

# FROM UNCLEANNES

## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable “Litany” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

## ICE BREAKER: ALPHABET “ICK-FEST”

This is an alphabetical word game. Ask the teens to be seated in a circle. The first person begins by saying, “Some icky things I cannot abide are: \_\_\_\_\_”, inserting a word that begins with the letter A. The next person in the circle must repeat the A-word, but add a B-word. For example, “Some icky things that I cannot abide are: Alarm clocks, body odor, coffee...”. The exercise continues around the circle till all the letters of the alphabet have been used. The words chosen don’t have to fit together, they must only begin with the correct letter.

FOR SMALL GROUPS YOU MAY END UP GOING MULTIPLE TIMES AROUND THE CIRCLE. TO ADD AN ELEMENT OF COMPETITION FOR LARGER GROUPS, ANYONE WHO GETS STUCK OR TAKES TOO LONG IS ELIMINATED UNTIL THERE REMAINS ONE WINNER.

## THE LITANY: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the Litany, leaving off the Grace (which can be said at the close of the lesson).

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

## DISCUSSION: NEXT TO GODLINESS?

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- You’ve probably heard the expression, “cleanliness is next to godliness”. What do you think that means? How important is cleanliness to you?
- What are some things that really disgust you? Why do you think they disgust you? Do you think your disgust could prevent you from helping somebody who needs it?

*A few things worth pointing out (if they don’t otherwise arise during the discussion):*

- *This phrase is not written anywhere in the Bible, but is a cultural proverb that is often mistakenly attributed to scripture. The saying generally means that it is important to keep oneself and one’s environment clean. It can be meant to suggest that there is a link between moral purity and physical cleanliness.*
- *Mother Teresa said, “Today it is very fashionable to talk about the poor. Unfortunately, it is not fashionable to talk with them”. A lot of the things that disgust us can be associated with other people (such as people in our community with irritating personal habits, or someone on public transit who has not bathed in a while). It’s natural and even healthy to want to protect ourselves from illness and unpleasantness. But our natural reflexes can also get in the way of us looking at others the way God looks at them (and us) – with love.*

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## THE LESSON: 2 SAMUEL 12, PSALM 51

The first part of the lesson (below) can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

*From all uncleanness in thought, word, and deed... Good Lord, deliver us.*

Jesus said, “It is not what goes into the mouth that makes a person unclean” and “eating with unwashed hands doesn’t defile a person”. The religious establishment of that day had become obsessed with mere outward cleanliness. But Jesus explained that what actually makes people “unclean” comes from the *heart*: things like “evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, and slander” (Matthew 15:11-20).

When we pray to be delivered from uncleanness, we are speaking of this sort of serious moral defilement that can grow out of the heart, moving into our thoughts, words, and actions.

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Scripture refers to King David as “a man after God’s own heart” yet he is the one who wrote Psalm 51 – the prayer of someone whose heart is seriously unclean. In a moment we’re going to look at the prophetic visit that brought King David to his knees in that Psalm. It’s a pretty bad scene. But here’s what we need to remember: David was given a special place in the genealogy of Jesus and *continues* to be known as a man after God’s own heart. *Why?* Because when he was confronted with his serious moral sin, he responded with sincere repentance. And as his own testimony bore out, God will not reject “a broken and contrite heart”.

Refer to 2 Samuel 12:1-10, 13a and Psalm 51:1-4, 9-10, 17.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE READINGS FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY AND FOCUS, BUT IF YOU HAVE TIME TO EXPLORE THE PASSAGES FULLY, FEEL FREE TO READ THEM IN THEIR ENTIRETY: 2 SAMUEL 12:1-14, PSALM 51.)

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS’ NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they’ve just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- What is the evil that David had done?
- What is God’s response to David’s sin?
- Does anything stand out to you in this excerpt from Psalm 51?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *We get the summary of the issue in 2 Samuel 12:9, although a more detailed account is given earlier in the book. David wanted to have sex with another man’s wife, so he took her. He was in a position of power and it was easy for him to do this. He tried to cover up his actions, but when he learned that he had made Bathsheba pregnant he then arranged for her husband Uriah to be killed in battle. Then David took Bathsheba as his own wife.*
- *God confronts David’s sin by sending his prophet Nathan. Nathan doesn’t begin by saying, “I know what you did!” Instead, he begins with an analogy to help David step back from the situation and recognize with objectivity the horror of what he has done. God’s goal in this confrontation is restoration, which can only be arrived at through sincere repentance on David’s part. Notice that even though David is forgiven, there are still serious consequences that will occur as a result of his sin (some of which is omitted from the excerpt we read).*
- *David’s understanding of God’s character is remarkable. Sandwiched between his notes of repentance are notes about what God is like – steadfast love, abundant mercy (v1), blameless in his judgements (v4). Even though David is a powerful king, he totally recognizes God’s authority over him. He knows himself to be accountable*

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to God – notice how he sees his sins as being against God, rather than against Uriah or Bathsheba? David understands that only God’s forgiveness can make him “clean” again.

- Note: David is no sugar-coated hero, and scripture does not condone his actions in this episode. What we are given here is a snapshot of a very human king, living during a specific time and culture (very different from our own) who wants to follow after God, has made a mess of things, and yet finds the courage and humility needed to return and repent.

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON’T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU’LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

## PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

*Psalm 119:11 says, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you”. The At-Home Challenge during this unit is to commit a short passage of scripture to memory each week. If the suggested passage is too long, try picking out one verse or phrase that speaks to you particularly and commit it to memory. You will be amazed at how the words of scripture, stored in the heart, will return to you in the moments when you most need them.*

Select a few verses from **PSALM 51** to memorize (or if you are feeling ambitious, memorize the whole thing!)

Here are a few suggestions:

- <sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; blot out my transgressions.
- <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
- <sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.
- <sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

*Almighty and everlasting God, who hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (THE COLLECT FOR ASH WEDNESDAY, BCP PAGE 138)*

## CLOSING PRAYERS

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE “PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS” SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU’RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the “Grace”, printed at the end of the Litany booklet.

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## 2 SAMUEL 12, PSALM 51: **GUILTY OF AN UNCLEAN HEART**

**(2 SAMUEL 12):** <sup>1</sup>And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, “There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup>The rich man had very many flocks and herds, <sup>3</sup>but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup>Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” <sup>5</sup>Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, <sup>6</sup>and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

<sup>7</sup>Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup>And I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. <sup>9</sup>Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup>Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife’... <sup>13</sup>David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

**(PSALM 51):** <sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. <sup>2</sup>Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! <sup>3</sup>For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. <sup>4</sup>Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgement... <sup>9</sup>Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. <sup>10</sup>Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me... <sup>17</sup>The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.