

Real Repentance vs. Worldly Regret

“For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret. What earnestness! What eagerness to clear yourselves! What indignation! What fear! What longing! What zeal! What punishment!” – 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

1. Facing the Reality

You have sinned — the act of adultery is a breaking of trust with your wife, a violation of God’s covenant, and a breach of your vow. It is not simply a mistake, but a serious offence against God’s law, against your spouse, and your own soul. The handout says: “Sin is the breaking of God’s law—it is anarchy in the face of God’s Lordship.”

Why this matters:

- You wronged your wife: emotionally, relationally, spiritually.
- You wronged God: you rebelled against His design for marriage and fidelity.
- You wounded yourself: the guilt, the shame, the brokenness all affects you.

2. Worldly Sorrow vs. Godly Sorrow

It’s crucial to distinguish between *worldly sorrow* and *godly sorrow*. The handout describes worldly sorrow as self-centered: it arises because we got caught, because we lost position, because of fear of consequences.

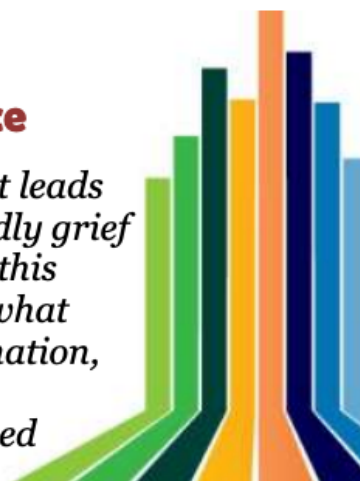
In your case, worldly sorrow might look like: “I feel bad because she found out,” or “I feel bad because I’m ashamed,” or “I feel bad because my reputation is ruined.” That kind of sorrow leads to stagnation: you may confess, you may promise—but you return to the sin or you merely manage the guilt.

In contrast, godly sorrow is God-centered: it sees the sin as an offence against a holy God; it hates the sin because it defaces God’s glory; it prompts genuine turning from the sin. The eight qualities listed in the handout (from 2 Cor 7:10-11) show what godly sorrow looks like:

- Forsaking sin completely.
- Forsaking sin immediately (earnestness).
- Confessing / coming clean.
- Hatred of sin because of God’s holiness.
- Fear of God.
- Longing for restoration.
- Zeal to please God.
- Realization the grace of God cost Christ.

Eight Qualities of True Repentance

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.



2 CORINTHIANS 7:10–11

- 1 – Forsaking sin completely**
“repentance...without regret”
- 2 – Forsaking sin immediately**
“what earnestness”
- 3 – Confessing of sin / coming clean**
“what eagerness to clear yourselves”
- 4 – Hatred for sin because it violates God’s glory**
“what indignation”
- 5 – The fear of God and His holiness**
“what fear”
- 6 – The vehement desire to get right with God/others**
“what longing”
- 7 – The enthusiastic desire to please God**
“what zeal”
- 8 – The realization that God’s grace is costly**
“what punishment”

Application for you: Do not settle for ‘I’m sorry I got caught.’ The question is: *Am I deeply sorry that I sinned against God and my wife? Am I ready to turn?*

Examples of Worldly Sorrow

Worldly sorrow is self-centered, concerned primarily with personal loss, shame, consequences, or image rather than a deep conviction of sin before a holy God. Below are biblical figures who illustrate this, as outlined in the worksheet.

Example	Passage	Motive & goal
Judas Iscaiot	Matthew 27:4 — “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.”	He felt remorse only because he was caught and the consequences were grave (“I sinned, I lost”). His motive was fear and self-pity, not hatred of his sin before God.
King Saul	1 Samuel 15:24-30 — “I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD ... because I feared the people...”	He admitted sin but the motive was fear of people, loss of status. He wants to salvage his reputation more than truly turn.
Esau	Genesis 27; Hebrews 12:17 — “he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”	His sorrow was over what he lost (the blessing/position/rights), not over having dishonored God. His goal was recovery of what was lost, not restoration with God.
Pharaoh	Exodus 10:16-17 — “I have sinned against the LORD your God ... now therefore forgive ... my sin only this once...”	His remorse was for the suffering and consequences, not for his rebellion against God. His aim was relief, not surrender.

Reflection for you:

In your particular situation (adultery), worldly sorrow might sound like:

- *“I’m sorry because I got caught and now my life is messed up.”*
- *“I feel terrible because I lost respect, job, family trust.”*
- *“I don’t want the pain I’m going through.”*

These thoughts indicate that the sorrow is still self-centered. Ask: *Am I more sorry for hurting God and my wife than for hurting myself?*

Examples of Godly Sorrow

Godly sorrow is God-centered: it sees the beauty and holiness of God, the ugliness of sin, the cost of grace, and responds in heartfelt surrender *and* changed life. Here are biblical figures who illustrate this.

Example	Passage	Motive & fruit
Isaiah	Isaiah 6:5-8 — “Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips...”	Isaiah sees the holiness of God, is overwhelmed by his sin, desires to serve. His sorrow leads to a response: “Here am I; send me.”
King David	2 Samuel 12; Psalm 51 — “Against you, you only, have I sinned ...”	David’s sorrow is directed at God. He confesses, seeks mercy, turns from his sin. It leads to restoration and God’s forgiveness.
Simon Peter	Luke 22:61-62 — “And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”	Peter’s sorrow is grounded in knowing his Lord had been betrayed by him, his fear of God, and then he is restored. The change is visible.
the Thief on the Cross	Luke 23:39-43 — “Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”	At the eleventh hour he turns from his own kingdom to Christ’s, recognizes his guilt, trusts in Christ. His sorrow leads to salvation.
The Prodigal Son	Luke 15:11-32 — “I have sinned against heaven and before you...”	The son comes to his senses, repents, returns to the father. The motive is recognition of sin, longing for restoration. The father welcomes him.

