



Name Sin

LUKE 15:11-32



GOAL

Youth are encouraged to be honest about their brokenness and wrongdoing, and they discover that naming sin is the first step in experiencing or giving forgiveness.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- AT** Abstract Thinking
- C** Conversation
- CT** Concrete Thinking
- D** Drama
- G** Game
- M** Music
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Holy God, I confess that I am broken. Allow me to connect with the young people in my brokenness and in the forgiveness that follows. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Young people find courage to be honest with themselves and with God about their stories of brokenness and sin. Part of a relationship with God is being fully known, meaning that we recognize that God's love for us is steady regardless of how big our mistakes may be or how much we mess up. Youth are invited to explore their feelings about being broken, to name the ways that they are broken, to consider the ways they have been unkind to others. In doing this, they begin the process of forgiveness and reconciliation.

THE BIBLE STORY

Luke 15:11-32 contains Jesus' parable of the "Prodigal Son." In the parable, the son asks his father for an advance on his inheritance. It is an extravagant request, which he then squanders on wasteful living. Verse 17 displays a critical turn in the story when the son "came to himself." The son admits his own shortcomings and recognizes his need for forgiveness. Readers are reminded that the son is not the only extravagant character. The father is also extreme in his love and forgiveness for the son. This radical sharing of resources by the father is essential for forgiveness. When we come to ourselves and name our shortcomings, we recognize how amazing the gift of receiving forgiveness can be.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Many young people have memories of a parent or teacher telling them to say "I'm sorry" to a friend or a sibling, but few have the experience of naming what they are sorry for doing. This act of apologizing is often used as a punitive action for wrongdoing rather than depicted as the first step in a process of forgiveness. Further, youth tend to focus on the wrongdoing of others rather than their own brokenness. As they explore what it means to "come to yourself," as the prodigal son did, they discover that honest recognition and confession are acts of liberation and reconciliation.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- "Forgiving" (p. 6) and "Sin as Missing the Mark" (p. 6): Prepare newspaper with the words to the responsive litany. Keep for use in all sessions.
- "A Brief Statement of Faith" (p. 8): Locate the statement at [bit.ly /FMBriefStatement](https://bit.ly/FMBriefStatement) and print one copy for each participant.
- "Improv" (p. 9): Copy and cut apart improv statements from Resource Page 3.

GETTING STARTED

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- ☐ Toy bow-and-arrow sets and targets or soft ball and hoop

MISSING THE MARK G AM

Welcome youth as they arrive and invite them to use the toy bow-and-arrow to hit a target or toss the ball through the hoop. They may make multiple attempts. Begin with the target set close and gradually move it farther away, increasing the challenge. If your group enjoys competition, form teams and keep score. Gather the group and discuss:

- ➔ How difficult was it to hit the target?
- ➔ When you “missed the mark,” was it due to aim, skill, intention, or some other reason?

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

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- ☐ Prepared newsprint

FORGIVING QC

Display prepared newsprint with the responsive litany and invite the participants to join you in prayer.

Gracious God, we believe you forgive all sin.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Forgive the many 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.

We believe in the forgiveness of sin. Thanks be to God.

-  Keep newsprint for use in all future sessions.

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- ☐ Prepared newsprint

-  *Sin* is from the Greek word *hamartia*, an archery term for “missing the mark.”

SIN AS MISSING THE MARK C

Tell youth that this session focuses on sin and forgiveness. Invite each person to say one word that comes to mind when they hear the word *sin*. Read aloud the definition of *sin* in the sidebar to the youth. Ask:

- ➔ In what ways is “sinning” like missing a mark or target?
- ➔ As in archery, when a person sins, is it due to intention, mistake, omission, or some other reason?
- ➔ How does understanding sin as “missing the mark” affect your understanding of forgiveness?

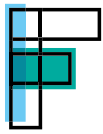
Explain that when we acknowledge that all people “miss the mark,” it becomes easier to name our sins and begin to work toward reconciliation.

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- ☐ Resource Page 1

STANDING UP AM C

Have participants sit in a circle. Read aloud the “Standing Up” statements on Resource Page 1. If a statement is true for a youth, have them stand up or raise their hand. Pose the accompanying question(s) and encourage conversation. Have youth sit down or lower their hands between statements. Always give youth an option to pass on an activity, depending on their comfort level.

Explain that when we practice forgiveness, we focus on mending and strengthening relationships. To begin to forgive, we acknowledge where relationships have been hurt or broken.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

DRAWING THE STORY

A C

Distribute paper and colored pencils or markers. Have youth work alone or in pairs. Assign each a part of the Prodigal Son story listed in “Drawing the Story” on Resource Page 2. Have youth illustrate their assigned verses then explain their drawings in numbered order to tell the complete Bible story.

