

A HUMBLER HEART

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

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

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGES:**

Psalms 119; Proverbs 28; 2 Corinthians 6–7

+ **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.

DAY 1

READ:

2 Corinthians 6–7

FOCAL PASSAGE:

2 Corinthians 7:2-10

NOTES

The Bible tells us to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Have you ever wondered what that means? It's hard to discern what is loving and what is something we want to say that we label "love." How can we tell the difference between what is truly loving and what just feels good to get off our chest?

Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 show us the kind of speech that speaks the truth in love. Paul knew he had to confront the Corinthian believers about their current way of living and thinking. They were not who they should have been. They were sinning against God, Paul, and one another.

As Paul dashed off a previous letter and saw it carried away to the church he loved, he let on that he had some regret about how it was received, but only for a little while (2 Cor. 7:8). He regretted he had to write it at all. He did not rejoice in the cause of the letter, but he did rejoice in the change the letter wrought in the hearts of his readers. Paul spoke the truth in love because he said what needed to be said in order to bring the church back to God in repentance. Paul wasn't out to settle the score. He wasn't trying to pick a fight. He wasn't pulling rank as the apostle in the room. He was saying hard things in a loving way in hopes of melting their hearts toward God. And it worked.

Perhaps you have never known the feeling of being on the loving end of truth-telling. Maybe you've too often experienced a kind of false love that attempts to manipulate and coerce. If so, that is not the way God works. God speaks hard things to us. The Bible is full of them. It is truth from page to page. But God is always loving. His goal is not to crush us but to save us. Jesus was already crushed for us. Christ is God's truth in love that leads us back to God's heart, where we find safety and salvation.

How have you experienced the Bible's truth as God's words of love to you, and how should that change your approach to speaking with others in the future?

DAY 2

READ:

2 Samuel 11–12; Psalm 51

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Psalm 51

NOTES



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.

King David was a mighty man who did great things in Israel. By all accounts, the people loved him, God loved him, and he was the king the world needed. In fact, it was to David that God made the promise of an eternal throne for his family.

But David was a sinner, and a bad one. In 2 Samuel 11, we are told of one especially terrible string of events where David took another man's wife into his bed, impregnated her, brought her husband home to trick him, and when that didn't work, sent him back to the front lines of battle with orders that he be left alone to die at the enemy's hands. For nearly a year, David seemingly had no regret. He kept silent and went about life as normal. But God knew what David had done. In 2 Samuel 12, He sent the prophet Nathan to confront David and call him to a godly grief and repentance.

Perhaps David had both kinds of grief at different points. Surely he regretted that the woman's husband had to die because of his sin. But it was a selfish move, one he considered worth the cost to hide his sin. He didn't seem too caught up on what to do next. He just moved along to the next idea that protected his own skin. This is worldly grief in a nutshell, entirely self-centered. When Nathan came, however, David's heart melted before God in repentance. In Psalm 51:4, David expresses his realization that it was against God that he had sinned. Yes, David sinned against others, but he knew his sin was really against God alone. He had turned away from the Lord, and now it was time to turn back.

David's grief turned to repentance. He pleaded for God's forgiveness and confessed his sinfulness. When our sin is exposed, we may find ourselves humiliated, not knowing if our lives can go on. But David shows us that with repentance and with God, all things are possible as God forgives us and restores us.

What sins do you need to confess in godly grief right now?

DAY 3

READ:

Proverbs 28

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Proverbs 28:13

NOTES

Each one of us faces two options regarding our sin. We can hide it in the shadows of our hearts or we can drag it into the light of Jesus. Any third option we can imagine is only a derivative of those two.

What happens in each scenario? Let's say we made a vow to ourselves that we would never open up. We would never confess. We would hide those dark parts of our hearts away forever. We would take our sins to our death. What will happen when we get to the grave? The Bible says it is appointed once for man to die and then face the judgment (Heb. 9:27). On that day, we will appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that we will receive our due reward (2 Cor. 5:10). God will, at that time, judge the secrets of human beings (Rom. 2:16). In other words, you can hide all you want. But a day is coming when all that is hidden will be revealed. Your sins will be dragged into the light. Even if you never confess your sins, you can be certain that God will reveal it all and there will be no more covering on that day for your soul.

Now let's suppose we take a different path. We choose to open our hearts to Jesus and step into His light. Will He judge us harshly? Will we wilt before Him? Will He cast us out? When we take that step of faith, here's what we find—grace and mercy (Heb. 4:14-16; 1 John 1:7). When we open our hearts to Jesus, He opens His heart to us, and we find the freedom and love we've longed for all our lives. He showed His love at the cross, where He paid the penalty for our sins and offers His cleansing blood for our unrighteousness.

