

Create in Me a Clean Heart

Psalm 51 - NCBC, December 2, 2018

Main Point: **Repentance is God's means of restoring joy to the sinner.**

- **Repentance takes responsibility for my own sin** (1-6)
 - Confessing what I've done (2-3)
 - Confessing who I've become (4-5)
 - Confessing what I've won [earned] (1, 4, 6)
- **Repentance trusts God for joyful restoration** (7-12)
 - Only God can forgive sin (7, 9, 14)
 - Only God can restore joy (8, 11-12)
 - Only God can recreate me (10, 12)
- **Repentance testifies of God's righteousness to others** (13-19)
 - Witnessing in humility (13-15)
 - Worshipping in submission (16-17)
 - Wanting God's pleasure (18-19)

Application: **Humbly pursue the joy of repentance for your sin.**

<<Communion>>

Opening Announcements:

- Search team update on pursuit of new Associate Pastor of Music & Worship – Please keep praying!!

<<Give us clean hands>>



Thank you for singing that fitting prayer as we come to the part of our worship together when we focus on the preaching of God's Word.

Psalm 51 is one of New Castle Bible Church's top 5 favorite psalms, and is a very appropriate study for us on this Communion Sunday. So please make sure your heart is open along with your Bible to **Psalm 51**.



If you don't have a Bible today, simply raise your hand and we'd be delighted to give you one. **Psalm 51** is on page ____ in the giveaway Bibles today. Last week Pastor Ritch Boerckel taught us well on the subject of forgiveness from **Colossians chapter 3**. It was a powerful sermon that greatly convicted my own soul, and I trust was an encouragement to you as well.

Pastor Ritch exhorted us to reach out and pursue reconciliation with anyone who has sinned against us. So how did that go for you this last week?

The pursuit of reconciliation and forgiveness is not for wimps. It's never easy nor convenient. But it is the practice of forgiven Christians. After all, after Christ has forgiven us so much, how could we not also forgive those who have sinned against us?¹

May God help each one of us to walk by His Spirit, and freely extend grace to those who have hurt us this week – that the reconciling power of the Gospel might be demonstrated among us – all for our greater joy in Christ!



Please stand in honor of the public reading of God's Word, as I now read **Psalm 51**. I am reading from the **English Standard Translation**.

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN NATHAN THE PROPHET WENT TO HIM, AFTER HE HAD GONE IN TO BATHSHEBA.

¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

¹ Matthew 18:21-35; Ephesians 4:31-32

- ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶ For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
- ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- ¹⁸ Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem;
- ¹⁹ then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

This is the word of our Lord. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

Psalm 51 is one of seven psalms of repentance found in the Psalter.² **Psalm 51** is one of just 14 psalms where the Biblical text includes a historical superscription telling us more about the background or the author or the purpose of this particular song.

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

The full record of what led up to this Psalm is contained in **2 Samuel 11 and 12**, and I recommend taking time later today to go back and review those two chapters. But for now, here's a quick review of **2 Samuel 11 and 12**:

King David committed adultery with a woman named Bathsheba and got her pregnant. When David's plans to hide his sin failed, David had Bathsheba's husband murdered, married Bathsheba, and thereby made her child appear as a premature product of their marriage together.

Likely more than 1 year passed. David thought he had gotten away with his sin. Bathsheba was no longer depressed, their cute son was growing and was well loved, and the kingdom was progressing forward. Admittedly David's conscience still bothered him. He couldn't ever shake his guilt – but as far as David could tell – no one else knew what he had done. He had been able to keep his sin a secret. He had gotten away with it.

Do you ever think you've gotten away with secret sin?
Have you ever started to believe the lie that your sin

² The others are Psalm 6, 32, 38, 102, 130, and 143.

really won't hurt anyone as long as they never find out about it?

Loved ones – if you have sinned against God – you don't just need more time to pass before your spiritual joy will return. You need to repent. The theme we are going to trace through David's prayer in **Psalm 51** today is that,



Repentance is God's means of restoring joy to the sinner.

Here's the Gospel truth – there's no such thing as a secret sin. God knows and sees it all.

So in **2 Samuel 12** God graciously sends Nathan the prophet to David – to confront him and to call him to repentance. And by the kindness of God, David is brought to repentance,³ and restored back into joy with His God.

Psalm 51 then is a prayer to pray after you have sinned. When you desire to take your sin more seriously, meditate on **Psalm 51**. When you desire to feed your

faith in God's merciful and forgiving nature – read **Psalm 51**. For this psalm of David teaches us that repentance is God's means of restoring lasting joy to sinners like you and like me.

