

True to the Faith

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True to the faith that our parents have cherished,
True to the truth for which martyrs have perished,
To God's command,
Soul, heart, and hand,
Faithful and true we will ever stand.

—*Hymns*, no. 254

PART 1

WHY SHOULD I STAY TRUE TO THE FAITH?

And because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.

—ALMA 32:42

CHAPTER ONE

A 20/20 VISION OF MY FUTURE BLESSINGS

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

—1 CORINTHIANS 2:9

Let's read this book now and do as it suggests. Let's stay true to the faith. Then in the year 2020 we will meet on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, near the Seagull Monument. We'll talk about the blessings we have received from the Lord. Let's each bring a lunch, because to describe all our blessings will take us all day.

A “20/20” Vision

As we were driving home from our recent mission to Canada I asked Marilyn, “Remember how I’ve said that going on a mission makes a man more handsome?”

“Yes,” she replied. “I’ve heard you say that after each of your four missions.”

“Well,” I continued, “I was looking in the mirror this morning, and I think it has worked again for me. What do you think?”

Her reply delighted me. “Oh, I agree. To me you do look much better now than you’ve ever looked before.” Then to my dismay, she added, “But of course, with each mission I serve my eyesight gets dimmer and dimmer.”

That reminded me of the time when the optometrist asked me which eye I could see better with. “This one? Or this one?” I guess I didn’t give the correct answers, because at the end of the exam he told me that my youthful “20/20” vision was now a thing of the past. I hated the thought of glasses. I feared they would mar my otherwise good looks.

Later I got the glasses and went into the bathroom, where in private I could assess just how I looked. My worst fears were verified. I was shocked at what I saw. I just didn’t look as good as I had without the glasses. I complained to Marilyn that I didn’t want to wear the glasses because I didn’t look good with them on. She told me I looked very good in the glasses. I asked her, “Then why do I feel I don’t look good?”

She replied, “Because by wearing them you can finally see yourself.”

A Spiritual “I” Exam

The purpose of this book is not to give you an “Eye Exam” so that with 20/20 vision you can see how you really look. Rather the purpose is to give you a self-administered “I Exam” to see how you will look spiritually in the year twenty-twenty.

To help us warm up to this idea of a 20/20 vision of ourselves, let us consider two case studies. Each of these stories is fictitious, but each is based on a composite of experiences I have noted in the lives of people I have known. To give these stories a usable format, I have created a character named Bill Morrow. Brother Morrow is a Church researcher who is traveling about the Church in the year 2020 to

determine why some people who were members of the Church in 1998 have remained true to the faith and why others have not.

Case No. 1

Bill Morrow, accompanied by two missionaries, Sisters Arnett and Kolby, parked the 2017 Ford and walked to the somewhat dilapidated brick town house. Soon the door was opened by a middle-aged, rather plump and bald man. Sister Arnett spoke first. “Brother Artisma, it’s so good to see you. This is the first time we have been to your home.”

“I’m honored that you’ve come,” the host replied warmly.

“This is Brother Morrow. He is the one we phoned you about,” Sister Arnett said, stepping back a bit so that the two men could shake hands.

“I’m sure glad to meet you, Brother Artisma. It’s good of you to give us some of your time to help us with something that is of vital importance to the Church.”

“Come in and sit down.” Brother Artisma beckoned his guests to seats. “I’m surprised and pleased that you would want to talk to me so much that you came all the way from Salt Lake City.”

“I’m the one who is pleased,” Brother Morrow said with a friendly smile. “The Sisters tell me you are a stalwart in the Church, and have been for quite some time.”

“Me a stalwart?” Brother Artisma said with a sort of chuckle. “I’m far from being a stalwart. It’s my kids and my wife who are the stalwarts.”

“Is that a picture of them on the piano?”

“Yes, it is.” He stood, picked up the picture, and handed it to Brother Morrow.

“Great-looking family!” Bill said admiringly.

Sister Kolby added, “You look handsome and proud in the picture, Brother Artisma.”

“I don’t know about handsome, but I sure am proud of them all. My oldest son and his wife just had their first child—a little boy. My daughter is a flight attendant. And of course, as the Sisters probably told you, my son is in Beijing, China, on a mission.”

“In Beijing, China. Wow! How is he doing over there?”

“He says he loves it. But I can tell he’s a bit homesick. He’s only been there two months, and I think he misses his mother’s cooking. He says the Chinese food is not quite like the kind she used to make for him.”

“Is your wife home today?”

“Oh! I should have told you. She was going to be here but her aunt was just taken to the hospital, and she had to go over there this morning to help with that.”

“Well, Brother Artisma, we had better get down to the business we came for. We mustn’t take up your entire day off.”

“Don’t worry about that. I have all the time you need.”

“Let’s make this as informal as we can. Could I call you by your first name?”

“I like my middle name better. So just call me Nevo.”

“And you call me Bill. The Sisters will just listen in and I’ll lead the discussion. We’d like to tape record your words. Will that be all right?”

Nevo nodded his approval.

“Nevo . . . , Incidentally, you’re the first person I have ever known named Nevo. Tell me a bit about your history in the Church. When did you join?”

“I was baptized in 1998, just twenty-two years ago last month. Time sure does fly!”

“How did that happen, Nevo—I like saying the name Nevo—how did it happen?”

“I was riding the subway to get to my job at the restaurant where I worked when I first came to this country. I saw these two guys. One of them was nearly seven feet tall. I guess they saw me staring at them, so they smiled and said hello. We started to talk and they got off at the same stop as I did. They talked to me as I walked the two blocks to work. By the time we arrived there, they had made an appointment to come to my apartment to see my wife, my two children, and me.”

“What happened then?”

“Do you want the entire story. It would take a couple of hours to tell you all that happened before we were finally baptized. It is an incredible story.”

“What I really want you to tell me is what happened to you *after* you were baptized. Tell me all that has happened from the time of your baptism until now.”

“Well, let me think. The first thing that happened, just a month after I was baptized, was my wife, Ann, was baptized. That was a great day for me and for her. But then some real problems started up. We were saddened when our two Elders, who we loved like brothers, came to see us one night with the news that they were both being transferred. We were so shocked! We couldn’t believe it! Somehow we had thought they would be with us forever. I think they were as sad to leave us as we were to have them go. Ann was more upset than I had ever seen her. She didn’t have many friends at the Church. There just

wasn't anybody there who she really hit it off with. I had a good friend there in Brother Simms, who had come with the Elders when we were being taught. But Ann is not as forward as I am. She couldn't seem to connect with anyone.

"So when the Elders left she sort of lost some of the spirit. The counselor in the bishopric knew that something was wrong, so he gave her a call as a visiting teacher supervisor in the Relief Society. It required her to phone the other sisters to get their reports. One of them told her not to call her again. That sort of upset my wife, and after that she wouldn't call any others even though they were all nice to her. Then she got a job that made it so she had to work every other Sunday.

"One Sunday I got up to get ready to go to an early morning meeting. As I left the house, I told her that I would come home later and get her and the kids. She told me to come for the kids but that she was tired and didn't think she would go to church that day. I was a little surprised by what she said, but I could see she was tired. The next week she had to work. The week after that she told me she just did not feel comfortable at church and that I could take the kids and she would stay home and do some things that needed to be done. I asked her to come with me but she wouldn't.

"People at church asked me where she was and I told them she did not feel well. After that, church didn't feel enjoyable and exciting to me any more. The kids loved it and I knew I should keep going to church, and I did. But I just didn't feel the way I had felt when I first joined. We were also having some money problems at that time. We didn't have real good insurance, and some medical expenses had put us behind in paying our bills. Ann and I talked a little about this. We really didn't ever decide not to pay tithing. Somehow we both just seemed to feel that we should give a few dollars but that we could not afford a full tithing.

"Then one morning I noticed that Ann was drinking coffee. I got a bit upset and asked her about it. She didn't reply. I know she felt guilty. But after that she really went back to the coffee as heavily as she did before the missionaries came. I'll have to admit that I started drinking coffee again too.

"I still loved the Church, and I think Ann did too. But life just kept coming at us, and it was like I was trying to hold on to a train by running along behind, trying to hang on. But the train was moving faster than I could run. Then one night Ann and I got in a big argument over me not helping more with the children. I said some things I really regretted, things I didn't think someone in the Church should say. I went for a walk. I've never felt so low and discouraged. I stood under the stars and looked up and wondered if there really was a God and did he care whether or not I was a Mormon.

“We had tried to have family prayer each day as the missionaries taught us, but when Ann quit going to church we just stopped doing that. And after that night under the stars I stopped my personal prayers.

“After that, for a year or so I went to church most Sundays. But my heart was not in it. The bishop we had known and who we really loved was released and was put in the stake presidency. I didn’t feel that close to the new bishop. He asked me to be a counselor in the Sunday School presidency. The president was my best friend, Syd, so I said I would.

“Ann wanted the children to keep going to church, so she encouraged *me* to keep going. The Church sort of became a social thing for me. I just went out of habit more than anything else. I played sports on the ward teams, and I loved that.

“Then we were transferred by my company. In the new city we didn’t know where the Church was. If it had not been for the kids I don’t think we would have ever even tried to find out. Two weeks after we moved there we discovered that our neighbors were active Mormons. Ann soon got quite friendly with Linda, who was a single mother. I mean those two really hit it off. I decided when we moved that that would be an ideal time for me to quit going to church. And now, with Linda so close, we could have her take the children to church and we could stay home.

“Linda said she would be glad to do that because her children and our children were becoming good friends. So that was my official break from the Church.

“That went on for several months. The home teachers came and we treated them cordially, but we had all kinds of excuses for not going to church. Ann and I never seemed to have any deep kind of relationship with each other. We didn’t fight much or things like that. We just seemed to drift apart. I began to wonder where we were headed. Our life just didn’t seem to have any meaning.

“I guess it was about then that I started thinking back to how things were when the missionaries used to come. Somehow I sort of became homesick for the Church. I didn’t want to go back, it was just that I missed the way things used to be.

“I was shocked one day when I came into the bedroom and found Ann kneeling by the bed. When she saw me she got up real fast, but I could see she had been crying. That night when we went to bed, I asked her what her praying was all about. At that she really broke down into deep sobs. She told me she felt she was not a good person and that she was holding me back. She asked me if I would consider going back to church. This took me by such surprise that I told her I did not see how we could ever do that. That was about all we said that night. But for the next few days her words about going back to church were always on my mind.

“One night Linda came to bring her children for a sleep over with our children. You need to understand something about Linda. She was the best person that Ann and I had ever known. I mean she was a saint through and through. We got talking about life and things. She told us that three years earlier her husband had found another woman and had left her and the children. She told us that she could never have survived at that time had it not been for her faith and prayers.

“Her words really touched Ann and me. When she talked about faith, it brought the same sort of feeling we had felt when the missionaries used to teach us. It was a feeling we had not experienced in a long time.

“That night Ann suggested to me that we kneel in prayer together. I told her I felt she was better at praying than I was, and so I asked her to say the words. I’ll never forget how she asked the Lord to help us find our faith again.

“The next Sunday—well, it took all the courage we could muster, but we were back in church. Not many people seemed to notice us. Only one or two paid much attention to us, and the bishop who was hurrying by said hello. But when we sang we felt like somehow we had come home. We could feel the Lord saying to us, ‘Welcome back.’

“From then until now, we can count on the fingers of two hands the number of times we have missed church. Ann really blossomed. She became a counselor to Linda in the Primary presidency.

“She found out that she really had a talent for working with children. The children in Primary adored her. She thought she had received her lifetime calling. But the next time I found her kneeling by the bed in prayer and tears was the Sunday night after she had been called to be the Relief Society president.

“And as for me, after that first Sunday there was no turning back. The Church was my life. I decided that my talent was just to be a friend to everybody. I didn’t want to tell others my problems, but I just wanted to be able to help them with theirs. I shouldn’t brag, I know that, but I sort of became the world’s greatest home teacher. It got so I almost felt guilty that I was feeling so much joy all the time. Well, I shouldn’t say all of the time. I still get discouraged, and occasionally I wonder how it would feel to stay home on Sunday and read the paper and watch TV. But I don’t wonder for long, because I can remember the empty feelings of those days.”

The two Sisters and Brother Morrow had been listening intently to Brother Artisma’s account. Brother Morrow now said, “Thank you, Nevo, for telling us your story. But what of your children?”

Nevo began again. “Like I told you, they loved going to church when they were young. If they had not been so faithful, I’m not sure Ann and I would have made it back. But when our oldest son was

fourteen, most of his friends were not members of the Church. He got so he didn't want to go because he wanted to be with them on Sunday. We told him that he had no choice in the matter but that he was going to go to church or else. Well, we soon found out what 'or else' was, because he really rebelled. He told us that we had been free to join the Church and we had done that, and that he wanted to be free to leave the Church. It really broke our hearts, but when we could not get him to come back through force we felt helpless. If we had it to do over again we would have handled it a little differently. But we had never gone through anything like that before and we didn't know what to do.

"In a year or so we got used to the idea that he didn't see eye to eye with us on religion. At the same time he was a good young man, so we tried to live and let live. We would still get after him quite often, but he would let us know of his displeasure and we would back off. He hasn't been in church for several years now. He married a girl who was brought up in another church, but neither of them go to any church. But they seem happy, and their little baby is the cutest little kid you've ever seen. We keep hoping they will come back. But if they don't, well, we will keep loving them. I'm sure we will get them a little upset from time to time by asking them to go to church with us. Oh, they did bring the baby to church for me to give him a name and a blessing. In that blessing it was revealed to me what a great person that little guy is. I know that someday he will be a stalwart in the Church."

"Our oldest daughter never wavered. She is so good, she puts us to shame. She lives the gospel to a T. Whenever she comes home she gets after us for this or that we are doing that she does not feel is right. We always tell her that we will try to do better. I wish you could meet her. She is a beauty inside and out. She has just been instrumental in bringing another flight attendant into the Church."

"And our youngest son? Well it's difficult for me to talk about him. I thought Ann would not be able to go on after he left for his mission. But she is making it a lot better than I am. I can't go into his room without starting to cry again. What a young man! If he doesn't end up as the president of the Church it will surprise me."

"Well, Nevo, you are a blessed man. You make me grateful that I have the gospel."

"Thank you, Brother Morrow. The gospel is everything to me and to Ann and to the children. Even our oldest son is blessed by the gospel. He is as honest as the day is long. And we can tell that he respects us. In many ways he is trying to live his life and guide his family in accord with gospel principles."

"Well, Nevo, if you had it all to do over again would you have joined this church and given your whole life to it?"

“Aw, Bill, don’t get me crying. Finding this church and sticking with it has made all the difference. My testimony means more to me than my life. You can tell by our house that we are not rich people, but we feel like in the ways that matter we are the richest people in this whole world.”

Case No. 2

“Jil, thanks for meeting with me,” Bill Morrow said as he and Brother Metcalf, a member of the ward bishopric, sat in the bishop’s office with forty-five-year-old Jil Soderburg.

“I’m glad to try to help. But I’m surprised that you want to talk to me about my life in the Church. I don’t know if you know, but I haven’t been in a Church building in the last fifteen years.”

“Yes, we know that. That’s why we want to talk to you.”

“Before we say any more, I just want you to know that it’s no use trying to get me back. I really have no interest in that.”

“We understand that. What we are trying to do is to find out why some stay with the Church and others leave it behind and go on to something else. By talking to those who are no longer involved in the Church and to those who are, we hope to find some answers to help us do a better job in doing the things that will help people to stick with it.”

