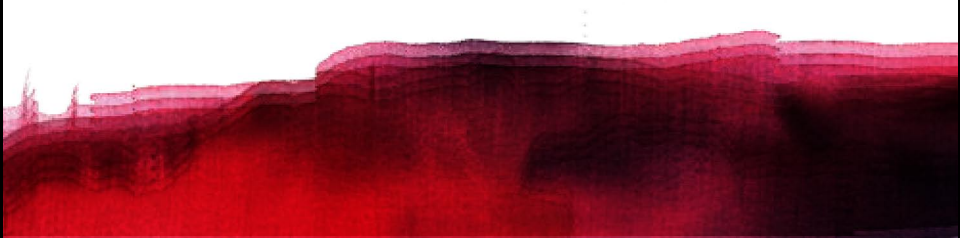


# confessions

Youth Ministry Leader's Guide



AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY



*What does it take to reach today's youth?*

You can *give the most powerful talks on the planet.*

You can *coordinate the coolest events.*

You can *reach out to the hardest kids.*

You can *pray your heart out.*

You can *do all these things . . .*

and still see little life-change in your students.



**why?**

*Because of the  
paralyzing power  
of hidden sin.*

Secret struggles, private thought  
patterns, haunting questions. . .  
they can make kids who love Jesus  
end up feeling like fakes,  
like their faith is a joke, like it's  
*pointless to even try to follow him.*

*But all of this changes with one simple phrase.*



# i'm sorry.

It's the life-altering power of confession. Raw honesty with God about their struggles and a freeing sense of God's forgiveness will enable your students to move from spiritual paralysis into vibrant growth.

That's where *Confessions* comes in. *Confessions* challenges teenagers to look sin straight in the face, wrestle with it, and with Jesus' help, change their behaviors and come out victorious.



# x themes

*Confessions* is organized around four key themes: *spiritual doubts, victimization, sexuality and broken self.*

Here's a breakdown of what you'll find in each themed section:

# 1

*Dear God* –

raw and honest confessions of real-life struggles.

# 2

*Devotion* –

stories and musings that dare readers to look more closely at an issue and recognize their own struggles. (Please refer to the content on pp. 20-21, 30-31, 38-39, 46-47)

# 3

*Be Real* –

questions that challenge readers to explore what Scripture says and discover how God is leading them to grow or change.

# 4

*Confess* –

creative ideas on how to come clean before God and others.

# 5

*Dig Deeper* –

key Bible passages for further study.



## *How to use Confessions with your group . . .*

Keep reading for ways your group can interact with the different components in each themed section.

# 1. Dear God

*In a large-group setting, you can . . .*

- Invite students to silently read the confession prayers to themselves.
- Have students or adult “actors” (volunteers) read the confessions aloud.
- Project a PowerPoint slideshow with the text of the prayers on a screen, allowing time for students to silently read them.
- Prompt students to underline words, phrases, feelings or ideas they can relate to in the confessions.

*In a small-group setting or one-on-one setting, you can . . .*

- Give teenagers time and space to read the confessions silently.
- Invite volunteers to read the prayers aloud.
- Read the confessions aloud yourself.

## 2. devotion

*Use the devotion as a launching pad for some brief, conversational teaching. You can read the devotion text aloud as is and . . .*

- Add in some of your own commentary or personal stories.
- Come up with an interactive activity to accompany the devotion text. For example, have students write their “feelings” toward someone they dislike on a paper cut-out of a person. Then tear up the person to show how those bitter feelings can irreparably destroy a relationship.
- Use the ideas in the devotion as a launching pad for your own teaching. (If you do this, encourage participants to read the devotion on their own before your meeting.)

## 3. be real

*The Be Real questions are meant to be compelling and personal. They’ll fall flat if you try to get teenagers to talk about them in front of the large group. You may want to . . .*

- Create a safe environment forming same-gender small-groups of three to six; keep the same groups throughout the series. Because these questions push beyond comfort zones, have an adult in each small group who can set the right tone: honest, open, mature and confidential.
- Have students partner with someone of the same gender to talk through all the questions; keep the same accountability pairs throughout the series.
- Have everyone get back together after small-group or paired discussions. Briefly talk through the main idea of the Scripture passages students discussed, inviting teenagers to share their reflections on the topic. Every time, week after week, reassure students of God’s promise to forgive and his unconditional love.

## 4. confess

*Each section challenges students to confess their struggles to God or others in a different way. Go with the specific instructions you find each week, (adjusting them as needed for your group size), or try these ideas:*

- Prompt students to write their own short prayer of confession to God, then fold it up and drop it into a locked metal box. Explain that no one (including you) will read what's in that box. At the end of the series, open the box and dump all the confessions onto the flames of a bonfire and watch them burn away.
- Dim the lights for a time of silent prayer. Say something like: "God, our sins and struggles blot out your light in our lives. They make it hard for us to see you. They try to trap us in the darkness." After students have prayed, turn on the lights and say: "Jesus said, 'I am the light that has come into the world. No one who has faith in me will stay in the dark.' (John 12.46). Jesus forgives you. The darkness has no power over you."

- Hang up a large white paper cross. Each week, give students time and space to silently pray about their own struggles. Set out red ink pads and invite students to make a red thumbprint on the cross, representing the sin they prayed about. Remind them that Jesus' death on the cross paid the price for those specific sins. At the end of the series, celebrate Jesus' forgiveness by writing the text of Psalm 103.12 in large, black letters atop the collage of red thumbprints.

## 5. dig deeper

*Encourage students to read the Dig Deeper passages on their own during the week.* You can also incorporate them into your teaching or read them aloud and invite teenagers to discuss them in pairs or small groups.



x **Set free  
to grow**

As the students come clean before God and each other, they'll experience the transformative power of the cross, rather than just talking about it. They'll be amazed by God's grace. They'll feel the freedom that comes when the burdens of guilt, shame, and secrecy fall away. They'll be ready to grow, to change, to follow God.

# x additional resources

*Visit [Pillar.AmericanBible.org](http://Pillar.AmericanBible.org) to check out additional Scripture resources, including three more Confessions themes that are available for downloading.*

If you haven't done so already, we invite you and your students to take the seven-day journey by texting **TRUTH** to **31452**. A Scripture verse will be sent to your cell phone each day for the next seven days. Connect with God directly while you are on the go and invite your youth to do the same!