



The Nourishing Vocation Project
Near and Now:
Reframing Regret: From Hindsight to Insight – Psalm 51

Warm-up Question
What does an apology look and sound like?



[“A Lost Heart”](#) by [*brilho-de-conta](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

Create in me a clean heart

Read [Psalm 51](#)

Bible Story Reflection

Psalm 51 is one of the psalms of King David. The psalm is said to be David's prayer for forgiveness after sleeping with Bathsheba and killing her husband, Uriah. When God makes David's child sick as a response to the sins that David committed, David prays to God for forgiveness.

The psalm is a prayer for those who are deeply aware of their sin and guilt. It is not a great feeling to realize when we have messed up, and it can be even harder to admit that we messed up. In this psalm, we hear of deep lament and a plea for mercy, to be "washed thoroughly from iniquity." This request for forgiveness is not for the person who was harmed, but to God, had also been hurt by the psalmist's sin. It is a request that depends on God's mercy, and the psalmist knows of the immense power of that. It's a transformative mercy that can put a new and right spirit within us, create a clean heart within us, and restore joy, but it is not always easy to get to that point.

We have all sinned and hurt people, and this psalm can be helpful when thinking about how to ask for forgiveness. The guilt that comes with sin can be unbearable, but we have a God that we can turn to in all times, whether that is guilt and pain or joy and healing. It is important to note though that prayer does not negate the harm that we have caused towards others. We are called to live in community with one another, and our sins can cause deep pain for others. We are called to care for one another, and sometimes that involves doing the hard work of admitting our wrongdoings. But when we mess up, we can turn to God, who hears our cries and guilt and who will guide us with mercy into the steps towards forgiveness.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you relate to the person proclaiming this psalm?
2. Talk about a time when you had to ask for forgiveness. What did you say?
3. When has forgiving brought you joy or freed you?
4. What do you think God's response to this psalm would be?
5. In what ways does this psalm call to you?
6. What insight do you gain from previous times of seeking forgiveness?
7. What do you think it means to have a "new and right spirit" within you?
8. What does it mean to you to be forgiven by God?
9. How does it feel to forgive?
10. How does it feel like to be forgiven?



Activity Suggestions

Psalms are often sung. Search “Psalm 51” on YouTube and listen to some of the different interpretations of the psalm. (You can try [this](#) or [this](#).) You could also try singing it using one of the psalm tones on page 337 of the Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymnal.

Psalms are often spoken antiphonally, with one group saying the odd verses and another group saying the even verses. Try reading Psalm 51 antiphonally. Discuss what this experience is like.

Go to your church’s baptismal font and wash and dry one another’s hands while saying a blessing for them. A large bowl of water would also work for this activity.

Prayer Concerns

Those who mourn, those who cry out for mercy, and those who look for forgiveness

Closing Prayer

Help me, O God, to give my regrets to you and to go forward today, confident in your mercy. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

