

Forgiveness

AND MAKING UP FOR

Losses

Name withheld

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KEY POINTS

- Our Savior wants us to let go of anger and hatred.
- To be fully healed from abuse, we need to forgive.
- We can find hope in Christ. He will restore all that we have lost.

I could not keep my mind on the Relief Society lesson about Jesus Christ's Atonement and the Resurrection. My mind kept returning to my need to forgive. I longed to feel the peace promised those who do. Instead, my emotions clamored whenever I thought of three individuals who had hurt my daughter Kaylee¹ and me. I wanted to let go of the angry and resentful feelings I still harbored, but something always held me back—my sense that we could never regain what we had lost as a result of their actions.

Kaylee's Loss of Confidence

I stewed about Kaylee's second-grade teacher, whose insensitive behavior had caused long-term damage to her sense of self-worth and had torpedoed her desire to attend school. Throughout most of her elementary school years, Kaylee had an

undiagnosed learning disorder, so she struggled with reading and mathematics. When she made mistakes, this teacher made Kaylee an example of poor performance. When I sent notes from home asking for help in coordinating her studies or to express a concern, he'd scoff and read them aloud so that Kaylee's classmates could hear—a mortifying experience that brought teasing from her peers. In dismay, I watched my confident, happy child slowly crumble. Her love of learning evaporated. By the end of the school year, she resented school and believed she was too stupid to ever do well.

Once Kaylee was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder and she began the right treatment, her ability to learn skyrocketed and she was eventually able to earn high grades. But she was still convinced that she was unintelligent and inferior. Every





FULL HEALING COMES THROUGH THE SAVIOR

“There are many ways to begin healing, but remember that a full cure comes through the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master and Redeemer. Have faith that with effort His perfect, eternal, infinite Atonement can heal your suffering from the consequences of abuse.

“As impossible as it may seem to you now, in time the healing you can receive from the Savior will allow you to truly forgive the abuser and even have feelings of sorrow for him or her. When you can forgive the offense, you will be relieved of the pain and heartache that Satan wants in your life by encouraging you to hate the abuser. As a result, you will enjoy greater peace. While an important part of healing, if the thought of forgiveness causes you yet more pain, set that step aside until you have more experience with the Savior’s healing power in your own life. . . .

“I pray that you, as one abused or one who has caused it, will act now to avail yourself of the healing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I testify that your faith and obedience will assure that He will help you.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “To Heal the Shattering Consequences of Abuse,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 42–43.

school day my husband and I had to persuade her to attend another day of classes. We mourned Kaylee’s loss of confidence, and we struggled for years to help her to see her true worth and to believe in herself.

My Loss of Close Relationships

My resentment toward Kaylee’s former teacher was minuscule, however, compared to my feelings toward the man and woman who had sexually abused me decades earlier.

Through counseling with LDS Family Services, I had been able to work through much of my grieving and healing process. I had learned to dispel my skewed belief (common to many victims) that I could never be “good enough” to be loved by others. But to

be fully healed, I needed to forgive.

I longed to let go of my hatred for those two people because I knew it was what my Savior wanted. I craved the peace He promised. But how could I forgive those perpetrators who had created so much pain? Their abuse had caused decades of emotional instability and inner turmoil that had negatively impacted my relationship with my husband and children. The betrayal of my trust and innocence had created a fear of ever becoming emotionally close to another person, including members of my own family, so I had built invisible walls around my heart through which others could not enter. I grieved the lost decades of close relationships.

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Christ's Redeeming Atonement

I wanted to follow the Savior's merciful example and genuinely forgive those who had hurt my daughter and me, but it was hard to set aside my anger at losing so much. For months I had prayed fervently for help and read many scriptures about forgiveness, trying to determine *how* to forgive.

As I sat in the Relief Society room that day, I prayed earnestly, silently, that Heavenly Father would help me.

Suddenly my attention was drawn to the instructor as she invited us to read a quotation from the Prophet Joseph Smith about the Resurrection. The quote began, "I am glad I have the privilege of communicating to you some things which, if grasped closely, will be a help to you when earthquakes bellow, the clouds gather, the lightnings flash, and the storms are ready to burst upon you like peals of thunder."²

As I pondered on this sentence, I looked for parallels between the Prophet's words and my own life (see 1 Nephi 19:23). "My emotions are stormy and broken," I thought. "Because of others, I feel like my and Kaylee's lives have been wrenched and divided by earthquakes."

As I read further, I found hope in the Prophet Joseph's exhortation to "lay hold of" hope in Christ and the joy that we anticipate in the

Resurrection, for as Joseph Smith said, "What can [these disasters] do? Nothing. *All your losses will be made up to you* in the resurrection, provided you continue faithful."³ As I read that last sentence, understanding came: The Lord would make up *all* my losses, *all* of Kaylee's losses. I no longer needed to be angry. I no longer needed to mourn. Because of Him—because He would restore all that I'd lost—I could forgive! My heart surged with hope, and I smiled through tears of gratitude.

Kaylee's former teacher lived nearby, and I encountered him often. In these encounters, he seemed unaware of the pain he had caused, and I tried to hide my resentment. Not long after the Relief Society lesson that touched me so deeply, I ran into him again and caught his eye. The forgiveness I'd been longing for washed through me. I forgave him. My burden of animosity fled.

I am still working to completely forgive those who abused me. I continue to focus on the Lord's promise that all my losses will be made up to me, and forgiveness is growing in my heart. I am confident that as I try my best, the Lord will heal me of all resentment, and I will be free. ■

NOTES

1. Name has been changed.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 51.
3. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 51, emphasis added.

THE SAVIOR CAME TO HEAL THE BROKENHEARTED

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised."

Luke 4:18

For more on abuse, the Atonement, and forgiveness, see the entries for these topics in the Study by Topic section of LDS.org (lds.org/study/topics). Study by Topic provides articles, definitions, scriptures, and prophetic statements on a variety of subjects for personal study and learning. For more information about counseling through LDS Family Services, visit ldsfamilyservices.org.