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2 Corinthians 7:10

# REPENTANCE

January 7th

*My sis and I shared a room growing up. We're almost four years apart and we fought . . . a lot. Now we're best friends but then we were frenemies if you know what I mean.*

Just for fun, if we're sharing a hotel room on a trip I'll start the nighttime apologies for nostalgia sake. We chuckle but still end with, "I love you." "I love you too."

*Every night before drifting off to sleep our little hearts would get the best of us, and one of us would bravely whisper,*

As adults this pattern is something we know all too well. We are determined to obey, we want to obey yet we fall short and at the end of a long day we whisper,

*"I'm sorry if I hurt you today. Please forgive me."*

"I'm sorry Lord, I'm sorry for what I did and what I didn't do."

*"I'm sorry too. I love you."*

*"I love you too."*

The older we get the more we realize that repentance isn't based on how sorry we are or how bad we were but on how good He is. He is long suffering, slow to anger and rich in love. While I've moved out of old patterns of temptations that I fought as a youth such as the lust of the flesh and lust of the eye, I've moved into the middle-aged temptation, the pride of life . . . Yet He is still patient, long-suffering and slow to anger. And He still responds, I love you too.

It's easier to apologize in the dark and as children this was the best we could do. We knew within the next twenty-four hours we'd hurt each other again and tomorrow night we'd be whispering through the dark saddened by our lack of resolve to do better. It was a cycle we'd repeat for years until my sis moved to Bible college.

## prayer.

**L**ord, thank you for sending to my heart the spirit of godly repentance. Today, I ask that you search my heart and show me any wicked way that lives inside of me. May I remove the "do not disturb" sign from any of the rooms contained in my heart that I don't want you to enter. Lower my guard and help me to embrace your love and forgiveness. After this prayer may I continue to walk in repentance by changing my behavior through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, Amen.

# REPENTENCE

## Declarations

1. I walk in repentance and ask the Lord to search my heart daily for what doesn't belong there.
2. I not only change my thinking regarding the sin I used to enjoy but I've also changed my behavior through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
3. It is the goodness of the Lord that leads me to repentance. He is good and He is for me.
4. The Lord is not mad at me when he corrects me. In fact, correction is a sign of His love.

## Reflection Questions

*Is there a specific sin that is cyclical in your life? If so, what is it?*

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*Have you convinced yourself that you will never be free from that specific temptation? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, why? \_\_\_\_\_*

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*Are these temptations common in your family? \_\_\_\_\_ If so who in your family struggled with what you struggled with? \_\_\_\_\_*

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*Do you know someone who walks in freedom in areas where you walk in bondage? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, would you be willing to meet and pray with that person? \_\_\_\_\_ Scripture reminds us to confess our sins to one another so we may be healed. (Disclaimer: This individual needs to be mature and no longer struggling with the temptation you are facing. Pray and ask the Lord for wisdom before you seek out someone to pray with).*



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# PRESENCE

January 8th

I had been in several prisons before but this one was different. Dr. Samuel Huddleston, author of *Five Years to Life*, was taking a camera crew back to his former prison cell to document his testimony. His sentence started at DVI in Tracy, California which was referred to as the CO's Gladiator School. As his admin he asked if I wanted to go and I jumped at the chance.

The prison was like many of the others I'd been too . . . cold institutions with clanging doors, big keys and security screenings but J-wing was like something out of an old prison movie. This wasn't what you see on *60 Days In* this was straight up *Shawshank* . . . literally. Dark, dank and demonic. As I stepped into J-wing I could feel the presence of darkness hover over everything and everyone. I kept in close proximity to the group and started to pray. My anxiety continued to escalate, I was feeling overwhelmed, as my pulse was beating faster, my breathing becoming erratic.

"Lord, I think I'm having a panic attack in prison of all places." Mentally I knew I was not an inmate, emotionally I felt trapped. The bondage was palpable. My prayers didn't seem to be working, my proximity to the group wasn't working. . . nothing was bringing down my anxiety until I heard, "Welcome Dr. Huddleston and friends."

