

Questions & Answers

When I think about the things that have happened in my life, it's hard to love myself. I know that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love me; how can I more readily feel Their love in my life?

Growing up I was taught that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ loved me, but I just didn't feel it or believe it. I consistently prayed for help but was never able to recognize the feeling. One night I was at a fireside where Sister Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, was speaking. She left time for questions, so I asked, "If you have forgotten that you are a daughter of God and that He loves you, what



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can you do to know and feel that?" Her answer changed my life. She suggested that I get a Book of Mormon and write down the questions that I have. She then said that as I read through the Book of Mormon I would find answers and be able to feel and recognize His love for me. I did exactly that and found the answers I was looking for. An overwhelming feeling of love came over me, and I knew that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ knew who I was and what I was going through. I knew that They loved me. That has made the difference in my life, and I know it can for others too.

Laura Schooley, California, USA

Some of the mistakes of my youth made me feel that I was unworthy of Heavenly Father's love and less likely to receive His blessings. Over the years as I continued to repent and apply the Savior's Atonement, I came to realize that Heavenly Father did, indeed, love me and that He was helping me by showing me how to overcome my weaknesses.

One day as I read Ether 12:27, the Lord's words to Moroni enlightened my mind. The Lord promises that our weaknesses can become strengths as we humble ourselves before Him and have faith in Him. As I continue to progress and pray for guidance, the Lord shows me how to change my thoughts and actions and how to avoid temptation.



GOD'S PERFECT LOVE

"Though we are incomplete, God loves us completely. Though we are imperfect, He loves us perfectly. Though we may feel lost and without compass, God's love encompasses us completely. . . .

"Regardless of our current state, there is hope for us. No matter our distress, no matter

our sorrow, no matter our mistakes, our infinitely compassionate Heavenly Father desires that we draw near to Him so that He can draw near to us."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Love of God," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 22–23.

If I ever get discouraged, I think about the multitude of blessings that He has poured out on me and my family and remind myself how far I've come. The grace that Heavenly Father offers me through His Son is truly a sign of His love for me. It gives me confidence that I can live with Him again someday, despite the mistakes of my past.

Walt Morrell, Missouri, USA

I've suffered from depression for many years. Because of this challenge, even though I know logically that my Heavenly Father and Savior love me, I sometimes struggle feeling it in my heart and knowing that I am worthy of Their love. Here are some things that have helped me increase my feelings of self-worth and feel closer to my Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ:

Focus on the present. When I am tempted to dwell on past mistakes, I try to remind myself instead of recent accomplishments, my growing testimony, service I've rendered, and examples of the Lord's hand in my life.

Think progression, not perfection. When I make mistakes during the day and feelings of worthlessness

start to creep in, I reinforce feelings of worth and love by saying things like: "I am still learning. Heavenly Father loves me and wants me to grow. Next time I will do better."

Display artwork of Christ. One afternoon when I was struggling, a picture of Christ caught my eye, and I began to reflect on His kind, loving, and forgiving nature. The Spirit filled me with peace, love, and hope, and I felt renewed to continue on.

Repent of sins. I found that once I repented of my sins, a huge burden was lifted from me. I felt better about myself. I also felt closer to the Spirit and could feel my Heavenly Father's love more easily. Daily repentance continues to keep me close to Him.

Believe in your divine worth. I imagine Heavenly Father views me much like I view my own children: He loves me, knows me personally, believes I am innately good, and wants me to grow and develop.

Remember, Heavenly Father and the Savior want us to be happy and experience joy in our lives. Satan is the source of all lies, and he wants us to believe we are unworthy of love and forgiveness. When I turn my thoughts away from past mistakes and heart-aches and toward Heavenly Father and

Jesus Christ, I more readily feel Their love and am able to progress.

