



LIFE GROUPS | LEADERS GUIDE

March 3-9 , 2024 | Week 7

Welcome to your cleanly formatted Leaders Guide, made kinder for your printers! I've heard a few requests for these changes – so here we are!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. YOUR SEVENTH MEETING:

- KEEP GOING!!! You're on a roll – keep pressing forward.

2. ATTENDANCE:

- Did you click the blue button in your last email?

3. FEEDBACK FORMS:

- It seems a little early to even be bringing this up, but here we are, in week #7 – the time is coming where we'll start seeking to hear back about the semester from all your members, so we can begin the planning process for the Fall of 2024. That should all come out next week.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

LEADER NOTE: These are the lowest risk questions! Have fun exploring past experiences of life, and how your members spend their time now! However, as your group gets more and more comfortable with the deeper conversations, limit your time here – perhaps just pick one question to work with.

1. If you could live in your favorite TV show, which character would you be?

LEADER NOTE: From the know-it-all Professor on Gilligan's Island to the oddball Phil Dunphy on Modern Family, to ever so wise Dr. Temperance Brennan on Bones – who's spot would you like to take?

2. Is there a day in your life that would you like to relive, if given the opportunity?

LEADER NOTE: There are a lot of things we might change about our choices we've made, whether it's words we've said, our actions we've done. David, likely, would chance his patterns that fateful night as he gazed upon Bathsheba. What would you change up? What different decisions would you make?

QUICK REVIEW

LEADER NOTE: These are two questions that have your group reflecting upon last Sunday's message. The first question will always be the same, and the second one is provided from our teaching pastor from the service.

1. Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

LEADER NOTE: n/a

2. This weekend Pastor Justin wrote out "*Psalm 51 according to the heart of Saul.*" When comparing this with David's Psalm, consider with your Life Group which parts of Saul's Psalm are most tempting for you to live into? Why?

LEADER NOTE: Here's the chart that pastor Justin shared, depicting what Psalm 51 looks like as David wrote it, verses what it would have looked like if King Saul wrote it:

Psalm 51 (of the heart of David)	Psalm 51 (of the heart of Saul)
Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;	Have patience with me, O God, according to my excuses;
According to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.	According to my great deeds blot out my transgressions
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.	For I conceal my transgressions, and my sin is always hidden from others and myself.
Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;	Against me, and me only, have others sinned and done what is evil in your sight;
You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.	You delight in my manipulative sacrifices, so I bring them; you take pleasure in my excuses and 'strings attached' gifts.
My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, O God, will not despise.	My sacrifice, O God, is my own pride and ego; my self-justifying heart, O God, you will not despise.

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

LEADER NOTE: As we get more into the pattern of regular meetings, and continuing in the same book to study, we see similar answers emerge week to week through these questions – *which is OK!* We are reminded of the themes emerging. However, if it does become repetitive, simply ask the question ahead of reading the scripture text, "*What stands out to you about this text?*"

READ 2 Samuel 12:1-14

1. What does this passage say about the character of God?

2. What does this passage say about fallen humanity and the world we are in?

3. Where does this passage specifically expose sin or unbelief in my own life? How does it specifically call me to change my thinking, redirect my affections, replace behaviors, and trust in my Savior?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Read 2 Samuel 12:5-6 & Exodus 22:1. David missed the message that God had for him (the Rich Man wouldn't be sentenced to death under God's law). Have you ever noticed that you were getting too familiar with God's word that you missed its meaning or that you easily overreacted?

LEADER NOTE: This is really an incredible message from the Lord, that David received, with such vivid detail and retelling of his own sin. It is quickly obvious to the reader, that Nathan isn't just telling a bedtime story, or that he's presenting a case for King David to discern judgement. David missed the point and didn't see himself in the story. His reaction, while vastly unjustified, is an overreaction. It's clear from God's word, in the Exodus passage, that the Rich Man would only have to repay the lambs. David, however, is also trying to make himself look good or protect himself as he comes down with a heavy hand, and shows his anger against this Rich Man.

As veteran Christians read the Bible today, we also easily miss the point of God's word, and we take the *binocular* view, and project stories and messages upon our neighbors and colleagues. While scriptures weren't written to us, they reflect us, and we must see ourselves in the *mirror* of scriptures and must be careful to not read the passages as just words on a page but must read it as God's Word preserved for us to change our behaviors to live more like Christ!

On the other hand, we overreact, and become over-justified like David. We see sin and atrocities in the world around us, and we quickly condemn, and seek vengeance that is worse than the wrongdoing. This happens as we watch the news, and as we observe people's actions around us.

2. Read 2 Samuel 12:13, 1 Samuel 15:20-21 & 24-25. In these two texts, we see both David and Saul confess to their sin, yet Saul lost the kingdom and the throne remained in David's family. What differences do you see between their confessions?

