

Church of Jesus Christ Oak Grove Restoration Branch



Zion the beautiful beckons us on . . .

Volume 31 Number 1

Spring 2022

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:

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**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, Mark Nunn and 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!

Please share your encouraging testimonies of what the Lord is doing in your life—both little and big things! We love receiving the testimonies of our young people, too! Your testimony can bring encouragement to many others!

You may mail or email your testimonies to the addresses on this page.

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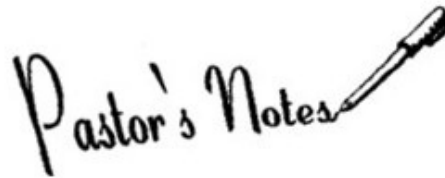
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The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom

-by Elder Aaron Smith, Associate Pastor

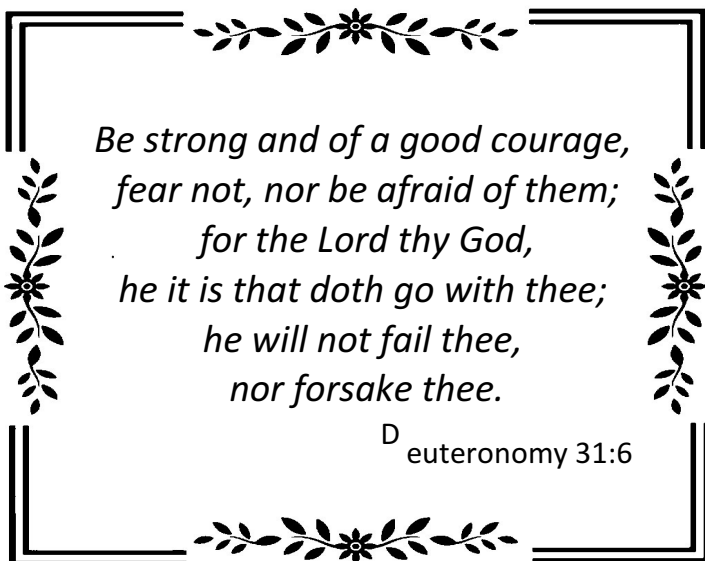
The world as we know it is crumbling around us. Many of the time-proven philosophies, institutions, and relied-upon structures are not only showing cracks in their foundations, but some are literally collapsing. This is a time of great turmoil. Upside down is right-side up now. Evil is good and good is evil. Scripture indicates that in the last days this would be one of the telltale signs. Babylon will collapse (Isaiah 5:20, Revelation 18:1-5).

It would seem we have all sorts of reasons to be afraid. We've placed our retirements, our food sources, our educational systems, and our medical systems in the hands of men. As evil has overtaken the minds of men, these organizations and institutions are showing the effects. Our physical safety has been called into question over the last two years—both in our cities through the long-lasting, devastating riots and in our own health through the pandemic. All around us is chaos.

The media seems to be in a frenzy. Go this way. Do this thing. Talk to these people. Don't believe X. Only believe Y. Their constant barrage of messages can only be avoided as you literally turn off the electronic devices that surround us every day. They are reminiscent of the plagues of frogs in Egypt, where the croaking must have been overwhelming. There is a reason John's revelation refers to the spirits coming from the dragon, beast and false prophet as frogs (Revelation 16:13).

With all of this crumbling and chaos, what are we as Christians to do? **We are to stand firm in the midst of the storm.** We are not to waver. We are not to change our minds. We are not to give in to the world and its wisdom.

Peter faced a storm—a very physical, literal storm—as he exited the boat and walked on the water

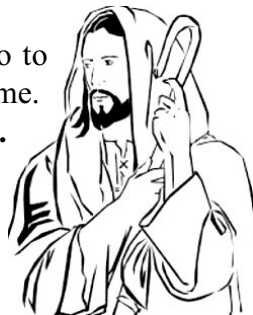


to Jesus. That call from Jesus was enough to give him the faith to walk on water. However, that call was soon overridden by the fact that he was in the midst of a storm, and his physical mind took over. “How will I survive? Look at those waves! Consider the wind.” And he began to sink. His instinct took over. He cried out to Jesus for help. Immediately, Jesus stretched forth his hand and pulled Peter up out of the water. Jesus saved him.

There was another who faced such a time as this as well. Elijah was upon the mountain God commanded him to traverse. There he was met with a whirlwind, a fire, and an earthquake. In none of these things, however, was the voice of God. They could have caused Elijah to go back down the mountain, to be afraid, to question the directive given by God. But he remained steadfast and waited. And in his waiting, he finally heard the still small voice. In his patience and refusal to fear the whirlwinds of life, Elijah found communion with God.

We, too, have been called like Elijah and Peter to a day when there will be many storms, both physical and spiritual. Our faith must be in Christ. As the hymn says, “On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand” (“My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less” by Edward Mote).

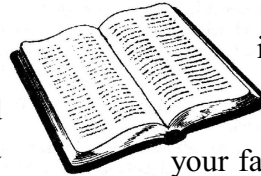
There are several things we can do to endure and to be prepared for this time. **First, come to know the voice of God.** Read His word. Listen during your prayer time. Find others who have heard His voice and consider their experiences. If you don’t know His voice, you aren’t one of His sheep (John 10:1-5). You won’t know to get out of the boat or to climb the mountain or to enter into the wedding feast. This is of paramount importance.



Second, be actively engaged in doing good. The Doctrine and Covenants says we are to do things of our own free will to help the cause of the kingdom (Section 58:6d). Like when riding a bicycle, it is easier to change direction when we are moving rather than standing still. Faith is action. It is doing something. It is in the doing that we find

fruit—whether good or bad—and then we are able to judge and correct course if necessary.

Fear, on the other hand, freezes us. It makes us immovable. It causes us to be locked up and paralyzed in inaction. None of that is good. Stagnant water breeds disease and other problems. Living water flows and moves. It is a fountain.



Third, know God’s word. Satan is more active now because he knows his time is short. He is pulling out all the stops to destroy your soul, your family, the Church, and the nations of the earth. The adversary is the master deceiver. You on your own are no match for him. If we don’t know God’s word, it will be very easy for us to be deceived and wander in forbidden paths (Matthew 24:39, Mark 13:43). If we know God’s word and cling to it, we shall remain on the path through the mists of darkness and find the tree of life (1 Nephi 2:65-69, 1 Nephi 4:35-42).

Remember, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Psalms 111:10, Proverbs 9:10). The fear the devil puts in our lives is selfish. It is concerned with our own well-being and situation, not the overall well-being of the kingdom of God and His work and glory.

Seek first to build up God’s kingdom. He will add all the necessary things to your life (Matthew 6:38, Luke 12:34). Be at peace in this work. Forget not that the three Hebrew children were forged in a literal fire and they came out not even smelling of smoke.

Do not fear what man can do to you. If you are in the service of God and He calls you home, sweet will be that death. But if He deems it necessary to preserve your life, the God of the universe and all creation does not lack in His power to deliver.



“Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you; yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save.”

(Alma 16:218)



Cross on Dry Ground

-by Mike Stice, Oak Grove, Missouri

Recently, I was feeling the need for assurance that God was with me. I knew in my head that God was with me, but I was feeling the need for assurance.

Since suffering a stroke in 2016, I don't sleep well at night. One night, I had been waking up and going to sleep over and over as I often do, when suddenly through a dream or vision, I found myself in the wilderness with the Israelites.

First I was with Moses at the Red Sea. The Israelites were afraid. They felt trapped in an impossible situation with the Red Sea before them and the Egyptian army behind them. They cried out to the Lord and complained to Moses, *"Hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us . . . ?"* (Exodus 14:11).

Moses said to them, *"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today"* (Exodus 14:13).

The Israelites moved forward in obedience to God's command as Moses did what God told him to do and held up his rod, stretching out his hand over the sea. God sent a strong east wind to part the water. And *"the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left"* (Exodus 14:29).

I know the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground. I felt the grit of the dust and pebbles under my feet. God was there, and by His power their enemies were destroyed while they walked on dry ground to safety.

Then I was with Joshua and the Israelites on the banks of the Jordan River. As the people prepared to cross the next day, Joshua said to them, *"Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you"* (Joshua 3:5). Again, they crossed on dry ground. Again, I felt the grit of the dust and pebbles under my feet.

I had the complete assurance that God was there and that He was with me, also. God was doing

everything for the Israelites, but they did not understand who He was. They did not appreciate or recognize all that God had done and was doing for them.

In each of these situations, God took care of them and promised to fight their battles for them. God wants us to have the assurance that He is taking care of us also. He can part the water for us to cross through our trials and through the turmoil of the world on dry ground. God wants us to have faith that He can do this.

"And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed" (Deuteronomy 31:8).

"Therefore, let not your hearts faint, for I say not unto you as I said unto your fathers, Mine angel shall go up before you, but not my presence; but I say unto you, Mine angels shall go before you, and also my presence, and in time ye shall possess the goodly land" (Doctrine and Covenants 100:3f).



† The Lord's Day

-by Patriarch-Evangelist Earl R. Allen

When I was a young man and had only been ordained into the priesthood for a short while, I liked very much to play baseball. I was working six days a week and had only four holidays a year so I felt I needed some time for recreation. By this I justified playing baseball on Sunday afternoon.

I always went to church in the morning and the evening on Sunday but the afternoon was my time for baseball. Some members of the branch counseled me that I shouldn't be playing baseball on Sunday afternoon because that was the Lord's Day, and after all, I was the pastor of the branch, but that counsel fell on deaf ears.

One Sunday a visiting minister who held the office of Patriarch-Evangelist was occupying the pulpit in my branch. I was the presiding elder over the service and my brother, Arthur, was assisting. I had never met the visiting minister before in my life.

After he had preached for some time, he began to speak to the people under the influence of the Good Spirit. I'll paraphrase what he said to us. "I, the Lord, am very disappointed at times with those whom I have called to serve in my ministry. Many afternoons on My Day I see some of my priesthood with their golf equipment in their car on their way to the golf course to spend their afternoon. I also see some with boats hitched to the backs of their cars going to the lake to fish on My Day. I see others playing baseball in the afternoon on My Day when there are so many souls being lost for want of ministry."

Needless to say, some of the members smiled and glanced at me as if to say, "I told you so." The Lord gave me the worst whipping of my life that morning, and if there had been a crack in the floor I would have tried to slip through it. I promised the Lord right there that He would never again find me playing baseball on Sunday afternoon. I haven't done so to this day, neither will I fish nor participate in other recreation on His Day.

As a result of this counsel, I began visiting in the hospital on Sunday afternoon. Not long after that special Sunday, I was visiting in our local hospital. In a small town such as I lived I knew many others

besides those members of my branch, so I visited those I knew that were in the hospital and then went down the elevator to leave.

As I reached for the door a voice spoke to me and said, "Earl, you're not through visiting." I thought that was strange because I didn't know of anyone else I should have visited. I started to go back and when I got to the elevator I talked myself out of it.

Again, as I reached to open the door the same voice said, "Earl, you're not through visiting." Now, you'd think by this time He would have had my attention, but again as I started toward the elevator I talked myself out of going back. The third time I reached for the door the voice again said, "Earl, you're not through visiting."

This time I walked over to the desk and looked on the whirl-a-gig on the desk that had a card for each patient in the hospital. As I turned through these cards, the only name that stood out to me was a man named Pete, religious preference Catholic.

I knew that most of our Catholic friends preferred that their parish priest visit them, but I went down a corridor to look for his room. I found him at the back end of the hall because this was during the time of segregation and he was very dark complected. I hesitated at the door then decided to open it.

To my surprise he seemed to be pleased to see me. I talked with him a couple minutes and found out that he had entered the hospital to have surgery and



was in severe pain. I usually don't stay long in the patient's room under these circumstances, so after a couple more minutes I started to leave.

The same voice said to me, "Earl, have prayer with this man." Of course I didn't know how he would react to that suggestion but I asked if he would like me to pray for him. He agreed to that and I had a short prayer for him and his health.

I left his room as well as the hospital and went about my business. The next Sunday his wife, who was an Assembly of God member, came to my branch for the first time. After the service was over, she bided her time and when there was an opening she came to me and said, "Brother Allen, I would like an audience with you if you can spare the time." I assured her I could do that and shortly we went to the office. She said, "Brother Allen, you went to the hospital and visited my husband last Sunday."

I said, "Yes, I did."

She said, "He was in great pain and waiting for his surgery. He said about ten minutes after you prayed for him and left the room all his pain left him. But that's not what I want to talk to you about. He said that while you were praying for him a voice spoke to him and told him that you represented the true Church of Jesus Christ."

"He has had his surgery and is home now," she continued, "but he wants to know if, when he gets strong enough, would he be welcome to come here to this church?" I assured her that he certainly would be welcome.

During his recovery I visited him a couple times in his home. One Sunday morning I was at the church early and was arranging things on the rostrum when the doors to the sanctuary opened and this man and his wife walked in and came to the front of the sanctuary.

I stepped around the side of the pulpit to shake their hands and saw that he had big tears rolling down his cheeks. He said, "Brother Allen, I know this is the true Church of Jesus Christ and if you think we are worthy, my wife and I would like to be baptized this afternoon."

This couple had received no instruction about the doctrine of the Church and ordinarily you do not

consider baptizing anyone unless they have had some teaching and instruction. I silently asked the Lord what I should say. I asked the man, "Do you really believe this is the true Church of Jesus Christ?"

He said, "I know it is, and we want to be baptized today. You can teach us later anything we need to know, but we want to be baptized today." I told them we would have a baptism that afternoon.

My father said to me after this couple left, "Son, surely you're not going to baptize that man." My Dad was somewhat prejudice because of the color of the man's skin.

I said, "Dad, what would Jesus have done if He had been in this situation?" Dad had to agree with me and I learned later that Dad had invited this couple to his home and had become friends with them.

We didn't have a baptismal font in the church building and attended to baptisms at a pond several miles out in the country. We arranged for the baptism at a given time that afternoon and about forty or fifty people attended.

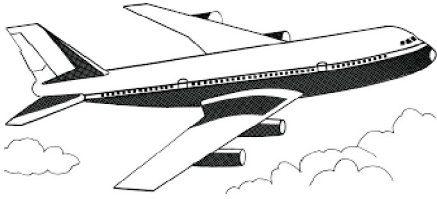
When we arrived at the pond, it was covered bank to bank with old green algae. I said to myself, "Lord, how can we have a baptism under these conditions?" but there was nowhere else to go and we didn't have another choice.

We had the preliminaries of the meeting and when we stepped into the pond for the baptism that algae parted and moved back and when I baptized that couple the water was as clear as if it had been in a font.

These people had the most faith of anyone I've ever known and were dedicated members of the church from that day.

*"One Lord, one faith,
one baptism,
One God and Father of all,
who is above all,
and through all, and in you all."*

Ephesians 4:5-6



My Testimony of Our Gathering

-by Todd Lavigne, Bates City, Missouri

My wife Crystal and I, along with our five children, had lived in Canada for all our lives. For many years we had known that we were called to gather to the Center Place, and for the past two years, the pull had only gotten stronger. Throughout the months of July and August 2021, our conversations really started to revolve around gathering.

At the same time, the adversary's claws began to get deeper into our shoulders, trying to prevent us from going. Every time the conversation about gathering got started, there he was distracting our minds and our attitudes. As September rolled around I started to pray harder. I asked for protection that the adversary wouldn't be allowed to stop me from doing what God was asking of me.

I reached out to a close and dear friend of mine who is an elder in the Church for advice and prayers, and I also reached out to another elder. We set up an online meeting and things started to move really fast. For many nights following that meeting I felt torn. Being but a mere man, I struggled with what I can only describe as petty pride, which was stopping me from going to God and putting my faith in Him who cares for and carries me. It took many calls back and forth to these two elders to finally get over myself, only to realize God had His own agenda in play.

Elder Brian had advised my family do this "fleece prayer" just as Gideon of the Bible had done before going to battle. I proposed this to my family. We all thought, "Well, this is weird, but it worked with the faith of Gideon, so if we ask in faith, then God will let us know." So we grabbed a typical dinner napkin and prayed that if it be God's will for us to gather, then the napkin would be dry come morning.

All that day it had been raining, and I felt as though it wouldn't work and that it was pointless to try. I didn't realize it, but the adversary had decided to stick his nose in and have a heyday with us. He got between my wife and I and pitted us against each other because of my lack of faith. Thankfully, our Almighty Father stepped in and showed me the hurt that I had left in my wake.

It hurt me to see what my lack of faith had caused, and being a father, husband, and a son of God, I knew I had to fix what I had done. After praying with my family members, I heeded the advice I was given and set the napkin out for the night.

In the morning, I let my pride go before me again, and I left for work without looking at the napkin. When I got to work, I received a phone call from my wife asking if I had looked at the napkin. I let her know that no I hadn't, and she let me know that my faith was weak. She then proceeded to let me know that the napkin was dry and that I should have been the one to find that out for myself.

That night we went to God in prayer again and asked as we lay out the napkin again that come morning the napkin would be wet. This time we didn't argue over it. All that day, there was no rain, and we weren't expecting any overnight, but we left it in God's hands that His will would be done.

Come morning, I once again let my pride come over me and left for work without looking. As I was getting ready to start work, I got a call from my loving wife again letting me know that I'm too prideful and that the napkin was wet. Our fleece prayer was answered, and we knew that God had blessed our efforts, even though I was skeptical the whole time.

From there I figured, "Okay, it's time to book some plane tickets and head to Zion." Well, I was wrong. I let my foolish ways stop me again from following what God had planned. Not being able to see any way for me to protect and support my family if we moved to the Center Place, I felt I couldn't do that and put them in danger. I failed again.

I called Elder Aaron multiple times, fearing that I was just not strong enough to follow God and His plan for my family. Aaron helped me to realize that just because I can't see it doesn't mean it's not there—my faith that is. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. He helped me see that if it be God's will for us to gather at this time, things would be taken care of. This went on for a few nights.

