



### **Does God accept repentance for illegitimate relationships?**

Before marriage when I was 19 years old I was in a friendship relationship with a distant relative's son. Several times, we hugged and touched each other physically because I was then certain that I would marry him, but something happened, and the two families started to distance from each other. As a result, instead of marrying that man I married another man. Ever since I realized the graveness of my sin, I have been repenting and seeking divine forgiveness, but I am not sure if God has forgiven my sins or not. Moreover, since my husband knows nothing about my previous mistakes, I am afraid lest I should be liable to him. I need your advice and request for guidance in this regard.

There are certain conditions for real and genuine repentance which if met, will be accepted by God. These conditions are:

- a) The sinner should have committed the sin out of ignorance and unawareness;
- b) Not knowing that he will die;
- c) Avoiding sins;
- d) Remorsefulness;
- e) To decide firmly to stay away from sins and not to return to them;
- f) To compensate his past mistakes by doing good deeds;
- g) Seeking Divine forgiveness.

Repentance or *tawbah* means for one to regret what he/she has done and make a strong resolution and decision to discontinue it; so repenting means for one to if make a commitment between him and the Almighty Allah to put an ugly act aside. *Kabirah* (major) sins entail otherworldly punishment and there is nothing that can compensate for them other than true repentance. Making a commitment and repenting itself is a victory and a window to Allah's grace and drives one towards salvation. An individual who reaches this stage (of repentance) has gained a great victory and he must do his utmost to strengthen further his intentions and inclinations towards fighting against sins. In addition, he must attempt to keep himself in this state perpetually. We must pay attention that not all *tawbahs* are considered true ones and true repentance has necessary conditions which are mentioned below:

1. Committing the sin out of ignorance and foolishness: the Quran says: "[Acceptance of] repentance by Allah is only for those who commit evil out of ignorance."



## إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ

Nisa', 17

The meaning of ignorance in this verse is broader than the lack of knowledge about a sin and it also covers the situation where one's carnal desires and instincts gain control over his intellect and faith. In this situation, although one does not lose his knowledge in regard to the sin, but his knowledge and faith is overshadowed and immobilized by his desires. When his knowledge loses its effect, it is as if he has no knowledge at all.

But if the sin was not committed out of ignorance, but rather because of opposing and rejecting the command of Allah, then such a sin reflects one's Kufr (Disbelief) and therefore the repentance of such a person will not be accepted.

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ  
"قَالَ إِنِّي تُوبْتُ الْآنَ وَلَا الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا"  
[4:18]

But [acceptance of] repentance is not for those who go on committing misdeeds: when death approaches any of them, he says, 'I repent now.' Nor is it for those who die while they are faithless. For such We have prepared a painful punishment.

2. Not knowing that he will die in the near future (repenting when he still has the chance to commit sins): The repentance of those who are on the verge of death and know it is all over for them has no value. In this regard the Quran says: "But [acceptance of] repentance is not for those who go on committing misdeeds and when death approaches any of them, he says, "I repent now."
3. Avoiding sins: Repenting is meaningless for one who is committing a sin and has still not decided to refrain from it, even if he is determined to repent and avoid the sin in the future, because he may not have the chance to ever repent.
4. Having remorse and regret: If someone is not truly regretful of his sins, he has not truly repented even if he no longer commits the sin, because he may return to it at any moment.
5. Strongly deciding to avoid the sin and not return to it in the future.
6. Compensating for previous sins and shortcomings.
7. Istighfar and asking Allah for forgiveness.

One who truly does tawbah (repentance) with the mentioned conditions should not lose hope in Allah's



mercy, because no matter how great his sin is, Allah's mercy is far greater and Allah will definitely keep his promise and accept his repentance. However, one who prefers to stay impure and insists on his sins definitely still hasn't regretted committing them, consequently, repenting will be meaningless. Moreover, it is not clear whether or not he will repent in the future and repeating the sin may even take away the tawfiq and chances of repenting! Yes, if one truly repents in a way that its conditions are met, this repentance will be accepted.

One point of dire importance, is the special favor and grace which God bestows upon someone who repents; repentance destroys and effaces all of the sins and negative consequences of sins before God. God has mentioned in the Holy Quran that: 'Say: "O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Zumar:53

Therefore, you should, as far as possible, try to conceal your sins and not disclose your secrets to anyone. Do not tell anything even to your husband. If he comes to know anything about that, you can honestly let him know about your sincere repentance.