

FEARLESS CONVERSATION™

**HOW CAN WE BE
FULLY FAITHFUL
WHEN WE'RE FULLY FLAWED?**

DISCUSSIONS FROM 1-2 SAMUEL,
1 CHRONICLES, PSALMS

LEADER GUIDE

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LESSON 7: IF GOD FORGIVES ME, THEN WHY DO I STILL GET PUNISHED FOR MY SINS?

LEADER PREP

- Read the entire lesson ahead of time. Also read the corresponding pages in the participant guide, as there may be additional info provided there that will be helpful to you.
- You'll find "Behind the Scenes" boxes with Bible commentary provided throughout this lesson. They're there to help you gain a better understanding of the Bible. The people in your class will have these too.
- Ask God to prepare the hearts of the people attending so they can sincerely examine their own sins and the impact they have had on others.

FOR EXTRA IMPACT

You may want to provide some quiet, reflective instrumental music while participants are doing the activity in the "Growing" section.

GREETING

- Welcome everyone and be sure to introduce yourself.
- Be sure everyone has a copy of the participant guide.
- Let everyone know you'll be moving through Lesson 7 today, so they can find that section in their participant guide and use it to guide them through today's lesson.
- Explain that there are many "Behind the Scenes" commentary notes throughout the lesson. These can be read by participants as they come to that section of the lesson, or people who want to plan ahead can read them during the week to be ready for the next lesson.

BEHIND THE SCENES

As a prophet, Nathan was required to confront sin, even the sin of a king. It took great courage and discernment to approach David with his wrongdoings. When Nathan confronted David about the death of Uriah, he did it in the form of a story. He wanted to "ease" David into the realization of what he had done. But hot-headed David flew into a rage and said that any man in his kingdom who would do such a thing was worthy of death and would be executed. Nathan then pointed his finger at David and said, "Thou art the man!"

And the shoe, as they say, was suddenly on the other foot. At that point David understood that God knew what he had done and the consequences were coming.

Then ask:

When you were a kid, what did you think the worst punishments were? Did you have to sit in a corner? Write "I will not tease my sister" 50 times? What were punishments you dreaded as a child?

Let people call out a few answers. Then say:

Let's get a little more personal with this. We'll form our smaller groups and talk a little more on this topic. Get into groups of no more than four, and discuss this question:

- **When was a time that you, as a child or a teenager, did something wrong and had to face the consequences?**

You don't have to go into all the details—just share in a sentence or two what you did and what the punishment was. I'll go first!

Share a very brief example from your own life to model the type of sharing

you'd like to see in groups. Then allow about 4 minutes for people to get into small groups (they may need to move their chairs into smaller circles), introduce themselves, and discuss this question. After about 4 minutes, have everyone return their attention to you.

Thanks for sharing in your groups and getting to know each other a little better. Today we're going to be grappling with questions related to the consequences of sin.

- **Why do you think we do wrong things, when we know we might get caught and have to face the consequences?**

Allow people from the whole group to share any thoughts on this question. Then continue.

GROUNDING

Let's get grounded in God's Word so we can understand more about the extent to which David's sin affected the rest of his life...and how God was able to forgive his multiple sins. Today's Bible account is from Psalm 51, and in the stirring words of the psalm we see the picture of a man who has fallen far and committed many sins but has not been abandoned by God. Let's read what David's recorded for us.

Read Psalm 51 aloud, or invite someone from your group to read it aloud. Encourage everyone else to follow along in their own Bibles or in their participant guides.

God's Word: Psalm 51

¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;

so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.

¹⁴ Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

¹⁵ Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

¹⁷ My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.

¹⁸ May it please you to prosper Zion,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.

¹⁹ Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,
in burnt offerings offered whole;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Before we discuss this, take a moment to reflect.

- **What are the first questions that come to mind? What sort of jumps out at you and catches your attention?**

Capture those initial thoughts and questions in your participant guide.

Wait at least 1 minute so people can jot down their thoughts before moving forward. This should be something people do on their own—not in discussion groups. When it appears everyone is ready to move on, continue.

GRAPPLING

We'll get back to your personal questions and reflections in a bit. But first let's grapple with a few other questions. Before we start into this time of discussion, let's remember that together we are creating a safe environment for sharing and conversation. Let's ask God to help us form questions and observations that will lead us into a closer understanding of where he wants our discussions to go. So, let's invite God to direct our conversation right now!

Pray for the group to be open to hearing each other and to hearing God. Ask God to open hearts to be receptive to each other, and ask God to direct the conversation where he wants it to go.

LEADER LEARNING

Trust God and fear not! It's okay for the discussion to get off topic. God may be directing the conversation to an area that will have even greater impact on the lives of those in your group than you could imagine.

