

21 — Brokenness in Relationships

Objectives

By the end of this lesson students will be able to ...

- state that the gift of human sexuality has been distorted by sin.
- realize that people who find joy and fulfillment in their relationship with God in Christ are free from the need to possess or dominate others.
- state that we can be delivered from abusing sex when we find the meaning to life in healthy relationships with God and His people.

For the Catechist

We tend to think of sexual immorality in terms of genital activity: fornication and sodomy.

However, the abuse of sexuality includes much more than this. Any time we use our masculine or feminine qualities to possess another, even in marriage, it is an abuse of sexuality. That the range of sexual abuse is so broad should surprise no one: our masculinity or femininity is the deepest rooted of our human qualities and affects practically every thought and action. To use our sexuality for selfish ends is a distortion of God's creative plan.

From time to time different societies have absolutely forbidden certain kinds of behavior: public demonstrations of love, drinking, smoking, dancing, movies. These prohibitions said in effect that the activity in question was always wrong and was to be punished.

Adolescents also tend to see things in these same absolute categories. The Christian view, however, is that all things—including sexuality—are good but can be abused. Because our actions affect other people, laws are made to help set minimum standards within community. This lesson helps the students see the distinction between the proper use of a good thing and its abuse. It also asks the students to learn to set their own standards based on God's original plan for everyone to live in harmony.

Materials Needed

Opening Prayer: Vesper folder

Review: Easel or wall pad markers with the objectives listed

Introduction: Two large bags of candy placed in a large bowl

Guided Reading: student text, pens, pencils, paper

Prayer of Repentance: Vespers folders, prayer sheets, tape or glue, scissors

Activity A: "Journal," and Journal folders and pens or pencils

Activity B: "What Would You Do?"

Closing Prayer: Vespers folders

1. Opening Prayer

- Gather in the icon corner and distribute the Vespers folders.
- Pray "Heavenly King" from the first page of Vespers. Encourage the students to memorize this prayer.

2. Review

Review the main points of the previous lesson:

- Human sexuality is of God.
- From the beginning God created man and woman as unique beings.
- Man and woman continue to support and bring each other to fulfillment.
- The Fathers of the Church see this relationship of man and woman reflecting the relationship of the Trinity.

3. Introduction

- Bring in 2 large bags of candy placed in a large bowl. Pass the bowl around and tell the students to take out as much candy as they want. [Suggestions: Start with a student who might try to take out everything for himself or herself]
- Ask the students to share why they took the amount they did.
- Now ask them what would have happened if you had a bowl of \$ 1 bills.
- Ask the students:
 1. *How do they decide when they have enough?*
 2. *What makes them think about leaving some for the other person?*
- Tell them that learning how to think about limiting oneself and thinking about other people is important in all relationships.

Background Reading (Sinful Rebellion)

"We can summarize our understanding of sin with this synopsis. There is an undercurrent of sinful rebellion lurking in all of us and it has been so from the beginning. We enter a world which is in rebellion against God and, because of our human weakness, we cannot avoid sin. When this rebellion—a chronic temptation—begins to emerge in our lives, it is generally in individual actions. We might avoid serious sins because of training or simply for fear of incurring condemnation. Nonetheless, if we abandon the continual patterning of our lives on Christ, we are entering the realm of darkness. Slowly we are engulfed by it until we reach a point where our natural conscience is stilled. Then we become prey to one or another of the deadly vices, finally destroying the remnants of the divine likeness and further defacing the image, because our powers of judgement and volition will have been maimed....

"As we seek to grow in the likeness to God, then, we first must admit that we have been touched by these sinful actions and attitudes. This is why the admission that we are sinners is at the heart of the most frequently repeated prayers in our Church, the Prayer of the Publican, the Jesus Prayer, and the Trisagion Prayers. It needs to be at the heart of our personal prayer as well. Only by facing our brokenness in action and attitude can we see the wisdom in the 'medicine of the Holy Spirit,' the ascetic practices of Christian life through which the Lord restores health to soul and body" (*Shown to Be Holy* 40-41).

4. Guided Reading, Pages 106-107, "Temptation"

Read this section and allow time for discussion of the way our media shamelessly displays sexual abuse as defined in this section. [In advance, the catechist should view a few music videos and/or a few popular television shows so that they can add to the discussion.]

Guided Reading, Page 107, "Our Hope"

Read this section aloud and discuss ways we can live in "mutual support and harmony."

Guided Reading, Page 107, "The Bible"

- Read this section aloud. Ask one person to read the story about the death of John the Baptist.
- Ask the students to make a list of the people who try to tell the truth, and discuss why people are listening or not listening. (*Priests, parents, spiritual advisors, grandparents—we use the excuse "Everyone else is doing it"*)
- Have the students share their lists and discuss why we listen to the truth from some people but from others we do not. [In this discussion help the students realize they need to listen to their parents who tell the truth even when the students don't want to hear it.]

5. Wisdom for Today

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the information on this page. Have the students write their answers to the questions and share them with the class.

