

SPECIAL LESSON

Psalm 32 (OSB 31): The Joy of Forgiveness

Bible Study Preparation and Materials Needed:

Reflecting on: Psalm 32 (OSB 31) - God as the Good Shepherd

For the Lesson: Orthodox Study Bible or Holy Bible: Armenian Church Edition

Recommended Orthodox Study Bible [HERE](#).

Recommended Holy Bible: Armenian Church Edition [HERE](#).

Optional Practice

If time permits, begin or conclude this Bible study with an antiphonal Psalm reading. Have students read the psalm aloud in two groups, line by line. Encourage them to hear David's emotion, allowing it to become their own prayer.

Memory Verse:

**Many are the scourges of the sinner,
But he who hopes in the Lord, mercy shall encircle him.**

- Psalm 32:10

Bible Study Lesson

Open with prayer:

Իմաստութիւն Յօր՝ Յիսուս, տո՛ւր ինձ իմաստութիւն, զբարիս խորհել եւ խօսել եւ գործել առաջի Քո՝ յամենայն ժամ. ի չար խորհրդոց, ի բանից եւ ի գործոց փրկեա՛ զիս. եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Eemasdootyoon Hor Heesoos, door eents eemasdootyoon uzparees khorel yev khosel yev kordz arachi ko hamenayn jham. Ee char khorhrtos, ee paneets yev kordzots prgya zees yev voghormya ko araradzots eents pazmameghees. Amen.

Wisdom of the Father, O Jesus, grant to me the wisdom to think, speak, and do that which is good in Your sight. Save me from all evil and distracting thoughts, words, and deeds. Have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

A Reflection on Psalm 32 (OSB Psalm 31): The Joy of Forgiveness

Psalm 32 (OSB 31)

*1 Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven,
And whose sins are covered.*

*2 Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not take into account,
And in whose mouth there is no deceit.*

*3 Because I kept silent, my bones grew old
From my groaning all the day long;*

*4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
I became miserable when the thorn pierced me. (Pause)*

*5 I made known my sin,
And I did not hide my transgression;
I said, "I will confess my transgression to the Lord,"
And You forgave the ungodliness of my sin. (Pause)*

*6 For this cause, everyone who is holy will pray to Him in a well-fitted time;
Surely they will not draw near to Him in a flood of many waters.*

*7 You are my refuge from the oppression of those who surround me;
O my exceeding joy, redeem me from those who encircle me. (Pause)*

*8 "I will give you understanding, and I will teach you in the way you should walk;
I will fix My eyes on you.*

*9 Do not be like the horse and the mule, which have no understanding;
You squeeze their jaws with bit and bridle,
Lest they come near you."*

*10 Many are the scourges of the sinner,
But he who hopes in the Lord, mercy shall encircle him.*

*11 Be glad in the Lord and rejoice greatly, O righteous ones,
And boast, all you upright in heart.*

Are you familiar with a feeling of a huge weight being lifted off your shoulders? That moment when you finally admitted something you'd been hiding, and instead of punishment, you received mercy? Psalm 32 is a celebration of that experience. It's a psalm about guilt, confession, and the unexpected joy of being forgiven.

David doesn't start with sin; he starts with blessing: *"Blessed are those whose lawlessness is forgiven, and whose sins are covered."* (v. 1) He knows what it feels like to carry sin in silence. But he also knows the freedom that comes when we stop hiding and come clean before God.

When I Kept Silent

David writes, *"When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long."* (v. 3) Guilt doesn't just affect the soul. It drains us physically and emotionally. It can make us tired, anxious, even sick. But when David finally opened up to God, something miraculous happened: the guilt lifted.

"I acknowledged my sin, and I did not hide my transgression. I said, 'I will confess my transgression to the Lord,' and You forgave the ungodliness of my heart." (v. 5)

This verse shows us the Gospel in miniature: honest confession, followed by immediate forgiveness. No lectures. No delay. Just grace.

Q: *Have you ever held something in for a long time, only to feel relief when you finally talked about it or confessed it?*

The Safe Place

David continues, *"You are my refuge from the tribulation which surrounds me; O my exceeding joy, deliver me from those who encircle me."* (v. 7) Sin isolates us. But confession restores relationship — not only with God, but with others and ourselves. God becomes a refuge, not someone we fear, but someone we run to.

In the Orthodox Church, confession isn't about judgment. It's about healing. The priest isn't there to condemn, but to witness the mercy of God being poured out over your soul.

Q: *Why do you think God invites us to confess our sins, even though He already knows them?*

God Will Teach You

"I will give you understanding, and I will teach you in this way you should go; I will fix My eyes on you." (v. 8)

Once the burden is lifted, God doesn't leave us alone. He promises to guide us forward. Forgiveness isn't just a clean slate, a new path. Confession opens the way for clarity. David moves from guilt to instruction, from silence to direction.

St. Porphyrios said, *"Whoever desires to become good should first believe that they are loved."* God doesn't just forgive; He accompanies us, watches over us, and walks with us.

Q: *How does knowing you are forgiven change the way you view yourself and your future?*

Many Are the Wounds

David ends with contrast: *"Many are the wounds of the sinner, but he who hopes in the Lord, mercy shall encircle him. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice greatly, O righteous ones, and boast, all you upright in heart."* (vv. 10-11)

Sin wounds. But forgiveness surrounds us with mercy. David moves from secrecy and sorrow to singing and celebration. That's the power of confession.

Psalm 32 reminds us that freedom isn't found in pretending we're perfect. It's found in admitting that we need grace. And when we do, we don't find a judge, yet we find a Father.

Reflection Questions

1. How does knowing that God loves you—even when you sin—change the way you view confession?
2. When you’ve tried to hide something you did wrong, how did it affect your peace of mind? Did it feel like “your bones were wasting away” (Psalm 32:3)?
3. Psalm 32 speaks about the blessing of being forgiven. Can you remember a time when someone forgave you deeply? How did that moment reflect God’s mercy?
4. What fears might keep someone from being honest with God in prayer? How can you overcome those fears?
5. St. Porphyrios said that becoming good begins with believing you are loved. Do you believe God loves you even at your worst moments? Why or why not?
6. God promises to “instruct and teach” us in the way we should go (Psalm 32:8). In what area of your life do you need God’s direction most right now?
7. How can silence become a barrier to healing? What is one thing you need to bring to God in prayer today, even if it’s difficult?
8. Psalm 32 contrasts the joyful person who confesses with the sorrow of those who remain stubborn. Which do you relate to more right now? What step could move you toward joy?
9. How does the Orthodox practice of confession help us experience God’s love, not just His rules?
10. When you think about repentance, do you focus more on guilt or on healing? How can Psalm 32 help shift your mindset?

Close with prayer:

Պահապան ամենայնի Քրիստոս, աջ Քո հովանի լիցի ի վերայ իմ, ի տուէ եւ ի գիշերի, ի նստիլ ի տան, ի գնալ ի ճանապարհ, ի ննջել եւ ի յառնել, զի մի երբեք սասանեցայց եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Bahaban amenayn Kreesdos, ach Ko hovanee leetsee ee vera eem; ee dveh yev ee keesheree, ee nsdeel ee dan, ee knal ee janabarh, ee nunchel yev ee harnel, zee mee yerpek sasanetsayts yev voghormya Ko araradzots yev eents pazmamyghees. Amen.

O Christ, guardian of all, let Your right hand guard and shelter me, by day and by night, at home and abroad, in sleeping and in waking, that I may never stumble. Have mercy upon Your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.