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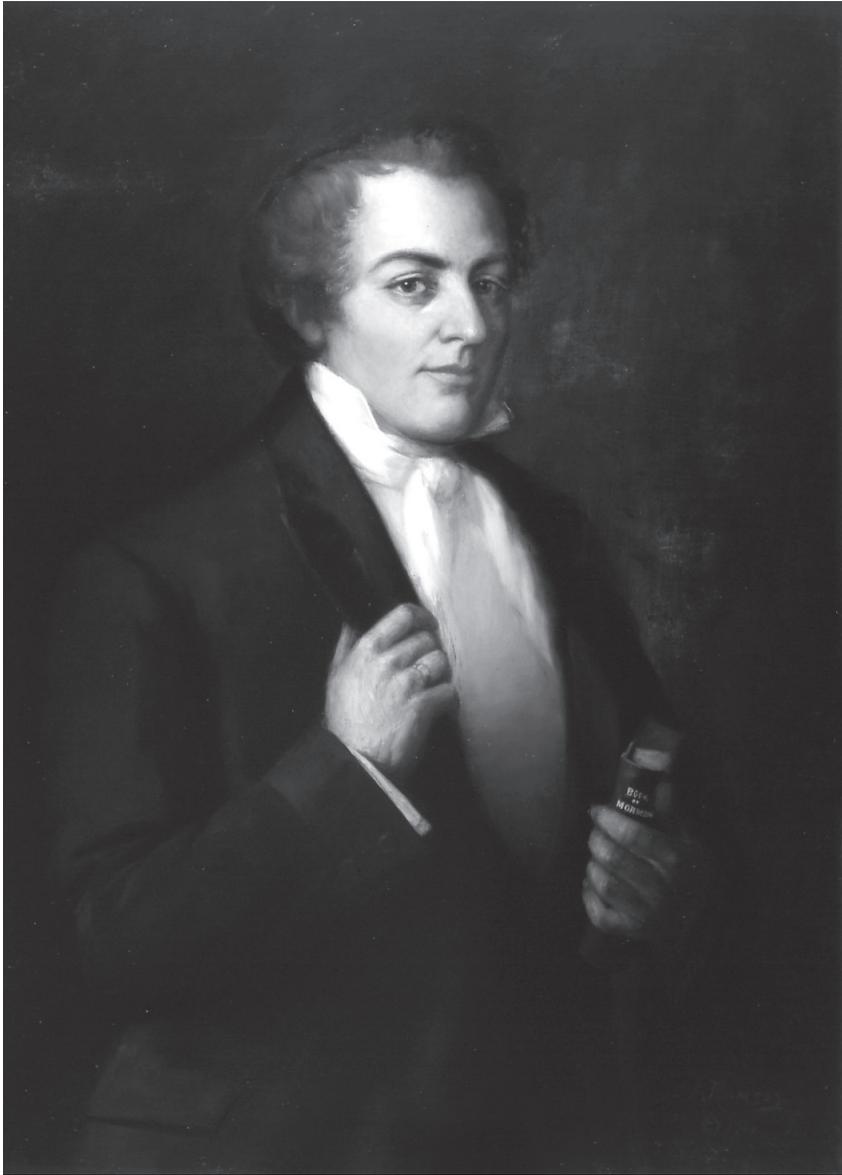
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Portrait of Joseph Smith by Edward T. Grigware

# Dealing with Personal Injustices: Lessons from the Prophet Joseph Smith

*W. Jeffrey Marsh*

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Because our lives consist primarily of numerous interactions with others, we should not be surprised that some of the Savior’s most challenging commandments focus on interpersonal relationships. Consider these soul-stretching declarations: “Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you” (Luke 6:27–28); “As you would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:31); “Love one another, *as I have loved you*” (John 15:12; emphasis added).