- Bibles
- 11" x 14" inch paper
- Colored pencils or markers
- Wall-safe tape
- Copies of Resource Page 2

NAMING FEELINGS

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Invite four volunteers to read the parts of narrator, father, older son, and younger son in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32). Have them read aloud while other youth follow in their Bibles.

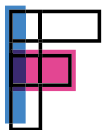
Form three groups and give each group a piece of paper and pen. Assign one of the characters to each group (*father, older son, younger son*). Have each group re-read Luke 15:11–32, pausing after each verse and talking about what their assigned character may be feeling at that point in the story. Groups record their feelings on paper using this pattern: “Following verse ____, I am feeling _____ because _____.” (Groups may not have a statement for each verse.)

- Bibles
- Paper and pens

Look over the range of feelings that emerge from the story, noting feelings named most often. Discuss whether youth think the character’s feelings are valid.

Gather the group and discuss:

- ➔ Which characters in the story felt hurt?
- ➔ In your life, how easy or difficult is it to name why you feel hurt?
- ➔ How easy or hard is it to name the ways that you hurt others?
- ➔ How are relationships affected by naming the ways we hurt others and how we’ve been hurt?



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

FINDING FORGIVENESS

X T

Show the video clip “Forgiveness: Shrek and Donkey” (bit.ly/FMShrek, 2:17). Discuss:

- ➔ Why does Shrek want Donkey to back off? When do we want others to back off?
- ➔ Can you think of encounters in which others are focused solely on themselves? Are there times in your life when it’s “me, me, me”? What do we miss when we focus only on ourselves?
- ➔ What effect does it have on Shrek when Donkey names why he is upset?
- ➔ Why does Donkey think forgiveness is important?
- ➔ How does the relationship change when Shrek genuinely apologizes to Donkey?

- Internet-connected device



If participants (or you) are unfamiliar with the movie *Shrek*, it will be helpful to find and give some background about the film before playing the video clip.

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- Different-colored pencils
 - Copies of “A Brief Statement of Faith”

A BRIEF STATEMENT OF FAITH



Distribute copies of “A Brief Statement of Faith” and two different-colored pencils to each participant. As you read the statement aloud, have youth use one color to underline the statements that name a wrongdoing. They should use another color to underline statements that bring about reconciliation or correction of a wrongdoing. As you read, pause at the end of each line to for youth to underline.

Invite youth to identify ways that the church has sinned in the past (or the present). Have youth mark with a star statements of reconciliation for the identified sins. Discuss participants’ reactions to the statement.

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- Copies of worship bulletins that include a prayer of confession

CALLS TO CONFESSION



Distribute copies of a worship bulletin that has a printed Prayer of Confession section. Ideally it will have three parts of confession included—Call to Confession, Prayer of Confession, Assurance of Pardon/Forgiveness. Tell youth that one way we name sin is by praying a prayer of confession during worship. Explain that, before praying as a group, worship leaders remind worshippers what we believe about confession and God’s role in it.

If the Call to Confession is printed in your bulletin, read it aloud. If the Call to Confession is not written out, read one of these Scripture verses, which are often used to remind people of God’s love:

- “God proves [God’s] love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)
- “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, [God] who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8–9)
- “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; yet they are now justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:23–24)

Invite youth to react to the prayer. Notice that all Calls to Confession include God’s promise of forgiveness and love. Before we even open our mouths to name our sin and brokenness, we are assured of God’s grace, mercy, and forgiveness.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

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- Copies of worship bulletins that include a prayer of confession
 - Pens
 - Internet-connected device


PRAYER OF CONFESSION



Distribute copies of a worship bulletin. Identify the Prayer of Confession section in the bulletin. Read the prayer together. Invite youth to call out the different confessions of brokenness, sin, and missing the mark stated in the prayer. Discuss together the value of naming individual sins and community or corporate sins.

Show the video, “TobyMac—I’m Sorry (a Lament) (Lyric Video)” (bit.ly/FMImSorry, 4:23).

Invite youth to call out the different confessions of brokenness, sin, and missing the mark stated in the song. Discuss whether this song is a prayer of confession.

 For visual learners, it may be helpful to show the music video for this song or obtain and provide a copy of the lyrics.

