

The Catholic Connections Handbook

For Middle Schoolers

Second Edition

CATECHIST GUIDE: CHRISTIAN MORALITY AND PRAYER

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Pray It! Study It! Live It!® resources offer a holistic approach to learning, living, and passing on the Catholic faith.



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The publishing team included Joanna Dailey, editor. Prepress and manufacturing coordinated by the production departments of Saint Mary's Press. We are also indebted to the authors of the first edition of the Saint Mary's Press Catholic Connections Catechist Guides for their work, which has been incorporated into this revision: Patricia E. Clement (Catholic Connections Catechist Guide, *Sacraments and Prayer*, © 2009) Diana Macalintal (Catholic Connections Catechist Guide, *The Eucharist*, © 2009), Gloria Shahin (Catholic Connections for Middle Schoolers, *Student Activity Booklet*, © 2010), and Alan J. Talley (Catholic Connections Catechist Guide, *Christian Morality and Justice*, © 2009).

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The quotation on the handout "Chapter 44 Summary" (Document #: TX003620) is from the English translation of the *Rite of Marriage* © 1969, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL), number 24, in *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, volume one, prepared by the ICEL, a Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990). Copyright © 1990 by the Order of St. Benedict, Collegeville, MN.

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The definition of "mentor" on page 48 is from the *American Heritage College Dictionary*, third edition (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993).

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Printed in the United States of America

2260

ISBN 978-1-59982-362-1

Contents

Introduction	5
Part 3: Christian Morality and Justice	
37. The Bible: The Old Law and the New Law	10
38. Living the Moral Life	14
39. Moral Decision Making	18
40. Honoring God	22
41. Honoring Family	26
42. Respecting Life	30
43. Respecting Truth and Property	34
44. Respecting Sexuality	38
45. Working for Justice	42
Part 4: Prayer	
46. The Bible: Models of Prayer	48
47. Prayer: Conversation with God	52
48. Tuning In to God	56
49. The Lord's Prayer: The Perfect Prayer	60
50. The Lord's Prayer: A Prayer for All Time	64
Life Issues A: The Ultimate Question: Why Am I Here?	68
Life Issues B: Using Money	72
Life Issues C: Using Technology	76
Life Issues D: Using Time	80
Life Issues E: Times of Trouble	84
Life Issues F: Saints as Role Models	88
Answer Keys	92

Introduction

Quick Overview

This guide is the parish catechist’s resource for *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers, Second Edition (CCH)*. The *CCH* is a comprehensive overview of the Catholic faith, in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Its fifty chapters follow the outline of the Catholic faith as presented in the *Catechism* under the “four pillars” of faith: The Profession of Faith (the Creed), the Celebration of the Christian Mystery (the Sacraments), Life in Christ (Morality), and Christian Prayer. Thus, included in the *CCH* are the topics the Creed, liturgy and Sacraments, Christian morality, and prayer. Ten additional life issues chapters are found only in the catechist guides. The main text of each chapter in the *CCH* presents a particular topic of the Catholic faith. The sidebar articles in the chapter enhance the main text by connecting the topic to prayer, Catholic saints, Catholic history, and lived faith.

For the convenience of catechists, three separate guides accompany the *CCH*:

- *The Old Testament, the Trinity, and the Mission of Christ* (covering *CCH* chapters 1 through 18, and featuring two life issues chapters)
- *The New Testament, the Church, and the Sacraments* (covering *CCH* chapters 19 through 36, and featuring two life issues chapters)
- *Christian Morality and Prayer* (covering *CCH* chapters 37 through 50, and featuring six life issues chapters)

Each of these catechist guides provides the teaching process for catechists to use in covering each chapter’s content and connecting it to young people’s life experience.

In preparation for creating these guides, we spent many hours observing and interviewing catechists and parish catechetical leaders. The lessons in this guide are created to directly respond to the needs we observed and the needs those leaders shared with us.

Leading the Lessons

Each chapter in this guide is presented as a 60- to 90-minute lesson, and provides time for the participants to read from the *CCH*. Each lesson is presented in a two-page spread so that you can teach the entire lesson without flipping back and forth between pages. Lessons follow the Saint Mary’s Press Pray It! Study It! Live It! catechetical process that catechists have used with great success. Your preparation consists of familiarizing yourself with the *CCH* chapter content, reviewing the lesson in this guide, and gathering a few supplies.

