



THE PAINTING LESSONS



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*This book is dedicated to my sweetheart, Lonnn Buckley.
Thank you for your patience, encouragement and love throughout every
phase of this project.*

*The book was written for my seven children, their amazing spouses and
my wonderful grandchildren.*

*To anyone else reading this text, "Welcome to our Family".
The door is always open and there is food in the fridge.*

I hope there is something in these pages that helps you find your way.

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Preface

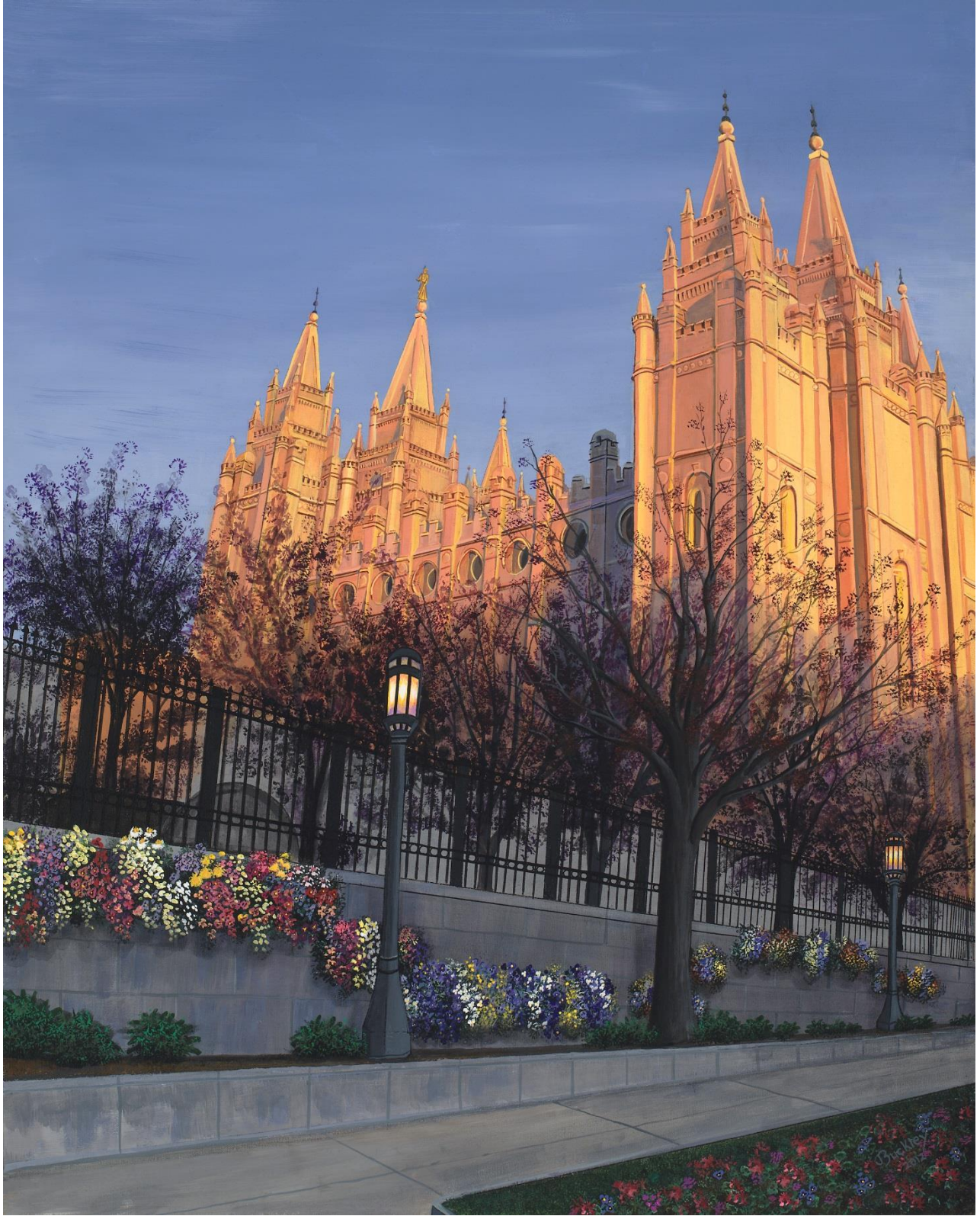
It's no secret that my paintings have a style of their own—unique in some ways, but much the same in others. Trained artists call the style “Literal,” I call it, “Paint by Prayer” because that is exactly what it is, and what continues to work for me. The process goes something like this:

My husband and I, sometimes accompanied by our daughter Mandy who has a great eye for photography and art, go and do a photo shoot of the temple I wish to paint. We climb hills, walk to different vantage points, or if necessary, lay in the snow to get the shot we want. Back at home, we each choose our five best photographs and print out 8x10 paper copies.

Then comes the process of elimination. We use straight pins to attach these copies to the back of the couch where we can get a little distance perspective. Next, the voting takes place; top ten, top five, deciding which photo looks most like a painting on the wall. The family usually abandons the whole process at about three and I choose the one I want to paint.

From there, the Lord is very much in charge of this project. My goal is to create on canvas the temple, sky, and surroundings as near to what God created as I can produce. I pray my way through every step of the process and give all glory and gratitude to Him for this project. Many times, people who see my art say, “I thought it was a photograph”. If I had studied and done the homework that many professionals have behind their work, that comment may not be desirable, but for me, it's exactly what I was trying to accomplish.

In 2012 when the first Salt Lake City temple painting was completed, I wrote this little piece called, “He Let me Hold the Brush,” and sent it out with a copy of the painting to my children. I would like to share the story as an introduction to “The Painting Lessons.”



Now The Day Is Over

“He Lets Me Hold the Brush”
Now The Day Is Over
Salt Lake City Uah Temple

My sister-in law passed away at the age of fifty-nine, two days before Christmas. Her death was totally unexpected. Because she and I are only five days apart in age, it left me thinking about my *own* mortality and the things I might regret if left undone.

Subsequently, I began making a “bucket list” of things that might matter to those left behind if I should suddenly be called home. It was an entry on this list that prompted me to reach out and do something I previously would never have attempted.

My husband and I are parents of seven wonderful children, all grown and out of the nest now—at least for the moment. As each child left home and established a home of their own, I made them a gift.

Although I consider myself to be a very amateur artist with no real training of any kind, I enjoy playing in the paint, and one by one, painted something for each of their homes. These were paintings of the Temple in which they were married or a picture of the Savior for those who married in the Salt Lake Temple.

The Salt Lake Temple was far too complicated for my limited experience and not something I would attempt to do. This temple took some forty years to build, and I was sure it would take me at least that long to paint it.

All six of our married kids have their paintings hanging in their homes. We have a beautiful daughter, number five of seven, who has not yet found her eternal companion. I waited to see where she would marry to begin her painting.

When she bought her first home, she reminded me a time or two that all of her siblings had a painting, and she did not. Getting this done for her became an entry on my “bucket list,”

This daughter was employed by the Church as a gardener on Temple Square. She graduated from BYU receiving a degree in Horticulture and Floral Design and is very gifted.

Early one summer evening, my husband and I went to Temple Square, with our daughter Mandy, to see the flower beds she designed and cultivated. These included some lovely hanging floral boxes attached to the block wall between the Tabernacle and the Temple.

Having had the privilege to be on Temple Square many times in the evening as a former member of the Tabernacle Choir, I was astonished to see something different that I had not seen before.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening and the sun was just setting. We were admiring and taking pictures of Mandy's flower boxes. Looking up we saw that the temple was reflecting the beautiful yellow, orange and red tones of the sunset and was a flame with color. Fortunately we had a camera with us out and ready to get a photo of this beautiful blazing temple, with Mandy's lovely floral designs in the foreground of the photo. Within a few moments the light changed, and the brilliance quickly vanished. We were grateful to have been blessed to capture that rare moment.

Back at home, looking at the pictures, Mandy let me know that this sunset photo was the painting she wanted on the wall of her new home. I considered trying to create on canvas this bright temple, in an effort to complete my "bucket list" for Mandy. Each time the thought came into my mind, I concluded that it was much too difficult for me. The craftsmanship, intricate angles and colors, would be impossible for someone with my limited experience to duplicate. I told her it simply could not be done.

She suggested that I “pray about it” which gave me pause to consider my testimony of the power of prayer. Believing that with God, nothing is impossible, I considered the idea more seriously.

It seemed for her a perfect fit. I envisioned the painting as an opportunity for her to reflect throughout her life on her experience on historic Temple Square. Perhaps, looking at the painting, she would teach her posterity how God had given faithful pioneer saints with limited resources and tremendous faith the ability to build the Salt Lake Temple. It might help her to remember that God had blessed her with the gifts to design and grow those beautiful flower boxes, preserved forever in her painting. The sunset on this most sacred creation could be a constant reminder in her home of God’s love and ongoing blessings of creation. So, knowing that with God’s help miracles occur, I made a commitment to take on the project.

There was an old frame in our basement that belonged to my favorite aunt. She also enjoyed painting and when she passed away my cousin gave me the empty frame. It was an odd size and I had to have a canvas stretched to fit the frame, something I had never done.

Real artists use easels, but I work from the kitchen table. For the next five weeks the fairly large canvas and painting supplies took over our kitchen table. My patient and very supportive husband had his meals served to him in the recliner in front of the television. He didn’t actually object as much as I had anticipated.

Each step of this endeavor was met with difficulty. When I didn’t know how to proceed, I found myself praying my way through almost every phase of the project. These were definitely uncharted waters for me and I quickly realized I was totally out of my comfort zone.

Sometimes I would spend an entire day on a tiny area of the painting. Because my eyesight is not wonderful, there were times when I couldn’t make out what was really there in

the little photo I was using as my guide. Repeatedly I petitioned the Lord to help me see what was in each tiny corner of turrets and spires. In response to these prayers I found my sight was clear for long enough to discover what I needed to do next.

At times painting was a frustration to me because I suffer with a debilitating condition called Fibromyalgia which interferes with muscle and nerve functions. Because this temple is compiled of many straight lines and angles, I was constantly asking for help to strengthen my shaking hand as each new straight line presented itself. I would literally pray, "Lord, I have to make another straight line; please steady my hand."

Over and over as the project progressed I was blessed to feel my mind and hands guided by a loving Father in Heaven who believed in me and I in Him. Sometimes frustration and fatigue would pull me away and I would rest on my bed and dream what to do next. Each time I returned to work those instructions, given in dream, came together with an ease that astonished me.

When the temple phase was completed and the flower phase began my husband complimented me on my work. My sincere comment to him at that time was; "God and I are painting a temple--He lets *me* hold the brush."

The life lesson for which I am eternally grateful, is understanding that God knows each of us personally, and He also knows the desires of our hearts. He understands our frailties and sends his Holy Spirit to guide and direct us in whatever we pursue with pure intent.

Now the Day Is Over was the title selected for this painting. I loved having His guidance day after day as God and I painted His Temple. My hope is that I will always remember to ask Him to be with me in everything I undertake.

Painting this temple my testimony grew on many levels. Receiving undeniable divine assistance was so powerful and exciting that I decided to paint again, and then again. Over the next eight years I painted temples, completing all seventeen working temples in Utah in the summer of 2019. Many cherished life lessons emerged from this experience. It is with joy, love, and gratitude to my Savior that I share with you now “The Painting Lessons.”



Where It All Began

Chapter One

My Life is Forever Blessed by the Temple.

Where It All Began -- Manti Utah Temple

The Manti Temple has been an important part of my life from early childhood. My family moved to Manti before I was born when my father accepted a position at Manti High School as an English teacher.

I vividly remember as a little girl my excitement piling into our old soldier-blue Ford with my Dad and two older sisters, then driving to Temple hill. With great anticipation we drove to the top of the hill and into a wonderful dark tunnel. The road and tunnel were built as part of the original stone temple structure. The road circled the temple and went underneath the east side of the structure in the form of a long tunnel, partially above ground. My Dad would honk the horn repeatedly as we drove through this magical open space. The echo was magnificent. We then circled into the daylight and around the temple to repeat the experience again and again.

It is also a clear day in my memory sitting in sacrament meeting and hearing a letter from the First Presidency of the Church read from the pulpit. The letter requested that the saints in our area no longer use the tunnel as a recreation because the Temple was a Holy Place. I must have been only four or five years old at the time and when my parents explained that we could no longer do our “ride and honk”. I remember thinking that it was totally mean for church leaders to not allow us to honk anymore. It was just not fair because the whole experience was so very funny, and I loved doing it.

Only a short time after that announcement, the Bishop read another letter which completely ruined my Easter Holiday, or so I thought. This time, the letter from the Prophet made it very clear that we could no longer use the beautiful temple hill for our Easter Festivities.

Easter was almost as special as Christmas for me. My mother lovingly stitched all three, then four, and later five little girls pretty dresses all alike with matching bonnets. I don't remember if my baby brother, number six, got a matching outfit or not. Easter Sunday we would all dress up in our new dresses and go to church.

After Sunday School the fun began. We gathered our little baskets filled with the beautiful pastel boiled eggs colored the previous day and headed for temple hill. Positioned at the top of the hill, we sent the eggs rolling one at a time down the steep hill. The thrill was watching them bounce once, then twice, ultimately resulting in an explosion which sent pieces of egg showering over the soft green grass. When our baskets were empty, we would lie down on the grass with our arms stretched tightly against our sides and roll ourselves down the hill laughing hysterically. I still get a rush of joy just thinking about it.

This temple hill tradition was shared by much of the community and, I suspect, may have gone all the way back to pioneer days. Just imagine the wonderful mess all this frolicking created every Easter. Giving up my cherished traditions was the beginning of my loving and understanding the *sacred* nature of the temple. Before the letters and the discussions at home, I had no idea what the temple was all about.

