Repentance — Turning Home

A Deep-Dive Scripture Set with Study Helps

Shorthand: RP.1 – RP.16 • Builds on F3.7, F4.3, F5.4 and F6.5 in the Foundational Sets

The Scripture Set

ID	Topic / Story	Scripture Passage
Part 1: What Repentance Is		
RP.1	The First Word of the Gospel: "Repent"	Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 4:17
RP.2	Return to Me: Turning with the Whole Heart	Joel 2:12-13; Hosea 14:1-4
RP.3	He Came to His Senses: The Two Lost Sons	Luke 15:11-32
Part 2: God's Part — Repentance Is a Gift		
RP.4	A Gift Only God Can Give	Acts 5:30-31; 11:15-18; 2 Timothy 2:24-26
RP.5	Kindness That Leads Us Home	Romans 2:1-4; Jeremiah 31:18-20; Ezekiel 36:25-27
Part 3: Our Part — How We Turn		
RP.6	Our Part: Turn, Come Close, Humble Yourself	Ezekiel 18:30-32; James 4:7-10; Philippians 2:12-13
RP.7	Two Kinds of Sorrow: Peter and Judas	2 Corinthians 7:8-11; Luke 22:54-62; Matthew 27:3-5
RP.8	Confession: Bringing Sin into the Light	Psalm 51:1-17; Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:7-9
RP.9	Fruit That Proves the Turn	Luke 3:7-14; Luke 19:1-10; Acts 26:19-20
Part 4: Strongholds — When Sin Has Built a Prison		
RP.10	False Repentance: Saul's Excuses and Esau's Tears	1 Samuel 15:10-31; Hebrews 12:14-17
RP.11	Strongholds: When Sin Has Built a Prison	Romans 7:15-8:4; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5
RP.12	Burning the Scrolls: Breaking with the Old Life	Acts 19:11-20; Matthew 5:29-30
RP.13	Not Alone: Confess to One Another and Restore Gently	James 5:13-20; Galatians 6:1-2
Part 5: A Life of Returning		
RP.14	Remember, Repent, Return: A Life of Turning	Revelation 2:1-7; Psalm 139:23-24
RP.15	Turned Back and Sent Out	Isaiah 6:1-8; Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-19
RP.16	Joy in Heaven over One Who Repents	Luke 15:1-10; Acts 3:19-20

How to Use This Set

Each session follows the same simple pattern you already use. Anyone can lead it, and it can be passed on.

- **Look Back:** How are you doing? Did you obey what God showed you last time? Who did you share it with?
- **Look Up:** Read the passage out loud. Have someone retell it in their own words. Then discover together: What does this teach us about God? About people? Use the session questions to go deeper.
- **Look Forward:** What will I obey this week? Who will I share this with? Pray for each other by name.

The plain text in each session is written for everyone. The grey boxes ("Look closer") give word studies, background, and what the Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox traditions agree on. They are for coaches and leaders who want to go deeper. Read them before the group, and share what helps.

For someone fighting a stronghold or addiction, work through the sessions **alongside** the section “Walking Through a Stronghold” and the Daily Rhythms.

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Start Here: What Repentance Is

> **Repentance is turning.** It is a change of mind and heart that turns the whole person away from sin and back to God. God makes it possible, we really do it, and it shows in a changed life.

Picture walking down a road away from God, toward what you wanted. Repentance is when God wakes you up, you see where that road goes, and you turn around and walk home to Him. It is not just feeling bad. It is not just saying sorry. It is a change of mind that becomes a change of direction that becomes a changed life.

Repentance is **good news**. Jesus' first sermon was “Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!” (Mark 1:15). You don't repent to earn God's love. You repent because His love is already running toward you (Luke 15:20).

The Words Behind “Repent”

Word	What it means	Where you see it
***shuv* (Hebrew)**	To turn, to return. The main Old Testament word for coming back to God; used more than 1,000 times.	Joel 2:12-13; Jeremiah 31:18; Ezekiel 18:30-32
***nacham* (Hebrew)**	To be moved, to grieve, to relent; also to comfort.	Joel 2:13; Job 42:6
***metanoia* / *metanoeō* (Greek)**	A change of mind: a new way of seeing that turns the whole person.	Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 7:10
***epistrephō* (Greek)**	To turn around, to turn back. The visible turn of direction.	Acts 3:19; Luke 22:32; 1 Thessalonians 1:9
***metamelomai* (Greek)**	Regret or remorse: feeling bad about the past. Not the same as repentance.	Matthew 27:3 (Judas)
***homologeō* / *exomologeō* (Greek)**	To say the same thing; to confess openly. Agreeing with God about sin.	1 John 1:9; James 5:16; Acts 19:18

The Shape of Repentance: Heart, Mouth, Hands

Across two thousand years, Christians have described repentance in three movements. The words differ, but the shape is the same.

	Scripture	Catholic	Orthodox	Protestant
Heart **Sorrow and turning**	Godly sorrow that turns us to God (2 Corinthians 7:10; Joel 2:13)	Contrition: sorrow for sin with the resolve to sin no more	*Penthos*: mourning over sin, “joy-making mourning” (St. John Climacus)	Conviction and godly sorrow: “grief and hatred of his sin” (Westminster)
Mouth **Confession**	Agree with God out loud; confess to one another (1 John 1:9; James 5:16; Psalm 32:5)	Confession in the sacrament of Reconciliation	The Mystery of Confession, often with a spiritual father	Confession to God and to one another; Luther kept private confession
Hands **Fruit and repair**	Fruit that shows the turn; making things right (Luke 3:8; 19:8; Acts 26:20)	Penance (“satisfaction”): repairing harm and healing, not paying for sin	*Epitimia*: penance as medicine; prayer, fasting, and giving	“Fruit in keeping with repentance,” restitution, “new obedience”

What All Three Traditions Agree On

- **God moves first.** Repentance is a gift of grace before it is our work (Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25).
- **We really take part.** God's grace does not make us passive; it makes us able (Ezekiel 18:31; Philippians 2:12-13).
- **It turns the whole person:** mind, heart, will, body, habits, and relationships.
- **It is lifelong.** It starts at conversion and baptism and continues every day until our last breath.
- **It is hopeful, not self-hatred.** It looks up at God's love more than down at our failures (Luke 15; 2 Corinthians 7:10).
- **It bears fruit.** A turned heart shows in changed actions and in making things right (Luke 3:8).
- **It happens in community.** We confess, pray, restore, and celebrate together (James 5:16; Galatians 6:1-2).

