

# 1

# Walking God's Path

1 KINGS 8:54-61



## GOAL

By hearing about and practicing various forms of self-examination, children consider how we all drift from God's path, despite God's extraordinary love for each of us.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

God of wisdom, may your word be a lamp before my feet and a light for our journey this day and every day. Amen.

## THIS SESSION

To confess, we first have to examine our relationship with God. When do we follow God closely? Where have we strayed from the path? In confession, we pause, look around, and realize our mistake. In the sessions that follow, we'll consider what our next step should be, but today, we sit in the discomfort of knowing we aren't perfect—and that's OK.

## THE BIBLE STORY

In this passage, King Solomon prays a blessing over the people of Israel at the conclusion of the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem. They have followed God's instruction in constructing the temple, and God has been faithful to them. Solomon hopes that the people will continue in their obedience to God, encouraging them to "follow the life path" God has cleared for them.

## CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

When we talk about confession with children, it can be easy to fall into all-or-nothing thinking. Is something wrong or right? Good or bad? Reality is much more complicated, of course. Children will benefit from a value-neutral posture when considering whether they have (or haven't) followed God's path. Straying from the path (what we might call *sin*) is normal and natural; there's no need to assign blame. The more important questions, then, are "Where did I get lost, and how can I find my way back?"

## SESSION PREPARATION

Consider your own experience of confession. What feelings does *confession* evoke? If you sense fear and shame, take a moment to let those feelings sit in the light of God's love. God's light is meant to illuminate, not condemn.

- "Finding Our Way" (p. 8): Tape together Resource Pages 1 and 2.
- "Walking God's Path" (p. 8): Learn the movements for the ritual on Resource Page 3, which will be used in each session in this unit.
- "Observing the Path" (p. 8): Obtain the *Confess* infographic poster ([bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters](https://bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters), Year 1 Set), which will be used in each session in this unit.

Depending on the options you choose:

- "A Light for Our Path" (p. 10): Invite a musician to lead the children in singing.
- "Following the Path" (p. 11): Obtain a music player and contemplative instrumental music.



## GETTING STARTED

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- ☐ Resource Pages 1 and 2 taped together

### FINDING OUR WAY

Gather around the map of Doodle Town (Resource Pages 1 and 2) and take turns determining paths between two locations. Who can find the most direct path? What stops could you make along the way? What other paths could you follow to reach your destination?

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- ☐ Resource Page 3

### WALKING GOD'S PATH

Invite the children to repeat after you and follow your motions as you lead them from Resource Page 3.



Keep Resource Page 3 for sessions 2, 3, and 4.



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

### LOST MEMORIES



Use the following prompts and questions to engage children in a conversation about being lost:

- ✿ When was a time you were lost?
- ✿ Who were you lost from?
- ✿ Were you alone or with someone else?
- ✿ Who found you? Did you find your own way? How?
- ✿ What feelings did you have when you were lost? When you were found?

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- ☐ Confess infographic poster

### OBSERVING THE PATH



Display the *Confess* infographic poster and invite the children to look at the overall poster. Ask them what they see as a main image. Explain that, in each session of this unit about the practice of confessing, they will look at the path and signposts that make up confession. Today, start in the upper left-hand corner with the brokenness of the world and have the children take turn identifying the various elements on the path to the *Confess* sign. Note that the “golden thread,” which runs through the entire poster from sin to reconciliation, is God’s presence with us through it all. Spend some time talking together about the pictures representing various ways we sin, the relationships that are changed by sin, and the ways sin may be brought to our attention, as well as the questions posed along the path for this section.



Keep the *Confess* infographic poster for sessions 2, 3, and 4.



# FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

## SOLOMON'S PRAYER

C

- Resource Page 4
- Bibles

Set the scene for the Scripture reading by telling the children that Solomon was known to be a wise king, a king who tried to do his best to follow God. Read aloud, or invite a volunteer to read, 1 Kings 8:54–61 from Resource Page 4. Ask the children:

- What does Solomon ask God to do?
- What does Solomon want the people to do?
- How will the people know if they are on the right path?
- What might be the “signposts” Solomon mentions?

Explain that some of these “signposts” are in the Bible. Invite the children to look up Romans 12:9–18. Invite volunteers to take turns reading a verse at a time.

- What do you think these signs tell us?
- How do they show us to follow God's path?
- What are some specific ways you can follow God?



Help the children understand what it means to “walk on a path.” For some, it will mean literally to follow a path on the ground. Help the children understand that it can also mean to follow God's way of living by loving God and loving others.

