

3

We're All in This Together

MICAH 6:6-8



GOAL

By exploring the notion of corporate sin, children consider ways to right systemic wrongs—and take action!

- 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

Righteous and loving God, be with me as I guide our children through complex questions. Fill me with your wisdom so your children may be filled with your thirst for justice. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Sin isn't just an individual occurrence. We all participate in systems that are sinful, systems that perpetuate evils such as racism, classism, poverty, and inequality. Even when we don't consciously *choose* to cause harm to others or the earth, we do so, sometimes even without our awareness. And since sin isn't always individual, neither is repentance. Today's session considers instances of collective, or corporate, sin and ways for collective repentance.

THE BIBLE STORY

The prophets of the Hebrew Bible spoke on behalf of God, delivering God's message to God's people. It wasn't always good news. Usually, it involved telling those in power that they needed to treat other people better. The prophets were sometimes concerned with individual behavior, but more often, they spoke out against society's ills. Into this context, Micah speaks a clear message from God.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

This session's practice is very similar to the last session, but looking at corporate or communal ways to change behavior and act. Children consider ways they participate in sin (stray from God's path) and how they can "turn around" and find their way back to it. The difference, however, is that, in this session, we are traveling in a group. What have *we* done wrong? How can *we* make it right?

SESSION PREPARATION

Take a few minutes to think about the different systems of which you are a part. Identify ways in which these systems cause harm, even inadvertently. What are ways you can do your part to mitigate or reverse this harm?

- "Walking God's Path" (p. 28): Obtain Resource Page 3 from session 1 (p. 17).
- "Observing the Path" (p. 28): Display the *Confess* infographic poster from session 1.

Depending on the options you choose:

- "A Group of Bullies" (p. 29): Obtain the book *What in the World Is Wrong with Gisbert?* by Jocheen Weber (Flyaway Books, 2018) or use the YouTube video "Reading: What in the World Is Wrong with Gisbert?" (bit.ly/FMGisbert, 9:02).
- "Prayers of Confession" (p. 30): Obtain a worship bulletin, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *Book of Common Worship* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), a worship book from your denomination, or one of your choosing that contains prayers of confession.
- "Climate Change Re-Action" (p. 30): Gather the needed supplies.



GETTING STARTED

- Board and/or card games such as Sorry, Uno, Trouble, or Chutes and Ladders

PLAYING TOGETHER

G

Provide several simple board and/or card games that involve changing directions or reversing the order of play. As children arrive, invite them to form a group of three or four to play a game. Form a new group with another game as more children arrive. Once everyone has arrived, give the children a two-minute warning to transition to your opening ritual, “Walking God’s Path.”

- Resource Page 3, session 1 (p. 17)

WALKING GOD’S PATH

Invite the children to repeat after you and follow your motions as you lead them from Resource Page 3 from session 1.



Keep Resource Page 3 from session 1 for session 4.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Newsprint
- Markers

CONCENTRIC COMMUNITIES

A C

Have the children use concentric circles to create a visual map of what it means to belong to multiple communities. In the center of a large piece of newsprint, invite each child to draw a small picture of themselves or to write their name. Draw a circle around the pictures. Then, draw a larger circle around the smaller circle, label it “family,” and have each child draw or write the name of someone in their family. Repeat this process for “school,” “church,” “community,” and “country” groups, along with any other community distinctions you see fit. Explore with the children how we, pictured in the center of the page, are a part of several different communities—or larger groups or systems—at one time.



Today’s session focuses on the difficult but important work of understanding the systems of which we are a part and then considering what repentance might look like within these systems. That’s a lot for children to grasp! If necessary, focus on the basic idea that we are all a part of something (and several things) bigger than ourselves.

- *Confess* infographic poster from session 1

OBSERVING THE PATH

C

Display the *Confess* infographic poster and invite the children to look at the overall poster. Review what they see as a main image. Remind them that, in each session of this unit about the practice of confessing, they will look at the path and signposts that make up confession. Today, start at the *Confess* sign and go to the *Repent* sign again, but talk about what corporate sins might be. Note that the “golden thread” that runs through the entire poster, from sin to reconciliation, is God’s presence with us through it all. Wonder about the pictures around the *Repent* sign and how they might help corporate repentance. Look at the questions posed along the path for this section.



