Life Connexion Group Study Notes
Repentance that Prepares the Way
Date: 18 October 2026

Series Overview

In this series, we are exploring what it means to live as people who belong to God. Biblical holiness involves turning from sin, surrendering to God and allowing the Holy Spirit to form the character of Christ in us.

Last week considered how holy lives become a visible witness in the world. This week turns to the heart behind that witness. Ps Samuel calls us to return wholeheartedly to God and to welcome the conviction that prepares us for spiritual renewal.

Introduction

The central truth of this message is that repentance prepares the way for renewal. We cannot sincerely ask God to transform our circumstances while refusing to let Him transform our hearts. God desires a people who reflect His character, as well as people who experience His power.

Repentance is a decisive turning of our hearts, minds and lives towards God. We acknowledge sin honestly, receive His mercy through Jesus Christ and respond in obedience. His invitation to return is an expression of grace: He calls us back because He desires to restore us.

> **We cannot sincerely ask God to transform our circumstances while refusing to let Him transform our heart.**

Key Scriptures

Joel 2:12–17
In a time of devastating crisis, God calls His covenant people to return with all their hearts. He looks beyond torn garments to a changed heart. The whole community is summoned to humble itself and seek His mercy, because He is gracious, merciful and abounding in steadfast love.

Acts 3:19–21
Peter calls his hearers to repent and turn back to God so that their sins may be wiped away and times of refreshing may come from the Lord. Forgiveness and renewal are gifts received as people turn towards Him.

John 16:8
Jesus teaches that the Holy Spirit will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgement. Ps Samuel emphasised that this conviction exposes what needs to change so that we can respond to God and be transformed.

Deuteronomy 6:5
God calls His people to love Him with all their heart, soul and strength. Repentance restores our wholehearted allegiance to the God to whom we belong.

Repentance that Prepares the Way

In Joel 2, God speaks to His people during a time of great crisis. His invitation is clear: return to Him with all your heart. The words “Yet even now” remind us that He is still calling His people back. He is gracious and merciful and His desire is to restore their relationship with Him.

Returning to God with our whole heart means bringing every part of life before Him. Our heart includes what we think, what we want and the choices we make. We may honour God in some areas while keeping control of others. Repentance begins when we acknowledge those areas and become willing to follow His direction.

This is why repentance goes deeper than feeling sorry. We can regret being caught or dislike the consequences of our actions without wanting to change. Genuine repentance means recognising that we have sinned against God, asking for His forgiveness and turning towards Him in obedience.

Joel tells the people to rend their hearts rather than their garments. Tearing clothes was an outward expression of sorrow, but God wanted a sincere response within them. In the same way, religious words and church attendance cannot take the place of a heart that is willing to change.

We can be honest with God because our acceptance before Him rests in Jesus Christ.
Ps Samuel reminded us that Christianity is not a gathering of people who are good enough to earn God’s approval. All of us have sinned and need His mercy. Jesus died for our sins so that we can receive forgiveness and stand right with God through Him.

This also shapes the way we welcome others. Ps Samuel described a young man who feared that God would strike him dead if he entered church because of his past. Instead, believers explained that they too needed the forgiveness Jesus offers. The young man was welcomed, came to faith and received mentoring. Our life together should help people see that they can return to a merciful God.

The Holy Spirit helps us recognise where we need to return. He brings things such as pride, bitterness, dishonesty and hidden compromise to our attention. This is what conviction means: God shows us what is wrong so that we can acknowledge it and respond to Him. His purpose is to change us and restore our closeness with Him.

Ps Samuel compared the awareness of guilt to the pain we feel after stubbing a toe. The pain tells us that something needs attention. In the same way, awareness of sin should lead us to confession and a changed direction. We do not need to remain trapped in self-condemnation. We can receive God’s forgiveness and take the next step of obedience.

When God shows us something that needs to change, we can ask: What do I need to confess? What am I holding back from Him? What should I do differently? Repentance becomes practical as we respond honestly and act on what He has shown us.

God’s mercy also helps us understand His call to repentance. When the people of Nineveh responded to Jonah’s warning and turned from their evil ways, God showed them compassion. We too need to welcome His mercy towards those who repent. As people who have received forgiveness, we are called to extend forgiveness to others and support their growth.

This call reaches the whole church as well as each individual. In Joel, everyone is called to gather and seek God's mercy, including leaders, families and children. Ps Samuel encouraged us to seek renewal with the same willingness to examine our lives together. As we pray for God to work among us, we also ask Him to show us which attitudes, priorities and practices need to change.

We do not have to make ourselves perfect before coming to God. We come honestly, allow Him to show us what needs attention and depend on His grace to help us change. The Holy Spirit brings renewal as we respond to His call. As Ps Samuel said, "Repentance is not merely turning away from what is wrong. It is returning to the One who is right."

The next step is to put this response into practice. Ps Samuel gave five ways we can return to God wholeheartedly in our daily lives.

Five Practical Responses

1. Examine divided devotion
Ask where something else repeatedly takes priority over obedience to God. Notice the occasions when we excuse ourselves by saying that God should understand, while refusing what He asks of us.

2. Identify what has displaced Christ
Consider habits, relationships, ambitions and desires that have taken the place that belongs to Jesus. Ask what needs to change so that He is honoured in those areas.

3. Practise daily honest self examination
Make room to pray, "Search my heart, Lord." Listen with humility, acknowledge what He reveals and turn back to Him. Bring specific attitudes and actions before Him rather than offering only general words.

4. Value inward holiness together
Encourage one another to seek a heart that pleases God above an outward religious appearance. Model honesty, humility and willingness to receive correction. Help one another take practical steps of faithfulness.

5. Respond promptly to conviction
Do not postpone obedience until it is easier or more convenient. Following God's will includes obeying when His direction challenges our preferences. Choose one clear step and ask Him for the grace to take it.

Returning to God Wholeheartedly

God calls us to return because He is gracious and merciful. Repentance reaches our thoughts, desires and choices. The Holy Spirit brings conviction so that we can change and Jesus is the basis of our forgiveness and righteousness.

As we seek renewal, we surrender the areas of life we have kept under our own control. Wholehearted devotion grows as we respond to God in daily, practical obedience.

> **God does not ask for a corner of your heart. He calls for your whole house.**

Our Personal Response

Is there an area of your life that remains under your control rather than under the lordship of Jesus?

Scripture Memory Challenge

"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."

- Joel 2:12 ESV