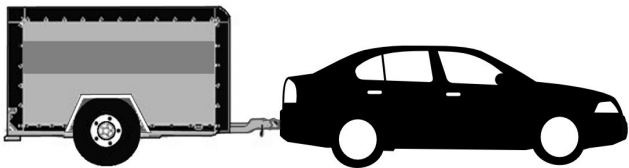
As time passed Aaron kept asking if we were coming. We were on a tight deadline to be able to get any help. I came to the realization that God is bigger than me and my fears and that if I wanted to be able to get help, I had to book the flight. So I did. I booked tickets for my family to fly to the US in ten days.

This is where God came to our rescue. We had a twenty-four hundred square foot house full of our life and only nine days to pack it up and rid ourselves of all of our idols. It was the hardest thing that God had asked us to do, but He had a plan for us.

Without saying it in words, God said to us, “Give up your treasures and I will bless you for it.” Time was ticking away and we weren’t getting anywhere packing. We had four days left and still had a house full of stuff, so we said, “It’s time to have an estate sale and let it all go.” We had a three-day sale and still were left with a houseful.

God didn’t want us to sell; He wanted us to give, so He could give to us. I talked to one of the people who came to the sale and asked him if he could take it all for free. I told him it all had to be gone in twenty-four hours, and he came through for us.

While this was all taking place, the elders who were helping and praying for us had work to do for us here in Zion. There were many people in Independence doing their part to try and find ways to help us out. Elder John and his wife had taken upon themselves the grand task of coming all the way to Canada to pick up as much of our belongings as they could in a U-Haul trailer and the back seat of their car. They arrived at our house around noon and asked that we work as fast as we could so they could be on their way back home.



We managed to pack the back of the car and the trailer as fast and neatly as we could in just under two hours. We said a prayer with them and sent them on their way. All the while, we still managed to keep working on getting ourselves ready for departure.

Now came the hard part—our cat and dog. I had to take our cat and dog to the vet. The dog needed to get his shots up to date, but our beloved cat had to be put

down. My family was devastated, but we had to end his suffering.

After I consoled my wife and children about our cat, we had to say goodbye to our dog for a few weeks, as he had to go to someone else’s house while we made the final push to leave and fly out of the country. We did not know this person, but had to put our faith in her that she would be able to take care of our dog until we could send for him.

We had less than twenty-four hours before we had to be at the airport. We were grieving for our cat and unsure how our dog was going to react to being in a new strange environment. All we could do was put our faith in God and pray that all was going to work out in His favor.

We could not sleep that night for the time had finally come for us to actually leave. The morning took forever to arrive. My mother arrived to take us to the airport. Our hearts were thumping in our chests. We went to the neighbor’s house and bid them a final farewell. It was difficult, but we knew God was with us. The time arrived, and we all piled into our van and headed off to the airport. We had five hours before takeoff and time was going by fast.

We arrived at the airport with the three-hour buffer for international flights like advised. We picked up our tickets and headed for customs. When we got to customs, the officer we had to deal with was, well... a custom agent, and he acted like one, taking his time. We ended up having to go for further screening, and the clock was winding down at what felt like an endless minute. All we could do was pray in our heads and hearts, as it was too busy and loud to pray aloud.

It was finally our turn to be spoken to. I was called to the counter and had to call my wife to join me. We had to ask our older children to watch our younger ones while we went into the back with the officers. As they started asking us how much money we were carrying we felt little relief. I then had to explain what we were doing to the superior officer, who didn’t understand why we were doing this.

As I started to explain things, I could see and hear the other officer (who didn’t seem to like anyone that day) denying passage to everyone she was speaking to. As I was explaining our situation to the first officer, my wife and children were in silent prayer for

us, and God once again joined us and softened the hearts of the ones who held our fate in the balance.

The angry officer came over to us and asked what was going on. The officer I was dealing with said, “I like them. I’m letting them in.”

Under her breath, I heard the angry officer say, “I wouldn’t!” That’s when I knew God was there opening the door.

We had twenty minutes after clearing customs to make it to the other end of the airport. We had to make a twenty-five minute walk in twenty minutes or less. Off we went, running through the airport. We made it to our flight with seconds to spare.

All the doubt I had carried was gone. We were about to board the plane and take the next step closer to what our God had called us to do. Then we were off and there was no going back. There was nothing behind for us. It was all gone. What was ahead of us was what we were looking for—Zion.

Our plane landed in Detroit just over an hour later, but with no cell service, we had no way to contact Elder Jay to let him know we had arrived. Walking around the airport looking for him, we grew scared. I ended up asking an airport employee if there was a pay phone around that I could use, and she offered to call from her phone. Soon Elder Jay and Elder Kerri pulled up, and we were one step closer to our destination.

All seven of us and our two friendly escorts climbed into the van, and we were off toward the land of Zion. As we drove down the highway, I could feel all worry and doubt stay behind, because God was leading the way, and we were along for the ride. It took a day and a half to drive here to the Center Place, and when we reached our final destination we felt completely at home. There was even a hot dinner waiting in the kitchen for us.

Our Heavenly Father works in very mysterious ways to accomplish His will. If we listen and heed His commandments, we can reap the great and many rewards He has for us. Sometimes they seem weird and far out there, but listen and follow that still small voice in your heart, because it is Him telling you what to do.

It was a long road to get here, but we look forward to helping build our Heavenly Father’s Zion.



The Miracle Administration

-by Larry Clark, Blue Springs, Missouri

Last August our older daughter, Lisa, called to say that Carole, our younger daughter, was in the hospital’s ICU in Marshall, Missouri. Her condition with COVID was serious. Lisa asked me if I would meet her at the hospital to administer to Carole. Because of the distance and not being sure how long I would be there, I went alone.

At the hospital Lisa and I were in a small waiting room and were told a nurse would contact us. About thirty minutes later a nurse came in and told us that no visitors were allowed and that Carole’s situation with COVID was very serious. The nurse stated that Carole needed 85% oxygen flow and may need to be put on a ventilator.

Lisa and I were disappointed that we could not get in to see Carole. The nurse went back to check on Carole while Lisa and I remained in the waiting room. The nurse returned with the good news that Carole’s oxygen need had dropped to 60% oxygen flow.

We visited with the nurse for a while and asked him to give Carole our thoughts and prayers. Lisa and I continued to visit. I still felt some disappointment that I was unable to administer to Carole. The nurse returned with more encouraging news: Carole’s oxygen need was now at 40% oxygen flow.

The next morning the family received a phone call from the hospital informing us that Carole’s oxygen need was much lower and she would be released in a day or two.

When I heard the news, these words were impressed upon my mind: “Because you were there Carole was administered to and received the blessing that was in store for her.”

We never know when our willing presence is the ministry needed to accomplish blessings and even miracles that are in store for His children.

I Still Believe in Miracles

-by Ray Buckwalter, Oak Grove, Missouri

Recently I read an account of a sea rescue in *Sail Magazine* that captured my attention. Even though the people involved did not seem to fully recognize it, I immediately saw that God had worked in a miraculous way in everything that had happened.

A fairly new sailor and three of his friends had taken out their boat and were headed from Marina del Rey to Paradise Cove, off Malibu, California. When they were about three miles offshore, a pod of dolphins swimming across the bow of their sailboat caught their attention. As they looked that direction, they thought they saw a human hand sticking out of the water. Steering closer, they saw a young woman in the water, barely afloat.

Just two weeks earlier, this new sailor had completed rescue and man overboard training, so he knew exactly what to do. The woman in the water was very weak and unable to grasp the float cushion they threw to her, but the sailor also had a water rescue bag. Using this, they were able to pull the woman alongside the boat and get her safely on board.

The crew contacted the authorities who sent a boat to rush the woman to the hospital. She spent three days in the hospital being treated for hypothermia. Evidently, she had been in the water about twelve hours before being rescued.

The sailor stated that he did not believe in divine intervention, but then said that he thanked God for everything that went right to allow him to find and rescue the woman.

Let's think about what happened. What are the odds of this woman surviving twelve hours in cold California water? How was it that her body's core temperature had not dropped too low and her condition was still reversible?

Was it just coincidence that the pod of dolphins found her and milled about her, attracting the sailor's attention? What were the chances of the sailor and his friends being on that exact course on that day and ending up at the exact spot at the exact time necessary to see the woman's hand above the water? Was it just chance that this sailor had recently completed

extensive rescue and man overboard training?

Was it just chance that the sailor was able to reach the needed authorities when he was three miles out to sea? Was it a coincidence that a boat was immediately available to transport the woman to the hospital?

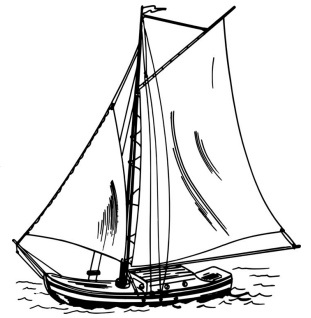
Even though the sailor said he did not believe in divine intervention, he thanked God for all the things that fell into place for that woman's life to be saved. Only God could have orchestrated all the pieces that needed to come together for that woman to be rescued. Her rescue and survival were completely a miracle!

I have sailed in the Gulf of Mexico on a thirty-six-foot catamaran. One time, I was sailing with friends on a beautiful, bright summer day. The wind was about ten to twelve knots (about 11 to 13 miles per hour). The swell (waves) was from the side. As the waves lifted us, we would slide sideways.

It was an absolutely exhilarating experience—until a daggerboard broke. (A daggerboard is a type of keel used by sailing craft.) I wanted to retrieve the piece of wood that broke off so I could use it for a pattern to make a new daggerboard. I turned around as fast as a large sailboat could manage, and my friends and I scanned the sea for a floating object that was about three feet by eighteen inches. Our four pairs of eyes could not find it.

If our eyes could not spot that large board, how could that sailor and his friends spot one small hand barely sticking out of the water? Only God could have brought that about.

I wish I knew the young woman's story and how this miraculous rescue impacted her life. One thing we know for sure is that God has plans for her life that had not yet been fulfilled.





A Great Desire

-by Jennifer Henderson, Blue Springs, Missouri

For many years I have desired to live in the Center Place—Independence, Missouri—which has been designated by our Heavenly Father to be the place for establishing His holy city, Zion, the New Jerusalem. Growing up in a family with parents who were baptized into the RLDS church, attempts were made to help me know my Lord and Savior, understand the gospel, and know somewhat of the history of the Church.

When I was about seven or eight years of age, I heard part of an evening sermon that caused me to feel how wonderful it must have been to live in the time of Jesus and see the great miracles of healing He performed. As I listened, I began to wish I lived in that time period and felt sad that I didn't.

As I sat there in church next to my mother, I started to think, "If only I could have that love of Jesus in my life." Then I remembered hearing the speaker quote scripture and tell us that anyone in any time could have the love of Jesus with them if they were only willing to believe, even on the words of His disciples which were in the Bible, Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants!

When I heard that, I felt a very warm feeling enter my heart and chest. I thought maybe that was the love of Jesus, but I didn't know for sure. I began to pray that it was. I had a great desire to believe.

In Sunday school, I heard children's stories about Bible times. Before I was eight years old, I was told I should attend a special baptismal class taught by our pastor "Brownie" (Elder Harper Brown). I can't remember most of what he tried to teach us, but I remember that I was happy to attend the class. I always knew our pastor loved teaching us children. He had a very kind and beautiful voice (especially when he sang "Oh, Holy Night," when we celebrated Jesus' birth).

After the baptismal class we were asked if we would like to be baptized and I did, as did others. So it was arranged that several of us children were baptized in the Little Chico Creek outside of town and

the service for the baptism of the Holy Ghost followed on another Sunday.

After I was baptized, somehow I thought that now that the Holy Spirit was with me I would always be protected from the temptations of sin and evil—as if I now had a super power. It wasn't long before I realized that I still made wrong choices which often got me into big trouble. I was in my twenties, I think, before I realized that the Holy Spirit was not going to stop me from making mistakes and wrong choices.

It took me a long time to recognize the impress of the Holy Spirit when it spoke to my mind and heart ever so gently, helping me to repent and trying to help me rely in faith on the power of my Heavenly Father. All too often, even in my thirties, I gave in to selfish desires, not realizing just how deceived I was.

As I grew older, I began to have a desire in my heart to read the Bible and find those special stories I'd heard in Sunday school to see if I could tell if they were true. I was given a King James Bible and I looked up the stories of the creation, Adam and Eve, Moses and the Israelites, Samson and Delilah, Mary and the birth of Jesus.

The more I read, the more I thirsted, but a lot of the King James Bible left me confused. Much of the wording was hard to understand and some things just didn't make sense to me, even though I'd prayed for help before and during reading.

Much later I was blessed to receive my own Three in One Scriptures as a gift from my husband (the Inspired Version of the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants bound as one book). It was amazing to me how our Heavenly Father through the gift of His Holy Spirit had enabled Joseph Smith to receive more light and to correct many areas of the King James Bible that had been corrupted in the translation process.

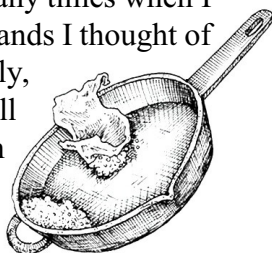
Besides the Inspired Version, there was further insight given to me while reading the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants! As I read the Book of Mormon, I knew I was reading factual

happenings to a people who lived on this continent many years ago. Although the way it was written was a bit strange with phrases like, “And it came to pass,” I was blessed with understanding as I read and prayed about it.

I continued to pray before I read God’s Word and felt that my prayers were answered regarding my various questions. This did not always happen right away, but over the course of time I was given more and more insight. Just as we are told, we learn line upon line, precept upon precept and are given grace for grace, a little here and a little there as we are willing to accept. (See 2 Nephi 12:36.)

When I was married with young children, I found it more difficult to make time to study. I was happy that I’d learned some things and became quite complacent.

There were still too many times that I gave in to selfishness. The bad choices I made caused my family and friends to have difficulty believing I was a Christian. Still, deep in my heart I desired to be in the Center Place and have a Zion home life. I felt so guilty at times, and repentance became very important for me and needed so very often! Many times when I washed dishes or even washed my hands I thought of how I needed cleansing spiritually, I began to be more appreciative of all Jesus did for me (especially when I had to scour a broiler pan or black skillet)!



I began to learn about faith and how to apply it, and my prayers became stronger within my heart and mind. I loved sharing at prayer meetings in Monterey, California, with the small group of Saints. I received strength from the prayers of others as well. But at home, I didn’t really pray much out loud, mostly just in my heart.

Many times I was able to see how the prayers of my heart were answered undeniably. My relationship with my Lord Jesus Christ was so special, I wanted others to understand, and yet I found it difficult to witness to those around me.

Singing praises helped me through my house and yard work, while my husband was at work and my children in school. Reading all the wonderful ways others were blessed in the testimonies printed in

Church publications and the many books I ordered was also a great escape for me from the strain of my life. My faith and hope increased slowly.

I especially felt the desire to gather after my parents gathered back to the Center Place in 1984, and my eldest sister, plus two younger sisters also followed. Around this time, our Monterey Branch split up and several of the Saints began meeting in homes, rather than try to worship where new doctrine was being adopted that did not agree with the scriptures and ordinances of the Church. This caused a lot of grief and yet spurred me on to study the scriptures even more carefully.

Over the next several years, more and more of the Monterey Saints decided to gather to the Center Place. Even our son, Mike, Jr., had an experience and shared his testimony saying that he and our daughter-in-law would obey the call to gather.

After all of our little faithful Church group members were gone, I began to desire more and more that my husband would be willing to worship together with me in our home on Sundays. After praying for courage for several weeks, I finally asked Mickeal if he would be willing to join me in reading the scriptures, and praying together for insight and understanding, so that he might come to understand what I believed and learn more about the Church that Jesus Christ had restored through Joseph Smith, Jr.

Praise God, Mickeal agreed to worship with me as I’d hoped and prayed. It was difficult in the beginning as we found ourselves getting into arguments about questions that arose, and there was an evil spirit working against us. After we noticed what was taking place, we both prayed and began discussing the materials and Scriptures with the peaceful Holy Spirit guiding us, preventing contention and strife from entering in. We enjoyed singing hymns together more and more as Mickeal became familiar with them and found he could sing!

From December 1994 through April 2004, Mickeal and I read through a lot of the Old Testament, all of the New Testament, all of the Book of Mormon and most of the Doctrine and Covenants, besides using old Junior High Sunday School Quarterlies on Church history and following up with *The History of the Church* by Inez Smith Davis.

In 1995, I flew alone to Missouri to visit my parents. I attended the evening preaching service at the Independence Branch with them on March 19. I had my Scriptures with me so I could look up and read along while the elder preaching read the Word of God.

I don't remember anything else, except the verses in Doctrine and Covenants 34: 5c. It seemed like the words, "...Tarry with him and he shall journey with you; forsake him not and surely these things shall be fulfilled," were meant for me. I wanted to claim those words as my Heavenly Father's answer since I had been praying to know if my husband would come with me to church and believe all he needed to.

In April 2004, Mickeal and I realized that our son Mike Jr. and daughter-in-law Tina were having financial difficulties and problems with a house they had bought in Independence, Missouri. He suggested that we go and help them fix up the house to sell and then they could move back to California and find jobs there while living in the granny house on our property. Hopefully, in time they could save money to return to the Center Place after a while.

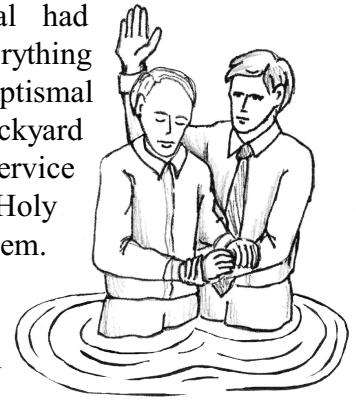
We so very much missed them when they had moved away and our grandchildren were born in Missouri. We could be daycare for our grandchildren since Mickeal was retired and I only worked part time. We greatly desired to be near them again and the idea of being able to help with our grandchildren, Tehya and Isaac, was a real incentive. So they moved back to California and lived behind us in the granny house for six and a half years.

