

THE POWER OF REPENTANCE

by Dan Baker and Carol Duerksen

KEY VERSES:

Psalm 51:1-17

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (verse 17).

FAITH STORY:

I Samuel 13 and 15; II Samuel 7; 11-12:14, and 24; Psalm 51

FAITH FOCUS:

The reoccurring theme in this lesson is the power of repentance. The question that arises is: Why is David, whose sins were just as bad as Saul's, considered the more righteous of the two kings? The answer is that David was more repentant. When David sinned, he never argued with God. He immediately repented, and did whatever it took to get on good terms with God again, even if it meant sacrificing his own well being. Saul, on the other hand, argues with God after sinning, and in some cases doesn't repent at all. It is for this reason that David is the more righteous of the two kings. Repentance is extremely important and powerful in the eyes of God.

SESSION GOAL:

To help students understand the importance of repentance.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session students will know about Saul's and David's greatest sins, their response to God's judgment, and whom God considered to be the most righteous.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 copies of the skit
- 2 a gavel or something to be used as a gavel
- 3 a robe for the judge (choir robe is great)
- 4 review the Insights from Scripture and be prepared to share the information in a mini-lecture after the skit
- 5 a poster board and stickers—one for each student
- 6 Bibles for each student

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5–10 minutes)

Read or tell the following stories to the class:

Max was an exchange student from Germany in America. When he arrived in the U.S., he was told by his exchange organization that he couldn't drink, smoke or do drugs while he was an exchange student, and he said he understood those rules. Two months after his arrival, his host family was waiting up for him when he came home one night, and there was a strong smell of alcohol on his breath. When they confronted him about it, he admitted that he'd been drinking, apologized for doing it, and promised never to do it again.

Anika was an exchange student from Germany in America. When she arrived in the U.S., she was told by her exchange organization that she couldn't drink, smoke or do drugs while she was an exchange student, and she said she understood those rules. Two months after her arrival, her host mom found a joint in her room. When she confronted Anika about the pot, Anika got very angry and yelled at her host mother about "invading her privacy" and denied smoking the joint.

Ask students to discuss and decide what should be done with Max and Anika. *Should one or both be sent home? Should they both receive the same treatment? Why or why not?*

CONNECT: (3–5 minutes)

Ask students to think of examples where they or people they know didn't receive the same treatment for doing basically the same thing. Perhaps it was a sibling that they think got different treatment from parents, or a member of a sports team, or a classmate. Or perhaps a person with lots of money got different treatment in the judicial system than someone who didn't have any money.

Transition Statement: *Today we're going to explore the story of two kings, Saul and David. We will find out how they sinned against God, and why God treated each one different from the other after their sins. We might all it unfair, but God called it.....well, let's see.*

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (30–35 minutes)

Ask students to perform the skit. At the end of the skit, the rest of the class is the jury. The jury needs to decide which King should be given which title, The Good Guy or The Bad Dude. They need to come to a decision and explain their decision.

Share a mini-lecture with the class that covers the information presented in the Insights from Scripture.

APPLY: (5 minutes)

Write the name Saul on the far left of the poster board, and the name David on the far right, with a line in between them. Ask students to decide if they identify more with Saul or David. Things to think about: Do they argue with God and not repent, or repent late for their sins,

like Saul? Or do they immediately repent and do whatever it takes to become right with God again, like David? Or are they somewhere in the middle? Ask students to place a sticker on the continuum to represent where they.

RESPOND: (5 minutes)

Ask students to turn to 2 Samuel 12:13. Read the verse together.

Ask students to close their eyes and say a silent prayer to God, confessing and repenting for anything in their life they feel they need to repent for.

Ask students to keep their eyes closed as you go around the class, slowly saying each student's name, followed by the words "The Lord has put away your sin."

End the prayer with your own words, or words similar to this: Lord, thank you for hearing our prayers of repentance. Thank you for the forgiveness granted to us because of your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Amen.

INSIGHTS FROM THE SCRIPTURE:

Samuel, the last Judge of the Israelites, is asked by the Israelites to anoint a king over them. He does so and the Lord chooses Saul to be the first king. Saul is a tall and handsome man, but he is very shy and self-conscious. Saul fails the Lord by sinning in some very big ways. His worst sin is not destroying everything in the battle against the Amalekites as the Lord had commanded him to. This is due to a law of Holy War known as the "Cherem" or "The Ban" which states that everything must be sacrificed to the Lord since it is the Lord who wins the battle. Another one of Saul's big sins is sacrificing an offering to the Lord in fear, instead of waiting for Samuel to arrive as he had instructed him to. This sin is simply one of disobedience and not having faith that the Lord's prophet Samuel will keep his promise.

