



By Elder
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The View from the **END OF THE ROAD**

The message from the end of the road is clear: “You can do this. And when you do, everything will be better.”

“I will never forget you, bishop. You saved my life.”

The man who makes that statement today didn't feel that way in the beginning. As a teen he was scared. He knew he needed to repent. I was his bishop at the time, and he knew we needed to talk. But he was full of doubts.

“What is the bishop going to think of me?”

“Will he keep this confidential?”

“How will I ever look at him again?”

Such worries can feel overwhelming, making it seem nearly impossible to muster the courage necessary to travel the road to repentance.

Looking Down the Road

But let's take a look at that road. Some parts of repentance are easier than others. One step is recognition. We usually know when we're doing something wrong; the Holy Ghost helps us sense that. We must

change, and the desire to change is usually strong.

Then the steps get harder. The Lord says we must confess and forsake. It seems pretty easy to confess to Heavenly Father in our prayers. We can correct many sins in this way, seeking forgiveness, making restitution, and improving behavior until the Spirit confirms that we have done all we can.

But some confessions require that you talk to your bishop or branch president. And that's where this young man found himself. He needed help beyond his own capacity, and he needed to know the journey was possible.

Hope on the Highway

Those who have traveled the repentance road will tell you that not only is the journey possible but that when you have been there and look back, this is what you are going to see:

You can do this. And when you do, everything will be better.

The Lord commands us to repent because He loves us. Through His Atonement, He paid the price for our sins, and so He knows that repentance sets us free. He will strengthen anyone who turns to Him. Alma taught that to take advantage of the Atonement, we must repent—every one of us (see Alma 5:33–34). The road may be hard,



WE SHOULD SMILE

“Repentance is a divine gift, and there should be a smile on our faces when we speak of it.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 38.



but a bishop will walk that road with you. There *is* help along the way.

As soon as you start, you will feel relief.

Turn to your bishop. You will find a man who loves you and respects you. The trust you can build with your bishop is profound. It will last forever, and it will help you feel safe with other bishops in the future. You'll be given a different perspective on your predicaments. In his wisdom and experience, and with inspiration from the Lord, the bishop will balance out for you what you thought was the end of the world when it's maybe only a bump in the road.

He will help you to truly understand that the Savior is the Light of the World. By your taking advantage of the Atonement, your life will become bright, your future will be promising, and you will understand that gaining faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the great purposes for coming to live on earth.

Your bishop will help you through this. You will love him and never forget him.

I firmly believe that people who help you in times of crisis become bound to your heart. How much more, then, is a bishop bound to you when he helps you through a spiritual crisis? The Lord can magnify the bishop's kindness and his ability to guide you. Your bishop will be your friend forever.

And for you young men who will one day be bishops or stake presidents yourselves, your experiences with your bishop will train you for that time when you may be on the other side of the desk.

Let me close by telling you a little more about my visit with that young man. "Bishop," he said, "you're going to hate me for what I have to tell you. You'll never be able to look at me again, and if you share what I say with anybody, I'll kill myself."

I said, "I promise I will never betray your confidences. I will take them with me to the grave."

He told me about some minor situations and watched my reaction. When I said, "I know what you're going through. I can help you," he proceeded slowly until he got to what he really wanted to discuss. I reminded him repeatedly that I admired him for confessing and wanting to change. Even though he seemed ready to run at any moment, together we got through what he needed to share.

Was it a big deal? It was to him. But as we talked, he came to better understand the mercy the Lord offers to those who sincerely repent. After that first visit, we worked together, and over time his repentance became complete. Today he still calls me to say hello, and our conversations are happy.

I was privileged to help him learn that we all depend on the Atonement. And I join my voice with his in praise of Jesus Christ, the one who really saved his life. ■