Learning to respect the temple grounds, was preliminary to my gradual appreciation for the sacredness of God's Holy House. Incidentally, that tunnel was taken out when the temple was remodeled in 1985. I still smile when we attend the Manti Temple and see, near the entrance to sister's locker room, that stone arch, now filled in where the old tunnel previously began.

Now fast forward about fifteen years later, as my sweetheart and I prepared to be married in this special place. After serving his calling to the Cumorah Mission in New York, he returned

to Ephraim to complete a second year at Snow College. I was just beginning the first year of my college experience at Snow when we met.

Years earlier, my family moved from Manti to Ephraim where my Father became principal of the grade school. I was in the first grade when we moved. Years later, my Father took a position as an English professor at Snow College. My now husband “boyfriend”, would fall asleep in my Father’s literature class the day after our late date. Dad would look me in the eye that evening as we sat at the dinner table and say: “That boy fell asleep in my class again today; you’ve got to send him home earlier.” What a way for a guy to impress his future-father in-law!

Both my future husband and I were interested in music and enjoyed two classes together; choir and jazz band. He played the trumpet and I played the saxophone. Our friendship blossomed into a beautiful romance and soon we were looking forward to our marriage. After graduating from Snow in the spring, Lonon attended Utah State University in Logan. Over the next several months, he put many miles on his old green Chevy driving back and forth each weekend to visit me in Ephraim.

I had enough credits to graduate from Snow College the following March, so our marriage date was set for March twenty-fifth. All the invitations were addressed and mailed. We were so excited.

Both of my older sisters had recently married in the Manti temple. Neither of them nor my parents offered much information about the endowment experience. Somehow, I got the impression that I wasn’t supposed to ask questions. This was long before they taught “temple preparation” classes, and I knew very little about what to expect. At that time, the endowment and marriage were done on the same day.

The night before the day of our wedding, my sweetheart took me for a short seven mile ride from Ephraim to the Manti Temple. He parked in the parking lot on the east side, and we walked up the steep hill and sat on the lawn in the shadow of the temple. We talked for a long time. It was a beautiful spring evening and we enjoyed our time together as he explained to me what the process would be like the next day. I was nervous and he taught me all he could to ease my anxiety.

Because the information he shared with me referred to a “washing” and anointing ordinance performed prior to the session and the marriage, I wrongly assumed that I would be taking a shower at the temple to be really clean. The next morning, the day of our wedding, this special day when a bride wants to look her very best, I didn’t wear any makeup at all because I figured it was just going to be washed off with the shower at the temple. We still laugh about that crazy misconception to this day.

The Manti Temple has always been so special to me. I love it and I was anxious to take it on early in the painting line up. We were living in Bountiful and we traveled south two hours to Manti to get some reference photos in the dead of winter. Working within a limited time frame, we drove down, took the pictures, and made our way right back to Bountiful. I don’t think my husband even got out of the car. He drove me from one place to another and sat parked in the car while I jumped out and took pictures from every imaginable angle.

The photo we selected for this painting, was taken across the highway in a little park on the south end of the city cemetery west of the temple. I wanted to capture the magnitude of the hill in the shot, so I laid down in the snow at the base of a very small rise to add some vertical distance. We were married in the springtime, so this piece was painted with colors to reflect spring and not the snow covered icy winter day on which the photo was actually taken.

Back at home, the painting process was underway. When the background and the temple were complete, I left the painting and the house to run an errand. When I returned, there was a post-it note left for me by my sweetheart attached to the painting which read; “This is where it all began.” When the painting was completed, Lonni ordered a little gold metal plate cut and engraved with the words; Where it All Began. He attached the plate to the gold frame around the painting for our anniversary. He said it was, “romantic enough to count for two anniversary gifts.”

I love this painting, which hangs in our bedroom next to a photograph of our family. I see the two of them each night before I go to sleep and each morning as I wake, always with a prayer of gratitude in my heart for the memory of those eternal temple blessings given in Manti Utah on a beautiful spring day in March.

At the time of this writing, we are two days away from celebrating the 48th Anniversary of our marriage in the Manti Temple. I am so grateful for every day we have together—yes, even the difficult days. Where it all Began may be my favorite painting.

There was a quote on the internet that I loved, “True love is when both people think they have the better half of the deal”. (Simon Sinek). I definitely “have the better half of the deal”.

Elder Gerrit W. Gong gave a talk at BYU Hawaii in September of 2013 entitled, “Be not afraid, only believe.” He made this comment in his address to those young people that carries a great deal of wisdom about the marriage covenant:

“We are to be wise, meet and become acquainted with possible marriage partners, learn to share openly and deeply things which matter most, then we make a choice. We commit. We covenant with each other and with Heavenly Father. Life’s circumstances can and will change. But our sacred commitments only grow stronger. We will never meet someone we like better

tomorrow because we choose to like, and love, our eternal companion best each day.” (Elder Gerrit W. Gong, BYU Hawaii Devotional, September 2013).

Elder Richard G. Scott has always been such a great example to me. He always spoke with such love and devotion about his departed wife Jeanene. When he recalled his marriage, it was with much reverence.

“It is so rewarding to be married. Marriage is wonderful. In time you begin to think alike and have the same ideas and impressions. You have times when you are extremely happy, times of testing, and times of trial, but the Lord guides you through all of those growth experiences together.” (Elder Richard G. Scott, “The Eternal Blessings of Marriage” April Conference 2011).

Our temple experience joins Heaven and Earth. It ties together the ‘Circle of Life’ in a way no other endeavor can. In the October Conference of 2017, Elder David A. Bednar said this:

“A principle purpose of the temple is to elevate our vision from the things of the world to the blessings of eternity. Removed for a short time from the worldly settings with which we are familiar, we can “look to God and live” by receiving and remembering the great and precious promises whereby we become partakers of the divine nature.” (Elder David A. Bednar, “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises” October Conference, 2017).

As a young woman, I had the opportunity to sing “Lift Thine Eyes,” from Mendelssohn’s Elijah Oratorio, in a trio with my two older sisters. The song has been a favorite of mine for many years. The words remind me of temples and the great strength they are to me. The words read:

*Lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes,
to the mountains, whence cometh help.
Thy help cometh from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

*He hath said, thy foot shall not be moved.
Thy Keeper will never slumber.
Lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes,
To the mountains whence cometh help.*

In the late eighties, I had the opportunity to perform “Elijah” with the Edmonton Symphony in Canada. At the time, I was singing with the Utah Oratorio Society. Once again, experiencing “Lift Thine Eyes” was a joy. Although the music and words were always special to me, it wasn’t until years later during the painting process that these words gained an added spiritual significance for me.

In 2016, I completed a second Salt Lake Temple painting titled, The Mountain of the Lord. This painting hangs in what we call our music room. This room has become my little sanctuary in our home. Lonni has his man cave with all his books, comfortable recliner, and computer. I have my little beautiful room with the piano, stereo system and a love seat opposite this temple painting. Because I rarely sleep through the night, I often go to this room in my sleepless hours to study my scriptures, pray, meditate and record impressions. Early on, I started referring to this lovely, undisturbed time of the night as, “God’s Time.” With that reference, it never frustrates me to be awake at about one in the morning, because it is a pleasant time of spiritual connection for me.

Much of this quiet time with my Savior involves pleading for help with the painting process, or for inspiration for this book. One such time was just recently when I was pondering what to do about a temple painting marketing consideration.

When people see my work, they often comment, “You should sell these.” I have felt that at some point that might be appropriate and have even investigated some possibilities. On this night as I considered my options, I got a message as I prayed that gently said, “Lift Thine

Eyes.” I looked up and focused on The Mountain of the Lord hanging directly across from where I sat. As I studied the painting, a strong impression came to me that the time for marketing was not yet. The words from “Elijah” came flooding back; *“Thy help cometh from the Lord, thy Keeper will never slumber, Lift Thine eyes to the mountains, whence cometh help.”* I also realized at that moment, that although the temples were at the time of this writing closed because of the Covid 19 Pandemic, my closeness with the temple and its blessings are firmly intact. The Lord’s direction in all things will work within His time frame for the good of all. He is *always* in charge!

I love this quote by Elder John A. Widtsoe, which makes clear the responsibility each of us accepted before we came to this earth to become involved in the work of latter day temples. It helps me to connect with the Lord’s time frame with a broader perspective.

“In our pre-existent state, in the day of the great council, we made a certain agreement with the Almighty. The Lord proposed a plan, conceived by him. We accepted it. Since the plan is intended for all men, we become parties to the salvation of every person under that plan. We agreed, right then and there, to be not only saviors for ourselves, but measurably saviors for the whole human family. We went into a partnership with the Lord. The working out of the plan became then not merely the Father’s work, and the Savior’s work, but also our work. The least of us, the humblest, is in partnership with the Almighty in achieving the purpose of the eternal plan of salvation.” (Elder John A. Widtsoe, “Lesson Ten, The Worth of Souls,” Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine, October 1934, 25:189).

In the dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple, offered by the Prophet Joseph Smith, we find this powerful blessing provided for us as we enter to serve in the temple.

“And we ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them; and from this place they may bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth, that they may know that this is thy work, and that thou hast put forth thy hand, to fulfill that which thou hast spoken by the mouth of the prophets, concerning the last days.” (Joseph Smith, Doctrine and Covenants, 109: 22-23).

The work for God’s children, both past and present, completed in His Holy Temples is a great blessing to me and my family. Painting the Manti Temple and all the others has deepened my appreciation for the never ending love our Father in Heaven has for all of us. Time spent with Him in his Holy House, and within the walls of home, is time well spent. His promises are sure. I can’t imagine loving my sweetheart and family as I do and not having these eternal temple blessings that bind us together forever.

With each completed painting, my gratitude for temples and the covenants made there is strengthened. My Life is Forever Blessed by the Temple.



Abide With Me

“As my life progresses, I am more aware of the messages that come through Holy Communication with my Father in Heaven. The peace of a sunset, comes from the same spirit of love and direction I feel when I ask the Lord to guide my hands in painting.”

Chapter Two

Prayer Opens the Windows of Heaven

Abide With Me – Bountiful Utah Temple

*Abide with me; 'tis eventide, the day is past and gone;
The shadows of the evening fall; The night is coming on.
Within my heart a welcome guest, Within my home abide.
O Savior, stay this night with me; Behold, 'tis eventide*

*Abide with me; 'tis eventide. Thy walk today with me
Has made my heart within me burn, As I communed with thee.
Thy earnest words have filled my soul And kept me near thy side.
O Savior, stay this night with me; Behold 'tis eventide.*

*Abide with me; 'tis eventide, And lone will be the night
If I cannot commune with thee, Nor find in thee my light.
The darkness of the world, I fear, Would in my home abide.
O Savior, stay this night with me; Behold, 'tis eventide.*

“O Savior stay this night with me, Behold ‘tis eventide.” The words and melody from this beautiful Hymn were the inspiration for the title of the painting, Abide With Me. The text written by Lowrie M. Hofford, Hymns number 165, LDS Hymnal.

My husband and I were living in Bountiful and working as ordinance workers at the Bountiful Temple during the time this painting was created. We did not obtain the photo shoot ourselves for this one, but used with permission, a beautiful photo taken by Julio Rincon, a member of our ward.

Bountiful is known for its vibrant, evening sunsets. When our younger children were old enough to be left under the supervision of our oldest son Thomas, my husband and I would escape on what we called a cheap date. We would grab a drive-in dinner or treat, park our car on the hill east of where the temple would later be built, and enjoy some much needed quiet time.

In these moments, we enjoyed uninterrupted conversation, and the magnificent sunsets. *Behold tis eventide.*

Sunsets bring me peace, something like the message of the rainbow, they remind me that my Savior, Jesus Christ, abides with me. Thus, the name selected for the Bountiful Temple was Abide With Me.

Each and every painting has been a testimony of the power of prayer. If there could be only one thing which my posterity learns from the experience of my life, I would choose for them to have an assurance that prayers are heard and answered in the Lord's time.

“Prayer Opens the Windows of Heaven.”

My unshaken testimony of the power of prayer began with the following childhood memory:

“The Shoe”

Sister Bailey sat near the window in our little classroom. It was after opening exercises, so it must have been about 4:30 in the afternoon. For those who are younger, this was at a time when Primary was after school on Mondays, not Sunday as now scheduled. The building faced south so there was not a lot of natural light in the room, and no one had thought to turn on the overhead lighting.

Our teacher was giving us a lesson about prayer. I remember there was a story, something about a child who had lost a coin of some sort and prayed earnestly for help. The happy ending was that the coin was found, and the child knew his prayers were heard.

Sleepy, my thoughts wandered and I slumped in my chair. When you were nine years old, your class was called “Gay Notes.” Every age group had a name, and all the older girls

wore a mint green “V” shaped bandolier with all kinds of great stuff on it. Mine was relatively new, and almost bare of awards, so it was not very interesting. However, living with two older sisters, I knew how really great this piece of green felt could look if certain requirements were fulfilled.

The awards I recall most vividly, aside from the “diamonds”, (I was always fascinated with jewels), were some curved glass picture frame looking things, gold rimmed with a picture on the inside. To me, they looked like tiny water globes and I couldn’t wait to have one of those displayed on my bandolier.

It was the next part of the lesson that brought me back to the class discussion. There was something about making a prayer be what Heavenly Father wanted to hear. I don’t suppose my teacher intended for us to believe that God didn’t want to hear all kinds of prayers, but that was what I understood in the moment. She said prayers that were selfish or asking for something that was “not good for us,” would probably not be answered. This idea was, in my “nine-year-oldness,” very new to me. But, it did make a lot of sense. It made so much sense, that I tucked it away in my memory.