Each lesson has four components: (1) a Pray It! segment found in the guide only and led by the catechist, or found in the Pray It! article in the *CCH*; (2) a Study It! segment; (3) a Live It! segment; and (4) a Pray It! segment found in the *CCH*. Each component is assigned a suggested time or time range. If your class is 60 minutes long, you will need to follow the shorter times; if your class is 75 or 90 minutes long, you can follow the longer times. Here's a quick look at the lesson components.

● **Pray It! Opening Prayer** _____

Each lesson begins with a short opening prayer related to the chapter topic. This prayer may be found only in the guide, or sometimes in the Pray It! article in the *CCH*, to be led by the catechist. Suggestions are included for actively involving participant volunteers in the prayer.

● **Study It!** _____

The Study It component is the heart of the lesson and will take the majority of your class time. During this time you will cover or review the chapter content. The Study It! process follows the chapter headings and is typically divided into three sections. Each section has a suggestion for beginning with a simple activity or discussion to prepare the young people for the content in the section. This is followed by reading or presenting that section's content in the *CCH*. A suggestion for reviewing the section content through questions and discussion is also provided.

You may read or present the content of the sections in a variety of ways. Here are some suggestions:

- Have the participants take turns reading the *CCH* section aloud, switching at each paragraph.
- Have the young people read the section silently to themselves.
- Ask the participants to read the chapter at home, prior to class. Review the content in class using the chapter summary handout.
- Present the content of each section in your own words, asking volunteers to read key sentences or paragraphs at appropriate times.

There is a lot of content in each chapter. It will not be possible to cover it all in depth, especially if your session is 60 minutes or less, so you will need to summarize some sections of the chapter quickly. The lesson directions suggest which sections to summarize, and the numbered points on the chapter summary handout provide key points to use.

● **Live It!**

The Live It! component is an engaging learning activity that connects the chapter content to students' life experience. These are typically about 15 minutes long, requiring a minimum of supplies and usually having the participants work together. If your class time is short, you will need to stay on top of the time and keep moving the process forward without too much delay. If your class time is longer, you can allow more time for the participants to interact with the content and with one other.

● **Pray It! Closing Prayer**

The session concludes with another simple prayer, using the prayer from the Pray It! article in the *CCH*. Suggestions are included for actively involving participant volunteers in the prayer.

Handouts

The lesson for each chapter of the *CCH* has two one-page handouts designed to make your life as a catechist a little easier. The first handout is the chapter summary handout. On it are two or three learning objectives that are the main goals of the lesson. The chapter summary handout also contains a summary of the key content in the chapter. This handout can be used in the following ways:

- to help you prepare for leading the lesson with a quick overview of the main content points
- to hand out to the young people as a review of the chapter content
- to send home to parents and guardians so they are aware of, and reinforce, what their son or daughter is learning in the sessions

The second handout is typically used as a learning resource in the Study It! or Live It! components of the lesson process. Sometimes it will contain a prayer to use during the Pray It! component. This activity handout is often integral to the presentation of the lesson, but sometimes it is offered as an optional activity that can be used to extend and enhance the lesson. This optional activity handout can be used as a take-home activity. The variety of activity handouts allows for some to be used as discussion starters; some as informal, quick checks of the content presented; some as an aid to individual or small-group work; and some as a means to encourage creativity and personal expression in learning.

Online Content

All of the handouts in this guide are also available online for easy access and customization. Also available online are a variety of other resources that can be used to reinforce the content covered in a lesson and provide additional support for lesson planning. These resources include:

- chapter quizzes
- tip sheets for catechists and parents
- links to helpful websites
- additional activity handouts

Go to www.smp.org/resourcecenter/books/ to see how these support materials might help you.

