



STARTING

POINTS

THE GOSPELS

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LESSON 1

THEY WENT HOME ANOTHER WAY

TEXT: Matthew 2:9–12, KJV

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

INTRODUCTION

1. No one has ever encountered Jesus and gone home the same way he came.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17, KJV).

2. The blind man did not even know who Jesus was, but once in his presence, something changed.

“He replied, ‘Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!’” (John 9:25, NIV).

3. Once you have been in the presence of Jesus, you will never be the same again.
 - a. You can run from Him, but you cannot hide.
 - b. You can attempt to explain the experience away with philosophy, but you will always come up one argument short.
 - c. You can attempt to replace your experience with religion, but all the incense in the world will not replace the experience of the Holy Ghost.
 - d. You may even attempt to drown it with drink, but even in a stupor, God can reveal Himself.
4. Once you have been in the presence of Jesus, you will not go home the same way you came.

I. A LEPER

A. He Worshiped Jesus

“A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean’” (Mark 1:40, NIV).

1. There’s something about our approach to God that’s so important.
 - a. Like the Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father which art in heaven” (Matthew 6:9, KJV).
 - b. Like Abel who brought the right kind of sacrifice.
2. Sometime in the past, I visited with a man who struggled spiritually as a young man and even now as an adult.
 - a. His children struggle spiritually also and are not doing well.
3. I noticed he indicated that his children were much like he was growing up.
 - a. He mentioned that they do not fit in with the church kids, because the church kids are not real.
 - b. My impression was that what he referred to as *real* was nonconformity.

- c. In other words, that individual who perceived himself as *real* and everyone else as *phony* was using his nonconforming rebellious attitude as a mark of being *real*.
- d. He perceived submission to authority as somehow below him.
- 4. I can't help but notice that the ones who are touched by Jesus are those who humble themselves and worship Him.
- 5. Never forget; He's God and we are but flesh.

B. Jesus Healed Him

“Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed” (Mark 1:41–42, KJV).

- 1. This leper came face-to-face with God manifest in flesh.
- 2. Just one touch changed his life forever.
- 3. He had the faith and Jesus had the power.
 - a. That combination resulted in the healing touch he so desperately needed.

C. He Went Home Another Way

- 1. One can only imagine the joy of returning home that morning.
- 2. He may have had a wife and children but had been separated from them by his leprosy.
- 3. As a leper, his wife could bring him food and leave it at a distance, but there would be no hugs, no kisses; there would be no holding one another close, sharing intimacy with one another.
 - a. There could only be shouts to one another at a distance.
 - b. He was required by the law to declare to everyone who approached, “I’m unclean; stay away.”
- 4. His children would grow up not being able to be close to their father.
- 5. The children would bear the shame of knowing their father was unclean.
- 6. But that morning would be different; after a quick stop at the Temple and confirmation from the priest that he was clean, he would be able to return home.
 - a. Once again, he would provide for his family.
 - b. Once again, he would hold the wife he loved so dear.
 - c. Once again, the children would have a father.
- 7. He would never be the same again after being in the presence of our Lord.
 - a. He went home another way.

“In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psalm 16:11, KJV).

II. A DEMONIAC

A. A Man in Distress

- 1. The man was bound.

“Jesus . . . commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places” (Luke 8:29, NIV).

- a. He lived among the tombs—uncleanness—the dead seek the dead.
- b. He was lawless and restless.
- c. He suffered from self-inflicted wounds.
- 2. When Jesus stepped on the shore that day, three worlds met.
 - a. The world of fear and distress—that of human experiences
 - b. The world of darkness
 - c. The world of omnipotence

B. All Three Worlds Understood

1. The world of fear and distress recognized the hand of deliverance.
2. The world of darkness recognized the omnipotent God within Jesus.
3. Satan knew he could never match the power of the omnipotent God.
4. Consider the power and authority of Jesus, something that has never changed.

“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9–11, NIV).

5. Jesus made this statement, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18, NIV).
6. Further, He declared, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18, NIV).

C. The Man Was Delivered—He Was Healed

1. You can rest assured that this man went home another way.

“The people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind” (Luke 8:35, NIV).

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Timothy 1:7, KJV).

2. Though I want to be very careful not to equate demon possession with all forms of mental illness, I do believe that many people are oppressed by the devil.
 - a. I do believe that fear and many forms of depression have their roots in the spiritual realm.
3. If you have been one who lives with fear or is bound by the chains of darkness and depression, you can go home another way this morning.
 - a. You can leave your anger and hatred at the altar.
 - b. You can leave your fear at the foot of the cross and walk away with a heart filled with faith.

III. AN ADULTEROUS WOMAN**A. The Cruel Accusers**

1. This woman was dragged to Jesus by her cruel accusers.

“The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, ‘Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?’ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground” (John 8:3–6, ESV).

