

WEEK 1
LESSON GUIDE

RESTART

BIG IDEA

*When you fail,
God offers you a fresh start*

BIBLE

2 Samuel 11:26–12:13;
Psalm 51:1,2,10–12; 145:8,9

ABOUT THIS WEEK

In video games, you can start over whenever you feel like it, but it's not so simple in reality. This week, we'll see how David might have wished for a way to do things differently when he was confronted by his mistakes. This story will remind us that while we can't go back and change what's already happened **when you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.**

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | IRL Angry Birds

- Welcome to our new series, *Restart*, where we will talk about those moments in our lives when we all wish things were more like a video game. Those times when we tried something, it didn't work out, and we wished we could start over again. Since this series is all about video games, let's play one, but IRL!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need a bunch of different-sized cardboard boxes set up and taped, [exercise balls](#), [green paper lanterns](#) to make the pigs, [a car cargo net](#), and [exercise bands](#). Build a slingshot by attaching the cargo net to the exercise bands. To play, split into two groups and take turns being on offense and defense. The defensive team will stack the boxes however they want and place the green lanterns pigs on top of them. Using a designated number of exercise balls, the offensive team will use the slingshot to launch the balls to knock down as many boxes and pigs as possible. To operate the slingshot, have a few teammates hold the exercise bands and then have a few teammates load the cargo net with the exercise balls to launch. The offense scores a point for each lantern it knocks over. Switch sides after all the balls are launched. The winner is the team with the most points!*
- So many times, I've let go of the slingshot and knew it would fail. So, even before the bird hit the boxes, I wanted to restart to get it right. Wouldn't it be awesome if there was a way for our lives to have redos like this?

IMAGE | A Game Over GIF of Your Choice

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, show a GIF on screen, like [one of these](#). For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- I wonder if part of the reason video games are so popular is because they tap into something we all hope is true. We want to believe there is an opportunity to start over. In a video game, you can mess up, and it's not that big of a deal. You can always restart. Sure, it may be frustrating to go back to the beginning, but you know your next chance is better than before because you have more experience on the next go around.
- On the other hand, a restart in the real world may be devastating because, unlike a video game, the stakes in our lives are higher and riskier than starting a level over.

- Restarting a friendship or a school project takes a ton of energy. It might mean doing a lot of repairs in a relationship or hours reworking a school project.
- Restarting with friends, family members, or teammates may be so tricky it might feel easier not to try.
- A restart may not feel like a fresh chance. It can feel like a failure. But what if there was a way to restart in real life? There is a story in the Bible that helps us see that a restart may come with challenges, but with God, they're possible.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.*
 - **If you could live in any video game for a day, what would it be? Why?**
 - **Have you ever had the chance to have a restart in real life? What did that feel like?**

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

SCRIPTURE | 2 Samuel 11:26–27

- There's a story in the Bible of a king named David who needed a restart. He was an unlikely hero chosen to rule God's people. But he had to get through some challenging levels before David got to his actual throne. David had to defeat a giant, an accomplished warrior named Goliath. And that was just the start. Over time, David leveled up. We even see David take down lions with his bare hands.
- David had faith when it seemed risky to trust God, and he eventually became a king known as a "man after God's own heart." But why would someone like this need a restart? That's where this Bible story comes in. The biggest boss he faced was a different kind of giant: himself.
 - You'd think a guy like David would continue to level up. He'd conquer every quest and be hyper-godly with integrity, faithfulness, and honesty. But the Bible isn't a fairy tale. It is more honest and realistic about what it means to be human. David doesn't always win.
 - David, like all of us, no matter how hard we try, chose something other than what God knew was best for him. The Bible has a word for when we choose to pursue things that don't lead us to live the whole and healthy life God wants for us—sin. David decided to act on envy, lust, selfishness, and power, and it ended terribly.
- David faced desires he knew would hurt others and his relationship with God. His ability to choose God's way had become damaged by sin. Instead of choosing God's way, which led to a healthy and whole life, David decided he knew better than God, and the consequences were devastating.
- David went after a woman named Bathsheba, who was already married to a commander in David's army, Uriah. David forced an affair with her, and she ended up pregnant. But then, to make things even worse, to cover up what he did, David had Uriah killed. God saw all of this, and Scripture tells us what God thought.
- But before we get into this passage... maybe you've never messed up quite as bad as David did, but we all have that, "Oh snap!" moment... those times in life when we sin and feel remorse. That feeling may be conviction. It comes from the Holy Spirit and it's actually a good thing because it encourages us to repent. And that's what we'll see here in David's story.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read 2 Samuel 11:26–27.*
- Could you imagine this playing out in a video game? The character you chose immediately storms through every level, taking care of lions and slaying giants, but then it comes to facing himself, the final boss, and he loses.

