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— A 4-WEEK SERIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT & JOHN —



# AUTHORITY

FROM OUR ANNUAL *TEACHING STRATEGY*

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BY ISAIAH BOARD



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## OVERVIEW



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## ABOUT THIS SERIES

Have you ever wished you had a little bit more power – or influence – or control? Whether you dream about ruling the world or just wish you could get a little respect once in a while, the desire to be in charge is something we've all experienced. But in this 4-week series, we'll hear about a few kings from the Bible whose stories show us power isn't always easy to yield. Through their failures and successes, we'll discover that **when you make mistakes**, God can help make things right; **when you think you know best**, be humble instead; **when you're not sure who to listen to**, ask God for guidance; and **when obedience is difficult**, stay close to Jesus.

## THIS SERIES AT A GLANCE

### WEEK 1

In this week, we'll learn through the mistakes of King David, that God shows us grace.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** When you make mistakes, God can help make things right.
- **THE BIBLE:** II Samuel 11:1-27, 12:1-13; Psalm 51:1-12; II Corinthians 5:17; John 1:9
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Question, Video, Poll, Object Lesson, Story, Reflection

### WEEK 2

In this week we'll observe how Absalom's arrogance led to his downfall and why living a life of humility is a better choice.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** When you think you know best, be humble instead.
- **THE BIBLE:** II Samuel 15:1-14, 18:1-15, 31-33; Matthew 23:12; I Peter 5:5-6
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Video, Story, Object Lesson, Video, Reflection

### WEEK 3

In this week, we'll hear how King Solomon chose wisdom when he had the opportunity to ask for anything he wanted.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** When you're not sure who to listen to, ask God for wisdom.
- **THE BIBLE:** I Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14; James 1:5
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Question, Story, Object Lesson, Music, Response

### WEEK 4

In this week, we'll see how, after centuries of failed human kings, Jesus came to set up a brand new kind of Kingdom.

- **THE BIG IDEA:** When obedience is difficult, stay close to Jesus.
- **THE BIBLE:** II Samuel 7:8-13; John 6:50-66, 14:23
- **THE BUILDING BLOCKS:** Activity, Video, Story, Object Lesson, Reflection, Music

## HOW TO PROGRAM FOR THIS SERIES

Outside of your teaching time, we have a few programming ideas to help this series really come to life — everything from how to **design your graphics** and **youth room**, to which **games to play**, to what **music to play and sing**.

### ROOM DESIGN

First, you'll need a backdrop. There are tons of ways to create a backdrop that you can re-use multiple times each year. Check out [this post](#) for a list of ideas. For this series, **we recommend using foam board covered in fabric or painted hardboard** in a color similar to the deep purple of the series graphic.

Next, paint the series title (or just the lion) on the backdrop with [gold paint](#), [gold marker](#), or [gold spray paint](#). You can do this by either creating a stencil or projecting the series graphic onto the board. We've provided the vector image of the lion in case you'd like to do a large scale version of the lion, instead of the series title.

Next, let's talk about crowns. Throughout this series, you'll be using four different crowns as an object lesson. There are two ways to incorporate these crowns into your room design . . .

- **OPTION 1: Crowns on Pedestals.** As recommended in your teaching guides, we suggest displaying the four crowns on four [decorative pillows](#), on four tables or [pedestals](#).
- **OPTION 2: Hanging Crowns.** If you'd like to try a different approach, add four nails to your backdrop — one in each corner. Each week, when you unveil a new crown, hang it on that nail until all four corners are full at the end of the series.

If you're looking for more ideas, try adding some dimension by draping [red velvet fabric](#) over an oversized chair, adding props like this [scepter](#), or hanging coronation-style banners from the ceiling.



## GRAPHIC DESIGN

We give you editable graphics so you can make everything your own! If you're going to **edit our graphics** or **create something brand new . . .**

Use this font!

**ROYAL GUILLOCHE  
SHADOW**

Download this font [here](#)

And use these colors!

 HEX #E0B362  
CMYK: 12/29/72/0

 HEX #4B1C77  
CMYK: 86/100/18/9

 HEX #2A1D4B  
CMYK: 93/97/38/39

## MUSIC

Here are a few worship songs that tie into this month's theme of authority and specifically how Jesus is our king . . .

- **"Still On the Throne"** (Mitch Wong)
- **"God of Israel"** (Maverick City Music)
- **"King of Kings"** (Hillsong Worship)
- **"Yahweh"** (Maverick City Music)
- **"There Is No Higher Name"** (Common Hymnal)
- **"Throne Room"** (Erica Violet)
- **"The King We Want"** (Stephen McWhirter)
- **"Follow You Anywhere"** (Passion)
- **"Jesus Is Our King"** (The Collective KC)
- **"Only Jesus"** (Limitless Worship)

We've added these songs to our [Grow Students \(Volume 5\) Spotify playlist](#) for your personal use only, according to Spotify's [terms and conditions](#). For more information on how to use copyrighted music in your services legally, [read this!](#)

And if you want to sing or sample a non-worship song or two (maybe as an opener, a closer, a bonus song during your program), try some of these songs about kings and queens . . .

- **"Royals"** (Lorde)
- **"Royal"** (Waterparks)
- **"King of Anything"** (Sara Bareilles)
- **"Queen"** (Shawn Mendes)
- **"Dancing Queen"** (ABBA)
- **"Jesus is Lord"** (Kanye West)
- **"I Just Can't Wait to Be King"** (The *Lion King* soundtrack)

For more fun (and clean) song suggestions, check out all of [our Spotify playlists](#) for your personal use only, according to Spotify's [terms and conditions](#). For more information on how to use copyrighted music in your services legally, [read this!](#)



## GAMES by Jeremiah Herring, Tyler Grant & Jordan Floro

If you have a designated time for games before your worship and teaching time, we have a few suggestions for games you can play . . .

- [Royal Kingdom](#)
- [Conquer The Kingdom](#)
- [Who's The Queen or King](#)
- [The Crown](#)

Since this series talks about the kings of Israel and draws heavily on the "kings and queens" theme these games will all include royalty related activities. To get the instructions and graphics for each game, click the links or visit the Games section of your Grow Students dashboard.

### HOW TO PREP FOR THIS SERIES

## WHAT TO GET

If you want to try all of our suggestions for this series, here's what you'll need to buy, borrow, Google, or dig for in your storage closet . . .

### WEEK 1:

- [Crowns](#)
- Hannah Montana [music video of Nobody's Perfect](#)
- A [crown of thorns](#)
- [Decorative pillows](#)
- [Four pedestals](#)
- The handout provided in your week 1 folder

### WEEK 2:

- Chairs
- Toy crown
- candy
- A [limbo set](#) (spray paint it gold for a royal look)
- [Lebron James postgame interview clip](#)
- [Nelson Mandela interview with Oprah clip](#)
- The handout provided in your week 2 folder

### WEEK 3

- A ton of spare change
- Jars
- Chairs
- [Blindfolds](#)
- [Pool noodles](#)
- Crowns
- The song "[Doxology](#)" by [Maverick City Music](#)
- The handout provided in your week 3 folder

### WEEK 4

- A monarch outfit with a royal robe, crown, and scepter
- A homemade throne
- [A Clip from "Not Listening to Directions Prank" \(The Daily Dropout\)](#)
- Crown of thorns
- [Crown-shaped wooden cut-outs](#)

## WHAT TO MAKE

### WEEK 1

- Come up with a [funny dad joke](#) to give as an example.
- Set up your **crown pedestal display** for the next four weeks.
- Print and cut the **handouts** provided in your Week 1 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen.

### WEEK 2

- Set up a space to play **Musical Chairs: Limbo Edition**. Instructions are in the Week 2 Sermon guide for details.
- Print and cut the **handouts** provided in your Week 2 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen.

### WEEK 3

- Set up a space to play **Game of Coins**. Instructions are in the Week 3 Sermon guide for details.
- Print and cut the **handouts** provided in your Week 3 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen.

### WEEK 4

- Set up a space to play **Monarch Madness**. Instructions are in the Week 4 Sermon guide for details.
- Purchase [crown-shaped wooden cut-outs](#) for every student. Place one under each chair, along with a fine-tipped permanent marker.

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## WHAT TO CUSTOMIZE

You know your students better than we do, so there are probably some things you'd like to change about this series before you start teaching. Here's what you'll need to update if you make changes . . .

- **TEACHING:** Add your own stories, jokes, and any pop culture references that make sense for your group. You can edit each message using the Word documents provided or the [Grow Message Builder](#).
- **SMALL GROUP:** If you make any changes to your teaching, make sure your small group questions reflect those changes. You can edit these using the Word documents provided.
- **APP:** If you make changes to your teaching or small group questions, don't forget to update your content in the [Grow App](#) for your team!
- **GRAPHICS:** We've provided graphics in your [Graphics & Video folder](#) already, but we've also provided a blank slide in case you need to make your own.
- **EMAILS:** Customize and send the [volunteer and parent emails](#) we've provided for this series.

## WHAT TO COMMUNICATE

To make sure your students, volunteers, and families are in the loop . . .

- **STUDENTS:** Throughout the month, post the [Graphics & Video](#) we've provided on social media, like the Big Idea images and Bumper Video. Post the [One-Minute Sermon Videos](#) we've provided or use the One-Minute Sermon Scripts to film a recap video each week and post it on social media.
- **FAMILIES:** Before you begin teaching this series, send families the [Parent Email](#) we've provided (after you've customized it for your ministry, of course). After each week of the series, post the Big Idea images wherever you talk to families online. You can also copy and paste the social media examples we've included in your [Social Media Posts](#).
- **VOLUNTEERS:** Before you teach each week of this series, send volunteers the weekly [Volunteer Emails](#) we've provided (after you've customized it for your ministry, of course). Before each week of the series, post the Big Idea images wherever you talk to volunteers online. You can also copy and paste the social media posts we've included in your [Social Media Posts](#).

For a more in-depth digital communication strategy, **customize the** [Social Media Plan spreadsheet](#) we've provided. And hey! When you post on social media, **don't forget to use the #growcurriculum hashtag** to share your ideas and stories with our team and with other churches who are using Grow!

## HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES

Every ministry is different. Whether you're teaching middle schoolers, high schoolers, teenagers with special needs, or all three, here's how to hack this series to fit your unique and diverse audience.

## HACKS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

 by Eddie Witkowski and Heather Kenison

### REVISE

To make this series more accessible for middle schoolers, here's what to adjust . . .

**In Week 1, revise the question, "Have you ever done something cringeworthy?" by answering the question first.** For both emotional and developmental reasons, middle schoolers will be in a better place to share if they hear you share something cringeworthy first. Ask the question, then give an example from your own life, and then ask the question again.

**In Week 3, revise the "What makes your life noisy?" question section by adding some distractions.** While you teach, plant a few students or volunteers in the room who can serve as distractions, maybe by asking to go to the bathroom or letting their phone rings continuously.



### REPLACE

And here are the Building Blocks you may want to swap for something else . . .

**In Week 1, replace the "Nobody's Perfect" by Hannah Montana video with a [TikTok or two](#).** "Things I get embarrassed about for no reason" was a TikTok trend!

**If you need a less rambunctious opening activity for one of the weeks, try a What's Your Royal Name icebreaker.** To play, have students create and share their "royal name" with this formula: "Prince or Princess + *First and Last Name* + of + *Childhood Street*." Or you can go with a sillier formula, like, "Prince or Princess + *First and Last Name* + of + *Your Pet's Name-ton*." (For example: Prince Jonathan Taylor Thomas of Fluffyton).



### REMEMBER

**In Week 1, be cautious with your retelling of the story of David and Bathsheba.** While our teaching guide intentionally does not go into detail about what takes place between the two, be careful not to add in any details your middle schoolers aren't ready for. Be prepared for some students to ask questions or make silly comments if they know the story. You may want to send a simple quick email to your parents letting them know what you'll be talking about in advance.

**Remember your middle schoolers are probably pretty insecure!** Throughout this series, there will be moments when students are asked to open up, so remember that middle schoolers may act overly confident or attention-seeking to cover up their insecurities and vulnerabilities.

## HACKS FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS by Irene Cho and David Magallanes



### REVISE

To make this series more accessible for high schoolers, here's what to adjust . . .

**In Week 1, revise the Making Things Right section by adding some accountability-related action steps.** If you think your high schoolers are ready for the challenge, give them a way to form accountability groups at the end of this week of teaching. As you do, encourage them to think about accountability as something much more than just pointing out each other's mistakes. What else could accountability mean for a high schooler? Showing up to youth group each week? Finishing their homework? Setting goals? Treating other people with respect? Coach your high schoolers to see accountability as something that is not based in shame or guilt, but in support and encouragement. Teach them to shift from, "Hey, you didn't show up last week," to, "Hey, are you okay?"

**In Week 3, revise the Who Are You Listening To response by encouraging them to recruit mentors.** Most high schoolers won't have formalized mentors, and that's okay. Help them think about mentorship as more of a community than a one-on-one hierarchy by asking questions like, "Who could you learn from? Who is someone you look up to? If you could spend more time with some of those people, what would you like to learn from them?"



### REPLACE

And here are the Building Blocks you may want to swap for something else . . .

**In Week 2, replace the activity, Musical Chairs: Limbo Edition for something less high energy, or turn it into an upfront game where only a handful of students play.** Let's face it — some high schoolers just aren't into the games. That's okay! If you'd like to play a more low-key game with your whole group, try a card game like War or Go Fish. You could emphasize the royalty theme by using only king, queen, and jack cards.



### REMEMBER

**Your high schoolers are more skeptical of authority figures than ever.** It's part of their natural development process, and that's okay! But since this series deals with obedience and authority figures, keep in mind it could open up a lot of questions and conversations. Your students may want to talk about complicated relationships with their parents or teachers, or their issues with spiritual leaders, or their thoughts on government and political leaders. There are a lot of options that could be capturing your high schoolers' interest! Decide in advance how you'd like to handle those conversations and questions if they come up. If you can find a way to have them without getting completely derailed, do it!

# HACKS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

by Addison Roberts and Stephanie Newland



## REVISE

To make this series more accessible for students with special needs, here's what to adjust . .

**Turn on closed captioning whenever needed.** Anytime a video or song is played during this series, be sure to turn on the captions for any students who are deaf or hearing impaired. If a video does not have closed captioning features already included, be sure to add the captions in advance or find a new clip.

**In Week 1, revise your opener by clarifying the differences between bad habits and sinful habits.** Remember, a high functioning student with behavioral special needs will usually be bombarded with the ways they can improve their behavior. For those students, it's important to help them understand they are not being sinful when they struggle to control their thoughts, feelings, words, or behaviors.

**In Week 2, make accommodations for students in the activity Limbo Musical Chairs.** Because this is a physical game, remember there are some students who may not be able to participate the same way others do. Try incorporating other roles for those students, like holding the limbo stick, or being a judge, or controlling the music, or crowning the winner.



## REPLACE

And here are the Building Blocks you may want to swap for something else . . .

**In Week 1, replace the word "cringeworthy" with "uncomfortable."** The concept of "cringeworthy" may not translate clearly to individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder or certain kinds of intellectual disabilities. Try using more of a commonplace word instead.

**In Week 4, replace the word "obedience" with "following instructions."** Because "obedience" is a larger and more complex word for kids with certain kinds of special needs, breaking it down into simpler and more understandable words and phrases can help! It will take a few more syllables, but "following instructions" or "listening to what God says" could help make this concept clearer for some students.