Spirit and Life

As a catechist, you have taken on an exciting and profoundly important task. The patron saint of teachers, Saint John Baptist de La Salle, often reminded his teachers that their students were not simply students in an academic sense but were *disciples*: “This must be your goal when you instruct your disciples, that they live a Christian life and that your words become spirit and life for them” (Loes and Huether, eds., *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, p. 440). As a Lasallian ministry, Saint Mary’s Press has this goal as well—that as you use and adapt these guides in your own situation, your words may become spirit and life for your own disciples. We at Saint Mary’s Press are deeply appreciative of your ministry and hope that our resources serve you well. Please be assured of our continual prayers for you and the young people you serve.

**Part 3:
Christian Morality
and Justice**

Chapter 37

The Bible: The Old Law and the New Law

Preparation and Supplies

- Study chapter 37, “The Bible: The Old Law and the New Law,” in the handbook.
- Provide a Bible.
- Provide sheets of paper and pens or pencils, one for each participant.
- Provide a sheet of poster board, markers, scissors, tape, and some Catholic or mission magazines, enough for each group of four or five.
- Make copies of the chapter 37 activity handout, “Living the Beatitudes” (Document #: TX003607), one for each young person. *(optional)*

Pray It! (5 minutes)

Tell the participants that class will begin with a reading from Sacred Scripture that speaks of loving others as the Greatest Commandment. **Invite** a volunteer to read Romans 13:10. **Pray** the following:

- Lord, each day help me to strive to be true to your teachings, to be your worthy disciple, and to be a good example for others. Guide me in following the Commandments, especially the New Commandment to love others as Jesus loves us.

Close with the Sign of the Cross.

Study It! (35 to 45 minutes, depending on your class length)

A. The Old Law

1. **Ask** the young people to form pairs and share who or what has been their greatest help in living the Christlike way of love. **Invite** volunteers to share their responses.
2. **Direct** the participants to read the chapter introduction and the section “The Old Law,” on pages 406–409 in the handbook. The content covers points 1 through 4 on the handout “Chapter 37 Summary” (Document #: TX003606).
3. **(Optional) Lead** a discussion with the following questions:
 - Are the Ten Commandments still important moral laws for us today? Why? (*Yes. Jesus came to fulfill the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets, to make their teachings come true, not to do away with them.*)
 - What do the Ten Commandments teach us? (*They teach us how to love and honor God and to love and respect one another.*)

B. The New Law

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read Matthew 5:1–20. **Organize** the young people into four groups. **Assign** each group one of the following Scripture passages:
 - Matthew: 5:1–2
 - Matthew 5:3–12
 - Matthew 5:13–16
 - Matthew 5:17–20

Explain the task as follows:

- Each group is to read aloud its passage from Matthew and then discuss the meaning of the passage.

Ask volunteers from each group to share their answers.

2. **Direct** the participants to read the section “The New Law,” on pages 409–412 in the handbook. The content covers points 5 through 7 on the handout “Chapter 7 Summary” (Document #: TX003606).
3. **(Optional) Direct** the young people to the Beatitudes on page 565 in the handbook. **Read** the Beatitudes aloud slowly. **Ask** the participants to choose a beatitude that appeals to them. **Distribute** a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil to each participant. **Invite** the young people to reflect on ways this beatitude is a “new attitude” for them, and **direct** them to illustrate living out this new attitude.

C. Practical Moral Advice

Direct the participants to read the section “Practical Moral Advice,” on pages 412–414 in the handbook. The content covers point 8 on the handout “Chapter 37 Summary” (Document #: TX003606).

Note: If you are running short on time, you may wish to just briefly summarize this section.

● Live It! (15 to 20 minutes)

1. **Organize** the young people into eight groups. **Assign** each group a Beatitude (see page 565 in the handbook). **Give** each group a sheet of poster board, markers, scissors, tape, and some Catholic or mission magazines. **Explain** the task as follows:
 - Each group is to design a poster based on its assigned beatitude. Each poster should include the title (the beatitude itself), a paragraph of explanation about the beatitude, pictures evoking the meaning of the beatitude, and a prayer based on the beatitude.
2. **Invite** the groups to share their work. Display the posters in the parish for all to enjoy.
3. **Comment** as follows:
 - The New Law that Jesus taught fulfills and completes the Old Law.
 - It is found in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:1—7:29).
 - In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explains that the Ten Commandments teach us how to love. The Beatitudes illustrate the meaning of love for God and one another.

