

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

***Two People at Prayer:  
Relating Authentically to God  
Luke 18:9-14***

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

## Leaders' Responsibilities:

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## Prior to this Coming Session:

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

Make copies of the reading from Psalm 51 ahead of time if possible and ask three people to read as directed during the Gathering Time. Use one of the youth if possible as a reader. (Copy from final page).

### **Bible Study Leader:**

Have a white board or large piece of paper to use when contrasting the prayer of the Pharisee and the prayer of the tax collector.

## **Worship Time Leader:**

## **Music Sources:**

**Amazing Grace**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #104; CCLI #22025 Public Domain

**Grace Alone**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #112; CCLI #2335524

**Just as I Am**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #435; CCLI #23206 Public Domain

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Two People at Prayer:  
Relating Authentically to God*****Focal Text**

Luke 18:9-14

**Background Text**

Luke 18:9-14

**Main Idea**

An authentic relationship with God is based on asking for God's mercy; not on engaging in self-justification and considering oneself better than others before God.

**Question to Explore**

On what do we base a genuine relationship with God?

**Teaching Aim**

To lead your church to evaluate the authenticity of your relationship with God and respond with humility.

**Gathering together:**

Sing **Amazing Grace**

**First thoughts:**

Use the following Scripture reading to introduce today's lesson. If possible, give the assignments out ahead of time in order for the readers to prepare to read with enthusiasm.

## Psalm 51:1-2, 10-13

### First reader:

Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
blot out my transgressions.

### Second reader:

Wash away my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.

### Third reader:

Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

### First reader:

Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

### Second reader:

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.

### Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## **Teacher Preparation**

### ***Two People at Prayer: Relating Authentically to God***

#### **Focal Text**

Luke 18:9-14

#### **Background Text**

Luke 18:9-14

#### **Main Idea**

An authentic relationship with God is based on asking for God’s mercy; not on engaging in self-justification and considering oneself better than others before God.

#### **Question to Explore**

On what do we base a genuine relationship with God?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead your church to evaluate the authenticity of your relationship with God and respond with humility.

### **Introduction to your personal study:**

If you can find the praise song, **Grace Alone**, printed in *The Worship Hymnal*, p. 112 and on CCLI #2335524, sing or read the words devotionally throughout the week prior to leading this study.

The only real antidote to self-righteousness is for us to stay focused on God’s grace in our lives. As a church leader, you may tend to be more like the Pharisee than the tax collector in today’s lesson. Pray about that reality before you teach the lesson. Ask God to reveal to you areas of self-righteousness in your life.

### **Background:**

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

As with the parable of the persistent widow, Luke prefaces this Parable with a statement which helps the listeners understand the meaning of the story. In fact he addresses the parable to a certain group of people. These people could have been his disciples; it most certainly could be you and me.

***To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable*** (Luke 18:9). Just in case, the listener or the reader felt that this story was about only the Pharisee or the tax collector, Luke makes it clear that there is a high possibility that it is really about them.

It is important for today's reader and listener to place themselves in the culture of New Testament times. The Pharisee was respected and the tax collector was seen as having sold out to the Romans and taking advantage of his fellow Jews at every possible opportunity. These are people on the opposite poles of value in Jewish thought and Jesus has chosen them because the shock value at the end will be tremendous.

The modern reader reacts differently. We have come to think of the Pharisee as an unworthy example of religious piety and today's tax collector is a government employee. In fact, the tax collector is not even a real person to us. It is a massive agency and we may feel no affection and some resentment for it, but it is not a real person whom we may have known personally at an early time of his life.

“In Jesus' world, the Pharisees were the most popular group of Jewish leaders. They were widely admired by the ordinary farmers and fishermen, the so-called people of the land. The Pharisees were descendants of a reform movement in Judaism from the second century B.C. Their goal was to contextualize the laws of Moses, to bring them up to date and apply them to every area of modern life, so that God's people should know how to be obedient in every situation in which they found themselves, with as few grey areas as possible. The Pharisees believe that God's blessing, most noticeably ridding the land of the Romans, was contingent on their achieving a significant measure of obedience among themselves and among the populace as a whole. The Pharisees were also very nationalistic and fuelled an intense hatred of Gentiles – people of other nationalities or religions.”(Blomberg,C.L.,*Preaching the Parables*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2004, p. 159).