These teachings strike at the very core of what eternally matters most: our relationship to God and our dealings with other people. When asked which of all the commandments was the greatest, the Savior responded, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:37–39). The door leading to eternal life hangs on these “weightier matters” of the law (see Matthew 22:40; Romans 13:10). Love for others is how we fulfill the commandment to show love for God (see Mosiah 2:17).

The Prophet Joseph Smith was intimately familiar with the Savior’s declarations. Joseph understood that religion is primarily a matter of interpersonal relationships both horizontally (person to person) and vertically (man to God) (see James 1:27) and that positive relations are dependent upon such principles as love and respect. Joseph described our personal responsibility in this regard: “Let the Saints remember

that great things depend on their individual exertion. . . . Let every selfish feeling not only be buried, but annihilated; *and let love to God and man predominate, and reign triumphant in every mind.*"<sup>1</sup>

Knowing what is written, however, and being able to rise to the occasion to live the doctrine is another matter. Joseph Smith's life and teachings reflect a deep commitment to following the Savior's admonitions and example. The emotional costs were, at times, unimaginable. "On numerous occasions Joseph Smith practiced what he preached about forgiveness. Few, if any, in the history of the Church have been betrayed as frequently or as grievously as Joseph Smith. Yet, if an offender would sincerely repent, the Prophet would readily forgive—even when the offense had been severe."<sup>2</sup> As Orson Spencer observed, Joseph was "remarkably cheerful for one who has seen well-trying friends martyred around him, and felt the inflictions of calumny—the vexations of lawsuits—the treachery of intimates—and multiplied violent attempts upon his person and life."<sup>3</sup>

The persecution Joseph experienced began at the time of the First Vision and intensified over time. He said, "When I went home and told the people that I had a revelation, and that all the churches were corrupt, they persecuted me, and they have persecuted me ever since."<sup>4</sup> His brother William commented that their family was well respected in the community until Joseph announced he had seen God. After that, William reports, their family's reputation was of the worst kind.<sup>5</sup> President Brigham Young later commented, "If a thousand hounds were on this Temple Block [Temple Square], let loose on one rabbit, it would not be a bad illustration of the situation at times of the Prophet Joseph. He was hunted unremittingly."<sup>6</sup>

President Young added, "Why was he hunted from neighborhood to neighborhood, from city to city, and from State to State, and at last suffered death? Because he received revelations from the Father, from the Son, and was ministered to by holy angels, and published to the world the direct will of the Lord concerning his children on the earth."<sup>7</sup> Such persecution has always been the lot of true prophets of God (see Mosiah 7:26–27; Helaman 13:26).

Even so, in the final hours of his life, while riding to Carthage, where he would be martyred, the Prophet Joseph declared, "I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men" (D&C 135:4). He was at peace with himself, with others, and with God. Joseph's personal example and counsel can teach us much about living "void of offense" toward others.

## Dealing with Criticism and Contention

Some offenses we experience in relationships are real. Others are simply imagined. All of them cause anguish. Joseph encouraged the Saints to avoid the negative criticism that destroys relationships: “I do not dwell upon your faults, and you shall not upon mine. Charity, which is love, covereth a multitude of sins, and I have often covered up all the faults among you. . . . We should cultivate a meek, quiet and peaceable spirit.”<sup>8</sup>

Joseph admonished the Saints to be willing to bear one another’s shortcomings because that is what “the Lord does with us.” “I charged the Saints,” he said, “not to follow the example of the adversary in accusing the brethren, and said, ‘If you do not accuse each other, God will not accuse you. If you have no accuser you will enter heaven, and if you will follow the revelations and instructions which God gives you through me, I will take you into heaven as my back load. If you will not accuse me, I will not accuse you. If you will throw a cloak of charity over my sins, I will over yours—for charity covereth a multitude of sins.’”<sup>10</sup>

