Psalm 51

1. How much guilt do you carry around for past sins? Recalling the context in which David wrote this Psalm (2 Samuel 11-12), how might a person dare to ask God for forgiveness? sin?

2. Read Psalm 51:1-2. On what basis does David approach God? Why might it be hard for a person to approach God on this basis?

3. What does David’s threefold description of “transgression” (crossing the line), “iniquity” (perverse in heart) and “sin” (missing the mark) tell us about ourselves?

4. How does David describe God? How did David know what God was like? How do we know what God is like?

5. Read Psalm 51:3-6. What position did David’s sin place him in (vv3-4)? What right does God have to hold us accountable for sin (v4)?

6. Why should we view our sinful acts as symptoms of a deeper problem according to vv5-6?

7. Read Psalm 51:7-12. How is God’s forgiveness described in vv7-9? How has God made it possible to do for us what’s described in these verses?

8. What is the process that forgiveness of sin begins (vv10-12)? Where are you in that process?

9. Why was v11 an understandable prayer for David to pray, but not something that a Christian needs to pray? (See 1 Sam 16:14, John 14:15-16, Eph 1:13-14)

10. Read Psalm 51:13-19. What is the outward effect of forgiveness according to vv13-15? What does this imply about how to get witness and mission going?

11. What is the inward effect of forgiveness according to vv16-17? What should drive our sacrifice and service?

12. What should the marks be of a community of genuinely forgiven sinners according to vv18-19? Does our church bear those marks? How can we increase them?

13. How can we ensure that forgiveness remains at the centre of our Christian experience? Are there specific sins that you need to confess to God now?