

Repent and Bear Fruits (CG Leaders' Notes)

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Luke 3:7-14

[7] He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? [8] Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. [9] Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." [10] And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" [11] And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." [12] Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" [13] And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." [14] Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

Main Idea: We are called to repent. True repentance involves "bearing fruit" (v. 8). Bearing fruit is a visible change in our lives and the things we value. John the Baptist addresses 3 different groups (crowds, tax collectors and soldiers) and he tells them to repent in these 3 areas (people, money and power).

This repentance changes our value system in these 3 areas (people, money and power):

1. The gospel calls us to value people.

- [10] And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" [11] And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."
 - The crowds included all types of people: old/ young, educated/ simple, rich/ poor, religious/ non religious. Sharing a tunic (a basic shirt) or food is something all people can do and yet is hard to do. This is a call for us to value people more than ourselves.

2. The gospel leads to repentance from greed of money.

- [12] Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” [13] And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.”
 - We know that tax collectors were notorious for collecting more than they had to for personal gain. This is why they were hated by the Jewish people.¹ One can imagine how difficult it would be to stop over taxing people. This is the issue of greed. The gospel changes our hearts and helps us find our heart’s satisfaction in Christ.

3. The gospel leads to repentance from abuse of power.

- [14] Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”
 - The third group who are addressed are the soldiers. These men are told to repent of their misuse of power. Remember that a soldier’s purpose is to defend the people and protect them. They are empowered to do so. However, the soldiers would often extort people for money and misuse their power. We must remember that any influence given to use by God is for the benefit of others and not to take advantage of others.

Discussion Guide:

1. Share your favorite Thanksgiving food with the group as an ice breaker.
2. Read Luke 3:7-14.
 - a. Point out the word “bear fruit” (Poieo) and how the same word is repeated as “do” in verses 10, 12, 14.
3. Why are we commanded to share in verse 11? How is “sharing” unique, compared to “giving” or “donating”?
 - a. Sharing has the idea of a communal experience. It is one person experiencing a sacrifice and the other experiencing blessings. This is why John the Baptist mentions a tunic or food to share. These are simple items that allow the other person to experience the benefit that you were experiencing.

¹ <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/repentance-action/>

4. The tax collectors are told to not over collect in verses 13-14. Greed for money is a hard thing to control. Why is greed for money so difficult to control for us?
 - a. Greed for money is one of those things most people cannot control. Since money often makes us feel secure, important and valuable, we cannot get enough of it. The Bible calls greed, idolatry (Col. 3:5) because people find their hope and security in it.
5. The soldiers are told to use their power for others and not to use others. How can you use your "power"/ influence to serve others?
 - a. People may mention helping a younger person at work, caring for grandparents, serving at church, etc.
6. Close with each person sharing one thing they are grateful for and pray together thanking God.