

A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

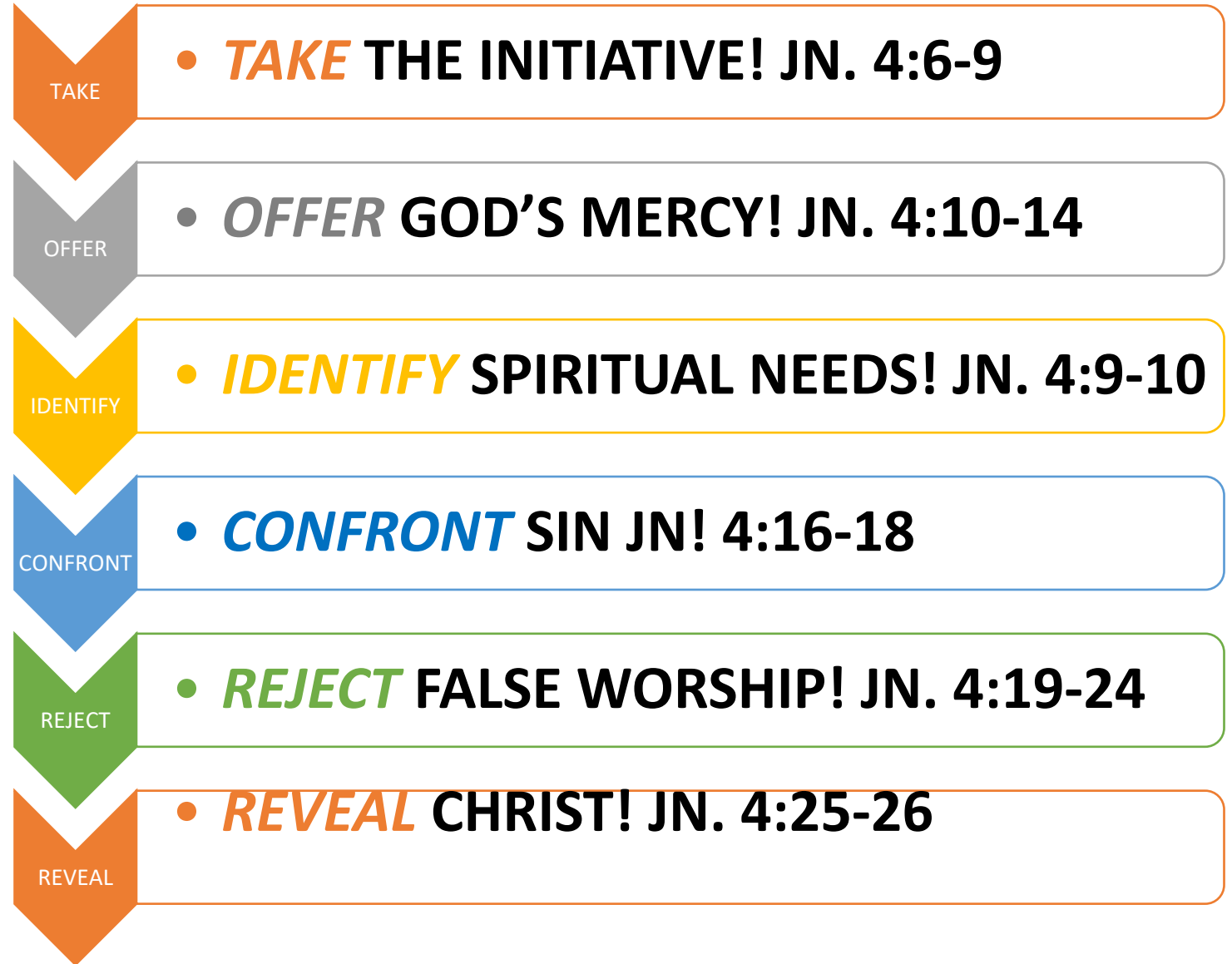




THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

PRINCIPLES
FOR
BIBLICAL
EVANGELISM
FOUND IN
JOHN 4, “THE
WOMAN AT
THE WELL.”



