



GOAL

Through the story of Nathan pointing out David's sin to him, youth name personal and social types of sin that must be seen in order to be confessed, and consider ways to open themselves to see sin in their own lives.

- 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

Loving God, help me to lead this session with calm, peace, and openness. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Before we can make a confession, we have to realize there is something to confess! We must see sin in order to admit to it. Though we are often able to see the wrongs of others, we can be surprisingly blind to our own failings. We may have an “Aha!” moment all on our own, but it may take someone else to show us the error of our ways. Either way, our first emotion is usually embarrassment or shame to realize we’ve done something harmful. It threatens our self-image of being a good person. A common first reaction is to shut this bad feeling down and deny what we did. It takes courage and maturity to fight that urge, for who knows where admitting wrong might lead? But we can trust in God’s love for us and let it help us overcome our fear of being in the wrong, of missing the mark.

THE BIBLE STORY

Second Samuel 11–12 describes the story of David’s encounter with Bathsheba, along with David’s manipulation of his faithful warrior, Uriah, as David attempts to cover up his violation of Uriah’s wife. David is unable to see how his actions make for broken relationship with Bathsheba, Uriah, and God until Nathan tells him a parable that clearly parallels David’s greed and misuse of power. Sometimes it takes someone else to wake us up to our sins.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth will be encouraged to learn that even one of the biggest heroes in the Bible, King David, committed sin. If someone that great is flawed, well, maybe they can admit to being a little flawed themselves. Knowing that God sees everything and is always ready to hear our confession and forgive us may provide a sense of security and openness to identify sins all around us. If your group is passionate about an issue like climate change or anti-racism, consider making that a theme of all four sessions.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Naming Sin and God’s Desires” (p. 6): Prepare the three newsprint sheets and hang them on the wall.
- “Close in Prayer” (p. 9): Write the words of Psalm 51:10–12 on a sheet of newsprint and post it on the wall.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Review Infographic” (p. 7): Obtain the *Confess* infographic poster (bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters, Year 1 Set).

GETTING STARTED

- Prepared newsprint
- Markers

NAMING SIN AND GOD’S DESIRES

AT CT C

Before youth arrive, post three sheets of newsprint side by side on the wall. Leave the middle one blank. You will use it later in the session. Title the sheet on the left “Naming Sin” and write “attitudes, personal actions, social injustices” directly under the title. In a different color marker, write the examples of “gossip” and “global warming” somewhere on the newsprint sheet. Title the sheet on the right “What God Desires” and write “attitudes, personal actions, social justice” directly under the title.

Welcome youth as they arrive and invite them to write on the left and right pieces of newsprint on the wall but not on the middle one. They can write examples of personal and social sins on the left sheet and examples of personal and social attitudes and actions God desires on the right sheet.

After those who wish to have written something have done so, gather as a group and invite participants to say their name and tell one thing written on one of the sheets that they care deeply about.

Explain that, throughout this unit, we will be talking about the Christian practice of confessing our personal and social sins. And we’ll talk about how to deal with them. Pray this prayer or one of your choosing:

God, we are grateful for your presence with this group here today. Help us to approach this gathering with open hearts and minds. Move us toward a place of deeper understanding. Creator God, may we feel your Spirit comforting us as we talk about places we have messed up. Amen.

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Newsprint posted
- Marker

REVIEWING THE TWO SHEETS

AT CT C

Spend some time reviewing and affirming what youth wrote on the two sheets. Welcome any additions to the lists and tell youth they may add to these during the next few sessions.

Write the four aspects to be covered in this unit in big letters on the middle sheet: See Sin, Confess, Repent, Repair. Provide a simple example of a sin, such as a friend steals your bicycle. How do the four actions explain what needs to happen for your relationship to be restored? See the answer in the sidebar. Spend a few minutes imagining what these four actions would look like with a few of the things mentioned on the left sheet. End by saying that, in this session, you are talking about the importance of seeing sin, as we cannot confess sin if we don’t see it.

See sin—friend admits to themselves they stole
Confess—friend tells you they stole your bike
Repent—friend promises never to do it again
Repair—friend returns your bike

Choose one or both options.

REVIEW INFOGRAPHIC

Gather around the *Confess* infographic poster and help youth get acquainted with it. Explain that you will use it to aid in discussing the current session topic as well as review past session discussions and how they relate to the infographic. Look at the top section in particular and comment on the definition of *sin* as anything and everything counter to the will of God.

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Confess infographic poster

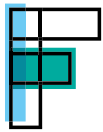
IS THIS A SIN?

See if your group can come up with a brief definition of *sin*. Write it under “See Sin” on the middle piece of newsprint. Some examples might be:

- Sin is anything and everything counter to the will of God.
- Sin is when we don’t do what we know is right or we do what we know is wrong.
- Sin = evil thoughts, words, or acts.

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Tell the group you are going to read off some thoughts, words, and actions and they can raise a hand to the extent they think it is sinful: never a sin (hand lowered); always a sin (hand raised high). Some examples are: lying about doing your homework, gossiping about a friend, robbing a bank, calling someone a derogatory name, wasting gasoline on unnecessary travel.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

READER THEATER

Tell the group that, although David was one of the most important people in ancient Israel, even he sinned and had to see his sin. Distribute copies of Resource Page 1 and ask for volunteers to read the different parts. Depending on the energy level of your group, encourage them to stand up and act it out.

D C

Copies of Resource Page 1

After the reading, discuss these questions:

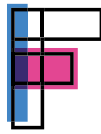
- ➔ Why couldn’t David see his sin before Nathan pointed it out to him?
- ➔ Why do you think the Bible includes the stories of flawed and sinful people like David, who are also great servants of God?

