

FOLLOWING JESUS
A Disciple's Handbook

Lesson 1:
“Following Jesus in Repenting and Believing”

Repenting and Believing Introduction

Read Mark 1:14-15

Sometime after John the Baptist was thrown into prison for confronting the immorality of King Herod, Jesus picked up John's clear call to turn from sin and self to serve the living God through repenting, believing, and obeying. Jesus declared that if one was to enter the kingdom of God (God's royal and righteous rule), they had to repent and believe in the gospel (the good news that God the Father sent His Son into the world to save all who would humbly turn to God and trust the sacrifice of Jesus the Savior and Son). Jesus' call to repent and believe was unmistakable and unapologetic. He made it clear that it was absolutely necessary in order to pass from death into life and from darkness into light.

Jesus later confronted unrepentant and unbelieving religious leaders who had witnessed the repenting and believing of the worst sinners of the day—tax collectors and prostitutes. Yet the religious leaders, in their pride and self-righteousness, would not repent and would not believe. (Read Matthew 21:28-32.) Jesus' desire was that all men would receive the love, light, and life that His Father sent Him to provide in abundance. The Father loved the world and sent His Son to tell them of His great passion and purpose to open the door of salvation and deep satisfaction of soul. (Read John 3:13-17.) But He made it clear that the key that opened the door to God's grace and goodness was repenting and believing.

Repenting and Believing Defined

Repenting involves turning away from something and turning toward something else. As a disciple, repenting is turning away from anything that does not line up with God's Word, will, and ways as embodied and expressed perfectly in the example of Jesus and turning toward everything that does. In the Bible, repenting means a change of heart that results in a change of decision and direction. It means different thinking on a matter that produces different attitudes and actions. Genuine repenting involves intellect, emotion, and will—thinking, feeling, and doing.

Believing involves relying completely on something or someone in unwavering confidence. As a disciple, believing is being fully focused on the person, promises, and power of God the Father and Jesus the Son as revealed in the Word of God and made personal and present by the power of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Scriptures, believing means to place confidence in or to trust

completely. The ultimate indicator of what we believe is how we behave. We will always act on what we truly believe. Genuine believing is a conviction that produces a corresponding conduct.

Repenting and Believing in the Life of Jesus

While Jesus had nothing to repent of, He went everywhere calling men to repent. Jesus called people to turn from sin and self, from false and fleshly thinking, and put their faith in Him—the only source of truth and spiritual transformation. He called and challenged people to do away with foolish notions that were contrary to God's Word, will, and ways. He exposed religious hypocrites and called people to turn from the destructive influence in their lives and to look to the God of grace, love, and mercy who sent His Son to help them find their way to Him. (Read Luke 5:29-32.)

Jesus believed completely in the mission His Father had given Him. This was a mission to seek and save, rescue and redeem, and reconcile and restore lost and broken humanity. He believed absolutely in the power of the Holy Spirit to anoint and empower Him to speak and to act according to the perfect will of the Father to defeat the devil and his demonic kingdom of darkness and to establish His kingdom in the hearts of all who would repent and believe on Him. (Read Luke 4:14-21.)

Repenting and Believing in the lives of Jesus' Followers

Jesus' followers first engaged Him by repenting and believing. Some of them had initially been disciples of John the Baptist, as they responded to his message to repent and believe that Messiah and His kingdom was coming. (Read John 1:35-37.) So, when they heard Jesus issuing the same call, they recognized their need to respond to Him. (Read Matthew 4:17-20.) This began an ongoing journey of discovering their need to repent of wrong thinking, attitudes, and actions and to be conformed more and more to the message and ministry of Jesus. They discovered that repenting and believing was an ongoing process rather than just a single act. As followers of Jesus, they learned increasingly how to conform their thinking, believing, and behaving in a manner consistent with His mission, message, and ministry. (John 13:12-17.)

After the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the disciples went everywhere preaching and teaching a message of repenting and believing. (Read Acts 2:38-39; 3:18-21; 8:35-37.) They also continued a lifestyle of repenting and believing. An example of this is Simon Peter not being clear on the fact that Jesus died to make Jew and Gentile equal in every way and that the grace of God, apart from the law, would save them and receive them fully through repenting and believing. (Read Acts 10.) There was also a council of church leaders who came together in Jerusalem to debate what requirements should be placed on Gentile believers. After much discussion, debate, and deliberation in the presence of the Lord, the Holy Spirit spoke, challenging and changing their thinking and believing. They responded to the Spirit's wisdom and revelation with actions that indicated real repenting and believing had taken place. (Read Acts 15.) The Apostle Paul taught consistently on the need for repenting and believing in his letters to the churches. (Read Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10.)

Repenting and Believing in Our Lives

Repenting and believing is how we are saved and enter the kingdom of God. (Read Mark 1:14-15.) And repenting and believing is how we continue to see the work of salvation and the rule of King Jesus increase in our lives. If repenting is turning away from anything that does not line up with God's Word, will, and ways, it means that we must be open to ongoing changes of heart and mind that result in changes in beliefs and behaviors, attitudes and actions. (Read Ephesians 4:20-24.) Repenting as a lifestyle requires personal revelation and personal response. This is what the Holy Spirit desires to lead us in each and every day. (Read Romans 8:13-14.)

If believing involves relying completely on something or someone in unwavering confidence, then it is absolutely necessary for us to grow in being more and more focused on the person, promises, and power of Jesus. Faith is like a muscle—the more it is exercised, the more it grows. The more we choose to believe the Word of God, the more we will behave according to the Word of God. This is how we grow in grace and the true knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (Read 2 Peter 3:18.) The main issue in a Christian's life is how we think and what we believe. Healthy and sound thinking and believing will produce healthy and sound emotions and feelings. (Read Philippians 4:8-9.)

MEMORIZE: *Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.* (Mark 1:14-15)

KEY TRUTH: Jesus' call to repent was unmistakable and unapologetic. He made it clear that it was absolutely necessary in order to pass from death into life and from darkness into light.

YOUR RESPONSE:

This is how you can respond in loving obedience to Jesus as you apply the truths from this lesson to your life.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal places in your life where you need to repent of sin and self and confess those to God, believing in His ability to renew your mind and refresh your heart.
- Make a daily commitment to allow your thinking to be adjusted to better line up with God's Word, will and ways.
- Pay attention to areas where your confession does not line up with your conduct and make a fresh commitment to believe God's Word and act accordingly.
- Meditate on the promises in God's Word to bless your life abundantly, making a fresh commitment to think rightly, believe fully, and anticipate expectantly that they will be fulfilled.

WRITTEN RESPONSE: Lesson Reinforcement

Review each section from the lesson on the previous pages to fill in each blank below. This will reinforce the truths from this lesson in your life.

1. _____ involves _____ from something and _____ something else.
2. _____ involves _____ on something or someone in _____.
3. Jesus called people to _____ from _____ and _____, and from _____ and _____ thinking and put their _____ in Him—the only _____ of _____ and spiritual _____.
4. After the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the _____ went everywhere _____ and _____ a _____ of _____ and _____.
5. _____ and _____ is how we are _____ and _____ the kingdom of God.

WRITTEN RESPONSE: Life Reflection

Using the journaling section on the pages at the end of this lesson, write in your own words your responses to the following questions.

1. What have you learned and what has impacted you personally from this lesson?
2. In reading the scripture references in this lesson, what are you sensing and seeing the Holy Spirit highlighting and revealing to you that will enable you to better follow Jesus?
3. As a disciple and follower of Jesus, what steps of loving obedience do you need to take to see what you have learned in this lesson become ongoing practices and patterns in your life?