

God Washes Us Clean

Psalm 51

1

Lesson



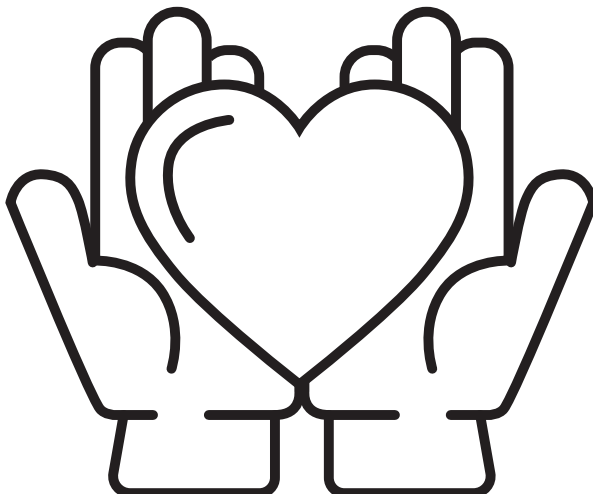
Teacher Background

What Happens: David has done something really, really bad, and someone points it out to him. David realizes the weight of his sin and cries out to God, asking him to give him a new heart, to clean him, and to restore his joy. David knows that when he asks God for forgiveness, he is forgiven.

Why It Matters: Kids live in a culture that creates identity around accomplishment: You are what you've done. This can also lead to kids feeling like one failure means they're a "bad kid." Use this lesson to show kids we are not the sum of what we've done, right or wrong; we are forgiven, and God gives us a clean start when we do wrong.

Think About: Are you allowing any past failures to define you? Give those to God; you are forgiven.

Pray for kids to understand their new identity in Jesus.



Point

We are forgiven.



Key Verse

"Family of Jacob, the Lord created you. People of Israel, he formed you. He says, 'Do not be afraid. I will set you free. I will send for you by name. You belong to me.' "

Isaiah 43:1

QUICK TIP

God gives us a new start; how might you do the same for your kids? Kids who go to the same church for several years can get branded as "the challenging one" or "the quiet kid." Put a stop to the negative labels in your own mind and in your classroom. Each week, treat kids as if it's a new start, rather than holding previous actions against them.

This Lesson at a Glance



WHAT HAPPENS	KIDS DISCOVER	SUPPLIES
SET THE STAGE Share about a topic related to the lesson.	The connection between their world and the Bible.	
EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE Recycle marked-up paper into new paper.	What renewal looks like and that God renews our hearts.	Bible, paper, washable markers, paper towels bowls of water (1/kid), paper plates (2/kid)
PLAY A GAME Attempt perfect posture.	That no one's perfect. We all need God's forgiveness.	Paper plates (1/kid) Upbeat music (optional)
EXPLORE MORE Attempt various tongue twisters.	Sin is more than just mess-ups or mistakes.	
PRAY TOGETHER Clean hands while praying.	That we can always say "sorry" to God.	



SET THE STAGE (5 MINUTES)



CELEBRATE

In sharing your own experiences first, you model openness and vulnerability. This builds relationships and a sense of safety. Leverage the power of how your classroom allows you and the kids to really get to know one another!

SAY: Today we'll discover that ➡ **we are forgiven.** That means all the wrong things we've done that make our hearts feel icky, God washes them away!

ASK: What's something you'd want to wash your hands really well after doing? Share your own quick answer first, and then let everyone share!

SAY: When we do something gross or dirty, we wash our hands really well! And all the dirt and germs wash away. Our hearts get dirty—or icky—when we do wrong things.

But good news! God washes away that dirt and ick from our hearts!

Let's read a psalm in the Bible that talks about how ➡ **we are forgiven.**



EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE (10 MINUTES)



SUPPLIES

- Bible
- paper
- washable markers
- disposable bowls of water (1 per child)
- paper plates (2 per child)
- paper towels

EASY PREP

- Fill each disposable bowl about two-thirds full of water.

MARK UP A PAPER

Give each child a half-sheet of paper, and set out markers to share.

SAY: Today we're going to learn a psalm, or song, written by a guy named David. David loved God so much!

Have kids draw a happy face on their paper.

But then David did some really bad things. Here's what he said about it in his song.



Read Psalm 51:1-2.

SAY: David called his sins "stains." Sin is the wrong things we all say and do sometimes. Each one of us sins, like David had, so let's stain our papers.

Have kids mark scribbles all over their paper, covering the happy face and ruining the paper.

SAY: David's sin ruined his joy in God and his happy friendship with him. David felt sad and broken about his sin.



Read Psalm 51:3.

MASH THE PAPER

Give each child a prepared bowl of water, and have kids show how broken David felt by tearing their paper into tiny pieces (the smaller the better—about the size of a fingernail), collecting the scraps in the bowl. Younger kids may have a hard time getting the pieces that small, but older friends can help them if needed.

SAY: Then David got to experience something awesome! David learned that ➡ **we are forgiven.** God could wash his sin away!



Read Psalm 51:7-9.

SAY: Let's wash our sin-filled paper! Have kids "scrub" and mash the paper with their fingers until it gets pulpy.

MAKE NEW PAPER

SAY: David knew that ➡ **we are forgiven** and that his wrong choices didn't define him. He asked God to create in him a new, clean heart.



