What could be better than getting even?
By Elly Catmull
(Based on a true story)

Help me, dear Father, to freely forgive
(Children’s Songbook, 99).

Tom threw himself onto the bed. It wasn’t fair!
He heard Michael’s voice from the doorway.
“I’m sorry I pushed you, Tom,” Michael said.
“Go away!” Tom yelled back.
The door clicked shut. Tom felt bad for yelling at his
brother. Then he remembered their fight, and anger
seemed to boil inside of him again. Michael deserved it!
“What’s going on?” Mom asked as she came in.
When Tom started talking, it felt like hot lava spilling
from a volcano.
“Sometimes I wish Michael wasn’t my brother. He’s so
much bigger and stronger, and I always lose when we
fight. I want him to be in trouble so that we’re even!”
Mom looked thoughtful. “I sent Michael to his room
for fighting, just like I sent you. Would it be fair if I
disciplined him more than you just because you wanted
me to?”
“I don’t care—I want him to feel like me!” Tom
clamped the pillow around his head. He felt like he was
going to explode! He barely heard Mom leave the room.
After a while Tom calmed down and was able to join
family home evening. But he didn’t sit by Michael. He
didn’t even look at him.
“In the Old Testament,” Dad said, “people practiced
‘an eye for an eye.’ That meant if someone poked your
eye, you poked his eye back.”
I wish I could do that! Tom thought.
Dad went on. “But Jesus taught a better way.”
Tom blinked, surprised. A better way? When Dad
asked him to read, Tom tried to understand what
Jesus was saying.
“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An
eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:
“But I say unto you . . . whosoever
shall smite thee on
thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew
Dad asked Michael what it meant.
“Umm . . . that we should forgive others?” Michael
said.
Mom nodded. “When you try to make someone hurt
as much as they hurt you, everyone just keeps feeling
hurt. But when you forgive, everyone starts feeling
better.”
How can I possibly forgive him? Tom thought, watch-
ing his brother. Michael gave him a cautious smile. Tom
looked away, thinking about the fight earlier that day.
Then other memories began popping into Tom’s
mind—like when Michael helped him practice for soccer
team tryouts. And when they built a tree house together,
Michael let Tom make the trapdoor! Michael even taught
him how to play songs on the piano.
Michael is a pretty good brother after all, Tom realized.
As soon as Tom thought those words, a warm feeling
started growing in his chest. The more he thought about
why he loved Michael, the stronger the good feeling
became. Soon Tom was smiling. For the first time all day,
he felt relaxed.
Dad was saying, “I know it can be hard to forgive. But
if we remember how much we love each other, we can
find a way.”
I think I found it, Tom thought.
After the lesson, as his family headed outside to play
Kick the Can, Tom caught up with his brother.
“I’m sorry I was so angry today.”
Michael grinned. “It’s OK! You can go first in the game
tonight, if you want.”
Happiness bubbled inside Tom. With a smile, he
looked around to see if his family was ready to play,
then closed his eyes and began to count.

Illustration by Bryan Beach

“Be patient and kind and forgiving.”
Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles