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# Repentance

**W**hen you have problems, open up the relief valve: confess them to God and apologize. Recognize you are wrong when you are wrong, and let Him know you want to change. Repent and with humility accept that He forgives you, and then simply go forward. Do your best not to get stuck in the muds of shame and self-pity. Far too many people are so burdened in their hearts; some of them end up in mental institutions because they feel so much guilt, and yet nobody forgives them. Nobody takes away the pain. Nobody wants to see their tears. But it is so hard for them to admit that they are in anguish. Many people don't allow anyone to come close enough to realize all that is seething and about to erupt within them. Yet unless a person can be humble enough to repent and ask for pardon, he has no hope of being freed.

To love and be loved, you have to first unload your burdens. Give them to God. Give them to the Messiah. They are all too happy to accept our burdens, but unless we make the first move, they are spiritually paralyzed to take that yoke from our shoulders. There is a song entitled "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother." I feel that God has His own version of that song: "You're Not Heavy, You're My Child."

**I** urge anyone who has a problem being aware of the presence of God to repent. But by the same token, I also urge people who feel very close to God to repent, so that they grow even closer. Have you ever tested the power of repentance? It is not enough to say almost as an after-thought, "I am sorry Heavenly Father; please forgive me." While you may feel deeply sorry, a small sentence said in a weak voice, even repeated two or three times, is not the level of repentance God seeks for us to offer. When you repent, you should feel the words sincerely. In fact, you should say them *because* you feel them. It is the quality of heart which must come through the words you speak, and through the tears that flow from your eyes! That is part of the nature of repentance. Crying tears is nothing shameful; tears are a necessary component in making an all-out confession to God. Neither hesitate to let them come, nor try to stop them. Surrender your heart totally; give it without reservation or compromise. A beautiful contribution to God's unlimited reservoir is the presentation of your tears. He collects our tears of repentance and then showers us in saving grace: He forgives. All that is bad. All that is evil. All that is shameful. And that is the moment we can experience freedom. The feelings that accompany forgiveness are comforting; they make us feel as if we have arrived home, and finally reached God's pavilion. And in the passions of repentance and forgiveness, that is absolutely where we are!

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Repentance is an inner process which does not necessarily happen when we are confronted with the almightiness and power of God, but rather when we are confronted with the almighty *love* of God. Repentance should stem from an experience of being moved in our heart, not from fear. After realizing our sin, we may sustain a feeling of guilt, but on the other hand, we should also have a feeling of hope. Repentance can grant relief, a feeling that it *is* possible to receive salvation and finally be freed from the burden of sin.

Once a person is confronted with the truth, he cannot help but discover that he has not yet reached the level of perfection, and that in fact he still makes mistakes. Furthermore, he learns that he should repent for those sins. Once a person realizes that he should make a new start, he may cry to God from the depths of his heart, "Father, I really want to be different, but there is such a big mountain in front of me; I just don't know if I have the strength to climb it and reach the summit. What should I do? It feels to me as if You are so far away, but I want so much to see You. I want so much to be with You. How?" God needs all of us to realize that the answer lies in repentance, and that it is the first step toward spiritual freedom. Repentance is a declaration of a person's desire to return to God. It is a proclamation, simultaneously made to and heard by both God and Satan. Before a person is able to receive forgiveness from God and leave Satan's sovereignty, however, he must offer both repentance and conditions of indemnity.

The freedom you long for and the grace of God you desire can come only through repentance. A war between good and evil goes on within each one of us; each of us individually must make the decision which side we want to be on. If you decide to go toward God, start your journey with repentance. Repent from the very bottom of your heart. Scrape until there is no vestige of "self" left, not one tiny thread that Satan can use to pull you back to him. The next part of the process is equally hard. It involves accepting forgiveness from God. After that step you will feel spiritually emancipated, but the saga does not end there. Then the *real* challenge rimes—not to look back with regrets, but rather to go forward with a penitent attitude and refuse to decline in spiritual growth.