REPENTANCE* AND *ASSURANCE **THE GENUINE ARTICLE.**

- **WHAT IS *REPENTANCE*?** The literal Greek word, *METANOIA*, has to do with ***CHANGING YOUR MIND***. But authentic repentance is much more than merely changing your opinion, your thought process, or your mood.
- ***IT'S A COMPLETE *SPIRITUAL ABOUT-FACE*. AND IF IT'S GENUINE, IT WILL ALWAYS RESULT IN A CHANGE OF *BEHAVIOR*, TOO.***
- And while ***TRUE *REPENTANCE**** is the flash point for ***SAVING FAITH***, and a source of powerful, ***LASTING *ASSURANCE OF THAT FAITH****, it's a widely **MISUNDERSTOOD *DOCTRINE***. Many believers only have a vague notion of what it means to repent, and they're unfamiliar with what it looks like in the pages of Scripture.

- **JESUS' PARABLE** in (MATT. 21:28-30) is a classic illustration. ***"BUT WHAT DO YOU THINK? A MAN HAD TWO SONS, AND HE CAME TO THE FIRST AND SAID, 'SON, GO WORK TODAY IN THE VINEYARD.' 29, AND HE ANSWERED, 'I WILL NOT'; BUT AFTERWARD HE REGRETTED IT AND WENT. 30, THE MAN CAME TO THE SECOND AND SAID THE SAME THING; AND HE ANSWERED, 'I WILL, SIR'; BUT HE DID NOT GO."***
- The response of the **FIRST SON** explains the meaning of **REPENTANCE**. He said, ***"I WILL NOT," BUT HE DID***. That's repenting. He said one thing but ***changed*** his whole ***attitude*** and ***purpose*** and went the opposite way.

"REPENTANCE IS A COMPLETE CHANGE OF HEART AND DIRECTION, NOT MERELY A NEW IDEA ABOUT SOMETHING."

- **PETER PREACHED REPENTANCE** to the Israelites who gathered after he and the **APOSTLE JOHN** healed a lame man at the Temple gate in Jerusalem. **PETER** indicted the Israelites for ignoring the prophecies about Jesus, for labeling Him a blasphemer, and crucifying the very One who was sent to rescue them from their sins. But then **PETER** offered a solution: **“THEREFORE REPENT AND RETURN, SO THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED AWAY, IN ORDER THAT TIMES OF REFRESHING MAY COME FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD;”** (ACTS 3:19).
- The nation of Israel had decided that God’s will for them was a **SELF-GENERATED RIGHTEOUSNESS**. The Pharisees manipulated a system of legalism or works for righteousness. They made sure it maintained its hold over the people.
- If a Jew kept the **365 NEGATIVE COMMANDS** and the **248 POSITIVE COMMANDS OF THE LAW OF MOSES**, he was safe and righteous. They thought that was what God wanted, and **THEY REJECTED JESUS BECAUSE OF IT.**

- **PETER** essentially said to them: **YOU BLEW IT ON EVERY COUNT.** Jesus is the very opposite of what you concluded Him to be. Therefore, reverse your decision and change course—turn all the way around. **WHATEVER YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING TO PLEASE GOD, IF IT ISN'T BASED ONLY ON FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, STOP DOING IT AND TURN AROUND.**
- That's repentance. It's a **TOTAL TRANSFORMATION FROM SIN TO SALVATION,** from **FLESH** to **SPIRIT.**
IT'S A RADICAL REVERSAL OF THE ORIENTATION OF YOUR HEART, AND A NEW DIRECTION FOR YOUR LIFE.
- But where does it come from? How does the Lord bring about this transformation, and how do we draw assurance from repentance? What does the act of repentance have to do with our confidence in an eternity with Christ? **ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS WILL BE ADDRESSED.**

THE LORD'S *POSITIVE* PRODDING.