## REMEMBER

**Remember, metaphors and word pictures can be difficult for students on the autism spectrum.** Keep this in mind when you talk about crowns and thrones as symbols of power, or when you read the words of Jesus in Week 4 about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Prepare your students who might struggle with this kind of abstract thinking before you present those ideas, and make sure they are tracking with you.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Isaiah Board is a youth pastor who has worked in youth ministry for over six years. Upon earning his degree in Ministerial Leadership from Southeastern University, Isaiah entered into full-time ministry and he can't imagine doing anything else! He is currently working at Access Church in Lakeland, Florida overseeing the middle and high school ministry. If you'd like to chat with Isaiah reach out! He would love to connect with you!

### CONNECT WITH ISAIAH!



## ALONG WITH . . .



**SERIES DEVELOPMENT:** Isaiah Board, Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, David Magallanes, Amber Stephens, Stephen Switzer, Candace Williams, April Wahl, Daniel Acton, Areli Ortiz, Aaron Rooks, Andy Disher

**HACKS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS:** Eddie Witkowski, Heather Kenison

**HACKS FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS:** Irene Cho, David Magallanes

**HACKS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:** Addison Roberts, Stephanie Newland

**GAMES:** Jeremiah Herring, Tyler Grant, Jordan Floro

**MUSIC:** Elle Campbell

**ONE-MINUTE SERMONS:** David Magallanes, Elle Campbell, Jose Rodriguez, Erica Rodriguez, Vanessa Serrano Cruz, Damean Easter, and the Rescue a Generation team

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# DEVOTIONAL FOR VOLUNTEERS



## **STUDY**

Like most families, the royal families of the Bible had struggles. This month, you'll be helping students get familiar with the royal line of David. David's family had its share of problems, both privately and publicly – like the problems of making big mistakes, being prideful, being influenced by things, and not knowing where to turn when it was time to turn to God. To get ready for this series, **spend a few minutes reading the stories you'll be teaching students this month.** As you do, think about what God has taught you (and is still teaching you) through these passages, and how these Big Ideas have been true in your life.

**WEEK 1:** When you make mistakes, God can help make things right. (II Samuel 11:1-27, 12:1-13; Psalm 51:1-12; II Corinthians 5:17; John 1:9)

**WEEK 2:** When you think you know best, be humble instead. (II Samuel 15:1-14, 18:1-15, 31-33; Matthew 23:12; I Peter 5:5-6)

**WEEK 3:** When you're not sure who to listen to, ask God for wisdom. (I Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14; James 1:5)

**WEEK 4:** When obedience is difficult, stay close to Jesus. (II Samuel 7:8-13; John 6:50-66, 14:23)

## **PRAY**

When we see celebrities in the news or on our social media feeds, it's probably not because they've done something worth celebrating. Instead, we see their mistakes highlighted, their loneliness revealed, their moments of foolishness caught on camera, and their hopes for others' approval on display. But let's be honest. What's true for famous people isn't untrue for the rest of us. We all struggle with problems that we wish we could overcome. How did it go for you the last time you made a mistake? Or became overly proud? Pray about a time when obedience was difficult for you. Your tough moments and mess-ups probably aren't being reported by the paparazzi, but they happen nonetheless. **Which passage of Scripture or Big Idea from this month is most relevant to you right now?** Spend a few minutes asking God to show you how you've already grown in this area, plus the next step you need to take in order to keep growing.

## **GROW**

So what's your next step? Is there a part of your life where you are struggling to do what's best? Are you needing to confess a little bit of pride to be able to do the humble thing? What little change can you make today that will make a big difference in your ability to be obedient? **Whatever your next step is right now, take it. Then help students do the same.**

## WEEK 1 SERMON GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

When you make mistakes, God can help make things right.

### THE BIBLE

II Samuel 11:1-27; II Samuel 12:1-13; Psalm 51:1-12; II Corinthians 5:17; John 1:9

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

#### ACTIVITY | Crown The Cringe

- Welcome to our new series, *Royals*. Over the next few weeks, we're going to be talking a lot about royalty, so let's start by crowning two royals of our own — the Kings or Queens of Cringe.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Buy or DIY two [crowns](#). Split everyone into pairs or choose a few pairs to play in front of the group. Give students a moment to come up with the cheesiest joke they can — like a great [dad joke](#). Have each team (or a player from each team) perform their joke and let the audience choose the winner. Play just one round or play a few, but crown your winning pair with the Cringe Crowns.

#### QUESTION | Have you ever done something cringeworthy?

- Be honest — have you ever felt like the king or queen of cringe? Not necessarily because of your joke-telling abilities, but maybe because of an unfortunate hair cut, embarrassing moment, or weird fashion choice?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to share a cringeworthy moment. Then share one of your own.
- If we're honest, we all know what it's like to . . .
  - Do something really cringeworthy.
  - Want to crawl into a hole and hide forever.
  - Desperately wish we had a "rewind" button.

## VIDEO | “Nobody’s Perfect” by Hannah Montana

- Do you know what else is cringeworthy? Some of the things that used to be cool . . . like *Hannah Montana*.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play a short clip from [the “Nobody’s Perfect” music video \(0:00-0:33\)](#). For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- You might recognize Hannah Montana — she’s, of course, being played by a young Miley Cyrus, who became a huge celebrity as a result of this role. But after the show ended, so did Miley’s G-rated kid-friendly career. Instead, she went on to create a more controversial image for herself that a lot of people found pretty cringeworthy.
- Whether you’ve cringed at yourself because of something small (like an awkward moment) or something big (like a really bad decision), Hannah Montana was right about one thing: “Everybody makes mistakes. Everybody has those days.”

## POLL | When’s the last time you cringed at yourself?

- When we do something really cringeworthy, we might think things like . . .
  - “Everyone’s laughing at me.”
  - “No one’s going to forget this.”
  - “I’m never going to live this down.”
  - Or maybe even, “My life is ruined.”
- **Has this ever happened to you? Has it happened to you recently? Was it this year? This month? This week? Today?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask students to raise their hands when the answer applies.
- I don’t know the stories behind your raised hands. You might be thinking about a weird outfit you wore that everyone laughed at . . . or you might be thinking about something more serious.
  - Like a damaged relationship.
  - Or that photo you passed around.
  - Or that person’s trust you broke.
  - Or that thing you said.
- What do we do when we’ve done something worse than cringeworthy? How can we recover from something that feels unrecoverable? That’s a good question. And it’s what we’re going to talk about today.

**SO WHAT?** *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

## OBJECT LESSON | The Crown

- You and I aren’t the only ones who’ve made mistakes or done things we regret. It’s something we all have in common, no matter how nice, cool, talented, famous, rich, or powerful we are. We’ve all done things we regret:
  - The people you look up to.
  - Influencers.
  - Politicians.
  - Celebrities.
  - Pastors.
  - Your friends and family.
  - Even royalty.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before you begin your series, collect [three different crowns](#) – a different crown for Weeks 1-3, plus [a crown of thorns](#) for Week 4. Place each of the crowns on [decorative pillows](#). Then place each one on a table or [four pedestals](#). But leave the crowns covered by boxes or sheets until you're ready to reveal them. This week, reveal the first crown. Pick it up whenever you talk about royalty or King David.
- There are a lot of reasons you might be given a crown.
  - When you eat at Burger King.
  - When you're a Disney princess for Halloween.
  - When you're named homecoming king or queen.
  - When you're an actual king or queen.
- In that last scenario (and *only* that scenario), the crown you're given symbolizes power, authority, and dignity. It means your whole nation has trusted you to lead well! But crowns don't instantly make crown-wearers people who are always worth following.
- Leaders of all kinds make decisions, but they don't always do it well. If you need proof, you could see what's trending on social media today, study politics or history, or take a look at some of the stories in the Bible. (It's not just a book of inspirational quotes. It's full of politics and history too.)
- For the next few weeks, we're going to meet a few kings mentioned in the Bible to see what we can learn from their examples – both good and bad.

## SCRIPTURE | II Samuel 11:1-27

- Around 3,000 years ago, there was a small nation called Israel. But Israel wasn't like other nations. While everyone else was ruled by a human ruler, Israel wasn't. Israel didn't have a human ruler because Israel was led by God.
  - First, God led the Israelites by speaking through people like Moses, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua.
  - Then, God appointed judges to take charge, like Deborah, Gideon, Samson, Eli, and Samuel.
  - God gave Israel tons of leaders over the centuries, but the Israelites were never satisfied. No matter who God was speaking through, they always seemed to have trouble trusting and following God's leadership.
  - Eventually, the Israelites decided they knew better than God did, so they demanded a king. They wanted a human leader to rule them, just like all the other nations had.
- Eventually, God gave the Israelites what they asked for.
  - First, God gave them a king named Saul. But when Saul disobeyed God, he lost his crown.
  - When it was time for a new king to be chosen, God chose someone pretty unlikely – a young, unknown shepherd boy named David.
- God chose David (like Saul before him) to wear the crown, wield the power, and reflect God's character to the people of Israel. And David did – for a while. But like King Saul before him, and so many leaders before that, and every follower of God who has ever lived, David got distracted.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read or summarize II Samuel 11:1-27.
- King David made a huge mistake. He used the power God had entrusted to him to harm others.

- David used his authority to pursue a relationship with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. But this wasn't just an ordinary affair. Because David was her king, Bathsheba didn't truly have the authority to say no.
- Afraid of the consequences of his actions, David then tried to cover up what he had done by having Uriah murdered and taking Bathsheba as his new wife. (By the way, he already had several.)

### SCRIPTURE | II Samuel 12:1-13

- King David tried to hide, but God saw everything he did. God needed David to see that his actions couldn't just be covered up or forgotten. So God sent the prophet, Nathan, to confront David.
  - If you've ever been called out for something you did wrong, you know it's not easy to hear that kind of feedback. When we're confronted, we often get defensive, get angry, deny it, or make excuses.
  - Nathan knew that, so instead of telling David he was wrong outright, Nathan first told David a story.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize II Samuel 12:1-13.*
- Nathan's strategy worked! King David was furious. When he heard someone had used their power to take something from someone else, he immediately demanded justice. Then Nathan said, "Hey, man. I'm talking about you."
- David had a choice. Once again, he could have tried to cover up his mistakes. He could have had Nathan killed, denied everything, or just shrugged it off — after all, he was king. But David didn't do that. Instead, he decided to turn back to the God who gave him his crown.
  - David's mistakes would have consequences that he and his family would have to deal with for years. The people he harmed were going to deal with the harm he did for the rest of their lives.
  - David couldn't change what he did, but he could try to make things right, beginning with taking responsibility for his actions.

### SCRIPTURE | Psalm 51:1-12

- We don't know exactly what David felt when he finally realized what he had done, but it's safe to say he was dealing with quite a few emotions, both in the moment and in the years to come.
- The book of Psalms in the Old Testament of the Bible is full of emotion too. It's a book of poetry and song lyrics, and many of these psalms are attributed to King David. It's believed Psalm 51 can help us better understand what David was thinking and feeling after being confronted by Nathan.
- As we read it, think about the emotions you hear. Do you hear heartache? Remorse? Anger? Fear? Peace?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Psalm 51:1-12.*
- David admits his sinful mistakes and asks God to forgive him. He asks for a clean start and says he wants to make things right.

## SCRIPTURE | II Corinthians 5:17

- I wonder if you've ever had a moment like this with God. I know I have. Like David, we all make mistakes (sometimes horrible ones), but there's hope.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read II Corinthians 5:17.
- With Jesus, we always can always begin again. David lived long before Jesus ever came to earth, but even then, God was already setting the stage for the best news humanity would ever hear: **when we make mistakes, God can help make things right.**

## STORY | Talk honestly (without oversharing) about your own sin.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life about a time when you became aware of a mistake you made and then made it right, both with God and others. This could be a story about one specific sin (but don't overshare!) or about the moment you first decided to follow Jesus. Share how you felt when your mistakes were revealed and how you feel now that you allowed God to help you make it right.

## NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

### MAKING THINGS RIGHT

- Like David, we all make mistakes. When we do, God asks us not to cover it up, but to make it right – both with God and with the people we hurt. We can make things right by . . .
  - **ADMITTING OUR MISTAKES:** We can't make anything right if we can't admit we've done anything wrong. It all begins here – by saying to God and others, "I was wrong."
    - David didn't admit to his mistakes at first. He tried to cover his mistakes, but he was never able to hide them from God.
    - It's scary to admit we were wrong, but remember, God already knows. We'll never surprise God when we admit what we've done, but we will begin the process of healing and making things right.
  - **ACCEPTING ACCOUNTABILITY:** It's uncomfortable, but God can use other people to keep us accountable. Our parents, coaches, mentors, teachers, pastors, family, and friends might someday tell us difficult truths we need to hear.
    - Nathan held David accountable by pointing out David's sin with love and care, but with honesty and firmness too.
    - You and I can accept accountability from others by identifying people we trust, inviting them to tell us the truth, and listening humbly when they do.
  - **AGREEING TO DO BETTER:** It's great to admit our mistakes, but we can't skip this step. We have to agree to do better.
    - David committed himself to do better. He chose to live in a way that better represented the character of the God who had given him his crown. If David could do this after such a huge mistake, with God's help, we can too.
    - No matter what we've done, with God, no mistake needs to define us. We can always move forward, knowing we have everything we need through Jesus to start fresh.

## REFLECTION | One to Own

- We've all made mistakes, but yesterday's mistakes don't have to define our tomorrow. Today I want to challenge each of us to own up to one mistake we've made and one thing we can do to make it right. Just one.
  - First, write down one "wrong" you've done – something that has come between you and God, you and someone else, or both.
  - Next, write down one thing you can do to help make things "right."
- Maybe you need to own up to God, to someone else, or both. Whatever it is, write it down. No one will see this but you and anyone you choose to show it to – maybe someone who can hold you accountable.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print and cut the handout provided in your Week 1 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen. Play a few moments of instrumental music while students write.*
- The one "right" you wrote down may not solve the "wrong" completely, but it's a start. Our sins have consequences and some can't be reversed. But with God, we're always one apology away from beginning to make our mistakes right.
- God isn't stingy with grace or forgiveness. In Jesus, God already offered forgiveness to us before we even knew how to ask for it.

## OBJECT LESSON | The Crown

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Hold the crown as you close.*
- God didn't stop loving King David when he made huge mistakes, and that should give us hope. When we mess up, it doesn't mean we won't have to deal with the consequences of our actions, but it does mean our story isn't over.
- We're going to make mistakes – sometimes bit mistakes that hurt us, hurt others, and hurt our relationship with God. But like David, God isn't giving up on us. With Jesus, we can always be made new. Remember, **when you make mistakes, God can help make things right.**

# WEEK 1

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE



Have you ever wished you had a little bit more power — or influence — or control? Whether you dream about ruling the world or just wish you could get a little respect once in a while, the desire to be in charge is something we've all experienced. But in this 4-week series, we'll hear about a few kings from the Bible whose stories show us power isn't always easy to yield. Through their failures and successes, we'll discover that **when you make mistakes**, God can help make things right; **when you think you know best**, be humble instead; **when you're not sure who to listen to**, ask God for guidance; and **when obedience is difficult**, stay close to Jesus.

### THIS WEEK

#### THE BIG IDEA

When you make mistakes, God can help make things right.

