

## Disciples Repent

Open with me to Luke 5:27 – READ Luke 5:27-32

We are looking into the Gospel of Luke with one overarching purpose in mind – to understand what it is to be a Disciple of Jesus – which is the only relationship with Jesus. All other relationships are false, spurious, unauthorized – they do you no good. The only connection Jesus allows one to have with Him is to be His disciple. And today we are considering the first of 7 characteristic we find in Luke of Jesus' disciples – **Disciples Repent.**

Let's begin by reminding ourselves from the past 2 weeks... What is it to be a Disciple? Or as we saw last week – to Follow Him (those two terms being synonymous). We put out a simple formula: Having first seen Jesus and believed on Him, you begin to Follow – just like Levi here.

And here is how the Scripture says that happens...  
[listen very closely – do not miss this!]

### 1. God sends Jesus to Earth

From Heaven to earth in time to live as a man, without sin, dying on the cross, as an atoning sacrifice for sin. 1 Peter 3:18

### 2. Jesus Sends Gospel to You

Rising from the grave, Jesus announces Salvation to all who believe in Him and become His disciple – their sins will be forgiven and be fully reconciled with God.

Luke 24:46-47; Matt 28:19-20

### 3. God Opens Your Eyes

Upon hearing this proclamation (being exposed to – “Seeing” Jesus), a light comes on! You recognize Jesus for who He is and you strangely and overwhelmingly agree with what the Scripture says about Him. You may have heard it before 100x, but now you are like – “it is real, it is true!” Others around you hear the same message, but it does nothing to them. It is as if they are not even seeing it.

Paul explains this “work of God” of graciously and sovereignly “drawing you to Himself”  
2 Cor 4:3-4,6

It is called “regeneration,” “new heart,” new birth, being “born again” from above.

This is what Jesus told Nicodemus – “you must be born again.” That is not something YOU do... Just like you can't “birth yourself.” Your father and mother conceive you and your mother births you. And you can't unveil your heart; you can't give life to your dead soul – God must do that.

Eph 2:1,4-5 – You were dead in your transgression and sins... But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved you, even when you were dead in your transgressions, made you alive together with Christ!

#### 4. You Believe on Christ for Salvation

It is not enough to See (have Knowledge of who Jesus is) – many saw Jesus & His miracles, but rejected Him. Many have read the Bible and do not follow Jesus.

Also, it is not enough to Affirm (that those facts are true) – the demons do that – when He would cast them out, they would cry out, “You are the Son of God, do not banish us to the Abyss!” They had absolutely right theology about His person and position – and confessed it with their mouth.

Yet we would not call them His disciples.

It is not enough to simply Have the facts about Jesus and Affirm them.

This work of regeneration in your heart leads you to go beyond mere knowledge of and affirming of His person and place, to where you make a decision to Embrace Him, trust Him.

John 1:12 – *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.”*

*Personally entrusting yourself to Him, and what He did for you, as your only means of being reconciled with God.*

And not in just a momentary kind of way (as we saw last week in the parable of the soils) – the rocky soil and thorny soil, who – not having been made into good soil by a new heart – they are

excited on a human level about hearing this message of having sins forgiven by trusting in Christ... but do not like the good soil “hold fast” (8:15) the message with perseverance, no matter what.

These do not “receive” the message into themselves, they only try to take from the Jesus what they want from Him.

These do not want to become a “disciple” – embrace Jesus as their Master and Lord (learn, serve, honor, obey, suffer, trust, prefer Him above all others).

These want to receive forgiveness from Him, but not receive HIM, as if the menu with God is *a la carte* – it’s not. Only one thing on the menu – Jesus. You want Him, you get everything. You do not want Him, you get nothing.

So... with this understanding of “Believe”, naturally then flowing out of such belief – If you have embraced Jesus as your Master, then...

#### 5. You Follow Jesus as His Disciple

For your whole life long. Holding fast to Jesus Himself.

- a. The actions of following does not save you, or earn your forgiveness of sins... *By grace you have been saved, through faith (belief); Abraham believed God and it was credited to Him as righteousness.*

- b. The “Following” then is merely the outworking of who you now have become... a born-again Disciple of Jesus.

So that if you don’t Follow, it simply shows you that you are not a Disciple.

Okay – this is how one comes to be a Disciple.

God having sent Jesus, Jesus having sent the Message to you, God working in your heart, and thus you believe / receive Jesus.

So, let’s clarify our simple formula...

Now let’s return to where we started – Luke 5:32...

READ

Wouldn’t you think Jesus would have said *come to call sinners to faith / belief / receiving of Me?*

- 11:32
- 13:3,5
- 15:7,10
- 16:30
- 24:47

We see this same language used by the Apostles in Luke’s 2<sup>nd</sup> book (Acts) – 2:38 – as Peter was preaching the message of Jesus, and their hearts were rent in two, and they cried out to Peter – “What should we do? How should we respond to this message about Jesus...?”

Peter’s response – “Repent and be baptized.”