Since today's society connects the Pharisee with rigid legalistic religion and is ready to condemn them, it is important to remember that Jesus speaks of “**a**” Pharisee. Jesus did not wish to represent all Pharisees in this story although the attitude of self-righteousness is easy to acquire by those who focus on the keeping of a rigid set of



regulations. All through the history of the church there have been those who would fit in this category.

In fact, the church often depends on those who have this type of orientation to keep things running. These are people who make a commitment and keep it. These are people who study Scripture and try to live their life as honestly and carefully as possible. Doctrinal purity is important to them.

The danger comes, as it had come in the life of the Pharisee in today's parable, when the things we do and the attitudes we hold become so inwardly focused that we are no longer dependent on God. We can, in fact, fail to realize that we are sinners saved by grace.

The description of the Pharisee in today's parable is very clear.

***“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men –robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get’”*** (Luke 18:10-12).

The Pharisee is filled with a spirit of self-righteousness and is casting disdainful looks at others around him as he makes his way to the temple in order to pray. In his words and in his deed he shows that he does not need God because his trust is in himself. His self-confidence is so great that he believes he is able to live up to the standards he has set. Consequently, he disdains the person who is unwilling or unable to meet the standard.

He goes to the temple in Jerusalem to pray either at the midmorning hour of 9 A.M. or the mid-afternoon hour of 3 P.M., the set times for prayer. He goes to the outer court to be seen and heard by others. Here he stands and looking up into heaven he prays *about himself*. His prayer is self-centered and is meant to be heard by others. (See Kistemaker, S. J., *The Parables of Jesus*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980, pp. 256-262.)

In his prayer, he used the pronoun “I” four different times. He gives a prayer of thanksgiving, but it is not thanksgiving for what God has given him, but thanksgiving for what he feels he has accomplished. He is not a robber, an evildoer or an adulterer. He takes notice of the tax collector who is also praying and is grateful that he is not like the tax collector. He then reminds God that he fasts twice a week although the Law prescribed a public day of fasting once a year on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). The Pharisees instituted Monday and Thursday as days of fasting during which prayers were offered for the nation.

Although we read this passage with some amazement at the audacity of this man, we must also see ourselves in his attitude. As we listen to the evening news and learn of someone who through his/her own bad choices is receiving punishment, we have, at

least in the back of our mind, the subtle feeling of gladness that we aren't like that person. Eugene Peterson says, "Hypocrisy is not the fruit of 'bad seed'. It is the lazy replacement of a strenuous interior life with God with religious makeup and gossipy god-chatter. Even then it takes a long time for that germ of desire to get completely suppressed. Hypocrisy is slow-growing. In its early stages it is difficult to detect.

And that is why no one is conscious of becoming a hypocrite. The line between that original impulse to be in on what God is doing and the procrastinating indolence of failing to attend to God on God's terms is crossed without awareness. Distraction from intended good ends up as hypocrisy" (Peterson, E. H. *Tell It Slant: A conversation on the language of Jesus in his stories and prayers*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008, p. 140).

A self-righteous attitude is almost inevitable for a righteous person unless one is constantly reminding oneself that it is by grace alone that we are who we are.

Scott Wesley Brown and Jeff Nelson caught that idea beautifully in a song published in 1998 by Maranatha! Music. The first stanza says, **"Every promise we can make, ev'ry prayer and step of faith, Ev'ry diff'ence we will make is only by His grace."**

The second character in today's story is a tax collector. The tax collector can enter the outer court of the Temple in Jerusalem because he is a Jew. He would not have been welcome in the synagogues found throughout the countryside and villages. Those are the "local" gatherings of people well known to one another. The tax collector would definitely have been an outsider and an unwelcomed intruder. In the large temple in Jerusalem, his presence might be overlooked. This man is so desperate for God that he must go to the Temple regardless of the consequences.

