

A crown of thorns, made of dark, sharp, and tangled branches, is laid out on a light-colored, textured surface. A single, bright yellow flower bud with a green stem is positioned on the right side of the crown, contrasting with the dark, thorny structure. The lighting creates soft shadows on the surface.

Of You
It Is Required
to Forgive



When we forgive someone, we are relieved of a heavy burden. Moreover, forgiving is a commandment from the Lord. The Savior taught: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

In the following examples we see how the blessing of being able to forgive came to three people—one who forgave a friend who had cheated her, one who forgave an ex-spouse, and one who forgave a murderer.

SEEKING STRENGTH TO FORGIVE

I could scarcely believe what had happened. A member of the Church, a trusted and valued friend, had cheated and stolen from my father’s family. My emotions ran the gamut from denial to rage. Could I move past this way of thinking?

My answer was no! So I ignored the scriptures and the prophets’ counsel to forgive, believing my situation was different. Surely God would not ask me to let go of my feelings. I hoarded them in my heart, justifying my anger and need for vengeance.

I visited with priesthood authorities concerning the matter. They reminded me that the deed was in the past and that it could not be undone, and they counseled me to move on. Disappointed that they failed to see the seriousness of what had happened, I turned away from them.

Soon my angry feelings were directed at them as well as the offender. I found reason to criticize Church leaders in various instances, voicing my discontent to others and complaining about those who had failed, in my opinion, to take action.

Ultimately, my actions did not bring me happiness or even satisfaction. Instead, my sense of discontent grew. I found myself pulling away from the Church, from the teachings I had always believed, and, to my shame, from the Lord. My calling in Primary no longer brought me the joy it once had.

Each day I withdrew further from my family and friends, preferring the solitude of my own perspective. I realized that this path was bringing me no comfort and that my spiritual life was spiraling downward, taking my sense of self-worth with it. At last

I recognized the cause of my despair, but I still felt powerless to pull myself out of it. The sense of betrayal I felt had begun to define my entire life.

Finally, the counsel I had received from others to forgive began to take root. I received priesthood blessings. I spent hours poring over the scriptures, searching for situations dealing with forgiveness. I studied not only the literal words but also the spirit of the words.

Among the verses I examined was Moroni 6:8: “But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven.”

Did this apply to my situation? The individual who had offended me had not confessed or apologized and, in fact, maintained there was no wrongdoing involved.

I pondered the Savior’s counsel to the Nephites:

“For, if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you;

“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (3 Nephi 13:14–15).

I also read and reread the passage that says, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:10).

I could not overlook the stark command of these words. How could I call myself a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints if I failed to forgive this person?

The scriptures gave me a measure of peace, as did constant and humble prayer. I recognized I could not control the actions of others—I could control only myself. I pleaded with Heavenly Father to remove the hardness from my heart. In humility and repentance, I confessed my own sins and begged Him to treat me with the mercy I had failed to extend to another.

I have learned that the process of forgiveness is continual. In this, as in other things, I remain a work in progress. I hold fast to the knowledge that the Lord will offer His love and grace to all who diligently seek it.

Name withheld, Colorado, USA

LETTING GO OF THE HURT

General conference weekend in April 2007 started out normally enough. I looked forward to being spiritually fed by the talks from leaders of the Church and by the music of the choirs.

Following breakfast on Sunday morning, my son and I sat in our living room and turned on the television. I was ready to listen and to learn. What I was *not* ready for was just how quickly I would hear something that impressed me deeply. President James E. Faust (1920–2007) spoke first and began his talk with a story of an Amish community in Pennsylvania.

He recounted how a man had stormed into a school and without any provocation shot 10 girls, killing five and wounding five. He then took his own life. President Faust said that although the violence shocked and hurt members of the community, they chose to immediately forgive.¹

As I continued to listen to President Faust describe “the healing power of forgiveness,” my thoughts turned to my own life. Twenty years before, in October 1986, my husband had left me and our seven young children. The decisions he made in his life changed *our* lives forever. The children were devastated. I was overwhelmed with all sorts of emotions and had no idea how we were going to make it.

We faced serious financial struggles, and I became responsible to handle them. I was angry, hurt, and unsure of myself and my abilities. Although I went on to raise our children, I felt a weight upon my shoulders that never went away. Even many years later, my spirit still felt heavy with hurt and anger toward my ex-husband. As I continued to listen to President Faust’s message, however, I felt prompted to send my ex-husband an e-mail. He and I had not communicated for many years, but I got his e-mail address from one of our sons and began writing.

I asked my ex-husband to please forgive me for the years that I had not been able to let go of my hurt. I told him that I wanted him to be

able to have a relationship with our children—especially our son who still lived at home. To my surprise, the words came easily, and the faster I typed, the lighter I felt. I finished the letter and clicked “Send.” In the days that followed, I felt lighter and happier than I had in years.

