

Lesson
12

Repentance Is a Blessing

Purpose To create in class members a desire to repent of their sins.

- Preparation**
1. Prayerfully study Mosiah 26:30; Alma 36:19–21; Doctrine and Covenants 1:32; 19:16; 58:42–43; Moses 6:57.
 2. Additional reading: Address given at the October 1995 general conference by President Boyd K. Packer (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 21–25; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 18–21); address given at the April 1995 general conference by Elder Richard G. Scott (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 100–104; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 75–78).
 3. Prepare a label that says *Repentance* and attach it to the chalkboard eraser you will be using during the lesson.
 4. Materials needed:
 - a. The picture Jesus Praying in Gethsemane (picture 4 in the picture section of the manual; 62175; Gospel Art Picture Kit 227).
 - b. A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

Note to the teacher Heavenly Father has lovingly included repentance in the gospel plan and promised to receive all who forsake their sins and come to him with a broken heart and contrite spirit. Be sure to leave class members with hope and encouragement following this lesson. Repentance is necessary for everyone. It is a great blessing that allows us to be forgiven and cleansed of our sins so we can achieve exaltation.

Suggested Lesson Development **Repentance Allows Us to Become Clean Again**

Story Tell or have a class member tell the following story:

Once a young girl was asked what she was thankful for. She replied, “Erasers.” When asked to explain, she said, “I make lots of mistakes doing math problems. Without an eraser I can’t undo my mistakes and write the correct answers on my paper.”

Chalkboard discussion On the chalkboard write in large letters *SINS*.

- Have you ever done something wrong and wished you had a giant eraser to undo your action? (This is a general question. Do not ask class members to name the actions they are thinking of.)

Using the eraser labeled *Repentance*, erase the word *SINS* from the chalkboard. Make sure class members can see the label as you erase.

Explain that repentance is the process Heavenly Father has given us for “erasing” our sins. Heavenly Father wants us to return to live with him after this life, but no unclean, or sinful, person can live with him (see Moses 6:57). Heavenly Father knows that everyone will make mistakes and commit sins while on the earth, so he has given us a way to become clean again after we have sinned. This is repentance.

Picture presentation

Display the picture of Jesus praying in Gethsemane. Explain that because Jesus Christ paid for all our sins with his suffering, when we repent we can be forgiven and can become clean again (see D&C 19:16).

We All Must Repent

Story and discussion

Read or tell the following story:

At the age of fifty-seven, Charlie was living in Leavenworth, Kansas—in prison. He had been in many of the United States’ high security institutions for most of his life. He had grown up with crime. His father and mother were alcoholics and convicts. When he was thirteen, the flu epidemic killed all the members of his family. After the funerals, Charlie hopped on a freight train and began a nomadic life across the United States. His life included crime, beginning with car theft, then burglary, and finally armed robbery. By the age of fifty-seven Charlie had spent thirty-five years in prison.

- Do you think there is any hope for a person like this?

Continue the story:

Charlie finally realized he was living a dead-end existence. He later described how he felt at that time:

“I slowly came to realize I did not like myself. How could I change? If I kept up my criminal acts, I would die in a prison cell and be buried in some unmarked plot on prison property.”

- What did Charlie need to do to change his life?

Charlie began studying religion. He eventually read the Book of Mormon and realized that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the true Church. He wrote to Church headquarters and asked for more information about the Church. He was unable to be baptized because he was in prison, but he studied the books and other materials he received from the Missionary Department.

As Charlie gained a testimony of Jesus Christ and the gospel plan, he made a complete change in his behavior. He would learn a principle of the gospel, then live it, and become strengthened; then he would learn another principle, live it, and become strengthened; then learn another principle, live it, and become strengthened further. As Charlie learned about the things that Heavenly Father and Jesus wanted him to do, he started doing those things and stopped doing wrong things.

Charlie eventually had a chance for parole (to be let out of prison under strict supervision). He decided that he would start a new life. He met with the stake

president in the area, who was so impressed with Charlie that he went to the parole officer and guaranteed that he would get Charlie a job and a place to live if Charlie were released on parole.

