TEPHILLAH
APOSTOLIC CENTRE
The Place Where Prayer Prevails

Place Where Prayer Prevails

Growth Track

LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE, MAKE DISCIPLES
our mission, given to us by Jesus

PRESENTER'S GUIDE

*step*TWO | FOUNDATION

Laying the Foundation
"Repent and Believe the Gospel"

As pastors, we carry the sacred responsibility before God to provide you with the essentials for building a solid foundation—one that will not only sustain you through life's storms but also enable you to stand with joy before our Creator on that Day.

In the following parable, our Lord Jesus presents the key to true stability, both in this life and the life to come:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice sin.'
"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man

who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall." (Matthew 7:21-27)

Here, Jesus reveals that obedience to His commands lies at the heart of our stability. As free will agents, we must cooperate with Him to be delivered from the power of sin and death. Obedience is foundational, and our eternal destiny hinges on how we respond to His commands.

The first recorded command Jesus gave as He began His ministry was this:

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)

"Repent and believe in the gospel." This was, and remains, the most important command for salvation in Christ. In this session, we will examine the Scriptures to establish your foundation in Christ. We will focus on key terms: *"Practice sin," "Repent," "Believe,"* and *"Gospel."* Skipping this foundational command renders all efforts to build your spiritual life futile, as Jesus Himself warns that without it, your foundation will ultimately crumble.

As pastors, our foremost concern for those God entrusts to us is that they come to experience a genuine "born-again" transformation. Before examining the meaning of *"Repent and Believe the Gospel,"* let's revisit an important statement Jesus made in the passage above.

In the following verse, Jesus provides a glimpse into the future—a sobering warning about what will happen to "many" on Judgment Day:

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice sin.'" (Matthew 7:23)

This is a deeply troubling passage. Jesus, looking ahead, foresees a time when "many" will be shocked and devastated on that Day. It is out of concern for your eternal destiny that we present this teaching. We do not want anyone to face that devastating reality: *"Depart from Me, I never knew you, you who practice sin."*

It is essential to examine the word *"practice"* in this context.
Practice: Actions that are willfully and habitually carried out, forming a lifestyle through repeated choices.

The individuals described by Jesus experienced no true transformational change, despite appearing outwardly religious. They mistakenly believed that doing things for Jesus was equivalent to knowing Him. Transformation comes through repentance, a foundational step without which no relationship with Christ exists. As Jesus teaches, repentance is the starting point for an authentic relationship with Him.

Many believe in God, but there is a vast difference between intellectual agreement and life-changing faith. Even demons acknowledge the reality of God. James highlights this distinction:

"You believe that God is one; you do well. The demons also believe—and shudder." (James 2:19)

The foundation of your spiritual life rests on hearing and obeying Jesus' words. His command is clear: *"REPENT and BELIEVE the GOSPEL."* In this session, we will explore these three words in detail. Our hope is that true reconciliation and a "born-again" experience will take place as you respond to His call with a whole heart.

As we look further into Matthew 7:23, Jesus' words expose a critical issue that will face "many" on the Day of Judgment: their belief that outward religious actions constituted a relationship with Him. These individuals will be utterly devastated, realizing too late that a lack of repentance led to their downfall. Their tragic error lay in neglecting a transformational faith that flows from obedience to Christ's commands.

This brings us back to the importance of repentance. The Biblical concept of repentance goes far beyond regret or remorse; it is a complete turning away from sin and a turning toward God. Jesus makes it clear that repentance is not optional for entering into a relationship with Him. In the absence of genuine repentance, there can be no true faith, and without true faith, there is no salvation.

Jesus' warning about those who "practice sin" points to habitual, willful actions that shape a lifestyle apart from Him. Transformation occurs when we obey His commands and surrender to His lordship. This is why Jesus pairs the call to repentance with belief in the gospel—the good news of salvation through His death and resurrection.

It is vital to understand that belief in the gospel is not mere intellectual assent to historical facts. True belief is demonstrated through faith that transforms every aspect of one's life. As pastors, we urge you to carefully examine your own heart. Have you responded fully to Jesus' command to *"Repent and Believe the Gospel"*?