- The **CONSTANT WAR** between our *NEW NATURE* in Christ and **OUR OLD, SINFUL FLESH** is a recipe for spiritual inconsistency. Regardless of how long you've been saved or how much you've grown spiritually in that time, **TEMPTATION TO SIN** is always waiting around the corner. Notice **(1 PET. 5:8)** ***"BE OF SOBER SPIRIT, BE ON THE ALERT. YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL, PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION, SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR."***
- And because we too often fall back into our old, sinful patterns, the Lord uses a variety of means **TO PROD US BACK TO REPENTANCE AND A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM**—some are *POSITIVE*, others are *NEGATIVE*. let's consider some of the *KEY METHOD'S GOD USES TO POSITIVELY PROD US TO REPENT.*

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- **FIRST, HE USES OUR KNOWLEDGE**. God has given His Word so that His people **might repent**. Through the Bible, He tells us that we ought to turn from a self-righteous attitude toward total faith in God through Jesus Christ plus **NOTHING ELSE!!!!!!!**
 - **SCRIPTURE** contains everything we need for **SALVATION** and **SANCTIFICATION** (2 TIM. 3:16-17), including **PRACTICAL WISDOM** for identifying and destroying sin in our lives. **WE CAN'T ACT ON GOD'S WORD UNLESS WE KNOW IT FIRST.**

“ALL SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED BY GOD AND PROFITABLE FOR TEACHING, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS; 17, SO THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE ADEQUATE, EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK.”

- **ACCESS TO AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE IS ESSENTIAL FOR TRUE REPENTANCE.** Apart from His Word, we can't know the truth about our sin, our need for a Savior, Christ's perfect sacrifice on our behalf, the means of salvation, or God's pattern for sanctification.

"CUT YOURSELF OFF FROM THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD AND YOU'VE CUT YOURSELF OFF FROM ANY HOPE OF REPENTANCE, REDEMPTION, OR SPIRITUAL GROWTH."

- **THE LORD'S SECOND MEANS FOR PRODDING BELIEVERS TO REPENTANCE IS HIS GOODNESS.** As Jesus said, **"...FOR HE CAUSES HIS SUN TO RISE ON THE EVIL AND THE GOOD AND SENDS RAIN ON THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS."** (MATT. 5:45).

GOD SHOWERS HIS GOODNESS ON PEOPLE THROUGH THE JOYS OF LIFE, SUCH AS LOVE AND THE BEAUTY OF NATURE.

- In **ROMANS 2**, the **APOSTLE PAUL** says that the Israelites had every blessing and promise of God, and yet they treaded on His goodness. He says, ***“OR DO YOU THINK LIGHTLY OF THE RICHES OF HIS KINDNESS AND TOLERANCE AND PATIENCE, NOT KNOWING THAT THE KINDNESS OF GOD LEADS YOU TO REPENTANCE?”*** (ROM. 2:4). God’s goodness is for the purpose of bringing us to turn around and change our minds about Him and about Jesus.
- **THIRD**, GOD USES OUR **SORROW FOR SIN** AS A MEANS TO **PROD US BACK TO REPENTANCE**. Have you ever done something wrong and then felt bad? That’s a good thing, **BECAUSE GUILT IS GOD’S WAY OF ENABLING US TO FEEL THE EVIL OF OUR OWN SIN**.
- We have already discussed the **GIFT OF THE CONSCIENCE**. **AS THE SOUL’S INTERNAL WARNING SYSTEM**, the **CONSCIENCE** can cause **depression** and **anguish** over your **sin**.

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- But it's a **PRECIOUS GIFT THAT GOD HAS GIVEN EACH PERSON TO GUARD HIM FROM THE DANGERS OF SIN, AND TO STEER HIM BACK TO HIS PERFECT, RIGHTEOUS STANDARD.**

“THEREFORE, HOW YOU RESPOND TO YOUR CONSCIENCE IS VITALLY IMPORTANT.”

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- There are a lot of people **WHO ARE SORRY** about their sins, but who are **NOT SAVED** because they **DO NOT TURN** from sin. Others believe but they can't get past their **GUILT FEELINGS**, and their perpetually **WOUNDED CONSCIENCES** inhibit their spiritual growth.

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- IT IS CRITICAL THAT OUR SORROW OVER SIN PROMPTS US TO REPENTANCE AND CHANGE (2 COR. 7:9). OTHERWISE, IT'S WORTHLESS.

"I NOW REJOICE, NOT THAT YOU WERE MADE SORROWFUL, BUT THAT YOU WERE MADE SORROWFUL TO THE POINT OF REPENTANCE; FOR YOU WERE MADE SORROWFUL ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD, SO THAT YOU MIGHT NOT SUFFER LOSS IN ANYTHING THROUGH US."

