

LESSON **11** MATERIALS

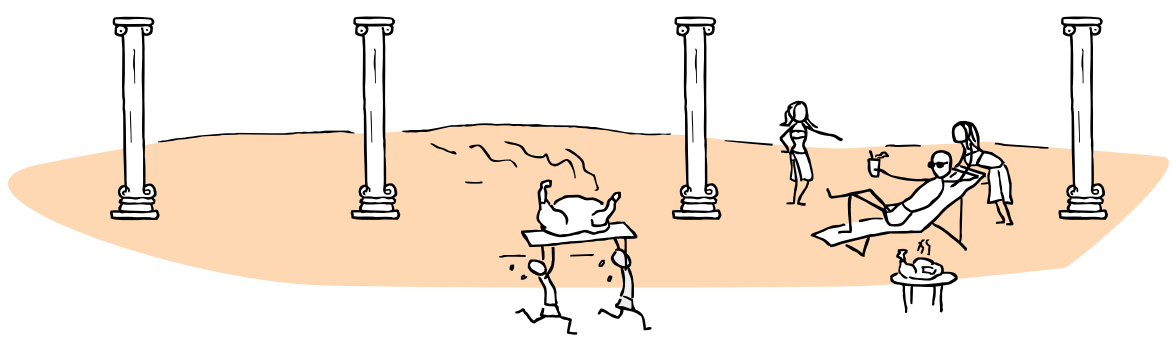
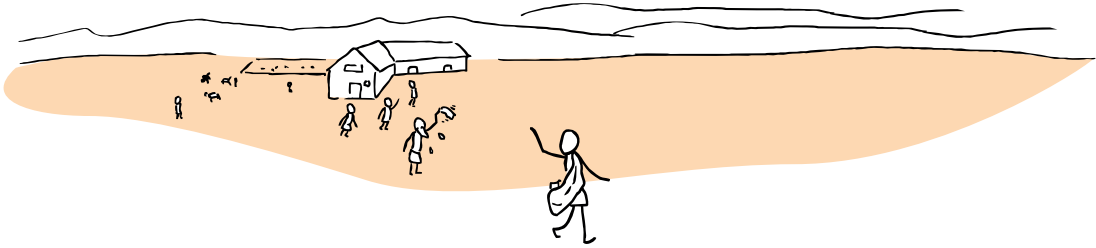
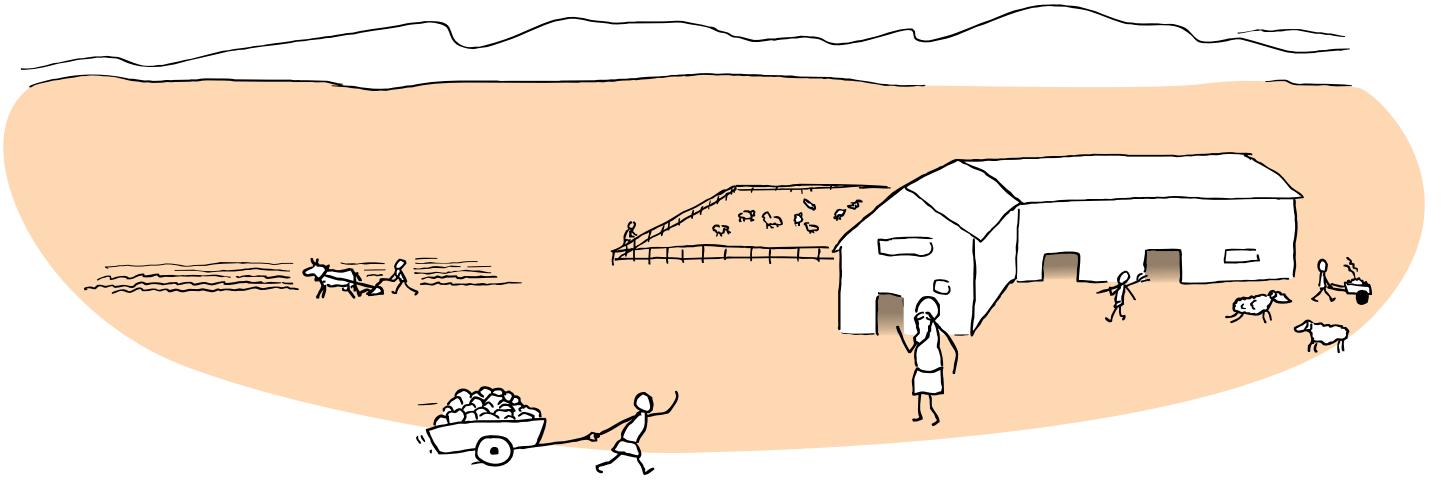