If you made a mistake, repent and go on immediately. Don't lose any time, because the accusation that can result from that *will* take its toll. If

you make no progress, your spiritual power will diminish. God has a relatively small number of people who work for Him at this time, yet Satan still wants us to abandon God and give him our loyalty. Therefore, we need to become spiritually aware that he uses whatever methods he can, and works through whomever possible to evoke our allegiance.

Repentance is a necessary part of a life of faith. Without repentance there can be no forgiveness. And without forgiveness there is no possibility to meet God. Daily repentance is key. We need to ask forgiveness for the things we have done wrong, and also for the things we have not done. I feel that sins of omission are far more common than sins committed consciously. Far too often we ignore, or "omit" to listen to the voice of God—the voice of our conscience—that tells us to be loving, more patient, more understanding, and more sensitive.

If you discover any part of your life—whether in the past or the present—which is still unresolved and which you have attempted to cover up, repent for these particular problems first. If your past wrongdoings—those crusty from age, and dusty from neglect—are still an albatross to you, take care of repenting for them before seeking forgiveness for anything new. Until you get rid of those things, your pipeline to God might be clogged, and you may find it extremely difficult to pray. You need to use a spiritual drain cleaner; if there is anything you have not yet told God, realize that He already knows about it. He is just waiting for you to confess it. So bring it out in the open; that is the only way the wound can be cleaned and heal completely. Repent—deeply.

Unless you are purified in heart, unless you give yourself a "spring cleaning," you will be unable to talk to God with a clear conscience. This is similar to the attitude a Christian tries to cultivate before receiving the sacraments. Christians are encouraged to smooth out the wrinkles in the relationships with their parents, brothers and sisters, friends, or workers, or, they are told, the sacraments won't really be effective. The same is true for anyone who attempts to live a life of faith with the aim of reaching perfection. The words, "I am sorry, please forgive me," are powerful ones. Have we forgotten?

Knowing that we do not fully understand the will of God, we should repent at all times, even for our ignorance. We should start our prayer or

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any conversation with God in repentance. Furthermore, we should acknowledge that we certainly do not deserve the abundant grace God bestows upon us.

Jesus said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What did he mean?—in my understanding, he urges us to give up our sins, lay down our burdens, and change our direction by cutting ourselves off from Satan, and freeing ourselves to come to God. It is necessary for us to realize and concede that we are sinners. Although we may have a difficult time to bear the brightness of God's love as it shines upon our impurities, in the sight of God, all is exposed—from the tragedy of mankind to the most minute personal sins. The closer we come to God, the more revelations we will experience, and even the smallest specks of our sin and spiritual dirt will be revealed to us. Yet it does us no good to primarily center upon our sin. We should concern ourselves with repentance—the process of heart which encompasses the whole world of emotion. We long to be cleansed, restored, and saved from the miseries of life. We deeply desire to meet God in His love, not only recognize His omniscience and omnipotence, or visualize Him with a sword or a flinger pointed toward us in accusation. When we are touched by the love of God, tears just naturally well up in our eyes. Love and tears are very close together, whether from sorrow or joy. Tears might first flow in repentance, and in the aftermath, out of joy and relief as a response to God's abundant grace.

As we come closer to God, we will perceive that the process of repentance involves much more than we previously thought. We become not simply concerned with the small trespasses, or even the larger ones, but also feel shame generated by the transgressions of our ancestors throughout history, and by the sinful actions of rebellion made by all mankind today. As we grow ever closer to God, we will feel more the purity of His heart, and God's love will really open our eyes to the ideal parent-child relationship He originally envisioned between Himself and His children. That is the moment we will be able to see clearly what man has unknowingly forfeited, and what God has been forced to relinquish since the fall. That is the moment we will be confronted with the nature of the greatest tragedy, with the circle of sorrow that has spiraled throughout history. And that is the moment we will begin to perceive the resentment of God. According to my understanding, we will not feel accusation when we stand before God. Rather, we will feel more the longing heart of God, and especially the forgiving heart of God.

