

Two Pages Full of Gratitude

My father suffered all his life from low self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness. He was raised by an alcoholic father who often told him how worthless he thought he was. Thankfully, my father never became an alcoholic himself, but he never told me and my siblings that he was proud of us or praised us for things we had done well. Growing up, I tried to please him, but I always felt I couldn't quite make the mark. This caused us to have a strained relationship.

One year, I mentioned this to my wise bishop. He counseled me to write my father a letter telling him all the reasons I was thankful for him. This would be no small feat for me. My wounds were deep, and I didn't want my letter of gratitude to become one of resentment. So I prayed. With the Spirit guiding me, the reasons that I was grateful for my father began to flow. It took time, but when I finished, I had filled two full pages.

I delivered my letter, not knowing how my father would respond. But I knew that I didn't get to choose his response. I just needed to look into my own heart and remember why I had written the letter.

The next morning, I received a phone call from my stepmother. She was crying. She told me my father had read the letter over and over and over. She said he couldn't talk to me because he was crying too hard.

"Thank you!" she said. "Your father needed this."

Later that day, my father called to thank me. He called me every day for several days to express how much the letter meant to him.

I wish I could say that our relationship was miraculously healed, but we still had much work to do. Over time,

my heart began to heal, and our relationship improved. Eventually, I was able to forgive him.

A few years later, after a tremendous battle with cancer, my father died. I am sure he is now experiencing great joy as the Savior helps him heal from years of abuse. I know that I have experienced healing through the power of Jesus Christ's Atonement. The Savior understands our needs and can help us remove the poison of hurt and resentment from our souls. I know that gratitude, forgiveness, and love are powerful cures. ■

Elise Dahlen, Utah, USA

My father read my letter over and over and over. He couldn't talk to me because he was crying too hard.