● Optional Activity

Distribute copies of the chapter 37 activity handout, “Living the Beatitudes” (Document #: TX003607). **Use** it to help the young people reflect on living the Beatitudes daily.

● Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Direct the participants to the Pray It! article on page 407 in the handbook. **Lead** them in praying the prayer together. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

● Online Resources

To access activities and a quiz related to this chapter, go to www.smp.org/resourcecenter/books/ and click on “Catechist: Additional Course Handouts or Quizzes.” Tip sheets and links are also available.

The Bible: The Old Law and the New Law

Chapter 37 Summary

Chapter Learning Objectives

- The participants will examine how the Old Law is fulfilled in the New Law of Love.
- The participants will explore the Beatitudes and how they are lived out in their everyday lives.

Content Summary

1. The Ten Commandments are the most important laws we find in the Old Testament.
2. The Ten Commandments are incomplete without Jesus' New Law of Love.
3. The Old Law can also be called the Original Law and is not outdated or expired.
4. We look to the Church to apply the Ten Commandments to our time and culture.
5. The New Law, which Jesus taught, fulfills and completes the Old Law.
6. The clearest expression of the New Law is in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:1—7:29).
7. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explains that the Ten Commandments teach us how to love. The New Law is a Law of Love.
8. The Bible contains practical moral advice, particularly in the Book of Proverbs and in the Letters of Saint Paul and other epistles.

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Chapter 37 Activity: Living the Beatitudes

For each beatitude, write down how you live it in your own life.

Beatitude: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

How I live it: _____

Beatitude: Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

How I live it: _____

Beatitude: Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

How I live it: _____

Beatitude: Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

How I live it: _____

Beatitude: Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

How I live it: _____

Beatitude: Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

How I live it: _____

Beatitude: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

How I live it: _____

Beatitude: Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

How I live it: _____



Chapter 38

38

Living the Moral Life

Preparation and Supplies

- Study chapter 38, “Living the Moral Life,” in the handbook.
- Provide a Bible.
- Make copies of the chapter 38 activity, “How Do I Make Moral Decisions?” (Document #: TX003609), one for each participant.
- Provide five markers and five sheets of newsprint with one of the following headers written across the top of each:
 - When you are frustrated
 - When you are sad
 - When you feel angry
 - When you are jealous of someone
 - When you are tempted to tell a lie
- Provide additional markers and sheets of newsprint, one of each for each group of three or four.

Pray It! (5 minutes)

Tell the participants that class will begin with a reading from Sacred Scripture that speaks about our ability to make good choices. **Select** a volunteer to read Sirach 15:15. **Pray** the following:

- Lord, as your children, you have lovingly given us the gift of free will, allowing us to choose between good and evil. As young people faced with so many decisions, we humbly ask that you give us the wisdom and strength we need to remain faithful to you. Please guide us today as we seek ways to make decisions that are pleasing to you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Close with the Sign of the Cross.

Study It! (35 to 45 minutes, depending on your class length)

A. Off to a Great Start

1. **Distribute** a copy of the chapter 38 activity handout, “How Do I Make Moral Decisions?” (Document #: TX003609), to each young person. **Read** the directions and **instruct** the participants to fill out the handout. **Invite** volunteers to share their responses.
2. **Direct** the young people to read the chapter introduction and the sections “Off to a Great Start” and “Walking the Talk,” on pages 416–420 in the handbook. The content covers points 1 through 3 on the handout “Chapter 38 Summary” (Document #: TX003608).
3. **(Optional) Invite** a volunteer to read the Fun Fact article on page 420 in the handbook. **Help** the participants to relate the idea of a nun’s habit to symbols of Christian faith that they might display in their bedrooms at home or that they might wear. **Ask** volunteers to share examples of these symbols and what they mean.

B. You're Born with It

1. **Organize** the young people into five groups. **Distribute** to each group one of the sheets of newsprint with a heading written across the top and a marker. **Select** a volunteer to read the quotation from Philippians on page 420 in the handbook. **Explain** the task as follows:
 - Filling your mind with things that are good can help you out of difficult situations. Each group is to think of at least two good things you can “fill your mind with” to help you turn your thinking around for the situation written at the top.

