



The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life's Experiences

Bruce C. Hafen

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This book considers the role of the Lord's saving grace in the mortal experience. Comprising collected essays, Bruce Hafen writes of the important doctrine of the Atonement. A bestseller in hardback, *The Broken Heart* will encourage, uplift, and inspire.

The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life's Experiences Details

Date : Published September 15th 1989 by Shadow Mountain

ISBN : 9780875792200

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Format : Hardcover 212 pages

Genre : Religion, Christianity, Lds, Church, Nonfiction



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From Reader Review The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life's Experiences for online ebook

Stephanie says

An incredibly wonderful read. It answers a lot of questions, and broadens the understanding of suffering here on earth, the Saviour's role, and our own in relation to the Atonement and eternal life.

I would recommend this book to all my family and friends.

Haley Pierson says

What a great book, deep, I had to read certain parts a few times to make sure I got it all. He does a great job of using stories and examples to illustrate points to help you understand the principles. I really enjoyed the book.

Heather says

This book helped me think about how I need the Savior's Atonement in my life. It made me want to study and understand it much better. *"The Broken Heart* has a double meaning: first, the breaking of Christ's heart at the moment of his death on the cross, when he voluntarily gave up his life in the final act of the Atonement's drama; second, the broken heart and contrite spirit the Savior asks each of us to place before him on the altar of sacrifice (p. 27)."

I was surprised by an opening statement in the introduction of this book that refers to a 1980 *Newsweek* article where the writer shared his understanding of the Church's doctrine based on what he heard members of the Church describe and interpret as their traditions. Those "traditions" didn't seem to include a clear explanation of the Atonement, the foundation of our religion. *"The Book of Mormon contains without question the most profound theological treatment of the Atonement found in any book now available on any shelf anywhere in the world. Despite this remarkable truth about the Book of Mormon, we Latter-day Saints are, for the most part, only superficially acquainted with our own doctrines of grace, mercy, justice, and the Atonement (p. 3)."*

I think that's an interesting and important statement and reminder of the importance of learning to understand the Atonement for ourselves and making that our center point and foundation. With that as our center point are motives and desires will be more pure and clear. We will have a humble, broken, teachable and new heart!

Here are a few other quotes I liked from the book:

"I once wondered if those who refuse to repent but who then satisfy the law of justice by paying for their own sins are then worthy to enter the celestial kingdom. The answer is no. The entrance requirements for celestial life are simply higher than merely satisfying the law of justice. For that reason, paying for our sins will not bear the same fruit as repenting of our sins (p. 7)."

"A sensible test for determining whether the Atonement applies might be the simple question of whether the experience in fact separates or estranges us from God. To make us "at-one" with God is, after all, the doctrine's purpose (p. 13)."

I love the translation of the German word *Sehnsucht*, meaning "a longing for home" as sung in *O My Father* (p. 87) and then the sweet prayer expressed on the next page *"Please help us, Father. We want to come home* (p. 88)."

"We can control the things that really matter: the righteousness of our desires, the purity of our motives, the wholeheartedness of our efforts to love God and keep his commandments, the genuineness of our interest in other people, and the extent to which our efforts reflect our inborn capacity. One way to distinguish what matters a great deal from what does not matter so much is to ask whether the subject is within our control. If it is, then it probably matters enough to merit our attention (p. 101)."

"Part of the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit is a willingness to sacrifice the love affair so many of us have with our own egos (p. 119)."

Kyle says

Excellent discourse on the atonement of Christ. Elder Hafen writes in a rich and educated simplicity. In 200 pages he quoted several scriptures and explained our need for the atonement clearly and concisely. Many times in the past I have thought or wondered about the topics he discusses in this book and it was nice to gain more perspective. I recommend it to every member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as well as anyone who does not understand what the Church believes about the atonement.

Nancy says

An interesting read on the Atonement. I gained some new insights on this most important of all subjects. Definitely worth the read for anyone seeking greater understanding of how to apply the atonement in their everyday life. A few places were a little difficult for me to take in all at once, so I had to go back and reread them to make sure I got the message I was supposed to receive. Not a book I could just race through. Some parts really made me think. The thoughts here made me stop and do a little self evaluating. Some things I decided I wasn't doing as bad as I thought, and others....need some work. But, that's how we learn. Line upon line....right?

Josh says

So when I saw this book on my bookshelf I said,

- A. What is this book doing here.
- B. This book looks boring as sin. (The cover was horrible)
- C. I'm never going to read it.
- D. Why am I spending so much time making a list about this book?

