

Forgive (v 1.01)

Another paper in my series on doctrinal terms that are used frequently in the world and in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with multiple definitions and multiple understandings being presented. President Benson said it best, “no matter how the world uses the term, we must understand how God uses the term so we can understand the language of holy writ and profit thereby.” (Beware of Pride, April 1989)

There is a lot of talk in the world and in the Church saying “be tolerant, don’t judge, etc.”- what is lost in this message is that the Lord never commanded his disciples to blindly tolerate everything. The Lord never taught to never judge, in fact the Lord commanded to cast the unclean things out if they did not repent and commanded the disciple to “judge righteous judgment” (JST Matthew 7:2).

So why so much fixation on those false ideas and no comprehension of the true order of forgiveness which is an eternal and divine principle? Beside the word pride there are very few terms in the Church more misused and misunderstood than forgiveness. If “blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7), should we not give this topic the due attention that it deserves for “if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14–15).

One of the questions I get asked the most or statements said to me is something along the lines of “who can you trust anymore? Who could really redeem and build Zion? What group could possibly do that?” Intrinsic in that question or observation is the false belief that those people will be perfect or will have obtained such a level of perfection as to then to be able to cope with each other. This is a false notion as we all sin, we all fall short- so it is not a true principle to look for perfection as the means to be able to trust and work with others without conflict. Instead of asking “who is it who will never lie to me? Who is it that will never hurt my feelings? Etc.?” Rather the question is, when that person is lied to, when that person has their feelings hurt, etc. “what is their response?”

My Mission President always used to say, “Men of God are calming influences”, I added to that quote years later “Men of God are calming influences, slow to anger, full of love.” Looking for somebody who doesn’t cause conflict is a fool’s errand; looking for somebody who solves conflict the Lord’s way is a clear cut way to find men of God. Many will be quick at this time to scoff under their breath “oh, I forgive!” but they err because they do not understand what the Lord requires when He says to forgive and thus the greater sin remains. So what does the Lord mean when He says forgiveness? One of the greatest compilations of quotes dealing with this subject is found in the Teachings of the Presidents: Spencer W. Kimball Chapter 9: Forgiving Others with All Our Hearts. Learning, accepting and implementing what is taught will in large measure determine our status before God and our ability to discern others.

Forgiving Others with All Our Hearts

The Lord commands us to forgive others so that we may be forgiven of our own sins and be blessed with peace and joy.

From the Life of Spencer W. Kimball

When President Spencer W. Kimball taught about seeking forgiveness, he also emphasized the vital principle of forgiving others. In imploring all people to strive to develop the spirit of forgiveness, he related the following experience:

“I was struggling with a community problem in a small ward ... where two prominent men, leaders of the people, were deadlocked in a long and unrelenting feud. Some misunderstanding between them had driven them far apart with enmity. As the days, weeks, and months passed, the breach became wider. The families of each conflicting party began to take up the issue and finally nearly all the people of the ward were involved. Rumors spread and differences were aired and gossip became tongues of fire until the little community was divided by a deep gulf. I was sent to clear up the matter. ... I arrived at the frustrated community about 6 P.M., Sunday night, and immediately went into session with the principal combatants.

“How we struggled! How I pleaded and warned and begged and urged! Nothing seemed to be moving them. Each antagonist was so sure that he was right and justified that it was impossible to budge him.

“The hours were passing—it was now long after midnight, and despair seemed to enshroud the place; the atmosphere was still one of ill temper and ugliness. Stubborn resistance would not give way. Then it happened. I aimlessly opened my Doctrine and Covenants again and there before me it was. I had read it many times in past years and it had had no special meaning then. But tonight it was the very answer. It was an appeal and an imploring and a threat and seemed to be coming direct from the Lord. I read [section 64] from the seventh verse on, but the quarreling participants yielded not an inch until I came to the ninth verse. Then I saw them flinch, startled, wondering. Could that be right? The Lord was saying to us—to all of us—‘Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another.’

“This was an obligation. They had heard it before. They had said it in repeating the Lord’s Prayer. But now: ‘... for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord ...’

“In their hearts, they may have been saying: ‘Well, I might forgive if he repents and asks forgiveness, but he must make the first move.’ Then the full impact of the last line seemed to strike them: ‘For there remaineth in him the greater sin.’

“What? Does that mean I must forgive even if my antagonist remains cold and indifferent and mean? There is no mistaking it.

“A common error is the idea that the offender must apologize and humble himself to the dust before forgiveness is required. Certainly, the one who does the injury should totally make his adjustment, but as for the offended one, he must forgive the offender regardless of the attitude of the other. Sometimes men get satisfactions from seeing the other party on his knees and grovelling in the dust, but that is not the gospel way.

