



# Renewed

Your Journey to First Reconciliation

## PARENT'S GUIDE

Sarah Kearns-Shutrop



West Chester, Pennsylvania

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Ascension  
PO Box 1990  
West Chester, PA 19380  
1-800-376-0520  
ascensionpress.com

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*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful,  
and kindle in them the fire of your love.  
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.  
And you shall renew the face of the earth.  
O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit  
did instruct the hearts of the faithful,  
grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise  
and ever enjoy his consolations.  
Through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

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# Welcome Letter

## The Privilege of a Parent

Families are special. We experience the love of God in our homes and in our families. Families are a special part of God's plan because, while he could have revealed himself to the world in any way he desired, he chose to be born into a family. Jesus had parents, and he experienced all the ordinary family events, like meals and conversations, that we experience in our homes today.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) tells us this about the family:

“The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a *domestic church*” (*Familiaris consortio* 21; cf. *Lumen gentium* 11). It is a community of faith, hope, and charity; it assumes singular importance in the Church, as is evident in the New Testament (cf. Ephesians 5:21–6:4; Colossians 3:18–21; 1 Peter 3:1–7).

The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. It is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task.

The relationships within the family bring an affinity of feelings, affections and interests, arising above all from the members' respect for one another. The family is a *privileged community* called to achieve a “sharing of thought and common deliberation by the spouses as well as their eager cooperation as parents in the children's upbringing” (*Gaudium et spes* 52 §1). (CCC 2204–2206, original emphasis)

“A *domestic church* ... a *privileged community*.” These terms remind us of how important the family is and how central it is to society. The family is where we first learn to love, and in the relationship between a child and parent, we glimpse the relationship between us and God.

In the New Testament, Jesus teaches us to call God “Father,” and the Book of Hosea shows the heart of God as that of a parent. God created us out of love, and he loves each of us perfectly. He seeks to provide for us, protect us, and guide us. All parents will find shared experiences here in the ways that they love and care for their own children. As parents, we are fortunate to partner with God in this way, guiding the children he loves so much, receiving them as a gift from him, and helping them become exactly who God created them to be.

For all these reasons and more, the Church calls the family the domestic church. This reminds us that the family replicates the role of the Church as a community of believers who encourage one another in their walk toward God. Within the walls of our homes, we share our lives together every day and challenge one another to be our best, to grow in holiness, and to live in love.

If you are reading this, chances are you are the parent of a child preparing to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When your child was baptized, you promised to bring him or her up in the Catholic Faith.

That means you have a privileged role in this domestic church. God has given you *this* child at *this* time in human history for a reason. There are gifts that only you can share with your child. There are ways that only you can challenge them and call them on toward God and toward holiness. You are the head of your domestic church. The leaders and teachers in this program will help you, but you are the primary catechist for your children (see CCC 2223).

## How This Book Works

If you are going to take on the responsibility of your child's primary catechist, then you probably need a tool kit. The place to start is to invest in your own relationship with God.

You have enrolled your child in this program. You are bringing them to receive the sacraments, which indicates that your child's faith is important to you. Sometimes, however, obligations and busyness pull us away from investing in our own spiritual lives. This book will invite you to dive back into your own relationship with God. We will do that first by studying a parent-centered version of what your child is learning. Then we will invite you to reflect, pray, and journal on those parts of Church teaching. Finally, we will talk about the take-home activities your child will be asked to complete with you after each lesson. We will also equip you with the answers to some tough questions that they may ask.

Each lesson in your child's book has a corresponding section in this Parent's Guide. Here is what you will find:

**Bird's-Eye View:** An explanation of the material your child will learn in the lesson.

**Make It Personal:** Two opportunities for you as a parent to reflect on the major themes of your child's lesson and explore the ways those themes apply to your own life. These sections include an invitation to reflect on some deeper questions related to the theme and explore your thoughts in writing.

**Pray:** A chance to offer the thoughts from your reflection to God in prayer.

**Take-Home Activities:** A review of the Car Conversation and Family Time prompts that your child is expected to complete each week, with tips, tricks, and ideas for you.

**Tough Questions:** A look at some tough questions that your child may have after the lesson. It gives you a guide to approaching challenging conversations and a possible response to each question.

**Additional Resources:** This includes Bible verses, *Catechism* references, videos, podcasts, and articles to help you dive deeper into the concepts covered in the lesson.

What is the point of all of this? Children are most likely to retain their faith if they have faithful adults in their lives. You want your children to grow deeply in relationship with God and the Church or else you wouldn't be bringing them to the sacraments. Let's ensure their success by giving them at least one faithful witness to walk with them on this journey. That witness is YOU!

In Christ,

SARAH KEARNS-SHUTROP



# Who Created the Universe?

## Lesson 1.1 GOD'S PLAN FOR CREATION

*“God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”*

– Genesis 1:31



### Parent's Prayer

God our Father, you sent your Son to be born into a family so that Mary and Joseph would love their child and he would redeem us all. Help me to be like them, to model our family on the example of the Holy Family. Help me to grow in the spirit of penance so that I may lead my child by example and grow in holiness with them in this process of sacramental preparation. Amen.

## Bird's-Eye View

In this lesson your child will

- Learn that God created everything.
- See that God creates every person in his image and likeness.
- Know that God wants a relationship with your child.
- Understand that God reveals himself to us in many ways, especially in the Church, and that he can be known through his Son, Jesus Christ, and through Sacred Scripture and Tradition.

## In Kid-Speak:

*Today we will learn that nothing existed before God. He created everything out of perfect love—the heavens and the earth. God rejoices in all his creation, but he especially rejoices in his creation of you.*

## Lesson Recap:

- We believe in one God who is eternal. He has always existed and always will exist. He is one God in three Persons, the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- God created everything out of nothing, with order and goodness.
- God created human beings wholly out of love.
- God created us in his image and likeness. We have an intellect, which is how we know God, as well as free will, which allows us to choose between right and wrong. God also gives us a conscience, which helps us know the difference between right and wrong.
- All human beings are made up of a body and a soul. Our mind, conscience, and free will are part of our souls, along with our hopes, dreams, choices, thoughts, feelings, and prayers. Together they allow us to know God and experience his gift of life.
- We are stewards of God's creation. This means we take care of the earth, and we take care of each other. We care for everything he has given us!
- God desires a relationship with us. He loves us and wants us to know him.
- God reveals himself to us in many ways, including nature and the love of our family.
- The most perfect way God shows us his love is in his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is our Savior and Lord. He loves us so much that he died on the Cross for us.
- Through the Apostles, Jesus gave us the Church to protect his teaching and hand it on to us through Sacred Scripture (the Bible) and Sacred Tradition.
- The Church leads us and guides us to be the people God created us to be.

## Make It Personal I

Let us consider how all of this applies to our lives today. Learning about God and his love for us isn't just for children in religious education or in Catholic schools—it is for all of us. We all have the same call to live out the Christian life, so we must all continue to learn about God.

In this lesson, your child will learn that we are made in the image and likeness of God. This image tells us that we were made for a relationship with God. We understand that this

relationship is like that of a father and child. It also means that we reflect God's image and his love to the world. We teach others about God's love by being who we were created to be—virtuous, holy, and seeking after the Lord.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- What do you think you teach the world about God's love? For example, as a parent, you care for your child unconditionally.
- Is it easy for you to view God as a good father? Why or why not?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal. Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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## Make It Personal II

This lesson will give your child the opportunity to think about how he or she reflects the image of God to the world. Just as we encounter God in the Church, we also encounter him in our families, in the domestic church. As the domestic church, our families teach the world something about who God is.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- What gifts do each of your children and your spouse have that show you something about who God is? For example, your spouse might be a good listener. Your child might be full of joy when she makes a new friend.
- What experiences or relationships have helped build and strengthen your own relationship with God?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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Place yourself in the presence of God, and take a moment to pray. Call to mind each member of your family. One by one, review the ways that they reflect the image of God. Recount their beauty, their qualities, and the things you love about them. As you finish with each person, thank God for the way he created them. Now think about yourself. Picture your image in the mirror. Think about your own gifts, talents, and qualities. In what ways do you bear the image of God? In what ways do you share God's love in the world? Allow God to tell you what he wants you to hear in response to this question. As you finish, thank God for the way he has placed his image upon you.

**O Lord, we are grateful for your fatherhood.**

**Thank you for loving us enough to call us your children.**

**We are imperfect parents, but we are made in your image.**

**Help us to love our children as you love them.**

**Help us to guide them to be who you created them to be.**

**Help us to show them the path to sainthood.**

**We ask all these things through Christ our Lord.**

**Amen.**

## Take-Home Activities



This is a way to open the door of communication with your child. It does not need to take place in a car. The idea is that you have something to discuss after the lesson. When asked what they learned, children will often answer “I don’t know” or “I don’t remember.” It may help to ask specific questions about the lesson, so your child will be more likely to engage and tell you what he or she learned. You can prepare for this conversation by reviewing these prompts from your child’s Student Workbook.

- Share what you learned about how God created the world.
- Share some ways God reveals himself to us.
- What did you learn about St. Francis?

*Some tips:*

- Review the Lesson Recap to gather additional talking points.
- Think about a place in nature or creation where you experience God’s presence. Maybe it is in the beauty of a sunrise or sunset, on top of a mountain, or in the fall when the leaves change color.



Your child will learn that every person is created in the image and likeness of God. This activity reinforces this concept and helps us recognize the beauty of our own domestic church.

**Student Workbook prompt:** “One night this week, sit around the table with your family and have each family member write his or her name at the top of a piece of paper. Then have each person pass the paper to their right. For each member of your family, one by one, write down one quality of God that they show to the world (for example, kindness, patience, or creativity). Continue until each person has their own paper in front of them again. Invite each person to read aloud what the others wrote about them.”

*Some tips:*

- Be sure the TV is off and electronics are put away!
- Create a prayerful atmosphere with low lights or a candle.
- Begin with a prayer.
- Give every family member a sheet of paper with their name written on top.
- Make sure everyone has a pen or pencil.

- Begin by passing papers to the right. When you get a family member’s paper, write down one quality they have that you think shows the world God’s love.
- Begin by sharing an example (Dad: leader, problem solver, hardworking). You can also share a list of qualities with your family before you begin—for example, kind, gentle, strong, resilient, caring, assertive, hardworking, reliable, honest, responsible, loyal, creative, patient, trustworthy, calm, humorous, optimistic, brave, strong, good cook, good friend, warm, friendly, forgiving.
  - This activity works best when people write multiple qualities, in different size letters, underlining, making doodles, etc., to make each paper end up looking bright and full!
  - Younger kids should still participate but may need a parent to write things down for them!
  - Hang the papers in a prominent place in each person’s room to remind them always of what their family loves about them!

