



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V27 N22 June 1, 2025

PSALMS: CELEBRATING CHRIST IN GOD'S HYMNBOOK

"Psalm 51"

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Humanity

I believe all people are
loved by God and need
Jesus Christ as
their Savior.

*"For God so loved the world
that he gave His one and
only Son, that whoever
believes in Him shall not
perish but have eternal life."*

John 3:16



Q?

What makes
forgiveness a
human need?



Humans need forgiveness! We believe that all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior. From what is Jesus is our Savior? Yes, Jesus can save us from poor health, poor economics, and poor hygiene. But these "salvations" pale in comparison to Jesus saving us from sin and saving us to eternal life! John the Baptist proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

In all of God's creation (Gen 1-2), it is only humans who commit sin and suffer the consequences of guilt and shame. Your pet might show signs of remorse when caught on the carpet, but will lose no sleep at night over infractions committed earlier in the day. Humans who experience no guilt or shame are often labeled psychopaths because they are lacking this important human trait of concern as it relates to offense and forgiveness.

In an article titled "Not Just Good for the Soul: Science Is Pinpointing How Forgiveness Also Benefits Our Brains and Bodies" (www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/not-just-good-for-the-soul), Maureen Salamon quotes Harvard Professor Tyler VanderWeele regarding the results of his 4,600-participant, multinational study on forgiveness. This study, building on earlier research, analyzed the effects of forgiveness. The study suggests that forgiveness boosts our mental well-being by reducing anxiety and depression. The results add to other recent evidence that forgiveness can also ease stress, improve sleep, and lower blood pressure and heart rate.

"Forgiveness acknowledges the wrong and helps you be free from it," says VanderWeele, "It frees you from the offender as well. When appropriate, forgiveness can lead to restored relationships, bringing happiness, satisfaction, and social support — which evidence also links to better health."

While forgiveness of others is the focus of most of VanderWeele's work, a concept he

calls "self-forgiveness" is equally important. The "Not Just Good for the Soul" article continues: "Forgiving others is challenging enough. But what if you're the one who's done something wrong? 'It can feel a little odd to say, 'I'm going to pardon myself,'" says Tyler VanderWeele. But it's a worthwhile effort: as with forgiving others, self-forgiveness is linked with less psychological distress, including fewer symptoms of depression, according to a 2020 study VanderWeele co-authored in *Frontiers in Psychology*. Getting started requires recognizing that no matter how badly you've behaved, you're in a relationship with yourself — one that deserves respect and compassion. Calling self-forgiveness a 'second dimension' of the concept of forgiveness, a 2022 study published in the journal *Spiritual Care* pointed out that any genuine effort to self-forgive must include three components: remorse, apology, and the making of amends. ...'Genuine self-forgiveness needs to acknowledge the wrong, but in spite of the bad, you should want what's good for you,' VanderWeele says."

From a biblical perspective "self-forgiveness" may be a bit short-sighted. We need God's forgiveness before we can fully forgive ourselves. But it is noteworthy that reputable mental health researchers are acknowledging that forgiveness of others and self are essential for human flourishing.

We understand that forgiveness from God comes through Jesus Christ. He has paid the ransom for our sins (Mk. 10:45; 2 Cor 5:17-21). Jesus has the authority to forgive sins (Mk 2:5-12). As believers, we can go to Jesus with confession of our sins daily and receive his cleansing (1 Jn 1:9). Confession of sin and dependence upon Jesus' forgiveness bring us spiritual peace which can also result in better health and better relationships. Don't neglect your need for forgiveness. Jesus encourages us to seek his forgiveness often (Mt. 6:12-15).

Read Psalm 51

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

- 1 *Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.*
- 2 *Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.*
- 3 *For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.*
- 4 *Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.*
- 5 *Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*
- 6 *Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.*
- 7 *Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*
- 8 *Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.*
- 9 *Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.*
- 10 *Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*
- 11 *Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*
- 12 *Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

