

Rules and Freedom

LESSON OVERVIEW

Overview

In Genesis, we encounter God creating mankind in His image and likeness. Not much later, man damages this likeness by committing Original Sin. Original Sin made our human condition frail and we became inclined toward sin. Throughout Scripture, God provides rules and encourages persistent adherence to them as a remedy against sin. Following these rules does not bind us down; rather, following rules bring us closer to embracing the likeness of God in ourselves and in others so that at the Last Judgment, Christ can complete the restoration of our soul to Paradise.

Grade Level

■ ES

Time

One fifty-minute class



Connection to the Catechism

- › CCC 1706



Essential Questions

- › What does it mean to be created in the image of God?
- › Why does God provide rules for us?
- › Rules limit “freedom,” don’t they? How can following God’s rules set me free?

BIBLICAL TOUCHSTONES

You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

MATTHEW 22:37-29

For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.

GALATIANS 5:1

Creation of Adam

BY HARTMANN SCHEDE (1493)



From the Schedelsche Weltchronik or Nuremberg Chronicle, Hartmann Schede.

DIGITAL IMAGES AVAILABLE AT
WWW.SOPHIAINSTITUTEFORTEACHERS.ORG

Sacred Art and the Beatitudes

Rules and Freedom



Creation of Adam, by Hartmann Schede (1493)

Directions: Take some time to quietly view and reflect on the art. Let yourself be inspired in any way that happens naturally. Then think about the questions below, and discuss them with your classmates.

Conversation Questions

1. Whom and what do you see in this illustration?
2. What appears to be happening?
3. Where does your eye go when you look at the illustration? What is the most interesting thing?
4. What do you notice about the colors the artist chose? How does the light look? Where is it coming from?
5. What are some feelings that this illustration inspires in you?
6. Why do you think the artist painted Adam the way he did?
7. Read Genesis 2:7. How does this illustration help you understand this verse?

Lesson Plan

Materials

- › 4-5, 2 x 11 strips of paper for each student
- › Stapler
- › Handout A: What Could You Do?
- › Handout B: Key Sheet

Warm-Up

15 minutes

- A. Share the following quotation with students: “Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become actions; watch your actions, they become habits; watch your habits, they become character; watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.”
- B. Ask the children to explain what a habit is – an action or thought that is repeated often and becomes a pattern of behavior. The more the habit is reinforced, the easier it becomes to do. Ask students to identify several examples of actions that are good habits.
- C. Distribute 4-5 strips of 2 x 11 paper to each student and instruct them to write down an action that is NOT a positive habit. [Younger learners can draw a simple picture, or say a word aloud while you write it down for them.]
- D. Bend each strip of paper to create a circle, staple, and interlock them to create a chain. As you do so, invite students to share some of what they chose to write down on their papers.

Activity

20 minutes

- A. Now that you have a visual representation of the “yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1) that is sin, ask students what this chain represents. Discuss that the chain of our sins weighs us down and limits our actions. Note that just as a reinforced habit is easier to do, it is also difficult to break free from. Discuss how the actions on the strips of paper might seem to bring instant gratification, but the long-term consequences of the action ultimately do not provide freedom.

- B. Read aloud the account of the expulsion from Eden – Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-24.
- C. Discuss what changed about Adam and Eve after they disobeyed God’s one law. Original Sin damaged mankind and made the human condition frail and susceptible to sin.
- D. Note that God gave humans rules to protect their dignity from the snare of sin and to empower them to love God and others.
 - 1. Ask students if they can think of any examples.
 - 2. Instruct students that God’s rules can be found throughout Scripture. For example:
 - › The Ten Commandments
 - › The Corporal Works of Mercy
 - › The Beatitudes
 - › The golden rule
- E. Present the verse Matthew 22:37-39 to students and discuss how this verse is a key to unlocking the chain created in the warm-up activity. Perhaps write the verse on a key constructed out of poster board as a visual. Note that God’s rule doesn’t weigh us down; it does the opposite: it frees us!

