

FORGIVENESS AND REPENTANCE

When we become a Christian, we receive a brand new life. The divine life of Christ within us. Galatians 2:20. *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me"*.

The Bible calls this reception of new life being born again (John 3:1-15). God forgives us of all our sins and brings us into a new relationship of love with Him. This new life involves more than just forgiveness, it also involves us giving up our past sinful ways in order to receive God's pure and clean way of living. This act of giving up the old way of life in order to follow Jesus is called repentance. Both Jesus and the apostles taught the importance of our turning from our old sinful way of life to God's way. Matthew 4:17. *"From that time on Jesus began to preach, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near"*. 3:19. *"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord"*.

THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

Before we came to Jesus we all acted as the bosses of our own lives. We made decisions based on what we wanted rather than what God wanted. This self-centredness is really the root of all other sins. Repentance means allowing God to be our Lord and our Boss, and making Him the one we are answerable to.

As a Christian, we make our decisions in life based on what pleases Him. He is our King, Lord, Master and most of all he is our Father. If we really love him we will do what He says. John 14:21-24 *"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."* Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, *"But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"* Jesus replied, *"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."*

THE RESULT OF REPENTANCE

God offers us a beautiful trade! We can exchange our selfish, limited, and shallow life for His loving, giving, eternal, and meaningful life. Ephesians 4:22-24 *"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."* Salvation is like changing our clothes; we don't wear the old clothes under the new and we don't put new clothes on a filthy body. Through our repentance we allow God to wash us and give us the new clothes of righteousness which He died to give us. There is nothing we give up from this world that God doesn't replace with something much more satisfying and rewarding. Mark 10:28-30 *Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!" "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields-and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life."*

THE MEANS OF REPENTANCE

God shows us the areas in our lives that need to be changed (repented of) through the inner voice of the Holy Spirit and His written word. The Spirit of God will often cause us to feel uneasy about doing or saying certain things. Listen for His prompting in your inner conscience. God's word, the Bible, also gives us very clear instruction as to what is right and what is wrong. One of the reasons we study the Bible is to find areas of our lives that God wants to change. God's word is like a mirror that reveals to us the desperate state of our lives James 1:21-25. *"Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the Word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the Word but does not*

do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it-he will be blessed in what he does."

Remember the Holy Spirit will never contradict the Bible, and the Bible will never contradict the Holy Spirit. So if the Word confirms what you feel the Holy Spirit is saying, you had better listen!

THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF REPENTANCE

We put off	We put on
1. Bad habits (drugs, stealing, lying etc)	1. Good habits (fellowship, giving, truth etc)
2. Immorality (petting, fornication, adultery etc)	2. Morality (unselfish godly love for people)
3. Music and reading that doesn't glorify Jesus.	3. Music and reading that leads to godly living.
4. Friends that draw you back into the world.	4. Friends who will help you walk with God.
5. Negative and unclean ways of talking.	5. Positive and thankful ways or talking.
6. Unclean thoughts from Satan and the sinful nature.	6. Clean thoughts from God's Word.
7. Anger and bitterness towards God, self and others.	7. Love and forgiveness for God, self and others.

Figure 1.

This diagram depicts someone who is unrepentant or self centred; just the way the world teaches us to be.

Before we came to Christ we thought we were in control of our lives.

However we're just doing what we're told. TV, newspapers, and many other forms of teaching are taken in by us every day. They tell us to do - this or that and it will fulfil you. Or, you deserve to treat yourself, or that if you eat or drink this product you will be more attractive. The way of this world is one of self-centredness.

That's why John wrote *"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him"* 1 John 2:15. The way of this world (selfishness) leads to destruction.

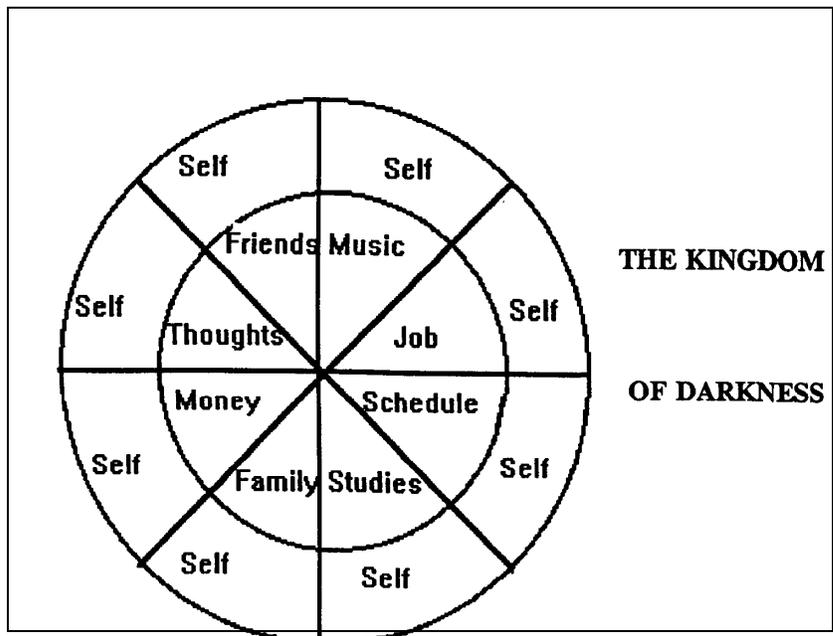
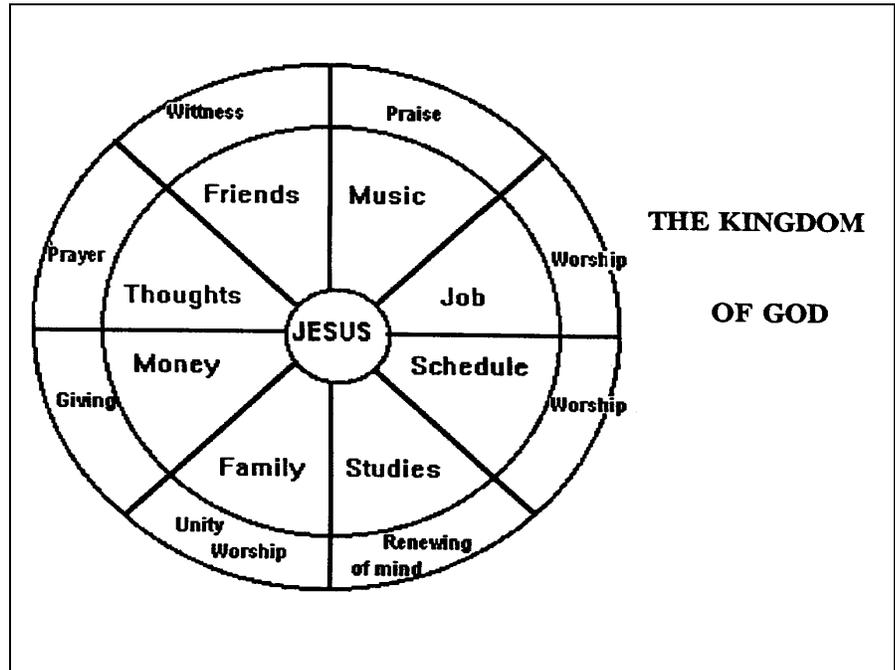