## FINDING GOD'S PATH

AM G

Invite the children to play Mother, May I? with a twist. Have the children line up shoulder to shoulder on one side of the room while you stand by the opposite wall. Give them the following two rules:

- When an action that would be on God's path for us is described, you are to move forward in whatever manner is chosen: walking, running, jumping, and so forth. For example: “For three hops: Is helping someone who is hurt following God's path?”
- When an example that would not be following God's path is given, you are to move backward in whatever manner is chosen. For example: “For two giant steps: When we follow God's path, do we take what isn't ours?”

Let the children decide if they should move forward or backward, then tell them which it is. Use the following consequences if they moved in the wrong direction:

- If they moved forward when they should have moved backward, double the action backward. Using the second example above: If they took two giant steps forward when they should have taken two giant steps backward, they would now take four giant steps backward from their original place.
- If they moved backward when they should have moved forward, have them move back to their original place. Using the first example above: If they moved three hops backward when they should have moved three hops forward, they would now return to their original spot.

Continue the game until the children have reached the opposite wall. You can choose whether to play as a contest or a group activity.



If you have a child with mobility difficulties, have them partner with another child or invite that child to help you come up with scenarios. With an older group, you may want to pause and reflect on why they chose to move backward or forward. Build up to more ambiguous circumstances to generate deeper discussion.



# FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

- Internet-connected device or *Glory to God* hymnals (optional)
- Musician (optional)

## A LIGHT FOR OUR PATH

M C T

Read aloud, or have a volunteer read, Psalm 119:105. Tell the children that this reminds us that God doesn't leave us on our own to find our way. Comment that the Bible can be like a map, showing us God's path. Invite the children to sing along with the YouTube video "Thy Word Is a Lamp unto My Feet" ([bit.ly/FMThyWord](https://bit.ly/FMThyWord), 3:14) or use *Glory to God* hymnals, #458. As an alternative to singing, have the children repeat the lines after you. Lead them in the motions they know for the refrain (from "Walking God's Path" on p. 8).

Engage the children in conversation about the song.

- ✦ When you are scared, who or what reminds you that God is with you?
- ✦ What Scriptures or stories help you find your way or remind you of God's love?
- ✦ How does it feel different walking on a lighted path instead of a dark one?

Sing the chorus together one more time, encouraging the children to memorize the words.

- Internet-connected device



A sacrament can be thought of as a visible sign (water, bread, cup) of an invisible grace, or gift from God (new beginning, welcome, spiritual nourishment, salvation), that Jesus instituted. Different faith traditions understand different acts to be sacraments. Catholics have seven sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Communion, Reconciliation [Confession], Marriage, Holy Orders, and Anointing the Sick). Many Protestants consider baptism and communion to be the only two sacraments.

## SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

T C

Wonder together if the children have heard their Catholic peers talking about making their "first confession" or "reconciliation" as part of their First Communion. (This may be more prevalent in geographic regions with a dense Catholic population.) Explain that, for Catholics, *reconciliation* (meaning to bring back together again), is considered a *sacrament* and is done with a priest.

Tell the children that we too have these parts of confessing our sins to God. We just do it in a slightly different way. In our tradition, we can talk directly to God about our sins, and God will help us find our way back to the path. We recognize that we have done something wrong, we apologize or say we are sorry, we feel badly and want to do better, and we try and repair what we can. God is always right there, always loving us!

Suggest that we can learn something about our friends' and neighbors' way of confessing that can help our everyday practice of examining where we've lost our way. Show the YouTube video "How Do I Go to Confession?" ([bit.ly/FMCatholic](https://bit.ly/FMCatholic), 4:28) about the Catholic sacrament of Reconciliation. After the video, ask the children the following questions:

- ✦ Have you ever heard of this type of confession?
- ✦ What feelings does the boy seem to have throughout the video?
- ✦ What do you think you would like about telling your mistakes to someone else?
- ✦ What do you think you wouldn't like?



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

### CREATE A CLEAN HEART IN ME

A QC

Psalm 51 is traditionally understood to be David's prayer of confession after the prophet Nathan has made David aware of his sin. While you may not want to delve into the entire story of David, Bathsheba, and Nathan, children can relate to the feeling of having messed up and feeling bad about it. Explain to the children that King David, the shepherd who became king, made some pretty bad choices along with the good things he did. When confronted with his wrongdoing, he prayed to God, confessing his sin and wanting to do better.

