

Transforming Your Mind: Changing the Way You Think

Chapter 2 – Repentance Is For Believers

Christians will probably all agree that for a person to become a child of God, he must repent of his sin and accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior. If someone does not repent, I seriously doubt that we can call him a Christian, because we consider repentance essential to salvation.

Unfortunately, many of us treat repentance as a once-in-a-lifetime event, a step in the process of converting from sinner to saint. It almost seems that repentance is no longer necessary once a person's sins are forgiven. However, that first act of repenting should set the pattern for an attitude of repentance.

This is not to suggest that we should continuously apologize to God for every human thing we do, although that might not be a bad idea at times. The biblical concept of repentance is much broader than that. The Greek word translated "repent" is the compound word *metanoeo*. The first part of the word (*meta-*) indicates a change or transformation and appears in many English words, such as "metamorphosis," which means a change in condition. The second part of *metanoeo* is from the root word *nous*, which we translate as "mind." So *metanoeo* literally means to change your mind, and by extension means to turn about, to express regret or adopt another view.

Whenever the Bible says you should repent or turn away from unrighteousness, its main emphasis is on your will, changing your mind or purpose. To turn to God you must understand the nature of sin and be aware of your personal guilt. The concepts of sin and righteousness are originally perceived spiritually, but understanding and awareness of them are functions of the mind. The fact that God demands repentance shows that it involves your mind; it is something you must choose to do.

Metanoeo suggests more than just rejecting your former position or attitude, and includes turning to and embracing a new one. It means to change your mind, not cease to have one. A Christian's mind plays a vital role in his relationship with God as he learns what God expects of him and chooses to please Him.

When you accepted Jesus as Savior, He erased the record of your sins, set you free from the law of sin and death and replaced your sinful nature with a righteous one. You became a new creature, your basic motivation changed and you were born again. You have only one nature, not two. Figuratively speaking, your sinful nature died with Jesus on the cross, so it is gone and no longer controls or even affects you. However, the results or by-products of your former sinful nature still remain: sinful attitudes, behaviors, desires, habits, instincts, perceptions, feelings, tendencies, memories and thoughts. Your task is to repent, to reject that sinful mindset and replace it with a righteous one.

Repenting is a process, not an isolated event. As you mature and become more like your Father (God), you will continue to discover things you need to change. Let me suggest an attitude you can change right now. Instead of viewing this as a frustrating, never ending struggle to make God happy, consider it an extended opportunity to get rid of those attitudes that cause you problems and prevent you from becoming more like God. As my pastor says, "Repentance is believers' territory." Let's examine the scriptures to see whether his statement is justified.

Jesus was teaching His disciples some basic principles of the kingdom when He said something that is tough to swallow. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive

him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4). This shocked the disciples because they responded, “Increase our faith!” (v. 5). Maybe you had the same reaction. I want to point out that Jesus was talking about “your brother,” another Christian, sinning against you and repenting.

The word “repent” (*metanoeo*) occurs twice in these verses and it is something done by a believer. And now that we know what the word means, we can see that Jesus is talking about more than apologizing and asking someone to forgive you. For one thing, the other person’s forgiveness is not what releases you from guilt; your repentance does. But to repent is to do more than apologize or be sorry; it requires a definite change.

Have you ever apologized for something you did and said you were sorry, but you had no desire to change? This probably happens frequently with children whose parents teach them to apologize. In most cases, the child probably regrets getting caught more than he regrets having offended someone, but he still needs to learn to apologize. More important, he needs to learn to repent, to decide to change his behavior. The purpose of punishment is to help him decide to change, because most of us would never learn to repent on our own.

Paul wrote the Book of Romans to the saints in Rome, whose “faith is being reported all over the world” (Rom. 1:8). He longed to see them so they “may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith” (v. 12). Yet Paul reprimanded them for showing “contempt for the riches of [God’s] kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance” (Rom. 2:4). We realize that God extends His tolerance and patience to sinners so they might repent and be saved, but this verse states that He treats us in a similar way so we might also repent. This verse also shows that He extends kindness to believers so they might repent, or change the way they think.

Think about that for a moment. God isn’t kind to you because you deserve it, but in spite of the fact that you don’t. He has forgiven your sins and is tolerant, patient and kind toward you so you will change your mind about sin.