> **WHERE THEY DIFFER (FOR COACHES)**
>
> Catholic and Orthodox Christians receive confession and absolution as a sacrament through a priest; most Protestants confess directly to God and to fellow believers, sometimes with a pastor. They also explain penance differently: Catholic teaching speaks of temporal effects of sin and satisfaction, Orthodox teaching mainly of healing, and Protestant teaching of fruit and gratitude. These differences are real. This set builds on what Scripture makes plain and all three affirm, so people from any background can walk it together.

How the First-Century Church Lived It

- **Cut to the heart, then action (Acts 2:37-41).** People asked “What should we do?” Peter said repent and be baptized. Repentance led straight into baptism, teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayer.
- **Honest confrontation with hope (Acts 8:18-24).** Peter told Simon plainly that his heart was wrong, and told him to repent and pray.
- **Public breaks with the old life (Acts 19:17-20).** Believers confessed their practices and burned their sorcery scrolls in front of everyone.
- **Discipline that aimed at restoration (2 Corinthians 2:5-11; 7:8-11).** When a man repented, Paul told the church to forgive him, comfort him, and reaffirm their love.
- **Confession in community (James 5:16).** Believers confessed to each other and prayed for healing. The Didache, a very early church manual, told believers to confess their sins in the gathering before praying.

Voices from the Whole Church

> **QUOTED FROM THE THREE TRADITIONS**
>
> “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent’ [Matthew 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.” — Martin Luther, Ninety-five Theses, no. 1 (1517)
>
> “Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience.” — Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 87 (1647)
>
> “Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart …” and “The human heart is heavy and hardened. God must give man a new heart.” — Catechism of the Catholic Church, §1431–1432
>
> “Correctly understood, repentance is not negative but positive. It means not self-pity or remorse but conversion, the re-centering of our whole life upon the Trinity.” — Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*
>
> “This life has been given to you for repentance; do not waste it in vain pursuits.” — St. Isaac the Syrian (7th century)
>
> St. John Chrysostom (4th century) taught five paths of repentance: condemning your own sins, forgiving your neighbor's

> sins against you, prayer, giving to the poor, and humility.

The Sixteen Sessions

PART 1: WHAT REPENTANCE IS

RP.1 The First Word of the Gospel: "Repent"

Read: Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 4:17

> *"The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"*
> **Mark 1:15 (NLT)**

What's happening

John the Baptist has just been arrested. Jesus steps out and preaches His first message, and it fits in one breath: the time has come, God's Kingdom is near, repent, believe. This is how the gospel begins.

Notice the order. The Kingdom comes near **first**. Repentance is our response to good news; it is not a fee we pay to get in. And repenting and believing go together. To repent is to turn **from** something. To believe is to turn **to** Someone. It is one turn with two sides.

> **LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS**
>
> In Mark 1:15 "repent" (*metanoeite*) and "believe" (*pisteuete*) are present-tense commands. They can carry the sense of "keep on turning, keep on trusting." Matthew 4:17 says that "from then on" this was Jesus' message, the same words John preached (Matthew 3:2). That ties Jesus to the whole line of prophets who called Israel to return.
>
> Martin Luther built the first of his Ninety-five Theses (1517) on Matthew 4:17: the Lord willed "the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."
>
> **Where the traditions agree:** All three traditions put repentance at the front door of faith, joined to baptism, and keep it at the center of the Christian year: Lent for Catholics and many Protestants, Great Lent for Orthodox Christians.

Discover

1. What reason does Jesus give for repenting?
2. Why do you think "repent" and "believe" go together?
3. What would "the Kingdom of God is near" look like in your unit, block, or home?

Obey this week

Finish this sentence and tell one person: "I am turning from __ *and turning to Jesus by* __."

RP.2 Return to Me: Turning with the Whole Heart

Read: Joel 2:12-13; Hosea 14:1-4

> *"Don't tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead. Return to the LORD your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love."*
> **Joel 2:13 (NLT)**

What's happening

Joel's nation has been hit by disaster. God's answer is not "try harder." It is: come back to Me with your whole heart. People in that culture tore their clothes to show grief. God says: don't just tear your clothes, tear your hearts. He wants the inside, not a show.

Why return? Because of who God is: merciful, compassionate, slow to anger, full of unfailing love. In Hosea, God even gives His people the words to pray ("take words with you," 14:2) and promises to heal their unfaithfulness and love them freely (14:4). In the Old Testament, repentance is a homecoming.

> **LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS**
>
> The main Hebrew word for repentance is *shuv*, "to turn, to return." It appears more than a thousand times in the Old Testament. Joel 2:13 quotes God's own description of Himself from Exodus 34:6-7, the words He spoke to Moses right after the golden calf. God reveals His mercy most clearly to people who have just failed.
>
> "Relent" at the end of Joel 2:13 is *nacham*, a word for being moved, grieved, or comforted. Hosea 14:2 is an early example of God giving His people a prayer of repentance to say. The Church has always handed people words to pray when they cannot find their own.
>
> **Where the traditions agree:** Catholic and many Protestant churches read Joel 2 on Ash Wednesday to open Lent. Orthodox Christians open Great Lent with Forgiveness Vespers, where everyone asks one another for forgiveness face to face.

Discover

1. What does God want instead of torn clothes? What does that look like today?
2. List everything Joel 2:13 says about God. Which one do you need most right now?
3. In Hosea 14:1-4, what does God promise to do for people who return?

Obey this week

Each morning this week, pray Hosea 14:2 in your own words. Then tell God one specific thing you are returning from.

