

Parent *pages*

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Love means never having to say you're sorry? No, it doesn't!



Children who learn they can admit mistakes, apologize, and receive forgiveness are blessed with a gift that will influence everything they do. They will know that they walk and work with the safety net of God's love and grace.

THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY OFTEN DOES NOT RECOGNIZE APOLOGY AS A HEALTHY LIFE SKILL. IN FACT, SOME PERCEIVE IT AS A WEAKNESS. CELEBRITIES SOMETIMES ARE PROUD NOT TO APOLOGIZE FOR HURTFUL BEHAVIOR. WHEN POLITICIANS APOLOGIZE, WE ARE LEFT WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY ARE SORRY ONLY FOR GETTING CAUGHT.

If you watch for apology in the media, you are more likely to find excuses than anything even remotely resembling repentance. Quite often, recognition of the need for apology is one thing that sets us apart from the world. Christians know that repentance is a healthy part of our relationship with each other—and with God. As parents, apology is a vital part of our relationship with our children and an essential skill to model and teach.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”

Rom. 1:16–17

The idea that apology indicates weakness is a popular myth. Have you ever worked with someone who does not admit to mistakes? Did you see that person as being strong? It takes strength of character to readily admit a mistake and strength of values to work toward repairing a relationship. Repentance and forgiveness will not weaken a relation-

ship. When you admit your mistake, you show love and care for the person involved. If you tell someone you care about them but refuse to acknowledge that your words or actions caused pain, your words ring hollow and show you care only about yourself.

“As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.”

2 Cor. 7:9–10

The biggest mistake we make when not apologizing is assuming that confessing to God is enough. Certainly, confessing to God results in forgiveness. God loves us even if we do not apologize, but He wants what is best for us and that includes repentance. If we hurt someone and do not apologize, that person may forgive us despite our lack of apology, or drop the issue. The issue, however, will not go away. The pain can be buried and fester, only to grow into contempt or conflict. Even if the pain stays buried, it will prevent you from building a healthy relationship with the person you have hurt. When we cannot

admit to our sin, we find it difficult to believe that we need God's grace. Even in a worldly sense, emotional growth cannot happen if we cannot admit mistakes. Also, we tend to spend a lot of time creating a world in which we always are correct. Confessing your sin, apologizing, and working toward reconciliation are God's plan for building strong relationships with each other. Repentance brings healing.

"As for me, I said, 'O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!'" Ps. 41:4

Children often do not know what an apology is, or how to do it. Older children may apologize reluctantly. It's good to ask them to apologize, even if it is little more than a formality. It is good to teach your children to apologize so they can begin to understand the process and see the event from the viewpoint of the person who was hurt. An apology results in the development of empathy, and that is a wonderful thing.

Teaching your child to apologize is essential. Likewise, it is important to encourage your child to practice apology when appropriate situations arise. However, the most important step to learning repentance is found in what you, as a parent, model for your children. When your children watch or experience your apology, they learn more than can be measured about God's plan for healthy relationships.

"I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." Ps. 32:5

Be sincere and clear. Name the incident and be specific about your contribution to the grief. It's fine to give possible causes for what happened, but be wary of giving excuses. In other words, do not let the reason for your behavior excuse you from accepting responsibility for the hurt you caused. It also is helpful to be specific about what you did and what you should have done.



Apologize early and often. While you should not apologize for things that are not your responsibility, it is a good idea to apologize for seemingly little things. The apology should fit the situation. Sometimes a quick word is all that is necessary to smooth over a rough spot; other times a private discussion is in order. Try to apologize as soon as you realize you have done something hurtful. The longer you wait, the more likely the issue will be buried, only to resurface later.

"For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret." 2 Cor. 7:10

Remember to atone and accept. Apology is about more than saying "my bad" and moving on. It includes a genuine feeling of sorrow that leads to a desire to atone. Is there something you can do to correct the hurt? If so, do it. If not, explain what you will change in your behavior that will reduce the chance of repeating the error. Once you have apologized and been forgiven, allow yourself to accept the grace of forgiveness. You have been brought to repentance by your God-given faith and conscience. God, and the person you hurt, bless you with the grace of forgiveness.

Be thankful. Apologizing is not something we look forward to. I often have to talk myself into it and approach the event with trepidation. However, God always blesses repentance with forgiveness, and this is a wonderful fact and feeling. Be thankful God forgives and models that forgiveness for us to practice with each other. Let the healing begin!

"So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God." Hos. 12:6

As children of God, we are part of a long history of sin, repentance, forgiveness, and grace. Repentance is a part of a healthy relationship with God. This is His blessing to us, even though we do not deserve it.

Children who learn they can admit mistakes, apologize, and receive forgiveness are blessed with a gift that will influence everything they do. They will be more willing to learn, try new things, and reach out a hand in friendship and love. They will know that they walk and work with the safety net of God's love and grace. Our God is a wonderful God who is able to bring this good out of our sin!

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Eph. 4:30-32

For Discussion:

- ▶ Do you remember your parents apologizing to you or to each other? If so, how did this influence you?
- ▶ What was the most difficult apology you ever experienced?
- ▶ What are the consequences of not apologizing?
- ▶ How does apologizing lead to growth?

For Further Study:

- ▶ Ephesians 4, Romans 8
- ▶ www.jcparentzone.com
Look for "There's More To Kissing And Making Up Than Meets The Eye" in the Article section.