

■ THIS IS US

Week Four | September 3, 2017 | Everyone Is Broken, But There Is Hope

PREPARATION

■ MONDAY THROUGH WEDNESDAY

Spend some time alone with God's Word reading through 2 Samuel 11–12, Psalm 51, John 18 and 21, and Acts 8–9. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truths of this text and allow you to teach it well to those in your care.

■ THURSDAY THROUGH SATURDAY

Read through the questions included in the guide this week. Many questions have been included in this lesson for discussion. Determine which of those questions will work well to encourage, push, and grow your group in the best way.

■ DAILY

As you prepare, pray for the preaching of God's Word this coming week at the corporate church gathering. Pray also for your time together as a group, that the Spirit would make effective your teaching and bring gospel clarity, gospel change, and a heart for gospel mission to those that are present.

THIS WEEK

■ KEY BIBLICAL REALITY

Every person is fallen and broken, but there is hope in Christ.

■ THEOLOGY APPLIED

Though we are all broken and get off track sometimes, Jesus brings us restoration through healthy confrontation, community, and confession.

■ MEDITATE

*“Against you and you only have I sinned [O God]...Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.”
(Psalm 51:4a, 10)*

GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

- 🕒: *Why is it that we all experience brokenness in our lives on some level?*
- 🕒: *List some types of brokenness we see in humanity.*
- 🕒: *Have you ever experienced a season of spiritual wandering and darkness? What did that feel like?*
- 🕒: *Why do you think we sometimes get off track spiritually?*

When it comes to the history of how certain people groups settled in various parts of the world, one of the greatest mysteries is that of the Polynesian people. A question that plagues historians and researchers alike is this: where did the Polynesian people first come from, and how in the world did they reach and populate offshore islands, across the raging sea, thousands of miles away? The leading theory is that they first came from Southeast Asia, and over time, constructed sea vessels able to move through currents in the Pacific Ocean, reaching islands in the east. While this may not seem like a huge feat in our day and time of technological accuracy and fancy GPS gadgets, we must remember that these people successfully navigated exploration across the ocean hundreds of years before contemporary cultures would “discover” America or even invent modern navigational tools.

The fact that the Polynesians were successful in their voyages tells us that they may have been the greatest sea-navigators who ever lived on planet Earth! This leaves a huge, gaping question. It's one thing to have a sturdy vessel that can make it through rough waters, but how did they know where they were going? A good boat is worth nothing if you don't know your destination! Historians tell us that the Polynesians are renowned for navigating by a few different techniques, the most important being their knowledge of the starry skies. By dividing the stars into various quadrants within the sky and following their direction, the explorers could always figure out exactly where they were, and adjust their course when needed. These ancient celestial navigators remain, to this day, a subject of fascination for wayfarers everywhere.

Like the Polynesians, we too can find ourselves in unknown, choppy waters at times. None of us gets through life unscathed. We all, at some point or another, experience seasons of brokenness, wandering, and sin. Sometimes we get off course and need a way back. Knowing this, God gives us a few trusty “stars” to offer us hope and direction in our wandering — stars that help us get back on track, out of the darkness, and into the light. These guiding “stars” for the Christian are confrontation, community, and confession. In the midst of stormy waters, God always offers us these navigation points to restore and give us hope!

Q: *How have you been able to get back “on track” during a season of brokenness or wandering?*

Q: *Why do you think we hold back from hard conversations with other believers about their sin? Why do you think we get defensive when others challenge our own sin?*

■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

So far in this series we’ve learned a great deal about who we are as believers. We are a people who find their identity in the gospel, live with Scripture as our guide, and prioritize planting churches so that others may know God. This week we will move forward and learn even more about who we are as believers in a fallen world, who sometimes struggle with brokenness, hang-ups, and sin in our lives. However, God does not leave us there. Because we are His people, we are offered a way out of brokenness and into hope and restoration! As we read this week’s selected passages, we will see clear examples of how God moves us as His people:

