

THE LIFE YOU WERE MADE FOR

LifeGroup Leader Discussion Guide

Week: Naming the Dragon

Key Scripture: Mark 1:15

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Sermon Summary

When things start breaking down, our instinct is often to hide behind vague language, white lies, and silence. But unaddressed problems don’t stay small—left in the dark, they grow into monsters.

We need to **name the dragon**. And once we’ve named it, there’s a turn to make. The Bible calls that turn **repentance**.

The New Testament word is *metanoia*—a change of mind so deep that it changes our direction. Repentance isn’t God’s threat; it’s His invitation—the doorway back to the life we were made for.

Opening Prayer

Leader:

“Father, thank You that You meet us with grace and truth. Tonight, give us courage to be honest about the things we sometimes hide, minimize, or avoid. Help us not simply to feel sorry for what is wrong, but to recognize where You are inviting us to turn.

Give us wisdom as we listen to one another, humility to speak honestly, and grace to respond to each other with love rather than judgment. Help us remember that repentance is not about condemnation—it is about coming home to You and becoming the people You created us to be.

Holy Spirit, show us anything You want us to see tonight, and give us the courage to take the next step. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

Discussion Questions & Leader Insights

1. What idea from this week's sermon caught your attention?

Leader Insight

This is an intentionally broad opening question. Give people room to share what challenged, encouraged, surprised, or convicted them.

Listen for themes such as:

- Naming something we have been avoiding.
- The difference between remorse and repentance.
- Repentance as an invitation rather than a punishment.
- The way hidden things grow.
- Speaking truth in love.
- The freedom and refreshing that can come from turning back to God.

Leader Tip: Don't rush to explain the sermon. Let the group process what they heard first.

Possible follow-up:

"What made that particular idea stand out to you?"

2. Read 2 Corinthians 7:8–10. Paul contrasts "godly sorrow," which brings repentance and leaves no regret, with "worldly sorrow," which brings death. What's the difference between feeling sorry (remorse) and actually repenting (turning)?

Leader Insight

The key distinction is **direction**.

Remorse says, *"I feel terrible about what I did."*

Repentance says, *"I recognize what I did was wrong, and I'm going to turn in a different direction."*

Someone can feel tremendous guilt and still never change. Remorse can become focused on **how bad I feel**, while repentance becomes focused on **what needs to change**.

Godly sorrow doesn't simply make us feel worse about ourselves. It moves us toward God and toward change.

A helpful way to express it:

Remorse looks backward at what happened. Repentance looks backward, acknowledges what happened, and then turns forward in a new direction.

Follow-up Questions

- Why is it sometimes easier to feel bad than to actually change?
 - What keeps people stuck in remorse?
 - What does repentance look like practically—not just emotionally?
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3. Read Mark 1:14–15. Notice Jesus presents repentance as an invitation to good news, not a threat. And you can't accept the invitation without the turn. If repentance is the doorway into Jesus' kingdom, what does that say about what following Jesus is—and why would He put turning at the very front door?

Leader Insight

Jesus begins His public ministry with:

“Repent and believe the good news.”

Repentance and faith belong together. Repentance isn't the opposite of grace; it is a response to grace.

Following Jesus means more than agreeing with certain beliefs. It means allowing Jesus to redirect our lives.

The order is important:

Jesus announces the kingdom → invites us to turn → invites us to trust Him → we begin living under His rule.

Repentance is therefore not something Christians graduate from. It is part of the ongoing life of following Jesus.

Leader Tip

Be careful not to make repentance sound like, *"Clean yourself up so Jesus will accept you."*

The gospel is the opposite:

Jesus invites us into His kingdom, and His invitation gives us the courage to turn.

Follow-up

"What might it look like for repentance to become a normal part of following Jesus rather than something we only do when we've really messed up?"

5. Read Luke 15:1–7. Jesus says there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. What does this story, and heaven's reaction, tell you about how God responds when someone turns? How is that different from what you expected?

Leader Insight

Jesus describes God as the shepherd who **goes looking for the lost sheep**.

The emphasis isn't on God standing at a distance with crossed arms waiting for the sinner to come crawling back. God actively seeks, welcomes, and celebrates the person who turns toward Him.

There is **joy in heaven** over repentance.

That means repentance is not something God reluctantly tolerates. **God celebrates it.**

Many people carry an image of God as disappointed, angry, or waiting to punish them when they admit what they've done. Luke 15 gives us a radically different picture.

Follow-up

- What picture of God did you grow up with when you sinned?
 - Why do you think we sometimes expect condemnation instead of celebration?
 - How might God's joy change the way we respond when someone else genuinely repents?
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6. Read Ephesians 4:15. What does it mean to speak the truth in love? What does the opposite look like? (*harsh truth, loving silence*)

Leader Insight

“Truth” and “love” are meant to stay together.

There are two common distortions:

Truth without love:

“I’m just telling you the truth.”

But the truth is delivered harshly, arrogantly, or without concern for the person.

Love without truth:

“I don’t want to hurt their feelings.”

So we remain silent while someone continues moving toward destruction.

