

Developing a Practice of Repentance:

The practice of repentance may be unfamiliar territory. I thought I would suggest ways to begin the process. These activities are meant to help you ponder, meditate, acknowledge and voice areas in which you need to repent, or ask God to heal or soften your heart. These are meant to start as a personal practice, but the hope is that the whole church would engage in corporate repentance.

A simple prayer.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against thee in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved thee with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in thy will, and walk in thy ways, to the glory of thy Name. Amen. (Source: The Book of Common Prayer)

Word Study.

Consider where God encourages repentance in the Bible. Why does he encourage repentance, what's the result he promises, how might we need it in our personal lives, in the church and among our neighbors? Here are only a few verses to help you start, write down your findings:

2 Chronicles 6: 36-42

Jeremiah 5

Ezekiel 18: 30-32

Amos 5

Matthew 3:4-12

2 Peter 3: 8-9

Revelation 2-3

Asking Hard Questions.

Spend time reflecting and answering these questions and then ask God how you can respond. Are there areas you need to repent, give it over to God and start on a new path.

- ◆ Do you believe you need to repent personally? Do you see areas in your church family that need to have a repentant spirit? If yes, pray over these items.
- ◆ Do you find yourself involved in an activity or thought process that is harmful to yourself or to another person your life?
- ◆ Do you have thoughts or expressions that put down or degrade another person? If so, where do those feelings come from? How would God respond?

- ◆ Do you struggle with jealousy, greed, pride, anger toward others, or daily frustrations that cause anger? Ask God to reveal where those feelings come from and to help you seek healing? Are there areas you could confess and repent a wrong to start you on the road to healing and seeking forgiveness?
- ◆ Is there a relationship with someone in which you can seek forgiveness or right a wrong?
- ◆ Are their hidden sins or struggles in your life that you dare not share? Can you confess them to God? Yourself?
- ◆ Are there sins you've committed that you still don't feel forgiven for, can you trust that God has forgiven and you are free to move forward?
- ◆ How am you, as the Church beloved by God, called to be living? Are you living into that calling?
- ◆ Are you, in all humility, dependent on God or leaning only into your own understanding?
- ◆ If you are not in a church community, why not, do you need to repent something concerning leaving? Can you wrestle with God about your reason for not being in a church family?
- ◆ What's keeping you from loving God's church, being involved, and serving? What hurts do you need to give over to God for healing, who can you speak to to find comfort?
- ◆ If you are involved in the church, could you pray about how you can encourage your family toward collective repentance and humbling before God on behalf of the global church for healing in our communities.

Closing your Time.

Spend time praying over any areas that arose in which you need to confess. Make sure to thank God for his gentleness with you. If you haven't laid your burden before God, be sure to make a gesture of handing it over to him with thanksgiving and let him carry your load. As you give over personal areas, ask God to show you how to present yourself to the church family and how to view your church community. Pray for those in your church community and that God would move you collectively toward a repentant spirit.

If you journal, perhaps you can spend time writing about what God is teaching you and how you'd like to continue growing.