

BY HEIDI CAMP

*During a difficult moment,  
I learned a powerful lesson  
about repentance.*

**I**t all started on a beautiful summer evening when I was least expecting it. My husband had taken our son on a trip to celebrate his high school graduation, leaving me home with our 12-year-old daughter. I was completing last-minute preparations for a birthday party for my mother, with just 15 minutes until my extended family was due to arrive. And then the sink clogged up—way up. Dirty water gurgled into the sink, bringing with it the muck from the plumbing and filling the sink to the brim with a silty, smelly mess.

So I did what any self-respecting homemaker would do—I covered the sink with a large cutting board and intentionally ignored it for the night.

### **Unclogging the Kitchen Sink**

The next morning, I geared up to fix the sink. Our home is 80 years old with many of the charming original elements. Unfortunately, this includes the plumbing—which is far from charming. My kitchen sink clogs up about twice a year, so I had watched my husband dismantle, roter, plunge, and shake the plumbing to free up the flow of water. I thought to myself, “I am strong. I can do this. Who needs a plumber?”

I threw on my oldest sweats and a wrinkled T-shirt. I didn’t even comb my hair, but pulled it up in a tangled ponytail. Then I proceeded to dismantle the kitchen plumbing. After loosening the first fitting, I was surprised with a less-than-refreshing shower of water. But after some experimentation, I was able to successfully drain the water from the sink into a bucket with a minimal amount of sloshing onto the floor. I was now wet and smelly but quite

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRANDON DORMAN



# LESSON FROM A CLOGGED SINK

## REFRESHING FORGIVENESS



*“Peace is the precious fruit of a righteous life. It is possible because of the Atonement of the Savior. It is earned*

*through full repentance, for that leads to refreshing forgiveness. Repentance opens the doors of enlightenment and aids inspiration. Repentance brings salvation through forgiveness.”*

**Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Path to Peace and Joy,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 26.**

pleased with myself. I could now figure out what to do about the offending clog, which was somewhere in the labyrinth of plumbing in my basement.

Then the doorbell rang. Muttering to myself, I opened the door just a crack, lest the visitor see me in all my undignified glory. Standing there was Brother Douglas Bowers, a member of our stake. My initial response was horror because I knew what I looked like and smelled like, but this quickly dissolved into disbelief when he announced, “I understand you’re having problems with a drain—I’m here to help.”

It turns out my sweet 12-year-old had quietly “worked” the ward “calling tree” until she could find some help. Brother Bowers was the only poor soul unlucky enough to be home this Saturday morning. And without hesitation he had come to help.

Within 10 minutes he had dismantled the appropriate couplings and orchestrated a creative construct of a garden hose, some rags, and a grapefruit. Then he proceeded to blast out my clogged pipes. I watched in awe as he rootered and wrangled, hardly even getting his hands dirty.

Through it all, despite my relief and gratitude, I was fighting a sense of mortification—not only because of how I looked and smelled, but also because—Oh, my gosh!—he saw my basement, as well as my dirty dishes, my overflowing garbage can, and my dirty kitchen floor.

## Cleaning Up the Mess

As often happens in life, my ultimate humiliation came at precisely the same moment as my enlightenment. Brother Bowers pulled the rooter cord back out of the pipe, bringing with it some of the gloppy, black goop. I was disgusted that I could have this kind of unsightly *gunk* in my pipe and embarrassed that now Brother Bowers knew it. I said something witty like, “Oh, how disgusting!” He smiled and said, “That’s just life. We all have muck in our pipes.”

With the cleansing power of the garden hose, he flushed out the muck and cleaned the pipes. He quickly reassembled all the parts and pieces and smiled as fresh, clean water flowed from my faucet into the sink and through the pipes.

I was struck that the pipes were a metaphor for life. We all have muck in the pipes of our souls. At one point or another, we’ve all been too embarrassed, or too afraid of humiliation, or too caught up in our own abilities, to ask for the help we need to clean it out. But when we humble ourselves enough to seek the Lord’s help—as my daughter sought the help of Brother Bowers—His response is to love us and help us clean up the mess. Then He rejoices with us.



How often have we put off the process of personal repentance because we were just too embarrassed? How often have we been more concerned about what our neighbors will think than about the sweet joy that comes from having clean hearts and souls?

I had a friend tell me once that she was too afraid to talk with her bishop because she believed that members of her ward would always look at her differently and would never be able to forget the mess she made of her life. This sister has a beautiful flower garden in her yard. I suggested to her that after she works for hours weeding the flower garden, no one ever walks by her garden and snickers about the weeds that *used* to be there. Instead, they just smile at how beautiful the garden looks and how brilliantly the colors of the

flowers reflect the light of early evening. I reminded her that even *she* probably couldn't recall the specific weeds she had

pulled; rather, each week she focuses her efforts on the new weeds that have taken root, working to keep her garden clean and beautiful.

As I watched Brother Bowers in my kitchen that Saturday morning, I was reminded that despite our best intentions and outward show, sometimes life is just plain hard. Through the process, the pipes of our souls occasionally get clogged up with muck—with mistakes, with heartache, with bitterness, with unforgiving. We don't have to hide the "dirty basements" of our souls from Christ—He already knows what's there. The Savior has given us the cleansing power of the Atonement, a gift that is available to each of us if we but humble ourselves—and trust our Savior enough—to take advantage of it. He is anxiously waiting for us to invite Him to help. ■



## HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

Most *Ensign* articles can be used for family home evening discussions, personal reflection, or teaching the gospel in a variety of settings.

1. Ask family members what areas of the home they would not want a visitor to see and why. Relate the story and ask your family how they would feel if this happened to them. Use the article to discuss how the Savior can help us repent and improve the unkempt areas of our lives.

2. As a family, fix or clean a problem area in the home. Discuss how it would feel to have done this project alone. Together read Ether 12:27. Identify how the Savior, priesthood leaders, family, and friends can help us overcome our weaknesses.