



## **What is Repentance?**

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# **WHAT IS REPENTANCE?**

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“What is it to repent?  
To be sorry for sin, and to hate and forsake it because it is displeasing to God.”  
Truth and Grace Memory Book (Book 1)

## What is Repentance?

In 2004 I was in Houston Texas with a group from my church on a mission trip. One particular day we were going from house to house knocking on doors and sharing about who Jesus was. As I casually approached a house, I quickly realized that I had made a huge mistake. I noticed out of the corner of my eye that two huge dogs were running toward me at top speed. Realizing my mistake, I immediately turned around and ran as fast as I could toward the street. The dogs chased me to the end of the yard. When they came to the end of the grass at the sidewalk, they immediately stopped in their tracks. They had either been trained to not cross the sidewalk or had shock collars on. To me, it didn't matter, I was able to run back to safety and for that I was extremely glad.

The word "repent" or "repentance" occurs 73 times in the New Testament. If God's word speaks about it so many times, It must be extremely important to Him. Repent means to "change your mind" or "turn around." In my story above, as soon as I realized the error that I had made in approaching the house, I changed my mind, turned around and ran away from the trouble and back to the safety of the street. What would have happened if I had chosen to stay near the front door of that house? The dogs would have attacked me and the story would have had a much different ending! Much like the dogs in the story, sin seeks to trap and attack us. Many times sin draws us in and we forget that like the dogs, it will bite us! Jesus tells us that He came to call "sinners to repentance." (Lk. 5:32) When we believe the gospel and trust in Jesus alone to save us, repentance becomes a way of life for us as Christians. When we realize that sin has lured us in and we have fallen in to temptation we must repent or "change our mind" about that sinful action and run back to the truth. If you decide to stay in the sin, it would be like in the story above, letting the dogs attack you! When you change your mind about sin and return to the truth of God, it is like running to the safety of the street. Sin will happen in your life. Repentance is the commitment to run away from sin and back to God's truth when you realize it. Jesus first words in the gospel of Mark are, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent** and believe in the gospel."

Repentance can be very difficult for the Christian! It requires discipline, hard work and prayer. It is important that we are committed to a life of humble repentance. This allows our heart to stay soft when hearing the Word of God. Thomas Watson was a Puritan who wrote a book called The Doctrine of Repentance. He said that there were 6 steps to repentance. I will use the steps that his book speaks of as small chapters to help you better understand repentance. I recommend for parents to read through just one chapter a night with their kids and talk through the "questions to consider," and "things to remember."

# 1

## Sight of Sin

### **Memory Verse:**

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

Hebrews 12:11

Have you ever heard the saying, "seeing is believing?" This is a proverb and means, "you need to see something before you can accept that it really exists or occurs." Sometimes we have to be shown our sin by others in order to know that it is there. Do you clearly see your sins?

Have your parents ever told you to clean your room? Of course they have! When I was a kid, my mom would ask me to clean my room. An hour later or so she would ask me, if I was finished. I would answer that of course I was. When she would come to inspect my room I was always amazed at how many things that she found undone. I didn't mean to not do some of it, I just didn't notice the details that she would point out to me. She would ask me why there was a sock still on the floor and why I hadn't vacuumed part of the carpet. She would point out that I didn't get all of the dust off of my dresser. Honestly, sometimes it was a little depressing for her to point it out. I hadn't noticed all of the spots that were unclean in my room until she pointed it out. In order for me to fix the problem's in my room I had to first see them.

Sin is sometimes like that sock on the floor, or dust on your dresser that you don't notice at first. It doesn't belong there and it needs fixed but if you never notice it or it's not pointed out it just remains there like unfinished business. Before we can repent of sin, we must first see the sin. God has given us authorities in our lives that help to point out those difficult to spot sins.

### **God uses parents to help us see our sin**

Your parents love you deeply. They want to watch you grow up to become a strong Christian. One way they help to guide you toward a relationship with Jesus is by pointing out sin in your life. When your parents point out sin in your life, do you listen carefully and take responsibility, or do you defend yourself and make excuses? It is important to take responsibility for your sin. If you don't take responsibility for sin you can never "change your mind about it" and repent of it. Parents not only cheer you on and tell you of the great things that you do, but they also help you to see your shortcomings and your failures. This is not a bad thing at all. This is a good thing! The reason they show you your sin is so that you can ask for forgiveness and have your relationship with God and others restored. When your parents point out your sin, it may be hard to hear at first. The bible tells us that being disciplined for sin is tough! Hebrews 12:11 says, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." Parents point out sin so that you might be trained to spot out the differences between the truth and a lie. You can help your parents by inviting them to point out things that they might see in your life that may not please God. Ask them to point out sin so that you may clearly see it and ask God to help you change your mind and repent of it.

