

# Repent

LUKE 3:7-14; COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

3



## GOAL

Youth name actions of repentance and look at their own behaviors that may need to turn around.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- AT** Abstract Thinking
- C** Conversation
- CT** Concrete Thinking
- D** Drama
- G** Game
- M** Music
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

Loving God, help me lead this session with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Amen.

## THIS SESSION

*Repent* is a church word that means simply “turn around.” If we see our sin and say we are sorry, but do nothing to change our behavior, our confession is pretty useless. When we repent, we step back onto a path that leads to right relationship with God and one another. *Confess* and *repent* go hand in hand. Repentance is both an individual and a corporate endeavor. As individuals, we acknowledge individual behaviors that fall short of God’s desire for us, make individual confessions, and change behaviors. As members of faith communities and as citizens of society, we work to change policies and practices that are sinful and that harm neighbors and our environment.

## THE BIBLE STORY

John the Baptist preached repentance and gave some concrete actions people should do to produce fruit if they wished to draw near to God. He said that those with two shirts should share with one who has none and those with food to share should do so. Tax collectors should not collect more than they are required to, as was frequently the practice. The letter to the Colossians talks about clothing ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. A list of behaviors gives some concrete ideas for all of us to practice.

## CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

We can become so used to church language that it loses its potency. Most youth will be able to grasp the practical acts of repentance named in this session. The biblical texts offer concrete attitudes and behaviors that, in fact, most people in society agree to. Younger youth, wanting to look cool in front of peers, may have a difficult time knowing how to change bad behavior, especially if it aids their popularity. Older youth may have learned how to be liked without acting out. Yet changing behavior is a lifelong challenge for all.

## SESSION PREPARATION

- Post the four sheets of newsprint from session 1 (the three that list sins, the *Confess* sequence, and God’s desires; and the one with Psalm 51).

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Review the Infographic” (p. 20): Use the *Confess* infographic poster ([bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters](https://bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters), Year 1 Set).
- “Hear from a Church Leader” (p. 22): Invite a church leader or social worker to tell stories of repentance they have witnessed.

# GETTING STARTED

- Colored pens and pencils
- Paper

## CHANGING THE WORLD

Welcome youth as they arrive and give them a piece of paper and colored pens or pencils. Ask them to draw a picture or write a phrase about one change that would make the world a better place. It can be a small thing or large.

Gather as a group and invite volunteers to show what they wrote or drew.

Ask if anyone confessed something since the last session and invite people to tell about what happened if they are willing. Affirm all responses.

Pray this prayer or one of your choosing:

Gracious God, thank you for the chance to be together again and think about how to follow your ways. Be with all who are here and all who could not come today. Guide our thoughts as we consider what it means to repent. Amen.



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

### PEOPLE WHO CHANGED C

Ask youth to think of movies and shows they watch where some *bad* person changes their behavior. Let a few people tell about what happened and what caused the person to change from bad to good. Say that, when we see our sin and confess it to a person or to God, we then need to change our behavior and not do it again. That is the nature of *repent* that we are talking about today.

### ONE BEHAVIOR YOU'VE CHANGED C

Form pairs or groups of three and ask them to spend a few minutes talking about a behavior they learned to change over time because it was hurting others. Assure them that, as we grow up, we all mature and learn to stop doing some things as we gain more awareness. If they prefer, they can tell about someone they know who changed their behavior instead of themselves. Tell them to take just two minutes each to tell their story. Return as a group and invite a few volunteers to share what they said. Affirm that that is repentance, the theme of *Confess* we are talking about today.

- Confess* infographic poster

### REVIEW THE INFOGRAPHIC C

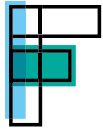
Gather around the *Confess* infographic poster and spend a few minutes reviewing what you have already discussed the last two sessions and also the theme of repentance. Call attention to the thread that runs through the entire poster and ask what they think it means. Honor all answers, and tell them that one thing it shows is that all the aspects happen at different times. *Confess* is not always a step-by-step process. Sometimes we repent without confessing, for example. Sometimes we see a need to repair, and we do that without necessarily passing through the other three aspects.

