

October 6, 2024

Regret and Remorse or Prayers of Repentance and Confession

Psalm 51:1-4,10-12, 15-17

Unifying Principle (Focus of Lesso

It is challenging for people to acknowledge that they have hurt others. When we have wronged others, how do we make amends for our actions and words? When David's sinful actions caused harm to others, he repented and found forgiveness in the Lord

Goals for the Learners

1. To interpret Psalm 51 through the lens of King David's experience of repentance and forgiveness.
2. To confess personal and corporate sins that require repentance.
3. To adapt David's psalm as a personal model of repentance.

Challenges for the Week

1. Recall a story of your experience of asking for and/or receiving forgiveness.
2. Is any act unforgivable? What are examples?.
3. Watch the waterfall scene in the movie *The Mission*. Wonder about the differences between penance and repentance. When is penance justified? What penance, if any, did David make after he confessed his sin?
4. Review the hymnal for versions of Psalm 51 and other hymns about forgiveness, such as "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy." How do the hymns express the confession and repentance of David?
5. Consider the notion that David's sin broke down the protection that God offered Jerusalem. How does our sin affect God's relationships with others?
6. Study the Hebrew word *chesed*, or "steadfast love." What is the connection between this word and the covenants God established with the people? How does *chesed* relate to *agape* (Greek, "sacrificial love")?

October 13, 2024

We're in a Tight Spot or A Plea for Deliverance

Psalm 22:1-11

Unifying Principle (Focus)

People may feel desperate or alone amid tragic circumstances. What can calm their feelings? Calling on God for help gives a sense of release and bolsters hope for divine rescue.

Goal For the Learner

To draw parallels between the psalmist's experience and what is happening in the world today.

2. To rely on the Lord's help in times of struggle.
3. To identify an area of struggle and offer a prayer for God's help or rescue.

Challenges For the Week

1. Compare the language of suffering in the psalm with David's travails when he was fleeing from Saul (1 Samuel 19–30) or Absalom (2 Samuel 15–17).
2. Make a case for David affirming God as the "Holy One" while experiencing the anguish of suffering. What is the significance of recalling God's past deliverances during a tragedy?
3. What is the difference between suffering out of despair and from self-pity. How are these kinds of suffering qualitatively different?
4. Name ways people suffer as they protest racial inequality, climate, and economic disparities among people. On what issues do we fail to courageously confront our society?
5. Sing a hymn based on Psalm 22, such as "All Ye That Fear Jehovah's Name."
6. What is the response to suffering and despair in the psalm with contemporary issues such as the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements.

October 20, 2024

Dinner Time! Or Praise for Deliverance

Daniel 6:16-23; 25-27

Unifying Principle (Focus)

People seek refuge during the stormy trials of life. Who can encourage and support us in our distress? God's promises and faithfulness can assure us that we will endure until the storm passes.

Goals For Learners

1. To connect Isaiah's historical context to his specific assurances of God's faithfulness.
2. To remain hopeful in God's future deliverance based on God's past actions.
3. To write a personal testimony to God's faithfulness.

Challenges For The Week

1. Review Israel and Judah's eighth-century BCE political context amid Assyria's resurgence. Connect the review to Isaiah's specific assurances of God's faithfulness.
2. Write a personal testimony or song of thanksgiving to God's faithfulness
3. The world suffers because people refuse to look to God. How are you encouraged knowing that nations will worship ("fear") God (v. 3) one day?
4. Review the events that occur on mountains in Scripture and note the symbolic significance of mountains in those stories.
5. Compare Isaiah 25's feast with Psalm 23 (a banquet in the presence of enemies) and Matthew 22 (the wedding banquet).
6. Is God's defeat of death as not merely about the afterlife, but about removing the "shroud" that covers us, the fear and pain that get in the way of God's promised abundant life?

October 27, 2024

Let The Silence Speak or Trust in God Alone

Psalm 62:1-2, 5-12 (include verses 3-4)

Unifying Principle (Focus)

There are times when the fast pace of life keeps us in a frenzy. Where can we find solitude and calm? In stillness and quiet, the psalmist finds God's salvation, hope, refuge, and deliverance.

Goals For the Learners

1. To review the role of stillness and silence in defining Israel's relationship with Yahweh.
2. To experience the calm that comes from knowing God as a source of peace and protection.
3. To recall an experience where turning to God in silence brought greater peace than turning to alternative sources of solitude.

Challenges For the Week

1. How does Psalm 62 capture the tone of our times—assaults, lies, cursing, hypocrisy, materialism, meanness, everyone trying to topple someone else?
2. Offer a presentation to your church on how stillness and silence reflect Israel's relationship to Yahweh. Silence shows proper respect and attention to learn God's will and purpose. Stillness echoes the Sabbath rest, which witnesses to Israel's dependence on God rather than on human strength and endeavor. See Exodus 14:14 and Psalm 46:10.
3. Ponder the significance of escaping the modern world's noise—name times when you have sought silence and describe the experience.
4. Play Van Morrison's song "Hymns to the Silence" and compare it to the emotion of Psalm 62.
5. Locate the chant version of Psalm 62 by Robert Batastini. Ask your church musician or look at https://hymnary.org/tune/rest_in_god_alone_rest_in_god_batastini. Sing the chant by asking a leader to sing the verses while the group sings the refrain. How does the music capture the mood of the psalm?