

3.2

THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will repent of my sins.

FOCUS VERSES

Mark 2:17

When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

LESSON TEXT

Matthew 3:1-11;

Mark 1:1-5; 2:1-17;

Acts 17:30

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God calls everyone to repent.



Thinking about Last Week:

Have students refer to their Daily Devotional Guide to answer the following questions:

1. What is something that impacted you most as you read through the Bible Reading Plan, the Lesson Text, and the Biblical Insights?
2. How did this affect your prayers and thoughts throughout the week?
3. Do you feel you grew closer to the Lord this past week? Why or why not?

LESSON CONNECTION I

Teacher Option:
Show image to help illustrate the Lesson Connection.

There was little at Boca del Monte—*The Mouth of the Mountain*—other than an isolated wooden inn marking the beginning of the journey into the high country of Colombia, South America. Eucaris, a woman who was the first person to take the gospel to the mountain people, shepherded Bill Drost to a rope bridge spanning a river about a hundred yards wide.

A mule awaited Bill on the other side for his ride to the top of the mountain. The ascent was sometimes the width of a man. Sometimes a precipice plunged far to the valley below. The trek took most of the day. After reaching his destination at about 7:00 PM, Bill lay exhausted on a bag of coffee. In about thirty minutes, more than two hundred people had gathered to hear him speak. Prayer continued until midnight, and Bill told those who wanted to be baptized to wait a day or two so he could explain the Scriptures concerning baptism. Early the next morning a man named Julio came up to Bill as he was shaving. “I want to be baptized, but I’m not sure I can be,” he said.

“Oh, why not?” asked Bill.

“You see, I have three wives. I don’t know which to leave and which to take. It seems to me I will have to make a decision.”

Bill didn’t know what to tell the man, so he said, “Wait until tomorrow, and I will let you know.” After that night’s service, Bill took his flashlight and Bible and went into the coffee bushes. Kneeling down, he placed his Bible before him and prayed, “God, there is something in Your Word that will settle this, I know. I don’t know where it is. You will have to help me.”

Bill let his Bible lay open, and his eyes lighted upon words from Revelation: “first love.” Bill thought, *This can’t be for the fellow; this is talking to the church.*

After turning off his flashlight and waiting in the darkness, Bill said, “Lord, reveal to me what You want.” Again Bill let the Bible fall open. Once more “first love” was before his eyes. “Lord, I don’t know, but this is what You have given me, so I will tell the man.”

Julio was waiting for Bill when he went to shave at 6:30 AM. “What is the answer?”

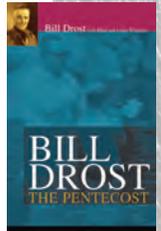
“I’m sorry,” Bill apologized, “but I can’t get anything else, only these two words: first love.”

“That’s it!” Julio exclaimed.

“What?” Bill asked, intrigued.

“I’m so glad the Lord has shown you, because the first wife was the one I loved, but she has left me. I must go and get her if I can and try to bring her back, so that we can live a Christian life.”

(This account is summarized from *Bill Drost the Pentecost*, Word Aflame Press, 2000, available at www.pentecostalpublishing.com.)



SG TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: What is a verse of Scripture that has been a great source of strength, help, or direction to you? Explain.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection on page 319. **I**

I. PREPARING THE WAY OF THE LORD

- A. The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness
 - » *If someone asked you how Jesus could be the Lord God, how would you explain it?*
- B. John the Baptist Preached Repentance
 - » *How does true repentance effect change in people's lives?* **V**
- C. John the Baptist Pointed to Jesus
- D. The Preaching of Repentance Prepares the Way for the Lord

II. JESUS PREACHED REPENTANCE

- A. Son, Thy Sins Be Forgiven Thee
 - » *How can we be sure the paralyzed man had repented of his sins?*
- B. Jesus Went to the Sinners
- C. I Came Not to Call the Righteous, But Sinners to Repentance
 - » *Were the Pharisees and scribes who did not believe on Jesus righteous? Explain.*
- D. God Commands Everyone Everywhere to Repent
- E. I Will Repent of My Sins
 - » *Are there some people for whom repentance is impossible? Explain.*

Internalizing the Message **I**



Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- Repentance and asking God to forgive our sins
- That we would make the necessary changes in our lives to please God

LESSON COMMENTARY

I. PREPARING THE WAY OF THE LORD

A. The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness

As Jesus pointed out shortly before His ascension, “All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44). One of the earliest of these things to be fulfilled in the New Testament era was a prophecy of Isaiah concerning John the Baptist: “For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Matthew 3:3). (See also Mark 1:1–3; Luke 3:1–6.)

