

Repentance... and the 5Rs

(Recognise....Repent....Receive....Rebuke....Replace)

1. The Father's heart in leading us to repentance

God's desire is for us to be free to develop to be the way he designed us to be. We need to turn away from sin and everything that entangles us to receive the blessing and freedom that God the Father wants to give to us.

Repentance is God's gift to us, to enable us to receive his generous blessings of forgiveness, freedom, son-ship and fullness of life.

In the Old Testament God often called his people to repent through his prophets:

Joel 2:12-13 NLT:

That is why the Lord says,
"Turn to me now, while there is time.
Give me your hearts.
Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning.

Don't tear your clothing in your grief,
but tear your hearts instead."
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is merciful and compassionate,
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.
He is eager to relent and not punish.

Ezekiel 18:30-32 NLT:

"Therefore, I will judge each of you, O people of Israel, according to your actions, says the Sovereign Lord. Repent, and turn from your sins. Don't let them destroy you! Put all your rebellion behind you, and find yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O people of Israel? I don't want you to die, says the Sovereign Lord. Turn back and live!

God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus

(Luke 3:1-18)

When John appeared it was to a people that were in slavery - not just to their Roman oppressors, but also in slavery to sin.

John preached that people could repent, change their ways and turn back to God.

Why did John the Baptist come? God promised that he would send him to turn our hearts back to him and each other. (Mal 4:5-6)

It was necessary for him to preach repentance and baptise to prepare the way for Jesus, "filling in the valleys and lowering the hills" to maximise the people's receptiveness to Jesus. It was an extra work of grace.

People flocked to John because they realised he was speaking God's message to his people for the time. When they arrived they went down into the river with him and received a symbol of cleansing, allowing them to turn back to closely following God and his paths and make a new start, with the past put behind them.

John's preaching came with due warning regarding a refusal to repent, and that God was about to "lay an axe to the root of the tree". He "exhorted the people and preached the good news to them" (Luke 3:18).

Jesus preached repentance

Mark 1:14-15 NIV:

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news".

Repentance is at the heart of our gospel message, and is involved when we first turn to God to be saved through Jesus Christ.

Romans 2:4 NLT:

Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

Romans 2:4 NIV:

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realising that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

After becoming disciples of Jesus, we continue in God's gracious gift of repentance

- God has begun a good work in us, transforming us and perfecting our faith, and will continue it until the day of Christ. Repentance from sin is an ongoing process!

- Three of the seven churches that Jesus addresses in Revelation are commanded to repent. (Rev 2:5, 2:16, 3:19).
But to all seven churches Jesus reveals his desire for them to remain in him and to overcome.
- Paul exhorts us to get rid of the bad stuff, and replace it with the good stuff.

Colossians 3:5-10 NLT:

So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behaviour, slander, and dirty language. Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.

Ephesians 4:21-24 NLT:

Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

- In teaching the parable of the sower, Jesus brought to his disciples a picture of how sin is like thorns (representing various sins) choking our growth and making us ineffective (Mark4:18-19). We need to get rid of these things.
- Hebrews 12:1 tells us to throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles so we can run our race with perseverance. How do we throw off the sin? Through repentance!

A window into the heart of God for his people

Isaiah 30:8-24

2. A practical guide to repentance

What is repentance?

Repentance is far more than saying sorry for individual mistakes and wrongdoings.

It is a change of heart, a change of direction, and results in a change of thinking and/or action.

John the Baptist told his listeners: "produce fruit in keeping with repentance."

Repentance is about turning every part of your life back to God and aligning yourself with God's truth.

What is it not?

In many places repentance has built up an association with heaviness, condemnation and emotional turmoil. Whilst these things can accompany the battle with our desires in repentance, they are not at the heart of repentance.

Repentance may have been thought of by some as the price we have to pay to receive God's forgiveness.

There is no price we pay for our forgiveness. Jesus has already paid the price. Repentance is the gateway for **receiving by faith the forgiveness that Jesus has already bought!**

Taking responsibility

Sin patterns continue to have a hold on us while we don't recognise they are there. Even after we recognise them, we need to repent of them otherwise, if we don't repent, they continue to have a hold on us.

Having repented and changed what we do, we have to fill the void with godly behaviour, otherwise there is a danger of slipping back to wrong practices and thinking.

Having the right attitude

Luke 18:9-14 NLT:

Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don't cheat, I don't sin, and I don't commit adultery. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.'

But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.' I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God.

1 John 1:8-10 NLT:

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

The 5 R's

Biblical repentance is a full heart response to God and his truth, involving the mind, will, emotions and often physical action.

In order to make sure we follow through with a complete understanding, we teach a number of steps which together take us through the process of repentance.

Again, we would emphasise that the most important thing is a whole-hearted response - resulting in a change of thinking and doing.

Recognise

a) Strongholds and sinful habits are often hidden because:

- Of our pride - we have justified our behaviour from an early age
- We are so used to living like that, it seems normal
- Other people exhibit the same behaviour, so we assume it's okay
- Satan's strategy is to keep it hidden from us

b) We need to recognise behaviours in ourselves that are not godly.

