

REPENTANCE

A COSMIC SHIFT OF MIND & HEART

STUDY GUIDE

This Study Guide complements the book, *Repentance a Cosmic Shift of Mind and Heart* by Edward Anton. See dpibooks.com for more details.

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REPENTANCE

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

1. Why did you begin to read a book on repentance?
2. Do you consider yourself adequately equipped to tackle the sin in your life?
3. What is your definition of repentance?
4. Describe your own experiences along the Trail of Tears and/or the Soldier's March.
5. Why is repentance important?
6. How does one repent?
7. How have you struggled with necessary things, not doing the good you want you to do?

CHAPTER ONE: WHATEVER HAPPENED TO REPENTANCE?

1. Have you made a recent decision to change something in your life?
2. Why is it more comfortable to make changes on your own terms? What changes do you seek to make?
3. How well do you respond to reproof – from the Bible and from fellow Christians?
4. Have you ever changed a fellowship, that is, church membership, to avoid a call to repentance?

CHAPTER TWO: WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

1. How did both John and Jesus begin their public ministry of preaching?
2. What does the prefix *meta-* (from *metanoia*) mean? What other English words do you know that have *meta-* as a prefix?
3. What does the root *nous* (from *metanoia*) mean? What other English words do you know that contain *-noia*?
4. Have you ever considered your worldview? How has the Bible shaped it?
5. Why is *metanoia* necessary for us to grasp the kingdom of God?
6. How has the Latin idea of *paenitentia* influenced your understanding of repentance?
7. Why is the author concerned with “repentance” as our English translation for *metanoia*?

CHAPTER THREE: A GALLERY OF REPENTANCE ILLUSTRATIONS

1. How does Scrooge illustrate *metanoia*?
2. Have you ever experienced a gestalt switch while studying in school? How would your life change if you experienced this phenomenon in a way that helped you better understand your relationship with God?
3. What are the rules by which you play the “game of life” within an egocentric paradigm ...and a deocentric paradigm?
4. How does changing the rules of a game change the strategy by which you play the game? What can learn from applying that principle to your life with God?

CHAPTER FOUR: JOHN THE BAPTIST COMPLETES THE PROPHET'S PREPARATION

1. How have you broken your covenant with God?

2. Are scriptures sufficient for your repentance?
3. Which Scriptures on pages 58 and 59 most convicted your heart?
4. Do you agree with the author's assertions that repentance isn't something we do in order to return to God, it is our return to Him? Why or Why not?
5. How does fear play a positive role in our repentance?
6. Do your standards for morality reflect a biblical standard or simply a modern one?
7. Why do prophets go after the leaders of a society?
8. How does *metanoia* differ from the fruit of *metanoia*? How does this distinction help you repent?

CHAPTER FIVE: JESUS OPENS OUR EYES

1. What causes spiritual blindness? Why is it so hard to see our own pride?
2. Why is Jesus so tough on spiritual blindness?
3. Earlier we discussed worldviews, how does a *Kingdomview* compare and contrast with your current worldview?
4. Why is the arrival of the Kingdom cause for *metanoia*?
5. What is Jesus' purpose for teaching via parables?
6. What can we learn about *metanoia* from Jesus' description of the Prodigal Son?
7. Why – according to Jesus' teaching - will we perish if we don't repent?
8. How can we be sure of our repentance?

CHAPTER SIX: THE CROSS COMPELS OUR HEARTS

1. How can grace compel repentance?
2. How can you assess your debt to Jesus?
3. How can you be assured of the forgiveness of that debt?
4. Who is to blame for Christ's death on the Cross?
5. How does one's good confession - "Jesus is Lord!" - express one's repentance?
6. Why is sharing the good news of Jesus Christ a clear indication of one's repentance?

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE APOSTLES TRANSFIGURE OUR MINDS

1. What influences have shaped your worldview?
2. How has the world tried to squeeze your mind into its mold?
3. How can you resist – even reverse – this persistent pressure from the world?
4. Why should you "gird the loins of your mind"?
5. When and how did Saul/Paul repent?
6. What is the difference between a fleshly mind and a spiritual mind?
7. At a popular level, what is the difference between WWJD and WWJT?
8. Why are spiritual disciplines more effective after one has experienced the paradigm shift of *metanoia*?

CHAPTER EIGHT: WORLDLY SORROW LEADS TO DEATH

1. What is wrong with defining repentance as "being sorry for your sins, so sorry that you stop them"?
2. What is the root cause of worldly sorrow?
3. In what ways have you exercised "damage control" rather than true repentance?
4. What damage has your sin caused?

5. Have you ever confused the tears of self pity for true repentance? What is the danger of this confusion?
6. Why does the author assert that “excuses are the clearest indicators of worldly sorrow?” Would you rather have your excuses accepted or your sins forgiven?
7. What’s the difference between cognitive dissonance and repentance? Why doesn’t cognitive dissonance prompt us to preach the good news to others?
8. Have you been selective in your repentance? What does that indicate about your repentance?
9. Why doesn’t *metanoia* accommodate the repetition of sin?

CHAPTER NINE: GODLY SORROW PRODUCES REPENTANCE

1. Does Sandi’s story convict you about an unresolved sin in your life? If so, what should you do?
2. What are some Biblical examples of individuals who exhibit godly sorrow? What are some Biblical examples of groups who exhibit godly sorrow?
3. Consider William Law’s assertion that our “sins are due to the fact that we do not intend to please God in all the actions of our lives.” Is this true for you? How does godly sorrow reverse this condition?
4. Why does sin require confession? Is confession only before God? To whom have you confessed sins besides God? What does a short list indicate?
5. Do you believe Proverbs 28:13? Do you practice it? Why or why not?
6. How does indignation promote repentance? When were you last indignant over sin?
7. How does “fear” promote repentance? How does it work together with “longing” to produce repentance?
8. Has anyone ever marveled at your zeal to repent – why or why not?
9. Are you ready to completely avenge the wrong caused by sin and self? What next steps will you take?

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTS US

1. What is the value of the gift of *elegcho* (pronounced “*elencho*”)?
2. What methods has the Holy Spirit used to convict you? Which has been most effective at producing repentance? Which methods have you most tried to avoid?
3. How have you tried to avoid reproof from fellow Christians?
4. According to Revelation 3:19, why does Jesus reprove us? What response does He desire from us?
5. How can a person dead in sin repent and believe?
6. How does God grant repentance?
7. Look back over the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus (see chapters 4 and 5); list examples of how they reprovved their hearers in order to bring them to repentance.
8. Why is repentance impossible without God?

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE CHURCH REORIENTS US

1. How does the church represent the “destination of repentance”?
2. How did the early church help sinners to repent? How did it safeguard true repentance from compromise?
3. How did the walls of the early church stand steadfast against the assaults of the world?
4. What does it mean to be of “one mind” with your brothers and sisters?
5. How were early Christians both non-conformists and conformists?
6. Why has church discipline gotten a “bad rap”? Is it warranted?

7. Why do so few churches practice the Biblical mandates to discipline its members?
8. How can a church best practice church discipline?
9. Have you ever been disciplined by your church? Did God's plan lead you to repentance – why or why not?
10. Over 85% of the Biblical references to repentance address groups rather than individuals. Thus, how can you help your fellowship - at various levels – repent?
11. How can you spark repentance – even revival – in your church and in your community? Are you willing to walk its path of selfless commitment?

