

LOVE THE LORD



Lesson Eleven - What is the point of repentance?

August 2023

Summary of key points

- Jesus paid a high price to make repentance and forgiveness of our sins possible.
- Repentance is not about behaviour modification, it is about a change of heart.
- The Holy Spirit cleanses our hearts as we repent. We can literally feel a difference inside us afterwards. We experience spiritual refreshment (with descriptions).
- We also experience more of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
- Unrepentant sins feel burdensome (with descriptions) and leaves areas in our lives open to Satan and evil spirits.
- God calls us to repent of our sins so that we can experience more of His abundant life. He's not interested in punishing us, He wants to save us.
- We need to be careful not to harden our hearts against God.

Watch the lesson online

<https://youtu.be/-SehETcU4rw>

Transcript

Welcome to lesson 11 of Love the Lord where we look at the common misconceptions about repentance and the true power of repenting.

Let us begin by inviting God to speak to us personally through this study. Please follow along as we pray together. Click pause at any point if you need more time.

First, let's thank God for His perfect character and will for us.

Next, please tell Him about the things that have been stressful and ask for His help and guidance.

Let us put our burdens of sin. Confess the ways we have sinned against God and against others, and ask for His forgiveness.

Please confess the ways others have sinned against us, and forgive them in Jesus' name.

Next, let us ask God to purify and open our hearts to receive His teaching.

Finally, please repeat these words, “In Jesus’ name, I silence all distractions and voices that are not from God. Amen.”

Let's begin the lesson for today. What is the point of repentance?

When Jesus began His public ministry, He went around calling on and teaching people to repent of their sins and turn to God.

Matthew 4:17 From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” (NLT)

In fact, He was willing to suffer terribly on the cross so that the message of repentance could be preached in His name to all the nations.

Luke 24:46-47 ... “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations... (ESV)

We may sometimes assume that repentance applies only to other people because they are worse sinners than we are, but God’s Word emphatically states that “unless we repent of our sins and turn to God, we will perish too.”

Luke 13:2-3 “Do you think those Galileans were worse sinners than all the other people from Galilee?” Jesus asked. “Is that why they suffered? Not at all! And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God. (NLT)

To repent is to make a 180° turn; to be so conscience-stricken that we choose not to do the same thing again. In fact, we will actively avoid any association with it in the future. However, true repentance is not just a modification in our behaviour, but also a radical change of heart.

Repentance isn’t about how well we perform in doing good things and looking good in front of others, it is about how the Holy Spirit cleanses our heart and sets us free from the power of sin.

Acts 15:8-9 God knows people’s hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith. (NLT)

The more our hearts are cleansed, the more we will experience the presence and power of God's Spirit inside us. We will also begin to display the good fruit of the Holy Spirit that He produces in us as a result of our change of heart.

Matthew 3:8 Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. (ESV)

After praying and repenting of our sins in Jesus' name, we will find that we exude more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control than before. These are the fruits of the Holy Spirit and it is something that He produces in us as our hearts are purified and made new by Him, because only God Himself can produce such goodness in us. It does not come about spontaneously through our own human will, our own strength, or our own wisdom.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! (NLT)

Repentance also brings spiritual refreshment. After having repented and receiving the Holy Spirit's cleansing in their hearts and spirits, many people report that they literally feel different inside, as you will hear from the testimony at the end of today's lesson.

Acts 3:19-20 Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord... (NLT)

So, what does spiritual refreshment feel like? We find our hearts are filled with more of God's love and joy, there is more compassion for others, even for our enemies. Inside, we feel uplifted. Spiritually, we feel lighter and cleansed. We feel strengthened with more confidence and faith, our fears and anxieties start to subside. Our minds are clear-headed, we are able to see things much more clearly.

God's righteousness in us will produce a peace and quiet confidence that money cannot buy.

Isaiah 32:17 The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever. (NIV)

Let's look at how God's Word describes this in Job chapter 11 verses 14 to 20. Let us read this together. "Get rid of your sins, and leave all iniquity behind you. Then your face will brighten with innocence. You will be strong and free of fear. You will forget your misery; it will be like water flowing away. Your life will be brighter than the noonday. Even darkness will be as bright as morning. Having hope will give you courage. You will be protected and will rest in safety. You will lie down unafraid, and many will

look to you for help. But the wicked will be blinded. They will have no escape. Their only hope is death.”
(Job 11:14-20 NLT)

We see that the Bible contrasts spiritual refreshment with feeling blinded, trapped, and hopeless.

This is because Satan still dominates large areas of our hearts, souls, strength, and minds through unconfessed and unrepented sins.

1 John 3:8 But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. (NLT)

Someone who is carrying burdens of unrepented sins will find that they lack the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Psalms 38:4 For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. (NLT)

This can sometimes manifest as feeling:

1. Anxious, joyless, restless
2. Easily agitated, distracted, frustrated
3. Discouraged, depressed
4. Angry, bitter, resentful
5. Self-righteous, judgmental, condemning
6. Guilty and ashamed
7. Out of self control, in bondage to addictions
8. Insomnia, nightmares, anxiety-related disorders

Let's pause here and allow you a little time to examine your own heart and the need for repentance. The more we are cleansed by the Holy Spirit, the less we will encounter such experiences.

Here are some other ways we can test if we have unrepentant sins in our hearts by how we relate to God and His Word. Many of us would have experienced such conditions before we were baptised with the Holy Spirit.

