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Understanding Repentance

Doctrinal Statement:

Repentance signals the start of a changed and godly life. It involves a fully conscious recognition of one's sinful, lawless way of life that is antagonistic toward God and His law. It is accompanied by a firm conviction to make a total change and to begin to live in full accord with God's way of life as described in the Bible.

The Church of God International

HOME BIBLE Study Course

God, by His very nature and in His supreme wisdom, has determined that every debt must be reconciled. How could we possibly believe His Word and trust Him to fulfill His manifold promises to us if He was of a changing character and lacked dependability, integrity, honesty, and fairness? Obviously we couldn't.

Sin in God's eyes is too serious to just be shrugged off. God's perfection and holiness are so great, He will not tolerate sin in His presence. The debt of sin must be settled, and the books balanced. Once we understand the immensity of His righteousness and holiness, we can then understand the great necessity for our repentance from dead works.

Jesus Christ has settled this debt of sin for us. God was willing to allow the life of His own Son to be sacrificed to pay the debt that no human being could ever afford to pay. Christ died because God's character is so consistent that there could be no other way for Him to extend mercy to us.

The Bible you will be using in this course was written for all men of all times. It is the most up-to-date book you can read today. Within its pages are revealed the causes of all of mankind's ills, the social problems, the economic problems, and the constant threat of warfare among the nations.

The Bible shows where all the sins of mankind are leading us and what the final outcome will be. Strange as it may seem, it is the most purchased book in the world and at the same time the least understood book in all the world.

Why? One major reason for failure to understand is their unwillingness to allow God's Word to change them. No one will understand God's Word unless they are ready and willing to allow God's Word to bring them to the point of repentance.

As in all endeavors, there are certain basic rules which, when followed, will help you in gaining the truth from God's Word. Some of those basic rules are: praying for guidance, accepting correction, and being grateful.

Pray for Guidance

Before opening your Bible, it is very beneficial to ask God in prayer to open your mind to His Word in the study you are undertaking. It has been written that David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). He studied the Word of God that was available to him, meditating upon God's laws and His ways. Throughout the Psalms we find David asking God to guide him in his study, and to open his mind to receive the truth of God.

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the

end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it. Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness....Establish Your word to Your servant....Behold, I long for Your precepts; revive me in Your righteousness" (Psalm 119:33-40).

Accept Correction

Think of God's Word as being written directly to you, because it is! We must have an attitude of accepting correction and be willing to take action by putting it to use in our lives. To gain academic knowledge is a wise thing to do, but we must know in our heart and mind that the real purpose for Bible study is to bring us closer to the stature of the fullness of the character of Jesus Christ. This is accomplished by allowing God's Word to correct us. Through the study of the Bible, God speaks to us personally and directly.

Therefore, our attitude should be similar to the prophet Jeremiah's: "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

Several other verses that will help us in learning a proper Bible study attitude are the following: "Thus says the LORD: 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist, says the LORD.

'But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word'" (Isaiah 66:1,2).

Another great truth is this: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible also commands each one to "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Be Thankful

Down through the centuries, the Bible was preserved by the blood of courageous, God-led men and women. It was a slow, painful, agonizing process to put together, preserve, and place in our hands the English text of the Old and New Testaments we call "the Bible." These Scriptures are the record of the lives of men and women of faith: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Deborah, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and many others. Without these people of faith, there would be no Old Testament Scripture "written for our learning" (Romans 15:4).

Where to Begin

There are a number of places to begin this course of Bible study: at the very beginning with Creation, or with prophecy, or with the ministry of Jesus Christ. We could even study about how the Bible was written and pre-

served, and why so few understand it.

However, because this course of Bible study has been requested by you, the student, we are going to begin with you! Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). Therefore we are going to assume that God the Father has drawn you to His Son, Jesus Christ, and that you are willing to do those things which Christ will ask you to do.