David is a popular young war hero who comes to the throne of Israel after the reign of Saul. David is remembered as the Godliest king even though he sinned just as badly and frequently as Saul did. The difference between David's sins and Saul's is that David always repented immediately for his sins and he continued to do whatever he needed to do to become right with the Lord again. After the sin of his affair with Bathsheba, David does not weep when the child dies because he knows the Lord's judgment is just and that he cannot bring him back. After numbering the people, David went through a lot to become right with God again but he did it all in great faith that the Lord would restore him. Numbering the people is a sin of Holy War because, since God wins the battles for the people, there is no need to number the people or establish a standing army. In doing so David puts his trust in the power of men instead of in the power of God.

I Samuel 13

Saul attacks the Philistine outpost at Geba, and then calls all of the Israelites to his side to fight with him. Unfortunately the Philistine army is too numerous and powerful for Saul to overcome and the Israelites are all afraid to fight. Many run away or hide. When Saul sees his men running away, he is frightened that the Philistines will attack him and so he offers the sacrifices to the Lord in order to have the Lord's favor in battle—something he was not supposed to do until Samuel was present. As soon as he is done offering the sacrifices,

Samuel arrives and he rebukes him for not obeying the instructions that the Lord had given him. Samuel assures Saul that his kingdom will not endure because he did not keep God's commandments. There is no mention of Saul offering any repentance at this time.

I Samuel 15

Later, after taking the Amalekites in battle, Saul does not sacrifice all of the spoils of war as the laws of Holy War require him to. Instead, he lets the king of the Amalekites, King Agag, live. Also, he does not destroy any of the good livestock, saying that he wants to sacrifice them to the Lord at a later time. Samuel once again rebukes Saul for his actions and for not obeying the Lord. This time, not only does Saul not repent for his sins, but in his ignorance, he even argues with Samuel, saying that he did obey the Lord. Finally Samuel is able to prove his failure and Saul repents and worships the Lord.

II Samuel 7

David begins his kingship in a good way and he asks to build a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem. The Lord tells him to do so, and blesses him, telling him that his kingdom will live on forever and that the Lord's love will be forever with him, unlike the love that the Lord had for Saul, which he took away.

II Samuel 11-12:14

During the springtime, David is on his roof when he sees through a window the beautiful Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, bathing herself. Lust overcomes David and he calls Bathsheba to his house and sleeps with her. Bathsheba soon realizes that she has become pregnant and she sends word to David of her condition. David then sends for Uriah the Hittite, one of "The Thirty" (David's most elite warriors who were all foreigners) and tries to trick him into sleeping with his wife so that it would seem as if the baby were his; but Uriah was a good man and he would not disobey the laws of Holy War, which forbid the act of laying with his wife during a time of war. David, after failing in this attempt to deceive Uriah several times, then sends Uriah back to Joab, the commanding officer in the David's army. David sends along with Uriah a note, his own death warrant, which says to set Uriah at the front of the heaviest fighting. Uriah delivers the message and Joab carries it out. Uriah soon falls in battle. After Bathsheba's time of mourning for her husband, David sends for her and he makes her his wife, but what David had done displeased the Lord. The Lord sends Nathan to David and Nathan reveals to David his great sin by using a parable. David immediately repents, and the Lord accepts, but the child that Bathsheba carries must die due to David's sin. David mourns for his son, but never complains about the Lord's sentence.

II Samuel 24

David breaks the laws of Holy War by taking a census of Israel and Judah. He counts all of the fighting men, which is the procedure for making a standing army. After doing so, however, he feels greatly troubled for what he has done and he repents to the Lord for sinning in such a way. The next morning the prophet Gad arrives at David's house and tells him that he has three choices in response to his sin. He can have a three-year famine in the land, three months of running from his enemies, or three days of plague. David never gives an answer, but prays that he and his people may fall in the hands of the Lord; and so the Lord sends a plague upon the land, but when David sees the people being struck down he cries out to the Lord, saying that these people have done nothing and he asks the Lord to bring the punishment upon him and his family. On the same day Gad returns to David and tells him to

go build an altar to the Lord. David goes and purchases from his servant Araunah what he needs to build an altar, even though Araunah offers it to him for free, David still pays because he refuses to offer to the Lord something that cost him nothing. After sacrificing burnt offerings and fellowship offerings the Lord lifted the plague from Israel.

Psalm 51

This is simply an example of David's repentant spirit. It is written as a response to his great sin in committing adultery with Bathsheba.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE SKIT

CHARACTERS:

Saul

David

Saul's attorney

David's attorney

Saul's witness

David's witness

Judge

Jury: the rest of the class

(Note, if your class is small, you can double up on the characters. If you have a large class, you can divide up the witness part among several students.)

