

7 THINGS WE FEAR ABOUT REPENTANCE

AND WHY WE
SHOULDN'T

We're often afraid to repent. But we can take courage in the truth.



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We all know that every person needs repentance (see Romans 3:23). We know we need to repent in order to find true joy through the power of Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice (see Alma 36:24). We also know that putting off repentance is a bad idea (see Alma

34:32–34). Yet so many of us do just that. Why? We know better, right?

One possible answer is fear. Whether we've committed a serious sin that we need to confess to our bishop or we have some little habits, attitudes, or behaviors that keep us from being fully committed to the

Lord's gospel and its standards, fear can keep us from doing what we need to do to change our lives.

Here are seven fears that can cause us to put off repentance, as well as some ideas and teachings that can help us take courage and do what we know will bring us peace and happiness.



1. Fear of Embarrassment

If I tell my bishop what I've done, he'll be so disappointed—and I'll be so embarrassed. What if I have to tell my parents? What if others find out?

There are far worse things than embarrassment, such as the spiritual burden of unresolved sin and the loss of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Any feeling of embarrassment you have in confessing to your bishop will last only a small moment and then be completely swept away by a wave of relief and joy. Anyone who has confessed to their bishop can attest to this.

“I promise you [that the bishop] will not condemn you. As a servant of the Lord, he will be kind and understanding as he listens to you. He will then help you through the repentance process. He is the Lord’s messenger of mercy to help you become clean through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”

Elder C. Scott Grow of the Seventy, “Why and What Do I Need to Confess to My Bishop?” *Liahona*, Oct. 2013, 59; *New Era*, Oct. 2013, 29.

2. Fear of Consequences

If I tell my bishop about my sins, there might be consequences—not taking the sacrament, not blessing or passing the sacrament, not leaving on a mission when I want to. That would mess up my life too much.

Remember that the positive consequences of repenting far outweigh what seem to be negative consequences. Focus on the good things the Lord promises to those who confess and repent.

“The fact that we can repent is the good news of the gospel! Guilt can be swept away. We can be filled with joy, receive a remission of our sins, and have peace of conscience. We can be freed from feelings of despair and the bondage of sin.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Repentance: A Joyful Choice,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 124.

“If you have sinned, the sooner you repent, the sooner you begin to make your way back and find the peace and joy that come with forgiveness.”

For the Strength of Youth (pamphlet, 2011), 28.

3. Fear of Effort

Making the kinds of changes I need to make seems so hard. It might take a long time too.

Anything worthwhile takes effort. Forgiveness, peace, and spiritual growth are among the most worthwhile things imaginable.

“Repentance means striving to change. It would mock the Savior’s suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross for us to expect that He should transform us into angelic beings with no real effort on our part. Rather, we seek His grace to complement and reward our most diligent efforts (see 2 Nephi 25:23). Perhaps as much as praying for mercy, we should pray for time and opportunity to work and strive and overcome.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson, “The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 40.



5. Fear of Losing Your Personality

If I conform to the Church's standards, I'll be giving up some of the things that make me me, like my favorite movies, TV shows, music, and ways of expressing myself. I'll just be another cookie-cutter Mormon. I'd rather just be me.

Through repentance, you can have the Holy Spirit in your life. And through the Spirit, you can discover a deeper, truer, and better individual identity. It will be based on who you can become in God's eyes rather than anything constructed on the sandy foundation of tastes, preferences, habits, and quirks.

"Satan would rather that you define yourself by your sins instead of your divine potential. . . . Don't listen to him."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Four Titles," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 58.

"There is more individuality in those who are more holy.

"Sin, on the other hand, brings sameness; it shrinks us to addictive appetites and insubordinate impulses."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Repentance," *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 30.

4. Fear of a Shattered Self-Image

I'm one of the "good kids." If I admit that I've made mistakes, that's it—I wouldn't be a "good kid" anymore. What would I be? Who would I be? I'd rather just try to forget it and move on as though everything were the same.

We have to humbly acknowledge our sin before God so that He can "make weak things become strong" for us (Ether 12:27). And the image of yourself that you should strive to acquire is the one that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have of you: a child of God who, though imperfect, has infinite and divine potential through Their help.

"God sees us as we truly are—and He sees us worthy of rescue. . . .

"... With each step of faith on the path of discipleship, we grow into the beings of eternal glory and infinite joy we were designed to become."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "He Will Place You on His Shoulders and Carry You Home," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 104.



6. Fear of Failure

I've tried to change so many times but keep making the same mistakes. Maybe I've had all my chances. Maybe I'll never be able to change. If I try one more time and fail, won't that prove it?

Repentance isn't easy. It isn't meant to be. But it's your path to joy, so stick with it. There is no limit to sincere repentance (see Mosiah 26:30). The Son of God gave Himself as an infinite and eternal sacrifice to atone for our sins so that we can be forgiven if we have faith and repent (see Alma 34:9–16). Did you catch that? *Infinite*

and *eternal*. You are not beyond the bounds of His Atonement, because it has no bounds. Keep trying.

“Sometimes in our repentance, in our daily efforts to become more Christlike, we find ourselves repeatedly struggling with the same difficulties. As if we were climbing a tree-covered mountain, at times we don't see our progress until we get closer to the top and look back from the high ridges. Don't be discouraged. If you are striving and working to repent, you are in the process of repenting.”

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Repent . . . That I May Heal You,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 41.

“With the gift of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the strength of heaven to help us, we can improve, and the great thing about the gospel is we get credit for *trying*, even if we don't always succeed.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Tomorrow the Lord Will Do Wonders among You,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 125–126.

7. Fear of Success

What if I really am able to change my life? There might be a lot more expected of me then. Maybe it's just better to be flawed and mediocre so I won't be expected to take on more responsibility.

Being afraid of higher expectations or more responsibility may come from laziness or insecurity. But Heavenly Father's plan is one of improvement and progress. You accepted that plan before this life; embrace it now by being diligent and having faith. Try to see the kind of person Heavenly Father wants you to become and the kind of life He wants you to have. If you could actually see the person you have the potential to become, it would be difficult for you to even believe it. With Heavenly Father's and the Savior's help, it's within your grasp.

“Our responsibility is to rise from mediocrity to competence, from failure to achievement. Our task is to become our best selves.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “The Will Within,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 68.

