

Family, Faith and Circle of Grace

Family Gathering Option D



Preparation- Please review 'Family Faith Guidelines' for more information.

- Prayer Leader- Invite clergy or another leader (like yourself) to lead the opening/closing prayers.
- Decide how you will divide students into groups (by grade level or multi-age).
- Assign and reserve rooms or space where groups will meet. Space is needed for adults and for each grade or grouping of students. Many parishes find using their worship space for the family and adult sessions works well and sets an appropriate tone.
- Give lesson plans and materials to those adults who will be teaching the lessons.
- Choose the topic for the adult session. Invite someone to facilitate the discussion. (Ideas for topics are listed in the 'Adult Sessions' section of this book.)
- Get materials needed for each of the grade levels or multi-age lessons you will be teaching. Materials needed are listed at the beginning of each grade-level lesson.
- Make copies of the "God is in our Family's Circle of Grace" family tree handout for each family. (This can be found at the end of the Leader's Guide for Option D.)
- Make copies of lesson handouts and parent letters for students in each grade level or multi-age group. These can be found at the end of each lesson. Make sure you have enough copies for all the children in each group.
- Make copies of the 'Family Gathering D- Agenda for Parents' for all adults who will be attending (available at the end of this Family Gathering plan.)
- (Recommended) Make copies of the grade-appropriate *Parents First* newsletters to give to parents for students in each grade. *Parents First* are age appropriate, so if you are using multi-age lessons, you should copy the grade-level the student actually attends.
- Make copies of any handouts or resources used in the adult session or for family enrichment (ex. 'Your Family and Circle of Grace' *Parents First* Special Edition- in resource section).
- Key to using the 'Family Faith Gathering Leaders Guide': Leader instructions are italicized; leader script is in blue. Family discussion topics are easily identifiable in the

leader guide and parent agenda handout by a *Circle of Grace* symbol next to each topic for conversation.



- Key to using the 'Family Gathering Agenda for Parents': Family discussion topics are easily identifiable in the parent agenda handout by a *Circle of Grace* symbol next to each topic for conversation. The words parents say to lead the family discussion are in bold.



- **These lesson plans for *Circle of Grace* are only to be used when parents and children can come together in a large group to learn about *Circle of Grace* in the format written here.** If children will be meeting by themselves without parents, or if children and parents meet separately for whole the event, or any situation when this family gathering format can't be used as written, children should be taught the regular *Circle of Grace* curriculum. This is because several critical parts of the *Circle of Grace* lessons are taught or reinforced within the family group discussions and are not included in these Family Faith youth lessons.

Family, Faith and Circle of Grace

Family Gathering Leader Guide- Option D



Key: Leader instructions are *italicized*, leader script is in **blue**.

1. **Welcome and Prayer-** *Group leader (Faith Formation leader, Pastor or other clergy or parish leader) can welcome the group and lead an opening prayer. Hand out Family Gathering Agenda D to parents.*

2. Gather in Family Groups

Leader: What is our Circle of Grace?

God is truly present in our lives and wants us to be safe because He loves us.

He wants us to be safe even more than we can imagine. Even more than our parents and family! And He puts other Trusted Adults, in addition to our parents, to help us stay safe.

Let us imagine our Circle of Grace together.

Direct each family to gather in a circle quietly. Ask parents to first raise their hands high as a visual way of inviting and covering their family in this holy space. Then the group leader directs the following:



Raise your hands above your head,
then bring your outstretched arms slowly down.
Extend your arms in front of you and then behind you.
Embrace all of the space around you.
Slowly reach down to your feet.
Know that **God** is in this space with you.
This is your **Circle of Grace**.
You are in it.

Family Discussion (brief): *Leader- direct families to discuss these topics.*

1. What would our world look like if families all lived believing that God is truly that close to us at every moment?

(Examples of answers)

- We'd know that God is with us when we are lonely or afraid.
- Everyone would know they have a *Circle of Grace* which reminds us of God's real presence in our lives.
- We would all respect ourselves and others as God desires.





2. God made each of us in His image, yet we are all unique. What special gifts or talents do you have that help others see God in you?
- Examples: kindness, forgiveness, a good friend, athletic, joyful, sensitive, energetic, loving, a good sportsman, fairness, ability to focus on things. The list is endless, as is the nature of God!

3. Sending to next activity!

Leader: Family members! Now we are going to break up into groups to talk about our Circle of Grace and do some activities.

When we are all done, we will come back here and ‘compare notes’ with our families about what we have each done!

Split into their groups and give directions on where each group should go. One group will be adults. The children will be divided by into groups, usually by age or grade- see below.

Make sure to re-affirm that families will be rejoining shortly and will have time to discuss with each other.

4. **Group Lessons and Discussions** *This is when parents/adults will have their session. Topics are provided in the ‘Adult Sessions’ section.*
- Children and teens will have their lessons* presented at this time. Depending on the number and ages of children/teens, you may decide to divide children up into their grade levels, or you may break them into groups by their age group.*
- *Lesson plans for students are in the ‘Student Lesson’ section in this binder.*

5. Families Gather Again!

Leader: **Welcome back!! Families, please sit together again.**

We have all had the chance to talk about our Circle of Grace and how much God loves us and wants us to be safe!

Let us share in our family groups some of what we learned.

Family Discussions

1. Have each person share one thing they learned about how God loves them. (Examples of responses- He wants them to be safe, we are made in His image, He gave them a family to care for them, He helps us know who and what is safe to be in our Circle of Grace and what is not, etc.)