“Shocked, the two men sat up, listened, pondered a minute, then began to yield. This scripture added to all the others read brought them to their knees. Two A.M. and two bitter adversaries were shaking hands, smiling and forgiving and asking forgiveness. Two men were in a meaningful embrace. This hour was holy. Old grievances were forgiven and forgotten, and enemies became friends again. No reference was ever made again to the differences. The skeletons were buried, the closet of dry bones was locked and the key was thrown away, and peace was restored.”¹

Throughout his ministry, President Kimball exhorted Church members to be forgiving: “If there be misunderstandings, clear them up, forgive and forget, don’t let old grievances change your souls and affect them, and destroy your love and lives. Put your houses in order. Love one another and love your neighbors, your friends, the people who live near you, as the Lord gives this power to you.”²

Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball

We must forgive to be forgiven.

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.³

“For 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.”
([Matt. 6:14–15.](#))

Hard to do? Of course. The Lord never promised an easy road, nor a simple gospel, nor low standards, nor a low norm. The price is high, but the goods attained are worth all they cost. The Lord himself turned the other cheek; he suffered himself to be buffeted and beaten without remonstrance; he suffered every indignity and yet spoke no word of condemnation. And his question to all of us is: “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be?” And his answer to us is: “Even as I am.” ([3 Ne. 27:27.](#))⁴

Our forgiveness of others must be heartfelt and complete.

The command to forgive and the condemnation which follows failure to do so could not be stated more plainly than in this modern revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

“Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye 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.

“I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.” ([D&C 64:8–10.](#)) ...

The lesson stands for us today. Many people, when brought to a reconciliation with others, say that they forgive, but they continue to hold malice, continue to suspect the other party, continue to disbelieve the other’s sincerity. This is sin, for when a reconciliation has been effected and when repentance is claimed, each should forgive and forget, build immediately the fences which have been breached, and restore the former compatibility.

The early disciples evidently expressed words of forgiveness, and on the surface made the required adjustment, but “forgave not one another in their hearts.” This was not a forgiveness, but savored of hypocrisy and deceit and subterfuge. As implied in Christ’s model prayer, it must be a heart action and a purging of one’s mind [see [Matthew 6:12](#); see also [verses 14–15](#)].

Forgiveness means forgetfulness. One woman had “gone through” a reconciliation in a branch and had made the physical motions and verbal statements indicating it, and expressed the mouthy words [of] forgiving. Then with flashing eyes, she remarked, “I will forgive her, but I have a memory like an elephant. I’ll never forget.” Her pretended adjustment was valueless and void. She still harbored the bitterness. Her words of friendship were like a spider’s web, her rebuilt fences were as straw, and she herself continued to suffer without peace of mind. Worse still, she stood “condemned before the Lord,” and there remained in her an even greater sin than in the one who, she claimed, had injured her.

Little did this antagonistic woman realize that she had not forgiven at all. She had only made motions. She was spinning her wheels and getting nowhere. In the scripture quoted above, the phrase *in their hearts* has deep meaning. It must be a purging of feelings and thoughts and bitteresses. Mere words avail nothing.

“For behold, if a man being evil giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God.” ([Moro. 7:8](#).)

Henry Ward Beecher expressed the thought this way: “I can forgive but I cannot forget is another way of saying I cannot forgive.”

I may add that unless a person forgives his brother his trespasses *with all his heart* he is unfit to partake of the sacrament.⁵

We should leave judgment to the Lord.

To be in the right we must forgive, and we must do so *without regard to whether or not our antagonist repents*, or how sincere is his transformation, or whether or not he asks our forgiveness. We must follow the example and the teaching of the Master, who said: “... Ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds.” ([D&C 64:11](#).) But men often are unwilling to leave it to the Lord, fearing perhaps that the Lord might be too merciful, less severe than is proper in the case.⁶

Some people not only cannot or will not forgive and forget the transgressions of others, but go to the other extreme of hounding the alleged transgressor. Many letters and calls have come to me from individuals who are determined to take the sword of justice in their own hands and presume to see that a transgressor is punished. “That man should be excommunicated,” a woman declared, “and I’m never going to rest till he has been properly dealt with.” Another said, “I can never rest, so long as that person is a member of the Church.” Still another said: “I will never enter the chapel so long as that person is permitted to enter. I want him tried for his membership.” One man even made many trips to Salt Lake City and wrote several long letters to protest against the bishop and the stake president who did not take summary disciplinary action against a person who, he claimed, was breaking the laws of the Church.

To such who would take the law into their own hands, we read again the positive declaration of the Lord: “... there remaineth in him the greater sin.” ([D&C 64:9](#).) The revelation continues: “And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds.” ([D&C 64:11](#).) When known transgressions have been duly reported to the proper ecclesiastical officers of the Church, the individual may rest the case and leave the

responsibility with the Church officers. If those officers tolerate sin in the ranks, it is an awesome responsibility for them and they will be held accountable.⁷

The Lord will judge with the same measurements meted out by us. If we are harsh, we should not expect other than harshness. If we are merciful with those who injure us, he will be merciful with us in our errors. If we are unforgiving, he will leave us weltering in our own sins.

While the scriptures are plain in their declaration that man shall have meted out to him the same measure that he gives his fellowmen, the meting out even of warranted judgment is not for the layman, but for proper authorities in Church and state. The Lord will do the judging in the final analysis. ...

