

resistance. It was part of the plan for our eternal progress. Without temptation, sickness, pain and sorrow, there could be no goodness, virtue, appreciation for well-being, or joy. The law of opposition makes freedom of choice possible."

He quoted from "biographies of struggle" documented in scripture, including Job who became the exemplar of faith in patient endurance; and Abraham, who fought in war, went through extensive famine, saw his father turn away from the priesthood, suffered persecution for his faith, was ordered to sacrifice his son, and experienced the loss of Sarah, his wife. He spoke of Abraham's grandson Jacob who, as a young man became estranged from his twin brother and didn't return home for many years to see

Elder Hunter added, "Today other biographies of faith are being written — Saints who, like Job, suffer physical pain, emotional sorrow, and even disloyalty from friends — yet remain faithful; Saints who, like Jacob, see sons and daughters not so valiant as they should be, but who bless them for their potential; Saints who, like Paul, endure great ridicule and endure to the end; Saints who, like Nephi, must separate themselves from family because of their commitment to the gospel. There are those who know pain and sorrow because of loss of loved ones; who know spiritual sorrow because children go astray, who experience loss of health, financial reverses, and emotional distress, and yet, like Job, resolve, 'When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.'" (Job 23:10.)

'Godly sorrow' is important part of repentance process

Paul taught, "... godly sorrow worketh repentance..." (2 Cor 7:10.)

A feeling of sorrow is part of the repentance process, which includes recognition of wrong, remorse, confession of the transgression, forsaking the sin, and, where possible, restitution.

The sorrow of which Paul spoke was not the kind that is felt upon feeling sorry because someone has found out about a certain behavior. At the October 1991 general conference, Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, "After recognition, real remorse floods the soul. This is a 'godly sorrow,' not merely the 'sorrow of the world' nor the sorrowing of the damned' when we can no longer 'take happiness in sin.' (See 2 Cor. 7:10, and Morm. 2:13.) False remorse instead is like fondling our failings. In ritual regret, we mourn our mistakes but without mending them.

"There can be no real repentance without personal suffering and the passage of sufficient time for the needed cleansing and turning. This is much more than merely waiting until feelings of remorse subside. Misery, like adversity, can have its special uses. No wonder chastening is often needed until the turning is really under way.

"Real remorse quickly brings forth positive indicators, 'fruits meet for repentance.' (Matt. 3:10; see also Acts 26:20; Alma 5:54.) In process of time, these fruits bud, blossom, and ripen."

There is peace in forgiveness

In his second letter to the saints at Corinth, Paul admonished them to love and forgive one another. (See 2 Cor. 2:5-8.)

Many Church leaders have spoken and written with the same fervor as did Paul on the topic of forgiving others. President Gordon B. Hinckley wrote in 1991:

"We see the need [for forgiveness] in the homes of the people, where tiny molehills of misunderstanding are fanned into mountains of argument. We see it among neighbors, where insignificant differences lead to undying bitterness. We see it in business associates who quarrel and refuse to compromise and forgive when, in most instances, if there were a willingness to sit down together and speak quietly one to another, the matter could be resolved to the blessing of all. Rather, they spend their days nurturing grudges and planning retribution. . . .

"If there be any who nurture in their hearts the poisonous brew of enmity toward another, I plead with you to ask the Lord for strength to forgive. This expression of desire will be of the very substance of your repentance. It may not be easy, and it may not come quickly. But if you

Applying the scriptures

will seek it with sincerity and cultivate it, it will come. . . .

"There is no peace in reflecting on the pain of old wounds. There is peace only in repentance and forgiveness. This is the sweet peace of the Christ, who said, 'blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.'" (Matt. 5:9.)

Articles on this page may be used in conjunction with Sunday School lesson No. 33 (2 Corinthians). The articles are published three to four weeks before the scheduled lessons.

Information compiled by Gerry Avant

Sources: President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, June 1991, pp. 2-5; Elder Howard W. Hunter, Conference Report, April 1980, pp. 35-36, or *Ensign*, May 1980, p. 25-26; Elder Neal A. Maxwell, Conference Report, October 1993, p. 114, or *Ensign*, November 1993, p. 85.

