

# LENT DEVOTIONAL

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## LENT DEVOTIONAL MARCH 19, 2025

### SCRIPTURE

#### PSALM 51

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.  
3 For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.  
4 Against you, you alone, have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are justified in your sentence  
and blameless when you pass judgment.



5 Indeed, I was born guilty,  
 a sinner when my mother conceived me.  
 6 You desire truth in the inward being;  
 therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.  
 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
 wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
 8 Let me hear joy and gladness;  
 let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.  
 9 Hide your face from my sins,  
 and blot out all my iniquities.  
 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
 and put a new and right spirit within me.  
 11 Do not cast me away from your presence,  
 and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
 and sustain in me a willing spirit.  
 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
 and sinners will return to you.  
 14 Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,  
 O God of my salvation,  
 and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.  
 15 O Lord, open my lips,  
 and my mouth will declare your praise.  
 16 For you have no delight in sacrifice;  
 if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.  
 17 The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;  
 a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.  
 18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;  
 rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,  
 19 then you will delight in right sacrifices,  
 in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;  
 then bulls will be offered on your altar.

## DEVOTION

**The Rev. Dr. Rick Willhite '86**

Years ago, I regularly attended Sunday worship with a Christian fellowship that introduced me to Psalm 51. Often, as worship opened, we sang several simple hymns, including one composed upon verses 10-12, the beating heart of Psalm 51:

"Create in me a clean heart, Oh God  
 And renew a right spirit within me;  
 And cast me not from thy presence.  
 And take not thy Holy Spirit from me.  
 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation,  
 And renew a right spirit within me."

The simple tune was catchy, the words too: plain, humble repentance and a prayer for refuge in God's presence. We'd sing the verses two or three times, letting the meaning sink in deeply. It becomes a meditation. I can hear it still.

Years later, I'm struck by how well the prayer speaks to different seasons of the human spirit. One whose choices and actions have created a sense of distance from God can relate to the prayer's longing for forgiveness, a welcoming home to God's grace. One lost in doubt might resonate with the restored faith and trust implicit in the prayer. The fearful might find shelter in the prayer's plea for the joy of knowing one's true ground in God's eternal love. The song, the prayer—they sound our depths of need.

All that seems required is the humility of admitting one's need for these gifts. The prayer at the heart of Psalm 51 sings from just that space, empty for God's love.

You can find almost anything on YouTube. I recently found the same Psalm 51 hymn that I learned years ago alive and well presented by several artists. It's still lovely, still speaks to me. "Create in me a clean heart, Oh God." It's a prayer for people like us.

## PRAYER

Create in me a clean heart, Oh God  
And renew a right spirit within me;  
And cast me not from thy presence.  
And take not thy Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation,  
And renew a right spirit within me.”

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