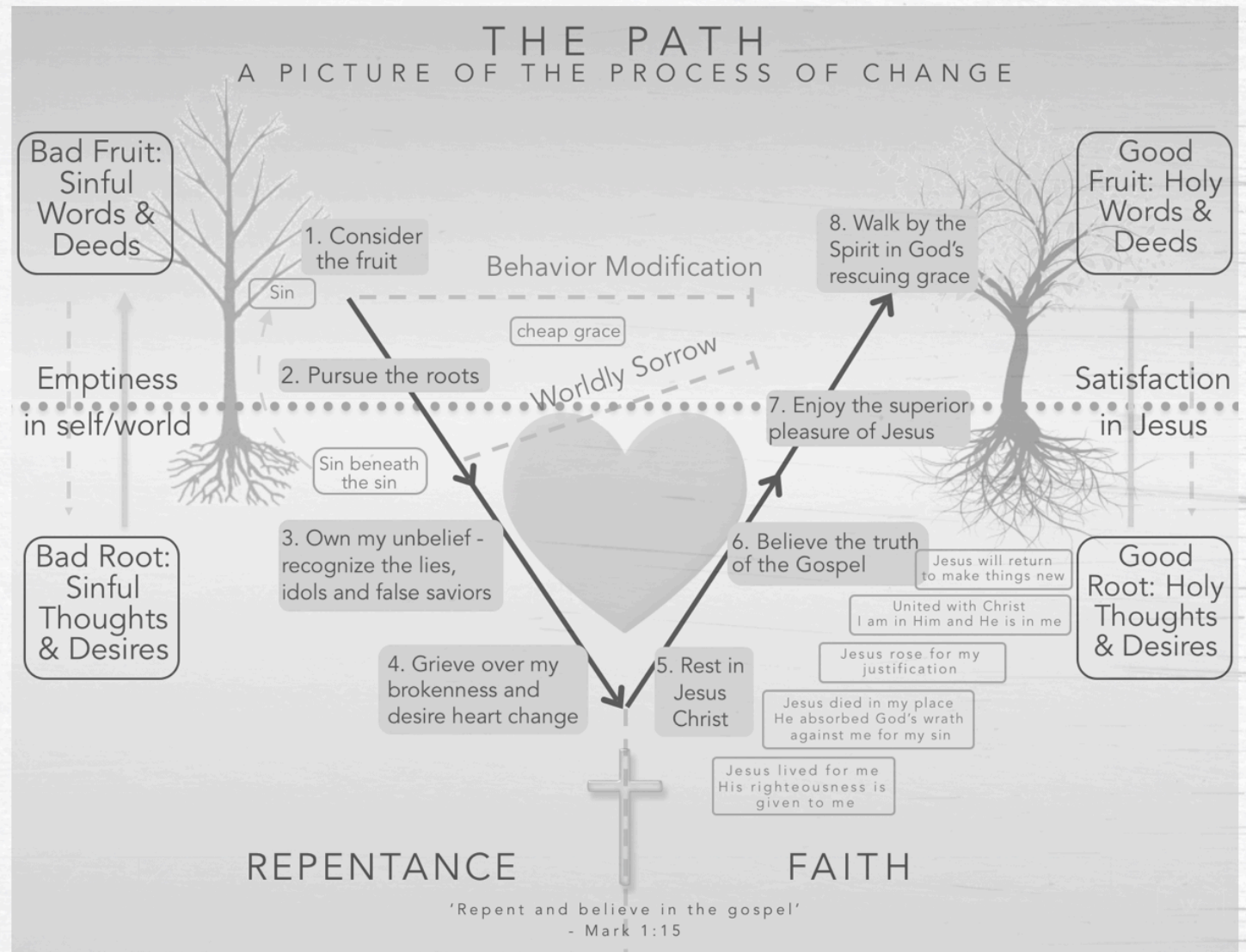


# THE PATH

How we change through repentance and faith

- Consider the fruit** - Look at the words, thoughts, actions, or attitudes of your life. Identify fruit that is consistently not good and in need of change (e.g. anxiety, bitterness, impatience, lust, anger, addiction, gossip, love of money, etc.)
- Pursue the roots** - Press deeper into learning what is causing that fruit. What's underneath it - what are the heart-level roots driving it? Ask x-ray questions like 'what were you seeking when you did, thought or felt that?' to help diagnose. It may be comfort, affirmation, companionship, control, pleasure, worth, etc. These begin to reveal the deeper sin beneath the sin.
- Own my unbelief** - Acknowledge the lies, idols, and false saviors that are being trusted instead of Jesus. How does this root expose elements of the gospel you're not believing - i.e. how does it show you think this is better than Jesus or found outside of Jesus?
- Grieve over my brokenness and desire heart change** - Feel genuine sorrow over the sinful state of your heart in loving things above God and begin to want transformation. Let the reality of your offense and your inability to fix yourself break you.
- Rest in Jesus Christ** - Run to Jesus and begin to feel his embrace and acceptance of you in the midst of this sin. Rest in the fact that He loves you despite you. Turn from trusting your own record for acceptance before God (self-righteousness) and begin to transfer that trust to Christ's righteousness on your behalf.
- Believe the truth of the gospel** - Proclaim the person and work of Jesus in reconciling you to union with God through His perfect life, substitutionary death, victorious resurrection, present reign and rule and future return to make all things right.
- Enjoy the superior pleasure of Jesus** - Rest in the implications of the gospel that now you are in relationship with the God of forgiveness, love, acceptance, purpose, peace, hope, identity, and security. You lack nothing and your joy is complete in Him. Think through how Jesus is actually better than this sin - how He alone delivers on what it promised.
- Walk by the Spirit in God's rescuing grace** - Motivated by grace and the joy it produces, live diligently seeking to know & obey Jesus more not by your strength but under the control of the Holy Spirit.





