



Repentance: An Overview

By Brian Childres

The Big Picture: our heart vs. our behavior - freedom through repentance.

Proverbs 4:23-27 (NIV) Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. The only thing that matters is the heart. This is where ALL of life begins and ends. All of our actions and relationships flow from the heart. All of the choices that we make in life: planning our calendars, responding to our spouses, talking to our kids, serving in ministry- it all is simply the physical expression of the spiritual reality of the heart.

Luke 6:45 “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” In essence, all our behavior is a direct result of what is in our heart.

So, our focus as freedom ministers is 100% the heart. But this is a huge challenge. Why?

We can't see the heart. But we can see someone's behavior.

Therefore, we constantly find ourselves getting caught up in the person's behavior, their story, their outward life struggles. For example, when the person is:

Getting angry – Gossiping - Being critical about their spouse - Avoiding others, - Shutting down and withdrawing - Being a victim



Do you struggle with their behavior??? If so, why do you struggle?

The truth is this: their behavior is a gift because it is the only way to help them get to their heart.

***Remember, behavior is neither bad NOR good. It just is. And it always is a reflection of the heart. Negative behavior is really a good thing because it is the heart crying out for help. Negative behavior is always a gift because it reveals the true need of the person's heart.

For example, who do you feel about relational conflict? Most people try to avoid it. But this is absurd.

Relational conflict is a huge gift.

Do you know what relational conflict really is? When two people can't get along, the bottom line is NOT that they can't get along. It is that one or both have a need. The conflict does not cause the need, it just exposes it. Once again, the negative behavior is our best friend- leading us straight to the true need of the heart. Let's begin to run headfirst into every relational conflict that we can find!

Let's take a look at the most important thing in the heart: **BELIEF**



But first, let's differentiate between a belief and a belief system.

- Belief system- This is a collection of thoughts that reside in part of our brain. In essence, it is our theology. It is the result of our intellectual learning. Most Christians have good theology. Their belief system is not their problem.
- Belief- Our true beliefs are found in our heart. And there are only two different things to believe: truth and lies. Bob Hamp says that a belief is like a contact lens that is overlaid on our hearts and determines how we see the world. In essence, we don't see the world and others as they truly are; we see them based on our true beliefs.

The way we live our lives is based on what we believe about: God, ourselves, and others. For example, if a woman believes the nasty lie that she is not worthy to be loved (maybe this lie was planted in her when her father left when she was 7 years old), what will be her perspective of any man that she is married to or dating? She will see any man as a failure in loving her. She will blame the man. She will be unable to receive any love that he gives simply because of how she sees herself.

Once again, we see the world based on our beliefs, not reality.



So, our simple goal as freedom ministers is to help people see the false beliefs that they have bought into and, most importantly, to see and embrace the truth. Their behavior will always reveal these false beliefs.

This is the essence of repentance. Recall the definition of repentance:

Metanoia- A change of mind / heart. In essence, God's truth replaces the lies that we believe.

The challenge in freedom ministry is to remember that only the Holy Spirit can empower someone to experience true repentance. We cannot make it happen. Often a freedom minister will talk, talk, and keep talking to the person, thinking that they can teach, encourage, or push someone into repentance. It can quickly become more about the freedom minister than about the other person!

What causes a person to repent?

Romans 2:4: God's loving kindness leads us to repentance.

We simply get to be a conduit for the love of God to empower the person to experience a true change of mind. This is an awesome privilege!



Now, it is important to realize that the person in front of us is the one that must see their truth. It does no good if we see it. And most of the time, what we think is their heart issue is not the same as what God sees. We can waste a lot of time trying to tell the person what their wrong belief is. Our job is to simply lead them into the liberating presence of Christ. He can easily and quickly provide the miracle.

It is also crucial to realize that the person we are trying to help is NOT broken. **They do not need fixed.** If they are in Christ, they are a new creation. Their heart is 100% good and pure.

The old nature is dead and gone. This one truth will remove a heavy weight off the freedom minister. It is easy to see people as messed up, broken, and needing repair. And we can easily get into judgement, which makes it difficult for us to minister freedom—because we are not free ourselves!

The person in front of us is whole and pure-hearted. They are no different than you. Their only issue is the lie(s) that they are choosing to believe.

Roman 12:2 “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”



Spiritual Transformation is an ongoing process. Look closely at this scripture: BE transformed-----renewing

Mind renewal is a daily, lifetime journey. This is a good thing because it keeps us turning toward God for more of His love and life-giving truth. Our goal is not to finally get completely free and stay free. It is to continue to allow God to remind us of what is true.

It is also important to know that some of the folks that you will minister to have been believing the same lie for decades. The rut of unbelief is very deep. This is called a stronghold. It may take a season of consistent mind renewal for freedom to occur. Don't put pressure on yourself to get them free in just a single one-hour session. It may happen, but God may receive greater glory by their freedom slowly coming forth over the course of an entire year.

Let's go deeper with the God factor. It is important that we realize that:

** Only God can destroy a lie, opens one's eyes, set a heart free!

** He desires their freedom much, much more than you do.

** He knows the best way to bring them real freedom.



The greater your awareness is of the above 3 truths, the more freedom you will have to be the gift that God has called you to be.

So how does this heavenly transaction take place exactly?

John 8:32 “You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.”

True freedom comes from knowing truth. Sounds simple, right? So why are there tons of Christians that have gone to church weekly for decades, have a sound grasp of the Bible, and have very little freedom? And what about the Pharisees? They memorized the entirety of Scripture and missed the boat completely!

The key word is.... **KNOW**. The Greek word used here does NOT have anything to do with the concept of “understanding”. It is one thing to intellectually understand a Biblical concept, but this is not what this verse is communicating. This particular Greek word implies a “deep, intimate knowing.” In fact, it is the same word used in Scripture to describe sexual intercourse- “a man knows a woman.”

Proverbs 23:7 - sheds more light on this type of knowing: “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” Notice that the focus is not “WHAT a man thinks.” It is “AS a man thinks.”



It is not only the content of our minds, but it is how we use our minds. The Biblical facts are important, but the ability to use our minds like God does is crucial. The good news is that this is not difficult. In fact, we are wired for this very thing:

“We have the mind of Christ.” 1 Cor. 2:16.



We have discovered that men can only be spiritually healthy when they are intimately connected with other men. Once this connection takes place, spiritual growth accelerates. Husbands begin to love and serve their wives. Dads begin to spend more time with their children. The local church benefits greatly: more mature and committed leaders.

We have witnessed many churches be greatly impacted by men relationally discipling other men. The ripple effect can be huge. Whether you choose to host a Men's Bootcamp or start a new SPAR Group, spiritual renewal is just waiting to happen. Men are hungry for discipleship opportunities that make them come alive. Let us serve you!

Join us in the pursuit of authentic masculinity

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