Form groups of three or four youth. Encourage each group to write lyrics that emphasize situations and circumstances of their lives and communities that require forgiveness. Invite the groups to share their lyrics with the whole group. Discuss:

- ➔ How does being honest in prayer affect your relationship with God? With others? With one another?

IMPROV

D X

Resource Page 3 cut into strips

Use the improv lines on Resource Page 3 or create lines that are more appropriate for your particular group.

Tell youth that, in an improv game, there are no winners or losers. The goal is to try something new and to react to the lines that your partner makes up. Encourage participants to think about how they may make or react to a genuine apology that clearly articulates some wrongdoing.

Form pairs. Give each person a strip of paper with one of the improv statements. Tell them not to look at their statement in advance. The improv begins with one person reading their statement. Participants then improvise a realistic dialogue that may follow. After a few exchanges, the second person reads their statement. Again, realistic dialogue follows.

Gather the group and discuss:

- ➔ How does it feel to improvise a confession? What difference does your confession make in the relationship with your partner?
- ➔ How does it feel to receive a person's "I'm sorry"? What difference does an "I'm sorry" make in the relationship with your partner?
- ➔ How can improvising saying "I'm sorry" help you confess or apologize?



Depending on how close your group is to one another, this game can be played by all pairs at the same time or by one pair at a time with others watching.



FOLLOWING JESUS

LORD, HAVE MERCY

M

Internet-connected device

Remind youth that all people sin. All people miss the mark. These actions and thoughts separate us from God and from one another. Our wrongs cause pain for us and for those around us. The first step in moving toward forgiveness is naming the sin, saying, "I'm sorry."

The prodigal child "came to himself" while far from home, and vowed to make his way back, naming himself as a sinner in front of his father. We also must name our own sinfulness and wrongdoing. In the next session, we will reflect on the second step on the journey of forgiveness, which is to recall the way each of us has been forgiven by the grace of our loving God.

An ancient Greek prayer, *Kyrie Eleison*, is sometimes sung during worship after a confession of sin. It is sung in Greek, English, or other languages. Play the video "Kyrie Eleison (Audrey Snyder)" (bit.ly/FMKyrieEleison, 2:10). Encourage youth to join the singing.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

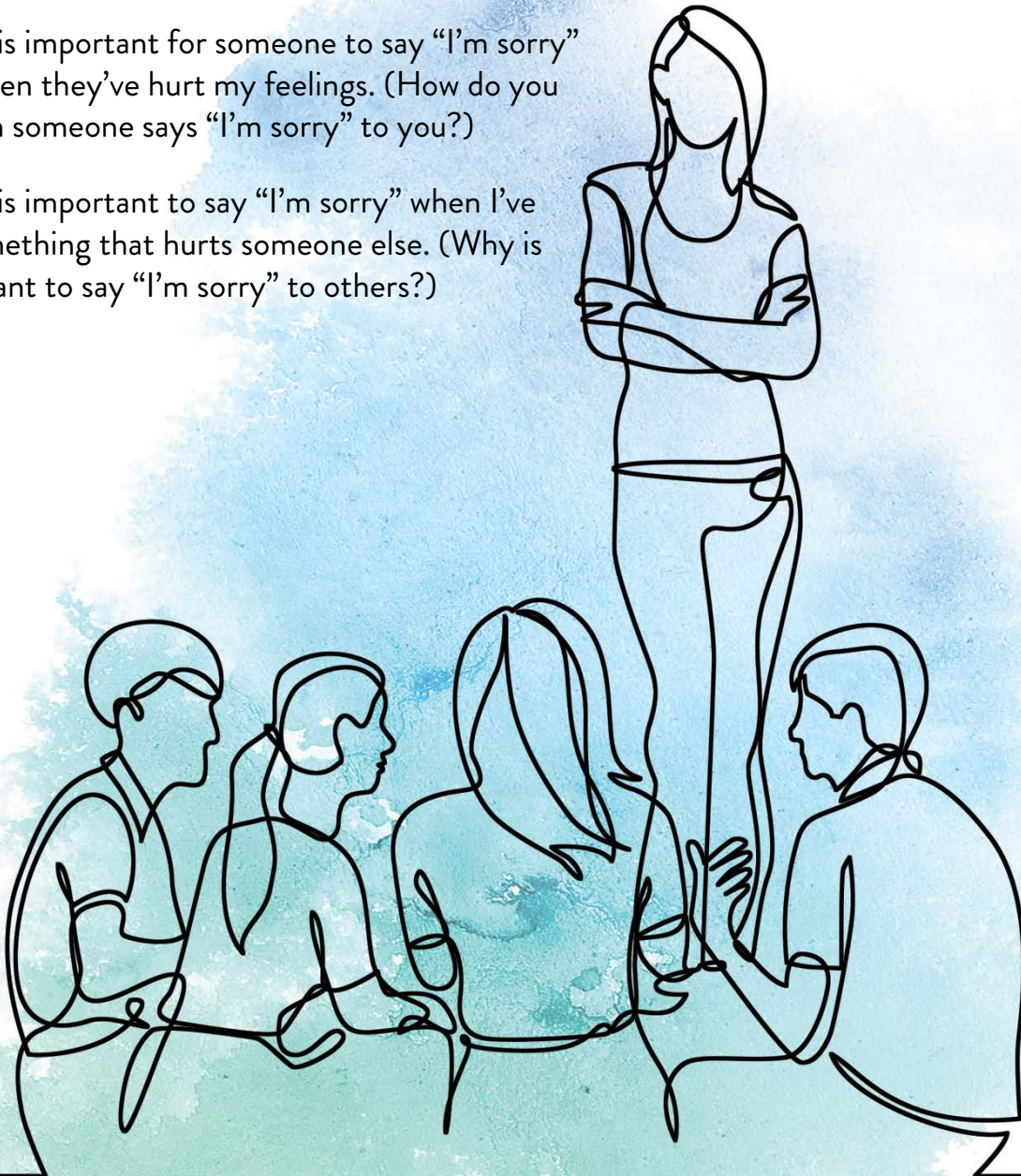
Send the youth out with these words: You are forgiven by God. And by God's grace, you can forgive others. Alleluia! Amen!

