

On Measuring Flour and Forgiveness

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*Since forgiveness is an absolute requirement in attaining eternal life, man naturally ponders: How can I best secure that forgiveness? One of many basic factors stands out as indispensable immediately: One must forgive to be forgiven. [Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), p. 261]*

Thank you, President Bateman, for introducing me and for allowing me the privilege of introducing two Brigham Young University students who will provide an a cappella vocal duet to set the stage for my remarks on forgiving others.

David and Michael Foutz will sing “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” a hymn that highlights our need to emulate the Savior and, in particular, our need “to refrain from judging unrighteously, to heal and comfort” (Karen Lynn Davidson, *Our Latter-day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988], p. 231). David and Michael are brothers and direct lineal descendants of Bishop Jacob Foutz, who was shot and left for dead at the Haun’s Mill Massacre in Missouri in October 1838. According to an account written by Jacob’s wife, Margaret Mann Foutz, after the massacre Jacob and another brother survived

by drawing dead bodies over themselves and feigning death.

Margaret records that these two men thus saved their own lives and heard what some of the mob said. After the firing was over two little boys that were in the [blacksmith] shop begged for their lives, but . . . one of the mob said [“Nits will make lice,” meaning] ‘they will make Mormons’ and he put the muzzle of his gun to the boys’ heads and [ended their lives]. [Grace Foutz Boulter, *History of Bishop Jacob Foutz Sr. and Family, Including a Story of the Haun’s Mill Massacre* (n.p., n.d. [February 1944]), p. 7, BYU Harold B. Lee Library Special Collections; for phrase “Nits will make lice” see Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 45]

After Margaret found Jacob, she got him home and eventually assisted him in removing a bullet from his hip with a kitchen knife. She

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applied a poultice to his wound and disguised him in women's clothes to trick the murderous mob when it returned to exterminate male survivors.

Though physically scarred for life, Jacob did survive, and, what is most important, he thrived spiritually. He was called as a bishop in Nauvoo, served a mission in Pennsylvania, and moved west with the Saints in 1847, continuing to serve as a bishop until his premature death the following year. Although Bishop Foutz sought legal redress for the financial losses he suffered at Haun's Mill, he did not allow the poisonous venom of hate and vengeance to destroy his spiritual life. Instead he bequeathed to his posterity a legacy of faith and forgiveness that continues to the present generation. David Foutz serves as first counselor in my bishopric, and the hymn that he and his brother will now perform honors the memory of their progenitor and all the pioneers who forgave their persecutors and moved on, geographically and spiritually, to establish a new life in Zion.

*Savior, may I learn to love thee,
Walk the path that thou hast shown,
Pause to help and lift another,
Finding strength beyond my own.
Savior, may I learn to love thee—
Lord, I would follow thee.*

*Who am I to judge another
When I walk imperfectly?
In the quiet heart is hidden
Sorrow that the eye can't see.
Who am I to judge another?
Lord, I would follow thee.*

*I would be my brother's keeper;
I would learn the healer's art.
To the wounded and the weary
I would show a gentle heart.
I would be my brother's keeper—
Lord, I would follow thee.*

*Savior, may I love my brother
As I know thou lovest me,
Find in thee my strength, my beacon,
For thy servant I would be.
Savior, may I love my brother—
Lord, I would follow thee.*

[“Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, 1985, no. 220]

“Savior, may I love my brother / As I know thou lovest me.” This was a hard lesson for me to learn.

Twenty-five years ago I completed my freshman year at BYU. At that time I never dreamed that I would one day address the faculty and student body in a Marriott Center devotional. For one thing, the Marriott Center didn't even exist! For another, I was a Latter-day Saint convert of less than two years and didn't feel overly confident in my ability to expound on Church doctrine. But I did feel prompted to embark on a full-time mission. I had baptized my best friend—also a BYU student—earlier in the year, and I was anxious to share the restored gospel with others.

