

“A Lifestyle” (Repentance) (Gospel Sanctification II)
(Study 8 of “Getting Personal with God: Sonship A” Series)

Opening Questions *(10 Minutes)*

1. What’s an example of a terrible excuse you have heard or used recently?
 - (It could be an excuse that is used a lot or a new one for you.)

2. What’s an example of a humbling situation you’ve faced in your life- a failure, an embarrassing moment, a big mistake?
 - What good (if any) do you think came out of that situation?

Let’s look at how one man, David, responds to a humbling situation with repentance. (This is one aspect- or “corner” of the Triangle Diagram- of how biblical change works.)

Scripture Study *(10-15 Minutes)*

Read Psalm 51:1-12 (first in the ESV, then the NLT)

1. Be quiet for 30 seconds. Think or write. Now what are your first impressions?
 - What’s your emotional, gut-reaction?
 - Ask a question you have (or can think of).
 - Volunteer a thought or comment- about a verse or the whole passage.

2. How does David address the harm of his major sins? (David committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband, Uriah. See 2 Samuel 11-12.)
 - Describe a situation where you failed big. (This might mean returning to that humbling situation you shared earlier.) What did you feel when you saw more clearly you had done?
 - What did you do to hide the failure or hide yourself from others?
 - Is there a verse in the Psalm that puts words to how you felt or what you did?

3. How does David plea for God’s healing mercy, cleansing, and restoration?
 - Describe a recent situation where you felt God’s mercy, cleansing, or restoration? (Again, this might mean returning to that humbling example you shared already.)
 - Is there a verse in the Psalm that puts words to what God did to you or for you?

Scripture Passage (The Book of Psalms 51:1-12)

Psalms, Chapter 51- English Standard Version Translation (ESV)

1 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.

Psalms, Chapter 51- New Living Translation (NLT)

1 Have mercy on me, O God, / because of your unfailing love. / Because of your great compassion, / blot out the stain of my sins. 2 Wash me clean from my guilt. / Purify me from my sin. / 3 For I recognize my rebellion; / it haunts me day and night. / 4 Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; / I have done what is evil in your sight. / You will be proved right in what you say, / and your judgment against me is just. / 5 For I was born a sinner— / yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. / 6 But you desire honesty from the womb, / teaching me wisdom even there. / 7 Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; / wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. / 8 Oh, give me back my joy again; / you have broken me— / now let me rejoice. / 9 Don't keep looking at my sins. / Remove the stain of my guilt. / 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God / Renew a loyal spirit within me. / 11 Do not banish me from your presence, / and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. / 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, / and make me willing to obey you.

Group Discussion (25 minutes)

Can I get 4 volunteers to each read aloud a verse or paragraph of the explanation below?

“Repenting of Our Repentance”: A Case Study

2 Corinthians 7:10: “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.”

Psalm 51 shows us the biblical response of “repentance.” Repentance can evoke a negative feeling in many of us. (This is often because it is confused with “penance”- trying to feel as lousy as possible, beating ourselves up over our mistakes, and then trying to make up for them). In reality “the purpose of repentance is to repeatedly tap into the joy of our union with Christ, in order to weaken our need to do anything contrary to God’s heart” (Tim Keller).

Our misunderstanding of repentance can make it something we want to avoid or only do occasionally. But the reality we see in Psalm 51 is that the bad things we sometimes find ourselves doing are symptomatic of our human condition. Biblically, we “sin” because we are “sinners.” So, repentance becomes not only a necessary practice, but a continually necessary practice. This is a fact Martin Luther recognized in the first of his 95 Theses to reform the church: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘repent,’ he meant that the entire life of believers should be one of repentance.” So, repentance is a lifestyle; but it is a lifestyle that we often confuse (hence our negative impression) and dismiss (hence our lingering guilt and shame).

So what does it look like to practice biblical repentance in real life? Perhaps it is helpful to practice a hypothetical situation (a case study) where we have wronged someone and try out both typical wrong reactions as well as biblical right ones...

