



Hello! This guide is provided to help facilitate a clear understanding of the Bible passage with a focus on applying God's truths to our lives individually and corporately. As such we encourage you to spend at least half your time pondering and discussing questions that are application focused. While the guide has been bulked up, we still need to prepare by praying through the passage, reviewing the guide on our own, and thinking about how our group might answer questions.

Psalms - Alive to God

The goal of this series is to show and cultivate a sense in our people of being alive to God, walking with him, engaging with him and having our hearts enlarged by him. The tables on repentance and faith in Christ help us to apply concretely the process of being alive to God and engaging with him in our lives (see section on application at end of this study guide).

Background of Psalm 51

The title of Psalm 51 refers to events recounted in 2 Samuel 11-12, when prophet Nathan came to David after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba. In this "... deeply passionate and transparent psalm of confession, David pours out his heart to God, asking for forgiveness after Nathan the prophet had exposed his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah. It is written from David's perspective before he had experienced forgiveness." ¹

Christ in Psalm 51

In our sinfulness, we long for God's steadfast love and abundant mercy to wash us from our iniquity and cleanse us from our sin. This love and mercy of God is found perfectly in Christ who came into our human condition to blot out our transgressions and iniquities. Jesus is indeed the God of our salvation who by his blood can wash us whiter than snow, give us God's presence in the Spirit, create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us. Christ is the perfect sacrifice and sin offering that removes all further need for offering other sacrifices.

Big Idea of the Text

This Psalm reminds us that all sin is ultimately against our holy God. As a Psalm of confession and repentance, it reminds us of the Psalmist's deeply felt sense of acknowledgment and contrition over personal sin, and shows us what true repentance looks like.²

¹ See D.A. Carson, *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015), 1046.

² See The Navigators, *A Life-Changing Encounter with God's Word from the Book of Psalms*, Life Change Series (Colorado: NavPress, 2010), 21.

Goal of this Study

To encourage your CG to (a) be open and transparent before the Lord in times of confession of sins; and (b) to remember that God's forgiveness is assured with honest confession because of Christ.

1. What happened between David and Bathsheba? (Refer to 2 Samuel 11-12:1-15)
2. Imagine you were in David's shoes and your own sin had just been found out by someone. How would you respond?

David responds by writing Psalm 51.

Read Psalm 51:1-19

- 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 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.
- ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- ⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the 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 broken rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶ For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
- ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- ¹⁸ Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
build up the walls of Jerusalem;
- ¹⁹ then will you delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Observation and Meaning Questions

- 2a. What is David asking God to do for him? (v1-2)
- 2b. How does David know God will answer his appeal? (v1)
3. What do we learn about the nature of repentance from this Psalm? (v4a, 4b, 5)
4. Consider the nature of David's sin (2 Samuel 11-12). Why does King David say he has only sinned against God?
5. What is the goal of David's repentance? (v11-12)
6. Have you ever repented in this way? How does this Psalm teach us to repent?
7. Look at the verbs in this Psalm (first verbs of v2, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14). Who needs to act to make David right with God?
- 8a. On what basis did David know that God would forgive his sins?
- 8b. Why should we have more assurance than David?
- 8c. How is this (Christ's work) better than working for our own salvation and forgiveness?

Application

10a. According to David, what kind of sacrifice does God delight in? (v16-19)

10b. How did people in David’s time give unpleasing sacrifices when they sinned?

Sacrifices need not be bulls and burnt offerings. They can be anything we do to try to make up for our sins.

10c. How have we given wrong sacrifices to God to try to make up for our sins?

11a. How does knowing we have Jesus’ righteousness and have been forgiven by God change the way we think about our sin?

11b. How does the joy of knowing we are forgiven of our sins overflow from our own lives onto others?

Apply practically

Split up into pairs of the same gender, preferably someone you know, share and pray for one another in an area you are struggling.

You could use the following questions to help each other process both repentance and faith. As a process, these questions should be done in the order laid out below.

Repentance

No	Action	Explanation
1	List	Name the sin specifically
2	Explore	How might you take a closer look at what’s happening in your heart, including idolatry (both near and far idols)?
3	Confess	How can I honestly and specifically confess this to Jesus, and who else must I confess this to?
4	Grieve	How has this sin damaged me, my family and my community, and tarnished the name and glory of Jesus?
5	Hate	How is this sin my enemy, seeking my ruin?
6	Turn	What does it look like to actually turn from it?

Faith in Christ

No	Action	Explanation
1	Look	At the perfect way that Jesus lived in this area of life.
2	Marvel	At the fact that Jesus gave himself to be punished for you for this specific sin.
3	Receive	The imputation of his righteousness as a gift.
4	Draw near	To the Father as a son/daughter who is fully accepted in Christ.
5	Walk	Think through what it means to walk by faith in this area of your life.
6	Request	Ask and request the Spirit to help you in specific ways as you walk by faith in Christ in this area of your life.

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