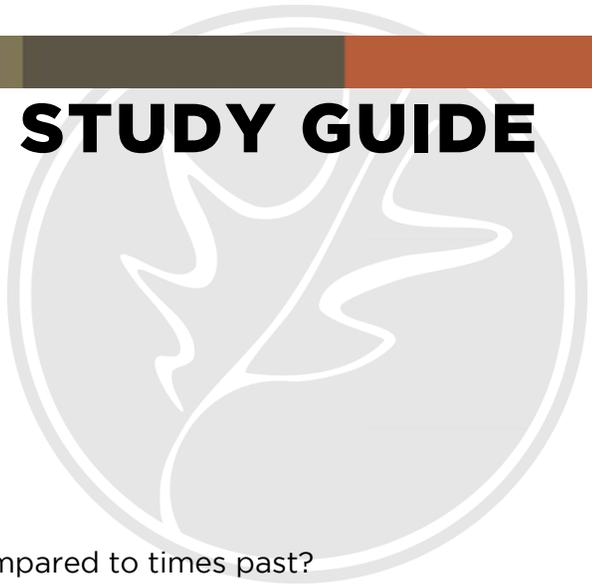


STUDY GUIDE



LIFE AFTER CHRISTMAS 01.13.2019

[set up]

Why can you praise God today?

What is one spiritual goal you have for 2019?

On a scale of 1-10, how is your love for Christ now as compared to times past?

[digging deeper]

When God calls us into a relationship with Him, there are obstacles that stand in the way of our having a right relationship with our perfect, holy, God. One of those obstacles is our sins. The Bible shows that repentance is a step in the process of removing that obstacle.

Why do we need to repent? (Discuss as a group.)

Jeremiah 17:9—The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

Proverbs 14:12—There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Romans 8:7-8—Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The Bible states that our natural desires and our minds are not in harmony with God and His ways. Also, Satan has deceived us influencing us to sin and rebel against God.

How does the Bible define sin? (Discuss as a group.)

1 John 3:4—Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

The Nelson Study Bible says that "lawlessness" means "active rebellion against the law." God's law reflects God's way of life—a way of love (Romans 13:8-10). It was given for our good (Deuteronomy 10:13). Rebellion and going against God is sin.

What is the result of sin, and how many people are affected? (Discuss as a group.)

Romans 6:23—For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 3:23—...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

What does the Bible say we should do about sin? (Discuss as a group.)

Luke 13:3—"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Acts 3:19—Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...

The Greek words that are translated "repent" and "repentance" carry the sense of "reversal" or to change direction. Repentance is a complete about-face from disobedience toward God to obedience, love, and submission to Him.

How are sins forgiven? (Discuss as a group.)

Romans 5:8-10—But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

John 3:16—For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Sin made us enemies of God, and Christ's sacrifice can pay our death penalty for us if we repent and accept His sacrifice. Nothing we do, could ever earn us forgiveness. But our unselfish God is willing to give us forgiveness.

What does repentance involve? (Discuss as a group.)

Job 42:5-6—"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. "Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Joel 2:12-13—"Now, therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.

Matthew 16:24-26—Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

These three passages demonstrate several aspects of repentance. Job realized his own need for repentance by seeing how awesome the Creator God is and how insignificant he was. Joel stresses that repentance is not just an outward show. It must be of the heart and bring a real change of attitude. And as Jesus explained, we must be willing to give up our lives in unconditional surrender. After all, Jesus' sacrifice paid for us. We belong to Him and our life is not our own.

What should we do after making this U-turn in our lives? (Discuss as a group.)

Matthew 19:16-19—Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Romans 7:12—Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Since God's law is good and breaking God's law was the cause of Jesus Christ's death, God wants us to learn to hate sin and to strive to obey God's law with His help. This is part of the path that leads to eternal life. As Jesus said, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

What is worldly sorrow? What is involved in true repentance? (Discuss as a group.)

2 Corinthians 7:10-11—For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: (1) What diligence it produced in you, (2) what clearing of yourselves, (3) what indignation, (4) what fear, (5) what vehement desire, (6) what zeal, (7) what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter. (*My counting numbers added.*)

The sorrow of the world seems to be a temporary remorseful feeling without any change in how you live. But godly sorrow involves a real and lasting change. Carefully think about Paul's powerful description of these seven elements of godly repentance. They demonstrate a deep understanding of why God abhors sin and a fervent commitment to change.

What did the apostle Peter say to do after repenting? (Discuss as a group.)

Acts 2:38—Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

[living it out]

How can we practice repentance?

How does our attitude about repentance change as we think about our sins and Jesus' passion and death on the cross?

[end with prayer]

As we humble ourselves, we begin to draw His presence.