The Prophet Joseph noted the great need in our world for more reciprocal kindness toward each other: “Men often come to me with their troubles, and seek my will, crying, Oh, Brother Joseph, help me! Help me! But when I am in trouble, few of them sympathize with me, or extend to me relief. I believe in a principle of reciprocity.”<sup>11</sup> “Notwithstanding my weaknesses,” Joseph lamented, “I am under the necessity of bearing the infirmities of others, who, when they get into difficulty, hang on to me tenaciously to get them out, and wish me to cover their faults. On the other hand, the same characters, when they discover a weakness in Brother Joseph, endeavor to blast his reputation, and publish it to all the world, and thereby aid my enemies in destroying the Saints.”<sup>12</sup>

On one occasion, when a man had made some critical remarks to Joseph about his wife, Emma, the Prophet responded not in anger or in retaliation but with an observation. The man had seen Joseph doing “women’s work” (as the man called it) in the Mansion House. He concluded that “mismanagement by Emma was the root of the domestic problems” and said to him, “‘Brother Joseph, my wife does much more hard work than does your wife.’ Brother Joseph replied that ‘if a man cannot learn in this life to appreciate a wife and do his duty by her, in properly taking care of her, he need not expect to be given one in the hereafter.’ The judgmental adviser meekly concluded: ‘His words shut my mouth as tight as a clam. I took them as a terrible

reproof. After that I tried to do better by the good wife I had and tried to lighten her labors.”<sup>13</sup>

### Forgiving Those Who Offend

Is anything more distressing in relationships than to be grossly misunderstood, to be quoted out of context, or to have negative things said about us? Joseph said, “There is no salvation in believing an evil report against our neighbor.”<sup>14</sup>

Misrepresentations can wrench souls, put knots in stomachs, break hearts, and crush spirits. The Prophet Joseph was not immune to such pain, but he had a unique method for dealing with these personal injustices. His approach enabled him to rise above the negative effects rumor-mongering might otherwise have had. An acquaintance of the Prophet recorded this experience:

I went one day to the Prophet with a sister. She had a charge to make against one of the brethren for scandal. When her complaint had been heard the Prophet asked her if she was quite sure that what the brother had said of her was utterly untrue.

She was quite sure that it was.

He then told her to think no more about it, for it could not harm her. If untrue it could not live, but the truth will survive. Still she felt that she should have some redress.

Then he offered her his method of dealing with such cases for himself. When an enemy had told a scandalous story about him, which had often been done, before he rendered judgment he paused and let his mind run back to the time and place and setting of the story to see if he had not by some unguarded word or act laid the block on which the story was built. If he found that he had done so, he said that in his heart he then forgave his enemy, and felt thankful that he had received warning of a weakness that he had not known he possessed.

Then he said to the sister that he would have her to do the same: search her memory thoroughly and see if she had not herself unconsciously laid the foundation for the scandal that annoyed her.

The sister thought deeply for a few moments and then confessed that she believed she had.

Then the Prophet told her that in her heart she could forgive that brother who had risked his own good name and her friendship to give her this clearer view of herself.

The sister thanked her advisor and went away in peace.<sup>15</sup>

This unique approach of dealing with personal offenses by looking into our own hearts first to determine whether we have inadvertently done something to cause others to say what they said, or to feel the way they do, requires courage and humility. But it is precisely this kind of humility that will help heal hearts, improve relations, and promote greater peace among family and friends. True humility is present when we do not think we are better than anyone else. The prophet Joseph thought, “Don’t be limited in your views with regard to your neighbor’s virtue, but beware of self-righteousness, and be limited in the estimate of your own virtues, and not think yourselves more righteous than others.”<sup>16</sup>

All of us will be faced with the challenge of having to extend forgiveness. We can grow in our ability to love and forgive others. Joseph counseled, “As you increase in innocence and virtue, as you increase in goodness, let your hearts expand, let them be enlarged towards others; you must be long-suffering, and bear with the faults and errors of mankind.”<sup>17</sup> Joseph also taught that “God does not look upon sin with allowance, but when men have sinned, there must be allowance made for them.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Showing More Kindness**