The seed was planted and ready to be nurtured. It was time to experiment upon the word, and it wasn’t long before the opportunity to test out this idea surfaced. My friends and I were very close with our Barbie Dolls. We had tea parties for them, and even had a costume party at Halloween. We wore a costume and so did our dolls. Mine wore a polka-dot clown suit with a Zorro type mask tied over her eyes. I remember stuffing my Barbie’s clown suit with toilet paper to make her look round. We had collected all manner of things to be Barbie sized food, peanuts for potatoes etc.

With the help of my mother, I had my costume ready to go. Barbie's costume was also complete, except for one white shoe which I could not find anywhere. Searching through my little blue case which stored Barbie's wardrobe items and then through every other place I could think of soon became discouraging. I checked in places I thought it might be and then in the places where I was sure it wasn't. But to no avail; it was nowhere to be found.

It was then that the Primary lesson came to mind. I remembered I needed to pray, but it must be done correctly. I had to make sure that God understood how important it was to me but at the same time, I had to be diligent about saying the words right so I could expect it was something He wanted to hear. I had to be careful so He wouldn't think it was selfish of me to ask for such a thing. I also wanted to let Him know that I believed He was there and that I knew He would help me if I asked Him the right way.

My parents taught me to pray, but before the Primary lesson, I never understood that I could ask for something so specific as finding my Barbie shoe. I was extremely nervous—I needed the shoe right away and just had to get this right.

I closed the door to my bedroom and knelt on the cold, hard, tile floor. I felt like someone was watching me and looked behind me a couple of times to make sure I was alone. Right off the bat, I explained to God that my parents had lots of kids, and that they didn't really have lots of money or anything like that. I said I was sorry that I had lost the shoe and knew that I was supposed to take better care of my things. Then I did it; I asked him flat out; "I need to find this shoe, and I've done everything I can to find it. It isn't here anywhere, and I know that you know where it is so please, if it be thy will, (I remembered we were supposed to say that too), please help me find it."

I can still recall the way I felt after I said it. For a few minutes, my eyes stayed shut as if they were glued and going to stay that way forever. Then I got a little message that came into my head, telling me to check the closet again. But I had already checked there very carefully-- the shoe was not there. Nevertheless, Sister Bailey had said that we should listen for our answers after we prayed. The message had come after my prayer, and I hoped, just maybe, God really had sent it.

Almost breathlessly I opened my eyes and got off my knees. Slowly, opening the sliding door of the closet, I could not believe what I saw. There in the middle of lots of kid stuff on the floor was the shoe. It was sitting upright in a little space that looked as though it had been recently cleared to display the shoe.

My whole little nine-year-old body shook with wonder and amazement. The shoe was there because God had heard and answered my prayer. The shoe was there because *God* was there. He was real, and He was there! He knew me and cared about me, although I was only nine and asking to find a tiny plastic white Barbie shoe!

From small things have great things come. In times and places where I have had much less faith, when answers to prayer were not so readily forthcoming and God seemed silent, I have remembered. A tiny miracle has held me from falling away in denial and despair time and time again. He was there then--I knew it, and when I feel I need reassurance, I again, remember!

Now, many years later; prayer has become my greatest resource of inspiration as I move forward with each new painting. This divine communication, made possible through my Savior Jesus Christ, remains as one of my choicest blessings in life.

1) I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

2) My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. (Psalms 121:1-2).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks teaches in his conference talk from October 2010 more about this channel of prayer through which the Holy Ghost guides us to eternal truth.

“We pray to our Heavenly Father, and He answers us by channels He has established, without any mortal intermediary. We pray to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ, and He answers us through his Holy Spirit and in other ways. The mission of the Holy Ghost is to testify of the Father and the Son, to guide us into truth, and to show us the things we should do. This personal line of communication with our Heavenly Father through His Holy Spirit is the source of our testimony of truth, of our knowledge, and of our personal guidance from a loving Heavenly Father. It is an essential feature of His marvelous gospel plan, which allows each one of His children to receive a personal witness of its truth”. (Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Two Lines of Communication,” October Conference, 2010).

As my life progresses, I am more and more aware of the messages that come through this Holy Communication with my Father in Heaven. The peace of a sunset, for example, comes from the same spirit of love and direction I feel when I ask the Lord to guide my hands in a small area of a painting.

President Ezra T. Benson explained this blessed connection in an article published in the Ensign many years ago, but always applicable:

‘It is soul-satisfying to know that God is mindful of us and ready to respond when we place our trust in Him and do that which is right. There is no place for fear among men and women who place their trust in the Almighty, who do not hesitate to humble themselves in seeking divine guidance through prayer. Though persecutions arise, though reverses come, in prayer we can find reassurance, for God will speak peace to the soul. That peace, that spirit of

serenity, is life's greatest blessing." (President Ezra T. Benson, "Prayer" Ensign May 1977, pgs. 33, 34).

"Imagine what we could accomplish, if we had no fear."

There are many beautiful testimonies of prayer recorded to help us find our way in our scriptures and in the words of past and present spiritual leaders. The following three quotes have made a positive impact on my faith and appreciation for the power of prayer.

"As we offer unto the Lord our family prayers and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in Him. Let us remember the injunction of Paul to the Hebrews: "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." If any of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now." (President Thomas S. Monson, "Come unto Him in Prayer and Faith," Ensign, March 2009).

"Prayer helps us transcend the stormy times. It gives us a glimpse of that blue sky that we cannot see from our earthly vantage point, and it reveals to us another vista—a glorious spiritual horizon of the bright blessings the Lord has promised to those who love and follow him." (President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Prayer and the Blue Horizon," Ensign, June 2009).

"Remember that whatever you do, or wherever you are, you are never alone," was my father's familiar counsel to me as a boy. "Our Heavenly Father is always near. You can reach out and receive His aid through prayer." I have found this counsel to be true. Thank God we can reach out and tap that unseen power, without which no man can do his best." (President Ezra T. Benson, "Prayer," Ensign, May 1977, p.32).

To know that we are never alone brings me peace and a sense of security that is ever present. When we seek the Lord with humility and a sincere desire to find Him, we are assured

that He will hear us. In his conference Report of April 1953, President Benson shared this beautiful testimony of the power of prayer:

“Even during hours of trial and anxiety, it is possible to draw close to the Lord, to feel of his influence and of his sustaining power—that one is never alone, if he will only humble himself before the Almighty. I am grateful for that testimony, for that assurance.” (President Ezra T. Benson, Conference Report, April 1953).

Although the following scripture was given in reference to the law of tithing, it has been enlightening to experience many ways the “Windows of Heaven” have been opened through prayer to provide inspiration and guidance throughout both the painting and the writing process.

3) 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).

It is my testimony that the “Windows of Heaven,” have been opened to me time and time again as I prayed for insight and divine intervention in painting these Utah temples and writing this book. I am so very grateful for the power of prayer, and try to always remember I am known by my Father in Heaven.

I believe that prayer is the key that opens the “Windows of Heaven”.



Together Forever

“Our willingness to put our feet on the path to eternal life by following the Lord’s plan, provides an environment conducive for the Spirit to guide us along our way.”

Chapter Three

Do Everything as Near as You Can to the Way God Does it.

Together Forever – Provo Utah Temple

Whenever I thought about painting the Provo Temple, I shied away from taking on the project. With the exception of the original Ogden Temple, built and dedicated the same year as the Provo Temple, there are no other temples in Utah that are similar, and to be honest, it was not my favorite. Consequently, of the seventeen Utah temples series, it was the last one to be painted. Looking back, I'm ashamed to admit I was hoping over the eight years I worked on this project, that the original Provo Temple would be torn down and replaced. I thought if I waited long enough they might build a new one designed similar to its sister, the remodeled, reimagined Ogden Temple.

My husband and I served our mission at the Institute of Religion at Southern Virginia University. We spent three weeks in Provo at the Missionary Training Center prior to our departure to Virginia. Noticing the heavy foot traffic from the Training Center to the Provo Temple across the street, it became obvious to me that changes to the Provo Temple probably would not be happening anytime soon. The missionaries need a temple within walking distance to the MTC.

After our return from our mission, I recognized it was time to stop stalling and begin this painting. Photograph in hand, I studied the landscape and the temple design for a long time, but something felt wrong. It occurred to me that before I could start this project, there needed to be a little repentance about my attitude. This was God's Holy Temple, sacred and special to so many faithful Latter-Day-Saints, and as such completely deserving of my sincere prayers, faith and best efforts.

Now, chastised and corrected, I recognized the Spirit with me again. I took inventory of the task at hand. The sky and the autumn leaves in our photo were something I knew I could accomplish with the Lord's help. The beautiful varied mountainside behind the temple was another story. This part of the project was very intimidating to me. I wanted it to be as close to God's creation as possible but was not sure just how to proceed.

Once again, as was the case in every painting, when I invited him in, the Lord was right there helping me. My eyes were opened to see color, texture, contrast and shape that were not immediately apparent to me.

Day after day one area after another fell into place, and I was full of wonder at the Lord's patience and love for me. A spirit of gratitude and confidence replaced previous doubts. By the time I was finished with this Provo Temple it was one of my favorites. What a powerful testimony it was to see how turning my will to the will of my Savior Jesus Christ opened the "Windows of Heaven" and helped me see the light.

The title for this temple didn't come in the form of a song, but rather from the process of changing my attitude about painting this temple. The Lord helped me to appreciate the thousands of missionaries that attended this temple prior to serving all over the world. I reflected on the spiritual strength they found within its walls, helping them bring precious souls from the far reaches of the earth "together forever" in their faith in Jesus Christ. I pondered the eternal nature of the covenants made in this temple that opened gates for many couples and individuals, leading to a pathway of joy and spiritual blessings. I recognized that this temple is revered by thousands who received their saving ordinances in this hallowed place.

Grateful for this lesson and my increased appreciation for the eternal, binding purposes of this temple, the painting of the Provo Temple was titled, Together Forever.

Doing the things in our lives that emulate the way the Savior would do them, keeps us on a positive path. He is our teacher, our exemplar, and our truest friend. Thus, the painting lesson; “Do everything as near as you can to the way God does it.”

In 3 Nephi 27:27, as the Savior ministered to his disciples in the Americas, he posed a familiar question, “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.” This response encompasses the purpose of the gospel: to grow and become like our Savior that through our obedience and His grace, we may receive the blessings of eternity.

In October 2005 General Conference, Elder Uchdorf gave us this beautiful instruction in his address:

“By becoming more like the Savior, we will grow in our ability to “abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Rom.15:13). We will “lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better.” (D&C 25:10). (Elder Uchtdorf, “Christlike Attributes” October Conference, 2005).

What a perfect road map for our time here on earth. Hope is such a blessing. The Savior’s life and teachings provide both hope and assurance.

We became acquainted with an amazing student at Southern Virginia University who gave an outstanding talk in our Young Single Adult Sacrament meeting just weeks before we were released from our mission. She graciously shared a copy of this talk with me.

Her name is Uzoma, and I would like to share some of her insights on the benefits of becoming more like our Savior. She says:

“As we become more like the Savior, we will develop an eternal perspective and even more immediately, be better able to weather the trials of mortality. Christ, has always shown us the way. Before the world was born, Jesus Christ knew that He would go through unfathomable

suffering to atone for the sins of man and thereby secure our salvation. Even with the knowledge of how difficult an undertaking this would be, He submitted Himself with humility to Heavenly Father saying, “Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.” While He suffered in Gethsemane, He prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

“I am constantly touched and humbled by this prayer. It is layered with meaning and sincerity. Christ recognizes that the will of His Father is greater than His and Humbles Himself before it. He has faith (or rather knowledge because He is the Son of God) that God’s plan is the best and His Father will see Him through.

Finally, Christ has the willingness and the patience to drink from the bitter cup. This example of Christ weathering literally the worst adversity is an example for us in our own trials.”

By submitting ourselves in humility to what the Father intends, and having patience, we can overcome tribulation. Uzoma taught us through her words the difference between overcoming and outlasting a trial. She says:

“*Outlasting* relies on the passage of time to eventually bring an end to the terrible trial. This passive approach can be dangerous and unreliable because without divine assistance, humans are less capable of staying mentally and spiritually intact through long trials. They are often left with a broken spirit and lasting scars from the experience.

In contrast, *overcoming*, takes action. We experience a triumph over tribulations as a result of work. Faith takes work. We must constantly strive to align our ideas and desires with Heavenly Fathers will. That requires active patience and persistence. There is a big difference between a trite “This too shall pass” and, I believe that God will cause this to pass and deliver me

both changed and safe on the other side. The product of an overcoming attitude is an increase of faith and strength to weather future trials.” (Uzoma e-mail permission on file).

I continue to be lifted and amazed at the depth and understanding of the rising generation. Uzoma and so many other strong, valiant youth give me hope and assurance that our future leaders are being prepared by the Lord.

There are and always will be trials to weather. As we seek to overcome our individual difficulties, we are blessed in different ways. Elder Scott teaches us about authorizing the spirit to help us through our times of need. He says this:

“Impressions of the Spirit can come in response to urgent prayer or unsolicited when needed. Sometimes the Lord reveals truth to you when you are not actively seeking it, such as when you are in danger and do not know it. However, the Lord will not force you to learn. You must exercise your agency to authorize the Spirit to teach you. As you make this a practice in your life, you will be more perceptive to the feelings that come with spiritual guidance. Then, when that guidance comes, sometimes when you least expect it, you will recognize it more easily.” (Elder Richard G. Scott, “To Acquire Spiritual Guidance,” October Conference, 2009).

I remember well a time when my husband and I *desperately* needed spiritual guidance. We were faced with difficult, heart rending choices to be made and learned much, taught by the spirit.

Our beautiful little daughter at just three years old began having violent grand mal seizures for no apparent reason. After hospitalizations, tests and priesthood blessings, we still had no answers.

