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# *“Hearts Up”*

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## KEY WORDS

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### I’m Sorry, I Repent... What’s the Difference?

We express sentiments of being *sorry* or of *repentance* in different situations and in different ways. Perhaps when we first think about it, it would seem that each of these expressions should mean the same thing. Sometimes, maybe, they ought to mean the same thing, but they don’t always mean the same thing! Your Heart is one of the keys to understanding life as a follower of Christ. Let’s take a look at the differences in these expressions and how they apply to us as believers when we are in various situations. Let’s see how expressions of *sorry* or *repentance* both hinge on what is in the heart.



*Your Heart*

**sorry:** feeling sorrow, regret, or penitence<sup>1\*</sup>

**apology:** an admission of error or discourtesy accompanied by an expression of regret<sup>2\*\*</sup>

**repent:** to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one’s life; to feel regret or contrition; to change one’s mind<sup>3</sup>

\*In the Bible, Greek and Hebrew words are often translated as *sorry* in verses where the meaning is more about regret, sorrow, etc. The meanings behind the use of *sorry* are not always about admitting guilt, penitence or changing one’s ways. Where a Hebrew or Greek root word is associated with admission of guilt and change or amendment of one’s ways, the word is typically translated as *repent* as opposed to *sorry*. Using the word *sorry*, as sometimes being synonymous with the concept of *repent* or *repentance*, didn’t really come about until later after Scriptural times.

\*\*The word *apology* may appear in some more modern translations of the Bible; however, *apology* or *apologize* are not typically found in direct translations of Scripture. Perhaps the closest to an expression of *apology* would be *repent*.

Typically we might associate *repent* with the ungodly. We talk about how they must repent to God for their sins. But as believers, how often do we think of repent as being appropriate for ourselves? When we’ve hurt someone, do we think in terms of whether we’ve sinned and that we may need to repent for a sin we committed against them?

Sometimes we shudder at the word *repent*. Perhaps we prefer to say, “Sorry,” or “I apologize.” These expressions seem less harsh, perhaps less blaming. *Repent*, by comparison, can almost seem too stringent if we think about telling our kids, “What you did to Fred was wrong, and I think you need to repent!” We usually don’t say to a child, “You have to share, now go repent to Sally.” Similarly, how would it sound if we said to a partner or spouse, “I don’t think what you said to me was right, and I think you need to repent.” While we may prefer to use the words *sorry*, or *apologize*, there are times when they are to be used with the sense of responsibility that comes with *repent*.

There are times when a person may believe we've wronged them personally, or when the person believes we are doing wrong in some way. The expression, "I'm sorry," seems to be in most common usage today when it comes to reconciling with others for those kinds of things. We might say something like, "I'm sorry you feel that way." When in our hearts we don't believe we've done wrong, we might feel "safer" saying, "I'm sorry." Saying, "I'm sorry," doesn't always mean we

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believe we've sinned or that we accept responsibility for committing a sinful kind of wrong. It's almost like a way of compromising in hopes that the person that feels that way will feel better and move forward with us, but without us actually having to directly admit we sinned. When we haven't actually sinned, expressing *sorry* may be appropriate. When we have sinned, but don't want to take responsibility to change, then feeling or expressing *sorry* may not be enough.

Part of allowing the Lord to teach us (i.e. disciple us) involves godly introspection. We have to look within our own hearts and discern whether the Lord would have us accept responsibility for a sinful wrong. Introspection leads to discerning. We must discern between regretting a "wrong" in which we didn't sin versus regretting a "wrong" because we've sinned!

**Genesis 6:6** The Lord was **sorry** that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. (**Bold** added by authors)

In Genesis 6:6, we see that even the Lord can be *sorry*. But because the Lord is without sin, we can recognize that *sorry*, in this verse, clearly has more of the meaning of feeling regret. That is appropriate. The Lord felt regret due to the sin He witnessed among mankind upon the earth. This did not mean that the Lord had necessarily done anything wrong in creating mankind! Now compare that to the verses below...

