

Adults are responsible for mentoring young people. Young people can be empowered and encouraged to learn ways to develop healthy and holy relationships. To build positive, healthy relationships, we need to develop an understanding of how to create and maintain relationships – with God, with ourselves, and with others.

**Please read this page prior to teaching this lesson.**

**ATTENTION.** Babies have needs that must be met. They express their needs vocally to receive a response. They want attention – to be fed, to be changed, to be moved to a different position, or a different location. They also need to be held, talked to, and have interactions with another human being that cares about them to thrive in this new life and environment. If these needs are not met, the baby will not flourish or reach their full potential; in fact, some may die.

Unknowingly, many learn that when they do certain things, they receive a positive response from the other person. When they cry, they are picked up; they may get food, a smile, verbal interaction, become more comfortable after a diaper change, and able to see other views of their world. We want this interaction with others so much that we do what it takes to get the response we are looking for – noises to bring laughter, crying to get help or assistance – wanting to be noticed. And we will do it repeatedly to see if we get the same responses.

Through childhood, we discover behaviors on both our efforts and the responses we receive for attention may change. We adapt, but still have the goal of getting attention. There are times when one will even do negative actions to get attention, rather than no attention from another. Why is that? Today, we splash messages on billboards for seconds, work for a “like,” a retweet, a notice from others, all for the attention from people we do not know. What relationships do we value? The online ones or with real people in our lives?

No, it is not just the children and youth – it is all of us, including adults. A two-minute observation in any public place, will show the great majority working for attention – whether through a device or even in communicating with the person next to us. This need for constant attention is a human reality, not just an issue of the day. Truth and good always focuses on God—not us. How do we decrease our need for attention, and increase the attention to Jesus Christ?

Once again, our faith gives us answers and helps to guide us on the right course. We are created by our heavenly Father to make a difference in our world- instead of a statement to be noticed. Look at the many miracle

stories Jesus performed in the Bible. After the event, he instructed the healed not to say anything; to two blind men he gave sight and then said, “See that no one knows about this,” (Matt. 9:30). Jesus was not seeking attention; He wanted to make a positive impact in those lives.

Jesus taught a similar message about alms giving to the poor, prayer and fasting (Mt. 6:1-8; 16-18). We do not do it so others see us, proclaim our good deeds, or change our appearance. He tells us to give in secret, pray in secret, and to look no differently, so our Father may reward us. It is not about making one’s self the focus, but making a difference to others with selfless service from our heart.

This tension of wanting attention and recognition, while maintaining a willingness to serve others, plays out in our daily interactions with classmates, co-workers, friends, family and others. The problem occurs when we care more about being noticed and recognized than about helping the few people right in front of us to feel noticed and important. In reflection, when we find we have a problem of wanting to be recognized or in the spotlight, we need to act – motivate yourself toward loving others. As stated in Phil. 2:3-4, “Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vain-glory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others.” Open your hands, walk the steps; seek to make a difference for others. With Christ leading you, in the process you will begin to find new ways forward in your journey.

We are each loved—we are the beloved sons and daughters of our God. We are called to love, to receive from others, and to give our self to others. We are called to participate in the Body of Christ as members of His body here on Earth. We serve Him when we make a sincere gift of self to others. This is how we can bring Christ to others!

*“You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”  
~ St. Augustine*

**Reflection for Catechist** ~ Reflect on attention in your own life. Is it used for yourself or others? How can you show the Christ within you to others? What is your first step?  
\*With God... \*With yourself... \*With youth... \*With others...

**CHALLENGE:** How will you help your group make a change to **give** attention to others, rather than direct it to them self?

## RESOURCES:

Braun, Tyler. *Seek Impact. Not Attention.*; Relevant Magazine. Nov. 2013. <https://relevantmagazine.com/god/seek-impact-not-attention/>

Quigley, Colleen. *Learning Love: Theology of the Body and the Family.* For Your Marriage. 2014. <https://www.foryourmarriage.org/learning-love-theology-of-the-body-and-the-family-part-1-2/>

## **Overview**

This lesson is designed for use during a class session in January/February. “Attention” looks at ways that our faith can support us in our relationships to work on healthy, positive, and holy relationships rather than unhealthy relationships. God has given us the 10 Commandments to guide us in building healthy, holy relationships, and bring us true happiness. “God created man in His image; in the image of God he created him” (Gen 1:27). One’s dignity is grounded in God and must be respected by all. As we learn and mature in building healthy relationships with others, we will do well to practice our beliefs and faith as we build the relationships we want and seek in our lives.

