

Repentance As A Lifestyle

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Introduction

As a youngster my faith was very real—and as early as I can remember, Jesus was a part of my life. The relationship I had with Him began like many others, through the unique love of my mother. Her mother, Alice, a first generation Italian-American, was a pioneer who was one of the first women to be a president of a Lutheran congregation in this country. Together they saw to it that I was in church and Sunday school every week. In fact, I remember staying through both the early and late services as they worked to grow the mission congregation we attended. My young faith was also nurtured because of a special Sunday school teacher, Susan Baldwin, who glowed with the Spirit as she shared stories about her Master with her primary class every Sunday morning.

During elementary school, my faith continued to grow because of Rev. Kroneburger who came down out of his pulpit to be a great dad to twin boys, Peter and Paul—good friends who were my age. He was a pastor that my own unchurched, but awesome dad liked for an interesting reason—he could remove his clerical collar and be a regular guy.

I remember planning my junior high and high school sports, academics and activities around my confirmation class, not vice versa. Most important of all I remember Pastor Baglien who confirmed me, and in the traditional pre-*Affirmation of Baptism* interview asked me what I wanted to do with my life. “Take the message of repentance to the world as a pastor,” I said—only to have the comment met with his wise counsel that there were many ways to be involved in ministry.

As I matured, there were continual miracles He brought about in my life that made me even more aware of His presence. Like the healing of an irreparable injury that allowed me to participate in the state track meet only three weeks later—or the “mistaken” phone call to my younger brother Mike from a college track coach who thought he was a senior and wanted to offer him a scholarship. A scholarship that was eventually offered to me which paved the way for a young Lutheran to be challenged at a Mennonite college.

There were other events in my life that strengthened my belief in Him. Like the beautiful godly wife He brought into my life; college professors that encouraged me to look deeply into my Lutheran heritage instead of trying to convert me to Anabaptist theology; and countless college chapel speakers who each brought a personal challenge to grow in faith. Later in my career there were a number of professional opportunities that I’d encounter which were clearly gifts from God.

But nothing has had more impact on my relationship with Him and His great love for me, than the way He accepted me back after I proceeded to trash many of the opportunities and relationships He had given me through sinfulness, a thorough compromise of my witness, and a personal decision to pursue a walk of faith . . . “my way.” How could He possibly receive me back after giving me so much, so many opportunities, only to have me squander them and reject the walk He chose for me? Through the very message He had given me to share so many years before—a *message of repentance*. Whether you’re an unbeliever, a compromised believer like I was, or walking firmly in the faith, the repentance I speak of is primary to your relationship with Jesus.

The Historical Meaning of Repentance

Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary provides the following definition of repentance:

re-pen-tance \ri-'pent-en(t)s\ <i>n</i> : the action or process of repenting esp. for misdeeds or moral shortcomings syn see PENITENCE
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For many, *Webster’s* definition represents the common understanding of repentance within the structure of faith in God. Man’s action, taken to right a relationship with God, broken by sinfulness for which we do penance.

There are two New Testament Greek words which are translated repentance in modern English translations: *metanoia* (including its verbal counterpart *metanoëo*) and *metamelomai*. The first term is translated as repentance fifty-eight times in the New Testament, the latter only six times. As we look at repentance we’ll concentrate on the preponderance of the word, *metanoia*.

Prior to the Christian meaning we have inherited, which for the most part is similar to *Webster’s* definition, the Classical Greek *metanoia* meant something quite different—changing one’s mind or heart about someone or something. During the pre- and early Christian period of KoineÀ Greek (ca. 300 BC to 100 AD) *metanoia* continued to carry a sense of a change of mind about someone or something. In the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) *metanoia* and *metanoëo* occur twenty times in the canonical books and seven times in the apocryphal books and maintained the same meaning. In most cases *metanoia* in the translations held to the

pre-Christian meaning of a change of mind about someone or something. When the context specifically mentions sinful practices about which a person was changing his or her mind about, the translation to repentance is also appropriate. But this original meaning as seen in the Classical Greek began to see change. In the Old Latin and Latin Vulgate *metanoia* was translated as *paenitentia* which came to mean *penance* or acts of penance that had to be done if one hoped to obtain grace.