CHAPTER TWELVE: IT'S TIME TO GO HOME

1. How can you make the same journey as David – from repulsive to repentant?
2. How does repentance differ between the lost turning to God and the saved *re*-turning to Him? How is it the same?
3. How do qualify for God's love and grace (see page 201)?
4. If you have not yet repented, why are you without excuse before God?
5. What will specifically change in your life when you proclaim, "Jesus is Lord!"?
6. If you have repented, have you also been forgiven of your sins – if not, what are you waiting for (see Acts 22:16)?
7. What can make post-baptismal repentance more difficult than your initial repentance?
8. What role does shame play in obstructing your repentance?
9. What is fellowship in the light vs. fellowship in the darkness? Which have you most often experienced in your church?
10. Finally, to the "confused": take time to consider and answer the questions on pages 207 and 208. How can you thwart Satan's attempts to undermine your path to true repentance?
11. Who can you encourage today with the good news of your repentance?
12. Who can you reach for Jesus by "telling how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" (Mark 5: 19)?

BEAR FRUIT THAT PROVES YOUR REPENTANCE

Luke 3:7-14

BIG IDEA:

Metanoia and the Fruit of Metanoia are distinct yet inseparable. So if we want to change our behavior, we should focus on the cause rather than the symptoms. And if we change our heart and mind, we should expect to see fruit of that change in our life.

ICE BREAKER(S):

1. Play Doctor. Pick a volunteer to be a physician. Each person has an appointment and describes an ailment that you provided on a slip of paper. Instruct the doctor to only treat the symptoms rather than the cause for: a back that aches when sitting, for a head that aches when reading, for a knee that aches when running. For each the doctor plays out the old joke – Patient says, “Doctor, Doctor, it hurts when I do this.” Doctor responds, “Don’t do that.” Discuss the competence of the doctor.
2. Play John the Baptist. Wear a ragged robe; bring some “gummy” insects in a Ziploc bag, etc. Have a member begin the bible talk by asking someone to read from Luke 3:7-9. Just as the volunteer begins to read, have John enter, shouting and quoting that very passage. Stay in character, but stand to the side as the bible talk leader begins his discussion of this passage.

QUESTIONS:

- What’s a viper? Is that a compliment? Why does John level this charge against the crowds seeking baptism? What was their motivation to seek his baptism? Why is that not a good thing?
- John tells them to produce fruit that proves their repentance (NET). What does repentance mean? [Explain *Metanoia* if necessary]. Why is it necessary to repent prior to being baptized?
- What is the fruit of *metanoia*?
- What is the distinction between *metanoia* and its fruit? Why is this distinction important? Is John targeting behavior or the heart behind the behavior? What does John expect from a changed our heart and mind?
- In your attempts to repent, have you focused on your behavior or your mindset that produced the behavior? Have you been treating the symptoms or the cause?
- What excuse does John anticipate from the crowd (see v. 8)? What excuse have you made to dismiss your lack of repentance and its fruit?
- How does John associate repentance with judgment?
- To what does the “good fruit” in v. 9 refer? How will you produce this good fruit?
- How does the crowd respond (v. 10)?
- In three interactions with the crowd, John describes the fruit of their repentance:
 - Example A’s good fruit: share food and clothing – what is the *metanoia* that produces this fruit?
 - Example B’s good fruit: stop fraudulent tax collection – what is the *metanoia* that produces this fruit?
 - Example C’s good fruit: stop abusing one’s own authority to bolster income – what is the *metanoia* that produces this fruit?

REPENTANCE STUDY GUIDE AND RESOURCES

- In some cases, John described fruit that involved starting something in other cases he described fruit that stopped a behavior. Do you think that the people who asked John “What should I do?” had a pretty good idea what he would tell them? Why is that?
- Well, we have John the Baptist with us right now (if you chose to include him in the ice breaker – if not, ask the group to imagine John, a prophet of God, with us right now). If you were to ask him “What should I do?” (that is, “what fruit of repentance should I bear?”) do you have a pretty good idea what he would tell you?
- So... what one thing would he tell you to *start* doing and what one thing would he tell you to *stop* doing?
- How must you repent – *metanoia* – in order to bear that fruit of repentance?

FINAL CHARGE:

Repent and bear the fruit of repentance! Don't claim repentance without the accompanying fruit. And don't just address your behavior (fruit) – change your mind and heart so that you can produce the desired behavior.

IF EVEN MANASSEH CAN REPENT, THEN...

2nd Chronicles 33:1-18

BIG IDEA:

No one is beyond the power of repentance. Even the vilest of offenders can repent AND be used by God to do great things for his kingdom.

ICE BREAKER(S):

Questions: Who is the most wicked person you have ever studied in history class? What made this person so wicked? Is there anyone in your family or circle of friends that you've considered to be too far gone to repent and turn to God? What are some sins that most grieve God's heart? We'll consider someone even worse. And his sins are even viler than the ones you have described. His name is Manasseh. He was king of Judah for 55 years.

Read *2 Chronicles 33:1-9*; then vv. *10-11*; finally vv. *12-18*

An alternate and more dramatic approach: Read *2 Kings 21:1-18* first (this requires more time). Discuss Manasseh's character, his sins, and his legacy. Then - a la Paul Harvey – tell the rest of the story via *2 Chronicles 33*. (Manasseh's prayer – alluded to in v. 18 – is also provided for you. It is found in the Septuagint version of the OT in the Apocrypha.)

QUESTIONS:

- vv. *1-9*...Let's start listing all the horrible sins that Manasseh commits (start a list on large piece of paper).
- What do you anticipate will happen next to Manasseh?
- Have you ever felt as though you've sinned too much to return to God? Tell me more about that.
- Have you ever felt that you've sinned too much to ever be used by God again? What was that sin? Why did you feel disqualified from doing great things for God? Do you still feel that way?
- vv. *10-11*... What did God do to try to get Manasseh to repent? How has God tried to confront you and your need to repent? How did Manasseh respond? So what did God do next? Has God likewise turned up the volume of his reproof to you? How? Why did you resist?
- vv. *12-13* ... What did it take for Manasseh to respond to God's reproof? How does God show his love for Manasseh? When Manasseh repented and returned to God, how did God respond? Is that fair? Which description of Manasseh best captures the idea of his *metanoia*? [Read the Prayer of Manasseh at this point to convey his heart and mind change – if time permits].
- vv. *14-18* ... How did Manasseh bear the fruit of repentance? Was he able to be used to do great things for God and his kingdom? Make a list of the reforms that he completed before he died. What are some things that you would like to do for God and his kingdom before you die? What needs to happen first?
- Compare the two lists. What happened in between the before and after picture? What do want your "after" list to look like?

FINAL CHARGE:

Let's get started on our second list! No one is beyond repentance. If Manasseh could repent, then so can you! Humble yourself before God and turn your life back to him. He'll use you again!

