



A WORD FROM OUR TEAM

Dear Families,

As your family ministry team, we want to affirm we are here for you. Our mission is always to support you as caregivers, especially in painful seasons like this one. God made us to live in community, and we don't have to navigate hard times alone. We want to encourage you to take the time you need to process your emotions, assess your needs, and seek pastoral care or counseling. Caring for your own emotional, mental, and spiritual health is an ongoing and important part of caring for your family. As you process the emotions you are feeling and navigate difficult conversations with your families, we've prepared resources that we hope will help you lead with wisdom.

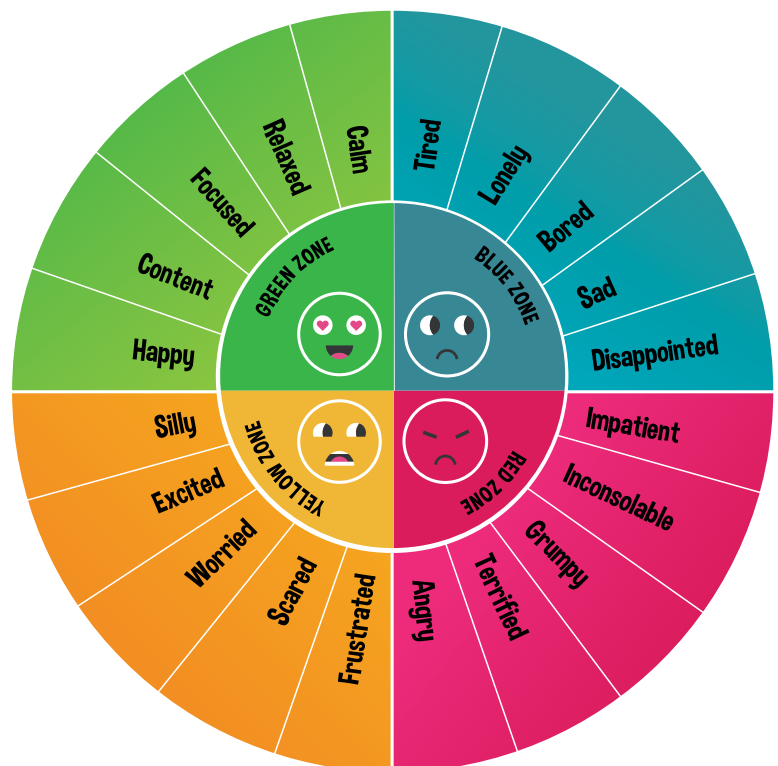
With love,

Your Summit Family Ministry Team

TALKING TO YOUR KIDS

We know that not all children will be aware, affected, or able to understand the change in leadership at our church. Therefore, a conversation might not be necessary or helpful for them. If, however, you would like to have a conversation with your child and are not sure how to begin, consider the following as a starting place:

- Ask questions, and invite your child to tell you what they've noticed or heard.
- Listen to what your child shares, and help them name their emotions using the feelings wheel.
- Name the emotions you're experiencing, and affirm that those feelings are all okay.
- Share facts that are age-appropriate with your child based on their age and maturity. Remember that it's okay to say, "I don't know," as your child asks questions.
- Pray with your child.



SIN AND THE CHURCH: A CONVERSATION GUIDE

If your child has additional questions about sin, or about hurt caused by church leadership, we've prepared the following conversation guide:

What is sin?

We were made to reflect God's goodness. Sin is disobedience to God and the way he made us. It's the hurtful choices we make, thoughts we think, and words we say... It's when we choose to live our own way instead of God's way.

Sin separates us from God. Living God's way leads to life and freedom.

"When you sin, the pay you get is death. But God gives you the gift of eternal life. That's because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done." Romans 6:23, NIRV

Who sins?

We all do. Kids, parents, teachers, small group volunteers, church leaders... We don't all sin the same way, but we have all made choices that separate us from God, from other people, and from God's good plan for us.

"Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory." Romans 3:23, NIRV

What do we do after we sin?

Jesus lived a perfect life for us and died for the sins of the whole world. Because of what Jesus has done, we don't have to experience separation from God. Instead, we can choose to accept his gift of life.

