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The Lord has said, "I am he [who] comforteth you."*



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REPENTANCE: *A Loving Invitation*

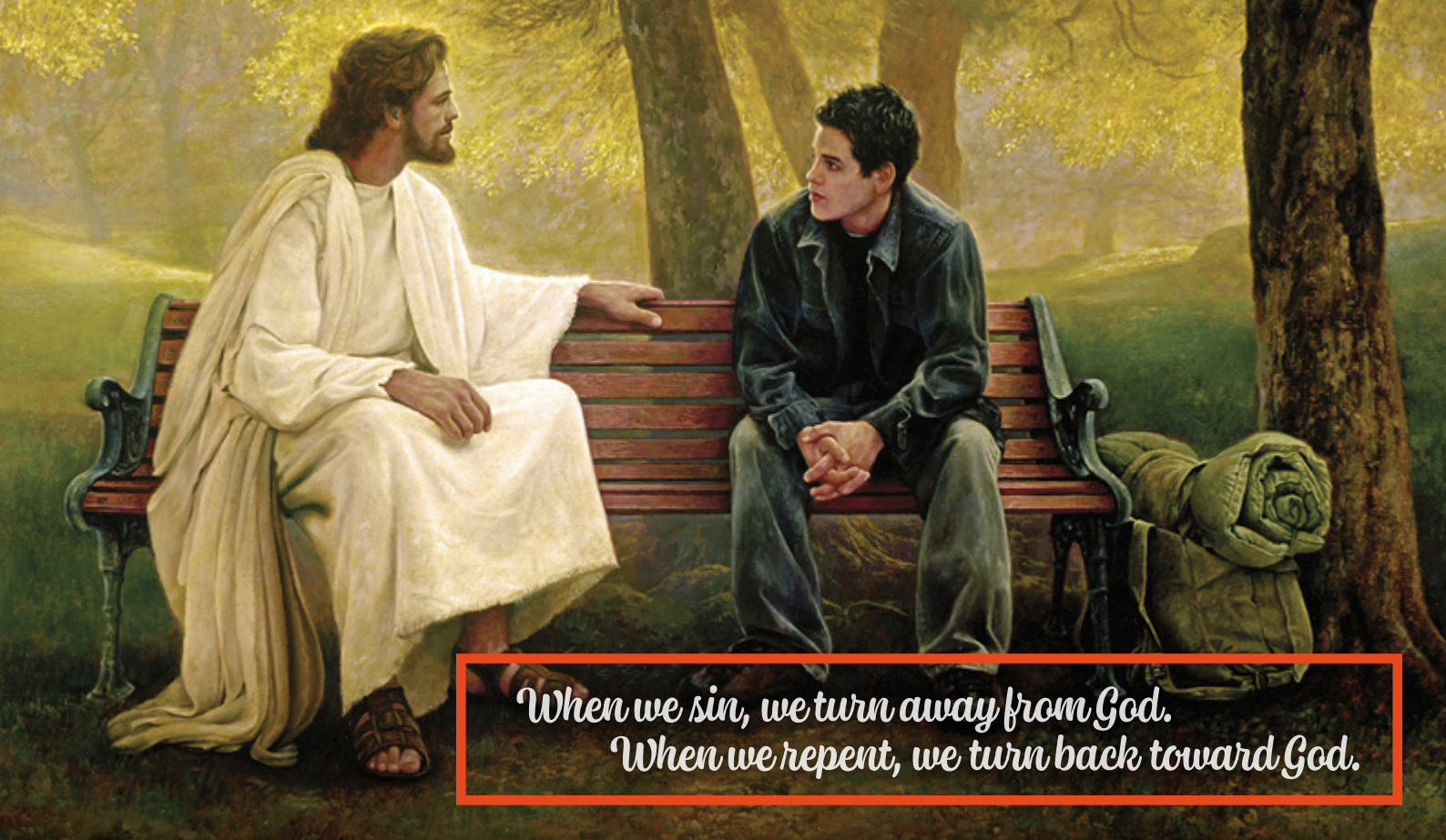
Our Savior can deliver us from our sins. His divine gift removes guilt from our heart and brings peace to our conscience.

I will forever remember President Thomas S. Monson's kindness as he extended my call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. At the conclusion of our interview, he opened his arms to embrace me. President Monson is a tall man. As he wrapped his long arms around me and pulled me close, I felt like a little boy being held in the protective arms of a loving father.

Since that experience, I have thought of the Lord's invitation to come unto Him and to spiritually be wrapped in His arms. He said, "Behold, [my arms] of mercy [are] extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me" (3 Nephi 9:14).

