

## Seek (Week 2): The How-To of Repentance

### **Yesterday's Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less**

1) Chapter 3 of our Lenten book focuses on repentance (which means changing direction or rerouting), so we used our time yesterday to do a tour of that concept in the New Testament and then show how what we find there syncs up well with modern research into how adults make positive change in their lives.

2) First, where we feel discomfort in our lives is often the place where we need to repent: 2nd Cor. 7.9-10 says that "godly grief" is the catalyst for positive redirection, and in Luke 5.31-32 Jesus Himself declares that knowing you're sick is the prerequisite for getting well.

3) This lines up with recent study of adult spiritual awakening, which finds that confusion, feeling unsettled, or discomfort is often the precursor to spiritual renewal.

4) As Christian psychologists Henry Cloud and John Townsend put it, "We change when the pain of staying the same outweighs the pain of changing."

5) Second, positive emotions are the best motivation for lasting repentance: over and over again, the New Testament talks about repentance and its outcome in positive terms (it brings salvation and eternal life, and leaves us with no regrets, for example, see 2 Cor. 7.9-10 and Acts 11.18).

6) So negative emotional motivation to change doesn't work long-term (as an example, think how poorly nagging someone works over the long haul), but what will work is you feeling positively about yourself, the change you're making, what you hope the outcome of the change will be, and even God's loving role in the change (see Romans 2.4).

7) Our emotions are far stronger forces in our lives than our reason (neurologists use the analogy of our emotions being an elephant, and our reason being the rider on that elephant), so we don't really think and analyze our way into positive change, but instead have to see or visualize the change, feel it deeply, and only then will it last.

8) Third, specificity makes repentance real (this is what John the Baptist does for the crowds in Luke 3.8-14), whereas generalized regret, shame or guilt gets you nowhere.

9) Those who study the subject would say that you need to "script the change" that you are hoping to see: map out small and tangible actions to take, limit your choices and don't leave things open ended, and work out ahead of time what you'll do when you're tempted or triggered to revert to old behavior you're trying to leave behind.

10) Fourth and last, I am much more likely to be a person who practices repentance if I surround myself with those who do, because our peer group is the single greatest influence on what we do and what we think is possible (that's why in the New Testament confession and repentance are a community or corporate practice, see James 5.16).



## Exploring More This Week

- For those not in Sunday School, here's the video lesson that accompanies chp. 3 in "Seeking God": [Trevor Hudson - Changing Direction](#)

- Spend some time this week - in prayer, in your devotional or journaling time, or in conversation with your small group - working on how to use the four "how to" lessons about repentance to make real change in your life:

### The How-Tos of Repentance:

- A. Where you feel discomfort may be where you need to repent
- B. Positive emotions are the best motivation for lasting repentance
- C. Specificity makes repentance real
- D. I am more likely to live a life of repentance if I surround myself with those who repent

- Want to learn more about how adults change? One of the more accessible books on the subject, which addresses both individual and group change, is "Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard" by Dan and Chip Heath. All of these insights make "repentance" concrete and workable. Here's a written summary of the book, as well as a 7 min. video summary:

[Book Summary Switch by Chip & Dan Heath | Sam Thomas Davies](#)

[Video Review for Switch by Chip and Dan Heath](#)

- Check out C. S. Lewis' reflections on repentance, and its depth:

[The Perfect Penitent - C.S. Lewis | Renovaré](#)