**Mark 6:25-26** Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." And although the king was very **sorry**, *yet* because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her. (*Italics* are part of translation; **bold** added by authors)

In these verses from Mark, we see again that *sorry* carries the meaning of regret. However, to have been right with God, the king needed to be repentant. His sentiment of being sorry did not involve regret or sorrow along with an admission of guilt AND intent to change. For this reason, the king's action and heart remained sinful.

While expressing *sorry* without intending to accept guilt may sometimes work with people, it doesn't work with God when we are guilty for sinning through action or inaction. God looks at the heart. God knows when we've done wrong whether we want to admit it or not. When we've sinned, whether against someone else personally or in a more general way we are acting, then we've actually sinned against God too. Is it possible to get right with God on an issue if we aren't willing to own our part and repent to others?



To answer that question, we need to see how *repent* is used in conjunction with believers.

The Greek word *repent*, or μετανοέω, means “to change one’s life, based on complete change of attitude and thought concerning sin and righteousness.”<sup>4</sup>

The Greek word repentance, or μετάνοια, means “a change of mind which results in a change of life” or lifestyle.<sup>5</sup>

While at first *repent* and *repentance* may seem to apply mainly to the turn of the ungodly from sin during salvation, let’s look at the following which was written to Christians...

**Romans 2:4** Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to **repentance**? (**Bold** added by authors)

**2 Corinthians 7:9** I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of repentance*; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. (*italics* are part of translation; **bold** added by authors)

**Revelation 3:19** Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and **repent**. (**Bold** added by authors)

Again, each of those verses is written to believers! They all are built on the same, foundational concept: we all sin, even as believers. When we do sin, repenting is required, regardless whether we choose to use the word *sorry*, *apologize* or *repent*. Whether we intend to sin against others or God or not, we have to see what’s happening within us during the battles that involve others and their feelings of being wronged.

### Practical Application

So for us today, godly introspection is vital to spiritual growth in Christ. Discernment is necessary. We must strive to be honest with ourselves before God. If we discern we have wronged in a sinful way, then we must remain vigilant to the fact that owning our part for the wrong involves:

1. **Accepting responsibility for what we’ve done wrong – the sin.**
  - a. Before God.
  - b. When humanly possible, before the person(s).
2. **A change of mind.**
  - a. Discover Lord’s guidance on what led us to fall to the sin.
  - b. Discover the “new self” thinking that must be embraced to avoid the sin.
3. **A radical reorientation of our actions**
  - a. Look for opportunity to demonstrate “new self” change.
  - b. Be bold and confident in demonstrating to God the new changes you embraced!
4. **A consistent, concerted effort toward not making same spiritual mistake (sins).**

A very important exercise in godly introspection involves checking our hearts when we find ourselves in situations where we may say we’re sorry or where we think about apologizing. While we don’t have to always say the word *repent* in those situations, it is important to know whether an act of repentance is really what the Lord sees as needing to be involved.

As an example, we might say sorry because we forgot to do something for someone. Sometimes letting the person down is a big deal to them, and we realize it is a big deal to us too. We recognize we failed in an important commitment. It is important to evaluate whether that wrong was actually a sin toward the person, and toward God! Would the Lord have us handle our commitments in such a loose way that we fail to fulfill our word to others? If, through introspection, we recognize we failed to place appropriate priority on fulfilling our word, then perhaps repentance is necessary, both to the Lord and to the other person!

On the other hand, forgetting something may not involve the kind of wrong that is tantamount to sin. It was simply an unintentional slip that we might not consider to be a sin, even a “small” sin. However, if we regularly commit to doing something, yet we have a pattern of continually forgetting to do those things and fulfill those commitments consistently, then the pattern could reveal the kind of wrong that overall *is* sinful. Why? It may be sinful because, again, we are to fulfill our word in our commitments. As disciples of Christ (Christians), we are to be reliable. We are not to do things that unnecessarily strain relationships, but rather build them up.