THE PRAYER OF MANASSEH

“O Lord Almighty, God of our ancestors, of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and of their righteous offspring; you who made heaven and earth with all their order; who shackled the sea by your word of command, who confined the deep and sealed it with your terrible and glorious name; at whom all things shudder, and tremble before your power, for your glorious splendor cannot be borne, and the wrath of your threat to sinners is unendurable; yet immeasurable and unsearchable is your promised mercy, for you are the Lord Most High, of great compassion, long-suffering, and very merciful, and you relent at human suffering. O Lord, according to your great goodness you have promised repentance and forgiveness to those who have sinned against you, and in the multitude of your mercies you have appointed repentance for sinners, so that they may be saved. Therefore you, O Lord, God of the righteous, have not appointed repentance for the righteous, for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who did not sin against you, but you have appointed repentance for me, who am a sinner. For the sins I have committed are more in number than the sand of the sea; my transgressions are multiplied, O Lord, they are multiplied! I am not worthy to look up and see the height of heaven because of the multitude of my iniquities. I am weighted down with many an iron fetter, so that I am rejected because of my sins, and I have no relief; for I have provoked your wrath and have done what is evil in your sight, setting up abominations and multiplying offenses. And now I bend the knee of my heart, imploring you for your kindness. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge my transgressions. I earnestly implore you, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me! Do not destroy me with my transgressions! Do not be angry with me forever or store up evil for me; do not condemn me to the depths of the earth. For you, O Lord, are the God of those who repent, and in me you will manifest your goodness; for, unworthy as I am, you will save me according to your great mercy, and I will praise you continually all the days of my life. For all the host of heaven sings your praise, and yours is the glory forever. Amen.” (*Prayer of Manasseh, NRSV*)

COME TO YOUR SENSES

Luke 15:11-32

BIG IDEA:

Jesus provides an insiders guide to repentance as he describes what happens inside the mind of the prodigal son. Watch how the son changes the rules by which he will play the game of life, and see the results in his changed life.

ICE BREAKER:

Play the Game of Life (if time permits) or simply read the rules to the game of life (you can find them at <http://www.centralconnector.com/GAMES/life.html>). Discuss how you would play the game if the rules were changed (to reflect a Biblical worldview). How do rules to a game affect players' strategies?

QUESTIONS:

After reading *Luke 15:1-2* (to provide background and audience – two main groups: religious and sinners – as represented by the two sons) and *Luke 15:7, 10* (to show that these are a series of parables about repentance), read *Luke 15:11-32*.

- *vv. 11-13*... What are the rules of the game of life for the younger son? What is his strategy for success in the game? How's he doing so far?
- *vv. 14-16*... Why didn't he succeed at the game of life? What was wrong with his strategy? Who really sets the rules to the game of life? What happens when we employ strategies that don't fit the rules? To what degree does the son define failure at this point? Have you ever felt like a failure in life? How? Were you defining success and failure by your own rules or by God's rules? Would you rather have success by your own rules or by God's? Why have you played by your own rules when they contradict God's?
- *vv. 17-19*... Jesus now takes us inside the younger son's head. What's happening inside his mind and heart? Although this is the third parable about *metanoia*, the word isn't mentioned – how does Jesus describe the son's *metanoia*? As he comes to his senses, the son changes the rules to the game of life. How do the rules change? How does that affect his strategy for life success? How will it affect his lifestyle and behavior? Who does the father represent? What's your strategy for returning to God? Can you find support for that in the Bible?
- *vv. 20-24*... How is he playing the game differently now? Is he succeeding or failing? Why is he succeeding? How do you win at the father's game? Is it possible to win any other way? Why are you still tempted to try? The younger son goes back to the serve his father, how can we serve God? Are you serving God in that way? Have you really repented?
- *vv. 25-32*... What are the rules to the game of life for the older son? What's his strategy for winning? How does that contradict his father's rules? Which son do most of us resemble in this parable – the one with worldly rules for success or the one with religious rules for success? Why is it harder for the former to repent? How do you know that you're not blind to a need for repentance? How can you be sure? The end of this story is left open-ended – why?

FINAL CHARGE: Come to your senses by rewriting the rules that you have for the game of life. Align your strategy for success with God's strategy for your success. With new rules, you will have new allegiances, new attitudes, new affections, and new success!

REPENT OR PERISH

Luke 13:1-9

BIG IDEA:

The way we die has no bearing on our final judgment; however, the way we live does... and if we don't repent we will perish.

ICE BREAKER:

Deep questions: Does the World Trade Center collapse or the Indian Ocean tsunami indicate judgment by God. Was God chastising Wall Street traders, or Indonesian Muslims, or Indian Hindus through these disasters? How do we find meaning in the midst of these disasters? Someone asked Jesus a very similar question...

QUESTIONS:

- *vv. 1-2*... What do you think... were they worse sinners as indicated by this suffering? What was the original incident described by "Pilate mixing their blood with the blood of sacrifices?"
- *vv. 4*... Were the offenders who were killed by the tower collapse in Jerusalem worse offenders than the others in Jerusalem? Why does Jesus bring up this accident/incident? What other tragedies could you bring up as well? Do any of them provide an indication of the victims' relative sinfulness?
- *vv. 3, 5* ... What is the main point that Jesus is trying to make out of these tragedies? What does it mean to repent? What happens if we don't repent? What does it mean to perish? Which of the two paths is the better option? Then why so little repentance in our community... in your own life? What should these tragedies mean to us then? Do you think about 911 the way that Jesus would? How can you best honor those who have fallen victim to tragedies? What specifically needs to happen to show that you've repented? Do you need help?
- *vv. 6-9*... Why does Jesus tell this parable? What is the context? Who owns the garden? Who is the gardener? Who does the tree represent? What is the fruit that the tree should bear (A: the fruit of repentance)? How does Jesus promote (i.e. fertilize) the fruit of repentance for us? What happens to us if we fail to bear the fruit of repentance? Do you want to bear the fruit of repentance? How will you begin?

FINAL CHARGE:

Tragedies, catastrophes, and acts of terror take lives indiscriminately. How we die – and we will all die – does not indicate our final destination. However, how we live does. So repent and live for Jesus. What more can he do to promote our repentance? He's shown us his love, and he's offered us his grace – because he knows that if we don't repent (and bear the fruit of repentance) we will indeed perish. Choose repentance – choose life.

THE RICH MAN IN HADES

Luke 16:19-31

BIG IDEA:

Everyone will “get it”, that is, they’ll be completely convinced about repentance after they die. Don’t wait until it’s too late to repent. You have all you need for complete repentance now, because we all have the Word of God.

ICE BREAKER:

- Play Monday morning quarterback with your own childhood. If you could go back in time and give yourself message, what would you tell yourself?