Final Instruction

The purpose of this lesson is to direct you to the Bible. It will help if you have a particular quiet place to go to for your study time. How long you study is up to you, but a daily study of at least thirty minutes is recommended. A notebook with some paper for your own personal notes is important. Writing out the Bible passages and your own comments will aid you in reviewing and remembering.

Finally, don't forget to pray and ask God to open your heart and mind to His truth and give you His wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. May God richly bless you in this great adventure, the study of the Bible!

Understanding Repentance

Jesus Christ preached repentance. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, 'Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matthew 4:17). Matthew says His message was the gospel of the kingdom and His

appeal to the people was to repent.

“And Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the *gospel of the kingdom* and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people” (Matthew 4:23).

Jesus started His ministry with the very word people had heard John the Baptist say: “Repent.” The message is the same today as when Jesus and John gave it.

To become a follower of Christ is to turn away from our self-centeredness—the *self*—and turn our lives over to Christ for correction and control.

Review

1. *Jesus preached repentance and the gospel of the Kingdom of God.*
2. *Jesus went about all Galilee teaching and healing all manner of disease.*
3. *Jesus preached repentance as did John the Baptist.*
4. *We must repent as those of Jesus’ time if we want to enter the Kingdom of God.*
5. *To be a follower of Christ we must turn control of our lives over to Him.*

**Scriptures to Read,
Remember, and Recite:**
Matthew 4:17; Matthew 4:23

Repent!

What Does It Mean?

What did Jesus mean when He used the word *repent*? Just what does it mean to repent?

Webster’s New International Dictionary says *repent* means “To

turn from sin out of penitence for past wrongdoings; abandon sinful or unworthy purposes and values, and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one’s life; to cause oneself to feel regret or contrition for a past action, course of conduct or decision.”

Real repentance means to turn from a lifestyle of breaking God’s commandments. It is to go the way of God, the way of the Bible. We are to live according to every word in the Bible, instead of the desires and appetites of the flesh.

God’s first children, because of their carnal nature, partook of the fruit of the forbidden tree. They did that which was natural for them to do. They gave in to the pulls of their flesh as they were deceived by the devil. They did not believe or trust God (Genesis 2:17; 3:6). They lusted for that which was not theirs. It was *desirable*. It would make them “wise.” They experienced the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life spoken of in 1 John 2:16. We have the same nature.

Repentance means that we have come to a *full realization* that we have rebelled against our Creator, just as Adam and Eve did, and we are willing to turn from our rebelliousness and begin obeying and trusting our Creator in all things.

Many believe that Jesus came to do away with His Father’s commandments. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). If Jesus did away

with the commandments, there would be nothing to repent of and His message of repentance would be meaningless. So Jesus came to magnify the law and bring out its true meaning.

Review

1. *We are to live according to the teachings of the Bible and not the way of society.*
2. *Our nature today is the same as that of our first parents, Adam and Eve, after the fall.*
3. *We are free moral agents, and we can choose to obey our Creator or rebel against Him.*
4. *Jesus did not come to cancel His Father’s commandments or the teachings of the prophets.*
5. *Jesus came to magnify the law and bring out its true meaning. You are not even to hate your brother in your heart, let alone physically harm or murder him.*

**Scriptures to Read,
Remember, and Recite:**
Genesis 2:17; Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:16; Matthew 5:17

Sorrow of the World

The apostle Paul revealed much about the doctrine of repentance to the Corinthian assembly. He stressed that mere sorrow is not repentance. In fact, only godly sorrow works toward repentance. It is from *God*, produced by the *Holy Spirit*. “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

King David experienced godly sorrow after his sin with

Bathsheba. You will find his prayer of repentance in Psalm 51:4. "Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight." With that attitude he found pardon from God. God forgave him, even though the consequences of the sin plagued David to the end of His life.

By contrast, the sorrow of this world regrets only sin's discovery and leads merely to dreading the consequences of sin. Since it does not work repentance, it ends in eternal death in the lake of fire. Also, the sorrow of this world can affect a person's health and well-being in this life, and lead to an untimely death. Many have suffered depression emanating from worldly sorrow which can result in suicide.

