

MARKS *of a* DISCIPLE

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Six Measurements for Growth

.....
Dean Inserra



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Marks of a Disciple



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dean Inserra is the founding and lead pastor of CITYCHURCH, where he leads the vision and preaching. Dean was called to start a church in his hometown of Tallahassee when he was the Student Body President at Leon High School. He is passionate about reaching the city of Tallahassee with the gospel, to see a worldwide impact made for Jesus.

Dean graduated from Liberty University and attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. He holds a MA in Theological Studies from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and is pursuing a D. Min from Southern Seminary.

Dean is an advisory member of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission's Leadership Council with the Southern Baptist Convention. He is also a member of Baptist 21.

Dean is married to Krissie, and they have two sons, Tommy and Ty, and a daughter, Sally Ashlyn. Dean likes baseball, wrestling, and the Miami Hurricanes. He believes Tom Brady is the greatest quarterback, and that everyone who disagrees holds the right to be wrong.



HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS STUDY

This Bible study book includes six weeks of content for group and personal study.

Group Sessions

Regardless of what day of the week your group meets, each week of content begins with the group session. Each group session uses the following format to facilitate simple yet meaningful interaction among group members, with God's Word, and with the teaching from Dean Inserra.

START. This page includes questions to get the conversation started and to introduce the video teaching.

WATCH. This page is intentionally left blank to take notes during the video teaching.

DISCUSS. This page includes questions and statements that guide the group to respond to Dean's video teaching and to explore relevant Bible passages.

DURING THE NEXT WEEK. This section gives group members something to think about over the next week. This includes directions, a few questions, and a verse of Scripture to memorize.

Personal Study

Personal Evaluation

Each session gives group members the opportunity to examine their lives and see how committed they are to the mark of a disciple being discussed in that session. Don't let this section make you feel guilty or that you have to do more, rather, let it guide you to healthier spiritual practices.

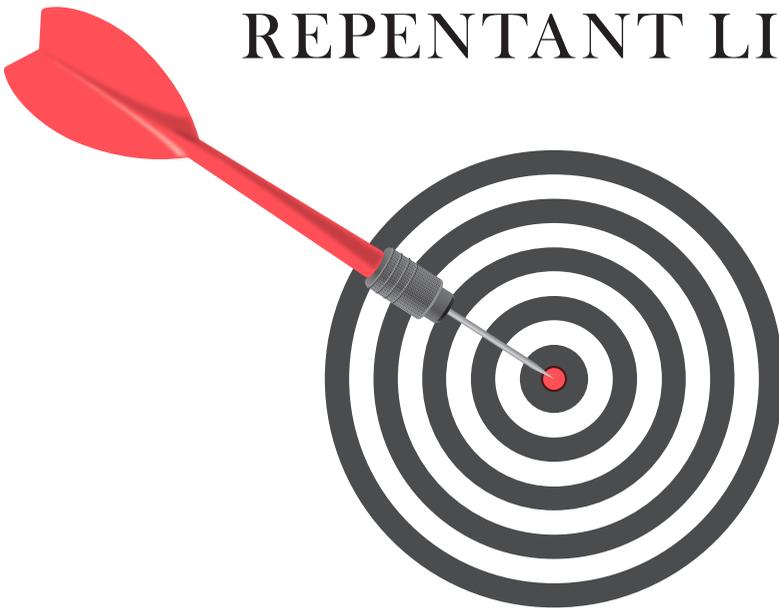
Bible Study

Each week provides two days of Bible study and learning activities for individual engagement between group sessions. The personal study revisits stories, Scriptures, and themes Dean introduced in the videos so that participants can understand and apply them on a personal level. Each day of personal study ends with a key question.

Marks of a Disciple

Session 1

REPENTANT LIFE





Start

Welcome to Session 1

When you have a child, each year of their lives they have a physical and a doctor examines them to ensure they're hitting certain milestones. This kind of evaluation is normal and healthy. *Marks of a Disciple* is all about identifying six marks or measurements of our faith so we can know if we're progressing in our faith. We're going to start this session with the first mark: a repentant life.

