**EARL’S BAD DAY**

*Supplies needed: Earl… Chocolate Pudding Cup and Pepper*

**BEFORE YOU START:**  Take the little guy, Earl, out of his can and show him to the group. He is bendable and his feet are magnets so he can stand upright on top of the can. You’ll also need to open your cup of “sin”. This is the pudding cup. It’s now a cup of “sin”. You’ll need your pepper nearby. This week pepper also represents “sin”. So you have Earl and things that represent sin.

**ACTIVITY SUMMARY:** Read the following story to your small group. At the end of each scenario in the story, each person will dip the little guy into “sin”. The little guy gets messy and dirty…and more messy and dirty as the story progresses. Follow up story with questions. Students may have different answers to the questions and that’s ok. This is a beginning discussion on sin.

**FOLLOW UP (after Earl activity and small group questions):** Leader can follow up asking students to wash Earl in a tub of water or kitchen sink. Talk about “Noah’s Flood: Water Cleanses”. Or continue discussion on sin separating us from God and the sacrifice Jesus made for us for the forgiveness of our sins. Or writing down a sin, prayer, and ripping up paper. Or discussion on communion. Or a discussion on sins of commission and sins of omission. So many options! ☺

**READ STORY:**

There once was a guy named Earl. Everyone liked him. He got along well with others. He went to church. He was involved in youth group. He played soccer. In his free time, he liked to play video games. He was your average guy. He liked to eat pizza, throw a football, and hide his dirty socks under the bed. Even though it was Co-Vid, life was pretty good for Earl.

Give Earl a high five. Way to go Earl!

One evening, Earl stayed up too late on a hybrid school night. His mom told him to go to bed. It was late. He knew he was going to school the next day but, he wanted to beat his new video game. The next morning, Earl rolled over and pushed the snooze button on his alarm clock. He didn’t get up when his mom called up to him. And when he finally woke up, he was late. Late for everything! Earl ran down the steps and the first thing he did was yell at his mom. “MOM, my alarm didn’t go off!!! Why didn’t you wake me?” When she said she did wake him, Earl just grumbled under his breath. As he rushed up the steps, he knocked down his little sister who was playing at the bottom of the steps. When she started to cry, Earl called her a big baby. This was just the start to Earl’s bad day.

Everyone take your Earl and dip him in and out of the sin cup.

Ok, back to our story. As you can guess, Earl got to school late. He rushed down the sidewalk in front the school building, adjusted his backpack, and started to put on his mask. He should have put it on sooner but nothing was going right today. Earl thought the mask was a pain to wear. Just as he was adjusting the mask, Earl tripped on the sidewalk. In his frustration, Earl said one of those word that he knew he shouldn’t have said. Ok, he actually said a few of those choice words, but who knows who saw him almost make a nose dive into the cement? In Earl’s mind, the sidewalk deserved those words.

Take Earl and dip him in and out of the sin cup.

Ok, back to Earl’s day. Earl went to his first class. Some of his good friends were there and he was glad to sit down in his chair. Even though he was socially distanced, this was still his space and that felt good. Finally, maybe, his day was going to get better. He actually smiled at one of the girls who sat across from him. With his mask on, he wasn’t sure she noticed him, but she smiled back. At least her eyes were smiling at him. Earl was feeling pretty good about that until he realized her eyes weren’t smiling at him but at the guy several rows over. This embarrassed him and made him pretty mad. Rather than moving on, Earl sulked about it the whole period. It bothered him so much, he got his cell phone out and texted a friend. Of course, the teacher saw him texting and when she asked about it, Earl denied it. A bad day was just getting worse.

Take Earl and dip him in the sin cup. Make sure you really dip him in good. (Note how messy Earl is getting. Sin all over him!)

On the way to lunch, Earl realized he had forgotten his lunch at home and being in a hurry, he hadn’t eaten breakfast. He had already used the credit on his lunch account. Things were a little tight at home right now. Really hungry, Earl asked a friend sitting at the table if he could borrow his code for a meal. He said he’d “pay him back” somehow, but deep down Earl knew he really wasn’t going to do that. He just wanted a lunch and at the time didn’t care how he got it.

Dip Earl into the sin cup. And this time sprinkle him with the sin powder.

As you can guess, Earl didn’t study the night before for the vocab test in Language Arts class. He thought he’d do it in the morning. Now he was sitting in class and everyone was taking the test. When the teacher went to the door to talk to someone in the hallway, Earl took the opportunity to open his backpack and sneak a peek at his study sheet. Cheating was better than failing, he thought.

You know what to do. Take Earl and dip him into the sin cup and sprinkle him with the sin powder.

Earl was having a really bad day. He had lied to a teacher, cheated on a test, stolen from a friend, and sworn at the sidewalk…he figured it couldn’t get any worse, but he thought wrong. Earl was walking down the hall, trying to keep his distance from people, and there was Alicia walking down the hallway towards him. Earl knew Alicia from church. The kids in youth group considered her to be “different” and often made fun of her when no one was looking. Earl didn’t think that was right and he usually just stayed away from her. But, today, there she was! Earl couldn’t believe it, but sure enough, she was walking right up to him, like she was going to talk to him – right there – in the middle of the hallway. This was going to be embarrassing. He needed a plan. And then it came to him. He moved quickly towards her and before Alicia could say something to him, Earl gave her quick light shove into the wall and walked away as fast as he could. Suddenly, Earl didn’t feel too good. In fact, he felt terrible. He thought he heard other students laughing, but he couldn’t be sure. All he could feel was the weight of his very bad day.

Dip Earl into the sin cup and sprinkle him with the sin powder…let’s talk about Earl’s bad day…

**Questions:**

* We had a sin cup that we dipped Earl into throughout our story. What’s your definition of sin?
* What made Earl’s day bad?
* When do our choices become sin?
* Would you consider Earl’s reaction to his day good or bad? Why?
* Think of one thing that Earl did, what could he have done differently in that situation?
* How does our sin affect our relationship with others? God? Ourselves?