Jennifer Peterson, Arizona, USA

Singing helps me feel Heavenly Father's and Jesus Christ's love. I enjoy memorizing and singing Primary songs and hymns. The uplifting lyrics and the beautiful melodies remind me who I am and what I may become. "I am a child of God, and He has sent me here."¹ "I feel my Savior's love and know that he will bless me."² "Father in Heaven, we thank thee this day for loving guidance to show us the way."³ "He lives to bless me with his love. He lives to plead for me above."⁴ "Yes, I know Heav'nly Father loves me."⁵

Dale Bills, Utah, USA

God has given us prayer as a means of bringing down the powers of heaven to comfort us and help us feel His love. Prayer opens the communication lines with Him. It brings our will back in line with our Heavenly Father's. It quiets our minds to feel the Spirit and the love of our Heavenly Father. Always remember that we are children of our Heavenly Father. As we call upon Him, we will feel His love and acceptance.

Ammon Robinson, Utah, USA

As my children were growing up, I was a member of the Church but my husband was not. It was difficult at times to feel love for myself as a mother as I saw

my children stray from the gospel. Feelings of regret for not getting married in the temple, not being sealed to my children, and a divorce often flooded into my mind. I had been active in the Church, served diligently in my callings, and taught my children the gospel in our home, yet I still felt that I had failed.

With the help of my Heavenly Father and my Savior Jesus Christ, I came to realize I had felt Their love many times—through thanking Heavenly Father for the blessings in my life, receiving answers to prayers, reading the scriptures, attending the temple, and serving others. I started to ask myself, how can I not love myself when I have felt Their loving arms around me in times of despair?

The knowledge that I am truly a daughter of God, created in His image, and the atoning sacrifice of my Savior Jesus Christ have given me feelings of self-worth and love. Through Them, I now realize that the greatest gift I can give my children is to show them the true joy and peace

the gospel brings into my life and to share with them my belief that they are of great worth in the sight of God.

Shari S. Jensen, Texas, USA

Part of the pain we may feel from past experiences comes as we recognize how our actions have hurt others. The Lord says, "Go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you" (3 Nephi 12:24). We gain confidence in His love as we seek to make things right with our brothers and sisters on earth. It takes great courage to ask for and extend forgiveness. At times it takes even greater courage to forgive ourselves. A good bishop taught me that being unwilling to forgive is selfish, even when it is directed inwardly. I have found that as I forgive and ask for forgiveness, my capacity to love others increases and my ability to sense God's love for me is strengthened. I also find that I have a deeper reverence for the Savior's Atonement

SHARE YOUR IDEAS

An upcoming Q&A feature will focus on the following topic:

I attend the temple regularly, and each time I go I feel peace. However, I don't feel I am receiving the increased understanding I hear Church leaders describe. How can I make attending the temple a learning experience?

If you would like to share your ideas and experiences, please label your submission "Temple Learning" and follow the guidelines under "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" in the contents pages at the beginning of the magazine. Please limit responses to 500 words and submit them by March 16, 2012.

and greater desire to share the gospel. Learning to treat all of God's children the way He would helps us feel the joy of being "encircled about eternally in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15).

Anna Hope Johnson, Arizona, USA

In high school I did a lot of things that I am now ashamed of. I lied and stole from my friends and family, generally rebelling against everyone and everything. With a lot of help from my family, I decided to change and was able to turn things around. But even though I had changed, for years I looked back and was terribly embarrassed of who I was and what I had been. Two things helped me accept the Lord's forgiveness and love.

First, I remembered the stories of Alma and Alma the Younger in the Book of Mormon. In both cases they were unrighteous as youth and then changed their lives, both becoming great prophets. (See Mosiah 18, 27.) I realized the Lord would not have allowed them to be prophets if He did not approve of the people they had become, and they were able to gain His approval despite their unrighteous past.

Second, I thought of Doctrine and Covenants 64:10: "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men." Only the Lord has the right to decide whether or not to forgive me. I realized that I was obligated to forgive myself, just as I would be required by the Lord to forgive others.



Self-doubt and self-loathing drive the Spirit away. Once you have repented, replace your doubt and guilt with an attitude of self-forgiveness, and the ability to feel the love of God will follow. ■

Name withheld

NOTES

1. "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.
2. "I Feel My Savior's Love," *Children's Songbook*, 74–75.
3. "Teach Me to Walk in the Light," *Hymns*, no. 304.
4. "I Know That My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 136.
5. "My Heavenly Father Loves Me," *Children's Songbook*, 228–229.