We may need to reflect on where we are trying to gain attention, as well as who is giving us attention - that sometimes may not be a positive choice. We may need help if we are in an unhealthy relationship where we are being exploited, abused, or are not free to express our thoughts, feelings, and actions. An environment of open communication encourages youth to communicate their thoughts and feelings appropriately and seek help from parents and other trusted adults as they develop their relationships.

**Goal:** God’s image, in which we are created, is “communal” - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A personal relationship with God reveals how to be in relationship with all others. Let us explore what our Faith can teach us about healthy and holy relationships.

**“Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.”**

**- Matthew 7:12**

### **Session Outline** 1 hour class

- Opening Prayer (3 min)
- Lesson on Attention. Introduction and development (18 min)
- Game/Activity (12 min)
- Activity Worksheet: “Who Pays Attention to Me?” : Compliments” (20 min)
- Summarize points— (5 min)
- Closing Prayer— (2 min.)

### **Session Objectives:**

- Created in God’s image, we are meant to give and receive attention from our parents, families and others.
- Right relationships give positive attention rather than negative attention by:
  - \* Helping us to attend to others
  - \* Paying attention to our gifts and the gifts of others.
  - \* Attending to our need to participate in many kinds of relationships.
- It is important to tell a trusted adult who we receive attention from and when the amount or kind of attention we receive is not right.

### **I. Opening Prayer (3 minutes)**

*May want to try this as an “echo” prayer by leading each phrase/line, and then have children repeat it back again with your assistance.*

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for sending us your son, Jesus, to save us.

We praise you for all your wonderful creations in our world.

Please help each of us to care for others  
in time of need

rather than want attention for our self.

We thank you for loving us and all you do for us.

May others see You

in the loving and kind acts we do today.

Amen.

### **II. What Are God’s Rules?**

*A Reference for the Lesson —*

**Share with the class:** “God gave Moses the 10 Commandments to help guide our lives and how to show our love to God and others. (Exodus 20: 1-17)

We learn how Jesus wants us to live with others through the Bible, at Mass, through prayers, the Sacraments, and the Church’s Teachings.

### **Supplies**

- Pencils (colored) or colors for each.

**Activities / Hand Outs** - for each person:

**You are asked to print these 2 pages back/back**

Pg. 4 “Who Pays Attention to Me?”

Pg. 5 “Notes to Parents” page (to take home)

Some materials created by the Diocese of Grand Island. Used with permission. Additional materials developed by the Diocese of Rapid City.

### III. LESSON: Attention

#### Introduction (8 minutes)

#### 1 Our Relationship with God.

**Share with class about this lesson: God created us to be with others.** From the time we are born we need attention from our parent(s). We need someone to feed and care for us and we need someone to spend time with us. This is a real need and important for a positive life. God also created us to have a relationship with him; we do this mostly through our prayer time with God. When we say our prayers, we are talking to God. Hopefully we are also taking some quiet time to allow God to respond to us. He is always with us; what a great relationship to have and build!

**Ask: As we start to learn more about God and how much he loves us, how can we give him attention and get to know him better?** (Possible responses: saying prayers, attending Mass with the family, listening to Bible stories, trying to obey his 10 Commandments, being helpful to others, being nice to others, etc.)

#### Lesson Development (10 minutes)

**2 Ask: Who spends time with you? Who gives you their attention? Share:** When we are very young we spend the most time with our parents, siblings (brothers and sisters), grandparents, or maybe a daycare provider. As we get older, there are others who are involved in our lives. **Ask:** Who are some of those adults? (**List results;** some examples may include: teachers, coaches, group/organization leaders, friend's pastors, etc.) How does each of these give us attention? (Put by person on list ways they give attention). **Share:** We can see that people give their attention to others in different ways.