### **God uses God's Word and the church to help us see our sin**

If you have went to church very long, you have probably heard of King David in the Bible. He was Israel's most famous King (besides Jesus). David was the warrior who defeated Goliath, unified Israel and conquered many of his enemies. David was also a musician and a poet. He was a very gifted person. Once when his men were out to war, he fell into sin by stealing Bathsheba from her husband Uriah! David ended up having Uriah killed and taking Bathsheba as his own. Just when David thought that he had gotten away with it, a prophet named Nathan told David a parable. This parable allowed David to clearly see his sin for what it truly was. David realized the seriousness of his sin and wrote a Psalm to

God that says, “against you, and you only, have I sinned.” (Ps. 51:4). David’s heart had grown hard to his sin, but God used Nathan the prophet to show him his error. This story from God’s Word helps us to see sin clearly. Having a friend like Nathan to help us walk like Jesus can be a huge blessing.

In the New Testament, Jesus also tells us that if we notice sin in another Christian’s life, we should help them to see it. We should go to that person and kindly tell them about the sin that they are committing. If they listen to you Jesus says, “you have won them over.” But if they don’t then you are to take others with you to again show the mistake to the Christian. If they still refuse, then that sin is to be brought before the church. Hopefully, if someone shows you or our sin, we are quick to “see it” and repent of it.

#### **God uses His Holy Spirit to help us see our sin**

If you are a Christian, then you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the triune God that we serve. We believe in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, yet there is only one God. God the Holy Spirit is said to live inside Christians. I Corinthians 3:16 says, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?” Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit came to live inside of Christians that “when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment...” This means that God’s Spirit will remind you of what God expects from you and you will see that you fail at reaching his standard. If your parents ask you if all of your homework is finished and you say to them “yes” but you know that you are really planning to finish it up at school in the morning, you are really lying to them. The Holy Spirit may be clearly telling you in your heart that this is wrong. Will you listen to Him and walk in God’s Spirit or ignore the truth and walk in the flesh? The bible says to not “harden your heart” (Heb. 3:15) against God’s Spirit. God wants to mold you into the person that He desires you to be. Jesus says that a blind man cannot lead another blind man. If he does, both of them “will fall into a pit.” (Lk. 6:39). One of the two persons must be able to see clearly so that they don’t both fall into the pit. The Holy Spirit guides His disciples into truth (Jn. 16:13). John Newton a famous song writer who used to buy and sell slaves before becoming a Christian and repenting of this horrible sin wrote a famous song called Amazing Grace. One of the lines in the song says, “I once was lost, but now I’m found, was blind but now I see.” Let God use family, the church and His Spirit to open your eyes to sin that you might see clearly and turn from your sin. To repent of sin you must first have “sight of sin.”

#### **Questions to consider:**

1. Do I invite my parents to point out my sins so that I might grow more to be like Jesus?
2. Do I have Christian friends in the church that are willing to tell me when I am in sin?
3. Do I listen to the Holy Spirit in my life when He warns me inside about my sin?
4. Do I want to see my sin, or ignore it?

#### **Things to remember:**

1. You will never be perfect in this life. Jesus was perfect in your place.
2. Jesus paid for all of our sins on the cross. Repentance is our way of remembering His great sacrifice in our place and turning from our sins out of love for Jesus.

## 2

### Sorrow for Sin

#### **Memory Verse:**

“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.”

Psalm 51:3

Have your parents ever caught you fighting with a sibling and told you to say that you were sorry? Did you ever then quickly say the word “sorry” but you didn’t really mean it? At one time or another we have probably all said that we were sorry but didn’t really mean it deep down. Sometimes we need some time to think about what we have done before we can truly feel bad about the situation. Sometimes the emotions and anger we feel in the moment can keep our “sorry” from being truly genuine. When I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, I got into a fight with my best friend Brad. We started punching and kicking each other. I was so mad at him! Our parents heard us fighting and brought us together and told us to shake hands and say that we were sorry. Brad put out his hand to shake mine and said he was sorry. My parents kept telling me to do the same, but there was no way I was going to do it. At that moment I wasn’t sorry for it, I was still mad!