## Tough Questions

### *Why did God create me?*

How to approach this question:

Your child wants to know what makes him or her special. They may ask a follow-up question like “Why did God make you my parents?” or “Why did God make me a certain way?” Make sure to identify the uniqueness of your child and how they are loved by God. They were put on this earth, with all of their individual gifts and struggles, because God wanted them to know him and experience life. God wanted their help in particular to spread his message of love and forgiveness.

One way to answer this question:

God created you out of love. It can sometimes be hard to believe the crazy love that God has for us. Think about a picture you colored recently or something you made for a friend or a family member. Think about the towers you build with your toys or pictures you have painted. You put a lot of hard work into the things you create. It is our love that makes us want to create brand new things and to put all our effort into our ideas and projects. God, who is Love itself, made you because love is creative. He made you, and he made you special. He put all of his effort into making you just the way he wanted you.

## *Why do we call God “Father”?*

How to approach this question:

This can be a loaded question. Your child’s relationship with his or her father will affect the way the child understands fatherhood. This can lead to questions like “How can the Father and Son be one?” and “How is God’s image in me?” Be sure to identify how we are good because of God within us and how we are different from the animals because we are capable of reason. Unlike animals, for example, we have rational souls.

One way to answer this question:

At Jesus’ baptism, God calls Jesus his Son. That relationship means that God is the Father. Even more, we call God “Father” because Jesus invites us to share in that relationship. When he taught us the Our Father prayer, Jesus taught us to call God “Father” the way he does.

## **Additional Resources**

- Fr. Mike Schmitz, “Why God Gave Us Bodies” (video), on Ascension Presents ([media.ascensionpress.com](http://media.ascensionpress.com))
- *Catechism*, paragraphs 279–294
- Genesis 1–2. Notice the care with which God creates the world and makes it good.

## Lesson 1.2 WHAT HAPPENED TO GOD'S PLAN

*“Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God say, “You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?”’”*

– Genesis 3:1



### Parent's Prayer

**God our Father, you sent your Son to be born into a family so that Mary and Joseph would love their child and he would redeem us all. Help me to be like them, to model our family on the example of the Holy Family. Help me to grow in the spirit of penance so that I may lead my child by example and grow in holiness with them in this process of sacramental preparation. Amen.**

## Bird's-Eye View

In this lesson your child will

- Become familiar with the characters of Adam and Eve and the story of the Fall.
- Be able to define Original Sin and understand how it affects us today.
- Identify Jesus as the promised Redeemer, sent to reconcile us with God.
- Understand that we receive grace, God's life in our souls, through the sacraments.

## In Kid-Speak:

*Today we will hear the story of how the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God and hurt their friendship with him. We will see that this is how sin came into the world, and we will look at how sin still affects us today. Finally, we will learn that Jesus came to save us from sin so that we can be close friends with God again!*

## Lesson Recap:

- Adam and Eve, the first man and first woman, were happy with God in the Garden of Eden. They had everything they needed. They trusted God and were filled with his grace.
- Grace is a free gift from God—his own divine life in our souls.
- There was one thing God told them not to do. He told them not to eat the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But the devil tempted them to disobey God.
- Adam and Eve ate the fruit. This was the first sin, which we call the Fall. After the Fall, they had to leave the Garden and work hard for everything they needed. But God still loved them and promised to send the Messiah, who would defeat the devil and restore people to God’s friendship.
- Angels are God’s messengers and servants. We each have a guardian angel to guide and protect us. Satan (the devil) is a fallen angel who wants to drive people away from God. He tempted Adam and Eve and continues to tempt us today.
- Since the Fall, we are all born weak. It is hard to say no to temptation and easy to sin. We call this weakness the stain or wound of Original Sin. Original Sin is not a sin we commit. It is a weakness we inherit. The sins we commit are called actual or personal sins.
- Jesus Christ is the Messiah who redeems us from sin and reconciles us with God through his death on the Cross. Through the Church, Jesus gives us the sacraments to give us grace, to help us, and to make us stronger every day.
- The Sacrament of Baptism washes away Original Sin and gives us a new life of grace in Christ. The Sacrament of Reconciliation reconciles us with God after we have sinned.

## Make It Personal I

In this lesson, your child will learn about the Fall. Your child will learn that Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, meaning that they chose themselves and decided that they knew best. We call this the Fall because they fell from God’s grace.

After they had sinned, Adam and Eve hid in the Garden. God could have abandoned Adam and Eve, but he responded by seeking them out; he called them. He saw that they had shame, and

he knew that they had sinned. Rather than letting them suffer, God protected them, provided for them, and showed them his fatherly love. This paints an even more beautiful and detailed picture of God's fatherhood. Like a good father, when his children disobeyed, God showed them mercy. Like a good father, he also needed to teach them a lesson to help them grow and to make good choices.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- When have you done something wrong and chosen to hide?
- When have you felt God seeking you after you made a choice that went against his will, as he sought out Adam and Eve?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal. Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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## Make It Personal II

Let us consider how all of this applies to your life today. Sin is when we choose to disobey God. Examining our sins can make us feel anxious, even judged. This can carry a serious, even scary connotation for children as well as for adults. However, we cannot return to the Father, who is waiting for us, unless we acknowledge that we have turned away from him in the first place.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- What has been your understanding of sin?
- Is it easy for you to acknowledge your sin and seek Reconciliation? Why or why not? What might this be telling you about your own idea of God?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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Place yourself in the presence of God, and take a moment to pray.

**God, our Father, thank you for loving us.**

**Thank you for seeing us.**

**Thank you for wanting to be close to us.**

**Make us aware of our sin.**

**More than that, make us aware of your love.**

**Help us to recognize the things that we are trying to put in your place.**

**Help us to understand that this is the source of our restlessness.**

**Help us to have the courage to return to you, confident in  
your fatherly embrace and the way you wait for us.**

**Amen.**

## Take-Home Activities



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Talk to your parents about what you learned today about the first sin—the Fall—and the plan God made to free us and restore us to his friendship. Do not forget to mention St. Michael the Archangel and the battle between good and evil! Tell your parents what sin is, and talk about why you think it is so easy to sin sometimes. Ask them to tell you what they think!”

*Some tips:*

- Be careful not to be reactive if your child tells you they struggle with a sin you were not aware of. It is important to create an environment where they are willing to share with you. Instead, direct them to what is right by asking what they think could help them avoid that sin or what makes that sin such a struggle for them.
- Remember to respond to children appropriately and on their level.
- Your child’s teacher or your parish priest can help if you struggle to find the right words.
- Do not be afraid to be honest with them (within reasonable and appropriate boundaries) about the ways you struggle with sin. This type of vulnerability helps children to know that they can share with us and helps us to serve as their guide.



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Share with your family the ‘Act It Out’ game we played today! Play it together as a family. See how many scenarios you can act out!”

This week’s activity is based on a game the children will play in class. “Act It Out” illustrates the idea of freedom and the consequences of sin. Your child will be given scenarios and then asked to act out each one in two ways: (1) the way God would want them to act, and (2) a way that is sinful.

Here are some examples that may be used in class:

- What could you do when Mom and Dad tell you screen time is over?
- What could you do when your brother or sister wants to borrow a toy?
- What could you do when a classmate you don’t know well has no one to sit with at lunch?
- What could you do when it’s time to send birthday invitations and you have one classmate you don’t want to include?
- What could you do when you see your friends making fun of a younger student?
- What could you do when Mom asks you to clean your room?

- What could you do when Dad tells you that you need to wear clothes you don't like to a family party?

*A tip:*

- Be prepared to help your child consider the consequences of each choice by asking questions like “How do you think that would make you feel?” or “What might that lead to?”

## Tough Questions

***After the first sin, why did God make such a big deal? If he forgave Adam and Eve, couldn't he just snap his fingers and make their suffering go away? Then Jesus wouldn't have had to die.***

How to approach this question:

This question can be difficult to answer. As a parent and adult, you know that actions have consequences. We may forgive someone and move on, but that doesn't mean the relationship hasn't been affected or that the hurt will go away overnight. Your child, however, sees something unfair in the fact that God can make a problem go away but doesn't. You can remind them of a lesson they learned the hard way—why they shouldn't take scissors to their hair, why they can't pull the dog's tail, or why they shouldn't touch the stove. They'll be forgiven for cutting jagged bangs, but that won't make their hair grow back.

One way to answer this question:

God is all-powerful, so if he wanted to, he could have snapped his fingers and forgiven Adam and Eve and made everything perfect again. This would have been wonderful, but it's not a perfect solution. God's original plan was for humanity to live in happiness with him forever. Adam and Eve committed the first sin because they failed to love and trust God. They were the first to be faced with the test of choosing to love God and obey him, and they failed. If God had snapped his fingers, they would keep making the same mistake. God does, in fact, forgive Adam and Eve, but that doesn't mean there weren't consequences to their actions, just as there are consequences to our actions. God is all-powerful and merciful, but he is also just.

### ***Is the devil real?***

How to approach this question:

Your child is asking an incredibly important question. Satan is real. Evil is real. The question they're asking really has two parts: *Is the devil real, and does he have power over me?* Remember to reaffirm that Jesus existed before the devil and that he

defeated Satan by his death and Resurrection. Christ tells his Apostles, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents ... and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you” (Luke 10:18–19). This is a promise, and one that needs to be reiterated to your child (and maybe even to you)!

One way to answer this question:

Satan is real. He was an angel of God’s heavenly court. He chose to disobey God and was cast out of heaven. Satan wants to keep us from having a relationship with God. The good news is that even though Satan is real, God is more powerful than Satan, and Jesus saves us from sin. Through prayer and trust in God, we can overcome evil.

## Additional Resources

- Fr. Mike Schmitz, “Learning How to Love from the Bible” (video), on Ascension Presents ([media.ascensionpress.com](http://media.ascensionpress.com))
- *Catechism*, paragraphs 599–603, 609
- Fr. Mark-Mary, “How the Devil Uses Your Talents and Gifts Against You” (video), on Ascension Presents
- *Catechism*, paragraphs 391–395
- Returning from mission: Luke 10:17–20



# How Did God Show His Love to His People After the Fall?

## Lesson 2.1 FROM ADAM AND EVE TO THE EXODUS

*“I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”*

– Genesis 12:2



### Parent's Prayer

God our Father, you sent your Son to be born into a family so that Mary and Joseph would love their child and he would redeem us all. Help me to be like them, to model our family on the example of the Holy Family. Help me to grow in the spirit of penance so that I may lead my child by example and grow in holiness with them in this process of sacramental preparation. Amen.

## Bird's-Eye View

In this lesson your child will

- Be introduced to the stories of Noah and Abraham and the covenants God made with them.
- Continue to follow the story of salvation and understand it as the story of God's love for his people.
- Learn the importance of trusting God as Noah and Abraham did.
- Understand that God never stops reaching out to us.