These can be things we do (e.g. lie, gossip), things we feel (e.g. fear, resentment), things we think (e.g. look down on others) and so on.

These behaviours however, are often symptoms of lies we have accepted and agreed with, or possibly deeper unbelief or rebellion. The good news is that the Holy Spirit, who guides us into all truth, will reveal what we need to know to enable us to deal with the root through repentance.

There are a number of ways we can recognise sin responses or patterns:

- God shows you personally as you wait on him.

Psalm 139:23-24 NLT:

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

- Stronghold prayer – through others praying with you.
- Our reaction to someone else's bad treatment!

This last one is a common occurrence, but requires humility on our part to respond in the right way.

Do you excuse your own wrongdoing by putting it in the light of their action? For example:

"I felt so rejected, I couldn't pray". "He made me so mad I slapped him".

Our sin reaction to someone else's sin is never justified.

In recognition, we are not only seeing the sin but taking full responsibility for it. We can't blame our past, our parents, our partner, our children.

Taking responsibility for it is the route to maturity.

c) We need to call sin by its true name and not water it down, for example:

"Frustration"	when actually it's anger
"Worry" or "nervousness"	when actually it's fear
"Not being sure"	when actually it's unbelief

Repent

Having recognised the sin or stronghold, we need to:

- Be sorry about it before God (Remorse – another R!)
- Express our desire and will to change

a) Repentance needs to be heartfelt, not just words.

Joel 2:13 NIV:

Rend your hearts not your garments.

It is often helpful to ask God to show you what the sin looks like from his perspective – which is the perspective of true reality. As a result you may well find yourself all the more eager to be free of the sin through repentance!

2 Corinthians 7:8-11 NLT:

I am not sorry that I sent that severe letter to you, though I was sorry at first, for I know it was painful to you for a little while. Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain caused you to repent and change your ways. It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way. For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death. Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation, such alarm, such longing to see me, such zeal, and such a readiness to punish wrong. You showed that you have done everything necessary to make things right.

b) Repentance breaks the enemy's hold on us. It is not only relational but also legal. The enemy loses his right to keep you in slavery to that sin.

James 4:7 NIV:

Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

c) Repentance is effective because of the blood Jesus shed for us. He has paid the price for our freedom.

d) Repentance includes forgiveness of others (Matt 18:35, Col 3:13).

Receive

Thank God for his forgiveness. Truly receive his mercy and grace (his favour).

1 John 1:9 NLT:

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

Beware of condemnation, turning correction and repentance into a depressing and exhausting experience. We never earn forgiveness or God's love through repentance.

Remember God's heart expressed by Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 18:32 NIV

"For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone", declares the Sovereign Lord. "Repent and live!"

Receiving forgiveness as a gift reminds us of our need to be rescued and promotes dependence and trust of God rather than a striving after righteousness in our own strength that so many of us can slip into without realising.

Rebuke

In recognising, repenting, receiving forgiveness and realigning the direction of our lives, we stand in the legal strength of Christ's victory for us on the cross.

Once the legal bit has been done, the enemy has no hold in that area of life. We can simply exercise authority and live in the freedom that Christ has promised.

John 8:36 NLT:

So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.

- We reject lies and the deception they have caused
- We renounce diseased and destructive thinking and behaviour
- We command the enemy to leave and that they no longer have any influence in that area

Galatians 5:1 NIV:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Replace

We choose by faith to set our hearts, minds and wills on the ways of the Kingdom and obedience to Jesus.

Choose, believe, declare.

Speak out the new way of thinking and feeling that you enter by grace.

Matt 12:43-45 NLT:

When an evil spirit leaves a person, it goes into the desert, seeking rest but finding none. Then it says, 'I will return to the person I came from.' So it returns and finds its former home empty, swept, and in order. Then the spirit finds seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they all enter the person and live there. And so that person is worse off than before.

As an illustration, if you took your car for repair and removed a faulty part but didn't replace it with a working one, there would be no value in the repair.

When we take something out of our lives, we need to fill the vacuum with a replacement - often the opposite.

For example when saved from fear, replace it with faith.

Be proactive in this, not passive. We need to replace old patterns of thinking and behaviour with truth and obedience.

The replacing takes place in our mind, imagination, will, lifestyle and emotions.

Replacing takes some time, because it is an ongoing process. It is standing in the victory Christ has won for you, and walking in the fullness of life he has planned for you.

Questions to consider

- If someone speaks to you about your sin (e.g. anger or selfishness), how do you tend to react?
Think of an actual example; don't immediately answer with what you think is the 'correct' response.
- How do you feel about a less mature/experienced Christian pointing something out?
- Do you have a "let me test this and see if even 1% of it is true" attitude?
- Do you try to justify yourself, e.g. "It's just my little weakness", rather than "it's wrong and evil"?
- Someone once said "God rescues you from your enemies, not from your friends", meaning that God will not rescue you from sins or strongholds that deep down you have 'made friends with' or continue to accept in yourself. Do you agree with this? Why?
- Are there circumstances when we should take our time before repenting of wrongdoing or wrong thinking? What parts of the repentance process should we take time over?
- Are there things you have repented over, but not followed through the process of replacement?