**What are some of the ways that adults give attention to children?** (some examples may include: listening, reading, talking to me, eating together, playing a game, texts me, going places together, chats with me, working together etc.). **Ask:** Can you name another adult you may know and how they give attention to others? (Add according to responses.) **Remind children and share:** Parents need to know who is paying attention to their children.

**Stress:** Talk to your parents about the adults and older teens or peers who spend time with you. Tell your parents all the ways others give you attention, even if someone is giving you attention you do not like.

#### 3 Game/Activity: Paying Attention (12 minutes)

**Paying Attention / Active Listening: Share:** This game is similar to other "ice-breaker" or memory games you may be familiar with playing. Have students sit in a circle or around a table so that they can all see one another.

**Introduce the game by saying,** *"An important part of right relationships is paying attention to others. It is important to attend to what others are saying, and also how others are feeling and what others may need. Sometimes we have to do more than listen with our ears; we also need to watch with our eyes for signs and actions that can tell us how someone is feeling or what they need."*

**Instruct** students that they will need to pay attention to each other during the game. Ask each student to think of one word, one sound, or one action that expresses a feeling. (You may wish to remind students that all words, sounds and actions must be respectful of others and not offensive).

One student will begin by sharing their word, sound or action (*e.g. a clap with hands*). The student seated to the right of them will have to repeat the word, sound, or action given by the first person and add their own (*e.g. a clap, makes a "buzz" sound*). The game proceeds clockwise around the circle/table, until each student has had a turn.

**ADAPTATION** for lower grades: If your group has a large number, you may want to start over after every 3rd to 5th child with a new pattern so they do not have to remember so many items to repeat at this level).

To make the game cooperative, encourage students to "see how far we can go without making an error." You can ask other students to help the current child if they have forgotten one. Celebrate each string of correct responses.

**Continued on page 4 with discussion questions. . . —>**

### 3 Game/Activity: Paying Attention— *continued*

Discuss with group the following after the activity:

“What did you enjoy about this activity?”

“What was difficult?”

“How are ‘paying attention’ and ‘remembering’ similar?” “How are they different?” (You have to pay attention to something in order to remember it, but sometimes you can pay attention and still have a hard time remembering.. (To ‘test’ yourself, have someone give you some clues. If you were paying attention the clues will help you remember...if you weren’t, all the clues in the world won’t help!)

“How did you feel when someone was paying attention to you?”

“Could you tell when someone wasn’t paying attention?” “How?” “How did that feel?”

“Why do you think paying attention to others is important in right relationships?”

How can we do this? (What would that look like?)

**What if you had two friends, and each of them wanted your attention? What would you do to solve this?**

## IV. ACTIVITY WORKSHEET: Who Pays Attention to Me? (page 5) (20 minutes)

(You may want to **do this worksheet as a group**, allowing each child to apply the directions to their situation).

Please divide the directions into two parts:

- Instruct the group:** First, you may choose a different color for each person with whom you have a relationship (if colors are being used). I will read each word; please DRAW a CIRCLE around each person that pays attention to you (pause after each one so they can draw a circle). Mom, Aunt, Uncle, Coach, Grandma, Brother, Friend, Grandpa, Dad, Cousin, Pastor (priest), Teacher, Classmate, Sister.
- Continue:** For each person that you circled, please draw a line to each way they show you attention. Let us go over the ways they may give attention to you. Did everyone circle “Mom?” Let us draw a line from mom for each of the ways your mom shows you attention (Read for class each caption under each picture on the sheet):
  - Works with me?
  - Talks to me?
  - Eats with me?
  - Reads to me?
  - Plays with me?
  - Goes places with me?
  - Prays with me?
  - Facetimes with me? (Visits with me through the computer)
- Leader, you may need to repeat this, or help children with the captions as they move on to the next person they have circled to draw lines to each way that person pays attention to them. This continues as time allows, or until completed. If time runs out, encourage them to finish this at home with a parent for the other names left on their page.
- Near end, say:** Look at all the names you circled, and all the ways each one pays attention to you. You have many persons in your life that care for you in many ways. I hope you also give positive attention to them in your relationships.