RP.3 He Came to His Senses: The Two Lost Sons

Read: Luke 15:11-32

> *"So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him."*
>
> **Luke 15:20 (NLT)**

What's happening

The younger son takes his inheritance, wastes it, and ends up feeding pigs, the lowest job a Jewish young man could imagine. Then he came to his senses (v17). Repentance begins when God wakes us up to what is real. He rehearses a speech and starts walking.

The father runs. Before the son can finish his speech, the father gives him a robe, a ring, sandals, and a feast. The older brother never left home, but his heart was far away. He was angry, proud, and bitter. He needed to repent too. Jesus ends the story without telling us if he went in.

> **LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS**
>
> "Came to his senses" is literally "came to himself." Sin makes us less ourselves; repentance gives us back our true selves. The son's speech is never finished. Grace interrupts it. In that culture a father running in public was undignified; this father gives up his honor to reach his son sooner.
>
> Jesus told this story to Pharisees who grumbled that He ate with sinners (15:1-2). When the older brother complains that he has slaved for his father all these years, he shows obedience without love. Religious people need repentance from pride as much as rebels need repentance from wild living.
>
> **Where the traditions agree:** Orthodox churches read this parable on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, just before Great Lent. Catholics read it during Lent. Protestants have long treated it as the gospel in a story. All three hear it as the shape of repentance: wake up, come home, be welcomed.

Discover

1. What was the moment the son “came to his senses”? What helps people wake up?
2. What did the father do before the son said a word?
3. Which son are you more like right now? What does the older brother need to turn from?

Obey this week

Take one concrete step “home” this week, a step toward God or toward someone you've hurt that you have been putting off.

PART 2: GOD'S PART — REPENTANCE IS A GIFT

RP.4 A Gift Only God Can Give

Read: Acts 5:30-31; 11:15-18; 2 Timothy 2:24-26

> *“We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life.”*
> **Acts 11:18 (NLT)**

What's happening

Peter says God raised Jesus up to give repentance and forgiveness (Acts 5:31). When the Holy Spirit falls on non-Jews at Cornelius's house, the church realizes that God has given them repentance too (Acts 11:18). Paul tells Timothy to gently teach people who oppose the truth, because God may change their hearts so they escape the devil's trap (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

This means we cannot manufacture a changed heart. Repentance is a gift. That is not an excuse to wait around. It is a reason to **ask**: for ourselves, and for people we love who are still far away.

> **LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS**
>
> All three passages use the same Greek idea: God “gives” (*didōmi*) repentance (*metanoia*). The NLT renders 2 Timothy 2:25 as “Perhaps God will change those people’s hearts”; the Greek literally says “perhaps God may grant them repentance.”
>
> In 2 Timothy 2:26, “come to their senses” translates *ananēphō*, “to become sober again.” Paul pictures sin as a kind of drunkenness the devil uses to hold people captive. For anyone fighting addiction, that word is personal.
>
> **Where the traditions agree:** The Catholic Catechism teaches that conversion is first of all a work of God's grace, since the human heart is hardened and “God must give man a new heart” (§1432). The Westminster Shorter Catechism calls repentance “a saving grace.” Orthodox teaching says grace comes first and we cooperate with it. All three agree: God moves first.

Discover

1. Who gives repentance in these passages?
2. If repentance is a gift, what should you do when you feel stuck and can't change?
3. How does Paul say to treat people who oppose the truth (2 Timothy 2:24-25)? Why does that matter?

Obey this week

Pray every day this week: “Lord, grant me repentance in ___.” Then pray the same for one person by name.

RP.5 Kindness That Leads Us Home

Read: Romans 2:1-4; Jeremiah 31:18-20; Ezekiel 36:25-27

> *"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)**

What's happening

Some people think God's patience means He doesn't care. Paul says God's kindness has a purpose: to turn us. In Jeremiah, God's wandering people ask Him to bring them back so they can return. And God answers with a father's heart that longs for His child.

In Ezekiel, God promises to wash His people, take out their stony, stubborn hearts, give them tender, responsive hearts, and put His own Spirit inside them. God's main tool for changing us is not fear. It is love.

> **LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS**
>
> Jeremiah 31:18 uses *shuv* twice: "turn me back, and I will turn back." Lamentations 5:21 prays the same way. The person asks God to do the turning, and then really turns. This is the gift and our response in one prayer.
>
> A heart of stone cannot feel or respond. A heart of flesh can. Ezekiel 36:26-27 is fulfilled when the Holy Spirit is poured out (Acts 2) and connects to the new covenant promise of Jeremiah 31:31-34.
>
> **Where the traditions agree:** All three traditions teach that seeing God's love, above all at the cross, is what moves a heart to repent. The Catholic Catechism speaks of the heart being moved by looking at Christ's sacrifice (§1432). The early letter 1 Clement (about AD 96) urged believers to fix their eyes on the blood of Christ, which won the grace of repentance for the whole world. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says repentance comes from "apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ."

Discover

1. According to Romans 2:4, what is God's kindness for?
2. What does Ephraim pray in Jeremiah 31:18? How does God feel about him (v20)?
3. What does God promise to do in Ezekiel 36:25-27?
4. What is the difference between being scared into change and being loved into change? Which one lasts?

Obey this week

Each night, write down three kindnesses God showed you that day. Then ask Him, "What are You turning me toward?"

PART 3: OUR PART — HOW WE TURN

RP.6 Our Part: Turn, Come Close, Humble Yourself

Read: Ezekiel 18:30-32; James 4:7-10; Philippians 2:12-13

> *"Come close to God, and God will come close to you." … "For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."*
> **James 4:8; Philippians 2:13 (NLT)**

What's happening

Last session, God promised to give a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26). Here God commands His people to get themselves a new heart (Ezekiel 18:31). Both are true. God works, and because He is working, we work (Philippians 2:12-13). He takes no pleasure in anyone's death. His plea is: turn and live.

James gives us action words: submit to God, resist the devil, come close to God, wash your hands, purify your hearts, grieve, humble yourselves. Repentance is not just a feeling. It is something we do.