#### THE BIBLE

II Samuel 11:1-27; II Samuel 12:1-13; Psalm 51:1-12; II Corinthians 5:17; John 1:9

- **Tell us about one of your funniest cringeworthy moments.**
- **What are some mistakes people might make that would be cringeworthy?**
- **What are some examples of mistakes that are difficult to admit? Why are those mistakes so difficult to talk about?**
- **Do you think David knew he made a mistake before he talked to Nathan? Once he realized what he'd done, what were his options?**
- **What do you think we should do when we think someone else has made a mistake? What should we not do?**
- **When someone calls you out on a mistake, how do you usually react? What do you think a better reaction would be?**
- **When we're genuinely sorry about a mistake we've made, what should we do next?**
- **Read I John 1:9. Have you ever confessed a mistake to God? When we confess our mistakes to God, what difference does it make?**
- **When we admit our mistakes to each other, what difference does it make? Who is someone you trust to admit your mistakes to?**
- **What's one thing you need to do this week to make a mistake right?**

# WEEK 1

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



Have you ever wished you had a little bit more power — or influence — or control? Whether you dream about ruling the world or just wish you could get a little respect once in a while, the desire to be in charge is something we've all experienced. But in this 4-week series, we'll hear about a few kings from the Bible whose stories show us power isn't always easy to yield. Through their failures and successes, we'll discover that **when you make mistakes**, God can help make things right; **when you think you know best**, be humble instead; **when you're not sure who to listen to**, ask God for guidance; and **when obedience is difficult**, stay close to Jesus.

### THIS WEEK

#### THE BIG IDEA

When you make mistakes, God can help make things right.

#### THE BIBLE

II Samuel 11:1-27; II Samuel 12:1-13; Psalm 51:1-12; II Corinthians 5:17; John 1:9

- **Tell us about one of your funniest cringeworthy moments.**
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- **Do you think David knew he made a mistake before he talked to Nathan? Once he realized what he'd done, what were his options?**
- **Read I John 1:9. Have you ever confessed a mistake to God? When we confess our mistakes to God, what difference does it make?**
- **What's one thing you need to do this week to make a mistake right?**

## WEEK 1 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

When you make mistakes, God can help make things right.

### THE BIBLE

II Samuel 11:1-27; II Samuel 12:1-13; Psalm 51:1-12; II Corinthians 5:17; John 1:9

*WHAT? What are we talking about today?*

#### ACTIVITY | Crown The Cringe

- Welcome to our new series, *Royals*. Over the next few weeks, we're going to be talking a lot about royalty, so let's start by crowning two royals of our own — the Kings or Queens of Cringe.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Buy or DIY two [crowns](#). Split everyone into pairs or choose a few pairs to play in front of the group. Give students a moment to come up with the cheesiest joke they can — like a great [dad joke](#). Have each team (or a player from each team) perform their joke and let the audience choose the winner. Play just one round or play a few, but crown your winning pair with the Cringe Crowns.

#### QUESTION | Have you ever done something cringeworthy?

- Be honest — have you ever felt like the king or queen of cringe? Not necessarily because of your joke-telling abilities, but maybe because of an unfortunate hair cut, embarrassing moment, or weird fashion choice?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to share a cringeworthy moment. Then share one of your own.
- If we're honest, we all know what it's like to . . .
  - Do something really cringeworthy.
  - Want to crawl into a hole and hide forever.
  - Desperately wish we had a "rewind" button.

## VIDEO | “Nobody’s Perfect” by Hannah Montana

- Do you know what else is cringeworthy? Some of the things that used to be cool . . . like *Hannah Montana*.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play a short clip from [the “Nobody’s Perfect” music video \(0:00-0:33\)](#). For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- You might recognize Hannah Montana — she’s, of course, being played by a young Miley Cyrus, who became a huge celebrity as a result of this role. But after the show ended, so did Miley’s G-rated kid-friendly career. Instead, she went on to create a more controversial image for herself that a lot of people found pretty cringeworthy.
- Whether you’ve cringed at yourself because of something small (like an awkward moment) or something big (like a really bad decision), Hannah Montana was right about one thing: “Everybody makes mistakes. Everybody has those days.”

## POLL | When’s the last time you cringed at yourself?

- When we do something really cringeworthy, we might think things like . . .
  - “Everyone’s laughing at me.”
  - “No one’s going to forget this.”
  - “I’m never going to live this down.”
  - Or maybe even, “My life is ruined.”
- **Has this ever happened to you? Has it happened to you recently? Was it this year? This month? This week? Today?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask students to raise their hands when the answer applies.
- I don’t know the stories behind your raised hands. You might be thinking about a weird outfit you wore that everyone laughed at . . . or you might be thinking about something more serious.
  - Like a damaged relationship.
  - Or that photo you passed around.
  - Or that person’s trust you broke.
  - Or that thing you said.
- What do we do when we’ve done something worse than cringeworthy? How can we recover from something that feels unrecoverable? That’s a good question. And it’s what we’re going to talk about today.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you’re working only with middle schoolers.
  - **Tell us about one of your funniest cringeworthy moments.**
  - **What are some mistakes people might make that would be cringeworthy?**
  - **What are some examples of mistakes that are difficult to admit? Why are those mistakes so difficult to talk about?**

**SO WHAT?** *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

**OBJECT LESSON | The Crown**

- You and I aren't the only ones who've made mistakes or done things we regret. It's something we all have in common, no matter how nice, cool, talented, famous, rich, or powerful we are. We've all done things we regret:
  - The people you look up to.
  - Influencers.
  - Politicians.
  - Celebrities.
  - Pastors.
  - Your friends and family.
  - Even royalty.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before you begin your series, collect [three different crowns](#) – a different crown for Weeks 1-3, plus [a crown of thorns](#) for Week 4. Place each of the crowns on [decorative pillows](#). Then place each one on a table or [four pedestals](#). But leave the crowns covered by boxes or sheets until you're ready to reveal them. This week, reveal the first crown. Pick it up whenever you talk about royalty or King David.*
- There are a lot of reasons you might be given a crown.
  - When you eat at Burger King.
  - When you're a Disney princess for Halloween.
  - When you're named homecoming king or queen.
  - When you're an actual king or queen.
- In that last scenario (and *only* that scenario), the crown you're given symbolizes power, authority, and dignity. It means your whole nation has trusted you to lead well! But crowns don't instantly make crown-wearers people who are always worth following.
- Leaders of all kinds make decisions, but they don't always do it well. If you need proof, you could see what's trending on social media today, study politics or history, or take a look at some of the stories in the Bible. (It's not just a book of inspirational quotes. It's full of politics and history too.)
- For the next few weeks, we're going to meet a few kings mentioned in the Bible to see what we can learn from their examples – both good and bad.

**SCRIPTURE | II Samuel 11:1-27**

- Around 3,000 years ago, there was a small nation called Israel. But Israel wasn't like other nations. While everyone else was ruled by a human ruler, Israel wasn't. Israel didn't have a human ruler because Israel was led by God.
  - First, God led the Israelites by speaking through people like Moses, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua.
  - Then, God appointed judges to take charge, like Deborah, Gideon, Samson, Eli, and Samuel.
  - God gave Israel tons of leaders over the centuries, but the Israelites were never satisfied. No matter who God was speaking through, they always seemed to have trouble trusting and following God's leadership.

- Eventually, the Israelites decided they knew better than God did, so they demanded a king. They wanted a human leader to rule them, just like all the other nations had.
- Eventually, God gave the Israelites what they asked for.
  - First, God gave them a king named Saul. But when Saul disobeyed God, he lost his crown.
  - When it was time for a new king to be chosen, God chose someone pretty unlikely – a young, unknown shepherd boy named David.
- God chose David (like Saul before him) to wear the crown, wield the power, and reflect God’s character to the people of Israel. And David did – for a while. But like King Saul before him, and so many leaders before that, and every follower of God who has ever lived, David got distracted.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize II Samuel 11:1-27.*
- King David made a huge mistake. He used the power God had entrusted to him to harm others.
  - David used his authority to pursue a relationship with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. But this wasn’t just an ordinary affair. Because David was her king, Bathsheba didn’t truly have the authority to say no.
  - Afraid of the consequences of his actions, David then tried to cover up what he had done by having Uriah murdered and taking Bathsheba as his new wife. (By the way, he already had several.)

### SCRIPTURE | II Samuel 12:1-13

- King David tried to hide, but God saw everything he did. God needed David to see that his actions couldn’t just be covered up or forgotten. So God sent the prophet, Nathan, to confront David.
  - If you’ve ever been called out for something you did wrong, you know it’s not easy to hear that kind of feedback. When we’re confronted, we often get defensive, get angry, deny it, or make excuses.
  - Nathan knew that, so instead of telling David he was wrong outright, Nathan first told David a story.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize II Samuel 12:1-13.*
- Nathan’s strategy worked! King David was furious. When he heard someone had used their power to take something from someone else, he immediately demanded justice. Then Nathan said, “Hey, man. I’m talking about you.”
- David had a choice. Once again, he could have tried to cover up his mistakes. He could have had Nathan killed, denied everything, or just shrugged it off – after all, he was king. But David didn’t do that. Instead, he decided to turn back to the God who gave him his crown.
  - David’s mistakes would have consequences that he and his family would have to deal with for years. The people he harmed were going to deal with the harm he did for the rest of their lives.
  - David couldn’t change what he did, but he could try to make things right, beginning with taking responsibility for his actions.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
  - **Do you think David knew he made a mistake before he talked to Nathan? Once he realized what he'd done, what were his options?**
  - ★ **What do you think we should do when we think someone else has made a mistake? What should we not do?**
  - ★ **When someone calls you out on a mistake, how do you usually react? What do you think a better reaction would be?**

## SCRIPTURE | Psalm 51:1-12

- We don't know exactly what David felt when he finally realized what he had done, but it's safe to say he was dealing with quite a few emotions, both in the moment and in the years to come.
- The book of Psalms in the Old Testament of the Bible is full of emotion too. It's a book of poetry and song lyrics, and many of these psalms are attributed to King David. It's believed Psalm 51 can help us better understand what David was thinking and feeling after being confronted by Nathan.
- As we read it, think about the emotions you hear. Do you hear heartache? Remorse? Anger? Fear? Peace?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Psalm 51:1-12.
- David admits his sinful mistakes and asks God to forgive him. He asks for a clean start and says he wants to make things right.

## SCRIPTURE | II Corinthians 5:17

- I wonder if you've ever had a moment like this with God. I know I have. Like David, we all make mistakes (sometimes horrible ones), but there's hope.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read II Corinthians 5:17.
- With Jesus, we always can always begin again. David lived long before Jesus ever came to earth, but even then, God was already setting the stage for the best news humanity would ever hear: **when we make mistakes, God can help make things right.**

## STORY | Talk honestly (without oversharing) about your own sin.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life about a time when you became aware of a mistake you made and then made it right, both with God and others. This could be a story about one specific sin (but don't overshare!) or about the moment you first decided to follow Jesus. Share how you felt when your mistakes were revealed and how you feel now that you allowed God to help you make it right.

## NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

### MAKING THINGS RIGHT

- Like David, we all make mistakes. When we do, God asks us not to cover it up, but to make it right — both with God and with the people we hurt. We can make things right by . . .
  - **ADMITTING OUR MISTAKES:** We can't make anything right if we can't admit we've done anything wrong. It all begins here — by saying to God and others, "I was wrong."
    - David didn't admit to his mistakes at first. He tried to cover his mistakes, but he was never able to hide them from God.
    - It's scary to admit we were wrong, but remember, God already knows. We'll never surprise God when we admit what we've done, but we will begin the process of healing and making things right.
  - **ACCEPTING ACCOUNTABILITY:** It's uncomfortable, but God can use other people to keep us accountable. Our parents, coaches, mentors, teachers, pastors, family, and friends might someday tell us difficult truths we need to hear.
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    - David committed himself to do better. He chose to live in a way that better represented the character of the God who had given him his crown. If David could do this after such a huge mistake, with God's help, we can too.
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### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
  - ☆ **When we're genuinely sorry about a mistake we've made, what should we do next?**
  - **Read I John 1:9. Have you ever confessed a mistake to God? When we confess our mistakes to God, what difference does it make?**

### REFLECTION | One to Own

- We've all made mistakes, but yesterday's mistakes don't have to define our tomorrow. Today I want to challenge each of us to own up to one mistake we've made and one thing we can do to make it right. Just one.

- First, write down one “wrong” you’ve done – something that has come between you and God, you and someone else, or both.
- Next, write down one thing you can do to help make things “right.”
- Maybe you need to own up to God, to someone else, or both. Whatever it is, write it down. No one will see this but you and anyone you choose to show it to – maybe someone who can hold you accountable.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print and cut the handout provided in your Week 1 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen. Play a few moments of instrumental music while students write.*
- The one “right” you wrote down may not solve the “wrong” completely, but it’s a start. Our sins have consequences and some can’t be reversed. But with God, we’re always one apology away from beginning to make our mistakes right.
- God isn’t stingy with grace or forgiveness. In Jesus, God already offered forgiveness to us before we even knew how to ask for it.

## DISCUSSION

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  - ✦ **When we admit our mistakes to each other, what difference does it make? Who is someone you trust to admit your mistakes to?**
  - **What’s one thing you need to do this week to make a mistake right?**

## OBJECT LESSON | The Crown

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Hold the crown as you close.*
- God didn’t stop loving King David when he made huge mistakes, and that should give us hope. When we mess up, it doesn’t mean we won’t have to deal with the consequences of our actions, but it does mean our story isn’t over.
- We’re going to make mistakes – sometimes bit mistakes that hurt us, hurt others, and hurt our relationship with God. But like David, God isn’t giving up on us. With Jesus, we can always be made new. Remember, **when you make mistakes, God can help make things right.**



**RIGHT**



**WRONG**

**ROYALS**



**RIGHT**



**WRONG**

**ROYALS**

## WEEK 2 SERMON GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

When you think you know best,  
be humble instead.

### THE BIBLE

II Samuel 15:1-14, 18:1-15, 31-33;  
Matthew 23:12; I Peter 5:5-6

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

#### ACTIVITY | Musical Chairs: Limbo Edition

- Welcome back to *Royals*, where we're talking all about kings, queens, and their wannabes. Let's kick things off by crowning a king or queen of our own.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need chairs for every player, a toy crown and candy, a [limbo set](#) (spray paint it gold for a royal look), and some music. Set up the chairs on one side of the room and the limbo set on the other side of the room. For each round, play some music. While the music plays, students must take turns limboing, waiting until the player ahead of them is finished before taking their turn, and trying not to fall or bump the limbo stick (or they're out). When the music stops, students must run to the other side of the room and get a chair before they're filled. Each round, eliminate one chair (or more, if anyone was eliminated during the limbo portion) and bring the limbo stick down one notch. When all other players have been eliminated, award the winner with a crown, handfuls of candy, and anything else you'd like.*
- Congratulations to our new ruler. Your victory was hard-earned, so can you imagine how awkward it would be if one of your competitors tried to take that crown from you?

#### VIDEO | LeBron James Postgame Interview

- It's a little weird to insist you're the best when you've just lost, but there's a guy who goes by the name of "King James" who once did just that. After a major loss for the Cleveland Cavaliers, here's what he said.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (1:13-1:20) of LeBron James calling himself the best basketball player in the world. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- It takes some serious confidence to say you're the best immediately after a loss. Some of you might say he's right. Some of you might say he's arrogant. But either way, you and I might get ourselves into trouble if we walked around with an attitude like LeBron's. Most of the time, that kind of attitude doesn't get you respect or friends. It gets you labeled as arrogant.
- Maybe you don't walk around telling people you're the best, but arrogance can show up in other ways, like . . .
  - Thinking your opinions are always right.
  - Refusing to admit you could be wrong.
  - Thinking you deserve credit, respect, or certain positions and opportunities.
  - Always trying to be in charge.
  - Believing you know best, even when you don't.

### SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

#### STORY | Talk about a time when you thought you knew best (but you didn't).

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) when you were really confident your opinion, knowledge, or understanding of a situation was right — until you found out it wasn't. Emphasize how confident you were that you knew best. Then share what happened when you were confronted with the fact that you were wrong.
- There are a lot of reasons why we might think we know best, even when we don't. Maybe it's because we're . . .
  - Misinformed.
  - Missing some important information.
  - Still young! Don't hear me say adults always know better than you just because they're older — I'm just saying as we gain more experience and wisdom, we often realize some things aren't as simple as we once thought they were.

#### OBJECT LESSON | The Crown

- Last week, we started a new series about some famous kings in Scripture.
  - So far, we've talked about King David and the mistakes he made when he was in charge.
  - Today I want to introduce you to a second person. He never actually became king, but he sure tried.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Building on your object lesson from Week 1, reveal the second crown in your collection. Pick it up whenever you talk about royalty or Absalom's rebellion. When you get to the part of the story where Absalom dies, either crush the crown or discard it and leave the pillow empty for the rest of the series.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KINGS

- Around 3,000 years ago, the nation of Israel got its first king.
  - For a long time, Israel didn't have an official human ruler because it was led by God.
  - But eventually, the Israelites decided they knew better than God did and demanded a king. They wanted a human leader to rule them, just like all the other nations had.
  - So God gave the Israelites what they asked for.
- First there was King Saul, whose crown passed to David when Saul disobeyed God.
  - God chose David to wear the crown, wield the power, and care for God's people. And David did – for a while.
  - Eventually, David got sidetracked and used his power as king to hurt people, instead of lead and protect people.
  - David's mistakes had big consequences. One of those consequences: David's relationship with his son, Absalom wasn't great.
- Here's what you need to know about Absalom:
  - He was David's third son, which meant he was in line for the throne, but wasn't next in line.
  - He was really good-looking.
  - Everyone loved him.
  - He was even called "flawless."

## SCRIPTURE | II Samuel 15:1-14

- But all of that wasn't enough for Absalom. Maybe his good looks and popularity went to his head, because Absalom wanted more. He wanted the crown.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize II Samuel 15:1-14.*
- Absalom was so convinced he could be a better king than David that he decided to take the kingdom by force.
  - First, he surrounded himself with chariots, horses, and soldiers so he'd seem impressive to the people and intimidating to his father.
  - Then he got sneaky. He gave himself a position of authority and began listening to people's needs – not to serve them, but to cause trouble.
  - Then he began to turn people away from King David. He stirred up dissatisfaction with the king's leadership by telling people David wouldn't listen to them, but if he were king, he would.
  - Then he got manipulative. He used his looks, charm, and personality to appeal to the people of Israel. But once again, Absalom didn't do this out of love for them, but out of arrogance and a hunger for power.
- It's no surprise Absalom gained the support of the masses. He was clever (and cute). When the last pieces of his conspiracy finally came together, he made his final move.
  - Absalom gathered 200 men and David's advisor to go with him to a place called Hebron, which was the very center of David's kingdom. There, Absalom began his rebellion.
  - King David, convinced of the hopelessness of his cause and anxious to spare the city from destruction, fled and began preparing to meet his son in battle.

## SCRIPTURE | II Samuel 18:1-15, 31-33

- Let's take a look at what happened when David and Absalom's armies finally confronted each other.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize II Samuel 18:1-15, 31-33.*
- This story is heartbreaking. In the mess, we see a glimpse of David's character, which is completely unlike Absalom's.
  - David sought to protect Absalom when he was alive and mourned him in his death.
  - But Absalom's arrogance and selfishness caused pain and death for others and himself.
- Absalom's pride convinced him he knew best. He thought he could be a better king than David and convinced himself he deserved it. But Absalom never stopped to consider that maybe . . .
  - He wasn't ready.
  - He was missing something.
  - There would be consequences he'd regret.
  - There was a reason God chose David to be king instead of him.
  - It's not a great idea to try to overthrow God's plans.

## SCRIPTURE | Matthew 23:12

- So what could Absalom have done instead? He could have chosen humility. "Humility" isn't thinking badly of yourself or denying you have any awesome skills or qualities. Humility is . . .
  - Thinking of yourself less often.
  - Knowing you don't know everything.
  - Being willing to learn or be corrected.
- There's a moment in Scripture when Jesus tries to help His disciples understand this.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 23:12.*
- I'm guessing you've never tried to "exalt" yourself by overthrowing a kingdom, but be honest. Like Absalom, have you ever been a little blinded by your own confidence, self-centeredness, or pride? Yeah, me too. So here's some advice for next time: **when you think you know best, be humble instead.**

**NOW WHAT?** *What does God want us to do about it?*

## VIDEO | Nelson Mandela on Humility

- There aren't many kings, queens, rulers, or world leaders who are known for their humility, but there is one who comes to mind. Nelson Mandela was a South African anti-apartheid revolutionary, political leader, and philanthropist who served as President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. Before becoming President of South Africa, he was imprisoned for 27 years because of his anti-racism work.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip (1:00-1:53) from [this Nelson Mandela interview with Oprah](#), where they discuss humility. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*

- Mandela could have done an entire interview talking about himself and his achievements, yet he focused on something bigger. He moved the focus away from himself and toward a vision of people doing something that matters, together — no matter who gets the credit.

## HOW TO BE HUMBLE

- Choosing to be humble won't always be the popular choice, but it's the best choice. It's how Jesus taught us to live, and it's what followers of God have learned over and over again is the wisest way to live.
- Just like King David got distracted by his power, Wannabe-King Absalom got distracted by his arrogance. His confidence that he knew best led him to do things he would never have done if he had stayed humble.
- So how can we be humble instead of arrogant?
  - **IDENTIFY YOUR ARROGANCE:** It's okay, we're all a little arrogant sometimes. The key is being able to see when, where, and why we're acting arrogantly so we can make a change.
  - **THINK OF YOURSELF LESS OFTEN:** The famous writer C.S. Lewis once said a humble person "will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all." I'm not saying you need to never think about yourself or pretend you don't exist. That's impossible. And weird. But when you catch yourself thinking about how awesome you are:
    - **Think about others.** Absalom only thought of others when he could use them for his own gain. If you don't want to be like Absalom, think about others. How might your attitude, words, desires, or actions impact other people? Instead of helping yourself, how can you help someone else?
    - **Think about God.** Absalom was so busy making his own self-serving plans that he never considered what God wanted. Instead of trying to get what you want or think is best, what would God want or say is best? How can you be part of what God wants, instead of trying to get God to give you what you want?
  - **KNOW YOU DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING:** Absalom was confident he was the right person for the throne, but there was a lot he didn't know. It doesn't matter how old you are — you always have more to learn. You might think you know best, but maybe you're not ready. Maybe you're missing some information. Maybe you haven't weighed every option. Maybe you can't foresee the consequences. Maybe God already has a plan and you just haven't grasped it yet.
  - **BE WILLING TO LEARN:** I wonder what would have happened if Absalom had been real with his dad and asked, "If I want to be king someday, what do I need to know? What do I need to do?" Would all of this have been avoided? Would David have taken Absalom under his wing and trained him to be the next king? We'll never know.

## REFLECTION | Confident and Humble

- Absalom had the “confidence” thing down, but he was missing the “humility” thing. The secret is to find a balance.
  - **BE CONFIDENT:** If you really are the best basketball player in the world (like Lebron), or you’re super good-looking and charming (like Absalom), humility doesn’t mean denying those things are true. You can recognize what’s great about you and be confident in the skills, knowledge, experience, and insight God has given you. But . . .
  - **BE HUMBLE:** Because no matter how much you have to be confident about, there’s still a lot God has to teach you.
- When you know you’ve still got a ways to go, you can put yourself in a better position to learn and grow. When you’re humble, instead of believing you know best, you’re more likely to . . .
  - Learn something new.
  - Grow in your relationships with others.
  - Grow in your faith.
  - Be used by God to do something bigger than you.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 2 folder and place one under each seat, along with a pen. Encourage students to reflect on their own or with a partner, then write down one reason they can be confident in who they are right now (a gift, talent, or characteristic), one reason they should continue staying humble (they’re young, new in their faith, still learning, or don’t know all of God’s plans), and one thing they’ll do to stay humble this week (get a mentor, ask someone to teach them something, admit they were wrong, decide to learn something new, spend more time with God).*
- Believing we know best can blind us and put us in conflict with others and with God. But if we can approach each moment with the knowledge that we always have more to learn, God will use that humility to help us grow. So this week, remember — **when you think you know best, be humble instead.**

# WEEK 2

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE



Have you ever wished you had a little bit more power — or influence — or control? Whether you dream about ruling the world or just wish you could get a little respect once in a while, the desire to be in charge is something we've all experienced. But in this 4-week series, we'll hear about a few kings from the Bible whose stories show us power isn't always easy to yield. Through their failures and successes, we'll discover that **when you make mistakes**, God can help make things right; **when you think you know best**, be humble instead; **when you're not sure who to listen to**, ask God for guidance; and **when obedience is difficult**, stay close to Jesus.

### THIS WEEK

#### THE BIG IDEA

When you think you know best,  
be humble instead.

#### THE BIBLE

II Samuel 15:1-14, 18:1-15, 31-33;  
Matthew 23:12; I Peter 5:5-6

- What's something you know a lot about? Tell us something about it?
- What is the difference between being confident in what you know and being a know-it-all?
- Think about a time when you disagreed with an adult about who was right. What was the disagreement about?
- Why do you think Absalom wanted to be in charge? Have you ever felt that way?
- Absalom thought he knew best, but what do you think he didn't know?
- Do you think it's possible to be right, but behave in the wrong way? Give an example of when this was true for you.
- Whose authority do you struggle to respect, because you think you know best?
- Do you think it's possible to be confident and humble at the same time? What would that look like?
- Read I Peter 5:5-6. What are some ways we can humble ourselves when we think we know best?
- What's something you're going to do this week to choose humility?

# WEEK 2

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



Have you ever wished you had a little bit more power — or influence — or control? Whether you dream about ruling the world or just wish you could get a little respect once in a while, the desire to be in charge is something we've all experienced. But in this 4-week series, we'll hear about a few kings from the Bible whose stories show us power isn't always easy to yield. Through their failures and successes, we'll discover that **when you make mistakes**, God can help make things right; **when you think you know best**, be humble instead; **when you're not sure who to listen to**, ask God for guidance; and **when obedience is difficult**, stay close to Jesus.

### THIS WEEK

#### THE BIG IDEA

When you think you know best,  
be humble instead.

#### THE BIBLE

II Samuel 15:1-14, 18:1-15, 31-33;  
Matthew 23:12; I Peter 5:5-6

- What's something you know a lot about? Tell us something about it?
- Think about a time when you disagreed with an adult about who was right. What was the disagreement about?
- Why do you think Absalom wanted to be in charge? Have you ever felt that way?
- Absalom thought he knew best, but what do you think he didn't know?
- Read I Peter 5:5-6. What are some ways we can humble ourselves when we think we know best?
- What's something you're going to do this week to choose humility?

## WEEK 2 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

When you think you know best,  
be humble instead.

### THE BIBLE

II Samuel 15:1-14, 18:1-15, 31-33;  
Matthew 23:12; I Peter 5:5-6

*WHAT? What are we talking about today?*

#### ACTIVITY | Musical Chairs: Limbo Edition

- Welcome back to *Royals*, where we're talking all about kings, queens, and their wannabes. Let's kick things off by crowning a king or queen of our own.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need chairs for every player, a toy crown and candy, a [limbo set](#) (spray paint it gold for a royal look), and some music. Set up the chairs on one side of the room and the limbo set on the other side of the room. For each round, play some music. While the music plays, students must take turns limboing, waiting until the player ahead of them is finished before taking their turn, and trying not to fall or bump the limbo stick (or they're out). When the music stops, students must run to the other side of the room and get a chair before they're filled. Each round, eliminate one chair (or more, if anyone was eliminated during the limbo portion) and bring the limbo stick down one notch. When all other players have been eliminated, award the winner with a crown, handfuls of candy, and anything else you'd like.*
- Congratulations to our new ruler. Your victory was hard-earned, so can you imagine how awkward it would be if one of your competitors tried to take that crown from you?

#### VIDEO | LeBron James Postgame Interview

- It's a little weird to insist you're the best when you've just lost, but there's a guy who goes by the name of "King James" who once did just that. After a major loss for the Cleveland Cavaliers, here's what he said.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (1:13-1:20) of LeBron James calling himself the best basketball player in the world. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- It takes some serious confidence to say you're the best immediately after a loss. Some of you might say he's right. Some of you might say he's arrogant. But either way, you and I might get ourselves into trouble if we walked around with an attitude like LeBron's. Most of the time, that kind of attitude doesn't get you respect or friends. It gets you labeled as arrogant.
- Maybe you don't walk around telling people you're the best, but arrogance can show up in other ways, like . . .
  - Thinking your opinions are always right.
  - Refusing to admit you could be wrong.
  - Thinking you deserve credit, respect, or certain positions and opportunities.
  - Always trying to be in charge.
  - Believing you know best, even when you don't.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
  - **What's something you know a lot about? Tell us something about it?**
  - ★ **What is the difference between being confident in what you know and being a know-it-all?**

**SO WHAT?** Why does it matter to God and to us?

## STORY | Talk about a time when you thought you knew best (but you didn't).

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) when you were really confident your opinion, knowledge, or understanding of a situation was right — until you found out it wasn't. Emphasize how confident you were that you knew best. Then share what happened when you were confronted with the fact that you were wrong.
- There are a lot of reasons why we might think we know best, even when we don't. Maybe it's because we're . . .
  - Misinformed.
  - Missing some important information.
  - Still young! Don't hear me say adults always know better than you just because they're older — I'm just saying as we gain more experience and wisdom, we often realize some things aren't as simple as we once thought they were.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.

- Think about a time when you disagreed with an adult about who was right. What was the disagreement about?

## OBJECT LESSON | The Crown

- Last week, we started a new series about some famous kings in Scripture.
  - So far, we've talked about King David and the mistakes he made when he was in charge.
  - Today I want to introduce you to a second person. He never actually became king, but he sure tried.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Building on your object lesson from Week 1, reveal the second crown in your collection. Pick it up whenever you talk about royalty or Absalom's rebellion. When you get to the part of the story where Absalom dies, either crush the crown or discard it and leave the pillow empty for the rest of the series.*

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KINGS

- Around 3,000 years ago, the nation of Israel got its first king.
  - For a long time, Israel didn't have an official human ruler because it was led by God.
  - But eventually, the Israelites decided they knew better than God did and demanded a king. They wanted a human leader to rule them, just like all the other nations had.
  - So God gave the Israelites what they asked for.
- First there was King Saul, whose crown passed to David when Saul disobeyed God.
  - God chose David to wear the crown, wield the power, and care for God's people. And David did – for a while.
  - Eventually, David got sidetracked and used his power as king to hurt people, instead of lead and protect people.
  - David's mistakes had big consequences. One of those consequences: David's relationship with his son, Absalom wasn't great.
- Here's what you need to know about Absalom:
  - He was David's third son, which meant he was in line for the throne, but wasn't next in line.
  - He was really good-looking.
  - Everyone loved him.
  - He was even called "flawless."

## SCRIPTURE | II Samuel 15:1-14

- But all of that wasn't enough for Absalom. Maybe his good looks and popularity went to his head, because Absalom wanted more. He wanted the crown.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize II Samuel 15:1-14.*
- Absalom was so convinced he could be a better king than David that he decided to take the kingdom by force.
  - First, he surrounded himself with chariots, horses, and soldiers so he'd seem impressive to the people and intimidating to his father.