First, **verses 1-6** demonstrate how,



Repentance takes responsibility for my own sin

Repentance does not play the victim or blame-shift. Biblical repentance begins by accepting full personal responsibility for both the fruit and the root of my own sin.

To repent literally means to change my mind to such an extent that I change my direction of living. When I sin, I actually believe that sin will make me happy in some way, or protect me from some kind of pain. But repentance thinks differently. Repentance believes that God is the source of ultimate joy and rest. Repentance is a way of thinking which is in full agreement with God.

The biblical word for agreeing with God is the word, "confession." To confess our sins in Scripture is not to

³ 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10

tell God something He didn't already know – but to agree with God's view of our sin.

So therefore, in **verses 1-3**, we hear David taking responsibility for his own sin by,



Confessing what he's done

Starting to read at the end of **verse 1**,

... Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...

Here David uses 4 different words to describe his own sin. He's not trying to minimize what he has done in any way. *My transgressions. My iniquity. My sin.* And in **verse 4** *I sinned and have done what is evil....*

Joy will always escape you if you are unwilling to take personal responsibility for your own sin. Repentance first

confesses what I've done wrong. But we also take responsibility for our own sin by,



Confessing who we've become (4-5)

At the end of **verse 4** David prays,

So that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Here's what David means by this:

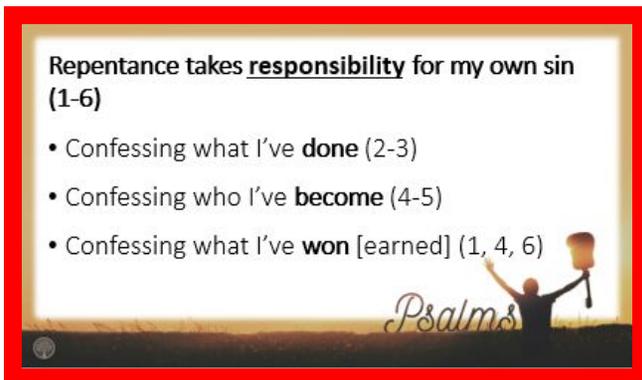
I am responsible for my guilty verdict in God's court. When You God condemn me as guilty before Your righteousness – You are not to blame. It is my sin and evildoing that deserves to be judged. In other words, genuine repentance accepts whatever judgment God's righteousness requires...for repentance understands the problem is not just with my sin – but actually with my soul.

Verse 5 says *Behold*, or I now realize that, *I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

In other words, sin is ingrained in my very nature and saturates all that I have become. Sin has characterized my life ever since my mother conceived me.

David is not blaming his mom or using his humanness to excuse his sin here at all. Rather- he is taking full responsibility for not just the sinful fruit – but also the sinful root of his own sinful nature. David’s repentance demonstrates him taking responsibility for both the root of sin in his own heart, and all the specific expressions of it in his outward behaviors and relations.

A repentant heart takes full responsibility for my own sin by,



Confessing what I've won or earned.

Verse 4 is clear. My sinful attitude and actions deserve God’s judgment. I deserve God’s wrath.

In **verse 6** David acknowledges that God’s standard is not just for right actions outwardly – but right affections inwardly. God doesn’t just want us to look right on the

outside – He desires genuine wisdom and truth in the purity of our hearts!⁴

Repentance begins with the full understanding that what I deserve is judgment. I’ve missed the mark. I’ve rebelled and become an enemy of God – both in my actions and my affections. I alone am responsible for my fall. God is completely right and just to cast me out and make me pay eternally for my rebellion against Him.

That’s why David’s plea for forgiveness in **verse 1** is a cry for mercy! Not justice...not a laundry list of all the reasons why God should forgive him – but just a simple cry for mercy – based on the steadfast love and compassion of God’s character.

David’s prayer serves as a model for our repentance today – because he asks God for forgiveness solely based on who God is.

In other words,



⁴ Matthew 5:48

Repentance trusts God alone for joyful restoration.

Our God of mercy, and compassion, and salvation is our only hope for joyful restoration after sin. Friend – there’s no amount of your good deeds and right living that could ever cause God to forgive how you have sinned against Him. So stop playing games with penance. Stop trying to earn back God’s intimacy. The only path that leads to joyful fellowship with God for you is the path of repentance, since,



Only God can forgive sin (7, 9, 14)

In **verse 1**, only God can blot out transgressions like a bookkeeper would erase a list of accrued debts.⁵ In **verse 2**, only God can scrub your heart clean and make it completely and thoroughly laundered and purified inside and out.