Our son Mike had been ordained a priest in 1992 and just before he and his wife came to live in our granny house, he received an ordination to the office of elder. This was a great blessing to us, as there weren't any Restoration elders nearby in California.

Mike prayerfully and skillfully prepared very interesting mini sermons that helped us to have family worship times together on Sundays in our living room. The Holy Spirit's presence was such a blessing for us and it was so special to sing hymns of praise together.

On November 5, 2006, my husband Mickeal Sr. and our grandson Isaac were baptized by our son Elder Mike Jr., in a small service at our home. Mike

and his father Mickeal had planned and worked everything out together to build a baptismal font in our fenced in backyard patio. Later, we held a service for the baptism of the Holy Spirit for the two of them. Mickeal Sr. had always told Isaac that they would be baptized together.



The topic of gathering back to the Center Place came up again over the years while our children lived behind us. In 2009, we had the opportunity to travel with the grandchildren to Missouri to visit with my eldest sister, Sallie, who was dying of cancer.

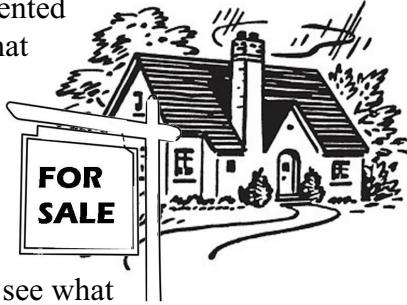
After Mike and Tina flew out and picked up the children, an old friend invited Mickeal and I to stay in her home for a few days. Vera was the widow of Elder Harold Cline, our former Monterey Branch's pastor. Vera and Harold had moved to a beautiful house in Blue Springs, Missouri, in the mid 1980's where she continued to live after her husband passed away.

As we stayed with Vera, Mickeal began to view the area with more and more interest. We decided that while we were in Missouri we would look into property for sale. Of course, that was definitely one of my dearest heart's desires, as our Heavenly Father knew!

After we returned to California, Mickeal and I began looking online at properties for sale in the Jackson County area. We contacted Ron, a real estate agent who was a member of the Restored Gospel. Since it was difficult to communicate regarding properties for sale at such a great distance, we decided to make another trip, this time flying to Missouri. Again Vera kindly offered to allow us to stay with her. We flew out in February 2010.

During that visit, Ron took us around to many properties, none of which we agreed upon. I began to be concerned because if I thought a place had potential, Mickeal didn't, and vice versa. I thought maybe we were praying amiss. It was impressed on my mind to pray that we would have common consent regarding whatever property God wanted us to purchase—if we should buy anything.

On the last day before we were to return to California, Mickeal suggested that we take a walk around the block in Vera's neighborhood. We were both feeling somewhat discouraged. Even though it had recently snowed and the air was brisk, the sun was shining, so we walked. As we did so, we noticed a for sale sign in the front yard of a house just a block away from Vera's home. There was no real estate agency listed on the sign, though, which we thought was odd. Mickeal commented that we hadn't seen that sign when we had driven around a few days before.



The house was very nice looking from the front. We both wanted to see what the backyard looked like, so we walked through the three or four inches of snow to the fenced yard and peeked in. We saw several trees which gave the area a park-like ambience. You should have heard our audible exclamations! We both liked what we saw!

Almost immediately, I felt discouragement enter my mind. We had looked into other houses in this neighborhood and they were all about \$50,000 over the limit of what Mickeal had figured we could spend. I prayed silently, "Lord, if you want us to have this house, you'll have to bring the price down, in Jesus' Holy name, Amen!"

As if Mickeal had heard my prayer, he said, "Maybe we'll have Ron look into this house for us after we get back to California. With the economy going down," he added, "possibly the price will be such that we can afford it." These words were so encouraging to me! It gave me added hope and my faith was boosted! Surely, our heavenly Father heard my unspoken prayer!

Ron did check out the property for us and found out that the listing was with another agent whom he knew. The price was very high, but we decided to put in a low offer anyway. Our offer wasn't accepted, so we raised it several thousand higher. It still wasn't accepted, but the owners brought their price down a little. We offered a bit more, but they still didn't accept. We figured that was it. We could not get that house.

Several months went by and Ron called to tell us that the house still hadn't sold and the owners were wondering if we were still interested. We said yes, but didn't raise our offer much. This time they accepted, but nothing was in writing or signed.

At the same time, I had a health issue show up and had to have an angiogram done to check my heart for clots. Mickeal called Ron and told him the situation, and explained he would not be able to fly out to sign the papers. The sellers were not happy, and the deal fell through.

My angiogram was clear. No clots were found, thanks be to God Almighty! But now we didn't have the house we wanted.

In August, Ron called us to say the sellers were again asking if we were still interested in buying their property. Mickeal asked me, and I said yes! This time we agreed with their current price which was about \$50,000 less than the original price listed. Before we made arrangements to fly out and sign papers, Ron called to say that the sellers had found another buyer who was offering more money. It was such a difficult thing to bear.

We continued to pray about it. Our daughter-in-law Tina told us that as she was praying, it was impressed upon her heart not to discount this house and property, yet! A week later, Ron called us to say that the other potential buyer had changed his mind, so yet again the sellers wondered if we'd buy?

We agreed to buy and Mickeal purchased airline tickets right away. He would look over the house and if everything was good, he would sign the papers himself. I wasn't able to go, as I had leg vein surgery scheduled.

Mickeal flew to Missouri. Just before I went into surgery, he called me. He said that the house had been inspected and everything looked even better than we had seen online. Plus, the owners had built a new deck in an attempt to encourage the other buyer to purchase.

"Should I sign?" he asked.

I said "YES, sign the papers!"

Our God is a truly awesome God! He helped us through all the trials of that year and opened all the

right doors. I believe He allowed those trials, as our faith needed to be tested! We had wanted a house large enough to enable Mike, Tina, Tehya, and Isaac to move back also and live with us until they could afford to buy their own house, and God provided it.

We still had quite a few trials to pass through before we settled permanently in our new home in the Center Place. We still had to get used to the climate of Missouri, which was a huge change for us. For a couple of years, we traveled back and forth between Missouri and California about every six months.

Then Mickael began to suffer from rapid, irregular heartbeats and needed medical treatment and finally surgery. It was difficult for him to endure. There was so much to do to get our California home ready to sell, yet Mickael had to be careful not to strain his heart.

At the same time, our little dog's health began failing, plus we were caring for Mickael's brother's ailing dog while he was out of the country. I had my hands full, being nurse to my husband, our little mini Schnauzer, and a Beagle.

At the end of December 2015, both the dogs had to be put to sleep as they were suffering so much. It was a very sad time and yet we knew it was the merciful thing to do. We were comforted knowing that the pooches were in heaven together and finally free of pain. Our Heavenly Father loves all His creatures so very much!

As much as we missed our little mini Schnauzer, we now could focus more intently on readying the house and property for sale. We found an agent to help us and we listed the price fairly high, as we had two lots with the granny house on the back lot. It became necessary to lower our price when we figured out that there weren't many buyers willing to have the granny house, but we finally found a buyer.

In the middle of all this, Mickeal had to have another heart surgery to fix the same problem again. Our younger son Bill and his wife Sara came for a week to help us pack things up. Since Mickeal wasn't supposed to do a lot of heavy lifting, our eldest son, Mike Jr., also flew out to California to help with the loading and to help drive us back to Blue Springs, Missouri.

God worked everything out, and we were able to stay in a hotel that last night. On the morning of December 6, we drove out of Pacific Grove, California. We arrived back in Blue Springs, Missouri, with hearts full of gratitude for all the many blessings throughout another very hectic year. Our Heavenly Father and Lord Jesus Christ went before us, helping us through all the difficulties, guiding us, and giving us understanding and wisdom the whole way, through Mickeal and through the faithful prayers of the Saints!

We have still had many times of testing since moving here, but it is such a wonderful blessing to be living in the Center Place these past five years! May Almighty God continue to keep us in His loving care, in Jesus Christ's most Holy name!

Wait on the Lord

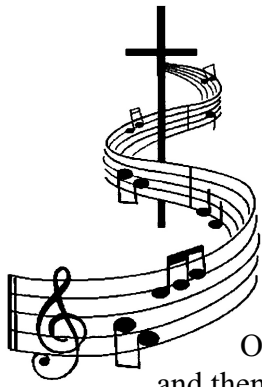
-by Betty C. Cottrill



Many years ago a gentleman gave our church a piano that was built in the 1850's. It was beautiful but could no longer be tuned. It took up a great deal of room, so after we bought our electric organ we decided to try to sell it or give it away. Everyone who saw it wanted it, but no one had room for it. We wrote to museums and offered to donate it, but it was felt that the expense of moving it was too high. We continued searching for solutions for many years.

Then one fall we decided to install carpet and buy new pews for our church. We wrote to a company and asked for a representative to give us an estimate. As soon as he walked in the church, he began to admire the piano and asked if he could buy it. He gave us a sizable amount, which turned out to be a few dollars more than we had planned to borrow for our remodeling project.

We often become impatient, but if we can learn to be long-suffering and ask for God's will to be done, we'll find out that He knows best. We pray, "Thy will be done; help us to accept Thy way."



A Lasting Impression

-by Sheri (Gunter) Nunn, Oak Grove, Missouri

During the summer of 1975, after my junior year of high school, I was able to go with the Center Stake Zion's League on a church caravan. We traveled to Ohio to see the Kirtland Temple and then on to Niagara Falls and parts of Ontario, Canada.

At the beginning of our journey things were quite chaotic. When we arrived at Kirtland, one of the buses broke down requiring us to stay a little longer and cancel our stop at Palmyra, New York. This delay allowed time for events to transpire that would unite our group and allow us to reach a level of togetherness and oneness that would be required to minister to the different church groups we would encounter on our journey.

Everyone sacrificed what cash they could to help purchase the bus part needed and this added to our process of gaining unity. One person wanted to be baptized and this delay gave him the opportunity and the place to do so.

At one of our first meetings held in the building across the street from the Kirtland Temple, we were asked to prepare ourselves by prayer before entering the Temple and to treat it with sincere reverence. We were to feel free to offer prayers of thanks to God and anything else on our hearts and mind.

I remember as I first entered the Temple I had three concerns on my heart and mind, and I had been praying silently to my Creator about these things. My first concern was that God would help me locate my friend Linda so we could practice a song for the next day's worship service. Linda had been inspired to write six verses to the tune of "Morning Has Broken" while sitting and meditating on the second floor of the temple earlier that day.

My second concern was about singing in front of such a large group. I was praying that God would allow an angel to help us sing this song for the service to give me the courage and support I would need. I had never sung in front of a group except as part of a children's church choir as a young girl.

The third concern was that God would direct me to meet a suitable companion to marry in the future—someone who would be acceptable to Him and with whom I could work together to do the Lord's will.

As I walked out of one of the front doors of the Temple, I immediately saw my friend Linda walking across the street in my direction. She was searching for me. We turned around and walked back into the building where we were lodging to practice her words to the song. Another friend arrived and asked to join us as we practiced and so we then became an a cappella trio.

As we practiced, my thoughts reflected back to my prayer. I had asked for an angel to help us sing the song. The other two girls sang the melody and I sang the harmony. It sounded beautiful, but I was still very nervous about singing in front of so many people. There were many others there besides our own group who would be attending the service.

The next day at the beginning of the service the time came for us to sing. I was standing on the left side of Linda and our other friend was on her right. As we started singing the first verse of the song, I felt what I thought was Linda's arm slip around my waist. Thoughts of my earlier prayer flooded my mind. I thought, "This is the Lord's answer—a friend's arm around me for shared support."

After the service, I told Linda about my prayer and thanked her for putting her arm around me. She told me she had not put her arm around me as she was holding the words to the song with her left hand. The warm Spirit filled my soul as I realized the true blessing I had received that morning. The Lord had answered my prayer about an angel helping us and giving me the courage to sing. In a later prayer meeting, we were told by one of the elders that he had heard the angels singing with us. Such a loving God we have.

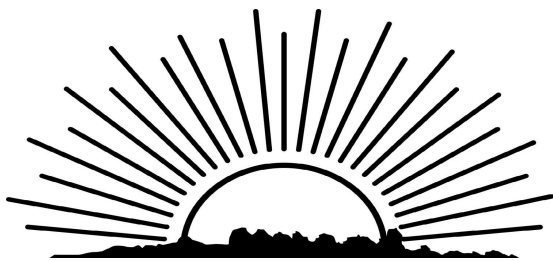
After the part for the bus arrived and repairs made, we boarded the two buses and the leaders did their head count before we headed on to New York and Niagara Falls. The head count was one shorter than all our previous stops before Kirtland. The leaders got

the name list out and carefully went through it. The total number of names on the list matched the head count they were now coming up with. After checking it several times we departed.

Later at another worship service we were told, under the Spirit of the Lord, why the head count had been different. One of the adversary's angels had been among us. I remembered that we did have a lot of chaos on the first leg of our trip. Our experiences at Kirtland allowed our group to start growing together, and to start becoming one in purpose with the help of His Holy Spirit within us. That personage of the adversary was no longer allowed to be among us and had departed.

As for guidance in meeting my future husband, God led me to meet Mark Nunn in September 1976, right after graduating from high school. Now we have been married for almost forty-five years and we work together to share the gospel and love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to those we meet.

Such fond memories I have of this caravan and the experiences God gave us. Occasionally through the years, I would get a glimpse of those two purple and white Center Stake buses in the Stone Church parking lot. I knew they were the exact buses because we had put tape on the back of them that read, "WE LOVE" on one bus and "THE LORD" on the other. When we returned home after the trip and we removed the tape used to spell this out, the white paint underneath came off leaving a lasting impression on the buses, just as the Lord has left a lasting impression on our lives.



"Morning Has Broken"

The hymn, "Morning Has Broken" was first published in 1931. The original words were written by English author Eleanor Farjeon and set to a traditional Scottish Gaelic tune called "Bunessan." The words and melody were made popular in the 1970's by musician Cat Stevens.

Lyrics written by Linda (Young) Winslow, 1975

Morning has broken, like the first morning.
Sunlight is streaming, over the earth.
Look at the beauty of the new dawning.
See the bright sunlight, of this new day.

God the Creator, made this great planet.
He is the Father, of the world.
He made the garden, He made the animals.
We are His children, we are His sheep.

Christ is coming, back to the earth.
He is the Savior, crucified.
He died to save us, from our sinful ways.
He is the true life. Come follow Him.

Jesus is calling, He is the way.
He is the one life, we must obey.
Trust in Him, serve Him, love Him, join Him
He's reaching out, so reach out today.

We are His people, chosen for Zion.
We are to build it, like a great home.
We must be loving, we must be willing.
We must be faithful, so He may come.

Evening is fallen, shadows are gathering.
Darkness is deepening, the end of day.
We should be thankful, for God's great gift of day.
Don't take for granted, His marvelous earth.



After the birth of our first son January 1981, my husband Mark and I were preparing a baby blessing service to be held at Kentucky Hills RLDS church. The pastor wanted the whole service centered on the baby blessing as it is a very important ordinance.

The words Linda had written to the tune of "Morning Has Broken" were very dear to my heart. I got permission from my friend to revise her words to just three verses. This version was sung for our son's baby blessing along with a slide presentation.

Morning has broken, like the first morning.
Sunlight is streaming, over the earth.
Look at the beauty of the new dawning.
See the bright sunlight, of this new day.

Praise for the children, God's gift from heaven.
Born of the one light, we must obey.
Follow the children, unto God's Kingdom.
Jesus has promised, they lead the way.

Evening is spoken, shadows are falling.
Darkness is deepening, the end of day.
We should be thankful, we have the children.
They pierce our darkness, with their pure light.

In December 2021, I began preparing to provide the ministry of music for an upcoming Sunday morning service in February. I searched for piano music that could be used to sing the three verses of "Morning Has Broken" that I had used at our son's baby blessing in 1981. I found an arrangement by Jose-Daniel Martines-Miranda online. This arrangement more closely followed the traditional Gaelic melody, but it had a lengthy prelude and postlude.

After prayerful consideration and after receiving permission again from my friend Linda to rewrite some of her lyrics, I wrote an ending to fit the postlude melody of this piano arrangement. These words were offered along with the three verses used at our son's baby blessing as ministry of music at our home branch on February 13, 2022:

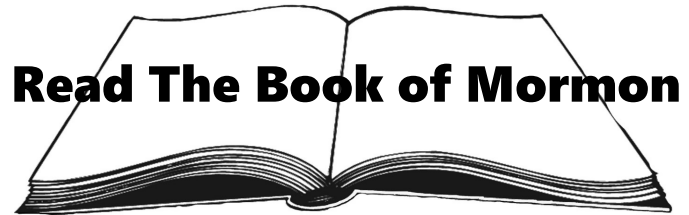
Christ is our Savior, now and always.
We are His children, we are His sheep.
He's our Shepherd, trust and obey.
Come follow Him, today!

I believe that the light of Zion and her promise still burns, even in the ever-growing darkness that surrounds us ... When the hour is the darkest, the brilliant light of Christ will beam ever brighter, if we are looking upward to seek it. It will lead us through the darkness, if we keep our eyes on Christ.

—excerpts from sermon by Elder Bob White
at OGRB, January 30, 2022

"And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received, which vanity and unbelief hath brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all; and they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written."

(D & C 83:8 a-b)



-by Edgar Pillsbury

Recently, a TV public service announcement captured my attention. It admonished people to increase their reading skills using the slogan, "Read a good book." This prompted me to mentally ask myself, "What greater book is there to read than the Book of Mormon?"

Many people have worked, sacrificed, and suffered that we might possess this wonderful book—a second witness to the divinity of Christ. Some have even given their lives, such as Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Yet many people fail to recognize the significance of this great book. Others say they believe it is true, but have never read the Book of Mormon in its entirety.

Why not resolve to initiate a reading program to read or reread the Book of Mormon? You will never regret time spent reading those precious pages which render magnificent truths and testimonies of our Lord and Savior. Ask the Lord to give you your own testimony of its truth.

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true;

And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things (Moroni 10:4-5).