Wrap-Up Activity/Assessment

15 minutes

- A. Distribute **Handout A: What Could You Do?** (1 of 3) to students so that they can independently or in groups read the scenario and respond to the critical thinking questions.
- B. Invite students to share their responses with the class. Reinforce points about how Scripture helped to free the individual from the temptation to sin and make a choice of love.
- C. Discuss with students how in each case, obeying God’s rules and making the right choice leads not to *less* freedom, but to *more*. (And this is true in the case of day-to-day life as well as spiritually.) Philip will be free to go further in math if he studies and learns rather than cheats. Justin will be freer because he won’t be grounded for disobeying; Meredith will be free from coercion from her “friends.”)
- D. Close by praying the second Bible verse for memorization with the students (Galatians 5:1).

Extension Options

- A. Complete the musical instrument activity from the lesson “What Is Freedom” on page 8. How does a virtuoso become a virtuoso? By acting as though there are no rules? No – by following the rules of how to play an instrument: learning to read music, practicing regularly, etc. Discuss how rules and discipline create more freedom and not less.
- B. Send home **Handout B: Keys** with this note:

Dear parents,

Your child has learned about how the Word of God provides true freedom by discouraging sinful actions and habits. With your child, look up three passages from Scripture pertaining to rules. The Books of Exodus, the Gospels, as well as the exhortations provided in the New Testament letters to the early Christian churches are wonderful places to start. Write each verse on one of the keys on the sheet provided and send to school for our bulletin board. Talk about the verses with your child – how do we follow the rule and how does it protect us from temptation?

Bulletin Board Extension

Create a bulletin board that illustrates how the laws, rules, and exhortations provided in Scripture free us to love and are keys that unlock the bonds of sin. The keys contain the verses that students explored and discussed with their parents in **Extension B**.

What Could You Do?

1 Philip has not been getting good grades on his math tests. His parents threatened to not let him play on his tennis team if he doesn't start doing better. Philip's friend Zach is an excellent math student – he usually gets all of the problems correct, and he happens to sit next to Philip in class. Philip did not study for this week's test and is considering looking at Zach's paper during the test. What should he do? After all, it is only a couple of math problems.

Questions

1. What is the temptation that Philip faces?
2. What are the choices – good and bad – that Philip could make?
3. Look up Exodus 20:15. How could this Scripture passage help Philip to make the right choice?

2 Justin and his friends are at a new level in the video game Justin received for his birthday. If Justin earns just a few more points, he'll win. Justin hears his dad say that it is time to turn off the video game to get ready for dinner. Justin's friend turns up the volume on the TV – the game is just too much fun. Justin could pretend that he didn't hear his Dad and finish the game. What should he do? After all, it would only be another 5 minutes.

Questions

1. What is the temptation that Justin faces?
2. What are the choices – good and bad – that Justin could make?
3. Look up Exodus 20:12. How could this Scripture passage help Justin to make the right choice?