LEADER NOTE: Be reminded that King Saul was commanded by the Lord to remove King Agag, and the whole nation of the Amalekites, and all their livestock. As King Saul led the charge, they took King Agag as a prisoner, and kept the best of the livestock for themselves. As Samuel approached King Saul, he quickly saw the error in his ways, confessed, and proceeded to make excuses! Saul, as we've seen before, thought that he was God's gift to the Nation of Israel, and cared only for preserving his own dynasty. We see his selfishness here as well. David on the other hand, more simply, and humbly, just confesses, "*I have sinned against the Lord.*" He doesn't justify his actions, he doesn't make excuses, he doesn't blame Bathsheba. He says, "*I was wrong.*" How often when we are confronted, our first pattern of thought is to justify our actions, "*I'm sorry, but I was distracted.*" "*I'm sorry, but I was led to believe...*" "*I'm sorry, but ...*"

- **Read Psalm 51.** These are the words that David penned with his heavy heart, knowing that he sinned against God. What stands out to you in his prayer?

LEADER NOTE: David was a writer, and used poetry to work through his emotions, fears, concerns, and joys. Fortunately, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, he not only penned these words, but they've been preserved from the very moment he wrote them, to being in print in our Bibles today. Many people have used these words to convey their sorrow and ownership of their sin. As you read these words with your Life Group, invite your members to not blast through the words just to read and finish. But encourage your members to read them slowly, and methodically, as they're being read for the first time. Perhaps even have different voices read each verse or paragraph and go around the room. Maybe even read it twice, and let the words resonate in your hearts as they're shared. Reading scripture together this way, not only prepares our hearts and minds to hear the Lord but makes us more attune to the Spirit's promptings.

- **Read Proverbs 28:13 & 1 John 1:9.** How are you left challenged for when you confess your sin?

LEADER NOTE: While David did initially conceal his sins, the Lord sent him Nathan who would confront him. David still had a choice, to deny or accept his actions, and we see that he made the decision to no longer run. David confessed of his wrongdoing, in front of the Lord, with no excuses or blaming of others. It's further fascinating to see that David's own son, Solomon (born in this current text), writes in Proverbs, "*but the one who confesses and renounces [their sin] finds mercy.*" Which must make us wonder if Solomon was cognizant of his father's actions while writing this proverb? While we're so prone to hide our failures, we cannot hide them from God the Father, and running is completely futile. So, before a *Nathan* shows up in our lives to convict us, what must we do?

3. Read 2 Samuel 12:15-16. God's judgement upon David and Bathsheba's son didn't make God unapproachable. How was it that David, knowing his son would die, could still approach God?

LEADER NOTE: There's a remarkable turn in David's heart following his confession. Up until now, it's been said that David, "*despised the word of the Lord.*" But now here, it's said that "*David sought God on behalf of the child.*" From not caring about God's word and being inattentive to it, to seeking the Lord's provision and guidance for his child. It's a significant shift! As we discovered in our exploration of **Psalm 22** last week, that David does in fact intimately know who God the Father is, and what He can do; all the while, he's been reminded of what he can do outside of following the Lord. His confession clearly reminded him again of who he is in the relationship with God. God is God, and David is David, a human created to honor and glorify God. In his humility, and even sense of guilt, he is driven back to the Father.

- **Read Matthew 11:28-29.** Christ came and is now the mediator between us and God the Father. How does this invitation cause you to reflect upon the areas of life where you have failed?

LEADER NOTE: As David's place in his relationship with God reminds that we too, have the same position – we're not God, we're mere humans designed to honor and glorify God, we're as prone to sin as David is. As sin touches every aspect of the world around us, we're left with heavy and broken hearts, and it's in that state of being, that Christ's invitation in **Matthew 11** is to be received. We're not to just approach God in the joys of life, or when everything is going super well. We're to seek him, more so, when life's challenges emerge. God does not reject those who come to him with honest and contrite hearts but welcomes them into His arms of compassion and care.

TAKING IT HOME

Read 2 Samuel 12:13-14, Matthew 1:1, 9:27, & 15:22. Nathan tells David because of his sin, his son must die. David's son took his own place. One of the most common titles for Jesus is "*The Son of David.*" Jesus took our place, for our sin. What does it mean to you, that you have received the same unmerited grace as David did?

LEADER NOTE: This is a remarkable moment in the story of scripture. David knows that he deserves death, **Leviticus 20:10** says, "*If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.*" Yet, he's just been told by Nathan, that the Lord has granted him mercy, and that he will not die; but the child must, as sin always has a cost.

We must picture the devastation that Bathsheba and her family must have felt as this news came about, only increasing David's sense of guilt. An innocent, helpless baby, took the weight of David's burden, for him, so that he might freely continue to live, and follow God's calling. This becomes a pretty familiar story for modern day Christians who know that Christ came as an innocent helpless baby, and who would grow to take upon the sins of the guilty, so that they might "*have abundant life*" (**John 10:10**). As the gospel of Matthew opens, we're told that Jesus is "*the Son of David.*" It's no longer a helpless baby, but God in flesh, come to earth, to extend to us the same mercy that He extended to David. Once again, we see ourselves as David in this story, recipients of yet another second chance.

Be sure to close your meeting in a word of prayer holding up each other's joys and sorrows to the Lord.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

LEADER NOTE: This following question is completely optional and is intended for the participants' personal reflection. But do feel free to explore using the question within your groups meeting.

Read Psalm 51. Read this Psalm slowly, and multiple times. As you do so, identify where David's words line up with all that you've read in 2 Samuel 11-12. How can David's honest and vulnerable prayer, influence your prayers?