When we think of repentance, we Unificationists desire to repent for something much more than ourselves and our own problems. We want to

be reestablished to our original position as true children of God, desire to make restitution for all the failures in history, and determined to lay the foundation for all humanity to also accept their own rightful position as children of God. Once we realize the magnitude of man's sin against God through the truth of the Principle, we see something more of God's own nature—how persevering and long-suffering He is. We are no longer confronted with God as the Mighty King, but rather as our loving Heavenly Parent. That understanding in itself will evoke from us even greater repentance.

**W**e owe repentance not only to God, but even to nature. As a whole, mankind should implore forgiveness from all things of the creation. We mistreated them or at the very least, failed to respect their true value. There are so many duties rightfully our responsibility that we neglect to do when we do not share God's viewpoint of the creation.

**R**epentance involves a change of direction. We have been following Satan and we must turn around completely in order to return to God. If we desire to do that, yet cannot break through and even come to tears because of it, we need to repent for the blocks which still exist within our heart. It is not the fault of God, but a problem within us. Perhaps we thought we repented for something, but if we were to examine the whole situation more closely, we would realize the barrier is still there.

Many people are touched by the word and spirit of God during a spiritual revival meeting. Tears run down their cheeks in joy, and they accept the call to give their lives to Jesus. They are struck by "something" which evokes them to publicly proclaim how sorry they are for the way they have been living. They declare their desire to change, to subjugate their will, and surrender to the will of God. That is a time their hearts are moved by His love. They subconsciously and consciously realize they have been away from Him and understand they can come back home through the intercession of the Lord Jesus. They realize they are sinners, yet can be forgiven of their sins. They are touched by the love and the simplicity of the invitation to return home to Jesus, and are grateful to give their hearts to him. So many people are ecstatic to hear they will be forgiven no matter what sins they committed—no matter how evil, no matter how grave. It is an overwhelming experience for them to finally have their heavy burdens lifted. Through their offering of repentance, God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are then able to work together to bestow spiritual salvation to them. Many

proclaim their hallelujahs in tears; tears of deep and sincere repentance are a key which can unlock a penitent heart. But God does not let those tears go to waste. He fills His reservoir with the outpouring of their tears.

**H**ow can we open up and overcome those feelings St. Paul talked about when he wrote "wretched man that I am." Many people suppress their problems to such an extent that they have to go to a psychiatrist to open their hearts in confession. Through the guidance of a professional, they then try to discover the originating point of fear, anxiety, or other emotions blocking their happiness. They then unload their hearts and speak about experiences in childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, as well as the ones they have today. They dig until they discover the root of the problem. Those people want to be free. Burdens are hard to carry forever.

We start as spiritual "freedom fighters" when we practice unloading to God in prayer, confessing and repenting from the bottom of our heart, for we want to be free, too!

If a person offers sincere repentance, he may be overcome with feelings of responsibility for a certain group of people, a nation, or even the whole world. He might feel liable for sins committed against God, the Messiah, or even the saints. Spiritual beings can sense such feelings of repentance, and they show compassion for and help people who willingly offer conditions to indemnify those situations. People who repent for others become mediators between the fallen world and God.

God is surely comforted when we repent for the failures of our movement, the nation, or the world, as well as lament that we were not responsible enough to prevent certain disasters from happening. God is so grateful when a person takes responsibility for others—by standing in for, and repenting in their stead.

**A** person on the brink of life and death may offer a "form" of repentance, "God help me! I promise I will serve You for the rest of my life, if You'll only get me out of this mess!" Yet the concept of repentance has much broader vistas. For example, it is proper to repent to God by expressing our feelings of inadequacy. Even when witnessing, we can pray, "I am sorry that I have no more to offer to You. I ask Your forgiveness; please work through me anyway." We should also repent that we do not see things as God does. That we do not see ourselves as the important link

between the past, present, and future. That we do not see who we really are, or comprehend the will of God. There are so many things to repent for. So often our ignorance is due to our lack of perception, *not* because God did not reveal His truth. We have been told things so often, but still we do not understand.

