

The Gifts of a Broken Heart

The pain in my broken heart was softened as spiritual gifts helped me heal.

By Kim Webb Reid

I met Daniel on the school playground in sixth grade. After years of friendship, my feelings for him developed into love, and I was thrilled when I discovered he felt the same way about me. Following his mission, we dated, then started discussing marriage and tentatively selected a date. During the course of our relationship I had prayed, studied my patriarchal blessing, and received an unmistakable spiritual impression that Daniel was someone I could marry. Simultaneously, I felt a strong confirmation of Heavenly Father's love for me. I had never been so happy. I was certain my childhood friend would become my eternal companion.

The only problem was this: Daniel broke up with me.

For months I felt lost. No matter how hard I tried to get a grip, questions cycled through my mind: If Heavenly Father loved me, why did He guide me to marry Daniel and then allow the relationship to end so painfully? Could I trust my ability to discern the Spirit? Even though I understood the principle of agency superficially, deep down I still wondered why the Lord would not intervene and soften Daniel's heart.

Instead, the Lord softened mine. I gained valuable gifts from having a broken heart.

The Gift of Empathy

I once heard a professor from Brigham Young University, James D. Stice, recount the story of helping his six-year-old daughter clean up her room. After trying for hours to clean it up by herself, she said "with big, tear-filled brown eyes, . . . 'Daddy, it's too hard.'" Reflecting on this experience, Professor Stice said: "The weight of a six-year-old's world can get very heavy—to a six-year-old. She did not want to hear me say, 'I could clean this room up in five minutes' or 'When I was your age . . . ' At that moment the weight was too much, and she needed relief."¹

So did I. No matter how trivial my plight may have appeared to others, my sadness was real and I needed help. Such help came from understanding friends and family members. They assured me of my worthiness to understand spiritual guidance despite my confusion over the promptings I'd received. Their expressions of faith in the Lord and in my capacities were exactly the boost I needed.

At times loved ones showed concern because I wasn't "over it" yet. Though I know they simply wanted me to be happy, I felt that they didn't understand the depth of my sadness. I knew I'd reacted similarly with seeming apathy to friends' breakups in the past. Before experiencing it for myself, I had assumed that the ending of a dating



relationship was on the minor end of the trial spectrum.

I'm still far from being perfectly compassionate, but I know my heart is changing. In recent years I have been able to offer a more sincere listening ear to friends enduring sadness, illness, or loneliness. I'm grateful that breaking up taught me I may never fully understand the weight of someone else's burden. The best I can do is prayerfully try to help carry it.

The Gift of Confidence

After knowing Daniel for almost 10 years, I had to reevaluate who I was without his influence in my life. It hurt to notice myself using expressions I'd picked up from him, hear music we'd enjoyed together, or see mutual friends. To stop reminding myself of the pain, I nurtured other friendships and immersed myself in studying the gospel.

In a way that didn't seem possible before, I developed a sense of worth and security independent from the acceptance of others. I came to value my personality and talents because God had given them to me and not because I believed they had earned someone else's love. This perspective helped me to be more courageous and optimistic in all facets of my life. Being given the opportunity to develop a stronger emotional foundation and a better relationship with the Lord made possible every good thing in my life since.

The Gift of Patience

For months I prayed for instructions on how *I* could stop hurting and what *I* needed to do—in other words, how *I* could have more control over what was happening. I knew I was responsible for how I reacted to my trials, but I wanted to be responsible for more than my behavior. I also wanted to control