If I would have reached out my hand to shake Brad’s in that moment and said sorry to him, would it have been real? No... I needed time to think about what had happened. I needed time to realize that my relationship with my best friend was now broken. I needed time to realize that my sin was against God, because I was trying to hurt Brad, and he was made in God’s image. Being sorry for something isn’t the same thing as saying that you are sorry. Sorrow is a deep feeling of grief that overcomes you for a sin or sins that you have committed. After King David’s sin with Bathsheba that I mentioned earlier he said, “my sin is always before me” (Ps. 51:3). This means that he was feeling sadness and grief from his sin. The feeling of sorrow from the sin felt to David, like it was always in front of his face. He couldn’t get away from the sorrow that his sin had caused. David was feeling true sorrow and wanted his sin to be forgiven. Have you ever felt this way? After fighting with a sibling, telling a lie, cheating on a test or talking mean to someone it’s normal to have that feeling of sorrow in your heart. As a Christian, it is important what you do with that sorrow.

#### **Don’t ignore sorrow**

Sometimes instead of allowing the sorrow to drive you toward forgiveness and making things right with others, you allow the sorrow to bottle up inside of you. The Holy Spirit may be convicting you of your sin and instead of making things right, you are hiding from dealing with the issue. I Thessalonians 5:19 says “Do not stop the work of the Holy Spirit.” (ICB). What would happen if you threw a huge wet blanket on a tiny fire? The blanket would put out the flames! When you ignore sorrow that is in your life from sin, it’s like putting a huge wet blanket over God’s Holy Spirit. Instead of ignoring God’s Spirit, you and I need to respond to His work in our hearts. If we don’t respond to the Holy Spirit our hearts can grow hard. Proverbs 28:13-14 says, “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.” The word “calamity” means to fall into distress or disaster. If we harden our hearts against God, we will fall into calamity. Instead we must confess our mistakes, deal with our sorrow and turn toward God. God is always quick to forgive us! I John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” If you ignore the sorrow that comes from sin, you will not find forgiveness and freedom. If you respond to the sorrow, rather than hardening your heart, it will lead to forgiveness and freedom.

### **Sorry you got caught, or really sorry?**

There is an important difference between being sorry that you got caught doing something wrong and really being sorry. Let me explain. A few years ago when I was a principal at a Christian school an interesting thing happened. It was early on Monday morning and I was setting up the chapel for the students who would be coming in just a short time. A little girl had gotten there earlier than the other students and looked very sad. I didn't say anything to her, but just kept setting up the chairs in the chapel and she suddenly walked up to me. I asked her if she needed anything and she suddenly burst into tears. She said, "Mr. Winslow, can you ever forgive me?" I told her to calm down and come to my office to talk. After she sat down she said that Friday afternoon, she had cheated on a Latin test at the end of the day. She said that all weekend long she kept thinking about the sin that she had committed and she needed to confess that sin and was truly sorrowful for what she had done. This student didn't get caught cheating, she confessed to cheating. The Holy Spirit had convicted her of her sin and she couldn't move on until she dealt with the sorrow inside of her by confessing the sin to me. She was a perfect example of what David said, "my sin is always before me." Student was really sorry! Sorry that you got caught is a little bit different. Let's say that this same student had been caught cheating on the test and was sent to the principal's office. She may still be sad and cry, but is it because she got caught and is embarrassed or because sin offends God and separates us from God and others? It may take being caught for you to be truly sorry, but it is always best if the sorrow comes from God convicting your heart about your sin, and not just being caught.

### **Godly sorrow**

The bible speaks of a "godly sorrow" and a "worldly sorrow." Paul says in II Corinthians 7:10, "For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading to salvation*, but the sorrow of the world produces death." The story I told of the student above is a perfect example of godly sorrow. The conviction that came upon her heart from the sin of cheating left her desiring forgiveness. She wanted to turn from the sin of cheating and get right with the me (the principal) and God. When she had done this, she felt great relief and thankfulness for the forgiveness that was extended to her. Notice that Paul also says that there is a worldly sorrow that produces death. This is the type of sorrow that only comes in the moment that a person is caught doing something that they shouldn't. The conviction of their sin only comes from someone else who has pointed out the wrong that they have done. There is no real desire from the person to change and to be more like Jesus. They just simply don't want to be caught having done something they know to be wrong. A perfect example of this is the New Testament is the story of Judas Iscariot. Judas was given 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus. After He betrayed Jesus he came back and said that he had "betrayed innocent blood." (Mt. 27:4). He even threw back the money to the chief priests. His sorrow however, was not a godly sorrow that leads to repentance. His sorrow was because he had been recognized by Jesus, all the disciples and everyone else present at Jesus arrest as the one who betrayed Jesus. Judas was simply caught. He may have thrown the money back, but instead of repentance that leads to regret and salvation, his worldly sorrow ended with him never asking God for forgiveness (Mt. 27:5). So that you can truly repent and turn from your sin, pray that God would give you "sight of sin" and true "sorrow over your sin."

### **Questions to consider**

1. Am I sorry that I get caught sinning, or sorry for the sin itself?
2. Does your sin like David stay "before you?" Do you quickly forget your sins?
3. Is there anyone that you need to tell you are sorry? What is keeping you from doing it?