The problem quickly escalated to a state where she was seizing almost seventy percent of the time day and night. We were panicked to get help and cried out desperately for the healing of our child. Months of trying different doctors and remedies passed without relief.

She was fitted with a little helmet that she wore almost all the time because she would fall and hurt herself, sometimes badly, over and over. She was losing weight at an alarming rate, and we were terrified and at a total loss as to what could be done to remedy the situation.

Our pleading seemed to be unheard, yet we believed that our Lord and Savior knew us personally and was aware of the situation. That assurance gave us some peace.

Months passed and we were introduced to a physician who worked with Epilepsy research at the American Fork Training School. We met with him and he informed us, as kindly as he could, that the situation with our daughter was very critical.

He explained to us that with the current frequency of the seizures, if we could not get them under control our child would die. It was his opinion that even if we were able to arrest the seizure activity there would be a ninety-eight percent chance she could incur severe retardation if things continued for much longer. This doctor recommended that our best option would be to have her admitted to the Training School where he could work with her and monitor her brain waves around the clock.

The requirement for admission to this facility is limited to only severely retarded patients. Our daughter did not qualify because, in her few cognitive moments, when they could test her, she tested out normal. The physician explained that our only hope was to do something that seemed unthinkable to us. We would be required to willingly go to court, give up all parental rights to our child, and have her admitted to the facility as a ward of the state. It was a tearful

and incredibly emotional process, but we were desperate for help and turned our will completely to the will of our Savior to deliver us from this nightmare.

Ordinarily the red tape involved in this legal process would take months, which we did not have. Our good Bishop suggested that our very loving and aware ward family, have a fast and pray for this process to be expedited. Many faithful members of our ward fasted on Friday and met in the chapel on Saturday morning. The Bishop asked everyone to kneel in the chapel and our daughter was given a powerful priesthood blessing.

Within one week, we went before a judge who compassionately assured us that if and when the situation was resolved at the Training Center we could return to court and have our parental rights once again restored.

Within a few days after the court proceedings, she was living at the facility. We traveled from Bountiful to American Fork often to visit and were allowed to take her home for her birthday and on Christmas Day.

Fast forward one full year of doing this. We got a call from her doctor at the Training School. He wanted to meet with us as soon as it was convenient. When we arrived, he ushered us into his office. Then came the wonderful, long awaited answer to our prayers. He said, “Mr. and Mrs. Buckley, I have something I need to tell you. We were losing your daughter. I had a dream in the night about what I should do to save her. My dream seemed like a plausible solution and our only hope, so I decided to try something that had not been tested. In my dream I was told that I needed to combine two experimental medications that had never been used together. After giving her this medicine, the seizures stopped.”

With an overwhelming spirit of gratitude for this miracle in our lives, we took our child back home. Parental rights were soon restored and, I might point out, that I believe the doctor was most certainly prepared to be an instrument in God's hands.

We were able to raise this child. She grew up to serve a mission, graduate from college and raise five of our wonderful grandchildren. We recognized the source of this miracle as the power of the Priesthood, administered through faith in Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

Guidance in our trials comes in ways we do not always expect. We recognize that guidance more readily, as our earthly experiences teach us to trust. Acknowledging success and divine guidance given through past experiences, helps us trust we can succeed in future endeavors.

Staying true to the things the Lord requires of us will not always be easy. He has promised us that with faith all things are possible. The more we try to do everything as "near as we can to the way God does it," the more we gain power and confidence. We can be assured that our Heavenly Father will be with us, and with that assurance we can "do all things."

33) And Christ hath said: "If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me." (Moroni 7:33).

Elder Oaks and President Nelson taught us this truth about spiritual blessings:

"Our loving Heavenly Father wants His children to have the joy that is the purpose of our creation. That joyful destiny is eternal life, which we can obtain by pressing forward along what our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, often calls "the covenant path." Here is what he said in his first message as President of the Church: "Keep on the covenant path. Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open

the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available to men, women, and children everywhere.” (President Dallin H. Oaks, “Truth and the Plan,” October Conference, 2018).

What a beautiful promise to be assured by prophets, seers and revelators that making and keeping our covenants will open “every spiritual blessing and privilege available.” Striving to emulate attributes of our Savior prepares us to make and *keep* these covenants. One key attribute we strive to attain is love. President Thomas S. Monson lists for us some ways we can emulate our Savior’s love.

“There are many attributes which are manifestations of love, such as kindness, patience, selflessness, understanding, and forgiveness. In all our associations, these and other such attributes will help make evident the love in our hearts.” (President Thomas S. Monson, “Love—the Essence of the Gospel,” April Conference, 2014).

President Monson then goes on to teach us how our actions show our love and help us to progress toward eternal life, doing things as close as we can to the way our Savior would do them.

Elder Bednar’s statement in his 2017 conference address speaks of our progressive path to that ultimate eternal promise of eternal life.

“God promises His children that if they follow the precepts of His plan and the example of His Beloved Son, keep the commandments, and endure in faith to the end, then by virtue of the Savior’s Redemption, they “shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.” Eternal life is the ultimate exceeding great and precious promise.” (Elder David A. Bednar, “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” October Conference, 2017).

It is such a testimony of our Savior's love for us to begin to understand that He wants to give us every spiritual blessing available. His love for us is evident. We can show our love for Him in small daily practices which demonstrate we are willing to strive to hear and follow him. Our willingness to put our feet on the path to eternal life by following the Lord's plan provides an environment conducive for the Spirit to guide us along our way.

It has been my great privilege to be guided as an instrument in His hands to help create with His love this painting, Together Forever, as near as I could to God's pattern.



Take Time to Be Holy

“Inspiration for all worthy endeavors in life, is afforded us as we are diligent in doing those things the Lord asks us to do on a daily basis.”

Chapter Four

Reading the Book of Mormon Every Day Invites Inspiration.

Take Time to Be Holy – Provo City Utah Temple

The title for this painting comes from an old Shaker Tune, Take Time to be Holy. It was a song we sang in the Tabernacle Choir but is not a part of our Hymnal. I love this song and it was in my mind as I painted this temple. The words to the song are:

*Take time to be holy, speak oft with the Lord:
Abide in Him always, and feed on his word;
Make friends of God's children, Help those who are weak,
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.*

*Take time to be holy, The world rushes on:
Spend much time in secret With Jesus alone;
By looking to Jesus, Like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.*

*Take time to be Holy, Let Him be thy Guide
And run not before Him, Whatever betide—
In Joy or in sorrow, Still follow thy Lord,
And Looking to Jesus Still trust in His Word.*

Somewhere on most of the temples or on the temple grounds are the words; “Holiness to the Lord.” Take Time to be Holy seemed a perfect complement to this painting.

It was a beautiful morning when we stopped to get our “photo shoot” of the Provo City Center Temple. For months we had monitored the progress on the news and other sources, as a miracle occurred. The empty shell of the original Provo Tabernacle building was lifted on stilts above the ground and transformed from burned ruins to become a magnificent temple of our God.

On the day of our photo shoot for this temple, we were en route to Oakley to spend some time at our family cabin. Although the Provo City Temple was not completed, we made a little detour on our way through Provo in hopes of getting some painting photos.

Not allowed to go inside the construction fencing, we were able to get some nice shots by reaching our cell phone through the black iron slats of the northern exposure. Our favorite angle however, was one we shot from across the street on the east front side of the temple. I was excited to get started as soon as we returned home to St. George. Thus, another temple began as I completed my sketch of this front-facing view.

I realized I would need to invent a lot of the foreground and its surroundings, because there was still so much construction fencing and scaffolding in front and on both sides of the temple. It was impossible to see clearly what was there. Creating reality from imagination requires some divine intervention. Once again, the Lord helped me see what was not openly visible in the photograph.

I had just painted my sky and waited for it to dry so I could sketch the top skyline of the temple. Our daughter came into the sunroom where I was painting and showed me a sunset surrounded photo of the Provo City Temple she had seen just noticed on Facebook. It was interesting, as I looked at this photo, to realize the shot had been taken from the very same angle I had chosen from our photo shoot for the painting.

Wasatch front sunsets are often enhanced by particulates in the air and are especially vibrant during the forest fire season of the year. The residues in the air from the fires, sometimes miles away, have incredible sunset results. The sky in the Facebook photo was full of vibrant blue and orange colors and looked so lovely behind the temple. I decided to start again with the sky and use these colors to create a sunset look for this Provo City Center Temple.

Although I am not computer literate, my daughter was able to find for me the name of the person who submitted the photo to Facebook. His name was Brandon and we tried to find contact information so I could thank him for the inspirational photo, but were unable to obtain this. Wherever you are Brandon, “thank you” for sharing your talent and capturing God’s beautiful sky.

We were privileged to be able to attend the open house when the Provo City Temple was completed and later participate in a session at this temple after it was dedicated. It is a marvelous, beautiful temple, both inside and out. We were so interested in how wisely the rather small interior was designed to make use of every inch of space available. I think those faithful saints who built the original building so many years ago must be very pleased that it is now operating to bring about the purposes of exaltation. It is truly a place to; Take Time to Be Holy.

Without inspiration for this painting and all the others, it would not have been possible for me to accomplish this work, or the writing of this book. I am so grateful for light provided to make miracles happen.

The “painting lesson” for this sunset painting, which required sight that I could not get from my limited photograph, is this:

Inspiration for all worthy endeavors in life is afforded us as we are diligent in doing those things the Lord asks us to do on a daily basis. Reading the *Book of Mormon* each day throughout the painting process and again while writing this book, has in part invited the necessary inspiration. The truths gleaned from the *Book of Mormon*, enable me to be receptive to the light and divine assistance required to accomplish my goals. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland clarifies for us the source of this light.

“The scriptures are not the ultimate source of knowledge for latter-day-Saints. They are manifestations of the ultimate source. The ultimate source of knowledge and authority for a Latter-Day-Saint is the living God. The communication of those gifts comes from God as living, vibrant, divine revelation. This doctrine lies at the very heart of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day-Saints and of our message to the world.” (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “My Words Never Cease” Ensign, May 2008).

Communication with deity makes possible miracles in our lives. Elder Douglas D. Holmes, former member of the Young Men General Presidency, powerfully connected for us the progression that occurs to be able to, “Hear Him.”

“But the unity we seek is to be one with Christ, to connect our hearts with Him. To connect our hearts with heaven, we need individual experiences Those experiences come as the Holy Ghost carries the word and love of God to our mind and heart. This revelation comes through the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon; through inspired words of living prophets and other faithful disciples; and through the still, small voice. . . . The word of God is spiritual power. It is truth and light. It is how we hear Him!” (Elder Douglas D. Holmes, “Deep in our Heart,” April Conference, 2020).

Prior to becoming our Prophet, Elder Russell M. Nelson shared this insightful testimony of the blessings of the *Book of Mormon* in his Conference address of 2017.

“When I think of the Book of Mormon, I think of the word power, the truths of the Book of Mormon have the power to heal, comfort, restore, succor, strengthen, console and cheer our souls. . . .” “I testify that Joseph Smith was and is *the* prophet of this last dispensation. It was he who, through the gift and power of God, translated this holy book. This is *the* book that will help to prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord.” “The Book of Mormon gives

purpose to life by urging us to ponder the potential of eternal life and “never-ending Happiness,” The Book of Mormon shatters the false beliefs that happiness can be found in wickedness and that individual goodness is all that is required to return to the presence of God. It abolishes forever the false concepts that revelation ended with the Bible and that the heavens are sealed today.” (President Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” October Conference 2017).

Our lives are guided and blessed by the words recorded by ancient, faithful followers of Christ. They are preserved for this dispensation. The testimonies and teachings of our present day Apostles and Prophets, are recorded and shared with all, strengthening our personal understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am profoundly grateful for the teachings and testimonies of my Savior, resounding from the pages of the *Book of Mormon*. These insightful inspirational words, now translated for us and our posterity along with loving words from our present day leaders, have repeatedly fed my soul. The following three quotes from modern seers and revelators bear witness of the value of these “plain and precious” messages given in our scriptures.

“We are convinced that our members are hungry for the gospel, undiluted, with its abundant truths and insights There are those who have seemed to forget that the most powerful weapons the Lord has given us against all that is evil are His own declarations, the plain simple doctrines of salvation as found in the scriptures.” (President Ezra T. Benson, Regional Representatives’ Seminar, 1 Oct. 1970, p.6)

“The Book of Mormon is the sacred expression of Christ’s great last covenant with mankind. It is a new covenant, a new testament from the New World to the entire world. Reading it was the beginning of my light. “It led me to love the Holy Bible and the rest of the

standard works of the Church. It led me to believe in an open canon energized with continuing revelation. It led me to and taught me to love the Lord Jesus Christ, to glimpse His merciful compassion, and to consider the grace and grandeur of all men, women and children from Adam to the end of time.” (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, multiregional conference, Stanford University Campus, February 8, 2020).

“Success in righteousness, the power to avoid deception and resist temptation, guidance in our daily lives, healing of the soul—these are but a few of the promises that Lord has given to those who will come to His word. Does the Lord promise and not fulfill? Surely if He tells us that these things will come to us if we lay hold upon His word, then the blessings can be ours. And if we do not, then the blessings may be lost. However diligent we may be in other areas, certain blessings are found only in the scriptures, only in coming to the word of the Lord and holding fast to it as we make our way through the mists of darkness to the tree of life.” (President Ezra T. Benson, “The Power of the Word,” April Conference, 1986).

Recently, we were blessed to be able to take our barren “red rocks, red dirt” backyard and, with some professional help, turn it into a beautiful retreat of grass, garden and trees. Growing things in the desert climate of St. George is a bit of a challenge to say the least. We have found joy in watching these plants endure the heat of summer, survive the winter months, and come to life in the early spring.