## In Kid-Speak:

*Today we will learn how much God wants a relationship with us. We will learn the stories of Noah and Abraham and see how God formed covenants with them. God cares for his people and wants them to be close to him. We can see God's love at work in each of these stories!*

## Lesson Recap:

- Although Adam and Eve were created holy, they lost their holiness in the Fall. Because of Original Sin, we all need God's help to live as we should.
- After the Fall, people continued to sin. The first murder was committed by Adam and Eve's son Cain, who killed his brother out of jealousy.
- The world grew to be full of sin. God cleansed it with a huge flood. Only Noah and his family were saved. God made a covenant with Noah and promised never to destroy the earth again by a flood.
- A covenant is a special agreement God makes with his people to bless them. The covenant shows them that he is with them and he is faithful. It shows them that he is guiding and protecting them. Their part is to trust him and be faithful to him in return.
- God later entered into a covenant with Abraham. He promised to bless him, make of him a great nation, to give him descendants as numerous as the stars. Abraham's great-grandsons became the patriarchs (fathers) of the Twelve Tribes of Israel.
- God made new covenants with his people because they kept falling into sin. They misused their free will. Each time God made a new covenant, he revealed himself in a new way. He gathered his people together and brought them back to himself. In his mercy, God always calls us back to himself.
- God promises he will send us a redeemer who will restore our relationship with him, who will bring the final and everlasting covenant.
- We are part of the family of God and part of the story of salvation history.

## Make It Personal I

This lesson helps children to understand that sin did not end with Adam and Eve but continues with all of humanity. Sin is generational and cyclical. We see that humanity continues to move further and further away from God. This means that we are all born with Original Sin and are in need of redemption. We also have a natural inclination toward sin (called concupiscence), even after we are cleansed of Original Sin through Baptism. Jesus is the promised Redeemer who comes to reunite us with God. He pays the cost for our sin and brings us home to the Father. The Bible is the story of God's love for his family, and we are part of it.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- Looking at the Scripture stories we have covered so far, where do you see aspects of your own story in these stories?
- Of the people in Scripture whose stories we have covered so far, who do you connect with most? Why?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal. Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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## Make It Personal II

Let us consider how all of this applies to your life today. In this lesson, your child will learn about the story of salvation from the time of Adam and Eve to the Exodus. This story shows us the ways that God reaches out to his people even when they turn away from him.

Picture God at the beginning of time. He creates Adam and Eve. He creates everything. And it is all good. Imagine him creating you. He looks at you and calls you very good. He gives you his image and his likeness. He calls you his.

Recall a time when you did something that you knew was wrong. You knew what God wanted you to do, but you chose to disobey. You chose to sin and to turn away from him. You knew what you did was wrong, so you hid.

Picture God's response. He comes to find you, just as a good father would. He does not address the sin outright but instead addresses what caused it, what made you turn away from him. He sees your underlying need. He meets it. He shows you mercy.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- Consider a time when you were frustrated with your spouse, your child, or another close relative. How could you grow to practice the Father’s mercy through such a time?
- When Adam and Eve fell, they were ashamed and hid from God. How do you behave when you know you’ve made a mistake? How do you receive mercy?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal. Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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Place yourself in the presence of God, and take a moment to pray.

**Lord, thank you for creating us.**

**Thank you for loving us.**

**Thank you for the freedom you have blessed us with.**

**We love you.**

**Thank you for meeting us with mercy, even when we turn from you.**

**Turn our hearts. Help us understand that sin is serious,  
not because you are vengeful but because we are willfully  
abandoning a loving Father.**

**Purify our hearts. Help us to lead our children toward you.**

**Amen.**

## Take-Home Activities



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Ask your parents about a time in their lives when they could *feel* God reaching out to them. What did that feel like? How did they recognize it?”

*Some tips:*

- Consider the milestone moments in your life. When did you experience God’s love, his mercy, or just his calming presence? Was there a time when you felt that God protected you from a bad decision or when Providence placed you exactly where you needed to be?
- Do not be afraid to be honest and open! Be descriptive. Sharing our faith with our children helps them understand how God may be reaching out to them as well!



**Student Workbook prompt:** “We have learned a little about the Old Testament so far, from Adam and Eve to Abraham. This week, tell your parents some of the Old Testament stories you learned, and ask them to tell you their favorites. You can even open the Bible and read a story together!”

*Some tips:*

- Bible stories
  - The Creation and the Fall: Genesis 1–3
  - Cain and Abel: Genesis 4
  - Noah and the Flood: Genesis 6:11–9:17
  - God calls Abraham: Genesis 12.1–9
- You may want to preview these stories before reading them with your child. There are details that may not be considered age appropriate and can be left out.

## Tough Questions

***Why did God flood the earth if he loved us? Is this a true story?***

How to approach this question:

The Flood seems like a really strong response to sin. It’s hard to consider that people could be so sinful that the Flood was actually necessary. Your child wants to make sure that God isn’t taking revenge on his people. It’s important to understand the *grave* nature of sin. Sin separates us from God. It is the least natural thing to our souls, which were made for happiness with God. With that in mind, consider describing how God,

as a protective parent, prevents his people from destroying their souls even further. God is not doing an evil act but rather saving man from himself.

One way to answer this question:

God flooded the earth to give it a fresh start and to save men from falling deeper into their sinful ways. We know God is all loving because he died on the Cross for us. Instead of thinking “How could God do that?” think “Wow, it must have been really bad for God to resort to that.” And indeed it was. People were sinning, turning away from God, and causing destruction. God protected Noah and his family because they were righteous. This story is not necessarily scientific. It is meant to reveal to us how bad sin had gotten on earth.

### *What if I do not ever feel God's presence?*

How to approach this question:

This is an especially tough one. Sometimes, this is enough to turn a faithful individual away from Christ. Everyone experiences desolation, or a lack of feeling God's presence, at some point in their lives. Because of this, they may ask “Does God really care about me?” or “How come other people seem to feel God's presence more?” Be sure to affirm that they only exist because God loves them. Often, we don't feel God's presence because we aren't noticing it in the small things. We want a revelation in a burning bush, like Moses, but God is often close to us in a whisper. Practicing gratitude for small blessings often increases one's awareness of God's presence.

One way to answer this question:

Sometimes, we do not feel God's presence. God isn't a feeling, but he holds our entire existence together; God is everywhere. He loves you and wants to be close to you. Sometimes, when we do not feel God, it may be because we are busy or our minds are distracted or filled with something else. Try to find some quiet downtime, then pray for God to reveal himself, saying, “Come, Holy Spirit.” God communicates with his people in ways they understand, and he has a unique relationship with each one of us. Think about your talents, interests, and the people you love. How might God be trying to speak with you through those things or people?

## **Additional Resources**

- Fr. Mike Schmitz, “Believing in a God Who Allows Evil” (video), on Ascension Presents ([media.ascensionpress.com](http://media.ascensionpress.com))
- Fr. Mark-Mary, “Struggling to Hear God's Voice” (video), on Ascension Presents
- The story of Elijah: 1 Kings 19:11–13
- St. Ignatius, Rules of Discernment, rule 5

## Lesson 2.2 FROM THE TEN COMMANDMENTS TO THE PROMISED SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST

*“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me.”*

– Exodus 20:2-3



### Parent's Prayer

God our Father, you sent your Son to be born into a family so that Mary and Joseph would love their child and he would redeem us all. Help me to be like them, to model our family on the example of the Holy Family. Help me to grow in the spirit of penance so that I may lead my child by example and grow in holiness with them in this process of sacramental preparation. Amen.

### Bird's-Eye View

In this lesson your child will

- Be introduced to the stories of Moses and David and the covenants God made with them.
- Be able to list the Ten Commandments and explain how they lead us to live holy lives.
- See how God continued to show his love for his people through his covenants.
- Understand that God made his final and eternal covenant with us when he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us from sin.

## In Kid-Speak:

*Today we will continue learning the story of salvation. We will look at the ways God reached out to his people through Moses and helped them live the lives he created them for. God gave his people the Ten Commandments to help them live holy lives. We will also see more covenants God made—with Moses and David and, finally, through his own Son, Jesus.*

## Lesson Recap:

- Abraham's grandson was Jacob. The families of Jacob's sons became the Twelve Tribes of Israel, the Israelites. When Jacob's sons were grown, there was a famine in Israel. The Israelites found food in Egypt and settled there.
- Many years passed, and the Israelites were made slaves in Egypt. Through Moses, God led his people out of slavery and into the desert. He fed them with bread from heaven, called manna. He made a covenant with Moses, forming the Israelites into a nation.
- God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments so they would have guidelines to live by. As Christians, we are continue to keep the Ten Commandments today.
- The Israelites entered the Promised Land and grew strong as a nation. They rejected God as their king and asked for human king like the other nations around them. So God gave them kings. The first was King Saul; the second was King David.
- David loved God and trusted him. David was a great warrior, and he wrote many psalms. God made a covenant with him and promised him that his kingdom would last forever.
- After David, the kings led the people away from God. The kingdom was divided, the people were exiled, and many became slaves again. God's people needed to be rescued from sin.
- So God sent his Son, Jesus, to die on the Cross and establish his final and everlasting covenant, the New Covenant, to bless all people everywhere and free them from sin.

## Make It Personal I

This week your child will learn about the lengths to which God goes to help his people, the Israelites, to be close to him and to remain in relationship with him.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- When have you felt God pursuing a relationship with you? (You may want to draw from the Car Conversation in the last lesson about when you felt God reaching out to you.)

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the question above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the question.

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## Make It Personal II

God gave Moses and the Israelites the Ten Commandments as guidelines to help them be close to him, like a parent child-proofing their house, not to control the child but to keep the child safe.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- How do you view the Ten Commandments and sin? Do you view them as rules that God inflicts on us? Or do you view them as an invitation to live the life God created you for?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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Place yourself in the presence of God, and take a moment to pray.

Sit for a moment, and recall the earliest days of your child's life.

Remember what they were like. Remember their essence. Remember watching your child grow, change, and learn new things.

Follow the time line of your child's life, and remember what they were like as a toddler. Remember this period of discovery and curiosity. Can you remember a time when you were anxious for your child? Do you remember worrying about something they did or got into? What was it? Recall that fear. What did you do? How did you keep them safe? How did your child respond? Did they accept it and trust you, or did they lash out in frustration?

Now take a moment to really consider what was motivating you at that time. Were you a dictator seeking control? No. You were a parent seeking to protect your child.

God says to us in Hosea, "When Israel was a child, I loved him" (Hosea 11:1). He teaches us to call him Father. Ask yourself, what in your life has God tried to protect you from? What guardrails has he put up to keep you safe, healthy, and spiritually happy? How has he put protections or rules in place to keep you close to him? Do you see the moral teachings of the Church or the Ten Commandments the way your child saw the boundaries you gave to keep them safe? Do you respond to them with frustration? Or do you respond to them with trust in your Father's love for you and his desire to keep you safe and close to him?

