

“Leaving Regret Behind”

Endless Vacation Sermon Series | Week Four | Newbreak Church

August 14th, 2022

Newbreak’s Sermon Study Guide is an in-house resource that serves sermon-based Life Groups and/or individuals who want to reflect further on how the message contributes to our spiritual formation.

In this week’s study, we talk about the paralyzing power of regret and how we can move past it in a healthy manner.

Icebreakers for Life Groups

- Which do you like better: Chik-Fil-A or In-N-Out?
- What’s something you regretted doing as a kid during the summer?

Going Deeper Into the Message

Everyone has regrets, but no one has to live **in** them. Here’s what we mean. Regrets can paralyze us, they might as well be like walls that come around us confining us to a sort of psychological jail cell. In that regard, many people (sadly) end up living **IN** regret like a prisoner in a cell. But that doesn’t have to be the case. In fact, it ought not be!

How do I leave regret behind me to move toward what’s ahead of me?

Read 2 Corinthians 7:8–10

Point 1 – Discover how sorrow can help me move past regret.

Newsflash: Sorrow and regret aren’t synonyms! Furthermore, having sorrow is not a symptom and precursor of regret. There is a kind of sorrow that is helpful and a kind of sorrow that is not. We need to recognize this, lest we fall into the trap of becoming numb or callous to sorrow altogether.

There are three options for how this plays out...

No sorrow or regret.

Diagnosed by...

- Not feeling sorry for what I've done; I'm just sorry I got caught.
- I agree my behavior was wrong, but I justify it with excuses.
- I'm sad about the consequences, but not about my choices.
- I give lip service to apologies, but don't ever make an effort to change my behavior.

Worldly sorrow.

Diagnosed by...

- Keeps me constantly looking back, afraid to look forward.
- Sends me spiraling into self-condemnation without any hope.
- Leaves me in a cyclical loop full of regret, despair, and fear.

But now the one worth talking about...

Godly sorrow moves me from guilt and shame toward real-life change.

Because God doesn't want us to feel bad just to *feel bad*. Any conviction that he gives is meant to lead us to repentance—which implies a shift of direction.

Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin? (Romans 2:4, NLT)

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- Growing up, was shame used to correct you? If so, did it lead you to real feelings of being sorry, or did you try to hide your bad behavior? How is this different from how God challenges you to become better?
- Reflecting on worldly sorrow vs. godly sorrow, have you been truly sorry for the last thing you regretted? If not, what needs to change in your thinking to get there? How can this be a healthy form of sorrow?
- Have you ever experienced a time in your life when you sensed God wanting to remove your shame? If so, how did that impact your relationship with Him?

How do I leave regret behind me to move toward what's ahead of me?

Point 2 – Choose repentance over regret.

9 Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain caused you to **repent** and change your ways. It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way. **10** For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks **repentance**, results in spiritual death. (2 Corinthians 7:9–10, NLT).

The Greek word for repentance (μετάνοια, *metanoia*) literally means “a change of mind,” but it is far richer than that. Theologically speaking, repentance was understood as a mental shift where the way someone thinks about something takes a drastic turn. And this does not just remain a cognitive disposition. To think differently—in a thorough way that affects a worldview—means that the habits and the heart-follow coincide. After all, we cannot change our own heart, but we can change our minds and then God has permission to change our hearts. Far from being an anecdote to the discussion, repentance, properly understood, provides the way out of regret!

Regret is that activity of the mind that causes us to say, “Why did I do that?” There is some limited benefit to this sort of introspection, but it cannot be where we live. Left unchecked, it goes down a dark path of shame and leaves you feeling like there is no way out.

True **repentance**, on the other hand, brings in another aspect of our minds—our will. To truly repent one must have a change of will, forfeiting the view that our agency makes us autonomous, and seeing that we are willingly joining ourselves to God as our sovereign Lord.

Repentance reconnects us with God and restores our relationships.

It puts us back on the right trajectory, right on “the path of life.”

You make known to me **the path of life**; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11, ESV).

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- How has your view of repentance been impacted by this study?
- Is it hard for you to truly repent to God? If so, why do you think this is? How do you view God dealing with your sin?

- What was the last thing you repented of, fully changing your way? How did that work for you? Was there relief with repentance?
- If you are dealing with a long term regret, what would it take to repent of it and give it to God?

How do I leave regret behind me to move toward what's ahead of me?

Read Deuteronomy 34:7–10; Hebrews 11:24–27

Point 3 – Leave regret in the past, to focus on God's hope for your future.

Over the past few weeks, we have leaned into a few parts of Moses' life. The more familiar you are with his life, the more you realize that he was far from perfect and led a people (the Israelites) who seemed to get it wrong more often than getting it right. Sometimes the people in Scripture become the example of *what not to do* (and sometimes *we are that way too!*). But there are lessons to be learned here. For Moses, regret—whether personal or while standing in solidarity with his people—never had the final word. This is worth repeating: We don't have to live in regret because regret does not get the final word—God's redemption does. So, if we find ourselves imprisoned by regret we must know that our feet are not bound to any shackles—that the cell door is not locked—that we are not doomed to live there forever! Repentance is beckoning us to walk out and leave regret behind!

All of this said, there are 3 key realities we need to get in our heads and down into our hearts.

1. My regrets are not too big for God's grace.

That's why we need to keep learning about the depths of grace, through biblical teaching and even through song we are proclaiming what is true about God's grace despite our greatest mistakes.

2. I am not what I have done; I am who God says I am.

Learning who God is (theology) and who he says we are (identity) are the most important things for all of life! And by doing so, they will combat the shame that tends to come from places of regret.

3. I cannot change my past, but Jesus can change my future.

Where you were is not as important as where you are going. Your past is not stronger than Jesus. He is excited to embrace you. But you have to leave regret at the door.

After all, the greatest tragedy is if we allow our regrets to keep us from God.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- Do you think you've done something God won't/can't forgive? Why do you think this?
- How have past regrets impacted your understanding of God and your relationship with Him? In what ways have you grown in this area?
- Oftentimes we are more forgiving and understanding of the missteps of others but much harder on ourselves. If that is true for you, why?
- Which of the three declarations (above) are you taking with you today? Why that one?

Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 7:10 (NLT) For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

How are you going to think or live differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

How does this week's message shape or nurture your relationship with God?

BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids in a way that they would relate to or understand?