2. The goal of a godly man is never to see someone fail, or fall, or sin.
3. These men look much more like devils than religious leaders.
 - a. Their first goal was to tempt; and their second goal was to accuse.
4. They acted very much like the enemy of our souls.

“For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down” (Revelation 12:10, NIV).

5. Maybe your thoughts accuse you day and night.

6. Satan torments you with remembrances of sinful behavior.
 - a. He reminds you of the law of God, but never even suggests that you might experience forgiveness.
7. You don't have to live that way.
 - a. You can go home another way.

B. A Pardon

1. Fortunately for that woman, she had been brought into the presence of the same one the Magi worshiped thirty years before.
2. Fortunately for that woman, she was brought before the One who knows all things.
 - a. Yes, that included all her sins.
3. But fortunately for that woman, they brought her before the One who truly had the power to pardon and forgive.

“Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, ‘Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.’ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you’” (John 8:6–11, ESV).

C. She Went Home Another Way

1. Jesus left her with one simple command:

“Go, and from now on sin no more” (John 8:11, ESV).

2. She went home a different way than she came.
 - a. She came being dragged by evil captors and accusers; she went home on her own volition a clean, forgiven woman.

CONCLUSION

1. You too can go home a different way than you came.
 - a. If you need healing, you can go home healed.
 - b. If you have lived a life of mental torment, you can go home at peace.
 - c. If you know there is sin in your life, you can go home forgiven.
2. Simply begin by bowing down and worshiping Him.
3. Once you have been in His presence, you will never go home the same way.

LESSON 2

AMEND YOUR LIVES

TEXT: Matthew 4:12–17, GNV

And when Jesus had heard that John was committed to prison, he returned into Galilee, and leaving Nazareth, went and dwelt in Capernaum, which is near the sea in the borders of Zabulon and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Naphtali by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people which sat in darkness, saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is risen up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Amend your lives, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

INTRODUCTION

1. In the tabernacle plan, the relationship between the brazen altar and the golden altar was in the source of the fire.
2. The brazen altar represented judgment, death, or repentance, and it was essential.
3. The golden altar represented praise, and it was essential.
4. The source of the fire for the golden altar was the brazen altar.
 - a. Coals were taken from the brazen altar and placed in a censer on the golden altar.
 - b. Praise that's not backed up by a repentant life is like strange incense.
5. Repentance involves sorrow over past sins, changing your thoughts and changing your behaviors.
6. Repentance is a death; and dead people significantly change their behaviors.
 - a. They lose all their old habits.
 - b. They never revisit the places they once frequented.
7. To enjoy spiritual life, a person first must die to the desires of the flesh.

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin, For he that is dead, is freed from sin” (Romans 6:6–7, KJV).

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye mortify the deeds of the body by the Spirit, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13, GNV).

I. MESSAGE OF REPENTANCE

1. We should not shy away from preaching repentance.
2. It was the greatest experience in my conversion process.

A. Preached by John the Baptist

“In those days, John the Baptist came and preached in the wilderness of Judea, and said, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:1–2, GNV).

1. He did not mince words.
2. John expected repentance to bring about a change in the lives of his converts.
3. John did not make repentance optional.

“Now also is the axe laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Luke 3:9, GNV).

4. When asked what they should do, John spoke of a change in their behaviors.

“John answered, ‘Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.’ Even tax collectors came to be baptized. ‘Teacher,’ they asked, ‘what should we do?’ ‘Don’t collect any more than you are required to,’ he told them. Then some soldiers asked him, ‘And what should we do?’ He replied, ‘Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay’” (Luke 3:11–14, NIV).

5. John wasn’t shy about preaching the message of repentance even to Herod.

“John also publicly criticized Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, for marrying Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for many other wrongs he had done. So Herod put John in prison, adding this sin to his many others” (Luke 3:19–20, NLT).

6. Ultimately, it cost John his life, but everyone needed to hear the message of repentance.

B. Preached by Jesus

1. Jesus picked up where John left off.

“Now after that John was committed to prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:14–15, GNV).

2. We often think of repentance as a message for people “out there,” yet many long-term believers need to check their lives to be sure they are living at the level of God’s expectation.
3. A life filled with blessings and free of pain and sorrow is not sufficient to indicate that one does not need to repent.

“There were certain men present at the same season, that shewed him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered, and said unto them, Suppose ye, that these Galileans were greater sinners than all the other Galileans, because they have suffered such things? I tell you, nay: but except ye amend your lives, ye shall all likewise perish. Or think you that those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but except ye amend your lives, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:1–5, GNV).

4. Repentance is the most basic step in becoming a Christian and maintaining a Christian life.

C. Preached by the Apostles and Believers

1. When the convicted crowd in Jerusalem asked what to do, the first word out of the apostle Peter’s mouth was “Repent!”

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38, KJV).