Class member

The Meaning of Repentance

By Elder Theodore M. Burton
Of the First Quorum of Seventy

Because of the Savior's Atonement, repentance *is a beautiful word and a marvelous refuge.*

Theodore M. Burton, "The Meaning of Repentance," *Ensign*, Aug. 1988, 5
The most basic principles of the gospel are sometimes those least understood. And one of the most fundamental gospel principles is repentance.

Repentance is a mechanism for personal growth and development. So fundamental is the principle that the Lord stressed its importance seventy-one times in the Doctrine and Covenants. Two of those revelations, one following the other in the Doctrine and Covenants, are identical and conclude with these words:

"And now, behold, I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to *declare repentance unto this people*, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest *with them* in the kingdom of my Father." (D&C 15:6; D&C 16:6; italics added.)

Why would the Lord give two *identical* revelations and have them published in the Doctrine and Covenants, one following the other? The Lord is a Master Teacher; he knows the value of repetition in learning. It may be that these revelations were intended not only for those to whom they were given, but also for all of us. If these revelations do indeed apply to you and to me, they help us understand that what is of greatest worth to each of us is to declare repentance to others and to practice it ourselves.

Just what *is* repentance? Actually, in some ways it is easier to understand what repentance is *not* than to understand what it *is*.

As a General Authority, I have prepared information for the First Presidency to use in considering applications to readmit repentant transgressors into the Church and to restore priesthood and temple blessings. Many times a bishop will write, "I feel he has suffered enough!" But suffering is not repentance. Suffering comes from *lack* of complete repentance. A stake president will write, "I feel he has been punished enough!" But punishment is not repentance. Punishment *follows* disobedience and *precedes* repentance. A husband will write, "My wife has confessed everything!" But confession is not repentance. Confession is an admission of guilt that occurs as repentance begins. A wife will write, "My husband is filled with remorse!" But remorse is not repentance. Remorse and sorrow continue because a person has *not* yet fully repented. Suffering, punishment, confession, remorse, and sorrow may sometimes accompany repentance, but they are not repentance. What, then, *is* repentance?

To find the answer to this question, we must go to the Old Testament. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and the word used in it to refer to the concept of repentance is *shube*. We can better understand what *shube* means by reading a passage from Ezekiel and inserting the word *shube*, along with its English translation. To the “watchmen” appointed to warn Israel, the Lord says:

“When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

“Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from [*shube*] it; if he do not turn from [*shube*] his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. ...

“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from [*shube*] his way and live.” (Ezek. 33:8–11.)

I know of no kinder, sweeter passage in the Old Testament than those beautiful lines. In reading them, can you think of a kind, wise, gentle, loving Father in Heaven pleading with you to *shube*, or turn back to him—to leave unhappiness, sorrow, regret, and despair behind and turn back to your Father’s family, where you can find happiness, joy, and acceptance among his other children?

That is the message of the Old Testament. Prophet after prophet writes of *shube*—that turning back to the Lord, where we can be received with joy and rejoicing. The Old Testament teaches time and again that we must turn from evil and do instead that which is noble and good. This means that we must not only change our ways, we must change our very thoughts, which control our actions.

The concept of *shube* is also found in the New Testament, which was written in Greek. The Greek writers used the Greek word *metaneoio* to refer to repentance. *Metaneoio* is a compound word. The first part, *meta-*, is used as a prefix in our English vocabulary. It refers to change. The second part of the word *metaneoio* can be spelled various ways. The letter *n*, for instance, is sometimes transliterated as *pn*, and can mean air, the mind, thought, thinking, or spirit—depending on how it is used.

In the context in which *meta-* and *-neoio* are used in the New Testament, the word *metaneoio* means a change of mind, thought, or thinking so powerful that it changes one’s very way of life. I think the Greek word *metaneoio* is an excellent synonym for the Hebrew word *shube*. Both words mean thoroughly changing or turning from evil to God and righteousness.

