

2

Say, “I’m Sorry”

PSALM 119:105; LUKE 15:11–32



GOAL

By hearing the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11–32, children are introduced to a model of confession and learn to say words of apology when they see they have done something wrong.

- 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, help me model confession, recognizing my mistakes and apologizing for them. Amen.

THIS SESSION

When we have done something wrong, first we need to recognize it as wrong. Once we have been able to acknowledge our mistake, wrongdoing, or what the Bible calls *sin*, we need to offer words of apology, to God and to others. Saying a heartfelt “I’m sorry” is a powerful statement. It shows that one sees the wrongdoing, takes responsibility, and regrets it. This is an important step for young children to learn at this stage of life.

THE BIBLE STORY

In Luke 15:11–32, Jesus tells a story about a son who turns away from his father, leaving his house and making all sorts of mistakes. He comes to a point where he has to admit to himself, and then his father, what he has done. The son returns home and says words of apology.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Using the image of a path, the children are learning to follow God’s path—ways of living by loving God and others—recognizing when they stray from that path and returning to the path. They are practicing the steps of confession: after seeing that they have done something wrong, they say words of apology with a sincere heart.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Centers” (p. 20): Set up the following centers:
 - Home center with kitchen and home items
 - Building center with blocks or other building materials
 - Puzzle center with simple wooden puzzles
- “Walking God’s Path” (p. 20): Using Resource Page 1 from session 1 (p. 13), practice the motions for the opening ritual used in each session of this unit. Also: Use the path created in session 1 or set up a path in your room that you can walk along with the children. This could be walking between a row of chairs; on a sheet, a blanket, or papers on the floor; or along a piece of tape on the floor.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Working on Apologies” (p. 22): Obtain *Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse* by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow Books, 2006) or use the YouTube video “Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse” (bit.ly/FMLillysPurse, 8:36).



GETTING STARTED

- Home center
- Building center
- Puzzle center

CENTERS

AM D

As the children enter, greet them by name and welcome them into the space. Invite them to play in the centers you have set up. As the children play, circulate among the centers and engage them in conversation about what they are doing. Wonder how they might feel if someone was unkind, knocked down their building, or took the puzzle they were working on. Listen to and empathize with their feelings. Comment that today you are going to talk about *apologizing*, or saying “I’m sorry,” and how that can help hurt feelings.

- Bible
- Prepared path
- Resource Page 1 from session 1 (p. 13)

WALKING GOD’S PATH

AM X

Gather by the path you have set up in your space. Read Psalm 119:105. Tell the children that loving God and loving others is like walking on God’s path. Invite the children to follow you as you walk slowly along the path. Explain that, when we do something we know we shouldn’t do, that is like stumbling along the path, getting stuck in the mud, or turning off God’s path. (*Stop and move off the path.*) Tell the children that to find our way back to God’s path is to admit what we’ve done wrong. (*Brush yourself off and move back onto the path.*)

Using Resource Page 1 from session 1, invite the children to repeat after you and follow your motions.



Keep the path and Resource Page 1 from session 1 for sessions 3 and 4.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Crayons and/or markers
- Copies of Resource Page 1

MAKING MISTAKES

C

Hand out copies of Resource Page 1 and invite the children to color the pictures. Encourage the children to talk about what they see has happened in each picture. Wonder what the children in the pictures might do or say next.

Talk about apologizing, or saying “I’m sorry.” Wonder together how it feels when you’ve done something wrong and need to apologize and how it feels when someone apologizes to you.



Young children see and experience the world only from their perspective. Helping them identify their feelings when someone wrongs them will help them understand how another person might feel when they do something wrong.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

I'M SORRY

D C

- Resource Page 2
- Biblical costumes (optional)

Tell the children that sometimes it's easy to know when we've done something wrong. There are rules—God's rules, rules in our society, and even family rules—and we know when we break them. Wonder together what might be some rules that people break. Suggest that there are other times we don't see that we have turned away from God or hurt another person's feelings.

Tell the children that there is a story in the Bible about a parent who had two children. In this story, it is a father and two sons. Invite the children to listen to what the younger son does and how he confesses, how he sees he has done something wrong and then says something to his father. Read the Bible story based on Luke 15:11–24 on Resource Page 2. Wonder together using the following questions:

- What does the younger son do at first? Do you think he knows he is making a mistake or hurting his father's feelings at the beginning?
- What does the younger son see that he has done later?
- What does the younger son decide to do?
- What does the younger son say to his father?
- What does his father say or do?

Tell the children that they each will get a turn to pretend they are the son coming home and say something to their father. Have the person playing the father stand on one side of the room and tell them to run toward the child playing the son, each time with excitement and exclamation. Have the children line up on the other side of the room. Give each child a turn to walk toward the father, be greeted, and say words of apology. Be sure and have the person playing the father tell each child how grateful they are for them and their apology. After all of the children have had a turn, talk together about the experience:

- How did you feel to be the son saying that you are sorry? Was it hard or easy? Why?
- Why do you think it was important for the son to say he was sorry to his father?
- How did you feel when you apologized and you were told how much you and your apology were appreciated?

