

Church of Jesus Christ Oak Grove Restoration Branch



Zion the beautiful beckons us on . . .

Volume 30 Number 1

Spring-Summer 2021

Zion's Call is a newsletter published by the Church of Jesus Christ, Oak Grove Restoration Branch. It is published with the intent of glorifying God and helping to preserve His Restoration Message. All correspondence should be addressed to our editor:

*Debbie Norman, 9664 Gillespie Rd
Napoleon, MO 64074*

Or e-mail: denorman8165@gmail.com



**The Church of Jesus Christ
Oak Grove Restoration Branch**

is located approximately 3/4 mile north of I-70 from the Oak Grove exit. We invite you to come and worship with us.

Sunday services are as follows:

Early Worship at 9:00 a.m.
Classes begin at 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.
Evening Service at 6:30 p.m.

Communion Sunday only:
(the first Sunday of each month)
Prayer Service at 9:15 a.m.
Communion Service at 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday Prayer Service at 7:00 p.m.



Branch Pastor: Elder Don Norman

Associates:
Elders Aaron Smith and Mark Nunn;
Priest Aaron Norman



**Live Internet Streaming of
Sunday Morning and Evening Services
(except Communion Sunday morning)
Go to www.ogrb.org and click "Video."**

We need your testimonies to continue to print *Zion's Call*! You do not need to be a skilled writer. Just submit your testimonies and we will help with the editing! You may mail or email them to the addresses on this page.

We are thankful for the addition to our staff of Dorothy Dalton who is helping collect testimonies!

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Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness

Worship the Lord
 in the beauty of holiness;
 Bow down in reverence,
 God's glory proclaim;
 Gold of obedience and incense of lowliness
 Bring now, adoring the Lord's holy name.

Low at his feet lay thy burden of carefulness;
 High on his heart Jesus bears it for thee,
 Comforts thy sorrows
 and answers thy prayerfulness,
 Guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.

Fear not to enter God's courts in the slenderness
 Of the poor wealth
 thou wouldst reckon as thine;
 Truth in its beauty and love in its tenderness:
 These are the offerings to lay on his shrine.

These, though we bring them
 in trembling and fearfulness,
 God will accept for the name that is dear;
 Mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
 Trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
 Bow down in reverence,
 God's glory proclaim;
 Gold of obedience and incense of lowliness
 Bring now, adoring the Lord's holy name.

—John Samuel Bewley Monsell

*"Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear,
 O earth, and rejoice ye inhabitants
 thereof, for the Lord is God,
 and beside him there is no Savior;*

*great is his wisdom;
 marvelous are his ways; and the extent
 of his doings, none can find out;*

*his purposes fail not, neither are there
 any who can stay his hand;
 from eternity to eternity he is the same,
 and his years never fail."*

Doctrine & Covenants 76:1



Stand Firm

-by Elder Don Norman, Pastor

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

This past year has been one full of fear, apprehension, anger, and hatred, unlike anything we have seen in this country before. As we start a new year, God is calling us to rise above the turmoil around us.

We recently passed through the seasons of Thanksgiving and Christmas. They may have looked a little different for you and your family this year, but I hope you paused to reflect on what these holidays mean to us as followers of Christ, not just in November and December, but as we move ahead into a new year.

As I reflected upon why we celebrate Thanksgiving, I thought not only of the thankfulness of the Pilgrims long ago for God's providential hand upon them, but also of God's promises for the future of this land which has been set apart as choice above all other lands.

After the waters had receded from off the face of this land, it became a choice land above all other lands, a chosen land of the Lord; Wherefore the Lord would have that all men should serve him, who dwell upon the face thereof; and that it was the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven, and the holy sanctuary of the Lord. (Ether 6:2-3)

We live in the Promised Land, in the place where Zion will be established. *"For Zion shall come, and God shall be in the midst of her; she shall not be moved"* (Psalm 46:5). Let us reflect on the hope of Zion and what it means not only to you and me, but to a world of angry, hurting, fearful, wandering souls.

Then we experienced the Christmas season. I hope you found comfort in celebrating the birth of Christ. Jesus' birth was a time when angels filled the sky and proclaimed tidings of great joy and peace on earth.

What better way to end the past year of upheaval and strife than to celebrate the birth of the One who came to bring us peace and joy?

Let us remember as we move forward into the unknown of this new year that Jesus came to show us the way to live in the calmness and certainty of His love and in the assurance of His promises. We can rest in His infinite love for each of us and the confidence that we are in His hands, no matter what is happening in the world around us.

The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God, cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught, for God doth not walk in crooked paths; neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said; therefore his paths are straight and his course is one eternal round. (Doctrine & Covenants 2:1a-c)

May we stand firmly upon His promises and remember that God is in control.



My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly trust in Jesus' Name.

When darkness seems to hide His face,
I rest on His unchanging grace.
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.

His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood.
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my Hope and Stay.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh may I then in Him be found.
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

-Edward Mote

A Deeper Understanding of God and His Purposes

A letter written by Emory Jennings, April 28, 1983

The experience you ask about occurred at the Yosemite Park in California. I was with Bishop Albert Carmichael, who was Presiding Bishop from 1925-1932. We were standing on the top rim of the canyon looking down some four thousand feet to the bottom of that beautiful site.



Brother Carmichael was greatly moved under the spirit of that occasion. He turned to me with tears in his eyes, deeply moved. We of course, were engaged in a conversation about the glory of God and about His wonderful creations. We then discussed the beauties of God's works. He then suggested the most beautiful of all beauties was yet in the future—that of building the Kingdom.

He then told me of his experience, when he was the Presiding Bishop, concerned about the physical Kingdom, and said one night as he was preparing for bed, an angel appeared and informed him that he, Albert, had been concerned about the coming Kingdom. He informed Albert that the principles of the Kingdom and its operation were quite simple, speaking about the financial and physical ones involved. First, the angel said that the people of the Church were not yet spiritually worthy of living in a righteous Kingdom, but someday the Saints would qualify. And then the angel held the golden plates of the Book of Mormon before him, and slowly turned the leaves of the sealed portion and had Albert read from the leaves. In these were written how the people of the Book of Mormon days were able to live for two hundred years in a wonderful society.

Brother Albert told me the principles related there were so simple and plain that even a child could understand them. The angel assured Albert that some day this type of society would prevail and Zion would be built in righteousness. Brother Albert said he became aware of what had to be done as revealed to him. The angel then told him not to attempt to write what he had learned because the Saints were not ready to live as they must to enjoy the presence of His Spirit in the fullest.

Albert said it took most all of the night before the angel closed the leaves and left him. After the angel had departed, Brother Albert said it was now early in the morning and he was so imbued with the Spirit and the result of this experience that he rushed to a table with paper and pen to record his experience and write what he had learned for the benefit of the Saints, all in disobedience of the angel's instructions. He was so moved he had forgotten the commandment, and as he attempted to write, all the factual knowledge was taken from him except the experience of the coming of the angel, and that he had had the opportunity of reading from the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon. He therefore could testify that an angel had ministered to him; he had learned about the future; that Zion would be built and he could function for years to come.

This, I might add, has been one of the highlights of my ministerial experiences. Brother Carmichael was an honest and loyal and godly man in the ministry. He was absolutely honest. He could be believed. His experience was true, no doubt about it.

Perhaps he told me about this marvelous experience because he came to know that I would tell thousands of people that the promises of God are sure and certain. At any rate I have been faithful to my duty, as I believed it to be. I think such experiences should be shared with our brothers and sisters. These are the things in which we grow spiritually and come to a deeper understanding of God and His purposes.



A Dream

-by

Emma Burton Kankura, June 6, 1904

On the night of April 1, 1904, I dreamed that Joseph and I, together with a company of Saints, though not a large gathering, were waiting the coming of Christ. I know not how we came in possession of the knowledge that His coming was so near at hand, but we knew it, and all worldly work and cares were laid aside. We were all standing together in the open air, looking with a solemn, wistful sort of feeling, first to one part of the heavens, and then to another, not knowing from which direction He would come.

All one day and one night we continued steadfastly watching and waiting. In the morning of the second day, a change came over us, a feeling of peace, slight at first, but nevertheless, distinct. It was daylight, but in the midst of the daylight there came another light, whiter than that of day. And like as the feeling of peace, it was just perceptible at first, but both gradually increased as does the light of the morning, the peace filling our hearts, and the light filling the atmosphere where we were, until neither could contain more.

Then out from that brightness burst forth the Son of Man, standing upon the earth directly in front of us. It was as though this light had been to Him for a covering which shielded Him from view until He stood upon the earth; then He threw it off as a garment, revealing Himself to our view, smiling pleasantly and genially. In appearance there was nothing that would distinguish Him from other men; the distinguishing feature was the exquisite happiness His presence imparted.

While the light was increasing, and the feeling of awe also, for we knew He was drawing near, I began to tremble and fear within myself lest I should be rejected of Him. I recounted my many imperfections, aye, downright faults, and felt unworthy, yet I said within myself, "I will not put myself away, but will stay right here by Joseph until He comes and puts me away." And oh the joy, when He extended His hand to me also. How I wished in my heart it might never be withdrawn.

After shaking hands with the people, He spoke concerning the delay and slowness of His coming, that it was needful for us, that we might have our thoughts withdrawn entirely from all other things and fixed upon Him, and His coming, otherwise we could not receive Him. And as if in answer to the thought of my heart of how different was His appearance to what I had thought it would be, He said, "This is not the final coming, but to help the Saints prepare for it, for without such help they would not be ready."

(Previously published in *Saints' Herald*, August 1904)

Take the

-by Julie Anderson,
Independence,
Missouri



This testimony is an excerpt from the May 2020 Oak Grove Restoration Branch women's department bulletin insert. To read the full insert, go to www.OGRB.org, click on "Resources," and scroll down to letter "C" (OGRB Women's Department Publications).

When I was asked to teach a class for the women's retreat last March, I hesitated. Even though I am a teacher by profession, teaching spiritual topics to adults was intimidating. I took my concerns to the Lord and was impressed to teach the class on Doctrine and Covenants, Section 4.

Now, behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men, therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind, and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day; therefore, if ye have desires to serve God, ye are called to the work, for, behold, the field is white already to harvest, and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perish not, but bringeth salvation to his soul; and faith, hope,

charity, and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualifies him for the work.

Remember, faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence. Ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Amen.

I was drawn to the end of the section, where the list starts with “*Remember, faith.*” The Lord showed me that there are many issues that cause a hardened heart, and we must remove those so we have room for His best attributes to reside. As I continued to pray about this list, He impressed on me once again that He has purpose in the exact wording, order, and placement of each scripture. And so began what I believe the Lord wanted me to learn: The Journey of Our Hearts.

As a child, I was told a specific testimony of my granny, who was a woman of great faith and was given a mighty blessing and answer to her heart’s desire because of her faith. She passed down this gift to my father, and through their witness passed it down to me.

Growing up, I never saw my granny or my dad ever waiver in their faith. However, I suffer from laziness. The Lord showed me in my preparation for this class how praying intentionally and purposefully for the armor of God on a daily basis was critical.

One afternoon, I was hit by a trial that came out of nowhere. I tried to handle the problem using a Biblical principle, but the problem worsened. I took the problem to an elder, who tried to handle it. Unfortunately for both of us, the trial intensified again. After a few days of struggling, praying, and being frustrated, I awoke with a question for God. Why? The Lord answered through my morning devotional—the armor of God (Ephesians 6).

I realized I had not intentionally prayed for the shield of faith. As I went to school that morning, an elder of the Church whose profession is in law enforcement was our chapel guest speaker. He had brought in some of his equipment, including what I called a “SWAT shield.” He talked about the importance of the shield being held on the left side, guarding his heart. He shared how even his police badge is worn over the heart for added protection.

However, what stood out the most to me was his comment that he must practice with the shield because of its heavy weight, so that in time of trial, he would have the strength to hold the shield up in long periods of battle.

I knew the reason I continued to battle my own trial was because I had not specifically prayed daily for the shield of faith to protect me from the fiery darts of the adversary, nor did I have the strength to carry my shield in times of battle.

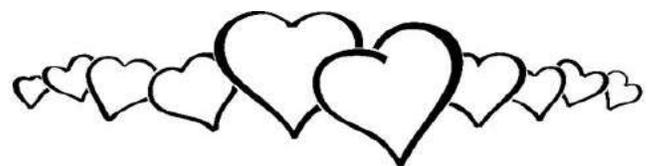
The Lord taught me that in order to strengthen our faith, we must first understand and establish our faith. In Hebrews 11:1, we are given the definition of faith: “*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*”

I have a question for you. Have you ever tried to bounce a football? As you may have seen this past year, when a football is dropped, it bounces in every direction. As players scramble around the field to try to get their hands on it and control it, it becomes elusive and unpredictable.

So it is with our feelings. They are unpredictable and hard to control. And yet, as believers, too often we try to rest our faith on our feelings instead of the Word of God. We are afraid to offend others, afraid someone won’t like us, afraid we may suffer if we follow the scriptural guidelines. And yet, resting on the absolute rock-solid foundation of the Word of God is the ONLY way to “stablish” our faith (See James 5:8).

Remember, facts from scriptures are safe and secure. Having faith based on the facts is so comforting to us. We have less “feeling” footballs bouncing all over our hearts and are more secure in the “Facts Knowledge Box” of our Heavenly Father.

As we continue on The Journey of Our Hearts, I pray that we all will work to strengthen our faith and heal our hearts as we move forward toward the kingdom of God.



Grandpa Sherman's Miracle

-by Pat Chadwick, Odessa, Missouri

“And again, it shall come to pass, that he that has faith in me to be healed, and is not appointed unto death, shall be healed; he who has faith to see shall see; he who has faith to hear shall hear, the lame who have faith to leap shall leap.”

Doctrine & Covenants 42:13a

This testimony was recorded in the *Saint's Herald*, October 1952, in an article by Elbert A. Smith entitled “Spiritual Gifts.” Brother Elbert tells it under the subheading, “A Recent Case of Healing.” I will quote him.

A few years ago I went to a doctor in Independence, one of the best physicians in town. There I saw Brother P.A. Sherman, pastor of one of our churches, who was just leaving. He looked so sick and broken that I questioned the doctor.

Because of my official position, I suppose, the doctor told me more than he would have told somebody else. He said that Brother Sherman seemed to have developed cancer of the bone in his arm. The prognosis was that the arm would have to be removed or a section of the bone taken out and the arm shortened. That was sad news. I liked Brother Sherman; I respected and trusted him.

I was out of town for quite awhile and upon my return, I went out to Brother Sherman's home southeast of town. To my surprise, I found him at work. I asked him what had happened, and he told me.

He said that he got worse and worse, until they sent him to Bell Memorial Hospital where x-rays were taken of the bone. Several specialists studied the x-rays and confirmed the previous diagnosis. The operation was to take place in Independence Sanitarium. He said that as he lay on his bed in his home at Gudgell Park, or near there, the least jar made the pain intolerable.

Then in the little church at Gudgell Park the congregation fasted and prayed for him.

Brother Dillee, another elder, and a number of others came to his house, and the elders administered to him. He said that while their hands were on his head every pain left him and never returned. Soon he was back at work.

I went to the doctor, and he confirmed the report. He said Brother Sherman did go to Bell Memorial Hospital and have x-rays taken which confirmed the diagnosis. Brother Sherman has told me that story three times at least.

His son said to me, “I have read of those things in the Bible, but that happened in my own home to my own father; I was there and saw it.”

I grew up hearing this story at my grandfather's feet. My own father recounted more of the story to me. He said that after the administration, Grandpa was still scheduled for surgery. My father took him to the hospital on the appointed day and Grandpa insisted that they run another x-ray, refusing to have surgery until they ran it, stating that all the pain was gone and he believed that he had been healed.

The doctor finally consented and they took Grandpa for his x-ray. Then pretty soon they came and got him for a second x-ray. Finally the doctor came in and with a happy smile said, “Well, P. A., I can't explain, it but here are your x-rays.” Upon the screen he put an x-ray showing Grandpa's arm bone riddled with cancer. My father said it looked like honeycomb.

Then next to it he put up the two new x-rays taken that morning, both showing a healthy arm bone—no cancer, no honeycomb. The doctor said he was convinced that they had x-rayed the wrong man the first time and he made them go back with instructions “to be sure and x-ray Mr. P.A. Sherman this time.” He said he just could not believe it with the first x-ray but did declare that he now believed it and that it was a miracle.



Grandpa lived up into his late eighties and did not die of cancer. He died of a heart attack. All of my life I heard Grandpa tell this experience and I never grew tired of hearing it. After all, who could get tired of hearing about real-life modern miracles? What a wonderful story to grow up hearing. I count myself very blessed to have been born into this wonderful family.



Trusting God

-by Lori Smith, Oak Grove, Missouri

Last April, my work had become stressful. I had been working mostly from home, only going into the office occasionally as required. The demands of my job were often overwhelming. The lack of communication or poor communication seemed to make matters worse. I worked hard every day to solve many problems, but each day came with more problems, and I had not resolved those of the day before. I was waking up in the middle of the night worrying over how to solve my problems.

