



Lesson Title: Themes in the Psalms—Psalms of Repentance



Key Concept: The Psalms provide an honest reflection of our human nature and the nature of God. When we follow the steps of repentance as demonstrated in the Psalms, God will always respond positively.



Scriptures:

¹Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. ²Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. ³For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. ⁴Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just.

(Psalm 51:1–4 *New Living Translation*)

¹Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! ²Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty.

(Psalm 32:1–2 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Psalm 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143; Genesis 4:3–13; Proverbs 28:13, Psalm 103:12



Lesson Thoughts:

There are seven penitential, repentance psalms, each of which is comprised of five elements in varying degrees and order, sometimes circling back for further elaboration. These components are the five C's: comprehension (realizing God has deemed something unacceptable), conviction (understanding our guilt in doing the unacceptable), confession (acknowledging our guilt without trying to rationalize), compassion (God's forgiving response to our honesty), and celebration (praise and thanksgiving for forgiveness).

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When we first comprehend the holiness of God and the terrible breach against that holiness by our offense, we automatically assume that God will be angry and wrathful and will punish us. Such terror is laid to rest by the grace and mercy of the Lord. Instead of condemnation, which offers no way out, God sends a conviction which includes the promise of forgiveness. But conviction on its own is not sufficient, as even Cain was convicted but did not repent (Genesis 4). God's conviction demands confession but promises compassion.

When we realize we are wrong, we need to admit it with repentance. As David said in Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God." Without confession, sin continues to hinder our walk (Psalm 32:3–5; Proverbs 28:13). But with confession and repentance, God grants compassionate pardon to us. "He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12). The repeated pleas of those who ask for mercy, those who begin to "do what is right" (Genesis 4:7) are always answered positively.

The climax of all these steps, whether on the way to the Temple, or in deep contrition at a prophet's rebuke, is celebration. Our soul rejoices, forgiven and released from the awful guilt of our sins. Praise and adoration are the natural outpouring of our hearts. We are set free from the chains of shame we forged by disappointing a righteous God! Whether the praise comes first or last in the psalm itself, worship is the soaring completion of a process set in motion and carried to conclusion by a loving God.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) How does God send conviction into our lives?
- 2) Read Psalm 51. What part of David's repentance experience impresses you most?
- 3) How does your experience with repentance match the five C's? How does it not match the five C's? What needs to change?
- 4) What is the practical difference between conviction and condemnation?

Next Lesson: Psalms of Hope

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Notes and Reflections

- 1) Read the seven psalms of repentance (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143) and reflect on the similarities and differences in emphasis and approach to the five C's mentioned in the lesson.
- 2) Note the different settings for these psalms: rebuke by a prophet, going to the Temple for worship, etc. Correlate the setting to the style and approach of the penitent in each.

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Notes and Reflections, cont.