

# Doctrine of Forgiveness

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### **We can become clean**

- Isaiah 1:18
  - “though your sins be as scarlet”
- D&C 58:42
  - “I, the Lord, remember them no more”

### **We cannot evade responsibility**

- Luke 12:59
  - “paid the very last mite”
  - Spencer W Kimball:
    - “The way of the transgressor is hard. It always has been and it always will be.”
- Galations 6:7
  - “As we sow, so shall we reap”
  - Spencer W Kimball:
    - “One may do as he pleases, but he cannot evade responsibility. He may break laws, but he cannot avoid penalties. One gets by with nothing. God is just.”
- Alma 11:37
  - “Ye cannot be saved in your sins”

## **Only one path to forgiveness**

- Spencer W Kimball:  
“There is *no royal road to repentance*, no privileged path to forgiveness. Every man must follow the same course whether he be rich or poor, educated or untrained, tall or short, prince or pauper, king or commoner. "For there is no respect of persons with God." (Rom. 2:11.) There is one way only. It is a long road spiked with thorns and briars and pitfalls and problems.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 149)

## **We can't blame our sins on the Lord**

- James 1:13
  - “neither tempteth he any man”
  - Spencer W Kimball:  
“Let him who has evil tendencies be honest and acknowledge his weakness. I tell you the Lord places no sin in our lives. He has made no man wicked.”
- 1 Cor 10:13
  - “not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able”
- Spencer W Kimball:  
“To blame our sins upon the Lord, saying they are inherent and cannot be controlled, is cheap and cowardly. To blame our sins upon our parents and our upbringing is the way of the escapist. One's parents may have failed; our own backgrounds may have been frustrating, but as sons and daughters of a living God we have within ourselves the power to rise above our circumstances, to change our lives.”

## **Serious sin – forgiveness does not come easy but we can be forgiven**

- D&C 64:7
  - “I, the Lord, forgive sins ... who have not sinned unto death.”
- Ephesians 5:5-7
  - “for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience”
- 1 Nephi 15:34
  - “kingdom of God is not filthy, and there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God”
- D&C 42:24-25
  - “he that committeth adultery, and repenteth not, shall be cast out”
  - “But he that has committed adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsaketh it, and doeth it no more, thou shalt forgive;”
- Isaiah 55:7
  - “abundantly pardon”
- Spencer W Kimball:

“The way of the transgressor is hard and tough and long and thorny. But the Lord has promised that for all those sins and errors outside of the named unpardonable sins, there is forgiveness. But sometimes it takes longer to climb back up the steep hill than it did to skid down it. And it is often much more difficult.” (Teachings of Spencer W Kimball, pg 81)
- Spencer W Kimball:

“To every forgiveness there is a condition. The plaster must be as wide as the sore. The fasting, the prayers, the humility must be equal to or greater than the sin. There must be a broken heart and a contrite spirit. There must be "sackcloth and ashes." There must be tears and genuine change of heart. There must be conviction of the sin, abandonment of the evil, confession of the error to properly constituted authorities of the Lord. There must be restitution and a confirmed, determined change of pace, direction and destination. Conditions must be controlled and companionship corrected or changed. There must be a washing of robes to get them white and there must be a new consecration and devotion to the living of all of the laws of God. In short, there must be an overcoming of self, of sin, and of the world.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 353)

## --- Steps to Receive Forgiveness of our Sins ---

### ***Recognition - Conviction of guilt***

- Spencer W Kimball:

“Before the many elements of repentance are set in motion there has to be a first step. That first step is the turning point at which the sinner consciously recognizes his sin. This is the awakening, the conviction of guilt. Without this there can be no true repentance because there is no acknowledgment of sin.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 150)

- Alma 42:29-30

- “Only let your sins trouble you”

- “Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins”

- Spencer W Kimball:

“When fully convicted, we condition our minds to follow such processes as will rid us of the effects of the sin.” (Faith Proceeds the Miracle, pg 180)

