



Countryside Bible Church

Discipleship Counseling Notes – Level 1, Class 5

The Biblical Process of Change:

Key Elements in the Biblical Process of Change (Part 2)

INTRODUCTION:

KEY ELEMENTS WITHIN THE CHANGE PROCESS

In the believer's pursuit of knowing, loving, and serving our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, he must possess a deep theological understanding of sin and guilt, conscience, repentance and faith, forgiveness and covering, and replacement (including mind renewal) in order to help people change biblically.

I. Sin & Guilt

II. Confession/Repentance & Faith

A. Repentance Defined

The word "repent" basically means to turn or to change.

Repentance is a necessary component of genuine conversion (Luke 3:3; 2 Cor.7:10).

Unsaved people must turn from sin, which is the state of self-rule they have lived in as their own lord and master (Rom.10:9; I John 3:4).

Repentance remains continually necessary after conversion (Psalm 51; Luke 17:3-4). Saved persons must confess and turn from sin, which is the specific symptom of the lingering disease called "the flesh" (Romans 7:14-25; Galatians 5:16-17). Often, it's referred to as "the putting off" of what's wrong.

All true human repentance has reference to a turning from sin and turning by faith to God for forgiveness and renewal. Scripture often alludes to a false repentance that does not actually

bring forgiveness (e.g. Matt.3:7-8; 2 Cor.7:10b), so we must understand some elements, effects, and examples of repentance in order to practice it ourselves and help others do so as well.

Definitions:

- Repentance is a *heartfelt sorrow for sin*, a rejection of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in *obedience to Christ*.¹
- Repentance is a *discovery of the evil of sin*, a mourning that we have committed it, a resolution to forsake it. It is, in fact, a *change of mind* of a very deep and practical character, which makes the man *love what once he hated, and hate what once he loved*.²
- Repentance is a *grace of God's Spirit* whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed.³
- Evangelical repentance consists of (1) a true sense of one's own guilt and sinfulness; (2) an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ; (3) an actual hatred of sin (Ps. 119:128; Job 42:5, 6; 2 Cor. 7:10) and turning from sin to God; and (4) a persistent endeavor after a holy life in a walking with God in the way of his commandments.⁴

B. Elements of True Repentance

1. Comprehending

We must understand the truth relevant to our sin and our Savior before we can repent. The Greek word most often translated "repentance" is *metanoia*, which denotes "a change of mind."

2. Confessing

The two-fold nature of inward confession is revealed in the meaning of the Greek verb *homologeō* ("to say the same thing"). We must acknowledge to God the fact of our sin and agree with God about the nature of our sin (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:8-9).

¹Wayne A. Grudem

²Charles Spurgeon

³Watson.

⁴M. G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary*

3. Choosing

True repentance always includes a willful resolve to not repeat the sin and an active resolve to pursue righteousness in its place (cf. Isaiah 1:16-17; Luke 5:27-28).

C. Effects of True Repentance

Although repentance itself is an inward turning that takes place in the heart and mind, it will lead to change in other areas of a person's life. If it is not accompanied or followed by such effects when they are appropriate, it is not a real repentance but a false one that fails to bring forgiveness (cf. Matt.3:7-8; Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20; 2 Cor.7:10b).

1. Restitution

The word means "to set things right" - the repentant sinner must fulfill any obligations to the offended party (cf. Ex. 22:1; Lev.5:15; Luke 19:1-10). This includes both an outward confession when it is appropriate (James 5:16) and a willingness to accept the consequences of our sin (Ps. 51:3-4).

2. Regret

True repentance may not always be accompanied by emotions (especially those that are visible to others), but in many cases a feeling of sorrow corroborates other evidence and points to a real change in thinking (Ps. 51; Job 42:6). Emotional responses alone, however, do not prove that repentance is genuine (cf. I Sam. 15:27; 2 Cor.7:10b).

3. Replacement

True repentance will lead to bearing the fruit of repentance. Often this change is accomplished through the process of replacement (Eph 4:22-24).

4. Reconciliation

When our sin has resulted in a broken relationship with another, true repentance will cause us to do whatever we can to transform the conflict into a peaceful and edifying friendship (Matt.5:24; Rom.12:18; 2 Cor.2:7-8).

Reconciliation: Restoration of friendly relationships and of peace where before there had been hostility and alienation. Ordinarily it also includes the removal of the offense which caused the disruption of peace and harmony.^{5 6}

⁵ Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible.

⁶ A helpful organization in conflict resolution is Peacemakers (Ken Sande). www.hispeace.org

5. Restoration

Most often the immediate counsel for two people who are now reconciled is to build (restore) their relationship.

NOTE: We must remember that not every case of repentance requires all of the above changes, and we also must be very careful to allow certain fruits of repentance to be defined by God rather than by man (Mark 7:6-13; I Corinthians 4:5-6).

