

GROUP LEADERS NOTES ON PSALM 51

Question 1

- a) David sees his need of mercy (v1a); but knows he has no claim to the favour for which he begs.
- b) He sees that he has transgressed. To transgress is to cross the boundary line between good and evil and to have gone completely over to the other side (see **Rom 3:23**).
- c) David sees his need of complete cleansing; such is the seriousness of his sin.
- d) He appeals to love, which is solid and unwavering (steadfast); and to mercy which is plentiful, though unmerited (abundant). Notice that he cannot appeal to justice; or to merit; or to achievement: **Psalm 103:10**.
- e) Steadfast love is a covenant term and reminds us that when His people strayed; God did not!

Question 2

- a) When we sin we primarily offend God because it is He who sets the bar in terms of how we should behave.
- b) It is His glory that we offend.
- c) *“The virus of sin lies in its opposition to God: the psalmist's sense of sin towards others rather tended to increase the force of this feeling of sin against God. All his wrong doing centred, culminated, and came to a climax, at the foot of the divine throne. To injure our fellow men is sin, mainly because in so doing we violate the law of God. The penitent's heart was so filled with a sense of the wrong done to the Lord Himself, that all other confession was swallowed up in a broken hearted acknowledgment of offence against Him”* (Spurgeon).
- d) God is justified in His assessment of our sin and whatever judgement He sees fit to give out is perfect; because He is holy.
- e) Any judgement we make is affected by our unrighteousness.

Question 3

- a) David wants God to delight in him again (v6a). That should always be our goal.
- b) He longs that he would be in that position where he walks with the Lord and learns from His word (v6b).
- c) David wants to know the real joy in his whole being (v8) that comes only in being right with God (v7).
- d) In Leviticus 14 a bunch of the Hyssop plant was dipped as a sprinkler in the cleansing of a leper.

Question 4

The process:

- For God to forgive and forget. To blot out sin from the record or 'from the book' (v9).
- A renewal that determines to turn away from sin and follow another path (v10). The word 'create' indicates nothing less than a miracle that is required on God's part in the life of the sinner. Such is the new creation in the gospel!
- To know complete forgiveness and the power of the Spirit to live a life pleasing to God (v11).
- To know again the joy of being in right relationship with God (v12).

These parts of the process find their fulfilment in repentance when we are saved; and also during those times when as believers we need to go back to God for forgiveness (see **1 John 1:9**).

Question 5

- a) David will have a powerful testimony of grace in his life which he will tell others of. They too can share the wonder of sins forgiven.
- b) Paul is a great example of what happens when a life is transformed: **1 Tim 1:12-17**.
- c) David will be able to sing about God's righteousness without that feeling of guilt that he has offended it (v14). The forgiveness is the mechanism to release his tongue.
- d) Being in right relationship with God will release him to praise (v15). The estrangement with God has held him back (**1 Pet 2:9**).

Question 6

- a) So often in the Old Testament the people of God carried on an outward observance of religion but it did not affect the heart.
- b) We see this as the problem with King Saul back in **1 Sam 15:22-23**.
- c) In the New Testament Jesus is scathing about the Scribes and Pharisees: **Matt 23:23-28**.
- d) We can easily go through the motions of Christianity without it affecting our heart and lives.