

Th122 Foundation Doctrines

Lesson Th122 - 5 Repentance: Change in Direction

Have you ever been on a journey and found yourself lost? It is easy to do. Sometimes the directions you were given were inaccurate. Other times you misread the landmarks. Whatever the cause, when we become lost we have to get back on the right path to get to our destination. There was a man on a journey who made a wrong turn and found himself on the wrong road, going the wrong direction. Rather than turning around and retracing his steps, he thought that he would just turn onto the next road. Maybe it would get him where he needed to go. Again and again he turned onto a different road, hoping it was the right way. Soon he was very far from his destination and thoroughly lost.

In many ways our lives are like this man's journey. Until we know God we are actually traveling away from him. We try so many paths, hoping to find peace, but none of them leads us to God. When we repent, we stop traveling away from God and turn around. Then we begin our journey anew, this time traveling towards God. Repentance requires a change in the direction of our lives. Many of the things we did before, we will no longer do. The disciple Matthew recorded Jesus' teaching on the road of life. Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matt 7:13-14).

Jesus told a story about a man who had two sons. He was a man of wealth who had much livestock. He also had lands that had been handed down from father to son for many generations. Now the younger son came to his father with a request. He was tired of living in a small village and working hard. He wanted his inheritance now. This was an unheard of request. The young son was insulting his father. It would be as if he were saying that he wished his father was dead! The elder brother became angry. By asking the father for his share of the inheritance, the younger brother was causing part of the family land to be sold and some of the flocks to be sold too.

But the father loved his sons. He would not force them to obey his will. He would allow them to make their own choices, even if those choices brought about great sorrow. So the father gave his younger son his share of the family estate.

The young man wasted no time in gathering his wealth and leaving the small rural village of his family. He traveled away from his father and family to a distant land, arriving as a stranger in a large city. It was obvious that he was from the country. His clothes and manners gave him away. But he did have wealth. Soon he was spending his inheritance on all of the pleasures the big city had to offer. His old clothes were replaced with new clothes that were more in keeping with a man of his wealth. He was surrounded by everything new, including foreign gods in temples that no Jewish man should enter.

The young man made friends with other young men of the city. They were more than willing to help him spend his money on the violent entertainment there. But money that is spent on wine, rich foods, fine clothing, and immoral friends soon runs out. The day came when the

young man had spent his entire inheritance. His money was gone and all of his friends were gone too. Alone, and without money, the young man found himself in trouble. Soon he had nothing left but the clothes on his back.

And then the land went into a time of famine. His stomach rumbling with hunger, he went to one of the farmers in the land. He was given a job feeding pigs. Can you imagine this young man's despair? He was a Jew. The Jewish law taught that pigs were unclean animals. No Jew would own pigs, let alone touch them. But the young man had reached the very bottom.

He was so hungry he wanted to eat the food that the pigs were eating. As he fed the pigs, his mind wandered back to his father's home. All of his father's servants had plenty of food to eat. And in that moment the young man made a decision. His life was going in the wrong direction. All of the things he thought he wanted, had not satisfied him, but had led him farther and farther away from his father. He made his decision. He was going to turn around and go back to his father. And so he began the long journey home.

How the father had grieved for his lost son! Each day he kept watch, hoping that his son would return to him. Can you imagine how angry the people of the village were when the young man came home? He had not only rejected his father, but had rejected them as well! But the father saw his son a long way off and ran to him. This was an embarrassing thing to do. He was a man of importance in the village and people of his status and age just did not run!

The father's love for his son was so great that he was willing to embarrass himself and turn his son's shame upon himself. The young man cried out to his father and said, "Father, I am not worthy to be called your son!"

But the father embraced his son with deep love. He called to his servants to get a new robe for his son and to place a ring upon his finger and sandals on his feet. He then commanded that a great celebration be held. The fattened calf was to be killed and prepared for the party. Everyone in the village would be invited, for his son who was lost had come home.

This story wonderfully illustrates what we have learned about repentance. The boy first experienced godly sorrow while feeding the pigs. This led to a change in his thinking. He finally understood that everything he had done was empty and vain. Next, he did something about it. He changed his direction. He turned around and headed home towards his father. Finally the young man confessed to his father his failure. And what was the result of his repentance? The father welcomed home his wayward son with open arms.

We have now learned four important aspects of repentance. First, Godly sorrow leads to true repentance. When we repent we should confess our sins to God. Repentance always leads to a change in the way we think and a change in our direction. We no longer are going away from God, but now are on the narrow path that leads us ever closer to him.

This lesson is **important** because it uses one of Jesus' stories to teach that true repentance leads to a change in one's direction.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God the Father welcomes with open arms those who truly repent.

To **review** this lesson, answer the following questions:

1. What kind of sorrow leads to repentance? [Pause]
A. If you said, “Godly sorrow,” then you are correct.
2. What are the two changes that happen when we repent? [Pause]
A. If you said that we have a change of thinking and a change of direction, you are correct.
3. Who should we confess our sins to? [Pause]
A. If you said that we should confess our sins to God and confess our sins against a person to that person as well, you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to watch this lesson at least three times until you thoroughly understand the parable of the lost son and can tell the story. Then, find someone else and use the story to explain to them the four steps of true repentance towards God.