



### GOALS

- For students to learn what to do when they have sinned.
- For students to learn what they can expect from God when they have sincerely repented of their sin.

### MATERIALS: Group

- Variety of colored pencils
- Whiteboard and markers

### MATERIALS: Each Student

- Student journal page
- Scripture sheet, Psalm 51
- A Bible
- A pen

## SESSION INTRO

### Prayer

Ask the Holy Spirit to give your group an understanding of God's Word through today's study. One of God's most wonderful precepts is His way of cleansing us from sin through confession, repentance, and forgiveness. Your students need to gain a deep understanding of this concept so they can live lives of confession and repentance thus experiencing the freedom of His forgiveness when they choose the wrong path.

### Open Brainstorm

Open your session with a five-minute brainstorm discussion on the following:

**Describe a time when you royally let someone down.**

**How did it go when you first connected with that person after the letdown? Was it awkward? Were you extended mercy? Did it create distance with that person?**

Transition into your study time by sharing these thoughts in your own words:

**We've probably all let God down at some point. When we do it can generate a variety of emotions in us: guilt, embarrassment. It might help, though, to know what to do when this happens. David gave us a great example to follow.**

**God is faithful to forgive any sin, even the serious ones, but He is looking for a sincere, repentant heart. Earlier in this study we learned that David was a man after God's own heart. Even with a heart that loved God, David messed up – big time! The key to David's forgiveness was having a heart of confession and repentance. A truly repentant heart is the key to unlocking God's grace and forgiveness. Repentance goes much deeper than simply saying, "I'm sorry I got caught."**

## CROSS-CHECKING

To begin your session, take your students on a fact-finding mission to discover some background on the author of Psalm 51, David. Listed below are several Scripture passages. Assign each student one scripture reference (or more if you fewer students than verses) to look up and study. If you have a large group, you should have several students look up the same passage so that everyone has a passage to look up. As they read, invite students to journal what they learn about David.

1 Samuel 16:1 and 10-12

1 Samuel 17:4-11, 32-33, and 45-50

2 Samuel 5:1-4

2 Samuel 8:14  
Matthew 1:6-17  
Acts 13:20-22  
2 Samuel 11:1-5

Once your students have finished reading and recording, work your way through the passages together (in order). Ask your students to tell you what they learned about David. As they tell you the facts, list them on the board. Stop before discussing the final passage (2 Samuel 11:1-5). Your list on the board should look something like this:

**David:**

*Was the youngest son of Jesse*  
*Tended sheep*  
*Was chosen by God as king over Israel*  
*Was "ruddy" and handsome (good looking)*  
*Volunteered to fight Goliath*  
*Trusted God*  
*Killed the giant*  
*Led Israel on military campaigns (was a warrior)*  
*Became king at age 30*  
*Reigned 40 years*  
*God gave him victory everywhere he went*  
*Was Jesus' great-great-great...? Grandfather*  
*God said David was "a man after His own heart"*  
*He did everything God wanted him to do (was obedient)*

Now on the basis of everything you've written on the board, ask your students:

**How successful was David? How true to God was he?**

**Does this sound like a guy who could do something really sinful to mess up his life?**

Now ask the students who looked up 2 Samuel 11:1-5 to read their passage out loud. Once they have finished reading ask them to tell you what to write on the board concerning what they have just learned about David. You'll be adding something like this to the board:

*David lusted after and committed adultery with Bathsheba, who became pregnant.*

After they've finished and you have written it on the board, share with your students the "rest of the story." Tell them how David sent Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to the front lines of battle so that he would be killed. In reality, David committed not only the sin of adultery, but also murder! And he lied to cover up both of those sins! Psalm 51 was written after David was confronted about his sin (2 Samuel 12:1-14).

After the entire story is out ask this question

**What does it say to you that David, a man who appeared to have it all together, could so quickly fall away from God?**

**David committed some major sins and at this point appears to be a long way from God. Have you ever felt as though you had blown it too much to find your way back to God?**

## DIGGING IN

Have your students turn to their Session 4 journal pages and the Scripture sheet for Psalm 51. Hand out at least two colored pencils per person. Ask students to read Psalm 51:1-6 slowly and carefully to discover everything they can about David's response to his sin. Before they begin reading, have the group come up with a symbol to mark David's sin. Since sin

ultimately leads to death, a good symbol might be a tombstone. The group should use this symbol to mark any mention of sin wherever it occurs. This includes words like “transgression,” “iniquity,” and so on.