### Role of the Holy Ghost in recognition of sins

- John 14:26

- “bring all things to your remembrance”

- John 16:8

- “reprove the world of sin”

## ***Sorrow for sin***

- Spencer W Kimball:  
“We are sorry. We are willing to make amends, pay penalties, to suffer even excommunication, if necessary.” (Faith Proceeds the Miracle, pg 180)

### Sorrow not enough

- Mormon 2:12-13
  - “for their sorrowing was not unto repentance”
- Spencer W Kimball:  
“If one is sorry only because his sin was uncovered, his repentance is not complete.” (Faith Proceeds the Miracle, pg 180)
- Spencer W Kimball:  
“To be sorry is not enough. Perhaps the felon in the penitentiary, coming to realize the high price he must pay for his folly, may wish he had not committed the crime. That is not repentance. The vicious man who is serving a stiff sentence for rape may be very sorry he did the deed, but he is not repentant if his heavy sentence is the only reason for his sorrow. That is the sorrow of the world.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 153)

### Godly sorrow required

- 2 Corinthians 7:10
  - “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation”
  - Spencer W Kimball:  
“Godly sorrow causes one to harness desire and to determine to do right regardless of consequences; this kind of sorrow brings righteousness and will work toward forgiveness.” (Faith Proceeds the Miracle, pg 180)
- Alma 42:24
  - “none but the truly penitent are saved”
  - Spencer W Kimball:  
“To be sorry is an approach, to abandon the act of error is a beginning, but until one's conscience has been sufficiently stirred to cause him to move in the matter, so long as there are excuses and rationalizations, one has hardly begun his approach to forgiveness. This is what Alma meant in telling his son Corianton that “none but the truly penitent are saved.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 152)
- Alma 36:12-16
  - “I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell”
  - Spencer W Kimball:  
“Conviction brought “sorrows to repentance” through torment-racking memory. His sin pains were exquisite and bitter. Alma had convinced himself.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 158)

### How much sorrow?

- Alma 42:29
  - “only let your sins trouble you”

## ***Abandonment of sin***

- D&C 58:43
  - “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will . . . forsake them.”

### Desire not sufficient

- Spencer W Kimball:  
“The saving power does not extend to him who merely wants to change his life.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 163)

### Trying not sufficient

- Spencer W Kimball:  
“Nor is repentance complete when one merely tries to abandon sin.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 164)

### Discontinuance must be permanent

- 2 Peter 2:20-22
  - “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world . . . they are again entangled therein. . . . it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness”
- D&C 82:7
  - “but unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return.”
  - Spencer W Kimball:  
“To return to sin is most destructive to the morale of the individual and gives Satan another hand-hold on his victim. Those who feel that they can sin and be forgiven and then return to sin and be forgiven again and again must straighten out their thinking. Each previously forgiven sin is added to the new one and the whole gets to be a heavy load.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 170)

## ***Confession of sin***

- D&C 58:43
  - “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them”
- D&C 64:12
  - “him that repenteth not of his sins, and confesseth them not, ye shall bring before the church”
- Moroni 6:7
  - “if they repented not and confessed not, their names were blotted out”
- Proverbs 28:13
  - “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”
  - Spencer W Kimball:  
“Many offenders have seemed to feel that a few prayers to the Lord were sufficient and they have thus justified themselves in hiding their sins.” (Faith Proceeds the Miracle, pg 181)

### Major sins confessed to the Bishop as well as the Lord

- Spencer W Kimball:  
“The confession of his major sins to a proper Church authority is one of those requirements made by the Lord. These sins include adultery, fornication, other sexual transgressions, and other sins of comparable seriousness.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 179)
- Mosiah 26:29
  - “if he confess his sins before *thee and me* and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also.”
  - Spencer W Kimball:  
“Many offenders in their shame and pride have satisfied their consciences, temporarily at least, with a few silent prayers to the Lord and rationalized that this was sufficient confession of their sins. “But I have confessed my sin to my Heavenly Father,” they will insist, “and that is all that is necessary.” This is not true where a major sin is involved. Then two sets of forgiveness are required to bring peace to the transgressor one from the proper authorities of the Lord's Church, and one front the Lord himself.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 179)

