

FP: Repentance

In Acts 2:38 Peter commands us to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of our sins. Repentance is a key part of our response to the cross. The goal of this study is to give us an understanding of what biblical repentance is.

1. Matthew 4:17

Of all the words God could have used to be the first one of the proclamation of the “good news” — he uses the word “repent.” What is your first response when you hear that word? What is the motivation that you feel? Your response and motivation is determined by how you define and understand repentance.

Dictionary — repent: 1) to feel sorry, self-reproaching for past conduct; regret or be conscience-stricken about past action, attitude, etc. 2) to feel such sorrow for sin or fault as to be disposed to change one's life for the better; be penitent.

Unfortunately this is the definition that is not only found in most dictionaries, but also in the minds of most Christians. However, does that make sense? Is Jesus telling us to “feel sorry or regret” because the Kingdom of God is at hand?

What was God's definition and intended meaning?

Metanoia—to repent, to change any or all of the elements composing one's life: attitude, thoughts, and behaviors concerning the demands of God for right living

It is made up of two words:

1) *meta*—means “after”. The force of “after” implies a “before”; thus the prefix bears the idea of “shift” or “change”. However, the change places the emphasis on the “after” picture rather than on the “before” picture. Think of the word metamorphosis.

2) *noia* (or nous) — has to do with the “brain” or “mind”. It denotes a much bigger idea than just a physical organ, encompassing one's mind-set, ideology, paradigm, and worldview. Think of the word paranoia.

True biblical repentance is not to repent “from” something, but “to” something! To repent is to change your mindset or worldview towards something so that it fits with God's mindset—that then leads to different actions.

2. Romans 12:1-2

This is a great description of biblical repentance: it begins with a decision, but does not end there. It is “living” not “dead”. It is a continuing decision for the rest of our lives. A decision about what? To just turn from our old lives? To just turn from sin? It is a continuing decision to not think like the world [flesh] but to be transformed [metamorphoses] in your minds; in other words to think like Jesus. “Metanoia” is not merely a change of mind on certain subjects; but an exchange of the mind of flesh for the mind of Christ.

3. Ephesians 4:17-24

Repentance is turning from an old life to a new one. Negatively, what must be “taken off”? Positively, what is the new attitude to be embraced? What is “put on” in place of the “old self”? Repentance orients us toward God and the true life and purpose we were

created for: to become like him in righteousness and holiness. What do you need to “take off” and “put on”?

4. **Ephesians 4:25-5:2**

“Therefore”. A change in our thoughts should lead to a change in our actions. True repentance will result in tangible “fruit.” (Acts 26:20) Notice all the specific ways that Paul expects the disciples in Ephesus to behave now that they have been “made new in the attitude of their minds.” What are specific ways that your actions have been changing? What specifically do you still need to change?

5. **2 Corinthians 7:10-11**

Beware of worldly sorrow. Have you previously confused sorrow with repentance? What kinds of attitudes characterize godly sorrow?

Godly sorrow is not repentance! It leads to repentance, but is not repentance itself. Godly sorrow is the process that changes our mind! That is why worldly sorrow will never lead to true repentance; you are stuck in how you think!

6. **Luke 19:1-10**

What a great example of heartfelt repentance. In what ways do you see godly sorrow and repentance shown by Zacchaeus? (Leviticus 6:1-5) How did Zacchaeus feel after repenting? How did Jesus respond? In what areas have you shown godly sorrow? Is there anything in your life that you are still having worldly sorrow? (Godly sorrow should lead to repentance (change of mind and actions))

7. **2 Peter 3:9**

How do you feel that God has been patient with you? What does God want from ALL men? Our repentance is motivated by God’s love. (2 Corinthians 5:14-19 / Romans 2:4)

8. **Acts 3:19**

As we saw with Zacchaeus, when we repent, we are filled with joy. Are you ready for times of refreshing?

Additional Scriptures:

- James 2:14-24 – Faith without deeds is dead
- 2 Corinthians 5:14-19 – We are motivated to repentance by the cross
- Acts 26:20 – We are to show our repentance by our deeds
- Romans 2:4 – God’s kindness leads us towards repentance
- 2 Chronicles 33:1-19 – Another example of repentance
- Luke 3:7-14 – John the Baptist demanded fruit of repentance before baptism
- Luke 13:1-9 – Jesus preached that without repentance we will all perish