

## Section 2

# What Does this Material Aim to Do?

**This is a process designed to help people and churches do what Jesus says.** In traditional language this is:

The kingdom of God is at hand.  
Repent.  
Believe the gospel.

A paraphrase puts it:

Give your entire attention to what God is doing now.  
Change your life.  
Embrace the good news, the reality of God's grace and love.

**The kingdom of God** is invisible but real. It is God in action. Jesus says this about the kingdom: *Give your entire attention to what God is doing now* (The Message). We are invited to recognize this reality and realign our lives. This reality is like wind, love, truth, justice. It shakes the foundations of countries and powers. It is within and among people and transforms lives, congregations, and cultures.

**Repent** means to change, to turn around, to keep being oriented to the Reality of God. Repent means that there will be observable results like:

- Basic openness to receive and give compassion
- A sense of kinship and belonging with all
- Appreciation and gratitude
- Letting go of holding onto ourselves, our defensiveness and arrogance
- Contributing to a caring community where care is given and received
- Doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God

There are historic practices, processes, that have been the means of the Spirit's changing people and churches. They have been used in both Eastern and Western traditions. They are called by different names, but they are, functionally:

**Self-examination:** inventory, looking at our behavior and God's gifts. Confession.

**Enlightenment:** receiving love, truth, grace. Our minds, hearts, and will are open and the Spirit flows through us. Forgiveness.

**Willingness:** resonating, working in synch with God's desires. Sanctification.

These practices have been used in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Jesuit practice of the Daily Examination of consciousness, and in other traditions. I have summarized them this way:

**Stop**

Intention.

**Look**

Attention. (Self Examination.)

**Listen**

Receive. (Enlightenment.) Be changed. Respond. (Willingness.)

These can be done by everyone, not just by the spiritual elite. They work for every personality type and temperament.

Congregational practices for leaders, in worship, in education and mission are similar. They include:

**Stop**

Shifting our usual way of business and planning.  
Recognizing where the Spirit is already at work rather than our vision.

**Look**

Listening together to life, community, Scripture, each other, the world.

**Listen**

Discernment rather than discussion and voting.  
Doing, practicing, a new way of living. Letting go of the old ways.  
Regular feedback and accountability.

**This approach is unique** because most of the time, programs that offer “one size fits all” don’t work for individual or congregational uniqueness. With this material, people can learn the attitude of paying attention to where the Spirit is working at many levels, and learn to identify their own unique way of recognizing the Spirit at work. In this approach, there is **mutuality** in the church system: the congregation is fed by individual renewal and supports and teaches individuals in their practice. The culture interacts with both.