



Practicing the Practice

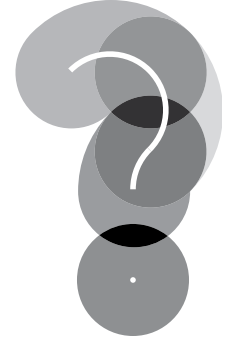


at Home

WHAT IS CONFESS ABOUT?

In this unit, we understand *confession* to be more about *actions* than simply *words*. Of course, words are a form of action, and confession certainly involves saying some key words, namely, those difficult and humbling words “I apologize” and “I’m sorry.” But it also involves recognizing that we’ve done wrong, committing to finding another way to live, and repairing, to the best of our ability, any damage (physical or emotional) that has been done.

Throughout the unit, we will look at our choices and actions in relation to God’s desires for us and the world. Confession is the practice of recognizing before God and others where we are and are not in right relationship to the path God has outlined for living. We will talk about “staying on God’s path” as well as “finding our way back to God’s path.” Such language is chosen intentionally to help children understand that sinning (making mistakes or doing something wrong), confessing, and repenting are not reflections on their goodness or badness. We are all beloved in God’s eyes.



GOD’S PATH POSTER

Poster board, markers

Throughout this unit, we talk about following—and not following—God’s path. But this concept can be hard for children, especially young children, to grasp. Creating a visual aid to hang in your home can help.

Using the poster board and markers, draw a path down the middle of the page. On either side of the path, draw a forest or other obstacles in which it would be easy to get lost. Leave some space for writing. As a group, brainstorm a list of choices and behaviors that would keep us walking closely with God, such as using kind words, sharing our toys and money, and so forth. Also think about actions that would not fall on God’s path, such as fighting, stealing, and so forth. Write or draw each idea in the appropriate place, on or off the path. Remember that feelings, such as anger, sadness, or joy, aren’t necessarily good or bad; the choices we make when we have those feelings can be. Hang up your poster in a common area where everyone in the family will see it each day.

FAMILY DETOUR

Local map or navigation app

Plan to take a walk in your neighborhood or on a path in a nearby park. Work together to locate your home on the map (or in the map app) and to plot your intended route. As you take your walk, intentionally detour from your planned route. Then, using the map, find your way back to your initial path. As you journey home, discuss:

- ➔ How did it feel to leave our planned route?
- ➔ Did you feel safe throughout this walk, even the detour?
- ➔ Were you anxious or excited or some other feeling when we found our way back to our route?
- ➔ How is this experience like or unlike falling away from God’s path and finding our way back through “turning around,” or repentance?

FAMILY EXAMEN

Internet-connected device (optional)

In the second session of this unit, your children may engage in a long-time Christian practice called the examen. This practice, in which we reflect back on our day in light of God’s presence and love, can be easily adapted as a family evening ritual. Simply decide on a set of questions and give each person a chance to respond as you wrap up the day, perhaps at dinner or bedtime. Questions might include:

- ➔ Where did you feel close to God today? Where did you feel far away from God?
- ➔ Where did you receive love today? Where did you give love today?
- ➔ Is there anything you did today that you’d like to say sorry for? Is there anything from today you’d like to say thank you for?
- ➔ Is there anything from today you’d like to do differently? Will you have a chance to try again tomorrow?

Close with a brief prayer, affirming God’s presence with and care for each one of us.



Optional: Pray As You Go is an app and website with an examen specifically written for families with children. You can access the recording here: bit.ly/FMChildrenExamen, 5:45.

CONFRONTING RACISM (SESAME STREET)

Internet-connected device

Racism might be the most pervasive systemic sin in which we participate. How do we talk about such a complex issue with children? Thankfully, the good folks at *Sesame Street* have a special called “The Power of We” to help younger children, in particular, make sense of racism and our role in it. In late 2020, it could be viewed on HBO Max. Do an internet search for current viewing options. A site for parents and caregivers can be found at bit.ly/FMSesameRacialJustice, along with a downloadable discussion guide.

Some shorts from the special can be viewed as YouTube videos:

- “Sesame Street: Making About Me Flowers—Power of We Club” (bit.ly/FMPowerFlowers, 3:36)
- “Sesame Street: How to be an Upstander to Racism Song” (bit.ly/FMPowerUpstander, 2:05)
- “Sesame Street: Listen, Act, Unite Song—#ComingTogether” (bit.ly/FMPowerSong, 2:01)

Visit the PBS Kids for Parents website (www.pbs.org/parents) for additional resources and a more in-depth video about racism, geared for slightly older children at bit.ly/FMPBSRacism, 28:10.

Talking openly about racism and our own implicit biases early in life helps children appreciate difference and move us toward a more just society.

HOW THE GRINCH MAKES REPAIRS

How the Grinch Stole Christmas by *Dr. Seuss* (*Random House books for Young Readers, 1957*) or one of the movies based on the book (1966, 2000, or 2018)

Regardless of the time of year, the Grinch can teach us a thing or two about turning around, changing, and repairing or restoring what we’ve broken. Read the book as a family or watch one of the various film adaptations. Pay particular attention to the Grinch’s conversion scene. Where do you see the steps of confession (confessing, repenting, and repairing)? How does the Grinch display each one? Even though we probably aren’t nearly as grinchy as the Grinch, wonder together what parts of our lives could use some new starts. Where does our heart need to grow three sizes?

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS

- How do you feel when someone hurts you? How does an apology make things better?
- Share about a time when you had to apologize for something you did that hurt someone else and how that made you feel before and after the apology.
- Why do you think it is hard for us to admit that we make mistakes sometimes?
- How can we help others who have been hurt who were unable to receive an apology from the person or people who hurt them?
- How does it make you feel knowing that God forgives us and accepts our apologies every time?



PRAYER

Loving God, may we see when we do wrong, say we are sorry to you or to others, feel regret and want to do better, and fix what we can to repair the relationship. Amen.

Multiage Children