

'I Want to Repent'

OBSTACLES & FAQs

I want to Repent

Will Allaah forgive me? You might say: "I want to repent, but my sins are many indeed. There is no kind of immoral act, no kind of sin, imaginable or otherwise, that I have not committed. It is so bad that I do not know if Allaah can forgive me for the things that I have done over the years."

In response, I would tell you that this is not a unique problem; it is one that is shared by many of those who wish to repent. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"Say: 'O My slaves who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allaah, verily Allaah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. And turn in repentance and in obedience with true faith to your Lord and submit to Him..."* [al-Zumar 39:53- 54].

The feeling that one's sins are too great to be forgiven by Allaah stems from a number of factors:

- The absence of certain faith on the part of the slave in the vastness of Allaah's mercy
- A lack of faith in the ability of Allaah to forgive all sins
- Weakness in one aspect of the heart's action, namely hope
- Failure to understand the effect of repentance in wiping out sins.

For those who find it hard to comprehend how Allaah may forgive such an accumulation of sin, we remind the hadeeth about "The repentance of one who killed a hundred" and how Allah ordered the land to move so that the man is amongst the forgiven ones

What then can come between a person and repentance? Do you think that your sins are any greater than the sins of this man, whose repentance Allaah accepted? So why despair?

Stop and think about the Ayaah: *"... Allah will change their sins into good deeds..."* [al-Furqaan 25:70]. This will explain to you the immense grace and favour of Allah. The scholars have defined this change as being of two types:

1. Changing bad characteristics into good ones, so that shirk is changed into true faith, fornication into chastity, lies into truthfulness, treachery into trustworthiness, etc.
2. Changing evil deeds that one has committed into good deeds on the Day of Resurrection. Think about the words "...Allaah will change their sins into good deeds...". It does not say that one bad deed will be exchanged for a good deed (of equal weight). It could be less, the same, or more, in number or in weight. It will depend on the sincerity of the one who repents. Can you imagine any greater favour than this?

OBSTACLES OR ASPECTS THAT CAN PREVENT REPENTANCE

One may question why so many choose not to seek forgiveness from Allah given the ease and obvious benefits of doing so. There are multiple obstacles, some subtle, some obvious but all these come between sinners and repentance. Imam Ibn Taymiyyah has outlined those that play a significant role in preventing the sinner from the act of repentance.

1. Disregarding or Belittling Sins

From the things that prevent one from *tawbah* (repentance) is paying little attention to the sins he commits and belittling the sins he falls into, when sinners view their sins as trivial, they do not experience true remorse and lack even the slightest motivation to engage in *tawba*. This is all too prevalent in today's culture where people openly brag about their sins on social media.

The pride and pleasure in minor sins drive people to engage in major sins; thus, major sins are almost always preceded by minor sins.

Furthermore, one is encouraged to keep concealed those sins which Allah has not exposed out of His Mercy and Forbearance—particularly when it comes to encouraging and misleading others toward the same sins.

The Prophet ﷺ said, *"All the people of my Ummah would get pardon for their sins except those who publicize them. And (it means) that a servant should do a deed during the night and tell the people in the morning that he has done so and so, whereas Allah has concealed it. And he does a deed during the day and when it is night he tells the people, whereas Allah has concealed it."* (Sahih Muslim)

2. False confidence in time

Yahya Ibn Mu'adh said: *"Of the things that prevent the people from tawbah (repentance) is (too) many expectations."*

One of the tricks of Shaytan is to discourage the believer by saying to him: 'take your time with regards to this, what is the rush? You have all the time in the world.' As a result Shaytan deceives and makes the person procrastinate and until he eventually dies a sinner.

But Allah says, *"Hasten to forgiveness from your Lord..."* (3:33)

Therefore the steadfast, upright believer should make good use of his time and not procrastinate. He should give up living a life of longing, hoping and expecting so much in the future. Some of the Salaf used to say: *"Be weary of procrastinating and always putting off things, for indeed it is something from Shaytan (the devil) and his forces."*

3. Just relying on and saying Allah is the most Merciful

Abu Ali Ru'thabani said: *"One of the things many are misled by is relying solely upon the mercy of Allāh. By doing so, they refrain from tawbah due to the fact that they believe Allah will always have mercy upon them."*

So the worst of the people are those who consider their sins not to be great and they are misled by this, believing that Allah will forgive them whether they repent or not.