Set the class room up like a simple courtroom: judge in front with a small table or desk in front of him or her; chairs on either side facing the judge for Saul, his attorney and witness on one side; and David's group on the other side. One chair should be near the judge for those who are testifying. Judge wears the robe. .

JUDGE POUNDS THE GAVEL: The court is now in session. This is the case of Saul versus David, in which Saul alleges that David should not be called The Good Guy while he is called "The Bad Dude." Saul's attorney, you may present your case.

SAUL'S ATTORNEY STANDS UP AND SPEAKS TO THE JUDGE: Your honor, my client is not a perfect man, but he is a King chosen by the Lord. He admits to some mistakes in his past, but they are nothing compared to what David did. David committed adultery, and then had the husband of the woman killed so he could marry her. Adultery and murder! How can a king do that and still be called The Good Guy? Your honor, I propose that David should be called The Bad Dude and Saul is The Good Guy.

SAUL'S ATTORNEY SITS DOWN.

JUDGE: David's attorney, you may present your case.

DAVID'S ATTORNEY STANDS UP AND SPEAKS TO THE JUDGE: Your honor, my client does not deny the allegations. He did commit adultery and murder. He greatly regrets both actions and has repented to the Lord for them.

DAVID'S ATTORNEY SITS DOWN.

JUDGE: That's all you have to say?

DAVID'S ATTORNEY: Yes your honor.

JUDGE: Then let's hear from the witnesses. Saul's attorney, your witness.

SAUL'S WITNESS GOES TO THE CHAIR. ATTORNEY STANDS UP

S. ATTORNEY: Witness, what have you seen and heard about King David?

WITNESS: He's been known to watch a neighbor woman while she's taking a bath, invite her over for sex, get her pregnant, try to manipulate the situation so it looks like the child is her husband's, and have her husband killed when that didn't work. That makes him a peeping tom, sex maniac, adulterer, trickster and murderer. He also broke the laws of Holy War. He counted the soldiers when he wasn't supposed to. That may not sound like a big deal, but it is. God was so upset that David had three choices in response to his sin: three years of famine, three months of running from his enemies, or three days of plague.

S. ATTORNEY: Thank you, witness. Judge, I fail to see how a man with this kind of record could be called A Good Guy.

JUDGE: David's attorney, your cross-examine.

DAVID'S ATTORNEY: Witness, you have done a good job of recalling some of David's actions. Are there any other actions you can recall?

WITNESS: What do you mean?

DAVID'S ATTORNEY: Do you recall hearing how the prophet Nathan visited David and

told him a parable, and told David to repent? Do you recall hearing how David asked God for forgiveness? Do you recall how David's son died because of his sin, and David did not complain about the punishment he was paying for his sin?

WITNESS: I might have heard something to that effect.

DAVID'S ATTORNEY: Do you or do you not admit knowing those facts.

WITNESS: okay, okay, they are true.

DAVID'S ATTORNEY: No further questions.

JUDGE: You may call your witness.

DAVID'S ATTORNEY: Witness, come on up here.

DAVID'S WITNESS SITS IN CHAIR.

DAVID'S ATTORNEY: Witness, what have you heard and observed about King Saul?

WITNESS: I was in a battle with him when he got scared of the Philistines. He panicked and offered the sacrifices to the Lord before the prophet Samuel got there. He wanted the Lord's favor in the battle and didn't want to wait. When Samuel showed up, he wasn't happy with King Saul and told him so. Saul just went on and did his thing. Then, in another battle, King Saul defied what God told him to do. He let the king live and didn't destroy all of the good livestock like he was supposed to, and then he lied about it to Samuel. When Samuel confronted him he argued with him and said he's obeyed the Lord. When Samuel proved he was wrong, he finally repented and worshipped the Lord. If you ask me, the man's got an attitude.

JUDGE: No personal comments please. Thank you for your testimony. Saul's attorney, do you want to cross-examine?

SAUL'S ATTORNEY: You bet I do. Witness, your recollections are correct. You know what you've seen and heard about King Saul, and you know what horrific sins King David has committed. Tell me, then, how can the man who's an adulterer and killer be the Good Guy and Saul, whose worst sins were offering sacrifices at the wrong time and not killing everyone and everything in battle, is known as the Bad Dude.

WITNESS: In my opinion, it's a matter of attitude.

JUDGE: Comment not allowed. You are a witness. Please stick to the facts.

WITNESS: I have nothing more to say.

JUDGE: Then this case will go to the jury