Joseph noted that kindness, rather than contention, motivates people to do good: “Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin as to take them by the hand, and watch over them with tenderness. When persons manifest the least kindness and love to me, O what power it has over my mind, while the opposite course has a tendency to harrow up all the harsh feelings and depress the human mind.”<sup>19</sup>

In his comments to the Relief Society, Joseph further described the positive impact kindness can have: “How precious are the souls of men. . . . When a man is borne down with trouble, when he is perplexed with care and difficulty, if he can meet a smile instead of an argument or a murmur—if he can meet with mildness, it will calm down his soul and soothe his feelings; when the mind is going to despair, it needs a solace of affection and kindness.”<sup>20</sup>

### **An Increase of Love**

At the time of the organization of the Relief Society, Joseph admonished the sisters to be more charitable to one another: “Suppose that Jesus Christ and holy angels should object to us on frivolous things, what would become of us? We must be merciful to one another, and overlook small things.”<sup>20</sup> He also reproved narrow-mindedness and

observed that “what many people call sin is not sin.”<sup>22</sup>

Joseph knew firsthand how difficult it was to show love to the undeserving. On March 24, 1832, a mob broke through the door of the John and Elsie Johnson home, where Joseph, Emma, and their adopted twins were living. One of these twins would die within days as a result of what happened that night. The enraged mob pulled Joseph from the home, severely beat him, split one of his front teeth while trying to get him to drink a bottle of poison, covered him with hot tar, stuffed the tar paddle in his mouth to suffocate him, and then left him to die in a snow-covered field. His family and friends spent the night scraping the tar from his body, which also took off much of his skin. The next morning was the Sabbath. As was his custom each Sunday, Joseph stepped out onto the large rock that served as the front porch of the Johnson home to deliver a sermon. He was wrapped in strips of cloth that covered his wounds. Several of those who had beaten him the night before were standing in the crowd to hear him speak! We can only imagine Joseph’s feelings as he looked out over the group. Still suffering greatly from the attack the night before, Joseph spoke from the heart. His sermon was not recorded, but he apparently spoke to them in kindness. Given the circumstances, Joseph’s choosing to speak that morning was a high example of charity itself. His sermon was delivered with such humility and spirituality that three people came forward and asked for baptism. Later that day, Joseph stepped into a nearby icy river and baptized them.

As Joseph grew in spiritual capacity, he came to intimately know and personally understand more about God’s love for all His children. Joseph’s teachings often reflected what he was learning: “There is a love from God that should be exercised toward those of our faith . . . which is peculiar to itself, but it is without prejudice; it also gives scope to the mind, which enables us to conduct ourselves with greater liberality towards all that are not of our faith.” He added that this principle of love “approximate[s] nearer to the mind of God, because it is like God, or Godlike.”<sup>23</sup>

He also taught, “It is a time-honored adage that love begets love. Let us pour forth love—show forth our kindness unto all mankind, and the Lord will reward us with everlasting increase.”<sup>24</sup> Joseph pointed out to the Relief Society that God has planted “feelings of charity and benevolence” in our souls, and he promised, “If you live up to these principles, how great and glorious will be your reward in the celestial kingdom!”<sup>25</sup>

## Generosity in Forgiving Others

Joseph learned early in his ministry about the importance of mercifully forgiving others. He had experienced the joy of forgiveness during his First Vision, when he heard the Savior's voice declare, "Joseph my son thy Sins are forgiven thee."<sup>26</sup> Joseph later expressed his sentiments with these words: "Ever keep in exercise the principle of mercy, and be ready to forgive our brother on the first intimations of repentance, and asking forgiveness; and should we forgive our brother, or even our enemy, before he repent or ask forgiveness, our heavenly Father would be equally as merciful unto us."<sup>27</sup>

