The story of Enos is often referenced as a great example of how we can find forgiveness of our sins. But how much thought have we actually put into what went into his "wrestle" with God in order to receive that forgiveness?

The start

> 1 Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it—

Verse 1 shows us that Enos was a grateful individual. He acknowledges that his father was good to him, because he taught Enos to be literate, and to understand the gospel of Christ, what Enos refers to as the "admonition of the Lord." This attitude of having a grateful heart is an important aspect of approaching the Lord for revelation of any sort. Can you even imagine the Lord answering our prayers if we approached Him with defiance, disdain, bitterness, or pride in our hearts? What good would an answer do for that person? I think this is why we are taught to work on expressing prayers that are just prayers of gratitude - no requests, just expressions of a thankful heart. If you don't do this sort of thing regularly, it can be really difficult at first. It definitely takes practice.

> 2 And I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins.

I love the word wrestle. If you have ever participated in wrestling as a sport, or watched a wrestling match, you have seen the definition of the word wrestle played out before your very eyes. To wrestle is to twist. This is why we are warned not to wrest the scriptures. The word wrest comes from the same root word as wrestle. Those who wrest the scriptures twist them or contort them to a meaning of their own design.

Some sports are done in bursts of energy, followed by short periods of rest. This allows you to regain your strength for the next burst. But when you wrestle, either physically or spiritually, once you start there is little time for pause until you have obtained your goal. In the verses below we will see that Enos's wrestle with the Lord was a marathon exertion.

> 3 Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart.

Enos was one distracted man. He was supposed to be hunting for food, but along the way he got caught up in thoughts about the teachings of his father Jacob. Jacob had taught Enos about what it takes to gain eternal life, about the joy experienced by the righteous saints, and he became engrossed in the subject and completely lost in this own thoughts.

Seeking forgiveness is not a lighthearted affair. It is not something casual. Recently it was pointed out to me that when Joseph Smith wrote his account of the first vision, every step along the way he spent time pondering, reflecting, and thinking as deeply as he knew how to do. As you reread his account notice phrases such as "at length," "serious reflection and great uneasiness," "my feelings were deep and often poignant," "In process of time."

Somewhere along the line I just assumed Joseph read James 1:5 then promptly trotted out to the grove and prayed, and voila! Vision! Not so. Joseph spent a lot of time trying to work out his feelings, trying to understand what was being taught, and trying to feel justified in his behavior. It was important to him that he stand approved before God. This was not something he took lightly.

Just as Joseph Smith struggled internally for months before he ever directly approached God with his questions, so too did Enos take time to ponder and deliberate. The longer Enos walked through those woods "hunting" the deeper into his heart sank

the words of his father. The key here is that he was feeling the importance of what he had been taught in a very personal and significant way.

In Moroni 10:3-4 Moroni echoes the importance that asking for revelation from God is not something that should be taken lightly, but with deep spiritual commitment.

> 3 Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.
>
> 4 And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Moroni tells us that it is not enough to just read the Book of Mormon. We must read it and recognize "how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men" from the beginning of time down to the present day. When we have listed in our mind and heart all the ways God has been kind, loving, and merciful to His children then we need to ponder or think deeply about that in our heart. Do we believe that God truly loves His children? Do we believe that as one of those children He will be just as loving and merciful to me as He was to all those others down through time?

Moroni then goes on to teach us the importance of our attitude when we approach the Lord. We need to ask God in the proper way - in the name of Christ, if these things are true. And it is important that we be sincere, and have a real desire to know, believing that God and Christ really want us to receive the answers to our questions. If we approach God with faith that He not only can, but will answer our prayers then the promise is given that the Holy Ghost will manifest or show us the truths we seek. Are we willing to exercise belief that God actually wants to talk to us, as unworthy as we are?

The process

> 4 And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

Try to imagine or remember how it feels to truly hunger for something. It is a craving, a desire that goes beyond just wanting, it is an imperative, a need. When we approach the Lord with the kind of hunger/desire Enos possessed this is when the Lord comes to us. President Russell M. Nelson described the process in this way.

