Session Seven: A Simple Way to Pray - Repentance

1. A Response to the Gospel
    a. Matthew opens up his account of Jesus' public ministry to the region of Galilee by giving this summarizing statement:

*"From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, **'Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" - Matthew 4:17*

    b. This notice at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry sets the tone for how Jesus' hearers were expected to respond to His life and ministry. In light of Jesus, who He was, what He did, and what He said, hearers were, and still are, expected to rethink everything about themselves, God, and the world around them.
    c. To repent is to reexamine and reconsider everything in light of Christ and to then respond and act according, namely to reorient one's entire life around the person and work of Jesus. He is to become the center and focal point of our entire existence.
    d. We are to respond to the good news of the gospel. The message and announcement that Jesus is Lord.

"We are witnesses to all that He did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put Him to death by hanging Him on a tree; but God raised Him on the third day and allowed Him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name." - Acts 10:39-43

    e. Jesus did not only come to change what we do (our actions) He came to change how we see God. He came as the Word of God, the perfect and complete declaration of who God is and what He is like. We thought He was one way but in Christ we realize that God is not like we thought but instead we see that God is, always has been, and always will be like Jesus.
    f. Thus, if God is like Jesus, if Jesus is the true and perfect Word of God then we must rethink and reexamine everything in light of Him and then act accordingly. This is simply to say that the same call of repentance that was on Israel then is still on us now. The command to repent is still binding upon us today.

2. Being and Doing
    a. The order Jesus establishes is important. Christ says that we must first look, then rethink (repent), and then and only then can our actions be changed. Simply put, our belief comes before our actions. Or you could say our being comes before our doing.

b. Our culture in modern America however flips this around. We place our actions, our doing, before our identity or our being. This puts us at odds with the gospel.
c. In the gospel our actions flow from our identity but in our culture our identity flows out of what we do. The relationship between our identity and what we do is at the very heart of repentance and the gospel.
d. If we allow our identity to flow out of what we do it impacts how we see and relate to God. Specifically it distorts our view of His goodness and cripples our faith in the gospel message.
e. Let's look at how this plays out.

When We Start With Our Actions

What I Do →	Who I Am →	What God Has Done →	Who God Is/What God is Like
Anxious	Out of Control	Nothing	Distant/Unloving/Not Sovereign
Angry	Unfairly Treated	Broken His Promise	Unjust/Not Righteous/Not Trustworthy
Obey	Better Than Others	Favorited Me	Grace/Mercy/Help is Unnecessary

f. When my identity comes from what I do two things happen to my view of myself and two things happen to my view of God:
   i. View of Myself
      1. I am either crushed by my sinfulness
      2. I am puffed up and deceived by my goodness
   ii. View of God
      1. God becomes not good in a plethora of different ways because of my sin
      2. God becomes unnecessary or invisible because of my own goodness
g. Either way, whether I base my identity in my own sinfulness or in my own goodness I am operating in works righteousness and thus running wholly and completely against the gospel and actually resisting God.

*"I marvel that you are **turning away** so soon **from Him** who called you **in the grace of Christ**, to a **different gospel**, **which is not another**; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" - Galatians 1:6-7*

h. To establish your identity, good or bad, in your own actions is to, according to Paul, turn away from the gospel and from Jesus entirely and therefore is to walk as an unbeliever rather than a Christian. Needless to say this is a big deal.

i. The good news of the gospel flips this order around completely. The gospel says that your identity is not based on what you do but is based on who God is and what He has done for you.

When I Start With Who God Is

Who is God/What He is Like →	What He Did →	Who You Are →	What You Do
Sovereign Ruler	Everything For His Glory and My Good	Cared For	Rest
Savior	Forgave Me	Forgiven	Forgive Unconditionally
Lamb of God	Gave Himself For Me	Rich in Christ	Give Generously
Father	Adopted Me	Loved Children	Love Radically/Adopt Others Into My Family

j. When we begin with the gospel everything else falls into place. Suddenly I am empowered to rest, free to forgiven, emboldened to give, and full to love. When I start with the gospel everything changes.

3. The Root of Repentance
   a. Where does this leave us in terms of prayer and repentance? What repentance is more than saying we are sorry for doing something it is about returning to the gospel, it is about realigning our heart and mind with who God is and what He has done.
   b. Therefore I don't simply say, "God I repent of being anxious." The key is asking yourself why you are anxious, specifically what are you believing about God that is making you anxious?
   c. Your anxiety or fear is actually rooted in a wrong belief about God. You are anxious because you don't really believe He is a good and gracious sovereign ruler working all things together for His glory and your good.

*"Then He said to His disciples, 'Therefore I say to you, **do not worry** about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. **Consider** the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn, and God feeds them. **Of how much more value are you than the birds?**'" - Luke 12:22-24*

d. True repentance then is rightly thinking about who God is. It is rethinking your anxiety in light of His sovereignty. It is saying, "God forgive me for not believing that You are who You are. Forgiving me for thinking You are out of control or distant or not loving towards Me. Help me believe the gospel!"