

# The Cost of Rest



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** 2 Sam. 11:1–27, 2 Sam. 12:1–23, Gen. 3:1–8, 1 John 1:9.

**Memory Text:** “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10, NKJV).

Many people seem desperate to find a little peace and quiet. They are willing to pay for it too. In many big cities there are internet-free rooms, which can be rented by the hour. The rules are strict—no noise, no visitors. People are willing to pay to be able to sit quietly and just think or nap. There are sleep pods that can be rented in airports, and noise-reducing earphones are popular items. There are even canvas hoods, or collapsible privacy shields that you can buy to pull over your head and torso for a quick workplace break.

True rest also has a cost. While the spin doctors of the self-help media would like to make us believe that we can determine our own destiny and that rest is just a matter of choice and planning, yet, at least when we consider this honestly, we realize our inability to bring true rest to our hearts. In the fourth-century, Augustine put it succinctly in his famous *Confessions* (Book 1) as he considered God's grace: “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you.”

This week we look briefly into the life of the man after God's own heart to find out how he discovered the true cost of God's rest.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 24.

## Worn and Weary

On a balmy spring evening, restless King David paced the roof of his palace. He should have been with his army on the other side of the Jordan. He should have been leading God’s people to defeat the Ammonites and finally bring peace to the kingdom.

**Not** being where he should have been opened the door to temptation for David. Read the story in 2 Samuel 11:1–5. What happened, and what great sin did David commit?

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David saw a “very beautiful woman” taking a bath on her roof. His sinful impulses got the better of him that evening, and he slept with Bathsheba, the wife of a trusted army officer. Like all ancient kings, David had absolute power. As king, he didn’t have to follow the rules that governed everyone else. And yet, the painful story of David’s family following this story-changing moment reminds us of the fact that, even as the king, he was not above God’s law.

Indeed, the law is there as a protection, a safeguard, and when even the king stepped outside it, he faced terrible consequences. As soon as David transgressed the limits of God’s law, he began to feel its effects on all aspects of his life. David thought that his passionate fling had gone unnoticed; yet, Bathsheba was now pregnant and her husband far away.

**Read** 2 Samuel 11:6–27. How did David try to cover up his sin?

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Even David’s most intricate schemes to get Uriah home to his wife, Bathsheba, failed. Uriah was a man of stellar reputation who responded to David’s subtle hints: “ ‘The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife?’ ” (2 Sam. 11:11, *NKJV*). Eventually a desperate David reverted to “remote control” assassination to cover his sin.

**It is hard to believe that David, to whom God had given so much, could have stooped so low. No matter who we are, what warning should we all take from this story?**

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## Wake-Up Call

In the midst of one of the darkest times of David's life there was good news: *God sent His prophet*. Nathan and David knew each other well. Earlier, Nathan had counseled David on his plans to build a temple (*2 Samuel 7*). Now, though, the prophet came with a different task to perform for his king.

**Why** do you think Nathan chooses to tell a story rather than naming and shaming David immediately? Read *2 Samuel 12:1–14*.

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Nathan knew what to say, and he said it in a way that David could understand. He told a story that David, the former shepherd, could relate to. He knew David's highly developed sense of justice and integrity. Thus, in a sense, one could say that Nathan set a trap and that David walked right into it.

When David unwittingly pronounced his own death sentence, Nathan told him, “ ‘You are the man’ ” (*2 Sam. 12:7, NKJV*). There are different ways of saying “You are the man.” One can shout it, one can accuse and stick a finger right into the other person's face, or one can express concern and care. Nathan's words must have been laced with grace. At that moment, David must have felt the pain that God must feel when one of His sons or daughters knowingly steps outside of His will. Something clicked in David's mind. Something tore in his heart.

**Why** does David respond with: “I have sinned against the LORD” rather than “I have sinned against Bathsheba” or “I am a murderer” (*2 Sam. 12:13; see also Ps. 51:4*)?

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David recognized that sin, which makes our heart restless, is primarily an affront against God, the Creator and Redeemer. We hurt ourselves; we affect others. We bring disgrace to our families or churches. Yet, ultimately, we hurt God and drive another nail into the rough beam pointing heavenward on Golgotha.

“The prophet's rebuke touched the heart of David; conscience was aroused; his guilt appeared in all its enormity. His soul was bowed in penitence before God. With trembling lips he said, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ All wrong done to others reaches back from the injured one to God. David had committed a grievous sin, toward both Uriah and Bathsheba, and he keenly felt this. But infinitely greater was his sin against God.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 722.