READ AND RETELL DAVID AND NATHAN STORY

Form two groups of two to five people. Have each group read the story of David and Nathan (2 Samuel 11:1–12:10). It is lengthy. You may choose to summarize chapter 11 and have them read chapter 12:1–10. Tell one group to prepare to retell the story from David’s point of view and the other group to retell the story from Nathan’s point of view. Depending on your group, you may wish to have a group tell the story from Bathsheba’s point of view.

C

Bibles



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

REVIEW NEWSPRINT

C

Call attention to the three sheets of newsprint on the wall. Discuss what needs to happen for people to see sins on the left sheet.

☐ Copies of Resource Page 2

A BRIEF STATEMENT OF FAITH EXCERPT

C AT

Distribute copies of Resource Page 2 and invite a volunteer to read it aloud. Discuss the questions at the end.

DISCUSS SIN IN PAIRS

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Form pairs or small groups of three youth. Invite them to tell ways they most like others to point out their mistakes to them. Encourage them to give an example of that. Then invite them to give an example of someone who saw sin and changed. This can be a movie character or real person, or even themselves.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.



Examen is a spiritual practice from the Jesuit tradition, a spiritual exercise from St. Ignatius. It is generally a daily practice but can work in groups as well.

EXAMEN

QC

Invite youth to get comfortable, to close their eyes and say a brief word of gratitude for the day in silence. Then ask them these two questions to consider with their eyes still closed. Allow a period of time between them.

- Where did you feel closest to God this week?
- Where did you feel the farthest away from God?

Close with a brief prayer:

God, we are grateful for this space to examine where we feel connected to you in our lives and where we are distant. Comfort and sustain us as we seek to follow you. Amen.

If there is time, debrief the activity by asking how they experienced it and what was comfortable and uncomfortable about it.

CONSIDER PARTICIPATION IN SIN

QC

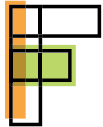
Give each participant a piece of paper and a pen and invite them to get comfortable. Assure them no one will see what they write, and you or they can tear up the papers when they are finished.

Ask them to write down where they are aware that they sin in their life and their world around them. They can write what is on the newsprint, but encourage them to think about where they see sin in their own life as well. Responses can be personal but also social.

Lead youth in prayer:

Holy God, you love us completely and as we are. We acknowledge we fall short of loving you and loving one another. We specifically are aware today of these sins we wrote. (*Allow a brief time of silence.*) Work through us to help us do better and change this world. Amen.

Invite participants to either take their paper with them or cut it up and discard it in a way they feel assured no one will read what they wrote.



FOLLOWING JESUS

COMMIT TO THE PRACTICE

C

Remind youth that, while seeing sin is something we need to do all our lives in order to change, it does not mean we have to constantly think of negative things. Discuss as a group ways during the coming week they can notice sin in their lives and in society.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

QC

Thank youth for participating and wish them well. Read the psalm verses in unison.

Save the sheets of newsprint to post at the beginning of each session.

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- Paper
 - Pens
 - Scissors

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- Posted newsprint with Psalm 51:10–12

Nathan Shows David His Sin (2 Samuel 11–12)

Characters

Citizen 1 David
Citizen 2 Nathan

Conversation Between Two Citizens

Citizen 1: Are you ready for some dirt on King David?
Citizen 2: Who? Our perfect King David who killed Goliath and saved all Israel?
Citizen 1: Yes, that David. You won't believe this. So, you know that his current wife, Bathsheba, was married to King David's best warrior, Uriah, right?
Citizen 2: Yeah, the poor guy who died in battle protecting the king.
Citizen 1: Well, turns out David set Uriah up to die in battle because David wanted to marry Bathsheba.
Citizen 2: No way.
Citizen 1: Yes, way.
Citizen 2: What happened next?
Citizen 1: Well, Bathsheba was very sad, of course. David just went on with his business and acted like nothing had happened, like he hadn't done anything wrong. But then his prophet Nathan came and pointed out David's sin to him. Here's how it went . . .

Conversation Between David and Nathan

David: Good morning, Nathan. How are you?
Nathan: Good morning, Your Highness. I am fine, and you?
David: OK, thanks.
Nathan: I need to tell you something. There were these two men in a city, one rich and one poor. The rich guy has a huge herd of animals, and all the poor guy has is one little lamb he loves dearly and treats as a pet.
David: That's sweet.
Nathan: Well, a traveler landed at the rich guy's house, and he didn't want to kill any of his animals to feed the guy, so he took the poor guy's one lamb and killed and served it.
David: What? Are you kidding? That rich man should be put to death for that!
Nathan: You are the man, King David! God told me to tell you that you have been given so much wealth and power, just like the landowner in that story. But you went and took the life of your great warrior, Uriah, so that you could have his wife as your own.
David: Oh my, now I see my sin!

Seeing Sin in “A Brief Statement of Faith”

Most Christian churches have statements that tell what they believe, often called confessions. In “A Brief Statement of Faith—Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),” a section mentions seeing sin.

In sovereign love God created the world good
and makes everyone equally in God’s image,
male and female, of every race and people,
to live as one community.
But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.
Ignoring God’s commandments.
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,
accept lies as truth,
exploit neighbor and nature,
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.
We deserve God’s condemnation.
Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.¹

- ➔ How do those who read this statement admit to seeing their sin?

- ➔ How do they believe God reacts to their sin?

- ➔ Do we need to add any of these sins to our newsprint sheet? Which ones?

1. *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part I, Book of Confessions* (Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly, 2016), §11.3, p. 311. Also see <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/brief-statement-of-faith/>.