It is important to note two key words in Isaiah’s prophecy: “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God” (Isaiah 40:3). These two words are *LORD* and *God*. These pronouns identify Jesus as God Himself. *LORD* represents the Hebrew *Yahweh* (sometimes rendered as Jehovah) in English translations, by which God identified Himself to Moses (Exodus 3:14–15; 6:2–3). The Hebrew word translated God in Isaiah 40:3 is a form of *Elohim*, used of the Creator in Genesis 1:1 and in many other places.

If someone asked you how Jesus could be the Lord God, how would you explain it?

B. John the Baptist Preached Repentance

The first recorded words spoken by John the Baptist were, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). That the message of repentance was John’s mission is reiterated in a variety of ways in the Gospels. For instance, Luke wrote of John, “He came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Luke 3:3). Like Matthew, Luke connected John’s ministry with Isaiah’s prophecy, but Luke extended the connection further. (Compare Luke 3:4–6 with Isaiah 40:3–5.)

Mark also made clear that John’s inaugural message was the necessity of repentance: “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). Mark, like Matthew and Luke, saw John’s ministry as a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. (See Isaiah 40:3.)

Metanoēō, translated *repentance*, refers to changing “one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness.” Since Scripture was not originally written in English, it is necessary to capture not merely the English definition of a word, but also the way the word would have been understood by those who used it at the time Scripture was written. In this case, since “in English a focal component of [the word] *repent* is the sorrow or contrition that a person experiences because of sin, the emphasis in [the Greek text]

How does true repentance effect change in people's lives? 

Teacher Option:

Show Video to either take the place of the question or to help illustrate it.

seems to be more specifically the total change, both in thought and behavior, with respect to how one should both think and act. Whether the focus is upon attitude or behavior varies somewhat in different contexts” (Louw-Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

C. John the Baptist Pointed to Jesus

Isaiah’s prophecy about the ministry of John the Baptist pointed specifically to Jesus. But John’s focus on Jesus was not limited to Isaiah’s prophecy. John made it known from his comments about Jesus and his interaction with Jesus that Jesus was superior to him.

John the Baptist consistently pointed his hearers to Jesus. John knew his own ministry was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (John 1:23). He also knew Jesus was the promised Messiah who would take away the sin of the world and baptize those who believed on Him with the Holy Spirit. (See John 1:29–36.)

D. The Preaching of Repentance Prepares the Way for the Lord

For people to be prepared for the coming of the Lord, it was necessary that they first repent. This is always the first step for those who wish to “see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6). We must keep in mind that the legitimacy of baptism has always depended upon the faith that precedes baptism. As illustrated in John’s ministry, this was faith in the Lord whose way John proclaimed.

John preached about the Lord when he said, “There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost” (Mark 1:7–8). This declaration anticipated the Day of Pentecost when Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33).

II. JESUS PREACHED REPENTANCE

Just as John the Baptist came on the scene in fulfillment of a prophecy of Isaiah, so did Jesus. Matthew connected the beginning of Jesus’ ministry with a prophecy found in Isaiah 9:1–2.

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. (Matthew 4:14–16)

Following these words, Matthew wrote, “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17).

Shortly after this prophecy in Isaiah, the prophet declared, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

The contextual connection between Isaiah’s “Galilee of the Gentiles” and David’s throne and kingdom demonstrates Jesus’ message was not intended only to the Jewish community of first-century Israel, but it was also for the Gentiles or, as Isaiah 9:1 has it, “Galilee of the nations” (KJV).

Whether Jew or Gentile, the message of repentance is introductory—after believing on Jesus—for entry into God’s kingdom. In other words, sorrow for sins alone does not open the door to God’s kingdom. Repentance is required, but it must be repentance that comes because of hearing and believing the gospel message, as seen in Acts 2:37-38.

A. Son, Thy Sins Be Forgiven Thee

During His ministry on earth, Jesus demonstrated His authority to forgive sins. For example, presented with a paralyzed man lying on a bed, Jesus said, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Matthew 9:2). He said this in response to the faith of the paralyzed man and those who brought him to Jesus.