Before I could serve, however, I had to submit to the rite of passage familiar to all who would serve missions. I had to have interviews with my bishop and stake president, fill out several forms, undergo medical and dental examinations, make financial arrangements, and attend to a variety of academic concerns. In preparation for my mission, I read or reread LeGrand Richards' *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* and James E. Talmage's *Jesus the Christ*. I also tackled Talmage's *The Articles of Faith*. With the zeal of a convert I had previously read Joseph Fielding Smith's three-volume work *Doctrines of Salvation* and much of Bruce R. McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine*. I had a vivid dream in which I saw myself called to Italy, where centuries before Paul had journeyed to preach to the Romans. When the call came, I was thrilled. The opening sentence of the letter read: “You are hereby called to be a missionary

of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to labor in the Italy North Mission.” My dream had come true.

Because I came from a non-LDS family, I could not rely on them for financial support. I elected to pay for my mission with funds I had previously set aside for my college education. I looked forward to my mission as one long spiritual feast. Mine was to be the *ideal* missionary experience. I would love my companions, I would teach the gospel daily by word and deed, and I would baptize regularly.

After I had been in Italy for only four months, I was called as a senior companion to a brand-new elder, a “greenie” whom I’ll call Elder Brown. *Proud* of the linguistic skills that allowed me to enjoy a senior position after so few months in a foreign land, I looked forward to remaking Elder Brown in my own image—never minding that he was more handsome and more personable than I. Unfortunately, things didn’t work out exactly as I had planned. Elder Brown came from LDS pioneer stock and from a much more well-to-do family. His grandfather invariably included a twenty-dollar bill in his letters; I resented the perks that such extra cash allowed, even though my companion invariably shared his bounty with me.

Elder Brown had belonged to a social fraternity during his freshman year—the type that never would have accepted a nerd such as I—and, unfortunately, his fraternity brothers had exposed him to a number of undesirable things, including risqué magazines.

Then it happened. One afternoon during scripture study time in our apartment I caught him “reading” (if that’s the right word) an unapproved magazine—you know, the kind with a centerfold. It was an Italian edition of *Playboy*. He had purchased it while on splits with another elder, and I was furious. I felt that Elder Brown had ruined my ideal mission. I seethed in righteous indignation, but, rather than rebuking my companion and then showing forth an increase in love, I chose to become

an expert on his every fault, which I cataloged and reviewed with some regularity in my mind. After a few challenging months together, my junior companion was transferred, and it was at that point that I began my revenge in earnest.

I have always been fond of telling stories (in case you haven’t noticed), and I soon captivated not only later missionary companions but entire districts with embroidered tales of my greenie’s sinful ways. Even after I returned from my mission, I continued to recount his problems. The one thing that I couldn’t understand, however, was the report that I had received from more than one source that Elder Brown, in contrast to me, had become one of the top baptizing elders of our mission and had been called to key leadership positions that had mysteriously eluded me.

A few years passed. Then one day Elder Brown appeared on my doorstep. He asked to come in. We spoke alone in my living room for over an hour. I asked what he was doing and learned that he was happily married and an extremely successful businessman and entrepreneur. Because of the way I had stereotyped him, I wondered about his activity in the Church. I was surprised to learn that he was not an elder (as was I) but a high priest and serving on a high council. He then stunned me by relating how his favorite high council talk was to share what he had learned from me while we were mission companions. He loved to tell young people preparing for missions how much better prepared doctrinally I—the convert—had been than he—the lifelong member—and how my example of gospel scholarship had inspired him to overcome his own shortcomings.

I began to feel pretty rotten about all the stories I had told about him. I prayed that he didn’t know what I had done, but somehow I sensed that he did know. He then acknowledged that at a family reunion one of his cousins, whom I had known in graduate

school, had told him how I had recounted in her presence and in vivid detail an episode Elder Brown had long ago repented of. My former companion did not berate me; instead he asked if I could ever forgive him for his youthful mistakes. I knew then that it was I who needed to ask him for forgiveness. In the pride of my heart I had sinned, and I had sinned in multiple ways—in judging unmercifully, in harboring resentment, in planning and executing revenge, and, perhaps most of all, in not allowing the possibility that a brother could change, improve, and repent.