D. Examples of true repentance:

1. Psalm 51 (David)
2. Luke 15:11-32 (prodigal son)
3. 2 Corinthians 7:9-11

III. Replacement

A. The Concept of Replacement

Biblical change must involve both "putting off and "putting on." Old sinful patterns must be replaced with new godly ones (from the heart out into behavior) in order for the change to be pleasing to God and to last over time.

Replacement is taught throughout the Scriptures (e.g. Psalm 1:1-2; Isaiah 1:16-17; Romans 13:14; 1 Thess.5:21-22; Hebrews 10:25; James 5:12; 1 Pet.3:9; 3 John 11), but the most clear and complete reference is Ephesians 4:22-32 and Colossians 3:5-17.

B. The Characteristics of Replacement

1. Mind Renewal

a) The priority of renewal

- 1) O.T. - **Ps. 15:2**; Prov. 23:7; Eccl. 3:17-18; Obad. 1:3; Zeph. 1:12

- 2) N.T. - Matt.9:3-4; Mk 7:20-23; **Romans 12:2**; 2 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 4:23; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:2,10,16; 1 Thess.4:13; 5:21; 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 1:8; Romans 1:28; 6:3,16; 1 Peter 1:13

b) The prerequisite of renewal

- 1) Prior to regeneration, one's mind is corrupt, blinded, futile, and darkened (Rom.1:28; 2 Cor.4:4; Eph.4:17,18).
 - 2) Since the mind of the lost is corrupt, it doesn't choose what is good; since it is spiritually blind, it doesn't know what is good; since its thoughts are futile, it doesn't perform what is good; and since it is ignorant, it doesn't even know what evil it is doing. What a tragic train of thought." - MacArthur, *Anxiety Attacked*
 - 3) In regeneration, one's mind has a new capacity to be interjected with and controlled by divine thoughts. (1 Cor.2:11-12; Rom.1:16; Lk.10:27; Eph.5:17-18; Col.3:16).
- c) A suggested pattern of renewal from Philippians 4:4-9 which highlights prayer to God, one's mind continually renewed with subsequent righteous actions.⁷ One first acknowledges God and His presence, then:
- 1) Right Awareness (:4-5)
 - 2) Right Praying (:6-7)
 - 3) Right Thinking (:8)
 - 4) Right Practice (:9)

2. "Putting off and "Putting on"

- a) Breaking and establishing habits – (Eph. 4:17-32; Rom. 15:14)
 - 1) Teaching (content, character)
 - 2) Example (competency)
 - 3) Practice (competency, community)
- b) Enduring in obedience (Hebrews 10:36)

⁷ Worksheets can be obtained for renewing the mind at www.oneeightycounseling.com

- c) No provision for the flesh / Guarding the heart

Romans 13:14; Proverbs 4:23, 5:7-8; Matthew 18: 27-30

NOTE: Effective homework will help people take practical steps to change in specific ways week by week.

IV. Forgiveness and Covering

A. What is forgiveness?

Greek verbs: *Aphiemi* means "to send away" or "to release" (Matthew 18:15-35; Luke 17:3). *Charizomai* focuses more on the quality of the removal (Ephesians 4:32).

When God forgives, He promises that He will never hold our sins against us (Jer. 31:34). So, the best definition of forgiveness is a "promise of pardon" done both properly and with the right heart motivation.

Definition – "...pardon for a fault or offense; to excuse from payment for a debt owed."⁸

Chris Brauns states it this way: ⁹

Concerning God's Forgiveness: *"A commitment by the one true God to pardon graciously those who repent and believe so that they are reconciled to him, although this commitment does not eliminate all consequences."*

Concerning Our Forgiveness: *"A commitment by the offended to pardon graciously the repentant from moral liability and to be reconciled to that person, although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated."*

1. God's Forgiveness

Man needs forgiveness from God both before salvation and after salvation.

The forgiveness needed before salvation can be called judicial forgiveness, because God acts as a judge, declaring us righteous forever and delivering us from eternal condemnation (Romans 4:3-8; Colossians 2:13-14).

⁸ Holman Bible Dictionary.

⁹ Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness*, 51,55

The forgiveness needed after salvation can be called parental forgiveness, because God is now our loving Father who wants to free us from hindrances to our communion that unconfessed sin brings (Matthew 6:12; Hebrews 12:5-11; 1 Jn 1:9).

2. Our Forgiveness

We are to forgive one another just as God has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13), so when we pursue and grant forgiveness to someone, we are promising that we will “release their debt” and commit to “not remember” their sins anymore (Jeremiah 31:34).

