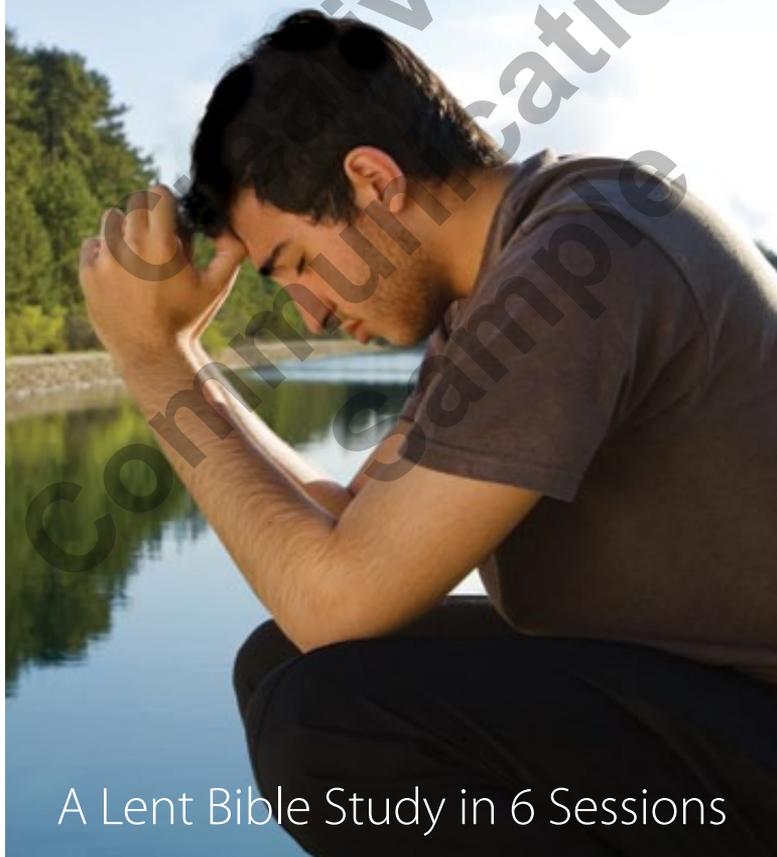


PRAYING

The Psalms of Lent



A Lent Bible Study in 6 Sessions

**Creative
Communications
Sample**

PRAYING

The Psalms of Lent

A Lent Bible Study in 6 Sessions

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Introduction

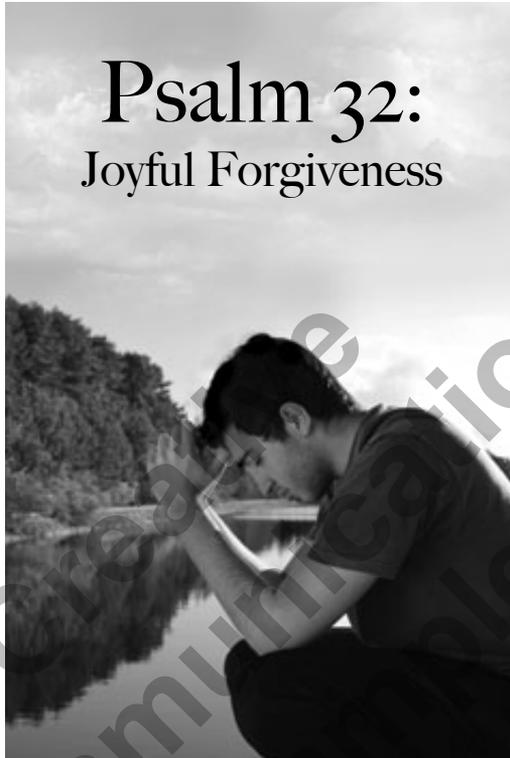
St. Paul writes, “Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father” (Eph 5:18–20). With these words the apostle invites us to pray the Psalter’s meditations, cries, shouts, and songs in light of the salvation accomplished by God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. This Lent we will do so using the Seven Penitential Psalms, so named by Cassiodorus (c. 485–c. 585 AD) in the 6th century AD. For centuries Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102 and 130 have served as a source of prayer and reflection during Lent. Their honest confessions invite us to turn to our Lord with the same candor and humility. These prayers are so fitting at expressing contrition that, as he lay dying in AD 430, St. Augustine asked that they be written in large letters near his bed. This study will write the Penitential Psalms large upon our hearts as they invite us to come as sinners before a holy God in order that we might receive his love and mercy anew.

Tips For Using This Study Guide

1. Always begin each session with a prayer. One is included for each session. You are encouraged to expand each of them with prayer concerns from the group.
2. Feel free to follow the format of each session as presented here or rearrange and adapt the material to meet the needs of your group.
3. You will need Bibles to look up the verses listed in each session. Bible verses are printed out in each Assignment For Next Session for convenience.
4. As you work through the material in this study guide, be sure to write down in the margins any questions that come to mind or any thoughts that arise in the course of the discussion and your contemplation of each session's Scripture verses.
5. If you are using this guide in a group setting, consider assigning printed Bible verses to various people in the class to read aloud at the appropriate time. This will move the session along more efficiently.

