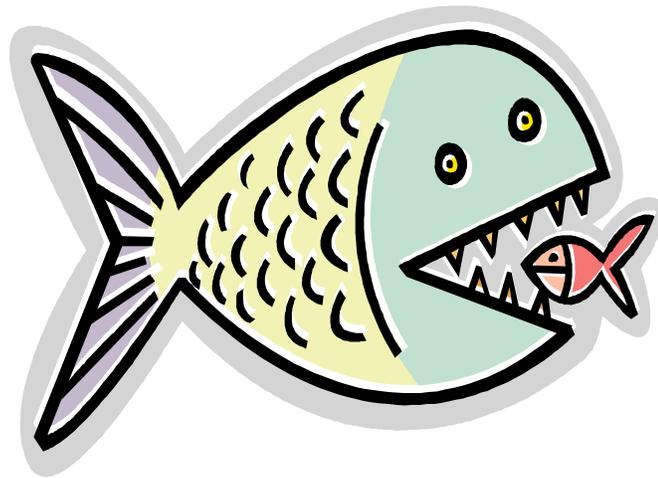


Christian Living

a study using the book of

JONAH



4 Lessons in Christian Living.

We are using the book of Jonah as a starting point to look at four vital areas of Christian living.

1. Guidance. 2. Thankfulness. 3. Repentance. 4. Compassion .

We are 'jumping off' from the book of Jonah to look at these areas and not studying the book itself.

Before reading this booklet please spend a week reading through the book of Jonah each day, maybe in different versions of the Bible to fix the story in your mind, and to let God speak to you about the lessons contained in this book. **2**

Timothy 3 v 16 & 17.

Section 1. Guidance.

Guidance always begins with hearing from God. Sometimes we seek God for His guidance, and at other times God breaks into our lives with His request; this was so with Jonah.

Jonah 1 v 1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah.

We see Jonah's futile response to God's word in verse 3,

Jonah 1 v 3 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

and *Psalm 139 v 7* shows us the futility of this action.

Psalm 139 v 7 Where can I go from Your Spirit or where can I flee from Your presence.

Jonah knew and heard the Lord. He was not confused about God's instructions; just disobedient to it. Jonah knew God, he knew God was speaking to him. He didn't like the task. In *Jonah 1 vv 5 & 6* we see that Jonah was able to be at rest even though he was disobedient. Jonah knew the reason for the storm, because he was trying to run away from God - not a good idea! Jonah also knew the remedy to stop the storm; that he should be thrown overboard. This is a warning to us not to 'travel' with those who are in disobedience.

Most Christians acknowledge the need to hear from God, but many have questions about how this can be so in their own lives. This is straightforward when God takes the initiative, and then only requires our obedience, but it is less straightforward when we are seeking for direction from God for our personal lives.

Looking at various incidents in the Bible will help us to see that God deals with people as individuals, and therefore underlines our need to know Him personally.

Adam.

We see with Adam that God did not load him down with numerous rules. As far as we can see God gave Adam only one instruction.

Genesis 2 vv 16 & 17 ...from any tree of the garden you may eat freely, but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat....

Adam and Eve knew the instruction, and Eve repeated it to the serpent when she was tempted, but she allowed personal desire to override the desire for obedience.

Genesis 3 v 6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

God's instructions are not there to be assessed, but to be obeyed. Disobedience to God's instructions bring disaster and a curse on our lives.

Noah.

God spoke into Noah's life, and His instructions to Noah became Noah's life's work. This brought about the survival of life on earth. This survival was dependant on Noah's obedience.

Genesis 6 vv 13 to 22. make for yourself an ark of gopher wood,.....you shall enter the ark, you and your sons, and your wife, and your sons wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh.....thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

Why did God choose Noah? Because Noah already had an ongoing relationship with God.

Genesis 6 v 9 Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.

God guided, Noah obeyed, and his obedience brought blessing to him, and his family.

Abraham.

We see many examples of God's guidance in Abraham's life. From his first call, to the sacrifice of his son Isaac. It is interesting to notice that in each case God takes the initiative, and the problems come when Abraham and Sarah have a 'good idea'

Genesis 12 vv 1 to 3. Now the LORD said to Abram, Go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land which I will show you.

God makes His directions clear, and Abraham follows them, but with partial obedience.

Genesis 12 v 4 So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him.

God said to leave your relatives, and Abram took Lot with him; this would prove to be a problem.

Genesis 13 vv 5 to 9.....and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock, and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock.....

Partial obedience will always bring problems into our lives.

Abraham passed through many experiences which taught him much about God and His dealings in Abraham's life. Therefore when we read God's directions to Abraham in,

Genesis 22 v 2 take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.

We also see Abraham's swift and purposeful obedience,

Genesis 22 v 3 and Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey.....

We see Abraham's faith by his statement in

Genesis 22 v 5stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder, and we will worship and return to you.

This is further expanded to us by the writer of the Hebrews in *Hebrews 11 vv 17 to 19* . Abraham knew his God, and believed the promises that God had given him.

Therefore whatever God asked, Abraham believed that God would keep His promise. We can follow God and His instructions when we know Him that well.

