

Discipleship Series for New Believers

Lesson 2: True Repentance

By Kristin Bone

True Repentance-Why

I would want to teach a new believer what true repentance is so they can live in repentance and grow more fully in God. There are two parts to true repentance, and sometimes we hear unbalanced gospels that lead us into lasciviousness or legalistic striving in the flesh.

To help avert these two pitfalls in a new believer's life they need to hear what true repentance is. Acts 20:21 shows that the gospel being preached was, "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." It was not just a turning from dead works of sin but also a turning to God. Knowing this helps guard a believer from being religious. Ezekiel 14:6 also gives us another aspect to what repentance is. This passage states, "...Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your face away from all your abominations." We need to leave our sins and our dead works behind. When this truth is taught to new believers, it will help to guard them from turning the grace of God into lasciviousness in their lives. It is important that new believers have heard the whole gospel and not just part of it because both truths are necessary to keep a believer from error in their lives.

True Repentance-How

True repentance is not just a turning away from sin, but it is also a turning to God. I know in my own life there was a time I struggled to perform both of these things in my life. I was being a responsible citizen leading a good life. I attended church and on the outside everything looked pretty good. However, I was not growing in God. In fact, my relationship with Him seemed to be getting more and more choked every day. The reason was because I was turning from sin but I was not turning to God. I had a hindrance in my life called pride that I needed to repent of, and until I let go of that pride, I could not turn to God. I was not overtly sinning. In fact, my life looked pretty good. But I did not have true repentance either. My relationship with God suffered immensely for this, too.

The book of Numbers shows that when God separated the Israelites from Egypt, He did not just take them out of Egypt, but He also took them into something. He did not just set them apart from sin only, but He set them apart to Himself. Numbers 8:17 states, "For all the firstborn among the children of Israel are Mine, both men and beast; on the day I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them to Myself." For true repentance to take place there must be both a forsaking of sin and turning to God. 2 Timothy 2:20-21 illustrates this point so well. It says, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." This verse clearly shows that true repentance is a two step process. First, you cleanse yourself from your former ways; then you are set apart for the Master. Without both of these

steps occurring, you will not be fulfilling the whole truth of God in your life. Another thing is if both these steps are not present in our life, we will continue to struggle with sin in our lives. We might be able to keep ourselves from the outward sins, but there will still be sins in our hearts. Only the power of the Holy Spirit, which we receive when we turn to God, will change us on the inside.

Acts 26:19-20 shows that Paul preached a two-step process to repentance. This is what he told King Agrippa...”I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to these in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the regions of Judea, and then to the Gentiles that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.” This portion of scripture clearly shows that first you have to turn from sin, turn to God, and then live a life worthy of the new life received in Christ. We should no longer cling to our sins or live our lives in a manner that will bring shame to the name of Jesus. We should continue in our lives to forsake sin and turn to God. It should not just be a one time event, but rather, it should be something which occurs throughout our whole life. An example of this principle would be a man when he gets married. He leaves his father and mother’s house then cleaves to his wife. If he only left his father and mother’s house, then there would still be something missing. To be fully married he also needs to take the next step which is cleaving to his wife. The same is true of us and God. For true complete repentance, we need to not only turn from our sin, but we must also turn to God.