- 1. FROM SIN TO RESTORATION (DAVID)**
- 2. FROM DENIAL TO OWNERSHIP (PETER)**
- 3. FROM ENEMY TO FRIEND (PAUL)**

GOING DEEPER

+ *This next section will help show what God’s Word says about this week’s particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week’s biblical truth.*

FROM SIN TO RESTORATION: DAVID

■ 2 SAMUEL 11–12 AND PSALM 51

🔗: *What do kings usually do during springtime? What did King David do? [11:1] What does this tell us about sin?*

🔗: *What were the consequences of David's sexual sin with Bathsheba? [11:5, 11:27b, 12:14] How do we see David's attempts to cover up his sin escalate? What does this teach us about human nature when we are caught in sin?*

King David is one of the most famous characters in all of the Old Testament. He is known for spearheading the glory days of Israel, being “a man after God’s own heart,” and bringing God’s people into seasons of unparalleled prosperity. However, we must remember that while David is renowned for these titles of honor, he is equally notorious for his dark season of sin. In a season of laziness, when most kings would fight alongside their armies in battle, King David chooses to stay behind and enjoy palace life. While his soldiers spend their days in gruesome combat, he spends his reclining at home and watching a woman (who is not his wife) bathe. Sometimes the worst of our sin can begin with simply being idle. When we choose not to engage in the battles to which God has called us, we “stay behind” like David in laziness, and our boredom gives ample opportunity for sin. As we read, we see that David moves from watching Bathsheba to forcefully taking her, though she was not his to take (11:4). His sexual sin with her leads to a consequence that he cannot hide: pregnancy.

As we watch David take ever-increasing measures to try to cover up this consequence, it becomes obvious that doing horrible things to deal with unexpected pregnancies is not a modern problem, but an ancient one. Much like Adam and Eve’s response in the garden, covering up our sin is fallen human nature. Instead of running to God first, we hide and sew “fig leaves” to cover ourselves, hoping we can spin our sin in a different light and get away with it.

For David, the “fig leaf” he tries to use to cover his sin is a plan to get Uriah back from battle to lay with his wife, seemingly causing the pregnancy. His scheme, should it work, would superficially patch up all of David’s sin. However, when that plan fails due to Uriah’s loyalty to his fellow soldiers and refusal to return home, David comes up with an even more desperate, treacherous “fig leaf” to cover his sin—killing Uriah and marrying his wife. David assumes that no one will know what really happened—that the great King David had fallen, chosen luxury over his own men, committed lust and adultery, gotten a married woman pregnant, and murdered her husband to cover it up. No one would know of his brokenness. No one, except God.

🔗: *Who orchestrated Nathan and David's conversation? [12:1] How did Nathan approach the confrontation with David? What do these two things help us see about our duty to call out sin in the lives of other believers?*

Q: *Though David is confronted by the prophet, who does he say he has sinned against? (12:13) How does this inform our view of sin and confrontation?*

Q: *What does David do after the final consequence of his sin has come to fruition? What is his reasoning for this? (12:19-23) How does this show us faith and restoration, even in face of incredible loss and darkness?*

As the account tells us, God knew what was going on and was extremely displeased (11:27). To confront David in his sin, the Lord sends a prophet and friend to David, Nathan. In a wise approach, Nathan chooses to confront David in the form of a story about an unjust rich man who stole the only lamb of a poor man. In anger, David swears that the unjust rich man should restore the poor man's loss fourfold. He even says that the rich man deserves death for taking something that was not his own, given that the rich man has so many other options. Unknowingly, David backs himself into a corner, as Nathan levels a final blow in the story. The rich man is David, the poor man is Uriah, and the lamb represents the wife of Uriah. Even though he has the world at his fingertips, David unjustly stole what wasn't his from someone who was not only less fortunate than him, but fiercely loyal to him as King. Thanks to Nathan's creative confrontation, David finally sees how off track he has gotten, and declares that he has grievously sinned against not just Uriah and Bathsheba, but against God (12:13). Though David is soon to pen his most famous Psalm of confession, he still must face the harsh consequences of his sin. The child that Bathsheba is carrying will die.

