

Read: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

Sinners Need to Repent

Ezekiel 18:30b-32

Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The vase lies broken in pieces on the floor. Olivia and Michael stared at the mess with eyes that reflect how upset they are. Mom approached them to get the details of the story. Olivia was unhappy that her brother was in her way. Michael knew he was in the way but refused to move. Instead of politely asking him to move, Olivia pushed him. He fell onto the table where the vase had been, and down it came. As Mom slowly uncovered the details of the incident, she considered what should be done. Both Michael and Olivia would need to find a way to replace the vase. "That's not fair," Olivia cried. "It's not my fault! It's Michael's fault!"

We can all be tempted to try to blame someone else when we sin. In the reading for today, you heard how some other people said the same thing. They felt that God was unfairly punishing them and that they were not as guilty as their fathers had been. God responded quite clearly. He was the one who created each one of them. He was the one with authority over them. He would decide what was best for them. He expected each of them to obey him perfectly. Each person was responsible for the way they lived and were answerable to God.

Why would he speak so strongly to them? Well, why do your parents sometimes speak strongly to you? Why do they expect you to behave in a way that is kind and loving to each other? Why do they warn that there are consequences for our actions?

It's really quite simple. God loved those people dearly. God loves you dearly. He loves all people dearly. God doesn't want anyone separated from him. He wants everyone to believe in him and be in heaven with him forever and ever. God said to the people in Jerusalem and to you and me, "Repent and live!" The word "repent" means "to turn away from sin." God wants us to repent. He wants us to turn to him in faith. He wants us to turn to each other in love.

After a fight, it's hard to admit when we've made a mistake. But denying our mistakes, our sins, doesn't fix anything. Admitting our sin and repenting does. God's forgiveness heals our relationship with him and leads to a healed relationship with each other.

The vase Olivia and Michael broke eventually was replaced. A lesson was learned about patience, repentance, and forgiveness. Above all, it taught them about God's love for each of us.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- Why is it so hard to say, “I’m wrong”?
- When you and I do something wrong, we can feel badly about it inside. But when we admit that we’ve done something wrong, what do God promise to do?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- In the story today, Olivia blames Michael and Michael blames Olivia. If Mom or Dad were to believe one of them and not the other, will the situation be fixed? Why or why not?
- Even if we don’t get caught when we’ve done something wrong, we can worry about it, and the guilty feeling doesn’t go away. What is the only way to make it better?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- What did God say in the final two sentences of the key verse that can be an encouragement when you are feeling guilty?
- Your mom and dad, your teachers, and especially God, want you to be at peace with them. How can daily prayer to God help you?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Father, it’s sometimes hard to understand how you can forgive us over and over and yet, because of what Jesus did on the cross, you do. Help us to always treasure the peace we have with you because of your forgiveness and grace. Help us to show that to others. In your name we pray. Amen.

Hymn: CW 593:1,2,4 – Now the Light Has Gone Away

Now the light has gone away;
Father, listen while I pray,
Asking you to watch and keep
And to send me quiet sleep.

Jesus, Savior, wash away
All that I’ve done wrong today.
Make me ever more like you,
Good and gentle, kind and true.

Now my evening praise I give;
You once died that I might live.
All your precious gifts are free—
Oh, how good you are to me!