Umar Ibn Thar'ra said: *"O people who wrong themselves by disobeying their Lord, do not be misled into believing Allāh will always be merciful to you; be wary of such a delusion because Allah says:*

- *"So when they angered Us, We punished them and drowned them all."* (Quran 43:55)
- *"So he feared not the consequences thereof..."* (Quran 91:151)

Did not a woman go to the Hell-Fire because of how she treated her cat? (Bukhari)

Also the Prophet ﷺ said, *"A person utters a word thoughtlessly (i.e. without thinking about its being good or not) and, as a result of this, he will fall down into the Fire of Hell deeper than the distance between the east and the west."* (Bukhari)

4. Heedlessness

One who is not engaged in the frequent remembrance of Allah will lack the spiritual awareness, conditioning, and fortitude required to abstain from following their desires. This is especially problematic today given the countless distractions that accompany an abundance of leisure time, prosperity, and secularism. Without *taqwa*, such an individual will likely follow his own desires and fall into sin. This obstacle illustrates the negative impact of a spiritually devoid heart on one's actions.

5. Thinking that Allāh Will Not Accept One's Tawbah

One of the most destructive tricks of Shaitaan for stopping someone from Tawbah is despair in the Mercy of Allah. The sinner who believes his sins are excessive and that Allah will no longer forgive them gives up all hope and does not repent at all. This may stem from a feeling of excessive guilt and hopelessness.

Negative sentiment about Allah and His deen felt in the question, "What's the point of repenting anyway?" is not a modern phenomenon. Rather, it has always been a common strategy of Satan used to distance the servant from his Master – Allah.

In this course we have studied multiple times about the Mercy and Forgiveness of Allah. He says: *"Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allāh. Indeed, Allāh forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful'".* (Quran 39: 53)

Also the Prophet ﷺ said, *"None of you should long for death, for if he is a good man, he may increase his good deeds, and if he is an evil-doer, he may stop the evil deeds and repent."* (Sahih Bukhari)

Therefore, it is not befitting that a true believer distances himself from *tawbah*. Do not despair and think that Allāh will not accept your *tawbah*. Indeed, Allah is the Most Merciful, who always forgives his repenting slaves, and none despairs from the mercy of Allah except the disbelieving people. What one is ordered to do is to have a good opinion of Allah in all his affairs, even in the last moments of his life.

6. Being confident because of the Good deeds that one has done

The slave is misled into believing that due to the fact he has done many righteous deeds he will be saved regardless of whatever sins he commits.

This is the case of the one who thinks his good deeds far outweigh his sins and mistakenly believes that he is guaranteed forgiveness—so he does not repent. The believer should never take forgiveness for granted, given the very real possibility of falling short even in regard to the best of his deeds.

Related to this obstacle is the practice of taking evidence of worldly success as a sign of Allah's pleasure and favor. The Qur'an and *Sunnah* give us ample proof of cases in which this is true and instances when it is not.

7. Evil Friends

You might say, "I want to repent, but evil friends are pursuing me wherever I go. As soon as they learn of any change I have made, they launch an attack against me, and I feel too weak to resist them. What can I do?" As you have taken the first step on the Straight Path, stand firm and persevere. These people are the devils of men and jinn, who will conspire with one another to turn you away from this path. Pay no heed to them. At the beginning, they will tell you that this is just a passing fancy, a temporary crisis that will not last. Strangely enough, such people have been known to say of friends who were setting out on the road of repentance, "What evil he has fallen into!"

Is your Lord more deserving of obedience, or these people who call to evil? You should know that they will pursue you wherever you go and will use every means at their disposal to try to bring you back to the way of sin.

They will try to remind you of the past and make your past sins appear attractive, by means of reminders, earnest pleas, pictures, letters... Do not pay any attention to them. Be on your guard against the ways in which they will try to tempt you.

Remember the story of Ka'b ibn Maalik, one of the great Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ all his Companions to cut off ties with Ka'b because he had stayed behind and had not joined the expedition to Tabook. This boycott was to last until Allaah decided concerning him. The kaafir king of Ghassaan sent a letter to Ka'b, in which he said: "We hear that your master has treated you badly. Allaah has not put you in a house of humiliation and loss, so come to us and we will provide for you." The kaafir wanted to win over the Muslim so that he would leave Madeenah and be lost in the land of kufr. How did this great Sahaabi react to this? Ka'b said: "When I read it, I said, 'This is also a test,' and I threw it in the oven and burned it." This is how the Muslim, male or female, should deal with everything that is sent by bad people: burn it to ashes, and whilst you are burning it, remember the Fire of Hell.