“Savior, may I love my brother / As I know thou lovest me.” I could not see the mote in my brother’s eye because of the beam in my own. I had chosen to ignore the fundamental law of repentance, taught by the Lord and modern-day prophets: We must forgive in order to be forgiven. Of this principle the scriptures are clear.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that

if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
[Matthew 6:14–15]

As a Protestant growing up in the Bible Belt, I recited the Lord’s Prayer by memory almost every Sunday. What I failed to realize as a child, as a teenager, and even as a missionary was that the words “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12) really mean “Father, do not forgive me one iota more than I am willing to forgive others.”

The apostle Peter inquired long ago, “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?” And Jesus answered, “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21–22). Some of us—unwilling to accept that “seventy times seven” does not

mean, in this context, a precise number—keep track of grudges, vainly nursing them and hoping that when the magic number of 490 comes along we can stop forgiving altogether. We forget not a hurt, we forget not a grudge, we forget not an offense.

What we do forget is the fifth beatitude: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7). We forget the example of the first Christian martyr, Stephen, who cried as he was stoned, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60). We disregard the counsel of Paul to “forgiv[e] one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32). We ignore the example of the Savior on the cross, who pleaded, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

When we are speaking of serious sins, the Savior’s phrase “they know not what they do” has raised the question in some minds as to whether the injunction to forgive includes forgiving those who know exactly what they do and choose to do evil nonetheless.

Modern-day revelation boldly proclaims that Saints of the Most High God must forgive in order to be forgiven. The Doctrine and Covenants clearly teaches that we

ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

The passage continues:

I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. [D&C 64:9–10]

President Spencer W. Kimball, extending this idea, preached that “unless a person forgives his brother his trespasses *with all his heart* he is unfit to partake of the sacrament” (Kimball, *Miracle*, p. 264; emphasis in original).

What is the Lord asking us to do? What does it mean to forgive another person his or her trespasses?

The first recorded use of the verb *forgive* in the King James Bible occurs in Genesis 50:17 and helps answer these questions. There we read that the last words of Jacob to his son Joseph, who had been sold as a slave into Egypt by his brethren, were an acknowledgment of the evil done and a request for mercy: “Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil.” Whereafter, the brothers confess their sin to Joseph: “And now, we [thy brethren] pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father.” This confession is followed by a description of Joseph’s softened heart: “And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.” Joseph’s reaction is telling of his magnanimous character. Nevertheless, he first reprimands his brothers and then forgives, telling them: “Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:17, 20).

“To forgive another” does not imply “to disregard judgment.” Certainly forgiving another does not mean that we hold in contempt the law of justice. In fact, Doctrine and Covenants 64:11 affirms that the one who forgives should embrace judgment and hold the transgressor—especially, I would argue, the serious offender—accountable for what he or she has done. Verse 11 states unequivocally: “And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me [the offended] and thee [the offender], and reward thee according to thy deeds.” This latter phrase echoes the words of Paul regarding one who had done him “much evil.” The apostle prays that “the Lord reward him according to his works” (2 Timothy 4:14), and this should be our prayer as well. But it must be a prayer uttered not in hatred, not in bitterness, but rather as “moved upon by the Holy Ghost” (D&C 121:43).

To forgive a serious offense, in other words, is to turn in faith to God, to pray that he will

help the offender repent, and to allow God to judge and reward. It means to accept humbly God’s righteous judgment with faith, hope, and comfort, with joy and peace. I repeat: The concept of judgment is not jettisoned overboard by the commandment to forgive even serious offenders. Rather, to forgive is to turn over to God the ultimate right to judge and, *if* the offender refuses to repent, to allow Him to decree the final punishment. As Amulek witnessed to Zeezrom, not even God can save sinners “*in their sins*” (Alma 11:37; emphasis added).

