

The Repenter Quadrant

by Solomon Rexius, Director, The Salt Company
campusministry.org/tools/repenter-quadrant

Every time you sin, you have a decision to make. Two, actually.

1. Are you going to confess it, or are you going to conceal it?
2. Are you going to take action against it or are you going to be apathetic toward it?

Here's what it looks like visually:

Two questions and two options each leaves you with four total options. And I'm sure all of us, myself included, have at some point lived inside of all of these squares. None of us are above this. None of us have nothing to confess. With that in mind, let's unpack each quadrant.

QUADRANT #1: CONCEAL + APATHY

We call this person the hider. At best, they are oblivious to their sin. At worst, they are intentionally hiding it. And let me tell you this plainly: You and I will never become more like Jesus if we stay here. We will never change. And we will never grow.

QUADRANT #2: CONCEAL + ACTION

We call this person the fixer. This person feels guilt about what they've done and who they are, but they don't want anyone else to know about it, so they decide to keep it in the dark. But they do try to fix it. Secretly, privately, in hiding, they try to become a better Christian on their own, without the help and without support of others. This person needs the reminder: you will always be as sick as your secrets. To be fair, it's not always clear who should know what, so I try to keep this in mind as a rule of thumb: you don't have to tell everybody everything, but you should tell somebody something.

QUADRANT #3: CONFESSION + APATHY

We call this person the talker. They openly confess their sin. They aren't afraid to talk about it, which is good. But their problem is with action, or lack thereof. They mourn their sin on Tuesday night, but Friday night they are back in the same place of temptation. They confessed their sin, but they took no action against it. Unfortunately, they have learned how to play the Christian game. None of us are exempt from this temptation. In the Bible, this is the story of Pharaoh and King Saul, they told God sorry, but then never changed. I don't want that to be my story, and I don't want that to be your story.

Good confession should be:

- Fast: Don't wait six months so you can tell the sin story as a long-time-ago event. Make it a daily or weekly routine.
- Full: Tell the whole story, not just the parts that are easy to share or don't make you look as bad.
- First: Share your first string sins (the ones heaviest on your heart), not your third string sins (the easiest ones to talk about).
- Faith: Confession should be Jesus-focused. I'm guilty, but grace covers me. I sinned, but Jesus died for that sin. I'm a mess, but I am deeply loved by God.

QUADRANT #4: CONFESSION + ACTION

This is the pattern of the repenter. This is where we want to be. Repenters are people who not only confess their sin, but they do something about it. They talk about it, and they take action against it.

Repentance is not just a place they visit, this is where they live — weekly, daily they confess evil thoughts, attitudes, and actions, and they take steps to walk more and more with Christ their King. Repentance isn't like baptism where you do it once and then you're done, repentance is an ongoing thing. In fact, when Jesus announces the coming kingdom in Mark 1:15, he uses the active tense of the verb for repent, which means it could also be translated as "keep on repenting." In other words, repentance isn't just the start of the Christian life. It is the Christian life.

Leaders: it is hard to overstate the lasting impact of your willingness to lead the way in this, to repent well, in front of the people you lead. This is hard, I know. Because when our career, position, or salary is tied to our character, there will always be a temptation to fix it privately rather than confess it to others. But those who follow you need to know the real you — a repenting leader.

In all of this, remember, a Christian isn't someone who never falls, but someone who clings to Christ who never did. You don't have to pretend to be further along than you are, because Jesus loves you exactly where you are.

Follow-Up Questions:

- Where do you find yourself, in your sin, the most, being a talker, fixer, or hider?
- What is your game-plan for fighting sin?
- How can the people around you help you live in the "Repenter's" square?
- How does the truth of the Gospel allow us to live as a Repenter?