Keep the *Confess* infographic poster for session 4.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

LIVING AS A COMMUNITY

C

Tell the children that the prophets, God’s messengers, spoke God’s truth to God’s people. God’s people were rich people and poor people, kind people and unkind people, generous and stingy people, and everything in between. The prophets hoped to make God’s people safe and fair for everyone, and they tried to help the people know how to live in such a way. The core of Micah’s message, and the heart of God’s way of living, is summarized in Micah 6:6–8. Read the adapted story on Resource Page 1 or from *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, pages 144–45. Then wonder together:

- What needed to change with God’s people for things to be fair?
- How were the people hurting one another?
- What did Micah say would make life better for the people?
- Does our country have any of the same problems?
- What do you think Micah would say to us today?
- How do you think we can make our church, school, town, or country a safer and more fair place for everyone?

-
- Resource Page 1 or *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible* ed. by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Flyaway Books, 2018)



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

A GROUP OF BULLIES

C T

Wonder with the children how it feels when someone at school, perhaps even a friend, makes fun of them. Then ask how it must feel for that person if a whole group of people—maybe even the whole class!—made fun of them. Read *What in the World Is Wrong with Gisbert* or show the YouTube video “Reading: What in the World Is Wrong with Gisbert?” (bit.ly/FMGisbert, 9:02). Explore with the children how the whole group loses its way on God’s path—and finds its way back.

-
- What in the World Is Wrong with Gisbert?* by Jocheen Weber (Flyaway Books, 2018)
 - Internet-connected device (optional)



Gisbert’s story reminds us that we walk God’s path together; sometimes we leave it and have to find our way back together.

CASE STUDY: CLIMATE CHANGE

NS C T

Tell the children that, as earth’s inhabitants, each one of us has an effect on climate change. Wonder who has a greater effect, children or adults, and why that might be. Comment that, even though children may not contribute as much to or have as much control over climate change, as human beings living on this earth, and particularly in the United States, we all have a part. Explain that climate change is destroying parts of God’s creation, and that’s not on God’s path! Even though we don’t want to harm the earth, our everyday actions and participation in society affect the environment in negative ways. Suggest that this is an example of how we have strayed from God’s path together and need to find our way back both individually and

-
- Internet-connected device

together. Show the YouTube video “Climate change (according to a kid)” (bit.ly/FMClimateChange, 2:11). Then, discuss:

- ✦ Why is climate change occurring at such a rapid rate?
- ✦ What causes climate change?
- ✦ What are some of the effects of climate change?
- ✦ What are some ways that we, personally, contribute to climate change?
- ✦ How does it feel to think about how we play a part in harming the earth?
- ✦ What ideas do you have of ways we could repent—turn around—and help the earth instead?



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

-
- Worship bulletins
 - Book of Common Worship* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2018) or book of your own choosing with prayers of confession
 - Newsprint
 - Markers

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

C

Tell the children that many worshiping communities include a prayer of confession in their service each week. Show the children the worship book with prayers of confession and distribute the worship bulletins. Invite the children to look at a few of the prayers. Read aloud one or two shorter prayers. Ask the children what they notice about who is praying the prayers. Comment, if necessary, that these prayers are almost all framed as *we* confessions rather than *I* confessions because we know that we all lose track of God’s path and need one another to help find our way back.

After looking over the example prayers, work together to write a prayer of confession specific to your group. Ask the children the following questions. Write, or have a recorder write, suggestions on newsprint.

- ✦ What sorts of things do you do that hurt others?
- ✦ Are there things that you *don’t do* that *not doing* them hurts others?
- ✦ How do you feel when you do some of these things?
- ✦ How can you apologize for leaving God’s path?
- ✦ What would you like God to do?

