



SUSPENSION AND REPENTANCE

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO I got into drinking. I drank as kind of an experiment. Around here there isn't a lot to do, so my friends all drink and party. I wanted to be like them, I guess. After I started drinking, I felt almost hopeless. At first I thought I was happy, that I was having fun, but I realized I was miserable. I thought, what's the point in trying to change? I just didn't feel worthy.

I really love football, and one day after practice I came home to find my mom sitting there. We talked about my drinking, and she called the school. I was suspended for a couple of games.

"The invitation to repent is rarely a voice of chastisement but rather a loving appeal to turn around and to 're-turn' toward God."

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Oct. 2009 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 40).

That was a really big kick in the head for me—I realized I needed to change.

My family and some people in my ward helped me and made me feel loved. As I went through the repentance process, I gained a strong testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It's so amazing to feel how much Heavenly Father loves us. It's just crazy to me that He would send His Son to die for me when I mess up so much. You can always call upon Heavenly Father no matter what, and He will be there for you if you are willing to try and change.

I'm so much happier now than I was when I was drinking and partying. The gospel just brings you so much happiness if you turn to God and strive to improve yourself. It's totally worth it.

Jens P., 18, Illinois, USA

What are some of the benefits of sincere repentance?

1. Joy replaces our pain (see Alma 36:20).
2. We gain a fresh view about God, ourselves, and the world (see Bible Dictionary, "Repentance").
3. We are forgiven (see Moroni 6:8).
4. Christ receives us (see Alma 5:33).

MY BAD BACK

A FEW YEARS AGO my back started hurting. I was kind of worried, so I went to see our family chiropractor. He took some X-rays, saw something weird going on, and recommended me to a specialist.

I was right. There was something wrong. The specialist told me I have a condition called ankylosing spondylitis. It's a form of arthritis where your spinal joints get inflamed and your spine tries to fuse itself together.

My prescription was to exercise and stretch four or five days a week for about 20 to 30 minutes. If I don't, my back starts to hurt again. Ankylosing spondylitis can also lead to other serious health problems.

Someday I may have to treat my condition with drugs, but for now, I stretch every day. I also go to the gym several times a week. Recently, I went for a checkup. The doctor told me that because I was diligent with stretching, my spine is in a lot better shape than many people my age.

I'm thankful for my body despite its limitations. I try not to focus on my health problems and just use my body the best I can. A few months ago, I found out that the lead singer of one of my favorite rock bands also has ankylosing spondylitis. Rather than complain, he said a lot of the great things in his life have come from struggling.

I try to remember the fact that Jesus Christ suffered every pain for us. He knows the mental and physical pain of any condition, including ankylosing spondylitis. He is the most equipped to help us, and He has helped me be grateful for my body and its abilities.

Samuel M., 21, Utah, USA



MODEL BEHAVIOR

A FEW MONTHS AGO, I was invited to go up to a cabin with a few other girls. One of the girls brought about 10 gorgeous dresses for us to model so she could photograph them and rent them out. There was only one problem: all but one of the dresses were immodest, and the only modest one didn't fit me. Dread washed over me. I started thinking, "Oh, it's only once. It's only for her Instagram. No one will know." I soon realized that wasn't true.

When we were preparing to model the dresses, I started making up reasons to not wear one. Everyone kept finding solutions to all of my excuses. At last I decided to take the photographer aside and explain, "I just don't feel comfortable wearing something immodest."

All the other girls put on a dress and went outside to start modeling. I stood watching them, feeling stronger spiritually than I had in a long time. Even though I was alone, I never felt alone; I felt the Spirit surrounding me, encouraging me, and building me up. I knew without a doubt I had done the right thing.

Sarah C., 20, Idaho, USA

