

# The Locust Years: Finding God's Restoration in Our Greatest Failures

A Comprehensive Study on Biblical Figures and Regret

# Introduction

This Bible study is designed to help you navigate the heavy burden of regret by looking at how God's Word distinguishes between paralyzing shame and life-giving repentance. Over the next four weeks, you will explore the stories of men and women who faced their greatest failures and discovered that God's mercy is deeper than any "if only" moment. This journey is not about erasing the past, but about allowing God to redefine it through the lens of His grace and restorative power.

Regret often acts as a tether, anchoring our hearts to seasons of life that God has already moved past. By examining the lives of Peter, Esau, Naomi, and David, you will see that while consequences are real, they are never the final word in a life surrendered to Christ. This study will challenge you to stop looking at the ground you've lost and start looking at the path God is currently paving for your future.

# The Tale of Two Betrayals

A silhouette of a person sitting on a balcony, looking out at a cityscape at sunset or sunrise. The person is in the foreground, their back to the camera, with their head resting on their hand. The background shows a city with buildings and a bright sky, suggesting a reflective or somber mood.

- Day 1: Matthew 26:31–35, 69–75 (Peter’s denial)
- Day 2: Matthew 27:1–10 (Judas’s remorse)
- Day 3: John 21:1–19 (Peter’s restoration)
- Day 4: Genesis 3:1–13 (The origin of hiding)
- Day 5: Hebrews 4:12–16 (Confidence in grace)

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**Focus:** Comparing the remorse of Judas and the repentance of Peter.

**Observation: The Weight of Failure (Matthew 26:33–35, 27:3)**

Both Judas and Peter were part of Jesus' inner circle, yet both failed Him in His hour of greatest need. In **Matthew 26:33–35**, Peter boasted of his loyalty, yet hours later succumbed to fear. In **Matthew 27:3**, the Bible records that when Judas saw Jesus was condemned, he was "seized with remorse." This shows that regret is a universal human experience that strikes the heart regardless of whether our mistakes were planned or accidental.

**Discussion: Remorse vs. Repentance (Matthew 27:5, John 21:15–17)**

The primary difference between these two men was the direction they turned with their sorrow. Judas looked inward and, according to **Matthew 27:5**, "threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself." Peter, however, encountered the resurrected Christ in **John 21:15–17**, where Jesus asked him "Do you love me?" three times. The distinction lies in whether our regret leads us to despair or leads us to trust in God's restorative character.

**Reflection: The Instinct to Run (Genesis 3:8, Hebrews 4:16)**

When we fail, our natural human instinct is often to hide, much like Adam and Eve in **Genesis 3:8**, who "hid from the Lord God among the trees." Shame tells us we are too far gone for grace. However, **Hebrews 4:16** invites us to do the opposite: "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy." Choosing to bring our failures into the light is the first step in ensuring regret becomes a bridge to restoration.

**Reflective Questions / Journal Prompts:**

- When you fail, do you find yourself reacting more like Judas (isolating in guilt) or Peter (eventually returning to Jesus)? Why?
- Identify a "betrayal" in your own life (a broken promise to God or yourself). How has your view of God's character influenced your response to that failure?

# Tears and Change of Heart



- Day 1: Genesis 25:27–34 (The traded birthright)
- Day 2: Genesis 27:30–40 (Esau's tears)
- Day 3: 2 Corinthians 7:8–13 (Godly vs. worldly sorrow)
- Day 4: Psalm 103:1–14 (The distance of forgiveness)
- Day 5: Isaiah 43:18–25 (God's choice to forget)

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**Focus:** Understanding why emotional regret is not always spiritual repentance.

**Observation: The Consequences of Choice (Genesis 25:33–34, Hebrews 12:16–17)**

In the story of Esau, we see a man who traded a lifelong, spiritual inheritance for a single meal. **Genesis 25:34** notes that Esau "despised his birthright." Later, according to **Hebrews 12:17**, "he could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears." This serves as a warning that we can be deeply saddened by the "bill" we have to pay without actually being sorry for the "debt" we incurred before God.

