

# *Pursuing God*

## In Step with the Psalms

### Lesson 5: Psalm 32

## The Joy of Forgiveness

### *Stay on the Path ~*

Would you be willing to have your sins paraded in public for everyone to see? How about written down in the newspaper, broadcast on the evening news, or put up on the internet for the world to view and even post their comments? King David was willing to share openly about what he had personally learned from his own painful failures and for that believers down through the ages can give thanks to God!

Whether a sin is small or large in one's own eyes, in God's eyes it is tantamount to open rebellion against Him. It is a horrible moment when we realize we have rebelled against God and that is why we must never attempt to minimize or trivialize our sin, but to see it from God's perspective; to understand it is our sin that nailed Jesus Christ to the cross. It is the price for which He had to die. We owed a debt we could not pay; He paid the price He did not owe to save us and allow us to spend eternity with Him.

The story behind Psalm 32 reflects the time when King David sent his troops into battle while he remained at home. He committed an adulterous sin with a woman named Bathsheba, and then he attempted to cover up the sin by sending her husband to the front lines of the battle to be killed. David continued to live with his guilt for an entire year, becoming mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually ill as a result of keeping it hidden until he was confronted by a man sent from God. Only then did he confess, receive the forgiveness of God, and then compose it into a song to pass on to others.

### *Did you know ~*

This is the first *Maschil* psalm recorded in the book of psalms. This type of psalm was meant to be used as an instructional tool for teaching. David composed it following his confrontation by Nathan the prophet when he was exposed for deception, adultery, and murder. His purpose in writing was to teach God's people the joyful blessings that are theirs as a result of confessing their sins to the Lord. Psalm 32 ultimately became a part of the closing worship service on the annual Day of Atonement when God's people collectively ask God to forgive their sins.

## Psalm 32

A Psalm of David. A Contemplation.

1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
Whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord  
does not impute iniquity,  
And in whose spirit there is no deceit.

3 When I kept silent, my bones grew old  
Through my groaning all the day long.

4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;  
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah

5 I acknowledged my sin to You,  
And my iniquity I have not hidden.  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"  
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

6 For this cause everyone who is godly  
Shall pray to You  
In a time when You may be found;  
Surely in a flood of great waters  
They shall not come near him.

7 You are my hiding place;  
You shall preserve me from trouble;  
You shall surround me with  
songs of deliverance. Selah

8 I will instruct you and teach you in  
The way you should go;  
I will guide you with My eye.

9 Do not be like the horse or the mule,  
Which have no understanding,  
Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle,  
Else they will not come near you.

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked;  
But he who trusts in the Lord,  
Mercy shall surround him.

11 Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous;  
And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Scripture from the New King James Bible, ©1980 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

**Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.**

**Read Psalm 32:1–11.**

### *Listen to the psalm ~ First impressions*

What is the *tone* of the psalm? What stands out to you from your initial reading?

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What joys could be yours if you were to openly confess your sins to God?

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### *Put a psalm in your heart ~ (Memory verse) Psalm 32:5*

(Write out the verse in the spaces below. Practice it each time you open your lesson.)

*I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah*

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## *Learn the lessons of the psalm ~*

*Selah* (Think about):

The experience and expression of David's forgiveness actually came about a full year after he sinned and then covered it up. Once he entered into the freedom of his forgiveness, he had to share the joy of it with others.

### *I. God's people can celebrate the forgiveness of sin ~ vv. 1–2*

Instead of beginning with a list of his sins, David starts this psalm with praises everyone in the assembly can hear. His acceptance with God was now all that mattered to him. He uses the word *blessed* (see Psalm 1:1 and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5), which can best be translated "happy, exuberant, joyful." It is in the plural form, magnifying the intensity of the word.

1. According to David's jubilant expression to the congregation in verses 1–2, who is the "blessed" person?

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## *Pause & ponder ~*

There are four words used for *sin* in verses 1 and 2, each conveying a different aspect. What we have in these verses is a beautiful example of poetic parallelism; four words used side by side to cover the big picture of what sin actually means. Take a moment to consider each of the four words below and glance back at the scripture text in Psalm 32 to understand how David uses each one in context.

- *Transgressions* (v.1a): from the Hebrew word *pasha*, meaning defiance or rebellion against God. It involves a willful choice to depart from and defy Him. A transgression may be acted out against another person that is hurt by the sin, but it is actually a deliberate act against God's rightful authority.

- *Sin* (v. 1b): (Hebrew word *hataa*) means to “miss the mark, to go wrong, to miss the way, and to go astray.” It conveys the image of an archer with a bow and arrow shooting at a nearby target but missing it and falling short. In reality it refers to the man or woman that misses the mark of God’s Word, falling short of His glory and holiness. (See Romans 3:23).
- *Iniquity* (also *sin* v. 2a): is translated from the Hebrew word *awon*, meaning “crooked, twisted, bent, perverse, and corrupted.” Any and all sin causes a twisting or a bend of a person’s character, a compromising of integrity.
- *Deceit* (v. 2b): translated from the Hebrew word *remiya*, meaning “deception” as in self-deception. David lived with his own self-deception for an entire year, causing him to live a lie.

