

JesusOnline Equip

Ministry Resources Hub

The Need for Repentance

A free resource from JesusOnline Ministries.

Read or share online: app.jesonline.com/post/34538-the-need-for-repentance

JesusOnline Equip · Ministry Resources Hub · equip.jesonline.com

Free media and discipleship resources for pastors, leaders, and growing disciples.

The Need for Repentance

Bill and Jan Stanton lived in a long, rambling nine-room ranch house on a three-acre beautifully wooded tract of land. The swimming pool in the backyard, the two expensive cars in the garage, and the neatly landscaped yard all added up to the obvious—total success.

They started out their marriage on a shoestring. Bill had a bread route and worked long hours to make a meager living.

One of Bill's customers was a fruit farmer. This man offered Bill the chance to find customers for his produce. Bill took up the challenge and managed to find a market for the whole summer's production.

An idea began to take shape in Bill's mind. Why not do the same thing for other farmers? Twelve years later, he had developed his idea into a vast wholesale produce business including a whole network of processing plants and warehouses.

The Stantons had not neglected their commitment to the Lord. Both were happily active in the church. Bill even served as a leader on a statewide level for their denomination.

Bill and Jan did a lot of entertaining in their beautiful home. Frequently they spent pleasant evenings around the pool or the fireplace with their guests. Many of their friends would turn to them for advice and counsel.

Bill's business demanded much of his time. But Jan didn't mind; she was busy with her family, her home, and her church work.

Skiing was one of their favorite pastimes. The family had many happy outings at a variety of ski resorts.

On one of these outings when Jan and the children went skiing, Jan had an accident and ended up with a badly broken leg. When Bill returned from a business trip two days later, he was shocked to learn that his wife was in the hospital.

Jan spent many weeks in the hospital with her leg in a cast. Bill dropped in to see her each day and in the evening. Both understood that his business demanded that he be away part of each week. The days in the hospital were long and lonesome. Jan

began feeling blue. The doctor explained that this was normal for a healthy, busy woman.

Finally the cast was removed, only to find that the leg had not healed properly. Jan began having long periods of depression.

On occasion, after Jan came home, Bill would take the children to the ski slopes. Jan stayed behind, nursing her leg, and her depression. It was late spring before her leg was completely healed. But the sieges of depression hung on. Summer faded into fall, and still Jan would spend long days feeling sad, breaking into tears for no apparent reason. By now, the doctor informed her that her accident could not be considered as the reason for her misery.

When Bill heard this, he became impatient with Jan. "Snap out of it. You have every reason to be content," he told her one day.

The beautiful home and lovely wooded yard was no help. Jan lost interest in her church work. Long silences developed between her and Bill. He would find reasons for staying at the office or for being out of town.

There were tender moments when the Stantons could talk about their situation. They were embarrassed. For years they had prided themselves that they had such a happy marriage. Now their marriage was a sad one.

It seemed that there was no way out. Finally, they swallowed their pride and ended up in my office. They spent the first session telling me how happy they had been together.

We spent several more sessions talking about their problem. Our conversation centered around their happiness together. We were getting nowhere.

I asked Jan to come in without her husband. Both of them resisted this idea. They would work this out together, they said. There was nothing to hide.

We were at a standstill. I had nothing more to offer, and could see no reason for us to continue.

Several weeks later, Jan called. She was ready to see me without her husband. Once more she reviewed the happiness they had enjoyed.

As we closed the session, I asked Jan to look at a warning and a promise in the Bible: *"If we say we have fellowship with Him (God), and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not know the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:6-7).

We turned to John 3:19. Here, I pointed out, Jesus says that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

Jan had to admit her life was dark. She was gloomy. Something was wrong. We must look at the dark side.

She was crushed. There was no dark side, she insisted.

We prayed together. My prayer was that she would do as the Psalmist said: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting"* (Ps. 139:23, 24).

As the two of them continued with the counseling process, the true picture became clear. Jan was an affectionate person and liked to show it. Bill was more distant. He preferred to sit across the room from her. As the business grew, he became increasingly preoccupied. Sometimes she found herself wondering if he loved her or his fruit. Her complaint festered and grew when she was in the hospital. There she really played second fiddle to the business. She was shocked at her attitude and tried desperately to cover it up rather than admit it.

Bill was also shocked. He thought of himself as a devoted, loving husband who provided the best for his family. But it was true; he was giving them everything but himself.

Bill was not glad to know about his wife's true feelings. He resented her attitude. They quarreled about it. It seemed that the weeks of counseling only made matters worse. But quarreling did not brush away the truth. He was giving his business more and more of his time and energy, and giving his family less and less.

Proverbs 28:13 is true. "He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy."

It's always hard to admit the dark side of truth. But light drives away the darkness if you walk in it.

It was true. They did resent each other. He felt she did not appreciate his efforts. She felt neglected. Each felt the other was wrong. When the light dawned, and each of them was able to acknowledge their own sins repentantly, they were on the way to restored fellowship.

Repentance always leads to forgiveness and renewal of fellowship. It's always been that way.

[Dr. Henry Brandt shares insights from various couples he counseled. The names and certain details in these true case histories have been changed to protect each person's identity and privacy.]