Although I knew stress could affect a person spiritually and emotionally, I had heard that stress can also affect a person physically, but had not really experienced this myself. On Wednesdays I try to fast and pray as much as possible, but having hypoglycemia complicates this. So I eat as little as I possibly can and have learned to adjust.

One Wednesday in the midst of this stress at work, I was trying to solve many problems while fasting at the same time. At about 11:20 a.m., I had a strange feeling come over me. I was getting light-headed and felt like I was going to pass out. I knew my blood sugar was rapidly dropping, and decided I needed to eat something, so I ate a salad with lots of protein to bring my blood sugar back up.

I felt like a failure in my work and in my fasting. As I began to pray, the Lord convicted my heart of a wrong focus. He said to me, “Why have you not asked for my help with your problems? I would have

helped you solve your problems and given you peace if you would only ask me.”

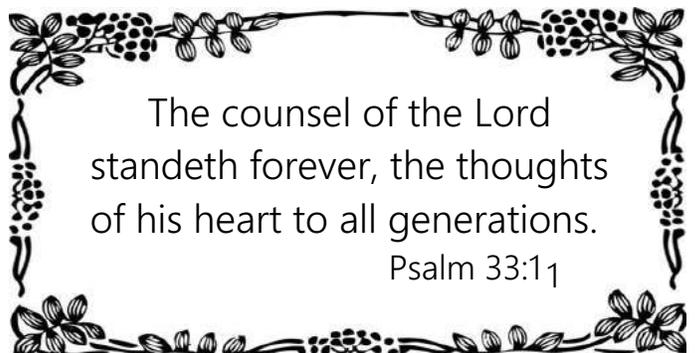
I knew I had sinned against God and didn’t want to relinquish control of my problems. I confessed my sin to God. I asked Him for forgiveness and help. I told Him, “Lord, I have all these problems. You have the solutions. Flood my mind with the right solution to each problem when it’s the right time. Give me your wisdom—not my own.”

Immediately I felt a peace enter my soul that I had not experienced in a long time. As I let go of control, God’s peace and wisdom entered my mind. Several of us at my work got together to solve these issues. At this meeting, the Lord gave us great wisdom and solutions. As my co-workers and I worked together, I began to see how this united us.

As I reflected on these things, I learned the following:

- ◆ It’s important to trust God even when things seem impossible.
- ◆ He holds the answers to all my problems. When I asked for wisdom, God gave it to me.
- ◆ Stress and worry affect our bodies physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
- ◆ My problems didn’t suddenly disappear when I prayed, but I had peace.
- ◆ Solving problems with others brings unity—even if we don’t all believe the same things or have the same opinions.

I am thankful for the many ways God continues to teach me great lessons. If I hold on to these lessons from this stressful time, I know I will make better choices in future trials.





Prepare for Jesus to Visit You

-by Heather Watterson, Kingsville, Missouri

On Sunday, September 3, 2017, my husband woke me just before dawn to tell me he was going to go take care of the cows before church. I vaguely remember it before drifting off to sleep to catch what little sleep I could after a rough night of not much of it, and

before the morning business of trying to get three kids fed and ready for church on a Sacrament Sunday.

The next thing I remember, I was walking out my front door onto our lawn, toward the gravel road in front of our house. About a third of the way there, I looked to the right (east), and around the corner of our neighbor's fence came Jesus, and He was walking right toward me. The moment I saw Him, I knew Him, and it didn't matter that He was in clothing like we would wear today, because I spiritually recognized Him. He wore a dark red t-shirt, carpenter's jeans, and carpenter's boots.

I ran to Him and wrapped my arms around Him, delighted to see Him. After we hugged, He got right to the point: "This is the first of many visitations I will be making to my people to prepare them for the coming of Zion, setting the church in order, and fulfilling all of my promises of long ago."

As He said this, I had the absolute understanding that these would be in-person—His translated flesh and blood visiting with your flesh and blood, face to face, as one person visits with another person in our day to day lives. I was so happy I didn't know what to say, but when it occurred to me that He had made His first visit with me, I was confused. Why not a priesthood member, a pastor, or just a man for that matter? Shouldn't they have been visited first?

"Why me first?" I asked, a little bewildered. His response was simply a question.

"Did I not first reveal myself to a woman after my resurrection?" He paused and said, "Go tell thy

brethren." I remember my first instinct was to tell our pastor/presiding elder, Larry Marsh, and then I woke.

I was a bit stunned by the experience, and didn't move at first. I wondered in my mind why I didn't have the instinct to tell my husband, James, first. He's an elder, too, and one of Larry's counselors. I also struggled with telling anyone about it, because I wasn't sure how literally to take the experience. After all, Jesus had come to me in a vision to talk about face-to-face visitations to His people. It should be noted here that I understood that He wasn't just talking about priesthood, but when He said my people, I knew that meant men, women, and children.

I turned over to see the other side of our bed empty and remembered James went to check our cattle. I got up and got the morning started. It was a normal Sunday for us in most ways, in that getting the kids ready and fed came with its challenges, but we did mostly fine. What was different was the fact that James had missed a priesthood prayer service that morning due to some cattle issues, and I thought that meant we'd probably be going to church together as a family and not in separate vehicles.

I felt strongly that I needed to be there for Sunday school this morning, but I really didn't know why. Usually, under circumstances like we were in, I would have waited for James. This morning was different. I knew I needed to be there.

As the morning wore on and James didn't show when I hoped he would. I called to check on him. He was fine, but there were some problems and he wasn't sure he'd be back in time to leave for Sunday school. I decided to wait as long as I could, but it came time that I had a decision to make. The girls and I went to church.

Our Sunday school class is kind of funny. We have Sundays where we are so chatty in participation that the teacher, Larry Marsh, gets almost nowhere in his lesson. Other Sundays, we are virtually in a coma with our eyes open, and Larry has to do all the talking for everybody! We were quiet that Sunday, including me. I was still tired from a night of little sleep. Larry

appeared very tired too. I noticed as the class wore on that he was struggling more so than usual. He was prepared for the class, but when he spoke, the words seemed to not come easy. He would try to convey a thought, and a simple word would escape him that he couldn't remember. I felt sorry for him.

As the class went on, I did my best to listen, but I was fighting sleep. I didn't want to fall asleep in class and embarrass myself or hurt feelings, but the fight was real! As I dozed off and on, I still had an ear on things, but I was losing this battle.

As my head filled with fog, I could hear Larry talking about how we're seeing many trials these days, and it feels like (as a church) we're just going in circles. That was the last thing I legitimately heard until I heard him say this: "And you need to understand; it was never gonna be any other way!"

Although I was mostly asleep, I heard that as though the Lord had said it Himself. In an instant, I came wide awake and Larry had my undivided attention. He wasn't yelling his words, but it was the power of the Lord's Spirit speaking through him that made the difference. I wish we had recorded that lesson, because I cannot remember verbatim all that Larry said, but I will recap to the best of my limited human ability.

He spoke about how all these things had to happen for the Kingdom to come. I remember him saying that we cannot assume that because we are members of this Church that we will be in Zion, and we cannot assume that those who aren't members now, won't. He spoke about how if we don't prepare ourselves, that the Lord won't be able to call on us. If we don't respond to Him now, we won't be able to respond while He's building His kingdom.

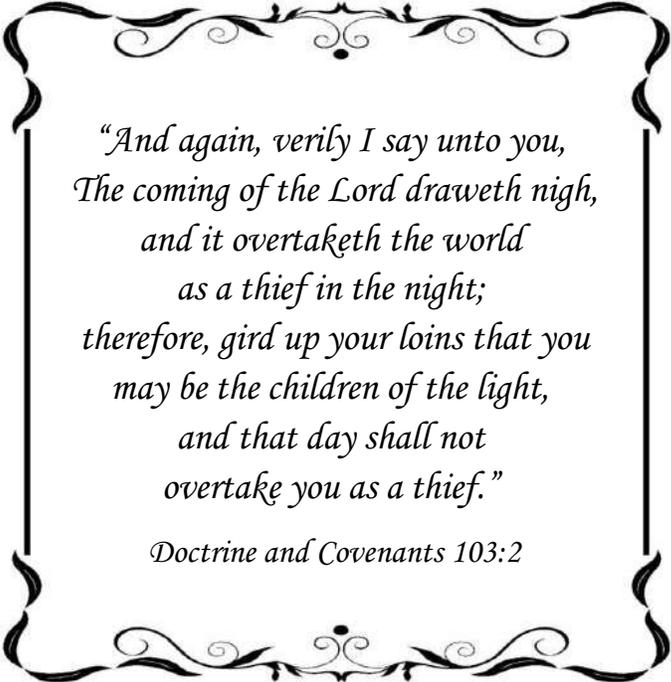
Then Larry adamantly emphasized that this was Christ's work, not ours. It was His to do, and that we were just helpers doing whatever we could to assist Him, but it would be Him who would do it and accomplish it. Just as He treaded the winepress alone, He would do this. Larry spoke of Zion with authority and that it was an ABSOLUTION. It was never, "if we do this or if we do that, maybe Zion will come." No! Zion will be. The only question is will we be there with Him in it.

At some point beyond this, the remark was made that in order for this to come to pass, it would take something extraordinary, like visitations from Jesus Himself to His people to prepare us and give instructions as to what was happening and get our hearts and minds ready for this His work. That's why we need to prepare now, so we can be ready for Him when He does call!

What I really want you to understand as you read this is that while Larry never claimed his words were Christ's words, I knew they were. The power of the Holy Spirit made it undeniably evident to me. He went from struggling to articulate his thoughts and words to clear, precise speech that flowed with ease and power.

When I thought about what happened, I realized that it was a confirmation to what happened to me just hours before, and that I needed to follow the Lord's command and, "Go tell thy brethren." I kept it to myself until the following day, and on Labor Day, I called Larry and told him the experience.

I do not know how or when this will happen. I would never put a timetable on this in my own thinking, but I know that it will happen. No one is exempt from receiving a visitation, unless you exempt yourself. So, prepare to the best of your ability and be looking for Him.



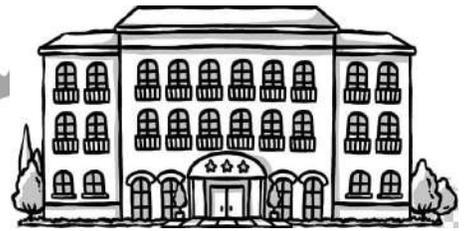
*"And again, verily I say unto you,
The coming of the Lord draweth nigh,
and it overtakeeth the world
as a thief in the night;
therefore, gird up your loins that you
may be the children of the light,
and that day shall not
overtake you as a thief."*

Doctrine and Covenants 103:2



The Lord Blessed Us

-by Dennis Heater, Oak Grove, Missouri



My previous wife, Shirley, passed away in 2017. She had a great passion for archaeology and the Book of Mormon. In 2015, Shirley registered to attend an archaeology convention in San Francisco, California. It would be the first time for both of us to go to San Francisco (although Shirley had lived in the Los Angeles area previously).

In preparation for this trip, Shirley had spent considerable time on the computer checking motels for pricing, location, and availability near the convention. She finally found a motel with vacancies for the dates we needed that was within our price range and booked our rooms through an online service.

After arriving at the airport in San Francisco, we picked up our rental car and proceeded to the motel. As we were getting into the area where the motel was located, we both looked at the surrounding area and agreed it wasn't the best. When we found the motel, it looked like it did on the computer, but pictures sometimes can be deceiving. We were booked for five nights, so we checked in.

When we got to the room, it was certainly nothing fancy, to say the least. It made Motel 6 look like the Hilton Inn. We were on the ground floor and all night long the people in the room above us were arguing and running around in the room. We could not even think about sleeping. We agreed this was not going to work, so Shirley got on her laptop computer to look up other motels in the area.

We noticed a sign in the office when we checked in that said absolutely no refunds, so what were we to do? Shirley did locate a motel that had a room available for the four nights we needed, and it was closer to the convention also. The pictures looked decent, so we left our motel early and drove over to check it out.

The location was much better than where we were and the units looked to be in nice condition. We went into the office and talked to the man about the room.

It was still available, but we couldn't see it as the occupants were still in it. We told him our situation and had him hold the room for us and said we would get back with him.

Now we had to figure out how to get a refund on the remaining four nights at the first hotel. I told Shirley, "We just have to go ask." We went in and talked to the person in charge. We told her that we had a situation come up and we had to leave. We asked if we could get a refund for the remaining nights. I again looked at the sign that said no refunds.

The lady told us since we had booked it through an online service, we would have to talk to them about the refund. She told us if they approved it, she would go along with it. We felt that the Lord had blessed us in this first step. We went to our room and Shirley called the service where she had made the reservations. She told them we had a situation come up and we needed to leave. Shirley told them the lady at the motel would release us of the next four nights if we could get our refund. The lady told Shirley she would check, and we were put on hold. We prayed that the answer would be yes.

When she came back, she told us she had credited us with the remaining four nights and it would show up as a credit on our card within two days. The Lord was with us in step number two. The credit showed up on our card later that same day.

The next step was to confirm with the man at the other motel that we would take the room. He reserved it for us over the phone. The Lord blessed us in step number three. Another thing—since this motel was closer to the convention, we would save time in travel as well as gas for the car. This was blessing number four.

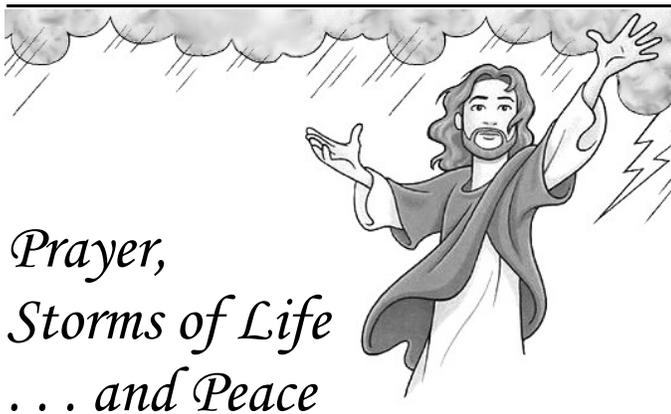
We loaded all our belongings into the car and drove to the lobby to check out. They gave us no problems whatsoever. We thanked them for their kindness and willingness to help us out of our situation. When we

arrived at the other motel and checked in, we went to the room. When we opened the door and walked in we looked at each other and smiled because it was what we expected to see.

The Lord was leading us in every step we took to make the switch work out. Probably the best thing we did was not to get upset with anyone. We are told in Scriptures not to be judgmental and to control our tongue. We just felt a peace through the entire ordeal.

*"Thou wilt keep him
in perfect peace,
whose mind is stayed on thee;
because he trusteth in thee.
Trust ye in the Lord forever;
for in the Lord JEHOVAH
Is everlasting strength."*

Isaiah 26:3-4



Prayer, Storms of Life ... and Peace

-by Connie Smith, Independence, Missouri

Many years ago, when my husband Ken and I only had two children and we struggled financially, I found myself filled with anger at times (anger over money; anger over a three-year-old who thought she had to have my constant attention—even through the night).

I was frustrated and tired. Have you ever felt overwhelmed with the demands of life and the trials of everyday living? That was me.

It reminds me of the disciples in the boat being tossed about while the storm raged on; and there was Jesus sleeping through the whole thing.

During one particular day, during this stormy time, I kept hearing this phrase spoken to my mind, "You need to pray." The urge and the prompting to pray were persistent and strong. I resisted for a while but finally gave in. I asked God to forgive me for my anger and to take it away. He did . . . immediately!

This may seem small and insignificant, but it was like a huge mountain had been moved in my personal life. A spirit of peace and calm came over me. I felt my heart soften toward my husband and toward my children.

I am reminded of a testimony I had recently read in a book called, *The Unlimited Power of Prayer*. This testimony was of a man who kept trying to do things on his own. He was very angry and frustrated.

Finally one day a wise clergyman said to him, "You're learning a lot about life. Some things require two wills—yours and God's." The clergyman then asked him, "Can you feel God's hand on your shoulder or are you just trying to make it on your own?"

That was me. I had been trying to take care of our family problems on my own. Do you try to face the demands of life on your own? Or can you feel God's hand on your shoulder?

This is a day when many storms are swirling around our country, our homes, our work, our finances, and our loved ones. What we need and what we have in Jesus Christ is a practical, everyday, problem-solving God who speaks peace to our souls—peace, whether our circumstances change or not.

These are such small examples, but they have held true in my life even through the greater storms that have come. Run to Him in prayer and let Him cover you in the shadow of peace.

Kid's Korner

ZION

The GREAT Adventure!

-by Debbie Norman, Oak Grove, Missouri

Last year at Vacation Church School at the Oak Grove Restoration Branch, I was in charge of writing the lessons for each day. The theme for the last day was Zion. I prayed and asked God, "What do you want these kids to know about Zion?" He gave me some ideas to share with the kids at VCS, and I want to share them with you, too!

Do you like to read exciting books or watch exciting movies? A good adventure story, whether in a book or movie, has a hero—someone who saves the day!

