

Praying through Psalm 51

(Use with The Living Bible version)

Personal revival can only come when we have been cleansed of sin and received the Lord's forgiveness. Ask the Father to join you in the midst of this prayer experience and help you to better understand His great mercy made possible through the death, burial and resurrection of His only Son, Jesus Christ:

- **Becoming aware of our sin.**

Leader reads: David had somehow hardened his heart against his own sin. Nathan, the prophet, was told by God to confront the king and open his eyes to the truth about what he had done:

Intro to Psalm 51: *"Written after Nathan the prophet had come to inform David of God's judgment against him because of his adultery with Bathsheba, and his murder of Uriah, her husband."*

It is so important that we "keep short accounts" with God. As soon as sin enters the picture, we need to recognize it quickly. This is why it is so very important that we, in great love, are accountable to one another as believers. Nathan didn't sugar coat David's transgression, although he did help him to clearly see the weight of it by telling a parable and sharing God's response to the sinfulness of His anointed king (2 Samuel 12:1-9).

Spend some time in quiet, individually asking the Lord to reveal any sinfulness in your life. Instead of the prophet Nathan, allow the Holy Spirit to reveal any sinfulness that you may not have been aware of, or that you may have hardened your heart to. This is a difficult but necessary part of living in Christlikeness.

Be sure that you consider sins of commission such as pride and anger, as well as gossip, lust, greed and not forgiving others. Also, there are sins of omission, which are the good things we have opportunities to do, but either neglect or choose not to do. Some of these may be caring for others, righting injustices, neglecting relationship with God in prayer, worship, studying the Word, etc.

Take time now to ask God to search your heart and reveal what is there – be sure to listen to what may as yet be unknown to you but which God wants to share with you. You may want to journal or write down what you sense from the Father.

Spend time in prayer.

- **Acknowledge whatever sin(s) the Spirit reveals to you and confess it/them to the Lord.**

Leader reads: Whatever sin you need to confess will very likely not be of the magnitude of David's and your response may not be as visceral as his. Yet, God still sees sin as sin, no matter if it is considered to be large or small. God does not judge us by the size or scope of our sins, but by the intent of our hearts.

A broken-hearted King David prayed in Psalm 51:3-4:

"For I admit my shameful deed—it haunts me day and night. It is against you and you alone I sinned and did this terrible thing. You saw it all, and your sentence against me is just."

Take time now to confess any sin the Holy Spirit has revealed. Confession is simply to speak out

Spend time in prayer.

- **Allow yourself to understand the weight/depth of your sin.**

Leader reads: Take some time to feel godly sorrow and to repent before the Lord. Consider how your sin may have affected others. Ask God to show you or tell you what He thinks about your sin. Express your desire to turn away from this/these sin(s) and not do it/them again.

Use Psalm 51:5-6 to inform your prayers:

"But I was born a sinner, yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. You deserve honesty from the heart; yes, utter sincerity and truthfulness. Oh, give me this wisdom."

Spend time in prayer.

- **Accept the consequences of your sin.**

Leader Reads: Sometimes we think that when we confess and repent, God's forgiveness should also wipe away any consequences of our sin. If He did, we would have nothing to remind us not to commit the same sins over and over again. The consequences of sin, although often difficult, help us to turn away from repeating the same wrongs. God loved King David, but the consequence of his actions, adultery and murder, resulted in the death of his first son with Bathsheba. However, after his repentance, Solomon was born to them.

David accepted the extremely difficult circumstance of losing his son (vs. 4): "It is against you and you alone I sinned and did this terrible thing. You saw it all, and your sentence against me is just." Because of Jesus, God does not give us "sentences" and punish us, even though we deserve it. He

does allow the natural consequences of our sins to happen, as mentioned above.

Spend time sitting with God in the midst of one or more consequences you have faced because of sins you have either committed or omitted. Or, if you have not yet experienced a consequence, talk to God about how you feel about that possibility. Allow your Father to comfort you and strengthen you.