At that moment I turned to see who I would later learn was Claude Finn, the warden. He was wearing a white starched shirt with a black tie. He was tall, African America, commanding, and wore a badge. His presence changed EVERYTHING in the room. Inmates immediately came up to him thanking him for specific things he had done for them. The room went from fear and desperation to gladness and thanksgiving in one moment. Warden Finn knew who he was and the authority he carried. By the way he carried himself and the presence he displayed, there was no doubt in anyone's mind who the leader was in the room that day. His presence quickly deescalated my fears.

This experience taught me that authority and presence are linked. The Lord teaches us in the natural to reveal what we need to learn in the spiritual (1 Cor. 15:46. When I walk in my God given authority physically and spiritually, I am able to carry His presence. When I am controlled by fear, lose confidence and hold back, I relinquish my authority and leave those around me without hope and powerless. Holy Spirit used Warden Finn that day to teach me the principle of authority and its connection to presence.

# PRESENCE

## Prayer

Father, please forgive me for taking the authority you have given the believer lightly. Please point out any area in my life that is not in submission to your word and the leadership you have asked me to serve with. I submit myself to you. I submit my family, church and future to you. I renounce rebellion or resentment that has lodged itself in my heart toward those you have placed in authority. I realize that in order to walk in authority and increased presence I need to be submitted to those who are in authority. I pray that you will now open my eyes to any area of my life that I have not submitted to your authority. I also ask that you open my spiritual eyes to the authority I carry as a believer and the presence I carry in your name to a lost and dying world. Increase your presence in my life to a GREATER degree. Amen.

## Declarations

1. God has given me authority to be called a child of God, share the Gospel, minister and serve others.
2. Because the Holy Spirit dwells within me I have spiritual authority and I carry His presence wherever I go.
3. I do not live in fear or overwhelm. I may feel it, but I do not relinquish my authority to fear.
4. I walk in submission to God's word (The Bible) and speak with authority as I wield the sword of the Spirit.
5. His presence in my life is increasing to GREATER degrees.

## Reflection Questions

*"Spiritual authority is the God-given right to receive and use God's power that flows from the indwelling Holy Spirit." – Charles Kraft. Matthew 10:1 and Mark 16:17-18*

*In what areas am I shrinking back and not walking in my God-given authority?*

*What lies am I believing about the spiritual authority I have been given?*

*In my sphere of authority what needs to be deescalated?*

*How can my presence as a submitted believer be used by God to eliminate negativity and bring about GREATER unity?*

*"The greatest of these is love."*



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# LOVE

## January 9th

**R**emain grateful that we don't have to work for our salvation. Yet salvation invites the believer into a working relationship with Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:5 in The Living Bible (paraphrase) says, "But to obtain these gifts, you need more than faith; you must also work hard to be good, and even that is not enough. For then you must learn to know God better and discover what he wants you to do. Next, learn to put aside your own desires so that you will become patient and godly, gladly letting God have his way with you. This will make possible the next step, which is for you to enjoy other people and to like them, and finally you will grow to love them deeply.

**T**he depth of our working relationship with Holy Spirit is not measured by how well we perform but on how deep we love. Holy Spirit is the great tenderizer and when He comes He breaks up our hearts of stone and He gives us hearts of flesh. When I'm not spending time in His presence on a regular basis I can slowly but surely see the above scripture start to come true but in reverse. I can quickly go from loving people, to liking them, to barely enjoying their company to becoming intolerant and irritable when they are around me.

**W**hen we isolate ourselves from other believers we are operating in a level of selfishness. Perhaps we hold back so we won't be hurt, again. Maybe we isolate because we struggle with anxiety when around others. The strategy of the enemy is to isolate believers from each other because he knows there is strength in numbers. The end game isn't about just being good, but it includes loving those to our right and left, the people we live with on a daily basis. The annoying shopper behind us in line, the driver who cuts us off, the spouse who betrays us, the child who leaves us, and even yes, those in the church who have hurt us.