The Lord can judge men by their thoughts as well as by what they say and do, for he knows even the intents of their hearts; but this is not true of humans. We hear what people say, we see what they do, but being unable to discern what they think or intend, we often judge wrongfully if we try to fathom the meaning and motives behind their actions and place on them our own interpretation.⁸

Though it may seem difficult, we can forgive.

In the context of the spirit of forgiveness, one good brother asked me, “Yes, that is what ought to be done, but how do you do it? Doesn’t that take a superman?”

“Yes,” I said, “but we are commanded to be supermen. Said the Lord, ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ ([Matt. 5:48](#).) We are gods in embryo, and the Lord demands perfection of us.”

“Yes, the Christ forgave those who injured him, but he was more than human,” he rejoined.

And my answer was: “But there are many humans who have found it possible to do this divine thing.”

Apparently there are many who, like this good brother, hold the comfortable theory that the forgiving spirit ... is more or less the monopoly of scriptural or fictional characters and can hardly be expected of practical people in today’s world. This is not the case.⁹

I knew a young mother who lost her husband by death. The family had been in poor circumstances and the insurance policy was only \$2,000, but it was like a gift from heaven. The company promptly delivered the check for that amount as soon as proof of death was furnished. The young widow concluded she should save this for emergencies, and accordingly deposited it in the bank. Others knew of her savings, and one kinsman convinced her that she should lend the \$2,000 to him at a high rate of interest.

Years passed, and she had received neither principal nor interest. She noticed that the borrower avoided her and made evasive promises when she asked him about the money. Now she needed the money and it could not be had.

“How I hate him!” she told me, and her voice breathed venom and bitterness and her dark eyes flashed. To think that an able-bodied man would defraud a young widow with a family to support! “How I loathe him!” she repeated over and over. Then I told her [a] story, where a man forgave the murderer of his father. She listened intently. I saw she was impressed. At the conclusion there were tears in her eyes, and she whispered: “Thank you. Thank you sincerely.

Surely I, too, must forgive my enemy. I will now cleanse my heart of its bitterness. I do not expect ever to receive the money, but I leave my offender in the hands of the Lord.”

Weeks later, she saw me again and confessed that those intervening weeks had been the happiest of her life. A new peace had overshadowed her and she was able to pray for the offender and forgive him, even though she never received back a single dollar.¹⁰

When we forgive others, we free ourselves from hatred and bitterness.

Why does the Lord ask you to love your enemies and to return good for evil? That you might have the benefit of it. It does not injure the one you hate so much when you hate a person, especially if he is far removed and does not come in contact with you, but the hate and the bitterness canker your unforgiving heart. ...

Perhaps Peter had met people who continued to trespass against him, and he asked:

“Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? ...”

And the Lord said:

“I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” ([Matthew 18:21–22.](#)) ...
... When they have repented and come on their knees to ask forgiveness, most of us can forgive, but the Lord has required that we shall forgive even if they do not repent nor ask forgiveness of us. ...

It must be very clear to us, then, that we must still forgive without retaliation or vengeance, for the Lord will do for us such as is necessary. ... Bitterness injures the one who carries it; it hardens and shrivels and cankers.¹¹

It frequently happens that offenses are committed when the offender is not aware of it. Something he has said or done is misconstrued or misunderstood. The offended one treasures in his heart the offense, adding to it such other things as might give fuel to the fire and justify his conclusions. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the Lord requires that the offended one should make the overtures toward peace.

“And if thy brother or sister offend thee, thou shalt take him or her between him or her and thee alone; and if he or she confess thou shalt be reconciled.” ([D&C 42:88.](#)) ...

Do we follow that command or do we sulk in our bitterness, waiting for our offender to learn of it and to kneel to us in remorse?¹²

We may get angry with our parents, or a teacher, or the bishop, and dwarf ourselves into nameless anonymity as we shrivel and shrink under the venom and poison of bitterness and hatred. While the hated one goes on about his business, little realizing the suffering of the hater, the latter cheats himself. ...

... To terminate activity in the Church just to spite leaders or to give vent to wounded feelings is to cheat ourselves.¹³

In the midst of discordant sounds of hate, bitterness and revenge expressed so often today, the soft note of forgiveness comes as a healing balm. Not least is its effect on the forgiver.¹⁴

As we forgive others, we are blessed with joy and peace.

Inspired by the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul has given to us the solution to the problems of life which require understanding and forgiveness. “And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” ([Eph. 4:32](#).) If this spirit of kindly, tender-hearted forgiveness of one another could be carried into every home, selfishness, distrust and bitterness which break so many homes and families would disappear and men would live in peace.¹⁵

Forgiveness is the miraculous ingredient that assures harmony and love in the home or the ward. Without it there is contention. Without understanding and forgiveness there is dissension, followed by lack of harmony, and this breeds disloyalty in homes, in branches and in wards. On the other hand, forgiveness is harmonious with the spirit of the gospel, with the Spirit of Christ. This is the spirit we must all possess if we would receive forgiveness of our own sins and be blameless before God.¹⁶

Frequently, pride gets in our way and becomes our stumbling block. But each of us needs to ask himself the question: “Is your pride more important than your peace?”

