

A HUMBLLED HEART

+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. Repentance is the result of godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:9-10).
2. Repentance is the act of turning from sin (Prov. 28:13).
3. Repentance is proven by obedience (Ps. 119:57-60).

Background Passages: Psalm 119; Proverbs 28; 2 Corinthians 6–7

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

Repentance is an act prompted by sorrow in which a person turns from sin to Christ.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

All sin is an affront to a holy and good God and deserves punishment. God, however, has provided the means of salvation through Jesus, the One who never sinned and lived in full obedience to the Father, even to the point of dying on the cross. Whoever humbly repents of sin and turns to Jesus in faith will be saved.

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because we have come to know the glory and beauty of God, we seek to respond to all sin with humility and genuine sorrow as we are quick to repent and turn back to God.

GROUP TIME

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

SETTING: The past few studies have taken us from the theme of judgment to the theme of grace and back again. From a king to a nation to a people, the need for humility is evident. So where should all of this take us? To a humbled heart. We've seen the kindness of God in the past few studies, though kindness and judgment aren't thought to live in the same house. With God, however, they do. The apostle Paul said God's kindness is intended to lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). It is to repentance we now look.

EXPLAIN: Lead off your group time with the following doctrinal explanation of repentance (*the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #67: Repentance: Repentance is a **response** to God's gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine **sorrow** for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward **Christ** (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects **lasting** change and transformation (Ps. 119:57-60). It is the human counterpart to God's work of regeneration; in other words, the human side of our conversion.

DISCUSS: Pass out copies of **PACK ITEM 10: SIGNS OF REPENTANCE**, and then ask: **How would you define or explain repentance to a non-believer?** (a U-turn from sin to God; turning away from sin and turning toward God; remorse for sin and a return to obedience; confession and contriteness of heart; believing what God says about sin and choosing to follow His good commands and path instead; turning from a path leading to death to a path of life)

TRANSITION: Repentance is vital to the Christian life. One cannot be a Christian without it. Repentance, along with faith in Jesus, leads to salvation. That is the promise of the gospel. As we humble our hearts before God and confess who we really are, we see who He really is: He is our Savior, the One who forgives our sin and iniquity and redeems our souls from death to life. Yet repentance is not only a first step for the believer—it is an ongoing step in the Christian life.



POINT 1

REPENTANCE IS THE RESULT OF GODLY SORROW (2 COR. 7:9-10).

9 As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. **10** For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **2 Corinthians 7:9-10** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSE 9** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Good and faithful confrontation regarding sin seeks not humiliation but repentance. And when sinners repent, we should **rejoice** over God's **grace**.

DISCUSS: Why should repentance, whether someone else's or our own, result in rejoicing? (repentance helps to affirm one's faith as a child of God; repentance helps to restore human relationships; God is glorified when we choose to forsake our sinful ways and to follow His good commands)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 10** commentary to explain the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Not all grief over sin is the same. What matters is the **outcome** of our grief: Do we keep our eyes locked on **ourselves** in self-pity or do we turn them to **God**, who forgives and saves?

DISCUSS: What are some ways we can recognize the difference between godly grief and worldly grief? (examine the fruit borne out of one's grief; seek godly grief in our own hearts first and foremost; see if once-damaged relationships are being restored and repaired; see if there is a desire for and follow through to make restitution for an offense; see if there is a Spirit-led change in an offending attitude or behavior over time; we cannot gauge the difference with certainty, since such is a matter of the heart and ultimately in God's hands, but we can encourage repentance and actions worthy of repentance [Acts 26:20])

TRANSITION: The key to repentance is humility. Until we get low enough to confess who we truly are, we will never find the freedom of salvation we truly need. But when we humble our hearts, God meets us in that low place to assure us of His love and forgiveness.