Although this text does not specifically mention repentance, its reference to faith, the willingness of the paralyzed man to be brought to Jesus, and the obvious faith of those who brought him all indicate hearts that had been transformed by hearing and responding to the gospel. The Bible does not tell us every detail of each event, but it opens our understanding of unmentioned details by those it does record.

How can we be sure the paralyzed man had repented of his sins?

B. Jesus Went to the Sinners

Pharisees and scribes who did not believe on Jesus complained, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Luke 15:2). In response, Jesus told the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:4-7.)

Jesus’ behavior that offended the Pharisees and scribes was the purpose for which He came. In this parable, the ninety-nine just persons were those who thought themselves to have no need for repentance. These represented the Pharisees and scribes. The one lost sheep was the repentant sinner.

C. I Came Not to Call the Righteous, But Sinners to Repentance

The account of Jesus’ call of Levi illustrates Jesus’ mission. The scribes and Pharisees questioned Jesus’ willingness to “eat and drink

with publicans and sinners” (Luke 5:30). Jesus answered, “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31–32).

Were the Pharisees and scribes who did not believe on Jesus righteous? Explain.

Also, as in the Parable of the Lost Sheep, the righteous are those who think they have no need for repentance, while the sinners are those who acknowledge their need for spiritual recovery.

D. God Commands Everyone Everywhere to Repent

Repentance is not a suggestion; it is God's universal command. When Paul visited Athens, noting the pervasive idolatry, he declared that God “commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

To be sure the Athenians understand the scope of this command, Paul explained that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:26–27).

After announcing the universal nature of the command to repent, Paul informed those who heard him that God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world” (Acts 17:31).

E. I Will Repent of My Sins

The ability to repent is a gift from God. When Peter explained why he had gone to the house of Cornelius, the Jewish believers glorified God and said, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

Those who refuse to repent will perish (Luke 13:3). When we obey this universal command and experience baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, we have the promise of forgiveness and of the additional gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Are there some people for whom repentance is impossible? Explain.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE I

Teacher Option:

Show Image to help illustrate the Internalizing the Message section.

It was at least one hour's walk from the location of Bill Drost's meeting to a place suitable for baptizing. As he lay on his coffee bag, Bill had a vision. He saw a white horse; beside it a short, round man with a red face; and in front of the man a pool with ducks swimming on it.

When Bill told the people the dream, one person said, "Oh, we know who that is. That is the man we all work for, Señor Fandino."

"But what about this pool of water," Bill asked.

"He has a pool," they said, "but be warned—he is not in favor of the gospel."

"Never mind," Bill answered. "Tell me where he lives."

"About a five-minute walk from here," they replied.

Bill sent a young man to tell Señor Fandino he wished to speak to him. Soon Bill was standing before the man he had seen in the vision. Señor Fandino knew of Bill.

"May we use your pool to baptize some people, Señor Fandino," Bill asked politely.

"Why do you want to baptize them?" Fandino asked. "Were they not all baptized when they were children?"

"No, this is a baptism unto repentance," explained Bill. "Now if you don't understand, sir, and you can wait . . ."

Señor Fandino cut in, "Oh no, I'm leaving now."

"You wait," Bill encouraged him. "I can hear them coming now."

With that, almost a hundred people came down the mountain path and stood around the pool, waiting for baptism. Excusing himself, Bill got into the water and began telling them just why they were being baptized. After a short time, Señor Fandino shouted in English, "Wait! Mister!" He continued, "Can I be baptized?"

"If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you have repented, you sure can be baptized," replied Bill.

With that, Señor Fandino ran into the house, returning in his pajamas, ready for baptism. Bill baptized him in the name of the Lord Jesus, and Señor Fandino came out of the water baptized in the Holy Ghost, speaking in tongues. In fact, he was so filled with the Spirit that for four or five days he could hardly speak a word in Spanish; he just worshiped and worshiped.

(This account is summarized from *Bill Drost the Pentecost*, Word Aflame Press, 2000, available at www.pentecostalpublishing.com.)

God calls everyone everywhere to repent. And when we repent from a sincere and humble heart, the Lord promises to forgive and fill us with His Spirit. All around the world, the power of repentance is being experienced. And the Holy Ghost is being poured out upon all those who call on His name.