As another example, we might feel the need to say, “I’m sorry,” when we have an ungodly knee-jerk reaction toward something that happens. There are times when we are caught off guard and we say or do something when we are mad, frustrated or hurt (Ephesians 4:26-27). It is spiritually normal to feel upset, angry or taken back by something unexpected. However, we aren’t supposed to make decisions and take actions while we are not centered in the peace of our Lord! Peace is to rule our hearts (Colossians 3:15)! It follows that when we act in a knee-jerk kind of way, it is probably important to evaluate whether a repentant heart should be at work within us during the aftermath!

*If... we recognize that we've wronged someone in any way that God wouldn't approve of, then to get right with God, we must make the effort to get right with the person too!*

In short, either a single act of wronging someone or a pattern of what we might consider to be “innocent wrongs” can require a repentant heart. Both may indicate it is time to take responsibility for admitting guilt. Both can indicate we need to do the follow up spiritual work to draw upon the Lord and make the effort to change the things in us that drive us toward those wrongs. When we fail to clearly look for our own patterns of poor behavior, then we are not doing our part before God to introspect.

If, during introspection, we recognize that we’ve wronged someone in any way that God wouldn’t approve of, then to get right with God, we must make the effort to get right with the person too! Trying to get right with the person is one of the ways we demonstrate to God, in our actions, that we

accept His forgiveness and are working to change our ways! We’ll need to take responsibility with the person and before God. But the other part is to make sure that we discover what God would have us to do to improve and change our ways. Satan’s temptations are behind each of the actions we take that end up requiring the repentant heart! It is important to discover how Satan manages to get his attacks to work! How is he catching you off guard? Godly introspection will reveal this! What is the Lord trying to get you to change in you so that you will be more alert and aware? We have to become aware of what leads us to react the way we do, and keep our spiritual eyes peeled for that! These are things God’s Spirit, The Teacher, seeks to draw our attention toward. Our part is to look for that guidance, to change in accordance with it, and to remember it in our lives.

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**Other related reading.** See the [March 2010](#) edition of “Hearts Up” *Spiritual Warfare Combat Tips* featured article. That article deals with how Satan gets us to overlook some of the “lesser” trials that



we may say we are sorry for, but in which we may not really see how more effort and change is required in us in order to demonstrate a repentant heart before God. Remember, having a repentant heart, when it is appropriate in God’s eyes, is the basis for a disciple’s heart! For a course in seeking out patterns and increasing your spiritual alertness and awareness, see [Feelings 101: Pain to Peace](#). This *Keys Series* course can help you see how Satan’s attacks are sometimes able to be successful in the unique trials you face in your life! It also walks you through how to become increasingly sensitive to God’s voice and guidance in your own heart.



## HEARING THE HYMNS

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### Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee<sup>6</sup>

I'll say... this can be a tough song to sing when we aren't actually feeling joyful! On the other hand, if you *aren't* joyful and you sing this song anyway, you'll soon find the joyous nature of it can shift the heart and bring out the joy!

The words to this popular song were penned by Henry van Dyke (1852-1933), but it is perhaps most well-known because of the music which was written by Ludwig von Beethoven (1770-1827)!

Verse 1 – Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee, God of glory, Lord of love;  
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before Thee, Op'ning to the sun above.  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; Drive the dark of doubt away;  
Giver of immortal gladness, Fill us with the light of day!

Verse 2 – All Thy works with joy surround Thee, Earth and heav'n reflect Thy rays;  
Stars and angels sing around Thee, Center of unbroken praise.  
Field and forest, vale and mountain, Flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,  
Singing bird and flowing fountain Call us to rejoice in Thee.

Verse 3 – Thou art giving and forgiving, Ever blessing, ever blest,  
Well-spring of the joy of living, Ocean-depth of happy rest!  
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother – All who live in love are Thine;  
Teach us how to love each other, Lift us to the joy divine.

### **Recognize God's Glory and Transforming Power!**

The first verse is powerful and awakening as it honors the God of Glory and Lord of love! He is truly worth our adoration and love. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> lines talk to the power of transformation we can experience in trials when we connect with the Lord of Love in our hearts!! We've all experience His power of transformation in some trials. Let's work to do our parts to experience it more consistently; we can count on Him to do His part! When we experience the presence of God in any of life's trials, our hearts do unfold; the clouds of sin and sadness melt away. That doesn't necessarily mean that all our external problems go away. It does mean that we can be "filled with His light." When our hearts transform in God's glory and love, we can be certain of what He wants of us in any trial. As a result, in that trial we shift from doubt and hesitancy to certainty, decisiveness and peace!

