

# Come Back to the Lord!



## SABBATH—NOVEMBER 20

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Deuteronomy 5:22–29; Deuteronomy 30:1–10; Matthew 3:1–8; Acts 2:38.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘But there in these other lands you will look for the LORD your God. And if you look for him with all your heart and soul [spirit], you will find him’ ” (Deuteronomy 4:29, ERV).



Look deep inside your heart. “All have done wrong and all are far from being as good as God” (Romans 3:23, WE).

**WE ALL HAVE SINNED.** Sometimes an “expert” may complain about the Christian teaching that says we are sinners. But all we need to do is watch the news today or look at human history. Then we will see that this teaching is correct. Or just look in the mirror. If you have the courage to look deep inside your heart, you will know that Romans 3:9–23 shows us the truth about ourselves as humans: “All [people] have done wrong and all are far from being as good as God” (Romans 3:23, WE).

Of course, we read the Good News in the next verse: “Anyone can be made right with God by the free gift of His loving-favor. It is Jesus Christ Who bought them with His blood and made them free from their sins” (Romans 3:24, NLV). An important part of the good news is our being sorry for our sins. We also need to confess our sins to God and tell Him we are sorry. We need to ask for His forgiveness, too. Then we must turn away from our sins. Because we are sinners, our turning away from sin should be an important part of our Christian life. This week, we will see what Deuteronomy has to say about turning away from sin.

**“MI-YITTEN” (Deuteronomy 5:22–29)**

The Hebrew language in the Bible often uses special sayings. These sayings are named idioms. Idioms have a meaning very different from the meaning of each word in the saying. An example of an idiom is "to pay through the nose." This saying does not mean that someone pays with money coming out of his nose! This idiom means to pay a lot of money, above what is normal. One idiom in the Old Testament is **“mi-yitten.”** **“Mi”** is a question. It means **“Who?”** **“Yitten”** means **“will give.”** So, **“mi-yitten”** really means **“Who will give?”** But **“mi-yitten”** also is an idiom. So, this saying also has another meaning that is different from its separate words. In the Old Testament, **“mi-yitten”** shows a wish of someone who wants something very much.

Let us look at some examples of this saying in the Bible. Soon after Israel escaped Egypt, they felt discouraged in the desert. So, they complained to Moses and Aaron, **“We wish the LORD had put us to death in Egypt”** (Exodus 16:3, NlrV). Do you see the word written as **“wish”** in this verse? This word comes from **“mi-yitten.”**

In Psalm 14:7, NlrV, David says, **“How I pray that the God who saves Israel will come out of Zion!”** The Hebrew language does not say **“How I pray.”** The Hebrew language says **“mi-yitten.”** In Job 6:8, ERV, Job cries out, **“I wish I could have what I ask for.”** Again, the words written as **“I wish”** come from **“mi-yitten”** in the Hebrew language.

**Read Deuteronomy 5:22–29. Look closely at verse 29. In this verse, the words written as “I wish” (NlrV) come from the words “mi-yitten” in the Hebrew language. The Lord is the One who talks in this verse. What important Bible truth do these words show us about the Lord?**

The Lord made time, space, and everything good. The Lord breathed into Adam the breath of life. He made our earth with His words. This same all-powerful God now says the words that weak humans say. These words show us that humans have limits. So, what do these same words show us about God? They show us something very important about the gift of free choice that God gave us. God Himself is limited in what He can do in the worldwide war between good and evil. **“Mi-yitten”** in Deuteronomy 5:29 shows us that God cannot go against our free choice. If He did, then our free choice will no longer be free.



**“ ‘ We wish the LORD had put us to death in Egypt’ ”  
(Exodus 16:3, NlrV).**

**LOOK FOR HIM AND FIND HIM (Deuteronomy 4:29–31)**

All through the Bible, we see proof that God knows what will happen before it happens. God knows who will control the earth until the end of time (read Daniel 7). God knows what people will do hours before they do it, as we see in the story about Peter: “Jesus said to him, ‘For sure, I tell you, before a rooster crows this night, you will say three times you do not know Me’ ” (Matthew 26:34, NIV). So, the Lord knows what the children of Israel will do when He brings them into the Promised Land.