Moses.

Moses did not seem to have much knowledge of God when He first spoke to him at the burning bush. The angel of the Lord appears, and Moses turns to see what is going on. At this point God appears to introduce Himself to Moses, and then goes on to commission Moses for the task that He has for him.

Exodus ch 3 to ch 4 v 17.

During this conversation Moses argues with God over various things that God asks of him, and commands that God gives him. Moses had been brought up in the ways and teachings of Egypt, and now he was meeting with God and learning to hear His voice and His ways.

We, too, need to meet with God, and learn to know His voice and His ways.

God then takes Moses into Egypt and uses him to set the people of Israel free. And then the Lord guides Israel's journey to the Promised Land through, His servant, Moses. By the time they reach the Red Sea; Moses knows God's voice and has learnt to trust His guidance.

Exodus 14 vv 1 to 31

v13 But Moses said to the people 'Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.

Moses really knows God's guidance all through the wanderings in the wilderness, but what does Moses ask of God? Let's look at

Exodus ch 33

After the incident with the golden calf, the Lord declares that an angel will go with the people, and bring the victory for them, but God, Himself, will not go with them. We then learn how Moses got to know God so well.

Exodus 33 vv 7 to 11.....thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face just as a man speaks to his friend.....

The Lord finally assures Moses that His presence will go with them, and He will give them rest, and Moses response shows his dependence on not only the guidance of God, but also the importance of God's presence.

Exodus 33 v 15 Then he (Moses) said to Him, 'If Thy presence does not go with us do not lead us up from here.

Moses was not just looking for guidance, but he was looking to be in the presence of the Lord.

The Lord is blessed when we want HIM, not just what He can give to us. We should not be just looking for Him to guide us, but also that we might KNOW HIM.

Joshua.

Why Joshua? Why was Joshua chosen to lead the people after the death of Moses. I believe the answer is found in the following scriptures.

Exodus 24 v 12 to 15.....So Moses arose and Joshua his servant.....

Exodus 33 v 11 Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

Joshua went where Moses went. He was willing to be a servant to the man of God, but when Moses left the tent after meeting God; Joshua stayed on and spent further time in God's presence.

God uses those whom He knows, and those who know Him.

Gideon.

Gideon grew up in a time which was known by the phrase from

Judges 21 v 25 In those days there was no king in Israel ; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

The statement says that there was no king in Israel, and it was talking of an earthly king, but it was also true that there was no turning to the heavenly King for help or obedience. When things became really bad in the land the people once again cried out to God, and God in response to this cry sent to Gideon.

When the angel of the Lord spoke to Gideon in *Judges 6 v 14*, Gideon questions this,

Judges 6 v 15O Lord how shall I deliver Israel ?.....

God then proves that He is present, and asks Gideon to get rid of his father's false gods, and Gideon is obedient; if still nervous of doing so.

Judges 6 vv 16 to 27.

Before Gideon completes what God has told him to do; Gideon asks for confirmation through the use of the wet and dry fleece. *Judges 6 vv 36 to 40*. I do not believe this to be God's usual way of guidance, but His grace in a situation where His child is not sure of the Father's voice. From this point onwards Gideon is much more ready to obey when God speaks. He has begun to know God's voice.

God would seek that we know His voice, but He is gracious, and if we are unsure He will guide us according to our faith. GOD LOVES HIS CHILDREN.

Samuel

Samuel did not know God when He first called him, *1 Samuel 3 vv 1 to 14*, but from this point onwards Samuel began to know God. *1. Samuel 3 vv 19 to 21*. By the time he anoints David as king, Samuel is hearing God clearly. *1. Samuel 16 vv 1 to 13*.

David

David knew the Lord from being a boy; when he went out to fight with Goliath he knew he was there in God's name.

1 Samuel 17 vv 45

David knew the need of wisdom in fighting God's battles, and the need to seek God's strategy.

2 Samuel 5 vv 17 - 25

In *v19* David asks the Lord should he go up and fight, and God says go. Then when the Philistines came again David did not rely on what God had said before see *v23*. God gave fresh instructions, and David's obedience resulted in victory.

Our desire to know God's plans, and our willingness to obey will always bring victory in our lives

There are many more Old Testament examples we could look at, but as we turn over to the New Testament; again we see the need to know God so that we may hear His voice, and obey His instructions, and thereby know His guidance in our lives. Jesus said

John 10 v 27.

My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me.

Jesus is our greatest example of the need to know God. He always took the time to spend time with His Father however busy He might have been.

Luke 5 v 16, Luke 9 v 18, Mark 1 v 35, Mark 6 v 46.

We see the guidance of God in the lives of the early Christians in the book of Acts. In *Acts chapter 2*, because they had obeyed Jesus' instructions to wait they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Later Paul encourages all Christians to be led by the Holy Spirit, *Galatians 5 vv 16 - 18, and v 25.*

In *Acts chapter 3*, Peter and John were doing just as was normal, and God used them to His glory. When the Lord needed Peter to go somewhere he

would not readily have gone; God sent him a vision to guide him, *Acts 10*. It was as the church was worshipping the Lord in *Acts 13*, that the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Paul to the work He had for them. They then began to travel and share the good news. They knew God had called them to preach the Gospel, but we read in *Acts 16 vv 6 - 8*; that they were not always sure where. The Holy Spirit then revealed through a vision where they were to go *Acts 16 vv 9 & 10*. As someone once said, it is easier to steer a moving ship than one that is tied up to the jetty.