Hand out copies of Resource Page 4. Invite the children to follow along as you read aloud Psalm 51:1–12. Provide paper and drawing supplies and ask the children to either rewrite a couple of verses in their own words or draw a picture of how this psalm makes them feel or what they see as they hear it. Offer the children a chance to share and talk about their work if they wish to.

- Copies of Resource Page 4
- Paper
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils

### FOLLOWING THE PATH

QC M

Tell the children that walking the labyrinth is an ancient spiritual practice that mimics both a holy pilgrimage and a journey into—and out of—one's heart and mind. Here we can see ourselves and God more clearly and recognize how and when we have made mistakes and not followed God as we should. Explain that a labyrinth is shaped in a pattern with no dead ends or false turns. It is not a maze to get lost in or trick a person. Following the labyrinth helps the body relax and focuses the attention on God.

Distribute copies of Resource Page 5, and crayons or colored pencils, if needed, and turn on some contemplative instrumental music. Open with a prayer: "God, guide us on our journey." Encourage the children to trace the path with their finger, a crayon, or a colored pencil, slowly and prayerfully. Allow several minutes of quiet to give the children a chance to trace the pattern slowly or several times. Suggest that, as they move from the beginning into the center, they tell God anything they may have done wrong; as they move from the center back out, they feel God's love and forgiveness. Close with a prayer: "God, thank you for always walking with us."

- Copies of Resource Page 5
- Crayons or colored pencils
- Music player, contemplative instrumental music



## FOLLOWING JESUS

Lead the children in the following call-and-response litany. If your context allows, don't be afraid to celebrate God's love loudly!

Leader: Is there anything you can do to make God love you any more?

**Children: No!**

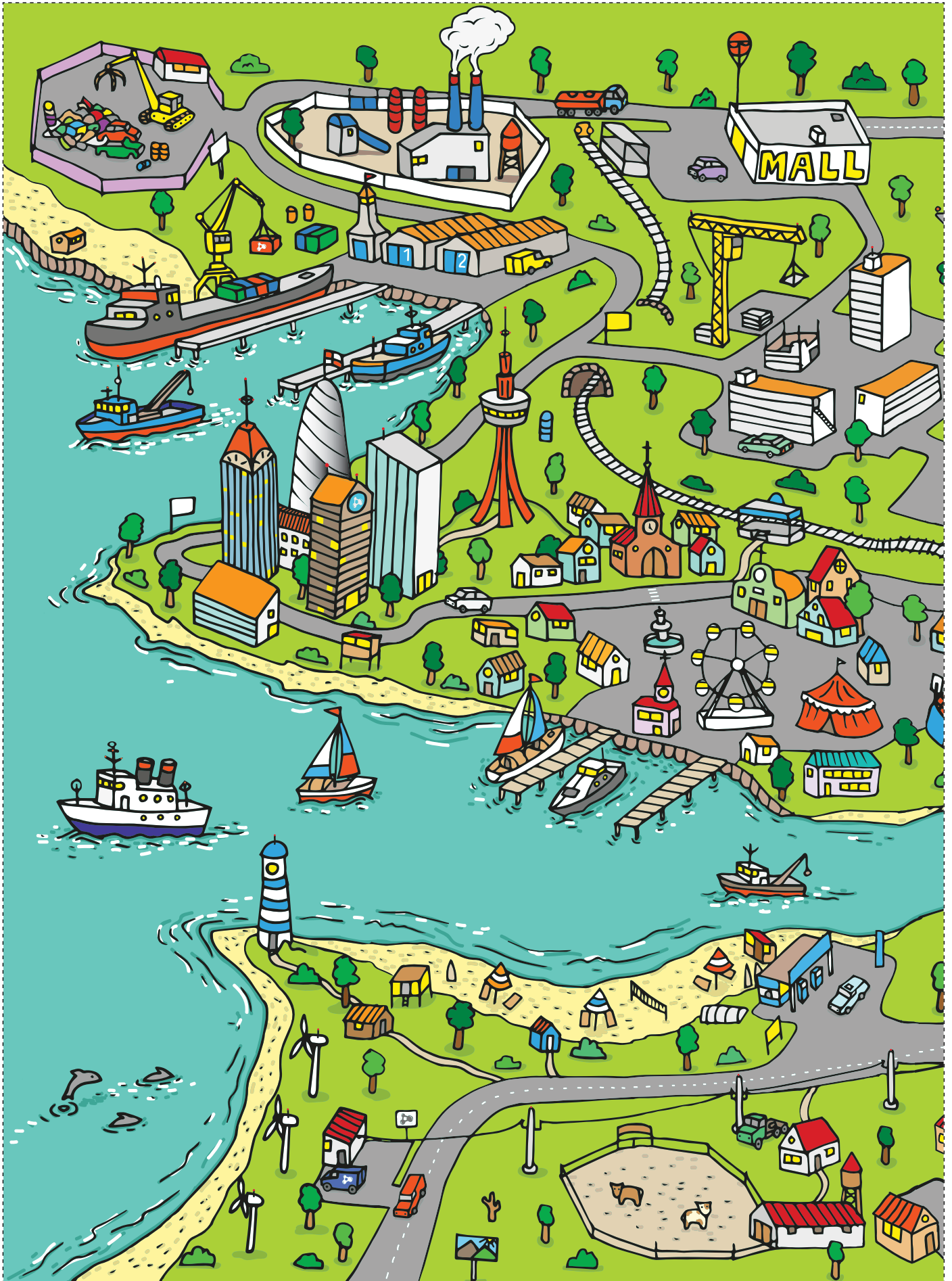
Leader: Is there anything you can do to make God love you any less?