### **Things to remember**

1. Sometimes you may need some time to feel genuinely sorry over sin. Reflect on this.
2. Sorrow is deep grief and sadness over your sin that moves you toward repentance.

### 3

## Confession of Sin

### Memory Verse:

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I John 1:9

I felt like a huge weight had been lifted off my chest! It was a moment that I will never forget. I was 17 years old and I was feeling inside the grief and pain of my sin. I could see my sins were many, and I was truly sorrowful for them. I went to the youth minister of my church and confessed my sins to him and to God and asked for forgiveness. I asked Jesus to forgive me that I had offended Him through my evil way of life. I trusted Him in that moment that He had truly died for my sins and rose again for me. In that moment, I was "born again." This was the day that I became a Christian, but my repenting of sin was just beginning. Paul talks about two ways that demonstrate Christian living. One way is called "walking by the Spirit" and the other is called "walking by the flesh." Paul also says that "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please." What Paul is saying here is that even though you might be a Christian, sometimes you will not walk by God's Spirit even though you want to. When you choose to do the things that are displeasing to God you and I are "walking in the flesh." Since we are all children of Adam and Eve, we inherited bodies that are susceptible to giving in to sin. When we give in to these sins of the world, we are "walking in the flesh." If you are a Christian and have been born again, you have also received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul says "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? <sup>20</sup>For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." When we choose to obey God and do His commands, we are "walking in the Spirit." If you have become a Christian, you will notice that it doesn't mean that you will now do everything perfect. Sometimes you walk in the flesh and break God's commands. This is why we must live lives of confessing our sins and turning from them. When we do walk in the flesh, we should be quick to confess these things to God and others we may have offended. If we wish to grow into a strong Christian we must be willing to take responsibility for our shortcomings and confess them to others. Part of growing up as a Christian is taking responsibility quickly for sin.

### Confessing to God

When I became a Christian as I talked about in the story above, it involved taking responsibility and confessing my sins to Jesus. While becoming a Christian is a one-time event (you can't be born again more than once), confession is not a one-time event. Even though when you were forgiven of your sins from the past present and future, it is still a good practice to confess your sins to God for your ongoing relationship with Him. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He said in the model prayer, "And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us." If I truly have a relationship with God and I know that I have carelessly decided to sin against Him, it only seems right for me to care enough to confess this is prayer and ask for forgiveness. This confession isn't out of fear that I am not a Christian anymore or that God has turned His back on me. This confession is because I truly love Jesus! I want to live my life for Him. I want to be used by Him as an example for others to see what a changed life looks like. When I confess my sins to Him I am recognizing my inability to live a godly life without His help. I am humbly admitting my weaknesses to Him and asking Him to forgive me and live through me even more! How can I ever repent and turn to God if I skip confessing my sins to Him? I quoted this verse earlier but will do it again here, Proverbs 28:13 says, "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy." Both confession of sin and

forsaking of sin is mentioned here. To forsake the sin is to repent or stop practicing the sin. Galatians 5:16 says, “walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

### **Confessing to others**

Have you ever heard the saying, “sticks and stones may break my bones, but your words will never hurt me?” Well, it’s not true is it? Words do hurt others. Words are the most powerful things that we have. We can use them to build up and encourage or we can use them to tear down and destroy. I am sure that someone has said something that hurt your feelings before. When they did, do you remember that your stomach hurt, or you wanted to cry, or it made you feel down? Words are powerful and can be used for good or bad. When we confess our sins to people that we have hurt, it can help to heal them and our relationship with them. If the confession is forced upon you by someone else and you really don’t want to take responsibility, the person you are confessing to will know that you don’t really mean it. However, if you have had a change of heart and God has opened your eyes to see your sin and you are sorrowful for it, then confession of that sin can be a very encouraging thing to the person who was offended. One time I had said some things to someone in a very uncaring way. I had reasoned with myself that what I had said was the truth. It wasn’t so much the truth of what I said as it was the way that I said it. The way that I said it hurt someone’s feelings. At the moment I wasn’t sensitive to that person’s feelings. At the moment, all that I cared about was the truth. What I was failing to realize was that there is a simple way to be both truthful and loving at the same time. The 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandment in the whole bible is to “love my neighbor as myself.” In that moment I was loving truth more than my neighbor. This sin of mine had caused damage to the relationship. I prayed about this situation and God revealed to me that I should ask for forgiveness. I went to that person one evening and spelled out what I had done and why it was wrong. I told them that I understood why they felt that way toward me and that I had been the one to create the barrier between us. Then I asked for forgiveness. First, I gave a detailed confession. I named what I had done wrong. This was probably the hardest part because in that moment I had to humble myself enough to take total responsibility for the mess that I had created. Confessing your sin is owning every bit of it.