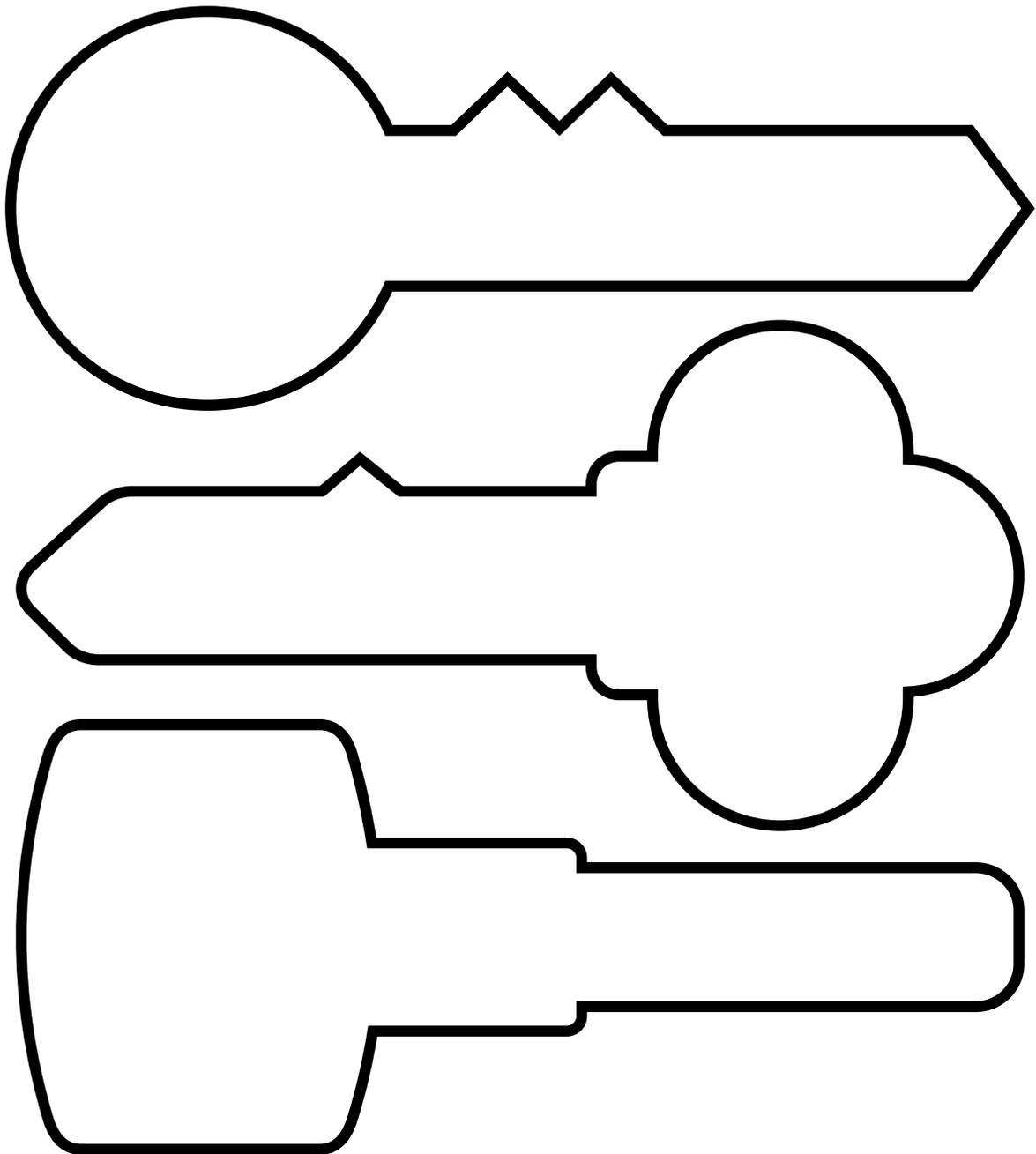
3 Some of Meredith's friends have started using bad language. At recess, Meredith hears phrases that she knows her parents, teachers, and priest would find inappropriate. One friend even uses the name of God as if it were a bad word. Meredith's friends have started to make fun of her because she won't use the words. They tell her if she wants to be cool and stay their friend, she will have to use at least one bad word next recess. What should she do? After all, it is only one word.

Questions

1. What is the temptation that Meredith faces?
2. What are the choices – good and bad – that Meredith could make?
3. Look up Leviticus 19:12. How could this Scripture passage help Meredith to make the right choice?

Keys

Directions: Look up three passages from Scripture pertaining to rules. The Books of Exodus, the Gospels, as well as the exhortations provided in the letters to the early Christian Churches are wonderful places to start. Write each verse on one of the keys.



Answer Key

Sacred Art and the Beatitudes: Rules and Freedom

1. God the Father, a person seeming to rise out of dust, animals, a landscape, trees.
2. God is creating Adam.
- 3-7. Accept reasoned answers.

Handout A: What Could You Do?

Version 1

1. Philip is tempted to cheat on his test. If he does so, he would be stealing someone else's work.
2. Philip could cheat and earn a better grade that would let him continue to play tennis or Philip could take the bad grade and suffer the consequences. He could then perhaps resolve to study harder.
3. Exodus 20:15 commands us not to steal. Philip, therefore, should not cheat on the test.

Version 2

1. Justin is tempted to ignore the reasonable directions of his parent.
2. Justin could continue to play his video game and win or listen to his Dad and lose the game to his friend. Justin could also tell his friend that it is important that he listen to his dad.
3. Exodus 20:12 commands us to honor our parents. Justin, therefore, should stop playing the video game – he could always pause the game or have a rematch at a later time.

Version 3

1. Meredith is tempted to use curse words and possibly use the Lord's name in vain.
2. Meredith could use a bad word and earn the approval of her peers or she could choose not to use those words and risk losing her friends. Meredith could also speak up to her friends or teacher about the bad language.
3. Leviticus 19:12 – given instead of Exodus 20:7 for the sake of challenging students to look throughout the Bible – commands us never to take the Lord's name in vain. Meredith, therefore, should not use this foul language and should discourage her friends from using it as well.