

**Inside...**

An Example of Repentance ..... 2  
 Repent!! Who, Me?? ..... 3  
 Today's Native Mother ..... 4  
 A Time to Repent ..... 5  
 Smile Awhile ..... 6



# DAD I've Never Heard You Say I'm Sorry

What would you really like to hear your father tell you?" we asked adults and youth attending our family life workshops one year.

An answer that came back frequently was, "I'd like to hear my father say *I'm sorry for the way I've treated you.*"

One of the complaints family counsellors often hear is, "I've never heard my dad say *I'm sorry.*"

Eric Segal's bestselling novel *Love Story* convinced a generation of young North Americans that "love is never needing to say *I'm sorry.*" These young people have now become parents of children who would give their right arm to hear their dad say, just once, "I'm sorry."

*I'm sorry* is part of a parenting skill called **REPENTANCE**. Like most parenting skills, repentance is learned. Children should learn it from their parents.

Why is repentance such an important skill for fathers? It is important because no father is perfect. Every father has been hurt. Every

father reacts to his pain by hurting others: his wife, his children, his parents. Hurt children in turn hurt others. *I'm sorry* is a BIG step in breaking the cycle of hurt.

## Repentance helps restore broken family relationships...

Then why is it so hard for fathers to say those two little words, *I'm sorry?*

**1. Some never heard it from their own fathers.** Young children learn their language, accent, speech patterns and much of their vocabulary from their parents. Five words every child should learn are *Please, Thank you* and *I'm sorry*. A child who doesn't hear his parents say them probably won't say them himself.

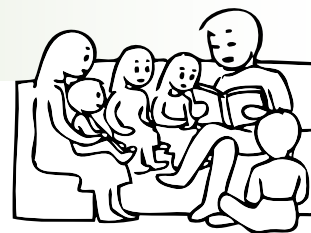
**2. Pride gets in the way.** Some dads say, "If I apologize to my children, I'll lose their respect. It's not the *manly* thing to do." However, those who apologize find that their children's respect for them grows. Children can

tell when their dad does wrong. It makes them feel bad. Admitting the wrong lets the child know that Dad also feels bad and wants to change. This encourages the child and gives him hope.

**3. A genuine *I'm sorry* means a willingness to change.** Men often say *I'm sorry* when they get caught doing something wrong. But unless a change of behaviour follows, *I'm sorry* doesn't mean much. Changing behaviour is tough. Changing the heart is even tougher. It has been said that man can change his mind but only God can change his heart. If a man feels unwilling or unable to change, he won't want to say *I'm sorry*.

Repentance helps restore broken family relationships. It is the cement that binds families together and makes them strong. Repentance is hard, but any dad can learn it.

*Cover article written by David Hertzler. Used by permission.*



## An Example of Repentance

Judas and Peter were two of Jesus' special friends. For three years they traveled with Him, ate with Him, learned from Him, and went on special missions for Him. Then one day Jesus wanted to go to Jerusalem, where He had many enemies who were trying to kill Him. Read the following scriptures to find out how Judas and Peter responded. Then answer the questions.

### JUDAS



1. *Luke 22:1-13* Judas was treasurer for Jesus' disciples. What do you think was on his mind when he agreed to betray Jesus to His enemies?
2. *John 13:1-30* After eating supper with Jesus, what did Judas do?
3. *Luke 22:39-53* When Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, what did Judas do?
4. *Matthew 27:3-10* Jesus was arrested, tried and condemned to death. How did Judas respond? Then what did he do? Do you think this was true repentance?
5. *Acts 1:15-20* How did Judas lose his life? What else did he lose?

### PETER



1. *Luke 22:1-13* While Judas was plotting to betray Jesus, what was Peter doing?
2. *Luke 22:14-34* After eating supper with Jesus, what did Peter do?
3. *Luke 22:39-53* When Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, what did Peter do?
4. *Luke 22:54-62* When people said, "You were with Jesus," what was Peter's answer? How did he feel about it afterward? What did he do then? Do you think this was true repentance?
5. *John 21:15-19* After Jesus' resurrection, what did He tell Peter?
6. *Acts 1:15-20* After Jesus went back to heaven, who became leader of Jesus' disciples?