King Saul experienced worldly sorrow at his rejection by the Lord God. It was loss of respect in the eyes of the army he commanded that worried him most, not his unfaithful service to God. When the prophet Samuel refused to help him keep up appearances, Saul sought to physically restrain the man of God (1 Samuel 31:4).

Many people exhibit worldly sorrow. They are very upset about the natural consequences of their sins, and for being caught. Compare Peter's remorse and repentance with Judas's bitterness and suicide. Both denied Christ. One repented and was restored to faith and service; the other took his own life.

Review

1. *We learned that godly sorrow works repentance to salvation.*

2. *The sorrow of the world works death.*

3. *Sorrow of this world regrets only sin's discovery and leads to dreading the consequences of sin.*

4. *Since it does not last, "worldly sorrow" ends in the lake of fire.*

5. *Sorrow of the world can lead to poor health and depression, even leading to suicide.*

6. *Saul expressed worldly sorrow and committed suicide.*

7. *King David experienced godly sorrow and wrote Psalm 51.*

8. *On your own, search the Scriptures and find Peter's repentance and compare it with Judas's.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite:

1 Corinthians 7:10; Psalm 51;
1 Samuel 15:22-30; 1 Samuel 31:4

Repent of What?

Can people actually worship the Lord, acknowledging that He is Lord, and yet not enter His kingdom? "Not everyone that says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

How else, in addition to not doing the will of the Father, can people worship God and yet never be transformed at Christ's coming? "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8,9).

Difficult as it may be to believe, many people feel they have received salvation, but in reality have failed to take even the first step.

How is this possible? It is because they have the opinion that all they have to do is "believe" in Jesus Christ (acknowledge His existence), but they do not have to *do* what He tells them to do. "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men...All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition" (Mark 7:7-9).

Jesus is plainly telling us to turn from man's way of worship and turn to God's way, and keep His commandments. Just as Jesus told His disciples, "You are my friends, if you do whatever I command you" (John 15:14). If we are not a friend of Jesus, then we must be a stranger, worshipping Him in vain.

Mankind has a carnal mind. What is wrong with the carnal mind? "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). The carnal mind is literally the mind of the flesh—the pattern of thought and its motives, interests, and aims. The carnal mind is the mind dominated by the flesh. "To be spiritually minded" is to have "the mind of Christ." "For 'who has known the mind of the LORD, that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ" (1

Corinthians 2:16). Our minds must be dominated by Jesus Christ.

What should one repent of or feel sorrow for? It is SIN we are commanded to repent of (Luke 24:47). And what is sin? “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, KJV). Sin is breaking God’s law—not human customs!

Anytime we break or disobey any one of the holy, righteous commands of God, we have sinned. We must repent. No one is excluded.

No man or woman has ever lived without having disobeyed and broken God’s law (Romans 3:10,23). Everyone must repent with their whole heart. For “He who says, ‘I know Him’ [who says, ‘I am a Christian’] and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4).

Review

1. *Jesus is more concerned with our “walk” than our “talk.”*

2. *Jesus would rather have us obey the will of His Father in heaven than say, “Lord, Lord.”*

3. *Satan is satisfied with a piece of our heart. Jesus will be satisfied with nothing less than our whole heart.*

4. *It is not enough to act religious; our actions and attitudes must be wholehearted.*

5. *We become hypocrites when we (a) pay more attention to reputation than to character, (b) carefully follow certain religious practices while allowing our*

hearts to remain distant from God, and (c) emphasize our virtues but point to others’ sins.

6. *We are God’s friends if we obey Him.*

7. *To be spiritually minded is to have the mind of Christ.*

8. *We should have a godly sorrow for sinning against God, not just a sorrow for getting caught in our sin or sorry we messed up our life.*

9. *We are commanded to repent of sin in our lives.*

10. *Sin is breaking God’s law, not human customs.*

11. *If we say we know the Lord and continue to break His commandments, we are lying, and the truth is not in us.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite:

Matthew 7:21; Matthew 15:8,9; Mark 7:7–9; John 15:14; Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:16; Luke 24:47; 1 John 3:4; Romans 3:10, 23; 1 John 2:4

Who Is Your Authority?