Sit with your thoughts. When you're ready, let us pray:

**Lord, thank you for loving us with a Father's heart.**

**Thank you for protecting us, for dreaming up a life for us that perfectly uses our gifts and talents to fulfill your purpose.**

**Thank you for giving us guidance for how to live in a troubled world.**

**Help us to welcome your guidance and the wisdom of your Church as the protection of a Father and not the rules of a harsh and uncaring dictator.**

**We know you love us, Lord. We love you. Help us to love you more.**

**Amen.**

## Take-Home Activities



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Review the Ten Commandments with your parents. Tell them which one you think is the hardest to keep. Ask them what they think!”

*A tip:*

- Be aware of your reactions when your child shares their answers with you. Be calm and open-minded, making sure your child knows they can safely share with you.
- It can be challenging to talk to a child in an age-appropriate way about some of the commandments, especially the Sixth and Ninth (“You shall not commit adultery. ... You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife”). A good place to start might be to talk about treating our own and others’ bodies with respect.



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Make a list of the Ten Commandments on a piece of paper. Under each commandment, write down one or two ways you can keep the commandment this week. Across the top of the paper, write the days of the week. Hang the chart where you will see it every day, and before you go to bed, check off the commandments you kept that day.”

*A tip:*

- Use stickers, graphics, and colors to help engage your child!
- *Renewed by Jesus: My Guide to Reconciliation*, by Colin and Aimee MacIver (Ascension, 2023), provides an examination of conscience for children based on the Ten Commandments. The questions there may help you think of ways your child can keep the commandments in daily life.

## Tough Questions

***If the Third Commandment is “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” why don’t we go to Mass?***

How to approach this question:

As your child learns about the Ten Commandments, it is normal for them to start to examine the ways their lives (and yours) are not quite in line with what God has commanded us to do. First, don’t panic. It is tempting to become defensive when something like this is pointed out. Remember that you have brought your child here to prepare for Reconciliation, and this is exactly what Reconciliation is for—to seek forgiveness, to start over, and to try again. Make a plan with your child for

how and when you will attend Mass if you do not go regularly. This may require helping them understand that they too will have to make sacrifices to help make sure the family gets there on Saturday evening or on Sunday.

One way to answer this question:

You're right that the Third Commandment is to keep the Sabbath. Sometimes we're not very good at that, because other things seem more important in the moment. Sometimes we have activities or obligations that distract us. But the Lord says to keep the Sabbath holy, and now we can work together to make sure our family goes to Mass more regularly.

***I learned about the Ten Commandments this week, and someone in our family breaks a certain commandment!***

How to approach this question:

An analysis of how faithful we are to God's commandments is normal as we grow and learn. Your child may come home and be ready to point out the sins of every other person in your family. If this happens, stay calm and be open to dialogue. Acknowledge the places your child is correct in pointing out sinful behavior. Remind them that no one is perfect, and all people slip up sometimes. This is what the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us overcome.

One way to answer this question:

You're right, this person does break the commandment. Thankfully, our Lord is merciful, and if that person repents, we know God will forgive him. It's also important that we don't judge them for breaking the commandments. We only see people from the outside, but God knows what is in their hearts. How can we pray for this person and ask Jesus to help them?

## Additional Resources

- Jackie and Bobby Angel, "Don't Feel Like Going to Mass?" (video), on Ascension Presents ([media.ascensionpress.com](http://media.ascensionpress.com))
- The child Jesus in the Temple: Luke 2:41–50
- Jackie and Bobby Angel, "The Best Thing a Parent Could Do After Messing Up" (video), on Ascension Presents
- Jesus and the woman caught in adultery: John 8:2–11



## Lesson 3.1 JESUS HEALS US, TEACHES US, AND SAVES US

*“My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”*

– 1 John 2:1–2



### Parent's Prayer

God our Father, you sent your Son to be born into a family so that Mary and Joseph would love their child and he would redeem us all. Help me to be like them, to model our family on the example of the Holy Family. Help me to grow in the spirit of penance so that I may lead my child by example and grow in holiness with them in this process of sacramental preparation. Amen.

## Bird's-Eye View

In this lesson your child will

- Know who Jesus is and know that the Gospels tell us about his life on earth.
- Be able to name and explain the two natures of Jesus—truly God and truly man.
- Be able to describe Jesus' saving mission—to save us from sin and reconcile us to God.
- Be able to identify the things Jesus did as part of his public ministry, especially preaching, teaching, and healing.



## In Kid-Speak:

*Today we will study the person of Jesus, the Messiah promised to Adam and Eve long ago! We will talk about Jesus' life, his teaching, and his healing miracles. We will also look at how Jesus saves the world from sin and why he is the only person who could rescue us from the devil and restore our relationship with God.*

## Lesson Recap:

- God sent us Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, to be our Savior.
- Jesus was born to Mary and conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus was born as a baby in Bethlehem. This is called the Incarnation. He lived with Mary and his earthly father, Joseph, in Nazareth. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are the Holy Family.
- Jesus healed many people from physical illnesses and also from sin during his ministry. The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick help us experience Jesus' healing today.
- Jesus taught using parables, which are stories with a lesson. One example is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). Jesus' parables teach us how to live our lives.
- Jesus also taught about the Kingdom of God, the Church, and how precious it is.
- Through his suffering (Passion) and death on the Cross, Jesus saves us from sin.
- Christ's suffering, death, Resurrection, and Ascension are known as the Paschal Mystery. By these saving events, Jesus established the final and everlasting covenant between God and his people. Through Jesus, we are reconciled to God and restored to his friendship.

## Make It Personal I

Recall the story of the Good Samaritan. Read the summary below from your child's workbook:

A man was walking from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. The robbers beat him and left him bleeding on the side of the road.

A priest walked by, but when he saw the bleeding man, he crossed to the other side and walked on. Then another traveler saw the bleeding man. He also crossed to the other side and walked on. Finally, a Samaritan (a foreigner) saw the man. He went right over to him. He cleaned and bandaged the man's wounds. Then he took him to an inn. He paid the innkeeper to take care of the man and promised to come back to check on him soon.

This is what love for our "neighbor" looks like, even when our neighbor is a stranger to us.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- When were you cared for like this? When did you experience mercy, kindness, or love like what we see in the story of the Good Samaritan?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal. Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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## Make It Personal II

The Good Samaritan is really a story about the healing power of love and mercy. God desires to love us in this way. He wants to care for our wounds, heal our ailments, and reconcile us to himself.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- What in your own life do you need God to heal?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the question above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the question.

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Place yourself in the presence of God, and take a moment to pray.

Envision the healing miracles you know from Scripture. Picture the actual healing taking place. Reflect on what Jesus does through his mercy and his compassion. Imagine the response of the person Jesus healed.

Now consider your answer to the last question. What in your own life do you need God to heal? Where do you need his mercy and love? Call to mind your answer. Take time to sit with it.

Imagine that Jesus is sitting across from you. Share with him what you need. What does he say?

When you are ready, pray the following prayer:

**Jesus, thank you for loving us enough to heal us.**

**Thank you for the ways that you reach out to me. Thank you for your mercy,  
your compassion, and your love. Help me to trust you enough to be  
vulnerable with the wounds I am carrying.**

**Please heal the following parts of my life (state intention).**

**I trust that you are the divine physician.**

**I trust that you want what's best for me.**

**Amen.**

## Take-Home Activities



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Share some of the stories you heard about Jesus today, then ask your parents to tell you their favorite story of Jesus from the Scriptures.”

*Some tips:*

- Be prepared with your favorite Jesus story beforehand so you can have a discussion. If you don't have a favorite, the story above about the Good Samaritan is a good place to start!



**Student Workbook prompt:** “We learned today that while Jesus was alive on earth, he taught and performed miracles. In our game this week, we saw some examples of the things Jesus did. Ask your parents to find one example in the Bible of each of the following events in Jesus’

life: Jesus performing a miracle, Jesus healing someone, Jesus teaching, and Jesus teaching through parables.”

*Some tips:*

Here are some suggestions for stories to look at:

- Jesus heals Jairus’ daughter and the woman who touched his garment: Luke 8:40–56
- Jesus heals a paralytic: Matthew 9:1–8
- The Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5–7
- The parable of the Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11–32

## Tough Questions

### *Why does Jesus heal some people and not others?*

How to approach this question:

This is a question all of us have asked at one point or another. You may even want to share with your child a time when you wondered the same thing. Beyond that, make sure to focus on the fact that we live in a world that is imperfect because of the Fall and because of sin. You may also focus on the fact that when Jesus healed someone or raised them from the dead, they ultimately would have to die again.

One way to answer this question:

Illness is an effect of the Fall; God never wanted us to get sick or hurt. He doesn't want bad things. But when we do have an illness or injury and need to be healed, it is okay to ask God for healing. God may or may not take our suffering away, but he always hears us and answers us. He may put people in our lives to help us deal with our pain, or he may give us the grace to be patient in our suffering. Remember that God "works for good with those who love him" (Romans 8:28). There are lots of great saints who weren't healed, but they accepted suffering as a gift. We can ask for healing for ourselves and others, but we need to remember that suffering isn't always a bad thing.

***Why did God form all those covenants with people before sending his Son?  
Why didn't he send Jesus after Adam and Eve committed the first sin?***

How to approach this question:

God's original plan was for us to live in happiness with him forever. After Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they had to face the consequences of their actions. God forgave them and continued to love and provide for them, but they needed to learn the meaning of his true love and faithfulness. They needed to learn that God would always love them and desire friendship with them. God revealed this slowly.

One way to answer this question:

How would you feel if you were expected to complete a big project on your own, without any help from Mom or Dad? You would probably feel overwhelmed and need help to get started. In the same way, Adam and Eve would be overwhelmed if they saw all of the damage they caused and also saw God's complete plan to rescue them and all of humanity from that damage. Perhaps God knew they would feel unworthy of such a rescue. They wouldn't know how to respond to him. God had to start slowly and reveal to his people over time that love requires obedience and sacrifice. He did this through covenants with his people, calling them back to himself repeatedly after they had sinned.

## Additional Resources

- Fr. Mark-Mary, "Does God Want to Work Miracles Today? I Think So" (video), on Ascension Presents ([media.ascensionpress.com](http://media.ascensionpress.com))
- Lisa Cotter, "How to Suffer Well" (video), on Ascension Presents
- *Catechism*, paragraphs 1499–1505
- Fr. Mike Schmitz, "Why Did God Take on Our Humanity?" (video), on Ascension Presents

## Lesson 3.2 JESUS GIVES US THE CHURCH TO CONTINUE HIS WORK

*“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.”*

– Matthew 16:18



### Parent's Prayer

God our Father, you sent your Son to be born into a family so that Mary and Joseph would love their child and he would redeem us all. Help me to be like them, to model our family on the example of the Holy Family. Help me to grow in the spirit of penance so that I may lead my child by example and grow in holiness with them in this process of sacramental preparation. Amen.