What is going on with this language? Where at times the single response for people to Jesus and His Gospel message is said to be, “Repent.”

- I thought Repentance was something you do AFTER you believe on Jesus and begin to follow Jesus... Even you said, Ted that Repent is in the list of 7 things that disciples are characterized by. [SHOW DIAGRAM}

Well, remember last week I said that some of these characteristics that must be both initial and ongoing. Repentance and Faith are those two things. So, we are talking here about initial repentance.

- Wait, I thought “faith alone” was the only requirement for salvation...

Yes, it is. We not saved by works, but faith alone.

So... “where is repentance, then?” This is the big question! If faith alone is the requirement for salvation, how can I say that Repentance is also a requirement for salvation. More than that, how can Jesus say and the Apostles say that Repentance is the appropriate response to Jesus???

It is because “Repent” is simply another word describing the wholesale embrace of Jesus that is true “belief.”

Repentance and belief are describing the same response.

I won't go so far as to say they are the same thing, but they are two different words describing one's initial response to Jesus. Some would describe it as Repentant Faith or Faith-filled Repentance.

Not two things, but one.

Now, for some of you, that statement just put you into "tilt" – all the lights on your dash are blinking, and alarm bells are going off.

So, let me push PAUSE on the sermon, and resolve any potential tension you may be having...

There may be two reasons for that.

1. Because of "Easy Believism") – there is a false teaching out there (sometimes called "easy believism" or "free grace theology" – promoted most prominently in the last century by Lewis Sperry Chafer, Charles Ryrie, and most vigorously by Zane Hodges). They took this reality that in the Scriptures belief and repentance are essentially the same saving response and they distorted it to teach that this means that "repentance" is nothing more than "changing your mind about who Jesus is."

But in doing so, they reduced "saving belief" to simply agreeing with the facts that Jesus was sent by God as the only Savior, and repentance to meaning you had to leave nothing behind, except

your inaccurate thoughts about who Jesus was.

In doing so, they eliminated any sense of "receiving" Jesus, the wholesale embrace of His person and work.

They then said that forgiveness of sins was granted on the basis of this kind of bare belief, and that Discipleship was for those who wanted to go further with Jesus and receive eternal rewards.

This is False Teaching, and a distortion of the Scriptures and the Gospel message.

So, if your alarm bells were going off when I say repentance and faith are the same response, because you think I am promoting easy believism – I am not. That teaching has been overwhelmingly shown to be false, and I am absolutely denying that teaching as heresy.

But you may have no idea what I was just talking about, having never been exposed to such teaching. I am glad for that. Many of us have, and there are many "Bible" churches who still teach such things.

There may be another reason that your gut tells you that something is wrong with me saying "repentance" and "faith" are just two different ways of describing the same saving response.

Here is likely the reason...

2. When you hear “repentance,” you are accustomed to thinking only of “repentance from sin – stopping some wrong-doing.

As if the word “repentance” itself means “repentance from sin.” It doesn’t.

The word means “such a wholesale change of mind, that leads to a change of behavior.”

You repent from singleness in order to get married.

*There is nothing wrong with singleness!*

Did I say there was anything wrong with singleness? You see, we have this negative connotation with the word “repent” as if it always is describing leaving off something sinful.

To “repent” means to let go of one thing to embrace something else.

You must let go of the single life to embrace the married life, and not just “married life” but a person – him or her!

You not only recognize and affirm “marital life” as an idea, but you take to yourself a spouse, with all of the blessings and requirements that come with it.

You repent from singleness & repent to marriage.

And what caused such a repentance?

A change in your heart. You saw that one, you begin to get to know her, and you agreed that she was lovely and perfect for you toward life-long happiness, but you didn’t just stop at merely “Affirming” that truth ... you decided to entrust yourself to her / receive her / embrace a marital relationship with her.

Knowledge, Affirm, Receive – “Belief”

But could you also say that upon seeing that gal, and getting to know her, you had a change of mind about your sorry state of singleness when there is a gal like that out there, and so much so that you determined to go out and buy a ring and put it on her finger, in order to receive her to yourself.

Change of mind that results in a massive change of behavior – “Repentance”

So, which is it? Did you Entrust yourself to your spouse or did you Repent from singleness into marriage?

You did both. They are in fact the same response.

This is why Jesus can say, “I have come to call sinners to repentance.”

Though obviously sinners need to repent of sin, in this proverbial statement, we need to let the word “repentance” have its fullest sense.

Yes, repent from sins. But that is not all. ANYTHING

that keeps you from fully following Jesus. Let it go!

You are determining to prefer Him over all other things. His demand upon your life is absolute.

Now, this is where we MUST grasp a crucial, and often misunderstood reality about repentance.

Repentance is an internal change of mind. It is a decision, a commitment. Repentance is not the actions you take to change. It is the decision to change. It is the Greek word *metanoia* – literally, “change of mind.”

We often hear people talk as if repentance is a change of behavior. But in reality, those changes in behavior are not repentance, but rather the “fruit of repentance.”

