

GREATER THINGS - PART 3

Scripture used: [Acts 2:36-38 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Most of us are fatigued and anxious as we end our second month in quarantine. But we should not feel powerless, as God wants to fill our existence with greater things, with His outpouring of love and radical capacity to change our lives. The surprising insight from today's message is the connection between repentance and the restoration of intimacy. We often have negative connotations of repentance; we may have been guilted or shamed into "repenting" more out of social manipulation than as a gift and resource that leads to spiritual and emotional health. In today's message, we learn that true, Biblical repentance is an invitation that God gives us to deeper intimacy and healthier relationships with God and with others.

KEY POINTS

- 1) Acts 2:16-17 reminds us that God foreknows the events of the present and His redemptive plan is able to work in the midst of the most challenging circumstances. Just as the followers of Jesus grew in their relationship with God in the midst of the challenging days following Jesus' death, so we too, in the midst of the pandemic, must not just survive, but we must also grow. As we face challenges in our work and our families, we must grow through them. We must repent of our sins and grow through the broken pieces. Repentance is akin to restoration. Our Scripture showcases people who had been hostile to each other, had called each other blasphemous and heretic, some who were in favor of the crucifixion of Christ and against the apostles. Yet they acknowledged the error of their ways and shifted their position. Former enemies became friends. The posture of repentance and the new relationship formed around following Jesus allowed them to share in the intimacy of friendship.
- 2) Repentance is a tool. It involves 3 key elements:
 - a. Owning our stuff: acknowledging honestly where we have fallen short or acted inappropriately
 - b. Acknowledge where I'm causing pain: recognize the impact our actions have on others, and genuinely communicate our sorrow over the harm we have done or pain we have caused
 - c. Commit to change: make a decision to live in a different way that honors God and cares for others
- 3) Repentance is made possible because of God's grace. Because we know that God's heart is one of love, restoration, and forgiveness, He makes it safe to repent. Repentance is hard when we are afraid of being punished if we own up to our mistakes, but we should not be afraid of confessing our transgressions and iniquities. We have to let go. We should also be people of grace who make it easier for those around us to repent.
- 4) Through the gift and resource of repentance, we receive forgiveness, we redeem intimacy. We hear God inviting us to restoration, to do something greater in our lives. Repentance grounds us in humility and restores real intimacy, and so it is a crucial way that our lives individually, and followers of Jesus communally, reflect God's goodness to the world and contribute to healing and hope in the world.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - When you hear the word repentance, what are the first feelings that you feel? Do you have positive or negative associations with the word? Why? Do you feel like repentance is difficult or easy? What in your experience has made it more difficult or easier?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [Acts 2:36-38 \(NLT\)](#). Discuss the relationship between the intimacy of the community in Acts 2:42-47 with the act of repentance in Acts 2:36-38. How does the process of repentance prepare us for greater intimacy with God and others? Have you seen this relationship between repentance and intimacy at work in your own life? Do you have a story of repentance that has been central to your relationship with God or others? In this discussion section, also consider the challenges to repentance. What happens when people take advantage of your desire to repent by blaming you for more than you are responsible for? What if people are not ready to forgive even when you communicate that you are repentant?
- 3) **DO** - In the safety of God's grace and assurance of forgiveness, consider where you need to repent. Own your stuff, acknowledge the pain you've caused others, and commit to change. Ask God for deeper intimacy with Him and with others through your repentance!