Throughout this session, we will explore these terms—*"Repent," "Believe,"* and *"Gospel"*—with the goal of helping you lay a strong foundation in Christ. Without this foundation, nothing built upon it will stand. Jesus reminds us of this truth in His parable of the wise and foolish builders. The wise man's house endured because it was built on the rock of obedience to Jesus' words. The foolish man's house fell because it lacked this foundation.

Our hope and prayer are that through this teaching, you will experience true reconciliation with God and a "born-again" transformation that leads to eternal life. Let us take these words to heart and respond with the wholehearted obedience Jesus commands: *"Repent and Believe the Gospel."*

REPENT

Let us begin with the word *repent*. The significance of this word is evident from the contexts in which Jesus used it. Below are several passages highlighting its importance:

- *"I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."* (Luke 5:32)
- *"Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."* (Luke 13:3)
- *"And He (Jesus) summoned the twelve and began to send them out... And He instructed them... And they went out and preached that men should repent."* (Mark 6:7, 12)

- *"Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem.'"* (Luke 24:45-47)

The word *repent*, found in Mark 1:15 and throughout the New Testament, originates from a Greek term meaning "to change one's mind." It is crucial to have a clear understanding of this word to faithfully obey Jesus' command. Misunderstanding *repent* can lead to confusion, especially regarding statements such as, *"Repent and believe..."* Does this command mean one must completely clean up their life before coming to faith in Christ? The answer is *no*. This misconception often arises from a misunderstanding of repentance.

First and foremost, repentance is an inward action rather than an outward one. When it pertains to salvation, as in Mark 1:15, repentance involves a mental adjustment—an inward willingness to embrace a new perspective introduced by God's truth.

Repentance is a willingness to view something differently, to realign one's thinking to conform to the word of the Lord. It is an intentional act of the will—a decision to change one's attitude toward God and those things that grieve Him. This inward change of heart is foundational, leading to a firm decision to believe the gospel message.

Repentance produces an adjustment in the heart, an essential prerequisite for salvation. While the fruit of repentance—visible, outward life change—follows as a result of salvation, confusion often arises when these aspects are conflated. A true change of heart will always bear outward evidence over time. The Apostle Paul underscores this connection in Acts 26:20:

"I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds." (Acts 26:20)

This distinction is critical. Repentance is the inward posture that allows God to transform the heart, leading to salvation. Outward actions, or the fruit of repentance, naturally follow as evidence of that transformation.

Repentance, therefore, is not about cleaning up one's life before coming to Christ; it is about changing the way one thinks and aligning one's perspective with God's truth. It is a decision of the will to turn toward God, resulting in an inward transformation that ultimately manifests outwardly in one's life.

This is why repentance is so critical to the process of salvation. It prepares the heart to receive the gospel and allows God's grace to bring about the necessary change. Without repentance, there can be no true belief, and without true belief, there is no salvation.

As we reflect on the significance of repentance, let us remember its inward nature and its role as the starting point for a transformed life in Christ. Through repentance, we align ourselves with God's truth, allowing Him to reshape our hearts and minds, setting the stage for a life that bears the fruit of His salvation.

BELIEVE

Repentance is an inward adjustment—a deliberate choice to align one's perspective with God's truth. This choice sets the stage for the next command: *"Believe."* As Jesus said, *"Repent and believe the gospel."* The words *believe* and *faith* are synonymous in Scripture.

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

Faith is described here as an inner assurance, a conviction that something is true and reliable—in this case, the word of God. God is spirit; He is unseen. Believing in Him requires faith, *"a conviction of things not seen."* Faith is an act of the will, a conscious choice to place full trust in something. This inward decision is outwardly expressed through obedience and wholehearted commitment to the One in whom we trust.

When one chooses to repent (change their mind), they establish a firm inward decision to believe the word of the Lord. This connection between belief and action is highlighted in Hebrews 11:6:

"Without faith, it is impossible to please God. For they that come to Him must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him."

