

Wash Away Shame and Discouragement

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These are detailed instructions for those who like structure but feel free to skim and run with the general idea. :-)

SKILLS DEVELOPED

Resilience after sin/misbehavior based on God's truth.

RATIONALE/SCRIPTURE

God gives us helpful guilt (I did something bad) to guide us to make things right with others when we've sinned. It is easy for that to hang heavy in our hearts and turn into shame, ("I'm bad.") But scripture tells us, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,"* [1 John 1:9](#)

GOAL

This activity helps kids gain a clear understanding of how forgiveness "washes away sins," so they can be free of shame, as they understand, "If I did something bad, I can be fully forgiven!"

MATERIALS

- ✦ *Permanent markers* (i.e. Sharpees)
- ✦ *Washable markers* (i.e. Papermate Flair pens or Crayola)
- ✦ *Ceramic/china plates* - this can be your dinner plates which you can clean off when done, or you could let each person pick out a plate at a thrift store that they can keep, and refer back to it when they are discouraged.


ACTIVITIES

- ✦ **Ask:** "Do you ever feel bad after you've done something wrong, and even if you've apologized or fixed the problem you caused, you still feel bad? Why do you think that happens?" (Discuss.)
- ✦ **Share** an example of when that's happened to you.
- ✦ **Say:** "We're going to do something fun that will help us not get stuck in discouragement."
- ✦ **Pass out** one plate per person (face down - you'll be writing on the back of it), and make both kinds of markers available in separate piles.
- ✦ **Say:** "Take one of these markers (permanent markers) and draw a picture of yourself in the flat circle part in the middle of the back of the plate. Then in the rim around that section, write down some unique ways God has made you, and also what he says about you." (i.e. I am a daughter/son of the King of the universe!)

- ✦ **Model** this and tell kids what you're writing.
- ✦ Optional extra verses you can read for ideas of what to write: [Psalm 139:13-16](#), [1 John 3:1](#), [Ephesians 2:10](#).
- ✦ **Say:** "Let's each share a couple of favorite things about the way God has made us." (Discuss.)
- ✦ **Say:** "But sometimes we do things we wish we hadn't, that we know are wrong. That's what the Bible calls sin. One of the great leaders in the Bible, the Apostle Paul, talked about how hard it is not to sin. *'For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing.'*" [Romans 7:19](#)
- ✦ **Share** a couple of examples of that for yourself, and use the **washable markers** to write down a word or short phrase about each one. Try to think of examples your kids could remember, (i.e. one parent stated, "Remember that time I yelled and scared you guys and you were both crying.") Fill in some more until you have maybe 3 or 4 things written down.
- ✦ **Say:** "You can write some on your plate with these other markers." (Discuss at a level your kids feel comfortable.)
- ✦ **Say:** "The good news about our sin is that the Bible says, *'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,'* [1 John 1:9](#) That's a great promise! It means if we tell God we're sorry we sinned, He washes away all our sin. Not just a little bit of it but all of it! Like this..."
- ✦ **Rinse your plate** with the kitchen sink sprayer, and celebrate as you watch the sin wash away! Let kids do the same with their plates.
- ✦ **Ask:** "What's left of our sin?" (discuss)
- ✦ **Say:** "When Jesus washes away our sin, God only sees the beautiful way He created us. Next time we're tempted to feel really bad even after we've confessed our sin, we can remember - Jesus washes it all away! The Bible tells us that God wipes away our sins and doesn't even remember them! ([Isaiah 43:25](#)) So the next time you can't shake that bad feeling after you've done something you wished you hadn't, remember what God sees when you rinse your plate."

AGE ADAPTATIONS

- ✦ **Younger kids:** Make the terms much simpler - i.e. we all do bad things, and then wish we hadn't done them. When we tell Jesus and others we are sorry, He forgives us and washes away what we've done. Then all He sees are the good things He's created in us.
- ✦ A simpler translation is the Children's Bible version: [John 1:9 ICB](#) *"But if we confess our sins, He will forgive our sins. We can trust God. He does what is right. He will make us clean from all the wrongs we have done."*
- ✦ **Older kids:** You can skip drawing a picture of yourself and write your identity truths in the center of the plate (bottom) and sins on the rim.

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- ✦ Over time you can talk about other verses, such as [Hebrews 10:22](#) “...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”
 - ✦ You can also talk about the [difference between guilt and shame](#).

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- ✦ Keep it light-hearted and fun as you draw yourself and write in permanent marker about the way God created you.
- ✦ Truly celebrate as sin examples are washed down the sink. That’s a wonderful truth in scripture, so let the joy sink in for you too!

CONTINUE THE GROWTH

- ✦ Choose a scripture about forgiveness and memorize it with your kids. Refer to it and this activity next time selfishness flares up in your family.
- ✦ If you get plates from a thrift store they will be available to repeat the activity as needed. After a big angry conflict, you can take your plates (with identity written in permanent marker) and each write what selfish words or actions you added to the fray (in washable marker). Then reconcile with each other and rinse them together. Remember to celebrate the forgiveness and cleansing!