This new idea of penance can be traced from the post-Apostolic Fathers like Hermas and Justin Martyr, through to Augustine, who unlike Hermas and Martyr believed that repentance was not the work of man, but a gift like grace. The post apostolic fathers looked for some sort of contrition for sin and the announcement of the same at the point of water baptism. But by the time of Augustine, infant baptism had become the norm. Post-baptismal repentance became the focus and themes like justification, regeneration and sanctification became popular. Repentance became almost synonymous with contrition, confession and penance.

During the Reformation, Calvin and Luther rejected the notion that post-baptismal sins could be atoned for by contrition, confession and acts of penance. It was their belief that all sins (past, present and future) were covered by the blood of Christ when the sinner was baptized so that penance wasn't necessary. Calvin further believed that repentance continued through the life of the Christian and saw it as the fruit of faith.

Luther saw repentance beginning at the point of faith and believed it involved genuine sorrow for sins committed and the renunciation of all sinfulness. He wrote, "Repentance is not penitence alone but also faith, which apprehends the promise of forgiveness, lest the penitent sinners perish." He connected repentance with faith and saw it as a lifelong process in Christians just like Calvin. It is exemplified in his thinking and writings, a sample of which says, "When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ said 'Repent,' He called for the entire life of believers to be one of penitence."

The Reformation saw the new church fathers begin to go back to the Classical Greek. Both Luther and Calvin wished to remove the concept of penance from the meaning of repentance. They pointed instead at the root of the meaning of the word repentance: *meta*=after; *noeo*=to think. Put the two together and the effect of *meta* was "after the fact" or "afterwards." In essence it meant to think about something later on and have a reversal of opinion about it. Thus, repentance meant "to change the mind." Specifically—to change the mind about Christ.

In a letter to John Staupitz in defense of his *Ninety-Five Theses*, Luther may have come closest to the New Testament meaning when he wrote that, "metanoia signifies a changing of the mind and heart, because it seemed to indicate not only a change of heart, but also a manner of changing it, i.e., the grace of God. For that 'passing over of the mind,' which is true repentance, is of very frequent mention in the scriptures." Luther was onto something far different than the metanoia found in Webster's.

The Meaning of Metanoia in a Modern Age

How did you happen on this Web site? There are a number of possibilities. I might have asked you here, a friend of *Metanoia Ministries* may have invited you here, or you may have simply entered "repentance" or "metanoia" as one of the terms in your favorite search engine and we came up among the results.

If you've examined many of your search results you've probably discovered a number of meanings or ideas concerning repentance—and even more for metanoia. In searches I've conducted I've found authors who talk about the current lack of the "preaching of repentance," others who write about repentance as a "commandment of Christ," even some that call it a "special baptism." One author I admire—whose early works have greatly impacted my own thinking and whom I often use as a resource—discounts it as a necessary element of our Christian walk entirely because it "doesn't appear in John's Gospel even once . . . and only minimally from Luke to Revelation." He further claims to have undergone a fourth "change of mind about repentance."

One New Age site declares, "Metanoia is a word in Biblical Greek which has been translated incorrectly as 'Repent' or 'Repentance' but actually means 'Going beyond the mind . . .'" and then proceeds to promote New Age philosophy. A second site reveals the use of metanoia as a name of a software application that comes close to "artificial intelligence" (I'm still trying to figure out how they claim a registered trademark on the word). Still another is a psychology based treatment center, another a homosexual support group—even a website design firm, and alternative Rock group. It's a great example of the variety of translations and ideas there are concerning metanoia, or repentance. So how do we find the meaning of repentance as it was intended in the New Testament?

The Difficulty of Translation

Bible translators throughout the ages have often found it difficult to translate the scriptures literally into languages because ethnic and cultural differences often combine to produce entirely different meanings. That concept shouldn't be hard to understand. In 1960, when General Motors began their marketing efforts for one of their new compact cars being exported into Mexico and South America, they had an immediate problem with the car's name. "Nova," when broken up syllabically in Spanish sounded like "no va," or the car "won't go!"