- 13 *Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.*
- 14 *Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.*
- 15 *Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.*
- 16 *You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.*
- 17 *My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.*
- 18 *May it please you to prosper Zion,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.*
- 19 *Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,
in burnt offerings offered whole;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline each request in vv. 1-2.
- Circle each use of "according" in v. 1.
- Underline each synonym for "sin" in vv. 3-6.
- Place a box around "Against you, you only" in v. 4.
- Underline each word or phrase depicting forgiveness in vv. 7-9.
- Underline each word or phrase pointing to renewal in vv. 10-12.
- Underline each word or phrase having to do with speech in vv. 13-15.
- Circle each occurrence of "delight" in vv. 16-19.
- Place a box around each occurrence of "please" or "pleasure" in vv. 16-19.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage? Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What is the psalmist asking for in vv. 1-2 and upon what is he basing his request?
2. Describe David's understanding of sin according to vv. 1-6.
3. What does "hyssop" suggest about the cleansing of forgiveness (vv. 7-9)?
4. Forgiveness from God involves more than just removal of guilt. What does David request as a result of forgiveness (vv. 10-12)?
5. How does a New Testament follower of Jesus differ (consider Eph. 1:13-14) from David as an Old Testament follower of God, according to v. 11?
6. Salvation is mentioned in vv. 12 & 14. According to all of Psalm 51, what is included in salvation from sin?
7. What kind of sacrifice does God not despise?
8. How do vv. 18-19 relate to David's plea for personal forgiveness?
9. How is God portrayed in Psalm 51, this prayer for forgiveness?
10. What could you include from David's prayer for forgiveness in your own prayers for forgiveness (consider Mt 6:12-15)?

Sin is a persistent problem for people. All people of all ages, races, genders, classes and levels of education and maturity struggle with acts of unrighteousness or the persistent allure of living contrary to God. King David, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22), a faithful worshiper and anointed warrior for the one true God, after many years of godliness, succumbed to lust, committed adultery, deceitfully tried to cover up his scandal and planned the murder of an innocent man (2 Sam 11). If the sweet psalmist of Israel could fall so tragically, who are we to think we are any less susceptible to sin? We never graduate from temptation.

Psalm 51 is frequently classified as one of seven "penitential" psalms (Pss 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). This is a lament psalm with the unique expression of the psalmist asking for forgiveness of sin as opposed asking for rescue from an enemy. Sometimes the greatest traumas in life are self-inflicted. We can often be our own worst enemies, deceiving ourselves and harming our own welfare. Psalm 51 is a soothing salve to the sore of self-inflicted sin. Psalm 51 can be segmented as follows: a Cry for Mercy (vv. 1-2), a Confession of Sin (vv. 3-6), a Call for Cleansing (vv. 7-9), a Plea for Renewal (vv. 10-12), Promises of Devotion (vv. 13-17), and a Hope of Future Blessing (vv. 18-19).

The psalmist begins with a cry for mercy (v. 1) using three metaphors of forgiveness for three descriptions of sin. "The psalmist seeks cleansing from my transgressions (*peša*), my guilt (*āwōn*), and my sin (*hattā't*). The three are the words used most often in the biblical text to describe acts against God and humanity, and they are often found in parallel construction in Hebrew poetry. In Psalm 51, the words occur in vv. 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, and 13. While each word has a basic root meaning—*pāša'* means 'go against, to rebel,' *āwā* means 'bend, twist,' and *hāṭā'* means 'miss a mark or goal,' attempting to define each as a particular kind of action or attitude is not productive. Psalm 51 opens, then, with a piling up of pleas for cleansing and of words describing the past action of the psalmist" (Nancy deClaissé-Walford and Beth Tanner, "Book Two of the Psalter: Psalms 42-72," in *The Book of Psalms, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, 455).

Next the psalmist presents the problem of his sin to God (vv. 3-6). This confession of sin makes no excuses and blames no one else. The psalmist takes sole ownership of his dilemma (v. 3). He heightens the severity of his offense by acknowledging he has ultimately offended God with his crimes against humanity (v. 4). He admits that these sins are not first offenses, as he has struggled with sinful tendencies his entire life (vv. 5-6). The psalmist's confession of sin is raw and without qualifiers or excuses. Confession requires humility.

From this dark assessment the psalmist moves to repeat his call for cleansing (vv. 7-9). He adds to this metaphor the imagery of priestly ablution. "Thou shalt purge me with hyssop alludes to the cleansing of the leper,

sprinkled seven times with the sacrificial blood into which the bunch of hyssop was dipped as a sprinkler (Lev. 14:6f.); or it may refer to the ritual for cleansing those who had come into contact with a dead body (Num. 19:16-19). In either case it ended with the forthright pronouncement, 'and he shall be clean'—a promise which David takes up in the first person. He also knows from that context the special word for purge, to which the nearest equivalent would be 'de-sin' (Lev. 14:49; Num. 19:19), and he pictures the final sequence in the ritual, the washing of clothes and body. But the descriptive touch, whiter than snow, is all his own: a flash of realization that with God there are no half-measures" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 15, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, 209). Hyssop was also used to spread the blood of the Passover lamb over the doorposts of the homes of those escaping the slavery of Egypt during the Exodus (Ex. 12:22). Blood administered by hyssop was a sign of a sacrifice of covering or protection from God's wrath and judgment. When we ask for forgiveness we are asking God to cover us and cleanse us with the sacrifice of himself. Hyssop and blood are not chemical cleansing agents but symbols of God's sacrifice for us and covering over us protecting us from the wrath of his judgment.

