

The Pencil Lesson **What are you for?**

(Revised 7/7/04)

1. Hold up a plain new unsharpened pencil. Carry on the following dialogue, asking the following questions as if you really don't know the answers.
  - Q: What is this? Response: A pencil.
  - Q: What is it for? R: To write with.
  - Q.: Like this? (Try to write with the unsharpened pencil.) R. You have to sharpen it first.
  - Q: Like this? (Try to sharpen it with your teeth) R: No, you have to use a pencil sharpener.
  - Q: You do it for me. (Someone sharpens the pencil.)
  - Q: Hey, I can use this as a weapon! (Pretend to poke someone with it.) R: No, don't do that. Lead is dangerous, You could hurt someone badly.
  - Q: Now I can write, right? Like this? (Write really hard and break the lead.) R: You have to write gently.
  - Q. Now what do I do? R: You'll have to sharpen it again or you can't use it.
  - Q. What's this little rubber thing on the end for? R: That's to get rid of your mistakes.
  - Q. Like this? (Bite off the eraser and throw it at someone) R: No, you're not supposed to do that. Now you don't have anything to erase with.
  - Q. Hey this thing breaks really easily. (Break the pencil in half) R: Yes, but now you don't have anything to write with either.
2. Put the pencil aside and say: What did we say a pencil is for? WRITING (Write on the board) Supposing I'm the one who made the pencil, and I wanted to send along a set of instructions to go with it. Give me a list of DO's and DON'T's for how to use a pencil. (Draw from the group based on the dialogue above.)
3. Ask one of the students: You know a pencil is for writing. Now I want you to tell me what are you for? Ask the same question of several people. Then write LOVING on the board under the word WRITING. Say: The person who made the pencil made it for writing. The One who made you, made you for loving. God made us to love God, to love one another, and to love ourselves. That's what we're FOR. That's our reason for being. How much does God want us to love Him?
4. Ask: Does anyone know the words from the Bible in which God tells us to love God, others, and ourselves? (Someone might be able to recite the Great Commandment. If not you say it: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself.")
5. Ask various children: If you loved someone that much
  - how often would you think about the person?
  - how much time would you spend with them?
  - what would you do for them?
  - what would you do if something you did hurt them?
  - how would you treat the person's friends?
  - how would you respond to the gifts they gave you?
  - what would you tell others about the person?
  - how long would it take to learn to love someone that much?

6. The pencil-maker needed some wood, some graphite, some rubber to make an object that would be able to write. Let's think about the person-maker, God. What God will have to put into ME, this person He is creating, so that I will be able to LOVE – to love God, to love other people, to love myself? He will have to give me (write the key words on the board as you present them.)
- LIFE -- I can't love unless I am alive (the pencil can't love it's creator)
  - KNOWLEDGE and TRUTH – I need a mind to know with, a way to learn about myself and all of creation, a way to understand who I am, to know God and why God created me
  - FREEDOM – I need to be free in order to love. Love has to be free otherwise it isn't love. I need to be free to make my own choices and decisions. But my decisions can't impinge on the freedom of someone else, so I also need AUTHORITY (write next to FREEDOM) to balance one person's freedom with another person's freedom.
  - FAMILY -- I need people who will love me, tell me who I am, where I came from, what my life is for. So this very wise God decided that I would be created through an act of love, and that he would put in me the power to create more people to love. Because he wanted loving families, he created SEX. (write SEX next to FAMILY)
  - PROPERTY – I need stuff: sunshine, air, water, shelter, food, clothing, transportation

5 Say: Let's see if we can stay in the mind of this Creator God for a while longer. God created me and gave me these five basic essentials that I need to be able to love. Draw a circle and scatter in it the letters L, T, F+A, S+F, P, saying as you do: Life, Truth, Freedom and Authority, Sex and Family, and Property. And God created Sandy [use the name of one of your students] and gave her Life, Truth, Freedom and Authority, Sex and Family, and Property. And God created Mike (draw another circle) and gave him Life, Truth, Freedom and Authority, Sex and Family, and Property, and Carla and Fred and Marty (Draw several more circles. Have the class say the key words as you put in the letters.)