### **See God's Greatness in All Creation!**

In Verse two, Mr. van Dyke expresses how he sees God reflected in the world around him: in the earth, the stars, nature... in everything! Often we can take such things for granted. Oh, we know God created the natural beauty of this world, but how often do we appreciate His creation in that special way that enables us to feel His very presence? Whenever we do, it somehow makes us aware of God's foundational love and His power. It can rekindle our sense of confidence that truly in all

things, He is with us. How can His majesty be reflected in the world around us and He not be with us even more still? A good exercise is to spend a little time outside once and a while, and work on permitting ourselves to be roused and stirred by His presence in nature. As you connect with that, work on sensing how much more His presence is within you, His child!

### **Remember, God is Giving, Forgiving, and Blessing!**

In the third and final verse of this short, but powerful song of praise, Mr. van Dyke thanks the Lord for giving, forgiving, and always blessing us! In so doing, the writer reminds us of these things whenever we sing or recall this song of worship! It is during those times, when life’s spiritual battles pop up and overwhelm us, that it can be hard to remember those wonderful characteristics of our Lord God: giving, forgiving, and continually blessing us! But, that doesn’t change the fact that our blessed Lord is

*...it can be hard to  
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at the very root of our ability to enjoy whatever we enjoy in living life. It is in Him alone that we find the depth of rest and rejuvenation for our very being.

### **Submit to The Lord’s Discipleship and Experience Joy!**

In the 4<sup>th</sup> line of verse three, the writer offers up a profound prayer to God: teach us to love one another, and lift us to the joy divine. Sometimes in my trials, I forget that the Lord is trying to teach me to love and to experience His divine joy. Discipleship is about Him teaching and me learning. I sometimes forget that as His disciple, *learning* is *my* task. Learning to love and be joyful in trials isn’t always as simple as it sounds. Love and divine joy are not of this world. They are not experienced or demonstrated by living by the ways and means in which the world seeks to be happy and to be loved. It is so important that we submit ourselves to the Lord and let Him teach us HOW to express and act in love, while in whatever particular trial we face. It is also important to allow Him to disciple us in the lesson of being joyful in *all* things!

Work to let your Lord teach you the lesson of loving and being joyful, in your trials. The God of glory, the Lord of love, is within you! Adore Him!

## **KEYS WEBSITE ALERTS**

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**S**ocial Networking and *Keys*. Here we have a couple updates of info for you.

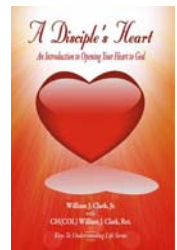
Both of the *Keys Series* authors are on Facebook. William Jr. hosts the *Keys To Understanding Life* page on Facebook, and co-author William Clark, Sr. is at [www.facebook.com/william.clark.sr](http://www.facebook.com/william.clark.sr).



For those of you that don’t know, we do post information about changes, additions and updates to the website on the *Keys* Facebook page as they happen. Obviously you can find that information in “Hearts Up” editions too, but on Facebook it’s faster. Along those lines, to continue to improve communication to you we’ll also be adding a link to our HOME page that lets visitors get a snapshot of changes to the website without having to hunt through the site looking for them. We’ll announce that on FB once it is up and running.

We look forward to connecting with you, and we hope you’ll connect with us if you haven’t already. Feel free to message us anytime, especially if you have any questions about any of the *Keys Series* materials we put out!

**F**or a limited time, we will send you a FREE copy of the *Keys Series* book, *A Disciple’s Heart*, if you will join us on Facebook (LIKE the *Keys* Facebook page)! Look for the ad on [www.adisciplesheart.com](http://www.adisciplesheart.com) for more information.