This confrontation shows us that God loves us too much to let us stay in our sin and brokenness. To shake us out of our denial and "fig leaf-making," He pricks us with serious confrontation and severe consequences. For David, the confrontation came through Nathan and the consequence was the loss of his own son. Just as He did with David, God uses these two things like scissors to cut us free from our self-made fig leaves. God uses confrontation and consequences to move us from trying to cover our sin to trusting Christ to cleanse us of our sin. In the end, while we know God was not out to get David, He was certainly out to get him away from darkness and into the light, using confrontation and consequences to get him there. May we, like David, be willing to receive healthy confrontation from our own Christian brothers and sisters when they see sin in our lives and call it out, for this will lead us to future restoration.

Q: *David knows that his heart has been compromised and he can't restore it to health on his own, so what does he do? (Ps. 51:10-12) How does David view his sin in this Psalm? How is this different from the way our culture views sin?*

- ❓ *How does 2 Samuel 12:24-25 reveal the God's great mercy and restoration offered to David after his repentance?*
- ❓ *What is an important result of confessing and repenting often? [Ps. 51:13] Explain how others are impacted when we confess our own sin.*
- ❓ *How do you usually try to cover up your sin? What "Nathan" in your life knows about these tendencies?*

Though Nathan played a huge part in helping David see his sin, Nathan can't do the hard work of confession and repentance for David. Only David can do that, and thankfully, he does do it as recorded in Psalm 51, the most famous passage on confession and repentance in the Bible. In this Psalm, David doesn't just assume that God heard him when he confessed to Nathan. Instead, David moves from conversing with a person about his sin to actually discussing it with God. He acknowledges that his sin is something he was born with that he cannot get rid of by himself. Instead of promising to do better or work harder, David simply and humbly asks God to clean him, purge his sin, make him new, and give him a pure heart in place of his broken, sinful one. He asks for mercy and deliverance and change—things we all must do in our own consistent confession and repentance.

Though we are very broken, like David, God uses both community involvement and personal repentance to restore us back to Him. There's always hope, no matter how dark our situation may seem to be. Community and confession are always the way back into the light! If God can take a man like David from such darkness and violence and bring him back into the light, surely He can restore us too. Instead of hiding, if we receive confrontation and simply come to God in sweet confession, asking Him to change us, God is faithful to do just that.

FROM DENIAL TO OWNERSHIP: PETER

❏ JOHN 18 AND JOHN 21

- ❓ *How does Peter unconsciously stand in the way of Jesus' work? [John 18:10-11]*

Q: *Next, how does Peter consciously sin? (John 18:17, 25, 27)*

Q: *In what ways do you deny the Lord in your daily life?*

As Jesus faces betrayal by Judas and arrest by the high priest, Peter seeks to defend the Lord by drawing his sword and fighting the guards, cutting off the ear of one of the high priest's servants. Peter doesn't know what must take place for Jesus to accomplish the work of the cross, and as a result, he is unconsciously standing in the way of it. As the story plays out, Peter's poor perspective only gets worse. Peter, the great apostle, moves from unconscious sin to a blatant, conscious, betrayal of Christ. When asked about his association with Jesus, he cowers in fear, denying three times that he even knows the man—a man he sworn he'd die for just a few chapters before (John 13:37)! How quickly he went from claims of faithfulness to claims of denial.

We, too, like Peter, have moments of poor perspective. Worse, we can easily go from raising our hands in worship and making bold promises of faithfulness to sheepishly side-stepping awkward conversations at work about Jesus, virtually denying him all together. Under the right type of pressure, we all have the ability to deny Christ in certain situations. While many assume David committed the worst types of sin (lying, adultery, and murder) the truth is that he still knew God was God. David was caught in terrible sin, yes, but through it all, he had not abandoned the Lord as his God. Peter, on the other hand, was denying the Lord altogether, abandoning Jesus in his darkest hour, something Jesus sorrowfully already knew would take place (John 13:38). Anyone from a great king to a great apostle can enter into a season of brokenness, whether that be in moral failure or outright denial of God.