Paul, when writing to the Philippians, in *Philippians 3 vv 7 - 14* makes clear his ultimate desire which was to KNOW JESUS. Hosea also encourages us in *Hosea 6 v 3*, to put our energies and efforts into knowing HIM.

God would have us to spend time and energy to know Him.

Psalm 123 v 2 reminds us that God wants us to be close to Him so that we can be guided by His eyes.

***Behold as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master,
As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes look to the LORD our God until He shall be gracious to
us.***

The best way to be guided by God is to know Him in such a way that we know His voice, and , because we trust Him, we are willing to obey His instructions. This takes time, and there are no instant shortcuts to a close walk with the Father.

Section 2. Thanksgiving.

This is an area of all our lives which needs to be built up. The word thanksgiving can be summed up in the phrase 'the attitude of gratitude'. There is always room for us to increase in gratitude, firstly to God, and secondly to others.

Jonah seemed to learn all his lessons the hard way, and this one was no exception. When he instructed his fellow sailors to throw him overboard, they reluctantly agreed to his request. Jonah, having been swallowed by God's provided fish, begins to cry out to God, and at the end of his prayer he offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Jonah declares that he will *'sacrifice to the Lord with the voice of thanksgiving'* *Jonah 2 v 9*. To give thanks, sometimes, is a sacrifice; we would find it easier to exercise the gift of grumbling and complaining.

We will look at the Hebrew and Greek words which are translated 'thanks' in our English Bibles, and hope to be encouraged to live our lives in the 'attitude of gratitude'. Our expression of thanks to God needs us to acknowledge *that every good and perfect gift comes from above, coming down from the Father. James 1 v 17*. To give thanks to God means that we acknowledge His part in our provision, and requires to die to our selfish thoughts, and ideas that we are masters of our own destiny. May we learn from God's word, and not necessitate the practical lesson that Jonah endured!!!

If we begin with worship to God in the form of thanksgiving we will grow in thanksgiving, and the overflow of this will bless our families and friends; as we become thankful people.

The most commonly used Hebrew word for thanksgiving is **yadah** which means to hold out the hand, to revere, to worship with hands extended. We will look at some of the places in the Old Testament where this word is used. This is not so that we can gain information about the Bible, but so that we can

implement what we learn from the different situations, and so that we can become thankful people.

1 Chronicles 16.

This chapter deals with the occasion of the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. The Ark of the Covenant is a symbol of the presence of God among His people.

vv 4 & 7 David appoints the Levites as servants before the Ark. They were men whose job was to celebrate, praise and **yadah** in the presence of God. They were assigned to **yadah**, that is to hold out their hands, in reverent worship of the Lord.

v8 How did they **yadah** the Lord, by making known His deeds - I will tell of Your name. They thanked the Lord by telling what He had done.

v34 Hold out your hands in reverent worship to the Lord, because He is good.

v35 The purpose of salvation was so that we can 'hold out our hands in reverential worship' at the name of the Lord.

v41 David appoints specific folks to 'hold our the hand in reverent worship', because the Lord continually poured out His love upon them.

After God's people had been taken into captivity, because of their disobedience, and then later returned to Jerusalem, Nehemiah appoints Levites to begin praise and thanksgiving as set out by David, *Nehemiah 12 vv 24 & 46*. David, as he is dying, again lists **yadah** as one of the responsibilities of the Levites, and he states they need to stand and give thanks every morning and every evening. *1 Chronicles 23 v 30*. We have a responsibility to give constant thanks to God for all the good things He gives to us, day by day.

The book of Psalms often encourages us to **hold out our hands in reverential worship**.

Psalm 18 v 49. David declares he will **hold out his hand in reverential worship** to God amongst the nations. He is not ashamed to worship God in places where people state there are other gods, or even many different gods.

Psalm 30 v 4. David encourages the 'godly ones', that is those who follow God, to **hold out their hands in reverential worship** to the name of the Lord. In verse *12* David declares he will **hold out his hand in reverential worship** to God, forever. This is not just a passing idea, but an eternal preoccupation.

Psalm 35 v 18. David states that he will **hold out his hand in reverential worship** to God amongst other worshippers.

Asaph, one of the Levites that David commanded to give thanks to the Lord, wrote some of the songs that David used in the thanksgiving. *Psalm 75 v 1*, Asaph explains why he will **hold out his hand in reverential worship** to God, because God is near in His name, and therefore they will declare His wonderful work.

In *Psalm 79 v 13*, Asaph, because he is one of God's people, and he knows God's care of him will **hold out his hand in reverential worship** to God, forever.