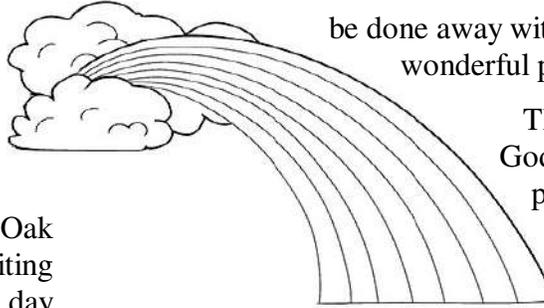
Have you ever noticed how the hero in adventure stories has to overcome LOTS of problems and troubles before he or she gets to the happy ending? There is a struggle between right and wrong—between good and evil—and the hero has to have courage and determination. Often he or she has to face much hardship. But in good stories, in the end, everything turns out to be wonderful. I love a happy ending!

Have you ever wished you were the hero in an adventure story? Well, guess what? You can be a hero for Jesus in real life! So get ready! The adventure is coming. We are all at the beginning of a great adventure—the greatest adventure you could ever imagine.

Prophets through all the years gone by have longed to live in this day when this adventure unfolds—when Zion will be established upon the earth. Just think—God has chosen YOU to live in this time!

Just like any adventure, there will be problems and troubles to overcome before we get to the happy ending! But God tells us NOT to be afraid. He is with us! And the best part is that we already know what the ending of this great adventure story will be. God WINS! Zion will be! There will be peace and great joy for all God's people. Everything evil and bad will

be done away with. Praise God for this wonderful plan!



The rainbow is the sign God has given us of His promise of Zion. Some groups of people are trying to make the rainbow a symbol

for other things—things that do not please God. But we know that God's plan will prevail. When you see a rainbow, remember God's plan for Zion!

Remember that in order to get to the happy ending, things have to change. The problem is that we are pretty comfortable with the way things are now. We don't really want things to change. It can be scary to face change.

But change is necessary for growth. Just like a caterpillar must change and struggle from the comfortable cocoon to become a butterfly, change is necessary to get from where we are, to things that are better. Like Zion.

Even though we might think we don't want things to change, and even though change can be hard and even painful, the end reward will be worth it. We know this is true because God has said so.

Think about living on this earth with everything that is good . . . and nothing that is bad! That is what it will be like to live in Zion when Jesus returns and is our King! It will be worth any struggles and trials and changes we have to go through to get there!

Praise God for His plan for ZION!

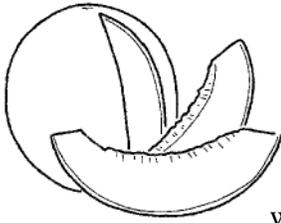
"Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

"The Lord is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people."

"Glory, and honor, and power, and might, Be ascribed to our God, for he is full of mercy, Justice, grace and truth, and peace, For ever and ever, Amen."

Isaiah 12:6, Psalm 99:2, D&C 83:17c

Marleigh's Testimony



-by Marleigh Norman, age 6,
Independence, Missouri

One day around Christmas-time, all my family gathered together at my house. We were eating brunch. I was eating chunks of honeydew melon. They were really hard.

I choked on a piece. It hurt and it was hard to breathe. My mom jumped up and rushed me over to the sink. She wasn't sure what was happening.

Then she tipped me over and the chunk popped out. Then I was okay.

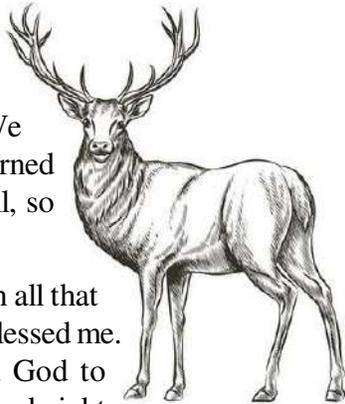
God made it pop out so I could breathe again and stay alive. I am thankful God was watching over me.

Prayer Works

-by Mason Norman, age 8, Lee's Summit, Missouri

Last fall, my family took a trip to Colorado. We pulled our RV behind our truck. Two crazy things happened when we got there.

The first one was that as we were driving to our campsite, an elk ran right in front of our truck. We almost ran over it, but it turned around and slipped and fell, so we didn't run over it.



I was really scared when all that happened, but God really blessed me. I said a prayer and asked God to help me not to be afraid, and right after that I wasn't afraid anymore.

The second thing was that the guy who was helping us unhook our RV from the truck at the campsite said there was a little brown bear that was coming to our campsite. That got me really scared again, so I did the same thing. I prayed that I wouldn't be scared and God blessed me right after I said my prayer, and I wasn't scared anymore.

Heed the Spirit

-by Terry LaGrece

I am very thankful that I am able to share this testimony with you. You may have heard on occasion someone say, "If it weren't for the Lord, I wouldn't be alive today." The realization of this is sometimes all too clear.

On a weekend afternoon during my second-grade school year, my mother was doing laundry. My sister and I were playing. We must have been rather rambunctious, because my mother promised us if we could let her get some work done without causing too much trouble, she would take us for an Icee at 7-Eleven. In other words, my sister and I were probably fighting and causing my mother unwarranted grief. My mother not only promised us, but had given us a specific time that we would leave. The time came and we were ready to go—but we didn't leave.

"Why?!" was my question. When Mother made a promise—she kept it. This time was different. The Holy Spirit, with whom my mother was very familiar, urged her to stay home and finish the laundry. My faithful mother, for a good reason, broke her promise to us without any explanation at all.

My sister and I complained, and my mother finished the laundry. Finally, mom was done, and we were on our way to get an Icee. As the small 7-Eleven store came into view, we noticed everything was in commotion around it. Police cars seemed to be coming from every direction. They pulled into the 7-Eleven parking lot, and mom drove on by. We went back home. By this time, I had forgotten all about the Icee. We had no idea what had taken place until later.

I cannot remember if we heard the news on TV, or if my parents read it in the newspaper. But right before we got to 7-Eleven, six people were forced to the floor at gunpoint and killed. When I heard this news, even as a seven-year-old, I realized it was not a coincidence that we were not there when this happened. By the grace and the power of God, we were preserved unto life!

My mother later told me that the Holy Spirit had urged her to stay home and finish the laundry, although at the time she did not know why. I am very thankful to the Lord that I am alive today! I am also

thankful for having a saintly mother, who was familiar with the urging of the Holy Spirit. How tragic it would have been if the voice of the Spirit was a stranger to my mother or if she had mistaken its guidance for her emotions. She could have simply overlooked what she had been urged to do. But, she DID NOT!

Children and parents, we must become familiar with the urging of the Holy Spirit and learn to interpret the guiding influence it brings to our lives. I share this testimony with love for you all, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Reprinted from *Zion's Call*, Spring 1992)

*“and thus be led by the Holy Spirit,
becoming humble,
meek, submissive, patient,
full of love and all long suffering;
having faith on the Lord.”*

Alma 10:28



FINISH STRONG!

-by April Smith, Oak Grove, Missouri

On October 25, 2020, my husband Aaron, two of our sons, Corbin and Blake, and I shared the early morning worship at Oak Grove Restoration Branch. Corbin and Blake are in eighth and seventh grade respectively and have been participating in cross country, running on their middle school's team. After singing *The Old, Old Path* and an invocation, we compared running in cross country to our spiritual lives.

Corbin and Blake had just completed their middle school cross country season. They started practicing

and training during the summer in order to prepare, and over the course of the season they ran eight races as they competed at meets. A cross country race is a long distance race, not a sprint. For the boys at the middle school level, the distance is a mile and a half. The high school runners run a 5K (3.1 miles). The races are run on an outdoor course, with hills and sometimes uneven terrain. The course is generally NOT a level, flat surface!

Our spiritual lives are often compared to running a race of endurance. We are not called to run a sprint, but rather to endure to the end. Hebrews 12:1-2 says,

Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

I asked Corbin & Blake to explain some of the elements of a cross country race, and they shared these five elements:

1. At the starting line, there is a great big group of runners.
2. When the race starts, there is an all-terrain vehicle called a Gator that drives in front of all of the runners. The runners follow the Gator to know where the course goes.
3. There is a path to follow to run the course. It is usually a mowed path with a white line.
4. Midway through the race and toward the end, you have to keep running even when your body is tired and you start running out of energy.
5. When you come to the last stretch and can see the finish line, you have to finish strong. You have to give it your all. Sometimes a runner has to try to beat an opponent right at the very finish.

We then examined how these elements of the race are found in scriptures. Aaron explained that the big group at the starting line is like the following scripture:

And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood.

And it came to pass that they did come forth and commence in the path which led to the tree (1 Nephi 2:65-66).

I talked about following the “Gator” as being able to follow our guide, the Holy Spirit. Doctrine and Covenants, Section 45:10a-c says,

And then shall the heathen nations be redeemed, and they that knew no law shall have part in the first resurrection; and it shall be tolerable for them; and Satan shall be bound that he shall have no place in the hearts of the children of men.

And at that day when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins; for they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived, verily I say unto you,

They shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day, and the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance.

Then I explained that the mowed path with the white line is like the Rod of Iron along the straight and narrow path. Do you know how many times I have wished I could just SEE the path laid out before me in such a visible way? To know my next step that clearly? But as Christians, we know we have a straight and narrow path made available to us.

“And I beheld a rod of iron; and it extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree by which I stood. And I also beheld a straight and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood” (1Nephi 2:62-63).

Aaron reminded us how we must keep going even when we are tired. *“And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this, that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he can not be saved” (2 Nephi 13:21).*

And from *Lectures of Faith* 4:15a-d:

And again it is equally important that men should have the idea of the existence of the

attribute mercy in the Deity, in order to exercise faith in him for life and salvation.

For without the idea of the existence of this attribute in the Deity, the spirits of the saints would faint in the midst of the tribulations, afflictions, and persecutions which they have to endure for righteousness’ sake;

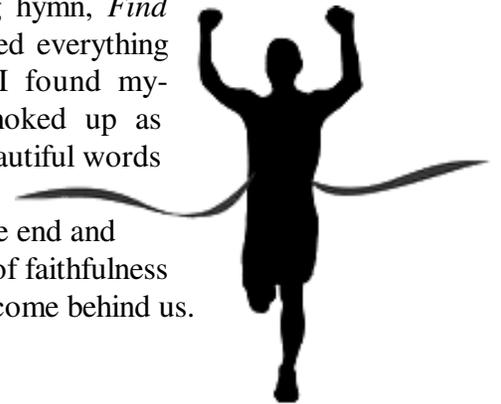
but when the idea of the existence of this attribute is once established in the mind, it gives life and energy to the spirits of the saints;

believing that the mercy of God will be poured out upon them in the midst of their afflictions, and that he will compassionate them in their sufferings, and that the mercy of God will lay hold of them and secure them in the arms of his love, so that they will receive a full reward for all their sufferings.

Then Aaron encouraged us to finish strong! *“And ye shall be hated of all the world for my name’s sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:19).*

“And if they endure unto the end, they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb” (1 Nephi 3:188).

The closing hymn, *Find Us Faithful*, tied everything together, and I found myself getting choked up as we sang the beautiful words of our desires to endure to the end and leave a legacy of faithfulness for those who come behind us.



**Endurance
is a key indicator of
spiritual fitness.**

-- Alistair Begg

Dog with a Bone

-by Janet L Williams, Grain Valley,
Missouri

When in eighth grade, I became involved with a boy who changed the course of my life. My parents could see that he was not a good influence on me and tried to discourage my contact with him. However, I was in love and thought I knew better than they did what was good for me. I thought they were just old fashioned and weren't aware of the modern world I was a part of. I imagined that they were not wise as to giving me advice because they didn't know anything about my life.

The relationship that developed with this boy was a very unhealthy one. As I became more and more desperate to be with him, he coaxed me down a path of poor choices. He introduced me to drugs and inappropriate intimacies among other harmful behaviors.

Taking my eyes off of Jesus, my vision and judgment began to be cloudy and dismal without His light to guide me. I withdrew from being a follower of Christ to participating in a very negative world that eventually drove me to being defiant to all authority. Shutting out all positive influence and adult guidance, I floundered around in the little territory I had prescribed for myself.

You may have heard the proverbial story of the dog with a bone. He saw his reflection in the water holding a bone in his teeth. Thinking it was another dog holding a bone, he dropped his bone in the water trying to take the bone from the dog he thought he saw in the water.

I was like a different dog with a bone. I clenched my teeth tightly upon my bone so that no one could remove it from me. It (my perception of my relationship with my boyfriend) was my everything and I would not give it up for any reason. I intended to spend the rest of my life with him and would not waver from my plan.

My plan became a reality as I married him at the age of nineteen. His version of loving me didn't turn out as I had hoped. He was very abusive. After many years of pain and sorrow, I literally had to escape from him with the help of some very loving members of God's family.

Could you be the dog with a bone? Is there something that you are holding onto that may be dangerous to your well-being? If I would instead have listened to God and my parents when they tried to advise me to choose differently, I might have had a much better life experience. Dropping the bone in my case could have freed me to choose alternative options.

There is very little substance in a bone. Letting go of the bone and searching for something better might have revealed a bowl of tasty meat or even a large T-bone steak. The steak would have provided fulfilling meat and a bone all at the same time!

If you're that dog, I encourage you to drop that bone and run into the arms of your loving Heavenly Father, that He may provide for you greater things than you can even imagine.



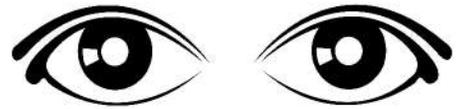
*"I love them that love me;
and those that seek me early
shall find me.
Riches and honor are with me;
yea, durable riches and righteousness.
My fruit is better than gold,
yea, than fine gold;
and my revenue than choice silver.
I lead in the way of righteousness,
in the midst
of the paths of judgment.
That I may cause those that love me
to inherit substance;
and I will fill their treasures."*

Proverbs 8:17-21



A Cure for Spiritual Blindness

-by Connie Smith, Independence, Missouri



This testimony is an excerpt from the April 2020 Oak Grove Restoration Branch women's department bulletin insert. To read the full insert, go to www.OGRB.org, click on "Resources," and scroll down to letter C (OGRB Women's Department Publications).

My husband, Ken, has macular degeneration in both of his eyes due to diabetes. This causes swelling and bleeding blood vessels near the macula and has cost him most of the vision in his right eye and at times temporary loss of vision or impaired vision in his left eye. Even the tiniest amount of blood floating around in his eye can and does create blind spots in his vision. This blood either dissipates on its own or has had to be removed and the bleeding vessel(s) cauterized.

Spiritually, we all have blind spots created by sin, such as holding on to grudges and the ensuing bitterness. Sometimes these spots are so well hidden from our vision that without help to expose them and "cauterize" them (cleanses them by the blood of Jesus), we become content to live in darkness with our "impaired vision." Just as Ken can't stop the bleeding vessels in his eyes without outside help from an expert, neither can we cleanse our heart without help from our expert, Jesus.

Are there people you need to be reconciled with? My in-laws and I had a falling out several years ago. In my anger I wrote them a letter explaining to them all my views. It was not well received and only added to the contention surrounding the situation. Through the Holy Spirit softening all of our hearts, repenting and then meeting together, all of our issues were resolved and a new peace and even joy in our relationships ensued.

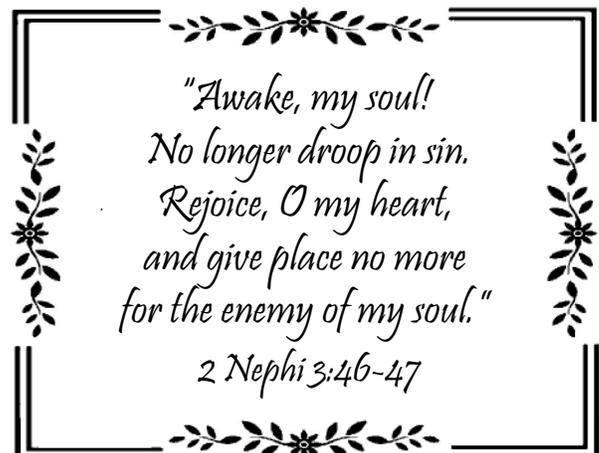
I literally felt scales of blindness fall from my seeing eyes. When these scales were removed, I saw my in-laws, and especially my father-in-law, through new eyes. The Lord brought to my remembrance times when he had tried to reach out and improve our relationship, but because of grudges, resentment, and bitterness, I was blind to all of his efforts. How my heart sorrowed for lost years. He died two months after our "family talk."

Pray in humility and ask God to help you restore the breeches in your life, to soften your heart as well as others' hearts and remove the scales from your eyes. How quick we are to judge and see things in others but are blind to see the faults and sins in our own lives. Jesus had some advice for the people of His day and our day:

For with what judgment ye shall judge, ye shall he judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall he measured to you again. And again, ye shall say unto them, Why is it that thou beholdest the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? (Matthew 7:3-4)

A tiny spot of blood, no bigger than a small splinter, can block portions of Ken's vision. In other words, it is like trying to see around a beam in the eye. When the beams (sins) are removed from our own eyes, then the sins of others come into perspective. When you get irritated with someone else next time, ask the Lord, "Is there a beam in my eye that is blocking my vision? Help me change so I can see this situation clearly."