> When you reach up for the Lord's power in your life with the same intensity that a drowning person has when grasping and gasping for air, power from Jesus Christ will be yours. When the Savior knows you truly want to reach up to Him—when He can feel that the greatest desire of your heart is to draw His power into your life—you will be led by the Holy Ghost to know exactly what you should do.

Taught by the Spirit

In Enos 1:4 when Enos says he cried to the Lord all day long and into the night, one might be left wondering, "Where do we find that much to say?" The secret is in learning how to pray. In the article, How Can I Have More Meaningful Prayer? I included these two paragraphs.

> As covenant-making and covenant keeping children of God we have a right to ask for help from the Holy Ghost in speaking to God. The purpose of including this member of the Godhead in our prayers is that it is his purpose to teach us what to pray for and how to feel in our prayers. He knows what we need the most. We often do not have any clue what is most important for us to ask in our prayers. So in order that we don't ask amiss, or for the wrong things, we need to seek out the companionship of the Holy Ghost and ask that our prayers will be guided by His divine influence.
>
> When the Spirit tells us what to ask for we can be assured it is the right thing to be asking for at that moment in time. He is a God, and as such is omniscient, just like Christ and the Father. He knows what we need. He knows what we should ask for. And anything he tells us to ask for we will be given, for it is a righteous request, and he wouldn't be telling us to ask for it if the Father has no intention of granting it. Praying without the Holy Ghost present is not a wise way to pray, for we are praying, for the most part, blindly.

This is how Enos was able to pray for so long. The Spirit was helping him think of the right things to say, to feel, and to ask for and about. He was being lead by the Spirit towards the condition that would get him the forgiveness for his sins he so earnestly desired. To achieve this state of being our mind and heart have to be aligned with the Spirit. We must be prepared. Don't think for a moment that the whole time Enos was praying he was just talking to himself. He was learning about his innermost feelings and how he really felt about his own behavior and his true desires for righteous living.

The Spirit is the one who opens our minds to the truth about ourselves. He is the one who bears witness of truth, whether it is about God, the universe, the gospel, or ourselves. It was He who taught Enos what to be grateful for and what to ask for.

Forgiveness

> 5 And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.
>
> 6 And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.
>
> 7 And I said: Lord, how is it done?
>
> 8 And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole.

The whole time Enos was struggling to stay in constant communication with the Spirit, wrestling with the Spirit and with his own nature, the Spirit was preparing him not only to be forgiven, but to be able to accept that forgiveness. By remaining on his knees and continuing the struggle to be in communion with the Spirit as he sought for forgiveness, Enos was increasing his own belief in what the Spirit was teaching him. This way, when the voice told Enos his sins were forgiven him, even though he didn't know how it was done at the time, he knew enough about the Lord as a person of truth that he no longer held onto his own guilt, and it "was swept away."

Pride vs. gratitude

The nature of pride is that as it grows within us we become increasingly self-centered. The nature of gratitude, as it grows within us is just the opposite. The more grateful we become for what God has done for us, the more we desire for His blessings and mercy to be extended to those whom we love. We cannot bear to feel that grateful and not want to share those blessings with others. In verse 9 we see how the beginnings of how Enos's love and concern for others begins to enlarge his desires for the happiness of others.

> 9 Now, it came to pass that when I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them.

First he was concerned mainly for himself, his own standing and salvation before God. Once he had received his own forgiveness he desired that his people also receive that same promise of salvation. Once granted, his desires expanded even to those of his enemies, the Lamanites (Enos 1:11).

> 11 And after I, Enos, had heard these words, my faith began to be unshaken in the Lord; and I prayed unto him with many long strugglings for my brethren, the Lamanites.

Verses 13-16 hold endless fascination for me. Read these four verses, and we'll talk about them after you have looked at them.

