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THE SAVIOR HEALS OUR HURTS

How do we respond when someone does something that hurts us?

I grew up in the southern United States in the '60s. The grandson of slaves, I was born and raised in inner-city Atlanta, where you couldn't live without seeing racism. I went to school where there were separate drinking fountains for "people of color." I've been called every name in the book. When that happens, it hurts.

But it hurts more when it happens at church—in a place where we should know better.

Since joining the Church in 1983, there have been certain instances where I have felt misjudged, betrayed, or belittled based on my color. I've been told I should be better at basketball because I'm black. I've been called a "coon" when someone got upset with me. When I was called as a stake president, I learned that someone who didn't know me had said, "The only reason they called him was because they needed a black stake president here in the South."

Not everyone in the Church has a problem with racism; it's just a few. But racism exists everywhere, so of course sometimes you come across those one or two in the Church. So how do we respond when someone does something that hurts us? And how do we heal?



Responding to the Hurt of Racism

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, how we respond when we've been hurt or offended makes a great deal of difference.

When I've been a victim of racism, I've found success in meeting it head-on, forgiving the individual and

addressing the issue. If someone says something to hurt my feelings, I need to find a way to help him understand why that hurt. It is an opportunity not only to forgive but to build a relationship so that the person doesn't just look at Tony Parker as an African-American but as a child of God. Jesus taught forgiveness (see Matthew 18:21–35), and He taught us when we have been offended to take it to the individual and work it out (see Matthew 18:15).

What He didn't say was to stop going to church, though that's what many do who are offended. But leaving the Church isn't the answer, because that means leaving Him and His gospel and His power to heal (see John



6:67–68). What's more, if I have a hurtful tongue, your not coming back to church isn't going to do anything to help me realize I need to change my tongue.

My Experience with the Restriction

I began investigating the Church in 1979. When I learned

about the earlier restriction on blacks holding the priesthood, the missionaries could never satisfy me as to the reasons why. I couldn't understand it.

In the end, after four years of investigating, it wasn't a person who got me through my questions. I never even talked to a bishop about it. I accepted the missionaries' invitation to find out for myself, to read the Book of Mormon and then take it to the Lord to know if it was true. My answer came through praying, studying, and feeling the Spirit.

When I got baptized, I didn't have all the answers, nor did I know all the history. But the Lord got me to a point where I could move forward in faith because I had come to a conclusion that joining the Church was right and that I was being led for reasons beyond my own understanding.

Finding Healing through the Savior

I've found that to overcome hurt, whatever the cause, our source of healing and conversion is Jesus Christ (see 3 Nephi 9:13; D&C 112:13), and the Church is His means to bring us to Him through learning His gospel and participating in ordinances so that we can be healed.¹

That healing for me has come through renewing my covenant relationship with Christ on a weekly basis through the sacrament. He can help us if we are willing to take whatever we are hurt by or struggling with and put it on the altar.

"Lord, I'm not perfect. I've got this situation that's bothering me. So I'm going to put this here. And I'm going to commit to do what You direct me to do. So Lord, help me walk this walk with You."

To be His people, we must be one in Christ. But our relationship with Christ is individual before it can be collective. Before I can be one with others, including my family, I, Tony Parker, have to have a relationship with Jesus Christ and my Heavenly Father that is solid, genuine, honest, direct, and continually improving every day. Then as we individually come closer to Christ, we come closer together as a ward, as a stake, and as a church. ■

NOTES

1. See Quentin L. Cook, "The Lord Is My Light," *Ensign*, May 2015, 62–66.