NOTES

PAUL AND THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

Paul planted this church during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-17). But as it grew, some of his opponents were proposing a different gospel, undermining Paul's authority. In 2 Corinthians, Paul wrote to strengthen those who followed his teaching and to call any rebels to repentance.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"No man is born with godly sorrow in his heart, as he is born with a tongue in his mouth. Godly sorrow is a plant of God's own planting; it is a seed of his own sowing; it is a flower of his own setting; it is of a heavenly offspring; it is from God, and God alone."¹

-Thomas Brooks
(c. 1608-1680)

COMMENTARY

VERSE 9 / Paul and the Corinthian believers had a rough relationship in which the Corinthians struggled to listen to and follow Paul's leadership as an apostle of Jesus. This led to some grievous sins. Therefore, Paul had sent them a severe letter (likely a letter we don't have). He felt some regret over the circumstances and the grief it caused his fellow believers in Christ, but that regret was short lived because the letter accomplished its purpose (2 Cor. 7:8). He said hard things to hard-hearted people who needed to repent, and they did.

Consequently, verse 9 opens with a note of joy as Paul rejoiced, not because the Corinthian believers were grieved but because their grief led to **"repenting."** Paul's confrontation through his letter was a necessary conflict to bring about the necessary response: They humbled themselves; they turned to God; and they repented.

Paul could have remained silent and let them go in their sin, simply hoping they would come around one day. But he chose to speak, or write, as it were, even though he knew it would be hard and painful for the Corinthians to hear. Why would he make this choice? Because he loved his children in the faith. And in this, he modeled God, who always does what's right and never fails to correct His children for their good.

Paul acknowledged that the Corinthian believers were **"grieved"** by his letter, but he went on to communicate that this was more than just his doing. Paul said they **"felt a godly grief,"** meaning it was God's intention for them to feel grief. Paul's words, it seems, were harsh, harsh enough that Paul had some regret sending his letter. But his words were not too harsh; rather, they were appropriately harsh. They were the instruments by which God evoked the music of repentance from the Corinthians' hearts. Paul's intent—and the Lord's—was not for them to experience a loss but a gain, that they would experience afresh the new life repentance and faith always brings.

VERSE 10 / Paul explained that there are two types of grief: **"godly grief"** and **"worldly grief."** Both types of grief produce something. The former produces **"repentance";** the latter produces **"death."** Both are humbling and/or humiliating. But godly grief is good, springing up to resurrection life through faith in Jesus, who rose from the dead.

Godly grief comes from understanding that our actions are displeasing to God. They offend Him. So godly grief leads to mourning before the Lord, bowing low in sorrow over the guilt of our sin. It means we don't try to pretty it up. We call the sin what it is. We grieve before the Lord and lay ourselves before Him in hope of receiving His mercy and grace.

While this is certainly a painful experience, the revelation of our sin is a grace of God. It pushes us low before Him and draws us close to Him. We see the cross best when we are lowest. When we remove all pretenses and take off the masks we use to cover our imperfections, it is embarrassing and humiliating. But then we look to the embarrassed and humiliated Savior hanging on the cross for those very sins and we are undone. We come crawling to God for forgiveness, and He steps out of heaven to assure us that because we have come to Him, we will be with Him in paradise (Luke 23:43).

Worldly grief, makes one feel sorry, but that's about it. It's a grief that humiliates but keeps a person's eyes on self. It is, in a word, self-pity. Such grief wants only relief, not betterment, and there is no salvation to be found here, only death and hell.

The Corinthian believers could have burned Paul's letter, turned a deaf ear to Paul's words, or "left the church," as it were, and started out on their own. But they did none of those things. Instead, they listened to God speak through Paul, humbled themselves, and repented, reaffirming their salvation in Christ.

POINT 2

REPENTANCE IS THE ACT OF TURNING FROM SIN (PROV. 28:13).

NOTES

13 Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Proverbs 28:13** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSE 13A** commentary to explain the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

As sinners, our first instinct when we sin is to **hide** it. But this results in exhaustion and weakness as **God** frustrates our way forward.

DISCUSS: What are some ways sinners do not “prosper” when hiding their sins? (sometimes their economic fortunes and futures fall apart; meaningful relationships can crumble and wither away; the emotional and spiritual guilt and shame of our sin can negatively affect our decisions and physical health; ultimately, the judgment of God will fall on all who refuse to repent and trust in Jesus Christ)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSE 13B** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Everyone who turns from their sin and comes to God in repentance and faith will be saved. The Lord has promised His mercy, and He sent His Son to secure that salvation, so we are to believe in **Jesus** as Savior and Lord.