Comment that, when we say we're sorry or confess when we have done something wrong, it helps to fix the broken relationship between us and another person and between us and God.



If you have a helper or an older youth assisting, invite them to play the father. Consider using biblical costumes to help the children get into character.



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

- ☐ *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow Books, 2006) or internet-connected device

WORKING ON APOLOGIES

C T

Read *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* by Kevin Henkes or show the YouTube video "Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse" (bit.ly/FMLillysPurse, 8:36). In the story, Lilly is upset that her favorite teacher has taken away her purse because she didn't listen, and it has hurt her relationship with her teacher. Lilly has to learn how to apologize to make things better. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ➔ Why was it important for Lilly to listen to her teacher's instructions?
- ➔ Why was it important for Lilly to apologize to her teacher?
- ➔ How did the people around Lilly help her realize she should apologize?
- ➔ How do people you love help you know when you have made a mistake and should apologize?

- ☐ Pictures cut apart from Resource Page 3

EVERYONE APOLOGIZES

D

Ask the children who they think makes mistakes or does something wrong: Children? Parents? Brothers and sisters? Teachers? Sunday school leaders? Pastors? Tell the children that everyone makes mistakes or does something wrong at times. Explain that part of growing up is seeing what you did wrong and saying you are sorry. Comment that it takes practice because it's hard for everyone, sometimes, to say you are sorry.

Form groups of two or three children and invite the groups to take turns acting out what might have happened in one of the pictures from Resource Page 3, saying sorry for what was done. In the picture with the teacher and girl at her desk, children might think that the girl made a mistake. Let the children act that scene out. Then ask them to imagine that the teacher made a mistake and the girl is pointing it out to her. Wonder how that scene might be. Do the same with the girl sitting on the bed. Either person could be making an apology for doing something wrong. Let the children imagine each scenario.



Young children see and experience the world only from their perspective. Helping them identify their feelings when someone wrongs them will help them understand how another person might feel when they do something wrong.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

FOUR STEPS

AM

Tell the children that there are four steps to take when they have made a mistake or done something wrong. Use the following directions, inviting the children to repeat your words and motions:

- The first step is SEE, (*hold up the pointer finger*) / seeing I did something wrong. (*point finger toward eye*) /
- The second step is SAY, (*hold up 2 fingers*) / saying, “I’m sorry” to another person or God. (*move fingers from mouth outward*) /
- The third step is FEEL, (*hold up 3 fingers*) / feeling sorry and trying my best to do better. (*place 3 fingers over heart*) /
- The fourth step is FIX, (*hold up 4 fingers*) / doing what I can to fix what is hurt or broken. (*lace fingers on both hands together*) /



This activity will be repeated in each session of this unit because it builds on the steps involved in confession, just the way the sessions do. Repetition is an important way that young children learn.

Encourage the children to use the four steps when they need to confess a mistake or something they have done wrong. Suggest that they share the four steps with family members.

SAYING “I’M SORRY”

A C

Provide the children with crayons or colored pencils and copies of Resource Page 4. Read the panels with the children. As the children color, use the time to reflect further on how each child can practice admitting a mistake, admit doing something wrong, and saying, “I’m sorry” at home or with friends. Encourage the children to share their picture with their family.