In her book *Mission Possible*, Marilyn Laszlo gives an example of one of these situations that happened in 1976 when she was a Wycliffe translator in Papua New Guinea. She had struggled for years with the Sepik Iwam language trying to find a word that meant "soul." One night after several days of struggling once again to explain the concept of soul to the Sepik Iwam group she was working with, she went to bed in tears. She cried and let God know she was ready to give up. But she heard God whisper, "Marilyn, who do you think created this language. I did. I love this language, and I love these precious people. The words are there. Trust me."

Days later one of the young Sepik Iwam boys and his dog ran into the jungle chasing a wild boar. The boar got away, but not before the boy, Ronnie, got lost. He ended up spending the night in the jungle, wide awake, holding his dog with his back to a tree and trembling with fear that a python would eat him. "I was terrified that I would lose my name," Ronnie said when he was finally found. When one of the elders was pressed about what the young boy meant, he said, "When you lose your name, it is over, finished!"

Since she knew the words for death and dying, Marilyn realized the concept young Ronnie was trying to convey was different. After consulting with the translation team that had been helping her in her struggle to find the word for soul for nearly seven years, they agreed that "name" was indeed the perfect Sepik Iwam word for "soul!" It also provided a second witness. Apparently the Sepik Iwam elders remained unsure of the concept of their names being written in the "Book of Life." What if someone who didn't understand their language had "misspelled" their name when entering it? Would God know them, or would they be lost forever? For the first time, they realized that God knew each of them personally, even the correct spelling of their names—and they were overwhelmed.

Metanoia represents a similar problem for us. Consider this—not only do we have a problem with our translation from the Greek to English, but what if the original Greek left something to be desired from words of the language most likely spoken by John and Jesus—Aramic? Translators often look for other words in a language that might have similar meanings to illustrate a concept. The closest word we have in English to the meaning of the Greek word metanoia—as used in the original scriptural text—is "metamorphosis," or the life cycle of change as seen when the caterpillar becomes a butterfly. If we look closely at the concept of metamorphosis we might find insight into the process of metanoia, and the importance of repentance in our lives.

Metanoia as Metamorphosis

The Enabling. The Monarch butterfly starts life as a little egg clinging to a milkweed leaf. The egg hatches only a few days after being laid and the larva that emerges from the egg becomes the first stage of the butterfly's life. At that point the larva is only one twenty-fifth of an inch long. It's first meal consists of it's own egg casing. But from then on, the caterpillar eats only milkweed. Through this exclusive meal, the caterpillar develops a natural defense system against the toxicity of the milkweed which is poisonous to birds—the Monarch butterflies' natural predator.

The caterpillar eats nonstop for three days, and then begins to molt for the next three weeks. During this time he adds colorful stripes. Two more weeks of nonstop eating follows. At this point, the caterpillar is two inches long and 2,700 times its original weight. If a 6 pound baby grew as fast as a Monarch caterpillar, it would weigh eight tons in twelve days. After its voracious eating spree, the caterpillar then begins to climb until it finds the right place for its cocoon.

The Equipping. Once it finds a suitable place, it produces silk and weaves a small button that it firmly attaches to a twig. Near the caterpillar's rear legs is a small hook-shaped appendage called a cremaster which the caterpillar hooks into the silk button and gently hangs from the twig forming a "J" shaped silhouette. The caterpillar molts for one last time and its stripes turn into a milky green sheath called a chrysalis. As the chrysalis hardens into a green case, gold dots appear. Depending on the air temperature, in a little less than fifteen days the case turns transparent and the Monarch butterfly's golden wings show through.

Soon the chrysalis shakes and splits and the Monarch butterfly emerges. At first, the Monarch is wet, crumpled and looks exhausted and vulnerable. The Monarch begins transferring fluid from its plump stomach to the veins in its wings. The butterfly must hang vertically and allow its wings to fully expand and dry before it can fly. If the butterfly flew off immediately, it would starve because its proboscis or feeding tube is

disconnected and must also spring into place. Once in place, the proboscis supplies the butterfly with nectar and water. When not in use, it coils up under the Monarch's head, like a watch spring. Soon, the velvety wings become smooth and dry and the Monarch caterpillar has successfully changed into a Monarch butterfly and the "metamorphosis" is complete. The process of metamorphosis is both **enabling** and **equipping**.

