

Pebble of Forgiveness

BY JANE MCBRIDE CHOATE

(Based on a true story)

Levi didn't have his mind on Primary that Sunday. He was still angry with his older brother, Jason. Jason had just gotten his driver's license. Last week, he had run over Levi's bike, even though Levi had carefully parked it at the side of the garage. He had saved his own money to buy the bike. It had taken a long time.

"I'm really sorry. I'll fix it up just like new," Jason promised.

Levi looked at the crumpled fender. "It won't be the same."

Jason apologized again, but Levi refused to listen. "If you weren't such a crummy driver, you wouldn't have wrecked my bike."

"I told you I'd fix the bike." Jason didn't sound so sorry now.

Levi stomped off, locking himself in his room for the rest of the afternoon and coming out only when Mom insisted he join the family for dinner.

That was last Wednesday. Levi had held onto his grudge for four days. It bothered him, being angry at Jason. Still, he didn't feel like forgiving his brother.

After opening exercises and singing time, Sister McClure, the second counselor in the Primary presidency, presented sharing time to the older children. Starting with Levi's class, she passed around a small paper cup. "Take one and pass it on," she said.

Levi reached inside the cup and found it filled with pebbles.

"Put a pebble into your shoe," she said. "Now try walking in place."

Levi lifted up his foot and brought it down again. The little stone felt funny against his foot. He tried to move it to a more comfortable spot, but it kept rubbing against his foot.

"Now reverently walk around the room," Sister McClure instructed.

Some of the children started giggling but stopped when Sister McClure reminded them to be reverent. A couple of the younger children started to limp and bent down to remove their stones.

Levi kept the pebble in his shoe. It began to feel a lot bigger as he walked.

After a few minutes, Sister McClure told the children to take their seats and remove the pebbles from their shoes. Once more, she passed around the paper cup and asked the children to put the pebbles inside.

Then she explained, "Those little pebbles are like the feelings we have when we don't forgive someone who has offended us. They can start out small but then feel bigger and bigger."

"What if the person who did something to hurt us isn't really sorry?" Levi wanted to know.



“Sometimes we need to forgive, even when the other person doesn’t apologize or repent,” Sister McClure responded.

Sister McClure told a story about a time when the Prophet Joseph Smith forgave one of his friends who had betrayed him. Levi felt a lump in his throat as he listened to how the Prophet had forgiven William W. Phelps, even though Brother Phelps had conspired with the mobs who persecuted the Church and its leaders.

Levi thought about Sister McClure’s lesson during the rest of Primary. Following dinner that evening, when his parents asked family members what they had learned in church, Levi told them about the pebbles.

“How did your foot feel by the time you took the pebble out?” his dad asked.

“My foot was a little sore,” Levi admitted. “Sister McClure compared walking around with a pebble in your shoe to carrying a grudge and refusing to forgive someone who offended you.”

“It sounds like one of Mom’s object lessons,” his little sister, Annie, said.

Everyone laughed. The whole family knew that Mom liked to use objects in the lessons she gave for family home evening.

Before he went to bed, Levi knocked on Jason’s door. “I’m sorry I’ve been such a jerk,” he said when Jason opened the door. “I know you didn’t mean to run over my bike.”

“Hey, I’m the one who’s sorry.” Jason pulled Levi into a bear hug and lifted him off the floor. “What do you say we work on the bike together tomorrow after school? I’ll ask Dad if we can use his tools.”

“Great!” Levi said, and as he went to his room, he thought, “I really *do* feel great!” ●

“FRIENDS AGAIN AT LAST”

After William W. Phelps betrayed the Prophet Joseph Smith, Brother Phelps asked for Joseph’s forgiveness. The Prophet wrote him this letter:

“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 [your letter]; at the same time I am rejoiced at the privilege granted me. . . . It is true, that we have suffered much in consequence of your behavior. . . . However, the cup has been drunk, the will of our Father has been done, and we are yet alive, for which we thank the Lord. . . . Believing your confession to be real, and your repentance genuine, I shall be happy once again to give you the right hand of 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.”

(History of the Church, 4:162–64.)

