









Repentance can be a hard pill to swallow. It requires humility to change, to admit you were wrong. Our next passage reflects this through a flashback to King Herod who had heard John the Baptist’s call to repent. Let’s just say that he didn’t respond well.

Read Mark 6:14–20.

*[Note: For further study on King Herod, see Go Deeper section 3 at the end of this session.]*

**What got John in trouble with Herod in the first place? Why, despite the trouble, did Herod keep John around?**

We’ve seen some poor reactions to those who shared the message of Jesus, but none so bad as Herod and his wife. When John declared their marriage a violation of God’s law, it got him thrown in prison. Herodias even wanted him executed. Herod kept John around, though, because of the message he preached. It intrigued him.

Now read Mark 6:21–29.

**What choice does John have in the matter of his life or death? Why does he die?**

Most of us won’t face an angry queen or a militant machete because of our faith in Jesus. But the question we have to answer with each moment of our lives is simply, “Would we die for him?”

The cost of discipleship—the price of following Jesus—is *everything*. Up to and including our very lives. Many over the last two millennia have chosen death over giving up Jesus. Most of us won’t face a choice that drastic, but we are still called to give up our lives for him.

Today, consider what you can surrender, put aside, or give away so that you can have the opportunity to show Jesus to someone else. Whatever it is, consider it practice. We are following the one who came to die for us all.

**What have you sacrificed to follow Jesus? What opportunities did it open up for you?**

**What does dying for Jesus look like for you? Why is it worth the effort?**





One of the biggest reasons (if not *the* biggest reason) that the message of Jesus is off-putting to some is the issue of repentance. In 6:12, Mark says the disciples proclaimed that people should *repent*.

The word translated “repent” is *metanoeo*, which literally means to change one’s mind. In the Old Testament Hebrew, the word is *shub*, which means to physically turn around or turn back. If we take both together, repentance involves both our mind and our behavior. It involves turning our backs on all that is ungodly and turning to face what is pleasing to God—both literally in how we behave but also in how we think.

Mark makes repentance the hallmark requirement for salvation. No one can be saved without acknowledging their sin and clinging to Jesus.

What do we do with this information? The reason the gospel is so provocative is precisely because it demands change. Think about it—people might turn to God when it would mean a change from bad circumstances. But if life’s good, why change at all?

Even for us who already accept the message, change is hard. Repentance is still hard.

**Think about your own relationship with Jesus. How has it changed your mind about various beliefs? Certain behaviors?**

**In what ways has your faith in Christ changed your goals and hopes for the future?**

**3. Background: Which Herod is which?**

King Herod plays a part in several New Testament narratives. But we must be careful to know which Herod the authors are referring to.

**Herod the Great**

Herod the Great ruled Judea during the time of Jesus’s birth. His reign lasted from 37 BC to 4 BC; he was the king whom the magi met, and who had the boys of Bethlehem murdered in his search for the baby Jesus.



