



**Growing with GOD™**  
*Safe and Sacred*

**LESSON 5**  
**Digital Discipleship**

**In This Lesson**

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**What the Church Says About**

*Loving One Another*

Love of neighbour springs from a *loving heart* which, precisely because it loves, is ready to live out the *loftiest of challenges*.

Pope John Paul II,  
*Veritatis Splendor*, 15 (1993)

**Our Call to Witness Online**

Think back to your memories of seventh grade friendships. The rollercoaster of emotions likely made for the highest of highs and lowest of lows. Now consider that reality with the added layer of social media. This is the environment your child is currently trying to navigate. Wouldn't it be nice if there was one thing you could tell your child that would teach him or her everything about staying safe and making good choices? The reality is that life is complicated; being online can make it even more so and requires ongoing, open conversations about how to interact with one another.

**God calls us to be witnesses to his love by what we say and do—both online and offline.**



Discuss with your child the impact that online posts may have on those who read them. Remind him or her that when we talk in person, we can see the effects of our words and behaviors on others. Online, the immediate effects may not be so obvious. Explain to your child that saying something mean or hurtful online is the same or even worse than saying mean or hurtful things to someone in person. It can be shared and read by countless others. In the same way, spreading kind and encouraging messages online can have greater impact because they also have the potential to travel and reach many people at once.

Model responsible behavior in your own communications. Monitor your child's online activity and find opportunities to generate positive posts together. Overall, perhaps the best message to share is that your child should always consider what impact his or her posts will have on those who read them and what conclusions others can draw about his or her character.



3minute  
RETREAT

*So you, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well.*

2 Timothy 2:1-2

### Reflection

Paul encourages Timothy by telling him to be strong in the grace of Jesus who embodies all the gifts and graces of the gospels. This strength helps Timothy with the task he is given next. Timothy is to “entrust” what he has learned to the faithful people. Paul uses the word *entrust* to signify a special treasure to be handled with care, so the next generation will be inspired to continue the story. This treasure is Christ’s message. It is now entrusted to us as we share it with our children.

### Questions

What helps me be strong in the grace of Jesus Christ? How do I share the treasure of our faith that has been entrusted to me with my child?



### Prayer

Speak to Jesus, using the words of this prayer or your own.

*Jesus, help me to be closer to you so that I may reverently pass on to others the treasure you have given to me.*

## Lead Your Child to Grow with God: Spiritually, Socially, and Physically

**Spiritual** Make a habit of having your family arrive early to weekly Mass. Discuss with your child ways to make this time prayerful. Suggest



spending time in quiet prayer, previewing the readings for the day, participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or reflecting on the week’s events. After Mass, invite your child to talk about how it felt to be present with Jesus in this way.

**Social** Provide opportunities for your child to socialize with peers in person. Suggest outings or invite your child’s friends to come to your place. Suggest that young people leave their devices at the door so they can fully enjoy each other’s company.

**Physical** Set limits on screen time. Encourage your child to take frequent breaks when using devices. Even something as simple as taking a break to walk around or changing to an off-screen activity after 15 or 20 minutes may be a good rule to establish. Remember that one of the best ways to teach healthy online habits is to model them yourself.

### Safe and Sacred at Home



*Embracing the Way of Jesus* (Loyola Press)

by Pope Francis

Before dwelling in a house made of bricks, children dwell in another house, which is even more essential: they dwell in the reciprocal love of their parents. I ask you, every one, to answer in your heart: do your children abide in your mutual love?

Parents have the vocation to love one another. God has sowed in their hearts the vocation to love because God is love. And this is your vocation as parents: love. However, always think of the children!

## Big Ideas

### In Lesson 5, your child will:

- recognize and describe appropriate and inappropriate online behavior.
- identify what to do if something he or she encounters online makes him or her uncomfortable.
- express ways to be responsible in online activities.
- define *social media*, *witness*, and *cyberbullying*.

### Words to Know

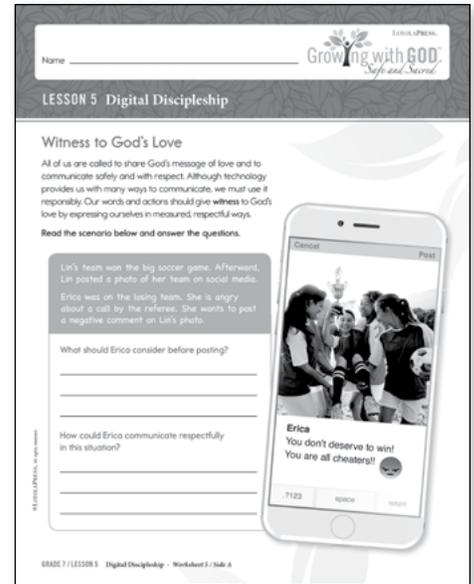
**social media** · *The websites and software applications (apps) by which people can post content and interact with one another electronically*

**witness** · *To share knowledge and experience of God's love through one's words and actions*

**cyberbullying** · *The use of online communication to harm, intimidate, or threaten a targeted person, often done anonymously*

## Bringing the Lesson Home

Determine ahead of time when and where you and your child will engage with the lesson content. Read or complete Side A of the worksheet with your child.



## STEP 1 ENGAGE & EXPLORE

Discuss with your child why a person might post mean or hurtful things online. Invite your child to share any experience he or she has had with such behavior or share examples that you know.



**ASK:** If you see something online that makes you uncomfortable or if something inappropriate is shared with you, what can you do? Listen to your child's responses and add any of the following tips that he or she does not mention. You may wish to make a list of tips together that your child can keep as a reminder of what actions he or she can take. Some tips to suggest include notifying you or another trusted adult immediately, and if something is dangerous or threatening, telling an adult who can notify the police or other appropriate authority.

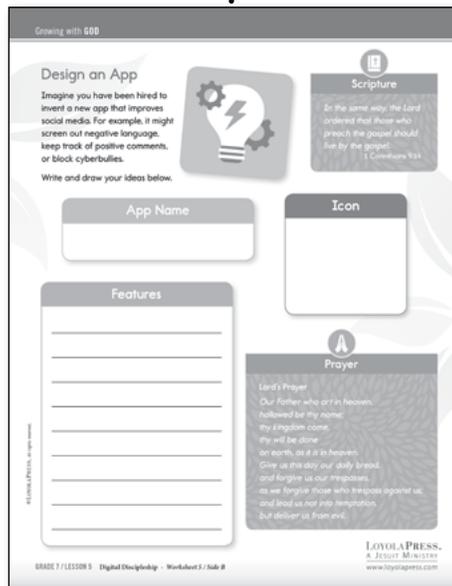
# Bringing the Lesson Home *(continued)*

## STEP 2 REFLECT & RESPOND

Read or complete Side B of the worksheet with your child.

**SAY:** Jesus taught about God’s love using words and actions. We are called to share God’s love in the same way. This is true for online and offline activities. Explain that each time we post a comment, share a picture, or interact on social media we make a choice. If we choose to live by the gospel, we will act in kind, compassionate, and loving ways. Invite your child to share examples of social media activity that would and would not show a person living by the gospel. If you allow your child to use social media, consider working together to create a positive and encouraging post. Talk about the app he or she created and how it would improve social media.

**SAY:** Let’s pray together. Pray the prayer from the Pray Together feature or one of your own. Begin and end the prayer by praying the Sign of the Cross.



### Pray Together

Dearest Jesus, help us be mindful of what we say and what we do. Guide us by your example to always treat others with kindness and respect. Help us reflect God’s message of love to others in both our online and offline behaviors.