\* USING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM JUDAS AND PETER, WRITE IN YOUR OWN WORDS WHAT YOU THINK REPENTANCE MEANS.

"The Lord is not slow about keeping His promise as some people think. He is waiting for you. The Lord does not want any person to be punished forever. He wants all people to be sorry for their sins and turn from them." (2 Peter 3:9 New Life Version)



### 1. What is Repentance? Repentance is:

- A. **Recognizing** that my sinful response to my pain has hurt the heart of God more deeply than I have been hurt.
- B. **Remorse-filled sorrow** for my own sin that has kept me from truly living.
- C. **Turning from** and **laying aside** that sin. Repentance is the flip side of forgiveness. Forgiveness says, "You owe me nothing for the hurt you gave me." Repentance says, "I owe you everything for the hurt I gave you."

### 2. What Should I Repent of?

- A. I should repent of my **self-justifying attitude**, my "Can you blame me?" attitude.
  - 1. **Victim justification** says, "What I did should be excused because I was hurting so bad. I am not accountable for my bitterness because I am a victim."
  - 2. **Comparative justification** says, "My sin is not as bad as what happened to me. There are people a lot worse than I. If there is justice with God, He will understand where I'm coming from and not hold me accountable."
  - 3. **Revenge justification** says, "I deserve to be bitter, abusive, and cold, especially toward my abuser, since it is my right to seek revenge."
- B. I should repent of **unbelief**:
  - 1. in God's **love** (Romans 5:8). God showed his love by dying for us.
  - 2. in God's **justice**. He will judge the world fairly (Acts 17:31). He will judge the **secrets** of men (Romans 2:15).
  - 3. in God's **ability to restore** (Psalm 23:3, Mark 3:5). God likes to fix things and put them back where they were before they got out of place.
- C. I should repent of **self-centredness**: acts of self-contempt that harm myself, and acts of a cold heart that wound or withhold love from others.

### 3. What If I Don't Want to Repent?

- A. Consider the **relationship** that God wants to have with you and to help you have with others. "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me*" (Revelation 3:20). "*When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son*" (Romans 5:10).
- B. Consider the **abundant life** that God wants you to have. "*You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore*" (Psalm 16:11). "*I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10).
- C. Consider the **terrible punishment** waiting for those who don't repent. "*I tell you...unless you repent you will all likewise perish*" (Luke 13:5).



# Today's Native Mother

*Dear Moms,*

"I am sorry. Will you forgive me?" Are there any words more difficult to say?

My father recalled a time in my teens when he was harsh towards me. I had not forgotten the incident, but I didn't know he remembered it thirty years later. He apologized one evening as we rode together in the car. His burden was lifted and my love for him was renewed.

A friend told of a time when she and her sister were having a big argument. She took a wire coat hanger to whack her sister's head. Just at that moment her dad appeared in the doorway. "I'm sorry!" she yelled, as with no hesitation she kept that hanger on course. I had to chuckle. But when things like that happen on a larger scale, it's not funny.

Another friend told of a time he was an attendant in a nursing home. Something happened with one of his patients. The patient was angry enough to get his lawyer involved. The attendant had not known the seriousness of the event, but when he found out he went to apologize. The patient was still very angry. However, the attendant asked for forgiveness and told him he was willing to take whatever the lawyer and family decided. The patient's attitude softened and changed. From then on the attendant was his closest friend in the home. The patient was very cooperative and could not do enough to make it easy for the attendant.

A young man remembers walking out of a mechanics shop one snowy day. He aimed a snowball at a wrecked car, missed and hit another car, breaking its tail light. He immediately apologized to the non-Christian owner, who

was surprised by the offer to make it right.

With deep emotion a father told how he goes to his children when he has wronged them. He tells them he's sorry and asks for forgiveness. Children have such a wonderful way of forgiving! There is nothing like these precious times together to make things right.

The same man also has deep pain about being sexually abused in his childhood by an older boy. The older boy is now a preacher. He has never said, "I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?" It hurts. This man longs for things to be made right between them.



A young mother told of being sexually abused by her brother when she was younger. When she went to tell her brother of her happy plans to be married, he immediately apologized for what he had done to her. He was deeply sorry for his wrong. He hoped he had not destroyed her future

happiness. Today she and her brother are close. There are no hard feelings between them.

