



Repentance

MAKING THE INSIDE CLEAN

By Michael Weir Allred

Josh climbed into his newly purchased sport-utility vehicle, ready to have the ultimate four-wheeling experience. He was excited to use the SUV in the way he thought it was meant to be used—on a muddy, wet adventure. He was thrilled by how high in the air the car splashed the muddy water before raining it down all over him.

After his adventure, Josh did not wash the mud off the four-wheeler—he thought mud made it look tough. Eventually rain washed off the outside of the vehicle, but several months later, Josh began having trouble with the engine.

He took the car to a mechanic, who told him that the dirty water from his ride through the mud had damaged the air filter; as a result, contaminants had gotten into the engine and it needed repair. It was a costly mistake, but Josh learned a valuable lesson: keep things clean, and if they get dirty, wash them as soon as possible.

Just as with Josh's SUV, sometimes things happen that cause our insides—our spirits—to become unclean or impure. As we go about our lives, we occasionally commit sins. But if we want to live with our Heavenly Father again, we cannot be unclean. We need to repent, which includes forsaking sin, replacing it with righteousness, and cleansing ourselves from the effects of sin.

The Consequences of Sin

When we sin, we suffer from the effects of being unclean and impure. The immediate consequence of sin is that we withdraw ourselves from the companionship of the Holy Ghost. King Benjamin reminds us, “And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known

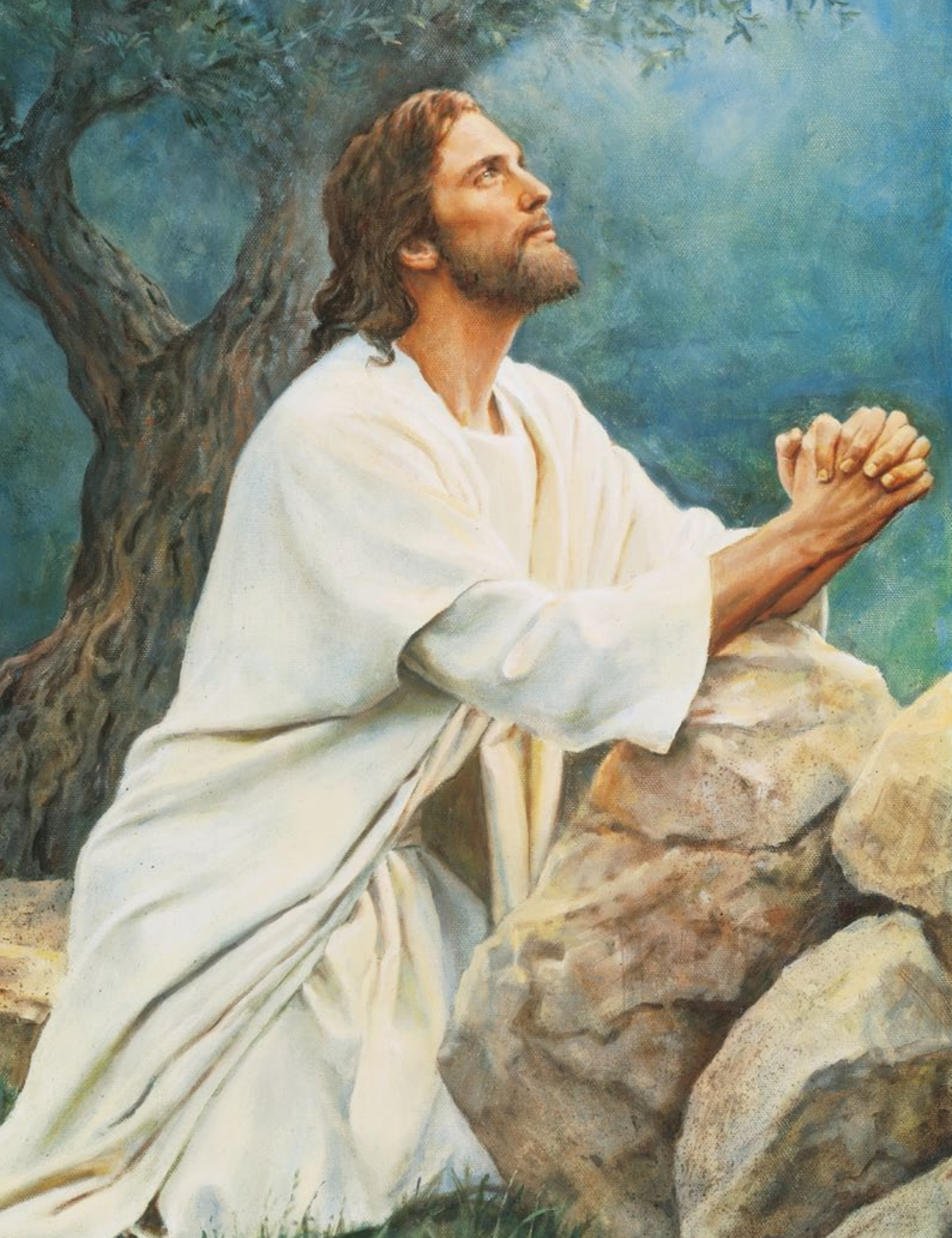
and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom's paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved” (Mosiah 2:36).