But we will notice that when we continue to sin and quench the Holy Spirit, we will find it increasingly challenging to remember what we have studied in God's Word. The Holy Spirit will remind us of what God has said, but we seem to quickly forget whatever we have read from the Bible. (vs. John 14:26)

The Holy Spirit gives us peace and self-control, but now we find ourselves easily distracted whenever we try to pray. We can't control our thoughts or take them captive to obey Jesus. (vs. Galatians 5:22-23)

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding. Where we once were enthusiastic to learn and listen to teachings in the Bible, we are now sleepy and unmotivated. We can't seem to develop a deeper spiritual understanding of God's Word. (vs. 1 Corinthians 2:14)

Lastly, we begin to pursue the things of this world, and begin to pay more attention to the god of this world, Satan, than to the Holy Spirit. (vs. 2 Corinthians 4:1-6)

Notice that all these conditions are in essence how Jesus describes the different types of soil in the Parable of the Sower. (Parable of the Sower: Matthew 13, Mark 4, Luke 8)

When we repent and are cleansed by the Holy Spirit, our hearts will become like good soil that God's Word can be successfully planted into and become fruitful.

What is the condition of your heart? Have you been carrying a burden of unrepentant sins around?

In our last lesson, we talked about how we grieve the Holy Spirit when we continue to sin and engage in what God calls evil.

Ephesians 4:30-31 And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live... Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. (NLT)

Let us read Romans chapter 2 verses 5 to 8 together, *"But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will judge everyone according to what they have done. He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honour and immortality that God offers. But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness."* (Romans 2:5-8 NLT)

The Bible emphasises repentance not because God wants to ruin our fun. God wants to empower us to live abundant lives filled with His love, hope, joy, and peace. God takes no pleasure in the coming judgment of those who sin and act wickedly. What He really wants is for us to repent so that we can live.

Ezekiel 33:11 As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live. Turn! Turn from your wickedness... (NLT)

God patiently pursues our repentance for our sake. He does not want any one of us to be destroyed.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. (NLT)

He corrects and disciplines us because He loves us.

Revelation 3:19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. (ESV)

Yet we may be tempted to reject God's discipline and be upset at His correction because we mistake God's discipline for punishment. In fact, when we go through difficult times, Satan will often come to accuse us and deceive us into thinking that God must be punishing us.

Proverbs 3:11-12 My child, don't reject the Lord's discipline, and don't be upset when he corrects you. For the Lord corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights. (NLT)

But we should stay alert to Satan's deceptions and remember that God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He does not treat us as our sins deserve.

Psalms 103:8,10-11 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; (NIV)

He disciplines us to save us, not to condemn us. God understands why we do the things we do.

Romans 8:1 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (NIV)

He knows our anxieties and will not reject us when we approach Him with contrite and repentant hearts.

Psalms 51:17 The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God. (NLT)

Neither is He petty and calculative, He will wipe away our sins when we confess and repent from our hearts.

Acts 3:19 Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. (NLT)

In fact, God won't even think about our sins again once we repent and reconcile with Him. Isn't that wonderful! God's love does not keep a record of wrongs.

Isaiah 43:25 "I—yes, I alone—will blot out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again. (NLT)

Many spiritual blessings come with repentance, but we may personally resist repenting because we do not believe in God's goodness and faithfulness. Our hearts may be deceived by sin and hardened against God.

Hebrews 3:12-13 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. You must warn each other every day ... so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. (NLT)

A heart that has been hardened against God and repenting before Him will

1. Tells ourselves we have nothing to confess
2. Actively avoids opportunities to confess
3. Finds excuses for our sinful actions
4. Puts the blame on others
5. Compares ourselves with others and think we are not as bad as they are, we may even attack them just to make ourselves look better
6. Justifies our actions
7. Feels angry or offended when we are exposed

The bottom line is, a hardened heart likes to stay in control, rather than submit to God and make things right again with Him. This is often because our hearts have been hurt and felt rejected, so we struggle to trust and release control to anyone else, even if it is to our good and perfect Father.

If we are willing to confess our sins to one another and repent before God in Jesus' name, we will experience healing and wonderful results.

James 5:16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. (NLT)

Here is an opportunity for us to humble ourselves before God and turn our hearts back to Him, if we have ever hardened our hearts against Him.

1. Repent of hiding our sins and hardening our hearts
2. Ask God for forgiveness for quenching the Holy Spirit
3. Invite the Holy Spirit to be the Lord of our hearts again
4. Quiet your heart and listen out for His comfort, assurance, counsel, or correction
5. Thank God for His faithfulness

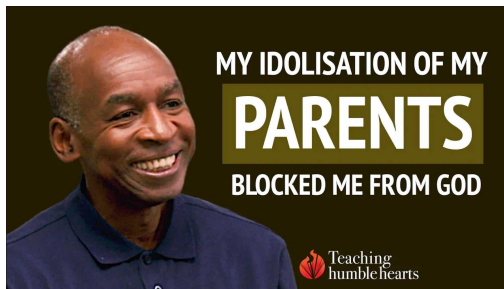
If you would like to go through this prayer, please click pause now and follow the points and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to you.

We will close our lesson with two reflection questions as well as the testimony we mentioned earlier. Please prepare your answers before your small group discussion time. We pray that you will be blessed. See you next time.

Time for reflection

1. How will you lovingly and gently encourage a fellow believer to turn from sin?
2. Share an experience where the Holy Spirit led you to turn from sin.

Watch the testimony for this lesson



Personal notes