In *Psalm 92 v 1*, the Psalmist realises that it is a good thing **to hold out his hand in reverential worship** to God, and again we notice in *Psalm 92 v 2* that again the worship of God is morning and night. They started the day with God, and worshipped Him before going to bed at night.

Psalm 97 v 12 encourages us to be joyful in the fact that God has given us right standing with Him, and therefore we will **hold out our hands in reverential worship.**

Psalm 106 v 1 gives us reasons why we should **hold out our hand in reverential worship.** Firstly it reminds us that the Lord is good and His loving-kindness is everlasting. This is repeated in the first verse of *Psalm 107*, *Psalm 118 vv 1 & 29*, *Psalm 136 v 13*. We need to worship Him with outstretched hands, when we think how good, loving and kind He is forever and forever.

The second most used Hebrew word for thanksgiving is **towdah** which again means to **extend the hand in adoration**, but also includes the meaning of **extending the hand in a sacrifice of praise.** This word brings in the meaning of my thanks to God sometimes being a sacrifice, and the need to give thanks because, God is who His is, and it is not dependant on my feelings.

Back in the book of Leviticus when God was giving instructions about sacrifice, He makes provision to bring an offering of thanksgiving, *Leviticus 7 vv 12 - 15*.

The choirs mentioned in *Nehemiah 12 vv 31, 38 & 40*, were actually thanksgiving choirs. Choirs formed to bring a **sacrifice of extending out the hand in reverential worship** to God. It probably was a sacrifice as they would have had to walk right around the walls of Jerusalem giving thanks.

Again, in the Psalms we see a great deal of reference to the **sacrifice of thanksgiving.** In *Psalm 26*, David is calling upon the Lord to vindicate him, and he asks the Lord that he might proclaim the **sacrifice of thanksgiving**, and declare all the Lord's miracles.

In *Psalm 50 v 14* we see Asaph stating the need to offer to God the **sacrifice of thanksgiving**, and the importance of paying the Lord what we owe Him.

Not just words, but also deeds. Platitudes don't please God, but thanks backed up by 'right' actions bring joy to Him.

David in *Psalms 69 v 30*, says that he will make much of God, that is to magnify Him, with the **sacrifice of thanksgiving**. David notes that this will please God more than just giving an animal to be sacrificed.

In *Psalms 95 v 2*, the Psalmist, encourages us to come before God's very presence with a **sacrifice of thanksgiving**, and in *Psalms 100 v 4*, we are instructed to enter God's gates with a **sacrifice of thanksgiving**. In *Psalms 107 vv 21 & 22*, the Psalmist, speaks of **holding out the hand in reverential worship**, and a **sacrifice of thanksgiving**, and links them both with telling of what God has done, and in an attitude of joyful singing.

The Prophets also speak of the **sacrifice of thanksgiving**. Isaiah, in *Isaiah 51 v 3*, states that the sound of the **sacrifice of thanksgiving** will be heard in Jerusalem when the Lord comforts the land. In *Jeremiah 30 v 19* there will be the sound of thanks when the Lord restores the captivity of the Jews. From the book of Jonah we see Jonah offering a **sacrifice of thanksgiving** from the stomach of the fish. In *Jonah 2*, Jonah begins by calling out to the Lord, and crying for help, *Jonah 2 v 2*. Jonah admits that God has put him where he is, in *Jonah 2 v 3*. Later in the chapter, in the depths of despair, he prays, and finally he offers the **sacrifice of thanksgiving** with his voice, and he promises to keep his vow. At this point the Lord causes the fish to dispose of Jonah onto dry ground.

When we look into the New Testament, the main Greek words used for thanksgiving are much more similar to our own use of the word. The main root in the Greek means, **to be grateful, express gratitude, and to be grateful to God as an act of worship.**

Jesus showed His gratitude as He ate or shared food with others. This can be seen in *Matthew 15 v 36, Mark 8 v 6 and Luke 22 vv 17 & 19*. This practice was continued by the early disciples as we see with Paul in *Acts 27 v 35*.

Jesus received thanks from those who had received healing from Him. We can see this in *Luke 17 v 16*; even though it was in 'short supply' see *Luke 17 vv 17 & 18*.

Paul has much to thank God for , and has a great deal of instruction for us in respect of thanksgiving.

Thanks for the saints :-

Romans 1 v 8, Romans 16 vv 3 & 4, 1 Corinthians 1 v 4, Ephesians 1 vv 15 & 16,

Philippians 1 v 3, 1 Thessalonians 3 v 9, 2 Thessalonians 1 v 3,

2 Thessalonians 2 v 13, Philemon v 4.

Thanks to God :-

Romans 7 v 25, 1 Corinthians 14 v 18, Ephesians 5 v 20, Colossians 1 vv 3 & 12,

Colossians 3 v 17, 1 Thessalonians 1 v 2, 1 Thessalonians 2 v 13,

Revelation 4 v 9, Revelation 7 v 12, Revelation 11 v 17.