I pray that all of us will be soft hearted and quick to repent.



Many Advantages of Getting Older

-by Irene Gunter 1923-2014 (Submitted by her daughter Sheri Nunn)



As we get older, we can look back and see some of the things that had the most influence in our lives. One of the things I remember most vividly was a show I saw when I was eight years old. It was called *King of Kings*. It was about the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Away back then, “in the Dark Ages” as my children would say, we weren’t privileged to watch TV as it hadn’t been invented yet. We did have a radio, but I can’t remember much about it except for a few songs that were popular at the time.

There were movie theaters, but the nearest one to our prairie home in Caddoa, Colorado was ten miles away in Las Animas, Colorado. So it had to be a very special movie for country folk to get chores done early and travel across the prairie at night, even in a car.

Oh yes, we did have a Model A Ford, and maybe if dad tried real hard, it would go twenty-five or thirty miles per hour over the rough dirt roads. *King of Kings* was a special movie, and my folks decided it was worth going to see. I’m so glad they did as it had a lasting impact on my life.

At eight, I knew about God and Christ as I was taught well. I loved Jesus and I knew He loved me. But at that age, death was something I really didn’t comprehend. On the farm, we did have animals that died. My younger sister Jean and I would have funerals for the deceased baby chicks with match box caskets and prairie flowers. Nothing prepared me for seeing Jesus being crucified and seeing Him hung on the cross.

This Jesus, whom I had been taught to love, represented to me all the things that were good. Seeing Him suffer and die was about all my little heart could stand. It blew my mind! I cried uncontrollably all the way home.

Even though the movie had shown His resurrection, all I could comprehend at the time was

seeing Him being forced to carry His cross, being whipped and then seeing Him hanging there on the cross. I know I wasn’t the only one that wept at His death. The angels wept, the earth groaned and God the Father agonized with His Son’s death.

It has taken me years to begin to understand what really happened on Calvary those many years ago. My mother explained to me that they really didn’t take His life, but that He gave it. But how could that be? I had seen them come into the garden and take Him.

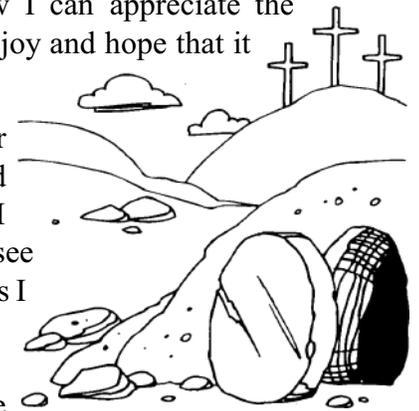
“Yes,” said my mother, “but He knew before He was born what they would do, and yet He let them. He could have called legions of angels to His side, but He was willing to do this because He understood why it was necessary. He understood the laws that had been broken and unless a divine sacrifice could be made, we, His children, could never see God. Christ was the divine sacrifice.”

Eight years old, and I was given these thoughts to ponder in my mind. Now I’m older and I can accept His death. I don’t like it, but I am beginning to understand it. Now I can appreciate the resurrection and the joy and hope that it offers.

Now as a mother and grandmother and great-grandmother, I can look back and see some of the sacrifices I have made that brought about changes in my life

and in the life of my family. These offerings or sacrifices seem so unimportant compared to the results of those offerings. That is because I loved the ones to whom those offerings were made.

Christ loved us and loves us still. He proved it. He gave His life that we might live and now we have hope. There is a poem I memorized when I was young that catches up this hope. It is called, “The Land of Beginning Again.” It’s our hope of Zion.



The Land of Beginning Again

I wish that there were some wonderful place
Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches,
And all our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door,
And never put on again.

I wish we could come on it all unaware,
Like the hunter who finds a lost trail;
And I wish that the one
whom our blindness had done
The greatest injustice of all
Could be at the gates like an old friend that waits
For the comrade he's gladdest to hail.

We would find all the things we intended to do
But forgot, and remembered too late—
Little praises unspoken, little promises broken,
And all of the thousand and one
Little duties neglected that might have perfected
The day for one less fortunate.

It wouldn't be possible not to be kind
In the Land of Beginning Again,
And the ones we misjudged
and the ones whom we grudged
Their moments of victory here,
Would find the grasp of our loving handclasp
More than penitent lips could explain.

For what had been hardest
we'd know had been best,
And what had seemed loss would be gain;
For there isn't a sting that will not take wing
When we've faced it and laughed it away;
And I think that the laughter
is most what we're after,
In the Land of Beginning Again.

So I wish that there were some wonderful place
Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches,
And all our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door
And never put on again.

—Louise Fletcher



Hearers and Doers

—by Edgar Pillsbury

My niece who is a teacher often tells me how hard she tries to explain how to take a test to her students. However, as she does so, she sees that many of them are hearing her only on a superficial level. They are staring at the ceiling, looking out the window, or playing with their pens.

As a result, many of them fail their test, because they have not followed directions. They have “heard,” but they did not do. They did not take what they heard seriously and apply it to their test taking.

Then because my niece feels sorry for them, she explains it all again. She allows them to take a repeat test so that they will get a better grade in the course.

James 1:22 says, *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”*

Like my niece, Christ, the great teacher, is constantly telling us how to prepare for the great eternal test which we will all face on judgment day. He speaks through the three books of Scriptures. He speaks through His priesthood. But are we tuning Him out? Do we only hear on a superficial level or are we taking His words seriously and applying His teaching to our lives as doers of the Word?

Are we working to love others as we should? Do we practice *“faith, hope, charity, and love, with an eye single to the glory of God”* (Doctrine and Covenants, 4:1e).

Christ must get very discouraged at times because so many people are hearers only of His word. So few are doers. Where do we stand?

Remember, unlike my niece who gives repeated tests, the great test which will be administered at the final judgment will not be repeated. God gives us our entire lives to prepare for it. It is up to us. Let us now get it right by being both hearers and doers of God's Word.



Confessing God's Hand in My Life



-by Anita Brotherton, Lexington, Missouri

"And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (Doctrine and Covenants 59:5b).

"All Day, All Night, Angels Watching Over Me, My Lord"

I love fall. I love the colors of fall. I love the pumpkins and the apples being harvested. Where I live, in the fall the combines are out in the fields as the farmers bring in the harvest of beans and corn. All of these things confirm to me God's hand in all things. They confess to me that God is in everything, and I take great joy and comfort in that.

As I look back on my life, I can see God's hand is evident in so many ways, beginning when I was a small child. When I was little, my theme song must have been, "All Day, All Night, Angels Watching Over Me, My Lord." Before the age of five, I should have died three times. But God must have had a work for me to do, and He made this evident by preserving my life.

The first time was when my family lived in Indiana, and we were at the lake. The parents were all on the lakeshore and the children were out in the water. There was a rope dividing the deep water from the shallow water, and on this rope were these wooden barrels for floats. I was just a little thing, so they sat me up on top of one of these barrels thinking I would be safe.

All was well for a while, but then the barrel suddenly just turned over, dumping me into the water. Even though I was so young, I can remember laying at the bottom under the water and looking up at all the feet of the other children jerking and kicking as they were swimming above me.

It wasn't very long before an adult got me out of the water and took me to shore, but this situation could have ended so differently. I have to confess the Lord's hand in preserving my life in that incident.



The second time occurred a little later as my family was driving down a gravel road. This was long enough ago that seatbelts were not in common usage, and I'm pretty sure our car did not have them. I was standing in the front seat between my mom and dad, sucking on a butterscotch drop candy. I accidentally swallowed the candy, and it lodged in my throat, blocking my airway. I was choking. My dad, as quick as he could, pulled into a driveway and got me out of the car.

Back then they were probably pounding on my back to try to help me, but they got it dislodged. I remember how it hurt and how I was crying. It was a traumatic experience. My life could have ended right there, but God's hand was upon me once again. My sister tells how my dad took that bag of butterscotch drops and threw it out the window, I'm sure to the sorrow of her and my brothers.

The last incident occurred in Indiana also. We lived in Bunker Hill, Indiana, in a little trailer house. One night after we had gone to bed, a tornado came through our town. It rolled our trailer several times with my family inside.

It was a miracle that none of us had serious injuries. We had bumps and bruises, but God was with us. Once again, I confess His hand in that.

Wait upon the Lord and He Will Guide You

God's hand in my life continued as I grew older. When I was in high school at Knob Noster, I was dating a good Christian young man. He was not a church member. There were only two other church members in my high school and those young boys were pretty wild.

We had been dating about two and a half years at the end of our senior year. That summer, this young

Thank the Lord Thy God in all Things

man went to West Virginia and spent the summer with his grandmother. He attended church with his grandmother and joined her church before the summer was over.

This was a church with a set of beliefs that was very different from my own. It was very charismatic and seemed radical. When he came back home, it was like I didn't know him anymore. Our beliefs just didn't mesh.

There was so much disagreement and conflict that we broke up. I thought I would never be happy again. I thought my life was over. (I was eighteen.) I was kind of angry at God. I thought I was living my life in a good way, and here He took away the one I loved. What was God doing? I just didn't understand.

I got my patriarchal blessing the end of that summer from Brother Roy Weldon, and in it the Lord counseled me to wait upon Him and not to rush into any relationship and that He would guide me. So I knew that God's hand was upon me and He would lead me. This gave me comfort and peace and taught me that I could trust God with my whole life—with every aspect of it. (And so can you!)

Fortunately, God led me to go to college that fall at Warrensburg, Missouri, where there was a wonderful Liahona House (a church campus house for our faith). There were probably about sixty or seventy young people active in Liahona House.

I had never had so many young people of like faith to associate with. This was one of the most spiritual times of my life. It was such a blessing to be there, and it was there that I met the love of my life—Val, who later became my husband.

The Lord had everything under control. I wasn't going to be lonely and forlorn the rest of my life. The Lord knew what I needed, even before I did, and I must confess His hand in that.



Doctrine and Covenants 59:2d says, “*Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things.*” It is easier to see the blessings when things are going well. It is harder in the midst of a trial to see what we should be thankful for, but this scripture has borne fruit in my life.

My parents divorced when I was five years old. I was the youngest of four children. That divorce has affected us all in different ways. As I look back, I have been able to see blessings that came through that horrible trial. I have to thank the Lord for the good things He worked through it.

As I said before, we lived in Indiana. My mom developed cancer, which led to a total hysterectomy. All of this devastated her health physically and mentally. My dad was not a church member or even much of a Christian. Money was tight. He did not have a good job. His answer in how to deal with this great pressure was to leave our family.

So there we were—four kids with a sick mom. I'm sure the state was ready to step in and take us kids away, but my Granny and Granddad came up from Missouri. They stayed with us for several weeks and took care of us all. My mom and dad tried to reconcile, but it just didn't happen, so my grandparents brought us back to Missouri on a train. We were able to bring one trunk, one suitcase, and one box. Everything else had to be left behind.

Through this time of hardship in our lives, the Lord worked something beautiful which impacted all the rest of my life for good. We were gathered back into the land of Zion. This is so precious to me. I was born in Sedalia, Missouri, but my family had left and moved to Indiana. Now I was planted again in the land of Zion.

My mom had lots of extended family at Knob Noster. She was one of eight children, so I had lots of aunts and uncles and cousins who all loved us, along with my Granny and Granddad, who helped raise us.

We also had a wonderful loving and nurturing church family at Knob Noster. In Indiana, the nearest congregation of Saints was an hour away, and with my

dad being a nonmember, I know all of us children would have fallen away and become inactive. It was a blessing that we ended up there in that congregation in Knob Noster.

Another good thing that came from the bad situation of my parents' divorce was that my mom became determined to see that her children's lives were wrapped around God and the gospel. We were at church every time the doors were open. In fact, many times we beat the deacons there. Now all of my siblings are active in the church, and my brothers are priesthood members.

Romans 8:28 says, *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* All things. This is a powerful promise, and I recognize God's blessings that blossomed from the terrible hardship of my parent's divorce.



The Secret to Avoiding Bitterness

My mother was a great example of how to lean on God's grace during trials. I think this quote exemplifies her life: *“Unless you accept God's grace to deal with suffering, inevitably you will become bitter.”* (Institute of Basic Life Principles)

My mother had every reason to be bitter. Her health was gone. From the cancer treatments and the stress, she developed arthritis and it crippled her. Her hands were gnarled and she was unable to do many things. We were poor. I don't mean kind of poor, but we were very poor. We depended on government assistance my whole growing up life. And her husband left her for another woman.

In spite of all these hardships, my mother never became bitter. Instead, she became a woman of great faith, and she taught us not to be bitter toward God or toward our dad.

My dad remarried and had two little girls. When I was about nine years old, he came to Missouri to visit us children. It was a hot summer day and his car had no air conditioning. (Most cars didn't back then.) His wife and two little girls sat in the car in that hot sun while he came in to see us.

When my mom found out his wife and little girls were sitting in the hot car, she insisted that he bring them into the house. She treated them with kindness and compassion. My stepmother never forgot that. She always had the highest regard for my mom. My mother had God's grace in her life and He took care of her.

I recently read a book called *Soaring on Broken Wings: A Story of Triumph in Tragedy* by Kathy Bartalsky. This quote from the book speaks to me: *“If we believe in God only for the blessings He can give us, our belief in Him is not based on love and trust, but on our own selfish desires and our own concept of what we think God owes us.”* Kathy has been through extreme hardships in this life, but has remained faithful and true to God, and she acknowledges that God has been faithful to her. He is faithful to you, too.

Inasmuch as Ye Have Done It unto the Least of These

Serving the Lord is the greatest joy I find in my life. Without Him, everything is futile. As we confess He is Lord, even during the trials, we need to move out in obedience to Him.

When I retired from my job four years ago, I had several people suggest good things for me to do, but I wanted to know what the Lord had in mind for me. What did He want me to do?

As I was praying and studying, I read Matthew 25:38-41:

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

As I read this scripture, I realized that I wanted to make a difference in the world. We all have different parts that we play and different roles and jobs that God has for us to do, but these are some of the things He called me to do. I just felt His calling.

I have Welch Corgi dogs. They are bouncy and joyful and you can't be sad when you're around them. I began to take two of them to visit a nursing home near me. I have done this for the past three years. (Although with COVID, we have had to suspend our visits, which has broken my heart and my little puppies' hearts, too.)

I was surprised when I felt God leading me in this direction, because growing up with my mom being crippled, we had to care for her a lot. We would brush her hair, help her dress, and attend to her needs, but I wasn't always very patient or kind with her. Being a kid, I had things I wanted to do, and I didn't want to have all these extra responsibilities. I regret that now. I wish I had appreciated my mom more. When I visit the residents of the nursing home, it is in honor of my mom.

I have found such love there with the residents of the nursing home. They have ministered to me, and it has been such a blessing to me. Pat, one of ladies we visited, passed away recently. If I had been going to the nursing home only for Pat, I would have gone. She loved the puppies and they brought her such joy.

We would go into her room, and she would be sitting in her wheelchair. She always wanted me to lift up the puppy and put him in her lap. She was a small person and the puppy would just cover her. When she petted the puppy and he licked her face, she was in heaven.

I also have felt called to help with Harvesters in my area once a month. The volunteers there are good people from all walks of faith. We work hard together and laugh together and pray together, and we feel we are performing a valuable ministry.

I would encourage you to seek out what the Lord might be calling you to do. As we seek the Lord's direction and we follow where the Lord is leading us, then we will be in His will.

Behold, the field is white already to harvest, therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God; yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God;

Verily, verily I say unto you, Even as you desire of me, so shall it be unto you; and if you desire, you shall be the means of doing much good in this generation . . . keep my commandments, and assist to bring forth my work according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed. (Doctrine and Covenants 6:2a-b and 4a-b)



I am Going to Africa!

About three years ago, I taught some classes in our congregation. Doug and Judy Smith, who are very active in the missionary work to Africa, attend our branch. Judy thought the material I taught might be useful to the women in Africa. So Doug Smith called me up and asked, "Would you be willing to go to Africa to teach some classes at a women's retreat?"

The first thing out of my mouth was, "Oh Doug, I have breathing problems." He knew this. He attends our congregation and is a medical doctor. He knew about my breathing problems.

"Just pray about it," he told me, and I said I would. This was on a Friday evening. All day Saturday I fretted about it. I would think, "I should go," and then I would think, "I can't go." I lay awake in bed into the early hours of Sunday morning thinking about it. I weighed the pros and the cons and it finally came down to one thing: I was afraid I wouldn't be able to breathe over there.

When it's hot and humid, I can't breathe well. I have to be in the air conditioning. I knew there would not be air conditioning in Africa and it would be hot and humid. I was afraid.

I said, "Lord, if you will help me be able to breathe just until I get back from Africa, if You will take care of me, I will go." Then I was at peace and fell asleep. The next morning, I got up and began getting ready for church. I noticed that I was not having my usual breathing trouble. I breathed in loudly a few times, testing my breathing. My husband Val asked me what I was doing, and I replied, "I can breathe. I am going to Africa!"