Standing Up

Read aloud the statements below. If a statement is true for a youth, they stand up or raise a hand. Ask the accompanying question(s) and encourage conversation. Youth sit down or lower hands between each statement.

Always give young people an option to pass on an activity, depending on their comfort level.

- ➔ When I was younger, I did something that made my sibling(s) angry. (What did you do?)
- ➔ When I was younger, someone in my family did something that made me angry. (What did they do?)
- ➔ In my past, I've hurt a friend's feelings. (What did you do?)
- ➔ When I was younger, I had a parent/teacher/coach who made me say "I'm sorry" to someone else. (How did that feel? Why do you think adults make kids say "I'm sorry?")
- ➔ I think it is important for someone to say "I'm sorry" to me when they've hurt my feelings. (How do you feel when someone says "I'm sorry" to you?)
- ➔ I think it is important to say "I'm sorry" when I've done something that hurts someone else. (Why is it important to say "I'm sorry" to others?)



Drawing the Story

Assign each part of the Prodigal Son story to individuals or pairs. The youth will illustrate their assigned verses then explain their drawings in numbered order to tell the complete Bible story.

Luke 15:11–12

(Jesus begins to tell the parable as the younger son asks his father for his part of inheritance.)

Luke 15:13–14

(Younger son goes to another country, squanders everything. A famine comes.)

Luke 15:15–17

(Younger son hires himself out, works feeding pigs. He comes to his senses.)

Luke 15:18–19

(Younger son decides to return home and confess his sin to his father.)

Luke 15:20–21

(Younger son heads home. Father sees him and runs to him. Son confesses.)

Luke 15:21–24

(Younger son confesses; father celebrates.)

Luke 15:25–27

(Older son comes in from field, sees celebration, is told of brother's return.)

Luke 15:28–30

(Older brother angry. Father pleads with him. He tells father why he's angry.)

Luke 15:31–32

(Father assures older son and explains why they are celebrating.)

After reviewing the story through the drawings, ask:

- ➔ Who made choices in this story that hurt others?
- ➔ How did those who hurt others apologize?
- ➔ What does it mean for the younger son to “come to himself”? What do you think he said to himself?
- ➔ When have you had a time in your life when you “came to yourself”?
- ➔ What changed in your life when you “came to yourself”?

The lines below are suggestions. Some are intentionally silly to make the game less awkward for some. Feel free to create your own that are more appropriate for your particular group.

I'm sorry I ate the rest of your potato chips.

I'm sorry I put a picture of you on Insta that you didn't like.

I'm sorry I didn't text you back.

I'm sorry I didn't return your favorite pen.

I'm sorry I said your sister looked like a giraffe.

I'm sorry I called you an ogre.

I'm sorry I spoiled the ending of the movie for you.

I'm sorry I didn't invite you over to my house.

I'm sorry I was jealous of your math grade.

I'm sorry I get so competitive sometimes.

I'm sorry I didn't save you a seat.

I'm sorry I left you alone at the ballgame.