All too frequently, one who has done many splendid things in life and made an excellent contribution will let pride cause him to lose the rich reward to which he would be entitled otherwise. We should always wear the sackcloth and ashes of a forgiving heart and a contrite spirit, being willing always to exercise genuine humility, as did the publican [see [Luke 18:9–14](#)], and ask the Lord to help us to forgive.¹⁷

So long as mortality exists we live and work with imperfect people; and there will be misunderstandings, offenses, and injuries to sensitive feelings. The best of motives are often misunderstood. It is gratifying to find many who, in their bigness of soul have straightened out their thinking, swallowed their pride, forgiven what they had felt were personal slights. Numerous others who have walked critical, lonely, thorny paths in abject misery, have finally accepted correction, acknowledged errors, cleansed their hearts of bitterness, and have come again to peace, that coveted peace which is so conspicuous in its absence. And the frustrations of criticism, bitterness, and the resultant estrangements have given place to warmth and light and peace.¹⁸

It can be done. Man can conquer self. Man can overcome. Man can forgive all who have trespassed against him and go on to receive *peace* in this life and eternal life in the world to come.¹⁹

If we would sue for peace, taking the initiative in settling differences—if we would forgive and forget with all our hearts—if we would cleanse our own souls of sin, bitterness, and guilt before we cast a stone or accusation at others—if we would forgive all real or fancied offenses before we asked forgiveness for our own sins—if we would pay our own debts, large or small, before we pressed our debtors—if we would manage to clear our own eyes of the blinding beams before we magnified the motes in the eyes of others—what a glorious world this would be! Divorce would be reduced to a minimum; courts would be freed from disgusting routines; family life would be heavenly; the building of the kingdom would go forward at an accelerated pace; and that peace which passeth understanding [see [Philippians 4:7](#)] would bring to us all a joy and happiness that has hardly “entered into the heart of man.” [See [1 Corinthians 2:9](#).]²⁰

May the Lord bless us all that we may continually carry in our hearts the true spirit of repentance and forgiveness until we shall have perfected ourselves, looking toward the glories of exaltation awaiting the most faithful.²¹

The Merciful Obtain Mercy

Dieter F. Uchtdorf

The Way of the Disciple

My dear brothers and sisters, consider the following questions as a self-test:

Do you harbor a grudge against someone else?

Do you gossip, even when what you say may be true?

Do you exclude, push away, or punish others because of something they have done?

Do you secretly envy another?

Do you wish to cause harm to someone?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may want to apply the two-word sermon from earlier: stop it!

In a world of accusations and unfriendliness, it is easy to gather and cast stones. But before we do so, let us remember the words of the One who is our Master and model: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone.”¹² John 8:7

Brothers and sisters, let us put down our stones.

Let us be kind.

Let us forgive.

Let us talk peacefully with each other.

Let the love of God fill our hearts.

“Let us do good unto all men.”¹³ Galatians 6:10

The Savior promised: “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over. ... For with the same measure that [you use] it shall be measured to you again.”¹⁴ Luke 6:38

Shouldn't this promise be enough to always focus our efforts on acts of kindness, forgiveness, and charity instead of on any negative behavior?

Let us, as disciples of Jesus Christ, return good for evil.¹⁵ [See Matthew 5:39–41] Let us not seek revenge or allow our wrath to overcome us.

“For it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. ...

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”¹⁶ Romans 12:19–21

Remember: in the end, it is the merciful who obtain mercy.¹⁷ [See Matthew 5:7

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, wherever we may be, let us be known as a people who “have love one to another.”¹⁸ John 13:35

Love One Another

Brothers and sisters, there is enough heartache and sorrow in this life without our adding to it through our own stubbornness, bitterness, and resentment.

We are not perfect.

The people around us are not perfect.¹⁹ [See Romans 3:23 People do things that annoy, disappoint, and anger. In this mortal life it will always be that way.

Nevertheless, we must let go of our grievances. Part of the purpose of mortality is to learn how to let go of such things. That is the Lord’s way.

Remember, heaven is filled with those who have this in common: They are forgiven. And they forgive.

Lay your burden at the Savior’s feet. Let go of judgment. Allow Christ’s Atonement to change and heal your heart. Love one another. Forgive one another.

The merciful will obtain mercy”

Doctrine and Covenants 98:18-27

18 Let not your hearts be troubled; for in my Father’s house are many mansions, and I have prepared a place for you; and where my Father and I am, there ye shall be also.

19 Behold, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with many who are in the church at Kirtland;

20 For they do not forsake their sins, and their wicked ways, the pride of their hearts, and their covetousness, and all their detestable things, and observe the words of wisdom and eternal life which I have given unto them.

21 Verily I say unto you, that I, the Lord, will chasten them and will do whatsoever I list, if they do not repent and observe all things whatsoever I have said unto them.