Paul took a similar stand with the believers in Corinth. In one of the letters he wrote them, he tried to correct some of their attitudes that were resulting in jealousy, quarreling and tolerance of sexual immorality. In a follow-up letter, he expresses happiness that they had changed their attitudes. “I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us” (2 Cor. 7:9). When Paul exposed their attitudes, they became sorrowful and repented; that is, they stopped their quarreling and they stopped tolerating the sexual immorality. Their repentance, or changed attitudes, changed their behavior.

There is a clear relationship between changed attitudes and changed behavior. What you do is not as important as who you are, because your attitudes determine your actions. It is clear from the Old Testament that doing all the right things and performing all the right ceremonies does nothing to change a person’s attitudes. That is why the New Testament’s emphasis is on your attitudes and character. John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees, “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matt. 3:8). Similarly, Paul said, “I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds” (Acts 26:20). Your actions are not only consistent with your attitude; they actually reveal your attitude. If you repent, your changed attitude will change your behavior.

If you want further evidence that God requires believers to repent, consider the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation, which are addressed to seven churches. “Remember the

height from which you have fallen! Repent (*metanoeo*) and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent (*metanoeo*), I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place” (Rev. 2:5). To another church he says, “Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent (*metanoeo*)” (Rev. 3:3). To still another church he says, “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent (*metanoeo*)” (Rev. 2:16; 3:19). God tells four of the seven churches to repent.

One of these verses shows that believers will suffer the consequences if they do not repent: “If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.” God expects his people to repent, to change their attitude and outlook on life and then change their behavior.

A related word is *metanoia*, which usually is translated “repentance” or “conversion.” It literally means your thinking has been converted. So if your thinking did not change significantly, you were not converted. This shows that changing your mind is crucial to your salvation.

Repentance is not mystical or mysterious. To repent simply means to change your way of thinking, which is virtually synonymous with renewing your mind. You can start with a sinful attitude and renew it, changing it with God’s help to a godly attitude.

How to Repent

We read in Romans 1:21, “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.” And Ephesians 4:17 reads, “So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.”

Both verses refer to futile thinking by nonbelievers. “Futile” means serving no useful purpose, suggesting a preoccupation with insignificant matters. “Thinking” refers to more than just a person’s ideas. “Futile thinking” means that what they think about is meaningless and that their priorities, standards and values are not worthwhile.

By whose standard is a nonbeliever’s thinking worthless or futile? God’s. He knows what is important and what is not. He considers their thinking futile because it is self-centered and therefore opposed to His kingdom. His kingdom is the ultimate reality and will prevail over everything else. Anything opposed to God’s kingdom is futile.

Everyone is born with a sinful or carnal nature, which is inherently self-centered, so everyone’s thinking originally is opposed to God’s kingdom and is therefore futile. It is very natural for everyone’s thinking to be self-centered and futile. Their carnal nature also reinforces that kind of thinking because it causes them to be concerned only with their own desires or what gratifies them. The more you satisfy your carnal nature, however, the more satisfaction it demands.

The entire world system is dominated by man’s carnal nature. People experience peer pressure to conform to the prevalent groupthink of the moment, whether they are adults or children. Conforming to the current socially acceptable or politically correct way of thinking is futile not only because it arbitrarily changes but also because it consistently opposes God’s position. Even advertising constantly appeals to sinful human nature, reinforcing its power and thereby encouraging people to preoccupy themselves with empty, futile thoughts.

Ephesians 4:17 says you should no longer live like that: “no longer live as the Gentiles

do, in the futility of their thinking.” So what does God want you to do instead? Repent. Change what you think about, your perspective, your standards, your values, your priorities, and so on. In other words, reprogram your mind.

Maybe you agree that you need to change your thinking, but how can you do it? Part of the answer is in Romans 13:14, which says not even to think about how to gratify sinful desires. What a radical thought for most Christians! Just like everyone else, we preoccupy ourselves with what we want and with schemes for making ourselves feel good. Listen to yourself talk. Consider how frequently you make statements like, “I want . . . or “I . . . need.” As much as you might recoil at the thought, you need to stop thinking about how to please yourself.

It is very important to stop doing the wrong things, but that is not adequate by itself; you also must start doing the right things. That is why Paul wrote the following: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Phil. 4:8). What standard can you use for true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy? God’s standard is the only legitimate one; any other standard is futile.