# SHORTCUTS OF REPENTANCE & FAITH

In the diagram there are 2 shortcuts that fail to bring about true transformation. They are labeled Behavior Modification and Worldly Sorrow.

## Behavior Modification

Most people's attempts to change follow a very basic approach of trying to reform external conduct. A specific action (fruit) is positively reinforced and pursued through discipline or situational changes in hopes that it will replace the current action or behavior. Though this sin gets minimized and even couched in less offensive terms, being fundamentally viewed as something we do rather than someone we are. Many times the primary blame is shifted off the individual and onto biological makeup or environmental surroundings. Therefore, the road to improvement simply focuses on revising words and deeds. On the surface it makes sense - after all it's the shortest line from point A to B.

This thinking saturates our culture and is reflected in a term coined by sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Denton - Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD). Although 77% of America claims to be Christian, their research in 2006 showed that what people actually believe is far from it. It's MTD. The description of this perversion of the gospel can be explained as follows:

1. Moralistic – Being a good person is the summary of Christianity. God wants people to be nice, fair, etc. and at the end of the day generally good people go to heaven. Jesus is relegated to a good moral teacher who shows us the example of what rules to follow.
2. Therapeutic – The ultimate goal in life is to be happy and feel good about oneself. Self-help is a prized virtue as people attempt to better themselves through their own means.
3. Deism – God is brought in only when there's a problem to resolve. In effect He is relegated to a distant and impersonal on-call genie.

However, we must pursue a different course. We must recognize external efforts to produce holy words and deeds are like stapling fruit onto a tree. It may have an apple on it, but it's certainly not an apple tree. Change may be temporary or surface level but eventually the apple you're so proud of is totally rotted out. Jesus is shouting to us that our problem is not behavioral or environmental (fruit), it's our heart (root). The heart of the matter is a matter of the heart. We must take the hard and gritty journey into our heart that is repentance and faith.

## Worldly Sorrow

While behavior modification is completely antithetical to repentance, there is another shortcut that serves as the chief counterfeit to repentance. The Scriptures call it 'worldly sorrow' (2 Cor. 7:10). Upon feeling the consequences of sin and getting a glimpse of the heart behind it, worldly sorrow wants things to be different, but not in the same way that true repentance does. The underlying motive of worldly sorrow is a regret for the consequences of sin (rather than the sin itself) and a subsequent desire for relief (rather than change). At the core there's been no true brokenness and sin still is seen as pleasant. The weed was mowed over, but the root remained.

It may in the short-term appear holy and even accomplish some alleviation of certain things, but sooner or later the disguise is broken and there is no fruit of true heart change. Consider the chart comparing worldly sorrow with repentance. At the end of the day worldly sorrow minimizes sin's weight and therefore simultaneously minimizes the need for the grace Jesus has provided through His work on the cross.

Repentance	Worldly Sorrow
God/Others Focused	Self-focused (Self-pity)
Sorry for Sin	Sorry for Consequence
Takes Responsibility	Avoids Responsibility (Victim)
Willingness / Submission	Demands / Barters
Sin seen as detestable	Sin still seen as pleasant
Hopeful (looking forward)	Hopeless (looking back)
Desire for Change	Desire for Relief
Perseveres	Temporary
Spiritual	Emotional
Humble Heart	Prideful Heart

*"He, who truly repents, is chiefly sorry for his sins. He, whose repentance is spurious, is chiefly concerned for their consequences. The former chiefly regrets that he has done evil; the latter that he has incurred evil. One sorely laments that he deserves punishment; the other that he must suffer punishment. One approves of the Law which condemns him; the other thinks he is hardly treated, and that the Law is rigorous. To the sincere penitent, sin appears exceeding sinful; to him who sorrows after a worldly sort, sin, in some form, appears pleasant. He regrets that it is forbidden. One says it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God, even if no punishment followed. The other sees little evil in transgression if there were no painful consequences sure to follow."*

- Dr. William S. Plumer