

*Tasmanian Baptists*

# time to turn

three studies in corporate repentance

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## introduction

At our mid year Assembly on 4 July 2009 Tasmanian Baptists were confronted by the seriousness of our current circumstances. There appeared to be an immediate response from delegates to pray and repent and to take this message back to our churches.

Delegates were told that:

- Tasmanian Baptists (along with many other churches) are losing momentum;
- Our numbers in Tasmania are shrinking (overall attendances in Tasmanian Baptist churches have reduced by 10% in the past 10 years);
- In fact there are now more Buddhists than Baptists in Tasmania (Baptists make up just 0.4% of the population in Tasmania);
- We have generally failed to reach and hold the 15-45 age groups;
- Many of our churches have aging congregations (mostly over 50 year olds) and are becoming dated in how they function;
- Many Tasmanian Baptist churches could die in the next ten years;
- We need to repent of our 'ecclesiastic consumerism' (our chasing after church experience that suits me and my family);
- We have lost our emphasis on mission;
- Over the past ten years we have averaged less than one baptism per church per year.  
*(for fuller details see Ivan James' open letter to our pastors and churches)*

Ivan James brought four challenges to Assembly:

1. **We need a broader vision** We need every Tasmanian Baptist to become a 'backyard missionary' and for every church to be transformed into a mission station. We need to commence planting new faith communities across Tasmania.
2. **We need to repent and pray** The purpose of these studies is to encourage such a response. Local leaders are encouraged to plan an appropriate expression of public repentance in each church.
3. **We need to act urgently** Local church leaders need to look at their own church's recent history and to discuss action that can be taken. Your regional minister is available to assist in this regard.
4. **We need to cope with pain** There is real sacrifice in again becoming a missional movement

In these sheets are three Bible studies to be used in small group settings:

Study One	big picture
Study Two	the mission of God
Study Three	turnaround

**Some of these sessions may contain more material than your group can use in one session. Feel free to either delete some parts or to continue the studies over more than three weeks.**

Study 1  
big picture

God wants individuals to live within his love and goodness. But is that all that God desires? How does the Bible picture salvation?

**Read *Matthew 6:9-13*.**

- What will the earth look like when God's kingdom fully comes and his will is done on earth, as in heaven? *Verse 10*

**Read *Isaiah 11:1-9*.**

- Who is the stump of Jesse who is coming? *Verse 1*
- What will he be like? *Verses 2-5*
- What will life be like under his influence? *Verses 6-9*  
(*The second part of verse 9 was a key prayer that the Puritans regularly cried out to God 400 years ago. Some traditions are worth reviving!*)

**Read *Isaiah 65:17-25***

- What do these verses say about the following when God creates new heavens and a new earth (that is, marries heaven and earth):
  - terrible memories *verses 17, 18*
  - weeping *verse 19*
  - infant mortality *verse 20*
  - land rights *verses 21,22*
  - young people with hope *verse 23*
  - prayer *verse 24*
  - peace *verse 25*

**Read the following scriptures from Paul's writings:**

- *2 Corinthians 5:17* (literally: if anyone is in Christ he is new creation) What does it mean to "be new creation"? (see also *Galatians 6:15*)
- *Colossians 1:20* What does it mean for God to reconcile all things through the cross? (see also *2 Corinthians 5:19*)
- *Romans 8:19-22* What does Paul mean when he says the creation is currently going through child birth?
- *Romans 8:23* What does Paul have in mind when he talks of 'the redemption of our bodies'?

**Action:**

- How might followers of Jesus express his compassion and concern for justice and shalom today?
- What is one way you can prayerfully live out *Matthew 6:10*?

Study 2  
the mission of God

**Read Luke 15:1,2**

- ◆ Who was muttering against Jesus?
- ◆ Why? (see *Luke 5:27-31*)

Jesus tells three stories (parables) with one common meaning.

**Read Luke 15:3-7.** What is this first story about?

- ◆ What is a middle-eastern shepherd's priority when a sheep is lost? *Verse 4*
- ◆ What does he do when he finds it? *Verse 5*
- ◆ What does this story tell us about our God? *Verse 7*

**Read Luke 15:8-10.** What is the second story about?

- ◆ What does a poor person do when she loses one of her ten coins? *Verse 8*
- ◆ What does she do when she finds it? *Verse 9*
- ◆ What does this story tell us about our God? *Verse 10*

**Look at** (without reading) **Luke 15:11-31.** What is the third story about?

- ◆ What does a father do when a wayward son appears on the horizon? *V 20*
- ◆ What is the first thing the father wants to do now his son is home? *Vv 22-24*
- ◆ What does this story tell us about our God?

**Read this:**

In effect Jesus is saying that we will not understand anything about his Father if we do not get this one point .... lost people really matter to God!

lost people ... hurting people ...oppressed people *Matthew 23:23*

Jesus invites all his followers to become 'backyard missionaries'. Bill Hybels suggests we can do this by developing "3-D living" (taken from his book Just Walk across the Room)

- ◆ Develop friendships – proximity
- ◆ Discover their story
- ◆ Discern the next step

**Action:**

- Who has God placed in your life who especially needs to experience his love?
- What might 'good news' look like for them?
- Can you see any ways God is already at work in their lives?
- How can you express God's love and goodness in 'your world'?
- Commit to pray for each others' friends.

Study 3  
turnaround

**Read the following sentences. Which one is most significant for you?**

Repentance is constructive in our lives

- 'Repentance' (*metanoia*) means a change of mind and a change of deeds
- Repentance is actually a gift from God *Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25*
- Repentance is an important aspect of how salvation and healing come to us *Isaiah 30:15; Jeremiah 15:19; Acts 20:21*
- Jesus came to bring Israel to repentance *Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Luke 5:32*
- The risen Lord continues to call his church to repentance *Revelation 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19*
- Biblical repentance can be individual or communal

**Work through each of the four points below, studying the scriptures where helpful.**

The Bible shows us a process for corporate repentance

- The leaders must come under conviction
  - prayerful wait on God; desire to know healing and renewal *Psalm 37:3-7*
  - Godly sorrow *2 Corinthians 7:9,10*
- The leaders must call the people to repentance
  - Leaders must trust the Holy Spirit and pray during this phase.
- (*if there is no response*) The leaders then offer representative/identification repentance. *Exodus 32:32* (Moses); *2 Kings 22:11, 19* (Josiah); *Nehemiah 1:4-9* (Nehemiah).
- (*if there is a genuine response*) The leaders then lead the people in corporate and public repentance. This involves:
  - **Thought** – understand sin and repentance God's way
    - Sin is primarily against God *Psalm 51:4*
    - Internal repentance is vital *Joel 2:12,13*
    - Godly sorrow *2 Corinthians 7:9,10*
    - The fruit of repentance must also be evident – *Mt. 3:8; Acts 26:20*
  - **Word** – confess together out loud *1 John 1:9*
  - **Deed** – an act that is symbolic and/or restitution
    - Symbolic *1 Samuel 7:2-9* – pouring water on the ground at Mizpah
    - Restitution *Luke 19:1-10* - Zacchaeus

**Action:**

- Share whether you believe you individually, and your church communally, have been effective as backyard missionaries over recent years. Pray together.
- Ask your leaders to develop missional strategies for your church.