### **Ongoing confession for the Christian**

Make a practice of not just saying the word “sorry” to someone else. Tell them what you have done. Take responsibility and ask them for specific forgiveness for the sin that you have done to them. “see it” be “sorrowful” and “confess” your sins to God and others. Is there anything right now that you need to confess? If so, what are you waiting for?

### **Questions to consider**

1. Do you remember what it means to walk in the Spirit? What about walking in the flesh?
2. Are there any sins that you need to confess to God? What about others you have hurt?
3. Am I able to humble myself enough to confess my sins to those I have hurt?

### **Things to remember**

1. You have two choices today if you are a Christian. You can walk in the Spirit or in the flesh.
2. Becoming a Christian is a one-time event, but confession should be ongoing for the Christian.
3. Be detailed if you are going to confess something you did that hurt someone. Own it.

## 4

### Shame of Sin

#### **Memory Verse:**

“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Hebrews 12:2

John Piper says that there are two types of shame in the bible. One he calls a “misplaced shame (the kind we ought not to have)” and the other “well-placed shame (the kind you ought to have).” Misplaced shame is the kind of shame that you shouldn’t have because there is really no reason to have it. Paul says, “for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” To be ashamed of sharing the gospel would be wrong for the Christian. This would be shame that we shouldn’t have. The gospel is true and it saves men and women, therefore to be ashamed of it is misplaced shame. Jesus said, “Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” If you are ashamed of the word of Jesus, this again is a misplaced shame. It doesn’t matter if the world mocks you or makes fun of you, you should never be ashamed of Christ’s words. There is no reason for you to be ashamed of what Jesus has said. This type of shame is misplaced.

Well-placed shame however is the kind of shame that a Christian feels for committing sin against a holy God. John Piper says in this same article, “Sin is always a proper cause for shame because sin is behavior that dishonors God.” Shame is a powerful emotion not unlike Sorrow. When Shame comes from a sinful act that needs to be confessed it can be used to draw us closer to God. However, to be ashamed of sin that we have committed needs to be harnessed and channeled in the appropriate direction. Jesus gives us direction for how to deal with the shame of sin in our lives. In Luke’s gospel there is a very powerful story that is told of a woman who had committed some serious sins. She came to Jesus seeking forgiveness. Luke tells us,

#### **Healthy Shame**

<sup>36</sup>Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee’s house and reclined *at the table*. <sup>37</sup>And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining *at the table* in the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, <sup>38</sup>and standing behind *Him* at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. <sup>39</sup>Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.” (Lk. 7)

The woman in this story is deeply distressed by her sin. This story tells us that she was weeping enough that Jesus’ feet could be washed with the tears. Imagine how many tears would have to fall for this to happen! She was feeling the shame of her sin and her need for forgiveness. The Pharisee in the story thought that Jesus shouldn’t have allowed the woman to do this act of humility. If the Pharisee would have had his way, the woman would have remained in her sin and shame, but Jesus doesn’t treat His children like that. Look what Jesus does next... “For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.” <sup>48</sup>Then He said to her, “Your sins have been forgiven.” <sup>49</sup>Those who were reclining *at the table* with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this *man* who even forgives sins?” <sup>50</sup>And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” (Lk. 7)

You notice in the story that Jesus says to her, “your sins have been forgiven..... your faith has saved you; go in peace.” Shame over sin is healthy to draw us to our need for the life-giving power of Christ’s forgiveness. But, you must not forget that Jesus tells all of His children who have come to him seeing their sin, sorrowful for their sin, confessing their sin and ashamed because of the reproach that it brought on Christ’s name “go in peace.”

### **No longer ashamed**

As a Christian, to be ashamed of a sinful act is healthy, but to stay ashamed after that sin has been confessed and forgiven is to deny the power of Christ’s forgiveness. Hebrews 12:2 says, “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” This passage tells us that Jesus “despised the shame of the cross.” What does this mean? It means that Jesus was willing to take the shame of all of our sins and die for them on the cross. The curse of the cross and its pain and suffering was something that Jesus took upon Himself rather than avoid. Our shame from sin was placed upon Jesus.

In the garden of Eden when Eve was first given to Adam the bible says that they “were naked and not ashamed.” (Gen. 2:25). When sin enters the world, the first thing that Adam and Eve do is sew fig leaves together to cover themselves. When they become sinful they are immediately ashamed. Do you remember what God did next for Adam and Eve in the story? “The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.” (3:21). God covered them! An animal died and the garments he covered them with were the skin of the animal. When the animal died its life was taken in place of theirs. Its blood was shed to save them and its body was given to cover them. The same thing happened in the New Testament only in a perfect way with Jesus. Instead of the animal dying in our place, the perfect son of God died in our place. He took all of our sin and shame upon Him. The book of Hebrews says that after He had done this “He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” What does this mean? A person only sits down when the work has been done. Jesus died for all of your shame and guilt.