> 13 And now behold, this was the desire which I desired of him—that if it should so be, that my people, the Nephites, should fall into transgression, and by any means be destroyed, and the Lamanites should not be destroyed, that the Lord God would preserve a record of my people, the Nephites; even if it so be by the power of his holy arm, that it might be brought forth at some future day unto the Lamanites, that, perhaps, they might be brought unto salvation—
>
> 14 For at the present our strugglings were vain in restoring them to the true faith. And they swore in their wrath that, if it were possible, they would destroy our records and us, and also all the traditions of our fathers.
>
> 15 Wherefore, I knowing that the Lord God was able to preserve our records, I cried unto him continually, for he had said unto me: Whatsoever thing ye shall ask in faith, believing that ye shall receive in the name of Christ, ye shall receive it.
>
> 16 And I had faith, and I did cry unto God that he would preserve the records; and he covenanted with me that he would bring them forth unto the Lamanites in his own due time.

Honestly, who would come up with the request, all by themselves, for the Lord to prepare a sacred record just for those people who wanted you dead and gone, just so they could be saved someday? I submit that the Holy Ghost is responsible for planting that thought and desire in the mind and heart of Enos. It was a worthy and righteous desire, the very kind of thing God, Himself desired. Enos was being taught to think and desire as God does.

To solidify this notion that it was the Spirit who taught him what to pray for, look at verse 18.

> 18 And the Lord said unto me: Thy fathers have also required of me this thing; and it shall be done unto them according to their faith; for their faith was like unto thine.

What are the odds that Enos would just happen to come up with the idea to plead with the Lord for the very thing that his forefathers had also desired of the Lord? The Spirit had worked with Enos to increase his faith in the Lord's ability to do the things he had heard the Lord could do, so Enos was granted his righteous desire, that same desire held by Nephi and Jacob. Now three separate prophets have been given the same promise by the Lord that their mortal enemies would, at some point in the future, be redeemed through a sacred record God promised He would give them. This is one of the purposes of the Book of Mormon.

Final Thoughts

There is good reason Enos is pointed out as a great example of how to receive forgiveness of sins, as well as how to receive personal revelation. The process for both are very similar in form and function.

1. There must be deliberate thought given to the desires of our heart. Why are we seeking what we seek? What has the Lord and the prophets taught about this very subject?
2. Do I believe I can and will receive an answer directly from God? Remember that belief is a voluntary choice. No one can force us to believe. If you are having difficulty believing, spend time reviewing how God has treated and dealt with His other children. How did they receive the answers to their prayers?
3. Be grateful for all God has done in your life and in the life of others you know about. Appealing to the Lord with anything other than gratitude is more likely to result in silence or correction than the answers we really want. It takes humility and real effort sometimes to prepare ourselves for this kind of prayer, but in the end it is totally worth it.
4. Once you begin the process of wrestling with the Spirit, don't give up easily. Stay strong. If at first you don't feel anything, or hear or sense anything, perhaps you will need to spend some time in silence and contemplation. Is your heart right before the Lord? Have you prepared sufficiently for this encounter? You may need to do some more confession and asking for the Spirit to come and abide in you to teach you what you should say and ask for. Once He comes to you the words will start to flow more effortlessly.
5. Once the Spirit brings your answer, be prepared to accept it and embrace it. It would not be given to you if you weren't worthy of it, so believe whatever the

answer is. If you have been listening to the Spirit prior to receiving your answer it should sound familiar to you, since it will come by the same voice.

6. Be prepared for an expansion of your capacities to love, for once you have received your own answers, it is natural for you to desire those same blessings for others you love.
7. Finally, be prepared to go and live a new standard of living as one who has been richly blessed by the Lord. That is the only way to maintain your newly found state of blessings. This is what Enos did in Enos 1:19.

> 19 And now it came to pass that I, Enos, went about among the people of Nephi, prophesying of things to come, and testifying of the things which I had heard and seen.

Click the link below for a PDF version of this article.

7 Important Principles Found in Enos