

LESSON 26

A CLEAN HEART AND A RIGHT SPIRIT

Psalm 51

*To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet
went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.*

- ¹Have mercy on me, O God,
 according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
 blot out my transgressions.
- ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
 and cleanse me from my sin!
- ³For I know my transgressions,
 and my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴Against 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 judgment.
- ⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
 and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- ⁶Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
 and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
- ⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
 wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- ⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
 let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
- ⁹Hide your face from my sins,
 and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
 and renew a right spirit within me.
- ¹¹Cast me not away from your presence,
 and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
 and uphold me with a willing spirit.

- ¹³Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
- ¹⁴Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
- ¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- ¹⁸Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
build up the walls of Jerusalem;
- ¹⁹then will you delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

WELCOME: *Fixing Our Focus*

Pretend that you are in David's shoes, after having committed adultery with Bathsheba, attempted to deceive Uriah, conspired to have him murdered, and had all these sins exposed before you by the prophet Nathan. How would you have reacted?

WORSHIP: *Adoring Our God*

Suggested songs:

A Broken Spirit by Don Harris and Marty Nystrom
His Mercy is More by Matt Boswell and Matt Papa

WORD: *Understanding the Word*

Lesson Aim: Members will understand and commit to the kind of response that God desires from them when they fall into sin.

Introduction

Have you ever confronted someone who had treated you unfairly or in a manner you do not deserve? Did this person admit his/her wrongdoing? How did you assess his/her sincerity?

Being honest about our sin can be tough. We make excuses. We rationalize our actions. We minimize the gravity of our offense. King David did the same thing. But he came to a point when he no longer could continue in unconfessed sin—in living a life out of tune with God. Let’s learn what he did and follow his example.

Leader: Lead in reading Psalm 51 aloud together. Then read the paragraph on the “Key Verse.”

Key Verse: Sin is not just an act; it is a matter of the heart. That is why, in confessing his sin, David prayed: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (v. 10).

Leader: Read 2 Samuel 11-12 and then give a short background to this psalm.

Psalm 51:1-6. Theme: _____

1. David appealed to three attributes of God in verse 1. What are these? In your opinion, why did he do this?
2. David used three different words to describe his offense. Match each of the words on the left with the meaning on the right (*vv. 1-2*).

___ Transgression	a. missing the mark
___ Iniquity	b. stepping over a boundary
___ Sin	c. twistedness
3. In appealing to God’s mercy, he asked God to do three things to his sins. What are these? Explain the significance of each (*vv. 1-2*).
4. In your opinion, why did David say, “Against you, you only, have I sinned?” Didn’t he also sin against Bathsheba, Uriah, and others (*v. 4*)?

5. Read verse 5 again. Was David making an excuse for his sinful actions and tendency? If not, what did he mean by this?

In the space above, write what you think is the theme of verses 1-6.

Psalm 51:7-19. Theme: _____

6. To whom did David look for the cleansing of his sins? How effective was the cleansing that he expected? (v. 7)

7. Read verses 8-13. What were the things that David lost when he continued in sin? Conversely, what did he expect to be restored after he receives God's forgiveness?

8. Was the pleasure of sinning with Bathsheba all worth it? Explain your answer.

9. In verses 14-15, David talks about "my tongue...my lips...my mouth." What did months of unconfessed sin prevent David from doing?

**Hyssop branches
were associated
the Passover
sacrifice—a
substitute animal
to atone for one's
sins. See Exodus
12:21ff.**

10. According to David, when seeking God’s forgiveness, what does God look for (*vv. 16-17*)?
11. In what ways did David’s sins affect the whole nation of Israel? What did the nation lose because of his sinful behavior (*vv. 18-19*)?

In the space above, write what you think is the theme of verses 7-19.

WALK: *Applying the Word*

Questions for Adults

1. Based on your understanding of Scripture, define sin.
2. Our culture has a way of redefining “sin” to tone down its gravity. Can you give examples? For example, bribery is referred to as “facilitation cost.” How does this affect people’s attitudes and behavior?
3. In what ways have you tried to rationalize your sin? When confessing to God, should we verbalize our sorrow? How specific should we be? Is it enough to say, “Lord, forgive me for all of my sins?” Explain your answer.
4. Compare Psalm 51 and 1 John 1:9. What do these passages have in common with regard to sin, repentance and forgiveness? How does God want you to act the next time you fall into sin?
5. Individually and as a group, pray back this psalm to God. You could start by saying something like:

Have mercy on us, God, according to your steadfast love...
6. Pray for one another.

Questions for the Youth

1. It’s in our high school and college years that we often explore anything and everything that can be done. Sometimes, we do these things in secret because we know deep down, it will have negative

repercussions in the future. What are the times that you may have felt this way? How did you feel when you did those things?

2. One of the worst feelings as an adolescent is when our parents discover things that we have hidden from them because we know that they don't approve of them. If we feel this way towards our earthly parents, how much more would it feel knowing that we have disobeyed God himself?
3. The apostle Paul talks about two kinds of grief: one that brings salvation and the other that brings death. Grief that brings salvation is one that makes us want to change and grief that brings death is one that makes us bitter that we got caught. David was in deep grief but still asked God for forgiveness. It's because of this attitude that God continued to regard him as a man after his own heart. What does this mean for you?
4. Knowing that God sees all we do and that there are deep consequences for our sins, think of ways you can avoid falling into sin. How can you encourage one another as peers to be accountable to one another?

Questions for Children

1. In this psalm, we see David asking the Lord to forgive him of his sin. What are some things in your life that you need to confess to God?
2. Take some time to pray to God and ask him for forgiveness for the things you just mentioned. Read 1 John 1:9. What does this verse say once we confess our sins to God?
3. In verses 14 and 15, David said that he will sing of God's righteousness and give him praise. How can you share God to others?