When we began this transformation, our landscape professional asked me what I was looking for in landscaping. My reply was, “I want an English Garden, designed with desert plants that won’t die.” That was almost an unreasonable request, but it happened.

Along a full sun block wall, our landscape artist planted three flowering vines. He cautioned us that they would look a little weak for a couple of years and then really take off.

This is our second summer watching these vines progress. I feed all these plants and trees every two weeks during the spring season before the temperatures get too hot. It is a water soluble plant food, and I mix it one bucket at a time. Because I wear out easily, this is accomplished through multiple feeding sessions. I completed one side of the yard and planned to complete the process the next morning. During the night, an unanticipated heavy rainstorm moved in and thoroughly soaked the plants.

It was interesting over the next weeks to see the rapid growth on the side I fed before the rain compared to the side that got plant food after the storm. One of the three vines on the fence had received a healthy feeding. The other two were fed following the rain. The difference in the growth was amazing. Although they all got the same food, and the same sunshine etc., the vine that was fed before the storm thrived, and had stronger, more numerous blooms.

Watching this process, it occurred to me that there are similarities in this story, to what transpires when we read and study the *Book of Mormon* each day. We will all have storms, in the form of difficulties, reversals, and disappointments. Reading the scriptures and staying close to our Savior, strengthens our foundation, nourishes our spiritual roots, and makes it possible for us to *grow* greater spiritual depth. This in turn, leaves us stronger to endure future storms.

When President Gordon B. Hinckley encouraged us to read or re-read the *Book of Mormon* in his “First Presidency Message” in August 2005, he said:

“Without reservation, I promise you that if each of you will observe this simple program, regardless of how many times you previously may have read the Book of Mormon there will come into your lives and into your homes an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of

the living reality of the Son of God.” (President Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Testimony Vibrant and True,” *Ensign*, August 2005).

President Spencer W. Kimball taught us that our family relationships will be strengthened as we study the scriptures.

“I find that when I get casual in my relationship with divinity and when it seems that no divine ear is listening and no divine voice is speaking, that I am far, far away. If I immerse myself in the scriptures the distance narrows and the spirituality returns. I find myself loving more intensely those whom I must love with all my heart and mind and strength, and loving them more, I find it easier to abide their counsel.” (President Spencer W. Kimball, Teachings of Presidents of the Church, page 67).

Elder Holland gave us valuable insight on divine dependable help with life’s challenges through our study of the *Book of Mormon*.

“Love. Healing. Help. Hope. The power of Christ to counter all troubles in all times—including the end of times. That is the safe harbor God wants for us in personal or public days of despair. That is the message with which the Book of Mormon begins, and that is the message with which it ends, calling all to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him. “That phrase—taken from Moroni’s final lines of testimony, written 1,000 years after Lehi’s vision—is a dying man’s testimony of the only true way.” (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “Safety for the Soul,” October Conference, 2009).

Our agency gives us the opportunity to determine our own destiny. Our choice to receive inspiration through our lives by following instructions and promptings given through the Spirit and words of leaders will bless us and help us feel hope and joy.

In the *Book of Mormon* we read the following:

27) Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

28) And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit. (2 Nephi 2:27, 28).

My painting lesson for this beautiful Provo City Temple came full circle for me as I read again this powerful statement from the Introduction to our beloved *Book of Mormon*:

“We invite all men everywhere to read the Book of Mormon, to ponder in their hearts the message it contains, and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ if the book is true. Those who pursue this course and ask in faith will gain a testimony of its truth and divinity by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Introduction, Book of Mormon).

May we all choose to accept this invitation to Take Time to Be Holy. There is great value in finding time to prayerfully study the *Book of Mormon*.



Winter's Peace

“The language of the Spirit is gentle, quiet, uplifting to the heart and soothing to the soul.”

President Thomas S. Monson

Chapter Five

The Holy Ghost Is Our Guide to All Truth—Be Grateful For the Holy Ghost. Winter's Peace – Logan Utah Temple

Unlike many of the other temples, the title for the Logan Temple simply came from the peace I feel when I look at this painting.

When it was time to paint the Logan temple, our daughter Mandy planned a weekend trip from Bountiful to Logan to visit her sister and her husband. I asked her if she would take some time to do a photo shoot of the Logan temple which she agreed to do for me. It was a peaceful, winter evening when she arrived in Logan. Driving directly to the temple, she was able to capture beauty and peace in a photograph which we selected for this painting when she returned home.

Over the next eight weeks, I spent many hours on this painting. The majority of this piece was painted with one *very* tiny brush. Of all the seventeen temples completed at the time of this writing, the detail of this one was the most time consuming and tedious. There were many prayers asking for direction answered, and I feel so grateful for the enlightenment. I felt the Holy Spirit teaching me the lesson; The Holy Ghost is our guide to all Truth. Repeated inspiration made this truth very apparent while working on this project.

Mandy's beautiful photograph has a tall black iron fence and gate in the foreground of the picture. I struggled to duplicate the intricate design of this fence. After hours and hours on this part of the painting I was satisfied with the fence and felt I had accomplished a look that to me, seemed very realistic.

From time to time throughout the painting process, and again when I think a painting is almost finished, I lean the canvas against the wall and move as far away from it as I can. The

distance gives me a better look at the painting so I can make corrections if something needs an adjustment. Sometimes I hold it up in front of the mirror and study the reflection. It is amazing what you see in a reflection that may not be apparent just looking directly at the canvas. It quickly became one of those really good, really bad days when I took that last distance look at what I thought was a finished work.

Because the temple is such a sacred holy place, it needs to be the primary focus of every painting. When I looked at this one, the thing that drew my attention was not the light of the Lord's house, the majesty of the spires, or the desired peace. What I saw as a focal point, was the fence. I felt dismayed at the realization and tried my best to somehow rescue this black iron piece of work I had spent so many hours creating. I wanted my fence!

It is a common weakness to try to rationalize our wants to make them seem like needs. Truth will always outlast deception as was the case with my lovely fence. No matter how I justified leaving it there, the truth was, it obscured the whole purpose for the painting. I felt the promptings of The Holy Ghost guiding me to make a change. Although I knew it would be a difficult task, I recognized the love and support from the Spirit in the process.

Because there is much detail in this temple painting, it took several days to paint out the fence and restore the grounds and temple behind it. Although it is not readily visible in the copies, I can still see the paint covered ridges of the iron fence in the original painting when the light is just right. It is a reminder to me, that truth prevails.

I am very thankful for the whisperings of the Holy Ghost in the painting process and in my life. Challenges come and go through all seasons of life and these difficulties, though sometimes not pleasant, help me better appreciate the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Recently, I became aware of a truth which could be something everyone else already knows. As years and experience fly by it has become very apparent to me that the only people who don't have challenges in their lives, are the ones we don't know well enough. Bottom line is that every person on this planet, now and from the beginning, has difficulties which challenge them to prove if they will seek truth and abide by God's plan, or choose the plan of the adversary.

We can't always solve the problems of others, but we have an eternal friend and guide to help us find our way through the individual jungles of our lives. As we embrace the help of the Spirit, we become better equipped to assist others who need our positive influence. Our Savior stands ever ready to guide each of us, often through the Holy Ghost. The mission of the Holy Ghost is to bring those who are worthy and willing to listen back to our Savior and our Heavenly Father, making it possible for us to live again in their presence.

As we choose to become worthy, temples are provided to assist us on our journey. These powerful words of promise concerning temples were spoken at the first dedication of the beautiful Logan Temple:

“Every foundation stone that is laid for a Temple, and every Temple completed according to the order of the Lord...lessens the power of Satan on the earth, and increases the power of God and Godliness.” (Elder George A. Cannon, Logan Temple Cornerstone Dedication).

After we are baptized by proper authority, we are blessed with the gift of the Holy Ghost to guide us throughout our lives according to our worthiness. Elder Ronald A. Rasband shared this insight about this gift:

“Our Father in Heaven knew that in mortality we would face challenges, tribulation and turmoil; He knew we would wrestle with questions, disappointments, temptations and

weaknesses. To give us mortal strength and divine guidance, He provided the Holy Spirit, another name for the Holy Ghost”. (Elder Ronald A. Rasband, “Let the Holy Spirit Guide”, April Conference, 2017).

This and many other testimonies of the power of the Holy Ghost, are recorded to remind and strengthen us. I love this quote from Elder Uchtdorf’s message given at a meeting we attended for Church Educators:

“Just think about it. You actually have a powerful companion and trustworthy guide in this ongoing search for truth. Who Is It? It is the Holy Ghost. Our Heavenly Father knew how difficult it would be for us to sift through all the competing noise and discover truth during our mortality. He knew we would see only a portion of the truth, and He knew that Satan would try to deceive us. So He gave us the heavenly gift of the Holy Ghost to illuminate our minds, teach us, and testify to us of the truth.” (Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “What Is Truth” Church Education System Devotional, January 13, 2013).

The Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit and a vital part of the Godhead. My appreciation for his contribution to the plan of salvation has increased through the painting experience. When I tell people that for me, this opportunity is a “Paint by Prayer” process, it is with an understanding that many of my prayers throughout the journey have been answered through the Holy Spirit, also known as the Holy Ghost. Elder Craig C. Christensen helps us learn more about the character of the Holy Ghost.

“The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, and as such, like God the Father and Jesus Christ, He knows our thoughts and intents of our hearts. The Holy Ghost loves us and wants us to be happy. Since He knows the challenges we will face, He can guide us and teach us

all things we must do to return and live with our Heavenly Father once again.” (Elder Craig C. Christensen, “The Unspeakable Gift from God”, October Conference, 2012).

This “teaching” extends to all our earthly experience if we are open to hear it. In this quote, Elder Oaks adds another dimension to our understanding of the blessings the Holy Ghost brings to our lives:

“Many scriptures teach that His mission is to testify of the Father and the Son. The Savior promised that the Comforter will teach us all things, bring all things to our remembrance, and guide us into all truth. Thus, the Holy Ghost helps us discern between truth and falsehood, guides us in our major decisions, and helps us through the challenges of mortality. He is also the means by which we are sanctified, that is, cleansed and purified from sin.” (Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “The Godhead and the Plan of Salvation,” April Conference 2017).

The Holy Ghost can increase our awareness of Satan’s clever efforts to dull and distort truth. In our rapidly changing world there are influences which attempt to normalize that which is not a part of God’s plan for us. We notice almost every time we turn on the TV that there are increasingly more commercials and weekly programs which include characters portraying alternative lifestyles. It seemed in the beginning these little segments were hardly noticed. Gradually however, they changed to longer segments, and now, are often presented as the norm. The little seemingly gray areas outside of God’s plan, darken so slowly that we tend to become less offended by them. In time if we are not alert to Satan’s tactics, we may be lulled into accepting off track new trends which could put us on a path of deception. Our challenge is to love and be kind to everyone in our circle of influence without compromising truth. President Henry B. Eyring teaches us how the Holy Ghost strengthens our desire to overcome deception and embrace truth.

“The companionship of the Holy Ghost makes what is good more attractive and temptation less compelling. That alone should be enough to make us determined to qualify for the Spirit to be with us always. Just as the Holy Ghost strengthens us against evil, He also gives us the power to discern truth from falsehood. The truth that matters most is verified only by revelation from God. Our human reason and the use of our physical senses will not be enough. We live in a time when even the wisest will be hard-pressed to distinguish truth from clever deception.” (President Henry B Eyring, “The Holy Ghost as Your Companion”, Conference, October 2015).

As we allow him into our lives, the Holy Ghost becomes a teacher as well as a comforter. He helps us learn what is right as we listen to his promptings and learn the language of the Spirit. President Monson helps us recognize and understand this language.

“The language of the Spirit is gentle, quiet, uplifting to the heart and soothing to the soul. It is not learned from textbooks written by men of letters, nor is it acquired through reading and memorization. The language of the Spirit comes to him who seeks with all his heart to know God and to keep His divine commandments. Proficiency in this language permits one to breach barriers, overcome obstacles, and touch the human heart.” (Elder Thomas S. Monson, “The Spirit Giveth Life”, April Conference, 1985).

Sometimes our understanding of the language of the Spirit is weakened by our desire to do something we strongly believe in and chase after. Later, through the promptings of the Spirit we come to recognize we are on a path that is not taking us in the direction we originally intended. At this juncture, we are faced with a choice. Who will we follow? This passage taken from an issue of the Church News clarifies for us what we must do to follow our Savior:

“One of the greatest tests of the human soul is to vehemently pursue a given path only to be directed by divine truth that the path is incorrect. In those moments, the soul is tested. Will a person subject his or her will to the truth or continue rebelling against the truth: the more firmly attached to a favored path we are, the harder it is to alter the course. One of the greatest attributes a person can possess in life is the ability to submit his or her will to the truth, no matter what firmly held desires, beliefs or sins are present. The scriptures call this attribute a broken heart and a contrite spirit. (“Habits of the Humble”, Church News, March 26, 2017).

The Holy Ghost is our guide to know the truth. He helps us stay close to the Savior as we desire to be Disciples of Jesus Christ. Elder Larry R. Lawrence refers to the Holy Ghost as an “ideal traveling companion.”

“The journey of discipleship is not an easy one. It has been called a course of steady improvement. As we travel along that strait and narrow path, the spirit continually challenges us to be better and climb higher. The Holy Ghost makes an ideal traveling companion. If we are humble and teachable, He will take us by the hand and lead us home.” (Elder Larry R. Lawrence, October Conference, 2015).

As we take the Sacrament each week we are reminded “that we may always have His Spirit to be with us.” What a blessing this is to have this promise to help us see clearly when the adversary tries to disguise truth as gray, rather than black and white. Truth is unchanging, dependable, and cannot be shaded.

