Lessons About Repentance

Lesson 1 - Introduction

Main Idea: What would you say is the hardest thing to do? Dieting? Hard work? Athletics? Physical fitness? Parenting? May I suggest another? Changing our character, our nature, what kind of person we are, so as to be like Jesus Christ. In other words, repenting. Repentance, I suggest is probably the most difficult thing God expects of us. Tougher than believing? Maybe. Tougher than confessing Christ as Lord? Maybe. Tougher than being baptized? Unless you have a fear of water. Yep, repentance is tougher. But expect it, He does...and it can be done...and it MUST be done! God never asks the impossible of us.

Text: Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30,31).

Does God present repenting as an optional matter?

Is ignorance an accepted excuse?

Is any sinful man on earth exempted?
Do YOU need to repent?

Why is repentance said to be necessary?

If we have failed to obey God’s command to repent, will be lost forever?

**What Is Repentance?**

*But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, “Son, go, work today in my vineyard.” He answered and said, “I will not,” but afterward he regretted it and went.* (Matthew 21:28,29).

This parable illustrates the meaning of repentance. What is it?

A Basic Definition: a turning or change...and might I add not simply a change of 90 degrees, but a complete 180. Elaborate.

A Bible Definition: a heart prompted turn to God from sin.

Eliminating some mistaken notions...

1. Repentance is NOT only sorrow or regret...See II Cor. 7:10.

* How could we be sorry, yet not repent?
2. Repenting is NOT a changed mind only...Judas repented somewhat, but you know his outcome. Read Mt. 27:3-5.

* How could we change our mind about some sin, yet still not repent?

3. Repentance is NOT a changed life only...that is more what the Bible would call the fruit of repentance...the result if you will.

* Why might we change our lifestyle from sinful to righteous, and still not truly repent?

4. Repentance is NOT simply confessing sin to God or others. The Bible distinguishes the two and so should we.

* Why might we think that if we are up front and open in admitting wrong, that is sufficient? “I said I was wrong...isn’t that enough?”

* Imagine being pulled over by a policeman for speeding and telling the officer, “Ok, you caught me...I admit it. I was speeding”...then speeding off as soon as he gives you a warning or ticket?

Repentance then is a multi-faceted thing. Repenting is Godly Sorrow and a Changed Heart and a Changed Mind bringing about a Changed Direction.
What Are Some Motivations To Repent?

Comment on these or what motivated you to repent and/or still may.

1) A fear of dying

2) A good example

3) Tired of two-faced living (living a double life)

4) A dead-end life

5) Godly sorrow

6) God’s goodness (Romans 2:4)

7) God’s word preached

Lesson 2 - If Even Manasseh Can Repent...

Main Idea: No one is beyond the power of repentance. Even the vilest of offenders can repent AND be used by God to do great things for his kingdom. In this les-
son we’ll consider one of the worst. His name is Manasseh. He was king of Judah for 55 years. For an alternate and more dramatic reading: Read 2 Kings 21:1-18. For the rest of the story, read 2 Chronicles 33. (Manasseh’s prayer, alluded to in v. 18, is found in the Septuagint version of the OT in the Apocrypha.)

Text: 2nd Chronicles 33:1-18

vv. 1-9...List all the horrible sins that Manasseh commits.

What do you anticipate will happen next to Manasseh?

Have you ever felt as though you’ve sinned too much to return to God?

Have you ever felt that you’ve sinned too much to ever be used by God again? Why did you feel disqualified from doing great things for God?

vv. 10-11...What did God do to try to get Manasseh to repent? How did Manasseh respond? So what did God do next?

Has God likewise turned up the volume of his reproof to you? How? Why did you resist?
vv. 12-13...What did it take for Manasseh to respond to God’s reproof? How does God show his love for Manasseh? When Manasseh repented and returned to God, how did God respond? Is that fair? Which description of Manasseh best captures the idea of his repentance?

vv. 14-18...How did Manasseh bear the fruit of repentance? Was he able to be used to do great things for God and his kingdom? Make a list of the reforms that he completed before he died.

Who is the most wicked person you have ever studied in history? What made this person so wicked? Is there anyone in your family or circle of friends that you’ve considered to be too far gone to repent and turn to God? What are some sins that most grieve God’s heart?

**FINAL CHARGE:** No one is beyond repentance. If Manasseh could repent, then so can you! Humble yourself before God and turn your life back to him. He’ll use you again!

