

April 19

Discussion Guide

Face the Issue:

In his message this week Brian reminded us of who we are. We are sinners. It is not very politically correct to admit that. That is the central message of the central verse Brian shared. We like the darkness. That is part of our fallen nature. We have to work at admitting that. It is not easy for us to do.

The words to the old hymn "At the Cross" have been changed in many hymnals from "such a worm as I" to "sinners such as I." The phrase could be changed again, if the current dislike of the word *sinners* were considered. Maybe, "victims such as I."

Why is it so hard for people to think of themselves as sinners?

Has the way people perceive their responsibility changed over the years?

How comfortable is our society with the notion of God as judge?

How comfortable should we be with the concept of ourselves as sinners?

Into the Word

Read Psalm 51.

A little background. This psalm was written by David after Nathan confronted him with his sinful nature. David had lustful thoughts for Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. He slept with her and then had Uriah sent to the front lines of the war so that he would be killed. David had broken three commandments and Nathan, the prophet, pointed this out to him. As king, David could have had Nathan imprisoned and ignored him. Instead he admitted to his sin and his sinful nature. He then poured his heart out to God.

In this psalm, David reveals 4 things about himself that we need to know about ourselves:

- 1- *"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight"*- Psalm 51:4. David had hurt a lot of people. Uriah, Bathsheba, the son born from their adultery, etc. But he comes to realize that their hurt is ultimately the result of his sin against God. If he had not done that, they would not have been hurt. All sin against people is against the One who made them and who made the laws to protect them.
- 2- *"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."*- Psalm 51:5. Human beings are sinners from the beginning. David concludes that he had been a sinner for as long as he could remember, quite a confession for a king whose every deed had earned him praise. If it applies to him, it applies to all of us.
- 3- *"Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place."*- Psalm 51:6. While we are sinful by nature, God desires us to be knowledgeable. He wants us full of truth and wisdom.
- 4- *"Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness."* -Psalm 51:14. Sin deserves death. David confesses he deserves

death: he is the adulterer, the conspirator, the murderer. He admits that his sin should require his own life. Again, he begs God for mercy. He vows to turn from sin to righteousness, and to live publicly a righteous life as a testimony to God's mercy and forgiveness.

David recognizes what he has done, confesses it, and repents for his sin. Repentance brings us back to God. It is important to understand that even after we accept Christ as Savior, we will have moments that sin enters our lives. It is ongoing contrition that keeps us in a flexible, moldable state. It keeps us from hardening our hearts. David refers to this as knowing again the joy of God's salvation. It is this joy that allows us to truly love others and to reach them with God's love.

How does David say his repentance will be played out in verses 13–17? What specific things will he do?

What is the role of these acts of worship and thanksgiving in renewing, maintaining, and deepening your own repentance?

How does one person's repentance influence others?

Apply The Word

Do you think of yourself as a sinner? Do you want to?

In what ways is it spiritually healthy to accept yourself as a sinner?

Can the label "sinner" keep us from moving forward? How would the term "recovering sinner" be helpful in understanding the continuing nature of repentance?

Will you make ongoing repentance a spiritual goal? If so, how?