But then, just to spite myself I began reading it. And was sorely disappointed in my initial prejudice. This was a practical book on the powers of the atonement, which is something I've been wanting to learn more about. It is not nebulous and motivational as much as brass-tacks definitions and enlightening steps toward understanding and taking full advantage of the atonement. And Bruce Hafen is a great author, very compelling with wonderful references and tie-ins to modern literature and philosophy outside the mormon church. You can tell he is a lawyer as he lays out the doctrine without much wiggle room.

Insert cliché "book by it's cover" closing statement here.

Camala says

One of the very best books I have ever read. Read it and am turning around and rereading it. May continue to reread it for years. Love it.

Jenny says

I love that at the beginning, Hafen points out that the broken heart applies both to our broken heart and contrite spirit but also to Christ's heart, broken for our sakes.

He writes that the gospel was given to us to heal our pain, not to prevent it.

(I'm not putting quotations because I listened to this and then dictated my summary of what he said, so while parts are pretty close to what he said, most aren't direct quotations.) I loved what he wrote about Christ's words to come unto him for his yoke is easy and his burden is light do not describe one event or even just an attitude. It's a process. Christ isn't asking for just the answer to a yes/no question but an essay that meanders through the winding path of our experience. As we traverse that trail, He is not only aware of our limitations but He will compensate for them. Each of us needs to take the Atonement more fully into the deepest part of our consciousness.

He points out that the requirement to enter the Celestial Kingdom is more than just being sinless or having paid for our sins. It requires a broken heart. While those who don't repent and must pay for their own sins will satisfy the demands of justice, they will not have the divine reconciliation, the divine achievement, that comes only through a combination of our repentance and Jesus Christ's grace. He compares it to someone who has spent time in prison. Going to prison satisfies the need for retribution to be paid, the law of justice...but it doesn't necessarily rehabilitate the prisoner, it doesn't necessarily lead to a change of heart. "Mercy and grace are rehabilitative in nature, not retributive."

The Savior's Atonement can make up for not only our sins, but also our inadequacies. Not only our wilfull disobedience but also our unknowing mistakes, errors of judgment and imperfections.

All of us are like the one sheep that has gone astray. The Savior will leave the 99 to go and find us. Often we are lost sheep not because we have wandered intentionally but because we are facing difficult challenges and need the Savior's help to overcome and return home.

The nearer we approach our Savior and become a true disciple, the more we recognize our blemishes and

faults. Maybe that's part of what it means to have a broken heart.

Hafen wrote that if we judge all human activity as either success or failure, with nothing in between, then because human activity is rarely an unequivocal success, we will judge nearly every action taken to be a failure. If we are honest with ourselves and we're committed to high principles, there will always be a distance or gap between where we are and where we hope to be. Progress usually occurs with small steps in the right direction, small incremental changes...but with both ups and downs as we progress, but with an overall upward trend. Often, our downs are seen with fear or discouragement...we worry that they show an overall trend of backsliding or poor performance when really it's a completely natural part of the process of growth. He then says to imagine two circles, one smaller inside of a larger circle. The inner circle is the reality of our actions/behavior/thoughts. The outer circle represents the ideals by which we try to live our life. We are standing in the inner circle, with what is real and true about ourselves, but we are reaching outward, trying to pull ourselves closer to the ideal. We especially see the distance, or gap, between the real and the ideal when we become aware of our imperfections. As that realization grows, so can our frustration. But it often actually shows our growth...because Heavenly Father doesn't show us what we lack all at once, He slowly shows us one area where the real and ideal have a gap and then helps us to lessen or close the gap and then reveals another area where there is a gap. We don't become perfect in one great act, but as we trust the Savior and use His Atonement the inner circle slowly gets pushed nearer the outer circle. So we need to be patient with our own shortcomings and others. And try to notice not only the gaps but also the small, incremental progress being made.

No matter how hard we try we can't attain charity on our own...it is bestowed upon the true followers of Christ...we can't just work hard to achieve it...it is a spiritual GIFT.

Jennifer Griffith says

This, along with Stephen Robinson's great *Believing Christ*, gives a comprehensive explanation of how we can access the blessings of Christ's love in our lives, how we can feel it more, and why we shouldn't be afraid to seek it. Invaluable.