But how do we find the courage and inspiration to forgive our brother his trespasses?

As a young adult ward bishop, I conducted during my first three years of service approximately 3000 personal, tithing settlement, and ecclesiastical endorsement interviews. Long before the 3000th interview I realized that many individuals who had gone through the formal steps of repentance still did not feel forgiven. In many cases the only reason for their not feeling forgiven stemmed from their not having forgiven others their trespasses. Keeping in mind that forgiveness of others is a step in the repentance process helps many to find the strength to forgive. I have also discovered that true stories of forgiveness are a powerful medium for teaching this principle.

Inspiring stories of mercy can be found in literature, in Church and world history, and in testimonies of living Latter-day Saints. Time limitations have forced me to limit my selections to a handful of examples that I have found particularly meaningful.

In modern history perhaps no more atrocious crime has been committed than the Holocaust, the systematic murder of millions of Jews, political prisoners, handicapped persons, and others by Hitler’s Nazi regime. Corrie ten Boom, a Christian political prisoner, survived the concentration camp at Ravensbruck, but her beloved sister Betsie did not. After the war Corrie traveled the world preaching sermons

of reconciliation, peace, and forgiveness. Then it happened. She was called upon to practice what she preached. She records in her autobiography, *The Hiding Place*, the defining moment of her Christian discipleship:

It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there — the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie's pain-blanching face.

He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. "How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein," he said. "To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!"

His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often . . . the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.

Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.

I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.

As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

*And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself. [Corrie ten Boom, with John and Elizabeth Sherrill, *The Hiding Place* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 238]*

This story is instructive to Latter-day Saints because it dramatizes that in difficult cases we

must call upon Christ to grant us his love and his forgiveness, for we cannot accomplish this act of mercy alone.

I now desire to share with you three short but poignant accounts of forgiveness, all written at my invitation by BYU faculty members for this devotional. These accounts have never been published. They are highly personal stories of dear friends, colleagues whom I love and admire. When I think of them, I know that Brigham Young University stands on sacred ground because their presence helps to hallow it. I originally intended for these teachers to stand, come to this podium, and narrate their own stories. All declined out of modesty, stating that their reason for agreeing to record their stories arose from a desire to help those who are struggling to forgive another.

Brothers and sisters, I do not wish to offend, but I need to say that from my work on the university's Self-Study Committee, I know firsthand that there are departments on this campus where divisiveness is more common than forgiveness. There are departments where colleagues are quick to judge and slow to forgive. Perhaps a faculty member here today carries a grudge, having been hurt by a careless remark or wrongful act of a colleague. Perhaps you know of someone who has been hurt and refuses to forgive, someone who is allowing a wound to fester. Or perhaps someone here has been offended by a roommate or teammate, brother or sister, mother or father, husband or wife, son or daughter, boyfriend or girlfriend, student or professor, department chair or administrator, ward member or bishop, boss or employee, or even stake president or General Authority. Whether the offense is perceived as intentional or unintentional, willed or not, if it is troubling your mind or cankering your soul, then the faculty accounts I am about to share are meant for you as well as for me.

My first account has a name attached to it because it treats someone who was the recipient of another's tender mercy, someone who

learned how to forgive others by being forgiven himself.

Larry Dahl is an associate dean of religion on this campus. Several years ago, when he was my bishop, he shared with a group of ward members a stirring lesson from his childhood. This is Larry Dahl's story:

When I was five years old, two friends and I made ourselves a hideout by tunneling into a haystack alongside a new barn in the neighbor's yard, then digging out a spacious room right in the middle of the haystack. We delighted in our secret meeting place.

One day we decided to roast some hot dogs. Since our home was right next door, I secured the matches to light a fire. You can imagine the rest of the story. The fire quickly got away from us. We scampered through the tunnel to safety, and all three of us ran to our separate homes. I don't know what the others did, but I immediately went to my upstairs bedroom and climbed into bed, panic-stricken. Within minutes I heard the wail of the town fire truck getting closer and closer. But it was too late. The haystack and the new barn were quickly consumed. Fortunately, however, someone arrived soon enough to get the animals out of the barn.

