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# God's Gift of Self



## Getting Help

No matter who you are, no matter how you see yourself, Jesus will help you to grow and discover the fullness of life and love. It is impossible for anyone to go through life without help. Jesus understood this very well. He was aware that no one goes through life alone. At the Last Supper he promised his disciples and us that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in his name to be our helper and guide (see John 14–16).

Reflecting on Scripture and spending time alone with God in prayer will open you to the guidance and assistance of the Holy Spirit. Participating in the celebration of Mass—praying, singing and receiving the Eucharist—is a powerful way to deepen your relationship with Jesus. In the Eucharist, we also encounter the Holy Spirit who has guided the followers of Jesus through the centuries and will continue to guide us until Jesus comes again in glory.

The Holy Spirit is your guide. He will assist you in ordinary and real ways. When seeking advice about situations in your life, the Holy Spirit may guide you through the example and counsel of your parents, teachers or pastor. Every time you act with forgiveness, kindness, patience, justice, compassion and love, the Holy Spirit is there assisting you.

## Family Blessings

Ask the Holy Spirit to bless your family with gifts of wisdom, piety, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude and fear of the Lord.



## Healthy Habits in the Home

Agree as a family that journals are private and need to be respected. Use journals as a safe place to express feelings, write letters to God, draw and work out your struggles.

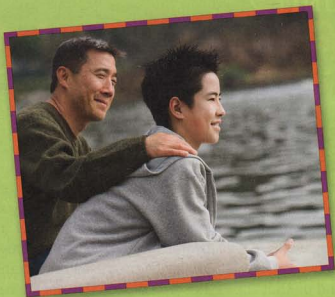


## Taking the Lesson Home

Working as a family, add to the list of guidelines for happiness you learned in unit 1 by focusing on effective communication with honesty and respect.

**To further develop guidelines for happiness, review the following:**

- 1. Awareness.** If you are aware of your feelings, you might need to pause before speaking.
- 2. Self-Control.** If you are experiencing strong emotions, you will need to control how you react and be more discriminate in the words you choose.
- 3. Vocabulary.** Are there phrases that should not be used because they inflame the moment or might be offensive to the other person? Avoid the use of them.



## Making Connections

To help each member of the family develop self-confidence, have family members respond to each of these questions:

- ▶ What gifts and strengths do I believe were passed on to me?
- ▶ Who in our family has been an inspiration to me? Why?
- ▶ How can I become more responsible as I become more independent?

## Faith on the Fridge

"Make us your own, O God, for we belong to no other . . . Give life to our souls, for you are our God . . . You are the Hope of the hopeless, the Help of the helpless, the Comfort of the fainthearted and the Harbor of the tempest-tossed. To every soul that is sorrowful, frightened or angry, bring your rest. . . ."

from the Coptic Liturgy of Saint Mark





# Understanding Yourself

## LESSON 3

### Roots and Wings

Roots of a large tree are powerful. Unseen beneath the surface, roots carry nourishment from the water and soil to the tree. Roots keep a tree stable in the fiercest winds. From deep roots trees find security. You have roots too. They are found in your family.

Your family provides you nourishment for life. You have become who you are, in part, because of who has helped shape you. You have inherited from your family genetic traits, such as curly hair or a tendency to be tall.

Your roots also include environmental influences from where and with whom you live. Shared tastes in food, sports and hobbies may have been passed along within your family. You have been shaped by many family influences.

Watching an eagle fly high in the sky reminds you of the freedom that wings could give you. You may have thought,

"If I only had wings with which to fly." In a way, you do have wings. Your parents give you wings by loving you and teaching you about life. Your friends give you wings when they accept you for who you are. Supportive people and positive experiences help you overcome difficulties and therefore help you to fly.

You are not like a tree standing still. God has given you the wings of a unique soul and a free will. You're a unique person. Even if you have an identical twin, your fingerprints, your thoughts and your choices are yours alone. God's grace gives you the strength to choose what is good and loving and not what is sinful and evil. With roots and wings, you can freely discover yourself soaring to the heights of finding life and love.

#### This lesson will help you to:

- **discover** two major influences in your life.
- **recognize** the importance of self-knowledge.
- **choose** to grow in self-knowledge.



**How have your roots and wings influenced who you are today?**





## Growing in Virtue

**Confidence** is about standing tall and reaching high. The more you understand yourself and value the person God created you to be, the more confidence you will have in yourself and in life.



