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GOSPEL FOUNDATIONS FOR INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

# Repentance



THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

# Repentance

Faith in Jesus Christ naturally leads to repentance because we love the Savior and want to become like Him. As we repent, our hope for eternal life will also increase.

We all came to earth for the purpose of growing and progressing, and we will all commit sins along the way (see Romans 3:23, page 1420). This is why we need a Savior. Repentance is the way provided for us to become free from our sins and receive forgiveness. Sins slow and sometimes halt our spiritual progress. Repentance makes it possible for us to grow and develop spiritually again.

## Principles of Repentance

Our repentance must be sincere in order to be effective. Although repentance is more of a process than it is a list of steps, there are some principles that can help us be sure our repentance is sincere and meaningful.

*We must recognize our sins.* To repent, we must admit that we have sinned. We cannot hide our sins from ourselves or from the Lord. Alma taught, “Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins” (Alma 42:30, page 313).

*We must feel sorrow for our sins.* In addition to recognizing our sins, we must feel sincere sorrow for what we have done. This sorrow should motivate us to change and come closer to God. Alma taught, “Let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance” (Alma 42:29, page 313).

*We must forsake our sins.* Our sincere sorrow should lead us to forsake, or give up, our sins. If we have lied, we will choose to be honest. If we have committed adultery, we will choose to be faithful. The Lord said, “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43, page 106).

*We must confess our sins.* We must confess all our sins privately to the Lord in prayer. In addition, we must confess serious sins—such as adultery, fornication, homosexual relations, spouse or child abuse, and the sale or use of illegal drugs—to the proper priesthood authority, such as our bishop. We should also confess our sins to the people we have injured.





*We must make restitution.* Part of repentance is making restitution. This means that as much as possible we must make right any wrong that we have done. For example, a thief should give back what he has stolen. A liar should make the truth known. And we must ask for forgiveness from those we have sinned against.

*We must forgive others.* In order for us to be forgiven, we must also be willing to forgive those who have sinned against us. The Lord will not forgive us unless our hearts are fully cleansed of all hate, bitterness, and bad feelings against other people (see D&C 64:9, page 119).

*We must keep the commandments of God.* To make our repentance complete we must keep the commandments of the Lord. We are not fully repentant if we pick and choose which commandments to obey. We must show our love for the Lord and for others through our actions. When we repent, our life changes.

## Now Is the Time to Repent

We have been given time in this life so that we can prepare to meet God (see Alma 34:32, page 295). We should repent every day. When we get up in the morning, we should pray to have the Spirit with us. Before we go to sleep, we should review our day and ask the Lord to help us recognize the things for which we need to repent.

### Additional Scriptures

- **Isaiah 1:18, page 862;**  
**Mosiah 26:29–31, page 198**  
(repentance brings forgiveness)
- **2 Corinthians 7:9–10,**  
**page 1466** (godly sorrow)
- **Alma 34:15–17, page 294**  
(faith leads to repentance)
- **D&C 19:15–20, page 32**  
(the Lord commands us to repent)
- **D&C 58:42, page 106**  
(blessings of repentance)

LOOK  
THEM  
UP



“If ye will repent,  
and harden not your  
hearts, then will I have  
mercy upon you,  
through mine Only  
Begotten Son;

“Therefore, whosoever  
repenteth, and  
hardeneth not his  
heart, he shall have  
claim on mercy  
through mine Only  
Begotten Son, unto a  
remission of his sins.”

Alma 12:33–34, page 240

# Personal Experience

I committed a serious crime for which I served time in the state penitentiary. Some people said that if I changed, it would be only because I got caught. They didn't think my basic nature would change. I wondered if it was true that my past behavior was the best forecast of my future behavior.

Could I be freed from the sins of my past? Could I change and become a new person in Christ?

My study of the scriptures taught me that a basic component of repentance is changing one's nature, the "inward vessel" (Alma 60:23, page 360). I had to change, and I had to change permanently.

Through Jesus Christ, my Savior, I have been able to look deep inside myself, and with His help and through His atoning sacrifice, I have indeed been able to change from within. Repentance has brought me great blessings. It has brought me new friends and has taught me how much God truly loves me. My family has been blessed because of my repentance.

Repentance and change are wonderful gifts from a loving Heavenly Father. I know that God lives and wants us to return to Him in spite of the serious sins that we might commit in mortality. He always extends His hand out to us.

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# Repentance

## RESPONSE FORM

How does your faith in Jesus Christ motivate you to repent?

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What effects do our sins have on us? What effects have your sins had on you?

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Why is it important for you to recognize your sins in order to repent?

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Why do you need to permanently give up your sins in order to repent?

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