

# Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE OCIA

## INQUIRY SESSION: FORGIVENESS

### Inquiry Session (Approximately 60 minutes)

#### Prepare

You will need a flip chart or white board and markers for this session.

Set the space with chairs in a circle and in the center place a candle and a Bible. (Mark the Scripture citations noted in the participant materials.)

If needed, have name tags. Have some refreshments available.

#### Gather (10–15 minutes)

1. Greet the children as they arrive. Invite each child to share his or her name and something good that happened since the last time the group gathered.

Take time to find out how the children are doing.

Ask whether they had an experience of prayer or church since the last session.

2. Explain that the focus of today's session is forgiveness.

Share an experience of forgiveness from your own life, and then invite volunteers to share an experience of forgiveness from their lives.

3. Read together the **My Story** section of the participant page and discuss the question found there.

Ask the children whether there is anything in **My Story** that happens in their own relationships.

Invite volunteers to share examples, and list any common points on the flip chart or whiteboard.

#### Expand (15–20 minutes)

1. Read and discuss the **God's Story** section of the participant page.

2. Highlight the following discussion points:

- Everyone sins.
- God sent Jesus to save us, to heal us, and to heal the world. Jesus reconciles us with God.
- God is always ready to forgive us, no matter what sin we have committed.
- God does not hold our sins against us.

3. Explain that in the second part of the Our Father we pray: "and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Ask the children whether anyone knows the meaning of the word *trespass*. (*Trespass* means to offend, or to sin against.)

Invite volunteers to share what they think the phrase "and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" might mean.

4. Read aloud the parable of the Forgiving Father (Luke 15:11-32).

Invite the children to retell the parable in their own words.

5. After reading the parable of the Forgiving Father, invite the children to respond to the following questions:

*What does the parable tell us about Jesus? About God? About sin? About forgiveness?*

6. If time allows, read the three Scripture passages listed below, and again ask the children what each passage tells us about Jesus, about God, about sin, and about forgiveness.

**Luke 17:3-4** (Temptations to Sin)

**Luke 23:39-43** (The Crucifixion)

**John 1:29-34** (John the Baptist's Testimony to Jesus)

**Our Response (15–20 minutes)**

1. After discussing the parable of the Forgiving Father (and any or all of the additional three Scripture passages), discuss with the children what it means to truly say, “I’m sorry.”

Give examples of times when we might say “I’m sorry,” but our actions don’t match our words. Examples might include giving a fake smile, offering an insincere handshake, giving a quick or sloppy hug, or saying the words but not changing our behavior (teasing, bullying, name-calling, cheating, not doing our chores, and so on).

2. Tell in your own words the story of Saint Augustine, given on the participant page. After telling the story, ask the children the following questions:

*Do you think Saint Augustine was sorry for the way he used to behave when he was young? Why or why not?*

*What did Saint Augustine do to show that he was serious about changing his ways and about following Jesus?*

3. Summarize today’s discussion by inviting responses to the following questions:

*What is sin?*

*Why is it important to name our sins?*

*What do we know about God’s love and forgiveness?*

*How are we like the prodigal son in the parable of the Forgiving Father?*

4. Point out the **Faith Words** section of the participant page. Review the faith words with the children.

**Pray (3–5 minutes)**

Lead the children in an examination of conscience using these or similar words:

*Close your eyes. Think about choices you made in the last few days that were not good choices . . . maybe you disobeyed your parents or teachers . . . maybe you fought or argued with a friend . . . maybe you took something that belongs to your brother or sister . . . maybe you cheated on a test at school. . . . What do you want to do differently the next time something like this happens? . . . In your heart, tell God you are sorry and ask God to help you do better.*

Allow some time for each child to speak to God in the silence of his or her heart.

When they seem ready, invite the children to open their eyes.

Conclude by inviting the children to repeat after you:

Lord Jesus, Son of God,  
have mercy on me, a sinner.

*Rite of Penance 92*