We often make choices influenced by the opinions of others all around us. My husband and I had an opportunity to listen to Elder Uchtdorf in another Church Education Devotional. I loved his explanation of discerning truth. His words helped me identify how human nature, if allowed, can erode our clarity and muddy the waters. He explained it in this way:

“Part of the reason for poor judgment comes from the tendency of mankind to blur the line between belief and truth. We too often confuse belief with truth, thinking that because something makes sense or is convenient, it must be true. Conversely, we sometimes don’t believe truth or reject it—because it would require us to change or admit that we were wrong. Often, truth is rejected because it doesn’t appear to be consistent with previous experiences. When the opinions or “truths” of others contradict our own, instead of considering the possibility that there could be information that might be helpful and augment or complement what we know, we often jump to conclusions or make assumptions that the other person is misinformed, mentally challenged, or even intentionally trying to deceive. . . . The thing about truth is that it exists beyond belief. It is true even if nobody believes it. “We simply don’t know all things—we can’t see everything . . . our world is full of confusion, but eventually all of our questions will be answered. All of our doubts will be replaced by certainty. And that is because there is one source of truth that is complete, correct, and incorruptible. That source is our infinitely wise and all-knowing Heavenly Father. He knows truth as it was, as it is, and as it yet will be. . . . If we will only have enough courage and faith to walk in His path, it will lead us to peace of heart and mind, to lasting meaning in life, to happiness in this world, and to joy in the world to come. The Savior is “not far from every one of us.” We have His promise that if we seek Him diligently we will find Him.” (Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “What is Truth,” Church Educational System Devotional, January 13, 2013).

Sometimes when we feel confused and uncertain in our journey, we forget the grounding message of the beloved primary song, “I am a Child of God.” I have carried this quote from Elder Boyd K. Packer with me in my little “file of stuff” because it quickly brings things back

into perspective for me. It reminds me how basic and wonderful the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ is for all of us.

“Now who made you? Who is your creator? There is not anything about your life that gets bent or broken that He cannot fix and will fix. You have to decide. If some of you have made mistakes and you think you are broken and cannot be put together, you do not know the doctrine of the Church. You do not know what the Atonement was about and who the Lord is and what a power He is in our life. . . .So if you are on the wrong path, then you must decide. You have agency. You have the promptings of the Holy Ghost to guide you. There is that great truth that the gospel is a gospel of repentance. Repentance is like a mathematical equation. Repentance leads to forgiveness.” (Elder Boyd K. Packer, “The Instrument of Your Mind and the Foundation of Your Character,” BYU Speeches, Feb. 2, 2003).

Mosiah’s address to his people in the *Book of Mormon* encourages us to:

9) Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all things which the Lord can comprehend.

10) And again, believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you; and now, if you believe all these things see that ye do them. (Mosiah 4: 9-10).

Sister Carol M. Stephens gave these words of assurance in her 2016 Conference Address:

“The Master Healer has the power to change our hearts and give us permanent relief from the sorrow caused by our own sin, He can comfort and strengthen us when we experience pain because of the unrighteous actions of others, and He can further comfort and sustain us as we

experience painful realities of mortality, such as disaster, mental illness, disease, chronic pain and death.” (Sister Carole M. Stephens, “The Master Healer, October Conference 2016).

It is with great gratitude that I recall feeling the hand of the Lord guiding me through my daily painting experience. My appreciation for the Holy Ghost throughout this journey of life multiplies each day and continues now with the writing phase of this project. As the book begins to materialize, I feel the presence of the Spirit directing my thoughts. I am so thankful the “Master Healer” has provided each of us with a way to “always have His Spirit to be with us.” Recognizing and expressing our gratitude for the gift of the Holy Ghost often results in blessings of *great* peace.



The Mountain of The Lord

“And it shall come to pass in the last day, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.”

Isaiah 2:2

Chapter Six

Blessings Come in The Lord's Time -- Seek Not to Counsel The Lord **The Mountain of The Lord – Salt Lake City Utah Temple**

There were many blessings that came with the painting of this historic temple. The preparation pattern involved in the majority of the other temples was not a part of this project. Instead of doing our own photo shoot, the photo came to us.

Our youngest daughter was married in the Logan Temple and has that temple painting hanging on the wall in her home. My husband and I were babysitting our grandchildren at their home in Kaysville while she and her husband served at a Youth Conference. At that time we were employed with some part-time insurance and our supervisor called to request that we come to the Salt Lake office while we were in town to pick up some information and supplies. When we explained that we were tending kids and he offered to drive to Kaysville to meet with us at our daughter's home.

After arriving he noticed the Logan temple painting on the wall and inquired who the artist was. He and his wife were also married in the Logan Temple. When I explained it was my painting he was interested and requested that I have a print prepared for him to give his wife for Christmas. In time, the print was framed and delivered.

A few months later, I got a call from someone I had never met who had seen the print of the Logan Temple in our supervisor's home. He asked me if I would be willing to paint a large painting of a favorite photo he had of the Salt Lake Temple where he and his wife were married. I agreed to look at it, and he sent the image to me in St. George on the internet. When it arrived, I was very pleased with it. However, it seemed likely that this was a professional photo and I wrote back explaining that I could not paint it without written permission from the photographer.

His reply indicated that the photo originated with a photographer he was acquainted with by the name of Henock Montoya. Apparently, permission was already given for him to make a large print from the photo. This however had not worked for him because he wanted a very large reproduction and the photo did not copy well when enlarged.

After he supplied me with the contact information, I was able to get written permission from the photographer to paint the temple. Soon, the project was underway using Mr. Montoya's photograph as my inspiration for the painting.

Once again, each step of the way was directed by the Holy Spirit, and day by day, little miracles occurred as the work progressed. Each time there was a roadblock and I didn't know what to do, the Lord blessed me in his way and his time with the vision of what was to be done. As an example of these little miracles, I recall two specific areas in this painting that were captured only through divine inspiration.

On the lower level of the tiered spires, there are symbolic stars in a row on each side. I remember praying for guidance to create those stars to reflect the shadows and the sunshine in a convincing way. The thought came into my mind that I should just paint the shadow and not try to paint the star. I followed that prompting, and a fascinating illusion was created. A star appeared with only the shadow painted. Row after row of stars were painted in this fashion.

Although there are many such miracles in this painting, the gold dedicatory inscription on the east center tower was especially difficult for me and required some inspiration. This engraving, unlike any of the other temples, is full of information. The panel reads, "Holiness to the Lord, The House of the Lord, built by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, Commenced April 6, 1853, Completed April 6, 1893."

It seemed there was no way for me to paint all those words in the one-half inch by two and one-half inch space. After pleading for help, the thought came to me, “This is God’s House.” It became clear to me that the largest words on the panel were “Lord, Lord.” Those two words needed to be legible. Other details, although important, could be less distinctive. With great care, prayer and a very tiny brush, my hands were steadied and the letters were established. All other writings on the panel are “illusions” created with tiny touches of paint where letters would be.

We had a smaller copy of this painting printed on canvas and framed. We took it with us on our mission to hang in our apartment. Although I didn’t bring any painting supplies with me, these temple paintings had become a sacred part of me and it was a comforting emotional connection to home to have this one where I could see it every day. On the last day of classes each semester, our students at the Institute were each given an 8x10 photocopy of this Salt Lake Temple painting, with our testimony printed on the back side. Just before we left Southern Virginia University, we donated the framed canvas copy that hung in our apartment to the University, along with our testimony.

The title of the painting, The Mountain of the Lord, comes from Isaiah 2:2; “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.” A second reference in 2 Nephi 12:3 reads; “And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

The painting lesson, “Blessings come in the Lord’s time – seek not to counsel the Lord”, is one that has been a personal struggle for me. It is an area in which I have diligently sought improvement in my own character. I have noticed that when I pray, it is so easy to slip into “what I want and what I need”. Sometimes in the past, I’m ashamed to say, I’ve not only told the Lord what I wanted and what I needed, but also how He should go about getting what I requested done for me.

It is a continual struggle to stay on the positive “gratitude” side when troubles come. I do believe that all blessings come in the Lord’s time. I know He already understands me far better than I understand myself. All my wants, needs, strengths, and faults are known to Him. The following words from Elder Oaks, help to define this truth:

“Most of us experience some measure of what the scriptures call “the furnace of affliction” (Isaiah 48:10, 1 Nephi 20:10). Some are submerged in service to a disadvantaged family member. Others suffer the death of a loved one or loss or postponement of a righteous goal like marriage or childbearing. Still others struggle with personal impairments or with feelings of rejection, inadequacy or depression. Through the justice and mercy of a loving Father in Heaven, the refinement and sanctification possible through such experiences can help us achieve what God desires us to become.” (Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” Ensign, November 2000 p. 32).

As years hopefully bring with them some wisdom and perspective, my prayers have evolved. Instead of counseling the Lord, my appreciation and conviction that He knows what is best for me has increased. Prayers on behalf of my loved ones have changed from counseling the Lord, to pleading that they will recognize the Lords hand in their lives and be guided to what is best for them.

In Jacob 4:10 we read; “Wherefore, brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For behold, ye yourselves know that he counseleth in wisdom and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works.”

Looking back, I see over and over times when our goals as a family were guided in a different direction than I had planned and prayed for. One of these times was when our family discovered that we needed to relocate to an area where the air quality was better, in order to sustain my life.

We were living in Bountiful Utah and were very content with our lives. My husband was serving in his fifth year as Bishop of our ward and our home was a wonderful gathering place for family and friends.

After being diagnosed with a lung condition that made it necessary for us to move to St. George where the air quality was better, we put our wonderful house on the market. The realtor assured us that it would sell quickly, and I went to look for housing in St. George.

Paula Smith, an excellent real estate agent, showed me many houses but nothing seemed right. We finally decided to build a house that would fit our needs. Eight months passed and we still had not secured a buyer for our Bountiful home. I felt stressed and frustrated that my sincere prayers were not being answered the way I imagined they should be.

The week before we were to sign the papers with the builder of our new home, we traveled to Seattle to visit our daughter Beth and her family. Just as we reached the Utah Idaho border on our return home a semi-truck dropped its starter motor in the middle of the freeway, and we hit it head on. The gas tank was torn from our car, spreading fuel all over the pavement. Two fire trucks were sent to clean up the mess and we felt very blessed that there was no fire and we were not harmed.

We called our builder in St. George and explained that our car was totaled and we would need to shop for another car before we could return to finalize our building plans. A second appointment to sign the contract was set for the following Monday.

After purchasing a used car, we headed back to my sister's home in the St. George area where we were staying while wrapping up our housing plans. When we awoke early the next morning, we felt inspired to attend a temple session.

A former Institute teacher and friend was filling his calling as an ordinance worker on the session we attended at the temple. Lonn taught with Richard Openshaw at the University of Utah some years earlier. We were not aware that he and his wife moved to St. George when he retired. After a short greeting, he invited us to come to their home for a visit after the session ended and his shift at the temple was complete.

When we arrived at their home, they asked us what our plans were, and we told them we were building a house in Ivins, just west of St. George. Within a few moments, our plans changed.

“Why are you building in Ivans when there is a perfectly good empty house just four doors down from us?” he asked. His wife Jeanne picked up the phone and called the owner of the empty house who still lived in the ward. This good man, who owned the home, had built a larger home just up the street. He came immediately with his key and let us in to see the empty house. It was exactly what we needed, and much more affordable than the home we planned to build. An offer was made and accepted.

We were able to cancel our building lot contract without financial loss and buy this house. Our home in Bountiful received five “full price” offers that same week. We were blessed to trade, home for home with no mortgage and move where we believe the Lord needed us to be.

The way all these pieces came together was like a beautiful symphony orchestrated just for us, by hand of the Lord. It was such a testimony to me that blessings come in the Lord's time. He knew what was best for us and, although we had a plan in place, he had a better one. I so appreciate this lesson.

When we have our own agenda, we sometimes forget to trust in the Lord's time. We tend to question why things are the way they are. In our mortal state, we try to understand our circumstance and often find ourselves disappointed or frustrated with the way things are going for us. Sometimes it seems as if our circumstance is not deserved or, "not fair". Life was never intended to be fair. My husband and I smile when we look back and recall telling our children that fair was one of those four letter words they were not allowed to say.

I love this statistical perspective written several years ago on a Canadian Red Cross flyer. When I feel like things are not fair or just not going the way I want them to, these words help me remember just how blessed I really am. The flyer suggests;

"If you have food in your fridge, clothes on you back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75 percent of the world.

If you have money in the bank, your wallet and some spare change, you are among the top 8 percent of the world's wealthy.

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million people who will not survive the week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the agony of imprisonment or torture or the horrible pangs of starvation, you are luckier than 500 million people alive and suffering.

If you can read this message, you are more fortunate than 3 billion people in the world who cannot read at all."

For some time I have kept this folded in my scripture cover and pull it out to study periodically. It is so humbling to be reminded of the comparisons. Although over time the statistics may have changed, getting some global perspective of the trials many of God's children face, diminishes my own trials and always tips the scales from complaint to gratitude.

At the time I am writing this book, our World is in the mist of the Covid 19 Pandemic. There are so many seemingly unfair situations all around us. Many people who have worked tirelessly to build successful businesses, are closing their doors in economic ruin. Front line courageous first responders are losing their own lives to save many others. Families are struggling emotionally, physically, and economically as once secure food chains begin to erode.

It was a strength to me to contemplate Elder Dale G. Renlund's timely reminder and perspective of "fairness" in relation to our present world situation. He helps us see our current trials through a wider scope.