Notice what happens after we pull away from the Spirit: we lose our guide, causing us to lose blessings, protection, comfort, and peace. When we sin, we “[go] contrary to the nature of God,”

and we are “in a state contrary to the nature of happiness” (Alma 41:11). In other words, if we sin, we are not happy.

Not only does sin make us unhappy in this life, but it also leads to suffering in the next life. Amulek reminds us that “no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven. . . . Therefore, ye cannot be saved in your sins” (Alma 11:37). The Lord describes the sufferings of those who don't repent as “sore—how sore you know not” (D&C 19:15).

*Repentance is
about becoming
clean from sin and
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spirituality
through the power
of the Atonement.*



The Atonement Brings Forgiveness

Fortunately for us, Heavenly Father provided a way for us to be cleansed from sin so that we may be restored to a clean and pure state. That way is through faith, repentance, and the Atonement of Jesus Christ: “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

The miraculous gift of the Atonement allows Jesus to take upon Himself our sins so that we don’t have to suffer eternal consequences for them if we will repent (see D&C 19:16–17).

“There is only one way to rid ourselves of this suffering,” says Elder Claudio D. Zivic of the Seventy. “It is by means of sincere repentance. I learned that if I could present unto the Lord a broken heart and a contrite spirit, feeling a godly sorrow for my sins, humbling myself, being repentant of my faults, He, through His miraculous atoning sacrifice, could erase those sins and remember them no more.”¹

If we repent, we can feel the joy of forgiveness that comes through the mercy of Jesus Christ.

It’s Never Too Late to Repent

We can learn yet another important lesson about repentance from Josh and his SUV: the best time to repent is now. Because Josh neglected to take full care of his vehicle, the problems on the inside grew worse. Similarly, sin can affect all aspects of our lives if we allow it to remain by delaying our repentance.

That being said, we need to remember that it is never too late to repent. President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum



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of the Twelve Apostles, tells us: “Those who make one serious mistake tend to add another by assuming that it is then too late for them. It is never too late! . . . The discouraging idea that a mistake (or even a series of them) makes it everlastingly too late, does not come from the Lord. He has said that *if* we will repent, not only will He forgive us our transgressions, but He will forget them and remember our sins no more. (See Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17; D&C 58:42; Alma 36:19.) Repentance is like soap; it can wash sin away.”²

Those of us who are afraid that repentance is no longer an option can find comfort in the words of Alma: “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).

Confess, Forsake, and Become Better

As we repent of our sins, we are required to “confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43) and then to “go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). However, simply forsaking sin by itself is not sufficient to completely remove the effects of sin.