[Suggestions: *He offers His unconditional love—even though He knows the truth. Knowing that someone loves us makes us happy; he wants us to be truthful—not to worry about impressing others with lies; some people tell us that sex is okay and we can do whatever makes us feel good.*]

6. Icon Study

- Have the students read the commentary on the icon of Herod's Festival.
- Ask the students to share the reaction to this icon that shows the head of John the Baptist.
- Show them another icon of Saint John the Baptist from Come Bless the Lord icon packet, #35.
- Ask the following:
 - Do they think the icons of Saint John the Baptist are too graphic?*
 - What do they think God is telling us through this story?*

Background Reading (Christian Morality)

"Lust is 'disordered desire for or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure' (CCC 2351). It is sexual desire apart from God's love that selfishly seeks one's own pleasure at the expense of another. Lust often dominates our culture. This domination can easily lead to apathy, or lack of concern, on the part of many. Apathy then leads to a lack of motivation to change. We begin to settle for less than true, good, and beautiful relationships....A natural question one would ask is, 'Is there any hope?' Are we all doomed to suffer broken hearts and marry people who will commit to us only as long as it is convenient? Where is God in all this mess?"

"God is with us and there is hope! The good news is that life and sexuality were not always the way we find it now. Jesus tells us, 'In the beginning, it was not so' (Mt 19:8). In fact, in the beginning, love had its way and lust didn't even exist. To learn more about how to solve the problem of lust and sexual confusion, we must go back to the beginning to see how God created sexuality" (*Theology of the Body* 9).

7. Prayer of Repentance

This lesson includes Psalm 51 (50). Even though this prayer is not part of Vespers, ask the students to add it to the end of their Vespers folder. Encourage them to pray this Psalm throughout the Great Fast.

- Distribute the Vespers folder.
- Give each student one copy of the Psalm (see page 162).
- Ask the students to tape or glue this prayer onto the last page in their Vespers folder.

8. Activity A: My Personal Journal

For this unit the personal journal page includes a summary of the faith perspectives presented in each of the previous units. This journal entry focuses on Unit 2: The Fall. The students are asked to reflect on these faith perspectives.

Distribute Worksheet A along with pens or pencils. Have the students complete the worksheet in silence (or you can play religious music if available) and place it in their folder. Plan accordingly, but they should need no more than 5 minutes to complete the journal entry.

9. Activity B: What Would You Do?

- Ask the students to make a list of activities they hear students their age are doing that they know are the wrong choices for people their age. (Possibilities: Smoking, drinking, watching and reading x-rated material, boys and girls kissing and touching inappropriately)
- Divide the students in groups and have them decide on how they should tell these students they are making the wrong choice. Ask them to do one of the following to present to the rest of the class:
 - 1 Write texts or Facebook comments or e-mail messages.
 - 2 Recreate a phone call and personal confrontation.
 - 3 Decide when to tell their friends' parents or guidance counselor and decide how to tell them.

10. Summary

Review the lesson. Ask if they are any further comments or questions about today's topics.

11. Closing Prayer

- Gather in the icon corner.
- Pray Psalm 50 (51).

Psalm 51 (50)—Prayer of Repentance

King David was one of the holiest personalities of the Old Testament. At one point, he committed a grave sin. Desiring the wife of an army official, David caused the officer to be killed and took the wife for himself. The prophet Nathan helped him recognize this as sin. David repented and returned to God. He wrote this Psalm as a prayer of repentance.

Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness;
in your abundant compassion blot out my offense.

Wash away all my guilt;
from my sin cleanse me.

For I know my offense;
my sin is always before me.

Against you alone have I sinned;
I have done such evil in your sight

That you are just in your sentence,
blameless when you condemn.

True, I was born guilty,
a sinner, even as my mother conceived me.

Still, you insist on sincerity of heart;
in my, inmost being teach me wisdom.

Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pine; .
wash me, make me whiter than snow.

Let me hear sounds of joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

II

Turn away your face from my sins;
blot out all my guilt.

A clean heart create for me, God;
renew in me a steadfast spirit.

Do not drive me from your presence,
nor take from me your holy spirit.

Restore my joy in your salvation;
sustain in me a willing spirit.

I will teach the wicked your ways,
that sinners may return to you.

Rescue me from death, God, my saving God,
that my tongue may praise your healing power.

Lord, open my lips;
my mouth will proclaim your praise.

For you do not desire sacrifice;
a burnt offering you would not accept.

My sacrifice, God, is a broken spirit;
God, do not spum a broken, humbled heart.

III

Make Zion prosper in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

Then you will be pleased with proper sacrifice,
burnt offerings and holocausts;

My Personal Journal

Unit Two Review

- ✘ The world, although created good and in harmony with itself, is now broken and shattered because of humanity's sinfulness.
- ✘ Sin and its effects have been present to man and woman from the beginning
- ✘ The origin of evil is outside of humans. Humans ultimately choose, however, the good or the evil.
- ✘ Men and women are unable to save themselves from sin or to heal the brokenness within themselves.
- ✘ We need to grow in a deep relationship with God and each other.

Identify some people, places, and activities that encourage humans to choose evil.

Identify some people, places, and activities that encourage humans to make good choices.

Why do you think people choose evil even though they know they will get in trouble and cause harm? *(Think about drug and alcohol abuse, fast driving, stealing, and disobeying parents to help you answer this question.)*