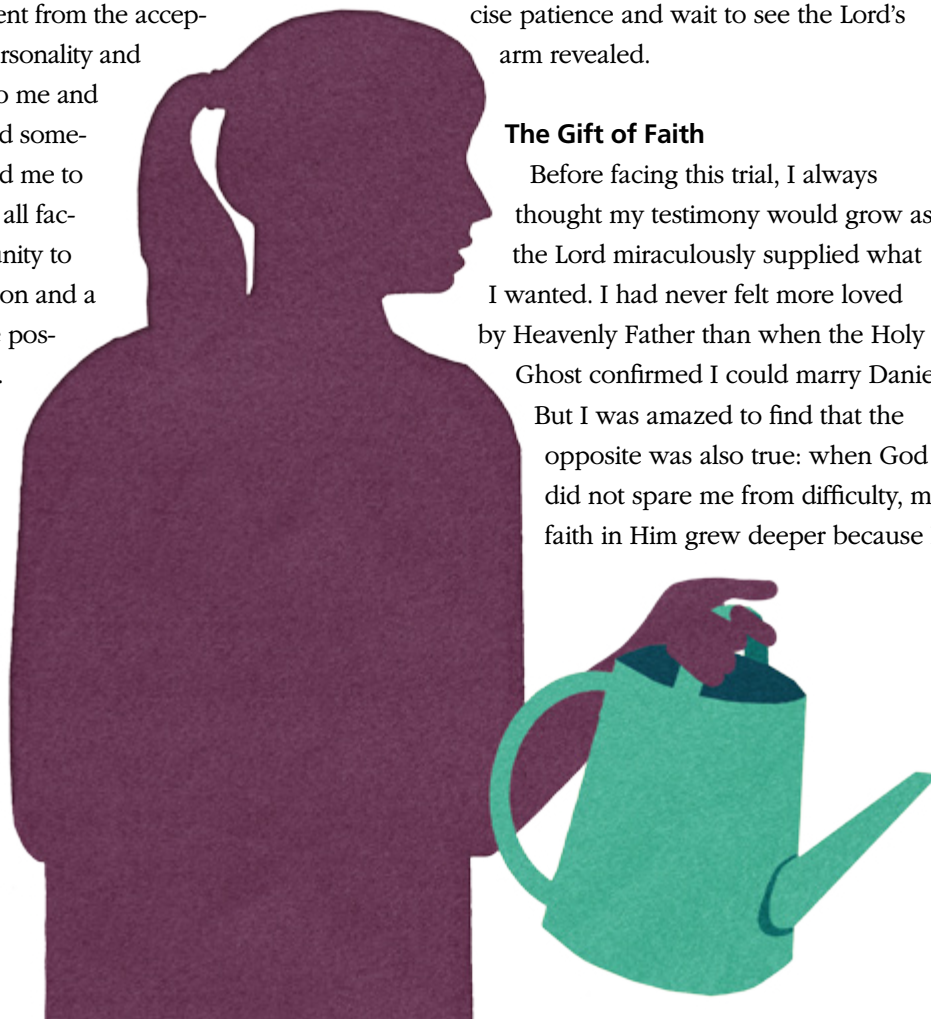
the pain. Many attempts to decide that I was all better only set me up for disappointment and a feeling of failure when I stumbled upon additional hard days.

Finally, one day as the Christmas season approached, I noticed how peaceful I felt. Over the weeks, that feeling grew. The instructions I had prayed for never came, but happiness did. Being healed was much like the changing of seasons, a patience-inspiring process I couldn't rush. I gained a testimony that the Savior truly grants peace that passes understanding (see Philippians 4:7) because at the appropriate time, He performed that miracle for me. I didn't understand what the passage of time was accomplishing in me, but all along the Lord was healing me. When my endurance yielded a small measure of patience, Heavenly Father's peace poured out upon me.

Now I realize I can't always perfectly control how I feel or plan every detail of my future. I'm more content to exercise patience and wait to see the Lord's arm revealed.

The Gift of Faith

Before facing this trial, I always thought my testimony would grow as the Lord miraculously supplied what I wanted. I had never felt more loved by Heavenly Father than when the Holy Ghost confirmed I could marry Daniel. But I was amazed to find that the opposite was also true: when God did not spare me from difficulty, my faith in Him grew deeper because I





HE WILL HEAL OUR BROKEN HEARTS

“When sore trials come upon us, it’s time to deepen our faith in God, to work hard, and to serve others. Then He will heal our broken hearts. He will bestow upon us personal peace (see John 14:27) and comfort (see Isaiah 40:1).”

