



A BETTER

By Elly Catmull

(Based on a true story)

*Help me, dear Father, to freely forgive
(Children's Songbook, 99).*

Tom threw himself onto the bed. It wasn't fair! He heard Michael's voice from the doorway. "I'm sorry I pushed you, Tom," Michael said. "Go away!" Tom yelled back. The door clicked shut. Tom felt bad for yelling at his brother. Then he remembered their fight, and anger seemed to boil inside of him again. Michael deserved it! "What's going on?" Mom asked as she came in. When Tom started talking, it felt like hot lava spilling from a volcano. "Sometimes I wish Michael wasn't my brother. He's so much bigger and stronger, and I always lose when we fight. I want him to be in trouble so that we're even!" Mom looked thoughtful. "I sent Michael to his room for fighting, just like I sent you. Would it be fair if I disciplined him more than you just because you wanted me to?"

"I don't care—I want him to feel like me!" Tom clamped the pillow around his head. He felt like he was going to explode! He barely heard Mom leave the room.

After a while Tom calmed down and was able to join family home evening. But he didn't sit by Michael. He didn't even look at him.

"In the Old Testament," Dad said, "people practiced 'an eye for an eye.' That meant if someone poked your eye, you poked his eye back."

I wish I could do that! Tom thought.

Dad went on. "But Jesus taught a better way."

Tom blinked, surprised. A better way? When Dad asked him to read, Tom tried to understand what Jesus was saying.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

"But I say unto you . . . whosoever shall smite thee on

thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:38–39).

Dad asked Michael what it meant.

"Umm . . . that we should forgive others?" Michael said.

Mom nodded. "When you try to make someone hurt as much as they hurt you, everyone just keeps feeling hurt. But when you forgive, everyone starts feeling better."

How can I possibly forgive him? Tom thought, watching his brother. Michael gave him a cautious smile. Tom looked away, thinking about the fight earlier that day.

Then other memories began popping into Tom's mind—like when Michael helped him practice for soccer team tryouts. And when they built a tree house together, Michael let Tom make the trapdoor! Michael even taught him how to play songs on the piano.

Michael is a pretty good brother after all, Tom realized.

As soon as Tom thought those words, a warm feeling started growing in his chest. The more he thought about why he loved Michael, the stronger the good feeling became. Soon Tom was smiling. For the first time all day, he felt relaxed.

Dad was saying, "I know it can be hard to forgive. But if we remember how much we love each other, we can find a way."

I think I found it, Tom thought.

After the lesson, as his family headed outside to play Kick the Can, Tom caught up with his brother.

"I'm sorry I was so angry today."

Michael grinned. "It's OK! You can go first in the game tonight, if you want."

Happiness bubbled inside Tom. With a smile, he looked around to see if his family was ready to play, then closed his eyes and began to count. ♦

WAY



"Be patient and kind and forgiving."²

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles