KnowingGod

CONTENT EDITION

What do repentance and faith actually mean?

Repentance and faith describe our response to God’s good news. They belong together: we turn from sin toward God and entrust ourselves to Jesus Christ.

Repentance and faith describe our response to God’s good news. They belong together: we turn from sin toward God and entrust ourselves to Jesus Christ.

Repentance involves a changed understanding and direction. We acknowledge that our sin is wrong, stop defending it as though it were harmless, and turn to God for mercy and help. It includes sorrow for sin, but it is more than feeling bad or fearing consequences.

Faith means relying on Jesus—trusting who he is, what he has done for us, and what he promises. It is more than agreeing that certain facts about him are true. We depend on him for forgiveness and life rather than treating our own goodness as the basis of acceptance with God.

Neither repentance nor faith means that we must first make ourselves morally successful. We come to Christ as people who need saving. Nor does genuine faith require perfect understanding or freedom from every doubt. Its strength lies in the trustworthiness of the Savior, not in the intensity of our feelings.

Turning to Christ begins a continuing life of repentance and trust. We will still need correction, forgiveness, and growth. Yet grace gives us a new direction: we increasingly learn to bring our sins into the light and follow the Lord who loves us.

Read in the Bible

Mark 1:14–15; Luke 18:9–14; Acts 20:21; Romans 4:4–5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10.