



Life Principles Notes™

God's Call to Genuine Repentance

Summary:

What do you say to a friend who claims to be a Christian, but lives an ungodly life?

How can you counsel a believer who struggles against a particular temptation but repeatedly succumbs to it?

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 enslaves them. They never

experience the victory Jesus promises. Although they may sincerely love God, they may not have genuinely repented of their sin. And unless they do, they will not enjoy 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 Repentance is important.

Jesus provided for the forgiveness of sin through His death on the cross. The way we accept His gift is through repentance—agreeing with God that we have fallen short of what He expects of us. The Bible says, “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). Turning from sin is crucial to enjoying the abundant Christian life.

2 What is genuine repentance?

The call to turn from sin is really an invitation to salvation and a new life (Luke 5:32). We start the process of repentance by realizing our need for a Savior and acknowledging that our actions are contrary to God's commands, desires, and plans. But 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 have done is sin. The second is that we have changed our direction. Authentic repentance always includes a commitment to turn from our rebellion and walk in obedience to God.

Many people are not really sorry they have sinned against the Lord. Rather, their regret comes from being caught doing something wrong. They may cry, feel ashamed or embarrassed, and may even ask for forgiveness. However, unless these people acknowledge violating God's commands and choose to embrace His standard of behavior, they have not truly repented. 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 The Prodigal Son is an excellent example.

One of the best illustrations of genuine repentance is found in Luke 15:11–24 in the parable of the prodigal son. The young man asked his father for his portion of the estate. However, it was not long before the son had squandered his entire inheritance and found himself in a terrible situation—feeding hogs and facing starvation. Verses 16 and 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 and that his manner of living was wrong and destructive. As a result, he felt remorseful about his actions *and changed his behavior*. 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’” (Luke 15:18-19).

4 What does it mean to believe?

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. What they need is the eternal change that takes place when a person receives Jesus Christ as Savior and truly believes in Him as Lord.

This is more than just intellectual assent; our behavior must also change. People must turn away from their sin and agree with God that it is the path to destruction. And they should also surrender to Jesus, realizing that the life He offers them is better than anything the world can give. 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.” At salvation, the Holy Spirit instantly indwells each believer—replacing the old, sinful life with an abundant life in Christ.

5 Does repentance mean you will never sin again?

If you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, does that mean that you are now immune to temptation and will never do anything that violates His 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 wrong until the Holy Spirit convicts us. However, He is faithful to reveal our sin and lead us to repentance. Then, as believers depend on the Spirit’s ability rather than self-effort, He enables us to live a victorious Christian life.

Conclusion:

Take a few moments to evaluate yourself. Perhaps there is a habit or behavior that God has been telling you to confess and turn from. The Lord desires for you to repent because sin is destructive. Proverbs 28:13 says, “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.” When you and I surrender to the Lord, He responds by cleansing us from wrongdoing and freeing us from its bondage.

If you are trapped in sin, I pray that you will confess it and change course. Decide to pursue God’s best rather than staying captive to harmful patterns. The Lord can show you the abundant, joyful Christian life if you will simply submit to Him. So don’t wait any longer—enjoy the wonderful freedom that is found only through genuine repentance. 🙏

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