**Lesson 3 - Good Men Like Job Need To Repent, Too**

**Main Idea:** Job is proclaimed by God in the first chapter of being the most righteous of men. After all his trials and the recorded ponderings of Job and his friends, we are left wondering what did Job say or do so bad that prompted such a vehement claim of repentance. There is a lesson in there for all of us.
**Text:** Job 42:1-6

vs. 2...What is implied that should cause all good men to still sense a need of repentance?

vs. 3...How did Job feel about having spoken some of the things that are previously recorded in the book? Have you ever confidently spoken about things which you later learned were mistaken? Have you ever speculated about things not expressly revealed in Scriptures? Might you need to repent?

vs. 4-5...Explain these verses in the context of repentance.

vs. 6...Why such dramatic expression of despite of himself? True repentance seems to come from where within us? Is dust and ashes needful today to show genuine repentance? If not, why not?

vs. 7-8...What does Job’s repentance enable him to be for others? Do good men lead the way for those more sinful by repenting themselves? How does that work?

Read Daniel 9:1-23 and discuss.

Read Luke 13:1-5...It appears the audience sought to divert attention away from themselves to others supposedly more wicked than they. Jesus does not deny the others are sinners or even explain all circumstances surrounding their calamity,
but rather aims a command to repent at YOU and ME! Stop looking at others! Look at yourself and you will see plenty of need for repentance. We all do!

Are you sometimes tempted to overlook your own need to repent, because your sin is not as bad as someone else’s?

Why do we do that?

**Final Charge:** Does God grade on a curve? Remember that in school? If no one did well on the test, then a less-than-stellar score did not look so bad. Rather than 95-100 being a “A”, it might become 85-90 or even lower. But, we all are being judged by Jesus Christ...remember Acts 17:30-31...and He got a 100 on every test...and so we better ALL get to repenting.

**Lesson 4 - Coming To Your Senses**

**Main Idea:** Jesus provides an insiders guide to repentance as he describes what happens inside the mind of the prodigal son. Watch how the son changes the rules by which he will play the game of life, and see the results in his changed life.

**Text:** Luke 15:11-32

Reading Luke 15:1-2...two main groups: religious and sinners – are being represented by the two sons. And Luke 15:7, 10 shows that these are a series of parables about repentance.
vv. 11-13...What are the rules of the game of life for the younger son? What is his strategy for success in the game? How’s he doing so far?

vv. 14-16...Why didn’t he succeed at the game of life? What was wrong with his strategy?

Who really sets the rules to the game of life? What happens when we employ strategies that don’t fit the rules?

To what degree does the son define failure at this point? Have you ever felt like a failure in life? Were you maybe defining success and failure by your own rules instead of God’s rules? Would you rather have success by your own rules or by God’s? Why do we play by your own rules when they contradict God’s?

vv. 17-19...Jesus now takes us inside the younger son’s head. What’s happening inside his mind and heart? Although this is the third parable about repentance, the word isn’t mentioned – but how does Jesus describe the son’s repentance?

As he comes to his senses, the son changes the rules to the game of life. How do the rules change? How does that affect his strategy for life success? How will it affect his lifestyle and behavior?

Who does the father represent? What like the prodigal son ought to be our own strategy for returning to God?
vv. 20-24...How is he playing the game of life differently now? Is he succeeding or failing? Why is he succeeding? Is it possible to win any other way than God’s?

vv. 25-32...What are the rules to the game of life for the older son? How does he, too need to repent?

Which son do you most resemble in this parable – the younger prodigal who wastes or the older who stays closer to God but despises his brother? Which is harder to bring to their senses of the need to repent?

Can we be blind to a need for repentance? How can you be sure? The end of this story is left open-ended – why?

**Final Charge:** Come to your senses by rewriting the rules that you have for the game of life. Align your strategy for success with God’s strategy for your success...and repent!

**Lesson 5 - Repent Or Perish**

**Main Idea:** The way we die has no bearing on our final judgment; however, the way we live does...and if we don’t repent we will perish.

**Text:** Luke 13:1-9
vv. 1-2...What do you think? Were they worse sinners as indicated by this grieved suffered at Pilate’s hands?

vv. 4...Were the offenders who were killed by the tower collapse in Jerusalem worse offenders than the others in Jerusalem? Why does Jesus bring up this accident/incident?

vv. 3, 5...What is the main point that Jesus is trying to make out of these tragedies?

What does it mean to repent? What happens if we don’t repent?

What does it mean to perish?

Why is there so little repentance in our community...in our own life?