**Discussion: The Fruit of Godly Sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:9–11)**

Paul's letter in **2 Corinthians 7:10** clarifies: "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret." Paul notes in verse 11 that this sorrow produces "earnestness, eagerness to clear yourselves, indignation, [and] alarm." Unlike worldly regret, which is stagnant self-pity, godly sorrow is a moving river that washes us toward salvation. It focuses on the broken relationship with God rather than just the broken circumstances of our lives.

**Deep Dive: Sorrow with No Regret (Psalm 103:12, Isaiah 43:25)**

The promise that repentance "leaves no regret" suggests that when God handles our past, the sting of the memory is removed. In **Psalm 103:12**, God promises, "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." While we may remember the event, the paralyzing power of the regret is replaced by the peace of being forgiven, as God says in **Isaiah 43:25**, "I... will not remember your sins."

**Reflective Questions / Journal Prompts:**

- Esau wept over his loss, but his heart hadn't changed. Have you ever been "sorry you got caught" rather than "sorry you sinned"? How do you tell the difference?
- Read **2 Corinthians 7:11**. Which of the seven "fruits" of godly sorrow (earnestness, eagerness, etc.) do you most need to see in your life right now?

# Dealing with Bitterness and Loss

- Day 1: Ruth 1:1–22 (Naomi’s bitterness)
- Day 2: Ruth 2:1–13 (Grace in the fields)
- Day 3: Ruth 4:13–22 (The restoration of Naomi)
- Day 4: Joel 2:12–27 (Restoring the locust years)
- Day 5: Lamentations 3:21–26 (New mercies every morning)

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**Focus:** How God redeems "wasted" time and bitter seasons.

**Observation: The Identity of Emptiness (Ruth 1:20–21)**

Naomi's story begins with tragic losses that left her feeling God's hand was against her. In **Ruth 1:20**, she says, "Don't call me Naomi... call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter." She identified herself by her pain rather than her covenant. This illustrates how chronic regret can reshape our entire identity, making us believe that our best years are behind us and that God has finished working in our lives.

**Discussion: Finding Grace in the Bitter Places (Ruth 2:12, 4:14–15)**

Even while Naomi complained, God was working through Boaz and Ruth. In **Ruth 4:14**, the women of the town eventually told her, "Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer." Bitterness often blinds us to the small mercies God provides. Recognizing that God is still active in our story, as shown in **Ruth 2:12**, is crucial for moving past seasons of loss.

