

# GOSPEL COMMUNITY

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Psalm 51



### CONNECT, REVIEW, PRAY

~5-10 minutes

- Announce any church activities/events and handle any housekeeping for the GC
- What are you thankful for / have struggled with this week?
- How did you apply or share what we learned last week?
- How can we pray for each other?

### READ & RE-TELL

~5-10 minutes

- Have someone read out loud from the ESV translation.
- Have someone read out loud from a different translation.
- Do we need to define any confusing/unknown/curious words or phrases?
- Ask one person to re-tell the passage in their own words (different from the person reading).

### ASK, LISTEN, LEARN

~30+ minutes

- What does this passage tell us about the character and nature of God?
- What does this passage tell us about ourselves/humanity?
- What does this passage tell us about the relationship between God and people?
- Review "FURTHER APPLICATION" questions.

### APPLY, OBEY, GO

~10+ minutes

- Does anything in this passage change how you should live, or how you view God / people / yourself?
- Does this passage reveal a specific sin in your life?
- How can you live differently this coming week, with what you've learned?

#### FURTHER APPLICATION

1. In the sermon, Pastor Jordan said that Psalm 51 is "hyperlinked" to 2 Samuel 11. Without getting too bogged down, read 2 Samuel 11 and discuss what it teaches us about the nature of sin.
2. The reason that we have Psalm 51 is that David received God's conviction as a gift. Why is it critical that we view conviction of sin as a gift from God?
3. Reflect on Psalm 51 and the four points from the sermon regarding God's mercy. Consider and discuss how these things are true and how you've experienced them in your life.
  - God's mercy frees us... (verses 3-5).
  - God's mercy cleanses us... (verses 2,7)
  - God's mercy renews our spirit... (v. 10-12)
  - God's mercy moves us toward God... (v. 13-15)
4. If this is what God's mercy can do, why are we often so slow to confess our sin and repent?

## 5 HELPFUL GROUP DISCUSSION RULES

1. *If you talk a lot, allow space for someone else to speak up.*
2. *If you don't talk as much, work on sharing more.*
3. *Focus on what this passage is saying, don't stray too far from it. Seek not only to understand more about God through the passage, but also how it specifically applies to your own life as a Christian.*
4. *Give other people time to respond, silence is ok.*
5. *Respect your GC family and exercise grace.*

## COMMENTARY EXCERPT: Psalm 51

The psalm and its title belong together like hand and glove. The efficacy of repentance (1–4) is an exact commentary on 2 Samuel 12:13. The problem of v 16, which appears to deny that sacrifices are acceptable to God, is solved by recalling that David's sins of adultery (2 Sa. 11:4) and murder (2 Sa. 11:14–17) were not covered by sacrificial provision. It is often urged that vs 18, 19 are later additions designed to make the psalm suitable for congregational use and to counter the rejection of sacrifice in vs 16, 17. But (apart from the fact that the psalm cannot be adapted by making it self-contradictory!) David, as king, could not sin simply as a private individual: his sin threatened the fabric of public life. Consequently, he would be as anxious for the building up of Jerusalem (18) as for his own restoration.

1–6 God and the individual: repentance and forgiveness. In God there is mercy, free, unmerited favour (Gn. 6:8); love, unchanging love based on solemn commitment; compassion, surging, passionate love (1). Sin is transgression, deliberate 'rebellion' against the known will of God (1); iniquity (2), the inner 'warp' of the fallen nature; sin (2), specific wrong. The sinner desires God to blot out his sin, 'wipe clean' the stain God can see; wash, reach into the fibers of his nature to purge ingrained filth; cleanse, remove sin as a barrier to fellowship with God. (2).

3–6 Repentance; its effect and necessity. The prayer for cleansing (1, 2) rests on the simple fact of acknowledgment (know) and awareness (before me, i.e. subjectively felt, 38:17) of sin (cf. 32:3, 4). 4 Against you. Whatever hurt sin brings to self or others the heart of sinfulness is that it offends God (2 Sa. 12:13). So that, 'in order that'. Were the sinner to cry, 'You are sovereign. Why did you not stop me?' the Lord would reply, 'In order to bring you to recognize your sinfulness and my righteousness. It is my purpose that you should know me as I am, the righteous God and the just judge. Only then will you fly to me for cleansing.' 5 The inheritance of a sinful nature does not, biblically, excuse the sinner but sets him in the place of mounting guilt (Mt. 23:34–36). At birth ... conceived. This does not question the holiness of the processes of conception and birth, but rather affirms that from the moment of conception there existed a moral human person, the infant at birth, the foetus at conception. Thus repentance must take into account both actual sins (1–3) and this infection inseparable from human nature. 6 In all of human nature sin is without excuse because it is contrary to God's desire, and contrary to the wisdom of God taught by the all-pervasive voice of conscience.

7–15 The dimensions of true repentance. 7 seeks divine dealing with sin; 8 with the sinner as crushed by divine wrath; 9 with the offence given to God by sin. Cleanse, 'de-sin'. Hyssop, the sprinkling instrument effecting propitiation of divine wrath (Ex. 12:12, 22, 23), ending exclusion and alienation (Lv. 14:6), purifying from defilement (Nu. 19:16–19). David knows of no sacrifice that will suffice (16) but he is confident that the Lord does. Joy ... gladness, the restoration of the sinner to the joyful songs of the sanctuary (42:4); bones, restoration to personal wholeness. Hide, deal, within your own nature, with your holy abhorrence of my sin. Blot out, both from your memory and from my record (1).

10–12 The true penitent longs to be rid of sin through the creation of a new nature bringing the power of constancy, the continuing favour of God and the presence of his Holy Spirit (10–11), the joy of deliverance and the gift of a spirit/Spirit ready to do God's will (12). Saul had lost the immediate benefits (1 Sa. 16:14) but not the ultimate reality (1 Sa. 28:19) of salvation and, doubtless with this example in his mind, David feared lest the same experience might be his—just as we too can grieve (Eph. 4:30) and quench (1 Thes. 5:19) the Holy Spirit, losing the joys but not the reality of his indwelling. 13–15 Teaching about God promotes repentance (13), but the teacher must take his own need of repentance seriously, exemplifying in himself what he desires to see in them. Only as a penitent can he sing of God's righteousness (14)—that wondrous righteousness whereby he is both just and the justifier (Is. 45:21; Rom. 3:26). But testimony must rest, too, upon prayer that the Lord will grant the opening of the mouth.

16–19 God and the community: what pleases the Lord. The renewed community is composed of penitent individuals (16, 17), seeks its security in God's favour and delights him with its religious observances (18–19). These verses share the themes of the Lord's delight, his pleasure, and sacrifice and burnt offering. The sin offering is not mentioned but only sacrifices speaking of commitment to God (the burnt offering, Gn. 22:2, 12) and fellowship with God and his people (where sacrifice is used with burnt offering, it means 'peace offering'). David's own experience taught him that getting right with God was a matter of the heart (17). This is the message he wished to share with others (16 begins with 'For') and now to make a foundational reality in the new community. Build ... the walls is metaphorical, 'to make the community secure'. Then, i.e. when penitent sinners (16, 17) rest on God for their security (18), religion becomes delightful to the Lord: righteous sacrifices, sacrifices which are all that God meant them to be.