

**By Bishop  
Richard C. Edgley**  
First Counselor in the  
Presiding Bishopric



## HOPE IN THE ATONEMENT

I have met people who have lost all hope. Repentance, they feel, is beyond their reach and forgiveness outside their grasp. Such do not understand the cleansing power of the Atonement. Or, if they do understand, they have not internalized the meaning of Jesus Christ's suffering in Gethsemane and on the cross. For any of us to give up hope for the purifying of our lives is to disavow the depth, power, and extent of His suffering in our behalf.

A few years ago I had the assignment while at a stake conference to interview a 21-year-old man to determine his worthiness to serve a mission. Now, General Authorities do not usually interview potential missionaries. So this was unusual. As I read some background regarding the reasons for my interview, my heart ached. This boy had committed serious transgressions. I wondered why I would be asked to visit one with such a background, concluding it would be most unusual for me to recommend him for approval as a missionary.

After the Saturday evening session of conference, I retired to the stake president's office for the interview. As I was waiting, a handsome young man with a wonderful countenance approached. I wondered how I could excuse myself because it was apparent he wanted to talk and I had an appointment with a very troubled young man. Then he introduced himself. He was the young man I was there for.

*Hope must be based not only upon knowledge and testimony but also upon a personalization of the Atonement.*

In the privacy of the office, I asked just one question: "Why am I interviewing you?"

He recounted his past. When he was through, he began to explain the steps and the personal suffering he had gone through. He talked about the Atonement—the infinite power of the Atonement. He bore his testimony and expressed his love for the Savior. And then he said, "I believe the Savior's personal suffering in Gethsemane and His sacrifice upon the cross were powerful enough to rescue even a man like me."

Moved by his humility and by the Spirit, I said, "I am going to recommend you to serve as a representative of Jesus Christ." And then I said, "I am going to ask only one thing of you. I want you to be the best missionary in the entire Church. That is all."

Three or four months later, Sister Edgley and I were speaking at a missionary training center. At the conclusion of the devotional, I was visiting with missionaries when I saw a young man with a familiar face.

He asked, "Do you remember me?"

Somewhat embarrassed, I said, "I'm sorry. I know I should, but I just don't remember."

Then he said, "Let me tell you who I am. I am the best missionary in the missionary training center." And I believed him.

This young man's hope was based not only upon a knowledge and testimony of the Atonement but also upon a personalization of this gift. He understood that it was for him personally! He knew the power of the Atonement and the hope it gives when all might seem lost or hopeless. ■

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