- Then he got sneaky. He gave himself a position of authority and began listening to people's needs – not to serve them, but to cause trouble.
- Then he began to turn people away from King David. He stirred up dissatisfaction with the king's leadership by telling people David wouldn't listen to them, but if he were king, he would.
- Then he got manipulative. He used his looks, charm, and personality to appeal to the people of Israel. But once again, Absalom didn't do this out of love for them, but out of arrogance and a hunger for power.
- It's no surprise Absalom gained the support of the masses. He was clever (and cute). When the last pieces of his conspiracy finally came together, he made his final move.
  - Absalom gathered 200 men and David's advisor to go with him to a place called Hebron, which was the very center of David's kingdom. There, Absalom began his rebellion.
  - King David, convinced of the hopelessness of his cause and anxious to spare the city from destruction, fled and began preparing to meet his son in battle.

### SCRIPTURE | II Samuel 18:1-15, 31-33

- Let's take a look at what happened when David and Absalom's armies finally confronted each other.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize II Samuel 18:1-15, 31-33.*
- This story is heartbreaking. In the mess, we see a glimpse of David's character, which is completely unlike Absalom's.
  - David sought to protect Absalom when he was alive and mourned him in his death.
  - But Absalom's arrogance and selfishness caused pain and death for others and himself.
- Absalom's pride convinced him he knew best. He thought he could be a better king than David and convinced himself he deserved it. But Absalom never stopped to consider that maybe . . .
  - He wasn't ready.
  - He was missing something.
  - There would be consequences he'd regret.
  - There was a reason God chose David to be king instead of him.
  - It's not a great idea to try to overthrow God's plans.

### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
  - **Why do you think Absalom wanted to be in charge? Have you ever felt that way?**
  - **Absalom thought he knew best, but what do you think he didn't know?**

### SCRIPTURE | Matthew 23:12

- So what could Absalom have done instead? He could have chosen humility. "Humility" isn't thinking badly of yourself or denying you have any awesome skills or qualities. Humility is . . .

- Thinking of yourself less often.
- Knowing you don't know everything.
- Being willing to learn or be corrected.
- There's a moment in Scripture when Jesus tries to help His disciples understand this.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read *Matthew 23:12*.
- I'm guessing you've never tried to "exalt" yourself by overthrowing a kingdom, but be honest. Like Absalom, have you ever been a little blinded by your own confidence, self-centeredness, or pride? Yeah, me too. So here's some advice for next time: **when you think you know best, be humble instead.**

### NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

#### VIDEO | Nelson Mandela on Humility

- There aren't many kings, queens, rulers, or world leaders who are known for their humility, but there is one who comes to mind. Nelson Mandela was a South African anti-apartheid revolutionary, political leader, and philanthropist who served as President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. Before becoming President of South Africa, he was imprisoned for 27 years because of his anti-racism work.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip (1:00-1:53) from [this Nelson Mandela interview with Oprah](#), where they discuss humility. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- Mandela could have done an entire interview talking about himself and his achievements, yet he focused on something bigger. He moved the focus away from himself and toward a vision of people doing something that matters, together — no matter who gets the credit.

#### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
  - ✦ **Do you think it's possible to be right, but behave in the wrong way? Give an example of when this was true for you.**
  - ✦ **Whose authority do you struggle to respect, because you think you know best?**

#### HOW TO BE HUMBLE

- Choosing to be humble won't always be the popular choice, but it's the best choice. It's how Jesus taught us to live, and it's what followers of God have learned over and over again is the wisest way to live.
- Just like King David got distracted by his power, Wannabe-King Absalom got distracted by his arrogance. His confidence that he knew best led him to do things he would never have done if he had stayed humble.
- So how can we be humble instead of arrogant?

- **IDENTIFY YOUR ARROGANCE:** It's okay, we're all a little arrogant sometimes. The key is being able to see when, where, and why we're acting arrogantly so we can make a change.
- **THINK OF YOURSELF LESS OFTEN:** The famous writer C.S. Lewis once said a humble person "will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all." I'm not saying you need to never think about yourself or pretend you don't exist. That's impossible. And weird. But when you catch yourself thinking about how awesome you are:
  - **Think about others.** Absalom only thought of others when he could use them for his own gain. If you don't want to be like Absalom, think about others. How might your attitude, words, desires, or actions impact other people? Instead of helping yourself, how can you help someone else?
  - **Think about God.** Absalom was so busy making his own self-serving plans that he never considered what God wanted. Instead of trying to get what you want or think is best, what would God want or say is best? How can you be part of what God wants, instead of trying to get God to give you what you want?
- **KNOW YOU DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING:** Absalom was confident he was the right person for the throne, but there was a lot he didn't know. It doesn't matter how old you are — you always have more to learn. You might think you know best, but maybe you're not ready. Maybe you're missing some information. Maybe you haven't weighed every option. Maybe you can't foresee the consequences. Maybe God already has a plan and you just haven't grasped it yet.
- **BE WILLING TO LEARN:** I wonder what would have happened if Absalom had been real with his dad and asked, "If I want to be king someday, what do I need to know? What do I need to do?" Would all of this have been avoided? Would David have taken Absalom under his wing and trained him to be the next king? We'll never know.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
  - ☆ **Do you think it's possible to be confident and humble at the same time? What would that look like?**
  - **Read I Peter 5:5-6. What are some ways we can humble ourselves when we think we know best?**
  - **What's something you're going to do this week to choose humility?**

## REFLECTION | Confident and Humble

- Absalom had the "confidence" thing down, but he was missing the "humility" thing. The secret is to find a balance.

- **BE CONFIDENT:** If you really are the best basketball player in the world (like Lebron), or you're super good-looking and charming (like Absalom), humility doesn't mean denying those things are true. You can recognize what's great about you and be confident in the skills, knowledge, experience, and insight God has given you. But . . .
- **BE HUMBLE:** Because no matter how much you have to be confident about, there's still a lot God has to teach you.
- When you know you've still got a ways to go, you can put yourself in a better position to learn and grow. When you're humble, instead of believing you know best, you're more likely to . . .
  - Learn something new.
  - Grow in your relationships with others.
  - Grow in your faith.
  - Be used by God to do something bigger than you.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 2 folder and place one under each seat, along with a pen. Encourage students to reflect on their own or with a partner, then write down one reason they can be confident in who they are right now (a gift, talent, or characteristic), one reason they should continue staying humble (they're young, new in their faith, still learning, or don't know all of God's plans), and one thing they'll do to stay humble this week (get a mentor, ask someone to teach them something, admit they were wrong, decide to learn something new, spend more time with God).*
- Believing we know best can blind us and put us in conflict with others and with God. But if we can approach each moment with the knowledge that we always have more to learn, God will use that humility to help us grow. So this week, remember – **when you think you know best, be humble instead.**

I'll be  
**CONFIDENT**  
because . . .

but  
**HUMBLE**  
because . . .

and  
**I WILL...**

**ROYALS**

I'll be  
**CONFIDENT**  
because . . .

but  
**HUMBLE**  
because . . .

and  
**I WILL...**

**ROYALS**

## WEEK 3 SERMON GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

When you're not sure who to listen to, ask God for wisdom.

### THE BIBLE

I Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14; James 1:5;  
Proverbs 16:16

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

#### ACTIVITY | Game of Coins

- Welcome back to *Royals*! Since we've been talking all about kings, queens, and the decisions they make, let's see how well you do with making royal decisions.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need a ton of spare change, jars, chairs, [blindfolds](#), and [pool noodles](#). Split your students into two teams. Set up a chair for each team with a jar of change underneath it. Have one person on each team sit in the chairs while wearing a blindfold and holding a pool noodle. Have the members of the opposing teams stand in a circle around their opponent's jar of change, about 10 feet away from the players in the chairs. When the game begins, the standing players must decide to either shout instructions at their seated team member or crawl as quietly as possible to get their opponents' jar of change without being hit by a pool noodle. If anyone is hit with a pool noodle, they're out. The first team to retrieve their jar or eliminate all players with the pool noodle wins. Give the winners king-sized candy bars.*
- Some of you did pretty well with your decision-making abilities! I mean, you're probably not ready to lead a whole nation yet, but it's a good start.
- I've never led a nation either, but I assume it's pretty difficult. There are a lot of decisions to make, a lot of things competing for their time and attention, and a lot of different voices making demands and giving competing advice. That's a lot to manage.

#### QUESTION | What makes your life noisy?

- Do you ever feel like life is just a little too noisy? Like you're sometimes so distracted you can barely think? **What makes your life seem noisy sometimes?**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.
- We're constantly bombarded by information, notifications, reminders, responsibilities — it's a lot to deal with on a normal day, but it's even worse when we're trying to make a big decision or get some guidance. Between the advice of our friends or family, the stuff we find on the internet, and whatever our gut is telling us to do, it's not easy to know whose advice to listen to.

## SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

### STORY | Talk about a time you listened to the wrong person for advice.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you listened to the wrong person for advice. This could be either a silly or serious story. If possible, try choosing a story where you were offered good advice, but took bad advice instead.
- With so many voices to choose from, it's hard to know who to listen to. We all have moments when we find ourselves asking questions like, "What do I do now? Who do I trust? Which voice is the right voice to follow?"

### OBJECT LESSON | The Crown

- For the last couple of weeks, we've been talking famous kings in Scripture. So far, we've talked about . . .
  - King David and the mistakes he made when he was in charge.
  - Absalom, whose confidence that he knew best led him toward destruction.
- Today I want to introduce you to a third person. Unlike Absalom, this guy really did become king after David. And when he did, he taught us all a few really important things about who we should be listening to.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Building on your object lesson, reveal the third crown in your collection. Pick it up whenever you talk about royalty or Solomon.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KINGS

- The kings we're talking about lived around 3,000 years ago, when they ruled the nation of Israel.
- For a long time, Israel didn't have an official human ruler because it was led by God. But eventually, the Israelites decided they knew better than God did and demanded a king. They wanted a human leader to rule them, just like all the other nations had. So God gave the Israelites what they asked for.
  - First there was King Saul, whose crown passed to David when Saul disobeyed God.
  - Then God chose David to wear the crown, wield the power, and care for God's people.
  - One of David's sons, Absalom, tried to take the throne from David against God's will and failed.
- But David couldn't be king forever. Eventually, David passed the crown on to his son, Solomon.

### SCRIPTURE | I Kings 2:10-12

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read I Kings 2:10-12.
- The transition of the crown from David to Solomon happened naturally and uneventfully. David died. When he did, Solomon took the throne.

## SCRIPTURE | I Kings 3:3-14

- After hearing the stories of David and Absalom, you might be wondering what horrible thing Solomon did next. Let's take a look.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read I Kings 3:3-14.
- So far so good in Solomon's story!
  - Solomon began his reign by following God closely. He placed the good of God's people above his personal peace, prosperity, or desire to be a powerful or popular king. As far as God was concerned, Solomon's priorities were in the right place.
  - One night, Solomon had a dream where God asked him, "What do you want?" So Solomon asked for unlimited ice cream. Just kidding. He asked for wisdom.
  - We don't know exactly why this was Solomon's request, but maybe it's because he really wanted to lead his kingdom well. Maybe he didn't want to go down the same path David and Absalom had by using his power to hurt others or become proud.
  - God gave Solomon wisdom, but God didn't stop there. Scripture says Solomon received the ability to pass fair judgment, which is really important when you're leading people. You need to be fair when you're ruling a kingdom.
- Solomon could have listened to anyone. He could have hired a million people to help him make decisions, or hired no one at all and just trusted his gut. But instead, Solomon asked for God's wisdom — a wisdom more trustworthy than anything a person could give him.

## STORY | A Man and His Money

- But maybe you're still wondering what exactly "wisdom" is.
  - Is it the same thing as knowledge?
  - Is it the ability to intuitively know what to do anytime there's a tough decision?
  - Is it a weird superpower?
  - Does having it mean you have to start dressing like an elderly professor?
- You can dress however you want, but no, that last part is not a requirement for getting or having wisdom.
- Think of it this way: **if knowledge is a collection of all of the information in the world, wisdom is what you have when you actually use that knowledge.** Wisdom is knowledge plus action.

## SCRIPTURE | James 1:5

- Solomon may have received wisdom in a pretty spectacular way, but here's the good news for you and me. We don't have to wait until we become king or have a mysterious dream in order to have a moment like this with God. Here's what the book of James says.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read James 1:5.
- Wait, all we need to do is ask? We don't need to do anything special? Make big promises? Make a deal with God? We can just ask? Yeah. It really is that simple. You don't have to be wearing a crown or ruling a kingdom to get access to God's wisdom.
- No matter what our problem is, and no matter who we are, **when we're not sure who to listen to, we can ask God for wisdom.**

**NOW WHAT?** *What does God want us to do about it?*

**MUSIC | “Doxology” (Maverick City Music)**

- Sure, we can learn wisdom from life experiences, mistakes made, or smart people who share it with us. But ultimately, all wisdom is a gift from God that is given to us when we listen and look for it. The book of James says every good gift is from God – including wisdom. It’s a gift, or a blessing, that flows from God.
- There is a famous song called The Doxology.
  - It’s a short song that was written in the year 1674 by Thomas Ken and has been sung by Jesus-followers all over the world ever since.
  - And since I remember everything better when I put it to music, I thought you might too. Listen to this song and consider how wisdom is a blessing that flows from God.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip (0:53-1:52) from the song “Doxology” (Maverick City Music). For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*

**THREE WAYS TO ASK FOR WISDOM**

- Just like Solomon found himself with a lot of responsibility and too many voices giving him advice, you and I also have a lots of voices telling us what to do, think, believe, or attempt. With so many potential people we could be listening to, we even need to ask God for wisdom about which voices we should be listening to!
- So how did Solomon figure out who to listen to? And how can you and I do the same? Here are three ways.
  - **RECOGNIZE YOU NEED GOD’S HELP.** Remember, this is where Absalom went wrong – don’t be like Absalom. Be like Solomon, who was quick to recognize he had a lot to learn.
    - When Solomon became king, he knew he didn’t have experience yet. He didn’t even have his dad, the previous king, to help him figure out what to do next. He needed help and he knew it.
    - Like Solomon, you and I still have a lot to learn too. We don’t know everything there is to know about the world or how it works. We barely even understand ourselves! We need a guide – a voice that will lead us down safe paths and guide us back when we make a wrong turn. But that’s exactly why God is there to help us. All throughout the Bible, over and over again, God promises to help us. We just have to ask.
  - **ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED – NOT WHAT YOU WANT.**
    - Solomon could have asked for riches, fame, more power – anything he wanted! God didn’t give him any rules. But what did he ask for? Wisdom. Solomon chose to focus on what he really needed.
    - When you and I are making decisions, we sometimes make the mistake of look for the quickest solution to get us whatever we want in the moment. But often times, the things we think we want are not the wisest choice for us. Sometimes, the things we think we want even rob us of what we really need.

● **REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE MATTERS MORE THAN WHAT YOU HAVE.**

- When given the chance, Solomon asked God for something that would grow his character — not his bank account. That’s because Solomon understood *who he was* as a king would be far more important than *what he had* as a king.
- The voices around us usually tell us the opposite of this truth. They tell us that what we have or own is more important than who we are. Even if they don’t say it outright, it’s still communicated. We need God’s wisdom to help us see the difference between focusing on something we want (like money, popularity, opportunities, or stuff) or something we truly need.

