

COMING CLEAN

[confessing their sins — Proverbs 28]

THIS WEEK

Kids—like most human beings—find it hard to confess when they've done wrong. Sins can stay to haunt and make people feel guilty. That's one reason that the Bible urges confession. It's a healthy cleansing process—the beginning of mercy and forgiveness. There's no reality check like admitting their failures. This TalkSheet session will encourage your students to be honest about their spiritual failures. Your kids will be challenged to quickly admit their sins to God.

OPENER

You may want to use this illustration (or one like it) to start things off. Before your meeting, fill a backpack with some large rocks. On each rock, write a sin (either on the rock or a piece of tape on the rock)—examples include lying, cheating, stealing, swearing, etc. Zip up the backpack or bag. During your intro, ask for some volunteers to come up to the front of the room. Have them put the backpack on and describe how it feels to have the pack on. Make a master list of the words that they use to describe the weight or how it feel to have the pack on. Then open up the backpack and pull out the stones. Point out that each stone has something written on it—a sin that needs confessing. Point out that just like the backpack, unconfessed sin wears people down—it's a burden that they carry around. Use this activity to jumpstart your discussion on confessing sins, getting forgiveness, and letting God carry the load.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Is it easier or harder for your kids to hide or to conceal wrongdoing. Why? What does God think about confessions sins? How can this bring you closer to God?
2. What are the top five reasons why people try to cover up wrongdoing? What do your kids think is the worst way to try to cover something up? Why? You may want to ask for some volunteers to tell about a time when they covered up a wrongdoing and what happened.
3. Take a poll of your kids' answers. How effective do they think his punishment was? Ask if Alex's confession was valid, since it was forced. Will it keep him from stealing again? Does your group think Alex learned his lesson? Why or why not?
4. These verses discuss confession of sin and the uselessness of concealment. You may want to read the verses with the group and ask for volunteers to fill in the blanks on a whiteboard or poster board.

Point out that God is all-knowing—he knows when people mess up and sin. But he also wants to forgive and have mercy.

5. Talk about when and if people should confess their sins to another person and even ask for forgiveness. Who would your kids go to and why? How many of them would go to God first? If your kids want to talk with someone, what qualities do they look for in a confidant?

THE CLOSE

Following up from the intro, point out that God's taken sin—like the rocks—and thrown them into the deepest part of the sea. When people confess, their sins are gone. God lovingly offers forgiveness and mercy to those who learn the habit of confessing. And he's waiting for your kids to bring their distresses, concerns, and wrong doings to him. He knows about them anyway—and he's willing to listen. Encourage your kids to ask God for forgiveness—and if they need someone else to talk with, to find an adult (let them know that you're available, too). God forgives and forgets. Period. What's holding your kids back today?

MORE

- You may want to talk more about how holding sin in can affect trust and respect in relationships. How can unconfessed sin hurt a friendship, a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend, or relationships with parents? What happens when someone is caught in a sin? What happens when someone hurts someone else and doesn't ask that person for forgiveness? Challenge your kids to get right with the people that they've hurt and to get the burden of that sin off their back.
- To help your kids to appreciate the benefits of honesty, try this activity—note that you may want a high level of trust within your group. Remind your kids of the TalkSheet ground rule about confidentiality and group trust. Then ask your kids to share one sin or cover-up of a sin (or lie) that they wish they could erase and why. Maybe jumpstart this activity by telling them one of yours.