### Bird's-Eye View

In this lesson your child will

- Understand that Jesus founded the Church to carry on his work.
- Become familiar with the story of what happened to the Apostles at Pentecost.
- Recognize the role of the Church as our guide in our relationship with Christ.
- Know that they become members of the Church when they are baptized.

## In Kid-Speak:

*Today we will learn about the Church, where it came from, and how it leads us to Jesus. The Church is our home as a family of faith and our guide on our own journey to heaven. The Church helps us to be who God made us to be and to know him better.*

## Lesson Recap:

- Jesus knew he would not always be on earth to teach and guide us, so he gave us the Church to carry on his work and help us in our lives.
- Peter was the first pope, the first leader of the Church.
- The Holy Spirit came down on the Apostles on the feast of Pentecost, and they began to preach the Good News. Pentecost is the birthday of the Church.
- The Church exists to continue Jesus' mission of sharing God's love and his mercy through her ministry and her teaching authority (the Magisterium).
- For very special teachings on faith and morals, the pope may speak in his full authority (*ex cathedra*). When he does this, his teaching is infallible. This means that what he teaches is true and cannot be wrong.
- We are members of the Church, the Body of Christ. This means we are called to share God's love with others. This is called evangelization.
- Our family is the domestic church, where we first encounter God and learn his love. We are responsible for helping our children to know God.

## Make It Personal I

In this lesson your child will learn about how, when he returned to heaven, Jesus gave us the Church to guide and form us. Trace your own relationship with the Church. What has it looked like? What is easy about it? What is hard?

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- What is your own relationship with the Church like? How did it come to be? Why is it important to you?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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## Make It Personal II

We are all members of the Body of Christ. This means we're called to share the news of God's love, mercy, and desire for relationship with those around us. Our families are the domestic church, which means that our children experience God within the walls of our home and learn about him there.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- Who in your own life has shared God's love with you? How did they provide you with a picture of who God is? How can you do the same for your child?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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Place yourself in the presence of God, and take a moment to pray.

Envision your child. Recall the day they were born.

Remember what it felt like to meet them for the first time.

How did you feel? Excited? Scared? Overwhelmed?

Picture God looking at you as you look at them.

He says, "I've given you this child. Teach them how I love."

How does that challenge make you feel?

Sit with these questions:

How can I show my child the love God has for them today?

How can I help them experience the love of the Father who created them?

Then pray:

**God, thank you for the gift of our children.**

**Thank you for entrusting them to us.**

**Teach us how to teach them. Help us help them know you.**

**Help us first know you ourselves.**

**Make us keenly aware of your presence, your mercy, and your love,  
so that we can help our children know you too.**

**Amen.**

## Take-Home Activities



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Ask your parents to tell you the story of your Baptism. Then ask them to explain why they decided to have you brought into the Church. Ask for a photo of your Baptism, if they have one, for use in the next class.”

*Some tips:*

- Have your child’s Baptism photo and story ready to go.
- If you were not baptized or are not Catholic, be prepared to talk about why and also why Baptism was important to you for your child.



**Student Workbook prompt:** “The family is the domestic church. Pope Francis calls it ‘the school of love.’ With the rest of your family, create a mission statement for your ‘school of love.’ Your statement can include beliefs you live by and rules you agree to so that everyone can experience God’s love through one another. It can include traditions you share and things you want to accomplish together. Hang your mission statement where you will all see it.”

*Some tips:*

- Ask your children to list the values that are important to your family, and then guide them into making a mission statement out of each one.
- Have the older children help lead the charge on what to include in the mission statement so that younger children can follow their example.

## Tough Questions

### *Why are you [or Daddy or another family member] not baptized?*

How to approach this question:

The Baptism activity in this section may introduce a conversation about the faith lives of non-Catholic family members. Be willing and open to gently telling your child about other faiths.

One way to answer this question:

As Catholics, we believe that when we are baptized, we come into the one true Church. Christians, when they are baptized, still have a true Baptism if they are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. However,

some people don't believe the same things that we do. Many religions don't practice Baptism. That's why it's so important that we share our faith as baptized Catholics or Christians.

### *Do we have to listen to everything the Church teaches?*

How to approach this question:

Your child is questioning authority, which is completely natural and leads to excellent conversation. We often tend to look at rules as confining or as obstacles to our happiness. You give your child rules and boundaries because you have life experience, and you know what is best for them. Likewise, God gives us rules because he knows us better than we know ourselves, and he knows what will lead us to ultimate happiness with him. In the same way, God gives us rules and boundaries because he loves us. He gives us the Church to help us follow these rules. You may not always agree with these rules, and it is okay to wrestle with them and talk to God about your struggle. And our world has lots to say about the Church. Nonetheless, Canon 750 in the *Code of Canon Law* reads, "A person must believe with divine and Catholic faith all those things contained in the word of God, written or handed on, that is, in the one deposit of faith entrusted to the Church, and at the same time proposed as divinely revealed either by the solemn magisterium of the Church."

One way to answer this question:

The Magisterium of the Church is the teaching authority of the Church, which guides us and helps us be close to God. Listening to what the Church teaches helps us live holy lives and become stronger in our relationship with God. It is not about having to follow rules; it is about knowing that God knows us best because he created us. He put the rules there to keep us safe and happy.

## **Additional Resources**

- Nicodemus visits Jesus: John 3:1–21
- Scripture is inspired by God: 2 Timothy 3:16
- The promise of the Holy Spirit: John 14:16–31
- Fr. Josh Johnson, "Orthodox Christians and Catholic Rites, Music in Mass, and the Necessity of Baptism," *Ask Fr. Josh* podcast, on Ascension Presents ([media.ascensionpress.com](http://media.ascensionpress.com)). Baptism question starts at 21.28.
- Fr. Mike Schmitz, "Why Catholics Use Scripture and Tradition" (video), on Ascension Presents



# Why Did Jesus Give Us the Sacraments?

## Lesson 4.1 THE SACRAMENTS BRING US GOD'S LOVE

*“For the law was given through Moses;  
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”*

– John 1:17



### Parent's Prayer

God our Father, you sent your Son to be born into a family so that Mary and Joseph would love their child and he would redeem us all. Help me to be like them, to model our family on the example of the Holy Family. Help me to grow in the spirit of penance so that I may lead my child by example and grow in holiness with them in this process of sacramental preparation. Amen.

### Bird's-Eye View

In this lesson your child will

- Know that Jesus instituted the sacraments to nurture his life in us.
- Be able to define *sacrament* and list all seven sacraments.
- Understand that God uses physical signs to give us grace, which we cannot see.
- Describe how we encounter Christ in the sacraments.

## In Kid-Speak:

*In our last lesson, we learned that Jesus gave us the Church. Today we will learn how the sacraments help us to be close to Jesus and to receive God's grace.*

## Lesson Recap:

- Grace is the free gift of God's love. By grace, God shares his own life with us.
- A sacrament is an outward sign of God's grace at work in us. We experience the sacraments with our physical senses. We also experience them in our souls. The grace we receive in the sacraments changes us in ways we cannot see.
- Jesus himself instituted (started) the seven sacraments. They are Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance and Reconciliation, the Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders.
- It is important to have the proper disposition when we receive the sacraments. Jesus himself comes to us in the sacraments, so we should receive them with an open and grateful heart.
- When we sin, we place a barrier between ourselves and God. We must not receive Jesus in the Eucharist when we are separated from him or our hearts are hiding from him. That is why, when we have committed a serious sin, we need to go to Reconciliation before receiving Jesus in Holy Communion.
- In all the sacraments, the priest stands in for Christ, acting *in persona Christi*, which means "in the person of Christ." His hands are Christ's hands. And his voice is Christ's voice.
- The sacraments help us encounter God himself.

## Make It Personal |

Call to mind your own experiences of the sacraments. Can you remember your first Holy Communion or first Reconciliation? Do you remember the day your child was baptized? Or your wedding day? Sit for a moment in those memories.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- Where in these experiences did you feel you encountered God's love for you?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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## Make It Personal II

The Church gives us the gift of the sacraments. This is how Jesus' salvific mission is continued on earth today. It is a beautiful gift that you are giving your child, empowering them to receive and encounter God through the sacraments.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- Why was it important to you that your child receive Baptism and now First Reconciliation?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the question above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the question.

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Place yourself in the presence of God, and take a moment to pray.

Call to mind the memories of your own sacramental experiences.

Spend a minute really feeling the presence and love of God that you experienced.

Imagine that you are walking your child into that same love, that same presence, that same mercy. What do you say to them?

Then pray:

**God, I'm here to give you this child.**

**I know that you love them more than I ever could, because you are perfect.**

**Help me to lead them, guide them, and shape them to be the person  
you created them to be.**

**Help me to introduce them to you, to be a reminder of your love  
for them and your purpose for their lives.**

**Amen.**

## Take-Home Activities



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Ask your parents about their favorite sacrament or their favorite memory from their first Reconciliation or first Holy Communion.”

*Some tips:*

- Prepare ahead of time by having a photo from your first Communion handy if possible.
- This is a great time to ask godparents to write a note to your child that you could present to them.



**Student Workbook prompt:** “When you get home, show your parents the family sign or symbol you drew today, and tell them about it. Then ask them to tell you about a symbol that is important to them. You can also talk about how a symbol and a sacrament are different.”

*Some tips:*

- Have a symbol that you feel tells the story of your family or God’s love ready to share with your child.
- If your child is struggling to communicate the difference between a symbol and sacrament, prepare to talk about how a sacrament *really* confers grace; it doesn’t just symbolize it.

## Tough Questions

### *What if I am not sorry for my sins?*

How to approach this question:

It is important to remember that children often struggle to see how their actions impact those around them. They may be asking about particular situations in which they thought they knew better than a classmate—for example, “Somebody said something mean, and so I hit them, but I don’t feel bad about it because they deserved it.” Or “I cheated on my reading test, but I don’t feel guilty because the whole class was cheating.” This is not an indication of how good or bad your child is. Many things contribute to a child’s developing understanding of justice. Remind your child that the most important relationship they have is their relationship with God. When they sin, they are hurting that relationship.

One way to answer this question:

It can be hard to be sorry for things you don’t think were wrong. But remember, Jesus says that what we’ve done to others, we’ve done to him. Your sins affect others, but most of all, they affect your relationship with God. Ask Jesus to help you see how your sin affected your relationship with him.

### *I’m afraid that the priest will judge me. My stomach hurts when I think about telling him all my sins. How do I know he won’t be mad at me for my sins?*

How to approach this question:

Your child might feel like their sins are absolutely terrible. Sometimes we have the impulse to say, “Your sins are not the worst the priest has heard. He’s heard confessions from really bad people before.” Try to avoid this; trivializing sin isn’t helpful to your child. Instead, let your child know that priests are overjoyed to hear confessions, not because of the sins but because of what happens after we confess them. The priest is grateful for the contrite heart that brings us to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and for his ability to forgive those sins.