Q: *Why do you think Peter throws himself into the sea to reach Jesus? (John 21:7)*

Q: *How does Jesus give Peter the chance to be restored for each of the times he denied Christ? What encourages you about this?*

Q: *What is the difference between Judas' betrayal of Jesus and Peter's? How do they deal with their sin differently? How do their examples help us deal with our own sin?*

After the death and resurrection of Christ, Jesus comes back to show his disciples that he's actually alive as they are fishing. When the men realize that the man on the shore is Jesus, they "came in the boat," and approached Jesus. Peter, on the other hand, "threw himself into the sea" and swam to Christ with all his might (21:7-8)! Here we see that after denying Jesus, though he could have run from his past denial and sin, Peter instead rushes to Jesus as fast as he can. He runs toward him instead of away, likely wanting to make things right after denying his Lord. When Jesus instructs them to get some of the fish he provided for them, Peter, probably soaking wet, is the first one to eagerly obey. He hurries to the boat and gathers the fish for Jesus. Through his actions, Peter reveals the repentant heart behind his behavior. He denied the Lord, but he doesn't cower away in fear this time. He seeks Jesus with everything he has, and shows by his actions that his heart has changed.

Jesus then asks three times if Peter loves him. In each response, Peter responds with a heart-filled "yes" and calls him "Lord," each time, reinstating Jesus' place in his heart and life. He knows Jesus has risen from the dead and that he's truly Lord of all. He even proves this knowledge by claiming that Jesus knows everything, something only God is capable of (21:17). By calling Jesus "Lord" and affirming his omniscience, though he has seriously wandered, Peter is now returning to his original declaration about Jesus that "you are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Where he once denied Christ, he is now owning his association with him fully. In each of the three questions Jesus poses to Peter, Christ is offering Peter the chance to be restored for each of his three denials! Peter takes it with joy, and shows us that even the sin of denial can be overcome in Christ when we truly repent and return to the Lord.

🗣️: *What usually keeps you from running toward Jesus when you've sinned?*

FROM ENEMY TO FRIEND (PAUL)

📊 ACTS 8 AND ACTS 9

🗣️: *What is Saul doing to Christians when we first see him in Acts 8? What does this cause the Christians to do?*

🗣️: *Did Saul's actions stop the gospel from moving forward? [8:4]*

Paul is another famous apostle in the Scriptures, arguably the most famous. However, before he became known

as Christianity's most fearless church-planting apostle, he was considered Christianity's most fearsome, church-ravaging extremist. Where Peter surely experienced the dark sin of denying Christ altogether, Paul went beyond simply denying Jesus and attempted to destroy him and the young church. Zealous for Judaism, Saul hated the Christians and the Christ they bore witness to. They were not only ruining but redefining everything that the Jews stood on to make them the "people of God": the law, the land, and the temple. Their law is what drew a line between pious Jews and immoral heathens. Their land was considered the special place God had promised to their nation alone for future inheritance. And the temple was the place the God of Israel dwelt, a place only Jews had access to. Together, these three pillars made up the foundation of faithful Jewish identity. Yet, in Saul's mind, these Jesus-followers were speaking against the pillars that made the people of Yahweh who they were. By extension, they were attacking Yahweh Himself! These Christians had the audacity to consider the old law obsolete and unattainable, fulfilled by their ordinary, untrained, Jewish nobody, Jesus of Nazareth! They even had the guts to call him the Messiah, though he brought no political upheaval to cast off Roman rule, as all the Jews had come to expect of the Anointed One.

