



## LESSON 4 // REASONS FOR REPENTANCE

Excellent results are almost always associated with a commitment to proper preparation. If we want to bear fruit for the kingdom of God and experience a fulfilling relationship with Him, we must be committed to the preparation process.

From the message and ministry of John the Baptist, we are learning about a key element of this preparation—repentance. Great spiritual progress is available for those who will prepare themselves through genuine repentance.

**Luke 3:6-9 (NIV)** *[John] went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>7</sup> John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? <sup>8</sup> Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. <sup>9</sup> The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

God wants us to live in a spirit of repentance. For this to happen, we must understand some reasons why repentance is so necessary. What does repentance accomplish in us? It puts the “ax” to:

### 1. Problem roots.

Any gardener understands root problems. For a garden to flourish, all roots contrary to the life of the garden’s plants must be deliberately removed. Failure to deal with the problem of undesirable roots will ultimately cost the gardener in terms of dead plants and a reduced yield of the plot.

According to John’s message in Luke 3:9, repentance is like an “ax” that is “laid to the root” of the problem of sin. While most of us believe we understand what sin is, it’s helpful to go back to God’s Word and rediscover His definition of sin. As we do, we become more aware of its prevalence as a problem in our lives and how the ax of repentance can be laid to this root.

- “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.” (1 John 3:4, NIV).
- “The devising of foolishness is sin” (Proverbs 24:9, NKJV).
- “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them” (James 4:17, NIV).
- “Everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23b, NIV).
- “All wrongdoing is sin” (1 John 5:17a, NIV).

John the Baptist’s message was that the ax of God needs to be laid to the root of these areas of our lives. These problem roots can only be removed through repentance.

## 2. Poisonous roots.

We are motivated to repent when we understand the awfulness of sin's impact and consequences.

Sin is the deadliest poison. Even in diluted or subtle form, it can deceive and kill! What does sin poison in our lives?

- *Our thinking (Ephesians 4:17-18).*
- *Our attitudes and emotions (Ephesians 4:22-24).*
- *Our choices and behavior (Galatians 5:19-21).*

If we can learn to listen to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit as He convicts and corrects us, and respond with repentance, we can avoid so many problems.

The Lord wants to keep us from the blatant sins we commit, but He is also concerned about the subtle ways we shut Him out, do our own thing, live in a spirit of rebellion, disregard His voice and distance ourselves from His dealings.

Too often, the defensive mechanisms of our soul and spirit are so thick, our will so strong and our minds so preoccupied with the things around us that we totally miss or ignore God's attempts to call us to repentance. We fail to live sensitively before the Lord.

Note two Scriptures that reinforce the importance of living sensitively in a spirit of repentance:

**Psalm 51:17 (NIV)** *My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.*

**Psalm 81:11-16 (NIV)** *But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. <sup>12</sup> So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. <sup>13</sup> "If my people would only listen to me, if Israel would only follow my ways, <sup>14</sup> how quickly I would subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes! <sup>15</sup> Those who hate the Lord would cringe before him, and their punishment would last forever. <sup>16</sup> But you would be fed with the finest of wheat; with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.*

Repentance lays the ax to sinful roots in our lives. A repentant, broken spirit cuts off stubbornness. Submission heads off rebellion. Turning from our sin to God prepares the way for His grace and fresh growth in our lives.

### Discussion questions

1. How does the Bible define sin? In what ways is sin the root of the problems in our lives?
2. What does it mean to "lay the ax" to the root of sin? How should this make a difference in your life?
3. Read Psalm 51:17 and Psalm 84:11-16. How do these verses speak to you about the value of brokenness and repentance in your walk with God?