THE LORD'S *NEGATIVE* PRODDING.

- It's true, the Lord employs a variety of methods to bring about repentance in the lives of His people. We just looked at **3 POSITIVE** means He uses to prod believers away from sin and back to His righteous standard.
- But if the **KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WORD, HIS GOODNESS TO US**, and the **NAGGING GUILT OF A TROUBLED CONSCIENCE** fail to bring us to repentance, God has other ways of leading us there. Let's look at a couple **NEGATIVE WAYS, HE PRODS** us back into a right relationship with Him.

- **FIRST, HE DISCIPLINES US.**
- Notice (REV. 3:19) says, **“THOSE WHOM I LOVE, I REPROVE AND DISCIPLINE; THEREFORE, BE ZEALOUS AND REPENT.”** Do you know why God rebukes and chastens us? He sometimes puts us through crises to bring us to change. That happened in my life. **WRECK, JADE!**
- While that kind of **PRODDING FROM THE LORD** can be uncomfortable and disruptive, we need to consider the reminder of (HEB. 12:5-11), that **HE ONLY DISCIPLINES THOSE WHOM HE LOVES.**

“SO EVEN AS HE USES *HARDSHIP, DIFFICULTY, AND STRUGGLE* TO STEER US BACK TO HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, IT OUGHT TO GIVE US *ASSURANCE* THAT WE TRULY *BELONG* TO HIM.”

- **ANOTHER *NEGATIVE* WAY THAT GOD BRINGS PEOPLE TO *REPENTANCE* IS BY WARNING US OF JUDGMENT TO COME.**
- Notice (ACTS. 17:30-31) ***“THEREFORE HAVING OVERLOOKED THE TIMES OF IGNORANCE, GOD IS NOW DECLARING TO MEN THAT ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE SHOULD REPENT, BECAUSE HE HAS FIXED A DAY IN WHICH HE WILL JUDGE THE WORLD.”***
- **THE MESSAGE OF *JUDGMENT* IS ALL OVER *SCRIPTURE*, and it must be preached because *GOD DESIGNED JUDGMENT TO LEAD US TO *REPENTANCE*.***
- God placed ***GUILT*** within the Israelites’ hearts and ***CHASTISED*** them with wars, famine, and exile. He displayed ***HIS GOODNESS*** to them by bringing them back to their homeland after the chastening. And ***HE PREACHED JUDGMENT*** to them through the prophets.

- God had tried **TO PROD** the Israelites with **KNOWLEDGE** through the Old Testament and then **HE SENT JESUS** to perform miracles in their faces. **JESUS PREACHED JUDGMENT TO THE JEWS IN MATTHEW 21, BUT THEY DIDN'T REPENT.**

“IGNORING THE PRODDING OF THE LORD PUTS YOU DIRECTLY IN THE PATH OF HIS JUDGMENT.”

- **INSTEAD, YOU NEED TO HEED HIS WARNINGS, ROOT OUT THE SIN IN YOUR LIFE, AND REPENT. UNLESS YOU'RE REGULARLY MORTIFYING YOUR SIN, YOU CAN'T HAVE STRONG CONFIDENCE IN YOUR SALVATION.**

DEALING WITH SIN.

- The tragic, inescapable reality of the believer's life is that he or she will never totally and finally conquer sin. ***THE LORD HAS TRANSFORMED US, REPLACED OUR HEARTS, AND REORIENTED OUR LIVES, BUT WE STILL CAN'T COMPLETELY ESCAPE THE GRIP OF SIN.***
- The **APOSTLE JOHN** recognizes, of course, that believers do fail and fall into sin. As a matter of fact, he began the epistle with a series of statements underscoring the truth that no one can claim any degree of perfection in this life: ***"IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN, WE ARE DECEIVING OURSELVES AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US"*** (1 JN. 1:8). And ***"IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NOT SINNED, WE MAKE HIM A LIAR AND HIS WORD IS NOT IN US"*** (1 JN. 1:10).