About a week after I sent that e-mail, I received a kind response from my ex-husband. Although the response itself didn’t change anything, receiving it added to the positive feelings I already felt. In addition, our children were blessed through this experience.

I am grateful for the Atonement in our lives, for the potential for change, and for the power of forgiveness. I am also grateful for prophets and apostles who teach and remind us of these sacred truths.

Name withheld, Utah, USA

NOTE

1. James E. Faust, “The Healing Power of Forgiveness,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2007, 67–69.



PEACE IN FORGIVENESS

“You may be carrying a heavy burden of feeling injured by another who has seriously offended you. Your response to that offense may have distorted your understanding so that you feel justified in waiting for that individual to ask forgiveness so that the pain can leave.

The Savior dispelled any such thought when He commanded:

“Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

“I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men’ (D&C 64:9–10).

“Don’t carry the burden of offense any longer. Genuinely ask forgiveness of one that has offended you, even when you consider you have done no wrong. That effort will assuredly bring you peace and will likely begin the healing of serious misunderstandings.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “To Be Free of Heavy Burdens,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 88.



SOWING SEEDS OF PEACE

For a long time, my younger brother has been one of my heroes. I will always remember him as a great example of humility, honesty, kindness, faith, diligence, and overall righteousness. He was well educated in both secular and religious matters. He had a good career and was engaged to be married in the temple. It came as a shock to me when I found out he had been murdered.

When I heard the news, I began the horrible emotional roller coaster ride of trying to cope with the loss. It didn't take long to realize that the pain wouldn't go away until I learned *how* to let it go. During times of prayer and quiet contemplation, I learned some lessons that made the healing possible.

Alma teaches us that faith is like a seed that can be planted in our hearts (see Alma 32:28–43). If we nurture the seed and let it grow, it will produce good fruit. The fruit is what shows us that the seed was good. This analogy suggests to me that if there are good seeds, there are also bad ones. We have to identify these bad seeds and seek guidance in knowing how to keep them from taking root and growing in our heart.

When I found out about my brother's death and the violent, selfish act that caused it, my heart was littered with bad seeds. I tried to keep them under control, to "cast them out" as the scriptures say, but I just couldn't pull

them out fast enough. Little sprouts of anger and frustration kept popping up at an amazing rate. A few of them grew to be quite large; these brought hostility into my heart and destructive thoughts into my mind. I knew that if these hateful weeds were to grow out of control, they could smother the good plants in my heart, such as peace, gratitude, love, and kindness—feelings I cherish and need in my life.

I found that the solution for a weed-ridden heart is to employ the Master Gardener, the Savior Jesus Christ. He has the power to heal any heart. He requires only one thing: we must offer our hearts fully to Him and let Him work in His own way.

His way, it turns out, requires us to forgive those who have hurt us. They don't need our forgiveness to be redeemed—they need the Lord's forgiveness; but still we are required to forgive them. I've learned that the reason we forgive people is not for their sakes—it's for ours. When we forgive, we are liberated from bondage and relieved of a heavy burden.

It has helped me in my struggle for peace to remember that when the Lord paid the price for our sins, He didn't suffer just for the sinners. He also suffered for those who are harmed by the sins of others. Those who are in pain can find relief. Those who are sad can find joy. Those who are upset can find peace. And those

who die can find eternal life.

I know that this life has periods of suffering, but I also know that suffering need not consume us. With time and effort, we can let go of our pain and once again see the goodness that life has to offer. I know that no matter how difficult forgiveness may seem (and it indeed can feel like an almost impossible task), doors will open, and strength and guidance will be given to us as we seek to follow God's will and allow Him into our hearts.

We don't have to travel the road of forgiveness alone. The Lord is ready to help us. By submitting to His will, we can feel the heavenly peace that comes from forgiving. ■

Name withheld, Idaho, USA

Additional Resources

For more on this topic, please see the following articles:

- Thomas S. Monson, "The Peril of Hidden Wedges," *Ensign* and *Liahona*, July 2007, 4–9.
- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Point of Safe Return," *Ensign* and *Liahona*, May 2007, 99–101.
- Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Best Is Yet to Be," *Ensign*, Jan. 2010, 22–27; *Liahona*, Jan. 2010, 16–21.
- David A. Bednar, "And Nothing Shall Offend Them," *Ensign* and *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 89–92.
- Gordon B. Hinckley, "Forgiveness," *Ensign* and *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 81–84.
- Gordon B. Hinckley, "Of You It Is Required to Forgive," *Ensign*, Jun. 1991, 2–5; *Tambuli*, Nov. 1991, 2–7.
- "Forgiveness," *True to the Faith* (2004), 70–72.