QUESTIONS:

- vv. 19-25... What did Lazarus do to deserve paradise (A: the answer is not explicitly given, so it’s not the focus of the story)? Does living in poverty earn you a place in paradise? What did the rich man do to deserve torment? How do we know that he did not live repently? What is repentance? What’s wrong with living life for Self?
- vv. 26... Once dead, do you have any more chances to repent? How often – do you think – does the rich man replay the bad choices of his life while in Hades? What’s a recent time in your life that you wish you could turn back the clock and do something differently? What’s a consequence that you wish you could have avoided? Describe the frustration of not being able to change that consequence.
- vv. 27-28... Knowing that his eternal fate is sealed, what does the rich man now want from Abraham? What would you want if you were in his shoes? What do your deceased relatives most want for you?
- vv. 29-31... According to the rich man’s thinking, what will it take for his brothers to repent? How will a messenger from the dead assure their repentance? Why do you think he holds to that misconception? According to Jesus’ story, what does he say it will take for the brothers to come to repentance? How did the brothers have “Moses and the Prophets?” According to Jesus, which is more effective for repentance – a miraculous sign/message or the Scriptures? Why is that? How does the Bible bring about repentance? If we do not repent before we die, will we have any excuses as we stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Do you want to repent? Do you want to know what repentance is? Let someone help you repent through the Word of God.

FINAL CHARGE:

Don’t wait until it’s too late to do the most important thing appointed to you to do while on earth – repent. The bible is your guide, so use it. If you need help, get it.

DAVID AND NATHAN

Psalm 51 vs. 2 Samuel 11:1-27 ...2 Samuel 12:1-13

BIG IDEA:

David presents a radically different “before” and “after” picture between the events of 2 Samuel 11 and the composition of Psalm 51. What happened to effect that change? We’ll see how God intervenes in our life through reproof to bring about radical repentance.

ICE BREAKER:

Share about a time that you were caught in a lie or some other type of sin. It’s best to keep it light at the beginning – provide a humorous example if possible. Before you begin, let the group know that you’ll be asking about a time that they, too, were “busted” (this will give them time to think of an incident). After your story, open it up for others to share how they were caught.

QUESTIONS:

- **Psalm 51**... Take note of the introductory material. What is the occasion for David’s composition of this Psalm?
- **vv. 1-19**... How would you characterize David’s state of mind and heart as he writes these words to God? Discuss signs of David’s repentance throughout the Psalm. (It’s easy to spend a tremendous amount of time discussing all the attributes of David’s repentance, because this Psalm is a tremendous testimony to his repentance. However, the focus of this bible talk is on HOW he repented – which we’ll consider in 2 Samuel 12.) It’s best to keep a quick flow around the circle with each person contributing one additional indicator of his repentance. Some clarifying questions (if you have time): Against whom has David sinned? Upon repentance, what does he promise to do? Why do repentant people try to help others to repent? How do you help someone repent? Have you helped someone repent? What is a broken and contrite heart? Why is it pleasing to God?
- **2 Samuel 11:1-21**... Read through the entire chapter. Then go around the group to build a list of David’s sinfulness. How does David retreat into darkness to cover up his initial sin? How does darkness make it worse? Did David successfully hide his sin from the people – (be sure to note Joab’s response)? Have you ever tried to cover up a sin? Did the darkness make things better or worse? From God’s perspective, did it become better or worse? Why? How deep into the darkness does David retreat?
- **2 Samuel 12:1-6**... How much was David able to hide from God? What does God do? Why does God send Nathan? How is Nathan’s mission an act of God’s love? Why does Nathan employ a parable to confront David? How might David have responded if Nathan were more direct? Have you ever responded with pride or defensiveness to a loving reproof? Does David still have a sense of right and wrong as he listens to the parable? In what one area does he lose his sense of right and wrong? Why are we our own worst judge? What blinds us from truth about self?
- **vv. 7**... God now shines the divine light of truth on David (“You are that man!!!”). Does David have anywhere to hide now? What are ways that God reproves us? Have you argued with the truth after having been exposed by it? How? Have you ever surrendered to such a reproof? What happened?

- vv. 7-8... Romans 2:4 tells us that God's kindness is meant to lead us to repentance; how was God kind to David? How has God been kind to you? Has his kindness always led you to repentance? When kindness fails, what's God's next move?
- vv. 9-11... What does it mean to "despise" something? What's something that you absolutely despise – maybe a food, activity, person, etc.? How did David despise the Word of God? What words of God have you despised in the past week? Did you think of it as "despising" at the time? If you had, how might you have responded differently? How did David despise God himself? How have you despised God? Who in this passage describes our sinful activity as an act of despising God (A: "*Thus says the Lord...*" v. 7)?
- vv. 12-13... Why does God decide to make a point about David's "secret" sinning? Do you have secrets that need to come into the light? Why does secrecy enslave us? How can we be set free? Does David come into light? Does he repent?
- **Concluding Questions:** At what point do you think he composes Psalm 51? How does he go from a wicked heart to one of repentance? What does God do for David to help him repent? How do we need to view reproofs that God sends into your life? Why? Most importantly, how do we need to respond to God's reproof? Why?

FINAL CHARGE:

Sin binds us and blinds us. We often retreat into such darkness that we can no longer be reached by God's kindness. However, God loves us and will continue to search us out until he finds us. If kindness doesn't elicit our repentance, then reproof will. Pray for God's reproofs. Rejoicing with God beats hiding every time... no matter how terrible the sin is that you're trying to cover up.

PAUL'S REPENTANCE

Acts 26:9-21

BIG IDEA

Just as Jesus opened the eyes of Paul, he can open our eyes so that we may turn from error, self, sin, and darkness to God.

ICE BREAKER

Play pin the “goad” on the donkey. Take the classic birthday party game’s tails and cut them into long arrow shapes to approximate a sharp goad. Get a really good blindfold so that you cannot see at all. Pick a few volunteers to play with blindfolds. Then take off the blindfold and have them play again. Make sure they position the goad behind the donkey in such a way that you can later explain what it means to “kick against the goads.” After playing, ask an obvious question: why was it easier to play without the blindfolds?

QUESTIONS

- vv. 9-12... Describe how Saul was sincerely wrong about following God. Was he good at what he was doing? How does being good at being wrong make it harder to see that you are wrong? In what ways have you been sincerely wrong about following God?
- vv. 13-14... What does it mean to kick against the goads? How does the image of a horse kicking against a sharp prodding stick relate to Saul persecuting Jesus? Given the fact that Saul and his companions have been knocked to the ground by a bright light from heaven, what’s he now thinking as he hears that he is persecuting the one whose voice he hears from heaven? Did you have some strong clues that you were wrong about following God – what were they? Did you pursue or ignore them?
- v. 15... Saul asks a question; the answer to that question will forever change his life. Do you think that he had a suspicion about the identity of the person speaking to him? What might have been going through Saul’s mind as he waited for the answer to his questions? Why would the answer change his life? Jesus answers in the Hebrew language... what would be the first words that Saul hears from Jesus (A: Yahweh... Jesus[Yeshua])? How does the answer re-write all the rules for following God for Saul? What were the rules – both before and after this answer? How has Saul experienced *metanoia* here? Now back to you...What helped prove you wrong? Did you repent after you saw that you were wrong?
- vv. 16-18... What’s the commission that Jesus gives Saul? How will Saul be able to open sinners’ eyes so that they may turn to God? How were your eyes opened? How did open eyes help you turn from darkness to light and from the domain of Satan to the kingdom of God?
- vv. 19-20... Jesus told Saul to go to both Jews and Gentiles and to “open their eyes so that they may turn... to God.” Does Paul preach this message? Do you notice a parallel between Jesus’ commission and Paul’s preaching (A: “open their eyes” = “repent” and “turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God” = “turn to God”)? How does “open their eyes” better help you understand “*metanoia*”? How does one prove his repentance? What proof do you have that you repented? What are deeds that prove that one has turned to God? How are *metanoia* and its resultant deeds both distinct and related? Why is the distinction important? If you don’t have deeds that prove your repentance, what do you need to do?