To the Saints, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Savior declared, "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:10). He also warned that to not forgive can impact our own souls: "And ye shall also forgive one another your trespasses; for verily I say unto you, he that forgiveth not his neighbor's trespasses when he says that he repents, the same hath brought himself under condemnation" (Mosiah 26:31). The Lord expects us to forgive those who repent because that is what He is willing to do (see Mosiah 26:29). "The nearer we get to our heavenly Father," Joseph observed, "the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls; we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, and cast their sins behind our backs. . . . If you would have God have mercy on you, have mercy on one another."<sup>28</sup>

Elder B. H. Roberts observed that Joseph was generous in his forgiveness of others: "One of the surest evidences of Joseph Smith's greatness of mind and of the inspiration of God upon him is to be seen in his treatment of those who had fallen but were willing to and did repent of their sins. His capacity to forgive under these circumstances seemed boundless."<sup>29</sup>

True enough, Joseph had often spoken about the need to forgive others, but his most powerful sermon was his personal example. Joseph had learned by experience the soul-expanding joy resulting from forgiving others. After the Prophet was taken by an armed mob at Far West and left to languish in Liberty Jail during the bitter winter of 1838–39, one of those who had betrayed Joseph Smith humbled himself and repented. This man stood in the highest circles of Church leadership at Far West. He ached for forgiveness but, recognizing the enormity of his offense, feared he could never obtain it. He humbled himself and traveled to Nauvoo to find the Prophet. He took a "present to the injured man of God [the Prophet] if, peradventure, he would forgive

and permit him to return to the fold as a private member. He felt that there was salvation nowhere else for him and if that was denied him all was lost as far as he was concerned.” He had underestimated the power of the Spirit in healing broken relationships. Not knowing how he would be received, if at all, “He started with a sorrowful heart and a downcast look. While on the way the Lord told Brother Joseph he was coming. The Prophet looked out of the window and saw him coming up the street. As soon as he turned to open the gate the Prophet sprang up from his chair and ran and met him in the yard, exclaiming ‘O Brother [Hyde], how glad I am to see you!’ He caught him around the neck and both wept like children.”<sup>30</sup>

Joseph encouraged the Saints not only to forgive but also to pray for offenders: “One of the most pleasing scenes that can occur on earth, when a sin has been committed by one person against another, is, to forgive that sin; and then according to the sublime and perfect pattern of the Savior, pray to our Father in heaven to forgive him also.”<sup>31</sup> Joseph taught that we must cultivate the love of others, even our enemies, by showing love to them. “Sectarian priests cry out concerning me, and ask, ‘Why is it this babblers gains so many followers, and retains them?’ I answer, It is because I possess the principle of love. All I can offer the world is a good heart and a good hand.”<sup>32</sup>

Joseph demonstrated his willingness to frankly forgive those who offend. One evening, Joseph attended a debate at his brother William’s home. When things didn’t go as William had desired, William physically assaulted Joseph. Joseph was injured and could not, for a time, sit down or stand up by himself. Within a few days, a much calmer William wrote to apologize. The Prophet Joseph responded without hesitation, forgiving and praying for William: “In your letter you ask my forgiveness, which I readily grant. . . . I freely forgive you, and you know my unshaken and unchangeable disposition. . . . And now may God have mercy upon my father’s house; may God take away enmity from between me and thee; and may all blessings be restored, and the past forgotten forever.”<sup>33</sup>

On another occasion, Joseph extended forgiveness to one who had betrayed his trust. The man had apostatized and signed an affidavit that was used to incarcerate Joseph in Liberty Jail. With great feelings of remorse for what he had done, the man earnestly desired to repent. Two members of the Quorum of the Twelve recommended this brother write Joseph a letter of apology and ask for forgiveness. He wrote: “I am as the prodigal son. . . . I have seen the folly of my way, and I tremble at the gulf I have passed. . . . I know my situation, you

know it, and God knows it, and I want to be saved if my friends will help me. . . . I have done wrong and I am sorry. The beam is in my own eye. . . . I ask forgiveness. . . . I want your fellowship; if you cannot grant that, grant me your peace and friendship, for we are brethren, and our communion used to be sweet.”<sup>34</sup>

Joseph’s response is one of the most moving letters ever penned by the hand of man. It is filled with forgiveness and effused with hope for brighter future relations:

Dear Brother Phelps:—I must say that it is with no ordinary feelings I endeavor to write a few lines to you in answer to yours. . . . At the same time I am rejoiced at the privilege granted me. . . .