I have often struggled to say "I'm sorry" to my husband. All kinds of reasons pop up why I shouldn't need to say it. But Oh! The relief, the joy that floods my heart when I can come to the point of admitting I was wrong. When I receive his forgiveness (and the Lord's) I feel as light as a feather.

What would happen if we all could be more humble, if we could acknowledge when we have done wrong and make things right? What would our homes be like? Let's do it!

Caring and Sharing,  
*Iva*

## **FAMILY FUN** Badges for Eager Beavers

If your children drag their feet about doing chores, try this:

Use heavy paper or light cardboard and markers to make each child a badge, highlighting his job. Assign catchy titles like "World's Fastest Dish Washer," "Toybox

Manager," "Garbage Disposal Genius," "Clean Floors Engineer," or even "Baby of the Month."

Use ribbons or other decorations to finish off the badges. Tape safety pins to the back. Wear proudly.

Suggested by Family Night At Home, a manual for growing families.



# A Time to REPENT

One day at dinner...

Dad, how do you know God is REAL?

Don't talk like that. You've gone to church all your life. Your Mom and I have taught you about God. You should know better than to ask questions like that!



Well!! If that's the way Dad feels about it, maybe God and the church aren't worth my time.



I spoke too quickly. He wasn't trying to act smart. He really wanted to KNOW.

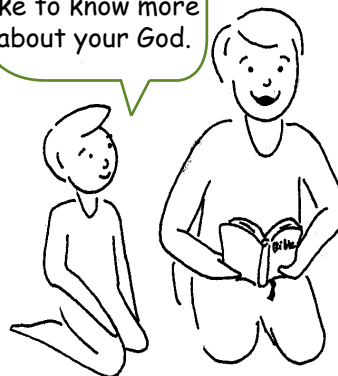
I'm sorry I blew up at you. Let's go fishing and I'll see if I can answer your questions.



I know God is real because He gives me the power to make things right when I do wrong.



Thanks, Dad. I think I'd like to know more about your God.



This story was adapted from *The Growing Child*, a booklet that is part of *Family Studies*. This literature may be ordered from:

NYM Ministries  
Site 306 Box 1 RR 3  
Dryden ON P8N 3G2  
nym@nymministries.org

You can request a copy of this booklet for \$1.75 each plus postage, or get the complete *Family Studies* for \$22.00 plus postage.

# Smile Awhile

Homemade signs are a traveler's delight, with their homespun humour, intended or not...

*This sign was seen in a Georgia cemetery:*

HAPPY FATHERS DAY  
EVERYBODY WELCOME

*An Oregon gentleman who prefers to keep to himself put this sign in his yard:*

NO TRESPASSING  
NO ANYTHING

*An Ontario wedding party arrived at the arena where the reception was to be held. The marquee read:*

CONGRATULATIONS,  
VERNON AND DARLENE.  
CHAMPIONSHIP DOG SHOW  
SEPTEMBER 5-9

(No, we didn't make up any of these.)

A shopkeeper was dismayed when a brand new business much like his own opened up next door and erected a huge sign which read, "BEST DEALS."

He was horrified when another competitor opened up on his right, and announced its arrival with an even larger sign, reading, "LOWEST PRICES."

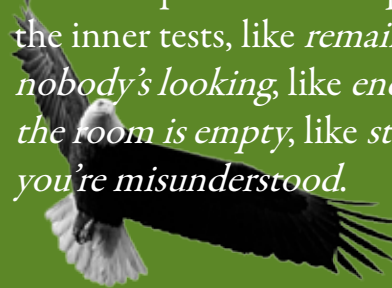
The shopkeeper panicked, until he got an idea. He put the biggest sign of all over his own shop. It read: "MAIN ENTRANCE."



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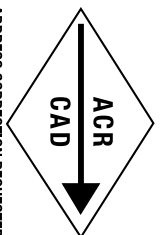
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**COURAGE** is not limited to the battlefield or bravely catching a thief in your house or [facing down an attacking bear]. The real tests of courage are much deeper and much quieter. They are the inner tests, like *remaining faithful when nobody's looking*, like *enduring pain when the room is empty*, like *standing alone when you're misunderstood.*



Charles R.  
Swindoll

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