What should tragedies mean to us, if not that “they must have had it coming to them”?

vv. 6-9...Why does Jesus tell this parable? What is the context? Who owns the garden? Who is the gardener? Who does the tree represent? What is the fruit that the tree should bear?
Does any of this apply to you and me?

**Final Charge:** Tragedies, catastrophes, and acts of terror often take lives indiscriminately. How we die does not indicate our final destination. However, how we live does. So repent and live for Jesus. He’s shown us his love, and he’s offered us his grace – because he knows that if we don’t repent we will indeed perish. Choose repentance – choose life.

**Lesson 6 - The Rich Man & Lazarus**

**Main Idea:** Everyone will “get it”, that is, they’ll be completely convinced about repentance after they die. Don’t wait until it’s too late to repent. You have all you need for complete repentance now, because we all have the Word of God.

**Text:** Luke 16:19-31

vv. 19-25...What did Lazarus do to deserve paradise? The answer is not explicitly given. Does living in poverty earn you a place in paradise? Does living a “hell on earth” existence now merit heaven later? Why or why not?

What did the rich man do to deserve torment? We do not know this either, but do have a glimpse of his character. What’s so wrong with living life for yourself and let others fend for themselves? What might this be an indication of?
vv. 26...Once dead, do you have any more chances to repent? How often – do you think – does the rich man replay the bad choices of his life while in Hades?

Has there ever been a time in your life that you wish you could turn back the clock and do something differently? Describe the frustration of not being able to change that consequences.

vv. 27-28...Knowing that his eternal fate is sealed, what does the rich man now want from Abraham? What would you have wanted if you were in his shoes? What do you think your deceased relatives most want for you?

vv. 29-31...According to the rich man’s thinking, what will it take for his brothers to repent? How will a messenger from the dead assure their repentance? Why do you think he holds to that misconception?

According to Abraham, what does he say it will take for the brothers to come to repentance? How did the brothers have “Moses and the Prophets?”

According to Jesus, which is more effective for repentance – a miraculous sign or a message from Scripture? Why is that? How does the Bible bring about repentance?
If we do not repent before we die, will we have any excuses as we stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Will we have a second chance to repent? To in any way change our position before God?

**Final Charge:** Don’t wait until it’s too late to do the most important thing appointed to you to do while on earth – repent. The bible is your guide, so use it. If you need help, get it.

**Lesson 7 - David And Nathan**

**Main Idea:** David presents a radically different “before” and “after” picture between the events of 2 Samuel 11 and the composition of Psalm 51. What happened to effect that change? We’ll see how God intervenes in our life through reproof to bring about radical repentance.

**Text:** Psalm 51; 2 Samuel 11:1-27; 2 Samuel 12:1-13

Psalm 51...How would you characterize David’s state of mind and heart as he writes these words to God? What are some of the signs of David’s repentance?

Against whom has David sinned? How can this be true? We know others were involved and sinned against.

Upon repentance, what does he promise to do? Why do repentant people try to help others to repent?
What is a broken and contrite heart? Why is it pleasing to God?

2 Samuel 11:1-21...How does David retreat into darkness to cover up his initial sin? How does darkness make it worse? Did David successfully hide his sin from the people – (note Joab’s response)?

Have you ever tried to cover up a sin? Did the darkness make things better or worse?

From God’s perspective, did it become better or worse? Why? How deep into the darkness does David retreat?

2 Samuel 12:1-6...How much was David able to hide from God? What does God do?

Why does God send Nathan? How is Nathan’s mission an act of God’s love?

Why does Nathan employ a parable to confront David? How might David have responded if Nathan were more direct?

Have you ever responded with pride or defensiveness to a loving reproof?
Does David still have a sense of right and wrong as he listens to the parable? In what one area does he lose his sense of right and wrong?

Why are we often our own worst judge? What blinds us from truth about self?

vv. 7...God now shines the divine light of truth on David (“You are that man!”). Does David have anywhere to hide now?

What are ways that God reproves us? Have you argued with the truth after having been exposed by it? How?

Have you ever surrendered to such a reproof? What happened?

vv. 7-8...Romans 2:4 tells us that God’s kindness is meant to lead us to repentance; how was God kind to David? How has God been kind to you? Has his kindness always led you to repentance? When kindness fails, what’s God’s next move?

vv. 9-11...What does it mean to “despise” something? How did David despise the Word of God? How did David despise God himself? Who in this passage describes our sinful activity as an act of despising God (v. 7)? Have we never done the same as David?
vv. 12-13...Why does God decide to make a point about David’s “secret” sinning? Do you have secrets that need to come into the light? Why does secrecy enslave us? How can we be set free? Does David come into light? Does he repent?

