

LESSON 16

Repentance and Forgiveness

Introduction

In order to be cleansed from sin, we must exercise faith in Jesus Christ unto repentance. As we sincerely repent, we can receive a remission of sins, which brings joy and peace of

conscience to our souls. We can retain a remission of sins throughout our lives as we faithfully keep God's commandments and love and serve one another.

Background Reading

- D. Todd Christofferson, "The Divine Gift of Repentance," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 38–41.
- Neil L. Andersen, "Repent ... That I May Heal You," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 40–43.
- Craig A. Cardon, "The Savior Wants to Forgive," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 15–17.

Suggestions for Teaching

Alma 34:15–17; 3 Nephi 9:13–14, 19–22

Exercising faith in Christ unto repentance

Ask students to imagine they have been asked to speak in sacrament meeting about repentance. Invite a few students to share what they might say to help Church members better understand this doctrine. After they share their responses, display and read the following statement by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency:



"We need a strong faith in Christ to be able to repent" ("Point of Safe Return," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 100).

- Why is this statement true?

Invite a student to read aloud Alma 34:15–17, which records Amulek's teachings to the Zoramites regarding repentance. Encourage the class to follow along and look for what Amulek taught is required of us in order to be forgiven.

- What principle about receiving forgiveness is taught in these verses? (As students respond, write this principle on the board: **In order to receive the merciful blessings of forgiveness, we must exercise faith in Jesus Christ unto repentance.** Point out to students that the phrase "faith unto repentance"

is mentioned four times in these verses. This is an opportunity to emphasize the scripture study skill of recognizing word repetitions.)

- Why must we exercise faith in Jesus Christ in order to repent and be forgiven? (We must have faith in His atoning sacrifice in order for this sacrifice to be effective in our lives. Only through His Atonement can we be forgiven so that our hearts are changed and cleansed from sin [see Mosiah 5:2].)

To help students better understand how we come to the Savior and repent, explain that following the widespread destruction in the Americas that bore witness of His Crucifixion, the Savior taught the people what they must do to repent and receive forgiveness from Him. Invite students to study 3 Nephi 9:13–14, 19–22 with a partner, looking for phrases that describe what the Savior said we must do to come unto Him and repent. After sufficient time, invite students to share what they discovered.

- What principle does the Lord teach in these verses about what we must do to repent? (Although students may choose other words, they should identify the following principle: **If we come unto Christ with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, He will receive us and redeem us from our sins.**)
- How can the Savior’s invitation to “[come] unto me as a little child” (verse 22) and “return unto me” (verse 13) help us better understand what it means to have a broken heart and a contrite spirit?
- What life experiences might cause a person to have a broken heart and a contrite spirit?

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy. Consider giving a copy of the statement to each student. Encourage students to listen for insights into how we offer a broken heart and a contrite spirit as we repent.



“What are a broken heart and a contrite spirit? ... The Savior’s perfect submission to the Eternal Father is the very essence of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Christ’s example teaches us that a broken heart is an eternal attribute of godliness. When our hearts are broken, we are completely open to the Spirit of God and recognize our dependence on Him for all that we have and all that we are. The sacrifice so entailed is a sacrifice of pride in all its forms. Like malleable clay in the hands of a skilled potter, the brokenhearted can be molded and shaped in the hands of the Master.

“A broken heart and a contrite spirit are also preconditions to repentance [see 2 Nephi 2:6–7]. ... When we sin and desire forgiveness, a broken heart and a contrite spirit mean to experience ‘godly sorrow [that] worketh repentance’ (2 Corinthians 7:10). This comes when our desire to be cleansed from sin is so consuming that our hearts ache with sorrow and we yearn to feel at peace with our Father in Heaven. Those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit are willing to do anything and everything that God asks of them, without resistance or resentment. We cease doing things our way and learn to do them God’s way instead. In such a condition of submissiveness, the Atonement can take effect and true repentance can occur” (“A Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 32).

- According to Elder Porter, what does it mean to come unto Christ with a broken heart and a contrite spirit?

Invite students to ponder what they can do to more fully exercise their faith in Jesus Christ by offering to Him a broken heart and a contrite spirit. You may wish to give them a few minutes to write the impressions that come to them through the Spirit.

Testify that the Savior's merciful gift of repentance is available to each of us. Invite a few students to share their feelings about the Savior's atoning sacrifice and the gift of repentance.

Enos 1:4–8; Mosiah 4:1–3; Alma 19:29–30, 33–36; 36:19–21

Forgiveness of sins brings feelings of joy and peace

- How might you respond to individuals who want to know how they can know whether they have been forgiven of a past sin?

Invite students to search Enos 1:4–8; Mosiah 4:1–3; and Alma 36:19–21, looking for ways in which people can know they are receiving a remission of their sins.

- According to these verses, how can we know that we are receiving a remission of our sins? (Help students identify the following principle: **As we sincerely repent and receive a remission of our sins, our guilt is swept away, we are filled with the Spirit of the Lord, and we feel joy and peace.** As prompted by the Spirit, you might share the following statement by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “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” [“Repent . . . That I May Heal You,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 42].)

To further illustrate this principle, ask a few students to read aloud several verses describing the conversion of King Lamoni and his people, found in Alma 19:29–30, 33–36. Invite the class to look for blessings that the people received because of their repentance and faith.

- What specific blessings did King Lamoni, his wife, and many other Lamanites receive because of their repentance and faith? (Their hearts were changed, angels ministered to them, they were baptized, the Church was established, and the Lord poured out His Spirit upon them.)
- When have you seen others experience some of these same blessings as they have repented and moved closer to the Lord?

To help students feel the truth and importance of the principle above, ask a student to read the following testimony from President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"Letters come from those who have made tragic mistakes. They ask, 'Can I ever be forgiven?'"

"The answer is *yes!*"

"The gospel teaches us that relief from torment and guilt can be earned through repentance. Save for those few who defect to perdition after having known a fulness, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness.

"'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' That is, Isaiah continued, 'if ye be willing and obedient' [Isaiah 1:18–19]" ("The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 19).

Invite students to ponder experiences when they have felt the joy and peace of conscience that accompany complete repentance.

Mosiah 4:11–12, 26

Retaining a remission of our sins

Ask a student to read Mosiah 4:11–12, 26 aloud. Invite students to look for what King Benjamin taught about how we can retain a remission of our sins.

- According to these words of King Benjamin, how can we retain a remission of our sins throughout our lives? (Students should identify the following principle: **If we remember God's love and goodness toward us, stand steadfast in our faith, and love and serve others, we can retain a remission of our sins.**)

To deepen students' understanding of this principle, invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"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. Surely the Lord smiles upon one

who desires to come to judgment worthily, who resolutely labors day by day to replace weakness with strength. Real repentance, real change may require repeated attempts, but there is something refining and holy in such striving" ("The Divine Gift of Repentance," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 39).

- What thoughts and feelings do you have as you consider that the Lord "smiles upon" you when you labor to overcome sin and mortal weakness?

Share your testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Assure students that as they repent, they will experience joy and peace of conscience. Encourage students to examine their lives and to exercise their faith in Jesus Christ unto repentance.

Student Readings

- Enos 1:4–8; Mosiah 4:1–3, 11–12, 26; Alma 19:29–30, 33–36; 34:15–17; 36:19–21; 3 Nephi 9:13–14, 19–22.
- Neil L. Andersen, “Repent ... That I May Heal You,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 40–43.