



PROACTIVE REPENTANCE

Repentance is the act of agreeing with God about our sin, turning from it, and rejoicing in what God has done for us in Jesus. Most of our repentance is reactive. We repent primarily for the sins that are staring us in the face or the ones that others point out. And honestly, even then, sometimes we delay dealing with our sin. But what if we weren't just reactive in dealing with our sin, but proactive? This is a trait we see in many of the godly men and women of the Bible: Josiah (2 Chron. 34), Daniel (Dan 9), and David (Psalm 139:23-24) to name a few. Proactive repentance is saying to the Lord:

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way
everlasting!

PSALM 139:23-23

The goal is not to be perfect and sinless, only Jesus fits in that category. But rather to live a lifestyle of repentance, facing our sinful hearts with boldness, confessing the sin that's there, and believing the Gospel again and again for those areas of brokenness. It is in that broken place of repentance where the Spirit of God changes us.

PRACTICING PROACTIVE REPENTANCE

Set aside 2 hours, get your Bible out and work through the following tasks. Please take your time as you work through this because being rushed will defeat the effectiveness of this exercise.

- **Read Psalm 139.** In your journal, write out verses 23-24. Write them out 2 more times. As you are copying these verses, pray them over yourself.
- **Give yourself 20 minutes** to quiet your heart and write down any sins or sinful thought patterns that God brings to mind. Set a timer on your phone to help you commit to 20 minutes. Don't answer texts or emails during this time. If your mind wanders, just reread verses 23-24 again. Listening for God's still small voice is a discipline. It takes focus and work.
- **Take time to process with God any sins He has exposed.** Look up verses that come to mind that relate to those things. Ask God to break your heart over those sins. Ask Him what repentance looks like. If you have a journal, you might write those verses down that you looked up or write out a prayer. Please don't rush! Take as much time here as you need! Once you feel ready to move on, go on to part 4.
- **Read Daniel 9:1-19.** Read through it a second time with the awareness that Daniel was a good man, not outwardly sinning, not in willful rebellion against God or others. He was proactively seeking God. As you read through this time, think about why a good, decent man might pray this way. Read through a 3rd time, this time make a list with 2 columns in your journal or on a piece of paper. Label the first column: **GOD**. Label the second column: **US**. Read Daniel's prayer and list all the things He says about God in the first column and all he says about "we" or "I" in the second column. Daniel doesn't point the finger at the sin around him. He sees the same seed of those sins in himself. Is this something missing in your life? Are you quick to point the finger at others and yet never search your own heart?

- **Make a list of the sins you see in other people that bother you the most.** Don't be shy or surface-y. Be brutally honest. What in other believers or nonbelievers drives you crazy?
- **Spend 10 minutes asking God** to show you where the seed of that same sin is present in your heart. Again, set a timer on your phone to make sure you commit to 10 minutes.
- **Through the process of reading through Daniel 9, has God revealed any other sins to repent of?** Take some time to write those down and process them with God as you did in part 3. Consider reading David's famous prayer of repentance found in Psalm 51 to give you an example of a repentant heart.
- **Finally, before you leave where you are, answer the following questions:**
 - Was this an uncomfortable process for you? Why or why not?
 - Was there any fear in shining the light in the dark corners of your heart? Were you afraid of what you might find?
 - Did God reveal anything in your heart that surprised you? (Ex: Envy when you were certain you aren't an envious person.) Write down up to 3 specific sins or sinful thought patterns God revealed to you in this time.
 - What does "bearing fruit in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:8) look like in regards to those specific sins you listed earlier? Give some very practical steps/examples of what this will look like for you to walk in repentance from what God has exposed. Remember, exposing sin is always so that through repentance we will change! Not just so that we will know.

Please write down any other thoughts you have about this process and your experience. Lastly, write out a prayer of repentance in regards to these things.