

Reconciliation and Repentance

Key Verse

"Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance." Matthew 3:8

Basic Biblical Understanding

Prior to reading this article, first read the article entitled "[Reconciliation](#)." That article shares the foundational principles for biblical reconciliation. This article focuses on the need for repentance as an aspect of reconciliation.

Reconciliation requires repentance! We're answering two questions in this article: (1) What is repentance? (2) How do you know if repentance has occurred?

What is repentance? Repentance is more than regret or sorrow (Hebrews 12:15–20). Repentance means to turn around, to change direction, to change the mind and will. Repentance does not occur when a person cries; repentance occurs when a person changes. For change to happen, God initially draws a person to Himself through grace (Ephesians 2:8–9). (For a more thorough understanding of this subject, please read "[Repentance](#)").

How do you know if repentance has occurred? Here are five indicators of true repentance:

1. The person accepts full responsibility for his or her actions. The individual doesn't say, "If I have done anything to offend you..." The individual says, "I'm sorry for _____."
2. The person welcomes accountability. The individual doesn't resent the fact that others will need to see if the change is real.
3. The person does not try to downplay the hurtful behavior.
4. The person does not continue in the hurtful behavior, but instead, wants nothing to do with it.
5. The person makes restitution where necessary.

Only God fully knows the heart; but Jesus told us to evaluate fruit. "By their fruit you will know them" (Matthew 7:16a). As believers in Christ, we're called to love people, forgive people, and be at peace with all people (if at all possible). However, if you attempt to reconcile with someone who is continuing in abusive, sinful, or unrepentant behavior, you're putting yourself in harm's way and you're not loving that person well. Reconciliation requires repentance!

Verses (ask God to show you how they apply to your life)

- "...Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17b
- "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" Romans 2:4

Helpful Questions and Application

1. After reviewing the indicators of true repentance, are there areas in your situation that need to be addressed further? If so, ask God to give you wisdom to address those things well.
2. Even if you're not the primary offender, repentance may be necessary on your side too. Ask God if hatred, bitterness, anger, or anything else is interfering with true reconciliation. If so, repent before God and confess those sins before the other person.

Additional Resources

Scripture references: 2 Chronicles 7:14; 1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13

WordTruth article: [Forgiveness: God's Pattern for Your Practice](#)
[Forgiveness: How to Ask for It](#)