

Repentance: The Christian Lifestyle Choice  
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It seems everywhere you look, someone is trying to influence our lifestyle choices. Whether it's a retailer, an insurance company, a self-help book or a concerned mother, our lifestyle choices are under scrutiny. So often, when we make a healthy change, it doesn't quite stick. Why? It's one thing to make a change. It's quite another to make a lifestyle change.

As Christians, the stage is set for significant lifestyle change. We have been forgiven of all our sins through the blood of Jesus. We have the confidence that since Jesus was raised from the dead, we also will rise. We have nothing to lose! We get to live a life of love and sacrifice for the sake of others. We can devote ourselves to truth and beauty. Every once in a while, when we slip up, we can even ask for forgiveness.

Every once in a while? Who are we kidding? That's like thinking your little weekly kale superfood salad will make up for your daily Venti White Chocolate Mocha, whole milk, extra whip. (Starbucks interpreter: 650 calories in a paper cup.) We can have the best of intentions, but unless we make the difficult, fundamental whole-life change, our benefit will only be incremental.

Christians believe in two contrasting, yet very true things. We are saints through the blood of Jesus, called to live according to His example. We also believe we are sinners in a sinful, broken world and that it is impossible for us to do anything good on our own. So, what is the key choice that enables the Christian lifestyle? It's not a righteousness diet or a ten step plan for spiritual success. It's actually repentance, the difficult, fundamental whole-life change of turning from sin toward what is good.

Jesus tells a story of two men. The first was a religious authority praying to God, bragging about his own righteousness. The second was a man who was hated because of his unsavory profession. He prayed while beating his chest saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Jesus made it clear that the repentant man was righteous in God's eyes. (Luke 18:9-14)

What does this mean? It means God wants us to be real with Him, and not just every once in a while. Just like there is no moment where we can exist without God's provision, there is no moment where His free gift of forgiveness is unnecessary. Our constant refrain is "God be merciful to me, a sinner." It's our Christian lifestyle choice. It's not just for Sunday morning or when we're in a bind. Repentance is our way of being.

A life of repentance frees us from pretending and leads us to trust in God to forgive and guide. It's amazing to see what God does through poor, miserable sinners like us. Let's encourage each other in the best lifestyle choice: Repentance.