**Church values 2021: Repentance Bible study**

This is the first of three values we are focussing on as a church this year. Repentance is the first of these in a large part because it proceeds all other character traits that will develop in the Christian. For the Christian there must be a change in the very depths of our thoughts and desires for new traits to then emerge.

Read Psalm 32. Make any notes of what stands out, what is interesting and what questions it raises that you might want to explore.

Repentance sits within a framework that describes the process by which humanity is restored to God and one another. The basic order is conviction, repentance, confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

**Conviction:** The awareness through the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8) of where God wants to heal my character and restore my relationships.

Discuss how the following barriers would affect my ability to be convicted by the Holy Spirit:

* Supress my conscience.
* Minimise my sin.
* Self-deception (see Dallas Willard quote below)
* Victim mentality

“The hidden dimension of each human life is not visible to others, nor is it fully graspable even by ourselves. We usually know very little about the things that move in our own soul, the deepest level of our life, or what is driving it. Our “within” is astonishingly complex and subtle—even devious. It takes on a life of its own. Only God knows our depths, who we are, and what we would do.” ― Dallas Willard, Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ

Read 2nd Corinthians 7:8-12. Conviction will produce a sorrow that all humanity experiences. How does this text though differentiate how we might respond to that conviction/sorrow?

**Repentance:** The appropriate response to my contribution of the world not being as it should be.

If I have a Godly sorrow from the conviction of the Holy spirit then I will be moved to respond. David in Psalm 32 describes what it can be like if we don’t respond (review his words). You can also see this at the end of the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matt 18 where the servant is locked up until he paid back everything he owed. It is describing spiritual captivity as opposed to the freedom of forgiveness.

What are some of the characteristics that would demonstrate a repentant heart?

Read Luke 19:1-10 How did Jesus know that an internal repentance had occurred within Zacchaeus?

How would you recognise the difference between a truly repentant person and one who has just experienced a worldly sorrow? Think of some specific scenarios.

Personal (or Gp) reflection: What is the Holy Spirit convicting us of at the present time? This could be specific conflicts (present or historical), patterns of behaviour in your own life or in a particular group you are part of or general character traits e.g. fruit of the spirit

**Confession:** Verbally owning sin and hurt that you cause to another person

Read James 5:16. What is the process and outcome described by this verse?

Can you give examples of when you have done this well (or not so well)?

What are some good guidelines to do confession well with another person?

**Forgiveness:** Giving up the right to seek repayment from the one who harmed you

Read the Parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18. Why does Jesus paint the servant in an unfavourable light even though he was being asked to forgive a reasonable debt?

What are some reasons why we might with-hold forgiveness?

**Reconciliation**: The restoration of fellowship

Read 2Corinthians 5:18. Why do you think the concept of reconciliation is foundational in the Christian life?

Does reconciliation mean that full fellowship is immediately restored? If not, what are other factors at play?

Personal Reflection questions:

* Where is God convicting me at present? (Think behaviours, habits, relationships)
* What might be barriers for me fully engaging with that conviction?
* How might I soften my heart to experience Godly Sorrow and be more repentant?
* What groups do I participate in at church and how might this process be applicable within these?
* Who is God calling you to practice this process with?