What practical steps can you take to change your thinking? First, you need to realize that your mind thinks about what you put in it. You are influenced by what you expose yourself to. If you subject yourself repeatedly to a certain environment or relationship, for example, it will affect you. Stop filling your mind with empty, useless, futile things, most of which comes from your entertainment. Obviously, you need recreation and entertainment, but not nearly as much as we get in America. Be more selective of your entertainment. You become like those you associate with and like the entertainment you consume. You absorb what you watch and listen to, so increase your intake of Scripture and of Christian music. Memorizing Scripture feeds your spirit, disciplines your mind, and gives your mind good material to think about.

I can almost hear you groan about memorizing Scripture. I am inclined to groan, too, but that reflects my worldly attitude. Memorizing Scripture has always been hard for me, maybe because I don’t ordinarily think the way others do. I cannot make memorization become a pleasurable experience, but I can make it easier by changing my attitude about the material I memorize. Instead of viewing Scripture as God trying to impose on my life, I can see Scripture as precious, vital to my spiritual health and therefore highly desirable.

Another way to change your thinking is to control what you think about. When an undesirable thought pops into your mind, replace it. You cannot just get rid of it; you must replace it. This brings up a good use for memorized Scripture: replacing an undesirable thought with a scripture that directs your thinking to a more appropriate subject or attitude.

What can you do to help other believers change their thinking? Hebrews 3:13 says to “encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” The Greek word translated “encourage” also means to exhort, urge or even beg. The same Greek word occurs later in Hebrews, where we read, “let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:25). The same word appears in First Thessalonians, which includes a detailed description of the Lord’s return for the saints followed by the statement, “Therefore encourage each other with these words” (1 Thess. 4:18). After explaining that believers do not need to be surprised by the day of the Lord and are not appointed to receive God’s wrath, the writer says, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thess. 5:11).

So when you see a believer getting tired or discouraged, encourage them and build them

up; remind them the Lord is coming. If they are struggling with sin, “The Lord is coming!” If calamity overwhelms them and they feel like giving up, “The Lord is coming!” Encourage believers to stand firm, be courageous and strong in the Lord because He is coming soon.

You also can teach and correct other believers, but be sure to do it the way you would want to be treated. American culture places an extreme emphasis on individual rights and liberty, so we shy away from correcting others; we don’t want to offend them or impose upon them. But no one is beyond correction. If I display a carnal attitude, correct me. If you correct me properly and I am offended by it, then I have two problems: my original sinful attitude and my unwillingness to receive correction.

The world system puts relentless pressure on you to keep you thinking like the world. You are bombarded with advertising propaganda, editorials masquerading as news broadcasts, and brazen sin masquerading as entertainment. People flaunt their unrighteousness. Most entertainment is brazenly sinful and frequently portrays anger, lust and selfish ambition. You are constantly exposed to it and it reinforces your old ways of thinking. “Because of the increase of wickedness, the *love of most will grow cold*” (Matt. 24:12, emphasis added). Do not be a victim of your environment! Do not let the wickedness around you and in your flesh cool your relationship with God!

Do you think like the world? Do you have similar priorities and standards? Do you want the same things? What do you think about in your spare time? What is the content of your prayers? Are most of them selfish?

You must take forceful action, not just bob around in the water hoping you don’t drown before help arrives. Aggressively change your thinking until it conforms in every respect to God’s thoughts. Every time you have a thought that violates God’s nature, repent. Change the way you think until every thought conforms to His. As the Bible says, “we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

You have spent your entire life accepting the world’s thinking and it is essential that you *repent*. Change your priorities. Change your standards. Change your perspective of life. Change what you put into your mind.

The Need for Repentance

The predominant characteristic of your former carnal nature was self-centeredness (pride). It caused you to be primarily concerned with your own thoughts, desires and needs. It caused you to act in what you believe is your own best interest, even at the expense of someone else.

Godly nature is motivated by humility, which is the exact opposite of self-centeredness. Humility is not a matter of having a poor opinion of yourself; rather, it is being more concerned for the needs and interests of others than your own. Humility does not cause you to abase yourself, because doing so focuses your attention on yourself, which is typical of self-centeredness.

As a Christian, you might not think of yourself as self-centered, but let me offer some evidences of self-centered thinking. Are your feelings hurt when someone speaks against you? Do you want to justify yourself when someone believes you were wrong? Do you notice yourself wanting to make your opinion known and wanting others to accept it? Are you disappointed when you don’t get what you want?