So, we have two options: We can hide our sin in the darkness and God will drag it into the light on His day of judgment, or we can drag our sin into the light and God will cover it by the cross with the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7,9).

What excuses do you make for keeping your sins to yourself? How does the gospel of Jesus remove those excuses?

DAY 4

READ:

1 John 1:1–2:2

FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 John 1:5-10

NOTES

First John 1:7 is the perfect life-verse for a community of Jesus followers. If we walk in the light as God is in the light, then we will have fellowship with one another and find all our sin forgiven in the blood of Jesus. This verse is a way to take Proverbs 28:13 and put it into practice. Jesus is light. He's out there in His light right now, waiting for you to step into it. When you do, it's an exposing light, but it's also a cleansing light. You will see things previously hidden in the darkness, and that can be scary. It will also be freeing. It's a step we all need to take on a continual basis.

But there is another step included in this verse that might surprise us. John wrote this not to individuals but to a community. This isn't an exhortation to private confession but to public confession with one another. Notice the second phrase of the verse: "we have fellowship with one another." Maybe we don't expect that to be true. Some environments are not safe for confession. Your sin can be used against you. Maybe you've experienced that before. But when a community can step together into the light of Jesus and trust Him alone to deal with whatever happens next, something miraculous can occur.

We deeply believe we are alone in our sin. Even if we know others sin too, at the heart level, we believe we're alone. Confession is to community what oxygen is to the body. It opens us up to life-giving power. When we confess our sins to one another, we find fellowship with one another. We find friends on the road to glory, all looking to Jesus alone for our hope and salvation.

When we open our hearts like that, not only do we find fellowship with one another, but we also find the blood of Jesus cleansing us from our sin. We find the grace of Jesus pouring out upon us. When we speak out loud what we really did and what we really thought and then look to Jesus for salvation, we will find Him and His people with arms wide open.

Will you allow your sins to keep you in darkness, or will you confess them with a trusted believer in the light?

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"Repentance is not a onetime action. We initially repent as part of our salvation response. However, salvation doesn't make us act perfectly. While we're living we will still commit sin, thus the need to repent. We don't repent in order to restore our salvation, because we never lose that; rather, we repent in order to restore our fellowship with God."¹

—Mary Wiley

DAY 5

READ:

Psalm 119:57-64

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Psalm 119:58

NOTES

In Psalm 119:58, the psalmist prays that God would be gracious to him according to His promises. This is a thoroughly biblical prayer, and not just because we find it in part of the Bible. Praying God's words back to Him is a model of prayer we see throughout the Scriptures. God gives us the privilege of using His own words in prayer to Him. We can come to Him with His words on our lips and ask Him to make His truth a reality in our lives.

When we think about it, what else is there to pray for? What greater prayer could we utter? God's words are never failing. The full weight of His glory is behind them. If He has said He will be gracious to His people, we can be sure that He will be gracious to us.

Prayer is among the most difficult things for us to do, perhaps more so in our modern day of endless distractions and relative safety compared to other times throughout history. Many today don't have a deep sense of need before God. We feel in control of our lives. Our refrigerators are full. Our beds are warm. Our bank accounts may not be as full as we would wish, but they are among the richest history has ever seen.

So what can we bring to God in prayer when we can't sense our need for Him? We can pick up the Bible and pray His words back to Him. The Bible can coach us in how to pray. It raises our eyes to God in thanksgiving. It pushes us low before the cross in humility. It lifts us up to the heights of glory where we sing with the angels of the holiness of God. And it reminds us of how needy we are of His grace and mercy all our days.

What portion of Psalm 119 might you use in your prayers today?

GROUP

NOTES

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."²

-Thomas Brooks (c. 1608-1680)

INTRODUCTION

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #67: REPENTANCE

Repentance is a _____ to God's gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine _____ for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward _____ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects _____ 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.

POINT 1: Repentance is the result of godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:9-10).

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



Why should repentance, whether someone else's or our own, result in rejoicing?

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



What are some ways we can recognize the difference between godly grief and worldly grief?

POINT 2: Repentance is the act of turning from sin (Prov. 28:13).

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



What are some ways sinners do not “prosper” when hiding their sins?

_____ 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 _____ as Savior and Lord.

POINT 3: Repentance is proven by obedience (Ps. 119:57-60).

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



Why does repentance require that obedience follow?

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

MY RESPONSE

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:** What obstacles keep you from confessing your sin to God? What reasons should you have for confessing your sin?
- **HEART:** What sins will you confess to God and others so that you may be forgiven and free?
- **HANDS:** 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.”³

-William Arnot (1808-1875)