## REVIEW NEWSPRINT

C

Call attention to the three pieces of newsprint from session 1. Ask what the word *repent* means and write the definition under “Repent.” Repentance simply means “turn around” and refers to changing our behavior to stop sinning and to do what is loving for others. Spend a few minutes going through some of the sins listed on the left piece of newsprint and ask what repentance may look like individually and socially to stop committing each sin.

- 
- Newsprint from session 1



## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

## EXPLORE JOHN THE BAPTIST’S WORDS IN LUKE 3:7–14

C QC

This activity can either be done as a whole group discussion or begin as a quiet activity alone. Give youth a piece of paper and a pen. Have them read Luke 3:7–14 and write actions that John says believers are to do. Share responses and discuss how his words imply that behavior needs to change. Ask what this implies for their own behavior.

- 
- Bibles
  - Paper
  - Pens

## CLOTHE YOURSELF

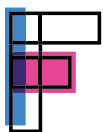
A C

Lay the sheet of mural paper on the floor and ask a participant to volunteer to have their outline drawn. Use a black marker to draw the outline of the volunteer on the paper and then post it on the wall.

Invite a volunteer to read Colossians 3:12–17 and briefly discuss attitudes and behaviors mentioned in the text that Christians should reflect. Read it through again and write attitudes and actions from the text on a piece of newsprint next to the mural paper. Go back through the list and decide which piece of clothing each attitude or behavior will be. Invite youth to use the colored markers to clothe the body with these.

If there are new words not already listed under “Repent” in the middle sheet of newsprint from session 1, add them.

- 
- Sheet of mural paper
  - Newsprint
  - Colored markers
  - Bibles



## FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

## CHURCHES REPENT SINS OF INJUSTICE

AT C

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1 and form three groups. Have each group read one of the stories of church confessions, and then gather as one group and have each group report what they learned.

- 
- Copies of Resource Page 1

## BLACK LIVES MATTER

C T

Watch the YouTube video “Anthony Ramos & Storybooth: Black Lives Matter. Period.” ([bit.ly/FMBlackLives](https://bit.ly/FMBlackLives), 4:49). Watch it a second time and have youth call out what the sin is, what needs to be confessed, and how behavior should change (repent). Post their responses under “See Sin,” “Confess,” and “Repent” on the middle sheet of newsprint. Discuss practices in your church and community that may need to change to confront racism.

- 
- Internet-connected device
  - Newsprint
  - Marker

- 
- Newsprint
  - Marker

## MEDIA EXAMPLES

C AT

Draw four columns on a piece of newsprint and title them as follows:

- Character Who Changed
- Mistakes They Made
- Ways They Changed
- Lessons We Can Learn

Remind participants of media examples they named in “People Who Changed” (p. 20). Fill in this list with those examples and others they can think of where repentance is seen.

## HEAR FROM A CHURCH LEADER

C X

Invite a pastor or church leader or social worker to come and talk with the group about people they have seen repent and change their lives. Prepare the speaker well before the session to tell two or three brief stories that may resonate with the youth. The stories do not need to be earth-shattering, but should help youth think about how repentance works in daily life.



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- 
- Copies of Resource Page 2
  - Pens

## WHERE DOES YOUR MONEY GO?

QC CT



Be sensitive to the fact that economic situations vary widely among youth. Many may not have any income at all. If you think this may be the case, remind youth this is confidential and tell them that the activity is a way to see how our money and our time are spent on ourselves and on others.

Distribute copies of Resource Page 2 and pens. Assure youth that they will work by themselves and keep this piece of paper. Ask them to spend some time filling in the blanks and answering the questions. After some time, invite a few volunteers to tell what they discovered and what they plan on doing about it, if anything.

- 
- Newsprint
  - Marker
  - Paper
  - Pens

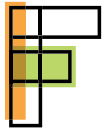
## WRITE AN APOLOGY

QC C

Post a sheet of newsprint and title it “Apology.” Ask youth to call out elements of a good apology and remind them the theme of today is repentance. Suggest that an apology includes the following elements and write them on the newsprint:

- Say you are sorry and admit you are wrong.
- Include what you are sorry for and that it will not happen again.
- Tell about how you will change going forward.
- Ask for forgiveness, but don’t demand it.

