

ROYALS

WEEK 1 (HYBRID)

BIG IDEA

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

BIBLE

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

WHAT?

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.

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?

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?

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.

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

- **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 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 big 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.**