**Unloading Our Backpack of Sin**

Goal: Learn that by going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation we can “unload” our backpack and not have to carry so many heavy things around.

Materials: 2 backpacks, “Cans of Sin,” taped “path” on the floor, Act of Contrition bookmark, colors, markers

Engage:

1. Welcome families into the circle. Show them two backpacks. Say you are getting ready to go for a journey.
2. Tell them this journey will take your whole life. Point out the lines on the floor. One end is labeled birth. The other end is labeled death.
3. Tell families that when a person becomes a follower of Jesus, we know we will go to heaven when we die because Jesus suffered and died for us on the Cross.
4. But even after choosing to follow Jesus we can still sin and mess up.
5. Ask kids how they feel after they have done something wrong. Wait for some responses. Stress keeping sin a secret makes us feel bogged down with fear and worry.
6. Tell them we may feel embarrassed about our sins and want to hide them. We may be afraid to tell anyone about them. Ask kids if they have ever felt this way.
7. Whisper to them the good news: “We have the special sacrament of reconciliation. We can always ask forgiveness and we will be forgiven right then and there. We never have to be afraid to tell the priest our sins!”

Explore:

1. Ask for two volunteers to help you.
2. Say “Each of you is going to wear a backpack. You will start as this line and try to walk to that line.
3. I will stop you and read some situations where you make an unloving choice and sin.
4. One of you will confess your sin and ask for forgiveness and one of you will not. (Give an example of what it would sound like to ask for forgiveness.)
5. Ready…lets’ go.
6. Read the situations below and put a can of sin in each backpack. Then ask them to ask for forgiveness. Take the can of sin out of the backpack worn by the one who asks for forgiveness. You may need to “coach” the child who asks for forgiveness at first.
   1. Your parents tell you not to watch a certain T.V. show but you watch it anyway.
   2. You haven’t studied for a test and you cheat off of someone else’s paper.
   3. You get mad at your brother and call him bad names.
   4. You steal a candy bar from a store when no one is looking.
   5. You keep the money you set aside to give to church and spend it on a new game instead.
7. As the student progress, ask the one who has the heavy backpack how that feels.

Reflect:

1. After the kids have reached the end of the journey ask, “Both of you make it to the end of journey, but who had the better trip? Was it better to carry all those heavy cans of sin, or better to have an empty backpack?
2. When you are a believer in Jesus you can still sin. And that sin can weigh you down with guilt, worry, and embarrassment.
3. But Jesus doesn’t want you to carry around all that sin and guilt.
4. Anytime we sin and make a mistake Jesus is right there waiting to forgive us in the sacrament of reconciliation. All we have to do is go to him.
5. We don’t need to be afraid. The priest will never tell anyone what we say.
6. Not only will Jesus forgive us, but through the penance the priest gives us, Jesus will show us a better way to live

Respond

1. If time allows, tell children there is special prayer we learn that we say at reconciliation that helps us tell Jesus how sorry we are for our sins.
2. This prayer is called the act of Contrition.
3. Hand out the Act of Contrition word scramble and book mark.
4. Tell families to cut the pieces apart, and then put them in the right order.
5. Once they have practiced, children can color in the bookmark to take home with them.