Not remembering means we will never use their sin against them, so practically we are saying the following to the one we forgive:

- a) “I will release you of and cancel the debt of sin against me.”
- b) “I will not remind you of this sin (unless it would be absolutely necessary to do so for your good).”
- c) “I will not mention it to anyone else (unless it would be absolutely necessary...).”
- d) “I will not allow my mind to dwell on it.”

We are commanded to forgive, so we are sinning if we refuse to make that promise. Therefore, forgiveness is a matter of obedience rather than feeling.

B. Who Should We Forgive?

Some passages in Scripture clearly imply that we can only forgive those who ask for it (e.g. Luke 17:3-4), while others seem to imply that we should forgive everyone who sins against us, regardless of whether they ask for it or not (e.g. Mark 11:25; 1 Pt 4:8).

Perhaps the best way to understand this is to make a distinction between the transaction of forgiveness and the attitude of being willing to forgive.

1. The Attitude of Love: always willing to forgive (a forgiving spirit) and pursuing forgiveness

Even though we may not be able to fully reconcile with everyone who sins against us, our attitude toward them should never be one of anger, bitterness, resentment, or any kind of ill will. We should also treat them very kindly and graciously (Rom. 12:17-21). We are commanded to love everyone (Luke 6:27-35), so we must desire their best, which means we will do everything we can to help them to resolve the issue (Rom. 12:18) and we will always be ready to reconcile (e.g., Psalm 86:5 says this about God).

- a) Mark 11:25
- b) Luke 23:34
- c) Matthew 6:12-15 and Luke 11:4

We can conclude from those verses (and others concerning love and graciousness) that any time someone wrongs us, we should pray to God in this way: "Father, you know what has happened between _____ and me. Help me to not be angry or bitter at him, nor to seek revenge in any way, but help me to love him and desire only his good. Please work in his heart and bring him to repentance so that we can have a reconciled relationship. Use me in any way You can to help him."

2. The Transaction of Forgiveness

Just as God does not make His promise of pardon to people unless they repent (Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38), we ought not to say "I forgive you" to people unless they admit their sin and repent. Therefore, the transaction of forgiveness is conditional in that we can only be fully reconciled to those who repent. Those who refuse to repent of their sin are not forgiven by God (in the parental sense mentioned above) and so the consequences of a broken relationship with the offended person continue.

Luke 17:3 says that our part of responsibility to those who sin against us is to humbly and lovingly confront them (bring it up to them), and if we have truly dealt with our own heart attitudes first (i.e., if we have a willingness to forgive heart attitude). Then, if they recognize their wrong and repent from it, we can be reconciled to them. Matthew 18:15-17 makes it clear that we cannot be fully reconciled to those who have not repented, because if we did, we could not continue the process described in those verses.

3. Other issues related to whom we forgive

- a) Confronting vs. "covering"¹⁰
- b) Apologizing and "I'm Sorry" vs. asking for forgiveness

¹⁰ Covering in the Bible happens after the sin has been dealt with not before. Ps 32:1-5; Prov 10:12; 17:9; 19:11; 28:13; James 5:19-20; 1 Pt 4:8. The Bible offers no list of sins to ignore and which ones to deal with.

- c) What about forgiving God?
- d) What about forgiving unbelievers?
- e) What about forgiving dead people?
- f) What about forgiving ourselves?
- g) If you practiced this form of dealing with sin, wouldn't you be confronting people around you all the time?
- h) Is it loving to confront or loving to not confront?
- What are some practical steps to approach someone who has possibly sinned against you?¹¹

C. How Should We Forgive?

1. Immediately (Luke 17:3)
2. Repeatedly (Luke 17:4)
3. Lavishly (2 Corinthians 2:5-8)
4. Why should we forgive? Gospel Motivated! (Matt 18:21-35; Eph 4:32)

¹¹ When a believer sins against you: 1. Pray for yourself (Mt 7:3-5) and for them; 2. Go ask questions (Prv 18:13); 3. Bring the Scriptures to bear on the sin; 4. Ask another believer to go with you (Mt 18:15-20); 5. If it becomes this serious, then it could be a whole church matter (but not because of the first sin issue but their entire life is troubling as over time their heart is hardened about sin in their life and they refuse to humble themselves or submit to God's Word).

Further Resources:

- *Holiness*, J.C. Ryle (first 160-180 pages is a treatise on biblical sanctification)
- *Christian Spirituality: Five Views on Sanctification*. IVP, 1988. Sinclair Ferguson wrote the Reformed view.
- *Five views on Sanctification*, Zondervan, 1987.
- *How Can I Change?* Victory in the struggle against sin. Robin Boisvert and C.J. Mahaney, 1996.
- *Killing Sin Habits: Conquering sin with Radical Faith*, Stuart and Zondra Scott, 2013
- *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, Walter Marshall.
- *Unpacking Forgiveness*, Chris Brauns