

Apostles Houston
Life Group Study: Self-Examination and Repentance

Love and Laughter

Creating a Sacred Space

Welcome→ Embrace→ Refresh

Remembering Our Purpose

Why Do We Do Life Groups? *(feel free to communicate this in your own words)*

In Acts 2, we read how early Christ followers devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. In Life Groups we follow their example with the hope of becoming more like Jesus, the goal of our salvation.

Being Known

Story Telling

We believe that loving God and others begins by being known.

In 5-7 minutes, what do you want us to know about yourself (~5Hs)?

Pray and Celebrate

Be sure to honor whatever is good or beautiful about their story, and ask one or two people to pray over those who just shared.

Following Up

Responding to God's Word

Last week, we were encouraged to spend time with a different type of prayer, possibly with a prayer partner. How did that practice go? Is this something you feel called to do again?

Hearing the Word

Hearing: (*Read "Context" and then Mark 1:14-15. Then pray for God's grace to understand.*)

- Before we dive in, what comes to mind when you think about repentance? What is repentance in Scripture? What are some things that you heard in the sermon on Sunday?
- In v 15, Mark tells us that Jesus told the people to "repent and believe in the gospel." Can you recall any stories from the Bible about those who repented or called for repentance? Why did they repent? What seems to be the purpose of repentance? (See notes for suggestions)
- Read Isaiah 55:6-8. Note how seeking God is paralleled by a forsaking of wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts. What does it look like for us to practically move away from our sinful actions and thoughts? How does God's gracious promise of pardon influence how we do that?
- Self-examination and repentance go together. Spend some time reflecting as a group on the need for self-examination. How can praying the Examen, for example, help us identify things in our life for which we should repent?

Obeying (application):

- Following on from the final question, spend some time this week in self-examination. As you pray, keep in mind what you should repent for. Consider trying out a daily prayer of Examen. On Sunday, reflect on the pattern of self-examination, repentance, and forgiveness in our liturgy.

Soul Care

Prayer Requests

This week, break up into groups of MEN and WOMEN for prayer. Along with sharing prayer needs, create some space for confession. Then, remind each other of God's mercy, and pray for God's grace to repent and be healed (1 Jn 1:9; Js 5:16).

Announcements

- No Life Group meetings during Holy Week (March 24-30).

Teacher's Notes

Context

- Repentance is a theme found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the word for repentance means “to turn around.” The New Testament word for repentance means “to rethink, change the mind.” Combining these two definitions gives the full meaning of repentance—a change in our mind and a change in our actions. A reversal of both our thoughts and our actions are necessary to return to God. God’s grace and forgiveness are free and unearned but the Spirit invites to embrace a lifestyle of repentance.

Specific Insights

- Some possible Biblical examples: **Saul:** Acts 9:1-22, where Jesus asked why Saul was persecuting Him? Saul responded by being baptized and proclaiming the Gospel in the synagogues. **King David:** Psalm 51 was David’s response after the prophet Nathan accused him of committing adultery and murder. See verses 1 through 10, David’s appeal for mercy, an acknowledgement of his transgressions, and a desire for a clean heart. **The Prodigal Son:** In Luke 15:11-32, the prodigal son’s self-examination in verse 17 led to a desire in verse 18 to return to his father to confess his transgression.
- Repentance is both a movement away from sin and towards God. As we seek repentance, we reflect on our own shortcomings but ultimately we focus on the goodness and graciousness of our forgiving God. Isaiah 55 continues into a beautiful picture of the grace, peace and joy found in God. “Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.” (v 13a)
- Self-examination involves a comparison of our life to Scripture, not a comparison to others or to the standards of society. The Examen is a type of reflective prayer where we picture moments that happened in our day and look for God’s presence in those moments. In praying the Examen, we look for how God is acting in our life; we ask how we felt, what we thought, and what we did when God acted. Did something draw us closer or further from God? We finish by looking to tomorrow and ask how we can cooperate more fully with God’s plans.