He does not presume on this privilege however. Employed by the Romans, he is the object of scorn and derision among his own people. He knows he has defrauded them, so they look upon him as a traitor and a robber. He is filled with remorse and deep spiritual hunger. He needs a place where he can pray to God undisturbed .

***"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner'"*** (Luke 18:13).

The tax collector stood at a distance. He was not there to impress people, but to relate to God. He beat his breast indicating the source of his sin – his heart. Under the Jewish Law he would need to pay back the people he had cheated plus add a fifth of the value to it and give it to the owner on the day he would present his "guilt offering" (Leviticus 6:2-7). Only then would he be free from his sin. The tax collector apparently could not do that. Beyond that reality however there seems to be his realization that only God himself could give him forgiveness. He cries out, ***"God, have mercy on me, a sinner."***

Imagine the surprise of Jesus' audience when he said, ***"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*** The audience would assume that the prayer of the Pharisee would be acceptable. It is true that it contained nothing of adoration of God, petition for the needs of others or admission of personal sin. It is an accounting of his own value in his own eyes. He assumes that God will value that which he values.

Although we have other stories where a tax collector becomes a follower of Jesus (Matthew 9:9-12), there is no more to this story. The ardent cry for mercy by the tax collector is all is know of his spiritual experience. But Jesus says that he went home justified before God.

Any church leader with experience has dealt with decisions about the responsibilities to be given a new believer. When should baptism occur? When should one be allowed to teach others? What level of understanding of Biblical truth is needed for one to assume leadership roles? These are meaningful questions. But today's parable teaches us that a repentant, humble heart is what is important to God.

## **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

***"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"*** (Luke 18:14).

Every parable we have studied speaks to us as modern day believers, but none more than this one. The story of two men at prayer is played out in groups of believers wherever they may meet. The story of these two aspects of our human nature can be seen in our own lives. We may have been a Pharisee at times – self-righteous, genuinely glad that we are not like the ungodly people who live around us. We may have even reached the point of reminding God how worthy we are. At other times, we may pray like the tax collector "God, have mercy on me – a sinner" as we are only too aware of our failings.

We need to be reminded often as this passage reminds us that those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted. But even when we are reminded we will struggle with pride, self-sufficiency, and an awareness of our own contributions to Kingdom work. When this happens – and it may happen on a daily basis – we must pray the prayer of the tax collector – "God, have mercy on me – a sinner". Amen and Amen.

## **For Personal Reflection:**

**What have I learned from this study?**

**What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

**What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### ***Two People at Prayer: Relating Authentically to God***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

#### **Focal Text**

Luke 18:9-14

#### **Background Text**

Luke 18:9-14

#### **Main Idea**

An authentic relationship with God is based on asking for God's mercy; not on engaging in self-justification and considering oneself better than others before God.

#### **Question to Explore**

On what do we base a genuine relationship with God?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead your church to evaluate the authenticity of your relationship with God and respond with humility.

#### **Connect with Life:**

Help your church to think through these thoughts: Even people who have never been a part of church life may use the word "Pharisee" to refer to someone who is judgemental and legalistic in attitude and actions. The Pharisees were respected and important in Jewish life and they were originally a part of a reformed movement in Judaism whose purpose was to contextualize and make clear the laws of the Old Testament. The purpose of that was to help people be able to understand and keep God's commandments. Unfortunately, for some Pharisees the desire to help people come

close to God by keeping his commandments became instead a rigid judging to those who failed to keep even the most minute detail of the Law. They built themselves up in their own eyes even as they criticized others. The reason the word Pharisee is so well known is that represents a crucial part of human nature – the desire to elevate our own good points as we compare ourselves to the weaknesses of others. This sin is a contemporary sin; it is one we cannot help but recognize.

## **Guide the Study:**

Have someone read the brief scripture passage to be studied – Luke 18-9-14.