Somehow my parents suspected I may have had something to do with the fire, since they knew of our hideout. Not seeing me anywhere in the neighborhood, they searched the house. As I heard their footsteps on the stairs, I thought my pounding heart would jump right out of my body. When they entered the bedroom and witnessed my fearful and tearful face, their suspicions were confirmed. Mother just sat on the edge of the bed and held me. My father asked me to tell them what had happened. Through broken-hearted sobs I recited the events of the afternoon. He quietly left the room while my mother stayed and cried with me. I learned years later that my father paid our neighbor for the hay and the barn. But from the day it happened to the day of his death forty-five years later, my father never mentioned the event to me. Truly, it was as if he did not remember it.

There is a coda or postscript to Brother Dahl's story, and it treats a role reversal that he experienced when he became a father. He writes:

Many years later when our two oldest boys were five and seven . . . , they broke a window playing ball in the yard. My first impulse was to be upset and scold them. My sweet wife, knowing the story of my own five-year-old ventures, gently intervened. She said simply, "Windows are not nearly as expensive as barns."

The principle that this story illustrates is simple but often ignored by those who need to forgive. True forgiveness implies not mentioning past sins, errors, or mistakes once they have been properly dealt with. In five-year-old Larry's case, he needed to express sorrow and to confess and accept responsibility for his careless and damaging act. But once that was accomplished, he could do little more as a kindergartner to restore the burned-down barn. And so a loving father paid the price for Larry's mistake and mentioned it to him no more.

The scriptures teach that "he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more" (D&C 58:42). Brother Dahl, through his personal account and writings, has helped me see that this principle is best understood in light of what the prophet Ezekiel taught. If a sinner "will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die." Furthermore, "All his transgressions that he hath committed . . . shall not be mentioned unto him" (Ezekiel 18:21–22).

Although it seems obvious that the Lord can recall to memory anything from our past—in fact, we know from the scriptures that when we repeat our sins, "the former sins return" (D&C 82:7)—it is apparent from Ezekiel that the Lord's promise to remember no more the

sins we have repented of means that he will remember them *to us* no more.

If the Lord will no longer remember to us the transgressions we repent of, then surely it is incumbent upon us to allow others the same opportunity. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland captured this idea in his recent conference talk when he stated: “Closely related to our own obligation to repent is the generosity of letting others do the same—we are to forgive even as we are forgiven” (“The Peaceable Things of the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, November 1996, p. 83). President Spencer W. Kimball also captured this principle: “He who will not forgive others breaks down the bridge over which he himself must travel” (Kimball, *Miracle*, p. 269).

The next faculty account I share deals with a much more serious act than barn burning. It has to do with forgiving someone who killed a wife and a child. Though the heinous act did not contain the element of intention inherent in the sin we call murder, the result was the same: a loving husband lost his companion and infant daughter, and a four-year-old son was robbed of a mother and baby sister. A colleague who now serves as a campus bishop shared his story in these moving words:

In a late evening of August we were beginning an eleven-hour drive from Cody, Wyoming, to Salt Lake to support our mother who was worried about my father’s open-heart surgery; we were close as a family and felt a strong need to be together.

My older brother was driving, his wife was sitting next to my youngest brother, who occupied the front window seat. My wife was behind my driving brother, holding our eighteen-month-old daughter, and I was on the opposite side with our four-year-old son stretched out on the seat, his head in my lap.

I awoke from a half-sleep to see headlights crossing the road to our side, my brother swerving to avoid head-on contact. Swerving helped, but there was contact, nonetheless, and it changed my life and my son’s life forever.

The left side of the car had received the most damage, my wife and daughter having absorbed the major portion of the shock. Although my daughter died later that night in the hospital, my wife took an entire week before she could finally go.

