

WEEK 4 LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

Forgiveness is always
God's game plan.

BIBLE

David and Nathan: 2 Samuel 11:26–12:13;
Psalm 34:15–22

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Once the game is over, teams will often put aside whatever happened on the field and settle their differences by shaking hands. This week, we'll take a look at the time when Nathan rebuked David for what he did to Uriah and Bathsheba until David repented for his actions. David's confrontation with Nathan helped him discover firsthand that **forgiveness is always God's game plan.**

LARGE GROUP TIME

Welcome back to *Game Plan*! Today, we will continue to learn a time when David *didn't* follow God's game plan and needed God to forgive him for a huge mistake. It's fantastic to see basketball players battle it out during the game but then shake hands afterward. It's like they're letting go of the rage and competitiveness from the game and being forgiving. That moderate—and sometimes half-hearted—forgiveness isn't anywhere close to the kind of forgiveness we're going to see God display in today's Bible story.

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Musical Sports

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, kids will need to get into groups of various numbers as you call them out. But, instead of calling out numbers, you'll call out a sport below that traditionally has that many players on a team. Run through the different sports and their corresponding numbers before you play, and run a quick quiz to make sure they got it. To play, put on upbeat music (like the soccer anthem), then have kids lock elbows and move in a circle. Call out one of the sports when the music stops and have kids form correctly numbered groups. Kids who can't find a team at the end of ten seconds get "benched." After a few rounds, tell teams they're allowed to call in kids from the bench to help them form the numbers needed!*

- Golf = one
- Tennis = two
- Gymnastics = three
- Polo = four
- Basketball = five
- Volleyball = six
- Baseball = nine (for large groups)

✳ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *Create signs with pictures of the different sports and their corresponding number to hold up when you call out the sport. Give kids extra time to form groups.*

- Being out or getting benched in a game never feels great, but in this game, you all had a chance to come back. It's kind of like the fact that you were out just got erased! Today, we're going to talk about something God does for us that wipes the slate clean when we mess up!

ACTIVITY | Blindfold Basketball

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need two basketballs (or other balls), a trashcan, and two blindfolds. To play, divide kids up into two teams. Pick one volunteer from each team to be the blindfolded basketball player. Blindfold those players and hand them a basketball. Give their team ten seconds to direct them to the trashcan (or hoop) in hopes of making the shot. After ten seconds, the blindfolded players have to shoot and hope for the best. Play a few rounds, starting the player from different places in the room. Most baskets in wins!*
- ✳ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *For kids who may not tolerate a blindfold around their head, pair them up with a leader who will hold a basket that they try to throw a ball into. The leader can move their basket to catch the ball.*
- **Did you notice that this game required some amount of forgiveness?** Hold up—what? Not sure what this game has to do with forgiveness?
 - Well, for one thing, you might have had to ask for forgiveness for allowing your player to run into an obstacle.
 - The player might ask for forgiveness when they miss the trashcan even though your directions were perfect.
 - Both players and teammates might have to forgive themselves for their poor play during this funny basketball game.
- This silly game is a good example of how many times a day we can practice, or at least encounter, forgiveness. I bet it's more than you think!

QUESTION | Have you ever needed forgiveness?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Ask the following questions. You can have every kid shout their answer but then ask a few kids to share their answers with everyone. Comment briefly on their answers—and have fun with this!*
- Imagine yourself in a basketball game. It's tied with one second left on the clock. You just got fouled by the other team, and now you have a chance to shoot a free throw and win the game! But ... you miss.
 - **How would you respond?**
 - **How would you want your teammates to respond?**
 - **Now imagine yourself as one of the teammates. How would you respond?**
 - **Have you ever been in a situation similar to this (sports or not) where you made some kind of mistake and needed someone to forgive you? How did that situation play out?**
- Forgiveness is a choice we make to let go of bitter or angry feelings toward someone else. Oftentimes, forgiveness is followed by giving someone a chance to do better and repairing a relationship. God gave us stories like the one we'll look at today so that we might know how God forgives and wants us to do the same!