Invite volunteers from each group to share their group's responses.
2. **Direct** the participants to read the sections “You're Born with It” and “Higher Love,” on pages 420–422 in the handbook. The content covers points 4 and 5 on the handout “Chapter 38 Summary” (Document #: TX003608).
3. **(Optional) Direct** the young people to the Think About It! article on page 421 in the handbook. **Engage** the participants in a discussion of the following:
 - Name an example of something that is not inherently wrong but that can become a bad habit if we don't control our use of it.
 - How can bad habits hurt our relationships with others?
 - Who are some people who might help and support you in overcoming a bad habit?

C. Virtues

Direct the participants to read the sections “Virtues” and “Always Closer,” on pages 422–424 in the handbook. The content covers points 6 through 8 on the handout “Chapter 38 Summary” (Document #: TX003608).

Note: If you are running short on time, you may wish to just briefly summarize this section.

Live It! (15 to 20 minutes)

1. **Organize** the young people into groups of three or four. **Distribute** a sheet of newsprint and a marker to each group. **Explain** the task as follows:
 - Each group is to review the descriptions of the theological virtues and the cardinal virtues on pages 423 and 424 in the handbook.
 - On your sheet of newsprint, write a story in which the main character is saved from danger—the danger of sin—by these virtues. You can use just a single virtue in your story, or all of them. Be creative, but be sure you show how the virtue or virtues were at work in helping your main character. Give your story a title and an illustration.
2. **Invite** the groups to share their stories with the large group.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Direct the participants to turn to the Pray It! article on page 417 in the handbook. **Invite** a volunteer to read the prayer. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

Online Resources

To access activities and a quiz related to this chapter, go to www.smp.org/resourcecenter/books/ and click on “Catechist: Additional Course Handouts or Quizzes.” Tip sheets and links are also available.

Living the Moral Life

Chapter 38 Summary

Chapter Learning Objectives

- The participants will understand that the natural law is part of our human nature that gives us an ability to know through human reason what is good.
- The participants will examine the gift of free will and how it enables us to freely choose to love God or turn away from him in sin.
- The participants will explore the theological and cardinal virtues and how they can help us to do the right thing.

Content Summary

1. God wants us to draw nearer to him in this life and to live happily with him forever in eternity.
2. The virtues and other supports from God help us to live morally and happily.
3. Both the Old Law and the New Law help us to form our conscience and use our free will in just and right ways.
4. God's gift of the natural law is placed deep within us, and we can know this law through our human reason.
5. The Sermon on the Mount is the ultimate expression of the New Law.
6. Virtues are habits we develop to help us consistently do the right thing.
7. The cardinal virtues are hinges on which other virtues hang: patience, prudence, temperance, and fortitude.
8. The theological virtues have their source in God and in God's energy within us. They are the virtues of faith, hope, and love.

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Chapter 38 Activity: How Do I Make Moral Decisions?

When you have a difficult moral decision to make, how do you go about figuring out what you should do? Do you talk with your friends or a parent or other adult, or do you pray about it? For some decisions, your decision making probably involves more than one of these possibilities. Complete the following survey about your moral decision making. Remember that you can check more than one item for each situation.

Moral Decision I'm Facing	Talk to Friends or Parent or Other Adult	Pray about It
Some classmates have been picking on the shy kid in our class. I think it's mean, but if I tell them to knock it off, they may target me for their bullying.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
One of my friends seems to be developing an eating disorder. Maybe I should intervene.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a tough math test coming up, and some of my friends are planning a way to cheat. Joining in sure would make my life easier.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A friend of mine dresses inappropriately and provocatively. I'd like to tell her she's attracting the wrong kind of attention.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends are planning a party with alcohol. I don't want to drink, but I'll feel weird saying so.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I saw a classmate steal from another kid's locker. I'd like to tell, but I don't want to feel like a squealer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Someone I thought was my friend spread an embarrassing rumor about me. I'd really like to get even.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A friend of mine got into trouble because of something we both did, but he didn't tell on me. I'm glad I didn't get into trouble, but I feel guilty that he took all the blame.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reflect on your responses, and think about how you go about making moral decisions and how you might benefit from relying on more than one source of guidance.