The scriptures speak of His arms being open (see Mormon 6:17), extended (see Alma 19:36), stretched out (see 2 Kings 17:36; Psalm 136:12), and encircling (see 2 Nephi 1:15). They are described as mighty (see D&C 123:6) and holy (see 3 Nephi 20:35), arms of mercy (see Alma 5:33), arms of safety (see Alma 34:16), arms of love (see D&C 6:20), "lengthened out all the day long" (2 Nephi 28:32).

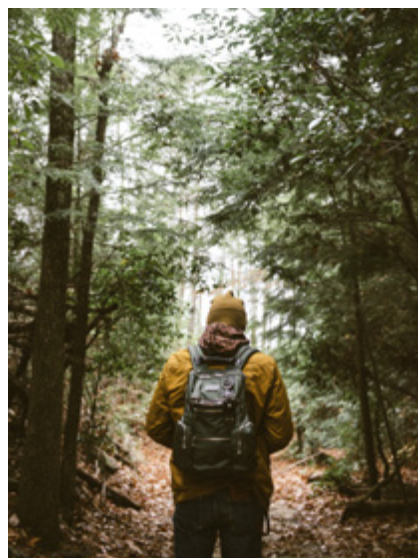
We have each felt to some extent these spiritual arms around us. We have felt His forgiveness, His love and comfort. The Lord has said, "I am he [who] comforteth you" (2 Nephi 8:12).



*When we sin, we turn away from God.
When we repent, we turn back toward God.*

THE INVITATION

The Lord's desire that we come unto Him and be wrapped in His arms is often an invitation to repent. "Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you" (Alma 5:33).



When we sin, we turn away from God. When we repent, we turn back toward God.

The invitation to repent is rarely a voice of chastisement but rather a loving appeal to turn around and to "re-turn" toward God. It is the beckoning of a loving Father and His Only Begotten Son to be more than we are, to reach up to a higher way of life, to change, and to feel the happiness of keeping the commandments. Being disciples of Christ, we rejoice in the blessing of repenting and the joy of being forgiven. They become part of us, shaping the way we think and feel.

I am amazed at the Savior's encircling arms of mercy and love for the repentant, no matter how selfish the forsaken sin. I testify that the Savior is able and eager to forgive our sins. Except for the sins of those few who choose perdition after having

known a fulness, there is no sin that cannot be forgiven. What a marvelous privilege for each of us to turn away from our sins and to come unto Christ. Divine forgiveness is one of the sweetest fruits of the gospel, removing guilt and pain from our hearts and replacing them with joy and peace of conscience. Jesus declares, "Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?" (3 Nephi 9:13).

A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Some may need "a mighty change [of] heart" (Alma 5:12) to confront serious sins. The help of a priesthood leader might be necessary. For most, repenting is quiet and quite private, daily seeking the Lord's help to make needed changes.

For most, repentance is more a journey than a one-time event. It is

not easy. To change is difficult. It requires running into the wind, swimming upstream. Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). Repentance is turning away from some things, such as dishonesty, pride, anger, and impure thoughts, and turning toward other things, such as kindness, unselfishness, patience, and spirituality. It is “re-turning” toward God.

DAILY STRIVING

Realizing where we need to change, we sorrow for the sadness we have caused. This leads to sincere and heartfelt confession to the Lord and, when needed, to others. When possible, we restore what we have wrongly harmed or taken.

Repentance becomes part of our daily lives. Our weekly taking of the sacrament is so important—to come meekly, humbly before the Lord, acknowledging our dependence upon Him, asking Him to forgive and to renew us, and promising to always remember Him.

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.

As we honestly confess our sins, restore what we can to the offended, and forsake our sins by keeping the



commandments, we are in the process of receiving forgiveness. With time, we will feel the anguish of our sorrow subside, taking “away the guilt from our hearts” (Alma 24:10) and bringing “peace of conscience” (Mosiah 4:3).

For those who are truly repentant but seem unable to feel relief:

continue keeping the commandments. I promise you, relief will come in the timetable of the Lord. Healing also requires time.

THE BLESSINGS

I bear witness that our Savior can deliver us from our sins. I have personally felt His redeeming power. I have unmistakably seen His healing hand upon thousands in nations throughout the world. I testify that His divine gift removes guilt from our heart and brings peace to our conscience.

He loves us. We are members of His Church. He invites each of us to repent, turn away from our sins, and come unto Him. I witness that He is there. **NE**

From an October 2009 general conference address.

