

Sins vs Mistakes Outline – Mike Baird

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Much of this is taken from an article by Elder Dallin H Oaks "Sins and Mistakes, Ensign Oct 1996, pg 62

Principle

- Not always well understood and applied
- About relationships

Lord differentiates between sin and mistakes

- D&C 20:80
 "Any member of the church of Christ transgressing, or being overtaken in a fault, shall be dealt with as the scriptures direct"
 - Implies that different to transgress than to "be overtaken with fault"
 - In either case we deal with as the scriptures direct

What do the scriptures direct members should be dealt with?

"Erred it might be made known"

- D&C 1:24-25
 "Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of

their language, that they might come to understanding.
And inasmuch as they erred it might be made known;"

"sinned they might be chastened"

- D&C 1:27
"And inasmuch as they sinned they might be chastened, that they might repent;"
- For purposes of this discussion
 - sin & transgression mean the same
 - "to err" or "be at fault" mean the same thing

What is the difference between sins and mistakes?

- Mistakes are not sins
- Bad ← → Good, better, best
 - Dallin H Oaks
"I would say that a deliberately wrong choice in the contest between what is clearly good and what is clearly bad is a sin, but a poor choice among things that are good, better, and best is merely a mistake" ("Sins and Mistakes," *Ensign*, Oct. 1996, 62)
- Both may hurt us and both require attention

Sin

- Sin is the violation of a commandment of God
- Require chastening and repentance

Mistakes

- Mistakes are usually a result of poor judgment on our part
 - Mistake to step in front of a speeding car
 - Suffer consequences of our mistakes
- Mistakes are not sins
- We should not require repentance for mistakes
- Book of Proverbs – uses the word fool for someone who fails to behave properly
 - A fool is a fool and not a sinner

Application

- Important to distinguish in several areas

Relationship with others

- Bitter finger pointing on disagreements
 - Politics - even if "wrong" choice it is generally an error
- We need to have compassion for others who make mistakes
 - Need more understanding of other's mistakes
 - "Are you laughing at another's misfortune"
 - Need satisfaction with correcting and not chasten or call to repentance
- Joseph Smith
"Suppose that Jesus Christ and holy angels should object to us on frivolous things, what would become of us? We must be merciful to one another, and overlook small things." ("Teachings", pg 240)

Teaching children

- Little children before 8
 - Mistakes not sin
 - Our responsibility to teach them right from wrong
- Shouldn't require repentance for mistakes
- Before chastening we need to ask:
"Have we taught them the commandments of God in this matter?"
 - Dallin H Oaks
"In some of these teaching efforts, on matters that are genuinely in doubt, parents may need to treat an uninformed or untaught act as the equivalent of a mistake rather than a sin. We should correct the youthful offenders and promptly teach them correct principles to guide their future actions."
("Sins and Mistakes," *Ensign*, Oct. 1996, 62)
- Teach them to repent of sins
- Sometimes the first time is a mistake – we correct and then if repeated is sin

Ignorance of the law or not accountable

- Ignorant then it is a mistake and not a sin
- Still may need to suffer from mistakes
 - Someone who smokes

Mistakes can lead to sin

- violating of limits
 - curfew or family rules
 - mission rules

- Discussion of mistakes
 - Careful in discussion of mistakes and correction
 - Wrath can lead to sin

Mistake can be as much or more serious than sin

- Almost all sins can be corrected through repentance
- Some mistakes can not be corrected
 - Stepping out in front of an automobile
- Joseph Smith's time – Ignorance of the nature of evil spirits caused many (including some church members) to err in following false prophets.
 - Joseph Smith
 "nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God "
 (History of the Church, 4:573)

Mistakes are part of life

- Dallin H Oaks
 "We should seek to avoid mistakes, since some mistakes have very painful consequences. But we do not seek to avoid mistakes at all costs. Mistakes are inevitable in the process of growth in mortality. To avoid all possibility of error is to avoid all possibility of growth." ("Sins and Mistakes," *Ensign*, Oct. 1996, 62)
 - Parable of talents – person with one talent

Take comfort from the Lord in Mistakes

- Lord suffered the pains and afflictions of his people
 - [Alma 7:11](#); [D&C 18:11](#); [D&C 33:53](#)
- Afflictions consecrated for our gain
 - [2 Ne. 2:2](#); [D&C 98:3](#)