Some Evil friends might even threaten to expose your past

You may say: “I want to repent but my old friends are threatening to reveal my past and publish my secrets to everyone. They have pictures and other papers they can use against me. I am worried about my reputation, and I am scared!”

Our advice is: fight back against these friends of Shaytaan. The tricks of Shaytaan are weak, and all the pressure that the helpers of Iblees may bring against you will soon crumble in the face of the patience and perseverance of the true believer.

It is true that this is a difficult situation. Take the poor girl who has repented, but her former boyfriend calls her on the phone and threatens her by saying: “I have recorded our conversations and I have pictures of you. If you refuse to go out with me I will disgrace you in front of your family.” She is certainly in an unenviable position.

But if the worst comes to the worst, and the thing you fear happens – they broadcast bad things about you – what you need to do is to be honest and explain your situation to others. Tell them, “Yes, I was a sinner, but now I have repented to Allaah, so what do you want?”

We should all remember that true disgrace will occur not in this world, but in the Hereafter, on the Day of Judgement, the Day of the Greatest Humiliation, not in front of one or two hundred people, not in front of one or two thousand, but in front of the whole of creation, angels, jinn and mankind, all the people from Adam to the last man

At moments of distress, seek help with the du'aa' of the Prophet ﷺ :

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ الْعَفْوَ وَالْعَافِيَةَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ الْعَفْوَ وَالْعَافِيَةَ فِي دِينِي وَدُنْيَائِي وَأَهْلِي وَمَالِي اللَّهُمَّ اسْكُرْ عَوْرَاتِي وَأَمِنْ رَوْعَاتِي وَاحْفَظْنِي مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِي وَعَنْ يَمِينِي وَعَنْ شِمَالِي وَمِنْ فَوْقِي وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أُغْتَالَ مِنْ تَحْتِي

Allahumma inni as'alukal-'afwa wal-'afiyah fid-dunya wal-akhirah. Allahumma inni as'alukal-'afwa wal-'afiyah fi dini wa dunyaya wa ahli wa mali. Allahum-mastur 'awrati, wa amin raw'ati wahfazni min bayni yadayya, wa min khalfi, wa 'an yamini wa 'an shimali, wa min fawqi, wa 'audhu bika an ughtala min tahti

O Allah, I ask you for pardon and well-being in this life and the next. O Allah, I ask you for pardon and well-being in my religious and worldly affairs, and my family and my wealth. O Allah, veil my weaknesses and set at ease my dismay, and preserve me from the front and from behind and on my right and on my left and from above, and I take refuge with You lest I be swallowed up by the earth.

FAQS ABOUT REPENTANCE

Q. Should I confess? A person may sorrowfully ask: “I want to repent, but do I have to go and confess the sins I have committed? Is it a condition of repentance that I should confess?”

A. No, If we believe that repentance is only for Allaah, then confession is only for Allaah too. The slave's direct relationship with Allaah, with no intermediaries, is one of the most important aspects of the belief in Tawheed (Divine Unity) with which Allaah is pleased.

Q. Repenting and then falling into the sin again. Does this mean that the first act of repentance is cancelled out and that one still bears the burden of the earlier sin as well as the later sin?

A. Most of the scholars say that it is not a condition of valid repentance that the person should never commit the sin again. The conditions of valid repentance are that the person should stop the sinful action immediately, feel sincere remorse for having done it, and be determined not to repeat it. If he does repeat it, he is then like a person who has committed a new sin, for which he must repent anew; his previous repentance, however, is still valid InShaAllah.

Q. Is repentance from one sin valid when I am still guilty of another?

A. Yes, it will be accepted as long as they are different and independent sins.

Q. I have neglected many rights of Allaah in the past, such as prayers, fasting and zakaah. What should I do now?

A. Prayers do not need to be made up, however one needs to make up the missed Fasts and also give the pending Zakah.

Q. I committed the sin of backbiting about one or more persons, and I slandered others by saying that they had done things of which they were innocent. Do I have to tell them about what I did and ask for their forgiveness? If not, then how do I repent?