Charlie was released from prison, and the stake president found a job and an apartment for him. The missionaries taught Charlie the gospel discussions. When his parole was finished, Charlie was baptized. Two and a half years later he came to Church headquarters to meet the person who had answered his first letter and to attend general conference. Charlie, who was now the high priests group leader in his ward, testified of the truthfulness of the gospel. He was a completely new man.

Discussion

- In what way was Charlie a new man?

Point out that as Charlie learned the gospel, he repented of the things he had done wrong. Repentance enabled him to change from being a criminal to being a member of the Church with a responsible calling and a strong testimony of the gospel.

- Why is repentance important?

Explain that sins can slow or stop our spiritual development and move us away from Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Repentance allows us to turn back to Heavenly Father and Jesus and begin to grow spiritually again. Although we may not commit big sins like Charlie's, all of us commit sins, so we all need to repent.

Repentance Requires Effort

Quotation

Have a class member read Charlie's comments about repentance:

"Because of . . . agency, I had to make the first move in changing my lifestyle. Repentance is definitely a change of mind. Repentance begins by a desire to scrap all your past by reading, studying, and pondering God's word. Repentance is reaching out from the midst of my pains and negativeness and turning them to joy and positiveness."

Chalkboard discussion

Explain that there is a process that helps us turn the pain and guilt of sin into joy through repentance. Charlie mentioned the first step in this process when he said, "Repentance begins by a desire to scrap all your past."

Write on the chalkboard:

1. Recognize your sin and desire to change.

- Why is recognition that you have sinned the first step in repentance? Why is it important to feel sorrow for what you have done wrong and desire to do better?

To find the next two steps, have class members read and mark Doctrine and Covenants 58:43.

Write on the chalkboard:

2. Confess your sin.

3. Forsake your sin.

- Why is it necessary to confess your sin? To whom should you confess?

Explain that all sins must be confessed to the Lord. If we have sinned against another person (for example, if you lied to your mother), we should also confess to that person. Serious sins must also be confessed to the bishop or branch president. Confession shows that we are sincere about wanting to repent.

- What does it mean to forsake your sin?

Explain that to forsake means to give up. If we forsake a sin, we resolve never to do that wrong thing again.

- Why is forsaking your sin an important part of repentance?

Write on the chalkboard:

4. Make restitution.

Explain that to make restitution means to make right, as much as is possible, what we have done wrong. Give class members examples of a few specific actions for which restitution can be made and ask them to tell how those wrongs could be made right. For example, if we have stolen something, we return it or pay for it. If we have lied, we tell the truth. If we have damaged something, we repair or replace it.

You may want to point out that sometimes a wrong action cannot be made right, no matter what we do. For example, if we have said untrue things about a person we can apologize and tell the truth, but we may not be able to undo the damage done to the person's reputation. If we have stolen or damaged something, we may be able to replace the object but not exactly as it was. In this kind of situation, Jesus Christ, through his Atonement and mercy, will take responsibility for setting things right. But this happens only after we have done all we can.

Write on the chalkboard:

5. Keep the commandments.

Explain that the last step in repentance is striving to keep all the commandments of God (see D&C 1:32). Repentance is a process that we will have to use throughout our lives, but as we become more perfect in keeping the commandments, we will do less for which we need to repent.

Read Charlie's testimony to the class:

"I know the extent [of the] damage done by my years of rebellion. But I also know that repentance and endurance based on faith is the way to my personal salvation. When I am called from this mortal life, I hope and pray, that since [I found the gospel], in the words of Paul [in] 2 Timothy 4:7, I can say, 'I have fought a good fight,' I did the best I could with my Church callings, and I kept my faith and love for the Lord and Heavenly Father."

Point out that once Charlie had repented of his sins, he endured to the end—he spent the rest of his life trying to live the way Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ wanted him to live.

Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ Will Forgive Us When We Repent

Scripture discussion

Explain that repentance can be a long and difficult process. But the effort required to repent is more than repaid by the blessings we receive when we do repent.