When do you first remember hearing the word "repentance?"

What do we typically associate with this word?

Most of the time when we hear the word *repentance*, we are conditioned to think about the initial moment of repentance when we begin following Jesus. Growing Christians live a life of repentance. It's not a milestone you reach or a destination that you accomplish and check off your list. Growing Christians are repentant Christians.

Ask someone to pray, then watch the session 1 video together.

Watch

Use this space to take notes during the video teaching.

Discuss

Read Romans 2:4 together.

Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

ROMANS 2:4

Dean defined repentance as, "a response to the goodness, kindness, and grace of God in our lives." However, there are two lies that keep us from embracing a life of repentance. The first is the false belief that we gain more by disobeying God than by obeying Him. The second lie tells us that we have to go around God for the things we want in life. Both of these lies keep us from experiencing the grace of God found in repentance.

1. How did the video teaching challenge your thinking about repentance?
2. Why do we tend to think of repentance as a one time action, rather than an ongoing posture toward God?
3. How is repentance related to God's kindness? How does repentance lead us into a deeper relationship with God?
4. Why do many of us struggle with the two lies Dean discussed?
5. Read Genesis 3:1-7. Why did Adam and Eve feel the need to go around God to get what they wanted? When are you most tempted to do the same?
6. What are some areas of our lives where we delay repentance? Why?

Close your time together in prayer

During the Next Week

1. Complete the two personal studies and evaluation.
2. Pray and ask God to reveal areas where you need to repent and return to Him.
3. Begin each day committed to live with a posture of repentance.
4. As you go through the day, embrace opportunities to repent.
5. Memorize Romans 2:4.



Evaluation

Use the following questions to help you recognize this mark of a disciple in your life.

Do you desire to experience God's kindness through repentance? If yes, how did you come to desire this? If not, what is holding you back?

What areas of your life are you most tempted to work around God to get what you want?

What areas are you most tempted to reduce repentance to a checklist?

How often is your prayer life characterized by repentance? Do you need to make any changes? Explain.

What do you need to repent of right now?



Personal Study 1

INITIAL REPENTANCE

Today, we're going to define repentance and examine why it is essential in the life of a Christian. Repentance is the entry point into the Christian life. The entirety of the Christian life flows from one initial act of repentance.

**What thoughts or images come to your mind
when you hear the word "repent"?**

How would you define repentance?

Repentance is one of those words we use without giving much thought to what it means. The historic confession of faith, the Westminster Shorter Catechism answers the question "What is repentance?" this way:

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 an endeavor after new obedience.

If that language is a little lofty to you, let's break it down further. Repentance is turning *from* your sins *to* God. Paul wrote that repentance is actually a response to God's kindness.

Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

ROMANS 2:4

Look at your earlier definition of repentance. How might you adjust your definition based on what you just read?

Repentance is not God calling you to a list of rules; He's calling you to Himself. He's inviting you to His kindness, patience, and restraint. He's inviting you to enter into a relationship with Him. When we think about repentance this way it becomes an invitation to experience God's character.

Responding to God's Invitation

Read Romans 2:5-8.

To know God is to know God's mercy. Even people who don't follow God want God to be loving and kind. But if you deny your need to repent you are "despising" the mercy of God. Once you truly understand the depth of your need, you will run to God's mercy. Repentance unleashes God's kindness in our lives.

Based upon these verses, why is repentance necessary?

What awaits us if we continue to live without seeking repentance?

Our sin deserves judgment and we desperately need God's mercy. The mercy we need can only be found in Jesus. He is the only One who never needed to repent because He perfectly kept God's law. In His kindness, God shelters us from the judgment we deserved by placing it on Jesus. He offers us forgiveness if we turn from our sins and place our trust in Him.