Once we repent and receive forgiveness, we should strive to be obedient from that point on—obedient to God, to His word, to His will, and even to our own conscience. It is impossible to take a segment of God's will out of context, and try to escape assuming responsibility by only doing a small portion, rationalizing that sooner or later we will reach the goal anyway. To meet God and be accepted by Him, we need to offer God the gifts of total obedience, total sacrifice, and total love.

If the offering we make to God is not properly purified, Satan will take it and we will need to make a new one.

It is best to make any offering by beginning with repentance, and then seek to make peace with those around us. We are not just concerned with repenting to God and all of creation; to become spiritually free, we must repent to our parents, our brothers and sisters, and to anybody we hurt. To successfully clear our mind and heart of any wrongdoing we committed against a person, however, we should first unload our sin by repenting to God.

What is worth more—becoming absolutely free and one with God, or protecting our shameful trespasses? Before scaling the heights of a mountain, the task looks ominous. Once you reach the top, or at least make it over the foothills, you have a much better perspective, and the summit no longer looks quite so frightening.

Before repenting of them, your mistakes might seem monstrous. You may also feel added burden because you consider your sins to have tremendous significance in the providence of God. While that may be the case, your sins are probably not nearly so consequential. Their significance will lessen a bit after you offer repentance for them, but until you climb over the "foothills" of fear and approach God in contrition, you may stay trapped in a valley of anguish. You may continue to focus upon your

iniquities and how terrible they are. Instead, why not look at them in true perspective. Realize that if you were to give them away to our Eternal, you would be free.

If you have a pain that does not subside, you realize that eventually you have to see a doctor. If you continue to put off that inevitable visit, you will probably suffer much more than necessary. An illness that could have been cured with relative ease, may even become cancerous if not treated early enough. But if you resolve to go to the doctor, and refuse to think about possible unpleasantness associated with such a visit, you will feel better and even relieved by getting a check-up and taking any medication prescribed for your condition.

What about spiritual pain? That too must be dissolved or cut out before it becomes "cancerous," spreads throughout your system, and causes you to die spiritually. Go see your personal physician, God; when you repent to Him, you can be given the proper medicine of forgiveness. He is the one who can cut out that tumor in time.

Each of us has a self-image, something which is an intimate part of us. We each want to be recognized for our value. We need approval both of who we are, and what we are trying to become. All of us want to be proud of our work and life accomplishments. If we look at a certain person, we know who he is. At least we think we do, but actually we do not know his position in the eyes of God. In some way, all of us have exposed our vulnerabilities to ourselves and to others, and by doing so, made ourselves smaller than we really are. We so often degrade ourselves and cling resolutely to one of the bottom rungs of the ladder of life. What are we afraid of? What are we ashamed about?

Once you hit "rock bottom," the only way to go is up. But climbing takes repentance. If you feel as though you are the greatest sinner on earth and in heaven, there is no place lower you can go. If you have such a feeling, you can repent accordingly; realize there is nothing to be afraid of or ashamed about. God is benevolent and He will grant you forgiveness.

What is the effect of repentance? Through living a life of faith we may understand that we should repent. We may even have gathered all kinds of evidence *why* we need to repent and ask God for forgiveness. We may recognize we are a sinner, and feel the need to express our shortcomings to

God. We may feel deep remorse for the mistakes we make and offer soulful repentance for them. We may shed tears because our emotions have come to the surface and need to be expressed; we may even make a mountain out of a molehill. But based on our offering of repentance, we also might be surprised that God has the power to just move that mountain out of our path.

The practical effect of repentance then is freedom, and feelings of liberation. An experience of the grace of God and an overwhelming sensation of joy. That is what happens in the experience of rebirth or conversion. And that is also what can happen those times we rededicate ourselves to God through the means of repentance. After we repent, we probably feel as though we are engulfed in the arms of God, and may even feel that we radiate His love.