"The sacrament truly helps us know our Savior. It also reminds us of His innocent suffering. If life were truly fair, you and I would never be resurrected: you and I would never be able to stand clean before God. In this respect, I am grateful that life is not fair. At the same time, I can emphatically state that because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, ultimately, in the eternal scheme of things, there will be no unfairness. "All that is unfair about life can be made right." Our present circumstances may not change, but through God's compassion, kindness, and love, we will all receive more than we deserve, more than we can ever earn, and more than we can ever hope for. We are promised that "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."(Elder Dale G. Renlund, "That I Might Draw All Men Unto Me," April Conference, 2016.)

I think about the story of Job and how everything in his life was definitely not fair. He lost everything including the support of his family and friends. He didn't tell the Lord what to do or how to do it. He didn't get angry or distance himself from the Lord because of his situation. He truly understood unconditional obedience. When things seem difficult, I remember Job and sometimes remind myself, "At least I don't have boils--yet." Sheri L. Dew said this about our perception of individual trials:

"Lucifer whispers that life's not fair and that if the gospel were true, we would never have problems or disappointments . . . The gospel isn't a guarantee against tribulation. That would be like a test with no questions. Rather, the gospel is a guide for maneuvering through the challenges of life with a sense of purpose and direction." (Sister Sheri L. Dew, "This Is a Test. It Is Only a Test." Ensign, July 2000).

In 2 Nephi 2:11, we read, "For it must needs be that there is an opposition in all things. If not so . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad."

In his conference address of April, 1998, Elder Robert D. Hales gave us this beautiful promise concerning how we respond to our difficult circumstances:

"If we are patient in our afflictions, endure them well, and wait upon the Lord to learn the lessons of mortality, the Lord will be with us to strengthen us unto the end of our days." (Elder Robert D. Hales, "Behold, We Count Them Happy Which Endure," April Conference, 1998).

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, made intercession for all inequality. His plan for us balanced the scales of fairness. It is our choice to accept his plan and live worthy of the great blessings that come through obedience or to ignore this truth.

Elder Uchtdorf blessed us with instruction encouraging us to stay focused on the path as we search for truth.

“If we only have enough courage and faith to walk in His path, it will lead us to peace of heart and mind, to lasting meaning in life, to happiness in this world, and to joy in the world to come. The Savior is “not far from every one of us.” We have His promise that if we seek Him diligently, we will find Him.” (Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “What Is Truth?” Church Educational System Devotional, January 13, 2011).

When challenges come and life gets “brown and lumpy”, it is easy to forget some of the basic parts of God’s plan and wrap ourselves in pity paper. If we are not careful, the natural man in us easily gives way to negative thoughts and behaviors.

Elder Tad R. Callister wrote this thought provoking comment in a Church News article which reminds us of the importance to keep a positive, submissive outlook of the Savior’s way:

“King Benjamin taught that we transform our natures as we become “submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19). That is the key to – cheerfully submit our will to God’s will, however difficult or inconvenient it may be. ... Similarly, life is about what the Lord wants, not what we want, but fortunately what he wants is always what will bring us the greatest happiness in life. There are no exceptions to this consequence. We can learn that lesson the hard way or the easy way. A change in nature comes when we are obedient, not because we want to – but when there is an overarching, burning, desire to do the Lord’s will because we love him.” (Elder Tad R. Callister, “Are we just changing our behavior when we should be changing our nature?” Church News, February 16, 2020).

The following *Book of Mormon* scriptures give direction on our path to happiness:

2) O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever. (Jacob 3:2).

11) O then, my beloved brethren, repent ye, and enter in at the strait gate, and continue in the way which is narrow, until ye shall obtain eternal life. (Jacob 6:11).

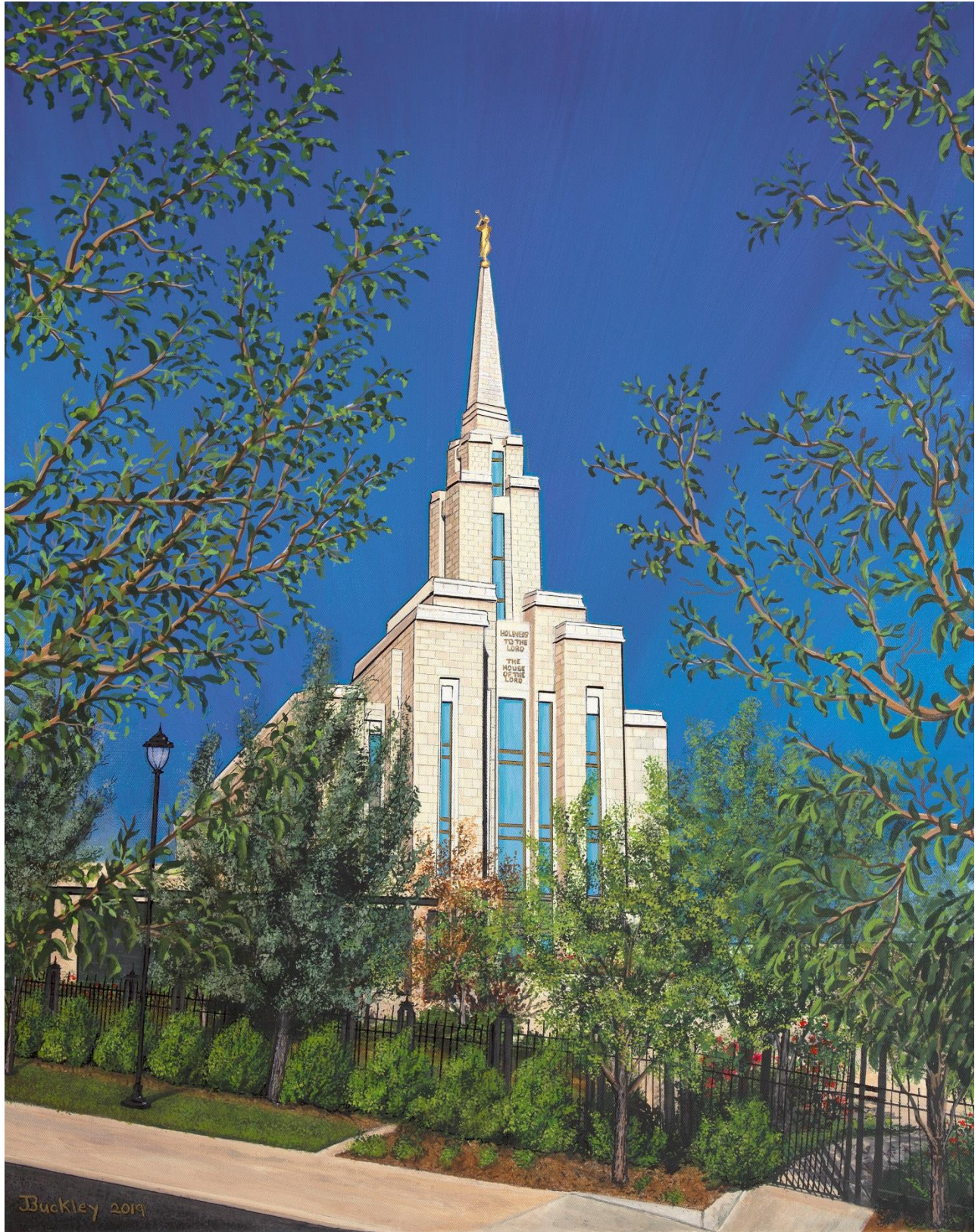
21) Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do;

22) Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day. (3 Nephi 27:21-22).

23) For it is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world; for it is I that hath created them; and it is I that granteth unto him that believeth unto the end a place at my right hand. (Mosiah 26:23).

Our loving Heavenly Father will *always* guide us to what is best for us if we seek to do our best. If we believe in the Lord's plan, we must also believe in his timing. I am thankful for this painting lesson.

“Seek Not to Counsel the Lord.”



Come Unto Him

Chapter Seven

Our lives are Forever Changed When We Understand What Jesus Christ Did For Us and, Strive to Emulate the “Pure Love of Christ.”

Come Unto Him – Oquirrah Mt. Utah Temple

There is a beautiful choral piece of music titled “Come Unto Him,” written by Dan L. Carter and recorded by the Tabernacle Choir on Temple Square. The end of the song is especially lovely with men and women’s voices repeating the words “Come Unto Him” on various levels of pitch and melody. I love this music and found myself singing this song in my head over and over as I painted.. It quickly became a perfect title for this painting of the Oquirrah Mt. Temple.

Coming to him requires learning about our Savior Jesus Christ. Knowing Him helps us to appreciate all He did for us. Serving a mission with my husband at Southern Virginia University was an opportunity for me to learn and grow in many ways. I would like to share how studying the life of my Savior on our mission enabled me to “Come Unto Him.”

At the end of the school Semester, the majority of the students at SVU went home for the summer which presented an opportunity for us to revise our teaching schedule at the Institute. We offered some adult education classes there and in the cities of Roanoke and Covington as well. In addition to these classes we also began teaching the members in Lexington and Buena Vista Wards.

The curriculum for these classes was based on a challenge President Russell M. Nelson made to the young adults near the beginning of the year, and then again to all of us in his address “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our lives,” delivered in the General Conference of the Church in April of 2017. The challenge was to study our Savior Jesus Christ through the

scriptural references of fifty-seven topics listed under Jesus Christ in the topical guide. This experience was amazing. I personally gained so much love and appreciation for my Savior through this study. President Nelson encouraged us in his challenge to invite the power of Jesus Christ into our lives as we study his character and seek to emulate His characteristics.

“We begin by learning about Him. It is impossible for us to be saved in ignorance. The more we know about the Savior’s ministry and mission—the more we understand His doctrine and what He did for us—the more we know that He can provide the power that we need for our lives.” (President Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into our Lives,” April Conference, 2017).

The more we learn about Him, the stronger our faith in Him becomes. President Nelson teaches us that this faith is followed by our taking action to do the things that give us access to His power.

“Faith in Jesus Christ propels us to do things we otherwise would not do. Faith that motivates us to action gives us more access to His power.” (President Nelson, reference above). As we learn about His mission and access His power, we improve our chances of returning home.

“Everyone is just trying to get home.”

Elder Ballard teaches us about making and keeping covenants that help us achieve our greatest desire which is to; “get home.”

“I testify there is no greater goal in mortality than to live eternally with our Heavenly Parents and our beloved Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is more than just *our* goal—it is also *Their* goal. They have a perfect love for us, more powerful than we can even begin to comprehend. They are totally, completely, eternally aligned with us. We are Their work. Our

glory is Their glory. More than anything else, They want us to come home—to *return* and *receive* eternal happiness in Their presence. (Elder M. Russell Ballard, “Return and Receive,” Ensign, May 2017 p. 64).

Understanding our Savior, helps us to return home to Him. A friend gave me a lovely gift for my birthday. It was a little book, written by Sheri L. Dew. This passage in her book helped me appreciate more fully the magnitude of the Savior’s gift to all of us. She writes:

“What is different for you and me when we understand what the Savior did for us and when we seek a personal witness that He is *our* Savior?

The answer is, *everything*.

Everything changed because of Jesus Christ.

Everything is better because of Him.

Everything about our Father’s plan became operable because of Him.

Everything about life is manageable, especially the painful parts, because of him.

Everything is possible because of Him.

Every heavenly power and privilege is available to us because of Him and His gospel.

The Savior changed everything for all who are willing to make covenants with Him and then keep them.

Without the Savior and His gospel, we would have no hope. No access to any kind of Heavenly power. No family that extends beyond the grave and therefore no hope of anything but the emotionally crippling state of eternal singleness. We would have no escape from sin, from our mistakes, or from the binding cords of the devil. We would have no peace. No joy. No happiness. No healing. No resurrection No possibility of eternal life. No future.” (Sheri L. Dew, Worth the Wrestle, pg. 92, 2017 Sheri Dew, Used by Permission of Deseret Book Company).

The ability to listen and feel the spirit of God’s love during the painting process was marvelous for me. Personalized messages delivered through the Holy Ghost, as well as messages given through written text and music, brought light to my soul. Many of these messages came in the form of scriptures, teaching comments, and testimonials. Some relate to the painting lessons and are included in this book.

The journey, “seeking to return home to Him”, is aided by many sources over the course of a lifetime. The following three quotes remind us of the vital direction given in our study of Jesus Christ:

“The crowning event recorded in the Book of Mormon is the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ among the Nephites soon after his resurrection. It puts forth the doctrines of the gospel, outlines the plan of salvation, and tells men what they must do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the life to come. (Introduction, Book of Mormon).

“Our Savior knows the heart of each of us. He knows the pains of our hearts. If we seek truth, develop faith in Him, and, if necessary, sincerely repent, we will receive a spiritual change of a heart which only comes from our Savior. Our hearts will become new again.” (Elder Robert D. Hales, “Healing Soul and Body,” October Conference, 1998).

“We cannot know God and Jesus without studying about them and then doing their will. This course leads to additional revealed knowledge which, if obeyed, will eventually lead us to further truths. If we follow his pattern, we will receive further light and joy, eventually leading into God’s presence, where we, with Him, will have a fullness. (President Ezra T. Benson, “In His Steps,” Ensign, Sept. 1988, p. 5).

I remember, a few years before the painting lessons, a time when I was literally just, “trying to get home.” This story is physically about an experience I had returning from our

daughter Beth's home in Seattle to our home in Albuquerque. The story spiritually is about a journey where I had opportunity to witness and be taught about; "The Pure Love of Christ."

Flying Non-Rev

There are blessings that come from having one of your children work for the airlines. On a whim, I could get on an airplane in Albuquerque where we lived and be in Seattle playing with my grandkids within a couple of hours. The downside is that sometimes these free flights are not available, and you end up doing a "milk run" to get to your destination. This, I found, can be exhausting and downright dangerous.

