

Repentance, a Change of Direction

Anchor command. “Do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” *Luke 13:4-5*

Anchor story. John the Baptist calls sinners to repent, *Matthew 3:1-12*

Anchor verse. “Do you think lightly of the riches of his kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?” *Romans 2:4*

Learning goal. Discover the need and meeting of heartfelt repentance.

Growth goal. Trust the Holy Spirit, not your own exhortation, to bring people to repent.

Skill goal. Call people to repent without condemning or sounding like you feel you are superior to them.

Outcome goal. Believers are calling their unsaved friends to repent, and believers who have strayed are now following Christ.

Dear Father in heaven, help us to be like John the Baptist, helping sinners to repent and to turn to Christ. Also, help us to restore gently believers who have strayed.

Basic Study

Learn from the story of John the Baptist calling people to repent, *Matthew 3:1-12*.

- John the Baptist is known as Christ’s forerunner who prepared the people of Israel for the coming of their Messiah Jesus. Where did John preach repentance? *3:1-2*
- Who had foretold what John would do? *3-5*
- How many people went out to the River Jordan to be baptized by John? *3-5*
- What did the people confess? *6*
- Who came to John not to repent but to show off their religious devotion? *7-10*
- What is the difference between the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus? *11-12*



During the week...

Visit friends who need Christ and explain to them that God loves them, will forgive their sins, and wants to bring them new, eternal life of true holiness and joy.

Visit any believers who have gone astray. Restore them like Galatians 6:1 says.

- Help them in a loving way to remember their conversion.
- Try to discover if they will let God convict them of their sinfulness.
- Try to discern if they understand God's great love.
- Pray with them to ask God to transform their lives.

During worship

- Tell the story of John the Baptist, Matthew 3:1-12, and ask the same questions as above. Let believers discuss the answers.
- Ask the children to present what they have prepared.
- Memorize together Mark 1:5.

Advanced Study

1. Additional information about John the Baptist.

Find in Matthew 3:13-17 what happened when Jesus came to be baptized by John.

Find in the parable of the lost sheep, Luke 15:1-10, why the angels rejoice in heaven.

Some Christian leaders scold and threaten sinners to force them to repent. Jesus explained in this story the better way that he wants us to call people to repent:

- Imagine that you are a 'lamb' that has strayed, but the Good Shepherd has found you. he holds you gently in his arms as he carries you back to the fold, to his people.



Sooner or later, all of us go astray. Still, straying sheep remain of great value to Jesus.

- You feared that he would scold and punish you, but his face shows only love and rejoicing.
- The Shepherd is willing to leave the rest of the sheep until he finds the erring one and restores it. Jesus loves us even when we go astray. he loves us so much that he died for us, Romans 5:8.
- The most important part of calling sinners to repent, and of restoring straying believers, is to love them, not the disciplinary action that we may have to take. If you discipline a child angrily, he may respond angrily. If you discipline in love, he will learn.
- When a member of the flock strays away, your purpose in disciplining him is to restore him, not to punish him. The apostle Paul told us in Galatians 6:1, “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.” Sometimes we must take severe action to restore someone, but we must always do it with love.

2. Plan with your co-workers additional activities for the upcoming worship.

- **Tell, or act out, the story** of John the Baptist from Luke 3:1–18. Ask questions about it.
- **Tell, or act out the parable** of the lost sheep, Luke 15:1–10. Explain that Jesus wants us to call people to repent, and to correct straying lambs.
- **Explain** what humans do to bring about our salvation, and what God does:

A human must repent, that is, have a change of heart, and trust God (John 3:1–8).
God forgives us believers and seals us forever as his children; and his Holy Spirit gives to us spiritual rebirth (Ephesians 1:13–14).

- **Read James 2:14–23.** Then ask: What two kinds of faith did James mention?

Ask what makes the difference between the two kinds of faith? [God wants faith that results in a changed life and good deeds. Beware of faith that does not start with repentance. James says that the devils also believe, and shudder!]

- **Read the poem, *The Devil Whispers in a New Shepherd’s Ears***
If you translate the poem, you will not have to keep the rhyme.

The Liar aims, the arrow flies!
Its venom carries subtle lies!
The message of these fiery darts?
“Don’t ask if Christ dwells in their hearts!
Just promise grace, forget God’s rules,
and Say anything to fill your pews!
Do not explain they must repent
and know the One that heaven sent.

Do not offend nor bring on tears,
just entertain those itching ears,
And offer empty, fruitless faith,
the kind that even I embrace!”

- **Ask the people to give testimonies** about how God has helped them to repent. Here is an example by a young lady.

“For years I followed a guru, chanted in Sanskrit and lived in an ashram. I nearly died trying to create my own reality. One day I learned I was a hopeless sinner unable to save myself, and that Jesus loved me and could save me. I left the powerless gods, asked forgiveness for my sin of unbelief, and gave my life to Jesus.”

- **To introduce the Lord’s Supper**, read Luke 3:4–7 about the people coming to John the Baptist and confessing their sins. Explain that this was like what we believers do before we take the Lord’s Supper; we examine ourselves and confess our sins to God, 1 Corinthians 11:28.
- **Those who teach children** should read study #51 for children.

When I Repent	
I leave off following	Gurus, gods and guides Priests, shamans and teachers Money, pleasure and power Tradition, philosophy and ideology Satan, spirits and magic
I start following	Jesus Believing Jesus’ promises Obeying Jesus’ commandments