“Hmm! That is interesting. It has been a long time since I sort of ‘went astray.’ But, you know, I think every case is different. The one thing that I feel is the reason why some stay and others go is that every person is unique and there are some people who are just not cut out to be Mormons.”

Bill smiled. “That is a fascinating response. What do you mean by ‘not cut out to be Mormons?’”

“Hmm. What do I mean? Well, I guess some of us are sort of free spirits. We don’t like to be tied down to things like commandments and that. I guess we are just sort of rebels.”

Bill chuckled almost silently. “Jil, I sort of like you already. We need people like you to keep us on our toes. How can we change things so that we can keep ‘rebels’ like you with us?”

“Just drop all the commandments,” Jil said in a light tone. “You know, like the coffee thing and the get married and have children. You know all that sort of stuff. But don’t take me too seriously. I know that the things that our church—or I should say your church—teaches are the right things. It’s just that some of us feel we are not good enough or well enough disciplined, so we complain about other things rather than changing ourselves. Now on the other hand, Cynthia, who I work with and who asked me to

meet with you to help you with your study—she is cut out to be a Mormon. I mean, she is a natural to be a Latter-day Saint. She is a ‘born to be a Mormon’ kind of a person.”

“Tell us more, just what you mean.”

“I mean everybody loves Cynthia. Whenever they have problems or need help they go to her. No one swears or tells off-colored stories around her. They just don’t feel comfortable doing so. Well, you must know her, she arranged this meeting. You know how she is. On the other hand, there is me. She is a saint and I’m—well, I don’t know what I am, but I’m sure not a saint.”

Bill spoke softly. “I get the feeling that you in your own way are also a saint.”

“Well, I don’t know, maybe I’m a ‘salty saint.’ But I was a really good Mormon for a while. I hope you don’t mind my using the word *Mormon*. I didn’t want people to call the Church that when I first joined. I liked the real name of the Church: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That is what I wanted everyone to call it. Anyway, I wish you could have seen me twenty-two years ago, in 1998, when I first joined the Church. I was so ‘with it’ that they could have put my picture in the dictionary under the word *zealous*.”

“Tell us how you came to join the Church.”

“Aw! Yes! Now there is a story. I won’t bore you with all the details. But in my high school there was this boy. He was really quiet. He was not in the ‘in crowd’ and neither was I. But he was nice. I could tell that he really struggled to be good. He did some dumb things by giving in sometimes when the other kids tormented him for his beliefs, but I could tell that he was different in a good sort of way. His family lived fairly close to where I did. I would go over to his house to study with him because we had three classes together. His family was great. They were the sort of family I wished mine was. It got so I went over there more and more. Not so much to see this guy, even though I liked him; but what I really liked was being around his family. Anyway, one thing led to another and I started going to church with them, and finally I was baptized.”

“Were you still in high school?”

“Oh yes, I was just seventeen years old when I joined. I remember the dreams I had of getting married in the temple and having kids, and all that good stuff. And another thing, I loved the missionaries. I thought they were the coolest thing to ever hit the earth.”

“So you really were involved at that time?”

“Involved! I was superinvolved. I loved it all, especially the youth conferences. All of us young people were really close. Sometimes at those conferences we’d be laughing one minute and crying with joy the next. Just talking about those days gives me some of the feelings I had then.”

“So how long did you stay involved?”

“I was still going strong when I graduated from high school. My mother thought it was great that I was doing so well. She didn’t want to have anything to do with the Church, but she could see what it was doing for me and she loved that. But after high school I got a job at a flower shop. The owner of the shop really had it in for the Mormons. Every day she would tell me something else that was bad about the Church. But at that time I just shrugged off what she said. Most of her comments made me stronger. But sometimes I wondered about what she said. She was really a woman of the world, and in many ways I admired her and wanted to be like her.

“My high school grades were not good enough to get into a university, so I attended a junior college. I was excited about going to that school because it was in another town. And I was glad to get away from home.

“I moved in with some really wild roommates. I mean you cannot imagine the parties and the language and the guys. I knew that I was in for a battle if I was going to keep the faith. But you know what? I did stay faithful for the most part. Oh, I slipped a little a couple of times, but I told the bishop about it and I felt good again.”

“Were you still going to church regularly?”

“Oh yes. Very much so. The young single adults had a good program and I attended institute. I even wondered about going on a mission, but didn’t feel that was best for me. During that time I didn’t do much dating. I wanted to meet an LDS guy and get married. But none of the guys that I knew really got me very excited. I heard a couple of talks on marriage and I got to wondering just a little if what I was hearing was really for me. I mean, I still liked the Church, but there was just a little doubt. Not about the doctrine but just about the whole way of life.”

“But you were still, quote, ‘active’ in the Church?”

“Yeah, I was there in body but not as much in spirit as I was before. I was praying less and seldom did I do any reading in the scriptures and that sort of thing. I just did not have the fire that I had once had. It seemed like I was maturing and growing away from the Church. I’ve always been a thinker, and I started to wonder about why I should be so different from those around me. I mean, I couldn’t go out drinking. I couldn’t even sit around with a group and have a cup of coffee. I really felt left out. And

having any kind of improper relationship with a guy was totally out of the question. Or was it? I mean, I wondered, is the whole world wrong and just us Mormons right in our standards?"

"Did you have any close Mormon friends at that time? Anybody to talk to about these things?"

"No, not really. Everyone at the Church was going their way and I was going mine. I was now at an age when I didn't fit in too well with the Church crowd. I wasn't a youth and I surely wasn't a young married. Nor did I feel that I would ever be."

"Did you keep going to institute and young single adults?"

"No, not really. I felt I was too busy for that; and besides, I didn't feel that what I heard there was the way I really wanted to go. I had started to ignore the Word of Wisdom and I also got pretty deeply involved with a guy. I guess I just wanted to get lost from the Church. I stayed away for two or three Sundays in a row, and that was it. I had made my break. No one tried to bring me back. Not that I wanted them to, but nobody came around or anything."

"So did you come back for a while, or what?"

"I never did. Never. I thought about it a few times. But it was too hard to go back. I read an article about the Church in a national magazine and the things the Church stood for, and I felt so far away. By then I was on the other side of the fence, and though I missed the Church and some of the people there I felt it was best that I get on with my life and continue going down my different roads."

"Did you join another church or go to another church?"

"No, I never did. I guess the Church spoiled me. The Church was sort of like my first romance. Nothing else ever seemed good enough to take the place of those glorious feelings that I had once felt when I was a Mormon."

"Did you ever marry?"

"No. I lived with a guy for a year or so. But that was it."

"Well Jil, we sure do appreciate your honesty. We wish things could have been different, but I suppose that . . ."

Before Brother Morrow had finished his thought, Jil broke in. "So do I. I feel so very empty. I'm free to think what I want, but quite frankly I don't really know what to think. When I see Cynthia at work I envy her. And you know, I think, in my heart, that on the inside I am more like her than I am like me. I mean, if I was more like her, I'd be more like the real me. I mean, I don't want to be a rebel. I just got caught up in playing a role and I've kept right on playing that role even though it's not the real me."

"Why don't you switch roles and start playing the real Jil?" Brother Morrow asked.

Jil did not answer. She sat silently for a moment and then she stood. "I had better go now." As she turned toward the door, she asked, "Is this picture on the wall a picture of the prophet today? When I joined the Church the prophet was President Hinckley. I loved him so much. In those days I loved a lot of things so much. In those days I even loved me."

As Brother Morrow, Brother Metcalf, and Jil went to the front door of the chapel to say good-bye, Brother Metcalf, who had been silent the whole time, said, "Let me open the door for you, Jil."

Jil smiled and said, "I've really enjoyed talking to you." Then after a brief pause she asked, "Does this door let people in as well as letting them out?"

"It sure does," Brother Metcalf replied. "The door to the Church opens both ways."

Writing Our Own Case Study

So what do you think of those two 2020 stories? Neither of these two imaginary folks is exactly like you or like me. But in a way there is a little of each of us in both accounts. Our faith and hope tell us that our fondest dreams can come true by the year 2020. But at the same time we know that it is what we do from now until then, how true we are to the faith, that will determine what we will be like by then. What we do today and tomorrow and each day will determine whether we will get the blessings the Lord has prepared for those who love Him or whether we will not. Whether we will be another Nevo or another Jil.

I wanted to write another case study to put in this chapter. I wanted to write your case study. But I'll have to wait for you to tell me your story when we meet by the Seagull Monument on Temple Square in the year 2020. Your case study is not for me to write. That case study is in your hands. And mine is in mine. Let's make our stories beautiful in the year 2020 by staying true to the faith.

Future blessings are there awaiting us! They will really mount up by the year 2020. Be sure and bring your lunch when we meet on that great day so that you will have time to tell me of your blessings, and I'll bring my lunch too; for it will take us all day to tell all that the Lord has done for us because we stayed true to the faith.

CHAPTER TWO

BECAUSE IT IS TRUE—
THAT IS WHY

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

—MALACHI 3:10

The greatest of all treasures is to know the truth: to know that we are the children of Heavenly Father; to know that He has a plan for us that brings us blessings in this life and will enable us to return someday to live with Him.

The Supreme Blessing: A Testimony

To have a testimony of this divine plan is the supreme blessing in this life. Through the sure witness of the Holy Ghost we can know the truths that are at the heart of this plan. We can know that Jesus Christ is the Son of our Heavenly Father and is our Savior. We can know that through His atonement we can return to our heavenly home. We can know that Joseph Smith was a witness of these truths. We can know that he saw and talked with our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ in the Sacred Grove. We can know the Book of Mormon is a testament of the reality of these things. We can know that as a church we have the priesthood. We can know that we have a living prophet. We can know that blessings come through obedience. We can know that we lived with our Heavenly Father prior to our birth upon this earth. We can know that death is not the end but is the doorway to eternal life. We can know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is indeed the true and living church of Jesus Christ.

Knowing these truths gives our lives meaning, gives us personal and family direction in this uncertain world, comforts us in times of crisis and sorrow, fills our hearts with the feelings of peace, and helps us fulfill our divine destiny as Heavenly Father's children.

As I write of these blessings my heart swells within me with joy, for I know that these things are true. I am grateful for the testimony that gives me the spiritual convictions which are the foundation of all that I love and hold dear; convictions that are at the center of my fondest hopes and dreams.

I recall the time when all these truths came together for me. I had embarked on my mission to England without knowing that the Church was true. I hoped that it was, but I did not know. I had a firm belief in prayer and in the help and inspiration I had received from the Lord.

I had been in my first area for three weeks. By that time I had had experiences that enabled me to feel certain that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. I had read much from the Book of Mormon and I knew that there was something sacred about its message. But I was not certain that Joseph Smith was a prophet.

I was assigned to tell the Joseph Smith story in a district missionary meeting. I prepared thoroughly. I prayed more and with greater fervor than I'd ever prayed before, because I wanted to do this well and I wanted to be able to know that what I was saying was true. Because of my extensive preparation, I could tell the story almost word for word as it appeared in Joseph Smith's history. The only thing I lacked was the sure knowledge that the story was true.

Seven other missionaries and I gathered in the little chapel in Hull, England. We all sat on the front two side benches. After other presentations it was my turn.

As I began to speak I was quite composed, and the words flowed freely. But then something happened. I said the words: "I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son, Hear Him!*"

As I said these words I became so overcome with emotion that I could not speak, and I began to cry. I tried to compose myself but was hardly able to do so. I looked at my seven companions, who were also in tears. Finally I was able to go on and tell the remainder of the story.

When I sat down after that experience I was a different person than I had been when I stood up. Now I knew that it was all true. I knew that God and Jesus Christ lived, for they appeared to Joseph Smith. I

knew that God cares about us. I knew that all that the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith was true. I knew that the Word of Wisdom was the way to live, that tithing was the thing to pay, that the temple was the place to be married, that children come to us from our Heavenly Father, that there was life after death. I knew everything that I needed to know to be happy.

I have learned many other things in my lifetime but never have I learned anything that was even close in importance to what I learned that day. In that little chapel in England it all came together, and I obtained the greatest treasure that can come to anyone, for I knew the truth.

So that is my story. When we meet in the year 2020, I would like you to inspire me by telling me of how you came to know the truths that are the foundation of your faith.

The coming of our testimony is an inspiring beginning, but after that beginning—then what? Why do some stay true to the faith and others drift away?

Those who nourish their testimony daily keep the truth alive in their hearts. And because they know the truth, they would give their all to follow their faith. They learn over and over again that the blessings that come from living the gospel far outweigh the sacrifices. They know that staying true to the faith is the most profitable of all investments. They know that through their faithfulness they receive huge spiritual dividends now and forever.

We Get More Out Than We Put In

We all have within us an inward scale on which we weigh our thoughts and thus make our decisions. If one side of our scale outweighs the other, we act accordingly. For example: We weigh in our minds whether or not we should embark on some type of schooling. We consider how long the training will last; how much it will cost; how much effort it will require. We put these factors on one side of the scale. Then, on the other side, we consider what the outcome of the training will be: a better job; more money; more opportunity to use our talents; greater job satisfaction. We weigh the two sides and then we make our decision. In other words, we determine by our inward scale whether we will get more out of this than we will put into it.

Several years ago considerable excitement was generated in the scientific world when it was claimed that two scientists had succeeded in creating energy through “cold fusion.” The claim was that this experimental process had resulted in the output of more energy than had been put in. If this had been

true it would have changed the world. The excitement ended when the results of the two scientists' experiment could not be verified.

The satisfying thing about religion is that the spiritual energy we get out always exceeds the amount of the energy we put in. In other words, the blessings we receive far outweigh the efforts we have extended.

When we do all that we can for the Lord, He does all that He can for us. And because He can do so much more than we can, we really get a good deal. We get far more out of keeping the faith than we put in.

But this is only true when we make a whole-hearted effort. As someone astutely observed, "When we almost keep a commandment, we almost get a blessing." There is no joy in almost getting blessings. The blessings are in the center of the faith, and when we haphazardly wander on the outer border we miss the blessings. In those circumstances our testimonies wane, and the energy we put in outweighs the blessings. And when that happens, we abandon the faith.

As I write about the fact that the blessings we receive outweigh the energy we put in, I keep thinking of a stake president in Toronto, Canada. He would not want me to speak of him, but I feel that the Lord keeps putting him into my mind as an example of what I'm saying. He has literally "spent" his adult life in the service of God and his fellowmen. He has in every sense been true to the faith, and the results can only be described by the word *amazing*.

He found the Church some thirty years ago when he was a young married man. It all began when he admired a fellow worker and wondered why this man was as he was. He and his wife listened to the missionaries and received a divine witness that they had found the truth. From the time of their baptism on they gave their time and talents and held nothing back from the Lord.

This brother has served in many Church positions. But his real service has not been prompted by his official duties so much as it has just naturally flowed from the abundance of his heart. His love has caused him to constantly reach out to others who are in need. His public and private Church service, often given at great inconvenience to himself, has moved him ever deeper into the faith and has brought him blessings beyond measure. He has shown a willingness to give all that he has to the Lord, and the Lord is giving to him in rich measure.

Let me try to describe him.

I can see him entering the foyer of our chapel. He has come to preside over our ward conference. When he walks into the building the whole area becomes brighter. The lights are already on, but now that he is present there is a new kind of light. Not only does he radiate, but in being with him we do also.