> **LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS**
>
> James 4:7-10 contains about ten commands in a row, most in a Greek form that calls for decisive action. The promise in the middle anchors them all: come close, and He comes close.
>
> Ezekiel 18 and 36 sound like they contradict each other until Philippians 2:12-13 joins them. Grace is not the opposite of effort. Grace is the opposite of **earning**. God gives both the desire and the power; we put them to work.
>
> **Where the traditions agree:** Orthodox teaching calls this *synergy*, from Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 3:9: we are God's "co-workers." Catholic teaching says grace comes first and makes our free cooperation possible. Protestant teaching says God works in us to will and to do, so we "work out" what He works in. All three reject both "God does it all, I just wait" and "I do it myself."

Discover

1. List every action word in James 4:7-10. Which one is hardest for you?
2. What does God promise when we come close to Him?
3. How do Ezekiel 18:31 and Ezekiel 36:26 fit together? Use Philippians 2:12-13 to explain it.

Obey this week

Pick one command from James 4:7-10. Do it every day this week, and ask someone to check on you.

RP.7 Two Kinds of Sorrow: Peter and Judas

Read: 2 Corinthians 7:8-11; Luke 22:54-62; Matthew 27:3-5

> *"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 7:10 (NLT)**

What's happening

Peter and Judas both failed Jesus on the same night. Both felt terrible. Peter denied Jesus three times, then Jesus turned and looked at him, and Peter went out and wept bitterly. He stayed with the disciples, and Jesus restored him.

Judas felt remorse, tried to undo it by returning the money, went to the priests instead of to Jesus, and ended his life. The difference was not how big the sin was or how bad they felt. It was **where their sorrow took them**. Godly sorrow moves toward God. Worldly sorrow moves toward self: hiding, shame, despair.

2 Corinthians 7:11 shows what godly sorrow produces: earnestness, a desire to make things right, a hatred of the sin, longing, and readiness to act.

> **LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS**
>
> Matthew 27:3 says Judas felt remorse (*metamelētheis*), a word for regret. It is not *metanoia*, the word for repentance. Regret looks back at what I did. Repentance turns toward God.
>
> In Luke 22:61 the Lord turns and looks at Peter. Peter's repentance began with Jesus' look. That look was not contempt. Jesus had already prayed for him (22:32).
>
> **Where the traditions agree:** All three traditions teach that despair is a trap, not humility. St. John Climacus (7th century) called true sorrow over sin "joy-making mourning," sorrow that carries hope inside it.

Care note

If your sorrow has turned into thoughts of hurting yourself or ending your life, that is Judas's road, and it is built on a lie. Tell someone today: a chaplain, a staff member, medical, or a trusted brother or sister. Jesus looks at you the way He looked at Peter.

Discover

1. How were Peter's and Judas's failures alike? How were their responses different?
2. Where did each man go with his sorrow?
3. What does godly sorrow produce (2 Corinthians 7:11)?
4. When you feel guilty, which direction do you usually go?

Obey this week

Next time you feel guilt, turn it into a prayer right away: “Jesus, look at me. I'm coming to You, not hiding.”

RP.8 Confession: Bringing Sin into the Light

Read: Psalm 51:1-17; Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:7-9

> *“People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.” … “But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”*
>
> **Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9 (NLT)**

What's happening

David wrote Psalm 51 after the prophet Nathan confronted him about his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband (2 Samuel 12). David does not excuse, minimize, or blame. He names his sin, owns it as being against God, and asks to be washed, given a clean heart, and given back the joy of salvation. He promises to teach other sinners God's ways.

Confession means agreeing with God out loud. Hiding sin keeps it alive. Confessing and turning from it brings mercy. And God is “just” to forgive, not only kind, because Jesus has already paid.

LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS

“Confess” in 1 John 1:9 is *homologeō*, literally “to say the same thing.” Confession is saying about my sin what God says about it.

Psalm 51:1-2 uses three words for sin and three for cleansing: *pesha* (rebellion), *avon* (twistedness), *chattat* (missing the mark); blot out, wash, cleanse. David covers every angle. Verses 16-17: what God wants is a broken and repentant heart.

Where the traditions agree: Psalm 51 is prayed constantly in Orthodox services, every Friday morning in the Catholic Liturgy of the Hours, and has long been a classic Protestant prayer of self-examination. All three practice confession to God and also confession to another person: as a sacrament with a priest for Catholics and Orthodox, and through James 5:16, pastors, and trusted believers for Protestants.

Discover

1. List everything David asks God to do in Psalm 51.
2. What does David never do in this psalm? (Look for excuses or blame.)
3. What does Proverbs 28:13 promise to people who hide sin? To people who confess and turn?
4. Why can 1 John 1:9 say God is “just” to forgive? (See 1:7.)

Obey this week

Write your own Psalm 51. Name your sins specifically, then pray it out loud to God. Keep it safe or destroy it afterward.

RP.9 Fruit That Proves the Turn

Read: Luke 3:7-14; Luke 19:1-10; Acts 26:19-20

> *"Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God."*
> **Luke 3:8 (NLT)**

What's happening

Crowds come to John the Baptist to be baptized. He tells them to prove it by how they live. They ask, "What should we do?" His answers are specific to each group's sin: share your extra coat and food; tax collectors, stop overcharging; soldiers, stop extorting and be content with your pay.

Zacchaeus, a crooked tax boss, meets Jesus and on his own gives half his wealth to the poor and pays back four times what he stole. Nobody forced him. Grace made him generous. Paul's whole preaching could be summed up this way: repent, turn to God, and do things that show it (Acts 26:20).

> **LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS**
>
> Paying back four times matches Exodus 22:1, the penalty for stealing a sheep. Zacchaeus applies the strictest standard to himself. Jesus had already welcomed him before he did any of it, so the fruit did not buy forgiveness. It showed it and began to heal the damage.
>
> "What should we do?" is the right question after repentance. People ask it three times in Luke 3 (verses 10, 12, 14) and again at Pentecost (Acts 2:37).
>
> **Where the traditions agree:** Catholics speak of "satisfaction" or penance, Orthodox of *epitimia* (spiritual medicine), Protestants of "fruit in keeping with repentance" and restitution. All three agree these do not earn forgiveness, since Christ alone paid for sin. They express a turned heart, repair harm where possible, and help heal the person.

