

Episode 3

Stories from General Young Women Meetings

REPENTANCE

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Welcome to Stories from the General Young Women Meetings. The topic of this collection is repentance. Through the atonement of Jesus Christ we can be forgiven of all our mistakes. In the Book of Mormon, Alma 34 verse 12 says “there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world.” In the 2007 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Julie B. Beck reminds us that repentance needs to be a continuous process in our lives.

[END MUSIC]

(Julie B. Beck, April 2007, General Young Women Meeting)

Not long ago I was with an eight-year-old girl on the day of her baptism. At the end of the day she said with all confidence, "I have been baptized for a whole day, and I haven't sinned once!" But her perfect day did not last forever, and I am sure she is learning by now, like we all learn, that as hard as we try, we do not always avoid every bad situation, every wrong choice, or control ourselves as we should. I often hear about the chosen, royal generation of this dispensation, but I have never heard it called the perfect generation. Teenagers are especially vulnerable because the power of Satan is real, and they are making their first big, independent choices. Consequently, they are also making their first big mistakes.

This is what happened to Corianton in the Book of Mormon. Corianton was supposed to be serving a faithful mission, but he thought he was strong enough and smart enough to handle risky situations and bad company, and he got himself into big trouble and big sin when he started going to the wrong places, with the wrong people, doing the wrong things.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Later in the same talk, Sister Beck tells about a woman who avoided repentance and let a simple bad habit affect both her and her posterity.

[END MUSIC]

(Julie B. Beck, April 2007, General Young Women Meeting)

My next story is about a woman I will call Mary. She was the daughter of faithful pioneer parents who had sacrificed much for the gospel. She had been married in the temple and was the mother of 10 children. She was a talented woman who taught her children how to pray, to work hard, and to love each other. She paid her tithing, and the family rode to church together on Sunday in their wagon.

Though she knew it was contrary to the Word of Wisdom, she developed the habit of drinking coffee and kept a coffee pot on the back of her stove. She claimed that "the Lord will not keep me out of heaven for a little cup of coffee." But, because of that little cup of coffee, she could not qualify for a temple recommend, and neither could those of her children who drank coffee with her. Though she lived to a good old age and did eventually qualify to reenter and serve in the temple, only one of her 10 children had a worthy temple marriage, and a great number of her posterity, which is now in its fifth generation, live outside of the blessings of the restored gospel she believed in and her forefathers sacrificed so much for.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: **In the same 2007 address, Julie B. Beck then shares a story about a girl who made *positive* changes in her life, which in turn, positively affected others.**

[END MUSIC]

(Julie B. Beck, April 2007, General Young Women Meeting)

The last story is about Christina (not her real name), who had been baptized and sealed to her family when she was a young girl, but somewhere along the way the family stopped living the gospel. Now she was in her late teens, and she had been making some wrong choices and was very unhappy.

One day I gave her a Personal Progress book and said, "This book will help you incorporate qualities of Christ in your life so you can make the changes you desire. I invite you to begin to work in your book today and then bring it with you to the youth fireside tonight and share with me what you have learned." That night she said with tears in her eyes, "Today I started *my* personal progress." She has written to me a few times since that day. She began going back to Sunday meetings, Mutual, and seminary. In a couple of weeks her sister and mother attended church with her. Later the father joined them, and now the entire family has been back to the temple together.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: **In the 1997 General Young Women Meeting, an invited guest speaker, Alejandra Hernandez shares a similar story from her life.**

[END MUSIC]

(Alejandra Hernandez, April 1997 General Young Women Meeting)

I have had the gospel in my home from birth, and thus my parents have always taken care to teach me good principles. In spite of that, I changed a lot during my junior high school years. I decided to take the way that seemed more fun and apparently easier too. I let myself be guided by my friends' counsel to dress inappropriately, to go to undesirable parties, and even to use bad language once in a while.

At the same time, I started to have problems with my parents and I stopped reading the scriptures. Being popular was most important to me, and going to parties and dressing like my friends seemed good. But in reality I felt empty inside and more alone than ever.

I had no peace of mind because I always had something to hide from my parents for fear of being scolded. Something always told me that I was doing wrong, but I still chose to follow my friends and be popular.

