## **Can S Really** APPRECIATE the ATONEMENT JESUS CHRIST?

If I haven't had to be forgiven of any "major sins," can I still appreciate the Atonement of Jesus Christ as much as those who have?

SUNDAY LESSONS

This Month's Topic:

The Atonement of

Jesus Christ

## By David A. Edwards Church Magazines

he degree to which we appreciate the Atonement of Jesus Christ isn't necessarily measured according to the magnitude of the sins we've been forgiven of, though it's understandable why you might link the two.

For instance, in Luke 7:36-50 we read of the Savior's visit to the house of Simon the Pharisee, where a woman came and washed Jesus's feet with her tears and anointed them with ointment. Simon said to himself that if Jesus were a prophet, He would have known that the woman was a sinner. Jesus then told a parable of two people who both owed money to the same man, one owing 500 pence and the other 50. Neither could pay, so the man forgave both debts. The Savior then asked which debtor would love the man the most. Simon replied that it would be the one who was forgiven most, and the Savior said he was right. Of the woman with the ointment He then said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47).

We learn many things from this scripture, but it would be wrong to think that one of the lessons is that greater sins are required for a greater appreciation of the Savior and His Atonement. There is never any advantage in sinning. The story is about the Lord's forgiveness and mercy, which come according to our faith, humility, and repentance-things we all need and can have in equal measure, whether we've sinned a lot or a little. Remember that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23; emphasis added).

Simon didn't recognize his own sins (for instance, pride and selfrighteous judgment) or his own need for faith in the Savior, humility, and repentance. If he had, he would have felt the same way the woman did, regardless of how much smaller he may have thought his debt was. Comparing your sins to another's isn't the point. As far as you're concerned, the worst sins in the world are the ones you have committed, because those are the ones that could keep you from returning to Heavenly Father.

In addition, part of our appreciation for the Atonement of Jesus Christ comes from the fact that it not only lifts us out of a hole but also continues to lift us higher. The Savior's grace not only pays the price of our sins but also gives us the "strength and assistance to do good works that [we] otherwise would not be able to maintain" (Bible Dictionary, "Grace"). (For more on the strengthening power of the Atonement, see David A. Bednar, "Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease," Ensign, May 2014, 88-89.) NE