One way to answer this question:

Our priest would never judge you. And that feeling in your stomach is normal. It's not easy to sit across from someone and tell them all the things you did wrong, but the priest is so happy that you came to receive the sacrament. It means you feel bad for your sins and want to love Jesus better. The priest gets to be the instrument through which Christ forgives your sins. He gets to see God's children coming back to him. What could be better than that?

## Additional Resources

- Fr. Mike Schmitz, "Going to Confession for the First Time in a Long Time" (video), on Ascension Presents ([media.ascensionpress.com](http://media.ascensionpress.com))

## Lesson 4.2 THE SACRAMENTS THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*

– Matthew 28:19



### Parent's Prayer

**God our Father, you sent your Son to be born into a family so that Mary and Joseph would love their child and he would redeem us all. Help me to be like them, to model our family on the example of the Holy Family. Help me to grow in the spirit of penance so that I may lead my child by example and grow in holiness with them in this process of sacramental preparation. Amen.**

## Bird's-Eye View

In this lesson your child will

- Understand why we are baptized.
- Be able to name the different categories of sacraments—Sacraments of Initiation, Healing, and Sacraments at the Service of Communion.
- Be able to name the Sacraments of Initiation and explain how each welcomes us into the Church and the family of God.
- Identify the Sacraments of Healing and describe how they repair our relationship with God.

## In Kid-Speak:

*Today we will learn about the seven sacraments that Jesus gives us through the Church. We will also come to understand the different categories of sacraments and what each category means. We will pay special attention to the Sacraments of Initiation and Healing and the way they help us be who we were created to be.*

## Lesson Recap:

- Before he ascended to heaven, Jesus sent his Apostles into the world to preach the Good News and “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
- Baptism is one of the Sacraments of Initiation. These sacraments welcome us into the family of God. The other Sacraments of Initiation are Confirmation and the Eucharist.
- Baptism cleanses us of Original Sin (and of actual sins for those baptized after the age of reason) and helps us begin our journey toward relationship with God.
- Baptism makes us followers of Christ and adopted sons and daughters of God the Father. We are baptized in Jesus’ own words: “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (the Trinitarian formula).
- Confirmation strengthens us with the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that we can be faithful followers of Christ and his witnesses in the world.
- The Eucharist is the source and the summit of the Catholic faith. When we receive Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, we truly truly receive all of him—Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. The Eucharist nourishes our hearts and bodies so that we can be more like God.
- The Sacraments of Healing—Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick—heal us by cleansing us of sin and reconciling us to God. They give us strength in times of serious illness or approaching death.
- In Reconciliation (Confession), the priest acts in the place of Jesus. He absolves us of our sins and gives a penance, a sacrifice to repair the harm from our sins. The absolution the priest gives means “pardon and peace.” Through it, Jesus forgives us, heals us, and gives us the grace to do better. He reconciles us with God and with the Church.
- The Sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders help us serve others and God and are called the Sacraments at the Service of Communion. These sacraments give us special graces to help us fulfill our vocation (our calling from God) to bring others to Christ.

## Make It Personal I

The Sacrament of Baptism makes us sons and daughters of God. God wants to be in relationship with us. Through Baptism we are cleansed of Original Sin, but we still have the capacity to sin, which is why we need God's grace and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### Take a Moment and Reflect:

- When I sin, where do I turn? Do I look for God as a loving Father, or do I try to make everything better myself?

### Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal. Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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## Make It Personal II

God gave us the Church, and he gives us himself through the Holy Eucharist so that we may stay close to him and have his life within us.

### Take a Moment and Reflect:

- What does this tell you about the way God the Father loves you? Do you take the time to build a personal relationship with God?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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Place yourself in the presence of God, and take a moment to pray.

Take a moment to picture the story of the Prodigal Son that you read today.

Place yourself in the story. Imagine a time when you were far from God.

Let yourself envision God waiting for you daily at the edge of the property until you decide to return.

Take a moment to soak in the risk that God takes in allowing you to stray from him, in giving you freedom.

Picture yourself returning to God after you have turned away. Imagine his reaction, his response. What does he say? What does he do? How do you feel?

Then pray:

**God, thank you for being a father.**

**Thank you for calling me your child.**

**Thank you for loving me enough to give me freedom and  
for waiting for me to return to you.**

**Help me to parent as you do—as a gentle guide, a waiting parent,  
a steadfast presence.**

Help me to return to you, brave, willing, and knowing that my Father loves me.

When my own children turn away, help me to welcome them back  
with open arms, with warmth and enthusiasm.

Give me the grace to be the parent my child needs,  
a parent who is first raised by you, Lord.

Amen.

## Take-Home Activities



**Student Workbook prompt:** “You have learned about some of our saint friends on the journey. At Confirmation, you will choose a saint to imitate and pray to. Ask your parents what saints they chose for their Confirmations.”

*A tip:*

- Recall ahead of time your Confirmation saint and the reasons you chose this saint. Share these reasons with your child. Also share with them other saints you have a devotion to and why.



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Ask your parents to tell you what their first Communion, first Reconciliation, or Confirmation was like. Ask them if they were baptized as a baby or later in life.”

*A tip:*

- If you are not fully initiated into the Church, be prepared to speak about your own experiences. Consider asking a family member who is fully initiated to share their experiences with your child.

## Tough Questions

*If God loves us, why does he let us sin?*

How to approach this question:

This is a great question, and a crucial one in helping kids navigate their relationship with God. Your child sees the guidance of adults in his or her life. They recognize that those they love often prevent them from making serious mistakes.

God tries to protect us from sin by giving us good parents, teachers, and role models. God never wants us to sin, but even more, he never wants to control us. And so, God permits sin because he wants us to love him freely. In our sin, we need to reach out and find God, and he's always there for us to come back to.

One way to answer this question:

To fully love, we have to be free not to love. If someone controlled everything you did, you would be like a robot following orders. You wouldn't be free to make your own choices or mistakes. But you also wouldn't be free to love or laugh or enjoy life, because you'd have to follow that person's orders. God loves us so much that he wants a real relationship with us. He doesn't want to control us or force us to love him. He wants us to be free to make our own choices and mistakes, free to love him and not just follow his orders. When we sin, we need to go back to him, be forgiven, and grow in holiness.

***Why do we have to be brought into God's family through Baptism?  
Aren't we already his children because we are created by him?***

How to approach this question:

This question can be asked in a number of ways. Your child might be caught up in Baptism being necessary for salvation and worried about those who are not baptized. Because of the Fall, we lost our original holiness. When we are born, we are God's beloved creatures, but we are born into a broken relationship because of Original Sin. Baptism heals us and changes us. It is only through Baptism that we become God's children. Through Baptism we become partakers of the divine nature. Through the Holy Spirit, God shares his nature with us. This isn't exclusive—it's the idea of partaking in a tradition that makes us part of the family. In fact, we want the whole world to be baptized!

One way to answer this question:

When we are baptized and confirmed, we are brought into the Church and then strengthened in the gifts of the Spirit that make us evangelistic, missionary disciples. All people are created by God, but Jesus tells us that there are things we need to be part of the family in his Catholic Church. We start with Baptism, but there are other parts too. At Mass, we receive the Eucharist. We pray together. It's like the way, in our family, we have dinner together. These things make us fuller participants in God's family.

## Additional Resources

- One people in faith: Galatians 3:23–29
- *Catechism*, paragraphs 1267–1270
- Fr. Mike Schmitz, “What Does the Holy Spirit Actually Do? (Super Hero Analogy)” (video), on Ascension Presents ([media.ascensionpress.com](http://media.ascensionpress.com))
- Fr. Chris Alar, “What Forgiveness Is NOT” (video), on Ascension Presents



# Why Did Jesus Give Us the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

## Lesson 5.1 OUR NEED FOR FORGIVENESS

*“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it?”*

– Luke 15:4



### Parent's Prayer

God our Father, you sent your Son to be born into a family so that Mary and Joseph would love their child and he would redeem us all. Help me to be like them, to model our family on the example of the Holy Family. Help me to grow in the spirit of penance so that I may lead my child by example and grow in holiness with them in this process of sacramental preparation. Amen.

## Bird's-Eye View

In this lesson your child will

- Learn that when we get lost because of sin, God always seeks us and wants us to return to him.
- Be able to name the two types of sin—venial and mortal sin—and describe the difference.
- Understand what it means when we say that the priest stands *in persona Christi* and that when he gives us absolution, our sins are truly forgiven by God.
- Understand what the “seal of Confession” means.

## In Kid-Speak:

Today we will learn that God always loves us, even when we do something wrong. We will see that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is the sacrament of God's mercy, and we will learn what happens when we receive the sacrament.

## Lesson Recap:

- When we sin, we get separated from God. We get lost. God looks for us and does not rest until he finds us.
- A sin is what we do (or fail to do) when we know what God wants and we choose to disobey him. Sin always harms our friendship with God.
- Some sins are more serious than others. Mortal sins separate us from God. They destroy sanctifying grace, which is the grace we received at Baptism. Sanctifying grace is with us permanently unless we commit a mortal sin. We must confess mortal sins to a priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Venial sins are less serious sins. They weaken our friendship with God, but they do not separate us from him completely. We still have God's sanctifying grace in our souls, but it is weaker. Venial sins can be forgiven through prayer, especially through the Mass, and by receiving Holy Communion.
- Temptation is our attraction to sin. Temptation leads us to want to sin even though we know it is wrong. This can make it difficult for us to choose what is right. God always helps us choose what is right if we ask him.
- When we sin, we should feel sorry for our sins, but we can also trust in the promise of God's mercy. Mercy is kindness we do not deserve. It is love in action.
- During the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we confess our sins to a priest who stands *in persona Christi*, which means that when he says the words of absolution, it is Jesus himself forgiving us.
- We resolve to make amends—to not commit these sins again and to fix the damage our sins have done.
- The priest cannot tell our sins to anyone ever, because he is bound by the seal of Confession.

## Make It Personal I

Consider the last time you went to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. What was that experience like? How did you feel?

**Take a Moment and Reflect:**

- How have you encountered Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

**Jot It Down:**

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
 Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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**Make It Personal II**

This week, your child is learning about sin, conversion, and reconciliation. Conversion is a lifelong process where God calls us back to himself and helps us become the people he created us to be.

**Take a Moment and Reflect:**

- What moments of conversion have you experienced in your own life? Where can you see God's hand in those moments?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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Place yourself in the presence of God, and take a moment to pray.

Imagine God looking at you.

Try to soak in the way he feels about you, the love he has for you.

Then consider the things in your own life that are standing between you and God. What is getting in the way of your relationship with him? Be honest.

Take a moment and talk with God about the things coming between you. Make a plan to root these things out.

Then pray:

**Lord, thank you for seeking my heart.**

**Thank you for loving me enough to wait for me to return to you.**

**Reveal to me what is keeping me from you.**

**Help me root out whatever is in the way of our relationship.**

**Give me the courage to step out in faith toward conversion.**

**Amen.**

## Take-Home Activities



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Tell your parents the story of St. Faustina, then ask them to tell you the story of a time when they, like St. Faustina, felt God’s mercy and love.”

*A tip:*

- Be honest in an age-appropriate way with your children. It is healthy and helpful for them to see that your path of discipleship is a journey, just like theirs!



**Student Workbook prompt:** “With your family, identify three ways you can practice peace and reconciliation together. Be sure to do this in a kind and gentle way. Promise to work on these things together in the coming week.”

*A tip:*

- This is a great time to gently address scenarios that are frequently problematic in your home!

## Tough Questions

### *Do I need to tell the priest ALL my sins? What if I forget some?*

How to approach this question:

Your child understands that repentance is important but wants to know what happens if he or she leaves out particularly embarrassing or upsetting sins. They are also nervous about forgetting. Kids forget things. Adults forget things. Remember that the Lord is merciful, and a contrite heart is sorry for all of its sins—not just the ones we can remember.

One way to answer this question:

If we forget some and it is an honest mistake, that is okay. At the end of Confession, we pray an Act of Contrition. In this prayer, we usually say something like “I am sorry for all my sins.” This means that even if you forget something, you’re showing God that you are sorry for every single one. It can be tempting to leave sins out on purpose because you are embarrassed, but remember, the priest is not there to judge; he is there to forgive you. It may help to close your eyes and picture yourself confessing your sins to Jesus, who loves you, and who wants to forgive you. If you need help remembering your sins, you can write them down on a piece of paper and take it with you into the confessional.

## *Can the priest REALLY not share what I say with anyone else?*

How to approach this question:

This is another question that often gets stretched to extreme what-ifs, such as “What if I confessed to something really bad?” or “What if I hurt someone or killed someone?” Try to navigate this conversation before getting to extremes, because the answer is always the same. The priest cannot tell your sins. Emphasize that priests have dedicated their whole lives to their ministry and to properly performing the sacraments. If they were to repeat a confession outside of the confessional, they could be excommunicated. Assure your child that no one will ever hear their confession except the priest.

One way to answer this question:

Yes! All confessions are subject to the seal of Confession. The priest cannot share what you say with anyone else, no matter what! No one will ever know what you told the priest—not even me! In fact, the Church takes this so seriously that if the priest did say anything, he faces the possibility of not being allowed to be a priest anymore. The seal of Confession reassures us that only God knows our sins, and this helps us feel confident in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

## **Additional Resources**

- *Catechism*, paragraphs 1451–1458
- *Code of Canon Law*, canon 983
- Fr. Mike Schmitz, “Making a Good Confession” (video), on Ascension Presents ([media.ascensionpress.com](http://media.ascensionpress.com))
- Fr. Mike Schmitz, “The Price of Forgiveness” (video), on Ascension Presents
- Fr. Mike Schmitz, “What Can You Do When Another Won’t Forgive?” (video), on Ascension Presents

## Lesson 5.2 OUR FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

*“Let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead,  
and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”*

– Luke 15:23–24



### Parent's Prayer

**God our Father, you sent your Son to be born into a family so that Mary and Joseph would love their child and he would redeem us all. Help me to be like them, to model our family on the example of the Holy Family. Help me to grow in the spirit of penance so that I may lead my child by example and grow in holiness with them in this process of sacramental preparation. Amen.**

## Bird's-Eye View

In this lesson your child will

- Become familiar with the parable of the Good Samaritan.
- Understand the importance of being sorry for our sins.
- Understand that though we are sinful, God is merciful.
- See how the Sacrament of Reconciliation prepares their hearts to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist.

## In Kid-Speak:

*Today we will look at how important we are to God and why the Sacrament of Reconciliation is so important for us. The sacrament teaches us about God and his mercy. It returns us to him. And it purifies our hearts so that we are ready to receive Jesus in the Eucharist.*

## Lesson Recap:

- The father's love for the Prodigal Son is like God's love for us. When we turn to God, he is there. When we seek his forgiveness and his mercy, he rejoices.
- When we are sorry for our sins, we can receive God's mercy. Sorrow for our sins is called contrition.
- When we confess our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we experience God's mercy. We come to know him better and love him more. This return to God after we sin is called repentance and conversion.
- When we do not confess a sin, it weighs us down. It makes us uncomfortable and unhappy. We may try to get rid of it by ourselves or try to forget it. Sometimes we tell ourselves it was not really a sin. We may start to judge other people so we feel better about ourselves. Everything gets complicated.
- Sin is not something we can fix on our own. We need God's mercy and love, which are poured out for us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- When the priest absolves us, we are truly free from sin. Absolution reconciles us with God and restores his grace in our souls.
- When we get ready to receive the Jesus in the Eucharist, our hearts want to welcome him. The Sacrament of Reconciliation prepares our hearts by absolving our sins and restoring our relationship with God. We are in a state of grace and can receive Jesus in Holy Communion with joy.

## Make It Personal |

Part of the core teaching of our Faith is that God is Father, and that he is a Father who desires a relationship with us.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- What are the things you want for your children? What do you want most for their lives? Why do you desire these things for them?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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## Make It Personal II

Consider your answers above. Take a moment and recognize that God views you with the same parental love that you have for your children.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- What do you think God wants for YOU? What does he desire to give you? What does God want your life to look like?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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Place yourself in the presence of God, and take a moment to pray.

Imagine God creating you at the beginning of time.

What did he envision? Why did he think the world needed you?

Imagine what purpose God had for you. Picture him planning your life and attending to every detail.

Then pray:

**God, thank you for being a good Father.**

**Thank you for the way you love me.**

**Thank you for the way you love my children.**

**Help me to see what you desire for me.**

**Help me to be courageous enough to pursue your purpose for me.**

**Help me to parent like you, Lord.**

**Help me to lead my child to your love.**

**Amen.**

## Take-Home Activities



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Tell your parents the parable of the Prodigal Son. Can you think of a time when they showed you the same love as the father in the story? Tell them about it.”

*A tip:*

- Be ready to accept whatever your child has to say! Pay attention to the ways they remember you’ve loved them and how they receive love.



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Share with your parents what you learned about the Prodigal Son. Then create a list of things you think they want for you. Have a discussion about why they want these things for you.”

*A tip:*

- Your child may struggle to come up with a list of your dreams for them. Be ready to be open, honest, and vulnerable. Your child will be ready to engage!

## Tough Questions

### *Will I go to hell if I commit a mortal sin?*

How to approach this question:

The concept of hell is especially tricky. The Church does not definitively say that there is a single person in hell. This is because men are capable of conversion in the last moments of their lives. The Church does teach, however, that God doesn't “damn” anybody to hell; rather, we choose this eternal separation from God in the choices we make. Redirect your child's question to reflect what they've learned about sin, Confession, and mercy.

One way to answer this question:

Hell is separation from God forever. God desires a relationship with us, and he wants us to spend eternity with him in heaven. Therefore, God does not send us to hell; we choose to go there because we choose to separate ourselves from him through mortal sin and the choices we make. But God is always calling us back to himself through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### *Why did the Prodigal Son leave? Why was his brother so mad?*

How to approach this question:

The Prodigal Son is a tricky story for anybody who has trouble forgiving. Your child is asking a valid question, not understanding why the Prodigal Son would abandon his home and waste all that money. This is practical. At the same time, your child may not understand fairness, justice, love, and generosity, so the dynamic of the older brother and the father is difficult for them. Be gentle, use examples that they will understand, and emphasize that love is forgiving.

One way to answer this question:

The Prodigal Son left his father's house because he was unsatisfied. Many children leave their parents' home, and someday you will too. The son received his inheritance and left to spend it on things that hurt his soul. He knew he had wasted all the treasure his father had given him. Imagine that I gave you extra allowance to buy a book, but you decided to spend it on candy and keep it a secret. It would take a lot of courage to admit you did the wrong thing. Imagine that the other brother bought a book like he was supposed to. He didn't get any candy, and he was mad that the father wasn't upset with his brother who bought candy. But the father loves the brothers equally. This feels unfair to the older brother, but he should know that love isn't about fairness; it's a gift, freely given and freely received.

## Additional Resources

- Forgiveness and mercy: Matthew 18:21–35
- *Catechism*, paragraphs 1855–1861
- Fr. Mike Schmitz, “Is Judas in Hell?” (video), on Ascension Presents ([media.ascensionpress.com](http://media.ascensionpress.com))
- Fr. Mark Toups, “The Prodigal You” (video), on Ascension Presents
- Fr. Mark-Mary, “What Not to Do After Mortal Sin” (video), on Ascension Presents
- Mari Pablo, “Why You Need to Know Your Go-To Sins (Habitual Sin)” (video), on Ascension Presents
- Fr. Mike Schmitz, “Mortal vs. Venial Sin” (video), on Ascension Presents



# How Do We Live Out the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

## Lesson 6.1 OUR FIRST RECONCILIATION

*“Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*

*Jesus said to them again,*

*‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.’*

*And when he said this, he breathed on them,*

*and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.*

*If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven.’”*

– John 20:20–22



### Parent's Prayer

God our Father, you sent your Son to be born into a family so that Mary and Joseph would love their child and he would redeem us all. Help me to be like them, to model our family on the example of the Holy Family. Help me to grow in the spirit of penance so that I may lead my child by example and grow in holiness with them in this process of sacramental preparation. Amen.

## Bird's-Eye View

In this lesson your child will

- Learn the story of Peter's denial of Jesus and Jesus' forgiveness.
- Become familiar with an examination of conscience based on the Ten Commandments and learn how to use it to prepare for their first Confession.

- Understand the different ritual elements of the Sacrament of Reconciliation—contrition, confession, penance, and absolution.
- Know what is expected of them in Confession.

## In Kid-Speak:

*Today we will learn about how to get ready to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We will also learn what happens during the sacrament. This lesson will help us to be confident when we receive the sacrament.*

## Lesson Recap:

- Jesus gave us the Sacrament of Reconciliation because he knows we are not perfect. When we go to Confession, we are showing Jesus that we love him and need his forgiveness. He forgives us and shows us how much he loves us too.
- Receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation is the only ordinary way we can be forgiven for our mortal sins.
- Before we go to Confession, we need to know what sins we have committed and be sorry for them. An examination of conscience helps with this.
- An examination of conscience is a list of questions about things we have done wrong and good things we have failed to do. It helps us know our sins and make a good confession.
- We make our confession in a confessional, either behind a screen or face to face with the priest.
- We tell the priest our sins, he gives us a penance, we pray an Act of Contrition, and he gives us absolution. When we leave the confessional, we do our penance right away or as soon as possible.

