

Parents Guide: Session Five. Sin and Reconciliation.

The purpose of this module is to explain the reality of sin and to help you and your child live a life of freedom and love. Don't be afraid of the topic. We know that we live in a fallen world and that sin exists; but, the Good News of Christianity is that Jesus offers us freedom from sin, new life and our genuine happiness. This session is a great opportunity to think about the last time you went to Confession and to turn to the Lord again. It might have been a while since you went, but have no fear, Jesus loves us more than we can imagine and is waiting to welcome you and your children home. Go to confession soon, and then go often. Soon you will discover that God is not only endlessly forgiving, but that he is giving you power to stop sinning. That's real freedom.

- 1) We know the Moral Law exists. That is, we know the basic rules by which we should live and work, and we know them innately. We call our innate sense of right and wrong, the Moral Law.
- 2) The Moral Law is a reflection of who God is because by giving us this law, he shows his love for us. If we follow it, we flourish. Like a parent, God gives us the Moral Law not to limit us but to teach us how to live life beautifully. We need only think about playing a musical instrument before we realise that life cannot be lived without some ground rules for engagement. It might be worth asking your child to write a list of rules for engagement to show that the kinds of lists we compile will all roughly correspond to the 10 Commandments. This is because these Commandments are based in the Moral Law, and so our knowledge of them is natural to us.
- 3) The failure to keep the moral law is called Sin. It is a betrayal of God, ourselves and one another. We can sin in two ways: mortally and venially. There are three criteria that must be met for something to be considered mortal sin.
 1. **Grave Matter**
 2. **Full Knowledge**
 3. **Deliberate consent**

Grave Matter

It must be something that is serious - ie. something against matters covered by the 10 Commandments. This includes sins against the love and worship of God, sins against our obligations to our family, sins against human life, any sexual sins, sins against property (which do not concern trivial amounts of money) or sins against our obligations to our neighbor and sins against the truth.

For more precision, see the Catechism of the Catholic Church, or, ask the advice of a trustworthy confessor.

Deliberate Consent

This means that you fully choose to do the action. *"I know that murder is wrong, and I know it's a big deal, but I am going to do it anyway."*; *"I am married, and I know adultery is wrong, but I am going to sleep with Mrs. Jones' husband."*

You cannot accidentally commit a mortal sin. Likewise, you cannot be forced to do so. Oftentimes, there can be psychological factors that impact our freedom.

If in doubt, ask the priest in Confession.

Full Knowledge

You have to *know* that it's wrong. For example, you cannot kill the man who hit your car. We all know murder is wrong.

Note, however, that as human beings we have an obligation to form our consciences according to the truth. If I act in ignorance, the question is - should I have known that this was a sin.

This is why it is very important for Catholics to keep growing in the knowledge of their faith.

IMPORTANT: It is a very, very grave sin to receive communion with unconfessed mortal sin on your conscience. If you think you may have committed one, *get to confession post-haste*.

VENIAL SIN is, simply, all the other sins - those sins that damage our hearts and souls, but still allow God's love to live and work within us. The danger of venial sins is that they are a choice we make toward something less than God and what he wants for us. According to the *Catechism*, venial sins also have the ability to condition us to commit a mortal sin. You know how it goes, the more we sin, the more open we are to sinning and the more difficult it is to recognise the sin and repent. Venial sins are EITHER grave sins, committed without deliberate consent or full knowledge OR smaller sins like disobeying your parents, calling someone a name, gossip, taking the Lord's name in vain etc.

We need to confess our Mortal Sins and we would do well to confess our venial sins often. It is good practice to go to Confession once a month. Confession is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ in His love and mercy to offer sinners forgiveness for offences committed against God. At the same time sinners reconcile with the Church, because the Church also is wounded by our sins. This is Good News for all of us, because we all are sinners and in need of God's forgiveness. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we meet Christ in the person of the priest, ready and eager to absolve us and restore us to new life. We confess our sins to God through His minister, the priest, who absolves us in the name of Christ. Confession is not difficult, but it does require preparation. We should begin with prayer, placing ourselves in the presence of God, our loving Father. Then we review our lives since our last confession, searching our thoughts, words and actions that did not conform to God's love, to His law or to the laws of the Church. There are some examples on the powerpoint. It is important to help you child to understand that Confession is a great thing! By it we grow in our relationship with God, and we learn how to become the best we could be. Do not be afraid. Jesus is waiting for you.