Illustration by Alexander von Lengerke

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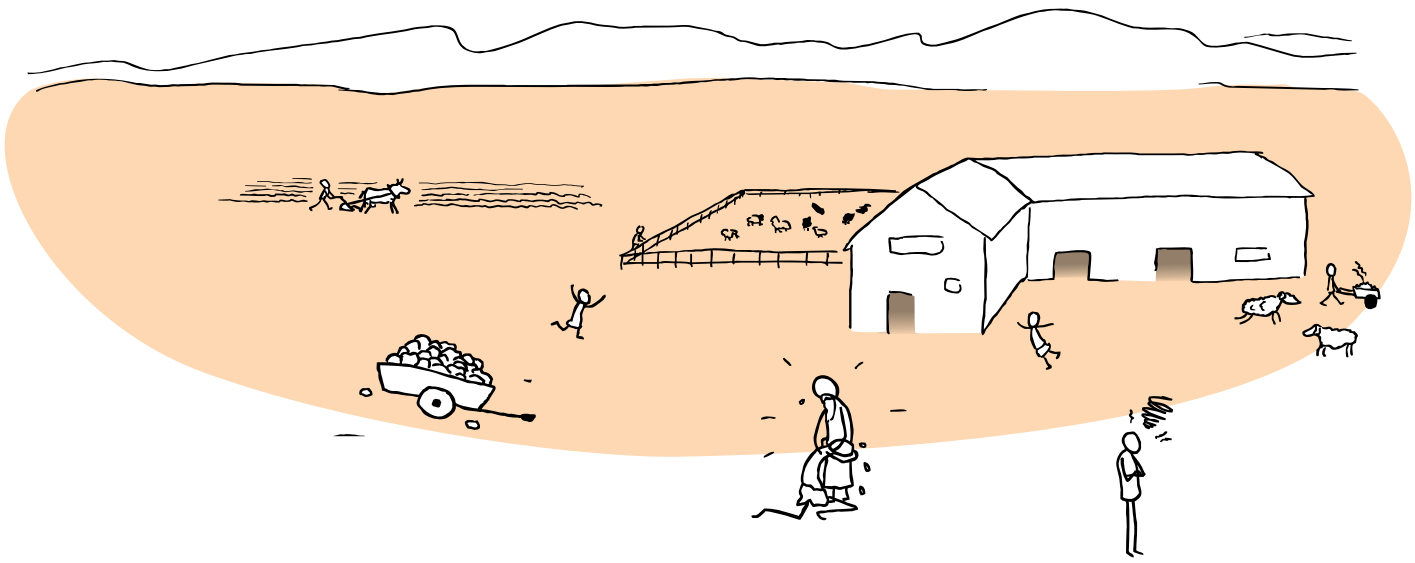
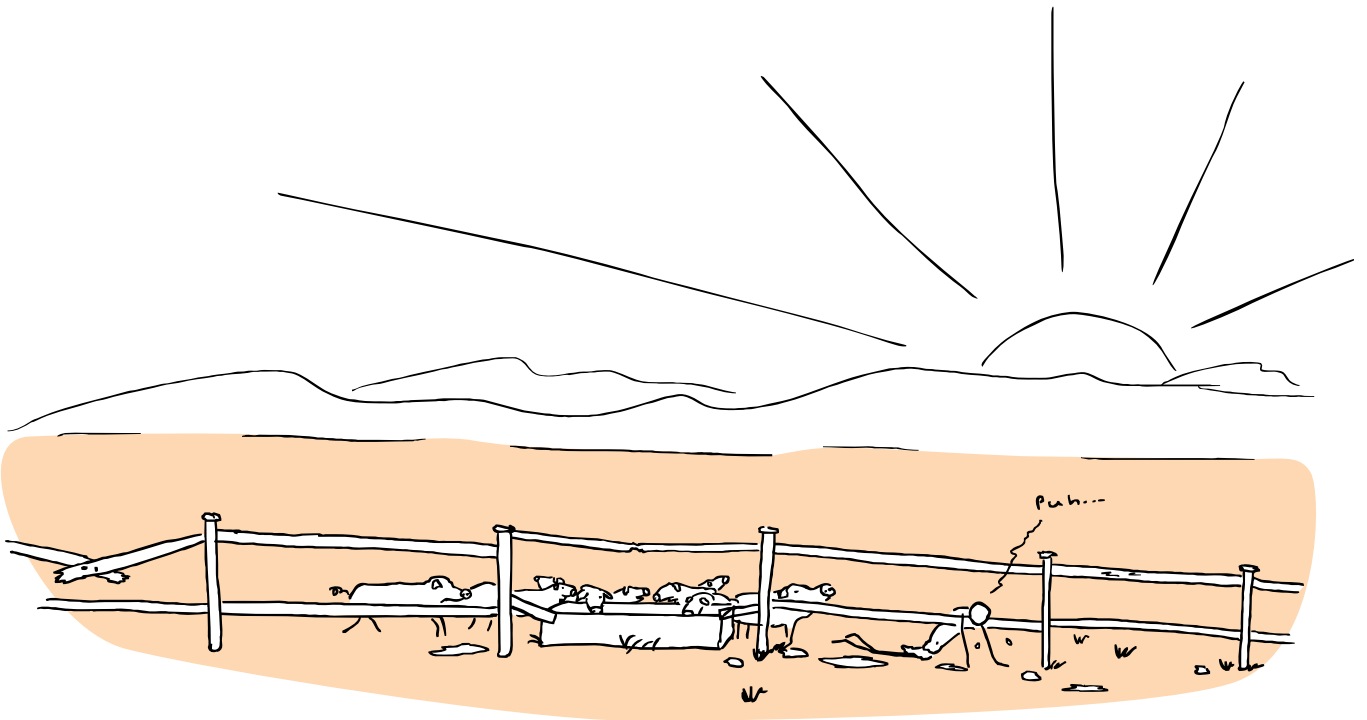