It is essential to understand that salvation in Christ is not something we can earn. It is a free gift from God, as the Apostle Paul explains in his letter to the Ephesians:

"For it is by grace that you are saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

This verse emphasizes that salvation is *"by grace through faith."* Let's briefly define grace. Grace is *unearned favor.* It is God's undeserved kindness and mercy. You cannot earn God's forgiveness or His love—it is freely given. If salvation were earned, it would allow for boasting. However, when it comes to our salvation in Christ, there is no room for pride.

All praise, honor, and glory belong to Jesus and His finished work on the cross. Faith, then, is our response to God's grace. It is the assurance that His promises are true and the conviction that His word can be trusted. Through faith, we embrace salvation as a gift, and through faith, we live out our commitment to Him.

Faith, in its fullest sense, is not merely intellectual agreement but an active trust that transforms every part of our lives. It is demonstrated through obedience and devotion. This inward conviction leads to an outward expression of trust in the form of deeds, as James reminds us: *"Faith without works is dead."*

To summarize, belief is the natural outflow of repentance. Repentance prepares the heart, and belief seals the decision to trust in the gospel. Together, they form the foundation of our relationship with Christ, enabling us to walk in obedience and experience the fullness of God's grace. Let us continually put our faith in the One who saves, giving all glory to Him. Amen!

GOSPEL

Jesus commanded us to *"repent and believe the gospel."* But what is the gospel? The Greek word *gospel* means *"good news."* And indeed, it is the best news humanity has ever received.

The good news is this: God the Father sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to address the issue of sin. Whoever believes in Him and personally identifies by faith with His finished work—His death, burial, and resurrection—will be forgiven, reconciled to God, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who brings with Him the promise of eternal life.

This is the gospel: that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day, having conquered sin and death, and now offers forgiveness and new life to all who believe.

As someone who has personally experienced this truth, I can wholeheartedly testify that the gospel is truly good news. King David's words in Psalm 34:8 express it perfectly:

"Oh taste and see that the Lord is good. How blessed is the one who trusts in Him!"

The gospel is not merely a message to be heard; it is an invitation to experience God's grace and goodness firsthand. It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). Through the gospel, we find forgiveness, reconciliation, and the hope of eternal life. Amen!

SIN

The final word we will examine today is *sin.* Jesus warns in Matthew 7:23, *"Depart from Me, I never knew you, you who practice sin."* But what is sin? If we are called to change our minds about something, it is vital to understand what that something is.

The first mention of sin in the Bible is found in Genesis 4:6-7, where God speaks directly to Cain:

"Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is to have you, but you must master it.'"

From this passage, we see the aggressive nature of sin. God personifies it as a predator, lurking at the door of the human heart, ready to devour its prey. Sin is not passive; it is a force eager to overwhelm and destroy. In this same chapter of Genesis, we see sin's destructive power when Cain, ignoring God's warning, plans and carries out the murder of his brother, Abel.

The Greek word for sin means *"to fall short"* or *"to miss the mark."* In 1 John 3:4, sin is described as *"lawlessness"—*living as though there were no law or disregarding God's commands. Sin is inherent to human nature. No one had to teach us how to be selfish, cruel, rebellious, or deceitful. We did not take lessons on how to lie, cheat, or lust. These behaviors arise naturally from our fallen condition.

Scripture provides a clear diagnosis of humanity's sinfulness:

- *"Through one man (Adam), sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."* (Romans 5:12)
- *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23)
- *"There is none righteous, no, not one."* (Romans 3:10)
- *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."* (Psalm 51:5)
- *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray; each of us has turned to our own way."* (Isaiah 53:6)

Though sin is destructive, Scripture also reveals the path to forgiveness. King David's words in Psalm 32 give us hope and highlight the key to finding mercy:

"How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the one to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit! When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained as with the fever heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the guilt of my sin." (Psalm 32:1-5)

David's confession demonstrates a repentant heart. Like the prodigal son, he came to his senses, changed his mind, and turned back to God. In response, David received forgiveness and release from guilt. God longs to do the same for us today. Many of us know what it feels like to be weighed down by past mistakes and decisions. Yet, God offers freedom, forgiveness, and healing to those who turn to Him.

