

Series: Practice Makes Perfect
Message: Practice for Holiness
Date: June 12/13
Passage: Psalm 51:1-19

The crystal formations of snowflakes are beautiful. They have many different shapes and sizes and are each unique. But they have one thing in common – dirty hearts. Snow crystals are formed around tiny bits of dirt that have been carried into the atmosphere by the wind. Snowflakes are really soil particles that have been dressed up in ice.

Man is the greatest of all God's creations – we're his pride and joy. But we, like snowflakes, share this in common – we all have dirty hearts. Everyone's life is marked by sin; original sin follows and flows through every life. So how do we clean up our lives when sin is at the heart of our humanity? David shows us how in Psalm 51 by modeling for us how to get unstuck and understand holiness.

1. Introduction: Describe a time you got stuck and needed help or a time when someone else was stuck and you helped them.

Leaders Tip: Allow 8-10 minutes for people to respond. You may want to have a response ready to model the kind of thinking you hope to get out of the group. I remember making an emergency landing in Goose Bay, Canada. It was scary. The landing was smooth but it was cold outside. Our plane was stuck there for around 5 hours. We couldn't get out and it was hot in the plane, real hot. You can imagine how the rest of the story goes and how we eventually got unstuck and got in the air. Anyway, let people think as they share how they got unstuck from something or how they helped someone get unstuck. The emotion of this question will remind people of how sin gets us stuck but God's forgiveness and grace makes us holy.

2. Observation: Read Psalm 51: 1-19. What do you learn about getting unstuck from David?

Leaders Tip: Allow at least 10 minutes for your group to respond. This passage is deep and has many observations. Don't be afraid of silence as your group reads and responds to the passage. There is a lot to think about in here as David looks at his heart and is reminded of what forgiveness and holiness looks like

2 Samuel 11-12 is the context for Psalm 51. David commits adultery with Bathsheba. Then, while trying to cover up his first sin, he makes matters worse and compounds his problem by committing murder. It's not until the prophet Nathan confronts David that he finally repents. Psalm 51 is the outflow of that experience.

God alone has the ability to forgive; we need to beg for God's mercy when we sin (vv. 1-2). Sin has consequences that take a toll on our life, so we need to admit to God that we are guilty (v. 3). First and foremost our sin is against God who is justified in handing out the consequences he does to us when we sin against him and remain unrepentant (v. 4). We are just as "lost" as all of mankind has been since the day in the Garden of Eden (v. 5). True repentance takes place deep inside our heart and life (v. 6). Sin saps us of our joy and saddens our heart (v. 8). Sin sours our spirit and makes us critical, judgmental people (v. 10). Sin separates us from God and makes us feel alone and isolated (v. 11). The joy of our salvation is restored when we come clean; and we want to obey God (v. 12). Forgiveness makes us want to reach out to others who need forgiveness and reconciliation (vv. 12-13). What God most desires from us is a broken spirit and a broken and repentant heart (v. 17).

3. Understanding: Where do you see people stuck today and where do they go for help?

Leaders Tip: Give your group about 5-7 minutes to respond.

4a. Application: Where do you find yourself stuck and what truth from this passage can help you this week?

Leaders Tip: Allow your group 10 minutes to respond.

4b. Application: In what ways can you apply one of the following this week; 1. Making holiness a priority 2. Keeping short accounts 3. Rejecting sin at all levels 4. Pursuing Jesus Daily?

Leaders Tip: Allow your group 10 minutes to respond. These are the 4 points Doyle used in his message. Allow your group time to pick one and respond to how they will live it out in everyday life.

Pray: This lesson in particular lends itself to closing the night in prayer. You would hate to leave the evening sharing such personal information and making such personal commitments without the support and encouragement of those in your group.

Greater Impact Question of the week – What excites you most as you see the new Worship Center being constructed and all that is happening at SCG this year?

Leaders Tip: Soon we will be in a new Worship Center and enjoying a much improved campus. We don't want to forget why SCG is moving forward as a church and creating a place for more people to know and worship Christ. For the next several weeks we want the participants in your small group to talk about how they can make a greater impact. Spend a few minutes asking your group the question above. It's important that as a church we don't lose sight of where and why we are going there!

Study Notes:

...blot out...wash me clean...purify me (vv. 1-2)

The three verbs David uses here are figurative. **Blot out** implies a comparison with human records that can be erased; **wash clean** is a comparison to washing clothes; and **purify** is drawn from the liturgical ceremonial law in which one might be cleansed in order to participate in temple services. These requests stressed David's desire for God's total forgiveness.

...renew a right spirit within me (v. 10)

Eugene Peterson in *The Message* translates verse 10 in this way: "God, make a fresh start in me, shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my life." David knew that to experience the joy he once had in his salvation, he needed God's inner spiritual renewal.

...I will teach your ways to sinners.... Unseal my lips...that I may praise you (vv. 13, 15)

In the Old Testament, anyone who sinned as David did had to receive a word from a priest or prophet indicating he was forgiven. Only then could the penitent person again take part in worship and make a peace offering.

The sacrifice you want is...a broken and repentant heart (v. 17)

David knew that God did not simply want an animal sacrifice from him (as was the Old Testament requirement). Rather, the sacrifice God wanted from David was a humbled spirit – one that was genuinely sorry for his sin.

Look with favor on Zion...rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (vv. 18-19)

These verses are often considered a later addition to the psalm because they don't readily relate to the theme of the psalm. Some scholars think these verses are a prayer for the general prosperity of the city's defenses, but they could also be figurative, requesting that the moral defenses of the nation be strengthened.