Reflection for you:

In your case, what would godly sorrow look like?

- Acknowledging: *“I sinned against God, I sinned against my wife, I broke our covenant.”*
- Being moved by the offence to God’s glory more than just the pain to you.
- Turning away from the adultery, not just because you got caught, but because you want to honour God and your wife.
- Desiring restoration: to God, and to your wife, with change.
- Acting on that sorrow: transparency, accountability, changed patterns of life.

Applying this to Your Situation

- Ask yourself: Am I operating in the “worldly sorrow” column? If so, you won’t experience the full blessing of repentance because the heart’s motive is self, not God.
- Or am I cultivating the “godly sorrow” column? That will lead to true repentance, restoration, and new life.
- Choose the direction: Let the examples guide you.
- Take time to meditate on the example of David or the Prodigal Son—let their brokenness and restoration speak into your heart.

3. Turning Back to God & to Your Wife

True repentance has both vertical and horizontal dimensions — toward God and toward others.

Toward God:

- Acknowledge your sin before Him: “Against you, O God, and you alone, I have sinned.” (cf. Ps 51)
- Recognize God’s grace in Christ: that though you sinned, Christ died for you, and God offers forgiveness. The handout quotes: “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret.”
- Decide to turn from the sin: this means no longer entertaining the adultery, the lust, the lies. It means cleansing your life: physically, relationally, spiritually—closing doors, removing access, limiting opportunities, accountability.

Toward your wife:

- Confess clearly and humbly. Don’t minimize or justify. Say: “I have sinned against you and against God. What I did was wrong.”
- Restore trust gradually: you know trust is broken. Be consistent, transparent, patient. Keep no secrets. Let your actions match your words.
- Seek to help her healing: understand her pain, give her space to express it, support her in counseling if needed, show remorse—not just words but deeds.

4. Steps of Practical Repentance

Based on the handout, here are practical steps—adapted for your life situation:

- **Self-examination:** Ask: What led me to this sin? What idols or desires were at work? (cf. Isaiah 6 in the handout).
- **Confession to God:** Don't hide it, don't down-play it. Bring it into the light.
- **Confession to your wife (when appropriate):** Lead with humility; allow her to respond in her timing.
- **Forsaking the sin:** Remove access, change patterns, avoid triggers, build strong accountability.
- **Restitution where possible:** While adultery isn't like theft, you must make good where you can—invest in marriage restoration, seek counseling, demonstrate your renewed commitment.
- **Pursuit of new obedience:** Repentance without a changed life is incomplete. The Westminster Shorter Catechism definition from the handout: "Repentance unto life is ... a sinner... with grief and hatred of his sin... turn from them all unto God, with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience."
- **Maintain humility and dependence on Christ:** Recognize you cannot rebuild this alone; you need the grace of God, the help of the Spirit, the fellowship of the church.

5. Hope, Restoration & Vigilance

Hope: Because of Christ you *can* be forgiven. The handout reminds us of the many promises: "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18) — "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions" (Psa. 103:12)

That includes your sin. Your adultery is not too big for God's mercy—yet this mercy is not cheap or casual. True repentance means you take it seriously.

Restoration:

- With God: Seek to know Him more deeply. Let this sorrow draw you into deeper worship rather than deeper hiding.
- With your wife: Restoration of your marriage relationship will take time. It will involve the painful work of rebuilding trust, consistency, transparency, and the new shared story of grace.
- With the church: Let your local church community support you, guide you, hold you accountable, and encourage you in your new life.

Vigilance:

- Sin has a way of creeping back. The handout warns: “Worldly sorrow...the sure result—only one sure result – death” (Rom. 3:23; 7:13).

You must guard your heart: avoid isolation, temptation, secrecy. Cultivate practices of prayer, Scripture, accountability, confession.

6. An Encouragement to You

You may feel crushing guilt, shame, despair—and rightly so. But remember: **godly sorrow produces** what? *Repentance that *leads to salvation without regret*. 2 Cor 7:10. Because you turn to God, you will *not* look back and say “I wish I hadn’t done that”—instead you will say “By God’s grace I am being changed”.

Be patient with yourself—and with your wife. The cross of Christ shows that the greatest sins can meet the greatest mercy. But mercy demands truth, humility, brokenness, and a firm resolve to walk differently.

Prayer for you:

“Lord Jesus, I come to you acknowledging my adultery, my betrayal of the one you gave me in marriage, and above all my betrayal of You. I ask for Your forgiveness. I hate what I did because it dishonored You, it wounded my wife, and it wounded my soul. By Your grace, I turn from this sin now. Help me to walk in new obedience. Help me to seek my wife’s trust, to live transparently before her and before You. Fill me with Your Spirit. Help me to love her as Christ loves the church, protect her, honor her, cherish her. Thank You for removing my transgressions far from me, for cleansing me, for giving me hope. Amen.”