22 And again I say unto you, if ye observe to do whatsoever I command you, I, the Lord, will turn away all wrath and indignation from you, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.

23 Now, I speak unto you concerning your families—if men will smite you, or your families, once, and ye bear it patiently and revile not against them, neither seek revenge, ye shall be rewarded;

24 But if ye bear it not patiently, it shall be accounted unto you as being meted out as a just measure unto you.

25 And again, if your enemy shall smite you the second time, and you revile not against your enemy, and bear it patiently, your reward shall be an hundredfold.

26 And again, if he shall smite you the third time, and ye bear it patiently, your reward shall be doubled unto you four-fold;

27 And these three testimonies shall stand against your enemy if he repent not, and shall not be blotted out.

D&C 98:16–48. Laws by Which the Saints Are Governed in Times of Adversity

“The Law of Retaliation. The Lord here states what may, perhaps, be called the *lex talionis* of the gospel. ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,’ was the highest ideal of justice to which the majority of the Children of Israel could rise under the Mosaic law. Our Lord enunciated a higher ideal, ‘But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also’ (Matt. 5:39–40). This principle is set forth in further detail in the paragraphs before us. If men will smite you, or your families, and ye will bear it patiently, and not seek revenge, ye shall be rewarded (v. 23). If the offense is repeated, and ye bear it patiently, your reward shall be a hundred fold (v. 25). If it is repeated again, and ye bear it patiently the reward shall be multiplied four times (v. 26), and the Lord will judge the offender (v. 27). If he still persists he must be solemnly warned, and if he does not heed the warning, the victim is justified in ‘rewarding him according to his works’ (v. 31); but if the wronged party will spare the offender, the reward for his righteousness will surely come (v. 30). “As the world is constituted at present, it is impossible to live in it without being wronged some time. What to do, when wronged, is one of the great problems of a Christian life. The world says, ‘Get even!’ The Master said, ‘Forgive!’ ‘Absurd!’ the world exclaims, ‘What are laws and courts and jails for?’ Christ bids us remember that our worst enemy is, after all, one of God’s children whom Christ came to save, and that we ought to treat him as we would an erring brother. Very often Christian love in return for a wrong proves the salvation of the wrongdoer. It always has a wonderful effect upon those who practice it. It makes them strong, beautiful and Godlike, whereas hatred and revenge stamp, upon the heart in which they dwell, the image of the devil. . .

“The Law of Forgiveness. In [verses] 23–32 the Saints are taught to bear persecution patiently, and not to seek revenge; here they are instructed to go still farther, and forgive an enemy as often as he repents of his evil-doing, and a stated number of times, even if he does not repent (v. 43). If, however, he continues to trespass and does not repent, the case is to be brought before the Lord, in the hope that the sinner may be brought to repentance; when that object is gained, he is to be forgiven (vv. 44, 45); if there is no repentance, the matter is to be left entirely in the hands of the Lord. “[Until seventy times seven] means, practically, an unlimited number of times. In the days of our Lord, the Rabbis taught that no one was under obligation to forgive a neighbor more than three times. Peter, asking the Master for a ruling on that question, suggested that perhaps seven times would be a liberal improvement on the rule of the Jewish teachers, but our Lord answered, ‘seventy times seven.’ . . . “The gospel teaches us that if we have a grudge against any man, in our hearts, we should drive it out. It teaches us to do good to all, even to enemies, and thereby it makes us as happy as only a heart full of sunshine can be.” (Commentary, pp. 625–26; see also Notes and Commentary for D&C 64:9–10.

Doctrine and Covenants 58

42 Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

43 By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them.

Doctrine and Covenants 58:38–42. “The same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more”

The Lord declared that those who repent will be forgiven and He will “remember [their sins] no more” (D&C 58:42). **President Boyd K. Packer** (1924–2014) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ this promise is true no matter what sins we have committed:

“No matter what our transgressions have been, no matter how much our actions may have hurt others, that guilt can all be wiped out. To me, perhaps the most beautiful phrase in all scripture is when the Lord said, ‘Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more’ [D&C 58:42].

“That is the promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Atonement” (“The Atonement,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 77).

Some mistakenly believe that if they can remember their sins, they have not been forgiven. **President Dieter F. Uchtdorf** of the First Presidency explained why we might remember our sins even after we have been forgiven: “Satan will try to make us believe that our sins are not forgiven because *we* can remember them. Satan is a liar; he tries to blur our vision and lead us away from the path of repentance and forgiveness. God did not promise

that *we* would not remember our sins. Remembering will help us avoid making the same mistakes again. But if we stay true and faithful, the memory of our sins will be softened over time. This will be part of the needed healing and sanctification process” (“[Point of Safe Return](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 101).

Doctrine and Covenants 58:43. “Behold, he will confess them and forsake them”

After teaching the Saints that they can be forgiven of their sins, the Lord revealed the requirements for repentance: confessing and forsaking sin. **Elder D. Todd Christofferson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described what it means to confess sin: “Confessing and forsaking are powerful concepts. They are much more than a casual, ‘I admit it; I’m sorry.’ Confession is a deep, sometimes agonizing acknowledgement of error and offense to God and man” (“The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 40).

