

Confession—We Confess Our Sins to Our Waiting Father

THE LOST SON

Review the story of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32).

1. What part of this story is most meaningful to you? Explain your response.

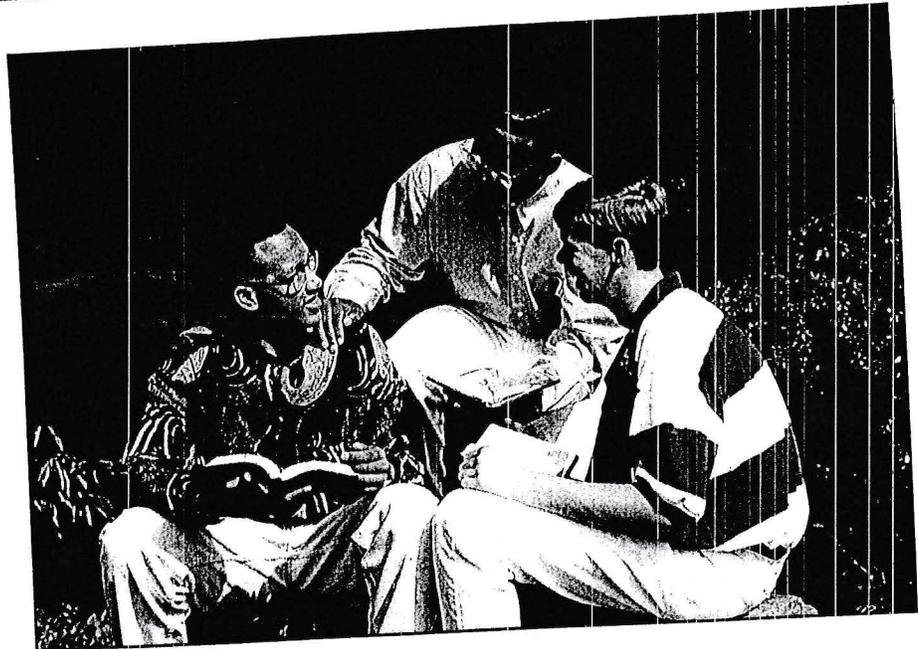
2. Jesus' story is really a story about how God treats you. But which son are you like, the older son or the younger? Which son was the better son?

a. In what way are we all like the younger son?

b. In what way are we all like the older son?

CONFESSION

Jesus wanted everyone to receive the forgiveness He earned through the life He lived for us and the death He died for us. When Jesus taught this parable, He was talking against people who thought they were such perfect children in God's family that they didn't need to confess any sins and who believed that people who did sin against their heavenly Father should not be allowed back into the family. Jesus said in the



parable that without confession and forgiveness, there really is no family.

Focus on why confession is so important to keeping a good relationship between people, and between people and God. Recall a recent time when someone hurt you or sinned against you and you called them on it.

1. If that person had said, "So what; what do I care," what would be the message you heard (felt) in your heart?

2. If that person said, "I'm sorry; I guess I wasn't thinking; please forgive me," what would be the message you heard in your heart?

FORGIVENESS SPOKEN

Read the catechism section "What is Confession?" (printed with this session). Following the confession of our sins, God desires that we receive the comforting assurance of our forgiveness of sins. The spoken forgiveness is called "absolution."

1. Look up the word "absolution." What does it mean?

2. Who speaks the absolution?

Question 330



3. What right does he have to forgive sins?

Question 330

CONFESSING OUR SINS

Continue reading the sections on Confession from Martin Luther's catechism (printed with this session).

1. Why do you think we should confess even "those [sins] which we do not know"?

2. Dr. Luther suggests that you examine your everyday life, that you "consider your station according to the Ten Commandments" in order to recognize and confess your daily sinfulness. In the space below, list one of the commandments and explain how confession and forgiveness can help us live it more as sons and daughters of God's family.

3. Read 1 John 1:9. How does the passage assure us that God forgives repentant sinners? Write the promise here:

IT SOUNDS SO EASY

Is that all there is to it? Just say, "I'm sorry, God," and through pastor He says "That's right"? Confession and absolution are more than that. Confession includes repentance—that sharp look inside ourselves at what is wrong and the sadness we feel at that sinfulness. And then it involves telling, but not just God—who else? Try this example. You hurt someone by calling him a bad name in front of your friends.

1. In addition to going to God and saying, "I'm sorry, God—forgive me," what else needs to be done?

2. Why is this second step so difficult?

3. Sometimes we may do something we feel is really bad—something that hurts or keeps on bothering us long after it is over. It bugs us, nags at us, makes us feel down. And even after we go to church and say the words about being sorry and hear the pastor's absolution—we still feel bad about it. What then? Read the catechism portion "What sins should we confess?" Where are we to go when something bothers us? Why?

4. How do we know that the pastor will keep to himself that which we have confessed to him (see catechism question 33)?

TO REVIEW AND REMEMBER

Proverbs 28:13: He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

1 John 1:7-9: But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

What is Confession?

Confession has two parts. First that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing, that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

What sins should we confess?

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer; but before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

Which are these?

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?