When he speaks, his first words are an invitation: "Brothers and Sisters, smile!" And with that, we smile! Oh how we do smile! He meets our smiles with his, and the chapel fills with something much more powerful than electricity. His next words are, "I love you." From that moment on we hang on to his every word. He speaks about simple things that are so powerfully profound. He is a brilliant man in his chosen field of work, but he isn't a great reader or an intellectual giant. His pure and astonishing knowledge has come to him via his personal experiences of service and faith rather than through his study of what others have said. As he speaks, we know that he knows the Lord on a personal basis. His firm testimony of the Restoration tells us why he is so deeply committed to the Lord and to the Brethren. When he is with us we all feel that our burdens are bearable and our blessings are numerous.

His wife is his equal. She always beams when he speaks. She is filled with the same light that he has.

It wasn't easy for him in his early days as a member of the Church. He underwent a great transformation as he searched for his spiritual self. He had many rough edges that were not really him. No one who knew him then would have predicted what the gospel was going to do for him and how glorious was his destiny.

There was a time when he wanted to move from Toronto to Utah. But he was advised by a Church leader that he should never leave where he was. And so he stayed and gave his life to the Saints in Canada. And because of him a multitude of lives have been blessed.

He retired from his work recently. After a while, he and his wife departed on a long-dreamed-of two-week vacation to Miami Beach. They were excited the first week as they ate in the finest restaurants, attended the best shows, shopped at the fanciest shops, and walked up and down the sandiest beaches. But as they began the second week of their vacation they felt that they were wasting time by being there. They wanted to return to the place where their blessings were. So they packed up, checked out, and came home. We were all glad to know that they were back, for we had missed them so much.

If all that he has done for the Church and for the Saints was put on one side of the scales, it would be such an enormous weight that it would appear impossible for his blessings to offset it. But all his efforts and inconveniences and sacrifices are but a molehill when compared with the mountain of that which the Lord has done for him. For he is now filled through and through with integrity, virtue, reverence, faith,

goodwill, hope, conviction, and love. These and other words are no longer adjectives to describe him. Now these words are him.

Even as I write about him I find myself filled with emotions because of the appreciation and love I have for what he means to me. I long to be able to tell you about him so that you can be blessed by what he is, just as I am. But words cannot fully describe him, and so I invite you to go to Toronto and see him for yourself.

I have chosen my Canadian brother to represent the multitudes of righteous men and women who are living witnesses that the blessings they have received for staying true to the faith far outweigh that which they have given. Even though they have given their all.

Special Blessings for You

Now let's talk about you. You probably made the school athletic teams and you were probably the student body president and were probably chosen the most popular person in your school. I did not achieve such honors and fame. I'm not jealous of you, because it is wrong to be jealous. But you have so much going for you. You have some unique talents.

You have so many gifts to give that no one else can give. In the days and years to come, you will do much for the Church. You will serve and love and help and build others. Your life will make a dramatic difference to the happiness and well-being of the lives of your family and friends and many of your brothers and sisters.

Why will you do all this? Because of your testimony, that is why. By the year 2020, the miracle of your life will not be what you did for the Church. Instead the miracle will be what the Lord has done for you. The blessings on your scale will far outweigh your sacrifices and service. And your greatest blessing will be that your testimony, which came to you so long ago as a single pillar of faith, is now supported by a thousand and more pillars that shore it up.

PART 2

HOW CAN I STAY TRUE FAITH?

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord.

—MOSIAH 3:19

CHAPTER THREE

JESUS CHRIST ENABLES US TO KEEP THE FAITH

Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things.

—ALMA 26:12

Some might say: “I know what I want to be by the year 2020. I’d like to have been as faithful as that stake president in Toronto. I’d like to have the blessings and, most of all, the testimony that he has. But that is a lot easier said than done. Living the gospel is no easy task. Sometimes it seems to take more strength than I have. I just hope I don’t fall away. I’ll give it my best shot. But with all the opposition, I don’t think any of us can say that we will make it all the way. I don’t know if I have the strength to pull it off.”

Taken at face value, that appears to be a good, honest appraisal of the future. The thing it fails to consider, though, is that we are not left to our own strength in our efforts to stay true to the faith. We can’t do it on our own, but with Christ as our partner we can and we will remain true.

In His Name We Can Do It

The Lord’s promise to Nephi and Lehi, the sons of Helaman, is also a promise to us.

And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall (Helaman 5:12).

So with that kind of help, can we do it? Of course we can—and we will.

There is a statement in the Bible dictionary under the word *grace* which is at the heart of the subject of this book: “It is likewise through the grace of our Lord that individuals, through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts.”

This message is at the center of my hope. It tells me that I will forever be able, in the name of Jesus Christ, to stay true to the faith.

The Lord invites us to live every aspect of our lives in His name: “That your incomings may be in the name of the Lord; that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord; that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord” (D&C 88:120).

Now, of course we do not proclaim to others at our every act, “I do this in the name of the Lord.” Instead we are responding to a very private mind-set that silently guides our every thought and deed. And then there are these words of Jesus Christ, which are at the center of the sustaining power we need to stay true to the faith: “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

And “in his strength [we] can do all things” (Alma 26:12).

It is such an opportunity and a blessing to live our lives in the name of Jesus Christ; to have Him back us up with His strength, which will enable us to go beyond our own efforts in doing all those things He invites us to do.

He Is Our Agent and We Are His

In my ninth year of school I had very little confidence in myself. In my third hour social science class I had the excitement of sitting in the seat right behind the girl of my dreams. I spent many hours daydreaming about what I could say to her to impress her. But when I was near her my courage failed me, and I remained silent.

But one day my friend Don, who all the girls loved, sent me a note. I opened it and read, "George, Please ask Louise if she will go to the movie with me Friday night."

With the note in hand, courage surged throughout my entire body. Now I wasn't relating to this girl in my name. I was doing so in Don's name. Bulging with confidence, I tapped her on the shoulder. When she turned around I smiled the most radiant smile ever seen in that classroom.

When I had her full attention I boldly asked, "What are you doing Friday night?"

"Nothing!" she said with conviction.

"Would you like to go to the movies?" I asked in a tone that almost demanded an affirmative response.

"I sure would," she replied without the slightest hesitation.

"Okay," I replied, and I added: "I'll tell Don. He wants to take you."

When we are representing someone else we usually have greater boldness than when we are speaking for ourselves.

When we accept a call to serve the Lord and are given the authority to do so, we become the Lord's agents. He could speak for Himself, but that is not His usual way. He allows us to speak for Him. He does not do this for His sake but for ours.

When a missionary stands on a doorstep or teaches the people, he does so as the Lord's agent. Therefore, just as I did when I had the note from Don, the missionary, in a true sense, has a note from Christ that says, "Ask these people, in my name, to accept me and be true to the faith." With such authority to be His agents we need not fear, for it is not us who others either reject or accept. It is He.

But just as He allows us to be His agents, in His perfect love and mercy He is now and forever our agent. For He has said:

Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—

Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him who thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;

Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life (D&C 45:3–5).

He is not just to be our Savior or Advocate at the judgment bar. He is our Savior *now*. For it is through the grace of His enabling power that we have the strength to do those things He asks of us. With Him as our agent we cannot fall.

As His Agents We Can Have His Power

As all missionaries do, I served my mission in His name. I was His agent. I didn't go to represent me, or my parents. I went to represent Him. When my shyness prompted me to turn away from a door, I reminded myself that I was there in His name. With that mind-set I could talk to the biggest and most rough-looking men without fear—well, maybe a little.

I'd stand on street corners in His name and speak to passersby about His message. I wish you could have seen this shy kid from American Fork. You would have proclaimed, "My, oh my! Is that old George?"

Of course the answer was, "No, that is not old George. That is the new George. That is the George who represents the Lord."

I'm not saying this to make it look as if I was some spiritual giant. But I was a lot bigger than I would have been if I had tried to do it on my own. With His help I did become the "greatest average missionary" the Church has ever had.

When I returned home from my mission, I felt that I had captured some sacred ground that I was not now, nor ever, willing to give up. And at the center of these blessings was the strength that came to me because I knew that I would have the strength to stay true to the faith by doing all things in the name of the Lord.

But doing difficult deeds does not require as much strength as does enduring heartrending difficulties. Sometimes our burdens seem so unbearable. That is why the Lord invites us to cast those burdens on Him and allow Him to represent us in bearing them. All He asks in return is that we represent Him by always remembering Him and keeping His commandments and doing all this in His name.

In the Lord's Name We Can Carry More

I recall that the most difficult time of my life was in the early months of my mission in England. I was desperately homesick. I missed my mother and the ease of my life at home. At that time I was going forth to do my duty in the name of the Lord, but I was trying to fight my inward battles on my own.

Deep in my heart I wondered if I had the strength to make it. Feeling discouraged, I prayed at my bedside for guidance. That night as I slept I had a vivid dream. In the dream I was at home and I felt happy to be there. I could see myself doing a chore that I had done during my childhood—bringing in the kindling wood that would be used to start the morning fire.

To complete this task I opened the side door of our big kitchen and walked past the cellar door, through the gate that kept the cow in the backyard, and on to the shed where the kindling was kept.

As I entered I noticed that someone else was there. The person's back was to me, so I could not tell who he was. I hurriedly picked up the kindling, but as I did part of it fell back to the ground. The stranger then, without looking at me, beckoned for me to hold out both arms in a cradlelike manner. When I did so, he picked up the kindling piece by piece and placed them in my arms. Sensing that I had a full load, I turned, left the shed, and started back to the house.

As I passed the gate and then the cellar, I felt happy to be home. When I arrived at the door to the house, I was just about to go in when I looked down at the load I was carrying. I felt that I could carry more, and I decided to go back. I hurriedly returned to the shed. Once inside I saw the person. He was still faced away from me. I said, "I can carry more."

At those words he turned toward me, and I recognized him as my Savior. He smiled in a way that made me glad I had returned. He then heaped my arms with so much kindling that I could scarcely see over it. The size of the load was much greater than it had been, but now it seemed lighter than before. I once again headed back toward the house. I was able to make it back to the kitchen door. But before I could go in, the dream ended.

The next morning I knew that what I had experienced had just been a dream, but to me it was a most wonderful dream. That day was in many ways the first day of my mission. I was ready now to carry my load, for I knew it was a load given to me by the Lord and I knew that I was not carrying it alone.

He Will Help Us Come Unto Him

Christ invites us to come unto Him. When we are trying to do so, even if our efforts seem weak and ineffective, if we make our effort in His name He will reach out to us and draw us to Him. He will consecrate our effort for the welfare of our souls (see 2 Nephi 32:9).

When we receive the light and truth of Christ, it becomes our fondest desire to move ever closer to Him. Being with Him brings us more joy than being with our dearest earthly friend. The closer we can be to Him, the more we can serve Him, the more we will know Him, and the more we will be like Him.

The feelings we get from moving ever closer to Him are among the greatest of our blessings.

We cannot stand on the edge of the gospel and mechanically try to do all that the Church requires. Such a position will leave us to our own strength. We will soon wear out and will wonder why we should make such a great effort when we seem to be getting so little in return. And we will drift off further from the faith and deeper into the world. With one foot in the gospel and the other in the world, we remain too far from Him to receive the strength that could sustain us in all we are asked to do.

So when we feel ourselves losing strength and drifting, we must turn around and face toward Him. We must begin to do the things that will bring us back toward Him. As soon as we do this, the blessings will begin to flow and the light will return; and the strength of the Lord will give us the desire and the power to do all that is needed to bring us ever closer to Him.

CHAPTER FOUR

OVERCOME OPPOSITION BY MOVING TO THE CENTER

Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened to you.

—D&C 88:63

A returned missionary desired to reform some of his pre-mission friends who had wandered away from the Church and into the world. To do this he went with them to bars. He did not go there to drink, but only so that he could be with them and influence them to return to Church activity.

You can guess the outcome.

This situation is a bit like the man who fell into the lake. Someone asked him, ‘How did you come to fall in?’ He replied: ‘I did not come to fall in; I came to fish and I fell in.’

When we go into the world, we may say: ‘I did not come here to fall into sin. I came here because I wanted to see the world, and I fell in.’

Danger at the Edge, Safety in the Center

Seldom does anyone fall off a cliff while staying away from the edge.

The case study that our imaginary friend in the first chapter, Bill Morrow, will write of us in the year 2020 will be like that of Jil if we take chances by going to the edge of the Church or even out into the world. Staying true to the faith requires that in every situation of life we do the things that will minimize the risks of being pulled into the world.

We can visualize our situation by drawing three circles, one within the other. The area within the innermost circle represents Jesus Christ. The area in the circle surrounding Him is the Church. And the area in the outer circle represents the world.

Because the outer area, the world, has such a naturally strong pull our safety in staying true to the faith comes from always moving toward the center of the Church; always coming nearer and nearer to Christ.

Life Can Be a Tug-of-War

I could have been the toughest kid in American Fork, but my mother wouldn’t let me. I really wanted to be tough. Not tough enough to get into fights and that sort of thing—I knew I could get hurt

by being *that* tough. I just wanted to be tough enough so that my friends would say, “There is George, and he is tough.”

By “tough” I mean that I wanted to be wise to the ways of the world and up to speed on what the world had to offer. That is what I wanted. But, as I said earlier, that is not what my mother wanted. She wanted me to be wise to the things of the Lord and up to speed on what He had to offer.

She kept pulling me away from the edge and into the center. To do this she used pressure tactics such as cooking me special apple pie as a reward for my going to church with her. When I’d come home from school, she’d make me peanut butter sandwiches. And then she would hold me on her lap and run her fingers through my hair and tell me her “vision” of what I was going to be. She’d tell me that I was special and that the Lord had things for me to do. Of course, I wouldn’t sit on her lap when I got to be sixteen and older. I knew that nothing could destroy my tough-guy image faster than having my friends see me doing that. So I wouldn’t sit on her lap during my last two years of high school, until I had pulled the drapes. And most of all she used the wonderful pressure of love, which is always the most forceful pull toward the center.

Now you see why I said, “I could have been the toughest kid in American Fork if my mother had let me.” She had a way of making it so that the blessings that came from being close to her far outweighed the worldly sacrifices that I had to make in order to get those blessings. She made it so that I never wanted to run away from home to the world but to run from the world home to her.

As the years passed, my mother’s active role in the drama of my life lessened. But now there was a new force to play the role that she had played. It was “the enticings of the Holy Spirit” that now prompted me to stay true to the faith. “For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:19).

I was still in the never-ending tug-of-war. The natural appeal and power of the world pulled me outward away from the center. But at the same time the “enticings of the Holy Spirit” kept trying to pull me in.

I recall going to my ten-year high school reunion. My classmates asked me and a young woman from the class to be the co-master of ceremonies. Having never been prominent in school affairs, I was almost indescribably honored and excited at this opportunity.

When the reunion day came, my classmate and I stood to introduce the program. I was in for a real shock. She spoke first, and she told a rather suggestive joke. While nearly everyone else laughed at what she had said, I was tempted to join in. After all, this was a class reunion and not church. But inwardly I did not feel comfortable laughing, so I just smiled. Now it was my turn. When the laughter died down, I pulled the microphone close to me and told one of the corniest jokes that had ever been told. It was so bad that everyone but the class valedictorian, who didn't get it, moaned in pain.

The young lady then told a joke that was even raunchier than her first one had been. When she had finished, the laughter was not quite as loud as it had been before. I was then inspired in calling to mind another joke that was cornier than my first one had been. This time the groans were even louder, but amidst all the sounds of pain there was an almost detectable sprinkling of laughter.

The young lady at my side then made some snide comments about my jokes being moronic. I stood straight and tall in the face of her assault. While she was telling her third worldly story, I hardly heard her because my mind was racing forward like a computer to get to my next joke. Our fellow classmates seemed to sense that this was now a duel. They were wondering, "Can George, who was such a dud in high school, hold his own in this contest with Miss World?"

