

Introduction to Christian Morality

Core Activity

What Makes an Action Moral?

1. Write three lists on the board for the students to view during the exercise:
 - The first list has the heading “Action” and includes these questions:
 - Does this action promote the well-being of me and others?
 - Does the action show respect for God, for me, and for others?
 - The second list has the heading “Intent” and includes these questions:
 - What do I hope to accomplish by making this choice?
 - What is the underlying good I am trying to achieve?
 - Does that good reflect what God wants for me?
 - The third list has the heading “Circumstances” and displays these questions:
 - What influences are causing me to consider this action?
 - How free am I to choose not to do it?

2. Begin the activity by conducting a brief presentation on Christian morality, using chapter 23 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)* as a guide.



3. Divide the students into groups of two to four. Give each group the handout “Morally Good or Morally Suspect?” (Document #: TX003198).

4. Describe the exercise to the students using comments like the ones that follow:

- The goal is to explore whether particular activities are moral or not, using an analysis of the three factors that determine the morality of any human action: the action itself, the intent, and the circumstances.
- The handout presents a series of moral dilemmas and a possible action for each dilemma. You have an opportunity to decide whether each action is right, neutral, or wrong; whether the intent behind it is good or not good; and whether the circumstances limit the freedom to decide.
- The questions on the board can help you make those determinations.

5. Give the groups 15 minutes to complete the handout. Consider walking through the first question to show the students how to proceed. Remind them when necessary to look at the questions on the board.

6. When the groups have completed the handout, discuss each question in order. If the groups do not agree on the analysis of a particular situation, talk through their differences. Then have the whole class determine whether the action should be carried out. Consider asking the students for alternative actions if they determine that it should not be; then discuss those options as well. Refer to

the questions on the board as necessary. If the students have trouble making a decision, explain again that for an action to be moral, it must be right or neutral, the intent behind it must be good, and the circumstances must not impair the freedom of the person deciding. Point out how those conditions have or have not been met for the action in question.

7. Close by inviting the students to apply this analysis tool to the decisions they have to make this week.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Core Activity Extension

Real-Life Moral Dilemmas

Instead of or in addition to using the questions on the handout have the students identify some of the moral dilemmas they face in their lives. Perform the action-intent-circumstances analysis with those situations. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Additional Activities

A Maturity Checklist

Invite the students to brainstorm the qualities that a mature person might possess. Some examples are the capacity to accept failure, the ability to draw out the best in people, a sense of humor, and the acceptance of personal responsibility. See whether the class can suggest at least twenty-five qualities. Then help the students create a maturity inventory that allows them to rate themselves on how far along they are in developing those qualities. (This activity is adapted from Marilyn Kielbasa, *Called to Live the Gospel*, pp. 24–25.)

An Apple a Day: Avoiding Temptation

Toss an apple around the group. Call on the first student who catches the apple to give an example of one way a person is tempted to sin; ask the next person who catches the apple to describe a way to avoid or to resist that temptation. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Doing the Right Thing

Recruit a few students to role-play the situation described in the Live It! article “Do the Right Thing,” on page 253 of the *CFH*. Then lead a discussion to determine the right decision for that situation. Invite the students to share not only what the right decision is but also the reasoning that leads to the decision. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

The Good Samaritan for Today

Have your students reflect on the painting of the Parable of the Good Samaritan on page 254 of the *CFH*, and read the parable in Luke 10:25–37. Assign your students the task of composing a children’s book about the Parable of the Good Samaritan, using places and people that young children today can recognize. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

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