This *Keys Series* book challenges readers to examine how well they are being disciplined “beyond the elementary teachings of Christ” during real-life trials. In addition to examining *why* the Holy Spirit seeks to teach us during life’s difficulties, the material discusses the importance of learning more about the spiritual warfare dynamics within our hearts and minds. This introductory book is both for individuals seeking to understand more about discipleship beyond the basics, as well as for those who minister to believers by walking with them through their spiritual battles.

If you are ministering to others in a personal, one-on-one way, then you will likely find the discussions in *A Disciple’s Heart* useful to you. It talks about why this aspect of discipleship is, by necessity, often very personal and challenging! Whenever we work to minister to believers by “walking with them” through their battles, then fundamentally we are actually trying to point to The Teacher, the Holy Spirit within them. By “walking with them” during their battles, we mean it’s about something more than just passing on an encouraging word or praying for them. This particular aspect of discipleship involves being *involved* in a person’s life during their battles. Not everyone feels called to do that. Some believers aren’t ready for that kind of support, but many are seeking it. It can be tough providing that aspect of ministry to others. It takes time and energy. It also takes great care to help others discern the guidance that God’s Spirit is seeking to communicate to them in their hearts, but without telling them what we (as ministers) think they should do! That’s a big role, a big commitment, and big responsibility – the role is one of a “human teacher,” i.e., a teacher that points to THE Teacher, the Holy Spirit. God uses us “human teachers” as one way to strengthen believers in their walks when they are really looking to grow more deeply in Christ. You won’t be disappointed in this book.

**A**s of March 2012, we’ve begun adding Events our Facebook page that we will attend (we’ll be at a booth there), where we will be conducting training, or other Events we think you might be interested in. You can find out more about these Events on [www.facebook.com/keystounderstandinglife](http://www.facebook.com/keystounderstandinglife). We hope you’ll consider joining us in sharing the Lord with others!

We are thankful to the Lord that *Keys* had the opportunity to go to two such events this last month. We participated in both [Shine! FEST](#) (Elgin, Texas) and the Awakening Youth Explosion Concert and Outreach (Del Rio, Texas). These two events were organized by Christians to minister in their respective communities. Both those ministries joined with [Freedom Outreach](#) to present Christian musicians and bands, speakers, activities for the kids, food, etc. A



number of people came to know the Lord. And, a number of believers found support, encouragement, training opportunities, and assistance in their spiritual battles through ministries that attended, including *Keys To Understanding Life*.

We hope you'll have the chance to come see us at an event sometime, but if not, we ask that you'd lift us up to the Lord in prayer so that we might do our best for Him in serving Him in others!

This month we have featured the Freedom Outreach ministry on our [LINKS to Other Hearts page](#). Be sure to check them out.

## HEART TO HEART

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If you write poems, psalms, lyrics or prose of faith, and would like to share one of them with others in a “Hearts Up” edition, you may submit it for consideration for the *Heart To Heart* feature. You may also submit a story or testimony of your own to share how you drew closer to God during a trial or in your life! You can email your submission through the [Contact Us](#) page or send it to the snail mail address provided on that webpage. Be sure to read the **Contribution Guidelines** before sending us your submission. You can view those guidelines by clicking the link provided on the Contact Us page itself.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Sorry: Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. Includes index. (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

<sup>2</sup>Apologize: Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. Includes index. (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

<sup>3</sup>Repent: Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. Includes index. (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

<sup>4</sup>Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.) (DBLG 3566). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>5</sup>Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.) (DBLG 3567). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>6</sup>“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”, Henry van Dyke, (1852-1933) as quoted in The Baptist Hymnal, Convention Press, Nashville, TN, 1991, 7

Dear Reader,

If you find this e-publication beneficial to your walk with Christ and would like to give a financial gift to the *Keys To Understanding Life* ministry, you may do so by mailing your gift to our Snail Mail Address (our current Snail Mail Address can be found on the Contact Us page on our website).

Just so you know, our ministry is not yet a non-profit ministry, although our goal is to be a fully non-profit organization this year. As it is, any gift that is given is a “true gift” in the sense that it is not tax deductible right now. At this time, donations or gifts to *Keys To Understanding Life* may be made out to: William J. Clark.

God bless you.

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