After a discussion, give youth a piece of paper and a pen and invite them to a time of quiet contemplation where they can write an apology they may need to make. If they can’t think of anything they are sorry for personally, challenge them to write an apology about their participation in systemic wrongs such as global climate change, racism, or economic inequality.



## FOLLOWING JESUS

### COMMIT TO THE PRACTICE



Gather as a group and ask participants to say one thing they learned or will remember about *repent*. Encourage them to practice a behavior or attitude explored today.

### PRAY



Pray one of the prayers used so far in this unit or read Psalm 51:10–12 in unison.

---

Posted newsprint with Psalm 51:10–12

# Church Confessions that Repent of Anti-Semitism and Racism

Throughout history, some churches have been courageous to speak out against governments and even other churches when they oppress others. Two examples in the recent past are the Theological Declaration of Barmen and the Confession of Belhar. Many churches adopted these two confessions as their own.

In addition, sometimes churches clarify just what they believe in the midst of social turmoil. The Presbyterian Confession of 1967 is one example. Download a free copy from [bit.ly/FMBookOfConfessions](http://bit.ly/FMBookOfConfessions), pages 285–97.

## **The Theological Declaration of Barmen (*Book of Confessions*, 279–84)**

In the 1930s, as Adolf Hitler gained power in Germany, he abolished all political rights and democratic processes: police could detain persons in prison without a trial, search private dwellings without a warrant, seize property, censor publications, tap telephones, and forbid meetings. He soon outlawed all political parties except his own, smashed labor unions, purged universities, replaced the judicial system with his own “People’s Courts,” and terrorized Jews. Hitler was popular among many people, including Christians, as he blamed minorities such as Jews, homosexuals, and people with disabilities for all the problems of the country. The Holocaust, the mass killing of approximately 11 million people, was the result.

A minority in the Christian church resisted and wrote the Theological Declaration of Barmen that rejected the false beliefs of the German church. They affirmed six Christian beliefs and appealed to everyone to repent of the sins of prejudice and oppression and return to the way of Christ.

## **The Confession of 1967 (*Book of Confessions*, 285–97)**

This confession of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) came at a critical time in US history when the country was involved in an unjust war of aggression in Vietnam and dealing with racial violence against Black Americans who had faced persecution since they were first brought to this country as slaves. The confession says that the church’s repentance should be active responses to social problems such as racial discrimination, nationalistic arrogance, and family and class conflict.

## **The Confession of Belhar (*Book of Confessions*, 299–306)**

This confession was written by a very oppressed church in South Africa, living under the system of apartheid, which separated people by race from 1948 through 1994. The racial separation established by law was enforced through violence. The Dutch Reformed Church supported apartheid and justified it theologically. A non-white church, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, wrote the Confession of Belhar in the early 1980s, calling out racism and calling the church and country to repentance.



# Monthly Money Worksheet

How do you spend your free time and money? Most people have some income from somewhere. Maybe you work. Maybe you receive an allowance. Maybe your parent(s) give you money when you ask for it or from time to time. It won't be exact, but try and estimate each line, knowing that some months you make or spend more than others.



## Income and Savings

Total money you receive each month from all sources \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours a day do you have unplanned where you can choose what to do? \_\_\_\_\_

## Spending

Of this amount, how much do you spend on the following in a typical month?

Survival (essential groceries, bus or subway fare, rent, water, gas, electricity) \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Fun (entertainment, going out with friends, eating out) \_\_\_\_\_

Family Needs (if you help pay family survival expenses) \_\_\_\_\_

Others (charities, church offerings) \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer time for others (How many hours a month do you spend?) \_\_\_\_\_



Christians believe that everything we have we receive from God. So, what we have isn't really ours. We use our gifts of time and money to help others. How would you rate the time and money you spend on others?

➔ What are some actions you might take to repent of any shortcomings?