**Children: No!**

Leader: God's love never quits.

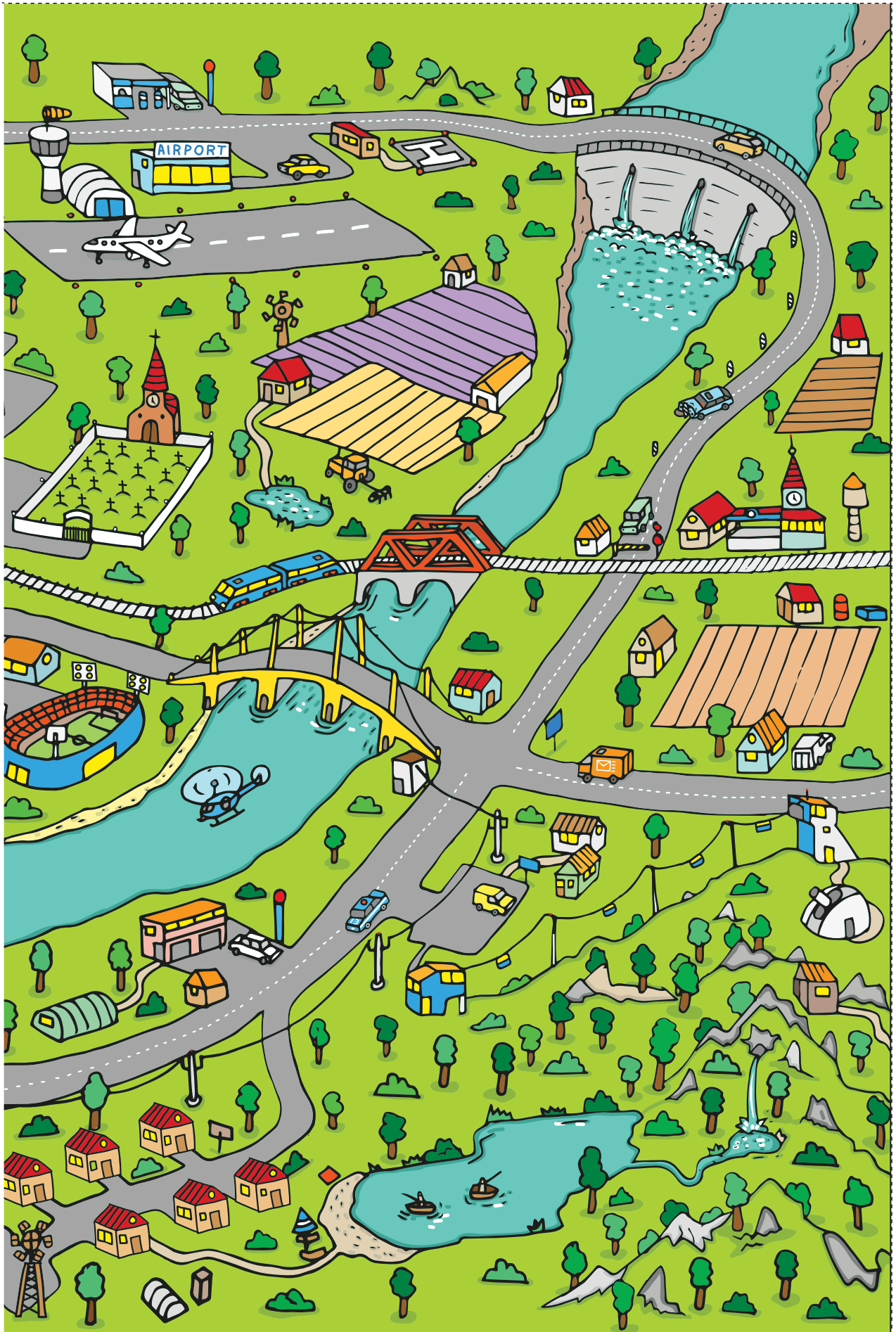
**Children: God loves us all-the-way and always!**