**I**n a time when Christians were being abused by their own government for their faith, Jesus says, "Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you." Love is a weapon our enemies will never understand. As we mature in our walk with Holy Spirit, we eventually learn that walking in love requires us to guard our hearts with our arms wide open. Lord call us to greater levels of love.

# LOVE

## Prayer

Lord, I repent for stunting my own growth when I make performance and my own goodness the end game. Please show me how to increase my capacity to love others. May I grow in patience and godliness which will lead me to eventually enjoy people, like them and ultimately love them. Forgive me for the times I've ministered at people and not to them. Lord, show me how to love those around me. Highlight the person who needs me to listen to them, pray for them, spend time with them or just offer them a hug. Amen.

## Declarations

1. My 'superpower' is love.
2. I love people unconditionally; this is the gift I will give them today.
3. I do not focus on the flaws in those around me but on their good qualities.
4. Perfect love casts out all fear. I am not afraid to meet new people and I enjoy being around others.

## Reflection Questions

1. *Who do I find difficult to love and why? Am I praying regularly for that person?*
2. *Where is my love-o-meter at?*
  - a) *I love people.*
  - b) *I like people.*
  - c) *I enjoy people.*
  - d) *I tolerate people.*
  - e) *I can't love people right now.*
3. *Loving people does not mean you don't set boundaries with them. How can you love well while guarding your heart?*
4. *Who is the Lord highlighting in your sphere of influence that you need to show more love to?*

Colossians 3:14



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# UNITY

January 10th

While some cultures demand uniformity, American culture promotes individuality, but the church is to operate in unity. Colossians 3:14 reminds us as to how we can operate in unity. It reads, “Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.” If you’ve ever worked with epoxy you know that two-part versions are stronger because when you mix resin and hardener together the bond is stronger. Without love Christians don’t stick together. Rather they start to hold grudges, gossip and avoid using Matthew 8. Growing up we used to sing, “Bind us together Lord, Bind us together with chords that cannot be broken. Bind us together in love.” Unity is a two-part epoxy that requires love to harden the bond, yet soften the heart.

## prayer.

*Lord, bind us together in your love. Father, please search me and show me the areas in my heart where I have allowed resentments or poor attitudes to creep into my heart and separate me from those within the body of Christ. Holy Spirit, tenderize my heart and clear out the grievances I’ve collected against my brothers and sisters.*

*-Amen-*

## Declarations

1. I will no longer allow past grievances and resentments to determine how well I love my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.
2. I will represent His kingdom well by loving those I serve Jesus with.
3. The Holy Spirit enables me to love those whom I have a hard time loving.
4. Love is not a feeling, but a choice and today I choose to walk in unity by walking in love.
5. I will not allow gossip to destroy the unity of my church.
6. This week I will fast my opinions and political rhetoric and only use my social media accounts to promote unity within the body of Christ.

## Reflection Questions

1. *What can I do this week to improve the unity in my church?*
2. *Is there anyone I need forgive?*
3. *In the past how has the Holy Spirit enabled me to love those in my life that I have found hard to love?*
4. *As I read the above devotional, I admit I have a hard time loving \_\_\_\_\_ . This week I am going to show them I love them in a practical way by \_\_\_\_\_ .*





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James 1:5

# WISDOM

January 11th

*Much like knowledge, Godly wisdom is not something you are born with. But you are able to acquire Godly wisdom if you ask. I have known people who are extremely knowledgeable, yet wisdom is not their friend. I have also learned that wisdom is not just something that happens with age. Like you, I've met people who are older than me, yet they do not operate in wisdom. Godly wisdom is the ability to apply spiritual truths to life's circumstances and may even appear foolish to the world. Try telling your unsaved friends that you give 10% of your income along with offerings to your church and see how they respond. The carnal mind does not walk in wisdom, nor can it comprehend it. However, the mind that is renewed by Holy Spirit searches scriptures, prays, and seeks Godly counsel so it can honor the father in heaven by making wise decisions.*