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

SCRIPTURE | 2 Samuel 11:26–12:13 (David and Nathan)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Pretend that you are the announcer at a one-on-one basketball game. Ask one kid to play the role of David. Ask another to play Nathan. Have the two stand facing each other. Each time their names are mentioned, have that kid dribble the ball or shoot it into a basket (a trashcan is fine). At other times, they can be still, like a freeze frame, so they don't distract the audience.*

- All right, sports fans! It's an epic one-on-one basketball battle on the court. David versus Nathan, and these two have some things to sort out. Let's see what happened right before this matchup.
- **Read 2 Samuel 11:26–27.**
 - Woah! David did not have one of his best games. He scored zero points with God by stealing Uriah's wife and then making sure he died in battle. That's a lot of personal fouls right there.
 - So God sent the prophet Nathan to have a word with David. Nathan begins the game with a tricky no-look shot. He tells a story that seems to have nothing to do with David, but it's a foolproof strategy to get the point across. It was a story that he knew would make David mad. It's an interesting tactic!
- **Let's check out this story in 2 Samuel 12:1–4.**
 - We can all agree that the rich man did a terrible thing in the story. He took the one lamb his neighbor had instead of giving up one of his many.
 - That's awful! David thought so, too.
- **Hear what he said in 2 Samuel 12:5–6.**
 - Sounds pretty fair, right? Except ... Nathan wasn't really talking about a man stealing his neighbor's lamb.
 - He told this story to help David realize that what he did in real life was way worse.
- **This is what Nathan said to David in 2 Samuel 12:7–12.**
 - David thought he answered with a slam dunk, but he got rejected! Though it was supposed to be a one-on-one game, Nathan actually spoke and played for God. And, in response to David's fouls, he just dunked on him. Game ... over.
 - But is it? What would happen to David?
- **Read 2 Samuel 12:13.**
 - Unbelievable turn of events. It looked like the game was over for David. But because of God's forgiveness, David was able to stay in the game.
- Holy Toledo! I don't believe what I just saw! Now *that's* how you do forgiveness!

BIG IDEA | Forgiveness is always God's game plan.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a large piece of butcher paper to each team of three to five kids. Assign each team a word or group of words from the Big Idea. Give them five minutes to design a banner with their word in large letters in the middle. Other things on the sign include "Go team!" or "Yeah, sports!" and fun sports-themed doodles. Afterward, line up the teams in order of the Big Idea words, and have two of the team members hold the banner while a third runs through the middle of the banner, tearing it and yelling their word. If you are short on time, create the banner beforehand and invite kids to run through it together. Afterward, chant the Big Idea together as a cheer!
- **Hands in!** (Invite kids to hold out their hand toward the middle or front.)
- **One, Two, Three, Forgiveness!** (Lift hands up.)
- **Forgiveness is always God's game plan!**

VIDEO | A Clip Of A Professional Athlete Who Had A Rocky Start

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play [this clip](#), or something like it, from the Stephen Curry documentary "Underrated." We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context! For more information on legally using copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- ✳ **PRETEEN HACK:** Play this [short video](#) (or part of it) of funny sports fails or something like it. After the laughter dies down, provide some time for discussion. Talk about how we all mess up and there are consequences for our actions. Then, discuss how we can ask for forgiveness

like David did. Talk about how when we ask God for forgiveness, God doesn't hold it against us and gives us a clean slate.