Note that some of the questions ask for facts. Typically, the answers to these questions will come from the Scripture verses just read. Other questions are more subjective, asking for your opinion or an example from your own experience. Since your life experiences are different from anyone else's, answers to these questions are neither right nor wrong. A Leader's Guide that accompanies this material is available from Creative Communications for the Parish (Code FLE).

SESSION TWO



Opening Prayer

Father of all mercy, we confess that though hatred, envy and a hunger that hunts after people's approval and applause have been crucified and drowned in the waters of baptism, they rise again and again in our sinful hearts. As we recall our great sins, many temptations and innumerable faults, bring to us anew your great grace that saves such wretches like us, for there is no joy so wonderful as knowing that we are fully forgiven through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Synopsis of the Theme

You probably remember that one man who led a long procession. The police cars were not in the lead; rather he was leading with the police cars following. TV news cameras from different helicopters caught the scene and were broadcasting it live. They knew where this man lived, so some officers were quickly dispatched to his home to meet him there. He was allowed to enter his house, speak to his mother, and have a glass of orange juice, which brought laughter from the reporters covering the story. This was the famous ride of O.J. Simpson, on June 17, 1994. Accused of murdering his ex-wife and her friend, O.J. Simpson's life was shoved under the microscope. Prosecutors began looking for every shred of forensic evidence they could find in order to produce a verdict of "guilty." The trial produced such national and worldwide attention that the courtroom was literally "center stage" for weeks and weeks. The County of Los Angeles reportedly spent so much money prosecuting this one case that it ran out of money to prosecute other cases. After O.J. famously couldn't put the black leather gloves on his hands and was found "not guilty," many believed that the evidence had been tampered with, that there had been a huge cover up. David most certainly was involved in a cover up; though in Psalm 32 he admits it and finds forgiveness in spite of it.

Icebreaker

Do you think O.J. was guilty or innocent? Did his legal team cover up the evidence? When was a time you tried to cover up something? What happened?

Outline of Psalm 32

Ps 32:1–2: Instructions regarding sin and forgiveness

Ps 32:3–5: David affirms truth for himself

Ps 32:6–7: David reaffirms the power of forgiveness

Ps 32:8: The Lord's word to David

Ps 32:9–11: Instructions regarding wisdom and joy

The psalm begins and ends with instructions about joyful living; in between are David's confession of sin and the assurance of divine pardon. God only speaks directly in Ps 32:8 where he commands all to walk in the way that leads to honesty, joy and freedom.

Questions

1. Read Ps 32:1–2. How do you define *blessed*?
2. Read Gen 15:6 and Rom 4:6–8. How do these verses shed light on Ps 32:1–2?
3. Behind the English word *LORD* is the Hebrew term *Yahweh*. What does *Yahweh* mean?
4. Ps 32:1, 5 employ the term *transgression*. What do you think that means?
5. What is so deadly about silence when it comes to our transgressions?
6. Read Ps 32:4. What happens when God's hand is heavy upon us?
7. Read Ps 32:5. The term *forgave* literally means lifted up. How is this an apt picture for forgiveness?
8. Read Ps 32:7. How is forgiveness like a shelter?
9. Ps 32:8 is the only place in the psalm where God speaks directly. Why are these comforting words?
10. Read Ps 32:10–11. Who are the wicked and the righteous?

Closing Prayer

(Psalm 32)

- L** *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,*
C **whose sin is covered.**
- L** *Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,*
C **and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**
- L** *For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away*
C **through my groaning all day long.**
- L** *For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;*
C **my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**
- L** *I acknowledged my sin to you,*
C **and I did not cover my iniquity;**
- L** *I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"*
C **and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.**
- L** *Therefore let everyone who is godly*
C **offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;**
- L** *surely in the rush of great waters,*
C **they shall not reach him.**
- L** *You are a hiding place for me;*
C **you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.**
- L** *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;*
C **I will counsel you with my eye upon you.**
- L** *Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,*
C **which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.**
- L** *Many are the sorrows of the wicked,*
C **but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.**
- L** *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,*
C **and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!**
- L** *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,*
C **as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Assignment For Next Session

- Read Psalm 38:

1 O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger,
nor discipline me in your wrath!

2 For your arrows have sunk into me,
and your hand has come down on me.

3 There is no soundness in my flesh
because of your indignation;
there is no health in my bones
because of my sin.

4 For my iniquities have gone over my head;
like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.

5 My wounds stink and fester
because of my foolishness,

6 I am utterly bowed down and prostrate;
all the day I go about mourning.

7 For my sides are filled with burning,
and there is no soundness in my flesh.

8 I am feeble and crushed;
I groan because of the tumult of my heart.

9 O Lord, all my longing is before you;
my sighing is not hidden from you.

10 My heart throbs; my strength fails me,
and the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me.

11 My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague,
and my nearest kin stand far off.

12 Those who seek my life lay their snares;
those who seek my hurt speak of ruin
and meditate treachery all day long.

13 But I am like a deaf man; I do not hear,
like a mute man who does not open his mouth.

14 I have become like a man who does not hear,
and in whose mouth are no rebukes.

15 But for you, O Lord, do I wait;
it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer.
16 For I said, "Only let them not rejoice over me,
who boast against me when my foot slips!"