Ask: To whom does Jesus address this parable? (To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else)

Ask: Who are the main characters in the story?

Ask the group to tell what their reaction is to the word “Pharisee” in general.

Using the background material, describe the high place of importance Pharisees had in New Testament days.

List the elements of the prayer of the Pharisee (The use of a white board or large piece of paper may make this exercise more meaningful; have two columns – one headed **Pharisee**, the other, **Tax Collector** ).

Pharisee: Gives thanks that he is not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers, tax collectors.

Pharisee: Reminds God that he fasts twice a week.

Pharisee: Reminds God that he tithes.

Tax Collector: Acknowledges God.

Tax Collector: Confesses his sin.

Tax Collector: Begs God for mercy.

Ask: What is meant by the statement “The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself”.

Then ask: What elements of prayer would we expect to be included in a religious person’s prayer? (Adoration, intercession, confession, thanksgiving for God’s blessings)

State: In today’s world, we likely encounter more impersonal officials and institutions when paying taxes even though we may still feel that some taxes are not used appropriately. Yet, we still have our mental lists of big sins and sinners.

Ask: In our world, Who might be placed in the category of a really big sinner? (Drug dealer; pedophile; one who defrauds others of money)

If we were praying nearby one of those we have mentioned, would we feel morally superior. (Of course we would.)

How would it affect our feelings if we hear him/her pray “God, have mercy on me – a sinner? (We might be sceptical, but if we felt it were a sincere prayer we would want to help that person find Jesus as Saviour and grow as a Christian).

Have someone read Luke 18:14.

Seek a brief, honest discussion of these questions:

Is it easy for you to believe that the simple prayer of the tax collector was sufficient to make him justified with God?

What other things do you think he should do? (On the white board, write “Have mercy on me—a sinner” opposite what you have written under **Pharisee**)

### **Encourage Application:**

Reread Luke 18:9 “***To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable.***”

Prayerfully consider times when you would have been included in that group. Ask for forgiveness.

Close by repeating the prayer of the tax collector “***Lord, have mercy on me – a sinner***”.

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

**Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time.** Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

# Youth!!! Take Ten

## Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

### ***Two People at Prayer: Relating Authentically to God*** Luke 18:9-14

**A youth will lead the following activity and comments.** No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

#### **High Drama in the Temple**

Luke 18:9-14

Use the time together to choose three of your group to dramatize the story for use in the worship time. One to represent Jesus, one for the Pharisee, and one for the tax collector. It will be especially important that body language convey the pride of the Pharisee and the humility of the tax collector. Position yourselves away from each other in such a way as to convey the importance of the Pharisee and the guilt of the tax collector.

The narrator will dramatically speak everything in the story (all the words of Jesus) except the actual words that the Pharisee and the tax collector prayed.



**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Two People at Prayer:  
Relating Authentically to God***  
**Luke 18:9-14****Beginning the Service:**

Sing *Amazing Grace* and *Grace Alone*.

If the youth have prepared a dramatization of today's Scripture study, allow them to present it to the group.

**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

In the Middle Ages, the lands of the Uzbeks of Uzbekistan were traversed by caravans transporting Chinese silks to the Middle East. It was during this time that Islam took root in Central Asia, becoming not just a belief system among the Uzbeks, but their cultural identity. Even after 70 years of Soviet atheism, Uzbeks have maintained their Muslim heritage. Give thanks for 5,000 Uzbeks who have put their faith in Christ. Pray that more Uzbeks will hear and respond to the Good News of God's sacrificial love for them.

**Sharing Guide:**

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

## The God of Stunning Grace

### Psalm 51

Peter Rhea Jones in his book *The Teaching of the Parables* uses the concept of the God of stunning grace. In his analysis of the parable we have studied of the Pharisee and the tax collector he says, “The picture of the God of stunning grace appears. The parable breathes the spirit of Psalm 51 with its confidence in a God of steadfast love (51:1) a God of healing forgiveness (vv.2, 7, 9, 10), a God who receives sinners (v. 13). (Jones, P. R. *The Teaching of the Parables*, Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1982, p 199.)