Inasmuch as long-suffering, patience, and mercy have ever characterized the dealings of our heavenly Father towards the humble and penitent, I feel disposed to copy the example, cherish the same principles, and by so doing be a savior of my fellow men.

It is true, that we have suffered much in consequence of your behavior—. . . One with whom we had oft taken sweet counsel together, and enjoyed many refreshing seasons from the Lord—“had it been an enemy, we could have borne it.” . . .

[Joseph described that he desired to follow the example of the Savior in helping others and then continued:] Believing your confession to be real, and your repentance genuine, I shall be happy once again to give you the right hand of fellowship, and rejoice over the returning prodigal.

Your letter was read to the Saints last Sunday, and an expression of their feeling was taken, when it was unanimously Resolved, That W. W. Phelps should be received into fellowship.

“Come on, dear brother, since the war is past,

For friends at first, are friends again at last.”

Yours as ever,

JOSEPH SMITH, JUN.<sup>35</sup>

Not only is this frank forgiveness touching but the inspired expressions in this letter also demonstrate how forgiveness works in friendships a willingness to forgive, coupled with a desire to renew the friendship. Commenting on this incident, Elder B. H. Roberts noted, “When the great offense of Elder William W. Phelps is taken into account . . . this letter is remarkable. The Prophet’s frank forgiveness of his erring brother . . . exhibits a broad mindedness and generosity that can come only from a great soul.”<sup>36</sup>

It is also interesting to note that the couplet the Prophet used to close his letter touched Brother Phelps, who was himself a gifted poet. Many of the hymns penned by Phelps are beloved favorites today, and one of them—"The Spirit of God"—is sung at the dedication of every temple.

Because Joseph forgave him, Brother Phelps rejoined the Saints at Nauvoo. Four years later, he was asked to deliver the eulogy in a memorial service in honor of his forgiving friend. Phelps recited a poem he had written as a tribute to Joseph, the martyred Prophet. The poem has since served as a lasting memorial to the greatness of the Prophet Joseph Smith: "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah. Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer."<sup>37</sup>

### Appreciating Others More

True friendship, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, is designed to "revolutionize and civilize the world, and cause wars and contentions to cease and men to become friends and brothers."<sup>38</sup> Joseph expressed sentiments that "the kindness of a man should never be forgotten. That person who never forsaketh his trust, should ever have the highest place of regard in our hearts, and our love should never fail, but increase more and more."<sup>39</sup>

To Joseph Smith, a true friend was a gift from God. "How good and glorious it has seemed unto me, to find pure and holy friends."<sup>40</sup> He was so grateful for the kindnesses occasionally shown to him that he resolved to be a greater friend to others: "I love friendship and truth. . . . I hope I shall see [my friends] again, that I may toil for them, and administer to their comfort also. They shall not want a friend while I live; my heart shall love those, and my hands shall toil for those, who love and toil for me, and shall ever be found faithful to my friends. Shall I be ungrateful? Verily no! God forbid!"<sup>41</sup>

His feelings of affection for true friends were intensified while he suffered in prison: "Those who have not been enclosed in the walls of a prison without cause or provocation, can have but little idea how sweet the voice of a friend is; one token of friendship from any source whatever awakens and calls into action every sympathetic feeling . . . until finally all enmity, malice and hatred, and past differences, misunderstandings and mismanagements are slain victorious at the feet of hope."<sup>42</sup> Joseph later explained that friendship is like a blacksmith "welding iron to iron; it unites the human family with its happy influence."<sup>43</sup>