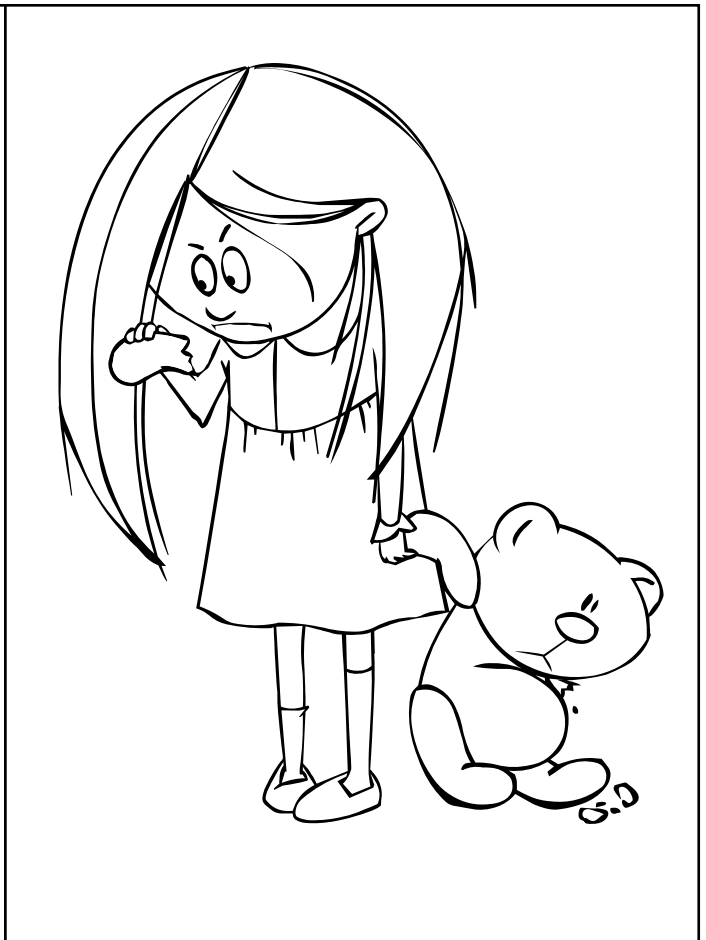
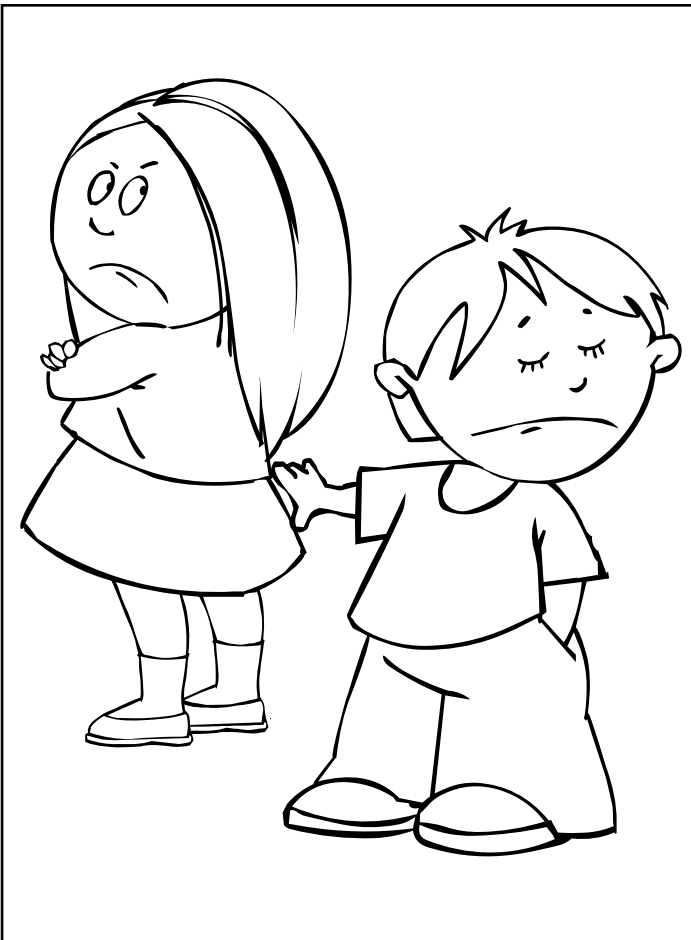
- Copies of Resource Page 4
- Crayons or colored pencils

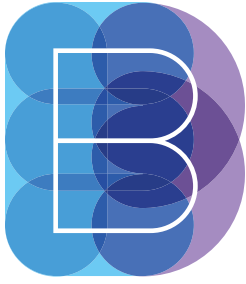


FOLLOWING JESUS

Gather the children in a circle. Pray the following prayer, inviting the children to repeat after you:

- Dear God, /
- we want to love you and love others, /
- but sometimes we make mistakes /
- or do something wrong. /
- Help us to confess, saying, “I’m sorry” /
- to you and to others. /
- Thank you for loving us always! /
- Amen. /





BIBLE STORY

BASED ON LUKE 15:11-24

Once Jesus told a story about a man who had two sons. He had saved up some money so that his farm could go to his two sons when he died. One day, his younger son came to his father and asked for all of the money he would get when his father was dead. Ouch! That had to hurt the father's feelings. The father gave his son the money, and the son left home. He went far away.

He played and partied and had a good time spending all of his money. When he ran out of money, all of his friends left him. The only job he could get was feeding pigs. The only place to stay was in the barn with the pigs. He was hungry and tired and lonely. He realized that he had a pretty good life when he lived at home. He had a house to live in, food to eat, a family that cared for him, and a father who loved him so much. The younger son thought to himself, "I need to go home and apologize. I need to tell my father that I was wrong and that I know that I hurt his feelings when I took his money and left home. Maybe he will let me work for him."

The younger son headed home. When he was still a long way away, his father saw him. The father jumped up and ran to his son. He hugged him even before his son could say a word. Then the son said, "Father, I was wrong. I asked for your money when it wasn't mine to have yet, and I hurt you when I did that and left. I'm sorry." The father was not angry. Instead, he called everyone together and said that they would have a big party because his son had come back home.