17 For I am ready to fall,
and my pain is ever before me.

18 I confess my iniquity;
I am sorry for my sin.

19 But my foes are vigorous, they are mighty,
and many are those who hate me wrongfully.

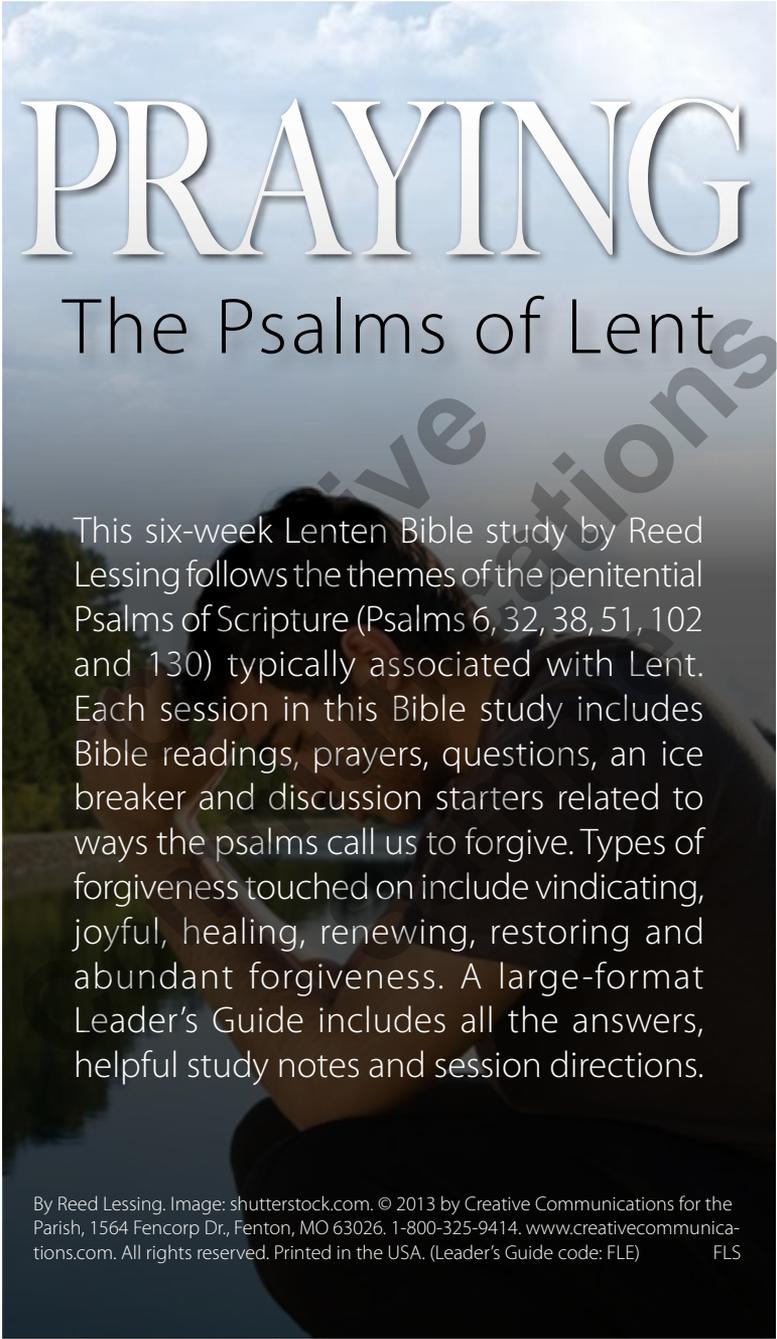
20 Those who render me evil for good
accuse me because I follow after good.

21 Do not forsake me, O Lord!
O my God, be not far from me!

22 Make haste to help me,
O Lord, my salvation!

Ask yourself:

1. What is the connection between sin and physical pain?
2. How do Ps 38:4, 18 function in the prayer?
3. How does a forgiven sinner live?



PRAYING

The Psalms of Lent

This six-week Lenten Bible study by Reed Lessing follows the themes of the penitential Psalms of Scripture (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102 and 130) typically associated with Lent. Each session in this Bible study includes Bible readings, prayers, questions, an ice breaker and discussion starters related to ways the psalms call us to forgive. Types of forgiveness touched on include vindicating, joyful, healing, renewing, restoring and abundant forgiveness. A large-format Leader's Guide includes all the answers, helpful study notes and session directions.

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