“‘Before a rooster crows this night, you will say three times you do not know Me’ ” (Matthew 26:34, NIV).

**Read Deuteronomy 4:25–28. What does the Lord say that His chosen people will do after they have lived in the Promised Land for a while?**

In Deuteronomy 4:15–20, the Lord warns His people not to make statues of gods or worship them. But the next verses say that the people are going to do that anyway!

Now look at Deuteronomy 4:25. Do you see that Moses says the people will not worship false gods right away? That is because the people had an awful experience with idol worship at Baal Peor. So, they are not about to start worshipping false gods any time soon. But over time, their children or grandchildren will “forget” (Deuteronomy 4:9, ERV) everything the Lord did for them and His warnings. Then the Israelites will do exactly what God warned them not to do.

**Read Deuteronomy 4:29–31. What does the Lord promise in these verses that He will do for His people?**

The mercy of God is wonderful! After the people sin and are carried away from the Promised Land, the Lord will show them mercy. But the people must first turn to the Lord. Then He will forgive them and bring them back home.

Do you see the words in Deuteronomy 4:30, ERV, written as “come back”? These words show us that the people will turn back to the Lord when they are sorry for their sins. The Hebrew word for our feeling sorry for sin is “**teshuvah**.” “**Teshuvah**” comes from the same Hebrew word as “come back.” What does this information show us that turning away from sin really means? Turning away from sin is more than saying you are sorry for your sins. It means we come back to God after our sin separates us from Him.

**TURNING BACK TO GOD (Deuteronomy 30:1–10)**

We see an important idea all through the book of Deuteronomy: obey the Lord and be blessed. Disobey and your bad choices will cause suffering. We see this same idea in the New Testament. Paul writes, “Do not be fooled. You cannot fool God. A man will get back whatever he plants! If a man does things to please his sinful [full of sin] old self, his soul will be lost. If a man does things to please the Holy Spirit, he will have life that lasts [continues] forever” (Galatians 6:7, 8, NLV).

After the Fall, sinning became as easy and natural as breathing. So, God warned His people about disobeying Him. But many people started to do the sins God warned them about. God was willing to accept His people back again if they asked for His forgiveness and turned away from sin.

**Read again Deuteronomy 30:1–10. What does the Lord say He will do for His people after they do many wrong things? But what thing must the people do first?**

God tells His people: if you mess up, awful things will happen to you and your family. That is how sin works. But you can turn away from your sin. God will help you to stop sinning, too. Then the Lord will accept you and bless you.

In Deuteronomy 30, we see this idea about turning back to God in several verses in the chapter: “ ‘Then you and your descendants [future family members] will turn back to the LORD your God’ ” (Deuteronomy 30:2, ERV). In verse 8, we see the same idea: “ ‘You will obey the Lord again, and keep all His Laws which I tell you today’ ” (Deuteronomy 30:8, NLV). Finally, we see the idea in verse 10: “ ‘You must turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul’ ” (Deuteronomy 30:10, NIV). The word written as “turn” really means “come back.”

So, what do all these verses show us about the Lord? They show us His mercy. The people broke their agreement with God. They sinned deeply in many ways. They had many awful experiences because of their sins. But God was not done with His people. They may choose to come back to Him by turning from their sins.

**How do the verses we studied today show us how important turning away from sin really is to us?**



**A man will go back to whatever he plants!**

**WITH ALL YOUR HEART (Deuteronomy 30:1–10)**

“‘The LORD our God is near when we ask him to help us. No other nation [people group] has a god like that!’ ”  
(Deuteronomy 4:7, ERV).

Deuteronomy 30:1–10 shows us the mercy of God for His people after they turn away from Him and all His blessings. God gave Israel blessings He gave no one else: “ ‘The LORD our God is near when we ask him to help us. No other nation [people group] has a god like that!’ ” (Deuteronomy 4:7, ERV). For sure, God did so much for His people. So, they had no real excuse for their sin. But they sinned anyway.

What is God willing to do?