How Does Repentance Go Beyond Change?

John the Baptist was pretty straightforward. There was more than sorrow, and more than change involved in true repentance, "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance." (Matthew 3:8, NASB) Obviously John was looking for a sign that real change had actually taken place. If we look at the simple illustration of metamorphosis we have some amazing clues about how this happens in our lives.

With regard to the caterpillar—on the surface it might seem to appear that when metamorphosis takes place a new creature is born—yet in all the change that has taken place, the caterpillar and the butterfly are one in the same. Although his outward appearance is different, although he'll never eat the same way again, or move about in the same manner, he is still the same creature and has the same DNA. Although he started life in one form, he will end his life totally transformed. For he is both **enabled** and **equipped** for the changes that take place.

Enabling. Whether we talk of the caterpillar in his larvae or adult stage, most would consider him an ugly creature. Scripture tells us that as man, we were born into sin, ugly in the sight of God. Yet even so we are both provided for through the plan of God. The caterpillar first survives on the meal of his egg casing, then the milkweed leaves, then instinctively climbs the tree to build its cocoon or chrysalis. Man is sustained in body as a child through his immediate family, then spiritually by the fellowship of believers in his church family, and grows into adulthood with the Word—which provides God's plan for salvation.

In the chrysalis, the caterpillar undergoes a dynamic transformation triggered by God's plan written in his DNA. Through coming to faith and belief, a dynamic transformation is triggered in man by God's plan written in His Word. Baptism becomes man's chrysalis—that wet moment in time when our transformation takes place. For the caterpillar and man, coming out of the chrysalis becomes a point of new equipping.

Equipping. Once out of his chrysalis, the butterfly finds his proboscis and a set of wings. He hangs from the branch until his proboscis springs into place and his wings unfurl and dry. When a truly repentant heart leads man to change we also find equipping to continue in change. In repentance (metanoia/metamorphosis) we find the equipping of the Holy Spirit. Therein lies the key—baptized by water and fire, man is also equipped for a life of faith through the Holy Spirit.

But, the comparison doesn't end just yet.

The butterfly can go to the end of the branch and stretch his wings and fly. Caught on the updraft he is no longer limited to crawling and inching along in life. He has new equipment, now he needs to use it. In using it, like the bee, he pollinates and furthers life. Yet he could also decide to remain on the branch, fearing the updraft and fearing where the wind might take him.

As believers, we too are equipped to "fly." How sad it would be, if we stood equipped to fly yet never left the branch. How sad it would be, to leave our repentance incomplete. How sad it would be, to fear where the wind might take us and never bear the fruit of change.

A Godly Sorrow Isn't Only for Sinners!

When Paul spoke of repentance in 2 Corinthians he provides us with a key to the repentance that both John and Jesus spoke of:

I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. (2 Corinthians 7:9-10, NASB)

Paul was clearly indicating that true repentance, repentance in relationship to the will of God, was free of the type of sorrow found in repentance that came out of an earthly or human origin. Repentance according to the will of God would **lead to salvation**. He applauded believers walking in this kind of repentance:

For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! (2 Corinthians 7:11a, NASB)

John's call to the Pharisees for their repentance was more than a call to acknowledge sin and guilt, it was a call to change and a call to a repentance that would not **lead to death**:

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

“As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matthew 3:7-12, NASB)

Jesus’ conversation with the Pharisee Nicodemus, spoke of a dynamic change, a rebirth:

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.” (John 3:1-15, NASB)

As the very lives of Jesus and John the Baptist are woven together, the call and message of these distant cousins are woven together as well: repentance and change, rebirth and the Holy Spirit.