Everyone was hurt but me. While I was alone and assessing the damage, praying for a saving car to happen by in the loneliness of the Wind River Canyon, and then walking toward the other damaged car, I was immediately offended by an overwhelming stench of alcohol. I briefly checked and found the nineteen-year-old driver of the other car incoherent from drink, but otherwise unharmed. I was later told, after the police finally arrived, that he had tried to find me to fight me, since he thought I would be angered by what he had done. Eventually, he did find me and drunkenly asked me to forgive him for what he had done that night.

I certainly had not prepared myself for such a request. My immediate thought was that if I did say that I would forgive him, I would have to do it, since I would not play games with my mind and my heart, given the incomprehensible changes of my newly defined life.

I could not say no. I told him flatly that I forgave him, and I meant it. In honesty, I must say that I have never wanted to be his buddy or pal. Indeed, I cannot even remember his name, nor do I know where he is now. But I will be eternally grateful for his asking for forgiveness that Saturday morning before dawn, because in complying I was freed from the thrall of anger and hate that otherwise could have brought even greater sorrow into my life. From this tragedy I think I learned something new: Forgiveness brings true and genuine freedom, often to the forgiven, but always and without exception to the forgiver.

This fine brother shared with me his conviction that he never would have been called as a bishop had he refused the invitation to forgive. How could he speak on behalf of the Lord’s church and bear testimony to penitent ward members that they were forgiven if he himself had never been willing to forgive? The

drunken driver in this story was, of course, tried in a civil court and will one day stand accountable before God for his actions.

Remember: Our forgiveness of others does not remove their own need to repent and pay the penalties for their sins. As my dear colleague Professor Glade Hunsaker, inspired by Elder Richard G. Scott's writings on forgiveness, has helped me see—

*The sweetness of spirit that follows forgiveness is absolutely essential to our daily growth process, but the requirement to forgive often sends wrong signals to the offender, such as: "You must forgive me, and when you have, my offense no longer exists." Forgiveness on the part of the offended blesses the life of the offender and greatly assists the healing process, but it must never be taken as the resolution to a transgression that has not been given the proper steps of repentance. [O. Glade Hunsaker to Madison U. Sowell, 16 October 1996; see also Richard G. Scott, "Healing the Tragic Scars of Abuse," *Ensign*, May 1992, pp. 31–33, and "Finding Forgiveness," *Ensign*, May 1995, pp. 75–77]*

Although we must forgive all, the Lord will forgive only the truly repentant.

My third account was written by a female faculty member who is a convert to the Church. It is a story of abuse and, what is more important, recovery from abuse. Abuse comes in many forms, including neglect, improper care, and abandonment, as well as verbal, mental, physical, spiritual, and sexual abuse. If anyone within the sound of my voice has suffered such abuse, I urge you to seek professional help and spiritual consolation. Recovery from abuse is a process that can take considerable time, much emotional energy, and deep faith. Forgiveness must be a goal of that recovery process, for, as one LDS psychologist has written, "Forgiveness is an opportunity to regain the internal peace of which evil has robbed us" (Wendy L. Ulrich, "When Forgiveness

Flounders: For Victims of Serious Sin," in *Confronting Abuse*, ed. Anne L. Horton, B. Kent Harrison, and Barry L. Johnson [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993], p. 348).

This is the final faculty story I wish to share with you today. It is one person's story of healing, of finding peace through forgiveness and gospel ordinances.

Alcohol addiction robbed my father of his wife, his four children, his job, his mother, and finally his life. Alcoholism doomed my parent's marriage from the beginning. On their very first Christmas, Daddy got drunk and broke all the lights on the tree. My mother stayed with him for 19 years anyway, hoping to save the marriage for the sake of the children. I left home during my senior year of high school because I could not bear to witness the violence anymore. When Mommy saw that Daddy's problem was destroying her children, she divorced him.