**Read Deuteronomy 30:1–10. What do the people need to do to come back to God? What should this answer teach us today about what we need to do to come back to God, too?**

God promises what He will do for His people if they come back to Him. He will work a miracle in their hearts. When their hearts are right with God, they will obey Him. But first, the people must want to come back. Then God will bring Israel back to Himself and to their land. God also will bless Israel in the land. How will He do that? God will change their hearts more and more! Their hearts and the hearts of their children will be filled will love for God. “ ‘Then you will love the LORD your God with all your heart. And you will live!’ ” (Deuteronomy 30:6, ERV).

Peter tells us that God “ ‘makes it possible for the Jews to be sorry for their sins. Then they can turn from them and be forgiven’ ” (Acts 5:31, NLV). Yes, God makes turning from sin possible for His people. But in the end, the people must choose to come back to Him. Read the quote below from Ellen G. White to understand more about this idea. In the quote, she talks about the people of God during a different time in their history. But the quote helps us understand better the Bible truth in Deuteronomy 30:1–10 about turning away from sin: “The people are sad because their sins caused them suffering. The people are not sad that their sins broke the law of God. Being sorry for our sins is more than a feeling we have. When we are really sorry for our sins, we will turn away from evil.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 557, adapted.

**You can feel sorry for the suffering sin causes you. Or you can feel sorry because you sinned. How are these two things different? Why is this understanding so important?**

**TURN AWAY FROM SIN AND CHANGE YOUR LIVES!  
(Matthew 3:1–8)**

The whole New Testament shows us the idea of turning away from sin. We see that John the Baptist starts his work for God by asking people to turn away from sin.

**Read Matthew 3:1–8. How do these verses show us the idea of turning away from sin? What does John tell the people to do that shows us the message we have studied so far in Deuteronomy?**

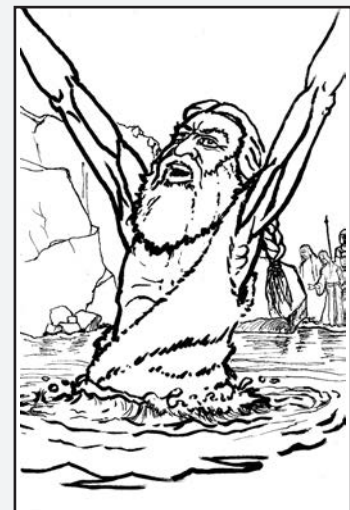
Jesus also started His work for God by inviting people to turn away from sin.

**Read Mark 1:15. What does Jesus say in this verse? Why does He connect turning from sin with the Good News?**

John talks to the religious leaders. Jesus talks to the Jewish people. Jesus and John talk to different groups. But their message is the same: we are sinners. Yes, Jesus came to save sinners. But we must turn from our sins and our old ways of life. Maybe you turned from God long ago. Or maybe you are a loyal Christian who made a mistake and turned from God for a little while. Whoever we are, we must accept that we are sinners. We must feel sorry for our sins and not only the bad things they cause. We also must choose to stop sinning. Jesus will give us His strength to say No. We must trust fully in the mercy of Jesus. He will help us to “ ‘obey him completely’ ” (Deuteronomy 15:5, NIV).

Some Bible thinkers believe that the New Testament shows us the same idea about turning from sin that we see in Deuteronomy. When Peter accused the Jewish people of hanging Jesus on the cross, many of the people “felt very, very sorry. They asked Peter and the other apostles [leaders of the Christian church], ‘Brothers, what should we do?’ ” (Acts 2:37, ERV). The people were very sorry for their sin against God. They wanted to know what they should do to make things right with God. Are we any different from those people today? We have hurt God. So, we need to tell Him sorry, too.

**Read Acts 2:38. How does Peter answer the question the people ask him? What important rule does this story show us about turning away from sin?**



**John the Baptist starts his work for God by asking people to turn away from sin.**



“‘I will pay for all the sins you have committed’”  
(Ezekiel 16:63, NlrV).

