

Memory Verse:

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

I. What Is Repentance?



How would you explain repentance to a person you are witnessing to?



Talk about the Tim Keller article “All of Life is Repentance.”



Application: Self-Centered Repentance or Gospel-Centered Repentance?

When we evangelize we must communicate repentance in a way that is pleasing to God. There are two ways to communicate repentance. One is *self-centered* repentance, the other is *gospel-centered* repentance.

Self-centered repentance asks for forgiveness so that God will bless us and answer our prayers. Gospel-centered repentance asks for forgiveness not because we desire to get *something* from God, but because we desire to have *deeper intimacy and fellowship* with God. Do we repent because we want the gifts, or the Gift-Giver?

Self-centered repentance asks for forgiveness because of the consequences sin has on our lives. Maybe our sin has caused job loss, a rocky marriage, or shame from being exposed. The selfish heart motive is to escape the consequences. Gospel-centered repentance asks for forgiveness because sin is an infinite offense against an infinitely holy and good God. God is grieved by sin because it dishonors and displeases Him. He is worthy of all worship but we have worshiped other things. Therefore, our heart is grieved over our sin because God's heart is grieved over our sin.

Self-centered repentance asks for forgiveness as a means of 'atoning' for our sin. This type of repentance can become "a form of self-flagellation in which we convince God (and ourselves) that we are so truly miserable and regretful that we deserve to be forgiven." Gospel-centered repentance realizes that for our sake God "made Jesus to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2nd Corinthians 5:21)." Jesus did everything necessary for us to be completely forgiven. Instead of trying to earn God's forgiveness and favor through our repentance, we freely receive it through the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Self-centered repentance hates confessing sin because confession of sin reveals weakness and moral flaws. If we are going to earn God's favor and grace, then we must live morally good lives. Therefore repentance is strenuous and extremely devastating. This will result in very few times that a person actually repents. Gospel-centered repentance liberates us to repent freely and often because our hope is in Jesus Christ's righteousness alone, and not in our moral goodness. When we live under the Gospel of grace, we realize that God freely loves us and accepts us because of what Jesus has done for us. This love will liberate us to see our flaws more clearly, confess them regularly, and rejoice in His grace continually.

Here's an example by Tim Keller on what sin can look like and how to repent with a Gospel-centered repentance:

“Am I doing what I am doing for God’s glory and the good of others or am I being driven by fears, need for approval, love of comfort and ease, need for control, hunger for acclaim and power, or the ‘fear of man?’ Am I looking at anyone with envy? Am I giving into any of even the first motions of lust or gluttony? Am I spending my time on urgent things rather than important things because of these inordinate desires?

- Repent like this: How does Jesus provide for me what I am looking for in these other things? Pray: ‘O Lord Jesus, make me happy enough in you to avoid sin and wise enough in you to avoid danger, that I may always do what is right in your sight, in your name I pray, Amen.’”

(These ideas came from Tim Keller in his article “*All of Life is Repentance.*” You can read it at http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/All_of_Life_Is_Repentance-Keller.pdf)



What is the goal of repentance?

Psalm 51:1 (For more penitential Psalms read Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143)

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. ⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. ¹⁶ For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. ¹⁸ Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; ¹⁹ then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.



How do we try to rid ourselves of guilt?



Application: Repenting Over Our Own Goodness

There is a vast difference between the repentance of a moralist and a Christian. A moralist sees their sin and feels guilty. They go to God and ask for forgiveness, vowing to never do it again. They might even go to great lengths to prove that they are sorry, like fasting or disciplining themselves.

The Christian sees their sin and feels guilty. They go to God and ask for forgiveness *because* they have failed to trust in Jesus as their perfect goodness. They realize that their sin reveals a heart that is not worshiping Jesus for His great love. They immediately forsake their own goodness and take hold of Jesus goodness.