- vv. 21... Some suggest that the Jews tried to kill Saul because of his preaching to Gentiles. Others suggest that the Jews were offended that he preached that they (the Jews) needed to turn to God and prove it. Who would be more offended today if you preached that they needed to turn to God and prove it: sinful people or religious people? Who would be more likely to persecute you for preaching to them their need for repentance? Why? Would you be offended if someone noticed your need for repentance – either because you were wrong or because of your sin - and brought it to your attention? Well, then that's your final charge...

FINAL CHARGE

Let Jesus open your eyes to your need for repentance – either because you are wrong about how to follow him or because you are in sin. Ask someone to open the Bible with you so that your eyes may be open to your error. Pray that open eyes will result in a changed life for Christ.

WORLDLY SORROW

2 Corinthians 7:6-10

BIG IDEA

There is a sorrow that does not lead to repentance. The bible calls it worldly sorrow. Many so-called Christians tragically confuse this sorrow for repentance.

ICE BREAKER

Hold a press conference. Ask for a volunteer to play the role of the politician/athlete/celebrity caught in a sin (you can pick one from the recent headlines or choose one of the more infamous ones: steroids in baseball, infidelity in the White House, betting scandal in baseball, rape and adultery charges against a basketball player, televangelist who solicits prostitutes, paternity suits against politicians, etc.). The volunteer is allowed to recruit two to three others to be his or her speech writers who will help spin this problem in such a way to minimize the damage. Instruct them to craft a “typical” speech delivered in like circumstances. Discuss whether or not the accused displayed sorrow. Did the accused really repent? Discuss other press conferences that you’ve seen over the years – what did they all have in common? [This Bible Talk can be combined with the Godly Sorrow Bible Talk. At the end of the Godly Sorrow Bible Talk, instruct the same team to re-enact the press conference, but this time with godly sorrow!]

QUESTIONS

- *vv. 6-10...*
- Ask for a definition of repentance from various members of the group. If you receive a definition that sounds like worldly sorrow, stop and tactfully explore (e.g. “Tell me more about that.” “What does that look like?” “If you had to make a movie of that, what would be on the screen?”) that definition. If you don’t receive this mistaken definition, ask “How did you formerly define repentance?”
- Have you ever been sorry about something that you’ve done – and yet you still did that same thing again? Have you ever been pulled over for speeding? Did you mention to the officer that you were sorry? What were you most sorry about? Have you broken the speed limit since that incident? Did that sorrow lead to repentance? What kind of sorrow is that?
- What are some other indicators of worldly sorrow? Suggest: damage control, excuse making, minimizing, self pity, self focus, pride, defensiveness, etc. Pick a few of these indicators and ask why they undermine true repentance.
- Do you battle with a chronic sin? How have you exhibited worldly sorrow in this battle? What would happen if you had godly sorrow? We’ll explore godly sorrow that leads to repentance next time - - be sure to come back!

FINAL CHARGE

If you entered this study of repentance with a misconception about sorrow and repentance, then you may be headed toward death rather than toward salvation. Please join our study on godly sorrow that produces repentance. Please don’t base your salvation on a tragic misconception.

GODLY SORROW

2 Corinthians 7:8-11

BIG IDEA

The bible draws a sharp distinction between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. Only godly sorrow leads to repentance. It is marked by earnestness, eagerness to clear yourself, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, readiness to see justice done. It is both powerful and rare.

ICE BREAKER

If this bible talk is a continuation, of the Worldly Sorrow bible talk, no ice breaker is needed. If not a continuation, then ... hold a press conference. Ask for a volunteer to play the role of the politician/athlete/celebrity caught in a sin (you can pick one from the recent headlines or choose one the more infamous ones: steroids in baseball, infidelity in the White House, betting scandal in baseball, rape and adultery charges against a basketball player, prostitute seeking televangelist, paternity suits against politicians, etc.). The volunteer is allowed to recruit two to three others to be his or her speech writers who will help spin this problem in such a way to minimize the damage. Instruct them to craft a “typical” speech delivered in like circumstances. Discuss whether or not the accused displayed sorrow. Did the accused really repent? Discuss other press conferences that you’ve seen over the years – what did they all have in common? At the end of the Godly Sorrow Bible Talk, you will instruct another team to re-enact the press conference, but this time with godly sorrow!

QUESTIONS

- **vv. 8-9...** Why is Paul happy that he caused the Corinthians to sorrow? Can sorrow do harm? How? Why doesn't godly sorrow do harm?
- **v. 10...** What does godly sorrow produce? What does worldly sorrow produce? What's the difference between these two sorrows? Who feels no regret in this passage [A: the person who confronts and convicts the person in sin.]?
- **v. 11...**
 - What is earnestness? How does it indicate repentance?
 - What is eagerness to clear yourselves? How does it indicate repentance?
 - What is indignation? How does it indicate repentance?
 - What is alarm? How does it indicate repentance?
 - What is longing? How does it indicate repentance?
 - What is zeal? How does it indicate repentance?
 - What is readiness to see justice done? How does it indicate repentance?
- Tell me about a time that you exhibited a godly sorrow that produced repentance in you.

FINAL CHARGE

Re-enact the press conference with the response of godly sorrow rather than worldly sorrow. How would the public respond? Would you need to be “caught” in order to call the press conference? Have you ever seen such a press conference? Have you ever really had this sorrow? Decide today to study the bible to learn how to have a godly sorrow that produces real repentance and leads to real salvation.

JESUS' LOVING REPROOF

Revelation 3:14-20

BIG IDEA

Jesus loves us and wants us to repent (especially of lukewarm mediocrity in our commitment to him)... so he gives us a startling wake up call by exposing our sin.

ICE BREAKER

[Ask these questions *before* you open up to the passage] Describe college football fans who are hot for their team. How many games do they attend? What do they wear? What is their behavior during the games? What do they talk about throughout the season – and the off-season? Do they know the teams' statistics, history, schedule, etc.? How thoroughly? Now use this same line of questioning for someone who is cold toward the team. Lastly, ask the same questions of a lukewarm fan. Now shift gears. Ask similar questions for someone who could be described as hot in his or her commitment to Christ. What does their faith/prayer life/bible study/worship/fellowship/repentance/ evangelism/sacrifice/ purity/ holiness/ etc. look like? Ask the same questions of one who is cold toward Jesus. Finally ask the group to describe a lukewarm Christian. Ask which broad category they most resemble. Now open up the Bible to read the passage.

