

1

Recognize Wrongs

LUKE 15:11-20



GOAL

Children recognize and name wrongdoings and understand that as the first step toward forgiveness.

- 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, we know we do wrong. Help us to admit our wrongs so we might be transformed by your forgiveness and love in all we do. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Forgiveness is a process beginning with knowing and naming the wrong that has been done by oneself or another. Recognizing wrongs, or sin, allows for sincere apology and a confession of hurt and/or damage that has occurred in the relationship. The need for forgiveness is articulated when wrongdoing is acknowledged. As Christians, we believe that “if we confess our sins, [God] who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

THE BIBLE STORY

Jesus tells the story of the loving and forgiving father and his two sons in Luke 15, beginning at verse 11. As a parable, a story with layers of meaning, God is reflected in the father as one who forgives. The younger son, who has damaged the relationship between father and son by turning his back on his father, needs to recognize his wrongdoing before he can begin the movement home.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Children understand doing wrong or making bad choices. They know what it feels like to make a mistake or to do something that hurts someone else. Knowing and naming their own wrongs is sometimes a bit more difficult because of guilt and shame. It is important that caring adults model recognizing wrongs so that children are not burdened with carrying the wrong but are allowed to receive forgiveness and move into the future. Children also know when they are wronged and are beginning to see societal and systemic wrongdoing. Helping children recognize and name corporate sin both is empowering and helps forge new paths.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Forgiving” (p. 8): To see a video of the signs for “forgive” and “thanks be to God,” use the YouTube videos “Learn How to Sign the Word Forgive” (bit.ly/FMASLForgive, 0:18) and “ASL Minute—Prayer, Thanks Be to God, Amen and Hawaiian Goose” (bit.ly/FMASLThanksGod, 4:04, starting at 0:41 and ending at 2:00).

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Connected” (p. 10): Obtain strong magnets, two for each child.
- “Prayer of Confession” (p. 10): Obtain worship bulletins that include a prayer of confession.
- “How to Apologize” (p. 11): Obtain *How to Apologize* by David LaRochelle (Candlewick, 2021) or use the YouTube video “How to Apologize by David LaRochelle and Mike Wohnoutka” (bit.ly/FMApologize, 5:44).



GETTING STARTED

- Two buckets or large bowls
- Beanbags or soft balls
- Painter's tape

GAME OF TOSS



Greet the children as they arrive. Have them help you set up two containers to play a game of toss. Place tape on the floor about 10 feet away from the containers. Provide beanbags or soft balls and have the children take turns trying to toss them into one of the containers. Encourage the children to keep track of how many times they make it in the container and how many times they miss. Once everyone has had a chance to toss five or more times, gather the children and wonder:

- ✦ How difficult was it to get the beanbag/ball into the target?
- ✦ Did you miss more than you succeeded or did you succeed more than you missed?
- ✦ Why do you think you missed the target at times?
- ✦ When you missed the target, what did you do?
- ✦ How is missing the target like doing something wrong?

FORGIVING



As an opening ritual for each session, teach the children the American Sign Language signs for “forgive” and “thanks be to God.”

- **Forgive:** Use the middle three fingertips of your right hand to brush twice across the palm of your left hand. Explain that the same sign is used for the word *forgiving* and *forgiveness* as well.
- **Thanks be to God:** Place your fingertips of your right hand on your lower lip and raise your hand out and upward. Then fold your thumb to your palm and bring your hand, palm facing left, back down, ending with your pointer finger at your lower lip.

Invite the children to join you in prayer, repeating after you and making the sign for “forgive” and “thanks be to God” when those words, or forms of them, are said.

Gracious God, /
we believe you forgive. /
Forgive us the times /
we hurt others and your creation. /
Forgive others, /
who also make mistakes. /
Help us be as forgiving to others /
as you are to us. /
Forgive us our sins, /
as we forgive those who sin against us. /
Thanks be to God. /



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

MISSING THE TARGET

C

Newsprint and marker

Wonder together about the meaning of the word *sin* or what it means to sin. Write, or have a volunteer write, responses on a sheet of newsprint. After the children have mentioned some meanings of sin, comment that there are many understandings and words used for sin in the Bible.

Invite a volunteer to draw a large circle on the sheet of newsprint. Then invite two more volunteers each to draw a concentric circle inside the last one. It's all right if they aren't perfect. The idea is to have them draw a target. Thicken the circles a bit, but not blocking what has been written, so that the circles stand out, and point out that a target has been drawn. Tell the children that one of the most common uses of the word *sin* in the New Testament is the Greek word *hamartia* (hah-mar-TEE-ah), which is actually a term used in archery that means "missing the mark" or "missing the target." Wonder why sin might mean this. Explain, if necessary, that sin—doing something wrong or making a mistake—is like an archer who aims for the target, but their arrow falls short or goes the wrong way.