### Confession must be complete

- Romans 10:10
  - “with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”
  - Spencer W Kimball:  
“Thus one must not compromise or equivocate he must make a clean, full confession.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 180)

- Joseph Smith:  
“Again, let the Twelve and all Saints be willing to confess all their sins, and not keep back a part: and let the Twelve be humble, and not be exalted, and beware of pride, and not seek to excel one above another, but act for each other's good, and pray for one another, and honor our brother or make honorable mention of his name, and not backbite and devour our brother.” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pg 155)

Confession to the Lord includes request for forgiveness

- Alma 38:8
  - “and *never, until I did cry out* unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But behold, I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul”

### ***Restitution for sin***

- Ezekiel 33:15-16
  - “If the wicked . . . give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live”
- Joseph F Smith:  
“True repentance is not only sorrow for sins, and humble penitence and contrition before God, but it involves the necessity of turning away from them, a discontinuance of all evil practices and deeds, a thorough reformation of life, a vital change from evil to good, from vice to virtue, from darkness to light. *Not only so, but to make restitution, so far as it is possible, for all the wrongs we have done, to pay our debts, and restore to God and man their rights—that which is due to them from us.*” (Gospel Doctrine, pg 100)
- Boyd K Packer:  
" To earn forgiveness, one must make restitution... There are times you cannot mend that which you have broken.... When your desire is firm and you are willing to pay the “uttermost farthing,” the law of restitution is suspended. Your obligation is transferred to the Lord. He will settle your accounts." (The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness,” Ensign, Nov. 1995, 18)



## ***Obedience to all law***

- D&C 1:31-32
  - “he that repents and *does the commandments of the Lord* shall be forgiven”
  - Spencer W Kimball:  
“This scripture is most precise. First, one repents. Having gained that ground he then must live the commandments of the Lord to retain his vantage point. This is necessary to secure complete forgiveness.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 201)
- D&C 53:7
  - “He only is saved who endureth unto the end”
  - Spencer W Kimball:  
“Doing the Lord's commandments, as the above scripture requires, is an effort extending through the balance of life. "Unto the end" is a phrase used often in the scriptures, and it means, literally, to the end of life. This phrase now takes on new and added meaning and significance to the repentant one” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg 202)

## ***Forgive to be forgiven***

- Matthew 6:14-15  
“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”
- Mosiah 26:31  
“he that forgiveth not his neighbor's trespasses when he says that he repents, the same hath brought himself under condemnation”
- D&C 64:8-10  
“ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.  
I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men”
- Gordon B Hinckley:  
“If there be any who nurture in their hearts the poisonous brew of enmity toward another, I plead with you to ask the Lord for strength to forgive. This expression of desire will be of the very substance of your repentance. It may not be easy, and it may not come quickly. But if you will seek it with sincerity and cultivate it, it will come. And even though he whom you have forgiven continues to pursue and threaten you, you will know you have done what you could to make a reconciliation. There will come into your heart a peace otherwise unattainable.” (“Of You It Is Required to Forgive,” Ensign, June 1991, 2)

## ***Partake worthily of the Sacrament***

- Bruce R McConkie:  
“The Holy Ghost is a sanctifier whose divine commission is to burn dross and evil out of a human soul as though by fire, thus giving rise to the expression baptism of fire, which is the baptism of the Spirit. Forgiveness is assured when the contrite soul receives the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle.” (A New Witness to the Articles of Faith, pg 239)
- D&C 20:77  
“always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they *may always have his Spirit to be with them.*”
- Bruce R McConkie:  
“Thus those who partake worthily of the sacrament—and the same repentance and contrition and desires for righteousness should precede the partaking of the sacrament as precede baptism—all such receive the companionship of the Holy Spirit. Because the Spirit will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle, they thus receive a remission of their sins through the sacramental ordinance. Through this ordinance the Lord puts a seal of approval upon them; they are renewed in spirit and become new creatures of the Holy Ghost, even as they did at baptism; they put off the old man of sin and put on Christ whose children they then are.” (A New Witness to the Articles of Faith, pg 240)