6 Say: Then God thinks to Godself: This creation of mine is getting pretty complicated. I think my people are going to need a list of DO's and DON'T's so they will know how to love me, how to love one another, and how to love themselves. So God draws up a set of instructions. What do we call God's instruction list?

Pass out the **God's DO's and DON'T's** handout. Help the class to relate the Ten Commandments to the basic essentials required for being a loving person. Start with the fourth commandment, then go back to the first three. Help the students to see which commandment relates to which essential, then write key words on the lines provided.

Say: Seven of God's rules have to do with how we love each other and ourselves.

- 4<sup>th</sup> Respect FREEDOM and AUTHORITY, obey parents, rules, laws
- 5<sup>th</sup> Respect LIFE, do all the things needed to care for and protect life, your own life and the lives of other people
- 6<sup>th</sup> Respect SEX and FAMILY, use sex only to create a loving family
- 7<sup>th</sup> Respect PROPERTY, don't steal, vandalize, waste, pollute

- 8<sup>th</sup> Respect TRUTH, develop your mind, study hard, don't lie, cheat, gossip
- 9<sup>th</sup> Don't even WANT to have sex with someone you're not married to; don't think about having sex except within a loving marriage
- 10<sup>th</sup> Don't even WANT what belongs to someone else, don't want everything you see advertised, don't whine

Say: Three of God's rules tell us how God wants us to deal with God himself:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Reverence GOD above all. Nothing must be more important in your life than God.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Respect God's NAME, and all of God's things, places, people
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Respect God's DAY. Spend at least one day each week remembering who you are and what you are for: loving God, loving one another, and loving yourself. Gather with other people who love God and thank him for your life.

7. Say: So that's God's plan. Does it work? Do all of the people he created follow the instruction book? What word do we use for our failures to follow God's instructions? Write SIN in large letters on the board. God took a big risk in creating human beings: God wants us to love, but in order to love we have to be free, and because we're free we choose to do things that go against God's plan for us. (Write the key words on the board under one another: GOD LOVE FREEDOM SIN) Then what? How does God respond to our sin? He forgives us. (Write FORGIVENESS under the other key words) But God doesn't want to make forgiveness too easy, because he still wants us to learn how to love. So God puts conditions on forgiveness. God tells us he can only forgive us IF: (put a small IF after the word forgiveness). Ask the group to tell you the conditions. They are:
  - we admit that we have sinned
  - are really sorry
  - we want to improve
  - we try not to sin again
  - (and the hardest one of all) we are also willing to forgive one another
8. We can ask God for forgiveness in our own hearts, and we should do that every time we become aware that we have sinned. But better yet, we as Catholics can make use of the very special way God offers us to seek forgiveness – the Sacrament of Reconciliation. (Write SACRAMENT in the sequence above.)
9. Print the two great commandments on large sheets of paper and post them on the wall. Print each of the Ten Commandments at the top of a long narrow sheet of paper and hang these under the two great commandments. Divide the participants into table groups. Give each table some 3x5 post-it notes and slim markers.

Say: Let's spend a few more minutes thinking about sin. None of us likes to admit that we are sinners. When we have done something wrong we say things like: "I didn't do it." "It wasn't my fault." "He made me do it." "She had it coming." "It isn't that bad." Before we can be truly sorry, we have to admit that we have something to be sorry for. We are going to work together in table groups to think of the sins committed by young people your age. I'm going to assign each table two commandments to start with. You will think of the sins against your commandments, write each sin on a separate post-it note, and stick them up under the numbers on

the wall. Remember, the sins should be ones actually committed by young people your age – so, for instance, you wouldn't write "adultery", but you would write "sexual kissing."

When you have thought of all the sins you can for your two commandments, check out the sins already posted and see if you can think of additional sins for any of the other commandments.

10. Move the commandments with their posted sins to the chapel. Say: What do you suppose God thinks about all the sins listed on the wall? What does God want us to do about these real sins in our lives? God wants to forgive us. God wants to love us. God wants to help us love him, to love one another, to love ourselves better. He sent us Jesus to show us how to do that. Let's prayerfully watch a video that will help us to remember how much our sins cost Jesus and how much He was willing to do to help us learn to love.