We wanted to love our dad, but he was often not himself. Under the bondage of alcohol, he was moody, physically violent, and verbally abusive. One time he kicked my brother with his steel-toed military boots. My brother was so badly bruised that he would not dress-out for his PE class at school. He got in trouble because the teacher did not know about our family background. We lived in terror. We never knew when Daddy would be sober or when he would be drunk. We felt relieved when he was gone.

We each suffered the consequences of Daddy's curse in different ways, but we all tried to forgive him. At the age of 18, I found peace and forgiveness in the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel. A year after the death of my father, I arranged for my home teachers to be the proxies for his temple work. Before my mission, I gathered all the family history documents from my grandpa's house. After my mission, I started doing the temple work for my father's family. In 1979, I did the temple work for my grandma and felt her gratitude. The following year, I went to the temple with some of my family home evening brothers and sisters. We were proxies as my father was sealed to his parents. I cried, and the

brother who did the sealings said that the spirits of my family members were present. Temple work is the key to family healing and forgiveness. Doing the temple work for my father helped to set him free from bondage, which helped to set his parents free. Doing temple work also sets me free, one name at a time.

This sister knew more hurt in the span of her first two decades of life than many of us will ever know. But through the Atonement of Christ, the plan of salvation, and the act of forgiveness, she has come to know that peace “which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). This is the peace that living the gospel brings. She understands what it means to sing “Savior, may I love my father / As I know thou lovest me.”

In the end we must arrive at the point where we can pray sincerely that the offender will repent, for our forgiveness does not insure the Lord’s forgiveness. God’s forgiveness is conditional; it is based on true, sincere, genuine repentance. As Spencer W. Kimball taught us, “Even the Lord will not forgive a person *in his sins*” (*Miracle*, p. 337; emphasis in original).

I would like to close with a poem composed by Marguerite Stewart. It is entitled “Forgiveness Flour.” The poem, written in the first person, features an unnamed wife who answers her door to find a young woman in shame and seeking flour, which symbolizes forgiveness, to make bread. The poem reads:

*When I went to the door, at the whisper of knocking,
I saw Simeon Gantner’s daughter, Kathleen,
standing
There, in her shawl and her shame, sent to ask
“Forgiveness Flour” for her bread. “Forgiveness
Flour,”
We call it in our corner. If one has erred, one
Is sent to ask for flour of his neighbors. If they loan it
To him, that means he can stay, but if they refuse, he
had
Best take himself off. I looked at Kathleen . . .*

*What a jewel of a daughter, though not much like
her*

*Father, more’s the pity. “I’ll give you flour,” I
Said, and went to measure it. Measuring was the
rub.*

*If I gave too much, neighbors would think I made
sin*

*Easy, but if I gave too little, they would label me
“Close.” While I stood measuring, Joel, my husband
Came in from the mill, a great bag of flour on his
Shoulder, and seeing her there, shrinking in the
Doorway, he tossed the bag at her feet. “Here, take
All of it.” And so she had flour for many loaves,
While I stood measuring.*

[Marguerite Stewart, “Forgiveness Flour,”
Religious Studies Center Newsletter 7, no. 3
(May 1993): 1]

The phrase “While I stood measuring” characterizes too many of us too much of the time. We metaphorically “measure flour” in an attempt not to be overgenerous in our mercy. At the same time we pray that God will throw a bag of flour at our feet—that is, that he will be boundless in his mercy toward us.

One month ago the First Presidency issued a letter to Church leaders in Utah County in anticipation of the Mount Timpanogos Temple dedication. President Hinckley and his counselors urged the Saints in this area

*to use this occasion as an opportunity to cleanse
their lives of anything that is displeasing to the
Lord, eliminating from their hearts any ill feelings
of envy or enmity, and seeking forgiveness for
anything that is amiss in their lives. [First
Presidency letter of 19 September 1996
concerning the Mount Timpanogos Utah
Temple Dedication]*

My prayer is that the forgiveness we seek is large enough to include the forgiveness not only of ourselves but also of others. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.