Concluding thought: At what point do you think he composes Psalm 51? How does he go from a wicked heart to one of repentance so soon?

**Final Charge:** Sin binds us and blinds us. We often retreat into such darkness that we can no longer be reached by God’s kindness. However, God loves us and will continue to search us out until he finds us. If kindness doesn’t elicit our repentance, then maybe reproof will. Pray for God’s reproofs. Rejoice when God brings you to repentance.

**Lesson 8 - Paul’s Repentance**

**Main Idea:** Just as Jesus opened the eyes of Paul, he can open our eyes so that we may turn from error, self, sin, and darkness to God.

**Text:** Acts 26:9-21

vv. 9-12...Describe how Saul was sincerely wrong about following God. Was he good at what he was doing? How does being good at being wrong make it harder to see that you are wrong? In what ways have you been sincerely wrong about following God?
vv. 13-14...What does it mean to kick against the goads? How does the image of an ox kicking against a sharp prodding stick relate to Saul persecuting Jesus?

What do you imagine is going through Saul’s (Paul’s) head as he hears that he is persecuting the one whose voice he hears from heaven?

Did you ever feel goaded before you repented of something? And did you kick back at it for awhile?

v. 15...Saul asks a question and the answer to that question will forever change his life. Do you think that he had a suspicion about the identity of the person speaking to him? What might have been going through Saul’s mind as he waited for the answer to his questions?

Why would the answer change his life? How does the answer re-write all the rules for Saul in following God from this day forward? Is he repenting? Can you and I repent just that quick, too?

vv. 16-18...What’s the commission that Jesus gives Saul? How will Saul be able to open sinners’ eyes so that they may turn to God? Turning is repenting...and repenting is through opening people’s eyes?

Can you relate an “eye opening” moment just before you repented?
vv. 19-20...Jesus told Saul to go to both Jews and Gentiles and to “open their eyes so that they may turn... to God.” How does “open their eyes” better help us understand repentance?

How did Paul prove his repentance?

Do you have proof do you have that you repented? What are deeds that prove that one has turned to God?

vv. 21...Who would be more offended today if you preached that they needed to turn to God and prove it: sinful people or religious people? Who would be more likely to persecute you for preaching to them their need for repentance? Why?

Would you be offended if someone noticed your need for repentance – either because you were wrong or because of your sin - and brought it to your attention?

**Final Charge:** Let Jesus open your eyes to your need for repentance – either because you are wrong about how to follow him or because you are in sin. Ask someone to open the Bible with you so that your eyes may be open to your error. Pray that open eyes will result in a changed life for Christ.
Lesson 9 - Two Kinds Of Sorrow

Main Idea: There is a sorrow that does not lead to repentance. The bible calls it worldly sorrow. Many so-called Christians tragically confuse this sorrow for repentance.

Text: 2 Corinthians 7:6-11

vv. 6-10...Is it sometimes necessary to be made sorry before any hope of repentance? Doe Paul regret doing so?

Is sorrow automatically a sign of repentance? If not, why do folks often associate the two?

Have you ever been sorry about something that you’ve done – and yet you still did that same thing again?

Have you ever been pulled over for speeding? Did you mention to the officer that you were sorry? What were you probably most sorry about? Have you broken the speed limit since that incident? Did that sorrow lead to repentance? What kind of sorrow is that?

What are some worldly examples of sorrow for wrongdoing?
Comment on these indicators that our sorrow may be worldly because of its failure to bring about repentance?

We make excuses

We minimize the harm done (no harm, no foul)

We wallow in self pity

We get very defensive

Others?

v. 10...What does godly sorrow produce? What does worldly sorrow produce? What’s the difference between these two sorrows? What if a man is feeling no sorrow of any kind for his sin? Is there much hope?

v. 11...Comment on each of these observable characteristics that a godly type sorrow that brings about true repentance is and has taken place...

Earnestness (diligence) - How does it indicate repentance?
Clearing of yourselves - How does it indicate repentance?

Indignation - How does it indicate repentance?

Fear (alarm) - How does it indicate repentance?

Vehement desire (longing) - How does it indicate repentance?

Zeal - How does it indicate repentance?

Vindication (readiness to see justice done) - How does it indicate repentance?

