



IRRECONCILABLE!

Lesson 6
The Law and Repentance

“Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.” (Mark 7:15).

Setting the Stage

🌀 What Does Repentance Look Like?

Setup:

- Divide into small groups.
- Read the “Statements about Repentance” listed below.
- Put a “” by those that describe **True Repentance**
Put an “**X**” by those that are a **Misunderstanding of Repentance**.

Statements about Repentance:

- ___ 1. Repentance means being sorry for sin and trusting Jesus for forgiveness.
- ___ 2. Repentance is a good work I do to earn God’s favor.
- ___ 3. Repentance is just feeling bad about getting caught.
- ___ 4. Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Christ.
- ___ 5. Repentance is promising God I’ll never sin again.
- ___ 6. Repentance is worked in me when God’s Word shows me my sin and gives me faith in Christ.

Debrief:

- *Why do people so often confuse repentance with a work we do?*
- *Pharisees made repentance part of their obedience. Jesus shows it’s a matter of the heart, not just outward actions.*

Core Exploration:

Repentance: Our Work or God’s Work?

🔍 IN-CLASS EXPLORATION (35 min)

Split into four groups. Each group explores a cluster of questions and prepares reports back to the larger class (choose a “secretary” and a “spokes-person”).

- ◇ Group 1: *What Defiles a Person?*
- ◇ **Read Mark 7:15; Matthew 15:7-9, 20**

What kind of “repentance” did the Pharisees demand of people who broke the rituals?

Why does Jesus use the imagery of what goes into a person vs. what comes out?

How might we also fall into the trap of “outside-in” repentance?

Takeaway: *True repentance isn’t about cleaning the outside—it’s about God’s Word cutting to the heart (Hebrews 4:12).*

◇ Group 2: *Does God Overlook Sin?*

◇ Read Romans 3:23-24; Romans 6:23; Romans 8:7-8; Isaiah 53:5

What is the real consequence of every sin?

Did the Pharisees believe their sins were that serious? Why or why not?

What does Isaiah 53:5 teach us about how God actually deals with sin?

Why is “the great exchange” (our sin to Christ, his righteousness to us) better than the Pharisee model of repentance?

Takeaway: *God doesn't overlook sin—he removes it by placing it on Christ.*

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- ◇ Group 3: *Why Didn't the Pharisees See a Need for Jesus?*
 - ◇ Read **John 8:31-47; Matthew 9:12-13**

Why did the Pharisees insist they were not “slaves to sin”?

How does Jesus' picture of a “doctor” in Matthew 9 apply to repentance?

What kinds of “false saviors” or “self-medicines” do people today rely on instead of Jesus?

How do we make sure our own repentance keeps us running to Jesus rather than to ourselves?

Takeaway: *If you don't admit you're sick, you won't go to the doctor. True repentance always drives us to Christ the healer.*

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- ◇ Group 4: *What Is True Repentance?*
 - ◇ Read Mark 1:15; Luke 24:47; Acts 20:21

What two parts make up true repentance (let's assume that "a desire to amend sinful ways" is a "third" part in some definitions)?

Why is it important that both parts are always together?

How do these verses show that repentance is something God gives, not something we manufacture?

How does repentance bear fruit in daily life? (Think of Luther's 95 Theses, #1: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.")

Takeaway: *Repentance isn't a work we bring to God—it's God's work in us through his Word, producing both sorrow over sin and trust in Jesus.*

Group Share

What was one key insight about repentance you gained from your discussion? _____

How did the passage(s) correct common misunderstandings about repentance? _____

Wrap-Up

Repentance—Not Our Work, But God’s Gift

The Pharisees saw repentance as a **step in their obedience**—a way to reset themselves and try harder. They minimized sin, thinking God would overlook their failures if they repented properly. But Scripture is clear:

- **Sin is deeper than our actions.** It comes from the heart (Mark 7:15).
- **Sin cannot be overlooked.** “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).
- **We cannot save ourselves.** “Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8).

True repentance is not something we perform to impress God—it is **something God works in us** through his Law and Gospel:

1. **The Law** shows us our sin and breaks our pride (Romans 3:20).
2. **The Gospel** heals our hearts by pointing us to Christ’s finished work (Acts 20:21).
3. **The Spirit** produces in us a new mind and a new life of daily repentance (Romans 6:4).

Gospel Comfort

- We don’t come to God with our repentance as a gift for him—**we come empty-handed**. God himself gives us repentance and forgiveness through Christ: “*God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.*” (Acts 5:31)
 - That’s the difference between Pharisaic religion and Christianity: one says, “*Repent so you can earn God’s favor,*” while the other says, “*God grants repentance because Christ has already earned your salvation.*”
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Key Takeaway for the Class

- **Pharisaic repentance:** outward, self-focused, and uncertain.
- **Christian repentance:** inward, Spirit-given, and certain—because it rests not on us, but on Christ.



At-Home Activities

1. Repentance Reframed (Creative)

Write or illustrate a “before and after” picture of repentance:

- Before: Pharisee-style, focusing on rules and self-improvement.
- After: Gospel-style, showing sorrow for sin and trust in Christ.

2. Rewrite the Phrase (Application)

Take the statement “*Repentance is what you bring to God*” and rewrite it in a Gospel-centered way.

Example: “*Repentance is what God works in your heart through his Word.*”

3. Personal Reflection (Devotional)

Journal or share with a trusted friend:

- What sin is hardest for you to acknowledge?
- How does God’s Word convict you of it?
- How does the gospel comfort you with Christ’s forgiveness?