**RESPONSE | Who Are You Listening To?**

- So as we wrap things up today, let’s take a moment to think about who we’re listening to.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print the handouts provided in your Week 3 folder and place one under each seat, along with a pen. If possible, try to make your space as silent as possible as you begin. You may want to whisper as you speak.*
- It’s super quiet in here right now.
  - If we lived in a world where everything was this quiet and we could hear people’s voices this clearly, it would be a lot easier to make the wiser choice. But the reality is it’s almost never this quiet — not anywhere.
  - If we want to hear God speak to us more easily, we have to learn how to find or make spaces that are quiet. I mean that literally (as in, no sounds) and metaphorically too. In order to hear God well, we need to find quiet places, free of distractions, people, notifications, reminders, or messages. That’s where we’ll be able to best hear God’s voice so we can make choices that align with God’s heart.
- On your paper, here’s what I want you to do:
  - List every voice you usually listen to — as many as you can. Think about family, friends, trusted adults, or people you follow online.
  - Circle the three names you listen to the most.
  - Star the names that usually give you wisdom that aligns with God’s wisdom.
  - Cross out any voices you’re not sure you should be listening to.
- Take a moment to look at your list.
  - What would it take for you to add more trustworthy voices to your list?
  - What will it take for you to listen less to the voices you’re not sure you should be listening to?
  - What can you do to raise the volume on the voices that best reflect God’s wisdom?
- You know, Solomon is called the wisest man who ever lived. But even with all that wisdom, Solomon wasn’t perfect. That’s because wisdom is something you need to choose to apply. You don’t just get it once and then you’re done. You have to continue practicing wisdom and gaining more of it.
- I don’t know if any of you will ever become leaders of entire nations, but I do believe you have the potential to do big things for God. But to accomplish them, you’re going to need God’s wisdom. So start asking! And start listening. Because **when we’re not sure who to listen to, we can ask God for wisdom.**

# WEEK 3

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE



Have you ever wished you had a little bit more power — or influence — or control? Whether you dream about ruling the world or just wish you could get a little respect once in a while, the desire to be in charge is something we've all experienced. But in this 4-week series, we'll hear about a few kings from the Bible whose stories show us power isn't always easy to yield. Through their failures and successes, we'll discover that **when you make mistakes**, God can help make things right; **when you think you know best**, be humble instead; **when you're not sure who to listen to**, ask God for guidance; and **when obedience is difficult**, stay close to Jesus.

### THIS WEEK

#### THE BIG IDEA

When you're not sure who to listen to, ask God for wisdom.

#### THE BIBLE

I Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14; James 1:5;  
Proverbs 16:16

- **What's one piece of advice you wish you could give to yourself as a kid?**
- **What are some places where people get advice?**
- **How do you know if the place you are getting advice from is trustworthy?**
- **If you could ask God for one thing, what would you ask God for? Be honest.**
- **Why do you think Solomon wanted wisdom more than anything else?**
- **How would you define wisdom?**
- **What are some scenarios where you and I might need wisdom?**
- **Why do you think we try to get guidance from sources other than God?**
- **Read Proverbs 16:16. What are some places where you can find God's wisdom?**
- **What is one area of your life where you need God's wisdom, today? What are you going to do this week to ask God for wisdom in this area?**

# WEEK 3

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



Have you ever wished you had a little bit more power — or influence — or control? Whether you dream about ruling the world or just wish you could get a little respect once in a while, the desire to be in charge is something we've all experienced. But in this 4-week series, we'll hear about a few kings from the Bible whose stories show us power isn't always easy to yield. Through their failures and successes, we'll discover that **when you make mistakes**, God can help make things right; **when you think you know best**, be humble instead; **when you're not sure who to listen to**, ask God for guidance; and **when obedience is difficult**, stay close to Jesus.

### THIS WEEK

#### THE BIG IDEA

When you're not sure who to listen to, ask God for wisdom.

#### THE BIBLE

I Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14; James 1:5;  
Proverbs 16:16

- **What's one piece of advice you wish you could give to yourself as a kid?**
- **What are some places where people get advice?**
- **If you could ask God for one thing, what would you ask God for? Be honest.**
- **How would you define wisdom?**
- **Read Proverbs 16:16. What are some places where you can find God's wisdom?**
- **What is one area of your life where you need God's wisdom, today?**
- **What are you going to do this week to ask God for wisdom in this area?**

## WEEK 3 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

When you're not sure who to listen to, ask God for wisdom.

### THE BIBLE

I Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14; James 1:5;  
Proverbs 16:16

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

### ACTIVITY | Game of Coins

- Welcome back to *Royals*! Since we've been talking all about kings, queens, and the decisions they make, let's see how well you do with making royal decisions.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need a ton of spare change, jars, chairs, [blindfolds](#), and [pool noodles](#). Split your students into two teams. Set up a chair for each team with a jar of change underneath it. Have one person on each team sit in the chairs while wearing a blindfold and holding a pool noodle. Have the members of the opposing teams stand in a circle around their opponent's jar of change, about 10 feet away from the players in the chairs. When the game begins, the standing players must decide to either shout instructions at their seated team member or crawl as quietly as possible to get their opponents' jar of change without being hit by a pool noodle. If anyone is hit with a pool noodle, they're out. The first team to retrieve their jar or eliminate all players with the pool noodle wins. Give the winners king-sized candy bars.*
- Some of you did pretty well with your decision-making abilities! I mean, you're probably not ready to lead a whole nation yet, but it's a good start.
- I've never led a nation either, but I assume it's pretty difficult. There are a lot of decisions to make, a lot of things competing for their time and attention, and a lot of different voices making demands and giving competing advice. That's a lot to manage.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
  - **What's one piece of advice you wish you could give to yourself as a kid?**
  - **What are some places where people get advice?**

## QUESTION | What makes your life noisy?

- Do you ever feel like life is just a little too noisy? Like you're sometimes so distracted you can barely think? **What makes your life seem noisy sometimes?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.
- We're constantly bombarded by information, notifications, reminders, responsibilities — it's a lot to deal with on a normal day, but it's even worse when we're trying to make a big decision or get some guidance. Between the advice of our friends or family, the stuff we find on the internet, and whatever our gut is telling us to do, it's not easy to know whose advice to listen to.

**SO WHAT?** Why does it matter to God and to us?

## STORY | Talk about a time you listened to the wrong person for advice.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you listened to the wrong person for advice. This could be either a silly or serious story. If possible, try choosing a story where you were offered good advice, but took bad advice instead.
- With so many voices to choose from, it's hard to know who to listen to. We all have moments when we find ourselves asking questions like, "What do I do now? Who do I trust? Which voice is the right voice to follow?"

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
  - ★ **How do you know if the place you are getting advice from is trustworthy?**

## OBJECT LESSON | The Crown

- For the last couple of weeks, we've been talking famous kings in Scripture. So far, we've talked about . . .
  - King David and the mistakes he made when he was in charge.
  - Absalom, whose confidence that he knew best led him toward destruction.
- Today I want to introduce you to a third person. Unlike Absalom, this guy really did become king after David. And when he did, he taught us all a few really important things about who we should be listening to.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Building on your object lesson, reveal the third crown in your collection. Pick it up whenever you talk about royalty or Solomon.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KINGS

- The kings we're talking about lived around 3,000 years ago, when they ruled the nation of Israel.
- For a long time, Israel didn't have an official human ruler because it was led by God. But eventually, the Israelites decided they knew better than God did and demanded a king. They wanted a human leader to rule them, just like all the other nations had. So God gave the Israelites what they asked for.
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- But David couldn't be king forever. Eventually, David passed the crown on to his son, Solomon.

## SCRIPTURE | I Kings 2:10-12

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I Kings 2:10-12.*
- The transition of the crown from David to Solomon happened naturally and uneventfully. David died. When he did, Solomon took the throne.

## SCRIPTURE | I Kings 3:3-14

- After hearing the stories of David and Absalom, you might be wondering what horrible thing Solomon did next. Let's take a look.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I Kings 3:3-14.*
- So far so good in Solomon's story!
  - Solomon began his reign by following God closely. He placed the good of God's people above his personal peace, prosperity, or desire to be a powerful or popular king. As far as God was concerned, Solomon's priorities were in the right place.
  - One night, Solomon had a dream where God asked him, "What do you want?" So Solomon asked for unlimited ice cream. Just kidding. He asked for wisdom.
  - We don't know exactly why this was Solomon's request, but maybe it's because he really wanted to lead his kingdom well. Maybe he didn't want to go down the same path David and Absalom had by using his power to hurt others or become proud.
  - God gave Solomon wisdom, but God didn't stop there. Scripture says Solomon received the ability to pass fair judgment, which is really important when you're leading people. You need to be fair when you're ruling a kingdom.
- Solomon could have listened to anyone. He could have hired a million people to help him make decisions, or hired no one at all and just trusted his gut. But instead, Solomon asked for God's wisdom — a wisdom more trustworthy than anything a person could give him.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*

- If you could ask God for one thing, what would you ask God for? Be honest.
- ★ Why do you think Solomon wanted wisdom more than anything else?
- How would you define wisdom?

## STORY | A Man and His Money

- But maybe you're still wondering what exactly "wisdom" is.
  - Is it the same thing as knowledge?
  - Is it the ability to intuitively know what to do anytime there's a tough decision?
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- Solomon may have received wisdom in a pretty spectacular way, but here's the good news for you and me. We don't have to wait until we become king or have a mysterious dream in order to have a moment like this with God. Here's what the book of James says.
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- No matter what our problem is, and no matter who we are, **when we're not sure who to listen to, we can ask God for wisdom.**

**NOW WHAT?** *What does God want us to do about it?*

## MUSIC | "Doxology" (Maverick City Music)

- Sure, we can learn wisdom from life experiences, mistakes made, or smart people who share it with us. But ultimately, all wisdom is a gift from God that is given to us when we listen and look for it. The book of James says every good gift is from God – including wisdom. It's a gift, or a blessing, that flows from God.
- There is a famous song called The Doxology.
  - It's a short song that was written in the year 1674 by Thomas Ken and has been sung by Jesus-followers all over the world ever since.
  - And since I remember everything better when I put it to music, I thought you might too. Listen to this song and consider how wisdom is a blessing that flows from God.
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## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
  - ★ **What are some scenarios where you and I might need wisdom?**
  - ★ **Why do you think we try to get guidance from sources other than God?**

## THREE WAYS TO ASK FOR WISDOM

- Just like Solomon found himself with a lot of responsibility and too many voices giving him advice, you and I also have a lots of voices telling us what to do, think, believe, or attempt. With so many potential people we could be listening to, we even need to ask God for wisdom about which voices we should be listening to!
- So how did Solomon figure out who to listen to? And how can you and I do the same? Here are three ways.
  - **RECOGNIZE YOU NEED GOD'S HELP.** Remember, this is where Absalom went wrong — don't be like Absalom. Be like Solomon, who was quick to recognize he had a lot to learn.
    - When Solomon became king, he knew he didn't have experience yet. He didn't even have his dad, the previous king, to help him figure out what to do next. He needed help and he knew it.
    - Like Solomon, you and I still have a lot to learn too. We don't know everything there is to know about the world or how it works. We barely even understand ourselves! We need a guide — a voice that will lead us down safe paths and guide us back when we make a wrong turn. But that's exactly why God is there to help us. All throughout the Bible, over and over again, God promises to help us. We just have to ask.
  - **ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED — NOT WHAT YOU WANT.**
    - Solomon could have asked for riches, fame, more power — anything he wanted! God didn't give him any rules. But what did he ask for? Wisdom. Solomon chose to focus on what he really needed.
    - When you and I are making decisions, we sometimes make the mistake of look for the quickest solution to get us whatever we want in the moment. But often times, the things we think we want are not the wisest choice for us. Sometimes, the things we think we want even rob us of what we really need.
  - **REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE MATTERS MORE THAN WHAT YOU HAVE.**
    - When given the chance, Solomon asked God for something that would grow his character — not his bank account. That's because Solomon understood *who he was* as a king would be far more important than *what he had* as a king.
    - The voices around us usually tell us the opposite of this truth. They tell us that what we have or own is more important than who we are. Even if they don't say it outright, it's still communicated. We need God's wisdom to help us see the difference between focusing on something we want (like money, popularity, opportunities, or stuff) or something we truly need.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
  - **Read Proverbs 16:16. What are some places where you can find God's wisdom?**
  - **What is one area of your life where you need God's wisdom, today?**
  - **What are you going to do this week to ask God for wisdom in this area?**

## RESPONSE | Who Are You Listening To?

- So as we wrap things up today, let's take a moment to think about who we're listening to.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your program, print the handouts provided in your Week 3 folder and place one under each seat, along with a pen. If possible, try to make your space as silent as possible as you begin. You may want to whisper as you speak.
- It's super quiet in here right now.
  - If we lived in a world where everything was this quiet and we could hear people's voices this clearly, it would be a lot easier to make the wiser choice. But the reality is it's almost never this quiet – not anywhere.
  - If we want to hear God speak to us more easily, we have to learn how to find or make spaces that are quiet. I mean that literally (as in, no sounds) and metaphorically too. In order to hear God well, we need to find quiet places, free of distractions, people, notifications, reminders, or messages. That's where we'll be able to best hear God's voice so we can make choices that align with God's heart.
- On your paper, here's what I want you to do:
  - List every voice you usually listen to – as many as you can. Think about family, friends, trusted adults, or people you follow online.
  - Circle the three names you listen to the most.
  - Star the names that usually give you wisdom that aligns with God's wisdom.
  - Cross out any voices you're not sure you should be listening to.
- Take a moment to look at your list.
  - What would it take for you to add more trustworthy voices to your list?
  - What will it take for you to listen less to the voices you're not sure you should be listening to?
  - What can you do to raise the volume on the voices that best reflect God's wisdom?
- You know, Solomon is called the wisest man who ever lived. But even with all that wisdom, Solomon wasn't perfect. That's because wisdom is something you need to choose to apply. You don't just get it once and then you're done. You have to continue practicing wisdom and gaining more of it.
- I don't know if any of you will ever become leaders of entire nations, but I do believe you have the potential to do big things for God. But to accomplish them, you're going to need God's wisdom. So start asking! And start listening. Because **when we're not sure who to listen to, we can ask God for wisdom.**

WHO ARE YOU LISTENING TO?



ROYALS

WHO ARE YOU LISTENING TO?



ROYALS

## WEEK 4 SERMON GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

When obedience is difficult,  
stay close to Jesus.

### THE BIBLE

II Samuel 7:8-13; John 6:50-66, 14:23

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

#### ACTIVITY | Monarch Mandates

- It's our final week of *Royals*, so let's wrap things up by seeing how well you're able to follow a few royal decrees.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you won't need any supplies, but you could outfit your Monarch with a royal robe, crown, and scepter, or seat them on a homemade throne. To play, have your Monarch teach your students a few simple commands, like the ones below. When the game begins, have the Monarch shout out commands. Every time a player fails to obey the command (or is the last to obey), have the Monarch call them out of the game by sending them into exile. Try commands like . . .*
  - **"The dragon is near!"** *Run to the back of the room and brandish an imaginary sword.*
  - **"Let them eat cake!"** *Find two partners. Have one partner get on their hands and knees (like a table) while the other two sit on the floor and pretend to eat cake.*
  - **"Hear ye, hear ye!"** *Run to the front of the room and put your hand to your ear to show you're listening.*
  - **"Yes, your majesty!"** *Kneel and bow your head.*
  - **"Pledge your allegiance!"** *Lay face down on the ground.*
- Based on that exercise, some of you are obviously more skilled at following instructions than others.

## VIDEO | A Clip from “Not Listening to Directions Prank” (The Daily Dropout)

- But even those of us who are the worst at following instructions are probably not as bad as this guy.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (0:16-0:44 and 1:26-2:10) of a prank from The Daily Dropout. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- Okay, obviously this guy is doing this on purpose, but this is still hard to watch. I’m not sure what’s worse — being terrible at listening to directions, or not asking for directions at all.

