

Ps. 51 Discussion Questions

Read Psalm 51

1. The Psalm begins with the phrase "To the Choirmaster." David composed this Psalm of confession and repentance that it might be sung by everyone. What does this teach us about the nature of repentance and confession among God's people?

a. How do we practice repentance in the church today? How have you experienced it, both publicly and privately?

b. What does this Psalm teach us about how we should practice repentance and confession in the church?

2. Pastor Mike pointed out that sin has both an external and internal dimension to it, which is covered by the terms *transgression* (external) and *iniquity* (internal). And so, sin is both an outward and inward problem.

a. What does David believe is the solution to both aspects of this problem (see vv. 1-2, 7, 10, 12)?

b. What is David's part to play in this process?

3. This Psalm powerfully demonstrates the intensity with which David acknowledges his sin and repents. While v. 4 can seem to discount the fact that David's sin has affected other people, the point is actually that ultimately David has failed and rebelled against God.

a. How should the fact that every sin is to be understood as an act of rebellion against God affect our attitude towards sin?

b. Many of us struggle to see sin in such serious terms. We often become indifferent or at least apathetic about it. Why is that?

c. How can we learn to take sin as seriously as it ought to be taken?

d. What consequence of sin is David most concerned about here (v. 11)? What does this reveal about his heart towards God and his priorities?

e. When you sin what do you fear most? Are they the practical consequences like losing friends, money, health, influence, respect, or is it losing intimacy with God?

4. In v. 7, David expresses confidence in God's ability to cleanse him.

a. Have there been or are there areas of your life where you struggle to believe that God can cleanse you? Why is that?

b. What are some areas of your life where you have seen God's cleansing and renewing work already?

5. David asks for cleansing that he might help others who are struggling so that he can praise God.

a. How has God used others in your life to help you with your struggles with sin?

b. How has God used your struggles to help others?

6. David ends the Psalm by praying for the flourishing of Jerusalem. Why would he end his Psalm this way?

a. How does the fact that our individual sin influences the spiritual state of the groups we are part of (families, churches, cities, countries, etc.) affect the way we think about our sin?

b. How should this fact affect the way we deal with our sin?