

6

Steps to
Forgiveness



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1 I Am Guilty

What if I don't really want to repent? D&C 19:17, 18; Jeremiah 16:5

What if the temptation is too much for me to quit? 1 Corinthians 10:13

What if I did not know it was wrong? Moroni 7:16; Moroni 10:5

“Sometimes we hear a youth in the Church say with regard to sex sins, ‘I did not know it was wrong.’ This is unthinkable. . . . Where were the whisperings of conscience? . . . Some at least of these influences and promptings must have lingered in his heart to tell him that the act was wrong! Even if he did not know *how* wrong it was he knew it was sin. Otherwise, why would he hide the act and keep secret the error.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 153-54.)

★ Can I wait until I get caught to repent? Alma 32:16; Alma 34:31-33

I feel guilty; is that part of repentance? Ezekiel 6:9; Psalm 38:4, 5

★ How guilty must I feel to earn repentance? Psalm 38:17, 18; 2 Corinthians 7:9, 10

2

I Will Abandon the Sin

Must I completely stop doing the sins to be forgiven?

D&C 58:43

How long must I wait to be forgiven after I stop?

“To every forgiveness there is a condition. The bandage must be as wide as the sore. The fasting, the prayers, the humility must be equal to or greater than the sin.” (Spencer W. Kimball, cited in *Church News*, 27 Mar. 1976, p. 6.)

What happens if I stop the sin for a time, and then break down and start again?

D&C 82:7

How can I prove to the Lord I want to repent?

Matthew 7:21

3

I Will Confess to Those Involved

Must I confess in order to be forgiven? 1 John 1:9; D&C 61:2

To whom must I confess? D&C 42:88, 93
James 5:16
D&C 59:12; Ezra 10:11

But isn't confession just too hard? Proverbs 13:15
"Perhaps confession is one of the hardest of all the obstacles for the repenting sinner to negotiate. His shame often restrains him from making known his guilt and acknowledging his error. Sometimes his assumed lack of confidence in mortals to whom he should confess his sin justifies in his mind his keeping the secret locked in his own heart." (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 178.)

What if I do not confess? 2 Nephi 27:27
2 Nephi 9:34
D&C 1:3
D&C 1:32, 33
D&C 64:12

4

I Will Restore the Damage

How do I make up the damage?

Exodus 22:1; Numbers 5:6, 7
Ezekiel 33:15, 16

“ . . . if children have wronged their parents, a part of their program of repentance must be to right those wrongs and to honor their parents.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 129.)

What if restoration of damage is impossible?

War

“God will work out in His own due time and in His own sovereign way the justice and right of the conflict, but He will not hold the innocent instrumentalities of the war, our brethren in arms, responsible. . . .” (The First Presidency [Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., David O. McKay] in *CR*, Apr. 1942, p. 95.)

ing his repentance impossible it is a . . . tremendous responsibility for which the murderer may not be able to atone in his lifetime.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 129.)

Murder

“Perhaps one reason murder is so heinous is that man cannot restore life. Man’s mortal life is given him in which to repent and prepare himself for eternity, and should one of his fellowmen terminate his life . . . mak-

Chastity

“Once given or taken or stolen it can never be regained. . . . To be forgiven one must repent. . . . convict yourselves of the horror of the sin, . . . confess it, abandon it, and restore . . . to the total extent possible; then . . . live the commandments of the Lord so he can eventually pardon you and cleanse you.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 196, 200.)

What if I am excommunicated?

“There is a possibility of an excommunicant returning to . . . full membership. . . . The way is hard and rough and, without the help of the Holy Ghost to whisper and plead and warn and encourage, one’s climb is infinitely harder than if he were to repent before he loses the Holy Ghost, his membership, and the fellowship of the saints. The time is usually long, very long, as those who have fought their way back will attest.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 329-30.)

5

I Will Not Repeat the Sin

What must I do next?

Isaiah 55:6, 7; D&C 14:7

Malachi 3:7

James 5:19, 20

What do I do if I still am tempted by evil thoughts?

Matthew 4:10

What if other people won't forgive me, or I can't forgive them?

Matthew 6:14, 15

6

I Am Forgiven

Will the Lord actually forgive me?

D&C 64:10

Will my sins be forgotten, and can I
not worry anymore?

Ezekiel 33:15, 16

D&C 58:42

Isaiah 1:18

How do I know when I've been
forgiven?

Alma 36:16-22

Read Matthew 11:28-30 if you want
to understand repentance.

Additional scripture references from
the Old Testament on repentance:

Leviticus 6:1-7

Deuteronomy 4:29, 30

Joshua 24:15

Ezra 10:11

Nehemiah 9:2

Psalms 32:5

Psalms 61:7-10

Proverbs 28:13

Ezekiel 18:19-32

Joel 2:12, 13

Jonah 3:4-10



Confession

“... I, the Lord, forgive sins, and am merciful unto those who *confess their sins* with humble hearts.” (D&C 61:2. Italics added.)