## STORY | Talk about a time you didn’t think you needed instructions.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from our own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you refused to follow instructions because you thought you could figure it out on your own, but you really couldn’t. Maybe you didn’t use your map app for navigation, or threw away an instruction booklet, or tried to figure out how to fix the p-trap of your sink all by yourself. Share what went wrong and laugh about it!*
- There are a lot of reasons we might decide not to follow instructions. Maybe . . .
  - We’re really confident we can handle it alone.
  - Or we can’t find the instruction manual.
  - Or the instructions are confusing.
  - Or we think we can find a better or easier way.
- Sometimes we can manage without the instructions. But a lot of the time, we realize following those instructions would have helped us avoid some big consequences.

## SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

### OBJECT LESSON | The Crown

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As you teach about the history of the kings of Israel, pick up the crowns as you talk about the kings they each represent. When you begin talking about Jesus, unveil the crown of thorns and hold it as you talk about Him.*

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KINGS

- For the last few weeks, we’ve talked about some of the ways the biblical kings (and wannabe kings) of Israel tried and failed to follow God’s instructions and then faced consequences.
- But there’s a bigger picture I want to talk about today. The fact that Israel had kings at all is evidence that kings aren’t the only ones who have a hard time following God’s instructions.
- To show you this bigger picture, we need to go back in time about 3,000 years. Back then, the nation of Israel didn’t have a king. And it was in chaos.
  - For a long time, Israel didn’t have one official human ruler because it was supposed to be led by God. God spoke to the Israelites through leaders, prophets, and judges, but Israel could never seem to follow God’s instructions. They were constantly disobeying, fighting with, and rebelling against God.

- Eventually, the Israelites decided they knew better than God did and demanded a king. They wanted a human leader to rule them, just like all the other nations had.
- God never wanted Israel to be ruled by kings because God was supposed to be its King! God eventually gave the Israelites what they asked for, but warned it would not turn out well.
- First, there was King Saul. Then King David (and the wannabe king Absalom). Then King Solomon. Dozens of kings came after them.
- But kings, just like the rest of us, ignore God's instructions. They . . .
  - Get greedy and power-hungry.
  - Use their power to harm others.
  - Rebel against God's plans.
  - Are only human, no matter how good or wise they seem to be.

### SCRIPTURE | II Samuel 7:8-13

- King David really tried his best to honor God with his reign. (Well, after all the Bathsheba and Uriah stuff.) He tried to guide and protect Israel, administer justice, *and* help the nation stay close to God. He even had a plan to get God to literally show up on earth and live alongside the people of Israel.
- But God's plans were different – and much bigger.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read II Samuel 7:8-13.*
- God promised to do something amazing. One day, God vowed to take one of David's descendants and make him the king of everything. This king would . . .
  - Protect God's people forever.
  - Defeat Israel's enemies forever.
  - End injustice forever.
  - Allow God to be present with them forever.
- This King would be the perfect King, able to follow God's instructions like the kings before Him never could. But the King God was promising was not the king Israel was envisioning.

### SCRIPTURE | John 6:50-66

- 2,000 years ago, this King finally showed up. But He didn't appear draped in fancy robes, or sitting on a throne, or commanding armies. He wasn't born into wealth or power. He was born to an unmarried teenage girl, in a cave, alongside some animals. She named Him Jesus, and only a few people recognized Him as the King that was promised.
- As Jesus got older, He began teaching about God, performing miracles, and showing us a new way to love God and others. He drew crowds who were eager to hear what He had to say. Some people even began to wonder if He would someday become the King God had promised and rule Israel. But then He said this . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 6:51-66.*
- Wait. What? Bread. Flesh. Blood. What is going on?
  - Jesus used a lot of metaphors when He taught, and this is one of those times. So pretend you're in English class for a second and remember that a metaphor is an illustration that makes a point by comparing two things you wouldn't necessarily pair together.

- When Jesus says He's the bread of life, He means that, just like food is necessary for physical life, He is necessary for eternal life.
- He's talking about His broken body and poured-out blood because Jesus knew He was soon going to be killed.
- When He says people must eat His flesh and drink His blood, He's calling us to accept the gift He is going to offer us through His death.
- There's a lot of reasons why this really scared and confused a lot of His followers. Not only did it sound like a horror movie, but it was confusing – why was He talking about death? God's promised King should be talking about taking the throne, not dying.
- Jesus' instructions were confusing, but instead of listening, asking more questions, or trusting Jesus, many of just . . . gave up and stopped following Him. But Jesus knew what He was doing. He needed us to understand He wasn't the kind of King we were expecting because God's Kingdom is unlike anything the world has ever seen.
  - It's not about power. It's about humility.
  - It's not about defeating your enemies. It's about loving them.
  - It's not about dominance. It's about sacrifice.
  - It's not about being served. It's about serving.
- That's why Jesus died, hanging on a cross, wearing a crown of thorns, beneath a sign that mockingly said, "King of the Jews." He died to usher in God's new Kingdom.
- Jesus knew people wouldn't understand. He knew people would walk away. But He also knew those who did stay close to Him during His arrest, death, and resurrection would be able to see God fulfill that promise to David and do something brand new.
- King Jesus redefined "royalty." Under His reign . . .
  - There is peace.
  - There is hope.
  - There is love.
  - And God is always near.
- Now, I'll be honest. If you're following Jesus, it's not always going to be easy. Just like those people who walked away from Jesus, sometimes it will be difficult to trust where He's leading you. But it will be worth it.
- So when following God's instructions are difficult, or scary, or confusing, don't give up. Our King can be trusted. **When obedience is difficult, stay close to Jesus.**

**NOW WHAT?** *What does God want us to do about it?*

**STORY | Talk about a time obedience was difficult for you.**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when following Jesus was difficult, but decided to stick close to Him anyway. This could be a time when you struggled with a specific sin, or had questions about God, or life got difficult. Share why obedience was difficult, why and how you were tempted to walk away from Jesus, what made you stay close to Him, and why you're glad you did.*

## OBEDIENCE CAN BE DIFFICULT

- Following Jesus and His teachings really can be difficult sometimes. While obeying human rulers can be difficult because we don't always trust them or their leadership, obeying Jesus' can be difficult because He asks us to do things that are so different from what we want to do.
  - **OBEDIENCE IS A COMMITMENT**
    - Commitment is hard for a lot of us, but that's exactly what Jesus challenges us to do.
    - When Jesus challenges us to follow Him, He doesn't mean, "Say you believe in me once and then hardly think about it again." He's challenging us to fully commit to following in His footsteps and letting God change everything about our lives.
  - **OBEDIENCE SHOWS LOVE**
    - Loving God is about so much more than our feelings. It's a choice we can make (or not make).
    - When Jesus tells us to follow Him, He's asking us to show we love Him, just like He loves us. Throughout Scripture, you can see Jesus saying that if we love Him, we should follow His instructions.
  - **OBEDIENCE REVEALS OUR HEART**
    - Obeying Jesus shouldn't be about what we "should" do or "have to" do, but about what "get to" do. Remember, He's not like normal kings. King Jesus doesn't just want your blind obedience — He cares about your heart.
    - Obeying Jesus isn't a to-do list. It's an adventure. It will sometimes not be easy, but Jesus told us He wouldn't leave us alone on the journey.

## REFLECTION | Close To Jesus

- There's an interesting relationship between obeying God and being close to God.
  - When we obey God, we actually get closer to God and become more like Jesus. Obedience is what we do, and closeness is what we get.
  - But when we're struggling to obey God, trusting and staying close to Jesus makes obedience feel more possible. Staying close to Jesus is what we do, and obedience is what we get.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your teaching time, purchase [crown-shaped wooden cut-outs](#) for every student. Place one under each chair, along with a fine-tipped permanent marker.*
- For the next few moments, I want you to think about an area of your life where it's difficult to obey God.
  - Maybe you're struggling to obey because you're confused about God's instructions, or you're doubting God's way is best, or you're just struggling to do what you know God has told us to do.
  - Whatever it is, write it down on that crown beneath your chair. You could write just a word or two, or you could write a whole prayer.
  - While you're writing, talk to God about why it's so difficult to obey and ask for help. You're not being disobedient by telling God you're struggling. You're being real. You're staying close to Jesus, even when obedience is difficult.

## MUSIC | Worship

- In the last few weeks, we've met a lot of kings.
  - There was Saul, who lost his crown because he disobeyed God.
  - There was David, who learned his mistakes needed to be made right.
  - There was Absalom, whose arrogance led to his own destruction.
  - And there was Solomon, who knew he couldn't lead without God's wisdom.
- We've seen a lot of kings rise and fall throughout this series, but we're ending this conversation today by focusing on our forever King. He's the King who . . .
  - Loved us before we ever knew Him.
  - Protects and defends us.
  - Give us peace.
  - Brings true justice.
  - Will never fail us.
  - And whose Kingdom is unlike anything we've ever seen.
- When following Him gets hard, remember — **when obedience is difficult, stay close to Jesus.** Let's do that right now by worshiping Him together.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *You can lead students in worship with any songs you like best, but here are a few songs that go along with this month's series. Make sure you have purchased any licenses required to play or perform these songs. For more information, [read this!](#)*
  - "Still On the Throne" (Mitch Wong)
  - "God of Israel" (Maverick City Music)
  - "King of Kings" (Hillsong Worship)
  - "Yahweh" (Maverick City Music)
  - "There Is No Higher Name" (Common Hymnal)
  - "Throne Room" (Erica Violet)
  - "The King We Want" (Stephen McWhirter)
  - "Follow You Anywhere" (Passion)
  - "Jesus Is Our King" (The Collective KC)
  - "Only Jesus" (Limitless Worship)

# WEEK 4

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE



Have you ever wished you had a little bit more power — or influence — or control? Whether you dream about ruling the world or just wish you could get a little respect once in a while, the desire to be in charge is something we've all experienced. But in this 4-week series, we'll hear about a few kings from the Bible whose stories show us power isn't always easy to yield. Through their failures and successes, we'll discover that **when you make mistakes**, God can help make things right; **when you think you know best**, be humble instead; **when you're not sure who to listen to**, ask God for guidance; and **when obedience is difficult**, stay close to Jesus.

### THIS WEEK

#### THE BIG IDEA

When obedience is difficult,  
stay close to Jesus.

#### THE BIBLE

II Samuel 7:8-13; John 6:50-66, 14:23

- **When you play a game, do you prefer to follow the instructions or make up your own?**
- **What would the world be like if no one followed directions?**
- **Talk about a time when you experiences consequences because you didn't follow instructions or disobeyed an authority figure. What happened?**
- **How do you know when an authority figure or the instructions they give you are worth obeying?**
- **How is Jesus like a king? What makes Jesus different from other kings?**
- **Why do you think it was difficult for people to obey Jesus when he was on earth? Why is it difficult for people to obey Jesus now?**
- **What's one area of your life where you struggle to obey Jesus? Why is that so difficult for you?**
- **Even when obeying Jesus is difficult, why is it still worth it?**
- **Read John 14:23. How can staying close to Jesus help us to be more obedient? How can being obedient help us stay close to Jesus?**
- **What's one step you can take this week to stay close to Jesus?**

# WEEK 4

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE

→ for middle schoolers



Have you ever wished you had a little bit more power — or influence — or control? Whether you dream about ruling the world or just wish you could get a little respect once in a while, the desire to be in charge is something we've all experienced. But in this 4-week series, we'll hear about a few kings from the Bible whose stories show us power isn't always easy to yield. Through their failures and successes, we'll discover that **when you make mistakes**, God can help make things right; **when you think you know best**, be humble instead; **when you're not sure who to listen to**, ask God for guidance; and **when obedience is difficult**, stay close to Jesus.

### THIS WEEK

#### **THE BIG IDEA**

When obedience is difficult,  
stay close to Jesus.

#### **THE BIBLE**

II Samuel 7:8-13; John 6:50-66, 14:23

- **When you play a game, do you prefer to follow the instructions or make up your own?**
- **What would the world be like if no one followed directions?**
- **Talk about a time when you experiences consequences because you didn't follow instructions or disobeyed an authority figure. What happened?**
- **How is Jesus like a king? What makes Jesus different from other kings?**
- **Read John 14:23. How can staying close to Jesus help us to be more obedient? How can being obedient help us stay close to Jesus?**
- **What's one step you can take this week to stay close to Jesus?**

## WEEK 4 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



### THE BIG IDEA

When obedience is difficult,  
stay close to Jesus.

### THE BIBLE

II Samuel 7:8-13; John 6:50-66, 14:23

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

#### ACTIVITY | Monarch Mandates

- It's our final week of *Royals*, so let's wrap things up by seeing how well you're able to follow a few royal decrees.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you won't need any supplies, but you could outfit your Monarch with a royal robe, crown, and scepter, or seat them on a homemade throne. To play, have your Monarch teach your students a few simple commands, like the ones below. When the game begins, have the Monarch shout out commands. Every time a player fails to obey the command (or is the last to obey), have the Monarch call them out of the game by sending them into exile. Try commands like . . .*
  - **"The dragon is near!"** *Run to the back of the room and brandish an imaginary sword.*
  - **"Let them eat cake!"** *Find two partners. Have one partner get on their hands and knees (like a table) while the other two sit on the floor and pretend to eat cake.*
  - **"Hear ye, hear ye!"** *Run to the front of the room and put your hand to your ear to show you're listening.*
  - **"Yes, your majesty!"** *Kneel and bow your head.*
  - **"Pledge your allegiance!"** *Lay face down on the ground.*
- Based on that exercise, some of you are obviously more skilled at following instructions than others.

## VIDEO | A Clip from “Not Listening to Directions Prank” (The Daily Dropout)

- But even those of us who are the worst at following instructions are probably not as bad as this guy.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (0:16-0:44 and 1:26-2:10) of a prank from The Daily Dropout. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- Okay, obviously this guy is doing this on purpose, but this is still hard to watch. I’m not sure what’s worse – being terrible at listening to directions, or not asking for directions at all.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you’re working only with middle schoolers.*
  - **When you play a game, do you prefer to follow the instructions or make up your own?**
  - **What would the world be like if no one followed directions?**

## STORY | Talk about a time you didn’t think you needed instructions.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from our own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you refused to follow instructions because you thought you could figure it out on your own, but you really couldn’t. Maybe you didn’t use your map app for navigation, or threw away an instruction booklet, or tried to figure out how to fix the p-trap of your sink all by yourself. Share what went wrong and laugh about it!*
- There are a lot of reasons we might decide not to follow instructions. Maybe . . .
  - We’re really confident we can handle it alone.
  - Or we can’t find the instruction manual.
  - Or the instructions are confusing.
  - Or we think we can find a better or easier way.
- Sometimes we can manage without the instructions. But a lot of the time, we realize following those instructions would have helped us avoid some big consequences.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you’re working only with middle schoolers.*
  - **Talk about a time when you experiences consequences because you didn’t follow instructions or disobeyed an authority figure. What happened?**
  - ★ **How do you know when an authority figure or the instructions they give you are worth obeying?**

**SO WHAT?** *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

**OBJECT LESSON | The Crown**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As you teach about the history of the kings of Israel, pick up the crowns as you talk about the kings they each represent. When you begin talking about Jesus, unveil the crown of thorns and hold it as you talk about Him.*

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KINGS**

- For the last few weeks, we've talked about some of the ways the biblical kings (and wannabe kings) of Israel tried and failed to follow God's instructions and then faced consequences.
- But there's a bigger picture I want to talk about today. The fact that Israel had kings at all is evidence that kings aren't the only ones who have a hard time following God's instructions.
- To show you this bigger picture, we need to go back in time about 3,000 years. Back then, the nation of Israel didn't have a king. And it was in chaos.
  - For a long time, Israel didn't have one official human ruler because it was supposed to be led by God. God spoke to the Israelites through leaders, prophets, and judges, but Israel could never seem to follow God's instructions. They were constantly disobeying, fighting with, and rebelling against God.
  - Eventually, the Israelites decided they knew better than God did and demanded a king. They wanted a human leader to rule them, just like all the other nations had.
  - God never wanted Israel to be ruled by kings because God was supposed to be its King! God eventually gave the Israelites what they asked for, but warned it would not turn out well.
  - First, there was King Saul. Then King David (and the wannabe king Absalom). Then King Solomon. Dozens of kings came after them.
- But kings, just like the rest of us, ignore God's instructions. They . . .
  - Get greedy and power-hungry.
  - Use their power to harm others.
  - Rebel against God's plans.
  - Are only human, no matter how good or wise they seem to be.

