

December 12, 1984
80 Greenridge Avenue
White Plains, NY 10605

Dearest Family,

Words can never convey what is in my heart this morning; so I pray the Lord's Spirit will fill your hearts with the sense of understanding He is granting me. I can never express the gratitude I feel to each of you for your love, faith, and prayers on our behalf. I have felt that power and want to be worthy to call on that same power for you when it can help.

Before anything else, I ask your forgiveness for being so self-centered and selfish most of my life and not loving you in a full and complete manner. You have been encouraging and positive and supportive to me in spite of it. I do not confess my sin to you in any hope except that you will accept what the Lord has revealed to me: the truth that I have been indeed in a fallen state, exhausting my energies to support my own false concept of what I ought to be, instead of wholly yielding my heart to the Lord and completely loving those who have loved (or not loved) me as I really am. And in that acceptance of my confession, I pray you can forgive me and that the Lord will help me make up somehow for all the lost years and perhaps eternal damage I have inflicted. I know through our Savior this is possible. Please pray for me that my repentance will be thorough and lasting and that thereby I can draw on the miracle of His love.

I have personal letters to write each of you; but there are things I want to share with all of you which I hope you will accept in this form. I ask Dan's forgiveness and yours for exercising the same sins against him. In my fallen state, I have justified myself for not loving him fully, and in my hypocrisy have pointed out his faults not only to him, but to you. Dan has suffered much pain because of this and struggles to believe anyone on the Hall side and some of the Bartholomews can abide or accept him.

Please be assured that Dan, too, has been coming to grips with the cooperative nature of this self-justification between us. I cannot speak for him, but I express gratitude for your part in helping a miracle happen for both of us. Early this morning Dan came to me in the same spirit in which I am now coming to you. I am ashamed to say I did not love enough to recently pray with much hope or faith that anything could change in our marriage and home relationships. In fact I had accepted Satan's invitations into feelings of total frustration, grief, and depression. When I did not see nor choose to see progress in my perception of our relationship, I got so desperate, I asked Brother Hamblin, who has been giving us counselling, for personal help to survive what I perceived as a permanent state of bondage. The only thing that can bind anyone's spirit is personal sin.

So what was my shock when Brother Hamblin, with the Spirit of the Lord and uncondemning love, laid at my feet the same diagnosis and same responsibility I had been somewhat gratified to see him lay at Dan's feet the weeks previous. What has been equally revealing is to see myself respond in the exact same manner, while trying to convince myself I was different. Dan will read this before I send it. I am not worthy to teach any of you. The feeling in my heart right now is that if I can say any thing to spare any of you the years of blindness I have shackled upon myself, by clarifying the images I give you, I pray for wisdom to do so. The grand irony is that God in His mercy is letting the two of us struggle out the same patterns and same weaknesses. This may not be true in every marriage. But I find it interesting that Sister Holland in her Ensign article on the three steps to peaceful relationships made the same discovery about the friends the Lord sent into her life.

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From Sherlene

I know you will feel to thank our Father in Heaven for answering our prayers and for the miracle of love and forgiveness. When Dan came to me today, I felt such wonderful feelings of overflowing gratitude, acceptance, and love. At the same time, it is excruciating to accept what I have spent much time denying and to accept the responsibility and change over forty years of bad habit. This is not going to be a quick-fix. Please don't feel sad for us. It's the best blessing we could have--especially at this season. I do understand better than I ever have what it means to tremble and anguish at a more-clear view of your own damning patterns, after fasting and praying for the ability to see things clearly and repent. Dan also is suffering very much. So pray for us that in our Savior we'll creatively endure what we must and succeed in building a continual oneness in our marriage relationship and home.

Dan will see this before it goes out--in my anxiety to share this experience, I must not presume to speak for him.

As I look back on this past couple of months, I am amazed at the blessings and opportunities that have come in spite of the struggle. The fact that the Lord has, from time to time, given me feelings of peace and joy and very rich opportunities--even with all these sins--underlines the fact that He is so desperate for witnesses of His gospel message. Brother David Hamblin told me there is no question that missionary work has been the saving grace in our home. It seems a certain forgiveness comes with the desire and willingness to bear testimony, and without that we both might be beyond help. He did point out, though, that this momentary relief could become a spiritual tranquilizer, and sometimes we use the joys of Church work as an excuse not to take the necessary steps for long-time peace--in our lives and in our homes.

It is now Dec. 13. What has happened is very beautiful. We told the children nothing about our experience, but they came home from school and said "What happened this morning?" Last night, Laura kept saying, "I can't believe the spirit and love I feel;" but Daniel brings us back to earth with such wisecracks as: "Of course I'll forgive you...I have a very forgiving heart...so it will only cost a fee of \$10...that would make a nice down-payment." And he keeps telling Laura to calm down and wait and see how long this lasts. I do feel very confident that it will. It is the first time we have both had this attitude and spirit at the same time. And what was so hard, seems so easy now. Family relationships--even with two teenagers--flow so easily. Circumstances meet with such smoothness. Feelings are upbeat and productive. I can be calm and even chuckle at things that usually would be very irritating. I get wonderful impulses telling me how to handle situations. But the real clincher was today when I went to the market and I got a parking place right by the door, a shopping cart that rolled straight and felt oiled, and every item for which I had coupons was available!

We still will continue counseling because we need to practice new patterns and Brother Hamblin says he has some practical ideas that really work. But the BIG step--the attitude and feeling, through the love of our Savior and the miracle of His atonement has happened. Thank you with all our hearts for your faith in our behalf. We wish each of you every blessing of peace and joy in this coming year.

Love,

Sherlene