In **verse 7** David repeats his request for total cleansing ... notice he wants more than pardon from sin – he desires freedom from the pollution of sin. In repentance,

⁵ Colossians 2:14
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David is seeking more than forgiveness – he is seeking fellowship. Joyful restoration with his Lord and Savior!

To *purge with hyssop* literally means to “de-sin” me. To remove all of my indwelling sin that deadens my spiritual joy in Christ and makes rebellion against my God look pleasant.

But there’s something more here that’s worth noting.



Hyssop was a small plant common in the Ancient Near East. Because of its shape and structure, it was commonly used as a small brush. For example, in **Exodus 12**, the Israelites were instructed to “take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood..., and put some of the blood on the top and on both the sides of the doorframe.”⁶ In **Leviticus**, hyssop was used to sprinkle blood on lepers who had been spiritually cleansed.⁷

David clearly understood what the law required – namely that everything is to be cleansed with blood, and without

⁶ Exodus 12:22

⁷ Leviticus 14:4, 6, 49, 51. C.f. Numbers 19:6, 18; Hebrews 9:19

the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.⁸ Therefore when David prayed here for God to purge or “de-sin” him with hyssop – he meant, “Forgive me and regard me as cleansed on the basis of the innocent victim that has died.”⁹

Friends – only God can forgive sin – for only God can make your soul clean by applying the blood of the perfect and sinless Lamb to your account. Snow falls occasionally in the city of David...and a fresh blanket of snow glimmering in the sunshine was the whitest thing David could think of.

Let me be very clear on this point. If you desire to be joyfully restored to God after sin – then only God can forgive you as He applies Jesus’ payment for sin to your account. This great exchange is only possible for those who believe on Jesus.¹⁰

So during your repentance – do you believe that Jesus’ death and resurrection is sufficient to atone for and cover your sins? Are you looking to the blood for your washing? Or do you proudly believe your own sorrow for sin and frail promises to never do it again will be enough to clean up your act?

Stop trying to pay for your sin yourself. Repentance trusts God alone for joyful restoration. Only God can *hide His face* or not take our sins into account in **verse 9**. Only a God of salvation can deliver us from the bloody death that our own sins deserve, according to **verse 14**.

⁸ Hebrews 9:19-22

⁹ James Boice, *Psalms*

¹⁰ Romans 3:25-26

And further,



Only God can restore joy (8, 11-12)

Verse 8 could be paraphrased as, “Tell me that you forgive me, and I will be filled with joy!”¹¹ Genuine repentance ushers the sinner back into joyful peace of body and mind.

For in the presence of God is fullness of joy.¹² Since God is the source and sustainer of all true joy, nothing else except God’s presence can satisfy our craving for lasting joy.

That’s why **verse 11** prays, *Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.*

Now remember that before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit dwelt *with* God’s people, but after Pentecost the Spirit

¹¹ Bratcher, Robert G., and William David Reybun. *A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*. UBS Handbook Series. New York: United Bible Societies, 1991.

¹² Psalm 16:11

dwells *in* God's people.¹³ According to **1 Samuel 16:13** the Spirit of the Lord came upon David when he was anointed king. David knew how the Spirit of the Lord had departed from King Saul after he had sinned.¹⁴

So **verse 11** is not concerned with losing his salvation – but rather losing his fellowship with God – losing the anointing of God's Spirit as king over His people.

After all, **verse 12** doesn't say, *Restore to me your salvation*, but instead, *restore to me the joy of your salvation*. David's sin didn't cause him to become unborn again, anymore than any right action caused him to become born again.¹⁵

But David's sin had broken his joyful fellowship with God. What once was joy and peace and delight is now grieved with guilt, shame, and an internal wrestling of pride and fear.¹⁶

Repentance trusts God, since only God can forgive sin, only God can restore joy, and in **verses 10 and 12**,



Only God can recreate me.

This is the real crux of repentance right here. David doesn't just pray for forgiveness. In **verse 10** David prays, *create* – it's the same word used in **Genesis 1** for God's ability to create out of nothing. David is asking for a miracle here – create in me a clean heart – a pure heart. Ever since my conception, there's nothing good that lives in me – that is in my sinful nature.¹⁷ Every part of my soul has been polluted by sin's lies and effects. Unless God makes a new creation out of my heart¹⁸ – I will only continue to sin against His Holiness.

Therefore, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me*. Incline my heart to fear your Name.¹⁹ Create in me an appetite to please you; a lust for your glory, and a greed for your praise.