- When we sin, however, Christ is our advocate with the Father. Notice **(1 JN. 2:1)** ***“MY LITTLE CHILDREN, I AM WRITING THESE THINGS TO YOU SO THAT YOU MAY NOT SIN. AND IF ANYONE SINS, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS;”*** as well as the all-sufficient sacrifice who has paid the price of our sin **(1 JN. 2:2)** ***“AND HE HIMSELF IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS; AND NOT FOR OURS ONLY, BUT ALSO FOR THOSE OF THE WHOLE WORLD.”***

“THEREFORE, WE CAN **KNOW** TRUE **ASSURANCE**, DESPITE THE **SINFUL** AND **FLESHLY** TENDENCIES WE ALL STRUGGLE WITH.”

- Read **PAUL’S** testimony in **ROMANS 7** about his own frustrating battle to overcome the sin that remains in each one of us as long as we inhabit fallen flesh. **WE **ALL** SIN **ALL** THE TIME**, and we wage the very same struggle Paul describes in **(ROM. 7:14-24)**.

- But notice that **PAUL** ends that discussion with a celebration of **HIS OWN ASSURANCE**: ***“THANKS BE TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD!”*** (ROM. 7:25). From there, he devotes the entirety of **ROMANS 8** to a discourse about **THE BELIEVER'S SECURITY IN THE SPIRIT**.
- **HOW CAN BELIEVERS KNOW THAT KIND OF ASSURANCE**, even while being aware of their own sinfulness?
- **FIRST**, it's vital to understand that **SCRIPTURE EXPRESSLY REFUTES ALL FORMS OF PERFECTIONISM**. Even when the **APOSTLE JOHN** writes, ***“NO ONE WHO IS BORN OF GOD PRACTICES SIN, BECAUSE HIS SEED ABIDES IN HIM; AND HE CANNOT SIN, BECAUSE HE IS BORN OF GOD”*** (1 JN. 3:9).
- He is clearly not making **PERFECTION A TEST OF SALVATION**, because as we have seen, he recognizes and even emphasizes the inevitability of sin in every believer's life.

- The point of (1 JN. 3:9) has to do with **OUR ATTITUDE** toward sin and righteousness, **OUR RESPONSE** when we do sin, and the overall **DIRECTION OF OUR WALK**.
- In other words, **WE DON'T TEST THE GENUINENESS OF OUR REPENTANCE BY THE PERFECTION OF OUR WALK, BUT BY THE DIRECTION OF IT.**
- In the words of PURITAN **JOHN OWEN**, "**YOUR STATE IS NOT AT ALL TO BE MEASURED BY THE OPPOSITION THAT SIN MAKES TO YOU, BUT BY THE OPPOSITION YOU MAKE TO IT.**"
- WHAT IS THE TRUE MORAL OBJECT OF YOUR **AFFECTIONS**? IS IT **SIN** OR **RIGHTEOUSNESS**? IF YOUR CHIEF LOVE IS SIN, THEN NOTICE THE PRINCIPLES OUTLINED IN (1 JN. 3:8, 10).

V.8, “the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.” V.10, “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”

- IF YOU **LOVE RIGHTEOUSNESS** AND **PRACTICE RIGHTEOUSNESS**, YOU ARE **BORN OF GOD** (1 JN. 2:29). THIS IS NOT MEASURED BY THE **FREQUENCY**, **DURATION**, OR **MAGNITUDE** OF ONE'S SINS, BUT BY THE **INCLINATION** OF THE **HEART**.

*“AND THE TRUE MARK OF A **REDEEMED HEART** IS A SPIRIT OF **REPENTANCE**, **MOURNING** OVER OUR SIN WHEN WE DO FALL, AND A **DEEP** AND **ABIDING** **DEPENDENCE** ON **GOD'S GRACE** AS WE WAGE THE WARFARE AGAINST SIN.”*

- To quote **JOHN OWEN** once more: "A MAN, THEN, MAY HAVE A DEEP SENSE OF SIN ALL HIS DAYS, WALK UNDER THE SENSE OF IT CONTINUALLY, ABHOR HIMSELF FOR HIS INGRATITUDE, UNBELIEF, AND REBELLION AGAINST GOD, WITHOUT ANY IMPEACHMENT OF HIS ASSURANCE."