**The Jesus Life Session 6**

**REPENT**

1. **The word “Repent” is almost a dirty word**

1a) We live in a society where if you were to tell people; “Repent – turn from your sins” people will think that you are a bit crazy.

1b) In the world, people all have different beliefs of what is right and wrong. People say; “This way of life is right for me”, so who are you to tell me that I’m wrong.”

1c) Politicians make laws about what is right – but it’s always changing. If a man went into a woman’s toilet in the past, or the ladies changing room at the gym, it would be a crime.

1d) In the church there’s a strong focus on teaching that God loves you and He accepts you just as you are. So you don’t often hear teaching that we need to repent.

1. **Repentance is a common Biblical theme**

2a) The Bible tells us to repent almost 80 times. It was one of Jesusl most common themes. He told people to repent far more often (**over 25 times)** than He told them that God loves you (5 times) or that we should love others 15 times.

“From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” (Matt. 4, 17) (Luke 24, 47)

2b) God has decreed what is right and wrong in the world. It’s written in the Bible.

1. **What is Repentance**

3a) To repent means that you see that you are wrong and admit your guilt.

3b) Express Sorrow or regret over what you have done

3c) Stop doing something. Change direction

3d) The Greek word used in the Bible for Repentance is “Metanoia” which means to “Change your mind or purpose”, to make a decision that you don’t want to do that again.

3e) In the Bible days if someone wanted to repent they would often fast to show how serious they were. Sometimes people also tore their garments and put on sackcloth and covered their heads in ashes. (See Ezra 9, 3; 2 Sam. 12, 16 & Ester 4, 1-3)

1. **God’s ways lead us to life & happiness**

4a) God’s not like a terribly strict parent with lots of stupid rules that stop you having any fun. **God is our father and creator who loves us and wants us to be happy.**

4b) God’s laws are there to guide us into the best way to live. They are to protect us from harmful choices and to stop people from doing wrong to each other.

4c) Sin is much more destructive than we realise. Attitudes like criticism, jealousy, fear, pride, hatred will destroy our life, our relationships and even affect our health.

4d) Freedom from God’s laws hasn’t made people happy. There’s an epidemic of Suicides, Self Harm, Divorce, Loneliness. The use of anti-depressants has gone up 35% in the last 5 years to 1 in 4 of the adult population in the UK!

4e) ***“There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.” (Prov. 14, 12 & 16, 25).***

4f) What do **YOU** do when people tell you that you’re wrong? Do you insist you’re right? Or do you listen carefully to see if there is any truth in what they are saying.

1. **Don’t be complacent because of God’s Grace, but earnestly repent**

5a) Martin Luther said; “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said ‘Repent,’ he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance.”

5b) When you are a Christian, it’s easy to think that you are a good person, better than most. You start to become **confident of your own righteousness** and casual about God’s grace and take His forgiveness for granted.

5c) Jesus told the story of two people who went to the temple to pray.

To some who were **confident of their own righteousness** … Jesus told this parable” (Luke 18, 9).

5d)God doesn’t’ want us to live in self condemnation. He wants us to be humble and repentant and to experience the joy of knowing that we are forgiven.

5e) Jesus finished the parable by saying; “For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 18, 9-14. See also Isaiah 66, 2 & Isaiah 57, 15).

1. **Many Christians are too casual about sin**

6a) Many Christians have very little understanding of how much sin is still there in their lives. They are content to live with an “acceptable level” of sin in their lives.

6b) The closer you get to God the further away you think you are from him.

6c) Even the apostle Paul recognized that he didn’t live the victorious Christian life that he should have. “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature..... The things I want to do I can’t do, but instead I find myself doing all the things that I don’t want to do..... Why? Because I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin” (Rom. 7, 14-18).

1. **Unrecognised sin limits the flow of God’s Grace in our life**

7a) When we do wrong things against other people, we think that it won’t affect our relationship with God, because God will just forgive us. The truth is that sin always harms our relationship with God.

7b) David committed adultery with his friend’s wife, then when she got pregnant through him, he tried to cover it up by having his friend killed in battle (2 Samuel 11). In his prayer of repentance for this he said; “Against YOU (God), YOU only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;” (Psalm 51, 4).

7c) Until David acknowledged his sin and asked God for forgiveness, the flow of God’s blessing was lifted off his life.

**8)Repentance allows more of God into our life**

8a) Many believers are satisfied with the shallow level of their faith and the little fruit that they see. God wants to give us more. The more that we see what we are like, the more we ask God to forgive us and to come into our life to change us. The more God comes into our life, the more power we have to change the situations around us.

8b) You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.” Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. (James 4, 4-10)

8c) This verse tells us

1. Examine your life through the eyes of a Holy God
2. Turn away from friendship with the world
3. God jealously longs for intimate relationship with us
4. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble
5. Resist the devil
6. Come near to God
7. Express true sorrow over your sin (Grieve, Mourn & Wail)
8. God Himself will lift you up.

**9 The Example of John the Baptist**

9a) John the Baptist was the son of a priest (Luke 1). If his life had gone along the normal track for people like that, he would have been trained in the law from childhood, then started working as a priest in the temple like his father, grandfather and all his other relatives going back in a line to Aaron the brother of Moses. He would have lived a comfortable life, highly respected among his people, no doubt got married, had children and a nice house. And he would have been serving God in the temple all his life.

9b) The world would have gone on as usual. But God didn’t want the world to go on as usual. He wanted to bring in a new era. To do that, he needed someone to work with Him through their own life and intercession would bring that era in.

9c) John the Baptist lived as a Nazirite all his life (Luke 1, 15). From the time of his birth he was dedicated to the Lord in a special way. He wasn’t allowed to drink wine or beer or any produce from the grape vine, and he had to keep himself ceremonially clean according to the Old Testament law to the extent where he wasn’t even allowed to go to relatives funerals. Instead of following the normal path for his life with his school mates, the sons of the other priests from the temple, he started spending long seasons of his life alone away from people alone in the wilderness, wearing clothing made out of camel hair (a sign of repentance, like wearing sackcloth). Instead of eating proper food just fed himself on wild locusts and honey from the desert (a form of fasting).

9d) The wilderness was the place where John turned away from the comforts, pleasures and demands of normal life and was able to come closer to God than most people. In that place, living a simple life of repentance and prayer, he heard things that no-one else had ever heard and so was able to bring in God’s new era.

9e) Jesus said about John; “I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John” (Luke 7, 28).

**10) The Example of Anna**

10a) Anna. She was there with Simeon praying over the baby Jesus when he was brought to the temple. Anna was 84 years older than John. She started what John finished. Anna was married when she was around 17, and after 7 years he died, seemingly leaving her childless aged 24. The Bible doesn’t give us her full story but it seems when her husband died, she went into the temple to pray, and just stayed there.

At first it was just for her own comfort. She had a peace and a significance to her life there that she couldn’t find when she went back home. As she stayed, praying, God started speaking to her about the new thing that he wanted to do. So she started praying for the consolation of her people rather than just the consolation of her own life. She started **fasting,** repenting for the spiritual adultery of her nation and the loss of relationship they were experiencing without God as their husband. Fasting and **worshipping,** declaring the greatness of God and the new things He was going to do into the national situation.

10b) John and Anna between them through their repentance and prayer changed the season in their nation from the Old covenant to the New covenant. They ushered in a new season of grace.