## What a Personality!

One of the most important things you will learn as you mature is that every human being is an individual. Each person thinks, acts and feels differently from the way others do. People have personal tastes and may react differently to the same event.

Each person has an individual personality. Personality arises from the sum total of all the traits and characteristics that express who a person is. When you describe someone as shy or outgoing, optimistic or pessimistic, practical or a daydreamer, you are describing aspects of their personality.

Personality is more than just the emotion or feeling of the moment. Anger, joy, fear and other emotions come and go, but your personality stays with you.

Your personality influences the way you experience and handle emotions. For example, a shy person might feel joy as a quiet inner glow expressed with a smile. An outgoing person, on the other hand, might express joy as an explosion while shouting with delight. Your personality creates the stage on which all your emotions are played out.

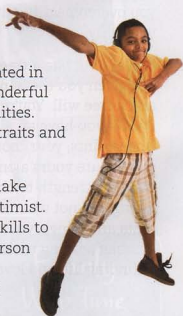


**Think about some of your personality traits and how you express them.**

## Taking Time

Though our personality offers some real clues toward our growing in self-knowledge and relationships, our personality is very complex and not easily charted. Because you are created in God's image and likeness, you are a wonderful mystery unfolding with endless possibilities. Knowing and naming your personality traits and growing in self-knowledge takes time.

People grow and change, develop and make choices. A pessimist may become an optimist. A daydreamer may learn the practical skills to make their dreams come true. A shy person may become someone who loves the spotlight. Your life can and will develop and change; it is not set in stone.



Taking time to get to know your own personality will help you grow in confidence and adjust more easily to the changes of puberty. Taking this time will help you make the best use of your strengths and overcome your weaknesses.

Confidence in who you are develops from understanding yourself. Knowing more about your personality will build the inner strength to achieve success. Confidence is about standing tall and reaching high. Your roots ground you in the truth of who are you, while your wings enable you to exceed expectations.

Taking time to understand other people's personalities is also key to confidently building and maintaining friendships and other relationships. Recognizing and accepting the fact that people are unique individuals can help you appreciate the gifts they can offer. Having respect for others is a sign of maturity—and also of self-confidence.

In God's plan for your life, your personality is not a lock, but a key. It is a key to understanding yourself and others.

## “Dynamic Duo”

Work with a partner to write a script in which you and your partner are superheroes saving the day. One of you is cautious and the other is daring. Then act out the script for the whole group.

### Activity

## Catholics Believe

Our soul is the innermost part of who we are. It is how God has created us in his image and likeness. Each human soul is unique, individual and immortal, immediately created by God. Our soul gives us the power of self-knowledge and freedom.



## Catholic Family Album

### Saint Albert Chmielowski

was born in 1845 to a wealthy family living in Poland. Adam, his birth name, was interested in politics and art, but also felt called to help those in serious need. Eventually he became a Franciscan, taking the name of Albert, and formed a group who provided food and shelter for the poor and homeless. Albert made a difference in the life of the people of his time. More than a century later, Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II) was highly influenced by St. Albert and even wrote a play about him. The pope said that he found great spiritual encouragement from St. Albert.



## Strictly Personal

The words *personal* and *personality* come from the Greek word *persona*, which is the name for the large masks worn by actors in ancient Greek theater. These “persona,” or masks, were structured to amplify the actor’s voice and to exaggerate facial expressions. The masks enabled the actor to be heard and seen from a distance. In the same way, your personality projects who you are, what you believe in and what you consider important.

Reflect on the questions below. The questions are meant to help you discover how your personality reflects who you are. Then write the questions and your answers in a notebook or journal. Your answers are meant to be strictly personal—but you may choose to share them with a family member or friend.

Make a commitment to do the exercise often to grow in self-knowledge and self-confidence.

What do I like best about myself?

Which family members am I most like?

What would I most like to change about myself?

What family rule helps me the most right now?

What is my deepest hope?

Why is my Catholic faith important to me?

Where do I find God?

Who are some people I most admire?

How important are my friends to me? Why?

How do I spend most of my free time?

What do I see myself doing in five years? In twenty-five?

What difference is my life making in the life of others?

What difference will my life make in the world?

