

David - The Sinner

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BEFORE YOU START

MEETING AIM: TO EXPLORE THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN AND GOD'S FORGIVENESS.

BACKGROUND PREPARATION: David is a complex man – powerful king, mighty warrior, loner shepherd boy, skilled musician, celebrated poet. And in this story, he is an adulterer and a murderer. The man after God's own heart really knew how to mess things up. David had to live with the consequences of his sin – the knowledge that he had given in to his lust and taken another man's wife; the death of a good man and the death of his own child. But he discovered the transforming power of heartfelt repentance and God's powerful forgiveness.

As with so many of the Bible's stories, we don't hear the perspective of the woman who is an integral part of the story. How did Bathsheba feel about David's attention, about being married to her husband's murderer, about the death of her child?

Young people may struggle to get to grips with aspects of this story because it's so countercultural – that sin has consequences even if you don't get caught, that God doesn't put a hierarchy on sin, that even the worst sins can be forgiven.

Domino toppling (10-15 mins)

As people arrive, have some sets of dominoes that they can set up and then topple. Challenge them to create different shapes.

If you have online access you could show the Tipping Point advert from the Guinness website which shows a whole village setting up a 'domino' run that includes cars and fridges. Refer back to this when you talk about the consequences of sin, of how sin sets off a chain reaction that leads to a broken relationship with God, and damaged relationships with others.

Sit down if... (5 mins)

Get everyone to stand up, and do some quick-fire rounds of 'sit down if...' starting with things like '...if you had cereal for breakfast', '...if you watched [favourite TV] this week', '...if you argued with someone from your family'. It's a good way to catch up on what people have been doing this week; invite young people to lead a round. Then use 'sit down if you did nothing wrong this week' to introduce the theme of sinning. To sin, in biblical terms, means to miss the target or to stray from the path; it's about not living up to the standards that God expects from us.

The worst sin (20 mins)

Write these offences on pieces of card; if you have a large group you may want to do several sets:

- buying cigarettes underage
- shoplifting a T-shirt
- being unfaithful to your girl/boyfriend
- stabbing someone who then dies
- stabbing someone
- downloading MP3s illegally
- lying to your mum
- nicking a fiver from your dad's wallet
- gossiping about your mate and spreading rumours
- swearing

Get small groups to discuss these and put them in a triangular formation with the worst offences at the top and the least serious at the bottom.

This is a deliberately open-ended exercise to stimulate discussion – do you mean 'worst' in terms of punishment deserved, or impact on other people...? How many of these are sins? Is there a difference between breaking the law and sin?

Get people to talk about their shapes and why they chose them.

KEY POINT: TALK ABOUT THE FACT THAT SIN HAS CONSEQUENCES; OTHER PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED BY WHAT WE DO, BUT IT ALSO AFFECTS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. EVEN IF NO ONE ELSE FOUND OUT ABOUT IT, GOD WOULD KNOW. YOU CAN'T PRETEND IT DIDN'T HAPPEN.

Bible study (30mins)

Make sure people know the background to this story – explain who David is. Read 2 Samuel 11:1-27 together. You could get people to read the different characters. Discuss with the group:

- What was David's initial sin?
- What if Bathsheba hadn't got pregnant? How might the story have been different?
- What did David do to cover up his sin? (verses 8, 12 and 14) Was he successful? What if Uriah had slept with Bathsheba? How might the story be different?
- What are the consequences of David's sin – for Uriah, Bathsheba, his relationships with God, him?

Make sure people understand that what David did was wrong, even if he hadn't been found out.

You the jury (15 mins)

In small groups, get people decide on what should happen next. Should David be punished? How? What about Bathsheba and the baby? Get each group to pass sentence and to explain their reasoning.

Talk about what happened in the Bible. David realised that what he had done was wrong, that he'd hurt Bathsheba but also sinned against God and had broken his relationship with God. He wrote a heartfelt psalm of repentance and spent time crying out to God, and God forgave him and gave him a chance to start again.

David had to live with the consequences of his sin – Uriah was still dead; Bathsheba was still pregnant. He decided to take care of Bathsheba and she became his wife. His relationship with God was restored and God gave him another chance to serve him.

KEY POINT: GOD IS ABLE AND WILLING TO FORGIVE US WHEN WE SIN. NO MATTER WHAT WE HAVE DONE, IF WE TURN TO GOD HE WILL GIVE US A CHANCE TO START AGAIN AND TO BE RIGHT WITH HIM.

Refer back to the triangles in the earlier activity. All sin carries the same weight with God in that it spoils our relationship with him. But all of it can be forgiven. This can be a hard concept for young people to get hold of, as often we put a hierarchy on sin and think the worst things can't be forgiven.

Space to reflect (15 mins)

Create a physical space that's conducive to reflection – low lights, background music, projected images, cushions on the floor. It may help to have it in a different room and to move into it. Give people pens and paper; play some instrumental worship music.

Invite people to think about this session and what it means for them. What are the things that they have done wrong and want God to forgive? Allow space for people to write or draw on their paper.

Read Psalm 51 aloud; you may like to have printed copies for people to read in addition. Then invite people to put their paper into a shredder as a way of giving to God what they have done wrong and asking for forgiveness.

Make sure that you give 'absolution' – that you assure people that God has heard their prayer and that they

are forgiven. Be prepared to talk to people afterwards.

NOTES FOR ADAPTING:

For younger groups...Keep the reflective time short at the end. Get them to spread out and do the exercise on their own.

For older groups...Get them to also read and explore Nathan's confrontation of David in 2 Samuel 12, but be prepared for difficult questions about why the baby died.

For unchurched young people...You could lead into this by showing the film Sliding Doors in a previous session, which includes a man cheating on his wife and the different ways the consequences could be played out.

Jenny Baker is a writer and a founder of the Sophia Network for women in youth ministry.

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