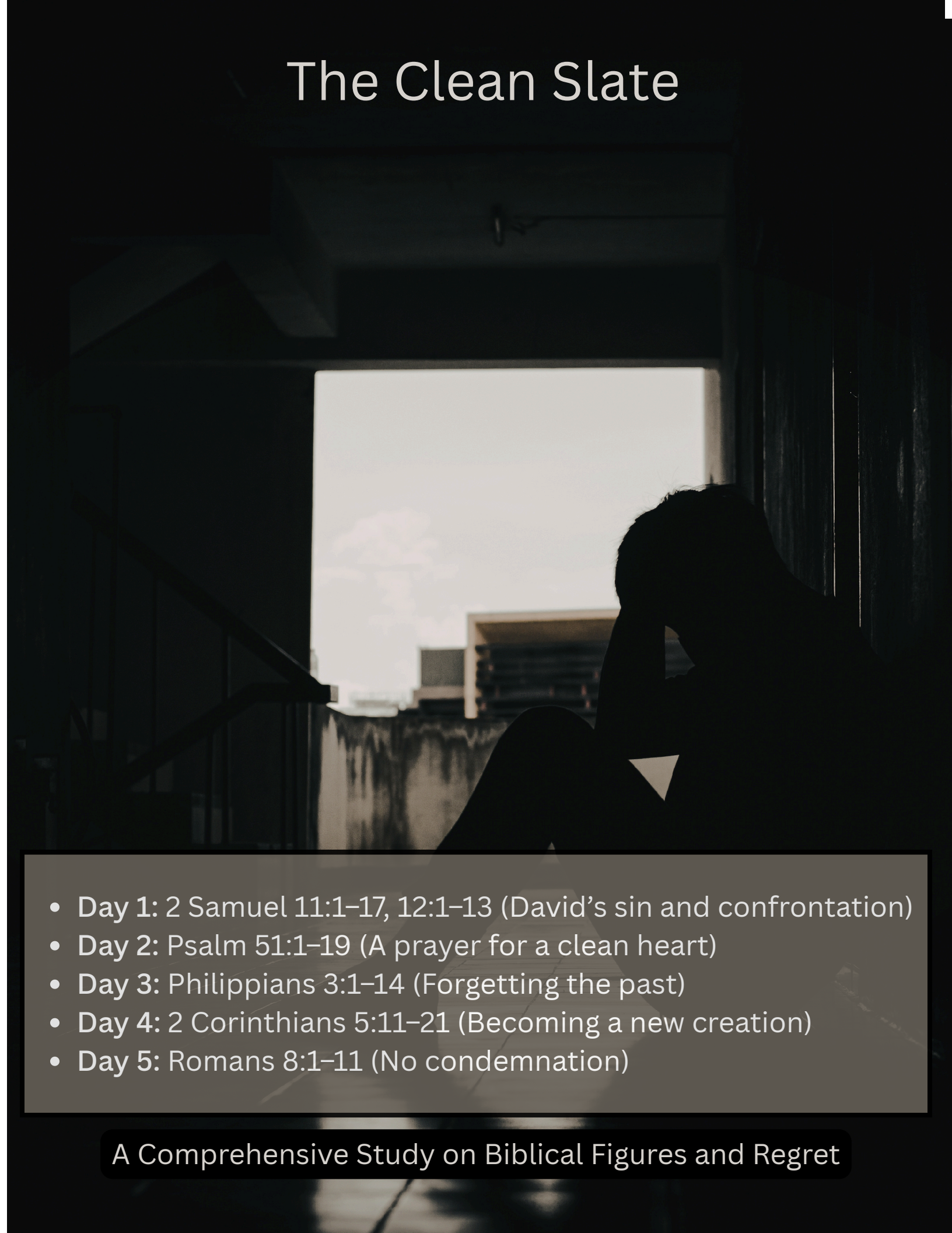
**Reflection: The Promise of Restoration (Joel 2:25–26)**

The promise in **Joel 2:25** is one of the most hopeful: "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten." God does not just forgive; He offers to restore the time we feel was lost to poor decisions or grief. As **Joel 2:26** says, "You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God." Our "locust years" do not have to be the final chapter of our lives.

**Reflective Questions / Journal Prompts:**

- Are you currently calling yourself "Mara" (bitter) in any area of your life? What would it look like to reclaim your original identity in Christ?
- Think of a "locust season" in your past. Can you see any "small mercies" or ways God was working behind the scenes even then?

# The Clean Slate

A person is sitting on a balcony, looking out at a city skyline. The person is in silhouette, and the background is a bright, hazy sky over a city with buildings and a body of water. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

- Day 1: 2 Samuel 11:1–17, 12:1–13 (David’s sin and confrontation)
- Day 2: Psalm 51:1–19 (A prayer for a clean heart)
- Day 3: Philippians 3:1–14 (Forgetting the past)
- Day 4: 2 Corinthians 5:11–21 (Becoming a new creation)
- Day 5: Romans 8:1–11 (No condemnation)

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# Conclusion

As we conclude this study, remember that regret is a place to visit for learning, but it is not a place to live for eternity. We have seen that while failure is part of the human story, restoration is the hallmark of the Divine story. Whether you are recovering from a singular moment of betrayal or a long season of "bitterness," the Word of God assures you that your past has been dealt with at the cross and your future is secure in His hands.

Moving forward requires a daily choice to believe God's Word over your own feelings. Like Peter, let your failures turn you back to Jesus. Like Naomi, watch for the redemptive work God is doing in your family and circumstances. Like Paul, strain forward toward the high calling of God. You are no longer defined by what you have done or what has been done to you; you are defined by the One who has called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light.



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