On and on we went. Her joke and then mine. After each of her stories the laughs were getting less and less resounding. And my little puns were bringing laughs from the very depths of my classmate's bellies.

In just over fifteen minutes the battle was over. Dumb jokes had proven more powerful than the jokes of the world. My co-host, with her head bowed in defeat, told me that although my sense of humor was weird it was a little bit funny.

I tell of this experience as a symbolic representation of the way things really are. In the story my co-master of ceremonies was trying to pull my classmates outward into the "world circle" and I was trying to pull them inward into the "gospel circle." The symbolic circles of religion and the world are real. The lines are clearly drawn. The tug-of-war is constant.

The Appeal of the World Is Powerful

I recall a story that a friend of mine told me about his thirty-year high school reunion. He came from a small school, and all the classmates knew how the lives of their peers had gone since the good old school days.

To each of the previous five-year reunions held since graduation all the students came but one. They would try to get him to come, but his lifestyle of drinking and worldly living was such that he said he did not feel comfortable coming.

But to the shock of all, he came to the thirtieth reunion. Everyone treated him so well that he asked for an opportunity to speak on the program. In doing so, he said: "My dear friends. Being with you sure does make me happy. I haven't attended past reunions because I always felt that you all stood on one side of the religion line and I stood on the other. Now I'm happy to tell you that I have crossed over the line to the side that you are on. I am now trying to live a religious life. I like my new way of life. I like being on this side of the line. But I want to tell all of you something. The other side of the line ain't all that bad."

That is one reason why so many people do not keep the faith. The other side of the line "ain't all that bad." It has tremendous appeal. A little drinking, some colorful language, Sunday sleep and ball games and fishing, no long Church meetings, a lot of television, no sacrifices of time or money: these things sound good. Plus you can feel like you are right up to the leading edge of the fashion, the thoughts, and the lifestyle of the world. You are the master and the supreme decider of what is right for you and what is wrong. These things can be extremely appealing.

The Blessings Are in the Center

So why not get on that side of the line? This story speaks to that question:

A young woman came to see me. She was really upset at me because, years before, I had been instrumental in her decision to cross the line from the world and come into the Church. Now her life was not at all what she had hoped it would be, and she felt that the Church was the cause of her unhappiness. She had come to my office to blame me for her misery.

She told me of her many frustrations, the chief one being that she had found out the night before that the fellow she had been dating was married. She really liked him and had hoped that something permanent would come of their romance. But now her dreams were dashed. She felt that if she had not been a member of the Church she could have continued to see him in the hopes that he would leave his wife for her.

She added that he was not a member of the Church and that was one reason why she liked him. When I asked her why that was so, she told me she didn't like Mormon men. She said they all seemed to

be too soft-spoken and unmanly. She said none of them seemed to be real men. She added that before she became a member of the Church she had been free. If she wanted to date a married man or a single man and be intimate with him, she could. If she wanted to drink, she could. If she wanted to be part of the world, she could. But now the Church had taken from her all her freedom.

As I listened, she bristled all the more. She said she was sick of hearing of a house and a spouse and wall-to-wall children and fireplaces and apple pie and all that sort of phony baloney.

Finally I had heard all I could take, so with slightly raised blood pressure I said: "You call a fireplace and apple pie and children and marriage phony baloney. But I'll tell you something, I have been there. I have felt love at home. I have come home to a wife and children. I have sat with them by a fireplace eating apple pie. And I want to tell you that those things are not phony baloney. Those things are real. The things that are a bunch of phony baloney are the things that you say you wish you could do out in the world. And if that is the phony baloney that you want, why don't you leave the Church and go get those things?"

Her frustrations and my words caused her to cry. After many tears she said: "I know what you say is true. It's just that I long for so many things that I can't seem to get and so I get discouraged." Then she added: "I can't leave the Church because I have felt more joy and peace since I joined this church than I ever felt before. And besides, I know the Church is true."

Like this young lady, once we have had the blessings of knowing that our Father in Heaven lives and that Jesus Christ is His Son and our Savior; once we know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is indeed the true and living church of Jesus Christ; once our lives have been given meaning; once we have received personal and family direction from prophets; once we have in crisis and sorrow felt our hearts be filled with peace that passeth understanding; once we have sensed our divine destiny as Heavenly Father's children—once we have had these wonderful experiences, we know with all our heart what we would lose by going from the center and into the world.

Being in the Center Does Not Insulate Us from Problems

The fact that we are within the circle of the gospel does not immunize us from the problems of life. As a matter of fact, if we do not have some problems we must have been crossed off the Lord's list. The

purpose of life is not only to have things go right but also to have things go wrong, and in either case making the right response.

Dealing with the heartache of life's problems with faith in Jesus Christ brings us closer to Him than we can get in any other way. But by being in the Lord's circle we are where the blessings of strength and comfort are. By being on the Lord's side of the line we can sing with great sincerity, "And should we die before our journey's through, . . . All is well! All is well!" (*Hymns*, no. 30.) And because of the heartbreaks of this life, the greatest of all blessings is to know amidst your tears that there is a God and there is a purpose, and there is more than the eye can see—much, much more. And all these blessings are in the center of the circle, where the Lord is very near.

A Place to Turn for the Blessings of Peace

So, as the man said at the high school reunion: "But I want to tell all of you something. The other side of the line [the world] ain't all that bad." That may sound true because the world offers many pleasures, much excitement, and much fun. But it does not offer a place to turn to when life gets so tough that you don't know *where* to turn. But on the Lord's side of the line not all of life's pleasures, not all its excitement, not all its fun are eliminated. Instead the wholesome ones are greatly enhanced and made indescribably sweet and pure. In addition, the Lord's Spirit gives our lives purpose and meaning and gives us a place to turn to and find peace. Why not go into the world's circle? Because that circle in the end will leave you empty. Moreover it will pull you away from the Lord's circle. And the Lord's circle is where the blessings described in previous and future chapters are in evidence. Go to the center and you will find them.

PART 3

WHY IS IT
SOMETIMES
DIFFICULT TO BE
TRUE
FAITH?

For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my first-born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad.

—2 NEPHI 2:11

CHAPTER FIVE

ALWAYS REMEMBER HIM AND
STAY TRUE TO THE FAITH

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

—JOHN 6:66–69

Quit is a funny-sounding word. It sounds so innocent. But it is a word that describes an action that probably has changed more destinies than any other word. If you or I quit, we won't even show up for our 2020 meeting on Temple Square. We might even forget that there is a Temple Square.

Don't Quit

I remember the time when I started in the university. It was so much fun the first few weeks. But then there were some reports due and some tests to take and some books to read and some experiments to complete and some lectures to attend. Suddenly the excitement was swallowed by the work.

I was perplexed as to what to do. I found myself thinking, “If someone had told me about this studying part of college, probably I would have stuck with my job at the gasoline station.” It seemed to me that filling up car tanks with gasoline and cleaning windshields was a lot easier than writing a theme about “The Coming of Winter.” At the service station I could grease a car with ten times less mental exertion than it took to take a history test. Besides, after work at the service station I was free to walk away with no worries and go to the bowling alley or the movie, or down to the restaurant to just hang out. But I could never outrun this school stuff. It followed me no matter where I went.

And another thing: at the service station I could stay out real late because I worked the afternoon shift and didn't have to get up until noon. And if I didn't want to go to work, this other guy would always work my shift so that he could make extra money. But this school stuff started with my early

morning class and didn't end until I went to sleep reading my sociology book. And nobody could do it for me. It seemed to me that the people with the real brains were the ones who quit school and did things that were not so hard.

I remember thinking that the guidance counselor at school hadn't really prepared me for this. She told me about some things that I would need to do, but somehow that didn't register with me. All I could see at that time was that I was a little sick of working at the service station and this was a change, and I felt as though I needed a change to get myself going in a better direction. And school seemed like an exciting challenge, and my family and teachers told me it sure would be a good thing for me. But nobody told me about early morning classes and mountains of reading and doing research in the library, and no time for a movie every other night. I thought, "If I'd known what I was getting into I'd never have got myself into all of this."

Time passed and I sort of stuck with it, but I started thinking that after the first semester I'd quit and get out from under all that.

In those days, as I said in an earlier chapter, my mother kind of meddled in all my affairs. She was so glad that I was going to college, and she said she could tell it was making me into a better person. Because of that I knew I had to run this idea of quitting past her. I didn't exactly relish the idea of doing that, because I sure didn't like disappointing her. But I felt I couldn't keep up something that demanded as much as school demanded.

I finally mustered up my courage, and one evening, after doing the dinner dishes so that she wouldn't have to, I said, "Ma, I've got something to tell you."

She was really excited that I was going to tell her something, because I didn't talk to her or Dad much about anything that mattered. I sort of stammered as I said, "Ma, I've decided to quit school."

Wiping away a tear from her eye with her apron, she said: "George, you can't quit. You just can't."

"Ma," I said, in a voice that was hampered by the fact that I was about to cry, "I'm not doing any good at school. It's just too hard for me. You saw my grades. I'm doing terrible in school."

"I know that," she said. "But you just can't quit."

"Why?" I asked in sort of desperation.

"Because what you are going to do in life you need to go to school to do."

"What am I going to do in life?"

"I don't know. All I know is that you have to keep going to school so that you can do it."

"I'm quittin'," I said, with all the determination I could muster. And at that her tears began to flow.

Seeing how I had disappointed her, I blurted out, “Ma, I was just kidding. I won’t quit.” And so I didn’t, and that changed everything for me. Everything.

School was still demanding, and I didn’t ever really get good at it. But I stuck with it and it became easier in a hard sort of way.

Don’t Quit a Big Thing Because of a Little Thing

Often those who abandon the faith do so for very small reasons. The little reasons become big reasons in their minds. Most of us are too easily offended, as is illustrated in this story:

I have always been a poor speller. I’ve worked on it through the years, and now I do quite well. But my first missionary journal is embarrassing to me because it contains a multitude of misspelled words.

When I was on my mission in England I met a fellow who had just joined the Church. He had a lovely wife and three little daughters. He was zealous in coming to church and taking part. He would go out tracting with us missionaries. He quickly became a hero to me, and I was inspired that maybe we could find someone as we tracted who would turn out to be as great as was Brother Wilson.

After I had known him for a few weeks he moved to a nearby town. He wrote to me and asked me to send him a photo of myself, as he liked to have pictures of all the missionaries he had known. I was honored to send him the picture. I wrote on the back, “With love and admiration to my dear friend Brother Wilson.” I then signed it, “Elder George Durrant.”

In an accompanying letter I wrote, among other things, “I am glad to send you the enclosed *pitcher* of me.” As you can see, I misspelled the word *picture* by spelling it “pitcher.” I’d spelled it the wrong way all my spelling life.

Somehow this misspelling really bothered Brother Wilson. He had thought that we missionaries were perfect, but now in his mind he began to wonder how we could be perfect if we couldn’t even spell.

You can imagine my chagrin when I talked to him a few weeks later and he had quit going to church. The reason he gave was that when he saw my spelling error he wondered if there were other errors in the Church. This doubt had swelled within him to the point that he had decided to leave the Church.

Of course I felt extremely sorrowful at that time, and I still do. I had come on my mission to help people join the Church and not to drive them away.

His leaving the Church over my spelling seems ridiculous. It is likely that there were other deeper reasons for his departure. But the spelling error was the one he could point to. So often it is the trivial and ridiculous things that provide the catalytic reaction that brings about deeper discontentments, doubts, and frustrations. We can each be assured that there will be many forces at the trivial level that will be tailor-made to hit us where we are most sensitive and vulnerable. If we allow these feelings to fester they will confirm other doubts and will cause us to retreat from the sacred ground we once occupied.

These “little things” seem trivial or ridiculous to other people, but to the person involved they will seem justifiable reasons to leave the faith. Things such as these:

“I gave my sincere opinion on a matter in a Sunday School class and the teacher gave me this look which said to me, ‘Where did you come from, Mars or something?’ Then as if his look was not enough, he said, ‘I suggest you do a little more reading and get your ideas more in line with the truth.’

“I’ve never been more embarrassed, and he went right on like it was nothing. Well, I decided then and there that I wouldn’t go back to that class or any other class in this church.”

“I was going down the hall to priesthood meeting with two other people and the bishop saw us and called each of them by name, but he couldn’t remember my name. I mean I have met him many times, and he couldn’t even remember my name. I felt like he didn’t care about me. If he is my leader and he doesn’t care enough about me to know my name, why should I keep coming to church?”

“The other kids in my son’s teachers quorum just aren’t friendly with my son. He feels really left out. He doesn’t want to keep coming. And quite frankly, if that is the way the people are here, then I’m not sure we want to keep coming either.”

We could list many more such offenses that we have experienced (and even committed) in the Church. There are no two cases exactly alike. Sure, offenses make us feel bad. But we should not make them an issue that will cause us to quit the Church. We must not be supersensitive. Don’t make another person an offender for a thoughtless word or deed. When we are offended, we can feel bad for a while,

that is all right; but then we can calm our emotions and try to understand and forgive. Remember that if over at the Church we left things to the perfect folks, we could hold our meetings in a phone booth. We can't always change the actions of others who offend us, but we can change how we react to what they do.

Let's suppose you were the one offended by the teacher we mentioned earlier. He "suggested" that you get in line with the truth. Feel bad about it for a little while, if you must, but then forgive him. Try to understand that he said what he did because he is a bit insensitive to the feelings of others. But he is trying. Give him a break. Someday he will be your friend, and you will know that he is a "character" who is struggling, but he is really filled with love even though he doesn't quite know how to show it.

This time you are the one offended by the bishop who did not remember your name. Feel bad about it for a little while and then try to understand. Maybe he hardly even remembers the names of his five kids. Maybe he is a genius and knows more about his field of employment than anyone in the country, but he can't get names right. Remember that he might not know your name, but if you follow his inspired leadership you will know that the Lord knows your name. Give him a "bad time" when he forgets your name. Kid around with him, ask him each week what your name is. Let it be a joke between the two of you, and you will come to love him with all your heart. And your loving him is far more important than his loving you. But he will love you. That is the way it is with bishops.

Don't Let Big Things Cause You to Quit Really Big Things

If you're the one offended because the other young people in the quorum seem to be unfriendly with your son, you have every right to feel bad. That is not a little thing. It is a big thing. You should feel bad because this situation is serious enough to affect your son's entire future. Talk to the teacher of his class and to the bishop's counselor or others who could help. Sometimes people are unkind and the situation may not improve on its own. Pray for the strength to help your son and pray for him to feel more comfortable with his Church peers. And pray for the other young people that they will be more accepting of your son. But don't stay away. Church is the place for you and for your son.

Don't Let Self-Inflicted Wounds Cause You to Quit

Often the causes for people quitting the Church are not what others do to them that offends them but rather what they do to themselves. In many cases the reason why they are easily offended by others is that they have already offended themselves by falling short of their self-expectations.

Many of us would like to be perfect but we can't quite pull it off. The reason why we make mistakes when we don't want to make mistakes is that we are dumb. We have let ourselves get away from the Lord's circle and wander into the world's circle and become involved in something that is amiss or a mess, and it drags us in farther away until we have made some sort of mistake. For example, such a mistake may be violating the Word of Wisdom. We are with people who invite us to have coffee or wine or whatever, and we are too dumb to know that we can say no. So we violate a standard that we have wanted to keep. It is dumb to do that.