If We Only Ask

-by Kristi Regier

When I was a girl (probably seven or eight years old), my parents owned a meat processing plant. During the summer months, my sisters and I would often go to the plant with our mother. While she worked helping my father, we would either help with chores or go outside and play.

One particular day, a salesman came into the plant and visited with my father for a while. Upon leaving, he presented my younger sister, Linda, with a doll. It was just an average-sized doll with “so-so” clothing and no special features, but because she was such an unexpected gift, this doll was immediately treasured, not only by Linda, but by me as well.

We took the doll outside and had a wonderful time playing with her. For several days our play centered around that doll. One day, we discovered the running board on the side of Dad’s pickup truck made a perfect bed for the doll. While the doll “took her nap,” we would go play in different areas or go inside.

One afternoon, though, while we were away from her, Dad needed to run to town for something. He jumped in the pickup and took off, not being able to see the doll on the running board on the other side. When he returned, he parked the pickup in the same place. He was only gone for a short time and my sisters and I didn’t even know he had left. However, later on when we went to get the doll, she was gone! We looked around for her, and then went to tell our parents that she was missing.

Eventually, we realized what had happened, so Mom loaded us up in the car and we set out to find her. As we retraced the path Dad had taken, our eyes searched desperately. We drove slowly and looked everywhere, but to no avail. Our precious doll was not to be found and we were very upset. Linda began to cry as we pulled back into the plant. There was nowhere else to look.

When we got inside, Mom said, “I think we should pray and ask God to help us find your doll.” So we said a prayer and got back in the car to go look for her

again. Again we retraced Dad’s path—all the way into town where he had stopped. No doll! We turned around to return to the plant.

Then just at the edge of town someone said, “Look! Isn’t that her? There she is!” And sure enough, there in the median was the doll lying in a spot that we had already driven by and looked at several times.

Out of His love and concern, God answered our prayer by placing the doll where we could find her. What a great blessing and encouragement to know that the Lord hears and answers our prayers, no matter how big or how small, if we only ask!



God Blessed Me

-by Johnathan Lidberg, age 10, Oak Grove, Missouri

At Grandma’s house I got sick. I got a bad headache. I laid down in bed. Aunt Val asked if I wanted to be administered to. I said yes. I asked for dad and Uncle Mike, who are both elders. They put the special oil on my head and prayed. After that I felt much better. I went downstairs to play.



God Helped Us

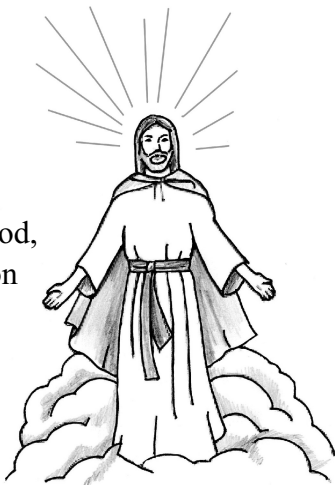
-by Megan Lidberg, age 9, Oak Grove, Missouri

Our church had a fun Harvest Party. After the party, we were driving home when my brother Jonathan saw that he did not have his glasses on. He was very upset and concerned.

Nana asked if I wanted to say a prayer for Johnathan and ask God that we could find his glasses. After my prayer, we looked around outside with a flashlight and after about five minutes his glasses were found. Then we said a prayer thanking God that we found them!

Christ Is Coming

Christ is coming,
Don't turn Him away,
He is coming today,
He is our Savior
and our God,
Take hold of the iron rod,
He died for your sins on
the wooden cross,
The Lord is our boss,
Follow his way,
And obey,
Come and
find Jesus today,
Trust and obey.



—Joshua Lavigne, age 9,
Bates City, Missouri



Cat's Testimony

My name is Cat. Yes, Cat. This is my story. I decided that the free life wasn't for me, so I found a woman who had a soft spot for cats and she took me in. That's been a little over a year ago. She lets me go outside every morning about 5:00 a.m. but I come home around 7:00 a.m. to get food. It's a hard life trying to find food so I tolerate all the other inconveniences of an inside life because I get fed.

Well, about a week ago I went out on my normal run only to get attacked by another cat. I went home, pride intact, and ate. Then I went and laid down to rest from the morning's ordeal. But, my left leg began to hurt terribly and swell. I laid around all that day and wouldn't even go outside again. I'm done with outside!

I went up to the lady and held up my left paw, but she didn't understand me. She thought it was broken and took me to the animal hospital. I was scared! But they were kind to me. I slept and when I woke up my leg was all bare—no fur!

What did they do to me? Brrrrr.

The lady came and took me home. I just wanted her to hold me, which she did, and I slept. However, two times a day she kept forcing this awful tasting liquid in my mouth. It made me sick. I threw up all my lunch, and couldn't poop for three days. Fortunately for me, she stopped that stuff.

She was also giving me these small, sweet tasting pellets, just dropping them down my mouth. They call it homoeopathy. I began feeling better.

After a week my wounds were healing. However, I was still limping, my leg hurt some, and there was this fluid buildup on the back of my leg. I did feel better and wanted to go outside again.

She kept telling me, "How soon you forget."

"Forget what?" I asked. "Let me go outside."

Then one evening something happened. The lady knelt down by me, put her hands on me, and prayed to our Creator—the One who knows us, loves us, and cares for all His creation. She asked Him to heal me. She had done all she knew to do and trusted in Him who is the Great Healer and who knows all things.

That night I slept so soundly that instead of sleeping in until 6:00 a.m. like I had been, I was wide awake at 5:00 and wanted her to get up. So I went into the bedroom where she sleeps and meowed, "Get up! I'm hungry."

She jumped up and began praising the Lord. How good I felt! All my body functions worked and my leg didn't hurt anymore. The fluid on the back of my leg was gone, and I wanted to go outside to run free again!

She has nixed that.

But we thank the Father for His healing and, well, I guess I'll stay around here.

Thankfully submitted by Cat's friend, because Cat cannot spell nor speak English, but, has found a voice in me, Barbara Dutton.



F YOUTH R ★ J E S U S

GOD'S LOVE

Late into the night,
I ponder on the day
I think about the times when I
Had wandered from God's way.

Perhaps a stolen bite to eat,
An instigating smile
"Small things," you say, "it's no big feat."
But small things add up after a while.

When an artist makes a painting
He must keep his eye on the goal
He must keep his focus from fainting
With his heart, might, mind, and soul.

We, just like the artist,
Must be careful in all we do
For just one little drop of paint,
Then things get bad for you.

As careful as I try to be,
I still make big mistakes
That's when Jesus comes to me
He reaches, and my hand he takes.

When I sit in bed and ponder and think
On the things I've done both good and bad
I feel my heart begin to sink,
When I know I've made God sad.

I can see Him now, sitting
On His Mighty Throne so high,
Weeping, wailing, for my sake.
A terrible, pitiful cry!

And Jesus, on his right hand side
Tears streaming down his cheeks
Not long ago He came and died,
And suffered many weeks.

Such tumult happens when I do wrong,
Such awful, deep despair!
But angels take up joyous song,
Because this the Lamb repairs.

When Christ was hung on Hill Calv'ry,
And His blood began to spill,
God was there to catch every
Drop that touched that hill.

God had had a plan in mind,
A special one by far
A plan that every man shall find
At God's great judgement bar.

God will open up a book,
By name, The Book of Life
I will see my name and below it look,
At my many times of strife.

I will look with anticipation
Through eyes all filled with tears
"This must mean damnation!"
And I am overcome with fears.

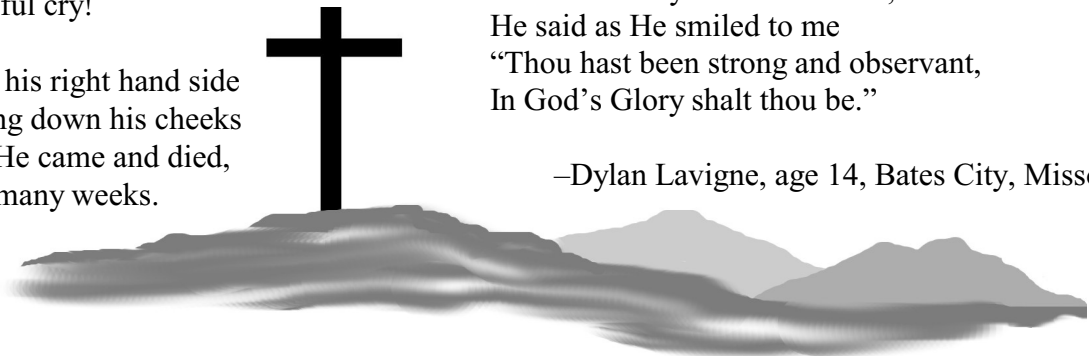
Beside me stands the Master,
And he asks to see the book
My heart beats somewhat faster
As His face had changed its look.

He seemed to have a smile,
As He grabbed a writing brush
He dipped it in a vile,
And the Heavens seemed to hush.

He gave me back the book and said,
"Come and follow me."
He led me through God's glorious gate,
So beautiful to see!

"Well done my faithful servant,"
He said as He smiled to me
"Thou hast been strong and observant,
In God's Glory shalt thou be."

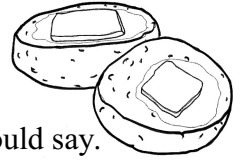
—Dylan Lavigne, age 14, Bates City, Missouri





Salted Biscuits and Hot Chocolate

-by Violet Ballantyne



“. . . the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5).

The ringing of the bell called the campers to breakfast. Talking and laughing they came from their cabins toward the dining hall. This was at Bandera, Texas, Sionita’s Junior High Camp, June 1977.

As a volunteer kitchen helper, I had just slipped two large pans of biscuits into the oven. I turned back to the big mixer of biscuit dough to get the next batch ready. Millie, the other helper, took out the first pans of golden brown biscuits as I put in the next pans.

It was then I picked up the big recipe card that Louise, the cook, had given me for the biscuit dough. At the top of the card were the ingredients for one hundred biscuits. Next, was given the recipe for two hundred. At the bottom were listed ingredients for five hundred biscuits.

Having eighty campers plus staff members, Louise had asked me to use the recipe for two hundred. This would allow each person two or more biscuits.

Suddenly, a terrible truth came to me. I had added the amount of salt from the five hundred biscuit recipe! Quickly, I tasted the dough! It was terrible! Too salty to eat!

Oh, the thoughts that flashed through my mind! Wasted dough, spoiled breakfast, and disappointed campers. I could imagine those young people saying, “What is this? Some kind of a joke? Oh, Ish! What happened? Who did this?”

It was too late to make more. What could I do? “Oh, God,” I prayed desperately, “this is an emergency! Please help! You changed water into wine in an emergency. Please do something about these salty biscuits.”

I stepped to the serving window. The campers were going to the tables with their plates. They began eating! “Yummy,” one said. “How many biscuits may we have?” another asked. “Pass the butter and honey.” “These are delicious!” These comments filled my soul with joy. I turned back to finish the last pans.

“Oh, thank you God,” was all I could say.

Later I told Louise. She said, “Oh, yeah. Anything can happen here. This is holy ground!”

That evening I told this experience to my son, Mike, who was camp pastor. He just smiled and said, “Ask Louise to tell you about the hot chocolate experience.”

During rest period that afternoon I said, “Louise, Mike said to ask you about a hot chocolate experience you had one year.” She began to tell me what happened. Here are her words:

It was a damp, chilly evening. The campers went to the campfire with sweaters, coats, and blankets. I promised them hot chocolate and cookies after the campfire. The big caldron was ready. There was plenty of milk. All I needed was to heat the milk and stir in the instant chocolate mix.

I went to the storeroom for it, but I could not find any. I searched cupboards, shelves, drawers and counters—no chocolate mix! There should have been a big container of it, but for some reason it was not there.

I picked up the old box, hoping I was wrong about it being empty. A scant tablespoon remained. Thinking of those eighty or more youngsters who would be coming soon expecting hot chocolate and cookies, I prayed. The words were not verbal, but they were strongly impressed upon my mind. “Take what you have and begin.”

I started stirring into the milk that tablespoon of chocolate mix. First the milk became cream-colored, then light brown. As I continued tapping the container and stirring, the milk became a rich chocolate brown color.

The hot chocolate was ready as the campers came from their campfire service.

Then she added, “God loves these young people. His Spirit is here on these grounds.”

Praise God for His mercy and blessings!



Purple Flowers



-by April L. Smith, Oak Grove, Missouri

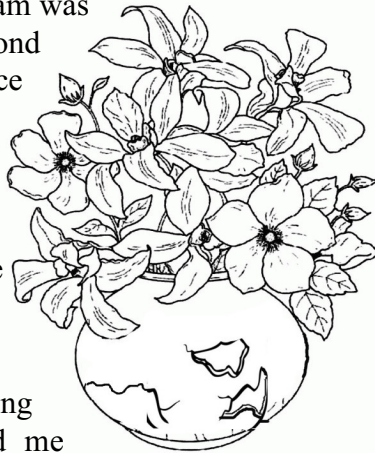
“To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified” (Isaiah 61:3).

In the midst of a great struggle—feeling very broken, very sad, and very alone—I went to bed, crying out to the Lord as I tried to fall asleep, “Can any good really ever come from all this brokenness?” I felt like every single area in my life was broken, and I felt like there was absolutely nothing I could do about it. Possibly without even knowing it, I was questioning God. “If You really are a Healer, when is something going to change in my life?”

That night (Thursday, August 16, 2018), I had a dream, and it was a gift from God. As the dream began, I saw a place of many broken items. It was a barren place, brown or tan in color. Everything looked like dust, as a desert filled with sand. In the dust I saw many broken items: a broken glass vase, a broken wooden school desk, broken furniture, broken cars. Everything was broken.

I must have been given this first so I would know what the area looked like underneath—the “before” picture. But what the dream was really about was the second part. I saw the same place with all of these broken things, but on top of each item, growing from each one, were incredibly beautiful flowers—purple flowers. Their beauty was exquisite.

Seeing them and soaking in their beauty reminded me of times when I’ve been stressed, busy, and hurrying, and then happened to see a gorgeous sunset or something lovely in nature. The beauty of God’s creation washes over and soothes me in those moments. That was the beauty and power of these purple flowers. They were breathtaking. The flowers did not cover the entire area, but there were many of them, and they were perfect.



I woke up, knowing exactly what God was telling me and showing me: *He can make beauty from broken things.* I told Him I knew He was telling me that yes, beauty can come from broken things. I was so thankful for His loving reassurance!

Then it occurred to me that every flower had been purple. I had just received a bouquet of flowers at work that very day, and the flowers in the bouquet were many colors. The flowers in my dream were all purple—only one color—a sharp contrast to the colorful bouquet. That seemed significant to me, and I asked God of the importance. “Why is it significant that all of the flowers are purple?”

Immediately He answered, “Purple is the color of royalty.” I knew they were flowers from the King. My heart swelled. I had been given flowers from God, the King, and they were all grown out of BROKEN things. Beauty from brokenness. I was given a gift. Flowers from God, yes, but the real gift that He gave me was a promise. It was the promise that yes, He can and He will bring beauty from brokenness. That is what He does.

That Thursday evening—the night God sent me the dream—had been so rough, so incredibly difficult. I was feeling completely broken in so many ways. I know my past is incredibly broken, and I have many broken relationships. Yet the Lord confirmed my belief that Jesus is a Healer and that He can take what is broken and make it beautiful.

I had been questioning, “Will this really ever happen in my own life? Will there ever be healing?” That was when God gave me the dream, a gift, a promise. The hope this brings to me is encouraging, uplifting and incredible, and so beautiful.

I wrote about the dream in my journal, and then I decided to share it with two friends. I had been thinking of the scripture that uses the term I recalled as “beauty from ashes.” I was looking for that scripture

when one of my friends texted me back, quoting the exact scripture, Isaiah 61:3: *“To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.”*

The next morning, the second friend texted me back, and she, too, quoted this same scripture! I knew God was confirming the dream with His word.

A day or two after my dream, my daily email devotional arrived with a photo of purple flowers. It was not exactly like what I saw in my dream, but it sure caused me to take notice!

I also recalled a story that a friend had shared about Patsy Clairmont and the broken pitcher.* Patsy had an experience in which God showed her a pitcher with a big crack down the front. The Lord put light inside the pitcher, covered the top, and showed Patsy that because the pitcher was cracked, the light was able to shine through the broken places.

Patsy tells how coming to the end of herself was the best thing that could have happened, because then she looked to the Lord. She had nothing left to offer Him but the ashes of her broken life, and God showed her how He can take something that seems broken and useless, and begin to create a vessel of honor for His use.

Her story went with my experience perfectly! Not only did she admit that she came to the end of herself, as I had that night, but she also quoted the same scripture that God had given me about making beauty from ashes!

Our God is so good to comfort us when we need Him and to give us light to take the next step in our walk with Him. He gave me a promise that night, a reminder that He IS a Healer, and *“He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and full of compassion”* (Psalms 111:4).



(**God Uses Cracked Pots* by Patsy Clairmont)



God's Blessing

—anonymous

Last summer while mowing the tall grass after a lot of rain, I had a flashback to about forty years ago. God's love and tender mercies are new every morning.

We were living on a small farm in the Ozarks, trying to subsist on very little. The weeds were tall and needed brush-hogging around the pond. To get to the pond you had to go through a small creek. Everything seemed to be going well as I made pass after pass with the tractor and brush hog, mowing down the weeds.

To look good, it needed one more pass along the edge of the pond's dam. It looked scary, but the 8N Ford tractor had wheel brakes, so it looked doable. The tractor did not have a clutch on the power takeoffs, but when you do not have much money that did not seem very important. The pond dam had a little curve, but with wheel brakes it should be all right, I thought.

As the curve approached, I stood on the wheel brake. Unfortunately, wet brakes don't work well. The tractor continued on the course and at the same speed, even with me standing on the brake. Frozen in that position, the tractor and I went over upside down off the dam, which was about five or six feet high. Fortunately, the ground was muddy and soft, but the impact was still jarring. My only thought was, "What have I done to the tractor?"