Thanksgiving, given by others because of what God has done:-

2 Corinthians 1 v 11, 2 Corinthians 4 v 15, 2 Corinthians 9 vv 11 & 12,
Colossians 2 v 7, 1 Timothy 4 v 4.

Let thanksgiving take the place of less helpful things & become part of our lives:-

Ephesians 5 vv 3 & 4, Philippians 4 v 6, Colossians 4v 2,
1 Timothy 2 v 1,
1 Thessalonians 5 v 18.

A second Greek word used which is translated thanksgiving is a word used for grace; which also includes gratitude. In *1 Timothy 1 v 12*, Paul, expresses his thanks to Jesus for calling him into service, and strengthening him for the work.

Paul also thanks the Lord that others have moved from the slavery of sin to obedience in Christ in *Romans 6 v 17*. There is an explosion of thanks and gratitude in *1 Corinthians 15 v 57 and 2 Corinthians 9 v14*, when Paul views the victory that Jesus has brought us and in *2 Corinthians 9 v 15* for the incredible gift of JESUS

There is one instance in *Hebrews 13 v 15* with a similar thought to that of the Old Testament **sacrifice of thanksgiving**. This verse reminds us that our thanks must be through Jesus. Our thanks must be continual, and not a one off event. Even when it is difficult we need to continue to give thanks. Our praise must be vocal, and our praise must be to JESUS.

Section 3. Repentance.

In the Bible, repentance is a mind and will decision, and not necessarily an emotional one. The change of mind should lead to change of action to be relevant. In the Old Testament, the people were sorry, and cried out to God, and in most instances where the word which is translated repent is used, it is God who is doing it! The Hebrew word used is **naw-kham**, which means to sigh, breathe strongly, and by implication to be sorry, to pity, to console, and rue. This is often used where God is sorry when He sees the state of mankind. *Genesis 6 v 6* is a good example of this. God is sorry that He has made mankind because of mankind's actions.

In the passage in Jonah, the people of Nineveh hear the word of the Lord through Jonah. Jonah declares that God is going to destroy Nineveh. The people immediately begin to fast, cry out to God, turn from wickedness and violence. In *Jonah 3 vv 9 & 10* we see that God sees their actions, and does indeed repent of His decision to destroy them.

The Hebrew word used for repent in relation to people repenting is **shoob**, which means **to turn back or away**, it is more often translated turn. We shall, firstly, consider the three places where the Authorised Version translates **shoob** as the word repent, and then the other passages where **shoob** is translated **to turn back or away**.

Firstly let us examine the three instances where **shoob** is translated **repent**.

1 Kings 8 vv 46 - 49. When Solomon is praying concerning the Temple he asks God to bear in mind that the people will sin against Him. Solomon asks that if the people **repent (shoob)**, that is **to turn back** and pray, that God will hear and forgive them.

This a request for God to hear when we **turn back**.

Ezekiel 14 v 6. The call is **turn away** from idols, that is the worship of anything other than the one true God, and **turn away** from looking at the things that don't please God.

This is request to **turn away** from the things that will destroy us spiritually.

Ezekiel 18 v 30. The Lord says He will judge Israel according to their conduct. It is interesting to notice that the Lord is not judging them according to what they say they believe, but what they do. God calls them to **turn away** from rebellion, that is doing things which are against God's law. The Lord then warns them that if they don't their actions will trip them up and cause them to fall.

God calls us to **turn away** from rebellion, and live our lives accordingly.

We will now consider a further nine Old Testament passages which use the word **shoob, to turn back (hence away)**.

Deuteronomy 4 vv 25 - 31. Moses warns the Children of Israel that if they put anything before God it will cause them to be destroyed as a nation. BUT if they then seek after God, with all their energies, they will find Him. The distress they are in will cause them **to turn back**, to the Lord, and listen to His voice, God will receive them back , because He is compassionate, and He will not fail His covenant.

If we **turn back**, seek the Lord, and listen to His voice, then He will find us ,
save us, and keep His promise.

Deuteronomy 30 vv 1 - 10. Moses often links **turning back**, with the nation being away from God, and in exile. We are not geographically in exile,

but we can be far away from God, and need to be **turning back**, and returning to him. In this passage **turning back** includes listening to God totally (v2), freedom from slavery (v3), restoration of our place (v4 & 5), restoration of our love (v6), destruction of our enemies (v7), prosperity (v9), the pleasure of God over our lives (v9), obedience to the Lord (v10).

Turning back brings full restoration.

1 Kings 8 vv 33 - 36. Solomon prays, to God, for his people. Solomon asks for when they have sinned, and it has brought the judgement of God in defeat in war or lack of rain, that if they **turn back** to God, He will forgive. Solomon includes in the **turning back**, a confession of God's name, prayer supplication, turning from sin. It is certainly much more than a formula of saying words, but a desire to change shown in action.

Turning back to God includes a seeking of Him and His ways.

2 Kings 17 v 13. At the time of the final destruction of Israel as a nation, we are reminded that the Lord had warned the nation through all His prophets. What was His message through them? **Turn away** from evil, and keeping the laws He had sent through His servants.

Turning back includes leaving evil behind and obedience to God.

2 Chronicles 7 v 14. This is probably one of the most quoted verse in the Bible in respect to prayer and revival, and this verse includes **turning away** as one aspect of God's requirements for His people to be heard by Him on behalf of His nation.

Firstly we must be His people, belonging to Him.

Secondly we must be called by His name, that is willing to be known as His, in all areas and aspects of our lives.

Thirdly we must humble ourselves. This is nothing to do with what we want or need, or how we are thought of, but all about Him, His name, His authority, and His glory.

Fourthly we are called to pray not just to talk about prayer.

Fifthly we are to seek His face. He must become our priority.

Finally we must, also, **turn away** from anything which displeases God. I believe our wicked ways includes much more than breaking God's written laws. I believe it includes God's ways written in our hearts, those things which are lawful, according to the written law, but are not pleasing to God in my life.

Let us turn away from all our wicked ways.

Jeremiah 25 vv 4 & 5. Here we see the persistence in the love of God. The Lord sent prophets consistently, and their message was **turn away** from evil. This was accompanied by the promise of living safely where God had put them.

Turning away from evil will bring safe living.

Daniel 9 v 13. Daniel in exile, whilst praying for his nation, acknowledges this is what Moses has said will happen when the nation turns from God. Daniel states that we must **turn away** from our twisted ways, and turn to the truth.

Let us see that turning away is part of what is needed, but we also need to turn towards the truth.

Hosea 12 v 6. There is a call to **turn back** to the Lord and once again it is accompanied by instructions to be loyal, do justice, and constantly wait for God. Repentance is never seen as a negative action, but is always accompanied with positive actions.

Turn back to the Lord with loyalty, justice, and a heart after HIM.

Joel 2 vv 12 & 13. Once again repentance is seen as a change of heart, leading to a change of action. The Lord calls His people to **turn back** with their hearts, with fasting, weeping, and mourning and actions.

Let us turn back to the Lord, knowing He is gracious, compassionate, slow to become angry, abounding in loving kindness, and willing to forgive.

The most commonly used Greek words in the New Testament mean **to think differently or afterwards, to reconsider, a reversal of decision.** Again these words are related to a change of thinking and action, and does not necessarily include emotions.

We will consider what various people in the New Testament have to say concerning repentance, beginning with John the Baptist, and Jesus. We will notice that the disciples preached repentance, and Peter, in the book of Acts, often called people to repent. Paul also preached repentance, and wrote to the churches about it. Finally Jesus often spoke concerning repentance when addressing the churches in the book of Revelation.

John the Baptist.

The whole thrust of John's message was REPENT, because God's kingdom is coming or has come. (*Matthew 3 v 2, Mark 1 vv 2 - 4, Luke 3 v 3*). John made it clear that repentance involved changes in thinking, but also in action. *Mark 1 v 4, and Luke 3 v 3* informs us of the fact that John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. Therefore when someone had a

change of mind which led to a change of action they would then be baptised by John.

John made it clear that repentance was not an end in itself, but preparation to receive the coming kingdom (*Matthew 3 vv 2 - 3, Mark 1 vv 2 & 3, and Luke 3 vv 4 - 6*), and the coming King/Messiah (*Matthew 3 vv 11 & 12, Mark 1 v 7, and Luke 3 vv 15 - 17*). John also left the people in no doubt that true repentance, **a change of mind**, would result in a change of action (*Matthew 3 vv 8 - 10,*

Luke 3 vv 8 & 9). John clearly stated that if someone had made **a change of mind** it would bear fruit in their lives. When pressed John gave examples of the fruit he would expect to see if someone had had **a change of mind**. (*Luke 3 vv 10 - 14*)

Firstly, share food and clothes with those who don't have any.

Secondly, be honest in your work.

Thirdly, don't use your position for your own ends, don't lie, and be content with the provision in your life.

These are all very practical instructions and underline the fact that our faith should be worked out in the everyday things in our lives. God does not separate the physical and spiritual, and neither should we. As someone once said,

Be natural in your spiritual life, and spiritual in your natural life.

Jesus

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, His first recorded message was, "Repent, **have a change of mind**, because God's Kingdom is here." (*Matthew 4 v 17, Mark 1 v 15*). Having given the call to repentance, Jesus, through His ministry taught various things concerning repentance. In *Luke 5 v*

32, He announced that it was sinners that needed to repent, but He also made it very clear that it was sinners He had come to call.

In the three parables in *Luke 15*, Jesus again underlines the fact that He had come for the ones who had gone away. Jesus also states in *Luke 15 v 7* that there is great joy in heaven over one person who has a **change of mind**, towards God. In the story of the lost son in *Luke 15 vv 11 -32*, the father in the story throws a party when his son **changes his mind**, comes to his senses and comes home.

In *Luke 13 vv 1 - 5*, Jesus warns the people that a lack of repentance will lead to us perishing. Then in *Luke 17 vv 3 & 4*, Jesus shows us that repentance by another person must always be followed by forgiveness on our part. This is to be true even if the person is a habitual offender, and then penitent. This is sometimes difficult to do, and the response of the disciples was '*Lord increase our faith*' (*Luke 17 v 5*).