John the Baptist (Luke 3) is out there in the wilderness calling men to repentance (3:3). And yet listen to his language – 3:8 – “bear fruits in keeping with repentance.”

In other words, not only have a change of mind, but make good on that commitment to change – let that commitment “bear fruit” by actually changing your actions.

Paul uses this same language in Acts 26:20 – *I kept declaring that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.*

The deeds were separate from the repentance.

This distinction helps us understand how initial repentance for salvation is not an outward human work of righteousness... Repentance is not something we “do.”

In that moment when we “repent and turn to God” initially, God has so worked in our hearts that we commit to “release all” and embrace Christ. And we are saved! It is not like you are saved only after you quit getting drunk, and stop cursing, and get baptized, and share the gospel with someone else that you are really saved???

It is like the day you get married...

The very moment you stand there with your knees knocking and say “I do,” have you actually changed any behaviors yet? Have you actually done anything as a married person? Have you actually made good on your marriage vows? No – you have simply made a commitment to release singleness and embrace your bride!

And so, are you married? Yeah! Because you have committed before God and these assembled witnesses to be married. The relationship is ratified not on the basis of your performance in marriage, but based solely on your commitment to marriage – or in Paul’s language – your “repentance” and not your “fruits of repentance.”

This is why repentance can be a requirement for salvation, along with faith – without it becoming a human work earning salvation. And because

repentance is also, like faith, directly granted by God in the regeneration of your heart.

Acts 11:18 – *“Well then, God has granted to them the repentance that leads to life.”*

Salvation is all of God, all of grace – even our faith and repentance.

So, we need to make one final clarification on our diagram here... REPENT / BELIEVE

So, Look – I think its fine if we say that the appropriate response to the Gospel message is twofold – faith and repentance. That is true; They are different, but they both together describe the single response of a person to Christ. I am not going to quibble over words, as long as we understand what we are saying.

Let's Review...

>>We are learning what it is to be savingly connected to Jesus as His disciple, a word that denotes a very defined relationship characterized by actively “following” Him.

>>How we come into that relationship is this...

- God so arranges that we gain knowledge of Jesus (via Scriptures or one of Jesus disciples speaking to us),
- God so works in our heart to cause us not only to Affirm the truths about Jesus, but whole-heartedly decide to repent (to release) whatever we must to fully embrace and entrust ourselves to Jesus alone as Savior and Lord.

- This involves the dual response of faith & repentance – essentially one and the same response.

And this call to salvation is perfectly summed up in Jesus' statement in Mark 1:15 –

*The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand; Repent and Believe in the Gospel.*

>>Those who have made that commitment, based on God's work in their heart, will continue to “bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance” in an ever-increasing way throughout their life, which will look like these 7 ways we are going to see in Luke... continually learning from Him, serving Him, honoring Him, obeying Him, suffering with Him, relying on Him, and releasing whatever is needed to be released in order to fully do so.

Now, before we leave Repentance – we need to understand all that we need to repent of... And beginning next week, we are going to let Jesus helpfully point out specific things we need to be releasing in an ongoing way as fruits of our initial repentance: **sin, self, \$, family, reputation, hypocritical religion, living by sight (rather than by faith), and / or ANYTHING** that keeps you from fully embracing Jesus and His call upon your life.

A continual “releasing / repenting” hovers over ALL of our discipleship. And it is at this point where the call to discipleship is going to become very demanding... and where the rubber is going to meet the road for many of us. For some of us, it may even feel like the tread is coming off...

Because whether we have ever been taught “free grace theology” / “easy believism” or not – many of us have gone down that road – reinterpreted, explained away, or unintentionally ignored Jesus’ “hard” words to His disciples in these middle chapters of Luke.

And the result of that is this – we find areas in our life where there is this great tension in our hearts about following Him as He calls us – and “*it is just so hard.*” We tend to think the problem is that we need to crank up more courage inside of us... when it may be that our spiritual ability is limited, because we are still trying to hold onto things Jesus says to release.

And so this is what we are going to do – look squarely in the face of these things that may not be sin, but Jesus says we need to let go of to follow Him. And we are not just going to pass over them quickly with a nervous laugh and move on... Because Jesus doesn’t.

We need to make good on our initial commitment to embrace and follow Him as His disciple. There are things we are going to have to let go of in order to Follow Jesus in all He calls you to. And is going to feel like you are dying.

Because you are. And yet as you do, I am going to make you a promise – squared in the Scripture, that two things will happen – I guarantee you...

1. We will experience the freedom and joy that Jesus intended for His people

2. Jesus will have the Bride for which He gave His own life.

#### PRAY

O Lord, we are on the brink of a great precipice here. It is scary to look over the edge and realize what all we must let go of to follow You.

And yet like all who have gone before us, our need is simply to Turn our Eyes from those things and to look full in your wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of Your glory and grace to us.

Help us to do just that in the days ahead – for the mutual and incomparable joy between you and your Bride.