

Family Reconciliation Activity



This activity is intended to provide a way for families to experience reconciliation at home in order to deepen personal and family spirituality. It also provides a framework for families to interact with each other and strengthen family ties. Family members are encouraged to share what is in their hearts within the context of a safe and loving environment.

Materials

A 3 x 5 piece of paper for each member plus pens and/or crayons

Ground Rules

All family members should be present and participate to the degree that they are comfortable. It may be necessary to establish other family rules based on your own circumstances such as confidentiality or respecting other opinions.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, we come together seeking ways to strengthen our holy family. Bless our time together. Help us to listen and to be open to each other. We ask this through Jesus, our brother, Amen.

Activity

The Leader invites everyone to listen to the following story.

Stones

We all have shortcomings, failings, negative behavior, or rather stones in our lives. Stones are those barriers that keep us from loving and living like Jesus wants us to. The problem for Jimmy happened when he started stacking the stones and built a wall.

At first the wall was only ankle high. It was made of stones like selfishness, rudeness, uncooperation, hurting a little brother, stealing, and lying. The wall was so small that some people didn't notice it.

His family saw it, but just stepped over it. Jimmy kept building. He became a little more rude, less tolerant, more grumpy.

Pretty soon, each family member was building his or her own wall. They'd all look at each other with anger, sadness or disappointment, but they all continued to behave in the same negative way.

One day, Jimmy noticed that he couldn't see the other members of his family because he had built such a high wall. It had seemed easier not to be friendly, not to cooperate. Now he was lonely. He missed the time spent with his family. They weren't talking, or sharing stories about the day or anything. In fact, there didn't seem to be any feeling among them at all.

"What happened?" he yelled.

Just then he heard other family voices yelling back. They all seemed to be yelling the same thing... "I love you, I'm sorry. Forgive me."

With those words, each of them began to take down their wall. Stone by stone, they began to recognize the times that they were selfish, unwilling to share, stubborn.

As Jimmy worked on the wall, a strange thing happened. He felt a warm feeling inside. God had touched his heart with a warm and soothing presence. It was a struggle to move the stones, but the effort was worth it because the feeling of peace and joy was so strong.

When the walls were down, the family ran to each other. They hugged and held each other. Jimmy looked into the faces of his family and saw the same sort of peace in their eyes.

Sure there are still stones in their lives. They know that with God's presence and the strength of their love, those stones must never become walls again.

Leader passes out paper "stones" saying: *We all have stones in our lives. Let's take a moment for each of us to reflect on one stone that we'd like to get rid of. Please draw a picture or write a word that describes that stone.*

When everyone is finished, the leader should ask everyone to share their stone. (Remind family members to listen and not make judgments.) As each member finishes sharing, tell them that if they are sorry for their stone, they should rip it up.

Suggestions for Action

1. Rather than ripping up the stones, secure them to a piece of construction paper in order to make a "wall." Place the wall in a prominent space throughout Lent and encourage each other to work on their stones. Gather your family to burn the stones symbolizing the death of those negative behaviors.
2. During this session or at a family meal, talk about one practical thing each member can do the following day to work on tearing away their stone.
3. When the stones are destroyed have a sundae-making celebration.
4. Attend your parish's Reconciliation Service as a family.

Closing Prayer

Forgiving God, thank you for our time together. Help us to not build walls between each other by reminding us to ask for forgiveness whenever we have caused pain. And when we have been hurt, to forgive the other. Regardless of our age or authority, we have prayed and continue to pray...forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Amen.

[The "Stones" story has been adapted from an out-of-print story entitled "The Wall: A Parable" by Gloria Jay Evans.]