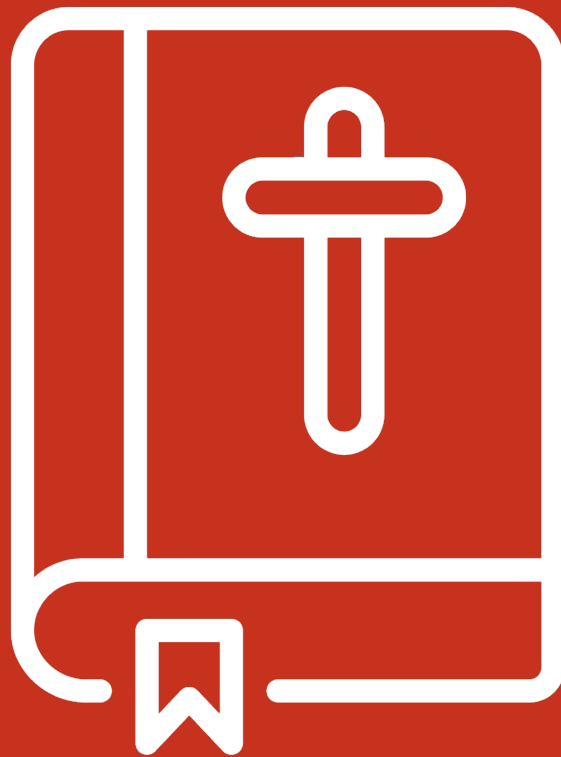


A Series of Short Messages with Big Truths

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES

Issue Four



TURNING TO
SOMETHING BETTER

Jimmy D. Brown

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STORIES AND SCRIPTURES #4: *Turning To Something Better*

[The following transcript is from a ten-minute message shared with an audience at a local gathering.]

When Paula and I first got married, we lived on a short dirt road just off of the main highway. After a few years, we built a palace about a mile closer to town off that same highway. Actually, it was just a normal house, but it had lots of upgrades like streetlights and pavement – *fancy!*

Here's the problem: our brains? Not fancy. Our brains are dumb. We moved to a new house, but our brains were like, "*Nah, we like the old one.*" For months – MONTHS – we would instinctively start to turn onto that old road.

Sometimes, we'd catch ourselves and dramatically yank the wheel back like we were in one of those *Fast & Furious* movies. Other times, we'd actually turn off and drive down to the old house. When we would realize what we had done, we'd look at each other like, "*Duh- we don't live here anymore.*"

After enough time passed, we were finally able to resist that pull towards the old road and the old house. The only turn we made was onto our new road that led to our new house.

And that's what spiritual growth looks like for us as Christians.

When we put our faith in Jesus, we are immediately given new lives: new identities, new passions, new purpose and a new power to live by. But those old lives continue to pull us, don't they? Old temptations beckon. Old habits resurface. Old loyalties divide. Old beliefs hinder. Old memories haunt.

What happens as we spiritually grow is this...

*We turn less and less toward the old
and we turn more and more toward the new.*

Part of that growth is the work of the Holy Spirit transforming us, and part of that is our responsibility to live by the wisdom, power and desire He gives us.

Listen to what the Bible says in Mark 1:14-15...

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Jesus gives us two instructions here: to "*repent*" and to "*believe in the gospel.*" There is an inseparable link between these two things. They go together. Today we'll talk about repentance. And next time we'll talk about how believing in the gospel is not just for non-Christians, but it's for Christians too, and how

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believing it more fully over time really solves all of our problems.

Today, let's talk about repentance and my main point is this...

Repentance is always an upgrade.

When we repent, what we are turning to is always better than what we are turning from. That's what it means to repent...

Repentance is a change in our minds that leads to a change in our behavior as we turn from sin and turn to Jesus.

We start to think differently about ourselves and our sin, and differently about God and His grace. And that leads us to inevitably and progressively turn from our old lives apart from Jesus to embrace all that God has for us in our new lives in Jesus.

Now, listen: repentance isn't merely turning from bad behavior to good behavior. That kind of repentance—one based on works—leaves out the gospel, as it relies on our own efforts to make ourselves acceptable to God. True, gospel-linked repentance is about turning from sin to Jesus Himself. It is through His life, death, and resurrection that we are made acceptable to God and are enabled to live transformed lives.

Now, in one way, we repent one time at the point we put our faith in Jesus. At that decisive moment, we are made right with God and have full assurance of forgiveness and eternal life. We turn from an overall sinful lifestyle.

But, in another way, we will repent over and over again our entire lives. Not because we lose our salvation and need to regain it, but because that's how we spiritually grow. We turn from individual instances of sin back to Jesus throughout our entire lives.

For example: If we tell a lie, we repent. If we harbor unforgiveness, we repent. If we are fearful, we repent. If we don't share the gospel, love our neighbor as ourselves or bear each other's burdens, we repent.

As we grow, we will never be sinless, but we will sin less because we'll find what Jesus offers is better than what sin offers. That pull toward the old isn't as strong when we are satisfied with knowing Him and all the blessings and benefits He graciously gives.

Next time, we'll talk about how to "believe in the gospel" as we apply its truths to our lives more fully to really experience all that is ours in Jesus, but for now, let me share four statements that are a part of gospel-linked repentance...