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Reflection



Repentance



Reform



Reconciliation



Reparation

For notes

Please don't write on or mark this section.

One year later, the prodigal son writes a self-help book, based on his own life experience:
How to Get Yourself out of Any Mess—Five Simple Steps for a Better Life

Try this: Think about which five steps the prodigal son actually took to be reconciled with the Father and how he might name the corresponding five chapters in his book.



Reflection

I acknowledge that I have made a mess of things.

Repentance

I am truly sorry about it.

Reform

I resolve not to do it again in the future.

Reconciliation

I confess that I have made a mess of things.

Reform

I am willing to make amends for everything, even though it's probably going to be quite uncomfortable.

Freely available any time, in your own or any other parish, local convent, or community!

Illustration by Alexander von Lengerke

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CATEGORY



An Evening of Reconciliation

Your Confirmation candidates need to prepare for their Confirmation by going to confession. So they can “wipe the slate clean”, so to speak, before receiving this Sacrament. In order to forestall some of the typical problems with confession, we suggest you arrange a special Reconciliation session for your young people.

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ORGANIZATIONAL PREPARATION

Have different priests available

Get together a suitable group of priests for the session. It is important for the young people to have the chance to choose which priest to confess to. It's also important to have at least one priest available who is not personally known to the candidates.

Offer a variety of outward forms

Make a variety of different environments available for confession. It is a good idea to accommodate the different characters of the young people by offering the sacrament both in the form of a more informal, face-to-face conversation with the priest, as well as in the more traditional setting of the confessional.

Use lighting to create the right atmosphere

Try and create a quiet and contemplative atmosphere inside the church. You could maybe use a couple of colored spotlights for this, so as to pick out some of the columns inside the church in suitable colors. Your local or diocesan Catholic youth office might be able to help you here and may possibly lend you these. The experience of a local “Nightfever-group” (a popular form of night-time adoration in Germany. Translator.) could also be helpful.

You can also illuminate the church with candles and tea-lights, in order to create a “warm” atmosphere.

Music and prayer

Organize a few musicians to accompany the evening musically. Modern worship music would be appropriate here. Interspersed with the music, you could have readings of individual prayers or meditations, for example those from the YOUCAT Youth Prayer Book.

The musical accompaniment also has the practical advantage of providing a degree of “background noise”, so that the candidates don’t have to fear that someone might overhear their confession.

PREPARATION THE CANDIDATES IN ADVANCE

You should already have discussed the essence of the topic of “confession” in advance with your candidates. Make sure they each have a copy of the accompanying YOUCAT Confession Guide and discuss with them in advance what happens in the confessional. The Confession Guide comprises the Examination of Conscience and the introduction to confession on the following pages. By copying both sides you have the front and back pages of this flyer for the candidates. You can then fold it in such a way that the YOUCAT heading becomes the title page of the whole leaflet.

Obligation to attend

In order to avoid a situation in which those young people who do wish to go to confession are made to feel exposed (As in “Aha, he must have a whole load of things to confess!), you should make it obligatory for everyone in your group to attend the evening and speak with a priest.

It is important here to make it quite clear to the candidates themselves that no one can be compelled to make a confession of sins, since this can only be a voluntary action. If anyone doesn’t want to confess, he must nonetheless attend the evening and speak with a priest, and explain to him why he does not want to do so. The priests involved should be prepared in advance to deal with this possibility.

THE EVENING ITSELF

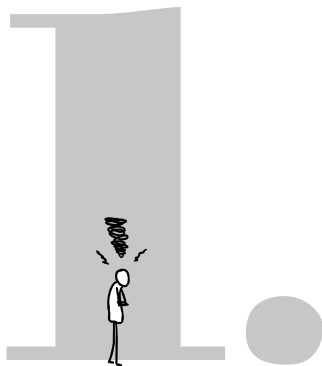
To start the evening it is a good idea to begin with a short prayer and then sing a hymn together. If you have any other organizational details to pass on to them, this is the time to do it.

Introducing the priests

After this you should (briefly!) introduce the priests, so that the young people can form some sort of first impression of them. At the same time you should also explain where in the church they will be stationed to administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Keeping to a set time framework

The whole evening should follow a clear timescale, so that the candidates can all go home after the official end of the session. However, if any of the young people would like to stay on outside this timeframe to make their confession, they should of course be able to do so. If the total number of candidates is so large that for practical reasons they cannot all confess on the same evening, then the program should simply be extended to two or more evenings.



The point about confession is for you to wipe the slate clean with God. So you need to take a look at yourself and your life and think about the things that stand between you and God. Now is the time to clear away these obstacles once and for all. The Examination of Conscience below may help you to take an honest look at yourself and your relationship to God:

If I enjoy the good things of life, that's no sin; but it is a sin if I make them into my god and try to get hold of them at all costs.

If I want to earn a decent wage, that's no sin. But it is a sin if I make wealth my one and only aim. And if I'm unwilling to share and have a heart for others for fear of missing out on life.