QUESTIONS

- vv. 14-16... How would you respond if Jesus told you today, "I know your deeds?" Why? What does the "faithful and true witness" see when he observes the last three months of your life? Have you seen yourself the same way? Do you have the same attitude toward it that Jesus does? Why would Jesus prefer you to be cold rather than lukewarm? What does he mean when he says that he will spit the lukewarm out of his mouth? Why is it more dangerous and more damaging to be lukewarm rather than cold?
- vv. 17-18... How does the Laodicean Church view itself? How is that different from the way Jesus sees them? Why the difference? How can you have a warped perception of self? What keeps us from realizing our true condition? What's the prescription for complacent Christianity?
- vv. 19... How does Jesus feel about complacent lukewarm Christians? Since he loves us, what does he do for us? Has anyone rebuked you out of love? When was the last time? What were the circumstances? What would have happened if they neglected to rebuke you? What is the rebuke (or *reproof* as in most non-NIV translations) designed to do? How does God help us repent? Can you think of characters in the Bible who repented after a strong reproof? How does God reprove us today? Have you ever allowed God to use you an instrument for a reproof? Why is it important? What's the difference between simple fault-finding a godly reproof? Why is it dangerous to ignore a godly reproof?

FINAL CHARGE

Jesus loves you and wants you to repent; therefore, he is trying to give you a wake up call through the scriptures, through the godly example of committed Christians, and through the loving rebuke of a concerned friend. Don't ignore God's knock on your door. He knows your deeds; he knows what you need.

The Lost Sheep

A Family Devotional Lesson on Repentance
Luke 15:3-7

Big Idea: Shepherds care about sheep – even lost sheep. They make every effort to protect every single one. And they run after the strays with an urgent and longing heart. That’s how God feels about us when we try to run from Him and hide.

Ice Breaker: Play Hide and God Seek. In this version of the classic playground game, you give each of the children (or participating adults) some cotton ball sheep ears. Pick someone to be the shepherd – dress him or her up with a sheet and staff to magnify the effect. Designate one of the children to be the “lost sheep” that strays away and hides. The shepherd counts the remaining sheep only to realize that one has strayed. The shepherd asks the sheep to stay together while he or she runs after the lost sheep. Celebrate every time a lost sheep returns home. Take turns being sheep and the shepherd.

Read the Text: Luke 15:3-7

Questions from the Passage:

- How can a shepherd know that one in a hundred sheep is missing?
- How can God know how each one of us is doing?
- How long will he look for the lost sheep?
- Who does he represent in this story? Who does the sheep represent?
- How long will God search for you?
- What steps will He take to find you?
- What does the shepherd do after she finds the lost sheep? Why?
- How much does he care about the sheep?
- How much does God care about you?
- What does God do after you return to Him?
- How can we give God a reason to throw a party today?
- **Memorize Luke 15:5** while sitting on your parent’s shoulders!

The Lost Coin

A Family Devotional Lesson on Repentance
Luke 15:8-10

Big Idea: It's great to find something valuable that's been lost. That's how God feels about us when we try to run from Him and hide.

Ice Breaker: Hide something valuable in the main room of your home. Pick something special that your children will highly value (toys, candy, trading cards, etc.). Tell the children what's been "lost." Ask them to try to find it (make it a slight challenge to find the item). You can equip them with flashlights to better dramatize the search.

Read the Text: Luke 15:8-10

Questions from the Passage:

- Why isn't the woman satisfied with the nine other coins?
- What steps does she take to find the lost one?
- How long will she look for it?
- Whom does she represent in this story? Whom does the coin represent?
- How long will God search for you?
- What steps will He take to find you?
- What does the woman do after she finds the coin? Why?
- How much does she care about the coin?
- How much does God care about you?
- How does a sinner repent? Can you think of a sin you've done? How can you repent?
- What does God do after you return (i.e. repent) to Him?
- How can we give God a reason to throw a party today?
- Memorize **Luke 15:10** and throw a party with your favorite desserts and dancing to celebrate each person's repentance!

The Lost Son

A Family Devotional Lesson on Repentance *Luke 15:11-24*

Big Idea: No matter how badly we stray away from God the Father, He still loves us and longs for our return to Him.

Ice Breaker: Imagine running away from home. Help one of the younger children pack a suitcase with some clothes, food, and even some money. Send them out into the backyard (be careful with children who are too young to understand that this is only a dramatization). Assign another family member to be an investigative newspaper (or television – in this scenario you could use videotape the interview for even more fun) reporter. Send out the reporter to interview the runaway. Write out the questions that the reporter will ask the runaway son or daughter. For example, what plans does the runaway have for the next few days or weeks? Why is running away from home exciting? Will it be exciting in the rain? In the snow? In the dark of night? How will you eat? Where can you live? What can you buy without money? How long will your money last? What will you do when it's gone? When will you begin to miss your own bed? When will you begin to miss your mommy and daddy, brothers and sisters, neighborhood friends? Do you think that you will go back home? Why?

Read the Text: Luke 15:11-24

Questions from the Passage:

- Why does the father allow the son to take off with his share of the estate?
- How does the son use the money he gains from the estate?
- How does sin destroy the good things in life?
- Are pigs dirty or clean?
- Do they smell good or bad?
- What's so bad about taking care of pigs?
- When does the son's life change? How does it change?
- Why should he go back home?
- How do we run away from God?
- Why should we go back to Him?
- Was it hard for the son to go back to his father?
- Will it be hard for us to go back to God?
- What does God do when we go back home to Him?
- What should you always remember in case you stray from God?
- **Memorize Luke 15:20** so that you always remember to return to God!

The Fruit of Repentance

A Family Devotional Lesson on Repentance

Luke 3:7-14

Big Idea: When we change our heart, we change our behavior. And just as you know that your heart has changed by your changed behavior, so you know a tree by its fruit.

Ice Breaker: Have two drawings of trees ready for the devo. Ask your children to take turns drawing and coloring “bad apples” on the first tree. Discuss what kind of tree produces “bad apples.” Now take turns drawing and coloring good apples on the second tree. Likewise discuss the attributes of good tree that produces good apples. How can a tree that produces bad apples begin to produce good apples (this may take some explaining from mom and dad)? How will you know when a bad apple tree has become a good apple tree? How can a boy or girl who produces bad behavior begin to produce good behavior? How do we know when someone has changed their heart?

Read the Text: Luke 15:7-14

Questions from the Passage:

- **vv. 7-9**...What does it mean to bear fruit that proves your repentance?
- When you repent, who will your brother/sister/mom/dad/teacher/friend know?
- Do you sometimes think that you’ve changed your heart - but your actions don’t show it?
- In Israel, to say “we have Abraham as a father” is like us saying “we belong to a great church” today. But going to a great church isn’t the same thing as having a good heart. Did some of the “children of Abraham” have bad hearts? Can some of us have bad hearts even though we go to a great church?
- **vv. 10-14**... How will each person change his mind and heart to produce the good fruit of: sharing clothes and food, honest tax collection, and stopping lies?
- If John the Baptist were with us right now, and we each also asked him, “What should we do?” What would be the one thing that John would tell us to start doing and the one thing we should stop doing? How can we each make that change?
- Memorize **Luke 15:8** to remember that behavior change begins first with a changed mind and heart.