People from the time of Adam and Eve have been self-righteous. God placed a desire in them to worship something, but with their carnal minds being at enmity (enemy) to God, they substitute commandments of their own for God’s commandments. God is not their choice of authority, so they do that which seems right in their own eyes, and attempt to worship God in their own way. By doing so they end up worshiping God in vain, establishing their own “righteousness.”

Read what the prophet Isaiah

recorded: “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and all our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6).

What did Jesus say about those who “trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (Luke 18:9–14)? Please read these verses carefully!

Observation: Notice that it was the man that smote his breast and called upon God to be merciful to him, a sinner, who received the commendation of God (verses 13,14). When we attempt to put our own ways ahead of the ways of God as recorded in the Bible, we are attempting to establish our own righteousness. There should be only one great Authority in our life, and that is Jesus Christ and His Word. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12).

Review

1. *No matter what the issue, Jesus Christ and God’s law is the standard by which all things should be measured.*

2. *We must choose God as our authority.*

3. *God’s Word is the only true authority.*

4. *When we are our own authority, we establish our own righteousness.*

5. *Our own righteousness is like filthy rags.*

6. *There is only one great Authority, and that is Jesus Christ and His Word.*

**Scriptures to Read,
Remember, and Recite:**

*Isaiah 64:6; Luke 18:9–14;
Proverbs 14:12*

A New Creation

A true Christian is a new creation created to perform good works. This is a spiritual matter which involves God's Holy Spirit. This great change takes place in the mind—we might call it the heart. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The very first step is repentance, and repentance means "a change of mind." The second step, acceptance and faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior, also takes place in the heart and mind. The third step is something God does by placing within us the gift of His Holy Spirit. When we receive the gift of the Spirit, a renewing of the mind takes place. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). The Spirit of God creates a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). Conversion miraculously puts within us the mind of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5). Conversion is putting on the "new man who is renewed in knowledge" (Colossians 3:10). Knowledge is knowing and living God's Word—the Bible.

Jesus said, "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power

over the nations" (Revelation 2:26). Overcoming is directed by this renewed mind! We must continue for the rest of our lives to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

True Christians follow Jesus and put loving obedience to God far above all worldly ways. As the apostle Paul told the Ephesians, "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

God ordained that we should walk in the footsteps of Christ, for we are His workmanship. We must repent, receive God's Spirit, and do the good works God commands us in His Bible to do. There is "doing" to be done. If we believe God's Word, we will be living within His law. This is a demonstration of our faith in Christ Jesus. If we fail to obey our Savior, we will be out-laws, saying by our lack of action that we are faithless.

When Jesus returns, He is going to return as a warrior King (Revelation 17:13,14; 19:11–16). Christ would rather return in this manner than let the people of this God-rejecting world continue in nonrepentant, destructive, sinful ways until "no flesh would be saved" alive (Matthew 24:22).

Remember, there were those that came to Jesus saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" (Matthew 7:22). Surprisingly, Jesus told them to get away from Him, because they had been working iniquity.

Repenting is an ongoing, life-long effort. It is time for all men to repent. Are you repenting?

Review

1. *We are God's workmanship.*
2. *We are created in Jesus Christ unto good works.*
3. *We should also walk in good works.*
4. *A true Christian is a new creation.*
5. *This change takes place in the mind, or the heart, by the power of God's Holy Spirit.*
6. *If we are in Christ, we are a new creature.*
7. *When we receive the Spirit, a renewing of the mind takes place.*
8. *We are not to conform to the world.*
9. *The Spirit of God creates a sound mind.*
10. *Conversion is putting on the new man.*
11. *Jesus will give power over the nations to the overcomers.*
12. *If we are not obedient, we show we are faithless.*
13. *Jesus will return as a warrior King, otherwise, no flesh would be saved alive.*
14. *Doing wonderful works is not a guarantee of salvation, but loving obedience is.*

**Scriptures to Read,
Remember, and Recite:**

Ephesians 2:4–10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 12:1,2; 2 Timothy 1:7; Philippians 2:5; Colossians 3:10; Revelation 2:26; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 17:13,14; 19:11–16; Matthew 24:22; Matthew 7:22; 2 Peter 3:9 □

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Test Yourself

Write your answers to the questions on a separate sheet of paper. Check your answers with the answers found above the return coupon.