It is not enough for the psalmist to just be forgiven. He wants to be changed internally so that he can proclaim the good news of salvation and transformation (vv. 13-17). Forgiveness is more than removal of legal guilt or internal shame. The psalmist wants to proclaim his new, restored status (vv. 12-14). He also wants to return to worship in a way that pleases God (vv. 15-17). The psalmist is not negating sacrificial worship, but instead is jettisoning hypocritical, formulaic observances of ritual void of integrity and contrition.

Finally, the psalmist looks beyond his own personal dilemma and asks God for blessings upon his land and upon his worshipping community (vv. 18-19). He mentions Zion and the rebuilding of her walls and the acceptance of sacrifices that are pleasing to God. When we confess our sins to God and experience his forgiveness, we can then better influence our community for good. Forgiven people are forgiving and redeeming people in their community and the broader world.

Seeking God's forgiveness and worshipping God with a humble and penitent heart is serious business. Jesus reminded his followers to make confession of sin as regular as petitions for daily bread (Mt 6:12-15). "The message of this psalm [Ps 51] is that the vilest offender among God's people can appeal to God for forgiveness, for moral restoration, and for the resumption of a joyful life of fellowship and service, if he comes with a broken spirit and bases his appeal on God's compassion and grace" (Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, vol. 1, 832).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 **mercy** “The opening plea, have mercy, is the language of one who has no claim to the favour he begs. But steadfast love is a covenant word. For all his unworthiness, David knows that he still belongs; cf. the paradox of the prodigal’s words, ‘Father ... I am no more worthy to be called thy son.’ Coming closer still, he appeals to God’s tender warmth, in the second word for mercy, an emotional term, used in, e.g., Genesis 43:30 when Joseph’s ‘heart’, or inmost being, yearned for his brother. It is akin to the New Testament’s visceral word for being ‘moved with compassion’” (Kidner, 207).

v. 4 **you only** “It would be inappropriate to infer from verse 4 (against you, you only, have I sinned) that the speaker’s action had no social effects, only religious ones (one might think of idolatry). The confession must be understood within the context of this immediate encounter with the God of purity, truth, and holiness (vv. 2, 6, 7, 11). As the rest of the verse makes plain, the point of this confession is to establish that the speaker has done what is evil in your sight, so that you are ... justified when you judge. While verses 3–6 are the speaker’s confession of sin, they are also a ‘doxology of judgment’ giving praise to the just God who reveals his thoughts to humans” (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series, 227).

v. 7 **Cleanse** “The prayer is literally to be ‘unsinned with hyssop.’ The verb חוּן appears a few times with the meaning ‘to purify from sin’ or more literally ‘to unsin’ or ‘to de-sin’ (so Dahood, II, 5, but long before by John Donne, see Perowne, 419; also Lev 8:18; 14:49, 52; Num 19:19; Ezek 43:20, 22, 23; 45:18). A hyssop bush was used to sprinkle blood on the doorposts at Passover (Exod 12:22), in rituals for cleansing of a leper (Lev 14:4, 6, 49, 51, 52), and in the purification of a person defiled by contact with a corpse (Num 19:6, 18). Thus the verb reflects a background of cleansing rituals, though the use here may be strongly metaphorical” (Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, vol. 20, Word Biblical Commentary, 21).

v. 10 **Create** “The suppliant is asking God to do a transformative work in the inner person that deals not only with the stain that results from past wrongdoing but also with the dynamics that will continue to produce wrongdoing (cf. Jer. 17:9). The psalm has noted that God looks for truth and wisdom in our private lives and behind closed doors (v. 6). The plea corresponds to that. Because of the person’s brokenness, God needs to do a creative work. Because of the inclination to sin that has caused that brokenness, this creative work needs to issue in a heart that is pure and stays pure” (John Goldingay, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Psalms 42–89*, vol. 2, 133).