TRANSITION: Confession of sin isn’t a one-time event in the Christian life. It is an ongoing reality. Confession includes going to God as well as to the offended party. When we confess our sins, we bring what was in darkness into the light. This is a difficult thing for many of us to do, but we can be confident that on the other side of confession is mercy and freedom.

PROVERBS

This book contains a collection of Israel’s wisdom. As a genre, proverbs are wisdom sayings providing insights to godly living and a godly worldview. These sayings are poetic, using literary forms such as contrasts and metaphors. The proverbs in Scripture are true wisdom for the world in which we live, but in general, proverbs are not meant to be taken as sure promises.

COMMENTARY

VERSE 13A / Charles Bridges said, “God and man each conceal sin—God in free unbounded grace, man in shame and hypocrisy.”² With each of our sins, we face two options: We can bring our sin to a gracious God in confession, or we can hide our sin and suffer the shame and guilt. On the surface, the choice seems easy, but in the warp and woof of life, coming to God is not as natural as we wish it were. We are hiders by nature. Ever since Adam and Eve hid in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8), hiding has become our preferred path.

God, being our Creator and Sustainer, knows our frame, so in His grace, He comes to us with a wisdom saying like Proverbs 28:13 and puts our choice as bluntly as anyone could—We can hide or we can confess.

Let’s first consider our natural response to sin, which is to hide it. Think of King David. David’s sins against the Lord are well documented (2 Sam. 11). That shameful period of his life likely resulted in at least two psalms: Psalm 51 (refer to the Day 2 devotion in the Daily Discipleship Guide) and Psalm 32. In Psalm 32:3-4, David spoke to God about the way he felt as he concealed his sin:

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

When David hid his sin, he found he could not move forward. He tried to go about life as if nothing significant had happened. But the guilt of his sin wouldn’t leave him. Nothing in his life was working anymore. He felt exhausted; his strength so vibrant before was now dried up.

This happens to us too. Hiding our sin is our natural response. After all, confessing sin is humiliating. We’re embarrassed by what we’ve done. Why would we want to tell anyone about it? Won’t they think less of us? Isn’t it better to keep it hidden? We all

know what that experience is like because we are all sinners. We are all hiders. We are all concealers, so we know the feeling of exhaustion and dried up strength.

VERSE 13B / What is the path forward? How do we get out of the rat race of sin and concealment? How do we rid ourselves of the guilt and shame we carry day to day? Proverbs 28:13b answers that question for us: **“But he who confesses and forsakes [transgressions] will obtain mercy.”**

Hebrews 3:13 talks about the deceitfulness of sin. Sin is a liar. It not only causes us to do bad things, but after the fact, it convinces us there is no way forward. Part of sin’s deceitfulness is the lie that confession will only make matters worse. What is hidden now will ruin us far more when it’s brought into the light. According to sin, there is no hope for mercy.

But God says in no uncertain terms that our only way to freedom is through confession. Notice the promise in the phrase **“will obtain mercy.”** God doesn’t say we might find mercy. He doesn’t say there is a chance of mercy. No, on the other side of confession before Him is mercy in Him.

Confession means to name our sin, to say exactly what it is. Without filters, we call sin “sin,” not just a “mistake” or “struggle.” Renouncing and forsaking sin means we turn away from it. We don’t love it anymore. We’re done with it. We want a fresh start. We kick it out of our life with the aim never to look back. This is repentance: turning from sin to God.

Proverbs 28:13 helps us understand our part in our conversion. We confess and repent of our sins, but the Lord alone forgives and provides Christ for our salvation. And this applies to every sinner. The **“he who”** in this verse opens this gracious wisdom and mercy up to every person in the world, regardless of their past, their sinful tendencies, their gender, or their ethnicity. Whoever comes to God in repentance and faith will be saved.