- When he was recruited for the NBA, Steph Curry, now one of the biggest pro basketball stars, was considered "far below NBA standards." They thought he was lacking in build and athleticism, but he turned out to be a greater athlete than those physical qualities alone predicted ... some might even say his ability to make three-point shots is legendary!
- **Can you think of someone else from the Bible who was underestimated for his physical qualities?** That's right—David! No one thought David, the youngest son of Jesse *and* a shepherd, could take on a giant like Goliath. Let alone become the king of Israel. But with God's help, David did both of those things. He might have been "far below standards" in everyone else's eyes, but God looked at the heart. And David was a man after God's own heart.
- Until he took Uriah's wife and had him killed — now, he had fallen down. But not so far that he was beyond the reach of God's forgiveness. God sent Nathan to confront David so that he could admit his wrongdoing, repair his relationship with God, and get back up again. And when David recognized his sin against God, God was at the ready to forgive him.
- Because **forgiveness is always God's game plan.**

ACTIVITY | Foul Out

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need to split the kids into small groups. To play, have groups decide on a sport they know and talk about all the different ways a player can get "out" or called out for breaking a rule by the referee in a game. You can also invite kids to make up a sport and create their own rules. Alternatively, you can go over all the different ways a player can commit a foul in basketball using a resource [like this one](#).*
- In many sports, like basketball, a foul is when you do something to another player that isn't within the rules. These fouls are added up. All your fouls are remembered. And if you get enough of them, you must leave the game. This is called "fouling out."
- Aren't you glad that God doesn't operate this way? David, for sure, would have fouled out. But he asked for forgiveness, and forgiveness was given. **Forgiveness is always God's game plan.**

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 34:15–22

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read the passage together. Choose volunteers to read each verse when prompted below in their best sports announcer or broadcaster voice.*
- It's time for today's "Top Five" plays! Brought to us by Psalm 34:15–22.
 - **Number five, we have verses 15–16.** Look at that! The righteous, meaning the team that follows God, call on their team captain and, oh! God rejects the shot of evil! *In your face!*
 - **Number four, let's look at verses 17–18.** The righteous looked like they were in trouble ... but no! God steps in. God even cares about those whose hearts are broken and whose spirits are crushed. What a save!
 - **Number three, we're going live to verses 19–20.** What an amazing play! God protects every single bone of the righteous person. I don't think that means that we won't see any injuries in the game, but those who follow God can trust that God is rooting for them and will keep them safe from harm.
 - **Number two, it's verses 21–22.** Those who are against God's people fall. While those who take rest in God, oh! They are saved. God will welcome anyone who turns to God, no matter what's in their past.
- **Number one, always in the number one spot, is Jesus!** We are not condemned for our sins because of Jesus' victory over sin and death! Because of what Jesus has done for us, we can freely run to God whenever we face troubles.

- Even if they're troubles of our own making. From learning about how God forgave David and how God sent Jesus to forgive all of us, we can be sure **forgiveness is always God's game plan.**

VIDEO | *Game Plan*, Episode 4

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).

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

REFLECTION | Pass It!

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you'll need a basketball. The one who has the basketball is the one who gets to speak. Start with the basketball yourself, then ask the first question and pass the basketball to a person who wants to answer. Keep the basketball moving around with all who wish to share.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Some preteens may find it embarrassing to talk about times they needed to be forgiven. Give them space if they don't want to share. Remind them that you are safe for them to talk with, even if it's outside of the typical small group sharing times.
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Spontaneous communication may be difficult for some kids. During this week's questions about forgiveness, they might need a few minutes of extra time to think about what they want to share.
- **Forgiveness is always God's game plan.** When playing sports, our fouls or penalties are often numbered and held against us.
 - **How does this mindset (counting fouls) sometimes sneak into our everyday lives with others? Do you keep track of how often people have wronged you?**
 - **How about in our relationship with God?**
 - **When was a time when someone forgave you for a big-time mistake? How did this make you feel?**
- When it comes to forgiving others, especially people who hurt us in a big way, it doesn't necessarily mean we just let it go and pretend it didn't happen. It's okay to acknowledge the pain someone else has caused you and learn to distance yourself from people who repeatedly treat you unkindly.
- After all, only God can forgive us completely and embrace us even after we've made a mess of things. But we can also forgive by controlling our own actions.
- We can let God's love drive our decisions ... not hate, anger, or bitterness. Following God in our Bible story looked like David seeking forgiveness for a big mess.
- **What might forgiveness look like for us in our day-to-day life?**