MATT. 3:1-6; LUKE 3:7-14. *FRUIT OF REPENTANCE*

I. CONFESSION OF SINS (MATT. 3:1-6)

A. *Confession doesn't equal Repentance*

1. Misconceptions of worldly sorrow for repentance.
2. Metanoia vs. Paenitentiam Agite

B. *Homologia* –

1. In the New Testament, homologia, the Greek word which we translate “confession,” literally means “same” (from homo) “word” or “reasoning” (from logos). It’s a statement that reveals our same-mindedness with Christ in our rejection of sin. Confession, then, expresses our metanoia as we shift from the mind of flesh and – reason with the mind of Christ.
2. Proverbs 28:13

C. *Confession is to both God and Man*

1. 1 John 1:5-10; James 5:16
2. Real reasons why we want to confess only to God.
3. Value in confessing to both God and men.

II. THE ROOT VERSUS THE FRUIT OF REPENTANCE (MATT. 3:7-10)

A. *“About Face” Fallacy*

1. Metanoia was never a Roman military command. “About face” is the ultimate mindless obedience.
2. Obedience is great; but don’t shortcut the change of heart and mind that produces the behavior change.

B. *“There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to the one who is striking at the root.” Henry David Thoreau*

1. John makes a distinction between Metanoia and its fruit. Change the mind and heart to change the behavior. Don’t disciple your behavior, but disciple your heart and mindset. Disciple your brother’s heart and mindset, too. We do it for our children (do we want better behavior or better hearts in our kids?).
2. We know, for example, to “flee sexual immorality” – but how? Don’t just say, “Stop doing it.” Help one another to see the mindset that produces the behavior. Expose the wrong thinking. Re write the mental programs that promotes sin and self.

C. *Good Roots Always Produce Good Fruit*

1. Don’t get “religious” like those who “Abraham as a father.” Instead, show me the fruit!
2. God can look at the heart, but can I? Has my heart changed? How do I know? Show me the fruit!

III. REPENTANCE BRINGS REVIVAL (FINISH THE STORY IN LK 3:10-14)

A. *What is the metanoia that produces the fruit of sharing food and clothing or working honestly (v. 10-14)? Describe the mind change that produces the conduct change. (BTW, if John the Baptist were here with us today, what ONE thing would he tell you to stop and what ONE thing would he tell you to start? What's the metanoia that produces the fruit of each for you? Write it down!)*

B. *What happens in a family when one of its members repents? And when an entire family repents? (Share inspiring examples)*

C. *What happens in a church when an entire family group repents? And when an entire church repents? (Share inspiring examples)*

D. *What happens in a community when people begin to share with one another (v. 11)? And when institutions begin to operate fairly and honestly (v. 13-14)? – It's called Revival!!! And we can spark it!*

1. Imagine the inner city, the new use of discretionary income in the suburbs, the aid to the needy, the open doors for the gospel, the way people dressed, the way they talked, the shows that the local cable company would offer, the new selection at the local Blockbuster and theatres, and so on...Paint the picture!
2. Examples of Revival in US (Great Awakenings)
3. Example from 100 years ago in Wales.

In 1904, a small group of students sparked a revival in Wales. What began as a prayer meeting quickly spread throughout their country and the world. Welsh churches reported an increase of over 100,000 members (10% of the nation's entire population) during the years of 1904 and 1905; the Bible Society saw orders for Bibles *triple* in Wales; Welsh coal mines reported dramatic improvements in productivity (the only problem was that the work horses were conditioned to obey foul language); Welsh pubs suffered record losses; Welsh judges enjoyed lighter dockets. The *London Times* observed, "The whole population had been suddenly stirred by a common impulse. Religion had become the absorbing interest of their lives. They had gathered at crowded services for six and eight hours at a time. Political meetings and even football matches were postponed...quarrels between trade-union workmen and non-unionists had been made up."¹ Even David Lloyd-George, the future Prime Minister of England, saw his campaign rally taken over by revival.

The Welsh Revival of 1904 began as Christians decided to

- Confess all sin
- Reject and remove all "doubtful" practices from their lives
- Immediately obey the Spirit and his word
- Publicly proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior

Many seek revival for their society and repentance for their church. Few are willing to surrender to its selfless demands. The Spirit will use those who do...to revive fellowships, reform societies and rewrite history.

CLOSING CHARGE FOR PERSONAL REPENTANCE, CHURCHWIDE REPENTANCE, AND COMMUNITY REVIVAL!!!

LUKE 13:1-9. *REPENT OR PERISH*

I. IT'S NOT ABOUT HOW YOU DIE (LUKE 13:1-2, 4)

A. *We're All Going to Die – How Doesn't Indicate Our Eternal Fate*

1. Fall of Man requires that we all die.
2. We're all mortal – but also spiritually immortal

B. *World Trade Center, Indian Ocean Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina*

1. Discuss Theodicy.

II. IT'S ABOUT HOW YOU LIVE (LUKE 13:3, 5)

A. *What does repent mean? Metanoia. No longer live for self but for Christ. Preach a strong a call for Biblical Repentance!!!*

B. *What does “perish” mean? See 2 Peter 3:9.*

If we don't repent, we will perish. If we're not back with God, we are separated from him. Clear enough? Maybe too clear for some, for the clarity of Jesus' statement corners our generation of easy-believers. So what's their escape? They make it unclear. They claim that “perish” doesn't really mean perish—perhaps it merely connotes physical consequences rather than spiritual consequences. Likewise, when Peter pleads with seekers to “repent” and “save themselves from this corrupt generation,”³³ they claim that this salvation is only present-day relief from the generation around you. When Peter, in his second epistle, proclaims, “He [The Lord] is patient toward you, not wanting anyone to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance,” they appeal to their earlier argument that “perish” is only physical in nature, *despite the context of the Second Coming and eternal judgment*. Whew...that's a sure way to test God's patience. “The people of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented when Jonah preached to them—and now, something greater than Jonah is here!” (Luke 11:32 NET).

III. HOW DO YOU KNOW HOW YOU'VE LIVED? (LUKE 13:6-9)

A. *Bear the Fruit of repentance!*

Given the necessity of repentance, one wants to be sure of his repentance. Jesus again offers clarity. We are not tasked with analyzing our mental orientation. That only produces insecurity (“Now did my mind really cosmically shift or do I just think that I think differently about the way I think?”) and weirdness. Instead, Jesus—like John before him and the Apostles after him—comes from the position that repentance always produces fruit. So how can we have security about our repentance and about our salvation? Look at the fruit. Jesus knows my heart, but do I? Heart, schmeart, it's a good day for me to just recognize my fruit! Before you argue this point, consider God's grace to us in keeping it simple: On the night of the Passover, God commanded the Israelites in Egypt to smear lamb's blood on their front doorposts. He promised that the Angel of Death would come that night and look at their *doors*. He sees blood and he passes over your house. No blood, and he takes the life of your firstborn

child. Of course, God sees their hearts, but he tells them that he'll be looking at the front door. Let's imagine that my family and I are there in Egypt that night. If I know that God's looking for blood around the door, then I smear blood around the door. Do I ever. My family and I then sit down for our Passover meal in peaceful anticipation of God's deliverance. What if God, instead, commanded me to get my heart right in preparation of the Passover? The Angel of Death would then pass over the homes of the goodhearted. Sounds spiritual, but what would that evening look like for my family? I imagine that I would be half-panicked and half-screaming to God for a good heart all through the Passover meal. At least the family would be extra, extra nice to me. Zach, our firstborn, would make sure of that. But he would also be eyeing me very suspiciously for any hints of an unacceptable heart. Instead of peace and celebration, the best we could hope for is perseverance and relief.