Only God can recreate me, and give me *a willing spirit* as David requests in **verse 12**.

¹³ John 14:16-17, especially 17b.

¹⁴ C.f. Judges 16:20 where the Lord departed from Samson while he indulged himself with Delilah.

¹⁵ John 3:5-6; 6:63

¹⁶ C.f. Psalm 32 where David fulfills his vow from Psalm 51:13

¹⁷ Romans 7:18

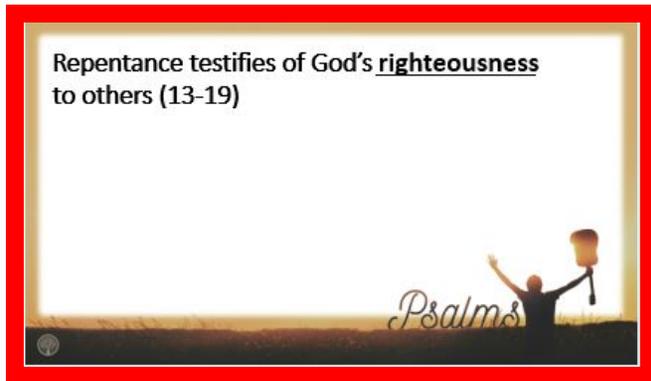
¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁹ Psalm 86:11; 119:36

Here's the point church. Sin lies. Sin says the path to joy requires sinning. Sin whispers that godliness is boring. But dear friend – may God's Spirit open your eyes to see the joy of repentance this morning!!

Repentance brings rejoicing as harmony is restored between you and our Holy God! You know you are truly repenting when you desire to be restored in sweet communion with God.

And further, you know God has granted you merciful repentance when you desire to,



testify of God's righteousness to others.

Unfortunately we must move quickly through this last section of the Psalm, but for now just notice that **verses 13-15** are David's repentant vows to testify of God's righteousness to others by,



Witnessing in humility.

In **verse 13** he is teaching, in **verse 14** he is singing aloud, in **verse 15**, his lips have been freed by forgiveness to publicly declare praise. The point is this, a repentant heart does not have a proud or arrogant ministry. No – the repentant sinner is overwhelmed as a recipient of God's undeserved mercy – and in his humble thanksgiving can't help but publicly share his joy with others.²⁰

Repentance delights in sharing God's righteousness with others not only by word, but by a lifestyle of,

²⁰ Luke 8:39



Worshipping in submission to God as well.

You might summarize the point of **verses 16-17** this way, God doesn't delight in any external expression of religion that is disconnected from a worshipping heart. God delights in humble dependence. God desires to fill those who know they are empty. A broken spirit is a submissive spirit. A contrite heart is a dependent heart, a repentant heart.

Pride always sabotages repentance. Self-reliance cannot coexist with a broken and contrite heart of repentance. For this kind of worship is supernatural... it's a miracle of God's grace that causes a sinful heart like mine to truly desire to please God more than to please my own sinful flesh.²¹

Finally, the last two verses of this repenting song testify to publicly,



Wanting God's pleasure.

David understands that his own sins have the power to influence the entire nation...but in repentance he prays that God's pleasure would be done among all of Zion. That God would protect His people – building up their walls so that they would not be weakened by his sin.

In other words, David's focus here is very God-centered. Repentance has as its final value the glory of God – the pleasure of God among all of His people. The worship and delight of God as He is treasured and esteemed as most valuable by all whom He has redeemed.

The main point of the entire Psalm is simply this,

²¹ Galatians 5:16-24
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Repentance is God's means of restoring joy to the sinner.

For repentance takes responsibility for my own sin. Trusts in the work of God alone for joyful restoration. And refuses to continue living in sin,²² but rather lives to testify of God's righteousness to others.

So here's the reality for all of us here this morning. None of us are perfect. That means there's still sin in every one of our lives²³ – and in fact, the closer you get to God the more aware of your sin you will become.²⁴

Which then means that the repentance of **Psalm 51** should be a familiar way of life for us. If we can't remember the last time we confessed sin to God and prayed along the lines of this Psalm – then our soul is in the dangerous grip of self-righteousness.

²² Romans 6:1

²³ 1 John 1:8, 10

²⁴ C.f. 1 Timothy 1:15



We must each humbly pursue the joy of repentance for our sin.

