

## **Sorry About That**

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Not long ago, I played a joke on a friend of mine. Well, to be more accurate, I tried to play a joke on this person. Unfortunately, I was not entirely successful. The problem with playing a prank on someone is that you want to make sure that they know that you are not serious. I'm not sure if this person really knew I was not serious.

Shortly after I played this prank, I tried to call the individual back on the phone, but the line stayed busy. I tried repeatedly until they finally answered, and as soon as they heard it was me, they hung up on me. Not long after that, I got a call from my wife, who wanted to know what I had done to upset the other person.

After I went to lunch and discussed the whole incident with my wife, I got to thinking about it and decided that maybe the person didn't know I had really been joking around. In fact, the more I thought about it, the more I decided I needed to go and apologize. I went to this person's office, but they were out doing something. I just kind of wandered around until I found them, then accompanied this person back to the office.

I explained that I had just been joking, but thought that maybe I had not made that very clear. I had gotten to the point that I was nearly physically ill from worry that I had really offended the other person or hurt their feelings. I was truly remorseful over what I had done. What I felt was true sorrow for what I had done, not just that the joke backfired.

A lot of people use the term repentance very lightly. They talk about the regret they feel soon after they get caught doing something wrong. If someone gets a speeding ticket, then goes out and buys a radar detector, they may have been sorry they got caught, but they have not repented over what they have done. True repentance is being sorry for what we have done, not just that it came to light or that we got caught.

The Bible teaches that all of us are sinners. I think most people would agree that none of us are perfect. But when we are confronted with our sin, how do we react? Are we sorry for what we have done, or are we just sorry we got in trouble? If we are genuinely repentant, we feel regret over the sin itself, rather than just the fact we got caught.

In the incident where my joke didn't go over well, I was not sorry that the joke wasn't funny. In fact, I am accustomed to most of my jokes not being funny. What I was sorry about was not even the fact that my wife said something to me about it. What I was really sorry about was that I thought I had hurt someone else. In short, to hurt someone else is to sin against them. It has the potential to damage the relationship. Fortunately, this person knew me well enough to know I was joking. The other person's reaction to my prank was a joke in itself. We are still friends.

When we sin against God and we are confronted with our sinful condition, we must be truly repentant over our sin, not just sorry we got caught. Further, repentance involves a change of direction. We don't do those same things any longer. To do them damages our relationship with God. Fortunately, when we do sin, if we repent and ask God's forgiveness, he does just that. He forgives us and restores the broken relationship.

When you get down to it, repentance is no joking matter.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in church on Sunday.