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1. *"I did it."* Repentance begins with owning our sin. We don't try to hide it or excuse it or relabel it; we acknowledge it. We confess to God that we have disobeyed Him.
2. *"I regret doing it."* There is genuine remorse over our actions. There is godly sorrow, not just because we got caught and don't want the consequences, but because we displeased God.
3. *"Help me to not do it again."* It isn't repentance if we have no plans to stop. We grow to hate our sin like God does and desire to be free from it and seek His gracious help to overcome it.

Now, this last statement is extremely important, and it's one that many people don't experience. And because of that, they don't find repentance to be an upgrade. They find it to be a necessity or a duty. They do it to avoid discipline or consequences. They may genuinely repent, but they don't experience the joys that should accompany gospel-linked repentance. So, I hope this is as life-changing for you as it has been for me...

4. *"Lead me to something better in you."* Repentance isn't just giving up sin; it's gaining something infinitely better. Sin isn't just to be abandoned; it is to be replaced. When God commands us to do this or don't do that, it's because He has something else in mind that is better for us.

Remember, it's turning from sin and turning to Jesus to embrace the beauty of His presence and all of the benefits and privileges that are ours because we know Him and walk with Him.

Now, we're going to really dive into this the next time, but let me give you a few quick examples now so you can see what I mean by asking God to replace our sin with something better in Christ.

Example #1: Sin of Envy. It's not just "stop wanting what other people have"; it's also finding real contentment that's available in Jesus.

Example #2: Sin of Bitterness. It's not just "stop holding a grudge"; it's also looking to Jesus to settle injustices while remembering the lavish forgiveness He has extended to you.

Example #3: Sin of Laziness. It's not just "stop wasting your life"; it's also living with rich purpose and meaning as an ambassador for Jesus.

Example #4: Sin of Anxiety. It's not just "stop worrying"; it's also experiencing the deep peace of Jesus by trusting in Him.

Example #5: Sin of Worldliness. It's not just "stop letting culture shape how you live"; it's also seeing all of your life through the lens of who you are in Jesus and what He wants to do through your life.

Do you see? Repentance is always an upgrade. It's better. It's gain. Listen...

To stop doing something leaves you empty. To find something better in Christ fills you up.

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Are you tracking with me? We turn from sin to Jesus; we replace sin with something better that is ours in Jesus. We leave the destructiveness of sin behind and gain the life-giving benefits of our salvation found only in Jesus. Repentance is always an upgrade.

And we do this over and over again throughout our lives...

*We fight against sin, we fail in the battle, we fall into mercy,
we find something better, we fight on and someday we finish.*

Okay, let me close by reminding us that the reason we repent at all is because we sin. That's why Jesus came... To live the perfect life we should have lived, die on the cross to atone for our sin and rise victoriously so we can be forgiven and freed from it.

That's the gospel, and I ask you to believe it this morning and to turn from your lifestyle of sin to something infinitely better in Him ... abundant life now and eternal life later.

So, if you've not yet done this, you can do so once-for-all-time right here, right now. Ask God to forgive you and free you from your old sinful life to embrace new life in Jesus. And, if you mean it, He'll do it. If you have questions, come see me after we are finished.

For those of us who are already Christians, we are to repent too. This is an ongoing part of our lives. So I would encourage you to examine yourself every day and where there is sin...

Confess it, forsake it, seek God's help with it and turn to Jesus instead of it.

This morning, whatever God is convicting you of in your heart, He has something better for you. So, by His empowering grace, take the time to replace sin with a gospel benefit.

And when you feel that pull toward the old road and the old house and the old life, remember this... You don't live there anymore.

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father, we are in awe of Your power to transform lives, and many of us here this morning can testify to how You have changed ours. We also acknowledge that there is still much to be changed about how we think, feel, speak and act. So, we ask You to finish the work You have started in us, and we are confident that You will. For those who have not yet turned from a life of sinful separation to saving faith in Jesus, we ask You to work in their hearts today so they gladly do so. Give us all a willingness to repent and believe the gospel so that You are honored in us and we are happy in You, now and forever. We ask this in Jesus' Name, amen.

Reflection Questions

1. What stood out to you from this message as most meaningful? Why?
2. What was the central idea or theme from this message?
3. What Bible verses or passages were used, and how do they support the message?
4. How does this message relate to your life right now?
5. In what ways did this message convict, encourage or inspire you?
6. What good news did you receive in this message?
7. What did you learn about God that is praiseworthy in this message?
8. How was grace and the gospel presented in this message?
9. What do you think God wants you to do as a response to this message?
10. With whom do you need to share or discuss this message?

PRAY IT

- *God, I praise you because...*
- *I confess that I struggle with...*
- *I thank you for...*
- *Please help me...*

How has God spoken to you through this message?

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Connecting With Me

If you have questions about any of the enclosed material, or if you have any other questions about life with Jesus, please reach out to me by using the *Contact* form at the bottom of the page at *JimmyBrown.com* (making sure you enter your email address correctly). I will personally reply back to you, usually within 24 hours (excluding holidays or weekends).

NOTE: There are a number of free resources available at JimmyBrown.com, and I regularly add more to the site. Check back often for additional materials to access at no cost.

Other Connections

- Social media (personal page): www.Facebook.com/thejimmybrown/
- Daily devotions: www.FinishLineFaith.com or www.Facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/
- Travel / mission vlog (with my wife, Paula): www.TheMissionAmerica.com

*If this resource has been helpful to you, please reach out and let me know.
And please pass this document on to other people who may, by the grace of God, be helped too.*