*Godly wisdom is a gift to us from a good father who says all we need to do is ask for it. How do you know if you're starting to walk in Godly wisdom? The first sign is that you have a healthy fear of the Lord. Growing up on the California coast I loved watching the waves crash along the rugged coastline of Mendocino. However, if you are not wise the beauty of the ocean will cause you to second guess its power. While God is good and full of beauty may we never second guess His power. Godly wisdom recognizes and honors an all-powerful God.*

## prayer.

**L**ord, I humbly ask that you grant me Godly wisdom. Wisdom that allows me to be honest about my limitations. Wisdom that recognizes your strength and power. And, wisdom that trusts you with all the areas of my life. Lord, I am not afraid of you, but I walk in a healthy fear of you because you are power personified. Thank you for inviting me to come to you and ask. Lord, give me your wisdom in how to raise my children, love my spouse, minister to my neighbors and coworkers and spend my resources. Oh powerful God, grant me wisdom to follow you and serve you with all my heart. Amen.

## Declarations

1. I belong to Jesus, therefore my mind is being renewed.
2. I make sound decisions and do not have to second-guess myself or walk in fear of making bad choices.
3. I fear the Lord by following the principles He has given me through His word.
4. When I don't know what to do I seek the Lord, He hears and He answers.
5. I have Godly men and women around me who help me to walk in Godly wisdom.

## Reflection Questions

1. *What are some areas in my life that need Godly wisdom? (i.e., marriage, starting a family, buying a home, ministry calling, going back to school, saving for retirement, changing careers).*
2. *When making decisions I mostly rely on . . .*
  - a) *Feelings: I made the decision because it felt good.*
  - b) *Scripture: God highlighted a passage in His word that I am resting on.*
  - c) *Prayer: Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and reassured me that I'm making the right decision. I have peace.*
  - d) *Godly counsel: I reached out to my pastors and Godly mentors, and they are joining me in prayer.*
3. *\_\_\_\_\_ % of the time I am confident I am using Godly wisdom when making decisions.*
4. *The enemy of your soul will want you to doubt because Godly wisdom may not seem wise to those around you. How are you going to combat the doubts if/when they come?*



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*Ephesians 6:7*

# SERVICE

January 12th

If your car, much like everyone else's, has a magnet on the front that pulls you toward the nearest Chick-Fil-A drive through you'll repeatedly hear a phrase, "My pleasure." The founder of this heavenly fast-food chain, Truett Cathy, was checking into a hotel and heard the phrase, "My pleasure" from the bellman after he thanked him for unloading his luggage. Cathy wanted to replicate the warm response throughout his entire team and participating chains so anytime you say thank you to a Chick-Fil-A team member you'll hear, "My pleasure." In such a fast-paced culture it's wonderful to be reminded that someone actually takes pleasure in serving.

You will also see this same type of attitude in many of our veterans. I was ministering one Sunday in Sparks, Nevada at Crosswinds Assembly.

There was an older gentleman sitting in a wheelchair with a Vietnam Vet baseball cap on. As I walked by I said, "Thank you for your service." His response caught me off guard and brought tears to my eyes. He said, "You're worth it." As we launch into 2024, we pray that God enlarges our capacity to serve. I have a sticky note on my computer monitor that reads, "It's a privilege not a burden." After a long day of ministry, checking emails or sending out a report the last thing I want to do is talk on the phone or respond to a crisis, but this is ministry. As the day winds down so does my attitude and ministry can feel more like a burden instead of a privilege. The attitude in which I serve makes all the difference. Do people leave my presence feeling like a pleasure or a pain? May I continue to serve with a grateful heart knowing it truly is my pleasure.