Invite the children to read the suggestions together, or have them repeat after you, as a prayer of confession. After the prayer, tell the children that people are always given an assurance of God’s forgiveness. Say to the children, “God forgives us and loves us always.”

-
- Poster board or paper, index cards, markers and/or painting supplies
 - Smartphone or tablet
 - Cans with plastic lids, can opener, scissors, acrylic paint and paintbrushes, duct tape in various colors, yarn, birdseed, ziplock plastic bags

CLIMATE CHANGE RE-ACTION

A D S X

Explain that we know we all contribute to climate change, whether we mean to or not, but we can also “turn around” and support a healthy earth. Help the children impact our environment positively through one or more of the activities below.

- Encourage energy conservation at your church and at home. Make signs that remind people to turn off the lights when they leave a room and display them in each classroom. Make recycling receptacles more visible by placing bright posters nearby. Use index cards to make smaller reminders to turn out lights at home and post by each light switch.

- Find out what, if anything, your church recycles. If so, create and film a commercial advertising the recycling program, which can then be shown in the adult small groups too! If not, brainstorm with the children about what you would need to start an in-church recycling program.
- Reduce waste and support wildlife by making bird feeders out of cans with lids. Use the following directions to make the bird feeders:
 - Use the can opener to take off the metal ends of the can.
 - Cut the plastic lid in half and paint the lids.
 - Decorate the cans with duct tape.
 - Thread several strands of yarn at desired length through the can and tie ends together.
 - Place the half lids on either side of the openings.
 - At home, fill with provided birdseed and hang feeder outside.



Depending on the size of your group, work together on one project or allow the children to select an activity.



FOLLOWING JESUS

Lead the children in the following back-and-forth litany. If your context allows, don't be afraid to celebrate God's love loudly!

Leader: Is there anything you can do to make God love you any more?

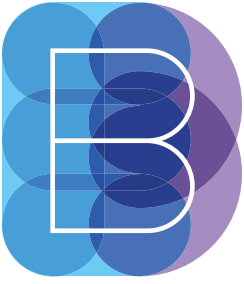
Children: No!

Leader: Is there anything you can do to make God love you any less?

Children: No!

Leader: God's love never quits.

Children: God loves us all-the-way and always!



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON MICAH 1:1; 4:1-4; 6:6-8

What Does God Want?

Sometimes we need people to help us see what's going on. It's good when someone points out ways we can live as God wants, loving and caring for others. Micah was a prophet who helped people see how God wanted them to live together.

Micah was from a small village outside Jerusalem. He grew up in a family of farmers. He spent every day in vineyards and fields. Sometimes people in these villages were treated badly by rich, powerful people in the cities. Micah knew this was wrong.

He traveled to the big city of Jerusalem and said, "God doesn't want rich and powerful people to treat poor or powerless people badly."

Images of fields and trees from his village filled his mind. All Micah could think about was the time he spent plowing and picking the grain with family and friends.

"When the world is filled with peace, people will beat their weapons into farm tools. No one will make war. We will all sit under our grapevines and fig trees," Micah told the people in Jerusalem.

Micah knew what it was like to be poor. He knew deep down inside what it was like to be treated terribly by people who had power and money. He had big ideas about how God wanted people to treat one another.

Like other prophets, Micah had a difficult job. He had to speak hard truths to God's people. Truths that they did not want to hear about how powerful and rich people treated others unfairly. Micah talked about the destruction that was coming if God's people ignored how God wanted them to treat one another.

What God really wanted was for people to:

do justice,
love kindness,
and walk humbly with God.

That's how Micah said it. Now think about what it means for you!

You are doing justice when you make sure that everyone is treated fairly.

You love kindness when you share something that is really precious to you.

When you walk with your eyes open to see places where you and your family can help someone—like a refugee or someone who is sick or hungry or needs money to buy school supplies—then you are walking humbly with God.

Micah believed with all his heart that this is what God wanted everyone to do. And we can choose to live our lives this way today.

Excerpted from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth Caldwell and Carol Wehrheim. © 2018 Flyaway Books. Used by permission.