Tell the children that being able to know and name when we have sinned, what we have done wrong, is the first step in the process of forgiveness. Explain that the four sessions in this unit explore the four steps of forgiveness:

- Knowing and naming sin—both when we have done something and when we need to call out wrongdoing or injustice
- Receiving God's forgiveness
- Forgiving others
- Building a bridge to repair and restore what was broken



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

THE REST OF THE STORY

D

Bible(s)
 Children's story Bible(s)

Open the Bible to Luke 15 and tell the children that today's story is found in the New Testament, which contains the books of the Bible about Jesus and his followers. Explain that the book of Luke is one of the Gospels, one of the four books that tell us about Jesus' life.

Form groups of two to four children and hand out Bibles or children's story Bibles. Have the children turn to Luke 15 or the story of the father and two sons (also known as the story of the prodigal son). Invite a volunteer in each group, or a leader, to read Luke 15:11–20 or the story, stopping at the point the younger son is feeding the pigs and decides to go home. Ask the children to close the books and not to read any further. Invite the groups to create a skit of what they think could happen next. Encourage them to think creatively and add details and dialogue that may enhance the story.

Have the small groups present their skits. Wonder together:

- ➔ Why did you choose the ending you did?
- ➔ Where did you see knowing and naming of sin or wrongdoing taking place?
- ➔ What was able to happen once it was known and named?



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

-
- Strong magnets, two for each child

CONNECTED



Hand out two magnets to each child. Invite the children to experiment holding the two magnets together as they attract and repel. Explain that the magnets are another way of thinking about sin, or wrongdoing, like the target. Wonder how the magnets may tell us something about what sin is like. Comment, if necessary, that sin, or doing something wrong—like the magnets when they repel—pushes us away from God. We are not connected to God’s way of living, as we are when the magnets attract. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ✿ What things did the younger son do that separated him from God?
- ✿ What are some things that might separate you from God?
- ✿ What might connect us to God?

-
- Worship bulletins with prayer of confession
 - Newsprint and marker

PRAYER OF CONFESSION



Provide worship bulletins for the children. Tell them that the worship bulletin guides people through the worship service. It’s all right if the children have different bulletins. They will find things in common and parts that are different. Invite the children to point out some of the different parts of worship and, if possible, explain just a bit about each one:

- Call to worship: gathering together to worship God
- Hymn: singing together
- Children’s message: talking with children about the Bible story or faith
- Prayer of Confession: telling God of any mistakes or wrongs they have done and asking for God’s forgiveness
- Assurance of Pardon: hearing about God’s great love and forgiveness
- Scripture reading: hearing a passage from the Bible
- Sermon: hearing a pastor talk about the Bible passage and how it applies to our lives
- Benediction: being blessed to go out and serve God

Circle back to the Prayer of Confession. Comment that individually we make mistakes and do wrong, but the prayer often mentions things that we all do as people that may hurt others or God’s creation. Invite the children to read one or two things that are mentioned in the prayer in their worship bulletins.

Brainstorm and create a prayer together. Wonder together what mistakes or wrong we have done this week, when we have hurt another person’s feelings or hurt God’s creation. Write responses on a sheet of newsprint.

Remind the children that the first step of forgiveness is knowing and naming what we have done wrong, so we pray, telling God these things. Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

Dear God, /
We do not always do the best thing or the right thing. /
Sometimes we make mistakes or poor choices, like . . . /
(name items listed by the children, one by one) /

We know you love us no matter what. /
Thank you for always being with us. /
Amen. /

Then assure the children of God’s forgiveness by saying, “The good news is that God forgives us and loves us. Thanks be to God!”



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

HOW TO APOLOGIZE



Read aloud *How to Apologize* by David LaRochelle or show the YouTube video “How to Apologize by David LaRochelle and Mike Wohnoutka” (bit.ly/FMApologize, 5:54). Talk together about times that the children have apologized for something. Wonder what they said and if they named what they had done wrong.

Invite the children to practice apologizing using the scenarios provided below, or some of their own choosing. Form small groups or work together as one group. Remind children to know and name what has been done wrong in the apology.

- Two or three children leave out another child in a game.
- A child breaks something at home and does not tell the truth about it.
- A child pushes other children to be first in line.
- Two children, who are friends, get angry with each other and call each other names.


-
- How to Apologize* by David LaRochelle (Candlewick, 2021) or internet-connected device

FORGIVENESS FINGERS



Give each child a copy of Resource Page 1. Read through what is written on the thumb and fingers of the hand. Invite them to complete the prompts and questions with words or pictures in the space outside the hand. In the center of the palm, have the children draw a heart and write the words “God loves me.” They may decorate the hand as they wish. Tell them that these forgiveness fingers can be a tool for practicing when they need forgiveness. Remind the children that God always offers us love and forgiveness when we do wrong.

-
- Copies of Resource Page 1
 - Crayons, markers, and/or colored pencils

 As an extra activity, invite the children to practice using the forgiveness fingers with a partner or two. Tell them to share a situation, real or made-up, in which they need to name something they have done wrong and ask for forgiveness.