President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Jesus Christ—the Master Healer,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 87.

had to choose whether or not I would continue trusting Him. Hence my faith could no longer be dependent on the sandy foundation of life going smoothly. My testimony became more rooted in the Savior Himself, in trusting Him, and in accepting the will of my Heavenly Father.

As my faith grew stronger, I stopped wondering if I had misinterpreted spiritual communications. I knew I could not deny what the Spirit had impressed upon me, but I also realized that my personal revelation had not disclosed what Daniel’s choices would be or how the Lord would use them for my benefit. That information was beyond my sphere. I was entitled to receive instructions for only myself. Moving forward on following those promptings didn’t yield the kinds of blessings I was expecting, but it’s easy to see now that the Lord supplied even better blessings.

The Gift of Forgiveness

As I was healed, genuine forgiveness filled my heart. I had spent many weeks examining both Daniel and myself to see who was more at fault for the end of our relationship. I wanted to find the answers and thus protect myself from making painful mistakes in the future. But as long as I sought to unravel what had gone wrong by assigning blame, I didn’t solve anything. I only made it harder to forgive Daniel, and I loathed myself because I was dwelling on my imperfections.

Welcoming forgiving feelings when they came allowed me to see both Daniel’s and my actions from a more charitable perspective. I forgave myself and understood Daniel better. I came to see our ended relationship not as a tragedy but as a success—a vital learning experience in which we both did

our best with the knowledge and experience we had at the time.

Now I better understand why the Lord requires us to forgive. When we learn not to focus on blame, we love others more *and* are kinder with ourselves.

The Gift of Experience

Over the next five years, I became involved in a few more serious dating relationships. In each one, I felt that everything was going well on the surface, but I couldn't shake an inexplicable sense of emptiness that prevented me from moving toward marriage. Discouraged, I began wondering if I'd ever be able to recognize who was right for me.

Then I came across some of Daniel's old letters I thought I had thrown out. As I read them, I remembered the unparalleled spiritual, emotional, and intellectual compatibility I had experienced in that relationship. Those memories were pivotal in helping me approach dating with a much more prayerful attitude. I prayed to know how I could feel an equal or greater sense of compatibility with the right person than I had already felt with Daniel. Answers to those sincere prayers guided me to start dating someone new—a good friend I had overlooked because he was “just a friend.” We understood each other well. We valued the same things in life. We shared the same sense of humor. As our relationship deepened, we decided to share our lives together too.

I can't help but wonder if I would have known whom I should marry if the Lord had not given me opportunities to learn through my experiences first. Instead of finally discerning all the reasons Daniel was wrong for me, as I originally assumed would happen, my experiences led me to discern exactly why my husband, Russ, is the best match.

A Softened Heart

I can testify of the Savior's ability to “bind up the brokenhearted” (Isaiah 61:1). My broken heart was not only softened; it was also strengthened. After my first

heartbreak, I received strength to love *more* and trust *more* than I had before, not less. This miracle is one of many evidences that teach me about the limitless power of the Savior's Atonement.

I would not have volunteered to learn vital qualities through pain, but I recognize valuable gifts that resulted from one unhappy experience. Heavenly Father knew what I was lacking and what I would need to serve Him better. He also prepared me to be a good spouse for my eternal companion. I'm grateful to Heavenly Father for tutoring me through a season of grief. The feelings of sadness are long past, but I know the gifts I received during that time can benefit me throughout my life. ■

The author lives in Virginia, USA.

NOTE

1. James D. Stice, “The Weight of the World” (Brigham Young University devotional, Oct. 2, 2001), 3, speeches.byu.edu.