Some get involved in worldly relationships that they know in the beginning are a dumb choice. Then against their desire they became involved in a physical manner and their passions lead them to break to some degree the law of chastity. It is dumb to do that.

We could go on talking about the dumb things we could do. But we now have the idea of what "dumb things" are. They are the things that happen when we go to the edge of the Church circle and the world pulls us into its circle and we do something that we did not intend to do. Or even if we do desire to do them, we know in our better moments that they are dumb things and we should rule them out.

But the thing that keeps some away from the Church is that after they do a "dumb thing" they follow it by doing a "stupid thing." They decide: "I have done this dumb thing. I do not feel worthy to go to church. So I will stay away." Now, that is a "stupid thing." That is like breaking your arm going down the stairs on a skateboard and then not going to the emergency room to get it fixed because you don't want the doctor to know how dumb you were to do such a thing. Church is much like a spiritual emergency room. If you feel your dumb mistake and it has given you a case of "spiritual pneumonia" and made you unworthy to have membership in the Lord's church, don't do a stupid thing and stay away. Do one of the wisest things you have ever done. Go to the bishop and tell him what has happened. He is the spiritual doctor for serious spiritual maladies. If what you did was "dumb" but only gave you a "spiritual cold," then just take your handkerchief and go to church and tell the Lord you are sorry and wipe away your tears and get back on your spiritual feet. The stupid thing to do is to stay away from church and let your spiritual cold turn into pneumonia.

Don't let any "dumb" or even "deliberate" mistake keep you from church. Dumb things can sometimes make us feel discouraged and make us feel like we aren't much and that we ought to just step aside and leave things to those who never do dumb things. I'm sure you agree that that is a stupid thing to think.

Don't Allow the Weaknesses of Others to Cause You to Quit

Some say that they don't go to church because they know someone who goes and that person is an outright hypocrite—someone who does wrong things and yet is at church all the time as if he or she were a saint. Don't condemn these folks and call them hypocrites. Praise them for being in church to try to heal their spiritual wounds. They have done some dumb things, and they usually know it, but now they are trying to do a wise thing to get back on their spiritual feet.

Help Those Who Do Dumb Things Not to Quit

If when you go to church you can smell that someone has done a dumb thing by smoking, don't shy away from them. They are doing a good thing by coming to church. Go and sit by them. And if you smoke and no one sits by you, that is all right. That is their problem. Your problem is being sure you don't do a stupid thing by staying away from church just because you have a dumb habit of smoking. Keep coming to church and try to move toward the center.

Smokers who come to church have an excellent chance of quitting if they come to church each week. Going three hours without a cigarette is a good beginning to going for three days, three weeks, three months, three years, and forever. Now, I'm not picking on smokers. It is just that smoking and still coming to church is such a good example of doing a dumb thing but not doing a stupid thing.

A missionary at the Missionary Training Center was caught smoking outside one of the buildings. That was reported to the mission president, who called him in to discuss the matter. The president and his first counselor talked to the missionary. He was fearful that he would be sent home and he really hoped he would be. But the president could tell he had the makings of a wonderful missionary. So he said to the young missionary, "Just where was it that you were when you were smoking?"

The missionary described where it was. The president then turned to the first counselor and asked, “Do we have a No Smoking sign on the outside wall of that building where he was smoking?”

The counselor replied, “No, president, I don’t think we do.”

The president then looked at the missionary and asked, “If we put a No Smoking sign there, will you ever smoke there again?”

“No,” came the reply.

The president then asked, “You mean that you will never smoke there again?”

The missionary said that he would not. The president then asked: “What if we hang a ‘no smoking’ sign in your heart. Will you ever smoke again?”

The missionary gulped and said that he would not. The president asked him if he himself would hang the sign in his heart, because he was the only one who could do so. He said he would do that.

The president told the missionary that if he would hang that sign there and obey it forever, he could go on his mission; otherwise he could not go. The president then said: “You have done a dumb thing by smoking. But if you keep doing that you’ll do a very stupid thing, because you will miss out on all the joys of your mission.” Many years later that “no smoking” sign still hangs in the young man’s heart and he treasures the memories of his mission.

So let us not let the dumb thing we do, or that others do, cause us to make a stupid decision to cheat ourselves of life’s sweetest blessings by staying away from church and letting the blessings slip away.

By discussing violations of the Word of Wisdom, we see principles that relate to other cases wherein we do not come up to the standards we desire. If you don’t have the faith to pay your tithing because money is so tight, don’t stay away from church. Pay some contribution and keep coming to church and your faith will increase and you will move closer to the center and soon you will once again be a full tithe payer. This principle applies to all your failures to come up to the standards you desire and which you know the Lord has asked you to live. Church is not a place to go because you are perfect. It is a place to go to gain the strength to be better and better until someday, with the Savior as your partner, you’ll be perfect.

If you can’t stay for all the Sunday meetings, come to one. Don’t break the connection with the Church and your friends there. If you break the connection your spiritual power will wane and the light inside your soul will soon go out. If you will come to some meetings each week, soon you will go to them all.

Just stick with it. Don't quit.

Don't Quit Until You Have Cleared It With the Lord

If you maybe came into the Church so rapidly that you really don't understand all that is involved and the load is heavy and you wonder if the Church is true and you wonder if you should quit—before you do, go to the Lord and ask Him whether you should quit or hold on. I know He will tell you: "Don't quit. Hold on!"

Then do just that; keep coming. If you have a few problems, just keep coming. You will make it. And then, after that trial of faith, you will receive a witness that will change your life from one you may feel is forced obedience to one filled with a pure desire to do all you can. And from then on your life will continue to change and you will have direction and you will move ever closer to the Lord and toward your divine destiny.

Allow the Lord to Interfere With Your Life

My mother used to "interfere" in my life. Now it is the Lord who "interferes." When I wonder whether I should keep going or quit, He says: "George don't quit. There is a blessing just around the next corner. A blessing that will make all the difference."

Don't ever quit. What you are going to do in life you have to go to church to do.

If you don't feel like praying, pray. If you don't feel like reading the scriptures, at least read a verse a day. Just stick with it. Don't quit.

If you have stayed away from church for a while for some reason, come back. I can promise you that as soon as you come back something will happen that will forever let you know that the Lord is giving you a special reward for coming home. Come back and watch to see just what that is. It may be a little thing, but it will forever be a witness to you that the Lord is very much aware that you have done a great thing in coming back.

And if you are thinking of going away, pray to the Lord for strength and then watch for some very special blessings that will bless your life forever. I write these promises because the Lord gave me the impression to do so and I know what I have just said is true.

Stay true to the faith by doing the things that will move you ever closer to the center, for the greatest of all blessings is to feel that you are very near to the Savior.

PART 4

WHAT
CAN I DO
WITHIN MYSELF
TO STAY

TRUE

FAITH?

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—2 PETER 1:5–8

CHAPTER SIX

ATTENDING THE TEMPLE IS AT THE HEART OF BEING TRUE TO THE FAITH

And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

—D&C 84:38

I'm glad we are going to meet at the Seagull Monument in the year 2020. As we talk about our blessings on that day, we will be able to look over and see the temple. We will love the temple even more than than we do now, because the temple is something that we love more every day that goes by.

The Blessings of the Temple

It is really something to go to the temple. I'm sure that for you as for me, the first time at the temple was a most meaningful experience. But it is in going back again and again to the Lord's holy house, that

the sweetest blessings come. There are always new inspirations and blessings waiting for us in the temple.

Attending the temple as often as our circumstances will allow brings us closer and closer to the Savior and deeper and deeper into the center of the Church.

When we meet in 2020 I'd like you to tell me about the first time you attended the temple. The time when you were endowed. I'm sure you will tell me of some of the opposition that came to you as you prepared to go. I know that is the way it was for me.

I had never before felt such panic. The president of the mission home, where we had come for our three days' training prior to departing for our missions, had just announced in our afternoon meeting that the next morning we would all go to the temple for the first time. He reminded us of the letter we had all received a few weeks earlier telling us to bring with us our temple recommends. Somehow I had forgotten these instructions and I did not have my temple recommend.

A moment later we were all dismissed for our evening meal. As I said, I have never felt such panic. If I told the president my problem, I felt that he would send me home because I was too dumb to go on a mission. What could I do?

I desperately but silently appealed to my Heavenly Father for help. Immediately there came into my mind the idea that I should call my bishop. But I did not want to ask to use the phone in the office, for then others would know of my dumbness. I hurriedly left the mission home and walked a block south to a phone booth. I didn't have enough money with me to make a long-distance call to American Fork to where Bishop Grant lived. I had just enough change to make a local call.

Still in a panic I prayed again. I then had the idea to call the local Highway Patrol Office. My bishop was a highway patrolman. I looked in the phone book to find the number for the highway patrol. To my complete dismay I saw that there were several listings. I could not call them all, as I only had a coin for one call, and in any case the time for the evening meeting was coming ever closer. I looked at the long list of numbers and one seemed to stand out in bolder type than the others. I put my coin in and with a shaky finger I dialed the number. A few seconds later I heard a woman's voice saying, "Highway Patrol."

Trying to remain calm so as to be understood, I said, "I need to talk to Bishop Mel Grant."

I was shocked when she replied. "How did you know he was here? He seldom ever comes here. But he is sitting here right now. I'll put him on the phone."

I could scarcely speak because of my feelings, but I blurted out, “Bishop, we are going to the temple tomorrow morning and I forgot to get my temple recommend. What can I do?”

He told me he was sorry for not helping me to remember this matter. He then said: “I’m just leaving here to return to American Fork. I can go quite fast. I will fill out the recommend and take it to the stake president. He knows you are worthy, since he interviewed you for your mission. When he has signed it I will give it to a patrolman who will be coming to Salt Lake City. He can drive fast too. So don’t you worry, George. You’ll have your temple recommend real soon.” I hung up the phone feeling total gratitude.

That evening all the missionaries were assembled to hear a special message from our president. Through the back door entered a fully uniformed highway patrolman. All eyes were upon him as he made his way down the aisle and to the podium. He went directly to where the president stood silently waiting to find out what was going on. The patrolman whispered into the president’s ear. Then the president, with great concern, announced to all, “This man needs to talk to Elder George Durrant.”

While every person in the auditorium looked on, I followed the patrolman out into the foyer. There, with a wide grin, he announced: “I’ve issued many tickets today but this is the happiest one of all. Here is your recommend to attend the temple.” Words can never express how happy I was to receive that piece of paper. Now I could go to the temple, and from there I could go on my mission.

Worthy to Attend the Temple

That night in the mission home I felt I could not go to the temple because I had forgotten my recommend. It seems that so often there is some reason why we feel that we cannot attend the temple.

It often happens that a person will experience opposition while striving to become worthy and ready to attend the temple. Do not become discouraged. Use obstacles as ways of becoming stronger. Stay close to your leaders and your dear friends at church. And most of all, stay close to your Heavenly Father. Tell Him of your desire to attend His temple and ask for His help in your goal to go there.

Often the reasons for not attending the temple are centered in our lack of worthiness to receive a temple recommend.

When I envision the temple in my mind, I see our Savior, Jesus Christ, standing at the temple door with his arms stretched out toward us and his hands beckoning us to come in. If we say to Him, “I

cannot come in, I'm not worthy," He responds, "Go home and become worthy, and come back as soon as you can."

The Savior wants us to attend the temple. When we have a sincere desire and make every effort to become worthy to receive a recommend, He will, through His grace, give us the power to overcome any problems. He will give us the strength to live the Word of Wisdom. He will give us the faith to pay our tithes and offerings. He will enable us to become morally clean. He will bless us with a deep and abiding testimony of our Heavenly Father, and of Himself, and of the Holy Ghost. He will attest to us that the restored gospel is true.

There is no greater satisfaction in life than to sit in private with one's bishop, to have him ask the sacred questions regarding our temple worthiness, and to be able to answer those questions affirmatively with sincerity and truth.

Making and Keeping Temple Covenants Brings Us to Christ

Thus far in this book I have not mentioned Satan. It is best to say as little about him as is possible. But when we speak of going to the temple we must speak of Satan, for he does not want us to go there. He knows that our going there will take us farther and farther from his kingdom. He knows that our going there will take us closer and closer to the center of the Lord's kingdom.

He knows that the greatest power to keep us in the Lord's kingdom is the power of making and keeping covenants. The temple is the place where we make our greatest covenants, and it is the place wherein we are endowed with the power to keep those covenants.

In the temple we covenant with the Lord that we will live the law of strict virtue and chastity, will be charitable, benevolent, tolerant and pure, and will use our material means to spread truth. In the temple endowment too we are instructed as to how we may obtain eternal life, God's greatest gift. Thus he endows us, gives us the great gift of being joint heirs with Christ in sharing all that the Father has.

Making and keeping these grand covenants will constantly be our guide and strength as we move ever closer to our Savior, Jesus Christ.

In your preparations to attend the temple, read the book by Elder Boyd K. Packer titled *The Holy Temple*. Having read that book, and following the counsel of your bishop and stake president and other

appointed teachers, you will be prepared to have a glorious experience when you attend the temple to be endowed.

Reminders of Our Covenants and the Promised Blessings

There is nothing that will bring us closer to the center of the Church and to Jesus Christ than the sacred privilege of faithfully wearing our temple garments.

While serving in the army in Korea I had an experience that caused me to be even more grateful for the temple. I had been advised by my Church leaders that, because of the lack of privacy in the army, if it was my desire I could be excused from wearing my temple garment while I served. But I could not bring myself to do so. Being away from Marilyn and often away from the opportunity to attend church, I felt that my temple garment was among my greatest connections to my faith.

Thus I continued to wear the garment. I became rather expert in dressing and undressing in such a way that others would not notice that my underwear was not regular army issue. The Lord helped me with this and it was never a problem.

Upon arriving in Korea I found that there was even less privacy than I'd had before. The shower room was without any partitions of any kind and the barracks was open from wall to wall. To add to this lack of privacy, I tried out for and made the battalion basketball team. From then on I lived with my ten teammates in a very small barracks. These men were always with me when I dressed in the little dressing room for practices and games.

Even though I took great care to avoid their doing so, they noticed. As we became closer friends, some of them took the liberty to ask me about my underwear. When they asked "Why do you wear those?" it was usually at times when it was not advisable to go into a detailed explanation. Therefore I would reply, "They are part of my religion, and someday soon I will tell you more about them."

They were respectful, but their curiosity seemed to mount continually. One night we had all just retired to bed. As we lay there in the darkened room we could carry on a group conversation wherein, without any difficulty, all could hear the voice of the one speaking.

This night one of the fellows spoke up and said, "George, you told us that someday you would tell us about your underwear."

I sensed that the time was right, so I began to speak. I said something such as this: "Have any of you ever seen a Mormon temple?" Most of them said that they had, and that they were impressed by how beautiful these buildings are.

I continued: "The temples are even more beautiful inside. I know because I have been inside. I went to the temple in Salt Lake City several years ago. Later I again returned to that temple. This time Marilyn, who I loved then and now, was with me. There in that holy place the two of us were married.

"At that time, a man who held the priesthood or power of God performed our marriage ceremony. In the temple that day Marilyn and I promised each other and the Lord that we would forever keep the commandments. And the Lord in return promised us that if we kept our commitment to Him our marriage would not end when we died, but we would be married throughout this life and in heaven. He also promised us that the children who would be born to us would be with us as part of our family forever."

I then said to my fellow soldiers, who were listening intently: "You all know how much I love Marilyn and our first little son. I show you pictures of him each week when they come in the mail, and you have all agreed that he is the cutest kid you have ever seen. My greatest desire is to be with my family forever."