A. If telling them about the backbiting or slander is not going to make them angry or cause them to hate him, then he should tell them – even if only in general terms – and ask for their forgiveness. He could say “I have wronged you in the past,” or “I have spoken unfairly about you, and now I have repented to Allaah, so please forgive me” – without going into details, and this is good enough.

One should feel remorse, seek Allaah’s forgiveness, think about the vileness of this sin, and believe that it is haraam.. He should tell the people to whom he uttered the false words that what he said was not true, and he should clear the name of the person about whom the slander was uttered.

He should speak highly of the person he had slandered, in the same gatherings where the backbiting occurred, and mention his good qualities.

He should defend the person about whom he had gossiped in the past, and speak up for him if anyone tries to speak ill of him.

Q. I unlawfully seized some wealth that did not belong to me, and invested it in trade. This brought a profit which multiplied the original amount several times. But now I have begun to fear Allaah. How can I repent??

A. The scholars have expressed several opinions on such cases. The most moderate and equitable of them suggests that you should return the original capital to the orphans, along with half of the profits.

This will make you and them partners, as it were, in the profit, as well as returning the original amount to them.

Q. Stole and took something. Years later he repented. Should he return the item, or should he give them the equivalent monetary value or an item?

A. He should return the original item, plus an appropriate amount of money to make up for the depreciation in value caused by the passage of time and wear and tear of use. This should be done in a suitable manner, without causing any harm or trouble for himself. If this is not possible, then he should give an equivalent amount in charity on behalf of the original owner.

Q. I used to have money that was earned from riba (usury or interest), but I have spent it all and have nothing left. Now I want to repent – what should I do?

A. All you have to do is repent sincerely to Allaah. Riba is a serious matter, as may be seen from the fact that in the Qur'aan, Allaah did not declare war on anyone except on the people who deal in riba. But since the money that was earned from riba is all gone, you do not have to do anything with regard to it.

Q. A man used to take bribes, but now Allaah has guided him to the Straight Path. What should he do with the money that he had earned in the form of bribes?

A. If he took it from an oppressed person (who was forced to give to get his job done) then he should return it. If it was from a person who wrongs and wanted to just get his way, then the money shouldn't be returned to him rather should be disposed in a good cause.

Q. I committed illegal sexual intercourse with a woman. How do I repent from this sin? Is it permissible for me to marry her in order to cover up the affair?

A. If its without her consent, then the man should pay Mahr (dowry) as compensation for the harm that he has caused her, and he has to repent sincerely to Allaah. If the matter has come to the attention of the authorities, the appropriate punishment is to be carried out on him. If it was with consent, in this case, all that he is required to do is to repent.

Q. A woman says that she married a righteous man, but she did things before marriage that were displeasing to Allaah. Now her conscience is troubling her, and she asks whether she has to tell her husband about what she did in the past.

A. Neither spouse is obliged to tell the other about bad things that they might have done in the past. Anyone who has committed wrongful deeds should conceal them as Allaah has concealed him (or her). Sincere repentance is sufficient.

To conclude,

O slave of Allaah, Allaah has opened the gate of repentance for you, so why not enter it? It was reported that repentance has a gate whose width is like the distance between East and West. Listen to the call of Allaah: *“O My slaves, you err night and day, but I forgive all sins, so ask Me for forgiveness and I will forgive you.”* (Sahih Muslim).

Allaah stretches forth His hand at night to forgive those who have done wrong during the day, and He stretches forth His hand by day to forgive those who have done wrong during the night. Allaah loves our apologies and pleas, so why not turn to Him?

And the Prophet ﷺ told us: *“Allaah is more compassionate towards His slaves than this mother towards her child.”* (Sahih Muslim).

اللهم إنك عفو تحب العفو فاعفُ عني

Allahumma innaka 'afuwwun, tuhibbul-'afwa, fa'fu 'anni

(O Allah, You are Most Forgiving, and You love forgiveness; so forgive me

O my brothers & sisters in Islam, let us move on, then, to good and righteous deeds, to the company of righteous people, to avoiding deviation after having been guided aright. May Allaah be with us all.

May Allah forgive all of our sins and by His Mercy make us all Inhabitants of Jannah.

Please do rememeber us and the whole Ummah in your prayers!