



Life Principles Notes™

God's Call to Genuine Repentance

Summary:

What do you say to a friend who claims to be a Christian, but there is no change in his or her life whatsoever?

How do you counsel a believer who is struggling with sin and cannot find release from the temptations that keep tripping them up?

First John 1:9 promises, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Yet, there are many who simply cannot find release from the bondage that entangles them and fail to

experience the victory Christ promises. Although they may be very sincere about loving God, their problem may be that they still have not genuinely repented of their transgressions. And obedient repentance is the key to truly enjoying the freedom and triumph that is ours through Christ.

Key Passage: [Luke 24:45–49](#)

Supporting Scripture: *Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:6–7; Matthew 3:1–2; 4:17; 7:16, 20–23; 28:20; Luke 5:32; 15:11–24; John 3:3; Acts 17:30; Romans 2:4; 10:13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 1:9*

Scriptural Principles:

1 The importance of repentance.

How do we know repentance is crucial to our enjoying the abundant Christian life? Because Jesus said, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations” (Luke 24:46–47). He provided for the forgiveness of sin through His death on the cross, and the way we accept His gift is by repenting of our sins—agreeing with God that we have fallen short of what He expects of us.

2 What is genuine repentance?

Jesus said, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). The call to repentance is really an invitation to salvation and the laying aside of our sinful ways. We start the process of repentance by realizing our need for a Savior and acknowledging that what we have done is contrary to God's commands, desires, and/or plan. Yet, this is only the beginning.

In the Bible, the word *repentance* carries two implications. The first is that there is genuine, heartfelt remorse that what we've done is wrong. The second is that we've changed direction concerning our actions. If there is no commitment to turn away from our sinfulness and walk in obedience to Christ, then there isn't authentic repentance.

One of the problems that many people experience is that they're not really sorry they've sinned against God. Rather, their regret comes from being caught in their sinfulness. They may cry, feel ashamed and embarrassed, and may even ask for forgiveness. However, they are not truly repenting unless they acknowledge that they've violated God's holy requirements and embrace His standard of behavior. As Isaiah 55:7 instructs, “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him . . . for He will abundantly pardon.”

3 An excellent example—the Prodigal Son.

One of the best examples of genuine repentance is found in Luke 15:11–24 in the story of the prodigal son. The young man in the parable asked his father for his portion of the estate so he could spend it and live in the way he saw fit. However, it was not long before he had squandered his entire inheritance and found himself in a terrible situation—feeding hogs and facing famine. Verses 16–17 tell us, “He would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!’”

The young man realized how helpless he was—he understood that his manner of living was wrong and destructive. Therefore, not only did he feel remorseful about his actions, but he also changed his behavior. Verses 18–19 report that he decided, “I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.’”

4 What it means to believe.

So many people decide to take God’s blessings and live any way they please. Like the prodigal son, they end up hitting rock bottom—in sin, despair, and helplessness. Yet, what they need is the eternal change that takes place when a person receives Christ as their Savior—when someone truly *believes* in Him as their Lord.

This is more than just intellectual assent—it is a change in behavior. They turn away from their life of sin and *confess*—or *agree with God*—that it is the path to destruction. They surrender themselves to Jesus because they realize that the life He offers them is so much better than anything they can find on their own. Second Corinthians 5:17 tells us, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” The Holy Spirit comes to indwell them—replacing the old, sinful life with the abundant life of Christ.

5 The big question.

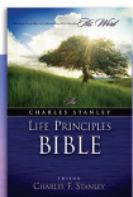
Does repentance mean you will never sin again? If you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, does that mean that you are now immune to temptation and will never do anything that violates God’s holy standards? Unfortunately, no, it does not. We will still sin because the process of God transforming us into the likeness of Christ—also known as *sanctification*—takes time. In fact, sometimes we will not even realize that our actions or habits are sinful until the Holy Spirit convicts us that what we are doing is wrong. Yet, eventually the Holy Spirit will get our attention—especially as we are praying and reading God’s Word. He will help us deal with our sin—confessing it and changing whatever we do that displeases God. He will also teach us how to obey God more and more each day, so we can do His will and live a life that glorifies Him.

Conclusion:

Is there anything in your life you need to repent of? Is there any habit or behavior that God has been telling you to confess and turn away from? God loves you too much to allow you to ruin your life, which is why He is so adamant that you repent of your sin. And you are not doing yourself any good by trying to excuse your actions. Proverbs 28:13 instructs, “He who conceals his

transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.” God will not cleanse you of your sin until you stop resisting Him. He will not set you free from the bondage that sin causes until you allow Him to change your life.

Therefore, confess your sin and change your course. Decide to pursue God’s best rather than staying captive to your sinful worst. He can show you the abundant, joyful Christian life if you will just surrender to Him. So don’t wait any longer—repent and enjoy His wonderful freedom. ✝



Benefit from the truths that have shaped Dr. Stanley’s life and ministry with the *Life Principles Bible*. Visit *Shop InTouch* at www.intouch.org.

Contact us:
1-800-789-1473

Customer Care
7:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m. | M-F (EST)