Detach the return coupon at the bottom of page 8 and mail back to us. We will send the next lesson in the series to you.

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True or False Questions

1. Jesus did not teach repentance at the *beginning* of His ministry.
2. Jesus explained that observing the law was good but no longer needed.
3. Godly sorrow comes from God, and brings us to true repentance.
4. Worldly sorrow dreads only the discovery and consequences of sin.
5. King David confessed to God that he was sorry he had sinned with Bathsheba.
6. Saul was a faithful servant, and the prophet Samuel defended him before God.
7. Repentance means to turn from your way of life to God's way of life.
8. It is acceptable to God to teach the commandments of men as long as you love Jesus.
9. To be a friend of Jesus we must do as He commands us.
10. Jesus admires those who worship Him in their own way.
11. To have the mind of Christ is to be spiritually minded.
12. To have the mind of Christ means to be willing to be obedient to God.
13. Man's carnal mind is subject to the law of God.
14. He who says he knows the Lord and does not keep His commandments is a liar.
15. Sin is the breaking of God's law.
16. Our own righteousness is as fine, clean linen.
17. Isaiah recorded that we are all as an unclean thing.
18. In the story of the publican and the Pharisee praying at the Temple, the Pharisee trusted in his *own* righteousness.
19. To worship God in your own way is not vain in God's eyes.
20. Jesus Christ and His Word is the only Authority man should look to.
21. God has a way that leads to life and man has a way that leads to death.
22. There is a way that seems right to man but the end is death.

23. A true Christian is one that is created to do good works.

24. To be successful in life means to be able to say, "I did it my way."

25. A Christian is God's workmanship.

26. We don't have to obey God's law as we are under His grace.

27. Our carnal mind is not completely hostile to the Law of God.

28. Conforming to this world is a great way to gain wisdom.

29. Receiving the Holy Spirit creates a sound mind.

30. We are to give our bodies as a living sacrifice to God.

31. We don't have to prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

32. We do not have to overcome, because Jesus did it all for us.

33. We do not have to do anything but acknowledge Jesus Christ's existence.

34. If we believe God's Word we will want to live within His law.

35. When Jesus returns, He will return in a very meek fashion and beg people to obey.

36. Whether Christ returns or not, technology can save us.

37. If Jesus does not return, there will be no flesh saved alive.

38. Performing wonders and

prophesying in Jesus' name means He knows you.

39. Obedience is a sign of faith.

40. God the Father lacks patience with mankind.

41. Jesus Christ wants all mankind to repent and change their ways.

42. God wants YOU to repent.

Congratulations!

You have just completed your first examination. Do you feel you have a better understanding of repentance?

Be sure and fill out the coupon below, detach, and return to us. The next lesson in the series will be sent.

Thanks for your participation! ☐

All Scripture quotations taken from the New King James Version except as noted. Text: Loren Chamberlain.

Answers to True or False Questions:

1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. True; 6. False; 7. True; 8. False; 9. True; 10. False; 11. True; 12. True; 13. False; 14. True; 15. True; 16. False; 17. True; 18. True; 19. False; 20. True; 21. True; 22. True; 23. True; 24. False; 25. True; 26. False; 27. False; 28. False; 29. True; 30. True; 31. False; 32. False; 33. False; 34. True; 35. True; 36. False; 37. True; 38. False; 39. True; 40. False; 41. True; 42. True.

Score Yourself: Miss 0-3 = Excellent; Miss 4-6 = Good; Miss 7-9 = Fair

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