

Psalms of Forgiveness

Week 1: Psalm 51

Gathering Activity:

“O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise.”

“The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who seek God.”

“I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer.”

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.”

“I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.”

LAST: “Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep.”

Opening Prayer:

Your love, gracious God, is from everlasting to everlasting. You are faithful even to the unfaithful and merciful even to the unrighteous. Help us, O God, to recognize the areas of our lives where we fall short of your command to love our neighbor, ourselves, and you as well. Enable us to receive the forgiveness you freely offer and the courage to seek forgiveness where we have injured others. In the name of Jesus, who offers forgiveness of sins and mercy to all who receive him. Amen.

Discussion:

Recount a time when you hurt someone in your life. What happened?

How did you relate with the person you injured?

How did the event reach its eventual conclusion/resolution?

Have people summarize the story of David and Bathsheba.

Who are the ones that David injured in the story and how?

Psalm 51

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
- ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
- ⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- ⁶ You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.
- ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶ For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.
- ¹⁷ The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- ¹⁸ Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;

rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,
¹⁹ then you will delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar. ¹

Psalm Discussion:

David asked God to have mercy on him, to cleanse him, to create his heart anew, and to restore his joy. What do you imagine David was feeling when he wrote this Psalm?

Do you think God responded to David's plea? How do you think God might respond and why?

What do you think David was feeling when he experienced God's response?

What do you feel you need most in your life right now—mercy, cleansing, re-creating, or restoration?

Closing Prayer:

Faithful and merciful God, when we seem to be most at odds with you due to the sins in our lives, you come to us and offer your grace—your undeserved favor. Where we have injured others in our lives grant us your forgiveness and the courage to ask for theirs. Where we have hurt ourselves, may we find it in our hearts to forgive ourselves for our transgressions even as we receive your forgiveness. In all ways that we sin against you, forgive us and re-new our spirits that we may live in joy once again—unbound by the specters of shame and guilt. By the grace of your Son, our Savior and Lord, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

After the Gathering:

Look at the Psalm and find the actions of God. List them.

Look at the Psalm and find the characteristics of God. List them.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*](#). (1989). (Ps 51:1–19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Look at the Psalm and find the actions and characteristics of the Psalmist. List them.

What action of God do you need most in your life? Right a prayer asking for God to act in the way that need most in your life.