

Wasted Faith Discussion Guide

Chapter 5

Faith Without Repentance

1. Read chapter 5 in **Wasted Faith** aloud: “Faith without Repentance” (pp. 27-32). [Leader: *The subject of repentance is so little understood in our day that it may be useful for the group to study the appendix, The Unrepenting Repenter, which reveals twelve deceptive substitutes for true repentance. I suggest that this optional study be done at the end of the whole series for a deeper look at this issue, but you may wish to do it just following this lesson. If so, remember to provide copies for everyone. You may also recommend that it be used for individual contemplation.*]

2. Once a man called me to his bedside. He was dying. He told me that he was not a believer and that he was soon going to die without Christ if something did not happen. He said he wanted to go to heaven. Then he asked me a most important question: “Jim, I have a habit I know God does not approve of. It is a sin. I don’t want to give my habit up. In fact, I don’t intend to give it up. But could I become a Christian?” What would be your answer to this man? Explain in detail what you would say. [Leaders: *You might want to ask people to discuss this in pairs for 1 or 2 minutes first, followed by group discussion.*]

3. God demands repentance of every human. Read the following verses aloud: Acts 17:30; 20:21; 26:20. What is right and/or wrong about each of the following statements?

- Repentance is turning from sin by doing better.
- Repentance is just the reverse side of faith. It is simply changing your mind about rejecting Christ.
- Repentance is a change of mind about sin that results in specific amendment(s) of life as its evidence.

4. Read Luke 13:1-5 aloud. Answer the following:

- What is the meaning of the word “perish”?
- Are some people worse sinners than others? (see Matt. 11:20-24; John 19:11; Luke 12:42-48, etc.)
- Did those who died at Pilate’s hands, or those on whom the tower fell, die because of particular sins they had done, or because they were sinners by nature?
- What message is God giving to the world during calamity?

5. Repentance is sometimes presented to us in the Scriptures as a *gift* of God. Read Acts 5:30-31; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:24-26. Does it seem correct to you that God requires what He alone can give? Is the person without Christ to wait for the gift of repentance, or should he repent immediately?

6. Read aloud Mark 10:17-22. It has often been said that there are two ways to heaven: the impossible way and the possible way. Jesus began by emphasizing the impossible way to heaven. He knew that the man was an unrepentant sinner, but he let him speak about his supposed goodness anyway. Then He asked him to give up his possessions. By this method God measured his life against the First and Second Commandments of the Law of Moses: You shall have no other gods before (besides) Me; and, You shall have no idols (Note: Idolatry is described as greed/covetousness in Colossians 3:5.). In reality, he was a failure at living by the commands of God and went away sadly.

Suppose the young businessman had been told that he needed only to repeat a simple prayer to receive Christ and he would be saved? Would he have done it? What does this tell us about much of today’s evangelism?

7. Read John 2:23-25 aloud.

- a. Many believed when Jesus performed miracles at Passover. Is it not true that Jesus did miracles so that people would believe in Him?
- b. Is it not also true that “believing” is the proper response to Christ? If so, what problem is revealed in this passage? Why did Jesus not receive the “belief” of these people?
- c. As this passage demonstrates, it is possible to see large numbers of people appear to “believe” (for example, when they respond to gospel invitations at evangelistic crusades, Vacation Bible Schools, youth rallies, Summer camps, missions trips, etc.) when in fact *none* of them have been truly converted. How can we be strongly evangelistic while avoiding (or at least minimizing) this problem?

8. How much did you personally contemplate the need for repentance when you thought you were being converted? Was it necessary for you to know the definition of repentance to be saved? Did you have any way to tell if you were truly repentant?

9. If you have additional time, read chapter 6 in **Wasted Faith**, “The Initial Act of Faith” (pp. 33-37). Pray that this lesson sinks in deeply for all of you.

Before the next meeting: Read chapter 6 in **Wasted Faith**, “The Initial Act of Faith,” on your own (pp. 33-37).