There is a bitter-sweetness in true repentance. You feel bitterness of soul because you have forsaken your all-satisfying, all-good, all-powerful God. But you also feel sweetness of soul because this all-satisfying, all-good, all-powerful God loves you no matter how low you go. When the eyes of our hearts see this, we will flee from our own righteousness and cast ourselves on Christ's righteousness alone.

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

⁹ For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you *turned to God* from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and *to wait* for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who *delivers* (rescues) us from the wrath to come.



Definition: What is Repentance?

John Piper sees Acts 26:18 as a good verse for defining repentance. It says, "I send you to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins."

That is repentance: turning from darkness to light and from Satan to God. It is a reversal of the direction of your life—toward God.

(John Piper, *Repentance, Forgiveness, and the Gift of the Spirit*, online sermon at DesiringGod.org)



Case Study: "But I've Asked For Forgiveness"

Over the past few months you've been able to form a relationship with your neighbor, Zach. Zach has been open to what you've shared with him about the Gospel. He's convinced that there is a creator God and that he's offended God with his sin. You've explained the sinless life of Jesus and His perfect sacrifice on the cross for sin. Finally, you tell him that he needs to turn from his sin and trust in Jesus for forgiveness. Zach responds by explaining that he is very remorseful for his sin. He's asked God to forgive him and he's tried to live a better life. He believes that God only expects him to acknowledge his sin, ask for forgiveness, and try not to hurt others or himself in the future. He tells you that God is forgiving, kind, gracious, and loving. What would you say to Zach?

II. What Is Faith?



How would you explain faith to a person you are witnessing to?

John 6:35-58 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." ⁴¹ ¶ So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴² They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" ⁴³ Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me-- ⁴⁶ not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." ⁵² ¶ The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" ⁵³ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."

Colossians 1:3-6 ³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing--as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. ⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.



What are the three greatest weapons that we can wield for stirring up conviction of sin and faith in someone's life?

Jeremiah 23:29

Is not *my word* like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

1 Peter 1:23

since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, *through the living and abiding word of God*;

John 16:7-11 ⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, *he will convict the world* concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

Colossians 4:3

³ At the same time, *pray also for us*, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ,



Application: Evangelism Is God-Dependence, Not Self-Dependence?

We have three very powerful weapons that God has given us for evangelizing: His Word, His Spirit and prayer.

It can be easy to think that we need to have the right words to convince and convict people. Our greatest weapon is not our words, but God's Word. His Word is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12)." As we quote Scripture, the Holy Spirit begins to pierce through the darkness and lift the veil of sin from the eyes. God's sovereign Spirit brings freedom to see Christ *for who He is and what He has done* (2nd Corinthians 3:12-18).

These truths can be absolutely liberating in your evangelism experience. God alone grants repentance and faith (2nd Tim. 2:24-26, Eph. 2:8-9) and therefore, the pressure is off. We are simply messengers crying out in the wilderness, "Repent and believe in the Gospel (Mark 1:15)."



Application- Find a partner and practice communicating the first two parts of the gospel to one another. Use your memory verses as you present the gospel.

Closing Song

*"Jesus, My Only Hope", by Mark Altrogge.
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*I come into Your presence
With nothing in my hands
I only bring thanksgiving
For Jesus, God and Man
I cast myself on mercy
I cast myself on love
I trust Your gracious promise
To wash me with Your blood*

*I will not fear Your judgment
For me, no wrath I dread
For it was spent on Jesus
Poured out upon His head
When Satan's accusations
Make my poor heart afraid
I hear my King declaring
"Father, that debt is paid"*

*Jesus my only hope, my only plea
My righteousness, my Great High Priest
Who intercedes for me before the throne
Jesus, I trust in You alone*

*Though I am poor and naked
Your prodigal come home
You place Your robe upon me
Your holiness alone
Though I be dry and barren
By grace this love springs forth
Love for You and Your Kingdom
Joy in Your glory, Lord*