2. Without repentance, baptism buries a person alive.
3. Without repentance, one’s heart is not prepared to receive the Holy Ghost.
4. There is little doubt that the success of the early church was directly related to the message of repentance.
5. It is troubling that today many Christians preach health, wealth, miracles, and healings, but neglect addressing sin.

6. Paul did not compromise his message, even to the king.

“Wherefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works worthy amendment of life” (Acts 26:19–20, GNV).

II. REPENTANCE DEFINED

1. The original Greek word for *repent* means “change of mind or purpose.”
2. In the New Testament, repentance always refers to turning from sin and change for the better.
 - a. The translators of the Geneva Bible often used the terms *amend*, *amendment*, or *amendment of life* in place of *repent* or *repentance*.

A. Godly Sorrow over Sin

1. Repentance involves godly sorrow.

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret” (II Corinthians 7:10, NIV).

2. Are tears necessary?
3. Can repentance be effective without tears?
4. You cannot truly repent with a heart full of pride.

“Blessed are those who recognize they are spiritually helpless. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Blessed are those who mourn. They will be comforted. Blessed are those who are gentle. They will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for God’s approval. They will be satisfied” (Matthew 5:3–6, GW).

B. Confession of Sin and Turning toward God

1. When people confess their sin, they acknowledge they are sinners, and that they need the help of God.
2. When there is genuine godly sorrow in the heart of people, it will generate true repentance in them.
3. Genuine repentance is an outgrowth of real, godly sorrow.
4. In the introduction to Psalm 53, David explained what precipitated his writing the psalm.
 - a. “A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba” (NIV).
5. The psalm describes the spiritual remorse and humility of a repentant person before God.

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according to the multitude of thy compassions put away mine iniquities. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from mine sin. For I know mine iniquities, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, against thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight, that thou mayest be just when thou speakest, and pure when thou judgest. . . .

“Behold, I was born in iniquity, and in sin hath my mother conceived me. Behold, thou lovest truth in the inward affections: therefore hast thou taught me wisdom in the secret of mine heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones, which thou hast broken, may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and put away all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thine holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and establish me with thy free Spirit” (Psalm 51:1–12, GNV).

6. “He that hideth his sins, shall not prosper: but he that confesseth, and forsaketh them, shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13, GNV).

C. A Lifestyle Amendment

1. Nearly every repentant sinner throws something away.
 - a. It may be certain kinds of music, movies, books, games, magazines, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, seductive clothing, and a host of other things.
2. One who is reluctant to part with things that relate to the old lifestyle has not fully repented.
3. We cannot just skip through repentance.
 - a. We must wrestle with our sinful nature until it dies.
4. Repentance is not a one-time action.
 - a. Christians learn to live with a repentant heart.
5. The wicked king of Nineveh stands as an example of repentant change.

“And he proclaimed and said through Nineveh, (by the counsel of the king and his nobles) saying, Let neither man, nor beast, bullock nor sheep taste anything, neither feed nor drink water. But let man and beast put on sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let every man turn from his evil way, and from the wickedness that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn, and repent and turn away from his fierce wrath, that we perish not?” (Jonah 3:7–9, GNV).

III. WHY REPENT?

A. It Is a Command

1. Repentance is not an option.

“Amend your lives therefore, and turn, that your sins may be put away, when the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19, GNV).

2. You cannot go to Heaven without it.
3. The tree of life demands it.

“After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life” (Genesis 3:24, NIV).

4. Christ became the victim of the flaming sword for us.
5. Our lives are to be hidden in Christ.

“Set your affections on things which are above, and not on things which are on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ which is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:2–4, GNV).

B. It Is Necessary for Salvation

1. The prophet Ezekiel revealed God’s plan for life for His people.

“Therefore, you Israelites, I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!” (Ezekiel 18:30–32, NIV).

2. Death is the gateway to eternal life.

“Even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18, NIV).

3. “A conversion experience that lacks genuine repentance is only a ritual. A baptism without the candidate confessing and forsaking his sins becomes simply a public dunking” (Johnson, 2010, Winter, 52).
4. Repentance puts you in right relationship with God.

CONCLUSION

1. No one escapes the command to repent.

“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” (Isaiah 55:6–7, NIV).

2. On the Day of Judgment, you will not be able to stand before the judge and plead your cause:
 - a. “I accepted you as my personal Savior.”
 - b. “I once had a spiritual experience.”
 - c. “I confessed you as Christ.”
3. Jesus’ own words will ring true on that day.

“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth my Father’s will which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not by thy Name prophesied, and by thy name cast out devils? And by thy name done many great works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity!” (Matthew 7:21–23, GNV).