

Psalm 51:1-12 Sorry changes us

¹ Be merciful to me, O God, because of your constant love. Because of your great mercy wipe away my sins! ² Wash away all my evil and make me clean from my sin! ³ I recognize my faults; I am always conscious of my sins. ⁴ I have sinned against you—only against you— and done what you consider evil. So you are right in judging me; you are justified in condemning me. ⁵ I have been evil from the day I was born; from the time I was conceived, I have been sinful.

⁶ Sincerity and truth are what you require; fill my mind with your wisdom. ⁷ Remove my sin, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. ⁸ Let me hear the sounds of joy and gladness; and though you have crushed me and broken me, I will be happy once again. ⁹ Close your eyes to my sins and wipe out all my evil.

¹⁰ Create a pure heart in me, O God, and put a new and loyal spirit in me. ¹¹ Do not banish me from your presence; do not take your holy spirit away from me. ¹² Give me again the joy that comes from your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

Can you just take a moment to think about a person who is reasonably close to you. It may be a friend, it may be a spouse, it may be another family member or relative, it may be a work colleague. So, just think of a person whom you get along with fairly well - someone you've had a few ups & downs with.

Now that you have that person in your head, ask yourself this question, "How many times have I said sorry to this person?" Of course, if there is an abusive situation with domestic violence, saying sorry is not enough – other help is urgently needed for each party. But here we are talking about respectful relationships, where people come together as equals.

So, with a that friendly person in your head, "How many times have I said sorry to this person?" If you need more than ten fingers, your free to stop counting. We don't need exact numbers.

But bear in mind that some 'sorry's' may be bigger than others. Some are just part of a casual conversation. Some 'sorry's' are much more needed to repair the relationship.

Can you then remember - how many times that person has said sorry to you? Once again, exact numbers don't matter, but we just want to get an idea of what the relationship has been like.

When you said sorry to each other, how did that change things? Was there relief?

Or was there still some tension that would take more time, more healing, and more understanding of what went wrong?

How much does saying sorry change us?

How much does it open up our relationships?

Psalm 51 is a classic Bible passage for saying sorry. It was originally said by King David, after he realised how deep his sin really was. He murdered a man (Uriah) to get his wife. And when Nathan the prophet told King David what he did wrong, this Psalm was his way of saying sorry. In this Psalm, David was saying sorry to God. Perhaps he said sorry to others too, but this time he was talking to God.

I'm sure you would all say, that saying sorry opens up your friendship. Even saying sorry to a stranger can break the ice and opens up communication. It changes us. It humbles us. We can let our guards down and be more relaxed when people say sorry. When people say sorry, there can certainly be relief.

What else goes together with saying sorry? When someone says sorry to you, what do you say back to them? "That's okay don't worry about it" is the usual response.

You might tap on the arm.

In some cases, you might give them a hug.

And it's all about forgiveness, isn't it?

Think of how quickly things change when you say sorry, and someone assures you that it's okay, they don't hate you; they don't want to hold a grudge against you. It's nice to get things out in the open and clear the air, isn't it?

How refreshing it is to recognise what went wrong, then say sorry, and then have forgiveness. Relationships grow stronger when we admit our faults and find forgiveness with each other.

And that is what Psalm 51 is all about. It's a prayer of forgiveness. And in this case, it's between you & God – us & God. If we think about the way that saying sorry changes human relationships, well the same thing applies to us with God. In fact, it is God who gave us the ability to say sorry in the first place. God doesn't need to say sorry to us, but we can

always say sorry to God, and receive God's forgiveness. This is the reason Jesus died – so that we can say sorry to God and receive forgiveness from God.

When people in the New Testament were baptised, the first thing they were taught to do was to say sorry to God. The Bible uses the word 'repentance', which means we are sorry to God, we want his forgiveness, and we want to change our thinking & our actions. Saying sorry to God opens up our friendship with God – it changes us, it humbles us to be better people – thanks be to God.

Good relationships are so important for Christians. Listening to one another is so important. Understanding one another is so important. And when we fill these relationships with the humility to say sorry, and when we fill them with the eagerness to share forgiveness – we are telling people just how good Jesus really is.

God bless you to say sorry.

God bless you to give & receive forgiveness. Amen.