Biblical love doesn’t avoid difficult truth. But biblical truth isn’t used as a weapon.

A helpful phrase for leaders:

Love tells the truth because it cares about what happens to the person.

Discussion

- Why can speaking truth feel unloving?
- Why can silence sometimes feel more loving?
- What helps us speak difficult truth with humility?

Leader Tip

This question can become personal quickly. Keep the group focused on **how we communicate truth**, rather than using the discussion to confront someone in the room.

7. Hidden, unrepented sin never stays private; it poisons everyone connected to you. What's the cost of hidden sin on a community, a family, a team, a church? Why do we protect the hidden thing instead of exposing and turning from it?

Leader Insight

Sin often begins privately but rarely remains private.

Hidden sin can produce:

- Secrecy and distrust.
- Emotional distance.
- Broken relationships.
- Anxiety and fear.
- Compromise that spreads.
- Damaged leadership.
- Loss of credibility.
- Spiritual numbness.
- A culture where people learn to hide rather than confess.

The reason we hide is often understandable: **fear**.

We fear consequences, rejection, embarrassment, losing control, or what people will think.

But secrecy creates a strange paradox:

We hide something to protect ourselves, but eventually the hiding becomes part of what is hurting us.

Repentance breaks the cycle by bringing what is hidden into the light.

Follow-up

“What makes confession so difficult—and what kind of environment makes honesty safer?”

8. Read Proverbs 28:13. This series is about the life you were made for. How is repentance *not* the price you pay before that life starts, but the doorway into it? What part of the good life feels out of reach while something stays unconfessed?

Leader Insight

Proverbs 28:13 says:

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”

The gospel isn't:

“Repent so God will finally give you a good life.”

It is:

“God invites you into life, and repentance is the turn that gets you moving in His direction.”

Repentance removes barriers that keep us from experiencing the freedom, relationships, integrity, peace, and closeness with God that He intends for us.

This is important for the whole series: **the good life isn't a life without struggle; it's a life aligned with God.**

Follow-up

- What does hidden sin take from us?
 - Why can confession actually be an act of hope?
 - Where might God be inviting someone to experience freedom by bringing something into the light?
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9. Read Acts 3:19. Peter promises that those who repent and turn to God have their sins wiped out, and “times of refreshing” come from the Lord. Why do you think God attached refreshing to turning, and what refresh have you personally tasted on the far side of an honest turn?

Leader Insight

Repentance can feel frightening beforehand, but there can be tremendous freedom afterward.

Peter connects repentance with:

- Sins being wiped away.
- Turning toward God.
- Refreshing from the Lord.

Why refreshing?

Because hiding is exhausting.

Maintaining an image is exhausting.

Protecting a secret is exhausting.

Living with divided loyalties is exhausting.

Confession and repentance allow us to stop pretending.

The burden of hiding can be heavier than the burden of admitting the truth.

Leader Tip

This question can produce powerful testimony. Give people time.

But don't pressure people to share something deeply personal. A person can answer generally without revealing details.

Follow-up

“Have you ever experienced a sense of freedom after finally being honest with God or someone you trusted?”

10. Is there a “dragon”/sin you’d like to name out loud to the group? What is it, what has it been costing you, and what would the first honest sentence of turning sound like?

Leader Insight

This is the most personal question of the night. The goal isn't simply **naming the dragon**. The goal is **turning**.

Encourage people to think about three movements:

1. Name it.

What is actually happening?

Not:

“I've been struggling lately.”

But perhaps:

“I've been using anger to control people.”

“I've been hiding my spending.”

“I've been looking for affirmation in places I shouldn't.”

“I've been holding onto bitterness.”

2. Count the cost.

What has this been producing?

- What is it doing to my relationship with God?
- What is it doing to me?
- Who else is being affected?
- What is it keeping me from?

3. Take the first turn.

What is the first honest sentence of repentance?

It might sound like:

“God, I've been pretending this isn't a problem.”

“I need to ask for forgiveness.”

“I need to tell someone the truth.”

“I need to stop making excuses.”

“I need help.”

“I don't want to keep living this way.”

Leader Tip: Create Safety

Don't require everyone to share. Vulnerability should be invited, never forced.

Before this question, remind the group:

“What is shared here should be treated with care and confidentiality. We don't fix each other, shame each other, or turn someone's vulnerability into a future conversation.”

If someone shares something serious that involves abuse, danger, addiction, self-harm, or another situation requiring professional or pastoral intervention, don't try to solve it in the group. Offer appropriate support and follow up privately.

Closing Thought for the Leader

The goal of tonight's conversation isn't for everyone to leave feeling guilty.

It's for people to see repentance differently.

Repentance isn't God standing at the door saying, “Fix yourself before you come in.”

It is Jesus standing at the door saying:

“Come in. Turn around. Come with Me.”

The dragon grows in the darkness.

But when we name it, bring it into the light, and turn toward Jesus, we discover that repentance isn't the end of the good life.

It is the doorway back into it.

- This LifeGroup Discussion Guide has been generated by ChatGPT AI with editing and revisions done by Jeff Austen.