Jenna says

This book makes the Atonement apply to everyone's life in some way or another. It made me understand it in a unique and powerful way. Even though I don't feel like I have terrible sins to repent of, or a broken heart that needs mending, I recognized the need for the Atonement in my life. Elder Hafen is a powerful writer.

Laura says

Several years ago I came across a talk entitled "Beauty for Ashes" by Elder Bruce C. Hafen. That talk changed forever my understanding of the Atonement. So, I was pleased when I came across this book in a bookstore one day and I bought it. So, so, glad I did! Elder Hafen in this book expounds on the true meaning and application of the Atonement for our every day lives. Using concepts he touched upon in the

aforementioned talk he succeeds in bringing new insight and understanding on the Atonement, one of the possibly least understood concepts of LDS doctrine.

Through his understanding you come to see the Atonement not just as a doctrine for sinners, but also a healing doctrine for anyone who has made mistakes, has weaknesses or needs a mended heart. Absolutely a great read!

Melanie says

Don't love writing reviews, but loved this book! It really elucidates the necessity for and relevance of the atonement in the trenches of day-to-day life, essential for all as opposed to just the vilest of sinners, and offers applications with real-life examples. This book was so dog-eared by the time I finished! Two brief points from the book, among many, that really resonated with me:

1. We all feel estranged or separated from God at times in our lives; it may be as a result of sin, but many times it is a result of circumstances that befall us that make it seem as if God has forgotten us or make us wonder why various difficulties happen to us. (Think Eve when she found out Abel was dead, or Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail. . . We all have personal examples we can use to fill in the blanks.) The parable of the ninety-and-nine is not just a parable of sinners, but of Christ's sheep--baptized members of the church--who need to feel that Christ is there, He understands, and He can carry them back to peace and safety despite the storms of life raging around them. It is often when we are "lost" that we find Christ and the true meaning of enabling power the atonement can provide.
2. Grace vs. works. Our works are important and essential, especially our efforts to repent, but no matter how well we repent, it will not be sufficient to lift us to a Celestial status. It is only through the atonement, which not only neutralizes sin--returns us to our spotless state--but rehabilitates us and has the power to transform us, through the gifts of the atonement we can be blessed with such as charity and hope, that we are finally molded in His image and fit for Celestial life.

The atonement is so much more than a loving Father who makes up the difference for a son trying to buy a bicycle that is many times more than He can afford, as this book so aptly explains. Could say more, but you'll have to read it and discover the atonement in a new light for yourself!

Wesley Morgan says

I had heard great things about this book from Brad Wilcox, who jokes that he quotes Hafen so much he should list him as a coauthor on The Continuous Atonement. I think because of that, I was a little underwhelmed when I started this book. I was also bothered by how often he used the phrase "Applying the Atonement," as well as some of his doctrinal theories and about Adam and Eve and the Atonement.

But I'm glad I kept reading, because some of these chapters are amazing. I particularly loved chapters 3-7, where I learned:

3. We shouldn't be disappointed when BYU, a temple marriage, or any other piece of the Church is not perfect. If life were always nice and comfortable, we would never learn from our challenges.
4. If we try to escape pain in search of constant entertainment, we will never find true joy.
5. We have a culture that focuses too much on success and outcomes, when we should focus on the journey, especially the relationships we build along the way.

6. Those who take commandments too seriously and those who don't take them seriously enough have the same problem: they are uncomfortable with their inadequacies. They think everything depends on their own effort, so when they mess up, they mask their pain by pretending they don't care about the rules or obsessively obeying even more rules. What they need to understand is Christ's willingness to help them in their helplessness, to be their strength, and to make them better than they could be on their own.

I still tell people about that last part I learned in chapter 6. I'd always had that question, and it finally makes sense. I also enjoyed how much he brought in European history to explain why we believe what we do (or used to) about our relationship with God.

I think the overall message is that we can find meaning, despite our shortcomings and trials, thanks to the Atonement of Christ. The gospel isn't about checking boxes and passing a test, It's about becoming a better person through obedience and sacrifice.

Jennifer Clawson says

This is one of the best LDS books I've read. It is well written, engaging, and filled with both doctrine and real examples. It is the best book I've read on how we can apply the atonement to our lives. This is on my list of life changing books.

Lora says

Spiritually nourishing book that helps the reader more fully understand God's grace and how it is available for us. Excellent read which i recommend to everyone. Whether you worry about sin or have sorrow over things you have no control over, this author can help you gain the peace that is more powerful than any darkness.