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained what it means to forsake our sins: “The forsaking of sins implies never returning. Forsaking requires time. To help us, the Lord at times allows the residue of our mistakes to rest in our memory. It is a vital part of our mortal learning” (“Repent ... That I May Heal You,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov 2009, 42).

Brothers and Sisters, before we get to "judging righteous judgment", and before we get to "tolerance", there is "forgiving"; all encompassing, all demanding, never yielding or negotiating- "forgiving"... There are "and, ifs, and buts" for tolerance, for judging righteous judgment, etc. there are no "and, ifs, or buts" for forgiveness. When our enemies confess and forsake their sins we are commanded to forgive quickly and completely, lest the greater sin remain in you- and note, that there is not quantifier for this, regardless of the sin committed, if we fail to forgive them, the sin in us of not forgiving is greater, it is a sin of rebellion. This forgiveness needs to be in totality, it needs to be with open arms, it needs to be with restoration, etc. it cannot be accompanied with conditions, threats, pushing away, etc. We need to forgive and forget as the Savior. Brothers and sisters this is something we must learn to do and become- forgive and become a forgiving person. This characteristic combined with honesty singularly can create or destroy any Zion community, let alone society at large. I want to end with a video clip of Joseph Smith Jr. which sums up this topic perfectly. How I love that man. I know that save Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior there has not been a greater or shall be a greater, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

Forgive *and* Forget

Elder Matthew Cowley once said:

"We ought to say in our hearts let God judge between me and thee, but as for me I will forgive" [D&C 64:11](#) That means to say in our hearts, not just lip service. We must be willing to forgive and forget. Most of us have a natural ability to forget, especially the things we are supposed to remember. Most of us work diligently to increase our power to remember. However, in forgiving, we should increase or attempt to increase and work diligently to increase our power to forget.

One who hates is his own tormentor. Unless you forgive, you cannot love. Without love, life has little or

no meaning. Love thy neighbor as thyself, forgive and forget, let no ill feelings exist between you and any member of your family or a neighbor or friend or anyone, for we are all God's children—sons and daughters of our Father in heaven and brothers and sisters in the spirit of our Savior Jesus Christ. That we may enjoy that sweet spirit of peace which the Lord giveth, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

1961–A:68, Eldred G. Smith, What Makes a Latter-day Saint?

Forgiveness and good-will dispel bitterness

Lillian Watson has recorded an interesting episode from the ministry of Phillips Brooks, a great American clergyman, as he addressed his affluent, well-dressed congregation on a Sunday morning in Boston nearly 100 years ago:

"He looked into the faces of men and women he long had known, men and women who had come to him with their problems, who had asked for his help and guidance. How well he knew what seethed behind the pleasant, smiling masks of their Sunday best respectability! How well he knew the petty spites that embittered their hearts, the animosities that set neighbor against neighbor, the silly quarrels that were kept alive, the jealousies and misunderstandings, the stubborn pride!

"Today his message was for those bitter, unbending ones who refused to forgive and forget. He must make them realize that life is too short to nurse grievances, to harbor grudges and resentments. He would plead for tolerance and understanding, for sympathy and kindness. He would plead for brotherly love.

"Oh, my dear friends!' he said, . . . and it was as though he spoke to each separately and alone:

"You who are letting miserable misunderstanding run on from year to year, meaning to clear them up some day;

"You who are keeping wretched quarrels alive because you cannot quite make up your mind that now is the day to sacrifice your pride;

"You who are passing men sullenly upon the street, not speaking to them out of some silly spite, and yet knowing that it would fill you with shame and remorse if you heard that one of those men were dead tomorrow morning;

"You who are . . . letting your friend's heart ache for a word of appreciation or sympathy, which you mean to give him someday;

"If you only could know and see and feel, all of a sudden, that the time is short, how it would break the spell! How you would go instantly and do the thing which you might never have another chance to do.'

"As the congregation poured out of the church that Sunday morning, people who hadn't spoken in years suddenly smiled and greeted each other . . . and discovered it was what they had been wanting to do all along. Neighbors who had disliked and avoided each other walked home together . . . and were astonished to find how very much they enjoyed doing it. Many who had been grudging and unkind firmly resolved to be more generous in the future, more considerate of others . . . and all at once felt happier and more content, felt at peace with themselves and the world.

"'Forgive,' Phillips Brooks urged his congregation. 'Forget. Bear with the faults of others as you would have them bear with yours. Be patient and understanding. Life is too short to be vengeful or malicious. Life is too short to be petty or unkind.'"

So spoke Phillips Brooks one hundred years ago, that great humanitarian who, incidentally, composed the words to that favorite Christmas hymn, "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

We need not reach back one hundred years for an example of bitter hearts. Such feelings are common in these very last of latter days. Unwillingness to forgive on a person-to-person basis is indeed a major and chronic illness of today's world.