“But that’s just human nature.” I agree completely; it is fallen human nature. It’s natural for you to be self-centered. You have been self-centered all your life and it is difficult to see that you can or should be anything else. You may be thinking right now that there really is nothing wrong with being self-centered; that it is unreasonable to expect anything else; that it isn’t humanly possible to be selfless; that someone who doesn’t have a positive self-image needs psychiatric help. You may feel justified thinking this way, even trying to prove that you *need* to be self-centered and that unless you look out for yourself, others will take advantage of you, neglect you and even abuse you. Why would you respond so strongly this way? Because we are striking at the root of your old way of thinking.

Self-centeredness is such an integral part of sinful human nature that it is hard for you to realize you have it, even as a Christian. It was part of your nature when you were conceived, so you may never have experienced anything but self-centeredness and find it impossible to imagine having any other attitude. Its effects are so pervasive that it even influences your relationship with God and your understanding of Christianity.

Let me address an issue that demonstrates this problem. I object to what we could call the “strong man” concept of Christianity, which motivates such declarations as, “We are mighty warriors. God has given us power and authority over the works of Satan. God said for us to raise the dead, heal the sick and cast out devils. Nothing shall harm us.” While such statements are clearly based on Scripture, there is a subtle shift in emphasis. The focus is on me, what I can do, and what I am. I become the center of attention.

Jesus said on several occasions that the absolutely greatest person in the entire kingdom of God is like an inadequate, insufficient, dependent little child. Humility is the key; it is the first and greatest value in God’s kingdom and everything else is based on it. Consider Jesus’ parables. Who was repeatedly portrayed in the role of leadership and authority? God. Who was repeatedly portrayed as servants or the needy? People, like you and me.

You can tell when a Christian’s worldly thinking is perverting kingdom principles. The person becomes self-focused, self-assertive, domineering, critical of those who don’t believe the same way, and enamored with attention. They emphasize what *they* are able to do in Christ: “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Phil. 4:13), with a big “I” and less emphasis on Christ. That is carnal Christianity, which is almost a contradiction of terms. It is as if they have simply switched to a different power supply, relying on God’s power to make them successful where they used to fail. Because God will not share His glory, it seems likely that He will not use such a person for long, if at all.

Our focus must always be on God doing the work and we must consider it an honor that He does it through us. Jesus said all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him; therefore we are to go and do His work. In effect, He delegated authority to us to work in His behalf, relying on His power to do kingdom work, not our power doing our work. We must learn to think like servants: “I am an unworthy servant and I have done only what I was told to do” (see Luke 17:10). That dictates a radical change in how we think.

Changing your attitude and perspective may or may not change what you do, but it will certainly change your motive. Someone can preach the power of God with boldness because they enjoy being bold. Or they can preach the power of God with boldness because they have boldness resulting from their convictions. By watching them preach, you may not be able to tell what their motive is and you can misjudge them. Man looks at the external appearance, but God sees the person’s attitude. You can be totally convinced that a person is being carnal and be completely

wrong. Your opinion is simply an opinion, not necessarily the truth. Why is that person excited, laughing and jumping up and down as they pray for people? Is it because they like being the center of attention and being able to do powerful things? Or is it because it's a total blast to be on the scene when God does something? You don't know which it is.

You can't always properly judge a person by the way they talk about these matters. It is very common, for example, for people to talk about the authority we have in Christ; how God in us enables us to live a victorious life and do mighty works for God; how we should put on the armor of God and resist the enemy; how we should raise the dead, heal the sick and cast out devils. I agree that we are participants in God's work; that God has chosen to work through mankind rather than angels; that we are co-laborers with Christ. But it is possible for a very subtle change to occur in these kingdom truths when they take up residence in our minds, as mentioned earlier.

It is natural for you to assume credit for what God does and not even realize it. Self-centeredness makes you want the credit and glory at every opportunity. It is masterful at portraying itself as beneficial and even essential to your well-being. We speak of someone who needs to improve their self-image, for example; we consider low self-esteem as unhealthy. In reality, all self-focus is unhealthy, whether it is optimistic or pessimistic. Because self-focus is the foundation of an ungodly perspective, it is extremely natural to interpret kingdom principles in a way that makes you feel better about yourself. You want to feel good about your ability to do what you think needs to be done. On the other hand, God's servant submits all that he has to God; God then uses His own power to do His kingdom business through the submitted servant.