I was so excited! I had my suitcases packed a month before we left. I had no fear! I made the trip to Africa with a wonderful team of men and women, including my husband Val. When we were in the big cities, when we walked the streets in Nairobi, I wasn't afraid. I just had a love for the people.

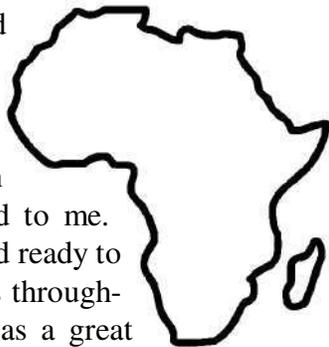
I had two wonderful blessings while I was in Africa besides my breathing. Before we left, I had a bladder infection. I went to the doctor and got medicine, and it was all cleared up. In Africa, like other third world countries, the water is not safe to drink, so we had to drink bottled water. I wasn't very good at drinking as much as I should. There also were not always bathrooms available when you needed them. Before long, I began to have symptoms of another bladder infection.

Just we ladies were sitting at the breakfast table one morning and I expressed my concern. One of the ladies said, "Well, let's just pray." So we did. I was healed instantaneously! I never had any more troubles. Nothing changed in my hydration or the availability of bathrooms, but I was healed. I was in God's will. I was in Africa because He told me I should go and it would be okay.

A few days later, I was sitting at the breakfast table again when I felt my stomach begin to roll. I began to feel nauseous. I left the table and went to my room to lie down on my bed. We had a really busy day planned for our team, and I thought, "Oh, this is not good."

My husband Val noticed I was gone and came into our room and asked what was wrong. "I'm sick," I said. Since he is an elder in the Church, he administered to me. Within minutes, I was up and ready to go. I had no more problems throughout that busy day and it was a great blessing.

Being in His will does not mean we will never have to suffer anything. Christ was totally in God's will and look at all He suffered. But when you are in God's will, He will sustain you. He will keep you, even if the times are bad. Faith does not make things easy. It just makes them possible.



Maybe the Lord knew how weak I was, but He took care of the needs I had on that trip to Africa. Maybe it was so I could share these wonderful testimonies with you.

Seeking God's Will

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6). This is a principle with a promise. To acknowledge the Lord, we must know Him and have a close relationship with Him. We must seek His will. How do we seek God's will in our lives?

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is (Romans 12:1-2).

Through the years, God has taught me a few ways that I can seek His will.

Be constant in prayer. I have what I like to call my little prayers and my big prayers. First thing in the morning and at night when I go to bed, I like spending a lot of time talking to the Lord. Those are my big prayers, and I enjoy spending that time with Him.

But throughout the day, I will talk to God in "little" prayers: "God, please help me," or "God, thank you for that." I know God is right there by me as my friend and my companion. And hopefully I hear Him talking back to me as I try to be constant in prayer, with big and little prayers.

Be actively reading the scriptures. One of the things the Lord told me in my patriarchal blessing was that I was to study the scriptures, even if it's what little time you can find every day. God knows me. I have a hard time stopping my busy life to read and study the scriptures.

I love the scriptures, but I was having a hard time making time to read them. I knew the promises that are there, so a few years ago, I decided I needed to do

better. I had heard in a class the recommendation that we should start small and not make big promises to God that we can't keep.

So I decided to make a commitment to read ten verses of scriptures each day. I know that's not much, but it was a place for me to start, and I have tried to honor that commitment. Some days, I only read ten verses—but other days I might read a chapter or two.

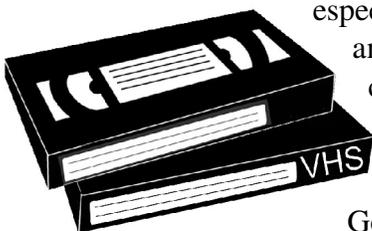
Follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit as He speaks to your heart. Where He leads you might surprise you! I was surprised when God led me to minister in the nursing home.

Seek God's counsel through His priesthood and devoted followers. You don't have to face things alone. If you have big questions or concerns, there are devoted priesthood, family, and friends who will fast and pray with you. You can get help from others. We can lift each other up and bless each other.

Remove those things from your life that separate you from God. A number of years ago, I was praying and I said, "Lord, what more can I do for You? I want to do all that I can. Should I do this more or that more?"

The thought God immediately put in my mind was, "Take things out."

I was surprised. God brought to my mind the books I spent time reading (they were good books, but they should not come before the scriptures) and the movies I spent time watching. I like to watch movies, especially romance movies,



and I had quite a collection of VHS tapes. (This tells you how long ago that was!)

God put into my mind that these things were taking up too much of my time. I also had the thought, "If God walked into my family room, would He be happy with what He finds there?" I began to go through my movies. I remembered that this one had a cuss word and that one had a scene that was not quite appropriate. I filled two grocery sacks with VHS tapes that I got rid of.

I want to be pleasing to the Lord, so I want to put in or take out of my life what He wants so I can be in His will. I know that is the desire that we all have—to be in His will and follow Him all of the days of our life.

Editor's Note: Anita's testimonies are from a women's class which she taught at the Oak Grove Restoration Branch on November 10, 2020. You may watch the class in its entirety by going to www.IGRB.org.

Click on "Videos & Audio" on the menu on the left of the page. Next click on "Oak Grove Video Channel."

Scroll down to find "Weekly Women's Classes Nov 10, 2020" and click there.

What Can We Do?

There are little things
Our hands can do
To ease a burdened life.
There are gentle words
Our tongues can say
To brighten a world of strife.

There are many paths
Our feet can tread
To rest those tired and worn.
Yes, more of us
Can bring peace of mind
To a heart with sorrow torn.

Only God, the maker of all
Can a heart and a soul repair.
But we can answer our brother's call
With an earnest unselfish prayer.

We can pray for those
We cannot help
With a smile or a word or a deed.
And while praying for others
We'll forget ourselves
And we will gain the strength we need.

—Barbara Holtsclaw (sister of Jim Cawley)



Abundant Blessings



-by Anita Turner, Oak Grove, Missouri

On February 17, 2020, I was expecting a fun day with my sisters as they were off from work because it was President's Day and they were coming out to my house. At breakfast, I told my husband, Rick, my right side of my face felt puffy. He did not notice anything different. So, I continued to prepare for my sisters' arrival.

While brushing my teeth, I discovered trouble rinsing my teeth and spitting. And my vision was blurry in the left eye. I thought that was strange. So I sent up a quick prayer to my Heavenly Father that if something was not right, my sisters would notice, and we'd know what to do.

The time arrived when my sisters came. Nancy came in and was looking down so didn't see me, but Betsy stepped halfway in the door and said, "What did you do to your face?"

Nancy spun around and said, "We are taking you to the hospital." They made me talk, raise my arms, and I don't know what else. Well, I didn't have all the symptoms of a stroke, but I knew we'd better make sure. So I called Rick's college and asked the section secretary to have Rick call me because I was having a problem. He called back right away, and I told him what was going on and that the girls were taking me to the emergency room and could he meet us there.

Nancy drove and Betsy sat in the back seat to keep track of me. I just love my sisters! Rick was there when we arrived. The emergency staff rushed me straight back as they thought I had had a stroke, too. They ran a CT, an MRI with and without contrast, a chest-x-ray, an EKG, blood work, and blood sugars—and then we waited. No one ever addressed the fact that my vision was blurry. While waiting for all the test results to come back, Rick, Nancy, and Betsy were allowed to come into my ER patient room.

I thought to myself, "I'm in God's hands. I'm just going to trust Him. I'm very concerned, but God is in control." You see, I had been trying to practice my

faith and trust a lot in the last couple of years because of different trials my family has gone through, and this time it was my turn for a trial.

The doctors and a few nurses came in the room just to "look" at me. We all thought this was a little odd but laughed it off. Everyone was very kind but continued to "look" at me and I would smile at them. But I guess I really did not have a smile.

I was finally told that I did not have a stroke (Praise the Lord!) but it was Bell's palsy on the left side of my face. It was caused by a facial nerve virus and maybe my diabetes. I was given a little steroid, and because I was given contrast during the MRI, I had an awful headache and was given some morphine. They told me to go see a neurologist and my primary care doctor in a week and sent me home. I was very thankful to go home!

My face was very flat on the left side. I looked terrible! Of course, Rick and my family said otherwise. The headache became worse. I made the appointment for my primary care doctor for the following Friday, but I could not get into the neurologist until June 4. Oh dear!

We called the elders and they came to administer to me. I think it was Wednesday night. Two elders from our stewardship group came (small groups within our branch) along with their wives. I was comforted, but still had the headache. On Friday morning, the clinic called and canceled my appointment with my primary care doctor. They said there was nothing they could do for me. I couldn't believe it!

On March 1, we went to church and I had sacrament and was administered to by the elders again. Rick encouraged me to keep calling for a cancellation appointment at the neurologist's office, and so I did. I finally got an appointment for March 4. I took it upon myself to ask for a referral to an ophthalmologist to see why I continued to have blurred vision and thankfully I received it and made

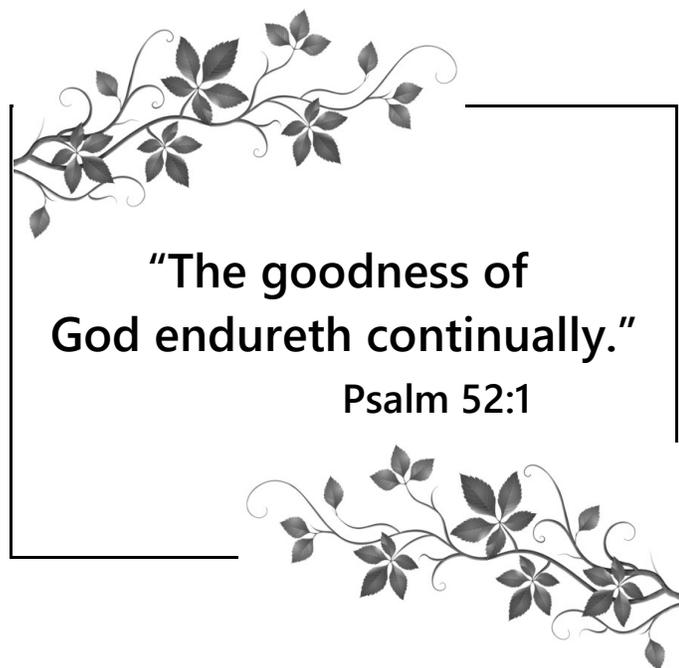
the appointment for March 6. God blessed me in getting these appointments.

What I learned about Bell's palsy from these two doctors was so much more than anything I was given at the emergency room. Three weeks later, I learned my face could stay this way for three months to six years. It just takes time for the nerves to heal. The doctor said 50% of the people get headaches and 50% do not.

My cornea was extremely dry and had I waited much longer I could have eventually lost my sight in that eye. On a one to ten scale where the worst was a ten—that was mine. With Bell's palsy, when you go to sleep your eye does not close at all. We did a lot of eye drops and taped my eye closed every night.

My blessings have been abundant! After several months, my face is back to normal! My eyelid closes almost all the way by itself and my vision is still improving! So many prayers from my family and church families have been an amazing blessing to me. God has truly blessed me! I think I missed being able to smile at people the most. I had an awful sneering smile that scared folks and that made me very sad.

Now with COVID-19, no one gets to see my smile because everyone is wearing a mask. But everyone is learning to smile with their eyes and oh, how they shine and sparkle!



New Year Wishes

What shall I wish thee?
Treasures of earth?
Songs in the springtime?
Pleasure and mirth?
Flow'rs on thy pathway?
Skies ever clear?
Would these ensure thee
A Happy New Year?

What shall I wish thee?
What can be found
Bringing thee sunshine
All the year round
Where is the treasure,
Lasting and dear,
That shall ensure thee
A Happy New Year?

Faith that increaseth
Walking in light;
Hope that aboundeth,
Happy and bright;
Love that is perfect,
Casting out fear-
These shall ensure thee
A Happy New Year!

Peace in the Savior,
Rest at His feet,
Smiles in His countenance,
Radiant and sweet,
Joy in His presence,
Christ ever near!
This will ensure thee
A Happy New Year!

—Frances R. Havergal



Look for the Silver Lining

-by Delores Champ (Heater), Oak Grove, Missouri

On Monday, October 26, 2020, the first snowfall of the season came to the Kansas City area, along with freezing temperatures.

My drive to work in Independence from Oak Grove takes about forty minutes; so does the drive home. When it was time to leave work at 5:00 p.m., my car was covered with snow and its windshield and windows with ice. I hit the remote start button on my key ring, walked out of the office, and got into my car.

After turning on the heat and defroster, I stepped out of my car to get the ice scraper/brush from my back floorboard, and closed the front door, not realizing that it and all the other doors were in the lock position. There I was—all doors locked, car running, and purse and phone inside the car, along with the sought-after ice scraper.

And yet, even in this frustrating situation God was with me. God has taught me to look for the “silver lining” even in the hardest situations. As I took time to think about it, I could see His blessings in this situation:

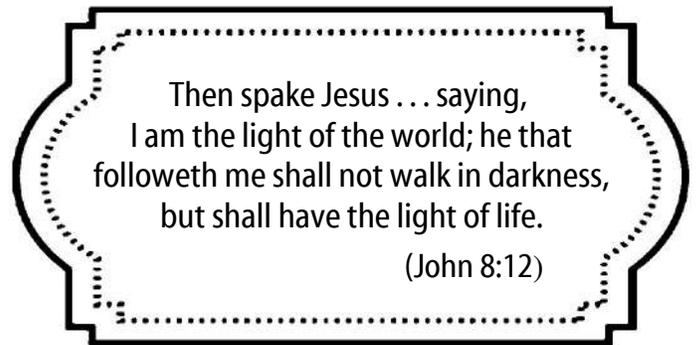
- 1) One of the attorneys I work with was still at the office. I rapped on his window and he let me back inside, so I could be warm and use the telephone.
- 2) It was still daylight (because we were still on daylight savings time).
- 3) Although it was cold, it wasn't precipitating right then and the wind wasn't blowing.
- 4) My husband Dennis answered the phone at home when I called him.
- 5) For supper, leftovers were planned, so Dennis didn't have to stop in the middle of cooking anything to come to my aid.

6) We had a spare set of keys for my car there at the house, which he brought with him.

7) Neither one of us had a meeting scheduled for the evening, so time was not a factor.

8) I had plenty of gas in my car, and since it was idling continually all that time, by the time Dennis got to my office, all the windows were defrosted!

I thanked God for all of these blessings, thanked the other attorney, and Dennis, and of course, got into my car and drove home.



Jesus, the True Light

-by David Strahan, Oak Grove, Missouri

In a dream, I was in a classroom. The class was for juveniles. The teacher asked us to write a story. Several students turned in their story. The teacher viewed some of the stories, then she said, “I wish they could have been stories of Jesus.” I got a piece of paper and started writing.

Over the years, I have heard people tell that they have seen Jesus in a dream or vision. But I have never heard tell of one to explain the great joy one has when they see Jesus. The joy fills your heart and soul. There is no way one can explain that joy.

Whatever brought you the most joy in the world, multiply it a thousand times. It would not compare to the joy one has when they see and taste the goodness of Jesus.

When I go to church, it is to learn about Jesus. There is a hymn called, “I Love to Tell the Story.”

“I love to tell the story, Of unseen things above, Of Jesus and His glory, Of Jesus and His love.”

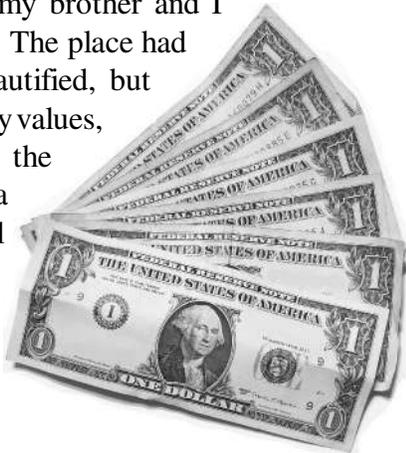
It's Easy to Forget How Blessed We Are

-by Ray Buckwalter, Bates City, Missouri

Last month I stopped for a frozen custard “concrete” on the way home from work. Jamoca almond fudge is a treat that I have several times a year. As I sat there enjoying the combination of flavors, I thought about the cost, which was about six dollars.

Years ago our family lived in a tarpaper shack on the beach near Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico, for a school year. At that time, the average wage of a working man was six dollars per day.

Forty years later, my brother and I revisited “our” beach. The place had been built up and beautified, but after calculating money values, we discovered that the average wage of a working man was still about the same. My ice cream treat would cost our neighbor, our brother, a day’s labor.



Similarly, a doctor from Bangladesh told me that a roll of toilet paper there cost about the same as ten chickens. Recently, I heard a radio pastor say, “On our very worst day, we are better off than the rest of the world.”

Let’s remember to count our blessings. God’s love and tender mercies are new each day. “Praise ye the Lord.”

