

# 2CH Sunday at 7.30

## Saying sorry

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### Introduction

Many 2CH listeners grew up in a slightly more polite world. Somehow basic manners seem to be one of the victims of our age. Once upon a time please and thank you formed the backbone of civil society, and the only word you needed more than please and thank you – was sorry.

When we think about how to relate to God those common courtesies are such a good place to start. It makes sense to be sorry to God for our sins. It makes **more** sense that our sorrow will turn to genuine repentance. And finally a thankful heart to God for his kindness, patience and mercy lies at the heart of living a relationship with God.

Stay with us this morning as we consider how much God has done for us. Such knowledge should lead us to sorrow for our sins and rejoice in all that God has given us.

### Part 1

There is no doubt that in Australia this year 'sorry' is a very important word. Our newly elected federal government has convinced its once ruling opponents to join with them in offering to the indigenous peoples of Australia an apology for some of the past wrongs. Time will tell if this is a significant act of reconciliation or an attempt to cause division and embarrassment to political opponents. Maybe history will judge it to be both at the same time, namely good policy and a political wedge. But regardless of the politics it is good that the idea of an apology is a talking point in the nation.

I can remember the battles in previous decades in our family when young children faced that crucial issue with their parents. A child does the wrong thing, normally to an innocent sibling or their property. A parent discovers the misdemeanour. The child knows the nature of the error and has little, if any, defence. The parents start to probe for the word 'sorry'. The word does not come.

The parents move from probing to prompting. Still no sorry. Then comes demanding, insisting and at times even a little intimidating. The word is getting closer. Next come threats of nuclear war or much worse! And then at last the word flows, "Sorry".

But at least one parent is not satisfied. A sorry under duress, without proper inflection and fluidity, smacks of a meaningless gesture. Now the word 'sorry' is just not enough. Now the child has to mean it too! Time passes, a door remains shut, and the world stands still. Then finally, with humility and genuine contrition, the word is finally said properly, "Sorry". The enmity is over and the job of restoring relationships begins. A wrong has been acknowledged and the hope on all sides is that this episode will not need to be repeated.

In life, contrition and forgiveness are the building blocks of long-term relationships. They are our only defence against hatred that can ruin a friendship, kill a marriage and threaten a democracy with a gun. But behind our world of human struggle lies a relationship with our Creator, which we have too often ignored at best, or rejected at worst. It is no surprise that the first and most resisted step back to God begins with the word 'sorry'. "Sorry that I ignored you". "Sorry that I thought I knew better". "Sorry that in my human arrogance I thought that the world revolved around my needs and me". "Sorry that I exchanged the truth of God and worshipped the creation rather than the Creator".

The poet Alexander Pope said "To err is human; to forgive is divine". But he forgot the missing link: "Sorry!" Jesus in Luke 23: 34 said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.""

## Part 2

Anybody with teenage children knows the complications involved with family holidays. Trying to organize a holiday with teenagers is just plain difficult. Juggling part time jobs and busy social lives is always complicated. But even more difficult is the question of whether teenagers really want to be seen hanging out with their 'olds'. It's complicated being a teenager and confusing being a parent.

According to media reports, Steve and Jo Delaney of Melbourne were all ready to go on their family holiday to the Gold Coast one week, when their 16 year old son, Corey, decided to pull out of the family vacation at the last minute, saying he had to work. Maybe Corey did have work commitments, but he also had other plans. With all the wisdom of a 16 year old male, Corey decided to open up his family home for a party during his parents' absence, and invited a few friends. He sent a few text messages and emails and posted an invitation on the internet. By Corey's account the party was a huge hit, but the neighbours were not so convinced when they called the police to remove over 500 party goers. According to a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, police attended the party along with dog squads, transit police, divisional vans and a critical incident response team.

The neighbours were furious, while the parents were mortified as they came to grips with the damage to their home. The police were enraged and want \$20,000 in compensation for their operational costs. Young Corey was outrageously unrepentant. Reportedly when asked what he thought of the party, Corey boasted that his friends described the event as 'the best party ever!'. When asked by a TV crew what advice he would give to other teenagers considering organizing a party, he said, "Get me to do it for you".

In the face of stupidity, selfishness and extreme lack of judgment, such unrepentance looks utterly foolish. When a teenager has not (or cannot) grow up, we are appalled at such an inability to understand how one person's actions impact on others. However the really challenging part of this story is that 16 year old males do not have a monopoly on unrepentance in the face of foolishness and sin.

Many believe that God's heart is for 'good' people. However as none are truly good, God's heart is really for spiritual grown ups who will face up to their mess and get serious about repentance. To realize we are wrong before God is the beginning of being right before God. Acts 3: 19 says "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."

## Part 3

Spare a thought for the people of Blacktown, Liverpool and Fairfield as they deal with a new phenomenon in Sydney, at least in recent years, called rain. After bad storm damage before Christmas, many Sydney households are finding the recent heavy rains on top of this are a little too much to bear. After years of drought when our dam levels fell below 30% and politicians activated the desalination emergency button, our weather seems to have turned back to a mood many of us remember in previous decades. School teachers with short memories can only remember the first few weeks of school in February being swelteringly hot. Those with deeper memories remember past years when children spent the first three weeks of lunchtimes inside, sheltering from rain while testing their teacher's patience.

Some of us were complaining a little while ago about our dry gardens. Now we are being besieged by a pest we thought was virtually extinct - snails. Of course our complaining down under after only three or four days of solid rain is most amusing to those who live in the UK, Ireland and many parts of Europe. Sadly our attitude to the weather in many ways mirrors our attitude to life – we are quick to complain and slow to be grateful.

Of all the fads and fashions of our 21st century society, thankfulness does not seem to rate highly. Aspiration is more likely the word that describes our age. We aspire to a better job, a lighter body, a bigger salary, a fancier house, a flashier car and a calmer environment. At the same time we expect modern medicine to guarantee us a healthy body, with perfect eyesight, no pain and perfect straight white teeth. We also want a suntan without the threat of skin cancer. In Australia and the UK we even expect our medical system to be free, provided by governments who we expect will continue to lower taxes and improve services. We want our dams filled and wonder why nature can't just be organized, so it rains at night while allowing us the sunshine in the daytime. Aspiration seems such a reasonable concept, but hides a deep, deep underbelly of ingratitude.

An understanding of history should remind us that we are quite possibly the most blessed generation to have ever lived. An understanding of geography reminds us that we in the western world have it so, so easy. An understanding of politics reminds us that those with the privilege to vote and remove our leaders, experience some very rare freedoms. An understanding of medical science will cause us to reflect on a world devoid of so many past illnesses and diseases. An understanding of economics will remind us that secure food, shelter and employment places us among the elite class of the global wealthy.

Finally, the realization that God has made this world and given us one chance to live, breathe and love, should drive away our discouragement and force us back to thankfulness.

Psalm 69: 30 says, "I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving."

### **Conclusion**

Thanks so much for listening to Sunday at 7.30. I am constantly amazed at the number of times I meet listeners to this inspirational program. We need to more regularly reflect upon the mysteries of this world and the blessing of being forgiven and reconciled to God.

Lord God, today is a good day thank You for all You have done; to say sorry to the living God for our sins and to say please God, fill us with your Spirit that we may service you with a glad heart. Amen.