FOLLOWING JESUS

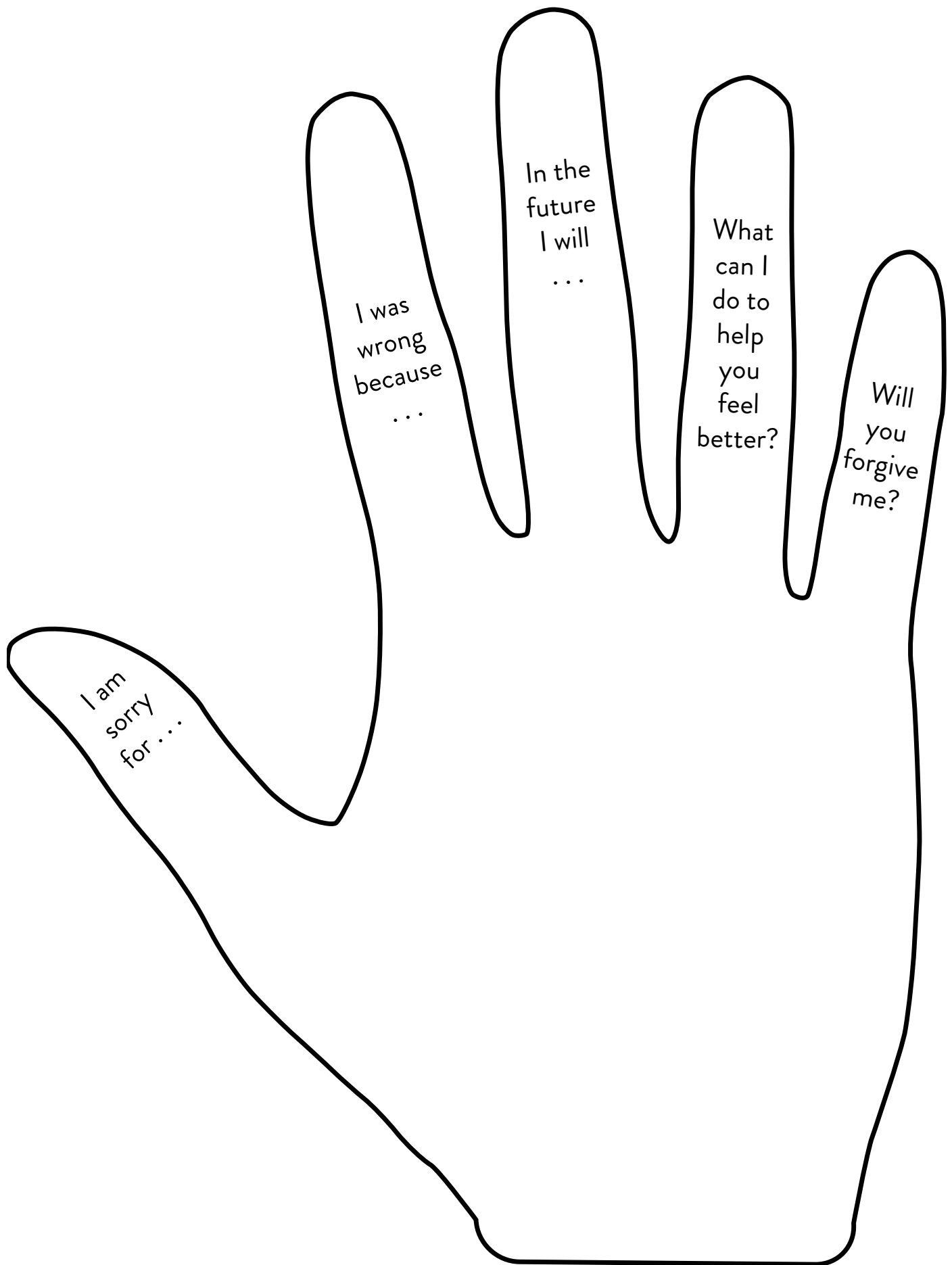
SINGING TOGETHER



Use Resource Page 2 to lead the children in singing a song about the younger son’s story. Invite the children to echo each line as you sing to the tune of “Frère Jacques.”

-
- Resource Page 2
 - Internet-connected device

 Play the YouTube video “Frère Jacques (Instrumental)—Cartoon-Free, Distraction-Free” (bit.ly/FMFresInstrumental, 1:15) if you would like to sing along with music. The video has music for four verses. Play again for remaining verses.



I am
sorry
for....

I was
wrong
because
...

In the
future
I will
...

What
can I
do to
help
you
feel
better?

Will
you
forgive
me?

The Prodigal Song

Sung to the tune: Frère Jacques

“Give me money,” /
said the son. /
“Rather now than later, /
when you’re dead.” /

Hurt Dad’s feelings. /
Dad was sad. /
Younger son ran away, /
sad, sad day. /

Son had parties, /
lots of cash. /
Then the money was spent. /
No more fun. /

Feeding piggies /
all day long. /
Hungry in his belly, /
none for him. /

He was so wrong. /
Hurt his dad. /
He asks for forgiveness, /
and goes home. /

God forgives him. /
Will his dad? /
Joyful celebration! /
Forgiveness! /

I make mistakes, /
and do wrong. /
I ask for forgiveness. /
God forgives. /