These Christians made claims about the land and God's inheritance being available to anyone who believed in this criminal carpenter who died on a Roman cross. Like Yahweh would offer just anyone the special promises only offered to His chosen people! And even more desecrating was their view of the temple! Instead of God dwelling with His people as He always had, through a building, these rogue Christians were spreading the idea that through their beloved Jesus, Yahweh somehow dwelt within them, making people the place where God dwells instead of the temple! As if the pure and perfect Yahweh could dwell with—much less inside of—sinful pagans! Rumor even had it that Jesus himself said he would tear down the temple; what a horrible, treasonous Jew!

Everything about this Christian message, in Saul's mind, was complete heresy. These destructive believers had to go, and Saul, as their number one enemy, hunted them down in the name of Yahweh to either kill them or throw them in prison.

- ❓ *Saul had been persecuting believers, yet Jesus asks Saul, "Why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4.) What does this say about the connection between Christ and the Church?*
- ❓ *Jesus himself could have explained the entire gospel upon meeting Saul on the Damascus road and bestowed the Holy Spirit to him, but he gives that task to a believer, Ananias (Acts 9:6-18). What does this teach us about how God desires the gospel to spread?*
- ❓ *What is the result of Saul's encounter with the risen Christ? Is he now an enemy of the church or a friend? How does his story encourage you?*

Saul's salvation story is one of Christ running after and seeking out the lost! While he was on his way to persecute Christians in the city, the risen and shining Christ stops him in his tracks, abruptly interrupting his pursuit, and bringing Saul to his knees in shock. The first thing we notice about their encounter is that Jesus accuses Saul not of persecuting the church, but himself. How wonderful to know that God tells us we are His body in the New Testament, He means it, even in the face of a violent extremist like Saul. Believers to Christ are so united to Him that He ties their fate to His own. In Jesus' mind, whatever someone does to the church, they are actually doing to Christ Himself. More than that, whatever problem someone has with Jesus' disciple they have with Christ himself. This is how much Jesus identifies with us as His believers!

Next, we notice that Jesus tells Saul to go meet another believer, Ananias, to be healed from his blindness and receive the gospel and the Holy Spirit. How amazing it is that Jesus himself entrusts this task to an ordinary believer. For Jesus, He wanted his people to spread the message of the gospel and see its power work among even the most unlikely of converts. Since the start of Christianity, people talking to people is the way the gospel spreads, even in the case of the great apostle Paul. Thank God for the faithfulness and obedience of Ananias, who rarely gets the honor he is due for facing Saul, the personification of persecution during the early church days.

🔍: *Before he starts his public ministry preaching in the synagogues, what does Saul do first? (9:19-20). Why is this important?*

🔍: *Now that Saul the Jew is a Christian, explain how the roles have reversed in Acts 9:22-25.*

🔍: *While we need brothers and sisters like Nathan to challenge us, we also need those like Barnabas to encourage us and defend us when we've transitioned from a season of sin to a season of restoration (9:26-27). Share about a time when someone was a Barnabas to you. How has this experience made you a better believer?*

After Saul becomes a believer, he immediately starts preaching the gospel in the synagogue. He finally understands that through Christ's work, the Christians aren't trying to undo or destroy God's chosen people, they are trying to expand them through the gospel! They are trying to bring the nations into the precious promises given to Israel through the work of God's son! But the Jews didn't understand. Due to their misunderstanding of the Christian message and the Christ at the center of it, Saul makes it his mission to powerfully prove from the Scriptures that Jesus is, in fact, the Christ. Saul, once an enemy of both Christ and the Church, is now their greatest friend and strongest advocate.