After his death, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught Brigham Young in a dream about the need to be patient with the Saints and bear with

their imperfections. Shortly after they had settled in the Salt Lake Valley, President Young became concerned about those few Saints who desired to leave the Salt Lake Valley for the gold fields of California. He wrestled with his feelings until he had a particular dream in which the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared to him, herding a “flock of sheep of all kinds, sizes, colors, and descriptions, from the largest, finest sheep I ever saw, down to the ugly decrepit dwarf. . . . I looked on the strange flock and . . . asked Joseph what in the world he was going to do with such a flock of sheep. . . . He looked up and smiled, as he did when he was living, and as though he was in reality with me, and said, ‘*They are all good in their place.*’”<sup>44</sup> Joseph’s counsel helped President Young learn to better appreciate the contributions of every individual, whether great or small.

### **Cultivating the Spirit of Forgiveness and Avoiding Self-Righteousness**

At the organization of the Relief Society, Joseph taught the importance of cultivating the spirit of forgiveness: “There is another error which opens a door for the adversary to enter. [Some are] subject to overmuch zeal, which [causes] them to be rigid in a religious capacity [when they] should be armed with mercy.” Then, speaking of forgiving those who have sinned against us, he continued, and with deep feeling added, “They are fellow mortals, we loved them once, shall we not encourage them to reformation? We have not yet forgiven them seventy times seven, as our Savior directed; perhaps we have not forgiven them once. . . . They who repent not should be cast out from this society; yet we should woo them to return to God. . . . We should act in all things on a proper medium to every immortal spirit. Notwithstanding the unworthy are among us, the virtuous should not, from self-importance, grieve and oppress needlessly, those unfortunate ones even these should be encouraged to hereafter live to be honored by this society. . . . Put a double watch over the tongue.”<sup>45</sup>

Joseph consistently warned the Saints about self-righteousness and hypocrisy: “All the religious world is boasting of righteousness: it is the doctrine of the devil to retard the human mind and hinder our progress, by filling us with self-righteousness.”<sup>46</sup> He noted that we could be more generous in our estimation of others: “Don’t be limited in your views with regard to your neighbor’s virtue, but beware of self-righteousness, and be limited in the estimate of your own virtues, and not think yourselves more righteous than others.”<sup>47</sup>

He cautioned that backbiting and faultfinding are forms of pious-

ness: “The devil flatters us that we are very righteous, when we are feeding on the faults of others.”<sup>48</sup> He warned against hypocrisy: “I love that man better who swears a stream as long as my arm yet deals justice to his neighbors and mercifully deals his substance to the poor, than the long, smooth-faced hypocrite.”<sup>49</sup>

As President George Q. Cannon explained, Joseph Smith “was a great hater of sham. He disliked long-faced hypocrisy, and numerous stories are told of his peculiar manner of rebuking it. He knew that much that people call sin is not sin, and he did many things to break down superstition. He would wrestle, play ball, and enjoy himself in physical exercises, and he knew that he was not committing sin to do so. The religion of heaven is not to make men sorrowful, to curtail their enjoyment and to make them groan and sigh and wear long faces, but to make them happy. This Joseph desired to teach the people, but in doing so, he, like our Savior, when he was on the earth, was a stumbling block to bigots and hypocrites. They could not understand him; he shocked their prejudices and traditions.”<sup>50</sup>

### Making Amends

An event in the lives of Joseph and Emma Smith that happened while the Book of Mormon was being translated illustrates Joseph’s efforts to make amends after an offense had occurred. David Whitmer, who witnessed the incident, recorded: “He [Joseph Smith] was a religious and straightforward man. . . . He had to trust in God. He could not translate unless he was humble and possessed the right feelings towards everyone. To illustrate so you can see: One morning when he was getting ready to continue the translation, something went wrong about the house and he was put out about it. Something that Emma, his wife, had done. Oliver and I went upstairs and Joseph came up soon after to continue the translation but he could not do anything. He could not translate a single syllable. He went downstairs, out into the orchard, and made supplication to the Lord; was gone about an hour—came back to the house, and asked Emma’s forgiveness and then came upstairs where we were and then the translation went on all right. He could do nothing save he was humble and faithful.”<sup>51</sup>

Thus, Joseph learned early on that the Spirit can be readily discerned only when we are humble and possess right feelings toward others.