It was not until the last part of ninth grade that I started feeling that everything that was said in church was especially prepared for me. During a sacrament meeting, the talks that were given were so much what I needed that I turned to my mother and asked her, "Mom, what have you told them about me?" She said that she hadn't said anything to the speakers about me. It was then that I decided to change, and it was then that my friends turned their backs on me. I felt really bad. But I accepted that my parents had always been right. I came to realize that they were my only true friends.

It was not easy to make the change. I needed to be humble to recognize that I had been wrong. I really wanted to be different, so I began to work with Personal Progress. I started to feel better about myself little by little, experience by experience. Sometimes it was very hard to complete the value experiences, such as reading the scriptures. But even when I would just make the effort, I would feel better.

The first time I finished reading the Book of Mormon, I could feel that everything my parents had taught me about the Church was true, and I could draw nearer to Christ. When I began working on the Laurel projects, I started feeling satisfied with myself, and I began to feel the peace that I had been looking for through service to others in my Good Works projects.

I now have my medallion, and I think it was worth the effort. To me, it is more than a necklace. It really means my feeling of love to my Heavenly Father. It represents my personal worthiness, and it motivates me to go on doing what Christ wants me to do.

I am so grateful for the opportunity we have been given to choose between right and wrong, and I am also grateful for the opportunity to learn from our mistakes. The joy I now feel when I feel the love of Christ through my service to others and the knowledge of my worth has no comparison with my feelings of being popular in school. By now probably nobody in my junior high school remembers me, but I feel happy to know that Christ knows me and knows of my love for Him.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Life is full of choices, and sometimes we choose to our detriment. But repentance allows us to reverse bad decisions. In the same meeting, another guest speaker, fono lavatai, tells us how she chose playing basketball over attending seminary. She soon realized the consequences that came from putting other things before church.

[END MUSIC]

(Fono Lavatai, April 1997 General Young Women Meeting)

I moved from Samoa to the United States last summer. I didn't want to leave my island and my friends. Going to a new high school made me very nervous. In spite of being new, I tried out for the girls' basketball team. I made it! I love basketball! As you're running down that court, everyone is counting on you to make that basket. When you

make it, a feeling of happiness comes to you, and if you don't make it--well, that is a whole different story!

Anyway, I was on the team and couldn't go to seminary because I had practice every day after school, and I had seminary after school as well. I missed seminary for the whole second quarter and forgot all about it.

One day my mom asked me about it. I told her that everything was OK. But she knew what was going on. My seminary teacher had sent her a letter. She told me: "Fono, you know that what you are doing is wrong. I'm just going to advise you, but it is your decision. Remember, your decision can give you happiness, and it can also put you into a lot of misery."

I thought about this for several weeks and came to my final decision. I decided to quit basketball and go to seminary. I knew that if I chose basketball over seminary it would be pretty sad and embarrassing at seminary graduation. I didn't want to watch others graduate when I couldn't. Maybe that was the misery my mom was talking about. I decided that I should get my priorities straight. Even though I love basketball so much, first things first. I am hoping to make the basketball team next year. As I plan my schedule, I am making sure that I won't have to drop seminary again in order to practice.

Right now I'm back in seminary. I have a great teacher, a fun class, and I'm very proud of myself for making the right decision. This experience reminds me of a scripture found in Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: You're listening to stories from General Young Women Meetings on the Mormon Channel. The topic is repentance. It is never too late to repent. Life will be better as we choose to repent and try to live the gospel. In the 1999 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Carol B. Thomas read an excerpt from a letter she received from a young woman who learned this for herself.

[END MUSIC]

(Carol B. Thomas, April 1999 General Young Women Meeting)

A Mia Maid from Utah wrote: "This past year I had some personal challenges. I lost track of the Spirit, and then something incredible happened. I went to my bishop. I can't remember ever feeling so scared. But the Lord was with me in that room, holding my trembling hand. I knew I could be forgiven. It's been a hard road--humbling, repenting, and learning to pray all over again. But He was there. He never left me for a minute. I've been on both sides, and the light side is definitely the place to be" (letter in possession of Young Women office).

Thank you, thank you, young women, for your desire to follow the light of the Savior. All of you have difficult situations in your lives, but you know the source of your spiritual strength. Every time you pray or bear testimony or stand for the right, you shut down the powers of evil in your life.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Sin can bring pain and sorrow. But the Savior has paid for our sins. We don't have to suffer long if we rely on him. In the 2002 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Sharon G. Larsen shares a very memorable reminder about the savior's atonement while participating in a choral group.