## prayer.

Lord, will you increase my capacity and capabilities to be more effective for your Kingdom. Where I have slacked off please put a new spring in my step and recommitment in my heart. May I not grow weary in well-doing. Lord, I can't do it all. I am human and have limitations. May you be glorified through my limitations. Please show me what I need to stop doing, start doing or continue doing in 2024 to bring about greater service for the Kingdom. Amen.

# SERVICE

## Declarations

1. I serve the body of Christ with a sense of gratitude.
2. Serving is a privilege to be enjoyed and not a burden to tolerated.
3. I take care of myself, eat right, and get plenty of rest so I can serve with a right attitude.
4. I don't serve for the sake of receiving kudos from man, I serve out of a grateful heart for all that Jesus has done for me.
5. Serving is truly my pleasure.

## Reflection Questions

1. *What do I need to stop doing?*
2. *What do I need to start doing?*
3. *What do I need to continue doing?*
4. *My spiritual gift is \_\_\_\_\_ and I use it \_\_\_\_\_?*
5. *This year I would like to serve in the area of \_\_\_\_\_?*



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*John 15:16*

# IMPACT

January 13th

**I** recently watched an online crash test with several different models of cars. Some performed well, some didn't perform instead they were squished beyond recognition. For the believer to make an impact in the Kingdom of heaven they must go head-to-head and collide with the Kingdom of Darkness. Even Jesus went through his own "crash test" in the desert for 40 days and nights.

**M**anufacturers have learned there is an equation that is needed to measure impact. They divide the change in velocity by the change in time, multiplied by two and then multiplied by the mass. If you want to make a greater impact in the physical realm you need to understand physical laws. If you want to make a greater impact in the Kingdom of Heaven you need to understand spiritual laws. For example, whatever a man sows, he reaps. If you want to reap a large harvest you have to plant a lot of seeds.

**B**ut in John 15:16, Jesus reminds his disciples that they did not choose him, but He chose them and then he tells them to go and bear fruit. He follows it up with the statement with, "fruit that remains." Planting seed impacts the kingdom. Bearing fruit impacts the kingdom, but fruit that remains multiplies the Kingdom. In 2024, we are asking our Heavenly Father for greater impact, for fruit that remains. May we be willing to continually tend the garden for the great harvest of souls and the greater impact of fruit that remains

## prayer.

**L**ord, we ask that we are not hasty or sloppy when leading others to you. Help us to play the long game when it comes to discipleship. Melt our hearts for new believers who need spiritual mothers and fathers to guide them so that they will remain in the Kingdom and bear fruit themselves. Lord, help us to expand our systems and structures to "house" the new souls you are bringing into the Kingdom in 2024. Lord, while all of heaven celebrates those who come to you, the Kingdom is greatly impacted by those who stay in you. Help us to cultivate a culture that reaches the lost and teaches them how to stay. Greater impact we pray in 2024.

## Declarations

1. I enjoy working in God's garden, tending the soil and working to produce a crop that remains.
2. The Lord highlights specific new believers to me so I can encourage them in their journey.
3. I am never too busy to help a new believer go to a deeper level in their relationship with Christ.
4. In 2024 I am planning on making a greater impact in the Kingdom by helping my church prepare for a greater harvest than ever before.

## Reflection Questions

*Who impacted my faith journey the most?*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Are they still living?* \_\_\_\_\_

*1. If yes, would you be willing to send them a note of thanks?* \_\_\_\_\_

*When will you do this?* \_\_\_\_\_

*2. Is there a new believer around you that you can pass on the same kind of care you received when you first started following Christ? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what is their name? \_\_\_\_\_*

*3. List 3-5 people who are not following Christ or who have walked away from Christ that you commit to pray for daily in 2024.*

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

*4. Greater impact means you are feeding more people spiritually than just yourself. You can feed chickens enough to survive but if you want them to lay eggs you have to feed them more for them to produce. What does "eat-ing" more spiritually look like for you in 2024 so you can feed others? (i.e., increased prayer time, reading an extra book each month, more time in the word and less time on social media, joining a prayer group?) \_\_\_\_\_*

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