In the same color they use to mark “sin,” ask students to underline anything that shows how David felt about his sin.

Once students have had time to finish, call them back together to discuss what they have discovered in Psalm 51:1-6. To begin the discussion, ask the following questions:

**How do you think David felt about his sin?**

**Do you think David was really sorry about the sin or just sorry he got caught? How do you know?**

**The idea behind the word repent is to make a change, a change of heart and a change of action. So repentance is like making a U-turn from sin. Did David make a U-turn? Did he really repent? What verses help you know this?**

## DIGGING DEEPER

Throughout the psalm David was very direct with God as he ascribed traits and made requests. This gives us a picture of how God reacts to us when we’ve blown it.

Ask students to read the entire Psalm 51 using their Scripture sheets. As they read, have them do the following:

- 1. Draw a cloud over every reference to God.**
- 2. Make a distinction (maybe by drawing clouds in different colors) between requests David makes of God and traits he ascribes to God.**

After they’ve finished marking, ask students to take one minute to circle two or three “clouds” (references to God) that fit any of the following categories and to note these on their journal pages:

- **the reference to God you find most convicting**
- **the one that packs the most “wow”**
- **the one you have counted on the most**
- **a trait of God you are most grateful for when you’ve blown it**

Now ask for your group’s attention and invite them to share their responses along with an explanation of why they chose what they did.

Below is a list of things you learn about God from Psalm 51.

### **God:**

*Has mercy on us (v. 1)*

*Has unfailing love (v. 1)*

*Can wash away all my iniquity (v. 2)*

*Can cleanse me from my sin (v. 2)*

*Sin is against God (v. 4)*

*Sin is evil in God’s sight (v. 4)*

*God is right when He speaks (when He says, “What you did is evil!”) (v. 4)*

*He desires truth in the inner parts (v. 6)*

*He cleanses us and washes us “whiter than snow” (v. 7)*

*He’ll hide His face from my sins (v. 9)*

*He'll blot out ALL my iniquity (v. 9)*  
*He'll create in me a pure heart (v. 10)*  
*He'll renew a steadfast spirit within me (v. 10)*  
*He restores the joy of His salvation (v. 12)*  
*He grants us a willing spirit that will sustain us (v. 12)*  
*He doesn't delight in sacrifice or burnt offerings (v. 16)*  
*His favorite sacrifice is a broken spirit (v. 17)*  
*He won't despise (scorn or turn away) a broken, contrite heart (v. 17)*

As students share their information about God, be sure to bring out the following points in your discussion:

**What is "mercy" (verse 1)? How does it relate to this psalm?**

**After you realize you've sinned, how do you feel about yourself? What difference does it make that God will wash you "whiter than snow" (verse 7)? Why is this a fitting analogy?**

*(Note: If your students ask you about the word hyssop in verse 7, hyssop was an herb used by the ancient Egyptians to cleanse the temples. It was also known as the holy herb and was used in rituals as a symbol of purifications. David is using the word symbolically here.)*

**After you've sinned (as David sinned), why is it important for God to "renew a steadfast spirit" in you (verse 10)? (Steadfast means "firm," "steady," or "resolute.")**

**Verse 16 says that God doesn't delight in sacrifice. Have you ever sinned and then tried to make up for it with God by making some sort of sacrifice? ("I'll go to church more." "I'll give up something I enjoy.") How does God feel about that? What kind of "sacrifice" is God looking for? (The last half of verse 17 tells us: "a broken spirit" and "a broken and contrite heart." Contrite means "deeply sorry.")**

## TAKING IT INWARD

Ask students to share their thoughts about the following:

**After David prayed this prayer of confession and repentance, do you think he was forgiven? Why or why not?**

Ask students to turn in their Bibles to 1 John 1:9 and read the passage. Discuss the condition (the "if") in this verse. Then discuss the promise, which is based on our fulfillment of the "if." You may want to ask students to mark this important verse in their Bibles.

Ask the group to think about the last time they blew it with God. Ask them to think about how they dealt with that sin before God. Were they as deeply sorry as David? Did they confess their sin? Did they repent?

If repentance is turning around and facing a different direction, what would repentance look like for them concerning this action?

## PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Your students will see two scales on their journal pages. Ask them to circle on each scale the description that most closely matches their feelings and actions.

Also on their journal pages is a space for them to write out a brief prayer of confession and repentance. (They may need to use the back of the sheet for more space.) Give your students a few moments to use this space to clean themselves out before God, much as David did in his psalm.