tape Resource Page 1 here



# Walking God's Path

God's way has been set before us, *(point upward; then point to the path)* /

a way of justice, peace, and love. *(make motions for: **justice**—move palms up and down like balancing a scale; **peace**—make a peace sign with two fingers in "V" formation; **love**—cross hands over heart)* /

God's Word is a lamp to my feet *(point upward; move hands to form an open book; rest right elbow on back of left hand, make a fist with right hand and open fingers like light bulb turning on; then point to feet)* /

and a light to my path. *(move hands, palms open and fingers spread wide, in an outward motion in front of face; then move both hands in a parallel motion, about the width of your body, back and forth, creating a path)* /

We stumble and stray away from the path. *(turn to the left, and then to the right)* /

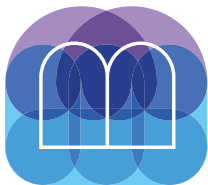
We get stuck in the mud. *(lift up each foot as if stuck in mud)* /

Create in me a clean heart, O God, *(pretend to wash hands, then cross hands over heart)* /

and renew a right spirit within me. Amen. *(bring hands together in prayer and bow head)* /







## BIBLE STORY

### BASED ON 1 KINGS 8:54–61, THE MESSAGE

Having finished praying to GOD—all these bold and passionate prayers—Solomon stood up before GOD’s altar where he had been kneeling all this time, his arms stretched upward to heaven. Standing, he blessed the whole congregation of Israel, blessing them at the top of his lungs:

“Blessed be GOD, who has given peace to his people Israel just as he said he’d do. Not one of all those good and wonderful words that he spoke through Moses has misfired. May GOD, our very own God, continue to be with us just as he was with our ancestors—may he never give up and walk out on us. May he keep us centered and devoted to him, following the life path he has cleared, watching the signposts, walking at the pace and rhythms he laid down for our ancestors. And let these words that I’ve prayed in the presence of GOD be always right there before him, day and night, so that he’ll do what is right for me, to guarantee justice for his people Israel day after day after day. Then all the people on earth will know GOD is the true God; there is no other God. And you, your lives must be totally obedient to GOD, our personal God, following the life path he has cleared, alert and attentive to everything he has made plain this day.”



### PSALM 51:1–12, GOOD NEWS TRANSLATION

<sup>1</sup>Be merciful to me, O God,  
because of your constant love.

Because of your great mercy  
wipe away all my sins!

<sup>2</sup>Wash away all my evil  
and make me clean from my sin!

<sup>3</sup>I recognize my faults;  
I am always conscious of  
my sins.

<sup>4</sup>I have sinned against you —  
only against you —  
and done what you consider evil.  
So you are right in judging me;

you are justified in condemning me.  
<sup>5</sup>I have been evil from the day I was born;

from the time I was conceived, I have been sinful.  
<sup>6</sup>Sincerity and truth are what you require;  
fill my mind with your wisdom.

<sup>7</sup>Remove my sin, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

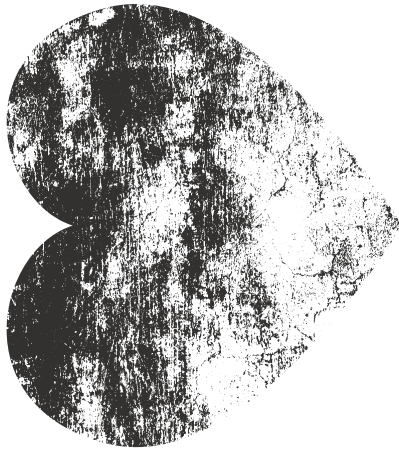
<sup>8</sup>Let me hear the sounds of joy and gladness;  
and though you have crushed me and broken me,  
I will be happy once again.

<sup>9</sup>Close your eyes to my sins  
and wipe out all my evil.

<sup>10</sup>Create a pure heart in me, O God,  
and put a new and loyal spirit in me.

<sup>11</sup>Do not banish me from your presence;  
do not take your holy spirit away from me.

<sup>12</sup>Give me again the joy that comes from your salvation,  
and make me willing to obey you.



# Following the Labyrinth Path