It is often when we are moved by the power of God and inspired to experience the love He has for us, that we offer repentance. One effect of repentance is that we make a new start. We make progress in turning over that proverbial "new leaf." Through God's forgiveness, our past is cancelled, and placed before us is a fresh page to be entered into our "book of life." After we repent, God considers us pure enough to make an untainted offering; whatever we do from that point is then written on that new page. He is able to endow His power to us, and we become a greater tool for Him as we reflect more of His image.

I advise you to begin each prayer with repentance. Ask for forgiveness, not just for yourself, but for all of humanity. Repentance should never be just superficial lip service; the words should emerge from the depth of your heart, and the emotions be powered by tears. The key to unlocking God's heart is sincere contrition accompanied by tears of regret. When God receives that gift from us, He presents us with a gift as well. He reveals His heart to us and fills us with love taken from His reservoir. Sin keeps us away from God, but we abolish sin and make our way back home to Him when we repent. It is actually so simple. We have only to begin; the rest will seem rather natural. Many people have to be almost forced into a corner before they repent. Many times God is offered repentance when a person finds himself in some sort of tight squeeze, a detrimental, or suffering situation. But why does man wait to repent until he is in such a predicament, until he is literally "scared to death?" It is much more beautiful to God if we long for and meet Him during our prime of life—on the sunny days, the days we feel joyful—and by our own free will, not when we are driven into such a position, or on the edge of death.

When we show God how much we appreciate Him, He feels tremen-

dous. That is often the moment He showers His love upon us. Based on our condition of repentance we become a pure container, no longer filled with sins. When our container is cleansed and the true love of God fills it, we feel beautiful. Happy. Wanted. And so does God.

A person who builds a close relationship with God will deepen his character when he allows God to move his heart. The more he opens himself up to the workings of God, the freer he will be. When I was twenty-one years old and accepted Jesus as my savior, I invited him into my heart. It was as if everything within me turned upside down and inside out. At that moment, I felt absolutely free of sin and guilt. I had such a desire to testify about my conversion experience, and each time I did so, I also mentioned how much I wanted to change my ways. Many of the people in those audiences had known me for years, yet I felt so liberated, I was not bothered by what they had thought of me before, or even what they thought of me then. I just felt totally free to speak my mind, however, my "transformation" shocked quite a few people. They remembered me as quite a closed person, not a person who spoke in front of crowds with ease, yet suddenly there I was, standing before them and expressing what I felt in my heart.

It is my experience that once a person meets God, he comes to the point of no longer caring about himself. He places pride, shame, and arrogance on the side, and can simply *be* himself. No longer in prison. No longer bound by certain concepts and difficulties. However, that kind of freedom does not come automatically just by seeking to be a part of the Messiah's family; the necessary ingredient in a conversion or rebirth experience is repentance.

Repentance involves a change of direction. The person who repents is able to see things more clearly. When confronted with the truth, he recognizes that he made a mistake. He knows that unless he turns his life around and heads back to God, he is in great danger of moving further away from Him. After we make a mistake, we do not stay on the same level of spiritual maturity. To prevent a further decline, however, we need to repent. It points us not to the right or left, but rather up not down—toward God rather than Satan—yet we do not *move* upward until we take another step. Repentance itself then is not the end-all, but rather a beginning. The step that will allow us to start growing again is to offer something in payment for our mistake. This is what Unificationism refers to as "indemnity."

Be honest in your relationship with God. Realizing your mistake and feeling the burden of the weight of your sin is not easy. Although you want nothing more than to cast off that millstone of sin by confessing your mistakes before God, at the same time you might feel that because of the seriousness of your sin, you dare not look at Him. But God has a different feeling. He wants to lift up your downcast head so that the two of you face each other. He wants to be able to see your tears of repentance, and wants you to see His tears of gladness. He wants to forgive you, and allow you to feel free and clear of sin. He wants to gaze into your face as you look at His. God knows the infinite power of repentance; it evokes His forgiveness, which is a potent way for Him to express His love to you.

There are literally hundreds of instances a day that drive us away from God. Our attitude could become unprincipled; we could experience difficulties and as a result become angry; we could knowingly commit a sin, or unknowingly become guilty of a sin of "omission" —the list goes on. The way we return to Him is by offering repentance. But afterward, we should forget those mistakes and simply move forward.

It is good to repent every day, for things we remember and are aware of, and even those things we are not conscious of. If you have a repentant attitude at all times, there is nothing to hide, and your connection with God remains intact and strong. What happens if you make a big error, one that could potentially cause detrimental effects? Confess to God in prayer. After repenting and receiving forgiveness, you won't decline to a lower spiritual level, however to restore yourself to the spiritual level you were on before you made your mistake, it is still necessary for you to make a condition of indemnity; repentance is not enough of a condition to allow you to advance spiritually. We may face certain consequences because of our words or deeds—or lack of them—but it is all a part of spiritual growth. We just have to face those consequences and ultimately become victorious by conquering our problems.

To repent and turn back to God is a decision each of us must make on our own. It is simply a beginning; from that point on, we should revert from using *our* law, and instead abide by God's. We must replace whatever we previously considered as truth with God's truth. However, this practice does not begin and end with repentance, but rather carries over into our understanding of life, our relationship to God, our practice of love, and so forth. The light that illuminates from God's new expression of the truth

through the Principle is strong enough to banish the darkness that surrounds our old understandings and concepts.

You will find yourself in trouble if you unite with Satan and allow him to manipulate your personal deficiencies and thus block your way to God. You will be unable to move forward if you do not overcome your personal problems. When you impede God's work by closing your heart and becoming oblivious to His presence in your life, you not only succeed in spiritually obstructing your own progress, but also hinder the salvation process of the world. That is when sin begins to multiply. What you need is a breakthrough. A very good way to make one is through the vehicle of repentance.

When can you feel the closest to God? When do you feel free and clear of sin?—When you capitulate before God. That is when the tremendous healing power of God's love can diffuse itself from the very top of your head to your toes. Anyone who is full of pride should not approach God in prayer. In prayer, it is important to speak in a down-to-earth manner, honest with yourself and with God. Declare bankruptcy. Even though you know you lack the necessary resources to reimburse God for the huge debt you incur, ask for forgiveness anyway. That is what declaring spiritual bankruptcy is all about—it is an act of repentance.

Unless we approach God in spiritual humility, it is impossible to receive absolution or become internally free. If you want to have a response from God, capitulation is your only real option. If you surrender to Him in contrition, you will receive relief from the heavy burden of your sin. However, if you rattle off a string of words in an effort to repent, yet turn right around and sin again, you will feel no release. The pride or shame we feel in front of each other bars us from coming close to God. We may feel qualms about what to say and what to avoid talking about even in the deepest of conversations we have with our closest friends. It is not easy to become totally free in thought and expression, but if you can come to the point where you feel neither great self-pride nor tremendous self-reproach, you will find it easier to communicate. However, as long as you feel you have to protect yourself—your personality and your intellect—it will remain extremely difficult to successfully break through to God.

The moment of truth is at hand. Religionists call it the "Clay of judgment"—the time when each of us will be judged for our good and bad deeds. Whether we want to or not, it is a time when we must be honest, a

time to declare spiritual bankruptcy. And seeing all our sins exposed, we will absolutely feel the need to repent.

There is nothing you can hide before God. He is the one being it is impossible to cheat. There are protective devices which each of us hide behind in our relationships with one another. Yet unless we either break down or remove these shields, we will always hold back in communication. We will never feel totally free because our sins will continue to accuse us. If we were completely free of sin, we could even stand before our brothers and sisters without remorse. Such is not the case: our sins do bother us, and we are often riddled with guilt. We may attempt to conceal our mistakes by putting on a mask of pride or arrogance, but such a reaction stems from and actually manifests our guilt. If we unloaded everything in absolute and sincere repentance, we would receive forgiveness and liberation. Then we would no longer need those self-defense mechanisms to protect ourselves. After we offer repentance and are granted forgiveness, there is nothing left to hide. And that is when we will be free to be ourselves.