The tax collector who was the focus of our Bible study would have known the words of Psalm 51. **“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love”** would have been part of the teaching each Jewish boy learned from the Rabbi teaching at the Synagogue. In those days of his childhood and youth before the temptation of money and power led him to choose to work for the hated Roman government, he may have memorized much of the Psalm. Without teaching aids such as pencils and paper, memorization was the basic way of passing Scriptural truth from one generation to another.

Hidden away, then, in the heart he was beating upon were these words, **“Lord have mercy on me—a sinner”**. And also hidden away was the sure knowledge that God would answer **“according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion.”**

The tax collector depended on God’s love and compassion to **“blot out my transgressions, wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”**

Psalm 51 was written by King David after the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. This great King who had since childhood had loved and praised God and served him as shepherd, warrior and King had not only committed adultery, but with his authority as King had ordered Bathsheba’s husband to the front line of battle where the fighting was fiercest—and had him abandoned there to be killed by the enemy soldiers. We read this sad story in 2 Samuel 11 after having read in 2 Samuel 5:10 **“And he became more and more powerful, because the Lord God Almighty was with him.”** In 2 Samuel 8:15 it is recorded that **“David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people.”**

Psalm 51 is the record of David’s repentance. The tax collector was a more ordinary person whose bad choices led to his alienation from his people and from his God. Like David he could only count on God’s unfailing love and great compassion to grant his request for mercy.

In verses 2, 7, 9 and 10 we see a God of healing forgiveness according to Peter Rhea Jones.

***Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.***

***Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.***

***Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity,***

***Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.***

***Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.***

Were all of these requests included in the cry of the tax collector ***“O God, have mercy on me – a sinner”***?

The cry for mercy was a cry for forgiveness and for cleansing. The sinner wanted to change. He needed a pure heart; he had to have a right spirit within him. Those are things only God can give. Many people caught in the despair of addiction, of broken promises to spouses and children; of unholy sexual desire have called out to God for mercy –for a pure heart and a right spirit. They have found that mercy in God alone because he is a God who receives sinners.

***Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.***

***Then will I teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.***

What a miserable life the tax collector must have led. With whom did he share the wealth he had gained? If he had a family, that family was shunned by the Jewish community. Childhood friends looked upon him with disgust. He was not welcome in the Synagogue where the Jewish community met to hear God's word and to pray and to encourage one another.

What would it mean to the tax collector to have the ***“joy of your salvation”***? We can only use our own experience to relate to the forgiven tax collector.

He prays, as we need daily to pray, ***grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*** How quickly humans forget promises made and blessings received. We must have a willing spirit to sustain us when the temptation to return to our old ways is upon us.

And then, forgiven, renewed in right relationship with God and others, we can participate in the teaching and telling of the Gospel so that others will turn back to God – ***then will I teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.***

What an amazing thought – what stunning grace! This hated tax collector and sinners like him shared the Good News of God's grace and forgiveness with others. He and they could become useful vessels in Kingdom work.

Psalm 32 tells us

***Blessed is he  
whose transgressions are forgiven,  
whose sins are covered.  
Blessed is the man  
whose sin the Lord does not count against him  
and in whose spirit is no deceit.***

***Rejoice in the Lord, and be glad, you righteous;  
sing, all you who are upright in heart.*** (Psalm 32: 1-2; 11)

### **Call to Commitment:**

Lord, we call out to you today –“Have mercy on me – a sinner” and we rejoice in the knowledge that you hear us each time we pray that prayer. Create in us a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within us.

### **Concluding the Service:**

Sing the old hymn “Just As I Am” or another of your choice which speaks of God's forgiveness and grace.

For use during the “Gathering Time”.

Make two more copies so that the three readers will each have their own copy.

**First reader:**

Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
blot out my transgressions.

**Second reader:**

Wash away my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.

**Third reader:**

Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

**First reader:**

Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

**Second reader:**

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.