## V. SUMMARIZE lesson’s key points: (5 minutes)

- Created in God’s image, we are meant to give and receive attention from our parents, families and others.
- Right relationships give positive attention rather than negative attention by:
  - \* Helping us to attend to others
  - \* Paying attention to our gifts and the gifts of others.
  - \* Attending to our need to participate in many kinds of relationships.
- It is important to tell a trusted adult who we receive attention from and when the amount or kind of attention we receive is not right.

## V. CLOSING PRAYER (2 minutes)

**Please have each student take home to share with their parents their worksheet—and the parent’s note (on the back side) from this lesson!**

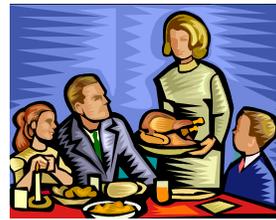
**Directions:** Draw a circle around each person that pays attention to you. Then draw lines from each person to the examples of how they pay attention to you.



...works with me?



...talks to me?



...eats with me?



...reads to me?

**Mom**

**Aunt**

**Uncle**

**Coach**

**Grandma**

**Brother**

**Friend**

**Who Pays  
Attention to Me?**

**Grandpa**

**Dad**

**Cousin**

**Pastor**

**Teacher**

**Classmate**

**Sister**

..plays with me? ...goes places with me? ...prays with me? ...facetimes with me?



## A Note to Parents

# Attention

This week we discussed the Right Relationship concept of Attention in our faith formation program.

As parents, we are to bring up our children in the faith, so that they may know and love God. One necessary focus is helping our children develop a relationship with God. Through prayer we communicate with our Lord about our daily life with its sufferings and joys. In teaching our children the importance of prayer in our life, we model the importance of giving God attention to develop this intimate relationship. You are encouraged to discuss with each child how he/she gives attention to God as they develop a relationship with Him that will be there all of their life.

Younger grade levels (PreK-2) discussed how God created us to need others and to need attention from adults. When we are very young, most of the attention we get from adults is from our parents, grandparents, or other caregivers. As we get older and are involved in activities and relationships outside our home, we are likely to need and receive attention from other adults (e.g. teachers, coaches, the parents of friends, group leaders, etc.). Students were encouraged to talk to their parents about the adults who spend time with them—the adults who pay attention to them.

Grades 3-5 discussed the concepts of “positive attention” and “negative attention.” They were encouraged to consider positive ways to seek attention, including telling their parents if they need attention. They were instructed to let their parents know who is paying attention to them and to seek help if the attention they are getting is negative.

At the middle school/high school level, students discussed attention as an important quality of right relationships, but also highlighted the value of balancing the attention given to all of the significant relationships in their lives. Right relationships don’t demand all of our attention, but rather, help us attend to all of our relationships and use our gifts to attend to others.

*If your child reports concerns about a relationship with an adult or peer, or if you would like more information about right relationships, please contact the Diocese of Rapid City Safe Environment Office (605)343-3541 or [cverhey@diorc.org](mailto:cverhey@diorc.org).*

### Attentive Listening

A good way to show your children that you are paying attention to them is to use active listening skills. We use active listening skills every day without thinking much about it, but when we are trying to give a clear message that our children have our undivided attention, it is useful to make these skills very deliberate actions.

1. When your child starts a conversation with you, put aside other distractions.
2. Make eye contact.
3. Respond to what they are saying by:
  - Nodding your head
  - Saying “uh, huh”
  - Asking a question.
  - Repeating what they said.
  - Making a comment.

### Quality Time

You have probably heard it said that *it is not the quantity of time that we spend with our children that is important, but the quality of the time we spend with them that is significant.* In our busy world it can be difficult to find quantities of time to spend together. In addition, the pressure to “multi-task” in most areas of our lives can have an impact on the quality of time we spend with our children. To improve the quality of time we spend with our children, we don’t need to be engaged in any particular activity, achieve any specific goal, or create an image worthy of preserving in a scrapbook or posting on Facebook. We merely need to put aside past stressors, future worries, and competing thoughts; and focus on the here and now of our interaction. Select one of the precious few moments that you have to spend with your children. As you interact, take time to appreciate the feelings of the moment. Notice the details of the experience. Focus on the purpose of your interaction and your desire to give your children unconditional, positive attention.