

## Understanding Sin

From beginning to end, the Bible teaches us God is good all the time and all people need God's forgiveness for their sin. These truths are worth reinforcing in your home. Help your child understand the truth that Jesus is our Savior from sin. The following concepts will help you.

### Confess Sin

The first step to confessing sin is learning to recognize sin. Teach your child that sin is anything one says, does or thinks that is contrary to God's Word. The more the Bible is studied and applied, the more a person knows God's character and holiness. We learn right behavior, attitudes and thinking from studying the example of Jesus' sinless life.

Confession of sin is not a natural behavior. It is very difficult to say, "I sinned," or "I did something wrong." The normal response is to deny or to blame someone else. Help your child or student learn how to admit wrongdoing.

Small children may need your prompting. "Joshua, do you know what you did that was wrong?" Give your child an opportunity to explore his actions. He may need guidance to know breaking the flower pot was wrong.

Do not force your child into an insincere apology by saying, "Joshua, let me hear you say, 'I broke the flower pot. It is my fault.' Now you need to say, 'I am sorry, please forgive me.'" Instead, explain how God is our loving Father who wants to offer forgiveness. Jesus is our gift from God who ensures our forgiveness when we ask. Provide your child an opportunity by asking, "Would you like to ask God to forgive and help you do the right thing?"

Encourage your child to say more than, "I am sorry." Help him identify the sinful behavior, thought or attitude underlying his action. With your guidance, your child may begin using the statements, "I was angry," or "I was selfish" (identifying sinful behavior), followed by, "I wanted my own way," or "I should have been patient" (identifying godly behavior), and ending with, "Will you forgive me?" This can establish a pattern of obedience to God and parents.

Forgive and discipline in an appropriate way, avoiding overreactions that might cause your child to fear or avoid confession. Do not make the possibility of your child's confession any more difficult than it is because there *will* be a next time! You want your child to learn it is best to admit sin and face the natural consequences rather than try to hide or lie about it.

### Model Quick Repentance

Your actions teach your child and those around you. When you avoid accepting responsibility for sin or use excuses when you are irritable, unfriendly, jealous, thoughtless or irate, others are watching, listening and learning how to deal with sin. Let your child hear you say, "I am late because I did not use my time well. I am sorry about the inconvenience this has caused you. Will you forgive me?"

When you turn from sin, it is valuable to talk to your children about new behavior you have implemented. The very best teaching model in the home is the parent's own life. If you are involved in the lives of children not your own, ask God to give you teachable moments to reinforce admitting and taking responsibility for your own sin.

### Reinforce with Scripture

Use an individual from Scripture to help you illustrate your or your child's sin. For example, Adam blamed Eve and the Lord (Genesis 3:12); Moses was stubborn and reluctant (Exodus 3:11-4:17); David misused his power and violated national trust (2 Samuel 11:2-5); Jonah was rebellious and angry (Jonah 1-4); Peter made a promise and broke it (Mark 14:29-30, 72); Paul admitted his sin (Romans 7:15-24). Referring to the Bible helps a child see God's response to sin in another person's life.

Daily family life provides natural opportunities to speak of sin, confession and God's forgiveness. As you talk about forgiving others and asking others to forgive you, your child gradually absorbs your attitude that sin is serious. He comes to understand he needs Jesus as more than just his best friend. He needs Jesus as his Savior from sin.

- Read and memorize Scripture with your child. Include verses about sin. Learn the 10 Commandments. Discuss what they mean. Make applications on your child's level of understanding.
- Deal promptly with each day's behavior. Introduce confession and repentance as part of evening prayer time. Teach your child how to ask forgiveness from God, family and friends.

Pray for humility for yourself, your child and those around you to be able to recognize and confess sin quickly and honestly. May we not think of ourselves more highly or more lowly than we should, but just as God thinks of us. May our homes become places where it is safe to fail, safe to be transparent and honest, safe to find and give forgiveness. Others will see the Lord Jesus Christ and be drawn to Him also.