## Make It Personal I

The daily examen is a prayer practice taught by St. Ignatius Loyola, in which we meditate on our day so we can become aware of how we are living our call to holiness.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

Let's walk through a daily examen. Consider your day, then:

1. Become aware of God's presence.
2. Review the day with gratitude.
3. Pay attention to your emotions.
4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.
5. Look toward tomorrow.

As you did the examen, what struck you? What might God be trying to tell you?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal. Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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## Make It Personal II

Practices like the examen and regular Confession help us to be closer to God, to avoid sin, and to have a healthier relationship with others.

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- How can you include these practices in your daily life? What roadblocks might you encounter?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal.  
Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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Place yourself in the presence of God, and take a moment to pray.

Imagine the things that came forward in your examen. Specifically hold on to the things that made you upset, uncomfortable, or unhappy.

Picture yourself placing them at the foot of the Cross and surrendering them to Jesus.

Then pray:

**Lord, I am so grateful for your love.**

**I am so grateful for your wisdom.**

**Help me to become ever more aware of the things  
in my life that lead me away from you.**

**Give me the strength to root out these habits  
and draw nearer to your love.**

**Amen.**

## Take-Home Activities



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Share with your parents what you have learned about Reconciliation this week. Then tell them the part you are most excited about and the part you are most nervous about.”



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Talk to your parents about the examinations of conscience. Keep asking questions. Your parents may be able to give you more examples of things to think about.”

*Some tips:*

- Encourage your child to think about his or her relationships with family members and friends. Are there times they could have been more loving toward these family members or friends?
- Look through the examinations of conscience in the Reconciliation book (*Renewed by Jesus*, pages 51–77), with your child!
- As we get closer to the time when your child will receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, your child may become more and more nervous about the process. This is totally normal. Calm their nerves by going over the process with them and making sure they understand that the priest will help them if they forget what to do!

## Tough Questions

***Why do I need to confess my sins to a priest? Why can't I just say them to God in my heart?***

How to approach this question:

This is a very common question in non-Catholic Christian communities. Many Christians will argue against Confession because of the authority of the priest. Remember to tell your child about how Jesus set the hierarchy of the Church in Matthew 16. The priests were given this task, this obligation, for a reason. “Because Jesus said so” isn’t a sufficient answer, but you are able to use the scriptural basis to support your answer.

One way to answer this question:

In the Gospels, Jesus tells Peter that “whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). With these words, Jesus gives Peter, and the priests of our Church today, the authority to forgive sins. When the priest says the words of absolution, he is

acting *in persona Christi*, so it is really Jesus who is forgiving our sins. Also, saying our sins out loud to another person holds us accountable for trying harder to avoid sin and helps us receive advice from the priest who is hearing our confession. Confessing our sins to God is good, but we may doubt whether God truly forgave us. With Confession, we hear the words of absolution, and we can be assured that we are forgiven!

### ***Why does an examination of conscience ask me all these questions?***

How to approach this question:

A good examination of conscience is incredibly thorough. Your child will be asked questions he or she probably didn't think of before. An adult examination of conscience might have you looking at your actions and asking, "Is that really a sin?" But this is for a reason. We should want to know all of the things that prevent us from being as close to God as possible. Emphasize that the examination of conscience is not meant to point out every wrongdoing and make the penitent feel bad. It is thorough so that we can become aware of our sins and avoid them in the future!

One way to answer this question:

Sometimes we don't know that our actions are sinful. Sometimes, even acts that seem normal can be harmful to our relationship with God. Grown-ups say bad words all the time, but those words aren't helpful to our friendship with God. We need that reminder so that we can be more aware of when we say or do things that can hurt us. The examination of conscience helps us to notice our sinful behaviors and start trying to change them. You never know you're doing something wrong until someone tells you it's wrong!

## **Additional Resources**

- Fr. Mike Schmitz, "Why Confess My Sins to a Priest?" (video), on Ascension Presents ([media.ascensionpress.com](http://media.ascensionpress.com))
- Fr. Mark-Mary, "An Easy Way to Do a Daily Examen" (video), on Ascension Presents
- Jeff Cavins, "Examination of Conscience for Fathers" (podcast), on Ascension Presents

## Lesson 6.2 LIVING THE LIFE GOD WANTS FOR US

*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

– 1 John 1:9



### Parent's Prayer

God our Father, you sent your Son to be born into a family so that Mary and Joseph would love their child and he would redeem us all. Help me to be like them, to model our family on the example of the Holy Family. Help me to grow in the spirit of penance so that I may lead my child by example and grow in holiness with them in this process of sacramental preparation. Amen.

### Bird's-Eye View

In this lesson your child will

- Learn what “being called by God” means.
- Recognize their baptismal call to holiness and consider how to live that call.
- Understand that the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us grow in holiness.
- Learn that virtues are habits that help us strive for holiness.

### In Kid-Speak:

*Now that we have learned how to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and what it does for us, we will learn about our call to holiness. We will also learn how Reconciliation helps us live happy and holy lives so that we can be the person God created us to be!*

## Lesson Recap:

- God knows each of us. He placed us on earth for a purpose that only our unique gifts and calling can bring about.
- We are called to be holy. God created us to be happiest when we are close to him. This is what holiness is—being close to him. It doesn't mean being perfect.
- Holiness is loving God and being close to him. It means following Christ and being his disciple. It means doing our best to love God, trust him, and say yes to him.
- Seeking forgiveness often in the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us live out our call to holiness and fulfill God's plan for us.
- Reconciliation heals us and strengthens us. The more mercy we receive, the more we have to share with others.
- Virtues are holy habits. The theological virtues are faith, hope, and love. The cardinal virtues are justice, prudence, courage, and temperance.

## Make It Personal I

In this lesson your child will be introduced to God's Word in Jeremiah 29:11:

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

## Take a Moment and Reflect:

- How does it feel to hear God speaking these words over your life? What do you think God's plan for you has been? What is he asking you to do that only you can do?

## Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal. Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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## Make It Personal II

Now that you have reflected on Jeremiah 29:11, consider that God speaks these words over the life of your child as well.

### Take a Moment and Reflect:

- What specific gifts, talents, and abilities do you see in your child? How do you think God might use them to give him glory and to bring his love into the world? What do you think God's plan for your child might look like?

### Jot It Down:

Use these lines to answer the questions above, or you can write in a separate journal. Take time to sit with what is stirring in your heart when you think about the questions.

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Place yourself in the presence of God, and take a moment to pray.

Allow your mind to picture God creating you at the beginning of time. What purpose did he have in mind? What gifts does he give you? What calling does he place specifically on your heart? What can only you do for the world?

Now picture God, years later, creating your child. What purpose did he have in mind? What gifts? What calling? How do those look in comparison with the plan you have for your child's life?

Sit with that image.

Now pray:

**God, thank you for loving us enough to create us with purpose.**

**Thank you for giving me a shape and a plan for my life.**

**Thank you for giving me gifts and talents, abilities and callings.**

**Thank you for doing the same for my child.**

**Lord, help me realize that my plan and your plan, in my own life and in the life of this child, may not always be the same.**

**Lord, give me the trust to surrender to your will for our lives.**

**God, help me believe that you are a good father,  
that you only want our good,**

**that you love my child more than I could ever love  
them because you are perfect.**

**Help me to trust in what you have planned for them,  
and lead them to do the same.**

**Amen.**

## Take-Home Activities



**Student Workbook prompt:** “When you get in the car, ask your family how they would want to be remembered if they became saints. What would they want to be known for? What would they be the patron saint of?”

*A tip:*

- Take a moment to prepare your answer before they ask!



**Student Workbook prompt:** “Tell your parents what you learned about holiness. Ask them to identify what gifts you have that they think make you holy. Then tell them what gifts you see in them that make them holy.”

*A tip:*

- Be prepared to speak to specific gifts, abilities, and strengths that you see in your child, especially ones you haven't shared with them before. Think especially of places where they may doubt themselves. This is a privileged conversation that you may not get to have with them again!

## Tough Questions

### *Why do I have to go to Reconciliation more than once?*

How to approach this question:

Confession isn't easy. It makes us vulnerable, because sometimes we aren't fully aware of the sacred reality in front of us. We see a man in vestments, whom we see on the altar every Sunday and maybe around the parish during the week, and we have to tell him all the things we've done wrong. Let your child know that you empathize with them, but also tell them about the gift of Reconciliation. We should *want* to go back and confess our sins—to be filled with grace and come to love God more. After all, Jesus didn't give us this gift to only use once. He knew we would need it!

One way to answer this question:

Jesus was thinking of us when he gave us the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He knew we would need it. Not only that, but he died to forgive our sins forever, so why would we not take advantage of this incredible mercy more often? Reconciliation is not about confessing what we have done wrong so that we feel better. Reconciliation is about having a relationship with Jesus.

Imagine that a good friend sends you an invitation to a birthday party, but you are too busy, you don't respond, and you don't go to the party. A week later, you run into your friend at the store. Your heart starts beating fast, you begin to sweat, and you want to run away. You don't mention that you missed the party, and your friend doesn't want to bring up the party and make you feel bad for not coming. Neither of you says anything, and you go on as normal, even though you are both hurting.

We never want to pretend and go on as normal with Jesus when we know we have messed up. Reconciliation is about honoring our friendship with Jesus and not letting too much time go by before we say sorry and begin anew.

### *What gifts do I have?*

How to approach this question:

Your child is asking earnestly how they can serve God. The years around First Reconciliation are incredibly formative for their self-esteem and their spiritual development. They want to know that God made them special. You can take this conversation and emphasize how growth in virtue helps with growth in individual gifts.

One way to answer this question:

You have many gifts. Some that I've noticed are [name two or three]. All your gifts are given to you from God, which is so amazing. God gives us gifts so we can give them back to him through serving the Church, our neighbors, and our families. As you get older, you'll keep growing in the virtues. Virtues are habitual dispositions, or habits, that help us to do good things. They include things like courage, prudence, and moderation. The virtues help us to strengthen our gifts, and working on our gifts helps us to grow in virtue! I am so excited to see how you keep becoming the person God made you to be, with all your talents!

## Additional Resources

- Fr. Mike Schmitz, "The Miracle of Confession" (video), on on Ascension Presents ([media.ascensionpress.com](http://media.ascensionpress.com))
- Fr. Mark-Mary, "God Has a Mission for You" (video), on Ascension Presents

## Meet the Author



**Sarah Kearns-Shutrop** is the director of formation at Immaculate Heart Academy in Washington Township (Bergen County), New Jersey. She holds a master of arts degree in moral and systematic theology from the University of Notre Dame and has worked in professional ministry for more than ten years. She is the founder of the Believe Conference, a Gospel-centered leadership conference for young women, and has served as a director of religious education, campus minister, theology chair, and theology teacher. Sarah has given many workshops on engaging the millennial Church and imagining digital catechesis. She lives in northern New Jersey with her husband, Kevin, and their children, Luke and Reese.