### **Put your shame on the cross**

Shame is a natural feeling you will have as a Christian when you have sinned against God. That feeling is meant to drive you to repentance. It’s not healthy to stay in shame. You have to remember that Christ died for all of your sin and shame. You must not only accept forgiveness from Christ, but you must also forgive yourself. Living in guilt all of the time denies the power of what Jesus accomplished for you on the cross. Jesus last words on the cross were “it is finished!” Let shame drive you to Jesus, but accept the same words He spoke to the woman who washed His feet, “Go in peace.”

### **Questions to consider**

1. Have I been ashamed of my sin?
2. Do I stay ashamed of my sins, or have I trusted Jesus to forgive me?
3. Do I have any well-placed shame that I haven’t confessed to God and need to?

### **Things to remember**

1. There is a difference between misplaced shame and well-placed shame.
2. The sinful woman showed through her tears how ashamed she was of her sin.
3. Jesus told her to “go in peace.” Her shame led her to the feet of Christ and she was forgiven.
4. Have you placed the guilt and shame of your sins at the feet of Jesus? When you do, He will say “go in peace.”

*\*John Piper (Desiring God: Battling the unbelief of misplaced Shame)*

## 5

### Hatred of Sin

#### **Memory Verse:**

“For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 6:23

Is it ok to hate? Your parents have probably told you that it's not ok to hate someone. I would totally agree with them. It's not ok. In fact it's the opposite of what God calls Christians to do. Jesus said, “and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” (Mk. 12:30) He went on to say that the second greatest commandment is “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mk. 12:31) Jesus even tells us in the sermon on the mount “But I say to you, love your enemies.” (Mt. 5:44). Jesus told His disciples that the whole world would know who His disciples were by the “love they had for one another.” (Jn. 13:35) Loving others is critical for the Christian. Jesus said, no greater love has any man than this, that He lay down His life for His friends.” John 3:16 says “for God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” As you can see from looking at Jesus words, it is not ok to hate people! In fact, we must love all people, even enemies. However, it is ok to hate sin! Sin “separates us from God” (Isaiah 59:2), “entangles us” (Heb. 12:1), “enslaves us” (Jn. 8:34), and ultimately as Romans 6:23 says, earns us “death.”

#### **Sin separates us from God and others**

When Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God. What do you and I want to naturally do when we sin? Hide it... When we hide sin, it keeps us from having good relationships with God and others. In order to restore those relationships, we must quickly take responsibility for sin, confess it and ultimately turn from it. Fortunately, the scriptures tell us “The LORD is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.” (Ps. 145:8). God, through the sacrifice of Christ takes away the separation that existed between us and Himself. When we believe by faith what He has done for us, we are able to have a relationship with Him. He also tells us that we must extend this same type of forgiveness to others. We must forgive in the same way. Jesus said, “for if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.<sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” (Mt. 6:14-15). How many times should we forgive someone who has sinned against us? Peter asked this important question. “Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”<sup>22</sup> Jesus \*said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” Wow! Jesus point here is that we should never stop forgiving others. But what is it that causes the need for us to forgive and be forgiven any way? That's right..... SIN. God made us to have a relationship with Him and others. Sin creates barriers between us and God and us and others. Because of this we must hate sin. If instead we decide to love our sin, we will never be able to repent or turn from it. Why would we want to turn from something that we actually love? The Bible tells us that God is Holy and separate from sin and evil (Is. 6:3). The Bible also says that God says to us, “be holy because I am holy.” (I Pet. 1:16). The only way for us to strive toward rooting sin out of our lives and be holy is to first, hate sin.

#### **Sin is the cause of all the problems in the world**

Sin didn't just affect you and I. Sin affected and infected the whole world! Genesis 3:14-19 show us that the whole world was affected by the sin of Adam and Eve. Animals were cursed, people were cursed, the ground of the earth was cursed. Romans 8:22-23 says, “for we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.<sup>23</sup> And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly

for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.” This means that the entire creation is waiting to be born again. We are told that there will be a “new heavens and a new earth.” (Rev. 21). The old earth that was cursed will pass away (II Pet. 3). We also continue to struggle with sin in our lives as Christians. Even though we have been forgiven and spiritually reborn, this flesh that we still live in is weak and reminds us that it must be made new again when Christ returns (I Thess. 4/I Cor. 15). Jesus came into this world to reverse the curse of sin. He defeated it and killed it at the cross. I John says, “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.” (I Jn. 3:8 b). God hates sin and defeated it at the cross. Christians must agree with God that sin is evil and therefore hate it. This hatred of sin with the power of God’s Spirit allows us to have victory in turning from sin even today. Remember that your repentance will never be perfect in this life. I John 2:1 says, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” John is saying that we should do our best to live lives without sin! But, since sometimes we will still mess up, to remember that Christ is our “Advocate” meaning that He continues to forgive us, even now!