## *Touchpoint ~*

Notice: the first word *transgression*, pertains to sin in our relationship with God. The second word *sin*, deals with our relationship to God’s Word—the application of it to our own lives. The third word *iniquity*, has to do with a person’s relationship to self. In other words, it is a *self-defilement*, *self-corrupting*, *twisting* of one’s own character.

Tragically, David’s sin involved all of the above types of sin, resulting in the fourth—*deceit*—that caused him to live with the lie in his own heart for a year in an attempt to cover up his sin. His attempts to justify and rationalize his actions resulted in him being weighed down, which also affected the lives of others around him.

Personal: Would you take a moment to consider if God is speaking to you about one or all of these sins and record your thoughts below? Think about what happens to your inner character and the potential impact on others. (Please feel free to keep this between you and God for now.)

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The good news is that joyful blessing comes to the person whose sins are *forgiven*—(Hebrew *nasa*), literally meaning to “have one’s sins lifted off” (v. 1). What David covered up for a year—the adultery, murder, and hypocrisy—once confessed brought forgiveness. God lifted it off of David and put it out of His sight—He *covered* it (v. 1). It is a reference to the Day of Atonement when Israel’s high priest took the blood from an unblemished animal that had been sacrificed and carried that blood into the Most Holy Place, where he then sprinkled it onto the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant to symbolize atonement—forgiveness of sins.

## *II. Concealment and confession both have consequences ~ vv. 3–5*

The psalm now shifts from the present in vv. 1–2 to the past reflection of the time when David concealed the truth. Read the drama for yourself as it unfolds in **2 Samuel 11:1–27**, then record your findings below.

1. In a sentence or two, briefly summarize what you learn about . . . from this passage.
  - a. David—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Uriah—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. God—
  
2. Using David's imagery from Psalm 32:3–4, describe what he experienced as the consequence of his sin took hold of him. What toll did the effects of his sin have on his physical and emotional well-being?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Now read the follow up to the story in **2 Samuel 12:1–25**.
  - a. Who sent the prophet Nathan to David? v. 1 (What does this teach you about God?)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Briefly describe the story illustration Nathan shared with David in vv. 1–4.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. What was David's immediate response to the injustice? vv. 5–6

- d. What was the message the Lord sent Nathan to disclose to David? How did David respond to it? vv. 7–13
- e. What was the collateral damage as the result of David's sin? v. 14 (Think about how serious this can be.)
- f. How did this affect David personally? vv. 14–23

Was there a consequence? Yes, and in David's case a huge one—the loss of his newborn son. God was faithful to confront David, offering him the opportunity to repent and confess his sin, which he did. Once he stopped deceiving himself, David acknowledged and accepted his responsibility, receiving God's forgiveness and blessing.

- 4. In Psalm 32:5, David stated the truth of his sin in three different ways; what did he say? (Compare these statements in v. 5 with the earlier definitions of sin defined on pages 4 and 5 of your lesson.)
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.

### *Pause & ponder ~*

Read the words of David's exact confession following this sin in **Psalm 51:1–19** (which we will look at in depth in a future lesson). Record any thoughts that come to mind.

David did not make any further attempts to cover up what he had done. He confessed his sin to Nathan but, ultimately, his sin was against God! The word *confess* literally means “to agree with God.” In this context it is the Hebrew word *yada*, which means to declare openly or to speak out openly to God. Once his actions demonstrated true repentance, he declared: *And You forgave the iniquity of my sin*. The burden was finally lifted—for good!

### *III. David offers advice about confession of sins ~ vv. 6–11*

Having experienced true forgiveness for himself, David goes on to instruct and encourage God's people to do the same: *For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found* (v. 6). He continues to pray using the imagery of a believer whose well-being is threatened by the potential floodwaters of God's chastening. If he confesses, such tragedy need not come near him (v. 7).

- 1 What did David consider God to be for him? What would David find there? v. 7
  
2. From the deepest despair there arose songs of praise in David's soul! As a result, he wanted to counsel others with what he had learned, instructing them in the path of forgiveness. vv. 7–11
  - a. What would he tell them? v. 8 (In vv. 8–9, David was repeating words God has used.)
  
  - b. What warning did he issue? What do *you* think he was referring to when he used this example? v. 9
  
  - c. Because David trusted in the Lord and experienced His faithfulness firsthand, what truth does he communicate to the hearers of this song? v. 10

The psalm ends the way it began—with the invitation to rejoice in the Lord and be glad! It is a call for every believer to sing the praises of God from the depth of their being—for He alone is worthy to be praised!

### *Pause & ponder ~*

Personal: Is *your life* a living testimony to God's faithfulness? Has He lifted the weight of your sin? Would you like for Him to? Just turn to Him now in prayer . . .

*Direct my steps by Your word and let no iniquity have dominion over me.*  
Psalm 119:133



## *Live the psalm ~*

What have you learned this week about confession and forgiveness from your study of Psalm 32? How will you apply this learning to your life?

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## *Pray the psalm ~*

Select a verse(s) from Psalm 32 that spoke to your heart, write it out below, and pray it back to the Lord with joy and thanksgiving.

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