Blessed to Be a Blessing

-anonymous

There is wisdom in the adage, “Count your blessings.” Following this advice can help us overcome discouragement and disappointments as we remember how blessed we are. Happy people focus on what they DO have and not on what they DON’T. There is always something we can be thankful for.

But let’s take it a step further to think about WHY we have been blessed. In our prosperous country of the USA, it’s easy to start thinking that God exists in order to improve our lives. We begin to believe that if we get something wonderful, it is a well-earned reward or a sign of God’s love for us.

But why have we been blessed? Is it so we can live comfortable lives? We need to remember that we are stewards and everything belongs to God. We need to “pay our blessings forward.” We have been blessed so that we can share our blessings and shine the light and love of Jesus in a dark world so that the cause of Zion might be advanced.

This doesn’t mean that we should not enjoy our blessings, but only that we should not hoard them. Like the miracle of the loaves and fishes, as we share the blessings we have, those blessings grow and multiply until everyone is blessed and satisfied, including us—and there are even leftovers.

Think about what you have been blessed with—talents, possessions, finances, and more. Ask God how you can share the blessings He has given you—and when you hear His answer, act on it!

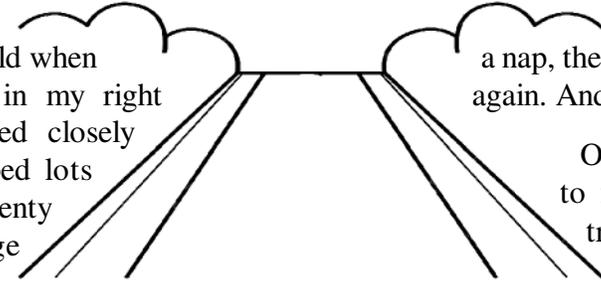
God said to Abraham, “*And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing . . . and in thee shall the families of the earth be blessed*” (Genesis 12:2, emphasis added).

*“But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.
And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ, ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them;
and ye will seek them, for the intent to do good; to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry,
and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick, and the afflicted.”*

(Jacob 2:23-24)

Three Visits Home

-by Wathena Woods Ballantyne



I was going on four years old when tuberculosis was discovered in my right lung. My Aunt Olive worked closely with the doctor, who prescribed lots of fresh air, a good diet, and plenty of rest. I took naps till the age of twelve, but the knowledge of what was the matter, in my closemouthed family, did not come to light for me until I was in my teens.

In another situation, another doctor pointed out the scar and said I had had TB sometime in my life. I was living in California then, and thought back to this particular time and to the fact that Aunt Olive never allowed me to have a TB test taken at school with my classmates. I have no idea how long it took to overcome this illness, but my experiences during that time were most profound.

I had lost Wyoma, my first mother, as well as my older half brother and sister. This brought us Woods children closer, even though it was forbidden to speak of things near to our hearts. We mutually suffered in silence concerning such things. The three of us played together outside in our own little world. Then the tuberculosis happened.

Struggling to adjust, as it was, to strict obedience, and not allowed to question the grownups, I did not understand why my brother and sister were assigned the north lawn across the road in the park, while I was given the south lawn to play in all by myself.

Because I did not understand, there were times when I was sure that little folk were just a bother underfoot and not really wanted. My folks were not outwardly affectionate either, and the truth be told, we *were* an added burden dumped on them by my father, who contributed only a very little to our expenses. He was more prone to ask for money rather than send back money to help out. It was declared by Aunt Olive that she raised me on \$5.00 a month, kept out of her check to cover both her and me in those years.

So I lacked the assurance of being wanted or loved when this new arrangement was set up, and I was sent out daily to play alone. I was called in for lunch and

a nap, then shooed right back outside to play again. And there was *no one* to talk to.

One day when I went outside, it was to find several toys under the apple tree. Nobody said how they got there, but I later surmised that it had been by my folks: Grandfather made a table and chair, a doll bed with slats like grown-up beds had, and a doll cradle. Then he came bringing out a pushcart with a long handle he had just finished after the rest was in use.

I'm sure now that Grandmother was the one who pieced the tiny doll quilt, made the mattress for the bed, and the pillow as well. But no one said anything, and I did not question. Yet, I'm just as sure the aunties purchased the rest. There was a mini iron cookstove with pots and pans, a mini coffee mill, egg beater, cup and spoon. Still, there was no one to talk to and no one to play with.

That fall, when the others went off to school, and the park was devoid of picnickers, Grandmother pointed out an area I might play in, provided I remain in sight of the house. There would be no hiding behind trees or the bandstand. However, there were such things as the teeters, the slides, the gym bars, the swings, and a merry-go-round to enjoy. And I did. Olive laughed in years to come over the egg-sized muscles on my upper arms that were so scrawny. And every day the park seemed to call to me, "Come play."

Now the Burlington Railroad ran twice a day on tracks just north of the park. I could count on the engineer to wave when going by and hobos on the top of the boxcars also waved. There were lots of fathers riding the trains, going nowhere in those days, for the government paid for families whose fathers did not live at home.

It was hard times in 1926, and became worse in the thirties, but in my confined world, the friendly waving of hands and watching the children at play on the school grounds just beyond the tracks, and across the main road going into town, were the highlights of each day.

Tuberculosis carried with it fever, but mostly was remembered in my mind as that “old tired feeling.” It was more than a naptime sleepiness; it was a tiredness I fought, for the sleep it offered was not a quick nap. It was something I did not want to give in to, so I fought to keep going. I did not fight over regular naps and I know now my dreams of a world on fire had to do with times of fever. And, as I played in the park alone, the playground equipment called me to come play on first one and then another of the rides offered there.

After a time, and on a day when that “old tired feeling” was most pronounced, I sat idly on the merry-go-round and doodled with my big toe in the dirt. Then I just sat still. I was so lonesome, and was tempted to just lie down and go to sleep. It had been a long fight. Then I said a firm “NO” to myself and jumped up to go swing.

Presently I stopped swinging and again sat still. I was so tired and more lonely than I had ever felt before. It was then I heard a Voice say to me, “Go walk along the west boundary line.” I looked about. No one was there. In obedience, I rose to do as told.

Now the boundary line was along a cut-through road, dividing the ball diamond from the rest of the park. Coming to the southwest corner of my play area, I discovered a small clay bank. As though always knowing, I ran for a coffee can to scrape the sun-baked clay to powdery smoothness, to which water was added. A quick stir and there was a ball of play dough just right for molding.

Many an hour was spent between the clay bank and the well at Grandmother’s place. Many a fancy was made, to sun dry for play. The toys were fragile, but materials plentiful. It proved a delightful manner in which to spend a lot of time. It was at this clay bank that three experiences occurred which changed my life forever.

The sun was hot that day of my first experience. Its rays burned deep into my back and felt good. The “old tired feeling” was very pronounced. I was fighting to stay awake. My scheduled naptime was not far off, but there were molds I wanted to make. The clay of the bank seemed harder than usual to scrape loose. Still, I kept working to get enough of the powdery smoothness for a batch of play dough—and I was fighting hard to stay awake.

I then became aware of a personage standing beside me. He was dressed all in white. About him was a glow that blurred his face. The light was brighter than the sun. I squinted hard, but I could not see his features.

He reached down and picked me up in his arms. I was not afraid. Up, up, up we rose, high in the sky. Then we turned and journeyed eastward most rapidly. I felt safe in his arms.

Presently there loomed on the horizon a huge, round, white building of many tall and slender windows. It was set in a landscape of beautiful green. Recognizing where I was, I clapped my hands and exclaimed, “I’m home! Oh, I’m home!”

The next I knew, I was being stood down upon marble flooring of a huge hall leading into a spacious and well-lighted room. In the very center was an oversized armchair of wondrously carved wood, in which sat a known Person. The moment my feet touched the floor, I was off like an arrow, heading straight down the hall into the big, round room, and directly toward the One who was watching my approach.

Holding out His arms, He scooped me up onto His lap, and I kissed His cheek while my arms hugged His neck in daughterly affection. Turning then, I settled myself to lean against Him in childish comfort. It was then there came to me the sense of it being all right to talk to Him— something I could not do with the folks in Grandmother’s house. And I found myself chattering on about all the things I was doing down on earth.



After awhile, I sensed it to be time to go back. Immediately I came to myself at the clay bank, in a state of awe and wonderment. It was a thing to ponder, all to myself. There seemed to be no need to share this experience with anyone else. I was becoming as closemouthed as my folks.

A few days later there came a second visit home. The experience was much the same as the first. However, it differed in my reaction to being stood down in the big hallway. Instead of running to reach the One who was waiting for me, I bowed a shameful head and walked ever so slowly forward.

Now I had broken a rule at Grandmother's place, but not been caught, so there had been no punishment. Fearing the razor strap, I had not confessed to any of the adults in our house. It might have been no more than stepping out of the boundary which Grandmother had set for me. There had been such pretty pebbles in the roadway to use as jewels for the molding of clay that I made. But a rule was a rule, and not to be broken.

I was becoming very sin-conscious as Grandmother taught us kids the Ten Commandments. So, as I walked slowly down the hall, there were questions in my mind: "Will He pick me up just as before? Will He be glad to see me? Will I get to hug His neck and kiss His cheek? Will He scold? Will He still love me?"

Coming to stand before Him, not knowing what to expect, I felt joy to find my small person being scooped up, just like before. I flung my arms about His neck to hug, just as before. And I kissed His cheek, just as before. Settled down in His lap of close confiding, I sensed it to be all right to tell Him my burden, which had been so heavy to bear.

He did not scold. His voice was soft and gentle. And He said to me, "Be obedient to those in authority over you, for you will need that discipline in your life later on."

With that, I came to myself at the clay bank, and thinking in firm resolve, said, "I will obey for His sake." This, too, was pondered upon all to myself.

Hardly a week had gone by when still another visit occurred. This time I found myself already seated upon His lap in that spacious room. My legs were dangling, my hands were folded like a lady, which Grandmother was teaching us girls how to be. I looked up into His face to continue the discussion we seemed to be engaged in. We had been speaking of my future. I felt no fear, only faith and trust as I looked up to request, "If there must be operations, let

them come while I am young in life and able to get well, not when I am old and cannot heal."

Once more I was at the clay bank, in the act of scraping dirt, and saying aloud, "This One is always there. This One always listens. This One Is MY FATHER."

At the age of four, I had made the conscious choice pertaining to parental fatherhood. I knew this chosen parent loved and understood me. He was always there to talk to, and thus began the Father-daughter relationship between God and me. All my hopes, dreams, joys, and sorrows were taken to Him—my Heavenly Father. From then on, we communed together on everything. Such opportune confiding gave confidence to rehearse the affairs of my young life to Him with daily devotion and songs of praise. Nothing was kept hidden from my Father in heaven!

As for the operations spoken of, the preface was a playground accident at school. In my middle teens there came the first in a series of operations for corrective surgery and the removal of recurring tumors and cysts. When the series finally ended, it came about by the hand of God in a miracle even the doctor could not overlook. Suffice it to say here, the Heavenly Father was ever mindful of my needs in this matter, for which I give Him all honor and praise.



"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation... And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord...his name is exalted...for he hath done excellent things."

(Isaiah 12:2-5)

A Wonderful Blessing

-by Gwen Tytgat, Amherstburg, Ontario, Canada

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in January 2020. The lump was discovered through a mammography, but I knew it was there. The lump kept moving. My mother's side of the family suffered with cysts and I assumed that was what the lump was. I noticed the lump seemed to grow, so I did the mammogram December 24, 2019.

They gave me the news and in January, I had an ultrasound and more in depth mammogram. They had pictures of the lump in my left breast and nothing in the right. It was a very small lump and they were surprised that I had discovered it.

On March 9, I was scheduled for a biopsy (which I would not wish on my enemy). I was scheduled for a lumpectomy March 24. I was so afraid. I know how prayer works and also I had been getting administrations by laying on of hands of the elders, and I decided to do many more before the surgery. I think I had five in total.

It was asked of me why so many and I remember Bill Davies saying to me years ago that administration by the elders can be done as often as it takes to make you feel better, and I needed to feel better about the whole procedure.

On March 24, the day of the lumpectomy, I had to wait an extra long time because there had been emergencies that took up the operating room. Finally, a nurse came and moved me to the operating room waiting area and said it would only be fifteen minutes.

My husband Ken was waiting with me. We were nervous wrecks. Because of COVID there had not been any church gathering, so we had both contacted many, many groups and asked them to add me and my family to their prayer lists.

The nurse returned and I walked into the operating room and climbed up onto the operating table. I had never done that before. The doctor greeted me and asked me a few questions to make sure he had the right patient. There was a student nurse present and she held my hand during the whole procedure. But what I remember most was the light.

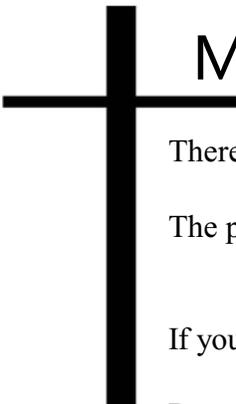
The operation room became very bright behind the doctor and nurses. The lights were already on above the operation table. I lifted my head a bit and could see that the light seemed to be coming from behind all the staff. It was as if there were others in the room. I had prayed for angels to protect me, and I felt they were there. I knew that God had sent His angels.

I settled down. The sedation was administered. (I didn't get sick.) The operation was performed quickly with no problems. Later I was told that the cancer was contained in a milk duct sac and a very clear operation. I was also informed that I would need radiation treatments, but not need chemo therapy at this time.

I will be on the doctors radar for the next two years to make sure the cancer stays away. I give thanks every day for all those who prayed for me and it is wonderful that prayer works.

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

Isaiah 12:2-3



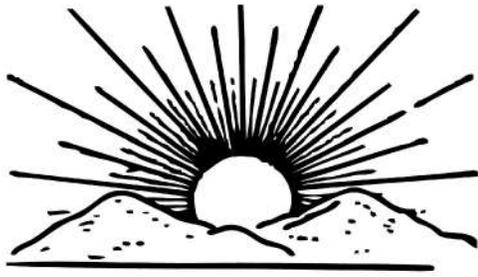
Make Him Lord

There is no other name or way,
The scriptures tell us so,
The path that leads to Calvary
Is the way that we must go.

If you would walk with Jesus,
And always there abide,
Deny thyself, take up they cross,
And you'll be satisfied.

The sands of time are running out,
To wait, we can't afford.
Oh, hasten and surrender now,
Make Jesus Christ your Lord.

—Ira Brosam



Hope Shining Brightly

-by Sherrie Smith, Oak Grove, Missouri

For the last two to three months, we have been actively working on moving our household after thirty-six years in the same place. This process has been extremely stressful for us “old folks” (my husband Lyle and me). The process was doubly difficult because of the battle I’ve had the last five years with an activated virus (not contagious) that affects different people in different ways, but a major symptom experienced by all is extreme fatigue. These difficulties, compounded by the distress and agony over the condition of our beloved country, has caused me to sometimes sink into despair and great discouragement.

On Friday, November 6, during the early morning hours, while feeling such agony that the pores/nerves on my upper body ached, the Lord spoke these words from a hymn into my mind, “there is hope shining brightly before us, and we know that deliverance is nigh. We doubt not the Lord nor his goodness, we’ve proved him in days that are past; the wicked who fight against Zion will surely be smitten at last.”

Such words of comfort. I got out of bed to search out this hymn in the gray hymnal, the one titled simply “The Hymnal,” that we used when I was growing up. But I could not remember the first line. Knowing the words came from a beloved Restoration hymn we used to sing at every world conference, I looked at the index that lists the hymns written by different Restoration authors. As I scrolled through the list, I recognized it immediately when I read the opening words.

We don’t sing this hymn these days because the first line says, “We thank thee, O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days.” In fact, this hymn is not in the blue hymnal our branch and many others use today. Also, the word shining isn’t in the hymn; it is “smiling”: hope smiling brightly.

We thank thee, O God, for a prophet
To guide us in these latter days;

We thank thee for sending the gospel
To lighten our minds with its rays;
We thank thee for every blessing
Bestowed by thy bounteous hands;
We feel it a pleasure to serve thee,
And love to obey thy commands.

When dark clouds of trouble hang o’er us
And threaten our peace to destroy,
There is hope smiling brightly before us,
And we know that deliverance is nigh.
We doubt not the Lord nor his goodness,
We’ve proved him in days that are past;
The wicked who fight against Zion
Will surely be smitten at last.

We’ll sing of his goodness and mercy,
We’ll praise him by day and by night,
Rejoice in his glorious gospel,
And bask in its life-giving light.
Thus on to eternal perfection
The honest and faithful will go,
While they who reject this glad message
Shall never such happiness know. Amen.

(William Fowler)

Two days later, a Sunday morning, while reading my scriptures in preparation for going to church, one of the verses stood out clearly. It’s verse 53 from Luke 22, which describes the arrest and trial of Jesus prior to his crucifixion. “*When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*”

Yes, for a time evil appeared to triumph; it was Satan’s hour. For the followers of Jesus Christ, it was devastating. Without that darkness of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, however, there would have been no glorious resurrection and no marvelous joy that filled his followers.

In the Testimony of John, Jesus tried to prepare his disciples for that which was to come:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world” (John 16:20-21).