[END MUSIC]

(Sharon G. Larsen, April 2002 General Young Women Meeting)

Years ago I was singing Handel's *Messiah* with a group of people from different faiths. Even though our beliefs were different, we were all singing about the same Messiah, our own personal Savior. I had sung this oratorio many times, but during one particular practice, the Spirit told me that I was not only singing notes, I was singing my testimony: "Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4). I knew with all my soul that He had done that for me. For a moment the 300 other voices became a whisper and I felt like I was all alone with the Lord. I felt His love and reassurance that He had carried the griefs and the sorrows of my teenage heart, and through my obedience, He would continue to walk with me for the rest of my life. To feel that blessing and comfort and complete love from the Lord is worth any price.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: From the Book of Mormon, Second Nephi chapter nine we read "he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women and children." But we have to do our part. That scripture continues, we "must repent and be baptized in his name". In the April 1999 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Carol B. Thomas shares the baptismal experience of a young woman from the Philippines.

[END MUSIC]

(Carol B. Thomas, April 1999 General Young Women Meeting)

The Savior has likened our baptism to being reborn. I want you to think about two of the greatest moments in your life: the day you were born and the day of your baptism, two very essential births in this lifetime. None of us can remember the day we were born. You can only imagine that your mother held you close in her arms and dreamed of what you would become.

Now, it's probably not as hard to remember the day you were baptized--your second birth. Listen to what Lan-Ting, a Beehive girl from the Philippines, wrote about her baptism: "I felt like I had been born again. What an extraordinary feeling of cleanliness, sinlessness! My mother's tears flowed like a fountain of pearls, and I could tell these were tears of joy! My mother told me sincerely, 'Lan-Ting, today I am relieved to say I can turn you over to the Lord. I trust He will accompany you along the roads of your life'" (letter in possession of Young Women office).

Baptism is our spiritual rebirth. It cleanses us from head to toe and allows us the companionship of the Savior through the gift of the Holy Ghost. He will accompany each of us along the road of life.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Baptism entitles us to great blessings as we continue to cleanse ourselves through daily repentance. Sister Thomas continues her talk with a historical analogy.

[END MUSIC]

(Carol B. Thomas, April 1999 General Young Women Meeting)

A story is told of the son of King Louis XVI of France. As a young man, he was kidnapped by evil men when they dethroned the king. For six months he was exposed to every filthy and vile thing that life had to offer, yet he never buckled under the pressure. This puzzled his captors, and they asked him why he had such great moral strength. His reply was simple: "I cannot do what you ask, for I was born to be a king" (see Vaughn J. Featherstone, "The King's Son," *New Era*, Nov. 1975, 35). You were born to be daughters of a King. By being baptized, you have been promised the blessings of royalty as you sanctify yourselves and become holy.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: No matter what we've done...there's a way back. From the 2009 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Elaine S. Dalton compares a backpacking trip to the repentance process.

[END MUSIC]

(Elaine S. Dalton, April 2009, General Young Women Meeting)

A few years ago my daughter and I, along with two other friends, were backpacking in the Teton Range. Looking for an adventure, we asked the ranger if there was a path that not very many people knew about. He told us about a trail-less hike that would take us through meadows, streams, boulder fields, then to a pristine lake, and eventually to our destination—The Wall. We were in! He gave us instructions on the basic directions and said, "Stay high on the mountain. Don't go down in the willows because that is where the bears are; watch for the cairns that will show you the way." Cairns are rocks stacked on top of each other to form an eco-friendly trail marker.

We began early the next morning. For a time we were down in the willows, which made me very nervous. Then we saw our first cairn up on the side of the hill, and we went to it. We hiked from cairn to cairn. At times it seemed we were lost because we would go so long without seeing another cairn, but then to our relief we would see one again and all was well. We reached a huge field of boulders and had to hoist each other and our packs to the top of each boulder. This was challenging, but by evening we reached the beautiful,

pristine lake. This is where we pitched our tents. We had exquisite views in every direction. The strenuous hike was worth it!

