

It goes without saying that change in our life is difficult. Sometimes we convince ourselves that it's easier to continue with the patterns of life that we know are not good for anybody, but at least we know the rut we are in. It's comfortable. The best definition I ever heard about a rut: "A rut is a grave with the ends kicked out." I don't know where I heard or read it, but it's always stick with me.

Those ruts, those patterns are the choices we make that keep us from being fully alive. I mean the real things that we choose and know we should not choose, not the things we obsess over, or get fixated on, or grow scrupulous about. I mean the objectively wrong, real things that diminish the quality of our life in Christ.

One of my favorite authors (I know, I say that a lot), Barbara Brown Taylor, make an insightful distinction between *remorse* and *repentance*.

*Repentance begins with the decision to return to relationship: to accept our God-given place in community. Needless to say, this often involves painful changes, which is why most of us prefer remorse to repentance. We would rather say, "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, feel really, really awful about what I have done" than actually start doing things differently. As a wise counsellor once pointed out to me, our chronic guilt is the price we are willing to pay in order to avoid change. We believe that if we feel badly enough about what we are doing, then we may continue doing it. Plus, the guilt itself is so exhausting that it drives us right back into the arms of our sins, which may provide us with our only reliable comfort. (Speaking of Sin: The Lost Language of Salvation,66)*

Lent is not about a guilt trip, Lent is about us being honest with ourselves. It's one thing to go through the motions of being remorseful, it is a completely other thing to repent. As much as we would like to avoid change, to be stuck in chronic guilt, this is the season when we turn to God, aware that true change can and will take place when we include God in the process . . . a grace-filled time of conversion.