SCRIPTURE | 2 Samuel 12:1–13

- **NOTE:** *If you decide to read verses 14–15, this can easily open up a can of worms. My encouragement would be to use this as a teachable moment that sin always has consequences.*
- God sent someone to confront David—his friend, Nathan. Nathan was a prophet, someone known for sharing messages from God. God sent Nathan to help David see that he needed a restart. And even though it wouldn't be easy, God was giving him one. Take a look.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read 2 Samuel 12:1–13.*
- Nathan wanted David to know how big of a mess he had made, and David couldn't fix it alone. Only God would be able to help him make things right. So, Nathan told David a story that seemed like a side quest.

But like all good side quests, it helped David understand what was happening in his story. Nathan showed how David's harmful actions affected his relationship with God and deeply damaged others.

- But God didn't leave David alone in his shame and regret. God sent a safe and trusted friend in Nathan to help him see this wasn't right. He told David he had made a poor choice, and no matter how big his failure was, God would take away his sin and allow him to make things right.
- *God is merciful. But He's also just.*

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
 - ***In what ways could getting a restart or do-over feel like a scary or overwhelming thing?**
 - **Why do you think it was hard for David to see his wrongs clearly? When Nathan told him the story, why was it easy to see what was wrong? Do you feel like you can see your wrongs clearly?**

VIDEO | A Clip of The Mario Flagpole

- David's decision hurt not only himself but also others. That's what sin does. We sin when we make decisions and choices that harm our relationship with God and others, and unlike a mistake in a video game, sin has real-life consequences.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, show this [clip](#) of Mario hitting the top of the flagpole to play silently in the background as you teach. 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 how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- In the original *Mario Bros.* game, at the end of a level, the goal is to hit the top of the Mario flagpole to get extra points. I mean, who doesn't love extra points? But most of the time, you miss the mark more times than you hit it. Sometimes, you are trying hard and can't get it right. Sometimes, you are so frustrated you miss it on purpose so that you can move on faster. Sometimes, you don't even know why you miss it. You just do.
- David misses the mark and does what is wrong in God's eyes, but when he misses the mark, it has big-time consequences. He knows what he is supposed to be doing, but he chooses to do something that hurts people instead. He has missed the mark, done what was wrong, and is honest enough to admit it. He will need to make amends with God and the people he hurt. It will take time, but God gives him an opportunity to restart.
- Sin and failure aren't game over for David. Yes, there will be consequences, but God will help him make things right. Restarts may not be as simple as video games, but they are always available.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
 - ***What do you think of the way David responds to Nathan confronting him? How would you respond differently?**
 - ***Why do you think being sure of God's character, love, and compassion helps us believe in God's ability to give us a restart?**

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 51:1-2,10-12

- In the book of Psalms, David writes a poem, and we get an insight into what it looks like for him to restart after Samuel confronts him.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Psalm 51:1-2,10-12.*
- David felt like his life was "game over." The mistake David made was big, but God's forgiveness was bigger. Maybe you've felt similar to David. You messed up, hurt yourself, and possibly hurt others, and you felt like there was no way out of your failure. Forgiveness was not an option.