This reminded me of Joseph Smith’s first vision in the grove. Satan attacked him so strongly, he thought he would die. Yet a marvelous light and vision appeared that annihilated Satan’s “hour.”

There is a common saying among us that “it is always darkest before dawn.” Yes, we live in those dark days at present, but I am so thankful that the Lord reminded me of “hope smiling brightly before us, and we know that deliverance is nigh.”

May these words “bring consolation to our souls, our drooping spirits cheer.” As we endure this current “hour of darkness,” let’s look forward to the glorious light of the coming kingdom of God!

Follow the Leadings of God’s Spirit

-by Lori Azvedo Smith, Oak Grove, Missouri

God often calls us to do things that don’t seem to make sense or maybe are insignificant at the time. If we follow those leadings, God often does incredible things. Recently I had this experience with my son, Nick. Nick and I have always been close. When he married into a family in 2004, our relationship was going to vastly change—only I didn’t know that at the time.

His wife’s family did everything in their power to influence Nick to cut ties with our family. It was an incredibly difficult time in my life. My heart was broken many times by the decisions Nick was making. I did the only thing I knew to do and that was to pray. I had to surrender my son to God.

During this period of time, God told me I had two responsibilities to my son Nick. That was to love him

unconditionally and to pray without ceasing. Although Nick had been brought up in the Church, he turned from that truth. I hung onto hope in God’s promises.

As he and his wife had children, we were not allowed to spend much time with them. In 2019 Nick left his family with not much but the clothes on his back and got divorced. It was a difficult decision for him to make but someone opened his eyes to see what his wife’s family was destroying. For the first time in nearly twenty years, Nick would call me and we would talk for a long time.

He believed in God, so I spoke many truths from the Bible, since that was our common ground. He was deeply depressed about many things and at times suicidal. I turned to several of my sisters in the Church who I knew were mighty prayer warriors and asked them to pray as well. I received good counsel from some of these sisters because some of them were going through or had been through trials with their adult children too.

During this time, the Spirit began to move upon me as I read my devotions and scriptures every day. I would read something and immediately it reminded me that Nick needed to read this too, so I would text it or email it to him. Sometimes I doubted that this was even making an impact on him, but I continued to do what the Spirit led me to do.

After several months of this, my son made a comment to me one day when we were getting off the phone with each other. He said, “Mom, you know those devotions and scriptures you keep sending me? Please don’t stop sending them. They just seem to come exactly when I need to read them.” I marveled at the power of God to move mightily.

Nick is not a reader. He’s always hated reading. A few times in the past, I have bought him some Christian books that he has asked for but that is the only time I have given him books as a gift. One day before his birthday in March last year, he told me one of the things he left behind at his house was a book on the armor of God, and he had read it so many times, it was highlighted and marked in heavily.



The Spirit of the Lord told me to buy him some books for his birthday this past year. One day while I was online looking at a Christian website that sells books, the Spirit kept telling me to buy books for Nick, so I did. When I was done, I had bought him about twenty books altogether.

Then the Coronavirus situation happened, and I wasn't able to see Nick. I told the Lord, "You had me buy these books and now I can't give them to him. What do I do?"

Nick and his girlfriend had a baby and were in dire financial need. I told them we would buy them diapers whenever they needed them, so I told him I had a huge box of diapers and wanted to know if we could meet so I could give them to him. He agreed to meet me at the AMC Theater parking lot in Independence.

We met there and I gave him the diapers, but also all the books I had bought for his birthday. As he unwrapped each book, I could see the feigned pleasure at opening book after book. I thought I had given the wrong gifts to him. I prayed that these books would call to him to be read and they would inspire him to delve deeper into his Bible.

When we saw Nick and his family for the first time in two months, it was a joyous reunion for all of us. His girlfriend told me that Nick had been reading those books I gave him and had shared many ways God has opened his eyes to his painful experiences. They were both reading these books together. Nick was clinging to the Rock and my heart soared with gratitude to my God.

I followed the leadings of God's Spirit even though it didn't make much sense to me at the time. I have seen the fruits of my prayers (and many others' prayers) and all of the things I bought or sent to Nick. His story is not finished but is constantly changing and expanding.

I would encourage you to do the things the Spirit lays on your heart. It might be something similar to mine or a phone call or mailing a card or something else. Just do it, even if it doesn't seem logical. God's ways are not our ways. He knows the hearts of everyone and what they need at any given time. Trust Him and act upon His leadings. You will never regret it.



The Lamanites Shall Blossom as the Rose

Lehi wept to see in vision
The destruction of his race.
When in wickedness and evil
They were swept from off their place.

Having known such blessed virtue
When in righteousness they walked.
How could they turn away again—
The gospel scorned and mocked?

He saw the Gentiles landing
On the shores of "Joseph's land";
He saw his seed the Lamanites,
Driven, scattered by their hand.
He saw them driven to and fro
With no place to call their own.

But after much affliction,
God's love would to them be shown.
For He had promised mercy,
And said, "In the latter days
They will be brought true knowledge
Of their Shepherd and His ways."

Ancient records would be brought forth
As a voice out of the dust,
And by God's power would speak to them
A message they could trust.
Joseph was the chosen prophet
To translate the plates of gold—
For the message had to come to them
As prophets have foretold.

The book of which we're speaking
Is the Book of Mormon true,
And it must from the Gentile go
To Lamanite and Jew.

For the long, long night is over;
Now the prophets' words must ring
Throughout the land, throughout the nations,
And the house of Israel bring
To the knowledge of their Savior—
And in spite of all their foes,
The Lamanites, as promised,
Then shall blossom as the rose.

—Merva Bird

Sharing Your Testimony of Jesus

-by Francis Harper



Those who have a testimony of Jesus are obligated to share it. If we truly have a testimony of Jesus, we will share it, by word and deed! I love the words of the psalmist, “*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy*” (Psalm 107:2).

Jesus taught:

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure, forth evil things.

And again I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.
(Matthew 12:29-32)

Our words are important. They are not only heard by our family, friends, neighbors and fellow workers, they are also heard and recorded in heaven!

Then they that feared [love] the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name.

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. (Malachi 3:16-17)

Two teenage girls were sitting on a blanket at a Woodbine, Iowa, reunion many years ago. One of the girls told an off-color joke or story. Her companion scolded her for telling it. In her defense, the storyteller said, “We are alone.”

Her friend said, “Jesus is always with us and hears everything we say.”

At this point, the one who had spoken so foolishly, said, “If He is always with us, I will take his picture!” She pointed her camera upward and snapped a photo.

When the photograph was developed, the face and head of Jesus could be seen in the configuration of leaves in the tree above where the girls had been sitting. There are at least three eyewitnesses who saw that photograph who are still living today.

What do we talk about when we meet with family, friends and acquaintances, day by day? Weather? Sports? Markets? World conditions? Family? Gossip? Or a testimony of Jesus?

The Lord will give us testimonies if we diligently seek for them. He will give us opportunities to share our testimonies. He will also give us the wisdom and ability to convey a timely, appropriate word to those who need to hear it.

I often think of words recorded in Isaiah 50:4: “*The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season unto thee . . . He waketh morning by morning, he waketh mine ear to hear as the learned.*” We need to pray for these blessings.

Our testimonies must be supported by a godly life. A cousin, who served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, told of a man who served with him who was constantly talking about Jesus, but was derelict in his duties. His witnessing was ineffective.

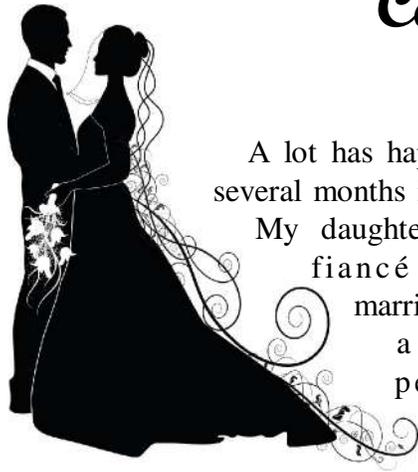
A patriarch in our area suggested we all write a thirty-second testimony of Jesus, being “*ready always to give an answer with meekness and fear to every man that asketh of you a reason for the hope that is in you*” (1 Peter 3:15). A short, concise testimony, accompanied by the Spirit, can lead a friend to the Lord.

I was impressed with this testimony: “I am a follower of Jesus Christ, and my life flows out of that relationship. His life, death, resurrection, has changed my life forever, and has filled my life with meaning, purpose, love, hope, joy, peace and freedom” (Kari Swenson, 25, Des Moines, Iowa, Des Moines Register, December 15, 2007).

If we expect to inherit celestial glory, we must be valiant in testimony. (See D&C 76:6g.)

Corey & Emma's Wedding

-by Neil Kerswell, Australia



A lot has happened in the past several months in my family's life.

My daughter Emma and her fiancé Corey were married last fall. It was a beautiful day. I performed their marriage service and was very thankful to Elder Gary Melling who took the lead of the service until the giving away of Emma, after which I could take my place up front. All who shared throughout the experience did a great job.

I personally was very grateful for the laying on of hands during the week before, which I received under Brother Gary. I had been struggling with all we have been through in recent times and desperately needed a blessing, so I could be open as needed to the leadings of the Holy Ghost. From the time he laid on his hands I felt peace throughout my being. This special peace was there up until and during the wedding service.

My daughter Emma told me the service met every need she had ever hoped for in her wedding service and one of Corey's relatives told me it was the best marriage service he had ever heard in his life. Many other guests also had kind words about the service. Let it suffice to say that Christ was there because two or more were gathered in the name of Jesus Christ and out of love for Corey and Emma.

Before the wedding day, I had a dream where I was looking down on the marriage service as it unfolded. I listened to the words for what seemed a period of time (not all) and had joy in my heart. As I listened, the service at that time was testimony based, which is something I had never done before in a wedding service, and it just worked.

The dream ended, and I thought, I need to change the service to include testimony of God's almighty goodness in the lives of people. There were so many that came to mind. In my notes, I just wrote "testimony" where I thought it might fit.

During the wedding service as it got to that point, I felt led to share a mutual testimony that Corey's mother Leanne and I had as youth in Zion's League many years ago. We had been in two different vehicles as passengers with two brothers driving the vehicles. We crossed paths at an intersection and a terrible accident took place.

The vehicle I was in was pushed back to the firewall and the engine ended up under the vehicle. I came out of it with a cut forehead which bled for about ten to fifteen minutes. I was led by someone to the side of the road where I bled into the gutter until it stopped.

Once over the shock and that sick feeling you get when injured, I walked across to look at the vehicle Leanne had been in and found that where she had been sitting didn't exist anymore. The side of the car was smashed back to about halfway looking like a half moon.

I had seen Leanne walking and knew she looked visibly okay, but I wondered how could she have possibly survived this. Where was she after the hit? I was so very grateful to God she was alive.

It wasn't at that time but at a later date when Leanne told me she felt like a cushion of air lifted her out of her seat and placed her either on or beside the driver. I mentioned in the wedding service that Corey would not be standing here this day marrying my daughter if God had not preserved the life of his mother so many years ago, and I thought but did not say at the time, "and mine."

The added witness came later on the wedding day in the evening when Leanne gave her speech. Her speech contained her testimony of the accident which we had both survived as youth, which harmonized with mine and had some extra details as seen through her experience. She added that it was no surprise that our children should someday find each other and marry after growing up apart.

Corey, although very nervous, did really well, especially in his speech at the end of the night. I was

proud of him. In fact all the speeches were heartfelt and some extremely funny. I was pleased to hear some guests say when saying goodbye to others at the end of the night that it was a great wedding from start to finish.

Now things didn't always go smoothly. The original date for the wedding was back in May 2020, but due to the COVID19 virus, all gatherings were made against the law and the venue had to cancel. Even the day of the wedding was uncertain due to a couple of COVID cases in Brisbane and Ipswich. We didn't count it as certain that the wedding was going to happen until we started getting ready on that day.

There were other problems to overcome leading up to the time of the wedding. However without reservation I can say now that our daughter's wedding day from her parents' point of view went very well and was a blessing to all who attended. We now pray for them every day as a married couple. It is amazing how life changes along the way.

As Brother Gary Melling said on the day, "I hope this day inspires those of you who have made a covenant in marriage to think back to your day and the promises you made for life."

May you all be blessed in the name of Christ, Amen.

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"The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down
in green pastures;
he leadeth me beside
the still waters.
He restoreth my soul."

Psalm 23:1-3



He Restores My Soul

-by Ray Buckwalter, Bates City, Missouri

Christmas at Bass Pro Shop where I work is very hectic! Hundreds of parents bring their children to see Santa Claus and get a free picture. Saturdays are always especially busy, but the last Saturday before Christmas is extreme. It feels like there are "millions" of people coming into the store. During our busiest hour on that Saturday, about nine hundred people passed through the turnstiles.

I don't do very well with large crowds. It is difficult to try to greet each one with a word to uplift, to cheer and brighten their day. The carts are all used very quickly. Unfortunately, Bass Pro Shop bought their carts from two different manufacturers and they often get stuck together. Sometimes they are stuck so tightly that it requires a body slam to release them.

If that's not bad enough, the cart corral has a low beam overhead. One time, a man didn't see the beam and opened his forehead on it. I try hard to keep all the carts pulled out so this does not happen again.

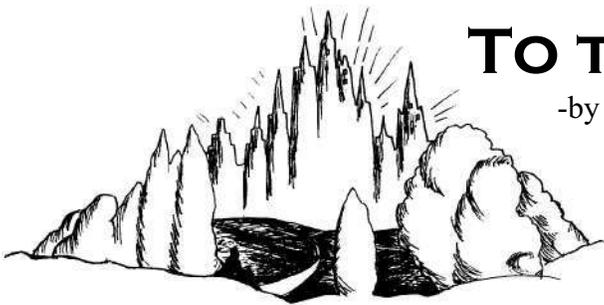
COVID19 prompted Jackson County Health Department to close Bass Pro Shop for a while. Now, of course, everyone is required to wear a mask. A few customers are very belligerent about this and refuse. I try to encourage them to comply with the health department, since I like working at Bass Pro and I do not want them to be closed down again.

This was how the weeks before Christmas had been going. It was stressful to say the least, especially that last Saturday before Christmas.

I attended our branch's Sunday morning Christmas program and it was beautiful and uplifting, but I was still dealing with the stress from the day before.

After lunch at home, I took our dog for a walk. Afterwards, our dog and I sat on the porch enjoying the view of the fields, trees, hills, blue sky and white clouds. It was a beautiful afternoon and everything was bathed in glorious sunlight.

As I absorbed it all and began to count my blessings, God restored my soul. He removed all the stress that I had been feeling. It was like a heavy load was lifted off my shoulders. I am so thankful for God's loving care for us!



TO THE GENERATION OF ZION

-by Irene Gunter and Sheri Gunter Nunn, Oak Grove, Missouri

At the age of fourteen, I attended the RLDS Center Stake Reunion at Camp Doniphan with my mother and sister. I had also invited one of my best friends from grade school to come for the week. We all slept in a six-man tent on the reunion grounds.

Most mornings, my friend and I slept in late and did not attend the 8:00 a.m. morning prayer service. This particular Friday morning, July 8, 1972, I was impressed by the Spirit that I should get up and attend. I got dressed and walked up to the tabernacle. My friend arrived shortly after and sat down beside me. Evangelist-Patriarch Henry Schaefer spoke under the influence of the Holy Spirit in the gift of prophecy during this prayer service.

Twenty years later in June 1992, I was typing up some of my spiritual experiences and dreams on our first computer. I ran across a printed copy of the inspired message given by Brother Schaefer in an issue of *Hastening Times* that my mother had given me. Unfortunately, much of the Xerox copy where she had written her testimony in the edges was too faded to read, and some had been cut off as she copied it. I was impressed to send a copy of this *Hastening Times* article to my friend who had attended this reunion with me. I wrote, "You might like to read this."

She wrote back within a few days saying, "It's odd you would send this to me now. Henry Schaefer has been in my thoughts several times in the past months. I had been remembering what a special Spirit he had and how generously he always shared this with each of us." (Brother Schaefer was our Skylark and Oriole camp pastor a few times at Camp Doniphan.)

My friend went on to tell me she was attending the RLDS church where she was living. Her mom had remarried a few years after the death of her dad, and she and her new husband attended the same church. It gave me great joy to learn they had both become active again in the Church.

After thirty-one years living away from Independence, and after my husband retired from his nursing career with both the army and the Denver VA, we decided to move back to the Center Place and found a house in Oak Grove, Missouri.

Some time after settling into our new home, my sister gave me my parents' collection of photo albums and notebooks of articles to keep. In one notebook I found the original *Hastening Times* article with my mother's handwriting in the border. What a thrill to be able to read my mother's entire message now in her original red ink.

This inspired message given through Evangelist Henry Schaefer has always been a powerful, encouraging, and uplifting message for me through my life. Much of it I did not fully grasp at the age of fourteen. Even forty-eight years later as I reread it, different parts stand out and are understood more clearly.

I yearn for the day spoken about in Genesis 7:71:
"And the Lord said unto Enoch, Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there; and we will receive them into our bosom; and they shall see us, and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other."

