



Brown Community Group

Discussion Guide

Psalm 26 – September 6, 2020

I. Starter Thoughts and Context:

What does it mean for us to have a “Clear Conscience”? One secular source that speaks to the origin of the word “conscience” says that it has to do with our “awareness that the acts for which one feels responsible do, or do not conform to one’s ideal of right”. We each have a conscience, but do we all have the same ideal of “right”? How does respect for Scripture, as the objective truth of God, impact one’s conscience?

II. Scriptures and Discussion:

David Worships with a Clear Conscience

¹ Vindicate me, Lord, for I have led a blameless life; I have trusted in the Lord and have not faltered. ² Test me, Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; ³ for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness.

Over the centuries the church’s most common understanding of the context of Psalm 26 is that it’s a prayer of David in preparation for worship. Worship preparation in ancient Israel had an overarching and profound view of God’s holiness. To enter into worship one was to carefully follow ritual purification with a sincere heart.

Group Questions:

1. How is it that David proclaims a clear conscience, saying “I have led a blameless life”?
2. What brought about his “clear conscience”?
3. The verses below from Psalm 51 were written by David after he was confronted by the prophet Nathan for the misuse of the power God had anointed him with as King. The sacred trust of David’s kingship, a call to protect the people of Israel, was used to accommodate the rape of Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, her husband.
 - 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!
4. How does David’s plea for mercy in these verses inform our understanding of how David speaks of his integrity—his clear conscience as he comes to worship God? Is his clear conscience of his own integrity, or is David claiming an integrity that flows from a heart of submission and repentance?

The Impact of the World on the Conscience

⁴ I do not sit with the deceitful, nor do I associate with hypocrites. ⁵ I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked.

Group Questions:

1. How does David's prayer instruct us regarding keeping our consciences tender to the ways and instruction of God?
2. Martin Luther's words, spoken during the Diet of Worms, when the Catholic church instructed him to recant his teaching; "Unless I am convinced by sacred Scripture, or by evident reason, I cannot recant, **for my conscience is held captive by the word of God**, and to act against conscience is neither right nor safe."
3. How does Luther's testimony of testing speak to us about how we should view Scripture and who is teaching it?

David's Public Proclamation Is an Example to us of Loving Others

⁶ I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, Lord, ⁷ proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds. ⁸ Lord, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells.

Group Discussion:

1. David's humble submission and repentance before a Holy God, lifts the weight of his sin and he proclaims a clear conscience! How, in "proclaiming aloud your praise" and telling of God's "wonderous deeds", With this how is David loving others?
2. Do we see worship in David's proclamation? Is telling others of our forgiveness a form of worship?

David's Conscience is Revealed in His Desire to Escape God's Judgement

⁹ Do not take away my soul along with sinners, my life with those who are bloodthirsty, ¹⁰ in whose hands are wicked schemes, whose right hands are full of bribes. ¹¹ I lead a blameless life; deliver me and be merciful to me.

Group Discussion:

1. David's conscience is tender to his sin and fuels his plea for God to be gracious to him and to redeem him. As believers, living on this side of the resurrection, how do we protect ourselves from becoming hard-hearted toward our sin with an active conscience aware of where we are vulnerable to sin?
2. How is a clean heart and a clear conscience important to us as we come to times of worship?

David Closes His Prayer with Comfort and Assurance

¹² My foot stands on level ground; in the great assembly I will bless the LORD.

Group Discussion:

1. When David's conscience had hardened to his sin, God used the prophet Nathan to lance his heart. Crushed in his sin, David declares in Psalm 51:17:
"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."
2. David finds his footing through a broken and contrite heart. He enters the "great assembly" to worship a Holy God in the integrity of a sincere humility and repentant heart.

3. How can we use these powerful scriptures and words from David in our lives today?

III. Responding in Prayer:

- Pray that God would lance our hearts of any hardness toward sin that keeps us from worshiping with integrity and clean hearts.
- Pray that our worship, our gratitude for our salvation, would spill over in telling others of God's goodness.
- Thank God for the "level ground" that you stand on, in Christ.