Then I added: "When I came out of the temple I was wearing these undergarments. These garments, as we call them, always help me to remember the covenants and promises that I made in the temple. They and what they mean to me is the reason why I don't go to the village with you to see the local girls; the reason why I don't go to your beer parties; the reason why I try to use language that is respectful to the Lord; the reason why I attend church each week; the reason why I kneel in prayer at my bedside."

When I had finished speaking, the little barracks was filled with silence. Since no one spoke, I concluded by saying: "Dear friends, Thank you for letting me explain these sacred principles to you. I want you all to know that what I have told you tonight is true. Our Heavenly Father is real, and so is His Son Jesus Christ. And the church to which I belong is the Lord's church."

No more words were spoken in the barracks that night.

Thereafter, in the dressing room, opposing team members would sometimes, while laughing a little, ask, "What are those?" At that, my biggest teammate would come to the questioner and, looking into his eyes, would say: "If you knew why he wore those underwear you would not laugh. Those are sacred. So

mind your own business and just get ready to play ball." My friend's size and the power of his words were enough of an explanation for even the most curious.

One of the reasons why I relate this story is to tell you and me what an honor it is to wear these sacred garments. They will always remind us of our solemn temple covenants. They will remind us to do the things that will help us be true to the faith.

Temple Blessings for the Family

As well as going for ourselves, we have the privilege of attending the temple to be baptized for our ancestors and to perform other temple ordinances for those who died without ever having found the true faith. No experiences we will ever have will be more spiritually satisfying than being part of making these sacred things available to our family.

If you have children, teach them to look forward to their temple blessings, which will fill their lives with meaning and joy. This will give them clear directions in a world that has so many voices beckoning people to go down the strange roads that lead to emptiness and regret.

Return to the Temple Often

If you have been to the temple but have not been back in a long time, become worthy to do so and return to the temple. It will infuse you with the vigor you once felt for spiritual matters and move you back towards the center of the Church, the place where the richest blessings are.

More than anything else, it is the temple that makes the side of the scales that contains the things you get out of the Church (the blessings) so much greater than the side that contains all that you put into the Church.

Yes, indeed. When we meet in 2020 near the temple we will realize again that it is really something to go to the temple.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BEING TRUE TO YOURSELF
IS THE FOUNDATION OF
BEING TRUE TO THE FAITH

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

—PHILIPPIANS 4:7

Someone has said “We are what we eat.” I’m sure that physically that is correct. But even more important is the fact that, emotionally, “We are what we feel.”

High on the list of blessings, and perhaps right at the top of the list, is that of having “good feelings.” Feelings of peace. If staying true to the faith could offer nothing more than feelings of peace, that alone would far outweigh whatever energy and effort we put in.

Good Feelings Can’t Come from Bad Actions

My greatest struggles in life have come as I have dealt with my feelings. I recall as a youngster experiencing times of emotional turmoil. This story illustrates what I mean:

I was the greatest basketball player to ever play in my dad’s barn. I could get back in the far corner and shoot long shot after long shot up over the rafter and down into the basket that hung against the opposite wall. It was incredible how accurate I was. The problem was, I always performed this feat while I was there all by myself. When I’d tell others about my sharpshooting they would not believe me. When they came to see what I claimed to be able to do, my accuracy fell off considerably.

One day my older brother came out to the barn and told me that he could easily beat me on my home court. I knew he couldn’t, because I was invincible there. So I eagerly took him up on his challenge. As

we began the big game, he said he would keep score. That seemed good to me, as it would let me concentrate on playing rather than scorekeeping. We played for nearly ten minutes and I knew I'd made about two baskets to every one he made.

Knowing the facts of this story, you can imagine how startled I was when he shouted out, "We are tied! The one who makes the next basket is the winner." When he said that he was right under the basket and he had the ball. Before I could react he shot a little, short, uncontested layup that went in. He shouted, "I won! I won! I beat you. I'm a better player than you!"

I about died right on the spot. I couldn't believe it. He left before I could make an official appeal. As he departed he shouted back at me. "I'm going to tell everybody that I beat George." With that he laughed and hurried away.

I didn't know what to do. I looked at our Jersey cow, who was in the stall eating. She had witnessed the whole sad event. But she just kept chewing her cud as if she couldn't care less. I was beside myself with feelings of anger. It was then that I saw that my brother had left behind his prized baseball mitt. I quickly picked it up and threw it out the barn window into the pig pen.

When I returned to the house, my brother started in again with his taunts that he had beat me. Then he paused and asked, "Did you bring my mitt in with you?"

"No," I replied, with a slight feeling of satisfaction.

He ran to the barn and in a few minutes came back. He asked me, "Where is my mitt? What did you do with it?"

I boldly told him that I had thrown it into the pig pen. A look of rage came over his face and he turned and hurried out the door.

In a few minutes he returned. He was holding the mitt delicately between his thumb and first finger. I could see that the pig had not eaten the mitt but he had made it so that no one else would ever want to. The mitt was turned inside out and was covered with mud and other stuff.

My brother came over to where I was seated reading the comics. He held the mitt real close to my face and said: "Look at my mitt that I just bought last week with the money I'd been saving for months. It's ruined because of you. Now how do you feel? Are you happy?"

I defiantly replied, "Yes, I am."

The problem with my answer is that it was a lie. First of all, I had feelings of anger towards him for what he had done and a feeling that it was him and not me who had caused me to throw his mitt into the pig pen. But mixed in with those feelings were other feelings of sorrow and regret. In short, I felt

terrible. I learned then, as I have relearned on a multitude of occasions, that you can't be happy when you do things that make you feel bad.

Good Feelings Are Happiness

The Book of Mormon records the true and universal fact that “wickedness never was happiness.” We just can’t do things that are “contrary to the nature of God” and feel happy about doing those things. For those things are “contrary to the nature of happiness.” (Alma 41:10–11.)

The pig pen incident acted as a stimulus for the arousal of many different kinds of feelings within my heart. Each day we experience things that fill our hearts with feelings. Some of those feelings are positive and some negative. Happiness is a condition that exists in our hearts when the majority of our feelings are good. And the greater that majority, the happier we are.

The big payoff that makes being true to the faith far outweigh the efforts we expend to do so is that living the gospel causes us to have a greater and greater majority of good feelings.

Good Feelings Renew Our Faith

Almost each day, by our own design or by the actions or words of another, life will bring to us a crisis like the one that I experienced in the barn; a crisis that almost begs us to get even, or to strike back, or to pull down, or to give in, or to give out, or to be jealous, or to become cynical, or to become discouraged, or to quit. And all of these feelings lead to other negative feelings and finally to unhappiness and discontent and even bitterness. And this discontent and bitterness, more than any other reason, causes those with such feelings to abandon the faith.

It is because of the delicate balance between good and bad feelings that exists in the heart that we need a power in our life that is far greater than our own. To have good feelings when the natural world fosters bad feelings we must yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit (see Mosiah 3:19).

As a bishop, when I counseled with those whose feelings were more filled with doubt than with faith, I told them that to renew or preserve their faith they must do three things: (1) They must read often from the scriptures; (2) they must pray at least twice a day in their secret place and also as they walk along their way in life; and (3) they must find special ways to serve others. If they did only one of these

three, very little would happen. If they did two of the three, they improved. But if they did all three, the feelings of their hearts always changed. And they moved ever closer to the Savior.

Learning of Christ by studying His plan of happiness as found in the holy scriptures and in the words of his modern prophets, praying in the name of Jesus Christ to hear and feel the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and serving others in the name of Jesus Christ so that they may be blessed as we are blessed—these all work together to give us the feelings that will make us want to come out from the world and move ever closer to Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father.

Doing these three things will bring to us His power. And that power will enable us to make a mighty change in our hearts and to fill our hearts with good feelings and with a desire to do good continually.

Learn of Christ and His Plan of Happiness

Some say that to learn of Christ we must pay the price of intense personal study of the scriptures. No doubt that is best. But if you are not scholarly, just a bit of reading each day will change your feelings in an almost miraculous manner. It is almost as if the Lord sees you studying and He rewards you with feelings of faith and knowledge that far surpass the effort you have put in. If your heart is right, He sees that you are seeking knowledge by study and by faith and He pours out His blessings upon you, and you come to know Him better and better and you will move ever closer to Him. There are no better feelings than that.

Studying the scriptures and listening to the prophets and the Brethren may not always make an everlasting impression on your memory but it will forever leave a sweet impression upon your heart. And it is the heart where the “learning by faith” takes place. The Book of Mormon, of all the scriptures, is the one that in a few moments each day can serve as a catalyst of a multitude of good feelings. I feel I must speak boldly as I say, “If you will prayerfully read from the Book of Mormon each day you will forever remain true to the faith.”

Listen to the Brethren. Learn their names. You may even choose a favorite one or two. Revere them all as being living representatives of the Lord. Pay special attention to the messages of general conferences. The more you love the Brethren and their words, the more you will love the Lord and His church. The Brethren are with Christ at the center of the Church. Following them will lead you there also.

Pray Always and Be Believing

A prayer for good feelings is always answered. Sometimes the things that cause a bad feeling cannot be changed. But your feelings about those things can be changed. Often, however, feelings are so strong that you can't change them through your own will but only through prayer. Christ can work a mighty change in your heart; in which case your feeling will change from bitter to sweet, from doubt to faith, from resentment to forgiveness, from hate to love.

In your personal prayers, ask for the power to think straight and not be confused by voices of the world that beckon you to join them in the glitter and the glare that seems appealing but which will soon bring feelings of doubt and despair.

Pray with thanksgiving for the knowledge that has come to you in the past and that has become the foundation of your faith. Ask for daily reassurances that God truly is hearing your prayers, that Jesus is indeed the Savior, that the Holy Ghost is there to guide you and to comfort you. Pray that your testimony of the Restoration will be strengthened each day.

Pray for the desire to be kind and thoughtful and generous, and filled with love.

Pray for those who come into your mind who need special blessings. So often we wish that we could help, but for some reason we cannot. To pray for them in consort with doing all that we can do for them will bring them comfort and will help them to have good feelings.

Pray for your family and those you know so very well.

Pray for your enemies until you find that you no longer have any. Then you will have more time to pray for your ever-increasing number of friends.

If on some occasions time will not allow a long prayer and you can only make one fervent statement, just tell your Heavenly Father that you love Him, then go about your duties. Somehow expressing to God our love for Him brings the best feelings of all.

And if you need a job, a promotion, a date, or an opportunity, add that on as a "rider" to the prayer. But you really don't have to pray for such things, because if you pray for those things that will help you seek first the kingdom of God, all the other things that you need will be added to you. But those things will be given in such a way and at such a time that they will be for the welfare of your soul.

I speak so much of prayer because only through fervent and frequent prayer can we have the continual spiritual nourishment that will give us the good feelings that will forever encourage us to stay true to the faith. If we do all else and forget our personal prayers, we may gain the whole world but we

will not continue to feel in our hearts the deep faith that will bring us closer to the joy of having a deep and personal relationship with our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost and Prayer

I speak of the Holy Ghost when I speak of prayer because we cannot speak of prayer without speaking of Him, for to us He is the essence of prayer.

The Holy Ghost has great access to that part of us which is called “feelings.” The good feelings that come to us through our prayers and through a more loving life are sponsored by this great Comforter. It is through Him, the Holy Spirit, that the enticings come that will lead us ever closer to Jesus Christ.

Having the Holy Ghost as a constant companion is among the three or four greatest blessings that God offers us. When you have the Holy Ghost it makes you sensitive and enhances all good feelings, which are the foundation of true happiness. If you have this wondrous gift of the Holy Ghost you are given the power to be happy in whatsoever circumstances you are in.

I remember when I began to try to move away from the world and into the center. Through the Holy Ghost my life changed from black and white to Technicolor. He made me want not to be “goody good” but just plain good. I wanted people to be able to trust me and to count on me. I wanted to help others. I still had problems, but I would take them to the Lord in prayer and things would turn out all right.

It is the Holy Ghost that makes it so that we can find so much happiness in the simple things. We can get more joy out of the small things that we are able to do than some of the great people get from changing for good the whole world of medicine or music or sports. We can get more joy out of a walk down by the river than we can from a trip to Europe. We can find more pleasure in going to the home of a family member than we do in going to a Broadway musical. We get more fun out of playing catch on the front lawn with our family than we get out of going to Disneyland.

When we are trying, even if we can't quite pull off all we have resolved to do because we are dumb, it is the Holy Ghost who whispers messages of hope. When we're so sorry for all our weaknesses that it breaks our heart because we want to do better and we long for forgiveness and we resolve again to do better, it is the Holy Ghost who comforts and encourages us. Through the Holy Ghost our idle thoughts are more peaceful. We are able to stop resentment and turn it around and get on the road to forgiveness; to be able to enjoy the success of others and to look for the good in others and in ourselves; and to love

and to care and to laugh at good things and to cry over things that are not good. But most of all it is the Holy Ghost who helps us to know our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

Serve Others in Special Ways

Nothing can bring good feelings as powerfully as serving others. And the best way to serve them is to do something that will cause them to have good feelings. It is wonderful to give material help to those in need. But often what they need is your attention. They need your encouraging word. They need your reassurance of their worth. They just need you to be with them. Be a detective who is forever looking for someone who needs your special love. The more your good deeds can be done in the most private manner possible, the more sure will be the good feelings that will come to you.

So much of coming to Christ consists in serving Him by serving others. Among the most profound words ever spoken are these words: "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13.)

The word *happiness* is used to describe the sum total of our pure and good feelings. And the highest form of happiness is joy. And the supreme joy for you and for me is to have a personal relationship with our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Ghost. We can have this relationship by learning of them, by serving them, and by praying to our Father. By doing these things we will gain the feelings that will enable us to forever stay true to the faith.

HOW
CAN I HELP
OTHERS TO BE
TRUE
FAITH?

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

—LUKE 22:32

CHAPTER EIGHT

HELPING MY FAMILY
BE TRUE TO THE FAITH

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou

sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

—DEUTERONOMY 6:5–7

One of the good things about most parents who are in the faith is that even if they don't always remain true to the faith, deep down inside they want their children to do so.

The Influence of Parents

That is the way it was with my father. In many ways my father, “Bert,” was not true to the faith, but he surely did want me to be.

As I have said, when I was young I had a desire to become less involved in the Church. I decided I needed to sleep in on Sunday morning more than I needed to get up and go to church. This greatly bothered my mother, who never missed church and who thought I should get up and go. But my father did not go to church, and I felt that because he did not go it ought to be all right for me to not go.

After I had missed two weeks in a row my mother was greatly distressed, but there was no way that she could make me go. I recall that the next Sunday morning my father came to where I was sleeping and said, “George, if you don’t want to go to church you can get up and go out and help me clean out one of our chicken coops.” I had no excuse, so I spent a miserable Sunday morning deeply involved in chicken manure.

After that I was always up and off to church before my dad could enlist me in his chicken coop crew.

But that is not all that my father did to help me stay true to the faith. In matters of integrity, hard work, and responsibility, which are so much at the foundation of faith, he taught me many things.

I remember going back to my home to give a talk about the way our town was in the olden days, in the days when my parents and other old-timers were still alive. As part of that talk I reminisced about my father. I told of the hunting and fishing trips and all the things my father and I had done together. Then I expressed my feelings about the good he had done for me and for the town. I told of my regrets that he had not been a churchgoer and that he had had a problem living the Word of Wisdom. Near tears

because of the emotion I had felt in talking about my father, I added, “I sure do miss him, and it is my hope that he is in the top part of heaven.”