## Forgiven and Forgotten?

After David had unwittingly pronounced judgment on himself (2 Sam. 12:5, 6), Nathan confronted him with the enormity of his sin. David's heart was broken, and he confessed his sin. Immediately Nathan assured him that "The LORD also has put away your sin" (2 Sam. 12:13, *NKJV*) and that he was forgiven. There was no waiting period for God's forgiveness. David didn't have to prove that he was really sincere before forgiveness was extended.

However, Nathan, who already had predicted the consequences of David's sin in 2 Samuel 12:10–12, went on to state that the child to be born would die.

**What** does it mean that God had taken away David's sin? Did He just wipe the slate clean? Does everyone just simply forget about it? Read 2 Samuel 12:10–23 as you contemplate these questions.

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David also must have wondered about these questions as he saw his world crumbling—the baby dead, his family in disarray (the stories of Amnon and Absalom are two good examples of real-life family troubles), and his future uncertain. And yet, despite the consequences of his sin, which had affected innocent people such as Uriah and the newborn baby, David also began to understand that God's grace would cover this and that someday all the consequences of sin would be done away with. In the meantime, he could find rest for his troubled conscience in God's grace.

**What** does David feel he really needs? What does he yearn for? Read Psalm 51:1–6.

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With Psalm 51, David went public as he opened his heart and confessed his sins. David's cry for mercy appealed to God's unfailing love and His great compassion. He yearned for renewal.

When we consider the cost of rest in Jesus, we need first to recognize that we need outside help; we are sinners and need a Savior; we recognize our sins and cry out to the only One who can wash us, cleanse us, and renew us. When we do this, we can take courage: here is an adulterer, a manipulator, a murderer, and someone who violated at least five of the Ten Commandments who called for help—and claimed the promise of God's forgiveness.

**If God forgave David for what he did, what hope is there, then, for you?**

## Something New

**After** David had confessed his sin without trying to excuse it or gloss over it, he went on to petition God. What did he ask God for? Read Psalm 51:7–12.

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David's reference to cleansing with hyssop utilized terminology known to every Israelite who had ever visited the sanctuary. As he referred to the ritual acts of cleansing described in the Law of Moses (*Lev. 14:4*), he recognized the power of a sacrifice—the Sacrifice—who would come in the future to take away the sins of the world.

David also went on to ask for “joy” and “gladness.” In the face of the enormity of his sin, wasn't this a little audacious?

Perhaps it may be helpful to listen to this paraphrase: “Tell me I am forgiven so that I may enter the sanctuary again where I can hear the joy and gladness of those worshiping you.”

**When** Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God's presence (*Gen. 3:8*). Why do you think David's request, even after his sin, is so different? Read Psalm 51:11, 12.

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David did not want to lose the consciousness of living in God's presence. He realized that without the Holy Spirit he was powerless. He knew that as easily as he slipped into sin with Bathsheba, he could slip into sin again. His self-confidence was shattered.

David understood that future victories would not come from him; they would come only from God as he depended totally on God.

The victorious Christian life is not all about us. It is all about Jesus. We yearn for *His* presence; we crave *His* Spirit; we want *His* joy of salvation. We recognize our need for renewal and restoration. We need *His* rest—a divine act of re-creation. Creation rest is not far from forgiveness. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (*Ps. 51:10, NKJV*) uses Creation terminology. In the Old Testament only God can “create” (*bara'*)—and once we have been re-created, we can rest.

**If you haven't experienced the joy and gladness of liberation from a guilty conscience, what is holding you back? If it is guilt, what could you learn from this story that should help you?**

## Reflectors of God's Light

Probably the most natural thing for us to do after working through an embarrassing failure and experiencing forgiveness is to try to forget that the event ever happened. Memories of failure can be painful.

**What** does David want to do with his painful experience? Read Psalm 51:13–19.

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When a bowl or a precious vase falls and breaks into pieces, we normally sigh and throw the useless broken pieces away. In Japan there is a traditional art called *kintsugi*, which specializes in re-creating broken pottery. A precious metal, such as liquid gold or silver, is used to glue the broken pieces together and to turn the broken item into something of beauty and value.

Every time God forgives our transgressions and re-creates us again, something changes. God's precious forgiveness glues our brokenness together, and the visible breaks can draw attention to His grace. We can become God's loudspeakers. "My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness" (*Ps. 51:14, NKJV*). We don't attempt to self-repair or auto-improve (even incrementally). Our broken spirits, our contrite hearts, are enough praise for God—and they are beams of light that the world can see surrounding us. Our experience of being forgiven attracts others who are searching for forgiveness.