- What blessings come to us when we repent?

Have class members find and mark Mosiah 26:30 and Doctrine and Covenants 58:42. Have two class members each read one of these verses aloud.

- What does the Lord promise to do when we repent of our sins?
- What does it mean that the Lord “will remember [our sins] no more”? (He will not consider them when we are judged. When we have sincerely and completely repented, to the Lord it is as if we had never sinned.)

Have class members find and mark Alma 36:19–21. Have a class member read the verses aloud.

- According to these verses, how will we feel when we have repented and have been forgiven?

Explain that sin brings us guilt and pain, but repentance brings us joy. Tell class members that it is better not to sin and thus avoid the pain of sin and the effort of repentance, but when we do sin, we can repent and again feel the joy of being clean.

Quotation

Have a person read the following statement by Elder Spencer W. Kimball when he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“What relief! What comfort! What joy! Those laden with transgressions and sorrows and sin may be forgiven and cleansed and purified if they will return to their Lord, learn of him, and keep his commandments” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 368).

Testimony

Testify of the joy and gratitude you feel for the principle of repentance, which enables us to be forgiven of our sins. Express your gratitude for Christ’s Atonement, which makes repentance possible.

Encourage class members to sincerely repent of their sins and strive to live righteously. Remind them of the joy and relief that can come through repentance.

Enrichment Activities

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. If *Book of Mormon Video Presentations* (53911) is available, show “Becoming Children of Christ,” an eleven-minute segment. Discuss how repentance helps us put off the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19) and become children of Christ.
2. Sing or say the words to “Come unto Jesus” (*Hymns*, no. 117). Discuss how the words to this song relate to repentance.
3. Emphasize to class members that while repentance and forgiveness are wonderful gifts, it is better to avoid sin. We should *never* deliberately sin

with the thought, “I will just repent later.” Read or have a class member read the following illustration of this idea, by Elder Hugh W. Pinnock of the Seventy:

“Live the commandments. Never feed the foxes! What does that mean? *Breaking commandments is like feeding foxes.* In England where we live, my wife and I had heard that foxes were right in town. We wanted to see a fox. A neighbor told us that if we left food for the foxes we probably would see one. Our butcher gave us some bones. Each night we would place some bones out in the backyard. Soon a fox came to eat. Then a few more. Now we have at least five foxes racing through our flower garden, digging up the lawn, and leaving a shambles every night. . . .

“What started out as a curiosity is now a problem, and sin is much the same. An indiscretion can begin a process that can make a mess of a whole life. Remember, if you don’t start feeding the foxes, they will never tear up your yard. If you avoid making the seemingly small and harmless mistakes, your life will be free of many larger problems later on” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 57–58; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 41).

Point out that the Pinnocks were eventually able to get the foxes out of their yard, but not without much effort and not before the foxes had caused great damage to the yard. Repentance can bring us forgiveness and make us clean again, but not without much effort and not before we have experienced the pain and damage caused by sin.

4. For the following object lesson, bring to class a clear bottle or bowl of water, a few drops of red food coloring, and a few drops of liquid bleach. (You may want to practice this object lesson at home before presenting it in class.)

Have class members read and mark Isaiah 1:18.

- Why do you think the prophet Isaiah used the colors scarlet and crimson in describing sins? (The color red represents blood, which implies serious sin. Isaiah is saying that we can repent even if we have committed serious sins.)
- In contrast, why did he use the phrase *white as snow* to show God’s forgiveness? (To represent purity. Through repentance we can become pure and clean again.)

Show the class the container of water. Explain that the clean, clear water represents a person free from sin. Add a few drops of red food coloring to the water. Have class members observe the coloring as it gradually discolors all the water. Explain that sin discolors our lives like the food coloring discolored the water.

Add a few drops of the liquid bleach to the container and gently stir or swirl until the water is clear again.

- What gospel principles does the bleach represent? (Repentance and forgiveness.)

Explain that as the bleach makes the water clear again, sincere repentance enables us to be forgiven and become clean again after we have sinned.