During my time as a bishop, I used the following visual to help explain what we need to do after we forsake a sin. Picture in your mind a bucket of water. That bucket represents you and me, and the water represents the Spirit, which can reside within us. The water can also represent our pure, worthy state.



A DIVINE GIFT

“Repentance is a divine gift, and there should be a smile on our faces when we speak of it. It points us to freedom, confidence, and peace. Rather than interrupting the celebration, the gift of repentance is the cause for true celebration.”

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

Now imagine that you have a brick and have dropped it into the bucket. That brick is like sin—it’s hard and rough and impure. As soon as it enters the bucket, it causes some of the water to slosh out. When we sin, we displace some of the good things in our life, like our peace of mind and some of our capacity to feel the Spirit.

Repenting is like taking that brick out of the bucket of water and making the water pure and clean again. But the repentance isn’t complete by just removing the brick, because the bucket is still not full. We must add more water to fill the bucket again.

When we repent, it is not enough just to forsake sin; we must replace the empty space left by sin by living righteously. We need to refill our spiritual bucket by doing those things that invite the Spirit back into our lives. We need to recommit to living an obedient life, to forgiving others, to restoring damages,

and to enduring faithfully to the end.

The power to make these changes comes from the Savior and His Atonement. The people of King Benjamin recognized how the Atonement was working in their lives when they said, “Because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, . . . we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2).

The people of King Benjamin experienced one of the healing aspects of repentance: as we repent, we develop “a fresh view about God, about [ourselves], and about the world.”³ This fresh perspective helps us to once again feel and recognize the love of our Savior and our Heavenly Father, and we can continue to feel Their love as we strive to keep the commandments of God.

Obedience to God’s commandments also qualifies us to receive help from the Holy

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going?

You or someone you know may wonder about the purpose of life. Following are some of the Church’s basic teachings on this topic.

God is our Heavenly Father, and He loves us.

We are eternal beings who lived as spirits before we were born. We will continue to live after we die.

Our life on earth has purpose—to gain a physical body and learn to choose between good and evil.

Jesus Christ atoned for our sins and provided a way for us to repent and become clean again.

Following God’s plan for us is the surest way to find happiness, endure life’s challenges, and return to our Heavenly Father.

For more information see lds.org/plan/our-eternal-life; *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 132–35, 115–17; Guide to the Scriptures, “Plan of Redemption,” “Repentance,” scriptures.lds.org.



Sin is like a brick dropped into a full bucket of water. Repentance isn't complete by just removing the brick; we must add more water to fill the bucket again.

Ghost to overcome our weaknesses. Our problems and weaknesses will not be completely taken away, but just as the Lord strengthened Alma and his people “that they could bear up their burdens with ease” (Mosiah 24:15), we too can be blessed with comfort and understanding to make our burdens lighter. We too can “submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:15). This kind of aid comes as a blessing of living the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁴

Repentance Brings Us Joy

When Josh first purchased his SUV, he didn't realize the importance of keeping a small thing like the air filter clean. Yet in order for the car to continue functioning, it needed to be clean in every aspect. Likewise, if we want

to progress in this life, we too need to clean our spirits when they become unclean or impure through sin. If we remain in sin, we lose the guidance of the Holy Ghost and can no longer return to our Father in Heaven.

To provide a way for us to be cleansed from sin, our Savior lovingly performed the Atonement, which enables us not only to be cleansed but also to refill our spiritual buckets. As we make the effort to repent and to refill our lives with the Spirit, we can experience renewed joy, peace, and confidence in our lives as we work to overcome our weaknesses and become better. ■

NOTES

1. Claudio D. Zivic, “After All We Can Do,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 98.
2. Boyd K. Packer, “To Young Women and Men,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 59.
3. Bible Dictionary, “Repentance.”
4. See *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 19–20, 132–35; *Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts* (2006), 12.