After the talk, some of the old guys who had known my father well surrounded me to talk to me about him. I’ll always remember one who looked right at me and said, with great conviction: “Garge, don’t you worry about your father makin’ it to heaven. Bert Durrant will make it there a lot surer than you ever will.” His words did not offend me because he said them with such love for my father, and because I hoped with all my heart that he was right.

It seems to me, on the other hand, that my mother surely will make it to heaven. She was zealous in keeping the faith, and as a result her love and encouragement were a mighty force in my faith. She wanted more than anything else for her children to stay true to the faith. As the following experience shows, she just expected us to do so.

During my last year of high school I felt I’d like to be sort of true to the faith but at the same time I wanted to enjoy a bit of the world. Usually each day when I came home from school my mother would make me a peanut butter sandwich so that I would be able to last until supper. But one day I came home and discovered that she and a bunch of sisters from the Relief Society were in our front room making a quilt. This upset me quite a bit, because I had to make my own peanut butter sandwich, and they never did taste right when I made them.

The door that separated our kitchen from the front room was closed, but I could still hear the ladies in there talking. I wasn’t too interested in what they were saying until I heard them start in on how the kids at the high school were all going to the dogs. To hear the details of what they were saying, I pulled my chair over close to the door. One lady after another spoke up to declare what she had heard the kids up at the high school were doing that was not right. As a group, the ladies were able to compile quite an accurate list of our misbehaviors.

Up to this point my mother had not spoken. Then finally I heard her voice as she spoke louder than all the rest. I listened intently to see what she would add to the list. But she added nothing to the list. Instead she said: “You might be right about the bad things the kids up at the school are doing, but I know this—my son George is not doing any of those things.”

Hearing that, I said to myself, “I’m going to stop doing those things.”

Nobody in their right mind would ever want to disappoint somebody who loved them as much as my mother loved me. And knowing how she felt and what she expected made me want to not ever

disappoint her. Those feelings were a great force in pulling me out of the world and into the gospel circle.

The Happiness and/or Sadness of Home

Family influences are amazing, aren't they?

It surely would be interesting for me to hear some stories about the experiences you had in your family as you were growing up. Some of your stories would probably be about happy times. But others might be stories of sadness. There is more heartbreak at home than any other place. There is more happiness at home than any other place. But either way, it is very unlikely that any other influence in your life will ever be as influential to you as has been the experiences you have had with your family.

If you can look back on a mostly pleasant childhood with parents who loved you and nurtured you, then you are among the most blessed people.

On the other hand, if your early family life was negative and sometimes abusive, you can in the name of Jesus Christ throw off the baggage of the past and achieve a life of your choice. Maybe that is the greatest advantage that comes from staying true to the faith.

The Present and the Future

But that is enough about our past. What of our present and our future? What is our family life like now? What do we desire it to be in the future? What do we want to have in our lives and the lives of our family by the year 2020 when we have our historic meeting.

Most people have a family dream. They would like to be married and have some children and have a loving relationship with all family members; a family in which everyone is true to the faith. But when we look around we find that for many, and maybe for you, that dream is not coming true.

Maybe your dreams of falling in love and marrying in the temple just aren't being fulfilled. Maybe your marriage has ended in divorce. Maybe your spouse is not a member of the Church and seems to have no desire ever to become so. Maybe your children are way out in the world's circle and have no desire to return to the Church circle. Maybe you and your spouse have different levels of desire when it comes to living in accord with the faith.

It seems we all have plenty to pray about in our families. And while praying that other family members will change, let us be sure to pray for the strength to change ourselves. Pray for the power to have good feelings—feelings of hope and patience and love. Pray for the strength to move ever closer to the center of the Church circle, but also pray for the power not to condemn those who do not want to move with us. Privately pray that they will have a change of heart and will overcome their weaknesses, but in your relationship with them praise them for their strengths.

Three Ideal Aspects of Family Life

Now let us talk about three things we could work on that will help our family stay true to the faith. These three things are:

1. Family leadership
2. Family home evening
3. Family prayer

If in our families we can improve these three family practices, doing so will be a great influence on all family members in helping them to stay true to the faith.

Family Leadership

Perhaps in your family there is no one who can hold the priesthood. If so, ask the Lord to bless you in such a way that much of what I now say about the priesthood will apply to you in your role as a family leader.

The Blessing of the Priesthood

Receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood and being ordained an elder in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a great event in a person's life. The power received that day enables us to govern our own lives and provides us with the means whereby we can be an influence for good in the lives of others.

As Marilyn grew up she had a teenage dream of marrying a handsome man. But by the time I met her she had decided that a priesthood man was more important than a handsome man. So I qualified. As

I became well acquainted with her I decided that she deserved the very best, so I asked her to marry me. (Ha! Ha!) But I did have one thing that was the best, and that was the priesthood.

I'm sure life with me has not always seemed like the best to her. But sensing my desire to be a worthy priesthood man she has not condemned me for my weaknesses. Instead she has encouraged me to be better. I have been far from a perfect husband, but because of the priesthood I have been far better than I otherwise would have been.

The area of my life wherein the priesthood has blessed me most is in my desire to be a good father. I have greatly hoped to give my children the very best. I couldn't give them things that cost a lot of money, because we have never had enough money to buy fancy things. But somehow the priesthood gave me the power to give my children something far greater than the things money can buy. I have a good batting average as a father. I sometimes struck out by making mistakes, but quite often, through the influence of the priesthood, I would get a hit that would help my children win.

When our children would do well in school, they would ask for five dollars for every A on their report card. They said the other kids in the school received that amount for their A grades. In response to their requests I would tell them, "I can't give you five dollars for each A, but come over here and I will give you a kiss for each one." They would say they didn't want any kisses, but they would come to get them anyway. Somehow they sensed that a kiss from a priesthood man was worth more than any amount of money.

In the "olden days," when our children were small, the pattern of the Church was that we would all go to church on Sunday morning for priesthood meeting and Sunday School, then we would go back in the early evening for sacrament meeting. One Sunday afternoon my young son, hoping I had had enough meetings for one day and would excuse the entire family from the evening meeting, asked, "Are you going to go to church again?"

I replied, "I sure am."

Saddened by my response, he asked, "Why?"

I wanted to give him a profound answer about the importance of sacrament meeting, so I paused to consider what to say. While I did so my little daughter Kathryn, who was younger than her brother, softly replied, "Because Dad is a priesthood man, that's why."

That answer—"Because Dad is a priesthood man"—has since that day been a guiding light in my life. In considering why or why not I should or should not do certain things the answer is: "Because I am a priesthood man. That is why."

When it was not convenient, or when I did not feel like gathering the family together for family prayer, or family home evening, or when they did not really want to come, I'd wonder why I should do so. And then I would know why. "Because I am a priesthood man. That is why."

When I'd wonder why being overly friendly with women at work or at church was wrong, then I would know why. "Because I am a priesthood man. That is why."

When I'd wonder why I should spend less time with my friends and more time with my family, then I would know why. "Because I am a priesthood man. That is why."

When I would feel really bad when I was less than Marilyn deserved and I'd wonder why I should try to be good when it was so hard, then I would know why. "Because I am a priesthood man. That is why."

Of course, there were other reasons for doing these things, but the sum total of all those reasons was encompassed as part of my desire to truly be a priesthood man.

And when I added the temple covenants to the priesthood it really gave my life direction and meaning. I knew that all the other things I did, even my Church callings, were temporary, but the family I led would be mine forever.

Somehow Marilyn has a power from something deep within her that is equal to the power I get from being a priesthood man. Her power comes from her natural and powerful integrity. She can do all that matters in a manner that is better than mine. But because she knows what she knows, she lets me lead. She just barely lets me lead because we are so "side by side," but she honors me as the leader. Why? "Because I am a priesthood man. That is why." She does not follow my leadership because of my priesthood title but rather because of my priesthood desires. I get to call on who will lead our family prayers, and prayers at meals, and prayers in the car as we leave to go here or there. I preside at family home evenings. I get to do all these things "because I am a priesthood man. That is why."

But if Marilyn had been in a home without the priesthood, she could have led the family equally well because the power is in her. And you can do it too. It is not easy, but you can do it.

Whether your home is one in which there is priesthood influence or not, give your family righteous leadership:

by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

By kindness, and pure knowledge, . . .

Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love (D&C 121:41–43).

Family Home Evening

Family home evening is much more than an event that takes place at a certain time each week. Family home evening is a spirit that is at the heart of your complete family culture. The spirit of family home evening should permeate all aspects of family life. Why? Because family home evening is a time to nurture, a time to communicate, a time to cooperate, a time to plan and to follow up, a time to express love, a time to sing and rejoice, a time for fun, a time to pray, a time to learn and to grow, a time to comfort, a time to make family the most important aspect of life. In that sense family home evening should last all week.

If you came to one of our family home evenings it wouldn't be a family home evening, because you were there. Our family home evening is just for our family. We would invite friends to other things, but not to family home evening.

Family home evening is a private affair. That is why at our house we pull the drapes so that no one can look in the window to see how we do it. We don't want others to look in on us because we don't do family home evening in a set way, and don't always do it as well as we'd like to. But we do it. And doing it is more important than doing it "well."

Sometimes we sit on the floor rather than in chairs. The children don't like the way I teach when I am "uptight," so I usually let them do the teaching. That way our lesson is quite short. Sometimes we don't sing, and other times we spend the whole evening singing. Sometimes for part of the evening we talk about sports or politics or a movie or a TV show. We figure that whatever we talk about is important; not because the subject at hand is important of itself but it is important because we are talking about it. And whenever we talk as a family, that is as important as it gets.

Sometimes we spend more time on games and fake rodeos and wrestles than we do on learning the names of the twelve sons of Jacob. Sometimes when the time is right I tell the kids how glad I am that they don't cheat in school or they aren't mean to other kids, or that they don't smoke or drink. Sometimes I tell them that being their dad makes me feel like the coach of a bunch of national all-stars.

Sometimes we get out our electric popcorn popper and put a sheet down in the front room and take the lid off the popper and dive for the kernels as they fly from the popper. Sometimes one of us hides

and another finds him and hides with him and another finds her and hides with all the rest, and then another, and then another, until the entire family is hiding under a bed. Sometimes we play marching music and turn it up real loud, and we march single file as a family all over the house. You can see why we pull the drapes. We don't want anyone seeing us. They might think we are strange.

Sometimes we take turns telling each other how much we love each other. Sometimes we get real serious and have some touching spiritual moments. Sometimes we don't do much but just sit there and drink Sprite and eat banana cream pie. You can get your kids to agree to any system of chores or other family rules if you take a vote while they are eating banana cream pie and drinking Sprite.

Family home evening, along with the things I have mentioned, is not just a once-a-week thing. Family home evening is a spirit of family life that goes through the entire week. Each meal is sort of a family home evening, each journey to the store is also. If you can just keep a bit of fun in family life it makes so much difference.

We sort of have an informal family home evening each night at dinner. I often tell funny stories at dinner. No one laughs, because the members of my family just don't always get it. Sometimes they even "boo" my greatest one-liners. Then Marilyn tells a really dumb joke and they all laugh. That really irritates me. Later they talk on the phone and tell their friends the jokes they got from me, and this material makes them popular because they come off as being witty.

I hope you have a sense of humor. It would really be difficult to stay true to the faith if you could never see the humor in things. There are so many people in families and over at church who are really funny. They don't try to be, they just are. Don't laugh at them, but be sure to laugh. Otherwise you could do a lot of crying. But of course, staying true to the faith also requires a lot of tears. So laugh when it is good to laugh and cry when it is good to cry, and pray to the Lord that you will always have the wisdom and discernment to know which of the two to do.

Have fun at home. Never fun based on ridicule or torment, but fun that just naturally flows, if you will let it, with the joy and happiness of life itself.

The Lord will give you the power to be patient when things seem to be almost more than you can bear. Just know that if you love your family members and are patient, all will be well. It is as Marilyn said to our grown children: "If I had known how well you were going to turn out I would have treated you better when you were kids."

We all know there are no guarantees that our children will stay true to the faith. But the best way to help them do so is to use the faith as your guiding star and love them, love them, love them.

So have family home evening even if it doesn't go any better than ours do.

Family Prayer

There is a lot of bad and hurtful stuff out there in the world that you and other family members will encounter each day. Family prayer can give each one of you the strength and guidance you need to cope with all that comes at you.

Sometimes it is difficult to get the family together for prayer. Some families get up and have prayer before the first one who has to leave, leaves. But others desire family members who can do so to sleep in as long as possible. So you'll just have to decide. To have family prayer, one mother would pray with each child just before that child left the home in the morning. Sometimes the evening meal is a good time to have family prayer. But sometimes not all the family members are there for the meals. Of all the experiences we had as a family, none was as important as having every one home for the evening meal. But if you can't do it, that is okay. Just do what you can, remembering how important family prayer is. If you have a spouse, at least the two of you can usually have prayer together each night and morning.

Of all parenting skills none are so profoundly important as is the skill of being fervent in prayer. So often when all else seems fruitless, prayer works it's marvelous spell.

Do your best to bring your family together for family prayer. If you try to do so the Lord will bless you as if you were perfect in doing so and He will reward you with the quiet blessings that will make all the difference.

Things Will Work Out as We Stay True to the Faith

My family is not like yours, and yours is not like his or hers. Maybe you have a priesthood holder in your family and maybe not. Maybe you are a single mother with a young son or daughter. Maybe you live alone and have no children. Things are the way they are and they will stay that way for a while. Do what you can. As we have been promised by a prophet, "Things will work out."

We are all part of a family. Somewhere at some time we each had a father and a mother and a family heritage with ancestors whose blood now flows in our veins. Pray for them even if they have failed you

or hurt you. In almost all cases they did the best they could, considering all that had happened to them. Do family history research so that they can receive the holy ordinances of the temple.

Pray for better family circumstances and then pray for the power and grace of Christ and the comfort of the Holy Ghost to help you be happy in the circumstances you are now in. Or if those circumstances are abusive, pray for the power and the way to do whatever is necessary to break away to the safety of a better place.

Do your best to provide righteous family leadership, to have family home evening, and to have family prayer. If you conscientiously do this you will influence your family eternally.

CHAPTER NINE

HELPING FELLOW SAINTS

BE TRUE TO THE FAITH

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

—JOHN 21:17

It surely is hard to have the feelings necessary to stay true to the faith without going to church each Sunday.

The Blessing of Attending Church

While in the army I was sent to Korea. When I first arrived there, even though I had friends in my new barracks, I felt alone. I arrived there on a Tuesday and I felt as though my very life depended upon being able to attend church on the coming Sunday. I inquired of the Protestant chaplain, on Wednesday, as to where the LDS folks met for Sunday services. He said that as far as he knew there was no such church in the area. But he kindly told me that I was most welcome to attend his Sunday services.

On Thursday I visited all the other barracks in our battalion seeking other members. But my search was unsuccessful. I felt desperate.

On Friday I learned that there was a fellow from Utah in a camp just three miles distant. That evening I walked to his camp, and after an hour's search I was able to find him. I was so thrilled to have finally found a fellow member.

The two of us talked of Utah and sports and other matters. Then I asked him where he went to church on Sundays. He looked down as he told me that he did not go to church. I asked him if he would join with me so that the two of us could have a simple Sunday service. He told me he would rather not do that. Try as I would, I could not change his mind. He had, for the time, departed from the faith. I walked back to my barracks with my shoulders slumped in deep disappointment.