2. Why did God make us each unique?

- Each of us reflect a part of God, who is endless and beyond our imagination.
- Our unique qualities are part of how God made each of us holy and sacred.
- God wants all our relationships to be experiences of divine love, to love each other as He loves us.



3. Talk about the talent or gift that each member of your family chose about themselves at the beginning of the night.

How do these gifts and talents work together to keep our family safe?



4. Ask each child or teen in the family what they would do if they were afraid that something unsafe may happen to them, or has already happened to them? (Tell our parents, or a Trusted Adult.)



5. One of the most successful components of *Circle of Grace* is having children choose several Trusted Adults, in addition to their parents, to turn to if something happens. When the child and parents have identified several other Trusted Adults that God has placed in their child's life, a bigger safety net is developed to protect them. Parents, please ask each child or teen in your family to tell you who they chose to be their Trusted Adults. Do you think their Trusted Adults are good choices? If not, respectfully and gently help them choose others who might be more helpful, more available...

6. Closing Activities

- *Please distribute take home materials for parents.*
- Leader: **Parents, please discuss these topics with your children. Please continue discussing them at home if you haven't finished.**
- *If time allows: (Remain in family circles)*

Leader: **Parents, you have been given a handout of a Family tree with 'God is in our Family's Circle of Grace' on the top. Please list the name of each family member on your family tree and the special talent or gift from God that they chose at the beginning of the session. Then you can discuss how these special gifts and talents can be used to keep your family and others safe. This activity can also be done at home.**

Closing Prayer: Group leader or Clergy could lead a closing prayer, song or give a blessing for parents and children.

Sample closing prayer (From student lesson):

Thank you, God, for always being with me in my *Circle of Grace*.
Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who helps me know what is good.
Thank you for giving me people who care about me,
especially my parents and trusted adults. Amen.

Family, Faith and Circle of Grace

Family Gathering D- Agenda for Parents



1. Welcome and Prayer

2. What is our Circle of Grace?

God is truly present in our lives and wants us to be safe because He loves us. He wants us to be safe even more than we can imagine. Even more than our parents and family! And he puts other Trusted Adults, in addition to our parents, to help us stay safe.

Let us imagine our Circle of Grace together.



Parents are asked to first raise their hands high as a visual way of inviting and covering their family in this holy space, while group leader directs group:

Raise your hands above your head,
then bring your outstretched arms slowly down.
Extend your arms in front of you and then behind you.
Embrace all of the space around you.
Slowly reach down to your feet.
Know that **God** is in this space with you.
This is your **Circle of Grace**. You are in it.

Family Discussion (Brief) Family leader topics for discussion are in bold and have a *Circle of Grace* icon next to them. Examples of responses and information is italicized.

Question 1. What would our world look like if families all lived believing that God is truly that close to us at every moment?

(Examples of answers)

- *We'd know that God is with us when we are lonely or afraid.*
- *Everyone would know they have a Circle of Grace which reminds us of God's real presence in our lives.*
- *We would all respect ourselves and others as God desires.*

Question 2. God made each of us in His image, yet we are all unique. What special gifts or talents do you have that help others see God in you?

- *Examples: kindness, forgiveness, a good friend, athletic, joyful, sensitive, energetic, loving, a good sportsman, fairness, ability to focus on things. The list is endless, as is the nature of God!*

3. Sending to next activity!

Family members! Now we are going to break up into groups to talk about our Circle of Grace and do some activities. When we are all done, we will come back here and 'compare

notes' with our families about what we have each done!

4. Families Gather Again!

Welcome back!! Families should all be seated together again.

We have had the chance to talk about our Circle of Grace and how much God loves us and wants us to be safe.

Let us share in our family groups some of what we learned. Parents, please discuss these questions now or complete discussing them at home if you haven't finished by the time to end.

Family Discussion

Question 1. Have each person share one thing they learned about how God loves them.

(Examples of responses- He wants them to be safe, we are made in His image, He gave them a family to care for them, He helps us know who and what is safe to be in our Circle of Grace and what is not, etc.)

Question 2. Why did God make us each unique?

- *Each of us reflect a part of God, who is endless and beyond our imagination.*
- *Our unique qualities are part of how God made each of us holy and sacred.*
- *God wants all our relationships to be experiences of divine love, to love each other as He loves us.*

Question 3. *Talk about the talent or gift that each member of your family chose about themselves at the beginning of the night.*

How do these gifts and talents work together to keep our family safe?

Question 4. *Ask each child or teen in the family what they would do if they were afraid that something unsafe may happen to them, or has already happened to them? (Tell our parents, or a Trusted Adult.)*

Question 5. *One of the most successful components of Circle of Grace is having children choose several Trusted Adults, in addition to their parents, to turn to if something happens. When the child and parents have identified several other Trusted Adults that God has placed in their child's life, a bigger safety net is developed to protect them.*

Parents, please ask each child or teen in your family to tell you who they have chosen to be their Trusted Adults. *Do you think their Trusted Adults are good choices? If not, respectfully and gently help them choose others who might be more helpful, more available...*

5. **Closing-** *Parents, please gather any handouts from the lessons for each of your children. It is important for you to continue discussing the family topics at home if you aren't yet done.*

Closing Prayer

Thank you, God, for always being with me in my *Circle of Grace*.
Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who helps me know what is good.
Thank you for giving me people who care about me,
especially my parents and trusted adults. Amen.



God is in our Family's Circle of Grace



Please list the name of each family member on your family tree and the special talent or gift from God that they chose at the beginning of the session.

How can we use these special gifts and talents to work together to keep our family and others safe?