### Securing a Positive Judgment

Through his translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith learned that we *obtain* forgiveness of sin through personal repentance,

baptism, and the reception of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Nephi 31:13; Mosiah 4:22, 26) and that following our baptism we *retain* that remission of sin by continually loving and serving our fellow beings (see Mosiah 4:26; Alma 34:27–29). Joseph taught, “To be justified before God we must love one another: we must overcome evil; we must visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and we must keep ourselves unspotted from the world.”<sup>52</sup>

However, our “peaceable walk” with others (Moroni 7:3–4) can be disrupted by criticism, contention, backbiting, betrayal, or offenses (both real and imagined). Occasionally, we may all be haunted by feelings of frustration, anger, guilt, or regret in our dealings with others. As seen, Joseph Smith spoke often about forgiving others. The numerous offenses and personal injustices he was subjected to throughout his life qualified him to speak about forgiveness with the voice of experience. His sufferings in his dealings with others were not abstract or theoretical. They were real. He came to know, firsthand, about the humility, patience, forbearance, and meekness required in dealing with others.

When God the Eternal Father introduced His Beloved Son to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1820, He said, “Hear Him.” Joseph listened to the Savior then and ever after—his life and teachings were filled with examples of how he tried to implement the two great commandments in the law to love God and to love others as ourselves. His teachings contain priceless counsel about these weightier matters and illustrate how applying the healing balm of forgiveness can mend and strengthen our interpersonal relationships. **RE**

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## Notes

1. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 178–79; emphasis added.

2. Arnold K. Garr, “Joseph Smith: Man of Forgiveness,” in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, the Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993), 127.

3. Orson Spencer, in Hyrum Andrus, *Joseph Smith: The Man and the Seer* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1960), 31.

4. Joseph Smith, in David Nye White, *New York Spectator*, September 23, 1843.

5. See Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Reappraised,” *BYU Studies* 10, no. 3 (1970): 314.

6. Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, comp. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1941), 464.

7. Brigham Young, *Deseret News Weekly*, October 11, 1876, 582.

8. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed.

- B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999), 5:517.
9. Smith, *Teachings*, 77.
  10. Smith, *Teachings*, 193.
  11. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:517.
  12. Smith, *Teachings*, 315.
  13. Jesse W. Crosby, in Hyrum L. Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus, comps., *They Knew the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999), 163–64.
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  15. Crosby, in Andrus and Andrus, *They Knew the Prophet*, 162–63.
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  17. Smith, *Teachings*, 228.
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  24. Smith, *Teachings*, 316.
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  27. Smith, *Teachings*, 155.
  28. Smith, *Teachings*, 241.
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  30. Daniel Tyler, *Juvenile Instructor* 27 (1892): 491.
  31. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:245.
  32. Smith, *Teachings*, 312–13.
  33. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:342–43.
  34. William W. Phelps, in Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:141–42.
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  39. Smith, *Teachings*, 31.
  40. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:107.
  41. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:108–9.
  42. Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:293.
  43. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:517.
  44. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:321; emphasis added.
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  46. Smith, *Teachings*, 241.
  47. Smith, *Teachings*, 228.
  48. Smith, *Teachings*, 241.
  49. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:401.
  50. George Q. Cannon, in Andrus and Andrus, *Joseph Smith: The Man and the Seer*, 45–46.
  51. David Whitmer, in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*

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