My neighbor came over with his tractor to pull out my little Ford 8N. He was shocked that I was all right. It hadn't occurred to me how close to death I had come. As I was falling through the air looking up at the tractor coming down on me, I'm sure fear must have gripped me, and I'm sure I must have cried out to God.

The tractor still had oil in it and it started back up. It looked pretty bad with all the mud on it, but other than that, everything was okay.

Forty years later, evaluating my life, I wonder why my life was spared. I've made so many mistakes. As Kris Kristofferson sang in a popular song years ago, "What have I ever done to deserve even one of the [blessings] I've known?"

Of course the answer is nothing. Our blessings are all because of the goodness and mercy of God and I praise Him.



Your Will Be Done

-by Sonia Smith, Oak Grove, Missouri

I used to pray differently than I do now. If it was something I thought was important, I thought it out completely, then I would tell God about it (as if He didn't already know) and inform Him how important this was and how good my idea was. If it fell through, I'd tell God, "You knew it was a good idea. Why didn't You push it through?"

After a few days or weeks, it always seemed like something else would happen that was even better than my idea. I could almost hear a wee small voice saying, "Why did you doubt Me?" My prayers began to get better. It was only when something super important to me came along that I would tell God what to do.

The last time this happened, my husband Roy and I had a chance for a job managing a self-storage and U-Haul business. It was ideal! A house was provided, and with our experience I didn't know how they could refuse us. Our interview went well. The owners led us to believe we were the ones for the job.

That night I prayed for God to realize how good this opportunity was for us. The next morning, we got

a call from the owners. They said they had decided to go with an older retired couple.

Needless to say, we—or I should say I—was extremely disappointed. It was to the point that I blamed God and told Him so. "You knew that was the perfect job for us and You could have pushed it through! Why didn't You?"

A few days later, Roy got a job cooking on a ranch with housing available. It was perfect! I felt guilty for being so angry with God.

About three months later, I was preparing dinner while listening to the local news on TV. My attention was caught by the mention of the town and the storage / U-Haul business we had applied to. The maintenance man working there had been fired. A few days later, he came back and beat to death the couple working there, as well as their nephew.

My heart all but stopped. I said, "Thank you, God, for not listening to me when I was telling you what to do. Truly, YOU are in charge."

Since then, I pray differently. I put it all in God's hands. I tell Him, "You know best. Your will be done."

Thy Will Be Done

We see not, know not; all our way
Is night, - with Thee alone is day:
From out the torrent's troubled drift,
Above the storm our prayers we lift,
Thy will be done!
The flesh may fail, the heart may faint,
But who are we to make complaint,
Or dare to plead, in times like these,
The weakness of our love of ease?
Thy will be done!
We take with solemn thankfulness
Our burden up, nor ask it less,
And count it joy that even we
May suffer, serve, or wait for Thee,
Whose will be done!
Though dim as yet in tint and line,
We trace Thy picture's wise design,
And thank Thee that our age supplies

Its dark relief of sacrifice.
Thy will be done!
And if, in our unworthiness,
Thy sacrificial wine we press;
If from Thy ordeal's heated bars
Our feet are seamed with crimson scars,
Thy will be done!
If, for the age to come, this hour
Of trial hath vicarious power,
And, blest by Thee, our present pain,
Be Liberty's eternal gain,
Thy will be done!
Strike, Thou the Master, we Thy keys,
The anthem of the destinies!
The minor of Thy loftier strain,
Our hearts shall breathe the old refrain,
Thy will be done!

--John Greenleaf Whittier

Perfect Peace

-by John Henderson (submitted by Karen Stevens)

God has given me so many testimonies and experiences throughout the years as I did my best to serve Him and follow His leadings. Numerous times these spiritual experiences were shared not only for me but for others as well, and sometimes they seem to be given through me for the benefit of others.

One such experience was given about 1970. Eva, a lady of about sixty-five, was a member of our congregation in Oregon. She became ill and the sickness progressed despite medical help and special prayer services for her. We were beginning to think the Lord was slowly preparing to take her home.

One Wednesday morning my wife, Lilli, called Eva and found she was extremely ill. She said she would like me to stop by on the way to prayer service that evening to administer to her through the laying on of hands, as we are directed in James 5:14: *“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”*

Lilli called me at my work and gave me this message. As I hung up the phone, a scripture came into my mind—a scripture I don't remember previously using. *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee”* (Isaiah 26:3).

I thought, “That would be a good scripture for Eva.” So I wrote it down and put it in my pocket, thinking it was a clever idea.

After the administration that evening I told Eva, “I'm not a doctor but I am going to give you a prescription anyway.” I handed her the paper. She read it and seemed shocked by it.

She stared at it until her husband asked, “What is it Eva?” She handed it to him and he responded the same way.

Finally I asked, “Does this have some special meaning for you?”

Her answer was, “Yes, I received my patriarchal blessing when I was very young and it says, ‘There will be a time in your later years when you will be

very ill and a man of God will bring you a message of peace written on paper.’”

My first thought was, “MY! What a wonderful testimony for Eva that God is with her.” That was immediately followed by the thought, “And what a testimony for me!” Although I had been in the priesthood ministry for some time by then, I had never applied “man of God” as a title for myself.

It also stole the thought that this had been my clever idea. Since then I have had so many thoughts given to me that seemed like my own wise ideas at the time and later proved to have been implanted in my head by God that I wonder now if I ever actually had a wise idea of my own.

Incidentally, this proved to be the turning point for Eva. She was not immediately healed completely, but began a process of getting well and was with the congregation for many years afterwards.



A Special Phone Call

-by Helen Cottrill

Several years ago I was going through a very rough emotional time. One evening in particular, I was very low. I asked God to please send someone for me to talk to. In less than five minutes the telephone rang. One of my close friends asked if I needed her. She didn't say hello or any of the other formalities that usually accompany a telephone call, only “Do you need me?” I truly believe God directed her to call.

God answers prayers. Sometimes we are the instrument He uses. How many times have we thought about phoning someone, paying a visit, or dropping a note in the mail? This may be God asking us to answer a prayer of some lonely soul.

Let us be listening for that still small voice and then be willing to go be a blessing to someone—just as my friend was to me that night.





Let Us Be Faithful (The Railroad Torpedo)

-by Pat Chadwick, Oak Grove, Missouri

“God is our refuge and strength, a present help in trouble” (Psalms 46:1).

I would like to share with you a testimony that is part of my spiritual foundation. Testimonies such as this one bring strength to me, and I hope it will strengthen your faith, too.

On that eventful day, Grandpa and Grandma Sherman had prayer together as was their usual habit in the morning. My grandfather prayed for the safety of his family. Such prayers are not taken lightly by our God. Grandpa later was so thankful that he had offered that prayer on that particular morning before he left for work.

My grandmother was working in the kitchen. She had four children at that time: Joy, Ronald, Leonard and little Kenneth. Joy was in the house with her mother but the little boys were out in the yard playing in the sandbox.

Suddenly a terrible explosion occurred and it seemed to rock the house. Grandma heard screaming, and she looked and saw her little boys running toward the house covered in blood. She saw the sandbox was completely blown apart. The neighbors came running to find out what had happened and upon seeing the bleeding children assisted my grandmother in caring for them.

She said there was so much blood everywhere that it was hard to even know where to start or who to help first. The doctor, who had been visiting a patient just down the street, came running.

It was a different world back then. There were no ambulances or emergency rooms. No antibiotics or pain killers. Nothing like we have today. Grandma said that the doctor actually turned the dining room into a type of surgical area. The dining room table was sanitized and that is where the boys were brought to clean and sew up their wounds. Many of the wounds were deep head wounds, but Ronald's hand was severely injured.

My grandmother would recall that her whole dress was soaked and dripping with blood. I can remember her telling me, “It was a bloody day, and at the end

when it was over I actually took my dress off and wrung the blood out of it into the bathtub.” I could tell by her comments that the horror of that day would always be etched in her memory.

My grandfather got a call at his work to come home immediately because there had been an explosion and his children had been injured. The family lived in Independence, Missouri, but Grandpa worked in Kansas City. He rode the trolley car to and from work. The trolley only ran certain hours, so Grandpa started hitchhiking and praying. He prayed for his family at home and prayed that he could get a ride. Immediately a car stopped and picked him up. Grandpa explained his great need to get to Independence and the stranger insisted on driving him all the way home.

When Grandpa arrived, the doctor was still there and still busy working on the children. He stepped in and assisted by holding down the boys and giving comfort as the doctor worked on them. He also recalled the wounded condition of his children and the amount of blood that seemed to be everywhere.

My own father, Kenneth Sherman, told me that he was blown out of the sand box area and ended up under a bush some distance away. He was unconscious for a while but then came to and started to cry. A neighbor found him. In all the terror of the moment Grandma had not realized that he was missing. She thought one of the neighbors had him and was helping him.

Upon seeing Grandma (his mother), he screamed and reached for her. Like the other boys, he was covered in blood but Grandma was especially horrified to see that he was bleeding from his eyes. His left eye had several metal fragments imbedded in it. He would never see clearly out of it again and was later declared legally blind in that eye.

Despite all their gaping wounds, cuts, and bruises, at the end of the day, the doctor said he believed all the boys were going to be okay. My father was the

only one with a permanent injury. The blinding of his left eye did keep him out of the Second World War. Daddy said that three or four times they called him up to go to war and each time he failed the medical exam because of being blind in his left eye.

When the whole story came out, it was a railroad warning torpedo that caused the explosion. A teenage boy had picked it up off of the railroad track and had given it to the little boys playing in the sandbox, telling them that if they hit it they would see pretty colors. They did not know any better.

Ronald, the oldest, ran and got a hammer. They all gathered around so they would be sure to see the pretty colors when the strange round object was struck. Ronald hit it, and as we say, the rest is history.

This teenager had evidently been a problem before in the community. Justice was far different in those days and later that evening the teenager and his family were visited by the sheriff and some of the men from the community and told to leave town. The next morning they were packed and gone.

We might wonder where the blessing is in such a terrible experience. My grandparents felt that there were many blessings in that day and that God walked with them through it. Grandma said it seemed a miracle that all her little boys lived through the explosion. She also declared that God strengthened her so she could minister to her children and make it through that bloody day without fainting or breaking down.

Grandpa was always thankful for that day's morning prayer. He felt that it made a difference in the outcome of that day. When talking about this experience I remember him saying "There were many blessings that day. All my boys lived through the explosion and a complete stranger took me all that way home."

My own father, who was as he put it, "just a little fella at that time," bore witness to me that he always felt as if the very angels in heaven were with him as he was blown out of that sandbox. Even though he was very little, only two or three, he seemed to remember this experience very clearly.

My mother always felt that my father's blind eye saved his life because it kept him out of World

War II. No one knows, but Mother always believed it saved him and that he would have otherwise perished in the war. Who knows? God does work in mysterious ways at times.

My grandparents had many trials in their lives. They lost five children as infants and later an adult son was killed in an accident. Six children lost! Yet I remember them as strong in the faith, always witnessing of the goodness of God. They were always valiant in the testimony of God's great love and goodness to them. Their faith was deeply anchored in Christ, and it held them firm through all the storms of life.

Their testimonies became a part of my foundation of faith, and their example of faithfulness has helped me to remain faithful in my own times of tragedy. Like my grandparents who have gone before me, I testify to you that no matter what happens in our life, God is with us, and that He will walk with us through it.

The Psalms tell us God is an ever present help in time of trouble, and I have found that to be true. If we will turn to Him, He is there, and even when we don't turn to Him, He still blesses us.

God has never promised that our lives as Christians would be free of tragedy. He has never promised us that we would never lose someone we love. No, His promise to us is not that we will be free of the trials or storms of this life, but rather that He will be with us in them. He will be with us in the tragedy, grief, and suffering that is a natural part of this life on earth. In

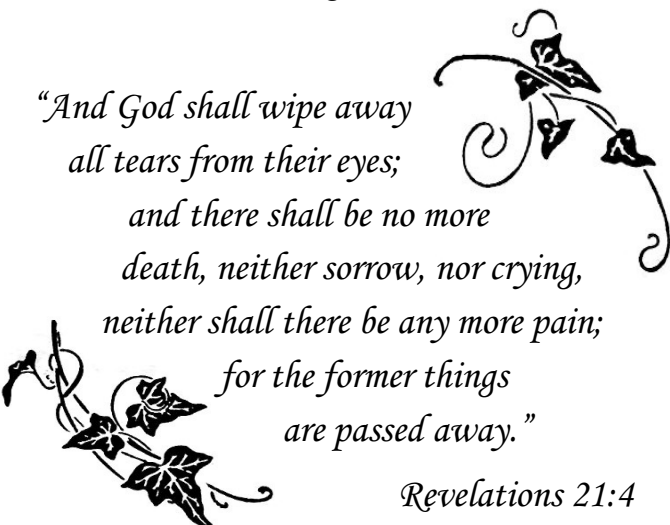
our darkest hour He promises to carry us through. He is always with us even unto the end.

Indeed, His promises are so wonderful! They go far beyond the assistance, help, and comfort that He promises us in this life. His promises are expansive. They include the promise of eternal life and encompass that complete joy that is yet before us in the next life. I wonder what it was like for my grandmother and grandfather as they were reunited with those children they lost in this life. What great joy there must have been in that moment! I can't even imagine, but I did catch a little glimpse of it through my father.

My father passed away at the age of ninety-three. Upon his death bed, he looked up and smiled and joy beamed from his face. He lifted up his arm and pointed upward and looked up toward the ceiling and said, "I'll be there soon and we will all be together." He was looking into heaven to his family that had gone before him. They were gathered there waiting for him. After that experience, he continued to smile, literally beaming with joy, and his condition was very good for a while. We had a wonderful visit with him and later that night he passed away.

The trials of this life can be hard to endure, but let us be faithful to the end. Let us be faithful, for there is much joy yet before us. Those who have gone before us are waiting for us. We will see them again. The promises of God are all true and He is faithful to us even unto all generations. Eventually all the trials of this life, the grief and tears, will be gone and forgotten. There are no tears in heaven, only Jesus, joy and those we love waiting for us.

*"And God shall wipe away
all tears from their eyes;
and there shall be no more
death, neither sorrow, nor crying,
neither shall there be any more pain;
for the former things
are passed away."*

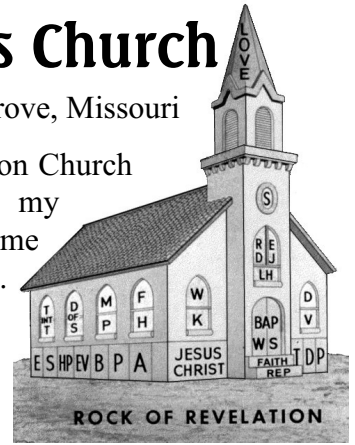


Revelations 21:4

This Is God's Church

-by Ed Story, Oak Grove, Missouri

I am a first-generation Church member, and this is my testimony about how I came into the Restored Gospel. When I was attending high school in Oak Grove, Missouri, I met this cute girl who had moved from Grain Valley (a town about five miles west of Oak Grove). Her folks had bought a farm just south of town. Her name was Karen Davies.



Karen was dating someone at that time and so was I. During her junior and senior years, we had classes together. When we graduated from high school, we both went our separate ways.

A couple of years later, I had a friend who was on leave from the Navy. He wanted me to go on a double date with him and his girlfriend. I told him that I was no longer seeing the girl I had been dating and that I had no one to go with.

My friend said, "Why don't you call that Davies girl down the road? She's not going out with anyone." I called Karen, and she said yes. I was twenty and she was nineteen. That's when my life began to change.

Karen and I hit it off immediately. While we were dating, I started learning in very slow steps about this church that she and her family belonged to. We were married on July 22, 1967—within three months from when we started dating. I could see big changes starting to happen to me.

Karen's father and mother were Bill and Coral Davies. They were very strong in the Restored Gospel. Karen is a fourth generation Church member. How do you marry a daughter of Bill and Carol Davies and not get involved with the Church? You don't. I was just starting to learn about that.

After we got married, I continued to learn. I had never experienced a church like this one. I had gone to the Christian Church when I was younger. That was about it for my background in religion. In the Christian Church, we had one paid minister who gave

the spoken word on a regular basis, with one or two assistants. It was nothing like the church that Karen and I were attending with her family.

This Church had what they called apostles, seventies, high priest, and patriarch-evangelist (called the fathers of the Church). There were also elders, priests, teachers, and deacons. Then there was this Joseph Smith, Jr. whom they called a prophet and seer of God's Church. Maybe you can understand the confusion I was feeling. I felt lost. I needed help. Everything was so new and completely different than I had ever experienced.

I began a series of classes in our home that they called cottage meetings. I started learning more about this church. I became fascinated and wanted to learn even more. Brothers Vernon Darling and David Watson were my teachers. The gospel, through their guidance, started to be clearer—and yet I was still learning.

My mother-in-law, Coral, could see that I was laboring with all of this information, trying to sort it out. She gave me a book called *The Call at Evening*. What a blessing this book was to me! Coral took me into her family as another son, and we had a very special relationship I will treasure for the rest of my life.

I remember Sunday afternoons at Bill and Coral's house. The guest ministers and their families were always coming out to the Davies' house after church for dinner, especially when there was a preaching series going on. Coral made these fabulous dinners, and they would sit around and talk about the Church and share powerful testimonies. I soaked this up like a sponge. I think Coral knew that this would help me along the way. Coral was a very wise, loving, nurturing lady who I grew to love more and more as the years went by.

J. J. Cornish was my wife's great-grandfather. Vernon Cornish, who was a patriarch-evangelist, married Karen and I. I grew to love Vernon and his wife Violet and their whole family. Vernon also gave me my patriarchal blessing. I have to say that I had doubts about my blessing—if it was really from God. But now as I look back on my blessing, everything the Lord gave Vernon to tell me has come to pass.

As I learned more about the Davies family and their testimonies I learned why they moved from Canada to Missouri. It started with Coral. My father-in-law Bill wasn't quite sure about moving down to the Center Place. You see, Bill grew up very poor, and he had become a very successful farmer and rancher. He was also a council man in the town of Senlac in the province of Saskatchewan, Canada.

