

CHRISTIAN ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING

SAMPLE LESSON 1

Assertiveness and standing up for yourself

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Christian Assertiveness Training
Sample edition containing Lesson 1

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New course edition: 2026
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Pastoral and professional scope

This course book is intended for teaching, practice and pastoral equipping. It is not a substitute for medical, psychological, psychiatric or legal assessment. In situations involving violence, coercion, stalking, immediate danger or severe distress, safety comes first and appropriate professional help is necessary.

Bible passages

Bible passages are mainly summarised or quoted briefly. Read each passage in full, in a reliable translation and in its context.

About this sample lesson

This sample lesson shows how the complete Christian Assertiveness Training integrates theory, biblical reflection and practical skills. Lesson 1 introduces the differences between passive, assertive, aggressive and passive-aggressive behaviour and helps participants choose a small first situation in which to practise.

What this sample lesson contains

The lesson contains the complete biblical framework, current theory, a visual step-by-step model, a comparison table, three role-plays, observation checklists, personal worksheets, the Identity in Christ exercise, knowledge questions and homework. It therefore allows readers to evaluate both the content and the teaching approach of the complete ten-session course.

How to use this sample lesson

- Read the biblical framework and the theory first.
- Then work out the core skill and personal exercise.
- Take part in the role-plays voluntarily and within clear safety boundaries.
- Use the observation checklist for concrete and respectful feedback.
- Conclude by practising in one small, manageable situation in everyday life.

Training is not a quick fix. Skills grow through repetition, feedback, prayer, recovery after mistakes and application in everyday life.

Lesson 1 Assertiveness and standing up for yourself

Assertiveness is not about winning, but about being present truthfully. Participants learn to use their own voice without drowning out the voice of another person.

Biblical foundation

Mark 12:29–31 and Galatians 6:5: love for God, your neighbour and yourself; responsibility without self-exaltation.

Learning objectives

- distinguish passive, assertive, aggressive and passive-aggressive behaviour
- describe assertiveness as both truth and love
- choose a small first situation in which to practise

Lesson plan

Component	Suggested time
Opening and review	15 min
Theory and demonstration	35 min
Break	10 min
Role-plays and feedback	55 min
Personal exercise and prayer	25 min
Summary and homework	10 min

Opening question

In what specific situation do you want to be able to act one per cent freer, clearer or more loving after this lesson?

Biblical framework

The biblical foundation for this lesson is Mark 12:29–31 and Galatians 6:5. Read both passages in full and notice who acts, what is given, which responsibility is named, and how love and truth come together.

Theological perspective

Love for God, your neighbour and yourself; responsibility without self-exaltation. In this course, assertiveness is not treated as self-promotion, but as stewardship of your voice, body, time, relationships and responsibilities. The other person is not used as a means to an end, and you do not erase yourself.

Questions about the passage

- What does the passage reveal about God and His actions?
- What dignity or responsibility is given to the human person?
- What limit does the passage place on selfishness, fear or domination?
- What specific way of speaking or acting is consistent with this passage?
- What simplistic conclusion would the passage specifically not justify?

Prayer

Lord, teach me to speak the truth without harshness, to listen without losing myself, and to act without having to prove my worth. Give me wisdom for the right word, the right moment and the right boundary. Amen.

Theory and key concepts

Assertiveness means expressing your thoughts, feelings, needs and boundaries clearly and directly while respecting the dignity and freedom of the other person. It does not guarantee that you will receive what you ask for. It is a way of taking honest responsibility for your part.

Passivity makes your own voice smaller in order to avoid tension. Aggression enlarges your voice by making the other person smaller. Passive-aggressive behaviour communicates resistance indirectly. Assertiveness seeks congruence: words, tone and body communicate the same message.

Current evidence base

The Centre for Clinical Interventions defines assertiveness as expressing a position clearly and directly while respecting the other person. Its modules combine recognising communication styles, examining unhelpful thoughts, practising behavioural skills, managing tension and progressing step by step.⁴ This course follows the same skills-based logic and adds an explicitly Christian and pastoral framework.

Important nuance

Assertiveness depends on context. Culture, generation, position, disability, neurodiversity, trauma and genuine differences in power can affect what is safe and appropriate. Silence can be a free choice; speaking is not always better. The criterion is whether the choice is conscious, responsible and as safe as possible.