Discover

1. What did John tell each group to do? Why were the answers different?
2. What did Zacchaeus do, and what moved him to do it?
3. If you asked John, "What should I do?", what do you think he would say to you?

Obey this week

Ask God, "What should I do?" Do one act of making something right this week. If you can't do it from where you are, plan it with your accountability partner.

PART 4: STRONGHOLDS — WHEN SIN HAS BUILT A PRISON

RP.10 False Repentance: Saul's Excuses and Esau's Tears

Read: 1 Samuel 15:10-31; Hebrews 12:14-17

> *In our words: God told Saul that obeying is better than sacrifice. Saul said, "I have sinned," then asked to be honored in front of the leaders anyway.*
> **1 Samuel 15:22, 30 (paraphrase)**

What's happening

God told King Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites. Saul kept the best for himself and built a monument to honor himself (v12). When Samuel confronted him, Saul claimed he had obeyed, blamed the people, made a

religious excuse (“for sacrifice”), and finally said “I have sinned,” but then asked Samuel to honor him in front of the elders. He cared more about his image than about God.

Esau traded his birthright for one meal. Later he wept and begged for the blessing but could not undo what he had done. Tears and “I'm sorry” are not always repentance.

> **LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS**
>
> Saul's pattern: partial obedience, blame-shifting (vv15, 21, 24), religious excuses, minimizing, and image management (v30). Compare David in 2 Samuel 12:13, “I have sinned against the LORD,” with no excuses. The same words came from two very different hearts.
>
> Hebrews 12:17 says Esau found no way to undo it, though he sought it with tears. Scholars discuss whether “it” means the blessing or repentance. Either way, tears were not the same as a turned heart, and some consequences could not be reversed. Forgiveness is always offered; consequences do not always disappear.
>
> **Where the traditions agree:** All three traditions agree that true repentance accepts responsibility and consequences humbly, and that sorrow driven only by getting caught, or by losing face, is not yet repentance.

Discover

1. List every excuse Saul made. Which ones sound familiar?
2. What did Saul care about most (v30)?
3. How is David's “I have sinned” different from Saul's?
4. Esau cried real tears. Why wasn't that enough?

Obey this week

Write down your favorite excuse. Every time you hear yourself use it this week, stop and say instead, “I did it. I'm turning.”

RP.11 Strongholds: When Sin Has Built a Prison

Read: Romans 7:15-8:4; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

> *“And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.”*
>
> **Romans 8:2 (NLT)**

What's happening

Paul describes doing what he hates and not doing what he wants. That is the cycle of every addiction and stronghold. He cries, “Who will free me?” The answer is Jesus. There is no condemnation for those who belong to Him, and the Spirit's power sets us free from sin's power.

In 2 Corinthians 10, strongholds are fortresses built out of thoughts: lies, arguments, and proud ideas that keep people from knowing God. We tear them down with God's weapons, by capturing thoughts and making them obey Christ. **Every stronghold is built on a lie.** Find the lie and you've found the foundation.

> **LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS**
>
> Christians have long discussed whether Romans 7 describes Paul as a believer or life under the law without the Spirit. Either way, the answer is the same. Romans 7:7-25 never mentions the Holy Spirit; Romans 8 mentions Him about twenty times. The way out of a stronghold is not more willpower. It is the Spirit.
>
> “Stronghold” (*ochyrōma*) means a fortress. Paul's weapons are not worldly: truth, prayer, and obedience. In 2 Corinthians 10:5 (NLT), “We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.”
>
> **Where the traditions agree:** All three traditions teach that sin is best fought at the level of thoughts, before thoughts become actions and actions become chains. The desert fathers and St. John Climacus traced how a passing thought

becomes a captivity, step by step. Protestants speak of “renewing the mind” (Romans 12:2) and taking every thought captive.

Discover

1. What does Paul say about himself in Romans 7:15-24? Have you felt that?
2. What sets us free (8:1-4)?
3. What are strongholds made of (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)?
4. What is one lie your stronghold is built on? What is the truth?

Obey this week

Write the lie on one side of a card and a Bible truth on the other. When the lie shows up, say the truth out loud.

RP.12 Burning the Scrolls: Breaking with the Old Life

Read: Acts 19:11-20; Matthew 5:29-30

> *In our words: Many who had believed came confessing what they had been doing. Those who had practiced magic brought their scrolls and burned them in front of everyone. They were worth fifty thousand silver coins.*
>
> **Acts 19:18-19 (paraphrase)**

What's happening

God did powerful miracles in Ephesus. Seven sons of a priest named Sceva tried to use Jesus' name like a magic word and were beaten by a man with an evil spirit. Fear fell on the city, and Jesus' name was honored.

Then believers came forward confessing their secret practices. They brought their sorcery scrolls and burned them publicly. They didn't keep them “just in case” or sell them to someone else. Jesus taught the same thing: if something keeps leading you into sin, cut off access to it completely.

LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS

Verse 18 says these were people who “had believed.” This was repentance going deeper after conversion. Fifty thousand drachmas was about fifty thousand days' wages. Burning publicly meant no going back, and it was a witness to everyone watching. Verse 20: the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. Deep repentance often comes right before a movement multiplies.

Matthew 5:29-30 is Jesus' way of speaking strongly. **He is not telling anyone to hurt their body.** He means: remove the access and the opportunity, ruthlessly. Paul says the same: don't make plans to feed the flesh (Romans 13:14).

Where the traditions agree: In the early church, people renounced the devil and all his works at baptism. Catholic, Orthodox, and many Protestant baptism services still ask, “Do you renounce …?” Breaking with the old life out loud and in front of others goes back to the beginning.

Discover

1. Why did the sons of Sceva fail?
2. What did the believers do with their scrolls? Why burn them instead of selling them?
3. What are your “scrolls”? (People, numbers, items, places, content, habits.)
4. What does Jesus say to do with things that cause us to sin?