v. 11 **take** “God gave his special empowering spirit in the old dispensation to elected individuals, such as prophets and warriors, to establish his kingdom, but not to all Israelites (cf. Num. 11:18–30). Beginning at Pentecost he gave his empowering spirit to all his covenant people. David is asking God not to take away his empowering spirit that made him king. Compelled by God’s spirit, Israel’s warlords fought valiantly, while lacking spiritual virtue (cf. Judg. 6:34; Judg. 11:29–31; 14:6; 1 Sam. 11:6). God’s empowering spirit came on David at his anointing, but he was already a man after God’s heart” (Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary*, 477). New Testament believers are “sealed” with Holy Spirit as a guarantee of redemption (Eph 1:13–14).

v. 14 **bloodshed** “The idea here resonates with David’s story in 2 Samuel 11–12 and implicates him in the death of Uriah. It could, however, be a prayer that God will deliver him from having his own blood spilled, perhaps in revenge (lit., ‘deliver me from blood/bloodshed’). In light of the allusions to the Genesis narrative, we might also raise the question whether ‘you do not delight in sacrifice’ (51:16) is an allusion to God’s rejection of Cain’s sacrifice, and ‘bloodshed’ to Cain’s murder of Abel, his brother (Gen. 4); so serious is his sin that the psalmist may be casting himself in the role of Cain” (C. Hassell Bullock, *Psalms 1–72*, vol. 1, Teach the Text Commentary, 391).

v. 17 **broken** “A person having a broken spirit loses his vital life energy; his entire disposition has been humbled under the mighty hand of God (v. 10 [12]). A humble spirit—knowing it is helpless without God’s grace—is an essential oil poured on sacrifice offered on the high altar of God. ‘A brokenhearted person is the opposite of the self-made, hardhearted person, as seen in the contrast between David’s and Saul’s confession when confronted with their sin.’ Now addressing God (see v. 14 [16]), he implicitly offers his own contrite heart on the high altar, confident that God will accept, not despise” (Waltke, 481).

v. 18 **build** “The final statements of Ps 51 communicate the societal ramifications of David’s behavior. If David incurs God’s wrath, that wrath falls on all under David’s reign. But if David experiences God’s favor, all Israel will enjoy the good pleasure of God. David prays for just this in 51:18, promising that God’s good favor on Israel will result in worship that is pleasing to God in 51:19. These words about the public results of David’s repentance function as the outer ring brackets of the psalm with the description of David’s public sin and Nathan’s rebuke in the psalm’s superscription” (James M. Hamilton Jr., *Psalms*, vol. 1, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary, 511).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

To delight God with fervent worship and service, ask God for forgiveness, cleansing, freedom and restoration from sin that is frequently present in daily life.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

Kids love parties, and one of the best places to host an event is Alley Cats. There are so many options – bowling, game room, pizza, Putt-Putt, and everybody's favorite, laser tag. I love watching faces light up as kids walk into the room lit only with blacklights. Their socks glow and they look like mini highlighters. Some are sneaky and wear all black clothes, but never fear, lint is always exposed. Blacklights reveal what can't be seen in regular lighting. This is the perfect picture of how God sees and is fully aware of our sin. The sins of secret thoughts, unspoken words and hidden actions are like lint to a blacklight. We might think we're being sneaky and sinning in the dark, but our sin will always be clearly exposed to the Lord. Walking in sin is like wading through mud. It wears us down to a point in which we are moved to bare our soul to the Lord and experience the power of His forgiveness. His arms are open, waiting for us to come to Him. He is merciful and loving despite how we've grieved Him. Are you parenting like the Lord? Are your kids afraid to come to you when they've made mistakes, or do they run to you for restoration and help? If your kids are trying to hide their mistakes, is it because of your past reaction? God wants us to represent Him in the restoration and forgiveness of our children. We are earthly models of His heavenly parenting. If you find yourself reacting in a way that doesn't represent God, ask for His help! We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Psalm 51

1. What does David ask God to do in verses 1 and 2?
2. What does David want God to create in him?
3. What is David's sacrifice?

What Do You Think?

Why would God prefer a broken and contrite heart over an animal sacrifice?

What Do You Do?

This week, say Psalm 51:10 every time you wash your hands or clean something (dishes, laundry, your room).

CORE COMPETENCY: Humanity

I believe God loves everyone and we all need Jesus as our Savior.

MEMORY VERSE: Hebrews 4:12

"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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OUR MISSION

Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.