Look squarely at the cross of Christ this morning – see the cost of your sin, and the greatest undeserved mercy of our Savior. He suffered on your behalf. He died to pay the penalty your sins deserved. His blood was shed to wash away your sins, and make your heart as white as snow.²⁵

Will you turn from your pursuit of sin? Will you stop believing that you've gotten away with your secret sins? Will you embrace the joy of repentance this morning – believing that dwelling together with God in sweet fellowship is your greatest possible joy.

Loved ones – **Psalm 51** is not in the Bible to give you an excuse to keep living in sin. **Psalm 51** stands as a lighthouse on the secure shore of heaven for all who are drowning in the high waves of sin, and the rip-tides of guilt and shame.

²⁵ Isaiah 1:18



Humbly pursue the joy of repentance and be made new by God's amazing grace. This is what we celebrate now as we observe the Lord's Supper together and remember all that Christ has done to bring us into fellowship with God.

As servers come forward now with the elements, I'd like us to take some time to quietly pursue repentance for our own sins.

If we were to participate in this glorious feast of remembrance while we were simultaneously justifying our sin – we would only drink God's judgment instead of His blessing.²⁶

So delight in the joy of repentance and faith in God's promises this morning! Quiet your heart, and pray through **Psalm 51** for your own soul right now.

If you do not believe in Jesus Christ for the salvation of your sins, we would invite you to just simply observe us

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:27-32
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as we participate in this symbolic ceremony of all that Christ means to us. There's nothing spiritual about this juice or these crackers. They just remind us of Christ's blood and body. There's no advantage of participating together in the symbol if you aren't first participating together with us in God's amazing grace that saves, sanctifies, and helps us look forward to the coming glory of our God and Savior.

We eat bread – symbolizing Christ's broken body – to remind us that His death brings us life!²⁷

I'm going to ask _____ to pray for us, and then as you receive the bread ... please wait until we can all partake together after everyone is served. Use this time as the music plays to quietly pray through **Psalm 51** – confessing your sins, thanking Jesus for His salvation, and praising God for a new heart that desires to please Him.

<<Instrumental Meditation>>

This cracker represents the body of Jesus Christ – which was broken to set us free from the lies of sin.

the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

<<eat>>

²⁷ Matthew 4:4

The men are now coming forward to serve us the cup, as we remember the blood that washes away our sins.

As we prepare to remember Christ's blood which covers our sins... I'm going to ask _____ to pray for us as we take the cup together.

Please sing with us as the juice is served, as we together thank our Lord for His wondrous mystery of salvation of sinners like you and me!

<<There is a Fountain>>



In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

<<drink>>

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be His glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with His glory! Amen and Amen! **Psalm 72:18-19***



Recommended Resources on Create in Me a Clean Heart:

- Exodus 33:12-23; 34:6-7
- 2 Samuel 11-12
- Psalm 32; 38:18
- Ezekiel 36:25-27
- Matthew 5:3-12; 6:11-12
- Mark 12:33
- Luke 13:3
- Acts 2:37-38
- Romans 3:25-26; 4:7-8
- 2 Corinthians 7:10-13
- 2 Timothy 2:24-26
- Hebrews 9:19-22
- 1 John 1:7-9

- <https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/how-to-repent-without-really-repenting>
- <https://www.challies.com/articles/four-key-principles-of-repentance/>
- <https://www.monergism.com/repentance>

- *What is Repentance?* R.C. Sproul
- *Brokenness, Surrender, Holiness*, Nancy Leigh DeMoss
- *The Gospel According to Jesus*, John MacArthur

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Review 2 Samuel 11-12. How can you personally relate with David's actions throughout this account? What did David do wrong or right? What lies or truths did David believe? What can you learn from David's sin and repentance in this passage?
2. Read Psalm 51:1. On what basis did David support his plea for forgiveness? How is this different from how we tend to approach God after we sin?
3. Read Psalm 51:3. How aware are you of your own sin personally? Do you desire to see your own sin more clearly? Why or why not? What steps can you take to gain greater awareness of your own sin?
4. Read Psalm 51:4. Even though David had sinned against Uriah and Bathsheba and the entire nation through his adultery and murder, why is verse 4 still a true statement?
5. Read Psalm 51:11-12. What hints in these verses help us understand David was not speaking of losing his salvation? (C.f. 1 Samuel 16:13-14)
6. Read Psalm 51:17. What does it mean to have a broken and contrite heart? How do you practically seek to maintain spiritual brokenness? (C.f. Matthew 5:3ff)
7. Is there any sin that you need to repent of currently? Pray for one another, and confess your sins to one another, that your joy in Christ may be restored (James 5:16).