Obey this week

Make a list of your scrolls. Get rid of one this week with a witness present.

RP.13 Not Alone: Confess to One Another and Restore Gently

Read: James 5:13-20; Galatians 6:1-2

> *"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*
> **James 5:16 (NLT)**

What's happening

James says to confess sins to each other and pray for each other so we may be **healed**. Forgiveness comes from God, but healing often comes through community. And if someone wanders from the truth, bring them back. That saves them from death and covers many sins.

Paul says that if someone is caught in sin, the spiritually mature should restore them gently, watching themselves so they aren't tempted too, and carry each other's burdens.

> **LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS**
>
> "Restore" in Galatians 6:1 is *katartizō*, the word for mending fishing nets (Mark 1:19) and for setting a broken bone. Restoration is careful, skilled, and gentle, never crushing.
>
> The Didache, a church manual from around the end of the first century, told believers to confess their sins in the gathering before coming to prayer. Confession "to one another" is mutual. It is not only for leaders.
>
> Wisdom for safety: confess to someone mature and trustworthy, not a gossip. For sexual sin, confess to someone of the same gender.
>
> **Where the traditions agree:** Catholics and Orthodox practice confession as a sacrament. Protestants practice James 5:16 with pastors, friends, and accountability groups. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in *Life Together* that confessing sin to a brother or sister breaks through to real community and breaks the power of hidden sin.

Discover

1. What do confession and prayer lead to in James 5:16?
2. What should we do when someone wanders (5:19-20)?
3. How does Galatians 6:1 say to restore someone? What do we need to watch out for?
4. What would make our group a safe place to confess?

Obey this week

Choose one trusted brother or sister. Tell them something you've been hiding and pray together.

PART 5: A LIFE OF RETURNING

RP.14 Remember, Repent, Return: A Life of Turning

Read: Revelation 2:1-7; Psalm 139:23-24

> *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life."*
> **Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT)**

What's happening

The church in Ephesus, the same city where people burned their scrolls, was hard-working, patient, and careful about the truth about forty years later. But they had left their first love. Jesus' cure has three steps: remember how far you have fallen, repent, and do the things you did at first.

Repentance isn't only for the beginning. It is how love stays alive. Psalm 139 shows the daily version: invite God to search you, show you what offends Him, and lead you on.

LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS

Acts 19 happened around AD 52-55. Revelation was written around AD 95. One generation was enough to go from burning scrolls to going through the motions.

The three commands are remember, repent, and do the first works. In Greek, "remember" is ongoing (keep remembering), while "repent" and "do" call for decisive action.

Where the traditions agree: Luther: the whole life of believers is to be one of repentance. St. Isaac the Syrian (7th century): "This life has been given to you for repentance; do not waste it in vain pursuits." The Catholic Catechism describes an ongoing "second conversion" for all believers (§1428). Daily self-examination is practiced in all three: the Ignatian examen, Orthodox evening prayers, and Puritan and Methodist self-examination.

Discover

1. What did Jesus praise in the Ephesian church? What was missing?
2. What three things does He tell them to do?
3. What were "the first works" when you first met Jesus?

Obey this week

Pray the evening "Search Me" prayer (in the Daily Rhythms section) every night this week.

RP.15 Turned Back and Sent Out

Read: Isaiah 6:1-8; Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-19

> *"But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers."*
> **Luke 22:32 (NLT)**

What's happening

Isaiah sees God's holiness and cries out that he is ruined. An angel touches his lips with a burning coal and his guilt is taken away. Then God asks whom He should send, and Isaiah says, "Here I am. Send me."

Before Peter's denial, Jesus told him: when you turn back, strengthen your brothers. After the resurrection, beside a charcoal fire like the one where Peter denied Him, Jesus asks three times, "Do you love me?" and gives him a job: feed my sheep. Repentance does not disqualify. It prepares people to lead.

LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS

"Turned to me again" in Luke 22:32 is *epistrephō*, to turn around. The word for charcoal fire (*anthrakia*) appears only twice in the New Testament: John 18:18, where Peter denied Jesus, and John 21:9, where Jesus restored him. Three questions match three denials.

Isaiah is cleansed before he is sent. The order matters: forgiven people make the best messengers. Jesus said the one who is forgiven much loves much (Luke 7:47).

Where the traditions agree: All three traditions honor Peter as a chief apostle, a leader whose story includes failure and restoration. In movements around the world, many of the most fruitful disciple makers are people who have been forgiven much and walk in daily repentance.

Discover

1. What happened to Isaiah before he was sent?
2. What did Jesus pray for Peter? What job did He give him?
3. How can your story of being forgiven help others?
4. Who are the "brothers" (or sisters) you can strengthen?

Obey this week

Share your story of turning with one person this week. Keep it short: what life was like before, how you turned to Jesus, and what is different now.

RP.16 Joy in Heaven over One Who Repents

Read: Luke 15:1-10; Acts 3:19-20

> *"Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord."*
>
> **Acts 3:19-20 (NLT)**

What's happening

A shepherd finds his lost sheep, and a woman finds her lost coin. Both call their friends to celebrate. Jesus says heaven rejoices like that over one sinner who repents.

Peter tells the crowd: repent and turn to God so your sins can be wiped away, and times of refreshment will come from God's presence. Repentance ends in joy, relief, and closeness to God.

> **LOOK CLOSER — FOR COACHES AND LEADERS**
>
> Acts 3:19 joins the two great words: *metanoeō* (change your mind) and *epistrephō* (turn around). "Wiped away" (*exaleiphō*) is the word for erasing writing. "Refreshment" (*anapsyxis*) means breathing again, relief after pressure.
>
> Kallistos Ware (Orthodox): "Correctly understood, repentance is not negative but positive … It is to look not backward with regret but forward with hope—not downwards at our own shortcomings but upwards at God's love."
>
> **Where the traditions agree:** Every tradition's season of repentance ends in a feast: Lent leads to Easter, Great Lent to Pascha. Repentance is the road to joy, not a punishment.