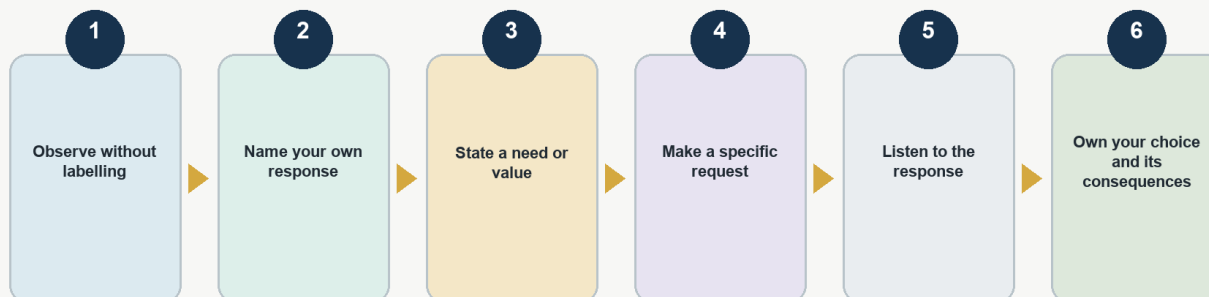
Your own example

LESSON 1

Infographic and practice pathway

LESSON 1 ASSERTIVENESS AND STANDING UP FOR YOURSELF

A practice pathway from insight to action



Mark 12:29–31 and Galatians 6:5

Love for God, your neighbour and yourself; responsibility without self-exaltation

Figure 1 Practice pathway for assertiveness and standing up for yourself

Do not use the pathway as a rigid script. Choose the step at which the conversation becomes stuck. Sometimes the first assertive action is not speaking, but slowing down, gathering information, seeking support or ending the conversation.

My most difficult step

- ☐ 1 Observe without labelling
- ☐ 2 Name your own response
- ☐ 3 State a need or value
- ☐ 4 Make a specific request
- ☐ 5 Listen to the response
- ☐ 6 Own your choice and its consequences

Comparison table

Aspect	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Aim	avoid tension	communicate honestly and respectfully	control or victory
Words	vague and apologetic	specific, direct and open to negotiation	blaming, absolute and belittling
Voice	too quiet or fading	audible, calm and appropriate	loud, rapid or threatening
Body language	withdrawn or frozen	stable and appropriate to the context	intrusive or intimidating
Feeling afterwards	resentment, shame or powerlessness	self-respect, sometimes with tension	guilt, conflict or a false sense of power
Other person's rights	made too important	recognised alongside your own rights	ignored or subordinated
Christian pitfall	confusing peace with conflict avoidance	truth spoken in love	confusing zeal with harshness

Important

These styles are patterns of behaviour, not fixed identities. Someone may respond passively in one relationship and aggressively in another. Describe the behaviour and its context rather than saying, "That is simply the way you are."

My pattern

Practising the core skill

Write one key sentence first. Keep it short enough to remember under pressure. Then add only the information that serves your purpose.

1 Observe without labelling

What does this step mean in my situation?

2 Name your own response

What does this step mean in my situation?

3 State a need or value

What does this step mean in my situation?

4 Make a specific request

What does this step mean in my situation?

5 Listen to the response

What does this step mean in my situation?

6 Own your choice and its consequences

What does this step mean in my situation?

Practice sentence

When _____ happens, I notice _____. I want / ask _____. If that is not possible, then _____.

LESSON 1

Role-play 1 The faulty purchase

A returns a new device that does not work and asks for a replacement. B follows a repair protocol but has some discretion. Practise making a clear request, showing understanding and repeating the request calmly.

Player A

State your concern, feeling or boundary. Choose one key sentence and one workable next step in advance. Stay with the issue being discussed today.

Player B

Respond realistically, not as a caricature. Offer some initial resistance, but leave room for a constructive response. Avoid humiliation, threats or acting out violence.

Observer

Observe visible and audible behaviour: opening, word choice, voice, facial expression, posture, distance, listening, empathy, boundary, request and conclusion. Note one strength and one practice point.

Round

Phase	Time	Task
Preparation	2 min	key sentence and purpose
Role-play	5 min	conduct the conversation
Self-reflection	2 min	player reflects first
Feedback	4 min	specific and concise
Second attempt	4 min	practise one part again

My key sentence

Feedback I will use

Role-play 2 Unexpected overtime

A has an important appointment. At the end of the working day, B asks A to work four hours of overtime. Explore how to say no, consider alternatives, and examine the boundary between a voluntary choice and pressure.

Player A

State your concern, feeling or boundary. Choose one key sentence and one workable next step in advance. Stay with the issue being discussed today.

Player B

Respond realistically, not as a caricature. Offer some initial resistance, but leave room for a constructive response. Avoid humiliation, threats or acting out violence.

Observer

Observe visible and audible behaviour: opening, word choice, voice, facial expression, posture, distance, listening, empathy, boundary, request and conclusion. Note one strength and one practice point.

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Role-play	5 min	conduct the conversation
Self-reflection	2 min	player reflects first
Feedback	4 min	specific and concise
Second attempt	4 min	practise one part again

My key sentence

Feedback I will use

Role-play 3 A domineering neighbour

A wants to discuss calmly that B repeatedly places items on the shared driveway without consultation. B minimises the problem. Remain specific and respectful.

Player A

State your concern, feeling or boundary. Choose one key sentence and one workable next step in advance. Stay with the issue being discussed today.

Player B

Respond realistically, not as a caricature. Offer some initial resistance, but leave room for a constructive response. Avoid humiliation, threats or acting out violence.

