FIRST STEPS · PART TWO

What Does Genuine Repentance Look Like?

"Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance."

LUKE 3:8

II

What Shall We Do Then?

When John the Baptist called people to repent, they did not ask a theological question. They asked a practical one: *"What shall we do then?"* John's answer was concrete — share what you have, stop overcharging, do not abuse your authority. Repentance cannot remain a feeling or a general prayer. It has to reach the actual places in our lives where something is wrong.

> **KEY INSIGHT**
>
> *Repentance is not primarily an emotion. It is a direction. John called for fruits — visible evidence that something real had happened. Recognition without turning is remorse. Turning without returning to God is only self-improvement. All three movements belong together.*

Recognize. Repent. Return.

This simple pattern runs through every genuine act of repentance in scripture.

1. ### Recognize — Name What Is Wrong
   Stop hiding behind general words. Name the specific action, thought, attitude, or habit God is asking you to confront. Broad prayers have their place, but when we already know what is wrong, we should be willing to name it before God.

2. ### Repent — Confess It and Turn From It
   Confess the specific sin and ask for forgiveness — then turn away from it. If you lied, choose truth. If you wronged someone, try to make it right. We do not turn to earn forgiveness. We turn because genuine repentance means we no longer want to continue in the same direction.

3. ### Return — Come Back to God
   The king of Nineveh came without demands, without bargaining, without assuming God owed him mercy. He simply humbled himself and turned toward God. That is the posture. Because of Christ, we return with confidence in His promise: *He is faithful and just to forgive.*

John gave specific answers to specific people — tax collectors, soldiers, those with surplus. What specific area is God asking you to name right now, rather than a general prayer?

Is there an area where you have felt sorrow over sin but have not yet made the turn? What would the turn look like in practical terms — not a feeling, but an action?

The king of Nineveh said "who knows?" — not "God will surely forgive us." What is the difference between coming to God with humility and coming with entitlement?

Lord,

I come not with a case to make, but with a heart that knows something is wrong and wants to be right with You.

Teach me what recognition means — to see clearly, without excuse and without despair. You know what I have done. You know what I have held onto. I am not coming to negotiate. I am coming to turn.

Where I have felt sorry without changing direction, give me the courage to take the next step. Where I have made confessions without fruits, make my repentance real. And where I am afraid to return, remind me that the welcome was never based on the quality of my turning, but on the character of the God who receives it.

If we confess our sins, You are faithful and just to forgive. I believe that. I come on that promise alone.

AMEN.

WRITE YOUR OWN PRAYER

THIS WEEK

1. **Name it specifically.** Write down one thing God has been showing you — not in general terms, but the actual action, habit, or attitude. Bring that name to Him in prayer.

2. **Take one practical step.** What would turning look like in the place where the problem exists? Write one concrete action — not a feeling, an action — and take it this week.

3. **Read Psalm 51 aloud** as your own prayer. Notice the three movements: recognition, turning, return. Underline the phrases that feel most true of you right now.