Would you be willing to have your sins paraded in public for everyone to see? How about written down in the newspaper, broadcast on the evening news, or put up on the internet for the world to view and even post their comments? King David was willing to share openly about what he had personally learned from his own painful failures and for that believers down through the ages can give thanks to God!

Whether a sin is small or large in one’s own eyes, in God’s eyes it is tantamount to open rebellion against Him. It is a horrible moment when we realize we have rebelled against God and that is why we must never attempt to minimize or trivialize our sin, but to see it from God’s perspective; to understand it is our sin that nailed Jesus Christ to the cross. It is the price for which He had to die. We owed a debt we could not pay; He paid the price He did not owe to save us and allow us to spend eternity with Him.

The story behind Psalm 32 reflects the time when King David sent his troops into battle while he remained at home. He committed an adulterous sin with a woman named Bathsheba, and then he attempted to cover up the sin by sending her husband to the front lines of the battle to be killed. David continued to live with his guilt for an entire year, becoming mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually ill as a result of keeping it hidden until he was confronted by a man sent from God. Only then did he confess, receive the forgiveness of God, and then compose it into a song to pass on to others.

Did you know ~
This is the first Maschil psalm recorded in the book of psalms. This type of psalm was meant to be used as an instructional tool for teaching. David composed it following his confrontation by Nathan the prophet when he was exposed for deception, adultery, and murder. His purpose in writing was to teach God’s people the joyful blessings that are theirs as a result of confessing their sins to the Lord. Psalm 32 ultimately became a part of the closing worship service on the annual Day of Atonement when God’s people collectively ask God to forgive their sins.
Psalm 32

Forgiveness and Trust in God
A Penitential Psalm of David

1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
   2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,
      and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
   4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
      my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.
      Selah
5 I acknowledged my sin to You, and I did not cover my iniquity;
   I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.
      Selah
6 Therefore, let everyone who is godly offer prayer to You at a time when You may be found;
      surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.
7 You are a hiding place for me; You preserve me from trouble;
      You surround me with shouts of deliverance.
      Selah
8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
      I will counsel you with My eye upon you.
9 Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
      which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.
   10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
      but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.
11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, oh righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

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“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.” – Psalm 119:18

The basic thing to remember about observing a psalm is that it is poetry—and poets think in images. Whatever type of psalm it may be (praise or lament, meditation or petition, just to name a few) the psalmist uses familiar images to turn his experience into a picture. He uses figurative language to reflect on God’s character and express the stirrings of his own soul.

Start by reading the entire psalm through a few times. You might try reading it aloud, or have someone else read it while you listen intently.

Some things to look for: Does the psalmist compare or contrast one thing to another? Does he repeat a specific word or phrase to emphasize a theme? The psalmist may use hyperbole (an exaggeration for the sake of effect, not meant to be taken literally). What experience does he describe? What emotions does he express? What characteristics of God does he mention? Does he make a vow or a declaration? Use the first column to describe what the psalmist says. Use the second column to jot down your own notes, thoughts, impressions or questions.

Write the definition of words listed in each section. Use a regular dictionary or an Old Testament Word Study dictionary if you have one.

Psalm 32:1-7
What the psalmist says: My notes and personal observations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>iniquity (v.2,5)</th>
<th>____________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>confess (v. 5)</td>
<td>____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By his description, how did David’s unconfessed sin affect him physically and emotionally?

____________________________________________________________________________

What does “selah” mean?

Psalm 32:8-11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What the psalmist says:</th>
<th>My notes and personal observations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>instruct (v. 8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>teach (v. 8)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>counsel (v. 8)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Did you know . . .**

A mule is the offspring of a male donkey and female horse. Though smaller than a horse, a mule is stronger and has more endurance. Mules tend to be curious and stubborn by nature. If they are frightened, they refuse to budge. If irritated, they will strike out with their hooves in any direction. A mule’s strong desire for self-preservation is what causes it to be stubborn. When a mule is treated firmly, but with patience and understanding, it will learn to trust and obey its master.

**CONSIDER**

According to Psalm 32 . . .

What is the only way to relieve a true sense of guilt? ____________________________

What promises does God make to the one who will “come clean” with their sin? _________________
INTERPRET and APPLY

“The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.”
– Psalm 119:130

Look for a spiritual lesson. The imaginative language of the Psalms helps us to understand that God’s Word provides guidance for our feelings as well as our faith. As you look for spiritual lessons, keep in mind that this collection of prayers and songs teaches us how to worship God—not just with our lips but with our lives. While the Psalms address all aspects of life and human experience, ultimately they point us back to our Creator.

Ask: What is the theme of this psalm? How does the psalmist express himself to God? What does this psalm reveal about God’s character or His relationship with His people? Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? Is there an example to follow or avoid? State the lesson in one simple sentence.

“I pondered the direction of my life and I turned to follow Your statutes. I will hurry, without lingering, to obey Your commands.”
– Psalm 119:59-60 NLT

We don’t read the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to put it into action.

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to obey what we have learned. Ask yourself: What can I learn from the psalmist’s experience? How does this help to line up my feelings with my faith? Does it provide comfort? Does it provide correction? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.

Psalm 32:1-7
Lesson: ____________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Application: ______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Psalm 32:8-11
Lesson: __________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Application: ______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Summary
Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the psalm is about. ____________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Give your own title to the psalm to help you remember what it says. ____________________________

_______________________________________________________________
I acknowledged my sin to You, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Psalm 32:5

Memorize God’s Word

Choose the translation you prefer to memorize the verse in and re-write it here.

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Meditate on God’s Word

As you memorize this verse, let it work into your heart and mind. Scripture meditation is like a good cup of tea: the longer it steeps, the richer the flavor. So give yourself permission to slowly savor God’s Word! Use the questions below (like a tea bag) to keep dipping into this verse.

Challenge alert: You won’t always see an obvious answer directly from the verse. Just think and pray about it and share what the Lord brings to your heart and mind.

Look up. What does this verse teach you about God? (For example, look for signs of His character, His attributes, His works, His promises.)

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Look around. What does this verse teach you about the world and people in general?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Look within. What does this verse teach you about yourself?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Look ahead. Does this verse give you reason to hope? Briefly share your thoughts.

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Look alive! Given the opportunity, how would you express the truth found in this verse to someone who needs to hear it?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Make God’s Word Your Prayer

As you memorize and meditate on this verse, pray it back to the Lord. Let the Holy Spirit examine your heart, increase your understanding, and help you to pray. Ask Him for faith and strength to act on the truth of God’s Word.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

A Lamp to my Feet and a Light to my Path

What has been the most important lesson, for you personally, as you studied this psalm? How will you begin today to put what you are learning into practice?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________