BEHIND THE SCENES

In Psalm 51 the Greek word *metanoia* is used to indicate true repentance: a change of mind and purpose and life. In this sense, David is conscious of his guilt and helplessness to do anything about his past sins on his own. He is at the mercy of God.

David realizes that true repentance consists of 1) a true sense of one's own guilt and sinfulness; 2) a desire for God's mercy; and 3) a heartfelt desire to live a holy life.

Let's start by discussing in our small groups. You'll find three questions under the "Grappling" section in your participant guide. Start with just the first one. You'll talk about this for about 5 minutes in your small group, and then we'll

hear some reports back to the larger group.

- **From this account in Psalm 51, what can we learn about God’s desire to forgive?**

Allow about 5 minutes for discussion, and then have each group share something they feel is significant. Thank everyone for sharing.

There is an interesting idea presented in verse 4. David writes: “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.” Um...did he just forget about Bathsheba, who was now a widow? Did he forget that Uriah had been murdered? Let’s talk about this as a large group.

- **Why does David say he has only sinned against God?**

Allow time for different people to share their thoughts with the whole group. Remember to model and encourage listening and respect for others as they share. When several people have had a chance to respond, continue.

I’d like us to have a chance to share in our groups about our own observations and questions. Take time now to share anything that seemed especially relevant to you as we read from Psalm 51. And if you’re comfortable, toss out any of the questions the passage raised in your mind. Perhaps someone else has an insight that will shed some light on the topic.

Allow at least 10 minutes for groups to talk. Give a 1-minute warning so groups have time to finish their thoughts.

Let’s find out what you talked about! Does any group want to share an idea or a question your group found interesting?

Allow a few minutes for different groups to share. Depending on how much time you have left you can simply let groups report their insights and questions, or if you have time you can invite the larger group to respond to an insight or question that was shared.

LEADER LEARNING

Sometimes “I don’t know” is the best answer, because it gives us something to strive for. If there are questions that don’t seem to have easy answers, encourage people to dig into these more after class or over coffee later in the week.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Even though David faced his sins following Nathan's confrontation and asked God to forgive him, things didn't end there. David could see his faults and readily admitted them. And while David was forgiven, his house would continue to display the sins he had sought to cover.

David's life and family were never the same as a result of what he had done. Murder was a constant threat in his family, his household rebelled against him, his wives were given to someone else, and his first child by Bathsheba died.

Let's dig into one more question in our smaller groups. David asks for forgiveness, and he also asks God to go a step further by asking God to restore him to God's good favor. That's asking a lot! David also makes promises to God as to what he will do if God does forgive him.

- **Do you think David was bargaining with God? Explain your answer, and tell if you think this is a good idea or not.**

Allow time for everyone to grapple with this question in their small groups. Then invite a few people to share what was discussed with the rest of the larger group. Be sure to

thank people for being fearless in their conversation.

GROWING

It's great to have these conversations and really dig into what the Bible says. This helps us move into greater understanding of God and to grow in our relationship with God. One way we see that growth is through applying what we've discovered to our lives.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Because we are born sinful (Psalm 51:5), our natural tendency is to please ourselves rather than God. David followed that pattern when he decided to take another man's wife. David also discovered what he needed to do to make his heart right with God. Right behaviors come out of a right heart.

David prayed for cleansing from his sin. Hyssop was a plant used by the priest in Old Testament ceremonial laws to symbolize the cleansing of sin. In his prayer David cried, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation." He understood that unconfessed sin makes intimacy with God impossible. The message of this psalm is evidence that David's prayer was answered.

This psalm gives us the opportunity to reflect on our own sins and

where we fall short in living a God-pleasing life. Psalms are a type of poetry. And since they are poetry, they are not meant to pass on information, but rather to pass along emotions. They are poems that may have been sung, especially during worship. In fact, psalms are also considered prayers, and many people pray the psalms as a part of their devotional time.

With that in mind, let's spend some time in reflection and write a few verses of a psalm/prayer of our own. It could be a psalm of forgiveness or a psalm of praise for God's mercy and restoration. Let's take 5 minutes to write our own personal psalm.

Invite everyone to write their psalm in the space provided in their participant guide.

Play reflective instrumental music at this time if you have it, and let individuals have some time to come up with their psalm. Then call everyone's attention back to you. Invite individuals who may feel comfortable to share their psalm with the group. Then continue.

Thanks to you all for being so creative and for sharing your psalms. Psalms come from a very personal place within each of us, and they say something about our relationship with God.

Close with a prayer, thanking God that we can approach him and each other without fear.