POINT 3

REPENTANCE IS PROVEN BY OBEDIENCE

(Ps. 119:57-60).

57 The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep your words. **58** I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.

59 When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies; **60** I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Psalm 119:57-60** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 57-58** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Repentance of **sin** necessarily leads to obedience to **God**. Because the Lord has graciously given **Himself** to us, we should seek to obey Him wholeheartedly.

DISCUSS: Why does repentance require that obedience follow? (if we are not obeying God, then by definition we are in rebellion against Him and not repentant; repentance involves a recognition that our way is wrong and God's way is good and right; repentance and subsequent obedience reveal the purifying work of God in a person's life)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 59-60** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Our **sinful** ways always come short of our expectations and of God's glory, but **God's** ways are worth our consideration and quick obedience.

COMMENTARY

VERSES 57-58 / Repentance means turning from sin to God, and this necessarily leads to obedience. When we turn from sin to God, we find new life in Him. In repentance, we are saying to God, “My life isn’t working. Will You please help me?” And His answer is always, “Yes!” (2 Cor. 1:20). So what does that obedience look like? Psalm 119:57-60 shows us.

Obedience begins with claiming the Lord as your own. In saying the Lord was his **“portion,”** the psalmist was referring to the ancient way of allocating plunder and food and land. He was saying God was his sustenance and his dwelling place. He was humbly accepting the fact that the Lord had given Himself to His image-bearer, even though the psalmist was a created and sinful being.

As a result of this gracious portion, the psalmist vowed to keep God’s **“words.”** **“Keep,”** here, means knowing and obeying. And we can keep God’s words because He has given us Himself to do so. We have the opportunity not only to receive God’s grace but to hear His voice through His Word. We can know Him and learn from Him.

The psalmist also sought God’s **“favor,”** and he did so **“with all [his] heart.”** He was no half-hearted follower! He looked at himself and saw his great need, and he looked at God and saw His great supply. So he hurled himself at his Savior and sought His grace with all his heart. He knew where his only hope lay.

In prayer, he asked God to **“be gracious”** to him. What basis did he have for such a prayer? He went on to tell us: **“according to your promise.”** As he read the words of God, he saw God’s offer of mercy. So in prayer, he asked God to be true to His word in granting mercy, and he knew all along that God would because the Lord always keeps His word. As Charles Spurgeon said, the psalmist **“asks nothing beyond the promise; he only begs for such mercy as the word reveals.”**³

VERSES 59-60 / The psalmist’s turn to God was a considered step, not a shot in the dark or what we might call a leap of faith. He thought about his ways, and like the prodigal son in Luke 15, the psalmist came to his senses and headed for home by turning his steps back to God’s **“testimonies”** to guide him moving forward.

True faith involves consideration. It is not merely hope that God might be there but a definite step toward God, believing He is real. The author of Hebrews said, “Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Heb. 11:6). The psalmist knew he was stepping onto solid ground in coming back to God’s decrees. He knew God’s words are unfailing.

True faith hurries one to God for salvation and forgiveness. When we see our great need of mercy and grace, we run to God to find it. True faith also hurries us to keep God’s commands because in God we find the one true way to live. If God is faithful to forgive sins, He is also faithful to direct our steps forward. God’s Word is the light to our path (Ps. 119:105). It won’t tell us everything about to transpire, but it teaches us enough to take our next step in faith and obedience as God leads us and walks with us on those paths.

Keeping God’s commands means to follow Him where He leads and to do what He has said to do. Sometimes this requires trusting Him even when the road ahead looks dark and gloomy and intimidating. God doesn’t automatically transport us to heaven when we become Christians. Instead, He leads us on a new path for His glory and uses us in the lives of others for their good and ours.

Obedience doesn’t put limits on what God can command, as if to say, “I’ll go this far but no further.” Instead, we should not hesitate to do all that God commands. We grow in this respect as the Holy Spirit conforms us to the likeness of Christ so that we may live holy lives pleasing to God.

MY RESPONSE

PACK ITEM 11: A LIFE OF REPENTANCE: Hand out copies of this bookmark to help remind your group of the importance of repentance for the Christian life.