David's testimony shows us these truths about sin and forgiveness:

- Sin is destructive.
- God will act out of love to get our attention.
- We must recognize our sinfulness.
- We are called to confess our sins to God.
- Sin can be forgiven, guilt can be removed, and lives can be restored.

No one desires to live under a curse, yet sin leaves us in a state of separation from God. Until we address the sin issue, the curse remains. This is why Jesus will say to many on Judgment Day, *"Depart from Me, I never knew you, you who practice sin."* If we continue in sinful habits, we open ourselves to spiritual oppression. As Proverbs 28:13 states:

"He who conceals and tries to cover his sins will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find mercy."

The Apostle Paul, in his letters to the churches, repeatedly lists specific sins by name to remove any confusion about the behaviors that grieve God and keep people in bondage:

- *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor those habitually drunk, nor verbal abusers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."* (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)
- *"The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."* (Galatians 5:19-21)
- *"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral, impure, or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."* (Ephesians 5:3-6)

Repentance and belief can begin now, wherever you are. You don't need to clean up your life before coming to Christ. Scripture says:

- *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."* (2 Corinthians 6:2)
- *"Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."* (Hebrews 3:7-8)

Jesus assures us that whoever puts their trust in Him will not be disappointed. He is our rock and firm foundation, capable of withstanding any storm. For this to become real in our lives, God requires our cooperation. He is listening for a heart cry, something like this:

"Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Son, Jesus Christ. I am tired of living apart from You. I repent and choose to turn away from the things that offend You. I give You my heart and life. I cry out to You for Your Holy Spirit. Come, Holy Spirit, and change me from within. From this day forward, I surrender to Your will and ways. My life is Yours. Amen."

As Scripture assures us:

"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:11-13)

WATER BAPTISM

Following Jesus requires action. When Jesus called His disciples, they had to physically rise and take steps to follow Him. You cannot remain stationary and still follow Jesus!

"But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves." (James 1:22)

The first step we take after trusting in and receiving Jesus as our Lord and Savior is baptism.

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19, NLT)

1. It Symbolizes and Signifies Salvation

Baptism represents joining Jesus in His life, death, and resurrection. It is an outward symbol of the spiritual transformation that takes place in salvation.

"Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives." (Romans 6:3-4)

Baptism signifies a fresh start, a cleansing from sin, and a new identity in Christ.

The word *baptism* is derived from the Greek word *baptizo*, which means *to immerse, bleach, or dye a garment.* This word implies a permanent change. Baptism symbolizes not only a cleansing but also a transformation into a new identity—one that reflects a new life, purpose, and relationship with God.

2. It's the First Act of Obedience to Christ

When we accept Jesus as Savior, we also submit to Him as Lord. This involves surrendering control of our lives to Him. Jesus' first command to a new disciple is to be baptized.

If we refuse to obey the first command, how can we expect to obey anything else Jesus calls us to do? Baptism demonstrates a heart willing to submit to Christ and take action on His instructions.

3. It's a Declaration of Our Allegiance to Jesus

Baptism is a public proclamation that you now belong to Jesus. It declares that you have left the kingdom of darkness and entered the kingdom of light.

"Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven." (Matthew 10:32-33)

While salvation is a private, inner transformation, baptism serves as a public declaration of what has taken place in your heart. It boldly proclaims your allegiance to Christ and your commitment to follow Him.

In Summary

Baptism is not just a ritual; it is a vital step in our journey with Christ. It symbolizes salvation and transformation, acts as a first step of obedience, and publicly declares our allegiance to Jesus.

Through baptism, we affirm that we have died to our old life, been cleansed from sin, and risen to new life in Christ. It is a powerful act of faith and commitment, marking the beginning of a life lived in obedience to our Savior.