



Week Two: Repentant

*He who conceals his sins does not prosper,
but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

Proverbs 28:13

Day 8: Introduction to Week 2

I was wrong. I have sinned. I am sorry. Please forgive me.

Those might be some of the most difficult sentences for us to say, but as we will see this week, they can be some of the most needed for breakthroughs.

Repentant prayer is, at a minimum, what is classically called “the sinner’s prayer.” We acknowledge before God that we have sinned against Him and ask for forgiveness.

Contrary to what some people may believe, this is not simply a one-time confession when we initially ask Christ for forgiveness and become a Christian. Instead, this is an ongoing, necessary practice in the life of every faithful Christian.

Because God loves us, repentant prayer is necessary to move forward with Him whether we have been a Christian for five minutes or fifty-five years. He cares too much for us to lead us into deeper spiritual depths when we continue to ignore glaring sin in our lives.

Once we can admit our problem and ask for forgiveness, the sin no longer stands in the way between us and where God wants to lead us. Of course, even with repentant prayer, breakthrough may not immediately arrive. But we know for sure that without repentant prayer, breakthrough will certainly never arrive.

This week, prepare to face and own up to your shortcomings. Allow God to probe deep into your heart to uncover both your obvious and your not so obvious sin. Don’t fear this. It is the loving work of a God who wants you to move forward. With repentant prayer, you’ll find that you have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Group Video Discussion

Watch Video 2 Repentant

Your notes:

1. **Before** praying repentantly...

If we avoid confession, it leads to _____

2. **After** praying repentantly...

We experience _____ and _____

3. God will _____, _____, and _____ us in the way we should go

Questions for Group Discussion

1. What is your experience with repenting? Is it difficult for you? How often do you find yourself repenting?
2. Do you tend to put any qualifiers on your repentance such as, “Yes, I was wrong, but only because,” or, “I wouldn’t have if he hadn’t...”
3. During the seasons of your life when you were avoiding repentance, how did it feel to have something covered up?
4. What are the typical ways in which you try to “hide” when you have shame?
5. How has it felt to confess in the past?
6. What makes repentance easier?
7. What are the benefits of repenting that you have experienced? What are the costs that you have found if you don’t repent?

Personal Daily Devotions

Day 9

Repentant Prayer is a Gift, Granted by God

“God exalted Him (Christ) to His own right hand as Prince and Savior that He might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.”

Acts 5:31

“So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance onto life.”

Acts 11:17-18

“Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”

2 Timothy 2:23-26

In yesterday’s introduction, we said that without repentant prayer, breakthrough will be impossible. Today, we ask the question, “What if you are in a season when you know you are pursuing sin, but you are not convicted enough to genuinely ask for forgiveness and turn from that sin?”

In other words, what can you do when you have no desire to stop sinning in a particular area?

You can ask God to grant you repentance.

If you want a relationship with God, but you want a relationship with a particular sin even more, you can ask God to grant you repentance. If you know in your head what you are doing is wrong, but you don’t know it in your heart and have no motivation to turn from it, you can ask God to grant you repentance.

Even if you aren’t currently consciously running from God, there are always some areas of our hearts, perhaps unknown to us, that desire something more than God. Ask God to reveal these areas to you and grant you repentance.

Where would you place yourself right now? Is your heart broken in all of the same ways that God’s is? Are there aspects of your life that you know are out of line with God’s commands yet you aren’t bothered enough to stop sinning?

If so, pray “Lord bring me to repentance. Show me the depth of my errors. Help me to grieve as You do when I reject You or Your ways, and then help me turn from them.”

Your Personal Reflection and Application

When have you typically felt remorse for your sinful actions? When have you known that you were behaving sinfully yet felt no remorse?

What has helped move you toward remorse for your sinful actions in the past? Have you ever asked God to grant you repentance?

Day 10

Repentant Prayer is Humble

“If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

2 Chronicles 7:14

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

1 Peter 5:5

Though we may try, with God we can never barter. With God, we can never demand. With God, we never have the upper hand. With God, we come as undeserving beggars, or we do not come at all. There is no other choice.

Our ways have been wicked, and even our righteousness is tainted with sin (Isaiah 64:6) so that we cannot stand before God on our own merits. We stand before Him only by depending on His mercy and the status He has given us through Christ.

In other words, we approach Him in prayer with a humble attitude. We approach Him repentantly. We know the only reason He will listen to us is because of His grace toward us -- not because we have earned a right to ask anything of Him.

Is this how you begin your prayers? Are you typically in line with the Lord's Prayer which reads, *“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us”*? Do you take time to repent by kneeling in wonder that God will hear your prayers?

Or do you perhaps believe that God owes you because of what you have done for Him? Or can you sometimes feel as though God has given you a raw deal? That He has given others more than He has given you, and it's not fair?

If so, pride has clouded you from seeing your true position before God, and you need repentant prayer. God does not take orders. He only takes requests. There is no other way.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

When was the last time you prayed with an awareness that God was listening purely as an act of His grace?

What demands do you find yourself making of God?

Day 11

Repentant Prayer is Corporate

"I am too ashamed and disgraced, my God, to lift up my face to You, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens."

Ezra 9:6 (read 9:6-15)

"Now, Lord our God, Who brought Your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and Who made for Yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong."