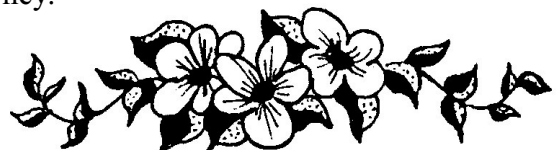
Bill worked hard and believed in his Heavenly Father with all his heart, and yet it was a great inward struggle for him to give up all he and Coral had accomplished. Yet, they knew with all of their heart that moving to the Center Place was the right thing to do because of the leadings of the Spirit to do so.

Bill did not like Missouri at first. He was used to large sections of land to farm and lots of open range land to graze cattle on. Missouri was a foreign land, not only for him but for the whole family. At one point, Bill went back to Canada and tried to buy his ranch back, but it wasn't to be. I think Coral's prayers beat Bill back to Canada. In time, Bill and Coral grew to love Missouri. They grew to love the Saints in the Center Place. And we all grew to love Bill and Coral and their children: Wayne, Ron, and Karen.

In my opinion, if it were not for Coral being the backbone of the family, Bill's ministry would not have flourished as it did. It was by tremendous sacrifice in prayer and by the blessing of the Lord. Bill and Coral radiated love to all who met them. They were indeed a treasure to behold.

If Bill and Coral had never moved down to Missouri, I probably would have never married their daughter or joined the Church. I would not have the rich testimony that I carry in my heart to this very day.

This is God's Church. He will continue to show us the way into His kingdom if we will live by His commandments. May the Lord continue to bring you and I closer together that we will be of one heart and one mind. Let us be our brothers' and sisters' keepers, just as our Lord and Savior is the great and loving Keeper of us all. May God continue to bless our journey.





Saying Goodbye—With Love to Louise

-by Connie Smith, Independence, Missouri

The week of January 16-22, 2022, my good friend Louise Gregson was in my thoughts. I had heard that her health was declining quickly and that she might not be with us much longer. She and I had a special relationship and my love for her was as a daughter to a mother. I began to pray, telling the Lord how much I would like to see Louise one last time, if possible, but I had no idea how this could happen. The only people going in or out of her home were caretakers. She was not taking casual visitors.

I had talked with Mick and Becky Ballantyne, as they were very involved in her day-to-day care. They had said they were looking for people who could come in and help take care of Louise. I texted Mick that I could possibly do that on a Friday evening and I could possibly spend the night.

A day or two later, on a Friday, I got a call while at work from Mick. I don't normally answer my phone at work but I did that time. He wanted to know if I could come that day to help with Louise. I said I could but that I couldn't get there until 7:00 or 7:30 p.m. He wanted to know if I could spend the night. I said yes but would need to leave around 8:00 a.m. the following morning. He said, "We'll see you then."

When I got to Louise's home, she was crumpled up in her recliner and miserable. All she wanted to do was lie down. About an hour before I got there, hospice had delivered a hospital bed, a lift, and a bedside table. Mick had cleared room for the hospital bed. This left furniture everywhere and in the way. Her house was so crowded with furniture and things it was almost impossible to have it any other way.

Louise refused to get in the bed because it had to be cleaned first and there were no sheets. Becky had left to go get some cleaner and a sheet set for a single bed. We waited for an hour after I got there, but still no Becky. All the while Louise was moaning because she just wanted to lie down. Finally, she suggested that we clean the bed with vinegar water (her standby cleaner for almost everything), so I cleaned the bed and bedside table. Mick went to her linen closet and

just grabbed a sheet set. It ended up being a single bed set! We made the bed.

I showed Mick how to make the bed with a draw sheet over the fitted sheet in case Louise needed to be pulled up in bed (which she did). A draw sheet allows two people, one on either side of the bed, to grab the sheet and pull the patient up toward the head of the bed, instead of trying to pull the person. It's so much easier on the patient and Louise was so fragile. She was so much more comfortable after we got her into bed. Becky made it back shortly after that.

I have to say, I expected to receive instructions on how to care for Louise and then to be there by myself. Not so. I soon learned that Mick and Becky fully intended to stay until midnight, when another couple, Ron and Shirley, would arrive and also spend the night. Ron and Shirley had come many times to help take care of Louise.

In my mind I kept wondering, "Why am I here?" They didn't really need me. But bless their hearts, Mick and Becky were doing the best they could to provide quality care for this dear sister. I had been able to help by showing Mick about the draw sheet, which wouldn't have happened unless I or someone else who knew how to do it was there. It proved to be beneficial for all of us, but it was such a small thing.

Once Louise was in bed and breathing treatments were done we all sat down, but our chairs were far apart, scattered around the living room. Louise's oxygen machine was clear over in another part of the room and the nebulizing machine for her breathing treatments was far away, too. I assessed the situation and suggested to Mick that we move some things to make the arrangement more practical for everyone. I gave him a couple of suggestions.

Mick thought it through for about ten minutes, then hopped up and found an extension cord so we could move her oxygen machine and nebulizing machine. I showed him where I would put them to make them out of the way, but nearby and easy to access. It meant moving more furniture which added to the clutter in the room. I then suggested that we move some of the

furniture to Louise's unused bedroom. After we cleared some of the furniture, the whole area was more open so caretakers could move around more freely. It was a small thing but made her care so much easier and more practical.

Before we had moved Louise to the bed, she was able to share a recent testimony with me. She had had an experience when the elders came to serve her communion in January. Her voice was frail and hard to hear, so I am conveying what I heard to the best of my ability. She had seen a brilliant light covering the bread and wine. This light beamed brightly and filled her heart. She rejoiced and praised God. She mentioned something else concerning the elders, but I could not hear her voice clearly enough to understand what she said. She was thrilled by this experience and beamed as she relayed it to me.

In the middle of the night, I pulled a small chair close to Louise's bed to be near her. She asked me to sing a hymn. I can't sing very well anymore and there were two other people there who I barely knew, so I politely declined. Finally Louise said, "I'll sing a song—'Onward to Zion.'" She lay in her bed struggling to breathe and sang both verses of "Onward to Zion." Her voice was loud and clear. Although somewhat cracked from age, it was beautiful. It was an offering to the Lord and filled the room. I literally thought God would send an angel and take her home right then.

Can you as the reader understand the depth of Louise's faith? In the midst of her pain—and she was in constant pain—she talked, she sang, she praised God, and she ministered to those around her by enduring patiently her afflictions. She was a living testimony and example for all to see.

I wondered why Louise just didn't go to sleep and rest. But her legs were restless, her back hurt at times, and always she struggled to breathe. She asked Mick to pray for her and we circled up and held hands while he prayed. She later told Ron and Shirley we'd had a prayer service.

In the middle of the night, Louise was experiencing increased pain and difficulty breathing. She asked Ron to pray for her. He said a beautiful and loving prayer. Finally, around 3:00 a.m. she fell asleep for about an hour and a half. She woke up and coughed for a while,

then fell back to sleep. It was the only time I had seen her rest since I had gotten there.

Louise's youngest daughter was there also. She was exhausted and went to bed around 9:00 p.m. but got up around 4:00 a.m. to check on her mother. She, Shirley, and I were able to visit.

We got to talking about Native American Ministries, which Ron and Shirley had been very involved in but had become discouraged. I was reminded of a YouTube video I had seen the previous fall. This video shared about many Native American Christians in Arizona, and even around the country, who have felt awakened and are on fire for the Lord. Someone had made this professional video featuring many of their testimonies, including a clip from an address Billy Graham had given to a large gathering of Native Americans back in the 60's.

Reverend Graham talked about his belief that the Native American peoples would play a great role in the rising up of the Kingdom of God in the United States. He said that it was time for them to be awakened and he likened them to a sleeping giant. It was a powerful message. The video is a little over an hour long and also features how some Messianic Jews have been directed to the Reservation lands, even bringing a shofar to be blown over the Native American lands. (You can find the video under the title "Awaken" on YouTube. There's a trailer video and a longer version.)

For the second time, I knew God had sent me to Louise's home for a purpose—to share with these ladies about this video and to encourage them that God is on the move and that He is aware of America's calling and of His ancient people.

All the way home, I praised God for giving me my heart's desire to see Louise one last time and to visit with her. It was a bonus to also care for her. Louise Gregson passed away one week and a day later. Onward to Zion, our dear Louise. You were faithful and strong, even when you were physically weak. Praise the Lord!





I Know He Lives and Cares for Me

-by Phillis Bailey,
Oak Grove, Missouri

God has blessed me so many times through my life. He has let me know He is with me and protecting me each and every day.

On Maundy Thursday (the Thursday before Easter) April 2019, while at the Odessa library for quilting group, I was taking some empty plastic sacks and other things to my car and going to bring in something else to work on. The wind was gusting. I lost some bags under my car. Not wanting to litter, I tried to grab them with my long-handled windshield scraper.

As I reached the two under my car, another one got away. I went to chase it, and as I bent down I lost my balance. The wind knocked me over. My glasses went flying. I landed on my face with a cut above my left eye from my glasses. My left hip and shoulder were hurting.

Several people came to my aid. A lady from the library went back in and called an ambulance and brought paper towels for my bleeding face. I was able to move my arms and legs. I could see out of both eyes. I rolled to my back.

When the ambulance arrived, they took my blood pressure and asked questions about sight, blood sugar, and movement. I agreed to be taken to St. Mary's emergency department for further examination. They started IV fluids and drew blood at the same time.

My friends from the sewing group gathered my things. They placed them in my car, locked the car, and gave me my purse and keys. They also called my husband to meet me at the hospital.

Upon arriving in the emergency department, the blood was sent to the lab, X-rays were ordered, vital signs were taken, and ice was applied to forehead, left hip, and left shoulder. I was glad I could see out of my eyes, because I had recent cataract surgery on both eyes.

The cut above my eye was bleeding a fair amount even with pressure and an ice pack. The cut was through my eyebrow. They cleaned the blood off and put Steri-strips on the skin with some glue to help keep the strips in place long enough for healing.

My husband was at the hospital shortly after the ambulance arrived. The emergency staff was very efficient. They got the lab results, the X-ray and CT scan results and the cut fixed up quickly. Instructions were given for care and follow up with my family practice doctor. I was ready to go home within two hours from arrival. I was very blessed by our Lord. I had no serious cuts, no broken bones, and no serious head or neck injuries.

I have a very personal testimony of the loving care of our Lord that day right before Christ's Resurrection Day. I know He lives and watches over and cares for me each and every day.

Open Our Eyes and Our Ears

-by Nancy Johnson

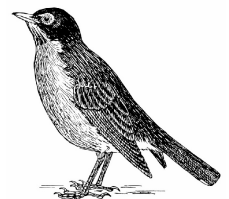
One morning when I could not sleep, I got up early and went to my kitchen to look out the window. I heard sounds, so I walked out on my porch to see what was going on.

In our big tree were seven blue jays, two redbirds, and some robins. The songs they were singing were beautiful! As I listened to them and enjoyed their music, I realized that if I had slept late I would have missed one of the beauties God put on earth for us to enjoy.

God has put so much beauty around us to encourage us. All we have to do is open our eyes and our ears and look and listen to His creation.

All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voices, with us sing,
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Let all things their Creator bless
And worship Him in humbleness
O praise Him! Alleluia!

-St. Francis of Assisi



ANGEL



-by Betsy Trahern, Missouri

When I was much younger, I took a summer job as a cashier at Sears. Most everyone who worked there was helpful and kind to me showing me how to use the cash register and our other responsibilities. After a week of training, I was scheduled to work the weekend with another girl named Angel.

First thing Friday morning I introduced myself to her as I was getting my cash drawer ready for the day. She turned her back to me without saying a word. I just got busy with my work.

As the day wore on, we got a break with the two girls working at the two other registers. They sat at one tiny table with two chairs and I sat at the other table with two chairs. They were chatting with me. Then when Angel came in, she took the empty chair from my table and pulled it to their table, blocking me from them and putting her back to me. I sat by myself and ate my lunch, but inside I was so hurt.

Why would she be so rude to me? That night in bed I prayed but then I started planning all the mean things I would say to her to put her in her place. In the morning I woke up thinking of the scripture about turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:41). I wondered why I woke up thinking that verse, and then I remembered how I wanted to be mean to Angel. I felt like God was telling me to be kind even when she was being mean. I didn't want to be kind, but I love God so I would try it.

When I saw Angel, I said a friendly "hi" like we had no problems. That Saturday there was a big sale so we had long lines of customers the whole day. As

we sold the clothing, we were to remove the hangers and put them in a large box that happened to be behind where I was standing at my register. Suddenly, I got hit with something. I looked down and it was a hanger. I didn't think anything about it and just picked it up and put it in the box.

A second time I was hit with a hanger. I looked quickly at Angel. She was facing her register and working, but I saw a smirk on her face and knew she had done it on purpose.

When I was hit a third time, I was fuming mad, but I remembered the verse and took a deep breath. I calmly took a breath and dragged the box over by Angel. I said in as calm a tone as I could, "This will help you get the hangers in the box. I'll be careful not to hit you when I put the hangers in the box." I wasn't hit again that day.

The next Thursday night I kept replaying what had happened the previous weekend when I had to work with Angel, and I thought of clever jabs I could have said. I got myself worked up and so angry I couldn't sleep. I finally fell asleep, but when I woke up I was thinking, "*do good to them that hate you*" (Matthew 5:46). I knew God was reminding me how I should treat Angel even if she was mean to me. Again, I didn't want to be kind to her, but I love God so I would do my best.

So, I greeted Angel like I did everyone else with a smile and a "hello." Angel still didn't talk to me, but she stopped doing mean things to me. That was some relief to me.

Then in August one night after closing the store, I couldn't get my cash drawer to balance out, which is big trouble. I was getting panicky about it because each time I counted the money, it didn't come out right. It was Angel who came over and helped me. She spotted a check I had forgotten to add in. I was so grateful for her help, and I told her so. She became my best friend there at Sears after that.

I realized that if I hadn't listened to what God was prompting me from His Word (John 14:26), things between Angel and me probably would have gotten worse instead of better. If I had said something mean to her, she would have done something even meaner to me, and it would have continued to escalate until it was an awful work situation. Instead God blessed her and me with a friendship by doing things His way.



“Just Be Patient”

-by Carol Allen, Grain Valley, Missouri

The last few years have been very hard for me. I have been blessed all my life to have strength when I have had medical problems, but the problems I faced these last three years have been very hard to put behind me and go on in life.

The first problem began when I moved from my home to an apartment because my children suggested I should do that. It was not my desire but I did move and was gone from my home nearly two years. After that time, I kept having a strong feeling I should move back home. I had two or three good reasons to do that.

I spoke with five elders and asked what they considered to be the right thing for me to do. All of them agreed that it would be best for me to move back home. I felt our Lord was urging me to do this, so return home I did. My children were not happy with my decision and removed themselves from my life.

Then I had a health problem. I had previously developed a bump on my left ankle. I asked my doctor for three years to test it. Every time, he said it was just a cyst. After three years, he tested it and discovered it was sarcoma cancer. I had surgery, but it had grown to my bones, and the surgeon could not remove all of it. I had thirty-three treatments of radiation

I then had three accidents after I returned home. The first one occurred while I was mowing. Somehow, I hooked my leg on an item in my yard. The Lord stopped my mower. The doctor said if the mower had not stopped, my leg would have been pulled off. It was terribly sore for several months.

The next winter I fell and broke my left ankle in three places. I had surgery and was confined to bed. A few weeks after that, they discovered that my ankle was not healing because of the treatment for the cancer, so I had to have another surgery. All of this left me in bed unable to put weight on my ankle for three months all together.

The last accident happened while I was working outside in May 2020 and was the worst one of all. My good neighbor helped me and took me to the hospital. I take blood thinner for my heart and was bleeding very hard from the accident. We sat in the waiting room for nearly an hour before they attended to me so I lost a large amount of blood. Because of this, I nearly passed out and I am not able to remember anything that happened after they took me to the bed in the emergency department.

My injuries from this accident are too complicated to explain here, but I had to have two surgeries and I was in three hospitals over a period of three months. During this time, I wanted very much to go home, but because I had to have special treatment twice every day I could not leave until I was healed.

During the three months I was in the hospital, I realized I could no longer take care of my six acres and my home. I had helped build that home with my own two hands and had lived in it for over forty years. I knew the only solution was to sell my dear home and move into a rehabilitation home. This was the last thing I wanted to do. I prayed many, many times while I was in the hospital that I wouldn't have to do this, and cried many nights because it seemed inevitable that I would have to give up my home.

I was also concerned about my sweet dog, Katey, who was being boarded at the veterinarian. I missed her very much and knew that boarding fees were costing me tremendously. The nurses did allow Katey to be brought to the hospital to visit me twice.

The Lord however in His goodness stepped in and completely took care of things. I have an electronic doorbell with a camera through which you can see outside. One day while I was in the hospital, I was looking through my phone into my front yard and discovered my grandson Timothy's wife, Michele, was mowing my yard. I was amazed and surprised. I had hired a man to mow, plus I rarely see either of my two grandsons because of family problems.

My neighbor, Linda, likes to bring table scraps to my chickens and one day when she did this, Tim was weed eating and Michele was mowing. Linda and

Michele started talking and Linda discovered that Tim had always loved my home and would love to have it. Michele said every time he drove by he said, "There is Grandma's home." I had no idea he felt this way. Linda couldn't wait to get back home so she could call me and tell me what Michele had told her.

On August 31, 2020, I finally came home from the hospital. The next day Tim and Michele came to mow again. When they were through, they came into the house to see me. I had thought about what Michele had told Linda, so when they came in and sat down I said, "Well Tim, how soon do you want my house?"

He looked at Michele and she nodded her head. He was speechless so I said, "Do you really like this place?" He nodded his head. I then said, "If you really like it, it is yours. You can have it!" He was so shocked he couldn't answer.

Tim and Michele put their house in Buckner up for sale and the first man who looked at it bought it for more than they were asking for it. They moved into my home, and I deeded it to them. They have promised me over and over that I will live with them and I will never have to live in a nursing home. How could I ask for anything better? I love them so much. They took over all the chores and I have nothing to do but knit. I couldn't be happier!