- But this story shows us something unique about God. In moments when we feel like this, God steps in and says, "I'll give you a restart. I've forgiven you. I've given you another chance." What God did in David's life is true for us, too. **When you fail, God offers you a fresh start.**
- *We are forgiven because of what Jesus did on the cross, but our salvation is evident in our lives when we find ourselves actively turning away from sin – we call this repentance.*

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

OBJECT LESSON | Restart Button

- One of the reasons why people like David in the Bible are so relatable is they mess up just like we do. They make mistakes, choose things other than what God hopes for them, get into serious problems, and make selfish decisions.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, create a restart button to use throughout this series. Use it whenever you want to indicate that God can help us restart. Here are a few ways you could do this. Choose one that works for your group.
 - Make a giant restart button by taking cardboard and making a controller, and play a short video [like this one](#) of a game over screen from Sonic the Hedgehog while you teach.
 - Purchase a video game controller [like this one](#) with games with a restart or game over screens, hook it up to a TV, and press the restart button while you teach.
- We all have moments like David's where we wish to hit the restart button. If we need a restart in our lives, David's story shows us how God offers it to us.
 - **LISTEN TO TRUSTED FAMILY AND FRIENDS:** I imagine it felt uncomfortable and awkward when Nathan confronted David. But Nathan's presence in David's life helped remind David of his need for God's forgiveness, which led to a restart. Even if it is sometimes difficult to hear, learn to listen to the friends and trusted adults who want God's best for you. *(Conviction)*
 - **ADMIT WHEN YOU'VE DONE WRONG:** God already knows everything about you—the good and the bad. That's why admitting to God that we've failed is okay. God doesn't think, "What kind of mess are they in now?" Nope. God invites us to show up with our failures and mistakes and offers us a restart. Admitting we're not okay is okay with God. In your prayers this week, tell God the ways you have done wrong. *(Repentance)*
 - **TRUST GOD FOR A RESTART:** In video games, you sometimes have to do things to earn a second life or chance, but that is not how God operates. You don't have to earn forgiveness. God offers it freely. Maybe you have never asked God for a restart, and you can do that for the first time today. When you ask for forgiveness, God gives it freely. So, trust God is with you and that mistakes won't define you. **When you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.** *(Grace and Mercy)*

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.
 - Read Psalm 145:8,9. The Psalm reminds us how powerful God's mercy and love is. What would it look like to trust this is true in your life?
 - Which one is more difficult for you: listening to trusted friends and family, admitting when you've done something wrong, or trusting God for a restart? Why? What would it look like for you to put one of those into practice this week?

REFLECTION | Restart Prayers

- When David finally asked God for a restart, God was faithful in giving him that. Let's take an opportunity to do the same.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this response, you'll need paint or chalk pens and an old TV from a thrift store you wouldn't mind marking up. Have the group reflect and invite them to write a restart prayer directly on the TV or put it on a sticky note first. Help guide teenagers to respond to what they heard by offering a few examples of what restart prayer may look like.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
 - *How do you think learning the difference between seeing ourselves as a failure and seeing what we did as a failure will help us restart?
 - Today, what's the one step you're going to take toward trusting that when you feel like a failure, God gives you a restart?

RESPONSE | Restart Reminders

- Think about how many times you open your phone to play a game. What if you used just a few of those moments to ask God for a restart?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this response, you'll need some blank cardstock and a few pens. Have the group put a reminder in their calendars or [the Grow Students' Habit app](#) to read Psalm 51:10–12 every day this week. For those who don't have a phone, give them the cardstock. Have them write out Psalm 51:10–12 and encourage them to put it up where they will see it and read it regularly.*
- Remember God's never-ending presence in our lives this week because **when you feel like a failure, God gives you a restart.**

THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS IN THIS MESSAGE:

- Sin
- Conviction
- Repentance
- Grace
- Mercy