

Acceptance vs Repentance (post on social media)

The pastor says they sit front and center. The gay boys. Sometimes they hold hands. And some folks have said he should address the issue. But the pastor tells me he doesn't know what to say. And then there's the man who sneaks in the back door. Fresh off the street. After the service starts. And leaves before alter call. The people sitting close complain about how bad he smells. Of beer and smoke and sweat. But the pastor tells me he doesn't know what to say. And then there's the young mama who has dirty skin and lets her four children come in and eat all the donuts and drink all the watered-down juice. Some church staff say they "...eat like little pigs. Like they haven't eaten in weeks." While the mama just stands there and lets them. And the elders say something must be done and said. But the pastor tells me he doesn't know what to say. And there's the whore sitting among the faithful. And everybody knows her. She sits with a painted-up face, cheap perfume, and a broken heart. And those who sit close, well, they all treat her for what they think she is. And at the last staff meeting, her name came up. Something must be done about her. But the pastor tells me he doesn't know what to say. The pastor is a good man. Holy and just. And he wants to do the "right and loving" thing. And he wants to "look like Jesus". And he asks me if I have any thoughts on anything he could say. Yes, sweet Pastor. I do. Start with this and say it Louder than any other words: "Welcome to Church. This is a place of love and hope and safety and forgiveness. We will be food for the hungry. Living water for the thirsty. We are so glad you are here. You are invited. You are loved. Come on in—we've been waiting on you. Welcome here. We are the church." Say that. To the called and to the called-out. To the leaders and the greeters. To the dirty and the clean. We are all the same. We are. May we blow the dust of religion out of our souls and choose affection instead. May our words and actions and reactions be a sanctuary for all. Jesus broke many laws to love. So, Jesus, be our voice. Be the only words we should ever speak. I believe this with all my heart. Years ago we were kinder. Everybody looked out for one another. We need to go back to that. It takes us all. We gotta do better at looking out for each other instead of breaking each other down.

Acceptance and forgiveness does NOT equal sanctioning or excusing behaviors.

If the Bible is clear, we must be clear. If issues are preferences or personal inconveniences, we must get over it.

Homosexuality is not the same as being homeless!

We do NOT have to reject people who need to repent. People who refuse to repent have rejected God and His word. Even if they struggle with that sin, it's not the same as justifying it or celebrating it.

The word "repent" appears 27 times in the New Testament of the Bible, and Jesus consistently used the language of repentance in his teachings. Some examples of Jesus' use of the word "repent" include:

- **Matthew 3:2:** "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"
- **Matthew 4:17:** "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"
- **Luke 5:32:** "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance"
- **Luke 13:5:** "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish"
- **Matthew 11:20–21:** Jesus denounced cities that did not repent
- **Matthew 12:41:** Jesus said that the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah

2 Chronicles 7:14^L—Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and will pray and will seek my face and will turn from their evil ways, then I myself shall hear from the heavens and will forgive their sins and heal their land.

Mark 6: Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. ⁷ Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits... They went out and preached that people should repent.

Matthew 1:15 The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel. **Matthew 3:8** Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. **Matthew 3:11** I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **Mark 1:4** John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.