### **Jesus got angry at death/So should we!**

Look at our memory verse above. Do you see what causes death? “Sin” does. God made us for life! He wants us to have life abundantly, but sin tries tear us down and destroy us both spiritually and physically. There is a story in the N.T. that you are probably familiar with. It is the story about Lazarus. Many people remember that the shortest verse in the bible comes from this story in John 11. Do you know that the shortest verse says? “Jesus wept.” But why was he weeping (crying) in the story? Because his friend Lazarus had died. Lazarus was a sinner just like the rest of us and had gotten sick with something. This sickness ultimately led to his death. Now Jesus is in Bethany where Lazarus was from and he sees the emotion and pain of those mourning the death of his friend. Jesus was overcome with emotion and he too cried from the situation. There is a Greek word that is used in this story that is very interesting. It is used in both 11:33 and 11:38. Many of the bible versions here say that it means Jesus was “deeply moved.” However, this word that is used here in classical Greek is “used of horses ‘snorting’ as they prepare to charge the enemy in battle.” (Devotions on the Greek N.T. J Scott Duvall pg. 46-47). In the Greek Old Testament the word can mean “indignation” (Lam. 2:6) and ‘rage’ (Dan. 11:30).” (*ibid*). instead of translating the word to mean that Jesus was “deeply moved” by his friend, Lazarus’s death, many believe that a better translation would be that Jesus was “angry!” J. Scott Duvall says “As Jesus goes to the tomb of Lazarus, he isn’t just overwhelmed with sadness and grief. He’s also righteous with rage. He’s fighting mad. He’s angry at sin, suffering, disease and most of all death! He’s furious at these evil powers for hurting the people he loves so deeply.” (*ibid* 47). Do you remember what Jesus does in the story of Lazarus? He demonstrates His power over both sin and death by calling Lazarus forth from the tomb! He defeats both sin and death through His power. Jesus hates sin! He also hates the death that comes from it. If we are going to repent and turn from our sins, we must pray that God helps us to hate our sin!

### **Questions to consider**

1. Do I love my sin or hate it?
2. Is it ok to hate sin? Does that mean we hate people? After all, people sin.
3. What emotion did Jesus feel when he saw that his friend Lazarus had died?

### **Things to remember**

1. Sin earns us death. We need Jesus because He conquered both sin and death.
2. God is Holy and He calls each of His followers to be Holy as well.
3. You will never turn from sin if you love it.
4. Sin is the cause of all of the problems in the world. Not just my problems.

## 6

# Turning from sin

### **Memory Verse:**

"Produce fruit in keeping with repentance."

Matthew 3:8

How do you know that an apple tree is an apple tree? Does it not have apples on it? How do you know a lemon tree is a lemon tree? Does it not have lemons on it? What about an orange tree? I think you get the point. A tree is known by its fruit isn't it? Christians are people who repent of their sins. When we are confronted by God's Word, the Holy Spirit, or others, our natural desire should be to put that sin to death and turn from it. This would mean that when we repent, we are producing the kind of fruit that would identify us as a Christian. In the memory verse above, John the Baptist is telling the religious leaders that they should have the fruit of repentance showing through the way that they live their lives. After you've "seen sin," been "sorrowful" for it, "confessed it," felt "shame" for it and "hated" it, you are finally ready to turn from it. It will be hard-work. Every day of your life there will be possible temptations for you to sin. This is normal in the state of existence we now live in. Remember that sin has infected us and that we are in a battle to live holy lives. When you mess up, remember that you are saved by God's grace. That means that you cannot earn His favor by being good. You must rest in the fact that He gave you the free-gift of salvation. Don't forget though, that He has also called you to repent of your sins. To the best of our ability with the help of the Holy Spirit we should turn from sin and strive for godly living. When we live in the will of God it gives us as believers both joy and peace. Strive for this in your life with God and others. Live at peace with your brothers, sisters, friends and family. Live at peace with God.