Spend time in prayer.

- **Ask God for His forgiveness. Ask Him to purify your heart and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.**

Leader reads: Asking God to forgive us is sometimes difficult when we feel we aren't done beating ourselves up enough, keep holding onto our guilt, or don't feel we have experienced an appropriate consequence.

On the other hand, God's word also tells us that if we have not forgiven another for their offenses towards us, that He will not forgive us: "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins" (Mark 11:25). Matthew 6:15 says, "But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

As you prepare to pray, consider who God may be asking you to forgive as you prepare for this time of prayer. You may wish to ask the Father for the courage to forgive someone who is difficult to forgive. In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35), the servant who was unable to forgive a debt after he had been forgiven by his master for the same kind of debt, was thrown into prison: "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of

you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Allow Psalm 51:1-2 and 7 to inform your prayer time when you have forgiven from your heart: “O loving and kind God, have mercy. Have pity upon me and take away the awful stain of my transgressions. Oh, wash me, cleanse me from this guilt. Let me be pure again.

Sprinkle me with the cleansing blood and I shall be clean again. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.”

Spend time in prayer.

- **Receive His forgiveness with joy and gladness and do not doubt that God rejoices with you and has forgotten your sin forever.**

Leader reads: Doesn't it always feel like a weight has been removed when you are forgiven, and you know that because of Jesus, your sin is forgotten - forever? As you spend time in prayer, receive God's forgiveness with joy and gladness, knowing that God is rejoicing with you. Thank the Father for His amazing gift of forgiveness!

Allow Psalm 51:9, 12 and 19 to inform your prayers:

“Don't keep looking at my sins—erase them from your sight.”

“Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.”

“And when my heart is right, then you will rejoice in the good that I do and in the bullocks I bring to sacrifice upon your altar.”

Spend time in prayer.

- **Recognize that you will sin in this life, and ask God to put within you a desire to obey Him and to live a holy and pure life.**

Leader reads: We all know the frustration of committing the same sins over and over when we wish we could stop. We are in good company! Even the apostle Paul struggled with his sin life, and was very vocal about it: "For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it" (Romans 7:19-20).

So, does that mean it is impossible to live a holy and pure life? Not at all! However, only Jesus lived a perfect and sinless life. So, we are to do everything we can to live a Christlike life, asking God to help us! At the same time, we recognize that we will never achieve perfection, and that's okay. As long as our heart's desire is to obey God and to live like Jesus, every day we will do better. Don't let the devil rob you of victories over sin by keeping you in a state of guilt when God Himself forgives and forgets!

As you pray, ask God to give you a desire to obey Him and to live a pure and holy life. Let Psalm 51:10, 16-17 inform your time of prayer:

"Create in me a new, clean heart, O God, filled with clean thoughts and right desires."

"You don't want penance; if you did, how gladly I would do it! You aren't interested in offerings burned before you on the altar. It is a broken spirit you want—remorse and penitence. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not ignore."

Spend time in prayer.

- **Worship the Father and be determined to teach others His ways.**

Leader reads: The Church today has not done a very good job of teaching about confession and repentance. It is so important, especially for children, to learn how to “keep short accounts with God” and to quickly bring sin before the Father. Just as David made a vow to God that he would teach sinners the way of the Lord, will you ask Him to show you those who need to hear what God has done for you and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior? Teach others the importance of confession and repentance, being sure to also teach the mercy and forgiveness of the Father. Don’t be afraid to talk about consequences. Consider asking God to give you courage to share your own journey with sin when there is an opportunity to strengthen others.

As you pray, let Psalm 51:13 inform your prayer:

“Then I will teach your ways to other sinners, and they—guilty like me—will repent and return to you.”

Spend time in prayer.

*****Consider keeping the PDF of this prayer experience to use whenever you need to be more aware of sin in your life, and as you continually move towards personal revival. It is also a good tool to share with others.**