Discover

1. Who rejoices in Luke 15:1-10, and over what?
2. What does Acts 3:19-20 say comes after repentance?
3. How does this change the way you see repentance?

Obey this week

Celebrate someone's turning this week: encourage them and thank God together. Thank God for one specific sin He has wiped away.

Walking Through a Stronghold: The Whole-Person Turn

A stronghold is a sin that has built a fortress in your life: an addiction, a habit, a pattern you keep going back to even when you hate it. Strongholds are not torn down by one prayer or more willpower. They come down as the **whole person** turns, with God's power and other people beside you.

This process walks through six turns. Point to each part of your body as you learn it. That makes it easy to remember and easy to teach someone else:

Turn	In one line	Key Scripture
1. EYES	Let God show you the sin and the lie underneath it.	Psalm 139:23-24
2. HEART	Grieve God's way: sorrow that runs to Jesus, not away.	2 Corinthians 7:10
3. MOUTH	Confess, renounce, and receive forgiveness.	1 John 1:9; James 5:16
4. HANDS	Break access and make things right.	Acts 19:18-19; Luke 19:8
5. FEET	Walk in the Spirit every day with S.W.A.P.	Galatians 5:16
6. FAMILY	Walk it out together. Nobody wins alone.	Galatians 6:1-2; Hebrews 3:13

> **Care note**
> Stopping alcohol, benzodiazepines (“benzos”), or some other drugs suddenly can be medically dangerous. Tell medical staff. If you are having thoughts of hurting yourself or ending your life, tell a staff member, chaplain, or medical right away. Some strongholds grow out of things that were done **to** you. What someone did to you is not your sin to repent of. Bring that to Jesus for healing, and to a counselor if one is available, while you repent of your own choices.

Turn 1 — EYES: Let God Show You

Read: Psalm 139:23-24; John 16:8; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

You can't fight what you won't look at. The Holy Spirit's job is to show us our sin, not to crush us but to free us. Every stronghold has a surface (what you do) and a root (why you do it and the lie you believe).

Do this

- Pray Psalm 139:23-24 slowly and wait. Write down what comes to mind.
- Fill out the Stronghold Map below as honestly as you can.
- Ask: What does this sin **promise** me? (Comfort, escape, power, control, belonging, relief from pain?)
- Ask: What **lie** am I believing? (“God won't come through.” “I'll never change.” “I deserve this.” “Nobody would love me if they knew.”)
- Look for the sin under the sin: often pride, fear, unbelief, unforgiveness, or trusting something other than God.

Turn 2 — HEART: Grieve God's Way

Read: 2 Corinthians 7:8-11; Joel 2:12-13; Luke 22:61-62

Godly sorrow is real grief: over what this sin has done to God's heart, to others, and to you. But it moves **toward** Jesus. Worldly sorrow moves toward hiding, shame, and despair. Peter wept and came back. Judas regretted and ran.

Do this

- Read Isaiah 53:4-6 slowly. Look at what your sin cost Jesus and how much He loves you.
- Name the people who have been hurt by this stronghold. Let yourself feel it in God's presence instead of numbing it.

- Test your sorrow: Is it pulling me toward Jesus or away from Him? Am I sorry it hurt God, or only sorry I got caught?
- Pray the Jesus Prayer (see Daily Rhythms) when the grief gets heavy.

Turn 3 — MOUTH: Confess, Renounce, Receive

Read: Psalm 51; Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9; James 5:16

Hidden sin keeps its power. Confession drags it into the light where it loses its grip. Renouncing out loud breaks your agreement with the lie. And receiving forgiveness, really believing it, closes the door shame uses to pull you back.

Do this

- **Confess to God specifically.** Name it the way Psalm 51 does. No excuses, no blame.
- **Confess to one trusted believer** (same gender for sexual sin). Say it out loud.
- **Renounce it out loud** using the renouncing prayer in Prayers for the Journey.
- **Receive it.** Ask that person to read 1 John 1:9 over you and say, “Because of Jesus, you are forgiven.” Catholic and Orthodox believers may also bring this to a priest in confession.

Turn 4 — HANDS: Break Access and Make It Right

Read: Acts 19:17-20; Matthew 5:29-30; Luke 19:8; Matthew 6:14-15; Ephesians 4:28

The believers in Ephesus burned their scrolls. Zacchaeus paid people back. Repentance gets practical. Cut off what feeds the stronghold, make things right where you can, and put something good in the empty space. Ephesians 4:28 shows the pattern: the thief doesn't just stop stealing; he works and gives.

Do this

- **List your scrolls** and get rid of them with a witness: stash, contraband, numbers, contacts, content, places, relationships that feed it.
- **Make amends** where it is wise and safe. Plan this with your coach. Some amends must wait. **Never break a no-contact order** to make amends.
- **Forgive** the people who hurt you. Unforgiveness is fuel for strongholds (Matthew 6:14-15; Chrysostom's second path).
- **Replace it.** What will you do with the time, energy, and money this stronghold used to take?

Turn 5 — FEET: Walk in the Spirit Every Day with S.W.A.P.

Read: Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:1-14; Ephesians 5:18

Repentance empties the house; the Holy Spirit has to fill it (Matthew 12:43-45). The answer to a stronghold is not just stopping. It is being full of the Spirit. Use S.W.A.P. from the 4 Fields Level 1 training every day, and aim each part at your stronghold:

Do this

- **S — Surrender.** Every morning, sign the blank contract with God, and name the stronghold: “Jesus, today I am Yours, including ___. Change my day however You want.”
- **W — Wait in prayer.** Spend unhurried time in the Word and prayer. When the stronghold is deep, fast and seek God for a deeper work. Talk with medical and your coach about what fasting is safe for you; it might be one meal or a commissary item.
- **A — Avoid even a hint of sin.** Confess the moment you sin, not later. Ask, “Shine Your light in my life.” Make a covenant with your eyes. Catch the thought at its first suggestion (2 Corinthians 10:5). Stay away from the triggers on your map.