RESPONSE | God's Plan Playbook

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you'll need to use the [printable](#) from last week (have extras available for kids who don't have one already). During the activity, have kids draw up a "play" based on a situation where they can choose to follow God. Invite them to use Xs and Os to represent different people and arrows to indicate how they'll move or what they'd do. It can end up looking something [like this](#).
- Okay, team, here's the situation: somebody just said "sorry" to you, and you can accept their apology and forgive them.
 - You're not sure what to do because it's not the first time this person was mean to you.
 - Or you're not ready to move on and want to stay mad at them.
 - Or perhaps it's someone who doesn't sound like they mean "sorry" at all.
- **How could you choose forgiveness in these kinds of situations? Who could help you with this choice you have to make?**

- Draw up the play on your play sheet, using Xs and Os like a team coach would. We might not be perfect forgivers, but all of us, at one point, have been forgiven for something.
- God is the ultimate forgiver who made it so that all our sins could be forgiven through Jesus. Jesus is the perfect reminder that **forgiveness is always God's game plan.**

MEMORY VERSE | Psalm 33:11 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Learn the memory verse together using any combination of the resources provided: [memory verse coloring page](#), [sign language motions](#), or choose from [this list](#) of our favorite memorization techniques!
- **"But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations."**

PRAYER

- God, thank you so much for seeing our need for forgiveness and making it your game plan to forgive us. Please help me to recognize when I need to ask for forgiveness and when I need to forgive others. Thank you for placing people in my life who can help me understand when I need to look to you for forgiveness. Amen

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

DISCUSSION

● SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS

- **What story did Nathan tell David to help him understand his wrongdoing?** *A rich man with many sheep took the only one a poor man had so that the rich man could feed his guest.*
- **How did David feel about the rich man in the story that Nathan told?** *David was angry. He thought the man should pay for what he did many times over.*
- **What happened when David realized that Nathan was using the story to talk about him?** *David realized that he had sinned against God and, after that, was forgiven.*
- **In Psalm 34:22, what promise is given to those who find their refuge in God?** *They will not be condemned. In other words, when we bring all our "stuff" to God, looking for rest and peace, we find it. And God doesn't hold our "stuff" against us.*

● APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- **What are some areas of our lives that we need to seek forgiveness in?**
- **Who can we go to when we need help seeking forgiveness?**
- **How can you show forgiveness to someone else this week?**

ACTIVITY | FRGVN Jersey

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you'll need to print out the basketball jersey printable double-sided or have kids glue the pages back-to-back. To make this, let kids decorate their "jerseys" using crayons, markers, or colored pencils, then cut them out. Make sure they assign themselves a team name to go on the front and a player number on the back under the letters spelling "FRGVN." You can show an example like this one, but encourage kids to get creative with their designs!
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** To level up this activity for preteens, inform preteens the week before to bring an old plain t-shirt. It can be any color except black. Provide extra t-shirts for those who missed the memo or are first-time visitors. If it's within your ministry budget, provide all kids with a shirt instead of having them bring one from home. Create a printable "FRGVN" stencil using an online tool such as [this](#), then precut the stencils and have kids paint over it to design their t-shirts like jerseys. Provide fabric markers and scissors for them to cut out or draw on

their shirt to make it look more like a jersey. Alternatively, simply have preteens write "FRGVN" on their shirts themselves with the fabric markers.

- Nearly every sport has its own jersey or uniform, especially players who are part of a team. The jersey represents their team's colors and who they are in the team. Put this jersey up somewhere in your room to remind you that you are on God's team, where **forgiveness is always God's game plan.**