

What is the relationship between repentance and faith?

When you come to faith, do you need to repent anymore? Does repentance affect our spiritual growth?

1. Jesus' description of a future of judgment begins with the letters to the seven churches. Carefully observe what Jesus says to the Church in Laodicea in the context of repentance. Is Jesus speaking to Believers?

I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. (Rev 3:15-19, ESV)

2. What is spiritual discipline? Observe the apostle Paul's letters to the church of Corinth and to his protege Timothy. How does repentance involved?

For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. (2 Cor 7:8-10, ESV)

For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced. (2 Cor 12:20-21, ESV)

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Tim 2:22-26, ESV)

3. In Paul's statement, directed towards Believers, what do you observe about the character of God and repentance?

Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? (Rom 2:3-4, ESV)

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Teacher Notes

When you come to faith, do you need to repent anymore? Does repentance affect our spiritual growth?

Encourage the student to grapple with the above questions. Does the student agree or disagree? Flesh out his thoughts and objections.

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Encourage the student to circle or underline his observations – mark up the text! What were the shortcomings of these Believers?

Then, like today, the pursuit of wealth supplanted their pursuit of holiness!

Ask the student: what is Jesus Christ associating repentance with? What must the church change their mind on? What do you observe of the figures of speech?

“Buy from Me gold refined by fire.” Change your mind: rather than spending time investing in yourself, invest in Me!

“Salve to anoint your eyes.” Change your mind: rather than spending time seeing what the world values, read God’s word and see what He values!

Change your mind on what you should be zealous / passionate about!

2. What is spiritual discipline? Observe the apostle Paul’s letters to the church of Corinth and to his protege Timothy. How does repentance involved?

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Ask the student: circle all the sinful behavior that the apostle Paul points out. How difficult is it to stop doing these things?

Ask the student: what caused the church of Corinth to grieve?

Paul's letter caused the church to grieve, because he pointed out their sinful behavior. Remember - all of the above passages are excerpts from Paul's letters, which is God's word!

The Bible, God's word, tells us how to be holy. Each time you read the Bible, you either learn or are reminded of what sinful behavior is and what holy behavior should be.

Ask the student: in light of sinful behavior, what is the apostle Paul advocating?

Resolve your guilt by changing your mind about your moral values. Repent to God and change how you should behave. Through God's word, you will acquire knowledge of the truth, be discerning, and avoid temptation!

When you don't read God's word, you won't learn knowledge of the truth and will forget God's moral values and regress in your thoughts and behavior. Genuine repentance recognizes what you did, who you offended, and what changes you made to remedy the problem. If you keep repeating the sinful behavior, then your repentance isn't genuine. The process of becoming holy as God is holy takes a lifetime, and repentance is part of our spiritual growth.

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Ask the student: does God want you to repent?

Yes! God knows you have much to learn, and it takes time to learn that your ways are not God's ways. In a loving relationship, repentance is how we recognize our error and let our Father know that we have learned from it!