

## MEN'S LIFE BLOOMINGTON & GOD @ WORK

Tuesday, January 20, 2020

### New Beginnings – Psalm 51

**Overview:** Do you ever feel stagnant in your faith, as though you are just going through the motions? Has sin ever driven a wedge between you and God, making Him feel distant? David felt this way. He had sinned with Bathsheba and had just been confronted by Nathan the prophet. God wants us to be close to him and to enjoy his full and complete life, but sin that remains unconfessed makes such intimacy impossible.

**Thought Starter:** We've all heard the term "Cultural Christian." Where would you scale yourself between strongly cultural (1) and strongly biblical (10)? Which way are trending? Need a change?

#### Segment Questions:

- In his book, The Man in The Mirror, Patrick Morley says that, "...there are two yous: the visible you that is known by others and the real you that is known only by God." Is he right? What are your thoughts?
- Verse 10 | After seeing himself as he really was (verse 10), David was broken before God. David asked God to Replace his sinful heart with a pure heart. Why did David feel it important to ask for a pure heart? How does your heart condition affect intimacy with God?
- Verse 10 | David wanted to rise after his fall and try again. He asked God to renew a steadfast (righteous) spirit within himself so he could stand firm. Why did he ask God for a new spirit? Why didn't David just resolve to stand firm?
- Verse 12 | Reflect on a time you embraced what God has done for you through Christ and felt some level of intimacy with God. What words describe the feelings or the sense of being you felt? What could Restore the depth of those feelings? How would life be different?
- Verse 12 | God created you in His image, but sin has distorted it beyond recognition. David asks God to Remake him in His image with the strength to be obedient and faithful. Discuss his plan for success.
- What encouragements can you draw from the passage in Lamentations?

#### Action Questions:

- Are you willing to allow God to show you yourself as you really are? What are some of the things you might find out about yourself? What will you do this year to ensure you are trending the right way?
- Where have you seen God's compassions, His mercies in your life this past? Where in your life or spirit would you like to experience them this year? Take some quiet time to reflect and ask God for it.
- What do you want to ask God to do that will reveal a difference between the way you live and the way the broken, hurting world lives? What needs changing so life offers hope and not more disillusionment?

**Prayer:** O God I humbly ask you to **Replace** my sinful heart with a pure heart that loves you above all else. **Renew** my spirit in a way that seeks you with all my heart. **Restore** the joy, peace, peace, security, and excitement that I felt when I embraced your free gift of grace. **Remake** me in your image by filling me with your Holy Spirit to believe in your love and accept your will so I can walk in obedience regardless of the temptation or the challenge. Amen.

## Introduction:

At the end of this past year I was reminded of God's great compassion and mercy in Lamentations 3:21-23. At 5am on New Year's Eve, my wife Julie and I were summoned to our youngest daughter Cari's home so that we could care for her and her husband Mark's four children, all 8 and under, while they headed for the hospital to deliver her fifth child. We were there with the four grandkids for the most of three days. As I reflected on those three days, I am aware of so much that God taught me about Himself during that time that I hadn't really learned in my previous 68 years.

Growing up as a good Catholic boy, I learned how to really experience guilt. Nothing wrong with guilt except the conflict it causes in the heart as it impacts relationships. God doesn't want me to hang onto guilt. God still wants me to have an abundant life, even when I often feel so guilty.

As I dealt with my grandkids, I learned more about how God deals with me. When they did something wrong, I didn't hesitate to call them on it. But after it was dealt with, I didn't want to dwell on it or have them wallow in it, because then we couldn't enjoy each other. They argued, complained, talked back, disobeyed, spilled things, made and left messes, fought, and injured each other as they played--just like all kids do over a three day stretch.

They also gave the most beautiful smiles, the biggest and strongest hugs, and the best cuddling time ever. Because it was three days, Julie and I were able give and get back individual time with each one and enjoyed a deeper level of intimacy with all four. We taught when needed but didn't dwell on what they did wrong after dealing with it.

I thought about how that is how God is with me. He doesn't want to be the scary, angry, wrathful God that some believe him to be. He loves me unconditionally like I do my grandkids, always ready to forgive and give me hugs as long as I am sorry. God wants to quickly restore our relationship just as I did with the kids. He wants to enjoy me and that can only happens when we are good with each other. Early in our marriage we had card on our refrigerator saying *"When God seems far away—guess who moved?"*

Generally at the end of a year I often reflect on the past year, a kind of spiritual inventory which generally leaves me feeling lousy because I fall so far short of what God wants me to be and honestly what I want me to be. It's become a cultural custom to come up with resolutions for the New Year. I decided this year to try to be more like David. Not in his actions but in his heart.

My natural inclination is like David's, to please myself rather than God. When I do this, whether it is in a big way like David, or in very small ways, God calls it sin. David didn't just ask God for forgiveness; he asked God to create in him a pure heart and to renew a steadfast spirit within him. David wanted one of those glamour makeovers. He wanted to be transformed into a man after God's own heart. How different this year will be if I went before the throne of grace to humbly ask God to do the same in me?

**Psalm 51** | <sup>7</sup> Sprinkle me with hyssop, then I will be clean. Wash me, then I will be whiter than snow. <sup>8</sup> Let me hear you say, "Your sins are forgiven." That will bring me joy and gladness. Let the body you have broken be glad. <sup>9</sup> Take away all my sins. Wipe away all the evil things I've done. <sup>10</sup> God, create a pure heart in me. Give me a new spirit that is faithful to you. <sup>11</sup> Don't send me away from you. Don't take your Holy Spirit away from me. <sup>12</sup> Give me back the joy that comes from being saved by you. Give me a spirit that obeys you so that I will keep going. <sup>13</sup> Then I will teach your ways to those who commit lawless acts. And sinners will turn back to you.

**Lamentations 3: 22-24** 22Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23 they are new every morning, great is your faithfulness. 24 I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."