It is essential that you accept responsibility for what you think, for your attitudes and perspective. You must consciously and deliberately change your mind. I hear Christians say they don't have faith to do certain things. Or they are waiting for God to take away certain desires and attitudes; they are waiting for God to do it. I cringe when I hear such talk, then I grieve over the lost potential. If we wonder why God uses others but not us, we come dangerously close to accusing God of being unfair. Of course, God is sovereign, but He is not biased. Instead, He is wise in not using someone who is not prepared.

You must realize—that is, change your awareness—that God has already done everything He needs to do for you to be effective in His kingdom. The ball is now in your court. The issue is not whether God will do something else in you, but whether you will acknowledge what He has already done and respond appropriately.

I believe that is the key to what we call the baptism in the Holy Spirit, for example. You received the Spirit of God at salvation; the Spirit of adoption that testifies (confirms with us) that we are God's children. You don't need to receive "more" of the Holy Spirit, because you have already received Him in His entirety. I suggest that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the release that occurs when you acknowledge His presence within you and permit Him to express Himself through you in whatever way He chooses. It is not a matter of receiving something new, but of changing the way you think of someone you already have received. He is the literal presence of God in you. You cannot receive more or less of God, but you can certainly regulate the degree of freedom He has to work through you.

As stated earlier, God does not need to give you anything else to work with. Your potential for success in the kingdom is directly related to your thinking. Have you chosen to believe you are his child and servant? That God is greater than Satan? That God has chosen to work through you? That success can only be defined in terms of kingdom values? If you have

chosen to believe these points, you can also choose to believe that your thinking is the only hindrance. The New Testament repeatedly tells you to repent, put off and put on, to declare yourself God's servant, and so on. These all relate to how you think. The spiritual victory has already been won and the primary battlefield is now your mind: Do you believe what God has said and are you willing to act on it?

Sinners can be extremely successful when they decide to believe they have within themselves what it takes to be successful. That is why motivational seminars are effective; they convince people they can succeed. Conversely, a person will become a failure if he expects to be one. The world understands some of the power of the human mind. If only Christians weren't so naive about this potential! The effective child of God recognizes his inadequacies when faced with the significant matters of life and he recognizes that God in him is overwhelmingly sufficient. That understanding leads to real success. You must learn to rely on the absolute, unlimited power and authority of God, who lives within you, rather than relying on your personal abilities. This not only defines true success, but also produces it consistently. This requires changing the way you think; redefine success and recognize the source of success. True success results whenever you do what God wants, when and how He wants you to do it, and you rely on Him to do it through you.

"But I just don't see it happening. I can't believe that." Are other principles or laws invalid because you don't understand them or even believe they exist? Were the laws of science in operation before you learned about them in school? Of course, they were. And they continue to function and be available for your use.

Turning on a light is not a big deal for most of us, because we have accepted the concept of making a bulb shine by flipping a switch. You can observe others flipping a switch and believe that you will get the same results if you flip the same switch. Even if you have never used that particular switch before, you do not stand in front of it, gazing hopelessly at it, believing it will not work for you. You have chosen to believe you will get the same results others do and, in fact, would be totally surprised if you didn't. Why? Because you have chosen to expect certain results.

You can read God's statements in the Bible and hear good teaching for years, yet choose to believe that for some reason it does not apply to you. God's statements are true, however, regardless of whether you choose to believe them. What you believe is a matter of choice. You might believe, for example, that a certain person is angry with you. You will judge their words and actions on the basis of your belief. They can say something and you might react, "Aha! That proves they're angry with me," when in reality what they said had no such meaning.

You even respond to the Bible the same way. When you read something in the Bible, you interpret it in light of what you already believe. That is how it should be, but you need to recognize what is happening. You might read, "God is love," and you interpret the statement's meaning by using your biblical understanding of God and love. This shows how it is possible for each person to have his own insights to Scripture. It also shows how you can read something you have read numerous times before and suddenly gain new insight. Your understanding has changed since you read it before, so now you interpret it a little differently.

You might think God has shown you something new, but it is also possible He has been showing it to you for years and your understanding has finally allowed you to comprehend it. How many times and in how many ways do you have to explain something to someone before they finally grasp it? The truth of your statement has not changed and neither has your desire for them to understand it, but they have to condition their thinking to receive it. Similarly, you must

condition your mind to believe what God says. It is up to you, and you must choose to do it.