Here is my mother's testimony:

A Thrilling Experience

-by Irene Gunter, 1972

My children and I were privileged to attend the (RLDS) reunion of Center Stake at Lake Doniphan [Excelsior Springs, Missouri], July 1972. Prayer meetings were held each morning at 8:00 a.m. and attended by most of the campers, children as well as adults.

During this time, Evangelist-Patriarch Henry Schaefer spoke, giving the Lord's message. My heart and soul were so filled that I felt as if I were no longer under or controlled by the law of gravity. It was as if I were suspended in air.

Later when I would think about the message, I would experience the same feeling. The words spoken were so indelibly printed on my mind that I could repeat the message in full. In fact, while visiting my husband's people [family] in Idaho soon afterwards, I wrote the message out for them.

Before leaving their home, the August 4 edition of *Hastening Times* arrived (Volume 4, number 32, 1972). When I compared my writing of the message from memory, it was almost verbatim with the printed message of Henry Schaefer that was in the paper.

This truly was a very thrilling experience.



Arise and Accept the Challenge

-excerpts from the inspired message given by Evangelist-Patriarch Henry Schaefer, July 28, 1972

I am aware that there has been . . . this sweeping longing within the hearts of my people—a longing for Zion. This has come to pass because it was I who desired to impress upon the heart of each one of you the urgency of the hour into which you have been projected.

For this is indeed the generation of Zion where My mighty works will be realized, where there will be demonstrated to earth's sick and dying ones that I am still God, so that thereby mankind might indeed find new hope, new courage to go forward in the accomplishment of my purposes.

Arise therefore and accept the challenge of this generation of Zion. Remember always that I am the one, the Great Designer—that I have designed that great and noble ideal of the city set on the hill whereby mankind might yet see that My ways are indeed the best ways.

A world of wickedness, a world of doubt and confusion, is in desperate need of the manifestation of the sons and daughters of God so that thereby they

might realize that there is a way to lasting peace. Stand therefore up! Put on your beautiful garments of righteousness, which righteousness is revealed when you establish right relationships with Me, your Creator, as well as with your fellow men.

Stand up, and break down the barriers and the walls that exist between men as individuals, races, as well as nations, for by doing so you can indeed be the ones that can bear the burdens of this world, by showing in a demonstration of righteousness that I am still God, having residence within those that have committed their life to my cause; whereby they have promised that they will be co-workers together with Me in the fulfillment of My glorious purposes.

Never dismay. Never doubt. Just because you are few in numbers, be not discouraged, but be more concerned that each one of you will discipline your life after a pattern which I have set before you through My Beloved Son, for if you do, you shall have the joy of the ministry of My Spirit as never before, for the endowment of My Spirit is at hand. I am willing to make it available to those that I can trust, so that under this power you can go forward accomplishing My purposes as a blessing to all mankind. . . .

There is a host of angels awaiting to be dispatched from eternal glory who are anxious to assist each one of you in the task of building Zion. That this might be made possible, I would encourage you to cleanse your life, to purge your life of all unrighteousness so that it can be My joy to send these angels into your midst, as well as into your homes, in your congregations, so that as a result of this fellowship you can go forward and declare in no uncertain terms that I have residence within you. . . .

Again, I would like to remind you that the coming of My Beloved Son is near at hand. Prepare your life to meet Him so that it can be the greatest reunion of all reunions that I, the Lord, have provided for those that are diligently seeking to serve Me.

May My peace, My joy, and My Spirit continue to abide within your heart. So saith the Spirit.



Joshua's Vision

-by Crystal Lavigne (Joshua's mother), Canada

On September 19, 2019, my youngest child of five came to me that morning with his face glowing and his eyes shining and said, "Mommy, I had a vision." He had just turned seven years old not quite a month prior to this experience. With his face just glowing, he proceeded to tell me some of his vision at that time.

He first started by telling me that, "Jesus showed me everything that is right and wrong with the Church. He showed me everything."

He had a very long vision. Jesus appeared to him twice that night. The first time, my son told me, was when it was still very dark outside. My son sleeps on the lower half of a bunk bed. I tell you this so that you may visualize and appreciate the small amount of wall space between his lower half of the bed and the top bed, as there isn't very much. So my son went on to tell me that Jesus first came to him right there in that small space.

My son seemed quite astonished that Jesus could fit into that small space but be as "big as He normally would be!" Jesus told my son that He was going to come back and see him soon. That vision then closed.

It was in the wee early morning hours that Jesus came back to see him. My son said that he knew that that was the time frame because the sun had just started to show light.

As his vision opened, Jesus said to him, "Come here, my son." Initially, my son said that his family was with him (meaning myself, his dad and his brothers and sister). His vision began with all of us walking down a path together, and Jesus and my son were walking hand-in-hand.

My son explained that this was the most beautiful path ever. It was like a dirt path, but it was straight and it was beautiful and it was tree-lined and the sun was shining through the trees. At the end of the path were these beautiful stairs and to the right-hand side of these beautiful stairs was a beautiful open field. In that field was the cross of Jesus.

Hand in hand, my son and Jesus walked over to the cross, and Jesus was talking with my son. "His voice was so calm and nice." At the cross, which my son

did describe to me, Jesus proceeded to show him the holes in His hands. "Mommy, He's got big holes in His hands and they're real holes, but they're not bloody, but they're just like, holey!"

Jesus showed him the nails and the size of the nails that they used on His hands. "Mommy, you know the size of a pop bottle cap or a water bottle lid, that's how big the nails were. They were huge!" This is how my son Joshua described all of this to me. Jesus and my son conversed a bit at the cross and then they went over to the stairs.

Here is a picture that my son had drawn about his vision:



On the right hand side of the stairs is the field and the cross. My son said he had his sandals on but could still feel how beautiful and soft the grass was. On the top of the cross it has the name, "Jesus," and the nails are in the cross. On the left of the picture are the stairs. At the end of the stairs, he said, were beautiful golden balls. The railings were these beautiful mixed colors, but they were colors that he couldn't describe.

Jesus and my son proceeded to walk hand in hand. up these stairs. My son told me that when he was holding the hand of Jesus, he could "feel the holes in Jesus' hands and they are real!" He did emphasize a time or two just how real these holes are.

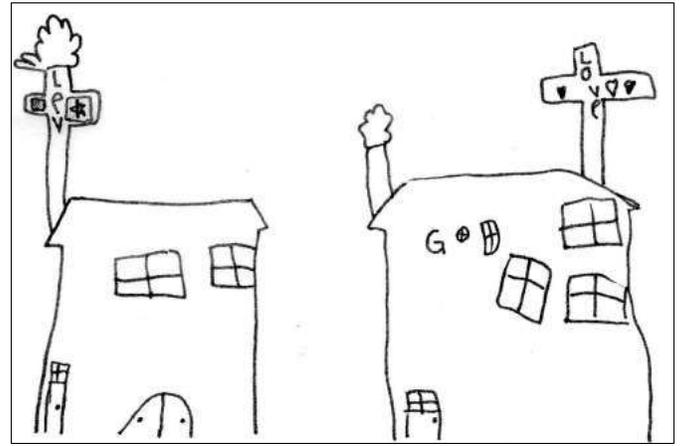
My son and Jesus went all the way to the top of these stairs. At the top of the stairs, this is what my son said happened next: “Mom, Great Grandpa [Leonard Else] and Leo Carrol were there and they ran to me and they each gave me a big hug! I know that they were real because it was real hugs I got from them and they hugged me and they hugged me and it felt so good to be hugged by them.” He continued, “And you wouldn’t believe that they are so young up there! Leo Carrol is thirty-seven years old and Great Grandpa is thirty-six years old.”

My son commented that in heaven you know everybody and nobody is old in heaven. He said that there are so many different colors in heaven. He mentioned that there is no black in heaven because heaven doesn’t have any dark colors. He said that there are colors there that can’t even be described because he has not seen any like them here. He also said that the white in heaven is so white, whiter and brighter than any white we have here.

His vision continued. Joshua commented that when he was talking with Jesus, he was talking just the same as we talk. He was also so nice to talk to. Joshua’s vision was long, but not all of it is for me to share at this time, The remaining part of the vision that I am going to continue to very briefly share is when Jesus was sharing, in my son’s exact words, “Everything that is right and wrong about the church.” I am sharing this, in brief, as this is something that Jesus really emphasized and focused on with my son.

Please know that I simply can’t write everything down in details, but I am doing my prayerful best to convey the message otherwise. It is very important for me to say here, that with everything I have written above and write below this point, that if there are any errors, they are my own.

The following picture is one that my son drew of the two churches that Jesus showed him. In the one church on the left, at the very top of the church, in Joshua’s spelling, is the word LEV [LEAVE]. He described to me that this was the bad church. On the top of the other church on the right-hand side, is Jesus’s Church which has the word LOVE. In the bad church—as my son called it—he was shown what it was doing and what it was doing bad and what was inside it.



He said that inside this bad church it was dark and that this church needed lights. What he was saying was that this bad church needed artificial light to illuminate inside this church in order to give it any light. He did say that even with this light it was still dark inside. Inside this bad church there are broken idols, statues that are prayed to, bad books, bad movies, broken windows, etc. The main focus of this church was the fact that he said to me, “There are idols everywhere and they are all throughout the church.”

In Jesus’ church, he said, it was so bright and there were so many windows, but that it was even brighter than what the windows were letting in. In his own words, he let me know that it didn’t need any artificial light like the bad church needed. It didn’t need anything for light, except the light that was already there.

Inside one part of the church, there were bags and bags (of which type, I do not know). Inside these bags were copies of the Scriptures. They spent some time in this church, but Jesus did go on to focus on the bad church because one of the things that is wrong with our church is the same as the bad church—all the idolatry that we have in it.

Joshua did draw a couple more pictures of what Jesus showed him. One of the pictures was of a very bad man, and his name was either Molech or Chemosh. I could not remember the name he said for the picture when I had labeled that one for him. This man was standing and telling another man which way to go for war. He also drew a man in a chariot (he said it was the same man) who was moving for battle.

My son was taken and shown many, many things about this, but he said that this was a very bad man and our church is falling [fallen?] into the ways of the churches of old.

In the picture below, my son drew one of the idols. As you can see, he has written, "Moe." This was Molech that was being bowed down to in his vision. This is a king bowing down to this idol. The idol was



silver and had painted red eyes. The king has his crown on the floor next to him. Christ was telling my son that no, this stuff is not okay to be doing and that we as a church are still bowing down to idols of old.

He told me much of what he had seen at this point about the idolatry/gods, etc. About their preparation for war and that they liked fighting and bloodshed. I did interject at this point and ask him, "Joshua, weren't you scared seeing all this?"

He looked at me and said, "No, I was with Jesus. You're not scared when you're with Jesus."

His vision was very detailed and long. He was of a manner that I have never seen before, and it did visibly tire him to share his vision. He was excited, yet so calm to share all these things.

I would specifically like to end with this. Jesus took my son through some points in the Scriptures, and the one that I would like to share is D&C 41:2b:

"He that receiveth my law and doeth it, the same is my disciple; and he that saith he receiveth it and doeth it not, the same is not my disciple, and shall be cast out from among you."

I pray for all those who read this small portion of my son's vision that God will send His Spirit to testify of it truthfulness to all those who will hear.

To Joshua's vision, I would like to add the following testimony:

A day or two before Joshua's vision, I had a dream. Leading up to that dream I hadn't had anything for a period of time. I did understand most of my dream upon receiving it, but did not understand the magnitude/depth of it until after Joshua had his vision.

My grandfather was an elder in the church, though inactive for many years leading up to his death (a good part of that was due to health). I want you to understand that I loved my grandparents (my grandma died in 2014) with my whole heart and have always been incredibly close to them. They were my stability as a child. I always told my grandpa that he could never die.

Long story short, he died in 2018, just a few months shy of his ninety-fourth birthday. My hubby and I brought my children up to his home to say goodbye. He looked peaceful. We had a very beautiful goodbye together as a family, the seven of us. I have never felt more at peace with the passing of someone as I did my grandfather.

After his passing I did not dwell upon thoughts of my grandpa very much. I missed him (still do!) and love him, but knew that he was simply just fine. I never questioned once where he may have gone.

Around a year after his passing and with no thought of him being on my mind, he appeared to me in a dream. I only shared this dream at the time with my hubby and possibly any number of my children. I still haven't shared with anyone outside my home, except one person. It was a dream of what I would consider to be of normal length, for me anyway.

I'm not at liberty to share my entire dream, but I will share this. At one point in my dream, as I was in a house that was semi-familiar to me in my dream, but not in waking life, I looked out the front of the house to see a man coming down the street with a skip in his step. He seemed incredibly eager to approach the house and immensely happy.

As he approached the front step and came in through the front door, I recognized this man as my grandpa! He was so excited to see me and I was ecstatic! I said, "Grandpa!" as he came into the room.

He looked at me and he had such a twinkle in his eyes and he was just beaming with excitement to see me, too! He did not utter a word to me however. He was young, and I know he was in his thirties because I remember seeing a picture of him when he was younger. He was so healthy looking and fuller of life than anyone I have seen before.

I couldn't understand why I couldn't just run to him and hug him and why he wasn't talking at first, but then I knew why. As much as he was excited to see me, he had a message to share. What appeared to be almost like a large, white sheet of paper appeared on the floor in front of me. At least, I didn't recall seeing that there before.

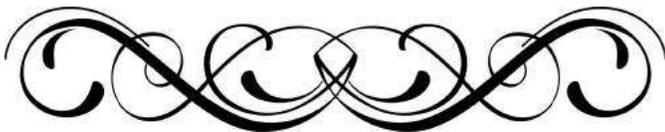
My grandfather immediately got down and started drawing a picture (I have never seen my grandpa so much as sketch a stick figure before in his life!). I looked on with great curiosity, for it was understood at the exact moment that I needed to heed his message.

It was simple. He drew (with what medium I know not, though it almost looked like a marker) what seemed to be the outline of a young boy—almost cookie-cutter like. He then, with the same device, started drawing messy lines with different colors all inside the outline. This immediately was given to me in my mind to represent the confusion.

He then set his drawing medium aside and took his hand and quickly blended all the beautiful colors together to fill in the outline. Not once did any of those colors go past the outline of the boy.

Immediately I knew that this represented the fact the confusion was soon going to be “filled in,” so to speak. It was going to go away and everything is going to make sense.

It was only a night or two later, on September 19, 2019, that Joshua had his most beautiful vision.



Christ is Coming

Christ is coming! Let creation
From her groans and travail cease;
Let the glorious proclamation
Hope restore and faith increase;

Christ is coming! Christ is coming!
Come, Thou blessed Prince of Peace!
Come, Thou blessed Prince of Peace!

Earth can now but tell the story
Of Thy bitter cross and pain;
She shall yet behold Thy glory,
When Thou comest back to reign;

Christ is coming! Christ is coming!
Let each heart repeat the strain.
Let each heart repeat the strain.

With that “blessed hope” before us,
Let no harp remain unstrung;
Let the mighty advent chorus
Onward roll from tongue to tongue:

Christ is coming! Christ is coming!
Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!
Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!

—John Ross Macduff

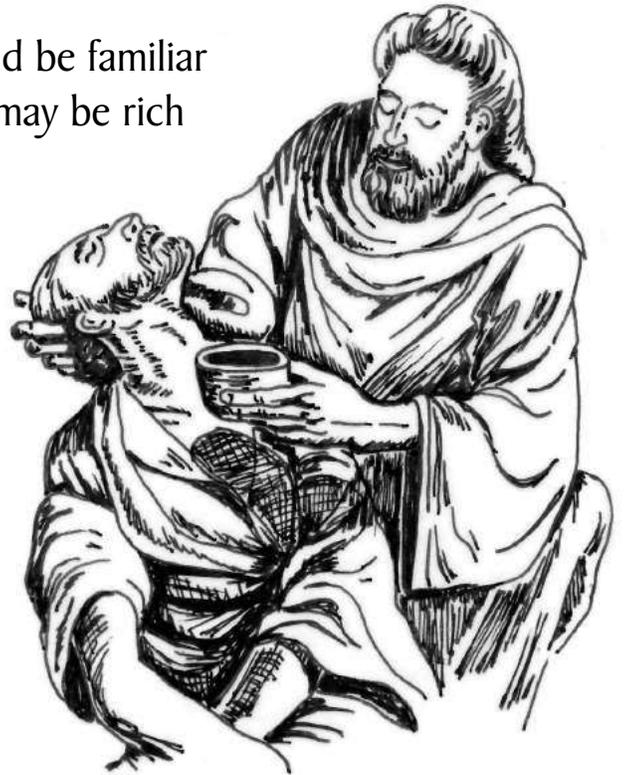
The Book of Mormon . . .

“Think of your brethren, like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all, and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you.

But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ, ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them, for the intent to do good; to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick, and the afflicted.”

Jacob 2:22-24



A Second Witness of Jesus Christ

For more information about the Book of Mormon, or the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ restored to earth in the latter days, write to Zion's Call at the address below.

Zion's Call

Church of Jesus Christ Oak Grove Restoration Branch
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