1966–O:128, Robert L. Simpson, Forgiveness

Guy de Maupassant, the French writer, tells the story of a peasant named Hauchecome who came on market day to the village. While walking through the public square, his eye caught sight of a piece of string lying on the cobblestones. He picked it up and put it in his pocket. His actions were observed by the village harness maker with whom he had previously had a dispute.

Later in the day the loss of a purse as reported. Hauchecome was arrested on the accusation of the harness maker. He was taken before the mayor, to whom he protested his innocence, showing the piece of string that he had picked up. But he was not believed and was laughed at.

The next day the purse was found, and Hauchecome was absolved of any wrongdoing. But, resentful of the indignity he had suffered because of a false accusation, he became embittered and would not let the matter die. Unwilling to forgive and forget, he thought and talked of little else. He neglected his farm. Everywhere he went, everyone he met had to be told of the injustice. By day and by night he brooded over it. Obsessed with his grievance, he became desperately ill and died. In the delirium of his death struggles, he repeatedly murmured, "A piece of string, a piece of string." (The Works of Guy de Maupassant, Black's Reader Service: Roslyn, New York, pp. 34–38.)

With variations of characters and circumstances that story could be repeated many times over in our own day. How difficult it is for any of us to forgive those who have injured us. We are all prone to brood on the evil done us. That brooding becomes as a gnawing and destructive canker. Is there a virtue more in need of application in our time than the virtue of forgiving and forgetting? There are those who would look upon this as a sign of weakness. Is it? I submit that it takes neither strength nor intelligence to brood in anger over wrongs suffered, to go through life with a spirit of vindictiveness, to dissipate one's abilities in planning retribution. There is no peace in the nursing of a grudge. There is no happiness in living for the day when you can "get even."

Paul speaks of "the weak and beggarly elements" of our lives (see [Gal. 4:9](#) Is there anything more weak or beggarly than the disposition to wear out one's life in an unending round of bitter thoughts and scheming gestures toward those who may have affronted us?

Joseph F. Smith presided over the Church at a time of great bitterness toward our people. He was the target of vile accusations, of a veritable drumbeat of criticism by editorial writers even in this community. He was lampooned, cartooned, and ridiculed. Listen to his response to those who made sport of demeaning him: "Let them alone. Let them go. Give them the liberty of speech they want. Let them tell their own story and write their own doom." (Gospel Doctrine, 5th ed., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co.,

1939, p. 339.) *And then with an outreaching spirit of forgiving and forgetting, he went ahead with the great and positive work of leading the Church forward to new growth and remarkable accomplishments. At the time of his death, many of those who had ridiculed him wrote tributes of praise concerning him.*

Not long ago I listened at length to a couple who sat across the desk from me. There was bitterness between them. I know that at one time their love was deep and true. But each had developed a habit of speaking of the faults of the other. Unwilling to forgive the kind of mistakes we all make, and unwilling to forget them and live above them with forbearance, they had carped at one another until the love they once knew had been smothered. It had turned to ashes with the decree of a so-called no fault divorce. Now there is only loneliness and recrimination. I am satisfied that had there been even a small measure of repentance and forgiveness, they would still be together, enjoying the companionship that had so richly blessed their earlier years.

If there be any within the sound of my voice who nurture in their hearts the poisonous brew of enmity toward another, I plead with you to ask the Lord for strength to forgive. This expression of desire will be of the very substance of your repentance. It may not be easy, and it may not come quickly. But if you will seek it with sincerity and cultivate it, it will come. And even though he whom you have forgiven continues to pursue and threaten you, you will know you have done what you could to effect a reconciliation. There will come into your heart a peace otherwise unattainable. That peace will be the peace of Him who said:

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you:

“But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” [Matt. 6:14–15](#)

1980–O:61, Gordon B. Hinckley, “Of You It Is Required to Forgive”

FORGIVENESS INVOLVES FORGETTING

And this reconciliation suggests also forgetting. Unless you forget, have you forgiven? A woman in a branch in the mission field where there had been friction finally capitulated and said, “Yes. I will forgive the others, but I have an eternal memory.” Certainly she had not fulfilled the law of forgiving. She was meeting the letter but not the spirit. Frequently we say we forgive then permit the grievance to continue to poison and embitter us.

The Lord forgets when he has forgiven, and certainly must we. He inspired Isaiah to say:

I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins [Isa. 43:25](#)

And again in our dispensation, he said:

Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven; and I, the Lord, remember them no more [D&C 58:42](#)

And we are instructed by him that

. . . thou shalt forgive him with all thine heart; . . . [D&C 98:45](#)

No bitterness of past frictions can be held in memory if we forgive with all our hearts.