Q: *Knowing that God can take a violent enemy of His people and change him into their greatest friend, how does this change your perspective about your own broken situations?*

Even great men of faith like David, Peter and Saul had seasons of brokenness, whether in moral sin, denial of Christ, or even harming Christ's people. All three of these stories teach us how incredibly merciful and forgiving God is in the face of the worst of our sin and brokenness. Though we all have different versions of the hang-ups in our life—whether that be past hurts, addictive habits, shortcomings, broken families, sinful choices, spiritual laziness, and the like—God is bigger than our hang-ups and consistently proves Himself more powerful than the darkness in our lives. We all are broken. But just as he did with David, Peter, and Saul, God has a way of interrupting us, waking us up, and restoring us to the right path. He does this through healthy confrontation, solid community, and sometimes, even severe consequences. When we see these warning signs in our own moments of brokenness, we know that as painful as it might be, God is helping us return to the light. If we take these signs for what they are, God's intervention, and simply run to Him in confession, He is faithful to restore us, like David said, fourfold! No matter how broken the circumstance looks, there is always hope for us by returning to Christ!

NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

- Q:** *We learned in this lesson that sin always escalates when we keep it in the dark. In what ways does your sin usually escalate? Share this with a trusted accountability partner in your group, and ask them to let you know when they see any signs of escalation in your life.*
- Q:** *Think of the barrier that keeps you from running to Christ when you are in a season of brokenness. What practical things can you do this week to overcome this barrier?*
- Q:** *Much of David's repentance can be credited to Nathan, who was brave enough to confront his friend in the thick of his sin. Who do you know you should have a challenging conversation with, but haven't done it due to fear? On the flip side, who*

could you ask to be a faithful Nathan in your life—someone you can trust to call out your sin and brokenness regularly? Take some time and plan to have these conversations this week.

Q: *What personal hang-ups in your own life make you feel like God could never restore you? Take some time to choose a few encouraging verses from this week's Scripture reading that show God is capable of restoring the most extreme brokenness. Memorize them this week to build your faith in the God who can offer hope to any broken situation.*

PRAY

+ *Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus:*

- God, thank you for not leaving me in seasons of sin or brokenness, but offering me hope and restoration through confrontation, community, and confession.
- God, help me believe that you can transform my story and my struggles, no matter how severe.
- God, give me a Nathan in my life who will call out my sin for my own good. Give me also a David in my life—someone you are calling me to hold accountable.
- God, grow me in the practice of confession. Help me run to you when I struggle.

COMMENTARY

P2 SAM. 11:8-11 Laying with one's wife was avoided during a military campaign, as it was a source of ritual impurity (Ex. 19:15; Lev 15:18). When Uriah refuses to go to his house and be with Bathsheba, it shows the clear distinction between David's mindset and his own. Uriah clearly considers himself still on duty, since the battle still rages on the field, while David is in an idle and lazy frame of mind, considering himself off-duty—a mindset that

always leaves one vulnerable to sin and temptation.

JOHN 18:10 Peter's violent aggression against the high priest's servant shows just how out-of-perspective he truly was in that moment. Peter's actions remind us, much like David's and Paul's stories, that our sin and brokenness impact others around us. Luke's account adds that Jesus healed the ear of the soldier (Luke 22:51). This gives us hope that though our sins do affect others, Jesus can heal and transform even our worst actions.

ACTS 9:3-5, 20, 27 It is an incredibly important experience for Paul that he met the resurrected Christ in person. While the reality of Christ's resurrection is usually just a verbal message from person to person, Jesus makes sure to actually reveal himself to Paul in a way that requires Paul's physical senses (sight, sound, etc.). Seeing Christ in the resurrected flesh emboldened Paul in a way that carried him through his witness for Christ in times of persecution, difficult church planting seasons, and even impacted his letter-writing. His direct experience would show up in his epistles that we still read to this day; he'd fervently claim that he saw and spoke with the risen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; Gal 1:16; Acts 9:27). This encounter with Christ would underpin all of Paul's teaching and helps us understand why the resurrection was the key part of the Christian message. If Jesus of Nazareth lived and died for people, but didn't have the power to overcome death in the end, Christians would have no eternal life to enjoy with Christ.

**All exegetical content and commentary resourcing for this lesson was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes and the Preaching the Word Commentary Series by Kent Hughes (Chapter 12).*