"We know that Christ was raised from the dead and will never die again. Death doesn't control him anymore. When he died, he died once and for all time. He did this to break the power of sin. Now that he lives, he lives in the power of God." Romans 6:9-10, NIRV

When we choose to trust Jesus, God sees us as his perfect children, and he gives us his Spirit to help us follow him. One day God will make all things new. But right now, we still live in a broken world, and so we still experience sin. When we sin, we can repent. Repent means turning away from our sin, saying we are sorry, and turning back to God. When we repent, God always forgives us.

"But God is faithful and fair. If we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure." 1 John 1:9, NIRV

"So turn away from your sins. Turn to God. Then your sins will be wiped away. The time will come when the Lord will make everything new." Acts 3:19, NIRV

What happens when leaders in the church know what they are doing is sin but don't turn to repentance?

We are all saved by God's grace, so, as a church community, we don't judge the person who is making sinful choices. Instead, Jesus told us to forgive one another. Forgiveness means choosing not to get back at someone who has hurt you. It does not mean what the person did is okay. When people we care about choose sin, the church can let them know we love them too much to let them continue to live in that hurtful way. Sin also comes with consequences, like broken trust and hurt relationships.

While this may be our church's response to sin, it's important to clarify that it is never a child's responsibility to confront, forgive, or carry the weight of consequences for a grown ups' choices.

"Brothers and sisters, what if someone is caught in a sin? Then you who live by the Spirit should correct that person. Do it in a gentle way..." Galatians 6:1a, NIRV

What can we do when leaders disappoint us with their personal choices?

Because we live in a broken world and are still waiting for God to bring his full kingdom, one person's sin can have painful consequences for the whole church community. Remember, any emotions you feel are okay. God made our hearts and our emotions, and we know that Jesus can relate to whatever we are feeling.

"We have a high priest who can feel it when we are weak and hurting. We have a high priest who has been tempted in every way, just as we are. But he did not sin." Hebrews 4:15, NIRV

Most importantly, we turn to Jesus. He's the one who defeated sin and death. He's the one who can give us the power to live God's way. And he loves us so much. We can bring all our feelings and our questions to God in prayer. And we can ask him for what we need: strength, hope, courage, peace, wisdom... He promises to give us those things when we ask in his name.

"Let us keep looking to Jesus. He is the one who started this journey of faith. And he is the one who completes the journey of faith. He paid no attention to the shame of the cross. He suffered there because of the joy he was looking forward to. Then he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. He made it through these attacks by sinners. So think about him. Then you won't get tired. You won't lose hope." Hebrews 12:2-3, NIRV

PRAYERS OF LAMENT FOR FAMILIES

Lament is an honest crying out to God, sharing our thoughts, deep-felt emotions, and even pain. Throughout Scripture, we can see many examples of lament, especially in the Psalms. This teaches us that we're safe and free to express any feelings we have to God. We don't need to deny our present struggles, because God is big enough to handle our problems and reactions. We trust that he will bring us through what we are facing now because he has done so in the past. Though there may be painful plotlines, we know that our God doesn't write bad stories. He's always working toward a good ending because of his love for us.

A prayer to read with young children:

God, thank you that you love us and want to be our friend forever. Thank you that we can talk to you anytime—when we feel happy, sad, mad, or frustrated. Today we feel (name emotions). Thank you for loving us when we make bad choices. Help us to love others like you do, and to follow you. Amen.

A prayer to read with elementary-aged children:

God, today we are feeling (name emotions). We see how hurtful sin can be. But we also know that your love is bigger than any sin and trust that you are able to bring good things out of painful times. Please comfort and help our family and our community. Forgive us for the wrong things we do, and help us to forgive others. Help us to follow you. Thank you for loving us so much. Amen.

A guided lament to follow with middle and high school students:

God, we cry out to you. Today we are feeling (name emotions) because (name cause).

In the middle of it all, we trust that you are still (name character trait of God).

Please help us. (Ask for specific forms of deliverance, healing, and help).

We remember how you have shown us your goodness in the past, (name ways God has come through for you in hard times), and so we have hope.

We praise you today, God, because we know you are faithful and (name character trait of God).

Amen.

SEEKING SUPPORT THROUGH COUNSELING

If you and your child would like to meet with a pastor, or would like a referral for a counselor, please reach out to your ministry leader:

Student Ministry

Tracy Beeson

tbeeson@summitconnect.org

Children's Ministry

Doris Herrero

dherrero@summitconnect.org