So long as we are bitter, hold grudges, are unrepentant ourselves, unforgiving to others, how can we partake of the sacrament? Read again what God said in the matter:

Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself [1 Cor. 11:27-29](#)

SETTLING DIFFERENCES

Brothers and sisters and friends, if we will sue for peace [D&C 105:38](#) taking the initiative in settling differences—if we can forgive and forget with all our hearts—if we can cleanse our own souls of sin, accusations, bitterness, and guilt before we cast a stone at others—if we forgive all real or fancied offenses before we ask forgiveness for our own sins—if we pay our own debts, large or small, before we press our debtors—if we manage to clear our own eyes of the blinding beams before we magnify the motes in the eyes of others—what a glorious world this would be! Divorce would be reduced to a minimum; courts would be freed from disgusting routines; family life would be heavenly; the building of the kingdom would go forward at an accelerated pace; and the peace which passeth understanding [Philip. 4:7](#) would bring to us all a joy and happiness which has hardly "entered into the heart of man" [1 Cor. 2:9](#)

And a final word from the Lord:

Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit [D&C 19:20](#)

May the Lord bless us all that we may continually carry in our hearts the true spirit of repentance and forgiveness until we shall have perfected ourselves, looking toward the glories of exaltation awaiting the most faithful, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

1949–O:123, Spencer W. Kimball, “Except Ye Repent...”

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, said:

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.

“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.” [Matt. 7:1–2](#)

We can also be a peacemaker by practicing and teaching forgiveness. Jesus was asked how many times one should forgive, and he replied that we should forgive without limit. Forgive him “seventy times seven.” [Matt. 18:22](#)

In modern revelation, the Lord has said, “Inasmuch as you have forgiven one another your trespasses, even so I, the Lord, forgive you.” [D&C 82:1](#)

An important part of forgiving is forgetting. In some ways, being able to forget is almost as valuable as being able to remember.

1983–O:57, Franklin D. Richards, Be a Peacemaker

The Lord has said: “For 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.” [Matt. 6:14–15](#)

And he further added: “For he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.” [D&C 64:9](#)

In other scriptures the Lord has said he would forgive and forget the sins of those who have truly repented. Oftimes we choose to decide when a person has repented, and when we will forgive. We have been told mankind will be judged on the intent of the heart. No mortal can see into the depth of another. There is only One who can. His is the role of a judge—not ours. If you are prone to criticize or judge, remember, we never see the target a man aims at in life. We see only what he hits.

Now, brothers and sisters, let us go to our homes and dismiss from our beings—and purge from our souls—the venom of any feeling of ill will or bitterness toward anyone. Let us strike from our hearts the unwillingness to forgive and forget; and, instead, approach men in the spirit of the Master, even those who “despitefully use you.” [Matt. 5:44](#) Let us pray—rather, let us plead for the spirit of forgiveness. Let us look for the good in each other—not the flaws.

The Master knew men’s lives would be changed more quickly and more surely by love than by criticism. In [1 Jn. 4:19](#) we read: “We love him, because he first loved us.”

I testify to the importance of this principle of salvation, the principle of forgiving and forgetting, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1983–O:59, H. Burke Peterson, Removing the Poison of an Unforgiving Spirit

Through a variety of family, priesthood, Relief Society, or ward and stake activities, we can create a setting that—

- 1. Helps all of us participate in wholesome activities that should be free from the sensuality and coarseness of many activities offered and promoted by the world.*
- 2. Places a premium on including rather than excluding individuals and groups, regardless of age, station in life, Church callings, etc.*
- 3. Offers opportunities for participation to the active, those who are less active, and those who are winning their way back to full fellowship.*

4. *Displays forgiveness and forgetting as individuals feel the warmth and concern of loving arms and open hearts. When we do not forgive and forget, the Lord warns: “My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; ... for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.*

“Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye 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.” [D&C 64:8–9](#)

1992–A:29, Adney Y. Komatsu, Please Hear the Call!

*“The most difficult of all the virtues to cultivate is the forgiving spirit. Revenge seems to be natural with man; it is human to want to get even with an enemy. It has even been popular to boast of vindictiveness; it was once inscribed on a man’s monument that he had repaid both friends and enemies more than he had received. This was not the spirit of Christ.”
(Independence, Zion’s Printing and Publishing Company, 1925, p. 35.)*

If we have been wronged or injured, forgiveness means to blot it completely from our minds. To forgive and forget is an ageless counsel.

1977–O:45, Spencer W. Kimball, The Power of Forgiveness

Truly he forgave all men. He was aware in all of his life of the commandment of God: God will forgive whom he will forgive. As for us, we must forgive all men [D&C 64:10](#) He could do that, and then refer the matter to God. As he forgave I am sure he forgot. When one who forgives can forget, then truly that man is an unusual man, indeed a man of God!

1951–A:166, Matthew Cowley, Untitled

My beloved friends, in our shared ministry of reconciliation, I ask us to be peacemakers—to love peace, to seek peace, to create peace, to cherish peace. I make that appeal in the name of the Prince of Peace, who knows everything about being “wounded in the house of [His] friends”¹⁸ [Zechariah 13:6](#) see also [Doctrine and Covenants 45:52](#) but who still found the strength to forgive and forget—and to heal—and be happy. For that I pray, for you and for me, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

2018–O:77, Jeffrey R. Holland, The Ministry of Reconciliation