

Why Adversity?

By Brad Sears

I've started reading the Book of Mormon many more times than I've finished it. Each time, I begin with a renewed vigor, only to find myself stalling by the end of 1 Nephi. Thankfully, one of the book's most important and precious truths is contained in its first chapter. Nephi writes, "The tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance" (1 Nephi 1:20). So after every additional reading of 1 Nephi, I start to look for the small and simple ways in which the Lord is shaping my life and delivering me through His "tender mercies," despite whatever hard things may be going on in my life.

A Bruised Eye and a Bruised Heart

In the past, however, I've looked for deliverance to come in the form of a stretch of life where everything runs smoothly and I don't have to deal with trials of any sort. An experience

I endured during my second semester at Brigham Young University changed my perspective.

At that time, a friend of mine took offense at something I did, although offending him had not been my intention. Things escalated to the point where we both began to lose our cool, and the argument ended with him throwing two punches at my left eye and walking away.

For the next several days, my emotions alternated between anger and shame as I walked around campus with a grotesque-looking black eye. I felt confused and wondered why the sufferer had to be me. I looked for healing, but it seemed slow in coming.

A week later, my bruises began to fade. I marveled at how expertly my body went about replacing the damaged skin with a new, unblemished layer. Something about the outward physical regeneration I was witnessing alerted me to the change that should

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have been occurring internally as well. I began to see how silly it was for me to be consumed by such a relatively insignificant event. I prayed for forgiveness and also that I could fully forgive the friend who had wronged me. Our interactions quickly went back to normal, and I could tell that he was relieved I was not intent on holding a grudge.

I found my previous insecurities giving way to a self-image rooted in

character and integrity, not appearance. I had seen, momentarily, how things could have been if I had continued to feel angry. I was reminded that although healing most often takes time, our hearts can *always* heal if we involve God in the process.

Reaching Higher Ground

Miraculously, the stumbling blocks that we overcome often place us on higher ground than where we started. If we think of each successive stumbling block as part of the staircase of our eternal progression, every time we fall over a block and then pick ourselves up we climb higher toward our Savior. His Atonement buoys us up as we truly repent and seek to overcome our sins. His succoring will help us endure sorrow, sickness, and painful experiences in life.

Sometimes we wonder about the purpose for trials and suffering. Adversity is necessary in our Heavenly Father's plan to help us grow spiritually and become more like the Savior. His Atonement makes it possible for us to be purified as we keep His commandments and our sacred covenants. By exercising faith in Jesus Christ, we receive strength to rise through every trial. I feel privileged to know I can find evidences of God's love for me in the good and the bad, the joy and the suffering.

In retrospect, dealing with the repercussions of a black eye and my prideful resistance to forgive has been a tender mercy in the best of ways. I am happier, and I have been taught essential lessons about the power of spiritual healing through the Atonement of my Savior, Jesus Christ. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



THE SAVIOR CAN HEAL US IF WE SEEK HIS HELP

"Because of His atoning experience in mortality, our Savior is able to comfort, heal, and strengthen all men and women everywhere, but I believe He does so only for those who seek Him and ask for His help. The Apostle James taught, 'Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up' (James 4:10). We qualify for that blessing when we believe in Him and pray for His help."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 64.