Once we reach perfection, neither prayer nor repentance will be necessary. Unfortunately, we have not yet perfected our hearts and we fall short of fulfilling our responsibility. We know the ideal goal as well as our personal goals, but no matter how much we strive to reach them, we never make it. If we were to analyze what we accomplished—or failed to accomplish—in a single day, we would be filled with regrets. We would see how much of God's time we wasted, and realize what sins of omission we committed. The pain we would feel as a result, would no doubt cause us to humble ourselves and repent before our God.

It is crucial to repent immediately after making any mistake. Granted it is hard to do, but repentance activates spiritual law: once you receive forgiveness, you have the chance to continue to grow spiritually. However, if you wallow in self-pity and don't repent, you lay the foundation for Satan to claim that mistake and push you even further away from God.

The more you know about God, the more you will regret all the transgressions you commit not only against Him, but also against your fellow man. Awareness of your mistakes might push you to repent and ask

for forgiveness. Once you do, you essentially start over. Why not try it? Create a new future. Create a new image of yourself and then strive to fulfill it. Just as each cell in your physical body is replaced every seven years, why not use the next seven years to become a *totally* transformed person! Become spiritually reborn and work on becoming a "new you" internally—mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. You absolutely have the power to do this. The first step is repentance, and the next is offering indemnity conditions.

I am sure that our life stories are currently being recorded in heaven. While the thought of that may be a bit scary, I am convinced that many things will not be held against us, especially if we sincerely repent for our wrongdoings and continue striving to perfect our hearts. We should never doubt that God accepts and forgives us. Even so, our conscience may be pricked by our words and deeds, and consequently we may continue to feel regret. As our capacity for compassion increases, however, someday we will be able to love ourselves as God loves us. We can start that very noble goal by cultivating a penitent attitude and heart.

What is it that can drive any of us to repent? Feeling the love of God touch and move our heart makes the difference. Although God often reaches us through speaking to our intellect, the process is not something that totally evolves in the mind. To break down inwardly and declare that essential bankruptcy before God is also a process of the heart.

The attitude we display immediately after repenting is important: we should develop a strong will and determine to do better from that point on. God wants to use our repentance as a tool to thrust us upward so that we advance in our spiritual growth. He prefers that we not feel depressed because of our mistakes, but that we go forward. Satan has the opposite desire; he wants to use our admission of remorse as a downward pull, and takes delight when we thrash our mistakes over in our mind and heart time and again. Aerodynamics are amazing and also are reflected in our spiritual life: an upwind lifts us higher, even though it may require us to fly a longer stretch. A downward wind, however, pushes on "our wings" in such a way as to effect a possible crash landing.

Repentance is something which cannot be forced. Preachers and evangelists have been making the call for all people to repent and recognize

our position as sinners, and to turn back to God so that He can ultimately shower blessings upon us.

**R**epentance without tears is not true repentance. If you feel deeply sorry for any sin that you committed—small or big, committed or omitted—tears will seem a natural accompaniment to the expression of heart you offer God. Humility before God is the best medicine for us, and is also instrumental in evoking cooperation from good spiritual beings. When spiritual beings begin to sense that we feel contrition for our sins, they have compassion with us and are willing to give us greater assistance in whatever we do. The same is true with physical beings. If someone begins to cry, others become concerned, wanting to discover why and what they can do to help. It is natural to feel sympathy or empathy for someone who is in either physical or spiritual pain.

Even though our heart can be lightened when another person sympathizes with us, the compassion of God is most powerful. If a person breaks down before God in tearful repentance, spiritual beings often cry along with him. He may hear the echoes of that lamentation reverberate in his own mind and heart. Repentance is a song of the soul, one that travels throughout the spirit world, and approaches the throne of God.