## Bishops Should act Decisively

Spencer W Kimball:

**“Bishops should act decisively.** Today is the day. When something develops that is ugly and nasty, you had better get busy and don't be afraid of any situation. The Lord is on your side and you must remember that numerous people are saved by excommunication. They are not lost by excommunication. They are saved through excommunication-when it's necessary, of course, only when it's necessary. But don't give a little ruling that one will be disfellowshipped when he ought to be excommunicated, because he will come back. Nearly all of them do come back because they come to realize they had committed sins and they have to pay the penalties. When they have paid the penalties and have repented of their sins, they can come back and life then has meaning to them.

The former presidents of the Church have all been quoted over and over and over that we must not forgive so easily. Now, that sounds bad in some way, doesn't it? We must be forgiving as far as we are concerned, but as far as the Church is concerned, we have got to be extremely careful, and I am speaking to you bishops particularly now. You have no right to say, "Well, alright, John. I can see the tears in your eyes. You can be free of it." You had better be pretty careful. You had better be sure that they are repentant and that they have changed their lives. We must remember that repentance is more than just saying, "I am sorry." It is more than tears in one's eyes. It is more than a half a dozen prayers. Repentance means suffering. If a person hasn't suffered, he hasn't repented. I don't care how many times he says he has. If he hasn't suffered, he hasn't repented. He has got to go through a change in his system whereby he suffers and then forgiveness is a possibility. Nobody can be forgiven unless there is adequate repentance. You bishops remember that, will you! The Savior can do almost anything in the world, but he can't forgive somebody who hasn't repented.

There has got to be "that much" repentance before "that much" sin can be forgiven. Just as sure as you live. No bishop has got a right to just sit there in back of his desk and say, "Well, Linda, I can see that you are sorry that you did this. You are all forgiven and are clean in every way." She isn't, because the Lord has made a rule and has given us a law, and he can't break it himself, can he? He wouldn't be God if he would just ignore all his own rules. Now, if you will remember that, brethren, that it is very important, let them show their repentance. Let them prove their repentance, for a person who continues to go back to the same evil is not repentant at the first. There has to be a total abandonment as well as tears and prayers and service. And that we must watch very, very carefully.” (The Teachings of Spencer W Kimball, pg 99-100)

## **Other Related Items**

### ***Necking***

- Spencer W Kimball:  
“Instead of remaining in the field of simple expressions of affection, some have turned themselves loose to fondling, often called "necking," with its intimate contacts and its passionate kissing. It is an insidious practice leading to other vices.”
- Spencer W Kimball:  
“Necking is the younger member of this unholy family. Its bigger sister is called "petting.””

### ***Petting***

- Matthew 5:27-28
  - “whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”
- D&C 42:23
  - “he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith”
- Spencer W Kimball:  
“Who would say that he or she who pets has not become lustful, has not become passionate? Who would say that there has not been mental adultery? Is it not this most abominable practice that God rebuked in his modern reiteration of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it.” What, may I ask you, is like unto adultery if it is not petting?”

### ***Does fornication or adultery require excommunication?***

- Spencer W Kimball:  
“The Lord has indicated that the bandage must be the size of the sore; if one has offended many, he must be chastised before many, and if the offense is known to few, then the adjustment involves few. Every unrepentant transgressor should be handled and, if he continues rebellious, should be disfellowshipped or excommunicated.”
- Spencer W Kimball:  
“a transgressor whose sin is secret and has voluntarily confessed and whose repentance is without reservation can be forgiven in secret by proper authorities.”