



## Repentance is accepted remorse.

To err is human; fallibility is yet another thing we have in common. We make mistakes, confirm our status as imperfect beings and, after our transgressions, we hide or distract or try to justify.

Or we accept our errors and atone for them.

Atonement starts with regret and requires imagination. Empathy helps us imagine how our action could be experienced by another. We consider their perspective and ponder what meaning they might make from our lapse. We do allow ourselves to feel the pain that they might be feeling, and don't allow our shame to crowd-out remorse.

Repentance follows regret and requires change. Without changed behavior, regret can become persistent self-pity or arrogant denial. With changed behavior, we begin to trust ourselves, to accept our humanity, and to demonstrate our desire to grow. We commit to a path that draws forth other parts of being human— courage, agility, the capacity to start again.

Atonement completes repentance and requires acceptance. Of remorse, yes, But remorse is a gate, not a bench, within the garden of atonement. Beyond that gate is the possibility of restoration. It is here that the most difficult acceptance is needed, for atonement requires acceptance of the pace of another's forgiveness. We must accept that another's mercy may come slowly or even not at all. We wait, humble, open, certain of our inherent worth.

Thankfully, our transformed actions can carry with them a measure of peace.

*What recent error do I regret? What behavior change will demonstrate my contrition?*

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