Figure 2. When we become "born again", Jesus should become the centre of our lives. He wants to be part of everything that we do. Not to control us, but to direct us in His holy and perfect way.

If you will let Him, He will turn your whole life around. All the things you did for yourself will become things that He can use to help others and to bring glory to God. God made us to be satisfied and fulfilled in serving others. It's up to you to open your life to Him and let Him be part of everything you do, say, think, see and hear.

This diagram shows the same person; only with Jesus at the centre of his life. The same things are around him but the outcome of seeing them through the eyes of Jesus is very different.



Jesus said "*Remain in me and I in you and you will bear much fruit; without me you can do nothing*". John 15:5 This way leads to life.

Read Proverbs 28:13.

1. Write out from memory Proverbs 28:13.

2. What must we do to avoid death (separation from God)? Luke 13:3.

3. What is the result of repentance? Acts 11:18.

4. Repentance is an essential part of coming into the salvation of God. If there is no repentance, there can be no salvation. Look up these other statements about repentance: Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21 and write down what you learn from them.

5. In Psalms 51:4 there is something about sin that we must realise. Against whom have we sinned?

6. Look up Romans 6:23. What does this say about the result of sin?

7. What did Jesus carry with him to the cross? 1 Peter 2:24

8. What does godly sorrow do? 2 Corinthians 7:10.

9. What do you think godly sorrow means, and how does it affect the way we think about God?

10. Look up Isaiah 55:7. What does it say the wicked and the unrighteous man must do?

11. What must we do in order to receive the gift of forgiveness that God offers us?
 - (a) R _____. Read Acts 3:19. We must recognise that we have done wrong and desire to change the direction of our life.
 - (b) C _____. Read 1 John 1:9. We must admit our sins to God.
 - (c) B _____. Read John 3:16. We need to put our faith and trust totally in Jesus.

- (d) R _____. Read John 1:12. God is a gentleman. He will never barge His way into your life. Your relationship with Him is dependant on your response to His offer. We need to ask Him to come into our lives.
- (e) Confess His L _____. Read Romans 10:9-10. We are not simply to accept Him as a convenience to get us out of hell, we need to accept Him as our Lord or Master. After all when we had control of our lives we didn't do a very good job. If we really have repented and desire to change, the only way we can do it is by allowing Jesus to take control. We have to mean it enough to live it and say it.

12. Now look up John 1:14. What does it tell us about Jesus?

13. Whom does God command to repent? Acts 2:38 & Acts 17:30.

14. How often should we repent? Matthew 6:9-13

15. What are the results of true repentance?

- (a) Romans 8:1
- (b) Romans 12:1-2
- (c) Ephesians 4:22-24

WHERE DO I STAND NOW?

Write out and memorise 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Read Romans 5:12-21. The "*gift of righteousness*" means that God has given us through Jesus Christ a gift of being made completely 'right' in His eyes. Even though there has been much sin in the past, God no longer sees it once we repent. Psalm 103:12 says "*as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us*". If you go east you will never get to the west and if you west you will never get to the east – that's how far God has removed our sins from us.

Read Romans 5:1. Another word which God uses to describe us is *justified*. Jesus paid the total penalty on our behalf when He shed His blood on the Cross and as we by faith accept His sacrifice and receive Him into our life we become justified. What does this mean? It means we become '*just-as-if-I'd*' never sinned. Romans 8:1 puts it another way, "*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*" It is as if you have stood guilty before the court of God, but the Judge announces you totally innocent because of the blood of Jesus Christ shed on your behalf more than 2000 years ago. The slate is wiped clean!

What is the most important truth you have learned from this lesson?

If you have any questions on any area you would like to discuss, write them here.

If you would like to do further study on the result of true repentance, read the following verses.

A new love for God and a determination to serve Him. 1 Peter 2:24, Romans 6:13.

Freedom from sin and guilt. Romans 8:1. Philippians 4:6 & 7.

A Love for righteousness and morality. Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 1:22.

A new peace and joy, living in a life centred on Christ. John 14:27, Romans 15:13.