Read Psalm 51:10.

SAY: Let's make new, clean paper!

Give each child two paper plates and a paper towel. Have kids pick up the pulpy paper and wring out the water into the bowl the best they can. Next, kids will press the pulpy paper firmly onto a paper plate, making a new, flat piece of paper they'll shape into a heart. Kids can use the paper towel to sop up excess water from the top of the paper and dry off their fingers.

Finally, have kids carefully flip their new, heart-shaped paper upside down onto the second paper plate, sop up any excess water with the paper towel, and leave their paper to dry. Older kids can help younger kids with any of these steps as needed.



TALK ABOUT IT

SAY: Because David knew ➡ **we are forgiven**, he knew that God had given him a new heart.

ASK: What makes your paper heart so cool?

ASK: How is being forgiven like getting a fresh, new piece of paper?

SAY: We've all done wrong things. But when God washes us clean and gives us new hearts, ➡ **we are forgiven!** The scribbles on our paper are gone, and so is the sin in our lives because of God's forgiveness.

The wrong things we say and do sometimes—our sins—don't make us who we are. God knows who we truly are, and he loves us! You can talk with God anytime you need forgiveness. He cleans the sin away and gives you a new, clean heart.

Kids can take their paper home and let it dry overnight. In about 24 hours, the paper should be dry enough to write on!



ATTEMPT PERFECT POSTURE

SAY: Today we're exploring what it means that **we are forgiven**. A game of Posture Perfect can help us understand that some more.

- Give each child a paper plate, and have kids stand side by side against one wall, facing the opposite wall.
- Explain that, at one time, having perfect posture was considered so important that kids practiced walking with books balanced on their heads. This is the same idea, except you'll use paper plates.
- Kids will walk to the far wall and back, attempting to not let their plates fall off. Should plates slip off, kids can pick them up, return them to their heads, and keep going.
- If you've chosen to play music, start it now.
- As kids walk, call out directions such as
 - Time to be kind! Without losing your plate, lean down and pet a small puppy!
 - Time to be loving—give someone a hug!
 - Time to be strong—take big, wide steps!
 - Time to be encouraging—high-five someone!
 - Time to be faithful—kneel and pray!
 - Time to be a ballerina—show me a leap!
- Once kids have made it back to where they started, have them sit.

TALK ABOUT IT

ASK: What made it hard to play this game perfectly?

ASK: What makes it hard to follow God perfectly?

SAY: We didn't do all this perfectly, and that's OK; it's just a game. But when it comes to always doing things God's way, none of us are perfect, either. We're not always kind, loving, encouraging, and faithful. We all need forgiveness, and because of Jesus, **we are forgiven!**

SUPPLIES

- paper plates (1 per child)
- upbeat music (optional)



QUICK TIP

If you have mostly younger kids, have them balance the plates on one hand (palm up) instead of their heads.



CELEBRATE

Enjoy one of the benefits of having a smaller group of kids and join in the fun of the games! Come alongside kids and attempt posture-perfect plate balancing yourself.

TRY TRICKY TONGUE TWISTERS TERRIFICALLY

SAY: Today we learned about a time David did something wrong. He went against God’s way, but he asked God to forgive him. When we sin, ➡ **we are forgiven**, too. Sin is worse than just messing up or making a mistake, but in this game, you’ll try to avoid even a silly mistake.

- Have kids circle up. Explain they’ll learn some fun new tongue twisters, but they’ll need to pay attention: Tongue twisters are tricky!
- Teach kids this tongue twister, and ask them to try to say it three times in a row: A flea and a fly flew up a flue.
- Once kids have repeated the tongue twister several times slowly, gradually increase the speed at which they’re saying it, or challenge them to say it while running in place or doing pushups. If kids make a mistake, they’re forgiven and can keep playing!
- Try these additional tongue twisters, or have kids make up their own:
 - A synonym for cinnamon is a cinnamon synonym.
 - I wish to wash my Irish wristwatch.
 - Can you can a can as a canner can can a can?
 - Real rock wall.
 - Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
 - Be sure to include this point-related tongue twister:
Faithful friends freely forgive!
- Let the game keep going as time allows. Kids may know additional tongue twisters they’d like to share.



TALK ABOUT IT

SAY: These tongue twisters were a challenge! We probably messed up quite a few times—but those kind of mess-ups aren’t sin. Or like when we get an answer wrong at school. Nope, that’s not sin either.

ASK: What are some wrong things we say and do that are sin—things that are the opposite of what God tells us to do?

SAY: We sin when we show meanness instead of kindness to others. Or when we could help someone who needs it, but we choose not to. Those are the kinds of wrong things we sometimes do that are sin. But remember, because of Jesus we are forgiven for *every* sin we have done or will ever do. God loves us *that* much!



PRAY TOGETHER (5 MINUTES)



SUPPLIES

- wet wipes



CLEAN AND PRAY

SAY: Let's close our time with a prayer for forgiveness. We know that when we tell God we're sorry, ➡ **we are forgiven**. He cleans away our sins.

- Give each child a wet wipe.
- Have kids scrub their hands well as they silently talk to God about what they need his forgiveness for.

PRAY: God, thank you that in your eyes, ➡ **we are forgiven**. We're not defined by the wrong things we do; you give us a new start and wash us clean. We love you! In Jesus' name, amen.