Because we have come to know the glory and beauty of God, we seek to respond to all sin with humility and genuine sorrow as we are quick to repent and turn back to God.

HEAD:

God loves an honest sinner. That may be hard to believe, but He does. He isn't surprised by our sin, so nothing we confess can startle Him. He knows it all already. He saw it all when it happened. He heard it all when we thought it. What God asks of us is simply to come to Him to find His grace and mercy for all our sin. He is faithful to forgive sin. Understanding the free grace of God is an intellectual step we must all take to come to Him. God wants to convince us that He is good and His promises are good. The truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ makes God's goodness plain before us.

What obstacles keep you from confessing your sin to God? What reasons should you have for confessing your sin?

HEART:

Knowing God is forgiving is one thing. Stepping into His forgiveness is another. When we confess our sins, we are stepping into the light of Jesus and asking Him to cleanse us. We are putting His Word to the test. Will God really forgive our sins? He says He will, so He will. Step into His light and see what happens.

What sins will you confess to God and others so that you may be forgiven and free?

HANDS:

When God forgives us, He changes us from the inside out. When we humble ourselves and seek His grace and mercy for our sin, we become new people who understand our fellow sinners. We stop viewing others as problems and start inviting them to Jesus. We stop trying to fix one another and instead take one another to Jesus in prayer. God's forgiveness changes us into life-giving, Jesus-offering, grace-supporting, mercy-loving Christians who gladly and gently press the gospel of Christ deep into the hearts of others so they may be saved and forgiven.

How will you press the gospel gladly and gently into those around you today?

NOTES



VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"The difference between an unconverted and a converted man is not that the one has sins and the other has none; but that the one takes part with his cherished sins against a dreaded God, and the other takes part with a reconciled God against his hated sins."⁴

-William Arnot
(1808-1875)

POINT 1: REPENTANCE IS THE RESULT OF GODLY SORROW (2 COR. 7:9-10).

+ **COMMENTARY**

“There is a worldly grief that can be very bitter and intense, like that of Esau who grieved with many tears over the loss of his birthright but found no place for repentance (cf. Hebrews 12:16,17). Worldly grief is deficient because it is not distinct from sin; rather it is redolent of the very essence of sin and self. This is because self is the center point of sin. As Archbishop William Temple so memorably put it, ‘I am the centre of the world I see; where the horizon is depends on where I stand.’ Therefore, ‘worldly grief’ is a grief for oneself, centered on self, not grief for sin against God. It grieves over consequences. It aches with embarrassment. It focuses on its own hurt. It is self-pitying.”⁵

POINT 2: REPENTANCE IS THE ACT OF TURNING FROM SIN (PROV. 28:13).

+ **COMMENTARY**

“Confession of sins to God is the first act of the penitent. But it should also be the daily habit of the saint. The further we advance, the deeper will be the tone of confession. The moment sin is seen to be sin, let it be laid on the Surety’s head. Every moment of unconfessed sin adds to its burden and guilt. The thought of a nature estranged from God, a heart full of corruption, sins of youth and age, before and after conversion, sins against light and conviction, knowledge and love, the sins of our very confession, their defilement, coldness, and too often self-righteous tendency—all supply abundant material for abasing acknowledgment. See the greatness, not the smallness, of our sin. Never deem any sin so trifling as not to need the immediate attention of the blood of atonement.”⁶

References

1. Thomas Brooks, *A Cabinet of Choice Jewels, or, A Box of Precious Ointment*, 1669, www.gracegems.org/Brooks/a_cabinet_of_choice_jewels3.htm.
2. Charles Bridges, *Proverbs: The Crossway Classic Commentaries* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 251.
3. Charles Spurgeon, *Psalms, Volume II: The Crossway Classic Commentaries* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1993), 206.
4. William Arnot, *Studies in Proverbs: Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1978), 313.
5. R. Kent Hughes, *2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness*, in *Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 151.
6. Charles Bridges, *Proverbs: The Crossway Classic Commentaries* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001) [Logos].