# Emotions

## LESSON 4

### The Good, the Bad, the Ugly

We all have emotions and express them in our own ways. Take a moment and think of the emotions you have felt today. Then think about the emotions others have expressed. Image what it would be like to be at the Super Bowl when the winning touchdown was scored in overtime and there was absolutely no emotion felt and expressed by the crowd, and everyone just stood up, folded up their seat, and left. A world without emotions would be a pretty dull place.

Emotions are simply part of being human. Emotions send you important messages related to your well-being. They are feelings you experience in response to everything that affects you. They can vary in intensity and are transitory. Some feelings, such as excitement, relief, hopefulness and attraction, can positively affect us. Other feelings, such as loneliness, grief and jealousy can affect us negatively. Both positive and negative emotions are important.

Whether positive or negative, emotions are neither right nor wrong. They are neither morally good nor bad in themselves. However, what you choose to do with your emotions is a different matter altogether. How you choose to act on your feelings can be morally good or bad. Sorting this out can be challenging because your emotion can make choosing the right thing to do difficult. Understanding your emotions and making choices based on what Jesus teaches us through the Church can lead you to decisions that will enrich rather than harm your life.

The important thing to remember is that you have choices. Your emotions cannot make you do anything. That is because God gave you free will. Along with all your emotions, God also created you with an intellect for knowing, a conscience for deciding and a free will for choosing. With the use of reason and the aid of God's grace, you can choose to use your emotions in a good and positive way as Jesus himself did.

#### This lesson will help you to:

- **explore** the role emotions play in making decisions.
- **understand** how to direct strong emotions in virtuous ways.
- **identify** and choose ways to experience joy through good choices.



*How have you chosen to use your emotions in a good and positive way?*







## Growing in Virtue

The person who has been able to face the challenges of anger, sadness and attraction with patience, hope and chastity has shown great **valor** in life. This makes such a person a hero who turns problems into possibilities.

## Problems and Possibilities

Your teen years are a lot like those ancient legends in which the hero faced tests and dangers in order to achieve victory. Like a hero, you have been given special gifts to help you turn problems into possibilities.

Valor is the defining trait of a hero. It is the virtuous ability to face challenges in life with the strength of mind, will and spirit. Valor reflects the cardinal virtue of fortitude, and can move you to make the right choice even when emotional barriers stand in the way.

Ancient map makers once marked especially dangerous or unknown areas of the world with the words, "Here be dragons." On your journey through adolescence there are three particular emotions that signal a similar warning: anger, sadness and attraction. With valor you can face the challenges these emotions will present to you and also conquer the "dragons" they may be.



**Think about how you deal with anger, sadness and attraction.**

## Anger, Sadness and Attraction

You may already have noticed that during this stage of your life you are more easily angered at times. Part of the reason for this increase in anger is physical.

Your body is flooded with strong hormones that give you a lot of energy. Feeling angry at this time in your life is quite natural. For some people the anger comes as a sudden flare up. For others it is a vague sense of being irritated. Sometimes you might feel like you are about to explode.

The virtue of patience can help you properly deal with your anger. When you feel anger rising within you, pause and slow down your breathing.

You can also exercise or do something relaxing, such as listening to music. If you feel angry during a conversation, you can say "I'm really feeling angry right now." This will



Three headed Dragon spitting fire  
by German School (19th century)

give others a chance to deal with you on an honest level. Whatever you do, always be patient with yourself; you're learning along the way.

Sadness is another strong emotion young people experience during puberty. Crying, which can be by-product of stirred-up hormones, may accompany sadness. You may sense gloomy moods or feel great loneliness. The signal of these down moods may be to move you toward the comfort of family and friends. The virtue of hope helps you face sad and troubling times, knowing and trusting that God is always there for you.

Feelings of sexual attraction can also increase during puberty. These feelings are normal. These feelings are a positive sign that men and women are meant to carry out together God's plan for love and new life. Sexual emotions are among some of the most powerful. The virtue of chastity is so important in helping you to live God's gift of love in ways appropriate for your age. It will help you channel the energy of sexual attraction into positive areas, such as developing real friendships and exploring creative talents.

## "Shield of Valor"

Choose one of the three virtues discussed in this section. Work with a partner or by yourself and create a billboard promoting to young teens the value of living this virtue.

### Activity



## Catholics Believe

The Theological Virtue of hope opens up the heart to desire and expect the happiness promised by God. Hope prepares us to be with God and sustains us until we are with him. The person filled with hope is preserved from selfishness and is moved to do the work of charity (*Catechism of the Catholic Church 1818*).