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “As we grow in faith, our understanding about turning from sin will deepen. The Lord says to the ones He forgives: ‘“You will remember the bad things you did. You will remember that those things were not good. Then you will hate yourselves because of your sins and the terrible [evil] things you did” ’ (Ezekiel 36:31 [ERV]). Again, the Lord says: ‘“So I will make my new covenant with you. Then you will know that I am the LORD. I will pay for all the sins you have committed [done]. Then you will remember what you have done. You will be ashamed of it. Because of your shame, you will never speak against me again,” announces the LORD and King’ (Ezekiel 16:62, 63 [NlrV]). Then we will not give ourselves any glory. We will know that our strength comes only from Jesus. We shall confess with Paul: ‘I know that no good thing lives in me. I mean, no good thing lives in my body’ (Romans 7:18 [WE]). ‘But I will not be proud of [brag about] anything but of [only] the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of it, the things of the world [the evil pleasures of this life] have become dead to me, and I have become dead to the world [the evil pleasures of this life]’ (Galatians 6:14 [WE]).”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pages 160, 161, adapted.

“‘You know that God is kind. He is trying to get you to be sorry for your sins and turn from them’ (Romans 2:4 [NLV]). The love of God and His mercy are the same as a gold chain. God puts this gold chain around every person who is in danger. The Lord announces, “‘I love you people with a love that continues forever. That is why I have continued showing you kindness [gentle and tender care]” ’ (Jeremiah 31:3 [ERV]).”—Page 202, adapted.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① After we turn from sin, why must we be careful not to think we have earned the favor of God? What is the only way we can have His favor?
- ② Read about Judas in Matthew 27:3–5. No doubt Judas was sorry about how things turned out with Jesus. (Judas killed himself, right?) But why did Judas not really feel sorry for his sin?
- ③ We are sinners. Why should this Bible truth help us not to judge other people? The Son of God needed to go to the cross to save us. How does the death of Jesus show us that sin is very bad?

## CHURCH WORKER SHARES FAITH ON TV

Carlos Biaggi worked for the Adventist Church in Beirut, Lebanon. A powerful blast hit Beirut and killed 200 people, in August 2020. People sent Carlos messages and prayers from around the globe.

One message to Carlos came from a pastor from Argentina. Carlos worked with this pastor in Paraguay in the past.

The pastor wrote, "I know people who work at a TV station in Buenos Aires in Argentina. If someone from the station wants to talk to you, will you be willing?"

Minutes after Carlos agreed to talk, his friend wrote back to him. His friend told him that a reporter from C5N TV wanted to talk with him the next day. C5N TV is a 24-hour news channel that people watch all over Argentina. The pastor told Carlos, "When the time is right, tell your personal story about God. Because C5N is a big TV channel, I do not think you will have a lot of time. Maybe you will talk up to five minutes. For sure, it will be a miracle if your talk continues for ten minutes."

The news writer talked with Carlos live on TV. Their talk went all over Argentina and to other Spanish-speaking countries around the globe. The talk lasted a surprising 9 minutes and 59 seconds! During that time, Carlos told his story. Carlos was the manager for the Business School at the Middle East University for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Carlos told how he felt hot air on his face seconds after bombs exploded at the warehouse. Carlos talked about the work that both the Adventist Church and ADRA (the Adventist Development and Relief Agency) were doing to help people who were hurt by the disaster. Then the reporter asked Carlos to share his personal story about how God led him to work in Lebanon.

Carlos told the reporter how God led him to Lebanon after he finished his PhD in the Philippines.

Carlos told the reporter, "I was invited to work here in Beirut. I knew that I will have a hard life. But if God wanted me to go to Lebanon, then I wanted to go. God showed me that Lebanon is the place He wanted me to be."

Carlos ended by saying, "That day, I prayed and opened my Bible to Isaiah 6. I read, 'Here I am, send me.' I thanked God for showing me His plan for my life from this verse."

This story shows Mission Purpose number 2 of the "I Will Go" plan for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Purpose number 2 is: "We will help make the Adventist Church grow strong in new ways in large cities. We will share Jesus with people from non-Christian religions." Learn more at [IWillGo2020.org](http://IWillGo2020.org).

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by CHAN-MIN CHUNG



**The reporter asked Carlos to share his personal story about how God led him to work in Lebanon.**