Confusion came, however, when the New Testament was translated from Greek into Latin. Here an unfortunate choice was made in translation; the Greek word *metaneoio* was translated into the Latin word *poenitere*. The Latin root *poen* in that word is the same root found in our English words *punish*, *penance*, *penitent*, and *repentance*. The beautiful meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words was thus changed in Latin to a meaning that

involved hurting, punishing, whipping, cutting, mutilating, disfiguring, starving, or even torturing! It is no small wonder, then, that people have come to fear and dread the word *repentance*, which they understand to mean repeated or unending punishment.

The meaning of repentance is not that people be punished, but rather that they change their lives so that God can help them escape eternal punishment and enter into his rest with joy and rejoicing. If we have this understanding, our anxiety and fears will be relieved. *Repentance* will become a welcome and treasured word in our religious vocabulary.

We can learn more about the meaning of repentance from the thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel, where we read, "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die." (Ezek. 33:15.)

Let us analyze these three steps of repentance. The first is commitment—to "restore the pledge." This is the most difficult step in the repentance process. What does "restoring the pledge" mean?

To restore or renew a pledge means to renew one's covenant with the Lord. We must forget all excuses and recognize fully, exactly, what we have done. We must not say, "If I hadn't been so angry," "If my parents had only been more strict," "If my bishop had only been more understanding," "If my teachers had only taught me better," "If it hadn't been so dark!" There are hundreds of such excuses—none of which matters much in the final analysis.

To truly repent, we must forget all such rationalizations. We must kneel down before God and openly and honestly admit that what we did was wrong. As we do so, we open our hearts to our Heavenly Father and commit ourselves completely to him.

To really *commit* oneself to God and to changing one's life—and to *mean* it—is the beginning of repentance. Our Savior's great commitment to his Father is exemplified best by his terrible trial in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he suffered in agony of spirit and shed great drops of blood.

Before this experience, he had always had ready communication with his Father. But now he was left alone to carry the burden of the world's sins. It was as if the heavens over his head were made of brass and he couldn't get through!

As he struggled in prayer and suffered horribly under the strain, he asked that the cup might pass and that some other path might be found. It is true that he added the words, "Thy will be done," but there was no answer to his request, and his soul continued to be filled with anguish.

Three times he pleaded for release, and all three times the answer was the same. (See Matt. 26:36–44.)

Yet Christ had fully committed himself to do what he had been appointed to do. He was *willing*, and he went forward! Though it cost him tremendous suffering, he had made up his mind and committed himself to be obedient in every particular, regardless of the cost.

Our struggles to repent may cost us agony of mind and body also, but our commitment to our Heavenly Father to do his will will make repentance possible and bearable for us. In our repentance, we should remember that the Lord does not punish us for our sins; he simply withholds his blessings. We punish ourselves. The scriptures tell us again and again that the wicked are punished by the wicked. A simple illustration can show how we do this.

Suppose my mother told me not to touch a hot stove because it would burn me. She would only be stating the law. Suppose I should forget or deliberately touch that hot stove. I would be burned. I could cry and complain of my hurt, but who would be responsible for the hurt I received? Not my mother. Certainly not the hot stove! *I* would be responsible. I would have punished myself.

This illustration, however, disregards the important element of mercy, which I will try to make clear in discussing a second step in the process of repentance—restitution, or to “give again that [which we have] robbed.” (Ezek. 33:15.) If you have stolen money or goods, you can repay them—even sizable amounts, in time. But what if you have robbed yourself of virtue? Is there *anything* you can do, of yourself, to restore your virtue? Even if you gave your very life, you could not restore your virtue. But—perish the thought—does that then mean that it is useless to attempt restitution by performing significant good works or that your sin is unforgivable? No!

Jesus Christ has paid for your sin and has thus satisfied justice. Therefore, he will extend mercy to you—*if* you repent. True repentance on your part, including a change in your life-style, enables Christ, in mercy, to forgive your sin.

The more serious the sin, the greater the effort it takes to repent. But if we work daily at turning completely to the Lord, we can stand blameless before the Savior. The key is to allow the Lord to complete the healing process without reopening the wound. Just as it takes time for a wound of the body to heal, so it takes time for a wound of the soul to heal.

If I cut myself, for example, the wound will gradually heal. But as it heals, it may begin to itch, and if I scratch it, it may open up again and take longer to heal. But there is a greater danger. If I scratch the wound, it may become infected from the bacteria on my fingers. I may poison the wound and lose that part of my body or even my life!