Have you ever come to a moment when you repented of your sins and turned to Jesus? If not, what is stopping you from doing so right now?

Experiencing God's Kindness

How does repentance allow us to experience God's kindness, restraint, and patience?

God will judge sin, but He also shows us kindness, restraint, and patience. He demonstrates His kindness by encouraging us to come to Him, He shows restraint when He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve, and He shows patience as we experience failures. God walks with us, loves us, and He calls us His sons and His daughters. Now God's grace toward us is a defining feature of our lives.

Read Ephesians 2:4-9.

If you know Jesus, make a list of what is true about you by making "I am" statements in the space below. List at least three.

I am...

I am...

I am...

For the disciple, repentance and faith in Jesus are inextricably connected. To repent of your sins is to trust in Jesus. They are unified actions. The Books of Ephesians tells us repentance is given to us so that God “might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (v. 7). Paul used the same word for kindness in Ephesians 2:7 and Romans 2:4. God’s kindness should change us and lead us into a growing relationship with Jesus.

In Closing

What does a lifestyle of repentance look like in the life of a believer?

**How is God’s kindness motivating you to extend
grace and mercy toward others?**



Personal Study 2

ONGOING REPENTANCE

On October 31, 1517 a German monk by the name of Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* on the door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, Germany, igniting the Protestant Reformation. While you may have learned about this event in your middle school history class, you might be less familiar with what Luther's document says. Luther's first thesis reads:

When our Lord and master Jesus Christ said, "Repent (Matt. 4:17)." He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.

Luther and the other Protestant reformers argued repentance is not just the entry point into the Christian life, but the whole of Christian life. Following Jesus means our lives are being consistently transformed by His grace. Therefore, we repent often.

What happens to our faith if we begin to treat repentance as optional?

Do you know anyone who models a life of repentance? What is different about their life? What could you learn from them?

Repentance is not a box to check, nor is it God's way of spanking us with a wooden spoon when we're bad. Rather, it's God's loving pursuit of you—an invitation to change that we must accept over and over again. To decline God's invitation is to despise and reject the grace of God. The Bible helps us see what ongoing repentance looks like in practice.

Guided by the Scripture

David wrote:

Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my concerns.
See if there is any offensive way in me;
lead me in the everlasting way.

PSALM 139:23-24

List the requests given in this psalm.

Why are prayers like these a mark of Christian maturity?

David invited God to search his heart, diagnose his motives, and lead him back into a life pleasing to God. David understood he needed God's help to see himself clearly. Christian maturity is not merely the ability to resist sin, but also what we do in response to our sins. While we should certainly try and resist sin, there will be times we ultimately fail. In those moments, we can choose to go on with our lives or to approach God with repentance and receive His forgiveness.

If going to God with your sin is a mark of maturity, how might an immature Christian handle their sin?

Transformed Instead of Conformed

When we embrace repentance as a daily reality, it changes the way we live because it changes the way we worship as we are conformed into the image of Christ. Consider Paul's words:

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

ROMANS 12:1-2

What are some ways we are “conformed to this age”? Give practical examples.

What does our culture tell you to do with your sin? How does the message our culture preaches contrast with what you've learned this week?

While the world tells us to “follow our hearts,” Scripture tells us our hearts are deceitful above all else (Jer. 17:9). “Embrace your truth” has become a cultural mantra, but the Bible tells us that truth is found not in us, but in the person and work of Jesus. Being conformed to the world means embracing our sin and excusing its entanglements. Paul points us to a better way.

How have your desires changed as you have followed God?

How have those changes produced growth and maturity in you?

Repentance means instead of being conformed to the world and its desires, we are transformed as our minds are renewed. A shift begins to take place in our loyalties. We exchange the desires of this world for new loyalties toward God.

In Closing

Spend a few moments asking God to examine your heart and motives. Write down what He reveals to you.

Spend a few more moments receiving God's cleansing and His forgiveness.