“... the ideal confession is voluntary, not forced. It is induced from within the offender’s soul, not sparked by being found out in the sin. . . . The voluntary confession is infinitely more acceptable in the sight of the Lord than is forced admission, lacking humility, wrung from an individual by questioning when guilt is evident. Such forced admission is not evidence of the humble heart which calls forth the Lord’s mercy. . . .” (p. 181)

“The confession of his major sins to a proper Church authority is one of those requirements made by the Lord. These sins include adultery, fornication, other sexual transgressions, and other sins of comparable seriousness.” (p. 179)



“Those who lie to Church leaders forget or ignore an important rule and truth the Lord has set down: that when he has called men to high places in his kingdom and has placed on them the mantle of authority, a lie to them is tantamount to a lie to the Lord; a half-truth to his officials is like a half-truth to the Lord; a rebellion against his servants is comparable with a rebellion against the Lord.” (p. 183)

“... confession is neither necessary nor desirable for all sins. Those of lesser gravity but which have offended others—marital differences, minor fits of anger, disagreements and such—should instead be confessed to the person or persons hurt and the matter should be cleared between the persons involved, normally without a reference to a Church authority.” (p. 185)

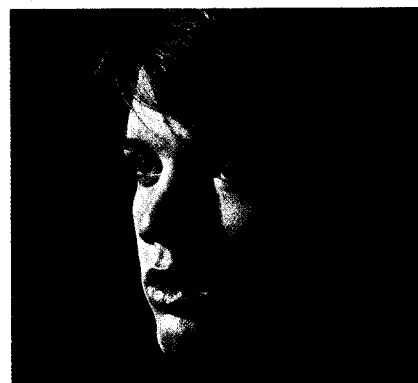
“Generally it is unwise and quite unnecessary to confess the same sin over and over again. If a major transgression has been fully confessed to and cleared by the proper authority, the person may usually clear himself in any future interview by explaining that this is so and giving the authority’s name. Providing there has been no repetition of the offense, nor a commission of any other serious transgression, usually the matter may be considered settled.” (p. 187)

“Confession brings peace. How often have people departed from my office relieved and lighter of heart than for a long time! Their burdens were lighter, having been shared. They were free. The truth had made them free.” (p. 187)

“When the apples in a barrel rot, it is not enough to throw away half of the spoiled apples from the barrel and replace them with fresh apples on top. This would result in all the apples rotting. Instead it would be necessary to empty the barrel and completely clean and scrub—perhaps disinfect—the entire inside. Then the barrel could be safely filled again with apples. Likewise in clearing up problems in our lives it is well also to go to the bottom and confess all the transgressions so that repentance begins with no half-truths, no pretense, no unclean residue.” (p. 180)

And wo unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the

Lord! And their works are in the dark; and they say: Who seeth us, and who knoweth us? . . . But behold, I will show unto them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I know all their works. . . . (2 Ne. 27:27.) (p. 182)



“Those who take the course of honest confession of their sin further the process of repentance, of adjustment in their lives, of reconciliation with God. To illustrate this I quote below a letter received from one young transgressor who, following excommunication, was finding his way back to the blessings of the gospel and the Church.

I am writing this letter hoping I may soon be rebaptized into the Church. I was excommunicated. . . .

I was very sorry for my sins and sickened by them. I read a great deal in the Book of Mormon, seeking somewhat to justify myself not going to the mission president to confess. I read about Alma and Corianton and tried to convince myself that, since I had repented (I thought), I would not need to confess to anyone but God. I did pray a great deal. After everyone else had gone to bed, I would remain up reading and praying. Finally one night, a voice from within me said, “You know what you must do, so do it.”

A few days later at a conference, I confessed to the mission president. . . . I had no choice if I was to ever obtain forgiveness.

After I had confessed, even knowing I would be excommunicated, I felt an extremely sweet peace in my soul . . . and I thank God . . . that he gave me courage to do it.



When I came home, humiliated and fearful, my family was extremely kind and understanding as was the bishop who . . . gave me an opportunity to get up in priesthood meeting . . . and . . . ask . . . forgiveness. It was extremely difficult . . . but I am thankful I did it. Then the bishop told me I should . . . shake hands with the people and not slink away. I'm thankful I did that also for it made things easier for me. They seemed to forgive me and they accepted me back. Their true Christianity helped me to have strength to go to all the meetings I could attend.

Since this weekend was fast Sunday, I started fasting Friday after supper and Saturday I went into the mountains and spent about five hours by myself, thinking and praying, and I read part of the Book of Mormon, particularly the Book of Enos.

While praying aloud to my Father, I tasted the most bitter sorrow that I have ever felt. I had a slight indication of what it really is to suffer godly sorrow for sin. . . . I had pleaded that I would be forgiven for my sins and for being such a great cause of suffering to my family and to the Lord Jesus Christ. I understood ever so vaguely that Christ did take upon himself my sins and he suffered untold sorrow for me. I begged for forgiveness, and for release from the deadening, prisoner-like effects of sin, and to know that I was forgiven.

I felt impressed . . . that I would receive forgiveness if I did continue to be humble, fast, and pray. I fear I will have to suffer sorrow as I did yesterday many times again before all the evil effects of sin will be lifted out of me and I will feel that freedom that my spirit craves.

I ask in all humility, realizing that the responsibilities of membership are great, that I might be accepted back into the Church and back onto the path I departed from. I know God lives and that his Son Jesus Christ really did take upon

himself our sins and that he lives today. I know the Church was restored through the beloved Joseph Smith and that all the keys remain with the Church today. . . .

Sincerely,

P.S. I observe the Word of Wisdom and I have been giving my tithing to my mother. She pays it to the bishop in my father's name. I felt that the money was the Lord's and I could not steal it. I have also been clean in mind and act since my excommunication." (pp. 188-89)



(Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 179-89. Paragraphing changed.)