**What** relationship is there between Psalm 51 and 1 John 1:9?

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First John 1:9 is a short summary of Psalm 51. As David knows that "a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise" (*Ps. 51:17, NKJV*), John assures us that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (*1 John 1:9, NKJV*). We can take God at His word.

Again, David could not repair the tremendous damage that he had done through his acts and example to his family. He suffered the consequences of his decisions and actions. And yet, David knew that he had been forgiven. He knew that he needed to trust by faith that one day the true Lamb of God would come and stand in his place.

**How can you learn right now to apply the promises of 1 John 1:9 to your own life? How should you feel after you do so and know that the promise is for you too?**

**Further Thought:** “David’s repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his crime. No desire to escape the judgments threatened, inspired his prayer. . . . He saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. . . . In the promises of God to repentant sinners he saw the evidence of his pardon and acceptance. . . . ‘The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.’ Psalm 51:16, 17.

“Though David had fallen, the Lord lifted him up. . . .

“David humbled himself and confessed his sin, while Saul despised reproof and hardened his heart in impenitence.

“This passage in David’s history is . . . one of the most forcible illustrations given us of the struggles and temptations of humanity, and of genuine repentance. . . . Through all the ages . . . thousands of the children of God, who have been betrayed into sin, . . . have remembered . . . David’s sincere repentance and confession . . . and they also have taken courage to repent and try again to walk in the way of God’s commandments.

“Whoever . . . will humble the soul with confession and repentance, as did David, may be sure that there is hope for him. . . . The Lord will never cast away one truly repentant soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 725, 726.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1 How can we find the balance between recognizing our inherent sinfulness and need for forgiveness and, at the same time, living like the forgiven sons and daughters of the King of the universe that we are?
- 2 Why is all sin, ultimately, sin against God? What does it mean to sin against God?
- 3 What can we say to someone, not a believer, who struggles with the suffering of innocent people, such as Uriah or the newborn son of David and Bathsheba? How do we explain the love and justice of God in such a situation? How does the perspective of the great controversy offer a helpful outlook?
- 4 Why would God devote two full chapters of the Bible to the sordid story of David and Bathsheba? What purpose does the recounting of this story serve?
- 5 Dwell on the idea that sin separates us from God as expressed in Psalm 51:11, 12. What has been your own experience with how this happens? How would you explain to someone what this separation feels like and why it’s so uncomfortable? Why is the promise of grace the only remedy?

# Thanking God for Life

By ANDREW McCHESNEY

Fifteen-year-old Giselle didn't feel well when she woke up one morning. She prayed before getting out of bed as she always did.

"Dear God, thank You for everything You have done for me, especially that I am still alive," she prayed.

She thanks God for life every day. She and her family immigrated as refugees to the United States from Rwanda when she was 12. She faced a difficult life in her African homeland, where her parents struggled to find work and the family had little to eat. She often went hungry.

After praying, Giselle slid out of bed in the bedroom on the second floor of the family's small home in the U.S. state of Georgia and carefully walked down the stairs. She felt so weak.

"I don't feel well," she told her mother.

Mother was talking on the cell phone, but she interrupted her conversation.

"Go back upstairs and go back to bed," she said. "Maybe you'll feel better."

Giselle turned around to climb up the stairs and collapsed. She heard Mother call out her name as she fell down the last three stairs and crumpled onto the hard floor below.

"Giselle!" Mother cried. "Are you OK?"

Giselle was unable to reply. She couldn't breathe, so she couldn't speak.

Mother hung up the phone and ran over.

"Giselle! Giselle!" she said.

Giselle still couldn't answer.

Mother touched her forehead to see if she had a fever. No fever.

Mother called Giselle's 19-year-old sister to bring an electric fan to provide some air.

The cool air felt good on Giselle's face. She began to breathe.

"Are you OK?" Mother asked.

"I'm fine now," she said.

Mother wanted to take Giselle to the hospital, but the girl insisted that she was fine. Mother gave her some water to drink. Giselle later learned from the physician that she had collapsed because she wasn't eating properly.

The night after her fall, Giselle prayed before going to sleep. She prays every night before bedtime.

"Dear God," she said, "thank You for this day, and thank You for everything that You have done for us, especially for keeping me alive."

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*This quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help refugee children like Giselle obtain scholarships to study at Seventh-day Adventist schools in the North American Division. Giselle received financial assistance from a 2011 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to study at an Adventist school in the U.S. state of Georgia. Through the influence of the school, she gave her heart to Jesus in baptism.*