When Luther said that, “metanoia signified a changing of the mind and heart,” he was concerned that the believer’s understanding of repentance didn’t stop there. He felt that the meaning of metanoia went further, that it “seemed to indicate not only a change of heart, but also a manner of changing it, i.e., the grace of God.” When John calls out to the Pharisees to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance” he angered them, and pointed to Jesus who intrigued Nicodemus, a Pharisee, with stories of the greatest change, of being born again—and a promise of the Spirit.

Repentance is Complete in the Fruit of Change!

We can argue whether repentance is found in all the Gospels, we can argue whether we find it between Luke and Revelation. We can further argue whether repentance is necessary for salvation, and can even do the same with baptism. But, it is difficult to argue what can happen when true repentance takes place, and when the fruit of the change is obvious. Jesus’ last statements in Luke, at His ascension, demonstrate the importance He placed on repentance and His promise of what would follow:

... and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:46-49, NASB)

When we look at the early church fathers, we can argue whether Augustine was correct in his belief that repentance was a gift like grace, or whether it was a life-long experience as Luther or Calvin believed, or whether grace proceeded from repentance as Luther felt it did. But when we understand that in repentance (metanoia) there is enabling and equipping for change, there is really little we can argue!

My own early childhood was filled with the knowledge of God and the relationship He had established with me “before the foundations of the world.” I knew He had “chosen me to be holy and blameless.” I knew that I was “saved by grace and not by works.” I accepted His grace at work in my life at an early age, felt His call on my life, and had a very real desire to serve Him.

My young adult life was filled with the conscious knowledge that we could walk expecting miracles, and those miracles—real miracles—did fill my life. I went to a Christian college and took seminary classes, and my life was filled with the joy of experiences He created for me to walk in—including marriage to a wonderful Christian wife and numerous job opportunities.

And yet despite His real presence in my life, I proceeded to trash my opportunities and compromise my witness. It wasn't until I'd lost nearly everything, that I finally began to seek Him and truly walk in repentance. At that time, God brought an experience into my life that confirmed the value of the equipping that comes in repentance.

In the midst of a family crisis, my daughter and I found ourselves at a Sunday evening service where our pastor delivered a message he hadn't intended—on recommitment. He spoke of the need to “return to a call,” and specifically of someone who was there that evening who'd been running from a call for more than thirty years. Later, as we knelt in the midst of our pews in prayer, God spoke the same message to my daughter and I, “Tonight's the night!” When Sarah shared what He had whispered to her my immediate thought was, “I need more time, Lord.” But I suspected He wouldn't wait on me anymore, and I also suspected that later on that night—I would really need Him . . . **and I did!**

Walking in Repentance . . . Means Life!

I spent that November night on my knees at my father's bedside as Satan tried to claim him. In the morning, Jesus won the victory. And where before I always found a way to take some of the credit for my faith walk, for the first time I found I didn't need to. What the Lord had me do that night was very simple, He had me share His Gospel message with my Dad. That's all I did—all through the dark hours of the night and right into dawn. I'll never forget the experience.

It would take a book to reveal everything that happened over the weeks to come—but most important, my father's health began to return, and God continued to teach me to stay on my knees. Jesus had taken residence in my father's heart by the third of December. He celebrated his joy in a way that truly warmed my heart—well enough to go shopping, he bought himself a cross to wear around his neck, and a praying hands necklace for Mom. Three days later on the sixth of December, quite unexpectedly, the Lord took him home.

Luther felt very strongly that baptism was a life-long experience. Right or wrong, he talked of baptism as, “walking wet.” He felt much the same way about repentance. Had I not been “walking in repentance,” I'd have missed the opportunity that He gave me with my father.

Are You Walking in Repentance?

As I alluded to earlier, unfortunate as it may be, Christians spend an extraordinary amount of time arguing over baptism, the Holy Spirit, works, grace, faith, belief and many more topics. When I truly began to understand the importance of repentance I began to consume everything I could get my hands on concerning metanoia—and I discovered this topic wasn't any different. You may have even found yourself taking sides as I covered the historical background concerning the meaning of repentance and things you'll currently find about repentance and metanoia on the internet.