Just as a worldly mindset is quick to accept glory for success, it quickly rejects responsibility for failure. “Passing the buck” began in the Garden of Eden, when Adam blamed both Eve and God for his failure: “It was the woman you gave me.” Since then, every human has the tendency to point their finger at others. Even Christians point their finger at God by claiming they have done everything that can be expected of them and that it is now up to God.

“I don’t know what else to do. It’s in God’s hands now.” “God will have to give me [fill in the appropriate term], because I don’t have what it takes.” These and similar statements are only partially true. Their error lies in their rejection of responsibility. Looking at the situation from a carnal perspective causes you to judge by human standards. If you reprogrammed your mind to view the situation from God’s perspective, you might reach an entirely different conclusion.

The key is repenting, changing the way you think. Maybe you cannot even imagine yourself thinking differently than you have all of your life. Let me offer an illustration that may help you see the potential.

Imagine a male child born with what we might call binary senses, senses that register only the presence or absence of a stimulus. He can see, but only black and white, not even any shades of gray. He cannot see the features on your face, for example, unless there are dark shadows. In low light levels, he cannot see you at all because everything looks black. As the light increases, he can see anything that appears white against a black background. As you turn your head, for example, your facial features magically appear and disappear as shadows define the features, then the shadows ultimately disappear. When the light gets bright enough, the shadows get softer until he can no longer see them, and everything becomes pure white. To him, everything looks like a polarized photograph, in which everything is black or white, with no colors or shades of gray.

His other senses are binary, too. He can hear, but he can only distinguish between the presence and absence of noise. He can hear no individual tones or differences in volume; he hears only noise or silence. His binary sense of taste tells him when something is in his mouth, but everything tastes exactly the same. The same is true of touch; he cannot distinguish between textures, between firmnesses, or between temperatures. His sense of smell tells him only that he can smell something, but everything smells exactly the same.

Imagine what this poor fellow is missing! The only way he can tell the difference between a tomato and a steak is by their shapes. To him, they have the same color, texture, feel, smell and taste. What’s more, because he has only experienced binary sensations all his life, he cannot even imagine the sensual sensitivity the rest of us take for granted.

Let us further assume that a doctor has studied this young boy and knows how to correct the problems through operations and therapy. The operations will at times be very painful and the therapy extremely unpleasant. The boy will have to make a constant effort to develop his new senses and pay constant attention to them to understand his new abilities and learn to use them effectively.

Does the boy understand the value of what the doctor is offering him? No, he cannot, because he has never experienced anything other than binary senses. At some point he may have to say to himself, “I submit myself to the process, even though I have no idea what the results will be like, simply because I trust the doctor.”

That is the commitment I am asking you to make. You probably have no realistic concept of what it means to be like Jesus, because you can only speculate on the basis of what you have

seen in other people. But your Father tells you it is possible to live on an entirely different level—you can be like Him. From your current vantage point, you cannot even imagine what that would be like or how you would get there.

Now is the time to submit yourself to the process, even though you have no idea what the results will be like, simply because you trust your Father. The process of transformation will be difficult as you reject the ungodly motivations and desires you developed before you turned to Christ. You will need to be constantly vigilant to avoid indulging old attitudes and behavior. And for the rest of your life, you will continue learning to use your new nature more effectively.

That is the essence of repentance. You have only a slight understanding of what its results will be. But you can trust God, who tells you it will be more than worthwhile.

Conclusion

To repent is to change your mind. The New Testament's statements about repentance are mostly directed at believers, and it repeatedly encourages us to do so. The first step to changing your thinking is to realize that your mind thinks about what you put in it. If you stop filling your mind with things that reinforce ungodliness, and instead fill it with thoughts of God and the truths of the Bible, you will have made a major step toward repenting. The world applies constant pressure to get you to accept its way of thinking. To offset this pressure, you must take forceful action and aggressively change your thinking until it conforms in every respect to God's thoughts.

Personal Study

It has been said that the first casualty in a conflict is truth. Imagine a conflict between two Christians, each of whom honestly believes the other is wrong.

- How might self-centeredness cause them to view the facts (truth) differently? Explain.
- What practical steps of repentance would help each person overcome self-centeredness in the conflict?
- If both parties repented, what results could they realistically expect?
- How could habitually practicing repentance prevent conflicts from occurring?