Jesus issued some very strong warnings concerning places that would not repent (*Matthew 11 vv 20 - 24, Luke 10 vv 10 - 16*). Jesus says that the miracles that the people had seen should have caused them to have a **change of mind**, but it had not done so. Jesus declares they will have no excuse on the day of judgement. Jesus also uses the instance in the book of Jonah to rebuke those who did not listen to His teaching, and were constantly asking for proof. (*Matthew 12 vv 38 - 41, Luke 11 vv 29 - 32*). Jesus reminded them that the people of Nineveh repented at Jonah's preaching, but instead of repenting they were wanting proof and more proof, and even then they would not repent.

Jesus had no intention that the message of repentance should end with His return to heaven, as He instructed His disciples to preach '*that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem*' *Luke 24 v 47*.

Peter.

Did the disciples fulfil Jesus' command? In Peter's first sermon when he is asked by the crowd, what they must do? His reply is :-

“Repent, be baptised in Jesus' name for the forgiveness of your sins.”

Once again we see the **change of mind** linked to changes in our actions. In *Acts 3 v 19* Peter links forgiveness of sins with repentance, and returning, and he adds that this is what will bring times of refreshing from the Lord. Now repentance is linked to the refreshing that the church so often desires, and certainly needs.

In *Acts 5 v 31*, whilst preaching to the religious leaders, Peter asserts that Jesus can grant repentance to Israel that their sins can be forgiven. When Peter travels to Samaria to visit the revival there, he prays for the people to receive the Holy Spirit. Peter then encounters Simon who had been a sorcerer. Simon unwisely offers to buy the authority to pray for the Holy Spirit. Peter quickly tells Simon that his heart is not right, and that he needs to repent, **have a change of mind**, and pray for forgiveness. (*Acts 8 v22*).

In Peter's letter to the scattered Christians he declares that the desire of God is for no one to perish, but for all people to come to **change of mind**.

Paul.

We find that Paul both preached repentance, and later wrote to the churches concerning repentance. When preaching in Athens (*Acts 17 vv 30 - 32*), Paul declares that God requires all men everywhere to repent, because God has fixed a day of judgement in which He will judge all men by their decisions concerning His Son Jesus.

When speaking to the elders from Ephesus, Paul reminds them that he preached repentance toward God, that is **a change of thinking which led to a change of direction**, and faith in Jesus. Whilst in chains, Paul is still declaring that he had preached everywhere to people that they should

repent, turning to God and doing the things that show they have had **a change of mind which has led to a change of actions.** (*Acts 26 v 20*)

When writing in the letters to the churches, Paul tells them that it is God's kindness, which will lead us to repent. It is often thought that declaring the judgement of God is that which will cause us to turn to God, but it is important to notice that it is God's kindness which brings us to change (*Romans 2 v 4*).

In *2 Corinthians 7 vv 8 - 10*, Paul states that God willed their sorrow that they would repent, but Paul makes it clear that this sorrow is to an end purpose - repentance. Paul is not writing about constant weeping and wailing which leads to nothing. God's purpose in bringing sorrow to us is to bring us to **a change of mind which will lead to a change of actions**, which leads to joy.

Paul teaches the younger evangelist and pastor, Timothy, that when we are serving God we should not be quarrelsome. We should be kind and patient when wronged. When dealing with those who oppose us we should correct them with gentleness, and leave room for God to grant them a **change of mind which will lead to a change of action.** (*2 Timothy 2 vv 24 & 25*)

In *Hebrews 6* we have two references concerning repentance. In *Hebrews 6 v 2* we are informed that repentance is a foundational truth from which we must press on to maturity. That does not mean to leave repentance behind, but have it deep within our lives. In *Hebrews 6 vv 5 & 6* there is a solemn warning that if we have tasted of the Word of God, and know the moving of the Spirit, and then we fall away we may be in danger of not being able to **change our minds and bring about a change of action.** We have an illustration of this in the life of Esau. *Hebrews 12 vv 16 & 17* informs us that Esau despised his birthright and later the situation could not be changed although he very much wanted it changed. He cried much, but could not change the situation.

Finally we find when Jesus is speaking to the seven churches, during the times recorded in the book of Revelation. Jesus speaks to five of the seven the churches about the need to repent.

Revelation 2 vv 4 & 5. Jesus says that their first love is lost, and they needed to remember how it was a t first, repent and that the **change of mind will lead to a change of action.**

Revelation 2 v 16. Jesus informs the church that as they follow false teachings that they must quickly have a **change of mind** or they will find they are fighting Jesus!

Revelation 2 vv 21 & 22. Jesus calls those within the church to **change their minds and actions** concerning their immoral living. Jesus also warns of the danger which face those who choose not to repent.

Revelation 3 vv 2 & 3. Jesus, here, warns the church not to be lazy or half hearted. He again calls the church to remember all that it has received, and make a **change of mind** which will definitely lead **to a change in action.**

Revelation 3 v 19. Jesus tells the church that He reprovess and disciplines them to cause them to repent. The blessing of this verse is that it reveals the reason why Jesus does this, and it is because **HE LOVES US.**

We see later in the book of *Revelation*, that in the times of the end, that even with all that people go through they will not repent, but choose to live their lives according to their own thinking. (*Revelation 9 vv 20 & 21, Revelation 16 vv 9 - 11*). God declares in *Isaiah 55 vv 8 & 9* that He doesn't think the way we think or do things the way we do them, but guess which of us needs to have a **change of mind which will lead to a change of action?**

Section 4. Compassion.