But here's a challenge I offer you. Try “walking in repentance,” that is—with repentance as an attitude or lifestyle.

If you're not a Christian . . . repentance is an equipping experience that both acknowledges our separation from God, then equips and restores us to a right relationship with him (see [Knowing God](#)). Jesus said it, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6, NASB; emphasis mine) I don't want to hurt your feelings or offend you if you're not a believer, but I'd be remiss if I didn't share this ultimate truth with you. The Pharisee's thought they had the corner on repentance and the knowledge of God. When John called out to them to “repent,” they were offended. But John didn't relent—instead he called on them to “bear fruit in keeping with their repentance.”

If you are a Christian . . . repentance isn't a one time event that occurred when you came to Christ. To chose to walk in repentance (or with a repentant attitude) doesn't mean that we walk with our guilt or sorrow. Paul identified the repentance that comes out of the sorrow of the world, as repentance that leads to death. The repentance that comes from the sorrow produced according to the will of God is a repentance that leads to eternal life—free from regret. Have you ever known someone who was consumed with sorrow? Until they work through the sorrow and are released from regret they will be robbed of a full life. At His ascension, Christ spoke to the believers who were the very fruit of the repentance he preached and told them they would be “clothed with power from on high.”

I walked with Christ as a youngster, experiencing miracle after miracle and opportunity after opportunity. But my pride caused me to walk away from the call He placed on my life. When my witness quit bearing fruit I was filled with sorrow—but it was a sorrow from within. It wasn't until I sought Him on my

knees, and I took my eyes off myself to look at my father's situation, that I found true repentance. At that moment He used me in my weakness. I wasn't ready for, "Tonight's the night!" But that's exactly where He wanted me to be, at a point where I was ready to turn the situation totally over to Him—and it was at that moment that I was "clothed with a power from on high." **It was at that moment that I "changed my mind about Christ!"**

And . . . What a Lifestyle!

When I first began talking about metanoia in Lutheran circles, the reaction was guarded. Even though metanoia was the key to Luther's struggle with penance that led him to write his *Ninety-five Theses* and post them on the door at Wittenberg—an action that became the hinge-pin of the Reformation. In truth, my study of Luther while at college made me a Luther's Lutheran, far more ecumenical and far less influenced by the Danish ethnic culture of my local Lutheran Church. Heaven forbid, an ecumenical Lutheran! "What do you mean, Luther believed total immersion was a better method of baptism? What do you mean, that Luther believed baptism was a life-long experience? What do you mean, you're not talking about works? What do you mean, Luther wasn't always right? What do you mean, we're often living in a state of 'half-grace?'" The questions were amazing and what I was saying seemed just too radical! But my challenge to each of you to live with repentance as a lifestyle isn't a call to radicalism.

It's simply a call to begin an introspective look at a great attitude for life in Christ. To "walk in repentance" is to walk in the knowledge of our human frailty—with a bonus! What's your personal belief system centered on? Is it grace, the Holy Spirit, water baptism (sprinkled or immersed), baptism by fire, tongues? Repentance is central to Jesus' teaching and entering His Kingdom. The bonus is in the equipping nature of repentance itself—for it leads to the gift of grace, faith and belief through an attitude that allows the equipping action of the Holy Spirit. It isn't foreign to any Christian belief system, instead it is an attitude essential to each.

As I walk in repentance I'm not called to recurring guilt and regret because of my human frailty, nor is repentance an experience that happened at only one moment of my life. Yes, the first time can often be a big step, a huge action. Instead, continuing to walk in repentance has simply caused me to spend a great deal of my life on my knees, where I trust the Lord to bring about recurring change and His equipping Holy Spirit. That recurring change brought about by the Holy Spirit, is the fruit that John was calling for—and in that fruit is Kingdom living.

The message of Metanoia Ministries and my challenge to each of you is that you "walk in your repentance." You'll be surprised at the gifts you'll find!

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

—Seeking him with whole hearted devotion—

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:1-2)

CS Lewis once wrote, "The Christian way is different: harder, and easier. Christ says, 'Give me All . . . hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours.'"

