The Story of Earl

Here is the story of Earl. We use it to catch a glimpse of what young teens believe when it comes to right and wrong. The discussion usually moves to what is a sin and what is not a sin. We use this to begin an ongoing discussion (over a period of months) thus, we do not necessarily add our thoughts at tis time. We ask questions to help them to think through and wrestle with their thoughts.

Materials: Pepper, pudding and Earl’s (something to represent a person…even gummy bears will work).

Adapt the lesson below to your situation and style.

BEFORE YOU START: Take the little guy 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. Each small group should name their little guy. Use this name throughout the following activity.

Point of the activity: The little guy gets messy and dirty…and more messy and dirty as the story progresses. At the end of the story, Gary will ask each small group to send someone up with their little guy. The little guy needs to be messy – the more messy the better – for Gary to then make a teaching point about sin.

ACTIVITY SUMMARY: Read the following story to your small group. The story is about your little guy (whom your group has named). At the end of each scenario in the story, your group will dip the little guy into “sin”. You can have one person dip your little guy or feel free to pass him around the circle so everyone has a turn to dip.

STORY:

1. There once was a guy named \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Everyone liked him. He got along well with others. In addition to being a good athlete he hopes that one day he’d learn to play the guitar. He went to church and was involved in youth group. 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 or behind the couch. Life was good for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. (pass little guy to the next person) Until one day, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ stayed up too late on a school night. His mom told him to go to bed but he wanted to play a little longer trying to beat a new video game. The next morning, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, hit the snooze button on his alarm clock. He didn’t get up when his mom called up to him and when he did get up he was late, late for everything. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ went hopping 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?” And when his mom said she did wake him, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ just grumbled under his breath and as he was rushing up the steps he knocked down his little sister and when she started to cry, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ called her a big baby. This was the start of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ day of bad choices.

Before you pass \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the next person, dip his head in the sin cup. (cup marked sin)

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ got to school late. He couldn’t get his locker open. In his frustration, he just kept banging the on the locker and then he finally said a really cruddy word that he knew he shouldn’t have said.

Before you pass \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the next person, dip his head and one arm into the sin cup.

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ went to his first class. Some of his good friends were there and he was glad to sit down in his chair. Finally, maybe, his day was going to get better. He actually smiled at one of the girls who sat in the row across from him. She smiled back. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was feeling pretty good about that until he realized she wasn’t smiling at him but at the guy two rows over. This embarrassed him and made him pretty mad. Rather than moving on, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ sulked about it the whole period. It bothered him so much, he got his cell phone out and texted a friend, telling him what a flake the girl was. Of course, the teacher saw him texting and when she asked about it, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ denied it. A bad day was just getting worse.

Before you pass \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the next person, dip his head, and both arms into the sin cup.

5. On the way to lunch, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, realized he had forgotten his lunch money at home and being in a hurry, he hadn’t eaten breakfast. He could have gone to the office to get a pass for a free meal. Everyone was allowed one free meal the first time they forgot their lunch. But \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ just didn’t want to go to all that effort. He asked a friend if he could borrow some money from him. He said he’d pay it back but deep down he know he wasn’t going to pay it back. He just wanted the money and he didn’t care how he got it.

Before you pass \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the next person, dip him into the sin cup. And this time sprinkle him with the sin powder.

6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ didn’t study the night before for the vocab test in Language Arts class. He thought he’d do it in the morning. And now, he was sitting in class and everyone was taking the test. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ saw the teacher wasn’t looking and he took the opportunity to look at the closest person to him and he ‘borrowed’ some of the answers. Cheating was better than failing, he thought.

Before you pass \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the next person, dip him into the sin cup and sprinkle him with the sin powder.

7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was having a really bad day. By the time school was over he had lied to a teacher, cheated on a test, stolen money from a friend, and swore at his locker…he figured it couldn’t get any worse, but he thought wrong. At the end of the day, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was walking down the hall. Alicia was also walking down the hall in his direction. Alicia went to his church youth group but everyone considered her to be “different.” Everyone made fun of her and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ usually just stayed away from her. But today there she was walking down the hall and walking straight up to him. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 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 really embarrassing and he needed a plan. And then it came to him. He moved quickly towards her and before she could say something to him, he knocked her books out from under her arm and kept walking as fast as he could. As he walked away, he could hear laughter from the other kids. Suddenly, he didn’t feel too good.

Dip \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ into the sin cup and sprinkle him with the sin powder…and let’s wait for the other groups to finish up….

while we wait, let me ask a few questions…

1. Have you ever had a bad day? What made your day bad?
2. Would you consider \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ reaction to his day good or bad, and why?
3. What else could he have done?
4. When do our choices become sin?
5. What is sin?
6. How does sin hurt us and others?
7. Does our sin hurt God?