## Catholic Family Album

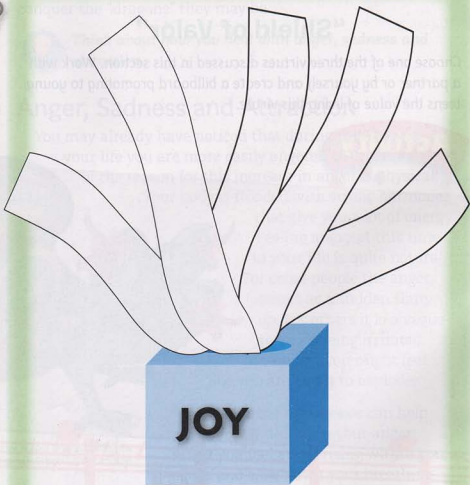
**Saint Joan of Arc** felt called by God to help restore the rightful king of France, King Charles VII, to the throne. This calling began in 1425 when she was thirteen. It was at that time she began to receive "counsel" or messages from saints. Later they became visions, some being of St. Michael the Archangel. While many were skeptical of Joan and her mission, she faced the challenges of her calling with valor. She helped restore Charles as king. Yet Joan of Arc was later betrayed, imprisoned and executed. In 1920 Pope Benedict XV canonized Joan of Arc and she remains a model of valor for Christians.



## Handling Your Emotions

As you grow in wisdom, you will learn that the responses you make to emotional impulses will have a huge effect or consequences in your life. When you respond to your emotions in positive ways, they make you stronger and more confident in yourself.

Learning to manage your emotions takes practice. When you and your friends are trying to figure out what to do, choose an activity that improves your mood by giving you joy. Using the illustration below, write on each slip of paper an activity that might improve your mood. For example, it might include music, hobby, a sport or game. Then recall these activities when you realize that you need to help bring joy back in your life.





## REVIEWING UNIT 2

Name .....

### Summary

Remember what you have learned in each of the lessons in God's Gift of Self.

#### LESSON 3: Understanding Yourself

- Each person is created with a soul, an intellect and free will. Inherited traits and environmental influences contribute to the person you are.
- Self-knowledge is important in understanding God's plan for your life.
- Understanding your personality will help you have greater self-confidence and mature in your relationships with others.

#### LESSON 4: Emotions

- Emotions are natural responses to everything that affects a person. How you act on your emotions can be right or wrong.
- The Theological Virtue of hope opens up a person's heart to desire and expect the happiness God promises.
- Being able to face challenges in life with valor enables a person to turn problems into possibilities.

### Matching It Up

On each line, write the letter of the description in Column B that best goes with the term in Column A.

**A**

1. .... Chastity
2. .... Confidence
3. .... Hope
4. .... Patience
5. .... Valor

**B**

- A. I'm feeling really angry, so I need to take a break.
- B. Despite the difficulties, I am able to face this challenge.
- C. I know that I can do this.
- D. I want to get to know you as a friend.
- E. With God's grace, I can help you.

### Thinking It Through

1. How can you work to overcome negative influences or obstacles?

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2. How is self-control a sign of maturity?

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3. Why is understanding your emotions important in relating with others and respecting yourself?

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## REVIEWING UNIT 2

Name.....

### Recalling Key Concepts

Circle the T if the statement is true. Circle the F if the statement is false.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Some emotions are good, while others are bad.   | T | F |
| 2. All people think, act and feel the same.  | T | F |
| 3. Emotions are the feelings that human beings experience in response to everything that affects them. | T | F |
| 4. Personality is just the typical personal emotional response to a given moment.                      | T | F |
| 5. The word <i>persona</i> refers to the name for the large masks worn by actors in theater.           | T | F |

Fill in the missing words in these sentences.

- ..... traits from your family, such as curly hair or a tendency to be tall, are genetic.
- Having ..... for yourself and others is a sign of maturity.
- ..... is an important virtue that helps you to live God's gift of love in ways appropriate for your age.
- Ancient map makers once marked especially dangerous or unknown areas with the words, "Here be ..... ."
- Shy, outgoing and optimistic are all examples of ..... traits.

### Working Together

In small groups create a cheer, rap, poem or song about handling difficult emotions. After you have finished writing it, hold a class talent show and present your creations to one another.