Early the next morning, however, I awoke to the sound of howling wind. A fog had descended on the lake, making it almost impossible to see in any direction. We packed our tents and sleeping bags and started out navigating around the lake, beginning our ascent to our destination, The Wall. I was never so happy as to arrive at The Wall—in fact, we all were! We went up to the huge granite wall and kissed it! We had arrived.

As I stand before you this evening and call upon the young women of the Church to arise in a return to virtue, I say, in the words of Isaiah, “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, . . . and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths” (Isaiah 2:3). The path of virtue is “less traveled” (see “The Road Not Taken,” in *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem [1969], 105); it will take us through life’s meadows and streams and pristine lakes—and even boulder fields! We will need to lift and hoist each other up! The path may be strenuous, but if we are willing, the rewards will be eternal.

As you climb, don’t allow yourself to descend into the willows. Stay high on the mountain. You are God’s precious daughters! Because of the knowledge of our divine identity, everything must be different for us: our dress, our language, our priorities, and our focus. We must not seek guidance from the world, and if our true identity has been clouded by mistakes or sins, we can change. We can turn around and repent and return to virtue. We can climb above the willows. The Savior’s Atonement is for you and for me. He invites each of us to come unto Him.

As you live a virtuous life, you will have the confidence, power, and strength necessary to climb. You will also be blessed with the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. Follow the promptings that you receive. Act upon them. Like the cairns on a trail less traveled, the Holy Ghost will show you all things you should do (see 2 Nephi 32:5). He will teach and testify of Christ, who has “marked the path and led the way” (“How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195).

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Repentance is not always an easy process. In the final narrative, President Gordon B. Hinckley illustrates how a small error may affect our entire life! This excerpt is from the 2004 General Young Women Meeting.

[END MUSIC]

(President Gordon B. Hinckley, April 2004 General Young Women Meeting)

Many years ago I told a story in conference that I think I will repeat. It is a story about a baseball player. I realize that some of you in various parts of the world do not know much

about baseball. You do not even care about it. But this story brings with it a tremendous lesson.

The event occurred in 1912. The World Series was being played, and this was the final game to determine the winner of the series. The score was 2-1 in favor of the New York Giants, who were in the field. The Boston Red Sox were at bat. The man at bat knocked a high, arching fly. Two New York players ran for it. Fred Snodgrass in center field signaled to his associate that he would take it. He came squarely under the ball, which fell into his glove. But he did not hold it there. The ball went right through his grasp and fell to the ground. A howl went up in the stands. The fans could not believe that Snodgrass had dropped the ball. He had caught hundreds of fly balls before. But now, at this most crucial moment, he had failed to hold the ball, and the Red Sox went on to win the world championship.

Snodgrass came back the following season and played brilliant ball for nine more years. He lived to be 86 years of age, dying in 1974. But after that one slip, for 62 years, whenever he was introduced to anybody, the expected response was, "Oh, yes, you're the one who dropped the ball."

Unfortunately, we see people dropping the ball all the time. There is the student who thinks she is doing well enough and then, under the stress of the final exam, fails. There is the driver who is extremely careful. But, in one single moment of carelessness, he becomes involved in a tragic accident. There is the employee who is trusted and who does well. Then, in an instant, he is faced with a temptation he cannot resist. A mark is placed upon him which never seems entirely to disappear.

There is the outburst of anger that destroys in a single moment a long-standing friendship. There is the little sin that somehow grows and eventually leads to separation from the Church.

There is the life lived with decency; then comes the one destructive, ever-haunting, one-time moral breakdown, the memory of which seems never to fade.

On all such occasions, someone dropped the ball. A person may have had plenty of self-confidence. He or she may have been a bit arrogant, thinking, "I do not really have to try." But when he or she reached for the ball, it passed through the glove and fell to the ground. There is repentance, yes. There is forgiveness, of course. There is a desire to forget. But somehow, the time the ball was dropped is long remembered...

...I wish to emphasize that if you make a mistake, it can be forgiven, it can be overcome, it can be lived above. You can go on to success and happiness. But I hope that such an experience will not come your way, and I am confident it will not if you will set your mind and pray for the strength to walk the high road, which at times may be lonely but which will lead to peace and happiness and joy supernal in this life and everlastingly hereafter.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Thanks for joining us for ‘Stories from Young Women General Meetings’. The topic of this episode was repentance. For more information on the Mormon Channel, go to radio.lds.org. Tell your friends about us!

[END MUSIC]