Daniel 9:15 (read 9:4-19)

Ezra and Daniel were not only grieved over their own wrongdoing, they were grieved that the corporate body, of which they were a part, had disobeyed God. There is no evidence to suggest that either Ezra or Daniel were directly involved in the sins which the body at large had committed, and yet they included themselves in the guilt of the group and asked for forgiveness. *"We have sinned"* and *"our sins are higher than our heads."*

Have you prayed like this? When you see wrongdoing in our country, our state, or our church, do you pray "God forgive us because we have sinned," or do you excuse yourself of guilt because you believe only the "others" who were directly involved are responsible?

Notice that neither Ezra nor Daniel pray "Lord, please forgive them for not being as wise and holy as me." Instead, they take the full measure of guilt incurred and declare themselves equally liable.

Ezra and Daniel show us that since we are all part of the same body, we cannot as a hand (for example) claim that the foot was at fault while exempting ourselves. If one part of the body is sinful, all parts of the body are sinful.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

What are the glaringly obvious sins you see in the church? Do you tend to think “I wish they wouldn’t do that?” Or do you think “I wish we wouldn’t do that?”

How would taking responsibility for the sinful actions of the group influence how you pray for the church and how you work toward change in the group?

Day 12

Repentant Prayer is Sorrowful & Leads to Salvation

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done.”

2 Corinthians 7:10-11

If our prayers are repentant, our emotions will be involved and can be a helpful self-check as we evaluate if we are praying repentantly or not. If we offer up a simple “Sorry, God,” without much contrition in our souls, we haven’t really prayed repentantly. At the same time, if our prayers sound something like “If only I hadn’t done that, everything would still be okay. But now, it’s all ruined,” we might be praying with worldly sorrow instead of repentance.

In a truly repentant prayer, we will feel indignation and alarm over our sin, which leads to both thanking God for the gift of salvation and a longing to set right what we have wounded.

In the old prayer books, confession of sin was always followed by praises for forgiveness, meaning that if we look at our sin and don’t feel grateful for salvation, we’ve probably missed something.

At the same time, if looking at our sin doesn’t provoke us to seek ways to restore what we have broken, we will also know that we missed repentant prayer.

As you pray over your sin, what emotions do you typically feel? Only regret or shame? If so, pray today that God would grant you eyes to see the depth of your salvation that you may praise Him for the forgiveness He has given you. Also pray that God would give you concern and longing to mend what your sin has torn apart.

It is entirely possible two of the breakthroughs God wants for you are (1) freeing you from the weight of worldly sorrow and regret and (2) moving you to action to repair the damage your sin has caused in your life and the lives of others.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

Do you typically pray with worldly sorrow that leads to regret, or with godly sorrow that leads to repentance and salvation?

What are the influences that make you experience one versus the other?

Day 13

Repentant Prayer Requires Others

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

James 5:16

James shows us that repentant prayer cannot be completed alone. We will actually need another person to help us, and that person must know the sin that is truly happening in our lives.

For most of us, confessing our sins to another person and having that person pray for us will be the most difficult step in repentant prayer. Commonly, it seems easier to talk about our sin to God than it does to confess it to other people.

But confess it to others we must if we want to follow God’s design for repentant prayer.

We might wonder, why would God want us to go through this excruciating step? Why isn’t He satisfied with our private repentant prayer?

Because He wants us to be healed, James tells us. Healing comes through sharing our struggle with others and having them pray for us. While forgiveness comes through confessing to God and faith in Christ, healing seems to require other people and their prayers. Breakthrough may not come another way.

Is there a current or past sin you haven’t confessed to anyone else? Can you see ways in which you have been or are still wounded by that sin? Do you perhaps carry around guilt for it? Did that sin begin a series of other bad decisions whose consequences are still felt in your life today?

We don’t know what breakthrough God could bring in our lives through repentant prayer, and we won’t know unless we confess to others and ask them to pray over us.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

Is confessing your sin to other people and having them pray over you a regular part of your life? If not, list the names of some people to whom you would be willing to confess. Pray over this list and seek God's leading to help you identify who might become that person for you.

What healing have you experienced from confessing your sin to another person and having that person pray for you?

Day 14

Application Day: Your Next Steps in Repentance

We have talked extensively about the importance of repentant prayer. Hopefully, after five days of devotions and prayer around the topic, God has moved in your heart. Now it is time to act.

Has God brought any personal, ongoing sin to your attention this week?

What pride have you discovered in your prayers? In what ways do you presume God owes you something?

What are the sins of your family, small group, church, city, and nation? Are you ready to stand before God and share the guilt of your community?

What previously concealed sin is God showing you to confess to someone else in order for that person to pray for you?

Have you identified a person to whom you can transparently confess your sin and ask for prayer?

The next step is to confess to that person your previously unrevealed sin. This could mean confessing a sin for which you only recently felt conviction. Or confessing inappropriate attitudes when you pray. Or confessing a past or present sin you have never shared with anyone.

After meeting with that person, record some of your thoughts below:

How did you feel about contacting the person? Scared? Excited? Nervous?

As you confessed to the person, what were some of your thoughts and feelings? When you admitted that you needed prayer, were you filled with humility? When the person saw you for who you really are, were you filled with godly sorrow that led you to gratefulness for salvation or were you filled with worldly sorrow that led to shame and regret?

After you confessed and the person prayed for you, how did you feel? What are some of your new thoughts on the practice of confession, repentance, and prayer for one another?

If the person you chose did not clearly state the Gospel in their prayer as a response to your confession, hear it now and make this your prayer:

*God accepts me. I might sometimes feel like
no one can accept me because of what I've done,
but that's not true. Jesus paid the price for my sin.
I am clean. I am loved. I am welcomed into His
heavenly arms, and He will never let me go. I am free.*