

The Literal Principle:

Seek to understand a Scripture's literal meaning before interpreting or applying it.

Read through Psalm 51 a couple of times. Write down the different action words related to cleaning, covering or restoring. Think about God literally performing these actions.

How involved is God in the process?

How personal are His actions?

How close does He get as He renews, blots, or washes?

Does He stay on the surface or penetrate deep inside as He cleans and restores?

Can you detect some of the specifics God will be looking to root out as He deep cleans?

God does not use a bristle brush or a branch of hyssop when He cleanses, but dwelling on the literal meaning of these words gives us insight into the process God goes through.

Have you ever prayed for God's cleansing work in your life? Does the process frighten you just a little? Read verse one once again. Your God is worthy of your trust and His cleansing is the path to both holiness and a deeper relationship with Him.

The Contextual Principle:

Seek to interpret any Scripture in context.

This principle is especially true when looking at single verses or short passages. It is also true of stories, parables, psalms, etc. What is the context of Psalm 51?

This Psalm follows the events described in II Samuel 11:1 - 12:15. An understanding of David's sin, extensive plot to cover it up, and God's response to all these events helps us to answer several questions. Read this passage carefully to answer the following questions one might ask of Psalm 51.

From Psalm 51, verse 2: David sinned in several ways in this passage. Which 'iniquity' or sin seems to be foremost on God's mind? Which verses in Samuel lead you to that conclusion?

From verse 4: The list of people offended by David in this passage is extensive. At the least, it would include Bathsheba, the servants he involved, Uriah, Joab, and the army of Israel. He brought chaos to his wives and children for generations. How can David claim "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned"?

From verse 4: What judgement of God does David refer to?

From verse 14: What is bloodguiltiness and how is it normally dealt with? What is David asking of God in this request? You will have to do a little research here.

From verses 16 & 17: In II Sam 12, God states that David *despised* both Him and His Word. I believe these words brought deep remorse to David's heart. What offering does David make that he hopes God will not *despise*?

The Synthesis Principle:

Simply put, synthesis is seeking other passages of Scripture that relate to the one that you are studying. Together, they bring balance, clarification, and understanding.

In Psalm 51 we find a 'believer' who is seeking forgiveness and who is suffering some judgement. Yet several New Testament passages affirm that believers already have forgiveness. Consider Eph 1:7, Rom 8:1, and Col 2:3.

What scriptures would you turn to for clarification?

What do they say that clarifies when a believer should confess sin and when he should simply trust in the redemption that is his in Christ?

In Psalm 51:11, David asks that he not be cast away from the presence of God and that the Holy Spirit not be taken from him. Are New Testament believers ever in danger of losing the presence of God or losing the Holy Spirit? Cite Scripture references in your answers.

If you need help with the above, look up some of the following:

In a Bible Dictionary or Systematic Theology, look up SECURITY or ETERNAL SECURITY.

In a Concordance, look up the words HOLY SPIRIT, PRESENCE, SEALED, FILLED, FELLOWSHIP.

The Practical Principle:

Every Scripture has a valid, practical application for believers.

It is my hope that simply spending time in God's Word has had an impact on your life. The longer we linger, reading and rereading, asking questions and seeking God, the more He rewards our effort.

Spend some time recording some of the practical applications that you have drawn from Psalm 51. Come to class prepared to share some of your thoughts.