

QUESTIONS CHRISTIANS ASK

WHAT MAKES A REBEL RETURN?

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

Haven't you wondered what it is that causes some wanderers to return to the Lord? And though we pray constantly for loved ones who have wandered from the faith, why don't they come back? Or if they do, it may take a *long* time. Is there a particular pattern found in Scripture that reveals why some people's hearts soften and others don't? If so, does God's Word always impact rebels in the same manner? These and other questions have probably troubled our hearts, but we seldom ask them out loud. Today, let's seek the Lord's counsel as we attempt to uncover the reasons an individual will admit his or her error, turn around, and come back to the Lord as a humble, repentant child of the King.



Discovering the Way

1. An Issue In Need of Consideration (Isaiah 55:6–7; 1 Corinthians 5:3–13)
Why do some people kneel in humility when confronted with wrong while others dig in their heels and resist? Let's bring the issue closer to home. Suppose that sinning person is your friend or even your spouse. What would you do if they refused to repent? Conversely, how would you respond if this rebel came back and wanted to restore the relationships they have damaged? Let's take a look at Scripture for some answers.



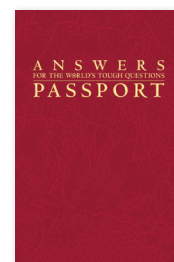
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2. An Analysis of Four Changed Lives

Many stories of changed lives weave through Scripture. One common trait connects all these stories—a genuine, penitent spirit. Each life shows the various means that God uses to bring a rebel home.

- A King: David
- A Preacher: Solomon
- A Prophet: Jonah
- A Son: The Prodigal



DIGGING DEEPER

God and the Rebel

Sometimes it takes a Nathan to say, “You’re wrong!” Other times, dissatisfaction with the sheer boredom and emptiness of the world pushes people back to God. Although we dread it, sometimes God uses calamity. Still other times, the love and acceptance of home turn them around.

Although the methods may vary, God never changes.

First: *He is a jealous Groom.* When His bride flirts with the world and embraces sin, He never yawns and looks the other way. (See Exodus 34:14; Ezekiel 39:25–29.)

Second: *He is a sovereign Lord.* When His servants rebel and run, He pursues. (See Jonah 1.)

Third: *He is a compassionate Father.* When His children come back, He forgives, accepts, and affirms them. (See Psalm 103.)

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Starting Your Journey

There's nothing easy about true repentance. Voluntarily bringing up our own sins is like uncovering a wound and asking someone to touch it. But could it be that God is trying to get our attention through one of the means discussed above? Or maybe God wants to use you as a means of leading someone to repentance. It will require patience, pain, constant prayer, unconditional love, grief, and self-examination. But it's worth it!

Spend some time studying the following references, and answer the question, "Is there someone for whom God could use me as a means to encourage repentance?"

Proverbs 25:11–12; 27:5–6, 17

Matthew 18:15–17

Galatians 6:1

Ephesians 4:29

1 Thessalonians 5:14–15

2 Thessalonians 3:6–15