### **Easy to understand, but hard to do**

I remember watching Major League Baseball on TV as a kid. On TV It didn't look that hard to hit a major league fastball from a professional pitcher. Then as I grew up I remember seeing a pitch sail by me for the first time at 90 mph. I realized then and there, that to hit that ball was "easier said than done." It wasn't going to be easy to hit a baseball coming at me that fast. Overcoming sin in your life is the same way. It is easy to talk about, but very difficult to put in to practice. Sometimes we like the sin we are committing. Sometimes we don't even think about the sin, we just find ourselves doing it. Sometimes we sin because we care about what someone else thinks about us and we want to fit in. Sometimes we just get angry in the moment, or don't want to obey authority. There are a million reasons why we fail, but keeping a soft heart toward the Word of God is very important.

When you believed the gospel and became a Christian you began a very difficult journey. There was no magic wand waved over you when you became a Christian that promised that all of your difficulties and troubles would be over. In fact, Jesus said that if you want to follow Him, you must "pick up your cross daily and follow Him." (Lk. 9:27). "Small is the gate, and narrow the road that leads to salvation." It is difficult being a Christian. It is a commitment. The Apostle Paul compares his Christian journey to athletic games, "Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; <sup>27</sup>but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified." (I Cor. 9:26-27) Paul had disciplined himself to overcome his sin to the best of his ability. If his body or mind was wanting to do something that he knew was going to go against a command of God, he disciplined his body to make it his "slave." Famous athletes today will sometimes spend over 1 million dollars per year on keeping their bodies in shape for the sport that they have dedicated themselves to. Every piece of food, every training session, every hour in the gym is carefully considered and taken in to account so that the athlete might perform at the very top of their

game. The great athlete's turn away from bad food. They turn away from people or things that would keep them from being the great athlete's that they are. Christians must have that same resolve about spiritual things. Paul says, "for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also for the life to come.*" Godly people do their best to turn from sin.

### **Roll up your sleeves**

While we are on the topic of sports here, let me ask you a couple of questions. How did Lebron James get so good at basketball? How did Giancarlo Stanton become such a great homerun hitter? Practice! This is not to say that they didn't have an edge athletically to begin with over most people. Lebron is 6'8 and 250 pounds. He is a huge guy. Giancarlo is 6'6 and 245 pounds. They are both giant men. But, both have been diligent to perfect their games through the years. Giancarlo takes thousands of practice swings a year. Lebron shoots thousands of shots in practice a year. All of these practices are to prepare them for the game. Christians are people who practice communing with God. Reading the Word of God, praying to the Lord and attending church are all ways for us to practice getting ready for the temptations that we are going to face each day. If you were to skip all of your practices before the baseball season and show up to the first game and when you go up to hit, you strike out will you be surprised? You shouldn't be. You didn't take the time to get ready for the game. You didn't take the time to find the right bat, work on your timing, swing structure confidence. You simply weren't ready and you failed. Being a disciple of Jesus is about being disciplined in life. You can even see that the word "disciple" comes from the word "discipline." It is prideful of us to think that we can handle temptation without being disciplined in God's Word, fellowship with other Christians and working on our prayer lives. All of these are important to work on. In order to live a life of repentance we must humble ourselves, trust the work of God's Spirit in us and work hard toward becoming more like Jesus. John Newton said, "Lord give me a humbling sense of my sins, give me a humbling view of thy glory, give me a humbling view of thy love, for surely nothing humbles like these." Ask for God to break your heart over your sin. Ask God to give you insight into His beauty. Ask God to help you understand better his great love for you. All of these things will help you turn from sin. The famous Martin Luther wrote these words in his song "A Mighty Fortress is our God."

"Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing, Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing: Do you ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He; Lord of Armies, His Name, from age to age the same And He must win the battle." Remember young Christian. We are to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance!"

### **Questions to consider**

1. Do you have the fruit of repentance in your life? Do you admit and turn from sin?
2. What kind of fruit comes from a lemon tree? What kind of fruit does a Christian produce?
3. Am I disciplining myself with the Word of God and prayer? Am I faithfully attending church?
4. What are the sins that I need to turn from right now?
5. Are there people that I need to ask forgiveness from?

### **Things to remember**

1. The Christian life is hard-work!
2. Athletes have to practice to be ready for the game. Am i preparing myself to stand up against temptation and sin?
3. It is very important to read God's Word.
4. Pray for God to give you the strength to endure temptation and the humble attitude to take responsibility when you fail and repent (turn) when you sin.

## **Memory Verses**

### **Sight of Sin:**

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

Hebrews 12:11

### **Sorrow for Sin:**

“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.”

Psalm 51:3

### **Confession of Sin:**

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

I John 1:9

### **Shame of Sin:**

“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Hebrews 12:2

### **Hatred of Sin:**

“For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 6:23

### **Turning from Sin:**

“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.”

Matthew 3:8