

Chapter 2: A Good Kind of Hurt

A Study of 2 Corinthians 7:11

Introduction:

You have come face-to-face with yourself, and chances are, it's not a pretty picture. If God is pricking your heart, then you are most likely experiencing a level of grief over your own failure and hard-heartedness. So...what now?

If you are grieving, that's good—but it's also dangerous. You are at a pivotal point in your fight against pornography. Will your grief lead to repentance or to destruction? This was Paul's concern for the Corinthian believers in 2 Corinthians 7. **Take a moment and read the whole chapter.**

Paul, the Nervous Wreck

The Corinthian believers had deeply offended and sinned against Paul. Desiring to see their restitution, Paul wrote a highly confrontational letter to them (v. 8). Paul immediately started to regret it. He began to get nervous about how the Corinthians would respond. All he could do was wait. He knew that the Corinthians could respond in one of two ways: They could respond with worldly grief that only lead to death, or they could respond with godly grief that led to repentance.

If you were to respond to your sin with worldly grief that leads to destruction, what might that look like?

Godly Sorrow: The Precursor to Repentance – Read 2 Cor 7:7–10

The response Paul received was the source of incredible joy and comfort for him (vv. 7-9). Yes, they were grieved, but that wasn't the source of Paul's joy. The source of his joy was the repentance produced from their grief (v. 9). While worldly sorrow might wallow in self-pity, sulk over the fact that you got caught, or grieve over your loss of reputation, godly sorrow recognizes the seriousness of your own sin before a holy God.

This is the distinction between simply feeling sorry for your sin and actually repenting. Grief without repentance is useless grief. True repentance will *always* result in action. Therefore, godly grief is necessary, but it's also temporary, for it morphs into a frontal assault against your sin.

Repentance, Close-up – Read 2 Cor 7:11

2 Corinthians 7:11 provides one of the most thorough descriptions of what true repentance looks like. As you grieve over your sin of lust, pray earnestly for God to produce in your heart an attitude of true repentance. 2 Corinthians is not meant to be a check list that you sequentially mark off as you seek to display true repentance; it is a litmus test of your heart. As we consider **the seven characteristics of true repentance**, examine your own heart.

PtP BIBLE STUDIES – PURSUING PURITY

- **A sense of urgency** – “what earnestness”: The Greek word here could be translated “strong effort,” “haste” or “eagerness.” True repentance is fully committed to change and will waste no time in pursuing that change.
- **A correction of testimony** – “what eagerness to clear yourselves”: This word is usually translated as “defense” (ἀπολογία). This is *not* describing a desire to make excuses for sin, but a desire to be an accurate representation of a child of God. An addiction to pornography hurts the cause of Christ. True repentance sees that.
- **An anger over sin** – “what indignation”: This is “a mental state of extreme emotional disturbance.” It is an irritation and agitation – a hatred – toward sin. A good indicator of true repentance is the level of aversion and hatred you have toward the sin you have committed.
- **A recognition of God’s presence** – “what fear”: True repentance soberly remembers God’s constant presence, leading him to a healthy fear. Isn’t it true, after all, that when we are lusting, we are forgetting God’s holy presence? R. Kent Hughes once wrote, “When lust takes control, God is quite unreal to us...when we are in the grip of lust, the reality of God fades.”
- **An acceptance of confrontation** – “what longing, what zeal”: Verse 7 clarifies that this longing and zeal the Corinthians had was a longing for the Apostle Paul (“he told us of your longing, your zeal for me”), the one who had so strongly confronted them. True repentance readily accepts and welcomes those who confront them; it doesn’t run away.
- **A desire for justice** – “what punishment”: True repentance accepts consequences. It wants whatever it takes to make things right, even if that means chastening. A heart that objects to justice reveals a lack of seriousness toward the offense.

This far more intense, all-encompassing, and fervent than “I’m sorry.” It’s far deeper than simply feeling bad about your sin. So consider your struggle with porn. No doubt, you have experienced times of grief over your sin, but how many times has your grief led to a repentance like Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 7:11? Has God worked so deeply in your heart that your grief morphed into this type of repentance?

What about You?

It’s time for some more honest examination. Just as we took a careful look at our sin, we must now take a careful look at our response. If you took an honest self-inventory as you “looked through the lattice” in the last study, you should be experiencing grief over your struggle with pornography. Now, it’s time to examine how you should respond.

A sense of urgency – Write down some indicators that would show that you are fully committed to pursuing change in your life. If you were “earnest” in your repentance, what would it look like?

A correction of testimony – How does your struggle with porn paint a wrong picture of your relationship with Jesus Christ?

PtP BIBLE STUDIES – PURSUING PURITY

An anger over sin – what Scriptural truths could help develop a strong aversion and anger toward pornography?

A recognition of God’s presence - List some characteristics of God that would help form a healthy fear of him in the moment of temptation.

An acceptance of confrontation – If you have ever been confronted over your struggle, how have you typically responded (even internally)? Why should true repentance more toward its confronter?

A desire for justice – Ask yourself this question: would you be ever be willing to pray this prayer to God: “Lord, whatever you need to do to help me grow, I’m ready to accept it—even if it’s painful”? If not, what does that say about how you’re viewing your sin?

Conclusion

This type of repentance is painful, not doubt about it. But being dominated by an addiction to pornography is infinitely more painful. As we saw in the first study, the end is destruction. But God has provided a way for us to turn. If you are his child, you have his Holy Spirit. None of these characteristics of true repentance are natural responses—they require divine intervention. They require the work of the Spirit.

So far, this study has forced us to take a good long look at the ugliness of our sin and our rebellion against God. But this painful process has a joyful, glorious end! After hearing of the Corinthians’ true, genuine repentance, he told them, “At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter” (v. 11). Would it not be wonderful that phrase to be said concerning your struggle with pornography? God’s Word says that this *can* be true of you! Seek true repentance in your own heart, and you will be on the road toward freedom!

Before next time...

- **Read Psalm 32 and 51.** Find elements of true repentance, as describes above, in these Psalms and write them down.
- **Ask for grace.** If your heart isn’t marked by true repentance, cry out to God and ask him to convict you and break you of your sin.
- **Recommended resource:** listen to the sermon, “Repentance in the Life of the Believer” by Dr. Jim Newcomer - <http://cbcypsi.org/resources/sermons/repentance-in-the-life-of-the-believer/>