Proving ourselves clear in matters of wrongdoing is absolutely a must.

**Final Charge:** Decide today to study the bible to learn how to have a godly sorrow that produces real repentance and leads to real salvation.

**Lesson 10 - Repentance In The Churches Of Revelation**

**Main Idea:** Jesus expected entire congregations to repent...and so He could today.
vv. 2:1-7...Of what sin was the church Ephesus told to repent?

How serious a problem was it?

What were the consequences of failing to repent?

Does God see us in need of repenting when we omit something? Or doing something in the right way or with the right motive? What other things might He say the same...Repent!

2:12-17...Of what wrongdoing was the church in Pergamos in need of repenting?

How can we repent of being tolerant of false teachings?

What is the consequence of failing to repent?

2:18-29...What was the Thyatira congregation doing wrong of which they are commanded by Jesus to repent?
Is ample time given of the Lord to repent?

In verse 22, does the Lord seem to hold out hope of repenting to the latest possible hour?

But, consequences of failing to repent are severe. What are they?

3:1-6...Repentance in Sardis involved what need?

Over and over in the letters to the seven churches of Asia we see how repentance is needed in areas and in ways we may often overlook. Name others not specifically mentioned that would be like these.

3:14-22...How would you respond if Jesus told you today, “I know your deeds?” What does the “faithful and true witness” see when he observes say the last three months of your life? Have you seen yourself the same way? Do you have the same attitude toward it that Jesus does?

Why would Jesus prefer you to be cold rather than lukewarm? Why is it more dangerous and more damaging to be lukewarm rather than cold?

What does he mean when he says that he will spit the lukewarm out of his mouth?
How did the Laodicean church view itself? How is that different from the way Jesus saw them? Why the difference? How could they have such a warped perception of themselves?

What often keeps us from realizing our true condition? What’s the prescription for complacent Christianity?

**Final Charge:** Jesus loves you and wants you to repent; therefore, he is trying to give you a wake up call through the scriptures, through the godly example of committed Christians, and through the loving rebuke of a concerned friend. Don’t ignore God’s knock on your door. He knows your deeds; he knows what you need.

**Lesson 11 - Bear Fruit That Proves Your Repentance**

**Main Idea:** Repentance and the **fruit** of repentance are distinct yet inseparable. So if we want to change our behavior, we should focus on the cause rather than the symptoms. And if we change our heart and mind, we should expect to see fruit of that change in our life.

**Text:** Luke 3:7-14

What’s a viper? Is that a compliment? Why does John level this charge against the crowds seeking baptism? What was their motivation to seek his baptism? Why is that not a good thing? Today is there ever a time when someone requesting baptism should be refused?
John tells them to produce fruit that proves their repentance. What is fruit of repentance?

What is the distinction between repentance and its fruit? Why is this distinction important? Is John targeting behavior or the heart behind the behavior? What does John expect from a changed heart and mind?

In your attempts to repent, have you focused on your behavior instead of your mindset that produced the behavior? Have you been treating the symptoms or the cause?

What excuse does John anticipate from the crowd (see v. 8)? What excuse have you made to dismiss your lack of repentance and its fruit?

How does John associate repentance with judgment?

How does the crowd respond (v. 10)?

John describes three examples of fruit of repentance...

Share food and clothing – what is the repentance that produces this kind of fruit?
Stop fraudulent tax collection – what is the repentance that produces this result?

Stop abusing one’s own authority to bolster income – what is the repentance that produces this fruit?

In some cases, John described fruit that involved starting something, while in other cases he described fruit that stopped a behavior. Do you think that the people who asked John “What should I do?” had a pretty good idea what he would tell them? Why is that?

Imagine John, a prophet of God, with us right now. If you were to ask him “What should I do?” (that is, “what fruit of repentance should I bear?”) do you have a pretty good idea what he would tell you?

How must you repent in order to bear that fruit of repentance?

**Final Charge:** Repent and bear the fruit of repentance! Don’t claim repentance without the accompanying fruit. And don’t just address your behavior (fruit) – change your mind and heart so that you can produce the desired behavior.
**Conclusion:**

Matthew 4:17...From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Matthew 3:2..."You must change your hearts and minds, for the Kingdom of Heaven has arrived!"

Mark 6:12...So they went out and preached that people should turn away from their sins.

Acts 2:38...Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

2 Tim 2:19..."The Lord knows those who are his," and "everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

Acts 3:19..."Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."

2 Peter 3:9...The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance