

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM

11. REPENTANCE

The first step toward repentance occurs when we recognize that we have not trusted our Father's plan, (purpose and will), or His Word, (design, instructions and guidance). It is then that we can see that we have lived our lives based on our own criteria; on what we learned from our families or from the schools we attended and that we have lived more by what the culture of the world has taught us than by what the Eternal Father says in his Word (the Bible).

Repentance is the only way to return to Him.

Repentance is admitting deep in our hearts that we have not believed God. It is to recognize disbelief as sin; understanding that not believing and disobeying means despising the love of the Father and rebelling against the King.

To understand repentance more deeply, it is important that we talk about remorse. Repentance and remorse look identical because on the outside they appear the same but they are not. One person may cry, moan and ask for forgiveness because of remorse or act in the same manner because of repentance.

Repentance: The difference is that those who are truly sorry are sorry towards God and their pain is for having hurt their Father's heart and having rejected His love. Although the one who repents feels pain from its consequence; their greatest pain is in the fact that they did something wrong in the eyes of God and it affected their relationship with Him. They now have a genuine desire to put an end to a particular behaviour and never repeat it again.

Remorse: However those who have remorse feel sadness and pain mainly because of the consequences they are facing for their actions; for the punishment they will receive or for the benefits they will lose as a result of their decisions. Therefore when those consequences pass, it is very likely that they will repeat the same thing again because there was no genuine repentance in the heart.

“ Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God

Matthew 3:8 NLT

The Lord exhorts us to produce fruits of repentance; that is that our actions and the change in our way of living show that it was genuine and that we truly regret having sinned. Not just because we are having to face the consequences.

If we were opening a hole in our garden and someone told us that it was a crime; would it be enough to stop opening it? Or even if an inspector came by after a month and saw it; would it still be a crime? Of course it would be! It would not be enough to tell them, "We stopped opening the hole and we didn't take out more dirt." What should happen is that as soon as they told us that it is a crime, we not only stopped removing the dirt but immediately began to return it until the hole was covered and leaving it as it was before, or even better! That would be the fruit worthy of repentance.



Let's look at some biblical examples:

If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.

Ephesians 4:28 NLT

It's not just about stopping stealing. It is about doing something now that glorifies God and doing what we were created to do in His image. It's not just stopping doing the wrong thing but starting to do the right thing.

Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

Ephesians 4:29 NLT

Here it is no longer just about stopping speaking rudely or vulgarly but now we must use words to edify others and to lift them up. God did not give us a new life just to say, "I no longer steal, I no longer cheat, I no longer commit adultery", but to do those things for which He created us; to love others. That is the culture of the Kingdom!

Study Questions

1. In your own words; define regret.
2. In your own words; define the difference between repentance and remorse.
3. Are there areas in your life where you can identify a recurring sin and can you identify that maybe you thought you had repentance but actually you only ever had remorse? Write them in your notebook and take time with Him and stand before God with the right heart and make decisions that show the fruit of that repentance.

Beyond learning this as knowledge, it is important to understand it in order to know how to measure our hearts and ensure that we are exercising genuine repentance instead of having remorse; since the only way to return to the Father is through genuine repentance.