



**Sermon Based Small Group
Leader Discussion Guide**

Sermon Title: “How to Have a Clear Conscience”

**Sermon by Rev. Bill Gaethke
Week of October 31, 2010**

Discussion Guide Contents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Icebreaker 2) Session Objectives 3) Personal Connection 4) Sermon Text 5) Digging Deeper 6) Taking it Home 7) Looking Ahead 8) Prayer Focus
Icebreaker	Death Valley in California is the lowest, hottest, and driest location in North America. Summer temperatures routinely reach 120 degrees. What is the hottest place you’ve ever been, and how did the heat affect you?
Session Objectives	<p>By the end of the session, group members should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify at least two reasons people resist confessing their sins. • Name two positive results that flow from accepting God’s forgiveness.
Personal Connection	<p>How does my story connect to the reading?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During what times in your life did you resist confessing your sin to God? • In what ways have you personally experienced the benefits of receiving God’s grace? • Please be sensitive to the fact that this group study may tap into strong feelings of guilt and shame. Maintain a posture of sympathy and acceptance to help group members experience God’s forgiveness and grace.
Sermon Text	<p><i>Psalm 32:1-7</i></p> <p><i>Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,</i></p>

	<p><i>whose sins are covered.</i></p> <p>² <i>Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.</i></p> <p>³ <i>When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.</i></p> <p>⁴ <i>For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah</i></p> <p>⁵ <i>Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"— and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah</i></p> <p>⁶ <i>Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.</i></p> <p>⁷ <i>You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.</i></p>
<p>Digging Deeper</p>	<p>Learning more about the lesson</p> <p>The Psalms are Israel's hymnbook. In the Psalms there are many voices from various times and places, from Joshua to Ezra, and from Jerusalem to Babylon. The psalms were used in ancient worship in the Temple, and they continue to live in both synagogue and church. Two recurrent words often appear, "Amen," and "Selah." The meaning of <i>Selah</i>, which appears in the NIV translation of our text, is unclear, but it may have referred to an instrumental interlude. There are several different types of psalms, including Laments (the most common), Thanksgiving Psalms, Hymns, and Salvation History Psalms. Psalm 32 is a Thanksgiving Psalm offered by one who experienced forgiveness and recovery from illness.</p> <p>1. Proverbs 28:13 says, <i>He who conceals his sins does not prosper,</i></p>

but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

The sermon identified several reasons why it is difficult for people to confess their sins to God even when they are troubled by a guilty conscience. Which of those reasons aligns best with your own experience? What rationale did you have for those times when you “concealed your sins” and hesitated to ‘come clean,’ admit guilt, and confess your sins to God?

Psalm 32:9 says, *Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding*

but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

Why do you think the psalmist compares the person who stubbornly refuses to acknowledge his or her guilt to a mule?

2. There are consequences in all of life for those who refuse to admit guilt, confess their sins, and receive forgiveness. What are some of those consequences?
3. Unconfessed sin sapped the psalmist’s strength like stifling summer heat. When we do not acknowledge our own sins, how is our spiritual strength affected? Be as specific as possible.
4. What do you think the psalmist means by the phrase, “in whose spirit is no deceit”(Psalm 32:2)?
5. 1 John 1:9 says, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* How is the Cross of Jesus Christ related to this assurance of forgiveness?
6. Is there a hymn, chorus, or song you like to sing when you feel blessed? How did that song become dear to you? When do you last

	recall singing it?
Taking it Home	<p>How will I live it? Apply it?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there a sin in your life that, until now, you have been stubbornly refusing to acknowledge? 2. What specific step might you take to acknowledge your sin and receive God's forgiveness? 3. Some Christians find that celebrating the Lord's Supper is a good time to come before God confessing one's sins in order to be renewed by a fresh experience of God's forgiving grace. Is the Lord's Supper such a time for you? <p>What other experiences, if any, have enabled you to be renewed by a fresh experience of God's grace?</p>
Looking Ahead	<p>How can I prepare for the next Small Group meeting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please be watching for Sermon-based Small Group discussion guides in the entryway of the church (paper copies) and available online (for download).
Prayer Focus	<p>How can I connect with God and others through prayer?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pray together as a group for the courage to acknowledge and confess your sins in order to receive the cleansing of God's forgiveness.
Updates	<p>Announcements from:</p> <p>Care Coordinator Outreach Coordinator, Social Coordinator</p>