Observer

Observe visible and audible behaviour: opening, word choice, voice, facial expression, posture, distance, listening, empathy, boundary, request and conclusion. Note one strength and one practice point.

Round

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My key sentence

Feedback I will use

LESSON 1

Observation checklist for role-plays

Do not rate the person's character. Mark what was visible or audible: N = not yet visible, P = partly visible, C = clearly visible. Always add a specific example.

Criterion	N	P	C	Example
The purpose and central message were clear	☐	☐	☐	_____
Word choice remained specific and respectful	☐	☐	☐	_____
I-statements and ownership	☐	☐	☐	_____
Voice volume and pace were appropriate	☐	☐	☐	_____
Facial expression matched the message	☐	☐	☐	_____
Posture and gestures supported the message	☐	☐	☐	_____
Distance and eye contact were appropriate to the context	☐	☐	☐	_____
The other person was able to finish speaking	☐	☐	☐	_____
The speaker summarised or clarified	☐	☐	☐	_____
The other person's feelings were acknowledged without automatically giving in	☐	☐	☐	_____
The speaker named their own feeling or need precisely	☐	☐	☐	_____
The request or boundary was workable	☐	☐	☐	_____
Pressure or manipulation was recognised calmly	☐	☐	☐	_____

Observation checklist continued

Criterion	N	P	C	Example
Safety and differences in power were considered	☐	☐	☐	_____
The conclusion and follow-up agreement were clear	☐	☐	☐	_____
clear key sentence	☐	☐	☐	_____
respectful tone	☐	☐	☐	_____
no excessive explanation	☐	☐	☐	_____
space for a response	☐	☐	☐	_____
maintain self-respect	☐	☐	☐	_____

Strongest moment

One specific practice point

Plan for the second attempt

LESSON 1

Personal exercise in standing up for yourself

Use a real but manageable situation. Do not independently practise with a situation involving immediate danger or recent trauma.

The event

What happened, when, where and with whom? Describe observable facts.

My response

Layer	What did I notice?
Behaviour	
Words	
Thoughts	
Feelings	
Body and facial expression	

Consequences

For me:

For the other person or the relationship:

LESSON 1

Desired situation and practice plan

My desired outcome is not “the other person must agree”. Describe what you want to do, say and safeguard.

Component	New choice
What will I do?	_____
What will I say?	_____
What will I think?	_____
What will I feel, and how will I carry that feeling?	_____
What will my body communicate?	_____
What is my boundary?	_____
What will I do if the answer is no or I meet resistance?	_____

Practice ladder

Step	Situation	Tension 0–10
1	very small and safe	___
2	small but real	___
3	moderately challenging	___
4	possibly something more difficult later	___

Evaluation after practising

LESSON 1

Identity in Christ exercise

This week, read Mark 12:29–31 and Galatians 6:5 in context, preferably in two translations. Pray for light, truth and one obedient step.

What does this passage reveal about God?

What does the believer receive in or through Christ?

What command, promise, warning or condition is stated?

Write the central message in your own words.

Which physical, psychosocial or church-related label is trying to carry my sense of worth?

Which truth in this passage challenges that label?

What does the passage not say, and what exaggeration should I avoid?

What specific step is appropriate this week?

Summary and questions

Assertiveness is not about winning, but about being present truthfully. Participants learn to use their own voice without drowning out the voice of another person.

Key points

- Assertiveness means expressing your thoughts, feelings, needs and boundaries clearly and directly while respecting the dignity and freedom of the other person. It does not guarantee that you will receive what you ask for. It is a way of taking honest responsibility for your part.
- Passivity makes your own voice smaller in order to avoid tension. Aggression enlarges your voice by making the other person smaller. Passive-aggressive behaviour communicates resistance indirectly. Assertiveness seeks congruence: words, tone and body communicate the same message.
- The practice pathway consists of: observe without labelling, name your own response, state a need or value, make a specific request, listen to the response, and own your choice and its consequences.

Knowledge questions

1. Describe the central concept of this lesson in your own words.

2. Name two differences between passive, assertive and aggressive behaviour.

3. Which step in the model comes before making a specific request or choosing a next step?

4. Which Christian value limits both self-erasure and domination?

5. When is extra support or professional help more sensible than role-playing?

Self-rating after this lesson 0–10: _____ One piece of evidence from my behaviour:

LESSON 1

Homework and transfer

- ☐ Read the Biblical foundation again in context.
- ☐ Complete the identity exercise after a second reading.
- ☐ Complete one small exercise in standing up for yourself.
- ☐ Repeat one core sentence aloud, with appropriate voice and posture.
- ☐ Ask one reliable person for concrete feedback.
- ☐ Note outcome, tension before and after, and what you want to repeat.

Situation for this week

My key sentence

Plan B if the other person resists

Review for the next lesson

Question	Notes
What went well?	
What was difficult?	
What did I learn?	
What do I want to practise again?	