I know all of this took place because the Lord loves us so much. I now know that through all my problems, the Lord was thinking, "Just be patient, Carol. I have a surprise for you in the future." He is so good to us if we try sincerely to follow Him and keep His commandments.



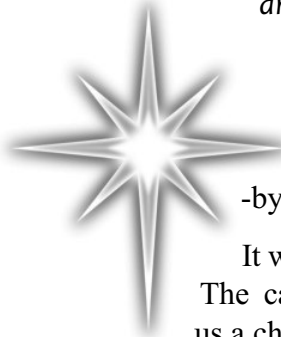
*"Wait on the Lord,
be of good courage, and
he shall strengthen thy heart;
wait, I say, on the Lord."*

Psalm 27:14



*"For the gate by which ye should enter is
repentance and baptism by water: and then
cometh a remission of your sins by fire,
and by the Holy Ghost."*

2 Nephi 13:24



My Baptism

-by Heather Smith, Oak Grove, Missouri

It was our family's first church reunion. The camp was a week long, which gave us a chance to get to know everyone and for me to decide if I wanted to be baptized. Also I needed to decide who I wanted to baptize me. It had to be someone I knew and trusted. There were several elders we got to know and now I just had to decide.

It was the second to the last day of reunion when I let my mom and dad know my decision. I wanted to be baptized and I had decided who I wanted to baptize me.

The day of the baptism we all walked down to the river. As the elder and I went into the water, I was surprised how warm the water was. We waded up to our waists. When he put me under the water, it was like time stood still. I could see under the water. This was weird, because I usually can't open my eyes under water.

There was nothing as far as the eye could see. All of a sudden, I was drawn to the horizon. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a small blue star. It flew past me and crashed at the horizon and created a sunset.

A big shiny blue sparkling star appeared in front of the sunset. I was drawn to it like a moth to a light. It rotated in animation up and down and then it flattened out to an oval. Behind it was a white oval door where Jesus stood. He was surrounded in glowing white and colors all around Him. He started walking toward me in slow animation. He had His hands with His palms out like He wanted to show me how much He loved us.

About that time, the elder pulled me up and everything disappeared. I looked around to see where Jesus went. I wanted to know what happened and if what I saw was real. I told my mom and dad and one of the elders. Apparently it was real.

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom,
neither shall fruit be in the vines;
the labor of the olive shall fail,
and the fields shall yield no meat;
the flock shall be cut off from the fold,
and there shall be no herd in the stalls;
**Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.”**

Habakkuk 3:17-18



**Has Turned
into 150 Days of Joy,
and Still Counting**

-by Susan Booth, Oak Grove, Missouri

The Women’s Department at our branch began a series of book club sessions in the summer of 2021. Our goal was not just to read books and simply discuss them, but to go a step further and see what we could find in the books that would motivate us to implement changes for the better in our lives.

The first book was *In the Shelter of the Little Brown Cottage*. As one of the results of this reading and study we were challenged for thirty days to write down daily evidence of “joy” we find in our lives. I decided to respond to this challenge.

I began by writing one-liners and then began to write a little more detail. To my amazement I actually stuck with this task. At the end of the thirty days, I typed up all of my entries and realized that this had indeed brought me so much joy and uplift in my spirit that I wanted to continue! And so I did. I completed another thirty days of joy month after month after month until now I am almost up to five months or 150 days of joy. I do not intend to stop!

I continue to handwrite my “joy” notes every morning. My routine also includes reading from a devotional book and praying regarding a number of subjects. These new habits are now something I look forward to every day and would greatly miss if I ever left them out of my routine.

Think of it this way: We all arise every morning. We get dressed. We make our beds. So why not in this process include praising God; reading a devotional that makes us ponder anew; and considering the previous day’s joy and writing it down (as well as considering the spiritual aspect of our daily walk with our Heavenly Father and how He blesses us)?

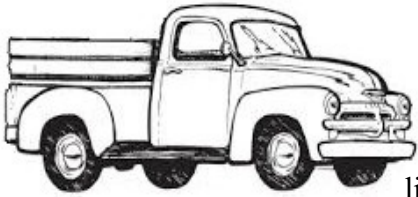
Throughout this process there have certainly been trying times—losing loved ones to COVID-19; difficult relationship issues; challenges expressed by family and friends in need of prayer and consolation; trouble in society, country and the world as a whole. These things will rob us of our God-given joy unless we intentionally focus on Him and the many blessings He showers upon us every day!

My three-ring binder is filling up with “joy” and now I realize I also have a historical record that someone may find interesting in the future.

Here are a few examples from my first thirty days of joy: JOY OF remembrance, friendship, prayer service, married love and commitment, perseverance, celebration, baptism and family time, giving, staying on task, family, reunion, Restoration talent, answered prayer, hearing the spoken word, restful sleep, intercessory prayer, visiting with loved ones, testimony and knowledge of eternal life, responding to the Holy Spirit, a child, seeking harmony, friendship, our VCS program, utilizing Zoom for family time, music ministry, a clean home and busy work, trusting in God’s will.

The song “Pass It On” says it well in the third verse:

I wish for you, my friend,
This happiness that I’ve found,
You can depend on Him,
It matters not where you’re bound;
I’ll shout it from the mountain top,
I want my world to know:
The Lord of love has come to me,
I want to pass it on.



The Lord Has Protected Me

-by Carol Allen, Grain Valley, Missouri

When I was a little girl, my father worked as a section foreman on the Santa Fe Railroad. We lived in several small towns from Atherton, Missouri, to Fort Madison, Iowa. In 1938, when I was five years old, we moved to Henrietta, Missouri. At that time in Henrietta, the roads were covered in cinders. For those who don't know, cinders are the "ashes" that result from burning coal.

This was a small town with very little traffic on the town streets. There were many children that lived in our neighborhood. (The family across the street from us had ten children.) Most of the time we kids played wherever we wanted to, but mostly in the street.

One day several of us were playing tag and the one who was "it" chased me across the street and tagged me. I immediately turned around to chase him back across the street and ran right out in front of a two-ton farm truck. I was hit by the truck and pinned under the front wheel. It did not run over me but it pinned me under the wheel and scooted me on the road. I was wearing an elasticized hat and the hit knocked off my hat as well as my shoes.

The other kids started screaming and the mothers ran out to see what was going on. My mother found me pinned under the wheel of that truck. She put me in our car and took me to a doctor in Richmond, Missouri. He didn't do anything except put a large bandage on my right thigh where the skin had been scraped off when I was scooted on the road. He didn't clean that area or any other area at all.

My mother took me back to the doctor a couple times and all he did was rip off the bandage and put on a new one. In a short time, my mother decided she could do a better job of taking care of my injuries than the doctor was doing. She got some medicine called "BFI Powder" and started putting that on my injury. Some of the time she left the bandage off so the air could get to my thigh. I was in bed for nearly two months. When I was finally out of bed, I had to learn to walk all over again. I would walk from one piece of furniture to the next.

The driver of the truck had been a next-door neighbor shortly before this happened and he was

extremely upset. When the accident happened, he was on his way home from having the brakes on the truck fixed. He had been driving very slowly.

He came to visit me several times. One time he brought me a bouquet of flowers called bleeding hearts and one time he brought me a bushel of home-grown apples. I have bleeding hearts growing in my yard right now and when they bloom I always remember him.

Another accident that happened to me while we lived in Henrietta was when I was about seven years old. In those days we didn't have bathrooms in our homes, only outdoor toilets.

One night I was cleaning up and getting ready for bed. I took the wash pan to the stove and poured hot water from the teakettle in it. As I was carrying it back to the kitchen table, I was carrying it in my hands but propping it against my waist. It slipped from my waist and dumped the hot water down my leg. I was wearing long cotton socks and when my mother pulled the sock off my leg some of the skin came off with it. There was a lady visiting the neighbor when my mother went next door to ask for help, and that lady was a nurse. She told my mother to soak my leg in tea. She did this and it relieved some of the pain.

I couldn't stand the bed covers lying on my leg when I went to bed, even though it was thoroughly bandaged, so my father put into my bed a round kitchen stool with the legs facing me. I put my leg inside the legs of the stool and that kept the covers off my leg. I slept that way several nights.

While I was in bed with a scalded leg, my older sister came down with chicken pox and whooping cough. Of course she was thoughtful enough and made sure I caught them from her. What a time I had!

Because I was so young I can't remember whether my parents called the elders. They were members of the Church, so I know there were many prayers offered for me. I am now in my eighties and I still have the scar nearly the size of a hand on my leg with traces of the cinders that the doctor didn't clean out.

The Lord always seems to remember me when I need Him. Thank you, Father.

A Near Fatal Accident: God Does Watch Over Us

-by Dennis Heater, Oak Grove, Missouri

I would like to share a testimony of God's protection and blessing. My first wife, Shirley, who experienced this testimony with me, has since passed away and is now spending time with her Heavenly Father.

It was 9:30 on a Sunday morning in November 2001 when Shirley and I were traveling in her 2001 Nissan 300 ZX to Syracuse, Missouri, to meet our families for a Thanksgiving dinner at the local park. It was a nice fall day and the sun was shining. I was driving and we were on Highway F south of Oak Grove, Missouri, about one and a half miles north of Highway 50.

It had rained earlier in the morning and the road was still wet. It had been quite a while since the last rain, causing an oily film on the surface of the road. As I came into a curve in the road, the rear end of the car began to slide sideways, sending us toward the ditch on the right side of the road.

The door on my side struck a mailbox, pulling it out of the ground and overturning the car. We ended up in the ditch in an upright position. The engine was still running, so I shut it off.

We both were wearing our seatbelts which no doubt saved our lives. Most of the glass was shattered including the T-Tops. I looked over at Shirley and her head was laid over to one side and she was unresponsive when I called her name.

There was a house close by. (The mailbox I had hit belonged to its residents.) A woman came running toward us, and I yelled, telling her to call 911. She said she had heard the crash and had already called 911. It turned out she was a nurse.

She went up to Shirley and began talking to her, trying to get a response. It looked like she was checking Shirley's vital signs. The corner of the roof had caved in when the car rolled over, hitting Shirley on the head. That is what knocked her out.

Shortly after that a vehicle pulled up and stopped. Two men got out and came over to the car. One went to Shirley's door and the other one climbed into the back of the car (the hatchback had opened on the

impact) and got behind her. He started asking me questions when he saw I was alert. The one at Shirley's door was talking to the nurse. I asked them who they were and they told me they were EMT's. They had been headed to Kansas City on 50 Highway and were nearby when they heard the call on their radio.

Soon the police and ambulance arrived and the paramedics took over. As Shirley began to wake up, they began questioning her. She had gone into shock, but now was becoming more alert. Life Flight had been called, but was cancelled. They had to use the jaws of life to cut the passenger door off in order to get Shirley out of the car.

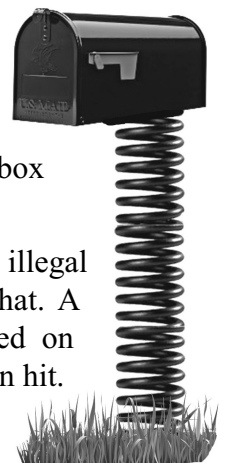
After they got her out, they put Shirley on a stretcher and began attending to her. I only received a bruise on my left leg where the mailbox bent the door in and some glass in my ear, which was removed at a doctor's office later.

Shirley was taken to St. Joseph Hospital in Kansas City by ambulance. A policeman drove me home, then I went to the hospital where Shirley was taken and later brought her home.

As I looked back at the accident, I realized that God had blessed us in many ways. First of all, we had our seatbelts on. Who knows what would have happened if we had not been buckled up.

Also, hitting the mailbox slowed our momentum in the skid so that we only rolled over once and came to rest in an upright position. We found out later that the mailbox was attached to a large coil spring from a D-8 Caterpillar which was set in concrete. This is why the car was slowed down so much as it uprooted the mailbox out of the ground.

We also found out later that it is illegal to have a mailbox mounted like that. A mailbox is required to be mounted on something that will break over when hit. But the way this mailbox was mounted probably saved our lives.



It was also a blessing that the lady at the house had called 911 before coming to the car and that she was a nurse, so she could monitor Shirley until help arrived.

I know it was not just chance but a blessing from God that the two EMTs were nearby, heard the call, and came to assist. We were also blessed that as Shirley came around, Life Flight was able to be cancelled.

God blessed us and spared us that the car's roof was not totally flattened. All this goes to show that even in bad situations, there are still blessings that can come forth. God does watch over us.



On a Far Distant Mountainside

-by Lyle L. Smith, Grain Valley, Missouri

On a rural mountainside in central Nepal, Brother Francis Harper and I had the opportunity to bless a tiny baby girl. Her parents are members of a small branch known as The Church of Jesus Christ, Restoration Branches, in this rural community. We had driven from Gorkha City in the morning in a high bottom four wheel drive truck, fording rivers and winding our way up and down mountainsides. I was in awe of the multitude of terraces that cover the mountains in Nepal.

We first visited in the home of the pastor, an elder in the Church, meeting his wife and children. They had known that Brother Francis was coming and had waited for him to bless their daughter. I could not help but remember what my parents had told me about my blessing as a baby and remember some of the other blessings I had given to members of my family and others. It reminded me that God's love is pervasive—

encompassing all people and fully able to touch the life of this small baby girl in rural Nepal.

Nepal is a strong Hindu and Buddhist country. It takes real courage and a strong belief in Christ to be a Christian. This small branch, with some outside assistance, had built the only church building that our branches have in Nepal. Other branches meet in homes. It was in this small church building where the Saints meet, that the blessing took place.

Yet this baby girl has just started in life. What will be her life? Who will she touch and associate with over the years? Will she have the opportunity to grow up a Christian? Will her husband believe in Christ also? There are a multitude of questions that come to mind in such a situation.

Of one thing I am sure. God's love will be a blessing in her life. I do pray that He sends the same mercy and grace into her life that He has shown me in mine, and I see and understand that I need to do all I possibly can to bless her life with a rich knowledge of Jesus and the Gospel of the Kingdom.

"But, behold, all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, shall dwell safely in the Holy One of Israel, if it so be that they will repent."

"And we see that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and believe on his name."

(1 Nephi 7:64 and Alma 12:180)

Shout the tidings of salvation
To the aged and the young
Till the precious invitation
Wakens every heart and tongue.

Shout the tidings of salvation
O'er the islands of the sea
Till, in humble adoration
All to Christ shall bow the knee.

Send the sound the earth around,
From the rising to the setting of the sun,
Till each gathering crowd
shall proclaim aloud,
"The glorious work is done!"

—William Bradbury, Alt.

“What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY

-by Pat Allen

I had a testimony that I had wanted to share for some time, but I couldn't put the words together. Then one Sunday, the minister talked about our bodies being the temples of God. I started thinking about some choices I had made in my own life. When I left church, I headed toward my daughter's house. As I approached Lee's Summit, I realized I was driving in the middle of the road. The lines had worn off so they were very hard to see, so I had not realized where I was driving.

This reminded me of how my life had been. I had been straddling the fence. For a number of years I had been involved in Word of Wisdom classes, and being a nurse, I believed how important our food choices are for our health. I knew our bodies are temples of God and that we should care for them in a way that glorifies Him. I could talk about what was good and what was bad, but when it came to practicing what I preached that was a different story.

I liked my sweets. Even though I knew sugar was not good for my body, I got quite good about sneaking around to get my "fix." You see, I not only liked sweets, but I was addicted to them. I was a Coke addict. No, not the white powder, but the beverage. No matter how hard I tried to give it up, the adversary was always there to entice and tempt me.

Then I had a mammogram and they found a small lump in my breast. I couldn't feel it, but it was there. So I started going through all the steps of treatment. First I had a needle biopsy and it was confirmed that I had breast cancer. A date was set for surgery.

I had heard a doctor talk in the past about alternative treatments for breast cancer. When I asked the surgeon about this, he said I could get a second opinion. I decided to do that. I saw an oncologist. He told me I had choices and alternatives. He believed that I did not have to have surgery at that point.

I cancelled the surgery and went to the Lord in prayer, knowing that if I changed my life and my eating habits, and if I started abiding by the Word of Wisdom, I could be healed.

The oncologist was getting ready for a seminar and had me do some research for him. In my reading, I found that to help my body fight this cancer I should give up meat, eggs, dairy, and especially sugar. I had tried giving up sugar before and it hadn't worked. But this time, I went to the Lord in prayer and fasting.

The Lord was there in a greater abundance than I have ever known. Every time I had an obstacle to overcome, I was administered to by the laying on of hands of the elders (James 5:14) and the Lord would carry me a little further. I made many changes, but I knew it still was not enough. I began having a lot of pain. I called to elders and we all prepared for a week for a special administration. When they arrived to administer to me, one of the elders asked what I wanted the Lord to do for me. I said that I wanted the pain and the cancer to be gone.

After this administration, I felt such a difference! The pain was gone. But over the next months, my tumor began to grow. I saw the oncologist again and we made the decision to remove the tumor.

I knew that sometimes the Lord does not answer our prayers the way we want them to be answered, but still I did not understand why He hadn't just healed me. I began to feel like a forsaken child. "What have I done wrong?" I asked the Lord. The Lord comforted me and helped me to understand that sometimes we have to go through things we don't want to go through, but that He has a plan for everything to work together for our good.

When I talked to the surgeon, he wanted to take out all my lymph nodes. I said no. He agreed to do a sentinel node biopsy. So I had the surgery removing the lump and two nodes. The pathology report on the lymph nodes came back negative and my margins were clear. I have since come to realize that there were many blessings poured out on and through those I came in contact with because of the surgery.

The Lord does not want us to be sick, but we live in a broken and sinful world. Sometimes through our own disobedience we make ourselves sick. Neverthe-

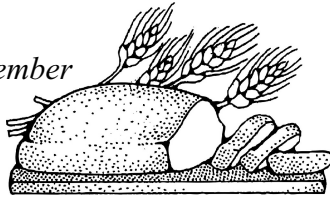
less, when we turn to Him, He is there to give us a Father's blessing. It may not always be the way we want it, but we can trust that He knows best. He allowed me to go through the surgery which I did not want, but He has blessed me greatly through it and after it.

