

“Repent...for the kingdom of God is at hand/near.” Matthew 4:17

When we realize that sin or selfishness/self-centeredness is the problem/illness, repentance is the first step in our recovery. This was John the Baptist’s message in the wilderness, “Repent!” (Matthew 3:2). Centuries earlier the prophet Isaiah proclaimed “a voice crying in the wilderness, ‘prepare the way of the Lord’” (Isaiah 40:3). Repentance begins with acknowledging and confessing our sinful condition. We accept the diagnosis of our dis-ease. But then we “turn around” (the Greek word is *metanoia* for repentance) and face in a new direction and begin a journey down a road away from ourselves toward loving God and our neighbor. I remember reading a book by psychologist Karl Menninger called *What Ever Became of Sin?* The book’s thesis was that in modern times, many people would minimize the power or even deny the existence of sin. Some would say the problem is ignorance or lack of education, while others would suggest the problem is genetics or a lack of intelligence. While these issues may contribute to the world’s problems, they don’t explain or address the basic brokenness of humanity. Without this accurate diagnosis we simply may be putting a bandaid over a cancerous condition. Repentance is the radical first step of admitting our role in the problem and turning toward God who has the ultimate solution.

Reflection Questions:

- What are you hanging onto that weighs you down? Anger, hurt, fear?
- How can you let go, release, with God’s help?

Family Activity:

Everyone makes a fist and holds it tight for a whole minute. Now release it. Many times we hold onto our sin (anger, hurt, fear) not willing to ask for forgiveness or help. Reflect on how tiring it is to hold onto a tight fist (sins).

Teenage Activity:

Place three rocks in your backpack that represent things you are holding onto. Travel with those for a whole week everywhere you go. Reflect on how tiring it is, and how it feels to remove them at the week’s end.

Adult Activity:

Write down on a piece of paper things you are holding onto. Shred the paper and soak the remnants in a bowl of water to make paper mulch. Place the paper mulch onto a paper bag, using it as a make-shift strainer. Add flat flower seeds to your paper mulch as it patted flat. When it is dry you can plant the paper and flowers will grow. Share them with someone!

Prayer:

God, I confess that I am far from perfect and I struggle daily with sin that tempts me to drift away from your forgiveness and love. Grant your forgiveness and release from the burden of my sins and help me to forgive...