

Turn From Sin and Turn to God

If anyone knows they are sick, it's us - people who have been active in addiction, have hit bottom, and come to the conclusion that life is unmanageable and that we are powerless over our dependencies. Amazingly, from Jesus' point of view, this is one of the best places a person can get to. Jesus clearly told everyone that He hadn't come to earth for the good guys. He'd come for those of us who were sick. Jesus comes to be with us at the place where we recognize that we are in need of a doctor.

Jesus answered them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call sinners to turn from their sins, not to spend my time with those who think they are already good enough." (Luke 5:32 NLT)

It is wonderful to know that when we arrive at the place that is the lowest of the low, Jesus is already there. When our self-esteem is scraping the bottom because we realize we are just not good enough, Jesus puts His arm around our shoulders and offers to lift us up. What comfort to finally have someone meet us in our loneliness, our fear, and our pain. Jesus cares. Jesus has come to help. Jesus has come with healing. It's wonderful.

Or is it? When Jesus meets in that place he says, "I am with you, now turn from your sins. Leave this life of addiction behind. Leave the self-centered relationships. Leave the hatred and bitterness. Leave the demand for pleasure at any cost. Leave the whining, lying, cheating, and stealing. Leave your selfish way of living behind and turn to me for forgiveness and healing.

Jesus began to preach, "Turn from your sins and turn to God, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near." (Matthew 4:17 NLT)

God has come close to us so we can come close to God. God is in charge - He's the King in the Kingdom. Our addictive lifestyles were the ultimate expression of us trying to be our own boss, trying to control our own destiny. Jesus meets us at our bottom and says, "Admit you can't do it. Admit that how you've been living isn't working. Admit that controlling your own destiny is impossible."

When we wake up after a period of rest and perhaps detoxing, we regret the chaos we've created, the heartbreak we've caused, the wasted time and resources. We realize what a mess we've made of things. We feel sad. We feel sorrow. We feel shame. There's nothing wrong with feeling bad in response to wrong actions. However, what we do with that sorrow and shame is very important. God wants to use that sorrow to motivate us to turn away from the choices that got us to this place of breakdown. God wants us to look

at the damage we've caused and purpose in our hearts to never do that again.

For God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation. We will never regret that kind of sorrow. But sorrow without repentance is the kind that results in death. (1 Corinthians 7:10 NLT)

The devil, on the other hand, wants to use that sorrow and shame to take us out again and destroy us even further. He wants us to feel so humiliated and ashamed that we'll decide we just can't take it any more and we run out to cover up the pain.

God, on the other hand, knows how uncomfortable the shame and guilt of past wrongs feels and so He's clear that not only are we to turn away from our sins but we are to turn to Him. His plan is to clean up our hearts, wash away all the wrong, all the pain, all the breakdown, all the guilt and all the shame. That's God's agenda. No wonder the Bible tells us that after that happens we will feel like we've entered in a fresh new experience of life.

Now turn from your sins and turn to God, so you can be cleansed of your sins. Then wonderful times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord ... If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong (Acts 3:19-20a, I John 1:9 NLT)

There is no better moment than when we realize that the burden of past bad behaviour is gone. Sometimes, after we've confessed the exact nature of our wrongs to God or to another human being, we feel we are "floating on air." We feel light. We feel peace we've never known before. There's a smile on our face we can't seem to wipe off. That's a great experience and a wonderful starting point for this new life to which God has called us.

Those who have truly repented and turned from their sins show that repentance by practicing new behaviours. We've made a thousand promises in our past. No one wants to hear any more of those. They want to see a change in how we choose, how we speak, how we act.

All must turn from their sins and turn to God—and prove they have changed by the good things they do. (Acts 26:20 NLT)

God forgives us and saves us so we can walk finally live as He created us to live - in service to God and our fellow humans. The Lord replied, ***"If you return to me, I will restore you so you can continue to serve me."*** (Jeremiah 15:19 NLT) Are we ready to turn from sin? Are we ready to turn to God?