We must allow injuries to follow their prescribed healing course. If they are serious, we must see a doctor for skilled help. So it is with injuries to the soul. Allow the injury to follow its prescribed healing course without “scratching” it through vain regrets. If the transgression requires ecclesiastical confession, go to your bishop and get spiritual help.

It may hurt as he disinfects the wound and sews it back together, but it will heal properly that way.

As you undergo the process of repentance, be patient. Be active with positive, righteous thoughts and deeds so that you can become happy and productive again.

As long as we dwell on sin or evil and refuse to forgive ourselves, we will be subject to return again to our sins. But if we turn from our problems and sins and put them behind us in both thought and action, we can concentrate on good and positive things. As we become fully engaged in good causes, sin will no longer be such a great temptation for us.

Now we come to a third step of repentance—forsaking sin, or striving to “walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity.” (Ezek. 33:15.) We must forsake our sins, one by one. If we do this, the Lord has promised: “None [not even one] of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.” (Ezek. 33:16.)

In our day, the Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith, “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.”

How do we know if a man or a woman has repented of his or her sins? The Lord answers that question in the next verse: “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them.” (D&C 58:42–43.)

Naturally, the confession that precedes repentance for serious sins should be made to a bishop or stake president who has the authority to hear such confession. Confessions to others—particularly confessions repeated in open meetings, unless the sin has been a public sin requiring public forgiveness—only demean both the confessor and the hearer. Repenting of serious sins takes time and effort. But whether the sin is small or great, the final step of repentance—forsaking sin—means that we do not repeat that transgression.

How grateful we should be for a kind, wise, loving Savior who will help us overcome our faults, our mistakes, and our sins. He loves and understands us and is sympathetic to the fact that we face temptations.

In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin explains one way we can show our gratitude to the Lord for his great mercy and his sacrifice for our sins: “Behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom: that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.” (Mosiah 2:17.) God’s work and glory is to redeem his children. If we participate in redemptive service to others, we can, in some small measure, repay him for his blessings.

God is merciful; he has provided a way for us to apply the principle of repentance in our lives and thus escape the bondage of pain, sorrow, suffering, and despair that comes from

disobedience. After all is said and done, we are God's sons and daughters. And for those who understand its true meaning, repentance is a beautiful word and a marvelous refuge.

• Attitude of Repentance:

Psalm 51

Matthew ch. 3

John 051 - Repent

Luke ch 3

• Ansigh Aug 1988 ansigh p.7-8
T.N. Burton

- After you transgress you have alienated yourself from God!
- Confession is not repentance.
- Sorrow is sorrow!
- Repentance is Repentance!
- Suffering is coming from a lack of repentance.
 - Confession / admission of guilt is the beginning of repentance.
- Repentance changes lives!
- Changes your heart!
- Prepares the way of the Lord
- Make paths straight
- Fill the Valley of danger by repentance.
- Take all obstacles out of your path that keep you from the straight & narrow.
- make path smooth so the Savior can come into our lives.
- Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.
- Repentance occurs in your heart.
- Repentant heart bears fruit of a heart that is changing.

Psalm 51
vs. 1

Fruits of Repentance:

- Changing heart
- Wash me thoroughly from iniquity
- acknowledge my transgression
- my sin is across before me

Compelled:

JOURNAL

Far too many people repent and are compelled to be humble because they are caught.

- Compelled to be humble:
 - you are blessed
- more blessed if not compelled to be!
- Repent without being caught!
 - fruit:
 - create in me a clean heart
 - re-new a right spirit in me.
 - Cast me not away
 - Take not the Holy Spirit from me.

• Pagan Repentance: I'm sorry / no change
falling back into old patterns

- Highest level of Repentance:
 - Restore valued relationships with GOD, family, wife etc.
 - want relationship
 - wants GOD'S presence back in your life!

I put this information in my journal because it is so insightful on the repentance process. It helped me greatly. My personal notes taken from class don't do justice to all of the teacher's comments, but none-the-less are helpful.

Since repentance is something we all do quite often and is vital to our progress in this life, I feel this information would be vital to my posterity.