



# ROUSING REPENTANCE

This week's text – 2 Corinthians 7:1-16

## Sermon ideas

### 1. Repentance leads to reconciliation

Who we are in Christ must dictate how we live our lives for Christ. We battle our sin victoriously through the rhythm of repentance and faith. Repentance means responding to the sorrow of having grieved God through sin, and consciously turning our back on the sin and returning to God, placing our hope and trust in him once again. This is how Christians change.

Human beings accuse God on wrongdoing all the time, because of our hard hearts. But God's defence is always to remind us of what he did for us on the cross. God put his own life on the line by sending Jesus to die. He chose to take the required and justified punishment for sin onto himself instead of placing it on us. He did this all for us because he loved us.

In reflecting God's kindness and mercy, Paul gave his life for the sake of the Corinthians, not because he had to, but because of his love for Christ and for them. The only fitting response to this kind of love and sacrifice was reconciliation, relationship and intimacy between them. Paul fought for their hearts because this is what God does with us all the time. Sin breaks relationships, and so God continually fights to rid our hearts from sin.

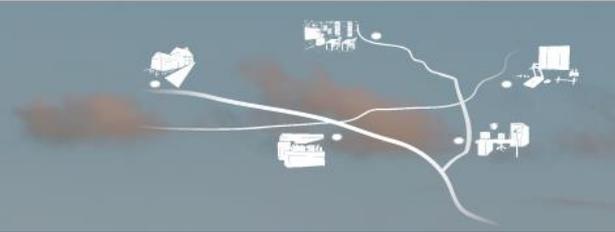
In turning from sin, relationships are restored, in Paul's case brought him a lot of comfort. The Corinthians responded to his rebuke and their hearts softened towards him once again. They also welcomed and embraced Titus, which was a huge encouragement.

### 2. Repentance leads to a life without regret

Paul's letter to the Corinthians was very confrontational, and he didn't hold back, because he knew what was at stake. He had one shot at getting them to confront their sin and to turn back to God, and he did it because he loved them. He knew that it would wound them emotionally, and that his attempt could fail, severing of their relationship once and for all. He was able to still go ahead with it because his motive was to shepherd them back to God. He was not enslaved to their approval, but to God's alone. It was worth the risk if it produced in them, a Godly sorrow, that would lead to repentance.

So many of us do not have important and necessary conversations because we are enslaved to people's opinions of us. Our identities are tied to what people think of us, and we do what we can to remain a certain way in their eyes. For some of us, it may mean being seen as the "nice" girl/guy, or the "easy-going" one, or the "one they can always count on" etc. We fear being honest or drawing boundaries because it may change their perception of us, and so we duck and dive around issues, protecting the comfortable labels we have been given by them. We choose to hide our sin, avoid conversations, cheat and lie in order to "save face". When we are then caught out, we feel deep shame for being exposed. We then feel regret for not having dealt with things while there was still time to. The Bible calls this *worldly sorrow*. It is a deep regret/remorse when things not working out. But it is not an attitude of repentance, and it is not about grieving God's heart.





Godly sorry is different. Godly sorrow pierces the heart, feeling the weight of sin at grieving God's heart. When we repent from sin in this way, we receive forgiveness and cleansing from God, and we experience true freedom.

The Corinthians experienced Godly sorrow which produced the following:

- a renewed eager devotion to Paul and his teaching
- a righteous anger at how Paul had been treated
- a soberness in respect to their awe and reverence of God
- they longed to see Paul, because their relationship had been restored
- they were enthusiastic on Paul's behalf
- justice was carried out towards the offending person that Paul's letter had addressed

### 3. Repentance leads to rejoicing

Additional Text: 2 Corinthians 3:16-18

Both Paul and the Corinthians were elated by the fruit of their repentance. Repentance brings about joy and freedom, which is difficult to explain unless one has been through it and experienced it for oneself. Many of us are not living in joy and freedom because we are still living in sinful patterns, believing that the sin will bring us what we need. It never will. Joy is found in living freely before God and people. When we fight for repentance in the lives of others, we are fighting for their joy, not their shame.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What is the difference between worldly sorrow and Godly sorrow?
2. What does repentance mean, and why is it far more than a confession?
3. Why is repentance necessary for reconciling relationships?
4. Why is people-approval such a barrier to repentance?
5. Application Questions:
  - What situation are you not confronting because of your need for approval?
  - What label has that person given you that you are trying to maintain? (e.g. perfect daughter, kind woman, nice-guy, best employee etc.)
  - How is your identity in Christ the real solution to your need for approval?
  - What is God asking you to do in response to this prompting?
  - Why does repentance lead to freedom and rejoicing?
6. When last did repentance lead to freedom and joy in your own life, and what were some of the other benefits?