I am trying to be more obedient and diligent in following the dietary guidance the Lord has outlined for us in the Scriptures, particularly in Doctrine and Covenants, Section 86—the Word of Wisdom. The Lord promises us that if we keep this counsel and walk in obedience to His commandments the destroying angel shall pass us by (D&C 86:3c-d).

I now have a scar that reminds me every day of the scars that the Lord Jesus carries for us. It reminds me to treat my body as a temple of God and to abide by the Word of Wisdom. If I do not do these things, my scar hurts. If I care for my body in the ways that the Lord has directed, I have no pain.

Cancer was a wake up call for me. I pray that this testimony will be a wake up call for you to follow the Lord's guidance and commandments in the care of our bodies.

“And all Saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel, and marrow to their bones, and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint; and I, the Lord, give unto them a promise that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. Amen” (D & C 86:3c-d).



My Old Back

-by David Strahan, Oak Grove, Missouri

My old back had been hurting for years. Every year it would get a little worse. I saw a chiropractor and did exercises for my back six days a week, but it got to where this was not helping anymore.

I know that the laying on of hands of the elders in administration is important. I asked for the elders to administer to me and they asked me what I wanted to get from the administration. I told them that I wanted

my back to quit hurting and never hurt again. Three months later that desire came true in the following way.

In 2020, I came across a testimony in one of the books we were studying in the adult Sunday School class. This book was *Exercises in Growing Spiritually* by Barbara Wilkinson, revised by Alicia Neggard.

On page 275, Sister Wilkinson states that a church sister in Australia had followed the Word of Wisdom all her life, but was bedridden with arthritis. She prayed and fasted to know why she had not received the promised health. An angel came to her and told her to drink barley tea. The recipe for making barley tea was also included on the same page.

I was interested in this barley tea and hoped that my aunt might try it, so I asked my sister to order some barley with the hulls on for me. The book said the barley needed to be unhulled.

One morning, I was lying in bed wondering how to get my aunt to try the barley tea. I started wondering if the barley tea could help me. I did not know if I had arthritis or not, but I decided to try it.

After two weeks of drinking barley tea, I realized that what I had asked for in the administration by the elders had been answered. I was able to spend three hours getting my lawn mower ready for the mowing season. To my amazement, that evening my back was not hurting. The next morning my back was still not hurting.

I had been wondering if I was going to be able to have a garden that year because of my pain. Since drinking the barley tea (or barley water as it is sometimes called), I was able to have a big garden and give away tomatoes, green beans, zucchini, and cucumbers. I canned one hundred pints of green beans and thirty quarts of dill pickles.

Drinking barley tea also helped my acid reflux, stopped leg cramps, and even helped the inflammation in my eyes which had been causing dry eyes. I noticed that my right shoulder quit hurting, too. The effects of the barley tea seem better if you are on a low sugar diet.

Here is the recipe I use: Boil 4 cups of water. Add 1/2 cup of barley in the hulls. Remove from the heat and let it steep for one hour. Strain. Store any tea you

don't drink in the refrigerator. I have tripled this recipe so I don't need to make barely tea every day.

The Word of Wisdom in Doctrine and Covenants, Section 86 states that barley is for mild drinks.

All grain is good for the food of man, as also the fruit of the vine, that which yieldeth fruit, whether in the ground or above the ground.

Nevertheless, wheat for man, and corn for the ox, and oats for the horse, and rye for the fowls, and for swine, and for all beasts of the field, and barley for all useful animals and for mild drinks, and also other grain” (D&C 86:3a-b).

Drinking barley tea is one way we can experience blessings from keeping the Word of Wisdom.



My Testimony of Conversion to the Church

-by Louise Crabtree

I was raised in the Baptist Church and knew nothing of the RLDS Church when I married my husband Milford. He had been baptized into the RLDS Church at age eight, but was not active at the time we married.

After about five years of married life, we decided we should find a church. Milford worked with a man in Dayton, Ohio, who was also a member of the RLDS church. They began talking and Milford had renewed interest in the Church. It was during this time Milford had his experience confirming the truth of the Book of Mormon shared below.

Milford arranged to have cottage meetings for me to learn more about the Church. [Cottage meetings are when the priesthood come into the home and teach a series of classes about the Restored Gospel.] I learned a lot, but still wasn't sure if it was right.

During this time, I had a dental appointment. I was put to sleep in the dental chair for the dental work. While there, I had a dream. I felt like I was on a wheel, such as a watermill, going under. Demons were all around me. I saw Milford in a beautiful place under a tree. I kept hearing the words, "They shall fool the very elect."

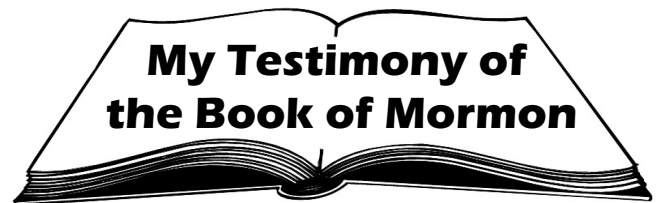
In my dream, I knew that I had to get to Milford and the beautiful place for safety. I fought the dentist,

the nurse, and Milford to get out of that chair. Afterward, I felt empty, like the Spirit of God had left me. This feeling stayed with me for several days.

I finally called the elder that had led the cottage meeting. He and another elder came to administer to me. They anointed my head with oil and laid their hands on my head to pray for me. During the administration, I felt the Lord's Spirit come back into my life, and I have never felt that emptiness again. I was baptized shortly after this experience.

We became active in the Dayton, Ohio branch where Milford was called to the priesthood. The branch needed help in the music department. One day we were sitting in church when I felt the Lord in my hands, telling me I could play the piano and organ. God gave me the ability to play the hymns that I love. I am so thankful for this gift. I want to be remembered for this gift.

I have lost a son and a husband, but the Lord has never left me. I praise Him and thank Him for all my blessings. Milford served as an elder in the Church for nearly fifty years. He died in March 2016. He wanted to be remembered for his certain knowledge that the Book of Mormon is true. Below is his testimony. He always taught the truth of the Book of Mormon and the Church.

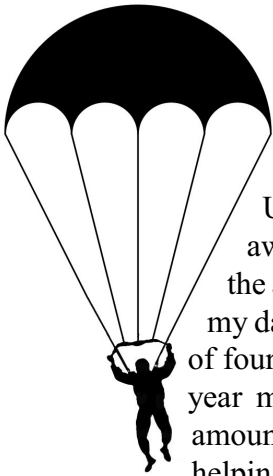


-by Milford Crabtree (as shared by Louise Crabtree)

After a period of inactive as a young adult, my interest in the Church was renewed, but I felt that I needed to know for sure if this was the true Church. I wanted to know the Book of Mormon was true.

I had been praying, reading, and studying about the truth of the Book of Mormon and asking my father about it. He told me the answer was in the book and to pray earnestly. While laying in bed praying about this, I was suddenly paralyzed and could not move at all. I remained this way until I said, "Thank You, God." Then I was back to normal and knew the Book of Mormon was true.

I later had a similar experience about the stewardship law and always tried to follow it.



Are You Packing Anyone's Parachute Today?

-by Mark Nunn, Oak Grove, Missouri

On January 28, 2020, my Uncle James (Jim) Nunn passed away in Independence, Missouri, at the age of eighty-six. Uncle Jim was my dad's younger brother and the last of four siblings to pass. Over the next year my son Larry and I spent a fair amount of time at Aunt Sandy's helping her to settle many of his affairs and provide maintenance and odd jobs around the house and property.

That November after I had spent some time working at Aunt Sandy's, we were sitting at the kitchen table enjoying some pleasant conversation. She began to tell me about an old friend of hers who was a Vietnam veteran and had survived nearly six years as a prisoner of war (POW). He had written a book about his ordeal and traveled around the country giving inspirational lectures about his experiences as a prisoner.

I mentioned to her that I actually met one of the Vietnam POWs when I was in college at CMSU (UCM). After his presentation I had the opportunity to visit briefly with him and get his book autographed. This was a treasured book that sadly got lost in one of our many moves while I was in the army.

Aunt Sandy asked me if I remembered his name. I told her it was Navy Captain Charlie Plumb. She laughed and said Charlie was the old friend she was talking about. She also told me that my dad, who was the accountant for the Herald Publishing House for many years, actually helped Charlie get his book published. This is just one of many experiences I have had where the Lord has directed my life to cross paths with others in a meaningful way.

In December, Aunt Sandy invited my wife Sheri and me over for some cake and ice cream. After we finished our cake and were again enjoying some quiet conversation, Aunt Sandy brought out three Christmas presents for me. One was a coffee mug with "Parachute Packer" printed on the side. She asked me if I knew what this meant, and I acknowledged that I did indeed.

The second gift was an autographed copy of a book by another old friend of hers who had also spent nearly six years in the Vietnam POW camp ruefully named the "Hanoi Hilton" by the prisoners. This book, *Escape From the Box* by Ed Hubbard was less of an exposé on his experiences as a POW and more a guide book on lessons he learned while in captivity.

The third gift Aunt Sandy gave me was none other than Charlie Plumb's *I'm No Hero!* This book was also autographed with a personal message: "To Mark Nunn, You've done a wonderful job of keeping Shub (Aunt Sandy's maiden name) Nunn's parachute packed. She and I say thanks, and Merry Christmas! Charlie Plumb" Needless to say, I was dumbfounded and touched deeply by this gift and will be sure to keep this one much more carefully in my possession.

I contacted Charlie via his website, charlieplumb.com to thank him for this wonderful gift which replaced my lost book. He replied to my email with a very kind note that included the comment, "I'm pleased Sandy replaced your lost book. Tell her thanks for tracking me down. I hope you enjoy reading it again. Yes, I go way back with the Nunn Family. I don't think I would have been able to publish that book without your dad's help."

My dad passed away in 1997 after suffering over a decade with the debilitating effects of a major stroke. Charlie is the second friend from Dad's history I've met in a meaningful way since his death. I miss my dad a great deal and, just as before, this connection to one of his old friends truly warmed my heart.

I am ever grateful for the Lord's divine touch in guiding my life to such crossroads. Experiences like this clearly reveal how a loving Father in Heaven guides our lives, if we allow Him, in such a way that we intersect with others in a meaningful way.

I share this testimony of God's Love not just on its own merit. Like so many of God's blessings, it was only a prelude to an even greater blessing. I was scheduled to bring the message at the Oak Grove Restoration Branch in February. The theme for the month was "Seek to Build Your Faith on a Solid Foundation."

For most of January I spent time in prayer and meditation about what the Lord wanted His people to hear. In the midst of this preparation I picked up Charlie's book. Right there in the foreword was the inspiration I needed to focus my thoughts and a message began to formulate in my mind. It was a message about faith, love, and serving one another.

James 2:14-17 very succinctly presents us with the connection between our faith and the work or service we perform:

What profit is it, my brethren, for a man to say he hath faith, and hath not works? . . . For if a brother or sister be naked and destitute, and one of you say, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled; notwithstanding he give not those things which are needful to the body; what profit is your faith unto such? Even so faith, if it have not works is dead, being alone.

Brothers and sisters, we are called to serve the Lord—by serving one another!

The following excerpts from the book, *I'm No Hero*, are used by permission of the author, Charlie Plumb. These are the words the Lord provided to me well before I even knew I needed their inspiration.

Just a few days after I left the jail cells of North Vietnam I found myself at the Great Lakes Naval Hospital near Chicago . . . [for] rehabilitation. I was the first guy back to the Midwest, and everyone was curious to know the story of our captivity, especially the skeptical media. I found myself in the basement of the hospital surrounded by a hundred reporters and photographers. And I shared my story.

On my way back up to my hospital room, on the elevator, a young reporter caught up with me. He had haggard lines of anguish in his brow and tears in his eyes as he said, "Sir, you really got to me in there. I've had a terrible year. My job is miserable. My family is falling apart. I even wondered if I should go on living. You've given me hope . . . you've given me hope."

Suddenly I saw value in my experience and the telling of it. That young reporter's words gave meaning to my six years of pain. So the telling of my story, in print and from the speaker's platform, has been a valuable therapy for me.

And the ability to touch the lives of people has certainly been another major blessing of the experience.

Charlie then shares another significant event that shaped the narrative of his lectures.

Recently, I was sitting in a restaurant in Kansas City. A man about two tables away kept looking at me. I didn't recognize him. A few minutes into our meal he stood up, walked over to my table, looked down at me, pointed his finger in my face and said, "You're Captain Plumb."

I looked up and said, "Yes, I'm Captain Plumb."

He said, "You flew jet fighters in Vietnam. You were on the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down. You parachuted into enemy hands and spent six years as a prisoner of war."

I said, "How in the world did you know all that?"

He replied, "Because, I packed your parachute!"

Well, for a guy who travels the world speaking, I was suddenly speechless! I staggered to my feet and held out a very grateful hand of thanks. This guy came up with just the proper words. He grabbed my hand; he pumped my arm and said, "I guess it worked!"

"Indeed it did, my friend," I said, "and I must tell you, I've said many prayers of thanks for your nimble fingers, but I never thought I'd have the opportunity to express my gratitude in person . . . Do you keep track of all the parachutes you've packed?"

"No," he responded (and this is perhaps the most significant part of the story and why I share it with you today), "it's enough gratification for me just to know that I've served."

I didn't get much sleep that night. I kept thinking about that man . . . I wondered how many times I might have passed him on board the Kitty Hawk . . . and not even said "good morning," or "how are you?" or anything—because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a lowly sailor.

But, again, how many hours must that sailor have spent at that long wooden table in the

bowels of that ship weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of those life-saving parachutes? I'm ashamed to admit that at the time, I could have cared less—until one day my parachute came along and he had packed it for me!

Charlie concludes his foreword to his book with the following comments.

I immediately began telling that story of the “Parachute Packer” and drawing from it the metaphor of the value of serving.

So, now that you know this book has a happy ending, I hope you will read on with confidence that there really are silver linings around your darkest clouds and the very essence of life is packing parachutes!

I'm No Hero by Captain Charlie Plumb, US Navy (Retired)

As we read in the Epistle of James—don't tell people of your love. Show them the love of God! Be a servant to the people just as Jesus is a servant to you. Every day in your prayers ask the Lord, “Help me pack someone's parachute today!”

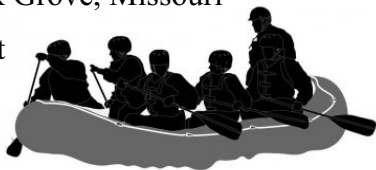
I pray that the Lord will bless you and keep you all safe in His path of righteousness.



Whom Are You Going to Serve?

-by Ed Story, Oak Grove, Missouri

Not long ago, about 4:30 in the morning, I had a dream. In the dream was a beautiful river, and it had two distinct currents. One was very gentle; the other started out as a gentle current but it became a white water rapid. In this dream I saw men and women getting into rafts that I later realized represented our lives and the choices we make.



In the middle of the river was a strip of land which separated the river into two streams. People on the left had no life jackets or paddles and they were wearing

flip-flops. They were gently going down the river. The people on the right side had life jackets, helmets, and paddles in preparation for what lay ahead.

I could look down upon this river and see the full length of it. The right fork turned into rapids. My wife and I used to float the rapids in Colorado, and they had a range of difficulty from one to five. That which I saw was probably a three. It was such that if you followed the raft in front of you, you would be able to negotiate the river and make the pilgrimage.

Those on the right were in white water, going around boulders. They were invigorated and up to the challenge. Then I saw a beautiful harbor where there were people on the shore welcoming those who were coming in. The travelers were tired and worn out, but they were rejoicing because they had floated the river successfully.

The people on the left side of the river were bouncing into each other, laughing and visiting. As I listened, I heard a rumble, but the people just kept floating along. I noticed the current became a little stronger, and they started going faster. Then I began to hear a roar.

I had heard a similar sound before when we visited Niagara Falls. I realized that there were great falls ahead, but those in this group had no concern or care. I began waving my arms—yelling and screaming—but they couldn't hear me. Then I saw them go over the falls into a great abyss, oblivious of the danger.

I woke up soaking wet because the dream was so real. And I cried, because the Lord is pleading with us—He is shouting to us, brothers and sisters. If we don't listen, we will suffer because we are not willing to hear our Master's voice.

We have come to a point in our lives where the Lord is giving us another invitation. We have a lot of work to do. We are in the last hour—don't make any mistake about that—but He is giving us another chance. We have our agency, but if we continue to turn our backs on His direction, we will suffer greatly. We will suffer in a manner that will literally bring us down to our knees

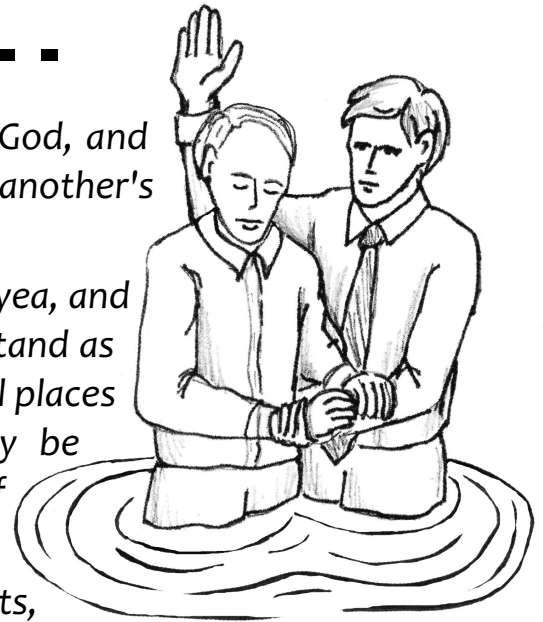
The hour is too close at hand. We either serve the Lord or we serve the devil. Those are our two choices. Whom are you going to serve?

The Book of Mormon . . .

And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;

Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life:

Now I say unto you, If this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?



(Mosiah 9:39-41)

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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