- **P — Prompting.** When the Spirit nudges you, say yes fast. His promptings always look like Jesus: pray, reach out to a brother or sister, serve someone, share your story.

When craving hits: the five-minute plan

1. **Stop and name it.** “This is a craving. It is not a need, and it will pass.”
2. **Say the truth out loud.** Read your truth card or pray Romans 8:2.
3. **Move.** Change your location or what you're doing.
4. **Reach out.** Tell your accountability partner or someone safe right away.
5. **Serve.** Do one kind thing for someone else. Cravings rise, peak, and pass.

Turn 6 — FAMILY: Walk It Out Together

Read: James 5:16-20; Galatians 6:1-2; Hebrews 3:12-14

Hebrews says to encourage each other every day so that none of us is hardened by sin's deceit. Strongholds love isolation. Freedom grows in community.

Do this

- Meet weekly with one or two believers of the same gender and use the accountability questions in Daily Rhythms.
- Share your Stronghold Map with them. Agree on what they can ask you about at any time.
- When you're the strong one, restore others gently, and watch yourself.
- Celebrate every step of freedom. Heaven does (Luke 15:7).

If You Fall

Falling is not the same as quitting. Scripture says a righteous person may fall seven times and get up again (Proverbs 24:16). Peter fell hard and was restored and sent.

- **Don't hide.** Hiding is where the enemy wins the second round (Proverbs 28:13).
- **Go straight back to Turn 3 (MOUTH).** Confess to God and to your partner the same day if you can.
- **Learn from it.** What triggered it? What lie did I believe? Which turn did I skip?
- **Adjust your plan** and keep walking. God's mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).

True Repentance or False Repentance?

False repentance (Saul, Esau, Judas)	True repentance (David, Peter, Zacchaeus)
Sorry I got caught	Sorry I hurt God and others
Blames others or circumstances	Owns it fully: “I did it”
Minimizes or makes religious excuses	Names it plainly, the way God does
Mostly wants consequences to go away	Accepts consequences humbly
Hides and manages image	Brings it into the light
Sinks into shame, self-hatred, or despair	Runs to Jesus and receives mercy
Changes nothing practical	Breaks access and makes things right
Goes it alone	Invites others to walk with them

Stronghold Map

Fill this out with God first, then share it with your accountability partner.

Question	My answer
My stronghold (name it plainly)	
When it started / what was happening then	
Triggers (people, places, times, feelings)	
What it promises me	
The lie I believe	
The truth (a Bible verse)	
What it costs me and others	
My “scrolls” to get rid of	
Amends I need to make (and when)	
People I need to forgive	
My craving plan	
My accountability partner(s)	

Daily and Weekly Rhythms of Repentance

Repentance is not only for crisis moments. It is a daily rhythm that keeps the heart soft and keeps love alive (Revelation 2:4-5).

Morning: Surrender

Sign the blank contract with God (S.W.A.P.). Read a short passage. Ask, “Am I full of the Spirit today?” Name anything you are holding back.

Through the Day: Turn Quickly

Confess sin the moment you notice it. Don't let it pile up. When tempted or anxious, pray the Jesus Prayer:

> *“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”*
>
> Rooted in Luke 18:13 and Mark 10:47. Prayed for centuries by Orthodox Christians, and widely by Catholics and Protestants.

Evening: The “Search Me” Prayer (5-10 minutes)

1. **Thank.** Name three gifts from God today.
2. **Ask.** Pray Psalm 139:23-24: “Search me, O God, and know my heart.”
3. **Review.** Walk back through the day. Where did I turn toward God? Where did I turn away?
4. **Confess and receive.** Name it. Receive 1 John 1:9.
5. **Turn toward tomorrow.** One specific step of obedience.

> **ACROSS THE TRADITIONS**
>
> Catholics know this daily review as the Ignatian examen. Orthodox Christians pray evening prayers that include confession of the day's sins. Puritans and early Methodists practiced daily self-examination and met weekly in small groups to confess and pray. The same practice runs through all three.

Weekly: Accountability Questions

Meet with one or two believers of the same gender. Answer honestly.

1. How did you meet with God in His Word and in prayer this week?
2. Where did the old pattern show up? Be specific.
3. What lie did you believe in that moment?
4. Did you obey what God showed you last week?
5. Have you hidden anything from God or from us?
6. Is there someone you need to forgive or make things right with?
7. Who did you share Jesus or your story with?
8. Have you been completely honest in your answers?

Seasonally: Fasting

Set aside regular times to fast and seek God, especially when a stronghold is deep (Matthew 6:16-18; Mark 9:29). All three traditions keep seasons of repentance and fasting before Easter. Fast in a way that is medically safe for you.

Prayers for the Journey

A Prayer of Turning

> *Father, I have been walking away from You. I see it now. I have sinned against You and against others by ___. I don't make excuses. I am sorry, not only for what it cost me but for how it grieved You.*
>
> *Thank You for Jesus, who died for this sin and rose again. Thank You for running toward me. I turn from this sin, and I turn to You. Grant me true repentance. Wash me, give me a clean heart, and fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Show me what to make right, and give me the courage to do it. I am Yours. In Jesus' name, amen.*

A Prayer for Renouncing a Stronghold

Pray this out loud, ideally with a trusted believer present. Fill in the blanks from your Stronghold Map.

> *Jesus, I confess that I have ___. I agree with You that it is sin. I turn away from it.*
>
> *In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce __, and I renounce the lie I believed: "__." I break every agreement I made with it.*
>
> *I receive Your forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). I choose to believe the truth: ___.*
>
> *Holy Spirit, fill every place this sin used to hold. I belong to Jesus. Amen.*

Pray the Scriptures

> *"Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me."*
> **Psalm 51:10 (NLT)**

> *"Come close to God, and God will come close to you."*
> **James 4:8 (NLT)**

Sources

- Holy Bible, New Living Translation. Key verses are quoted from the NLT. Verses marked "paraphrase" or "in our words" are summaries, not quotations.
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- St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (Step 7 on mourning; Step 15 on how temptation grows).
- *The Didache*, chapter 4; *1 Clement*, chapter 7.
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