The last chapter of Jonah is an 'eye opener' concerning Jonah's thinking. We see in *Jonah 4 v 1*, God's grace for others, produces anger in Jonah. There is something in us as human beings that believes we should decide what God should do in particular situations. These assessments by us rarely take into account what Jonah declares concerning God:-

"I knew You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, and one who relents concerning calamity." Jonah 4 v 2.

This understanding fits in with Peter's statement in *2 Peter 2 v 9*,

"..... not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

We learn from *Jonah 4 v 2*, that the reason for Jonah's disobedience was not fear of the people of Nineveh, but a fear that God would have compassion on Nineveh!

God then teaches Jonah a lesson concerning Jonah's personal desire for God's compassion, and Jonah's lack of compassion for Nineveh. Jonah makes himself a shelter, still hoping God would destroy Nineveh. God causes a plant to grow and bring protection over Jonah, and Jonah is happy about this. God sends a worm to eat the plant, a scorching east wind, and the sun to beat down on Jonah. Jonah then wishes he was dead. God challenges Jonah concerning his attitude. Jonah wants God to act in compassion and protect him, but Jonah has no compassion for the people of Nineveh. The book of Jonah finishes abruptly at this point, and we are left wondering Jonah 'got the message'. More importantly we need to consider if we have 'got the message' of God's compassion on us, and the need for our compassion on others. We need to learn to **be like our Father.**

Let us consider, together, what the Bible has to say about the compassionate nature of our God. The two major Hebrew words used, concerning the compassion of God can be translated, compassionate, merciful, full of compassion, to pity, to regard and to spare.

Exodus 34 vv 5 & 6. We can see in this event, that as Moses calls upon the name of the Lord, the Lord, Himself, appears and proclaims that He is the Lord and He is **‘compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness, and faithfulness.’**

Deuteronomy 4 v 31. Moses, when teaching the people about the Lord, as he hands over responsibility to Joshua, declares that the Lord is a **‘compassionate God who will not fail or destroy His people, and He will keep His promises.’**

2 Chronicles 30 v 9. King Hezekiah assures his people that if they have gone away from God, and they return to Him they will find compassion. He declares that the Lord is, **‘gracious and compassionate, and will not turn His face away from them.’**

Nehemiah 9 v 17. Nehemiah reminds the people, that at the time of their rebellion, God revealed Himself as a God of **‘forgiveness, gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness, and that the Lord did not forsake them.’**

Psalms 72 v 13. Solomon tells us that God will deliver those who know their need, and cry to Him for help. Solomon says that God will have **compassion on the poor and needy.**

Psalms 78 vv 34 - 39. This Psalm is titled ‘God’s guidance of His people in spite of their unfaithfulness’, and verse 38, tells us of God’s gracious nature. **He being compassionate, forgave them, and turned away His anger, and did not arouse His wrath.**

Psalm 86 v 15. David states that God is **'merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abundant in loving kindness, and faithfulness.'**

Psalm 103 v 8. David, when reviewing God's actions towards Israel, declares that the Lord is **'compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness.'**

Psalm 111 v 4. In this Psalm, praising God for His goodness, the Psalmist states that God is **'gracious, and compassionate.'**

Psalm 145 vv 8 - 13. David, once again, declares that God is **'gracious, merciful, slow to anger, great in loving kindness, good to all.'** This will cause us, His people, to declare praise to His name.

Joel 2 v 13. Joel calls us to return, in our hearts, to the Lord, and he assures us that the Lord is **'gracious, and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness.'**

Malachi 3 vv 16 & 17. These verses assure us that the Lord will **'spare'** those that fear Him, and His name, speaking often of Him.

I believe it would be helpful to look closely at this reoccurring phrase concerning the nature of God. **The Lord is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness.**

Gracious, that is willing to bend or stoop in kindness, to favour or bestow.

Compassionate, that is full of care and concern for others.

Slow to anger, that is patient, slow to become angry. The Hebrew word used here for anger literally means 'a rapid breathing in passion' probably the nearest modern equivalent would be 'to get wound up'.

Great in kindness, that is abundantly willing to be kind, and show favour to us.

That is our God, and *Luke 6 v 6*, reminds us that we should be merciful, as our Father in heaven is merciful. We should be like our Father, **gracious, compassionate, slow to anger and full of kindness.** Did Jonah get there? We don't know, but with God's help we can.

Through the book of Jonah we have considered **Guidance, Thanksgiving, Repentance, and Compassion.** Let us not leave this as words on a page, but let us take what we have learnt, and let Jesus make all these things real in our lives.

*He has showed you, O man,
what is good And what does the
LORD require of you?*



*To act justly and to love mercy and
to walk humbly with your God.
Micah 6:8*

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