**SCRIPTURE | II Samuel 7:8-13**

- King David really tried his best to honor God with his reign. (Well, after all the Bathsheba and Uriah stuff.) He tried to guide and protect Israel, administer justice, *and* help the nation stay close to God. He even had a plan to get God to literally show up on earth and live alongside the people of Israel.
- But God's plans were different — and much bigger.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read II Samuel 7:8-13.*
- God promised to do something amazing. One day, God vowed to take one of David's descendants and make him the king of everything. This king would . . .

- Protect God’s people forever.
- Defeat Israel’s enemies forever.
- End injustice forever.
- Allow God to be present with them forever.
- This King would be the perfect King, able to follow God’s instructions like the kings before Him never could. But the King God was promising was not the king Israel was envisioning.

## SCRIPTURE | John 6:50-66

- 2,000 years ago, this King finally showed up. But He didn’t appear draped in fancy robes, or sitting on a throne, or commanding armies. He wasn’t born into wealth or power. He was born to an unmarried teenage girl, in a cave, alongside some animals. She named Him Jesus, and only a few people recognized Him as the King that was promised.
- As Jesus got older, He began teaching about God, performing miracles, and showing us a new way to love God and others. He drew crowds who were eager to hear what He had to say. Some people even began to wonder if He would someday become the King God had promised and rule Israel. But then He said this . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 6:51-66.*
- Wait. What? Bread. Flesh. Blood. What is going on?
  - Jesus used a lot of metaphors when He taught, and this is one of those times. So pretend you’re in English class for a second and remember that a metaphor is an illustration that makes a point by comparing two things you wouldn’t necessarily pair together.
  - When Jesus says He’s the bread of life, He means that, just like food is necessary for physical life, He is necessary for eternal life.
  - He’s talking about His broken body and poured-out blood because Jesus knew He was soon going to be killed.
  - When He says people must eat His flesh and drink His blood, He’s calling us to accept the gift He is going to offer us through His death.
- There’s a lot of reasons why this really scared and confused a lot of His followers. Not only did it sound like a horror movie, but it was confusing — why was He talking about death? God’s promised King should be talking about taking the throne, not dying.
- Jesus’ instructions were confusing, but instead of listening, asking more questions, or trusting Jesus, many of just . . . gave up and stopped following Him. But Jesus knew what He was doing. He needed us to understand He wasn’t the kind of King we were expecting because God’s Kingdom is unlike anything the world has ever seen.
  - It’s not about power. It’s about humility.
  - It’s not about defeating your enemies. It’s about loving them.
  - It’s not about dominance. It’s about sacrifice.
  - It’s not about being served. It’s about serving.
- That’s why Jesus died, hanging on a cross, wearing a crown of thorns, beneath a sign that mockingly said, “King of the Jews.” He died to usher in God’s new Kingdom.

- Jesus knew people wouldn't understand. He knew people would walk away. But He also knew those who did stay close to Him during His arrest, death, and resurrection would be able to see God fulfill that promise to David and do something brand new.
- King Jesus redefined "royalty." Under His reign . . .
  - There is peace.
  - There is hope.
  - There is love.
  - And God is always near.
- Now, I'll be honest. If you're following Jesus, it's not always going to be easy. Just like those people who walked away from Jesus, sometimes it will be difficult to trust where He's leading you. But it will be worth it.
- So when following God's instructions are difficult, or scary, or confusing, don't give up. Our King can be trusted. **When obedience is difficult, stay close to Jesus.**

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
  - **How is Jesus like a king? What makes Jesus different from other kings?**
  - ☆ **Why do you think it was difficult for people to obey Jesus when he was on earth? Why is it difficult for people to obey Jesus now?**

**NOW WHAT?** What does God want us to do about it?

## STORY | Talk about a time obedience was difficult for you.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when following Jesus was difficult, but decided to stick close to Him anyway. This could be a time when you struggled with a specific sin, or had questions about God, or life got difficult. Share why obedience was difficult, why and how you were tempted to walk away from Jesus, what made you stay close to Him, and why you're glad you did.

## OBEDIENCE CAN BE DIFFICULT

- Following Jesus and His teachings really can be difficult sometimes. While obeying human rulers can be difficult because we don't always trust them or their leadership, obeying Jesus' can be difficult because He asks us to do things that are so different from what we want to do.
  - **OBEDIENCE IS A COMMITMENT**
    - Commitment is hard for a lot of us, but that's exactly what Jesus challenges us to do.
    - When Jesus challenges us to follow Him, He doesn't mean, "Say you believe in me once and then hardly think about it again." He's challenging us to fully commit to following in His footsteps and letting God change everything about our lives.

- **OBEDIENCE SHOWS LOVE**

- Loving God is about so much more than our feelings. It's a choice we can make (or not make).
- When Jesus tells us to follow Him, He's asking us to show we love Him, just like He loves us. Throughout Scripture, you can see Jesus saying that if we love Him, we should follow His instructions.

- **OBEDIENCE REVEALS OUR HEART**

- Obeying Jesus shouldn't be about what we "should" do or "have to" do, but about what "get to" do. Remember, He's not like normal kings. King Jesus doesn't just want your blind obedience – He cares about your heart.
- Obeying Jesus isn't a to-do list. It's an adventure. It will sometimes not be easy, but Jesus told us He wouldn't leave us alone on the journey.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.

- ✦ **What's one area of your life where you struggle to obey Jesus? Why is that so difficult for you?**
- ✦ **Even when obeying Jesus is difficult, why is it still worth it?**

## REFLECTION | Close To Jesus

- There's an interesting relationship between obeying God and being close to God.
  - When we obey God, we actually get closer to God and become more like Jesus. Obedience is what we do, and closeness is what we get.
  - But when we're struggling to obey God, trusting and staying close to Jesus makes obedience feel more possible. Staying close to Jesus is what we do, and obedience is what we get.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, purchase [crown-shaped wooden cut-outs](#) for every student. Place one under each chair, along with a fine-tipped permanent marker.
- For the next few moments, I want you to think about an area of your life where it's difficult to obey God.
  - Maybe you're struggling to obey because you're confused about God's instructions, or you're doubting God's way is best, or you're just struggling to do what you know God has told us to do.
  - Whatever it is, write it down on that crown beneath your chair. You could write just a word or two, or you could write a whole prayer.
  - While you're writing, talk to God about why it's so difficult to obey and ask for help. You're not being disobedient by telling God you're struggling. You're being real. You're staying close to Jesus, even when obedience is difficult.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
  - **Read John 14:23. How can staying close to Jesus help us to be more obedient? How can being obedient help us stay close to Jesus?**
  - **What's one step you can take this week to stay close to Jesus?**

## MUSIC | Worship

- In the last few weeks, we've met a lot of kings.
  - There was Saul, who lost his crown because he disobeyed God.
  - There was David, who learned his mistakes needed to be made right.
  - There was Absalom, whose arrogance led to his own destruction.
  - And there was Solomon, who knew he couldn't lead without God's wisdom.
- We've seen a lot of kings rise and fall throughout this series, but we're ending this conversation today by focusing on our forever King. He's the King who . . .
  - Loved us before we ever knew Him.
  - Protects and defends us.
  - Give us peace.
  - Brings true justice.
  - Will never fail us.
  - And whose Kingdom is unlike anything we've ever seen.
- When following Him gets hard, remember — **when obedience is difficult, stay close to Jesus.** Let's do that right now by worshiping Him together.
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  - "The King We Want" (Stephen McWhirter)
  - "Follow You Anywhere" (Passion)
  - "Jesus Is Our King" (The Collective KC)
  - "Only Jesus" (Limitless Worship)

## ONE-MINUTE SERMON SCRIPTS



### ONE-MINUTE SERMONS

After you teach each week, we recommend **filming a video of yourself re-teaching your message in one minute or less**. Then post it on social media! We've written the beginnings of a script for you each week, and we've also filmed complete [One-Minute Sermon Videos](#) for you too, in partnership with [Rescue a Generation](#). Make your own or post ours — whatever you want!

## WEEK 1

Everyone makes mistakes! There's not a day that goes by when we don't mess up somehow. Sometimes our mistakes are just accidents we quickly forget about, but other times our mistakes are choices we wish, more than anything, we could take back. They're the kind of choices that come with big consequences for ourselves and for others. There's this guy David in the Bible who can relate. God chose him to be king of an entire nation because of his good heart, but all that power went to David's head. He used his position to do horrible things, and those choices had devastating consequences. You may not be a king, and you may not have messed up as much as David did, but you probably know what it's like to feel guilty and ashamed of things you've done. But there's good news: just like David eventually discovered, **when you make mistakes, God can help make things right.**

## WEEK 2

Picture this: your friend shows up at school wearing a crown. They demand to be called "Your Highness." They start giving you orders, like, "Bring me snacks." Um . . . no. I mean, it's cool to be confident, but that's a little arrogant. Actually, it's *really* arrogant. But thousands of years ago, this happened! Sort of. A young guy named Absalom tried to overthrow his father David, king of Israel. But here's the problem: David was chosen by God to be king, and — well, it's maybe not a great idea to try to overthrow God's plans. Things did not end well for Absalom. Now, I'm guessing you've never tried to overthrow a kingdom, but be honest. Like Absalom, have you ever been a little blinded by your own confidence? Or should I say, "arrogance?" Yeah, me too. So here's some advice for next time: **when you think you know best, be humble instead.**

## WEEK 3

Do you ever feel like life is just a little too noisy? Like you're sometimes so distracted you can barely think? We're constantly bombarded by information, notifications, reminders, responsibilities – it's a lot to deal with on a normal day, but it's even worse when we're trying to make a big decision or get some guidance. Between the advice of our friends or family, the stuff we find on the internet, and whatever our gut is telling us to do, it's not easy to know whose advice to listen to. Thousands of years ago, a king named Solomon had a conversation with God because Solomon had a lot of important decisions to make. God told Solomon he could have anything he wanted. So Solomon asked God for the same thing I'd encourage you to ask God for – because, **when we're not sure who to listen to, we can ask God for wisdom.**

## WEEK 4

Do you ever not follow directions? I do. Like when I decide not to use my maps app because of course I know the way. (I don't.) Or when I throw away the instruction booklets to everything I ever buy because of course I can figure it out myself. (I can't.) Or when I know the right thing to do, but I don't do it, because it just seems too hard or not worth the effort. There's this story in the Bible where some people reacted to Jesus that way. Jesus said something that really scared and confused a lot of His followers. But instead of listening, asking more questions, or trusting Jesus, they just . . . gave up and stopped following Him. Now, I'll be honest. If you're following Jesus, it's not always going to be easy. But it will be worth it. So when following God's directions is difficult, or scary, or confusing, don't give up. **Stay close to Jesus.**

## MARKETING CHECKLIST



### BEFORE THE SERIES

#### ✓ TO DO

	Print your <b>Series Promo Poster</b> and <b>Series Promo Cards</b> and display them where families and volunteers can see them.
	Customize your <b>Volunteer Hub</b> and <b>Parent Hub</b> web pages for this series.
	Customize and send the <b>Parent Email</b> for this series.
	Send the <b>Volunteer Email</b> for Week 1 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.
	Review the <b>suggested Social Media Posts and Captions</b> for this series.
	Post the <b>Bumper Video</b> on social media with this caption:  👑 Hear ye! Hear ye! 👑 A new series starts this week! We're talking about the king, queens and some Old Testament royalty.

### AFTER WEEK 1

#### ✓ TO DO

	Post the <b>1-Minute Sermon Video</b> for Week 1 on social media with this caption:  In case you missed it, Week 1 of Royals we learned that even when we make mistakes God can make things right. Here's a recap.
	Post the <b>Big Idea Graphic</b> for Week 1 on social media with this caption:  Remember, that when we make mistakes God can make things right.
	Send the <b>Volunteer Email</b> for Week 2 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.

AFTER WEEK 2

✓ **TO DO**

	<p>Post the <b>1-Minute Sermon Video</b> for Week 2 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>In case you missed it, Week 2 of Royals was all about humility. Here's a recap.</p>
	<p>Post the <b>Big Idea Graphic</b> for Week 2 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, when we think we know everything, it's best to be humble.</p>
	<p>Send the <b>Volunteer Email</b> for Week 3 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.</p>

AFTER WEEK 3

✓ **TO DO**

	<p>Post the <b>1-Minute Sermon Video</b> for Week 3 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>In case you missed it, Week 3 of Royals was all about learning to listen to God and asking for wisdom. Here's a recap.</p>
	<p>Post the <b>Big Idea Graphic</b> for Week 3 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, when you aren't sure who to listen to ask God for wisdom.</p>
	<p>Send the <b>Volunteer Email</b> for Week 4 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.</p>

AFTER WEEK 4

✓ **TO DO**

	<p>Post the <b>1-Minute Sermon Video</b> for Week 4 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>In case you missed it, Week 4 of Royals was all about following the way of Jesus. Here's a recap.</p>
	<p>Post the <b>Big Idea Graphic</b> for Week 4 on social media with this caption:</p> <p>Remember, when life gets tough stick close to Jesus.</p>
	<p>Get ready for the next series!</p>

## SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS & CAPTIONS



Need some help deciding what to post on social media before and during this series? Here's our suggestion: each week, share the media we've provided in your Graphics and Videos folder using the captions below.

### BEFORE THE SERIES



#### BUMPER VIDEO

👑 Hear ye! Hear ye! 👑 A new series starts this week! We're talking about the king, queens and some Old Testament royalty.

### AFTER WEEK 1



#### 1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 1)

In case you missed it, Week 1 of Royals we learned that even when we make mistakes God can make things right. Here's a recap.

### AFTER WEEK 2



#### 1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 2)

In case you missed it, Week 2 of Royals was all about humility. Here's a recap.



#### BIG IDEA (WEEK 1)

Remember, that when we make mistakes God can make things right.



#### BIG IDEA (WEEK 2)

Remember, when we think we know everything, it's best to be humble.

AFTER WEEK 3



**1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 3)**

In case you missed it, Week 3 of Royals was all about learning to listen to God and asking for wisdom. Here's a recap.

AFTER WEEK 4



**1-MINUTE SERMON (WEEK 4)**

In case you missed it, Week 4 of Royals was all about following the way of Jesus. Here's a recap.



**BIG IDEA (WEEK 3)**

Remember, when you aren't sure who to listen to ask God for wisdom.



**BIG IDEA (WEEK 4)**

Remember, when life gets tough stick close to Jesus.

WHAT WE'RE TEACHING



ADD YOUR LOGO HERE

WHAT WE'RE TEACHING



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WHAT WE'RE TEACHING



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WHAT WE'RE TEACHING



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