When I arrived back at the barracks I was elated to see a note someone had left on my bed that said there was an LDS fellow down at the "I Corps" base, which was just six miles away. The note had his name and a phone number where he could be reached. The next day I called him, and to my joy he said he too wanted to go to church. We decided to meet at a camp that was halfway between us.

It was a beautiful Sunday morning when we each made our way to the small Quonset-hut chapel that served the religious needs of all who desired to come there. When I arrived, the Catholics were holding services. I stood on the sunny side of the chapel and waited. Soon I saw a stocky fellow huffing and puffing his way towards me. Somehow I could tell that this man was my brother in the faith. Soon we stood face to face, and as we met I felt as though I had come home. We were instant friends.

Following the Catholic services we made our way to the chaplain's office. We told him we wanted to have church each Sunday. He said: "You sure can. The Catholics meet at nine-thirty and the Protestants meet at eleven. You would be welcome at either." We told him we were not of either of those two faiths. He asked what we were, and we told him we were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He asked how many of us there were, and we said there were two. He looked

at us as if we were a little odd, and we looked at each other and knew he was right. He told us we could hold church anytime we desired on Sunday afternoon, as the chapel was free at that time.

We had services every Sunday thereafter. It was a wonderful church. All of our members sat right up front. There was no backbiting in our congregation. Every other week, one or the two of us got to give a talk. Each week each one of us offered either the opening or closing prayer. Each week we each blessed and passed the sacrament. And we each knew that if either of us did not come, none of these things could happen. So we never missed.

There in Korea, and wherever I have gone, my dearest friends have been the Saints at the ward or branch.

The Joy of Being with the Saints

I love going to church because I look forward to seeing the Saints. I know the Saints are not perfect, but I know they want to be and that deep in the foundation part of their hearts they believe just as I do. Home is where the heart is, but the chapel is the place where the heart likes to go on its favorite outing.

As I write this, I start to think of all the Saints I have known in places where I have lived. My heart overflows with love for them.

And the people in my ward now are the dearest of all. I look forward to seeing them this Sunday. I never want to be out of town on Sunday because I would miss seeing my people. I love saying hello to my fellow Saints and being with them. I look forward to seeing the young men (I'm the Young Men president). They remind me of me. Times change, but many of the struggles facing the young folks remain the same. I'm glad that I can maybe help them a little.

Be a do-gooder at church. Some people don't like do-gooders, but I do. Especially if they do good to me. Pay attention to the children. Observing them helps us to know the way the Lord would like us to be. Let the bishop know that you would like to work in the nursery. That is an even better job than working with the adults.

But if you do not feel comfortable with being overly friendly, just be a little more friendly than usual. When you are friendly, others seem friendly, and when you and them are friendly it makes going to church much more enjoyable.

I like the singing in church. I really like singing with gusto. Marilyn would rather I did not sing so loudly. According to her, I'm not a good singer. But to me, I sound good. Marilyn says the reason I sound good to myself is that the Lord blesses my ears rather than my voice.

I love speaking up in Sunday School class, but not too often. I think we all ought to have thirty seconds to give our profound comments and then restrain ourselves so that the less profound can also speak. I love to look into the eyes of speakers and teachers and nod my approval when they make a powerful point. I love complimenting the teachers and the speakers by telling them of a specific thing they said that really helped me. And in these remarks, by having listened carefully, I can always be sincere.

I love shaking hands with the bishop each week, even if he is hard to get to. Tell him thanks for being my bishop. I feel my churchgoing experience is not complete unless I get to shake his hand.

I love to be amused by some of the peculiar people in the Church rather than being irritated by them. And I love to do my part in being a bit peculiar myself.

The Blessings of the Sacrament

Most of all, though, I love to partake of the sacrament. To stay firm in the faith it is absolutely necessary to partake of the sacrament each week.

When you partake of the sacrament, make a solemn promise that you will strive to do better. Perhaps during the week you have fallen a bit short and you have a feeling of guilt. While waiting to receive the sacrament, say a fervent silent prayer wherein you ask for forgiveness and promise to do better. When you have a contrite spirit and a broken heart, the Savior will make up the difference between where you are and where you desire to be. He won't just do this when you are dead, but He will also do it this very day and hour and minute. Partaking of the sacrament each week will help you feel the mercy that is extended to you through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

The sacrament is at the heart of the most thrilling part of the gospel. It is a catalyst that causes you to be repentant. Only those who repent of their sins will make it back to our Heavenly Father.

While the sacrament is being blessed I try to say the sacrament prayers in my mind one or two words ahead of the priest. I often get every word correct. I love to take the bread and water and promise the Savior that I will take upon me His holy name and always remember Him. I love the assurance that if I keep my covenants I can always have His Spirit to be with me.

I love the feelings that come on fast and testimony Sunday. I don't like to fast as I first begin the fast, but as time goes by I seem to find my spiritual self. To me there is something each time that I fast that I want more than I want to eat. So I fast and pray for those things.

In summary of all that I have just said, the joy that I get out of attending church each Sunday far outweighs any efforts I have made to get there.

The Blessing of Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy

If you don't attend church on Sunday, whatever else you do will turn out to leave you feeling about as wonderful as you would feel if you were cleaning out a chicken coop. There are some common Sunday activities that bring on chicken coop feelings. Such feelings come from sleeping in on Sunday morning. At eight o'clock or so on Sunday morning, while you are in the comfort of your bed, it seems as though the happiest thing you could ever do would be to turn over and go back to sleep. But that extra two or three hours of sleep isn't what it is cracked up to be; because when it is over it leaves you feeling like your whole body and mind and spirit are all clogged up, and you spend the rest of the day in a daze.

Another chicken coop feeling comes from a detailed study of the Sunday paper. To read those pulp pages from front to back is guaranteed to leave you deader than a doorknob.

And the worst of all chicken coop feelings is watching television. Especially ball games. I like ball games on TV. But to invest several hours on Sunday watching these events is a surefire formula to deaden your sensitivities to all that is lovely or praiseworthy or of good report (see Articles of Faith 1:13).

Don't spend your Sundays cleaning out chicken coops. Get up and put on your nicest clothes and go to church. Church is the place to go to be healed of all the wounds that you have had inflicted on you during the week.

The Blessing of Having a Bishop

Have you ever used a jackhammer to break up cement? For years I'd seen workers doing that on projects and I always wanted to give it a go. One day I got my chance. I found out that it was really fun for the first ten minutes, and then the pain starts to set in.

Many years ago we had decided to add a room onto the east side of our house. To accomplish this task, the first order of business was to rent a jackhammer and the compressor that makes it work. With this amazing tool I would knock out the concrete porch and steps that were in the way of the addition.

On that Saturday morning I could hardly wait to rent the machine and get going. I hooked everything up and with great noise and much jarring I knocked off one corner of the cement. My sons and their friends watching me have such fun wanted to take a turn, but I told them "No, I can do this myself." That was a statement I would come to regret.

The longer I worked, the less fun it was. My arms, which were more used to holding papers than construction tools, were fast becoming weary of holding the heavy jackhammer. I longed for my sons to get involved, but they had by now departed.

I discovered that the job was bigger than it had at first appeared. As the cement was chipped away I had to hold the hammer up more to an angle where it would be effective. Soon I was getting charley horses in my arm muscles. But I had no choice but to continue, as I had to take the machines back to the rental place at the end of the day.

I prayed for strength and was able to keep going. I determined that if I could just complete this job I would be willing to go all the rest of my life without ever again having the fun of using a jackhammer.

Now time was running out. Some weeks earlier, I had made a speaking appointment for the late afternoon of this day in a nearby town. Now it was nearly time to go to that appointment. I wondered what to do. I prayed that the Lord would soften the heart of the cement so that it would crumble at the next jar of the jackhammer.

In the moment of greatest distress someone tapped me on the shoulder. As I looked to see who it was I heard the words: "That looks fun. Could I have a turn."

I had never in my life been so glad to see my bishop as I was at that time. I stepped back and said: "Sure, Bishop. It is fun. Go ahead and try it." The hammer seemed to respond to his great strength. Large chunks began to fall away. I said, "Bishop, I have to go give a talk."

"Don't worry," he said. "You go, and I'll do what I can here."

Two hours later, returning home, I drove into my driveway. As my headlights shone ahead I could see that the equipment was gone and so was the cement porch. My bishop had left a note that read: "I finished the job and took the jackhammer back. Thanks for the fun."

I went in the house and Marilyn asked, "When did you call the bishop and ask him to come?"

Trying to hold back my emotions, I replied, "I did not call him. He just came."

“Why?” she asked.

“Because I had done all I could, and I told the Lord that. And so He sent the bishop.”

The Blessing of Rallying Around the Bishop

So often when we don’t know where else to turn and we pray to the Lord, He sends the bishop. One of the great blessings that the Lord gives us for our efforts to stay true to the faith is that He gives us a bishop.

But if our bishop is to be free to do the things that only he can do, then we must rally round and do all the things that the bishop needs us to do. The Lord gives us a bishop who is not paid for being bishop, so that the Lord can really bless the bishop with things more important than money. When the bishop is blessed with these spiritual treasures, everyone else in the ward is blessed. To have a blessed bishop is a great blessing.

The Blessing of Fulfilling Church Calls

But because the bishop is working for a living, he needs to have each of us take a portion of the ward responsibility and do it. So each of us is “called” to do certain tasks.

It is always an elect lady who is called to be the Relief Society president. She stands next to the bishop in helping those who don’t know where else to turn. She helps the women to be caring and effective wives and mothers and helps them develop their talents.

Others are called to be priesthood leaders. They teach us men to do our duty, to be good fathers and good providers. They make it so that we will live a wise life and be able to help others.

Many are called as teachers. There is no greater call than that.

Some are called as counselors to the bishop. They and the bishop make up the bishopric. We love the bishopric almost as much as we love the bishop. We like it when we see that the bishopric has fun working with each other. We like it when they manifest a bit of humor. We know that when Church work is done right those who are doing it will have fun. We know that Church work is fun, and we love associating with the people we work closely with as we perform our Church calling.

Sometimes our callings are difficult because things don’t always go just the way that we want them to. Sometimes our class members are unruly. Sometimes those we count on do not come through.

Sometimes our preparations come at great personal sacrifice and the results are not what we had hoped for. But even in the difficult times, somehow the blessings come and we feel a closeness to the Savior because we are serving Him. My favorite verse comes from the hymn "How Firm a Foundation." It says:

Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, . . .
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand. (*Hymns*, no. 85.)

I used to be afraid to go to church for fear that I would be called upon to pray or to give a talk. But gradually I conquered my fears enough to at least try. I first mastered the praying. It helped that I could close my eyes and I couldn't see anybody looking at me. I felt so good after giving a prayer that I sort of hoped I'd be called on to do it again. Gradually I got so I could give a talk. The Church seems to make talkers of us all. Church members are famous for being able to speak well. So when they call on you, say your personal prayers and do it. Doing things like that make you feel as if the Church could not survive without you. And you feel needed. When we feel needed we stay.

The Joys of Visiting the Homes of Our Fellow Saints

The greatest task we perform by assignment from the bishop, our priesthood leaders, the Relief Society president, and the Lord is that of home teaching and visiting teaching. It is such a privilege and an honor to be assigned to watch over and care for the well-being of other Saints. To enter the homes and hearts of our friends and serve them in the name of Jesus Christ is a sacred trust.

My most treasured spiritual experiences have come as I have carried out my home teaching assignments. I haven't always had the success that I desired in helping others stay true to the faith, but in all my efforts I have felt the Lord's commendation and love. In striving to help others stay true to the faith I have found the joy and strength that helped me to do so.

In one home teaching assignment I visited the home of a man who was not true to the faith. He was an imposing man in appearance and in intellect. He was a weather forecaster. The weather has always

been a favorite home teaching message of mine and so our visits to his home were easy. But one day my priesthood leader told me that I should be more bold in teaching this man. I offered some hesitation to my leader but to no avail. He assigned me to be bold.

So the next time when my young priest companion and I went to his home, I was quite nervous. I knew that on this evening we were not going there to discuss the weather.

Soon we were in this family's lovely home. At the right moment I took a deep breath, uttered a silent prayer for courage, and said: "I have a special message for you tonight. I want you to become my bishop."

I could see the stunned look on his face. But before he could offer any rebuttal I continued. "I want you to be my bishop because I really love and respect you." I could see him soften a bit and my heart was now really into this.

"But," I continued, "before you can become my bishop, you have to quit smoking." I then paused and said, "In the name of the Lord, I tell you that you must quit smoking. Will you do that?"

Tears filled his eyes as he said, "Do you know how hard it is to quit smoking?"

He wanted no answer to his question and I offered none. I told him again of my love. Boldness leads to boldness, especially if it is immersed in love. I added, "Another thing you need to do to be my bishop is to start coming to church."

His reply was that he was not an active member. I told him that I had seen him walk around our block showing his two little girls flowers and birds and other of nature's marvels. I told him that the greatest calling in the Church was to be a good father and that he was fulfilling that calling as well as I had ever seen it done. "But now," I said, "it is time to bring those girls to church."

Amidst her tears his wife said, "Oh, honey. Let's do it. Let's go back to church."

But it was too hard for him at that time to come back. Sometime later he did return. I believe it was because at that later time some other home teacher was able to help him more than I was. But I had tried, and the Lord made it so that I loved this man from that time on with a love that was a joy to me. And he returned my love. It is amazing to me that when we go out to rescue another it somehow takes us deeper and deeper into the center of the Church.

So if you hold the priesthood, go home teaching. Don't try to change the people you home teach as much as you just try to love them the way they are, so that they will change themselves. Do things for them. Keep the message short and the love long and deep.

So often when the home teachers fail to see how they can help a family, the visiting teachers are able to do so. I love it when the visiting teachers come to be with Marilyn. When they have been and gone she is always so happy. And there is no greater blessing for a man than that of being married to a happy woman.

Move Rapidly Toward the Center

Oh, and one more thing—pay your tithing. You will always make it financially if you pay your tithing. Of course, you have to be thrifty, and honest also, but if you pay your tithing you will get the joyful feeling that is far greater than any feeling of sacrifice. You just can't feel like you are really all the way into the Church unless you pay tithing. Paying tithing moves you rapidly toward the center of the Church. Do all those things that take you into the center of the Church. No one ever leaves the Church from the center. They leave the Church from the periphery.

You have to get up and move forward to the place where the blessings are. Sometimes the blessings are at the chapel. Sometimes they are in a neighbor's house. Sometimes they are at your bedside as you kneel to find them, and sometimes they are in the scriptures waiting to come from the pages and into your heart as they give you revelations about things that matter and things that do not. Most blessings are hiding inside of sacrifices. Blessings that are encompassed in the paying of tithes and offerings are blessings you need more than you need physical security. Blessings are in the bishop's office talking about your desire to repent and to serve and to go forward and to live.

The greatest thing that has ever happened to you is that somehow you have found the Church. You know that. The gospel of Jesus Christ can make your life one of joy. It can give you direction that will enable you to be all that you can be.

An Invitation to Meet in the Year 2020

I'll see you at our appointed place in the year 2020—at the Seagull Monument on Temple Square. I'll recognize you, not because you will be handsome but because you will look good. You will look good because you have stayed true to the faith. I'll recognize you because you will be worn out in service to your fellow Saints and to the Lord. I'll recognize you because you will have the name of Jesus Christ written in your heart, and His image will be in your countenance. This is my 2020 vision of you.

If I'm not there when you come to that meeting, it may be that I've gone on to another place. So when you start to tell of your multitude of blessings, speak loud enough that I can hear. It is always such a joy to hear the grateful voice of someone who has stayed true to the faith.