Here’s the scene: Your spouse or roommate is messy. She or he usually leaves clothes and dishes everywhere. She or he never cleans the bathroom sink. She or he often “borrows” your phone charger or car without asking and doesn’t put them back in the same place, and “misplaces” an occasional utilities bill. You have stuffed your frustrations and anger with her or him until you see that person- in an unexpected burst of spring cleaning- throwing your favorite old sweater into the kitchen garbage. You lose it. You yell, and call him or her a “hypocrite.” Then you slam the door on your way out of the house, trying not to get into another argument but also resolving

to practice the silent treatment for the rest of the week...But then you calm down a bit and begin to replay what you just did right about where your subdivision meets the main road.

So we get to ask: *what do you do inside yourself*? (What do you do with yourself- how do you process what you are thinking and feeling? *What do you say and do outside yourself*- with your spouse or roommate?) And finally, *how do we find the power to realize and repent*, deeply and honestly? As we begin to answer these questions, let's try to be as specific as possible...

Can I get a volunteer to read aloud the sentence definition for each bolded word below? [Leader, have a volunteer read the word definition, then ask the question(s) underneath.]

Realization versus **Resentments** and **Remorse**

Resentment says "I hate it when he/she does that! I would never have done that!"

1. Imagine yourself in the case study above. As you feel resentment, what would you specifically say to yourself
 - about your roommate or spouse?
 - about yourself?

AND

Remorse says "I can't believe I did *that!*...that's not what I am *really* like"
or "I can't believe I did *that!*...I just can't forgive myself."

2. Still using the details in the case study, you start to feel remorse. Now, what would you specifically say in your head about yourself?
 - What is the "that" you can't believe you did?
 - Why does that feel impossible to believe?
 - What do you think you're "really like"?
 - How does "I just can't forgive myself" both feel true and not make sense?

VERSUS

Realization says "I *did* do that. That *is* what I'm really like. I *can* believe I am like that!"

3. As you practice realization in this case study, what would you specifically say
 - about yourself to yourself? (what does David say about himself in Psalm 51- in your own words?)
 - about yourself to your roommate or spouse? (what is the "that" you did?)
 - about yourself to God? (what are you "really like"?)

Repentance versus **Reacting** and **Resolutions**

Reacting looks like angry thoughts, dirty looks, and cutting words

4. Continue to imagine reacting in the case study above. Give an example of
 - an angry thought you might have (about your spouse or roommate)

- a scenario where you could give a dirty look that did some damage
- cutting words you might use (against your spouse or roommate)

AND

Resolution says “I promise to do better next time...I won’t do *that* again!”

5. Still using the details in the case study, you start to make resolutions. What would you specifically say about yourself?
 - What does “better next time” look like?
 - What is the “that” you won’t do again?
 - How do you know you will “do better next time”?

VERSUS

Repentance says “Lord, forgive me! *You* are my only hope...”

6. As you practice *repentance* in this case study, what would you specifically say
 - to God, about Himself?
 - to God, about yourself?
 - to your roommate or spouse, about what happened inside and outside you?

Would someone read over us the lyrics to the Charles Wesley hymn below?

Remembering the Invisible Drama at God’s Hand (Or How We **Realize** and **Repent**):

“He ever lives above,/ for me to intercede;/ His all redeeming love,/ His precious blood, to plead
[...] Five bleeding wounds He bears;/ received on Calvary;/ They pour effectual prayers;/ they
strongly plead for me:/ ‘Forgive him, O forgive,’ they cry,/ ‘Forgive him, O forgive,’ they cry,/ ‘Nor let that ransomed sinner die!’/ The Father hears Him pray,/ His dear anointed One;/ He cannot turn away the presence of His Son [...]

My God is reconciled;/ His pardoning voice I hear;/ He owns me for His child;/ I can no longer fear/
With confidence I now draw nigh,/ With confidence I now draw nigh,/ And ‘Father, Abba, Father,’ cry” (Charles Wesley, “*Arise My Soul Arise*”)

[Now, play a version of this hymn- the traditional hymnal version or the Indelible Grace retuned version. Encourage people to sit and listen or stand and sing along.]

Group Prayer (15 Minutes)

Ideas for communal and personal prayer

- “Share for yourself, and pray for the person sitting at 10 o’clock from you”
1. What’s one *burden* you need prayer for- for relief or healing?
 2. What’s one *sin* you’d like to (re-)confess to God?
 3. What’s one *deed* in your life or community you’d like to praise God for?
 4. What’s one *desire* stirred by this time together with God that you can pray for?