It's actually an act of grace by Jesus to recognize our repentance and our faith by its fruit. Fruit is simple, clear and secure.

IV. CLOSING CHARGE - “*REPENT!*” IS THE GOOD NEWS! THERE’S NO NEED TO PERISH WHEN WE CAN INSTEAD SURRENDER OURSELVES TO JESUS’ BOUNTIFUL FRUIT OF REPENTANCE.

LUKE 15:11-31. CELEBRATE REPENTANCE!

I. THE BEFORE PICTURE (LUKE 15:11-16)

A. Entitlement

1. Killer of gratitude
2. Always wants more, never satisfied

B. Running Away is no Solution

C. God will humble us until we repent

D. Side note – imagine how encouraged and approving the Pharisees (v. 1-2) have become at this stage of the story.

V. COME TO YOUR SENSES (LUKE 15:17-20)

A. Huge Turning Point – He “came to himself”

Jesus begins to paint a vivid picture of *metanoia*, and he does it with a unique perspective—from *inside* the younger son’s head! We can learn exactly what happens when he shifts from one paradigm to another.

First, the younger son comes to his senses or comes to himself. “This sounds like a “Nebuchadnezzar moment.” After total humiliation, he “*lifted [his] eyes to heaven, and [his] reason returned to [him], and [he] blessed th Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures form generation to generation*” (Daniel 4:34 NIV). At a more trivial level, perhaps you’ve encountered a similar phenomenon during struggles with math equations, foreign language declensions, computer cables, or toys with “some assembly required.” Do you remember the frustration of not seeing a path for the solution—and then suddenly—POW!—the solution became clear? The data didn’t change, but your brain did—suddenly. You wondered how that happened. It seemed “outside” of you. Perhaps this is the same phenomenon, but on the grandest scale possible. Thomas Kuhn (the guy who popularized the idea of a “paradigm shift” describes a similar phenomenon saying, “Like a gestalt switch, [the conversion that we call a paradigm shift] must occur all at once (though not necessarily in an instant) or not at all.”

Second, through the new paradigm (new worldview/kingdomview or new rules to the game of life), the younger son objectively sees both himself and his father. He perceives and reasons that he’s separated from a relationship with his father. He’s able to see his hideous sin and its effects. Notice that the realization of sin and separation doesn’t produce grief as much as it does eagerness and earnest resolve. Paul calls this “godly sorrow,” and it often accompanies or surrounds *metanoia*.

Third, the younger son turns or *returns (epistrepho)* to his father. A reoriented heart cannot help but produce a reoriented life.

Fourth, he proves his repentance by his deeds. The son remains with the father, joyfully serving his household. He remains *metanoid*. He throws out the old bottle of blue pills (Matrix Movie reference).

VI. SO THEY BEGAN TO CELEBRATE! (LUKE 15:20B-24)

A. The Watchful Father

All the while, the father was searching and watching for the son's return—in a manner similar to that described of both the shepherd and the woman. Upon his son's return (which was precipitated by repentance), the entire household celebrates.

B. The Searching Shepherd and the Diligent Woman

God is running through the fields for you. And when he finally tracks you down...he lovingly places you on his shoulders, laughing in pure delight over your repentance and return. Your repentance also sends a wave of joy through heaven itself. What is the downside to repentance? How did repentance ever get bad press?

God is crawling on his hands and knees throughout the house for you. Even if you're in the place of seemingly no return—the place of missing socks, God will find you. And when he does, your return will be celebrated by a block party—attended by all the angels.

VII. CLOSING CHARGE - “*REPENT!*” AND SET OFF A CELEBRATION IN HEAVEN.

LUKE 16:19-31. *THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS*

I. WE'RE ALL GONNA **GET IT!** (LUKE 16:19-26)

A. *Judgment Happens to Everyone*

1. Review judgment scriptures
2. Underscore the reality of ALL being resurrected to eternal life and eternal torment; all appear before the judgment seat.

B. *There is a Heaven*

C. *There is a Hell*

D. *Why is Lazarus in paradise while the rich man is in hades?*

It's not just because one is poor and the other is rich. One repented and the other didn't (v. 30). Perhaps the most damning evidence of the rich man's lack of repentance is found in v. 24: He calls Lazarus by name. He knew him well enough to know his name yet he did nothing for him. Not that he did wrong, but he nothing. It's not always that we do wrong, but we do nothing. Call out complacency in Christianity.

II. NOW HE **GETS IT!** (LUKE 16:23)

E. *He Looked Up*

Same phrase is used to describe "seeing again." His eyes were opened... METANOIA (describe it). There is a heaven and a hell. There is a spiritual realm as well as an earthly realm. There is a kingdom of God and an earthly existence.

F. *The Red Pill*

Using a pop-culture illustration, this earthly realm of existence might be equated with the Matrix from the movie of the same name. The movie features a red pill and a blue pill. Morpheus, a prophet, explains the powerful properties of each pill to Neo, the anointed one.

Morpheus, holding a red pill and a blue pill, asks Neo, "The Matrix...do you want to know what it is, Neo? It's that feeling you have had all your life. That feeling that something was wrong with the world. You don't know what it is but it's there, like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad, driving you to me. But what is it? The Matrix is everywhere, it's all around us, here even in this room. You can see it out your window, or on your television. You feel it when you go to work, or go to church or pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth...that you are a slave, Neo. That you, like everyone else, was born into bondage...kept inside a prison that you cannot smell, taste or touch. A prison for your mind. Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself.

Neo asks, "How?"

Morpheus explains, "Hold out your hands. This is your last chance. After this, there is no going back. You take the blue pill and the story ends. You wake in your bed and you believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill and...remember that all I am offering is the truth. Nothing more." After Neo chooses the red pill, Morpheus drops it into his hand.

Neo opens his mouth and swallows the red pill.

Smiling, Morpheus says, "Follow me."

The "red pill" of *metanoia* liberates us from the blindness that prevented our entry into the kingdom of God. The "blue pill" of a darkened mind¹² offers only an illusory peace. The Rich Man lived only for the illusion of this present age.

III. NOW HELP THEM TO **GET IT!** (LUKE 16:27-31)

A. *First response of a repentant heart and mind: Evangelism*

Read Psalm 51:12-15; also 2 Corinthians 5:14-20. Discuss how true repentance is evidenced through evangelism. It's not social reformation. All other changes might be mere prudence or cognitive dissonance – but not evangelism. (see pp. 139-141 of *REPENTANCE*)

B. *I've got five brothers!!! Who has God placed in your life?*

C. *God "grants repentance" (Acts 5:30-31; 11:17-18) HOW? Not necessarily by signs and wonders but by His Word: see v. 29-31). Do you respond to the Word? Are you in the Word? Use the Word! It holds the power of repentance (additional idea: discuss the idea "elencho" see chapter 10 of *REPENTANCE* for a discussion of how conviction/reproof/exposure precipitates repentance.) Preach the Word!!!*

FINAL CHARGE: It's an irony that what the rich man's five brothers cannot have, you do have: a message from beyond the grave. What's the message – Repent! Repent and live eternally in comfort and bliss.