I had come to a point in my life where I thought I had handed over my entire self to God. In my mind I was saying, "Of course I'm not conforming to the pattern of this world! I'm a Christian—I look for what God wants me to see. And I search out his glory in all I do." But I was still holding on to a part of myself.

"There is a generation who is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness." (Proverbs 30:12)

When I was a sophomore in high school I went to see *Les Miserables*. I had to talk my parents into letting me go—they didn't want me to expose myself to some of the play's language and content. I had already read the book and began to listen to the music. So I begged and I pleaded. They felt I was old enough to make adult choices and let me go. I was so excited! I bought the CD's, watched the play and fell in love with the story line. When I returned home, my parents asked me what I thought. "It was so wonderful," I said, "Val Jean's character meets a priest who buys his soul for God! It has a great Christian message."

"And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their ends will be what their actions deserve." (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)

This year the play returned to Fresno. Without hesitation I spent a fourth of my paycheck to see it again. I soon found myself seated in the Saroyan Theater. I was practically jumping up and down in my seat when the actors walked out on stage.

But my excitement didn't last for long. Prostitutes, sexual innuendoes, filthy language and even violence filled the remainder of the play.

"God is with you in everything you do." Genesis 21:22b.

God was sitting beside me as I watched the play. "His left arm is under my head and his right arm embraces me." (Song of Songs 8:3). The thought of it was enough to make me cry. And I did—right there in the middle of the Saroyan Theater. But not because Eponine had been shot or Gavroche was killed. I cried because I had lost sight of something very simple.

"I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." (Isaiah 43:6-7)

God created us for his glory. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "So whether you eat or you drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." Do it all for the glory of God. Had I sacrificed the all because the play glorified God in part?

"God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand where his power was hidden." Habakkuk 3:3-4.

God's presence was so evident. He made his presence known even where his power was hidden. Can we say the same of today? Has his presence diminished? Or have we, as a people and generation who have turned from God, let the light he first sparked in us die? Are we feeding ourselves with his presence and word or letting others feed us with partial truth, even if it means sacrificing just a tiny bit of God's glory? Has the dirt and filth of the world infiltrated our hearts? Have we conformed to the patterns of this world? Or have we been, "transformed by the renewing of [our minds]?"

God's glory is so bright. But Satan tries to mask that glory by the things of this world. A Christian message disguised by violence, immorality and filth actually sends no Christian message at all. We shouldn't have to look hard to see Christ—he doesn't try to craftily hide himself in things as Satan does. Instead, he simply reveals himself. He sends his glory where "his power was hidden."

"In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us." (Titus 2:7-8)

Do the things we do honor Christ? Can we lift our lives in worship to him? Is our one purpose and desire to glorify him, and him alone? Can others see Christ's life in us? Oswald Chambers says, "If we want to maintain personal intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ, it will mean refusing to do or even think certain things. And some things that are acceptable for others will become unacceptable for us."

"I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:2-3) We must be careful to listen to Christ as he sits beside us, holding us, living in us. Are we sincerely devoted to him? Is our devotion to him pure?

Take time to look at him—gaze at his face. Sit at the foot of his throne. "And if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look with all your heart and with all your soul." (Deuteronomy 4:29). *"May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."* (Hebrews 13:20-21) —Sarah Joan Elder, *Syrinx Editor-in Chief, Fresno Pacific University*

REPENTANCE

Repentance (*Gr. metanoia*-from *meta*-with, and *noos*- mind-something done with the whole mind).

Mind, as thus viewed, embraces the spirit, with particular reference to the conscience and will, and denotes a decision made which changes the desires, views, attitude, purpose, and conduct of one's life. Truth inwardly applied produces conviction for sin; conscience awakened by conviction demands a change; and the will mightily influenced by the conscience in view of the judgment is moved to change the whole life. Metanoia signifies a whole life repentance—a lifetime forsaking of sin, and not a mere momentary act day by day.

Repentance is not "godly sorrow for sin," but "godly sorrow," which is produced by a display of the goodness of God that leads to repentance (Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10). Repentance puts the heart in a position to believe.