If I insist on my rights, that's no sin. But it is a sin if I abuse these rights, if I become inconsiderate and hardhearted or disrespect the rights of others.

If I experience sexual desires and impulses, that's no sin.

But it is a sin if I give way to my impulses or use others to satisfy my desires.

If I find it hard to like some people, that's no sin.

But it is a sin if I treat them as though they were not God's beloved children every bit as much as I am.

If I criticize other people, that's not necessarily a sin.

But it is a sin if I do so hastily or without charity or if I thereby demean or injure other people.

If feelings of envy, malice, or anger rise up within me, that's not in itself a sin.

But it is a sin if I do not try to overcome these feelings but, instead, let my actions be influenced by them.

If I talk about others, that's no sin.

But it is a sin if I gossip thoughtlessly about others or say mean or spiteful things about them.

If I keep silent in situations of conflict, that's no sin.

But it is a sin if I keep silent when others are being disparaged, slandered, or lied about.

If I get into arguments, that's not necessarily a sin.

But it is a sin if I pick a quarrel, don't listen to others, don't try to understand them, or am unwilling to make peace.

If my heart often seems empty when I pray, that's no sin.

But it is a sin if I think I don't need to pray, or if I don't even take the trouble to open my heart to God and listen for his voice.

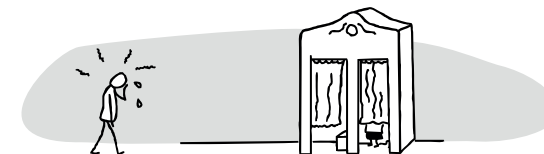
If I am sometimes unsure of my faith, that's no sin.

But it is a sin if I withdraw from the community of believers, if I regularly refuse to take part in their worship, or if I think earthly things more important than heavenly ones.

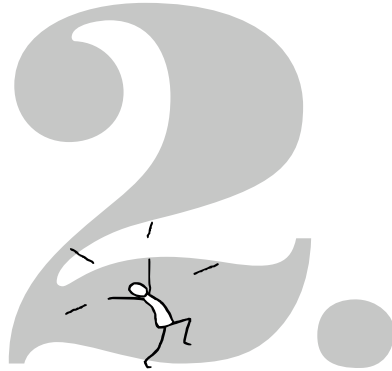
If I make plans for my life, that's no sin.

But it is a sin if my faith in God plays no part in them, if I no longer care about the fact that my life each day lies in his hands.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN "SÜNDE IST ... DIE LIEBE LEUGNEN", ED. BERNHARD RIEDL, ARCHDIOCESE OF COLOGNE 2008



ORIGINAL YOUCAT CONFESSION GUIDE



So now we get down to the nitty-gritty: The moment has come when you are going to allow God to do a spring-clean in your heart. And the more honestly you let this happen, the clearer and more mature your faith will become. This is how it happens:

You go into the confession booth or the confession room.

The priest welcomes you.

You make the Sign of the Cross and say *“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”*

The priest may now say a short prayer.

You respond to it by saying *“Amen”*.

You can start your confession by telling the priest when you last went:

“It is about ... weeks/ months, etc. since my last confession.” This helps the priest form an idea of your personal situation.

After this you can say the things you want to confess. If you’re not sure about anything during your confession, you can always ask the priest, who will help and advise you.

You can conclude your confession by saying something like: *“I am sorry for all these things, and I want to make a fresh start with Jesus.”*

The priest will now give a few words of advice as to how to avoid these sins and do better in the future.

The priest will give you a simple task to do, usually a prayer, as a sign of penance.

Finally, **the priest** will speak the wonderful words of absolution, which free you from your sins:

God the Father of mercies, through the death and Resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

You make the Sign of the Cross again during these final words and respond. *„Amen“*.

The priest says: *“Your sins are forgiven you. Go in peace.”*

You respond, *„Amen“*.

After your confession you can remain in the church for a while, to say a silent prayer and thank God in your own words for his forgiveness.