Non-revenue passengers on this program enjoy "shirttail" flying benefits because an immediate family member works for the airline. You carry your luggage with you and fly standby. This means that after all paying customers board the flight, you get a seat if one is available.

I had no problem getting to Seattle. I enjoyed my time with family and reported to the airport at 5 A.M. to catch a flight back home. Several standby tickets were available, and I gave Beth a hug and boarded a plane that was making one stop in Oakland and then on home to Albuquerque.

Because I am not a small person, it is best to get an aisle seat, but this was not the case. Finding both sides of the seatbelt before I sat down between two already comfortable travelers, I breathed a sigh of relief at being on my way home and got to the business of finding out who was touching me on both sides.

The person seated by the window could not be identified because they had pulled a hoodie tightly around their face making a silent statement indicating they did not want to be

disturbed. I turned to my left and introduced myself to the lady next to me. She looked to be in her early thirties, and we soon discovered we both shared the same name. We talked briefly about all the ways “Jeannine” could be spelled and I asked her if her home was in Oakland, or if she was just passing through. Explaining to me that she was on her way home from an event, I pried just a little to determine what that meant.

Her regular job was working at a grocery store, she explained, “But my boss knows how difficult it is for me financially, so when the opportunity comes, he lets me attend events to market T shirts for another company. I can come home with as much as \$300.00 if I’m careful”. Her eyebrows lifted as she said it and I could tell that was lots of money for her. As the conversation continued, I discovered that she had three young children and was at the end of a messy divorce. It was heart wrenching to hear her describe being grateful to have escaped the shelter her family lived in, finding a place she could rent for only \$200.00 a month. Her description of their meager living situation prompted me to comment on how difficult that must be for her. Her reply was, “Oh this is so much better than last year.” She then began her story about “last year” which took up the rest of our one-hour flight together. I will share the rest of this story in first person as she relayed it to me:

“I was feeling a little blue because it was two weeks before Thanksgiving, and my ex would have the kids this year. Driving home from work a man kept pulling in front of me and slowing down. I tried to get away, but he dogged me from one lane to another. I had to stop at day care to pick up my three-year-old, and I worried he would follow me there.

The next exit to the right went toward the police station. I decided to take it so I could go directly to the station if he continued to follow me. Just before I reached the off ramp, he

accelerated ahead and forced me into the direct path of an oncoming cement truck. I was not seriously injured, but my car was totaled.

Only a week after the accident, still dealing with the pain, I got an apologetic message from my landlady telling me our little home had been condemned and I would have to find another place to live before Christmas.

Not wanting to be alone for Thanksgiving, I accepted an offer from a friend in Milwaukee to join her family for the holiday. She paid for my plane tickets and, knowing she had the funds and I did not, I was very grateful.

I only had \$70.00 to my name but figured I could get there and back since there was little expense involved in the weekend. I had to be at the airport at six A.M. and had no means of transportation that early. I determined I would need to spend the night at the airport, and took the bus straight from work there the night before.

Visiting with an older man sitting near me in the terminal, I learned a little about him and he learned a little about me. He explained to me that he was a retired Navy Seal which allowed me to trust him when he agreed to watch my bags while I slept for a little while.”

At this point in her story, the skeptic in me thought she was going to tell me he took off with her belongings and her purse. But instead, the rest of this story was inspiring:

“He woke me up and I thanked him and got in the long line at the check-in-counter. Four or five people ahead of me was a young man trying to exchange a ticket for a missed flight. He couldn’t have been more than twenty years old and sounded *desperate* to get home for Thanksgiving.

The woman at the counter was telling him the exchange would cost \$74.00 dollars, which he did not have. He pleaded with her to allow him to pay at the end of the flight where he could

get help from his parents, but she refused. I thought if this were my child, I would hope someone would help him. I knew I had \$70.00 and some change in my purse and moved to the front of the line and offered to pay the difference.

I started digging in the bottom of my purse for change and the lady at the counter became very short with me. "Don't you have a credit card, I can't take pennies, nickels and dimes," she barked. By now I had managed to put together the \$74.00 and asked her to please let me speak to her supervisor. When the supervisor arrived, she dismissed the girl at the counter and took my money. The anxious young man was given a boarding and pass and I felt pleased, although I now realized I had just left myself without even bus fare to get home.

Now, it was my turn to get a boarding pass. I watched the supervisor enter my information in the computer, "No, that isn't it," she said, followed by "Now, let me see." I was sure she was going to tell me that I was not listed, and I would not be going anywhere for Thanksgiving. Suddenly she smiled and said, "Oh, here we go!" and handed me my boarding pass.

As I boarded the plane, I was seated in "first class". I told the flight attendant that there had been a mistake and she checked my ticket stub and assured me that I was in the right seat. She brought me a warm, wet washcloth which felt so comforting after a night in the airport. When I was settled and the flight took off, I became painfully aware of others around me. They were dressed in expensive clothing and jewelry and I felt they were staring at me.

The man in the seat next to me started a conversation. I asked him if he was going home for Thanksgiving and he informed me he was meeting His family in Atlanta for a Caribbean cruise over the holiday. I asked him what kind of work he did, and he said he was CEO for a large company in Milwaukee. He then turned the conversation back to me and asked what I did

for work. I wanted to crawl under my seat and stammered an apology. "I'm not supposed to be here," I told him. "Someone made a mistake and I'm just a single mom that works in a little grocery store with three kids and I'm really sorry you have to sit with me".

"You don't know why you're here, do you?" he asked. I told him I didn't know what he meant, and he explained that he had been behind me in the ticket line, and that he and everyone else in line within earshot, knew why I was there.

"You did something so nice for that young man, that the agent at the counter upgraded your ticket, didn't you know that?" He pleasantly explained.

I was taken back by this thought for a moment and then decided in some way, I did deserve to be there and just sat back and enjoyed the trip."

She went on and on about the champagne, and delicious airplane food, and then related the end of her story.

"When we landed, the man sitting next to me extended his hand to shake mine. He had folded a \$100.00 bill in the palm of his hand and pressing it into mine he said, "I'm just so proud to know you".

I felt lifted by her story and thanked her for sharing it with me. No sooner was she out of sight that it occurred to me that I had only learned her first name. The remorse I felt for not thinking quickly enough to get more information so I could have the missionaries find her, was deserved. She needed the church and she had such a good heart. I had truly missed the boat on that one.

I stayed on the plane as the count was made for Albuquerque passengers. New passengers were beginning to load when I heard my name over the intercom. "Passenger Buckley, bring your things and come to the front of the plane, we need your seat." My heart

sank, and I unbuckled the seatbelt and stood up. It was a long way from the back to the front of the plane, and I felt like I had just been arrested.

I asked what I should do and was told I would be rerouted to Los Angeles where I could catch a flight to Albuquerque. From there, my day became a downward spiral.

In L.A. I was told I could stay there overnight or fly to Phoenix, where I could possibly catch a flight home. The thought of being in L.A. overnight was terrifying to me. I had only \$7.00 in my wallet and a credit card that I really couldn't afford to use. I made a choice and got on the next flight to Phoenix.

It was almost 2:00 in the afternoon when we landed, and I was really getting tired. I needed something to eat and after I checked in, I only had an hour until the next flight to Albuquerque. The attendant at the gate told me the flight was overbooked and she doubted I would have a seat. She assured me that there were four other flights that day and my chances were good of getting on one of those.

It seemed like miles down the concourse to the food court, and the luggage strap cut across my shoulder producing a nagging pain in my neck. The disk problems in my back were telling me I had abused them. I found a little restaurant that took credit cards and got some lunch, watching my time carefully so not to miss the stand by call if it came.

Back at the gate, I noticed a woman expressing her displeasure at being told there was no standby room on the current flight. She let out a string of foul words and I shuddered a little. Both waiting in hope to get a seat on the following flight, she sat down across the aisle from me. She was a thin, hard looking woman with lots of makeup and a scanty black velvet with sparkles outfit that gave her the appearance of a stereotype T.V. hooker.

The air around her quickly filled with a mix of tobacco and perfume odors, and sitting close now, I could see that she was much older than I had first thought. “You trying to standby to Albuquerque too?” she asked me. I told her I was, and she explained to me that she needed to catch a connecting bus in Albuquerque for Denver. Her daughter who was her “non-rev” connection, worked for an airline that didn’t fly to Denver. She indicated that her plan was to fly to Albuquerque, and then catch a Grey Hound bus. She also commented that she was starving, and needed the juice and peanuts from the flight, to get her through the day.

The third plane came and went and the two of us were still without a seat. Our conversation revealed she was going to Denver because her father, a war hero, was being honored at a ceremony there.

It was after 7:00 now and I desperately needed to lie down somewhere and get off my back. Ruby, my new found standby traveler, followed me around like a lost puppy and talked continuously. I tried to lose her a couple of times but every time I moved from one spot to another, Ruby followed me. “Child of God,” I said to myself, “she is a child of God Jeannine, be nice.”

She told me she hadn’t had anything to eat all day and had only \$5.00 in her purse, which she would have to use to exchange her bus ticket. Having already missed her bus in Albuquerque, she would have to pay a missed connection fee to get on another bus. Complaining she was freezing cold, she left me and went to the restroom to change into something warmer.

I went to the nearest food service outlet and looked at the menu for something the two of us could share. The only choice for under \$7.00 was a chug of milk and a large bran muffin. I asked for a plastic knife and an extra cup and with some difficulty carried the food, luggage and my purse back to the gate to wait for the 9:10 P.M. flight.

Ruby joined me. She had changed into a longer, tighter version of the first outfit, which left nothing to the imagination. “Child of God, work in progress,” I muttered under my breath as she came toward me. After sharing my food with her, she was mine for the rest of the wait. I heard more crude language than I had ever been exposed to in my entire life and just wanted to get away from her and have a little peace.

The 9:10 came and went and there were only two more flights out, surely I would get on the next one. I called home periodically to let my family know the status of things. This time when Lonnn picked up the phone, I burst into tears. My physical and emotional stamina were exhausted. He told me he had contacted some friends in Phoenix who were prepared to pick me up at the airport and put me up in their home if I could not get on a flight. At least I would not be sleeping in the terminal.

The 10:20 was also overbooked and six passengers were offered a deal to give up their seats for the value of their ticket plus \$100.00. The last flight of the day was scheduled for 11:10 and the women at the counter assured me there would be room on the flight. Great news; I could be reunited with my husband at the Albuquerque airport, and home in bed by around 12:50 A.M.

As I gratefully boarded this last plane, I scanned the isles for a seat between two passengers so I wouldn't have to sit by Ruby. Discovering what I had hoped to find, I quickly slipped in and fastened my seatbelt.

I watched her get on and thought I saw a little hurt as she passed me to find a seat in the back of the plane. I felt terrible and ashamed of my behavior. Memory of our hours together, and all the things she had told me about herself, filled the flight home with concern. I imagined her somehow getting to the bus stop at this late hour, and then riding a bus for another ten hours to Denver to honor her father. She would be hungry and probably cold and the chances for her

even getting a ride from the airport to the bus station at this hour of night were slim and could be dangerous. I had to help. I said a little prayer asking for forgiveness for my judgemental nature.

When I saw my husband at the gate, I practically fell into his arms. “There’s a woman coming off the plane”, I stammered, “she is very rough, but we have to take her to the bus depot and get her a ticket to Denver.”

We watched dozens of weary passengers emerge from the boarding tunnel. At last I saw her and motioned for her to join us. After introductions were made, we started for the car. We would have to hurry to catch the last bus, because it was a twenty-five-minute ride from the airport to the bus terminal in downtown Albuquerque. Lonni rolled down his window when we got in the car. I remembered the strong odors I had become accustomed to, and winked at him and smiled.

Ruby proudly displayed the little pillows and blankets she had procured from the airplane to keep her warm on her bus trip to Denver. “I think they owe me this, after everything they put us through, don’t you?” she smiled wryly. I just laughed and we made our way quickly to the depot.

I was so tired, I waited in the car while Lonni took her inside and paid for the ticket exchange so she could save her \$5.00 for the ride to Denver. This gave me a quiet moment to reflect on the events of a very, very, long day.

I thought about the other Jeannine on the first flight earlier in the day and wondered if I would have given Ruby a ride or shared my muffin if I had not heard her story about helping the young man make his flight.

Sadly, I realized too late, that there may have been much more I could have done to help. I had been given two opportunities to connect people with our church and the blessings I so often take for granted. Why hadn't I been better? What was my problem?

The thought came to me as I watched Lonni emerge from the bus station, "I too am a Child of God, a work in progress."

Trying to "get home" requires us to learn and then adopt the attributes of our Savior. Elder Oaks clarified this process for us:

"We are challenged to move through a process of conversion toward that status and condition called eternal life. This is achieved not just by doing what is right, but by doing it for the right reason—for the pure love of Christ. The Apostle Paul illustrated this in his famous teaching about the importance of charity. The reason charity never fails and the reason charity is greater than even the most significant act of goodness he cited is that charity, the pure love of Christ, is not an act but a condition or state of being. Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in a conversion. Charity is something one becomes." (Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "The Challenge to Become," *Ensign*, November 2000 pp. 32-34).

President Monson simplified our need to "become" in this quote from his conference address in October 2010.

"There is a serious need for the charity that gives attention to those who are unnoticed, hope to those who are discouraged, and to those who are afflicted. True charity is love in action. The need for charity is everywhere. . . . Charity is having patience with someone who has let us down. It is resisting the impulse to become offended easily. It is accepting people as they truly are. It is looking beyond physical appearance to attributes that will not dim through time. It is

resisting the impulse to categorize others.” (President Thomas S. Monson, “Charity Never Faileth,” October Conference, 2010).

I have such a long way to go in this area. There are opportunities all around me that slip through the cracks, noticed, but not acted upon. Responding with appropriate action when opportunity arises, builds our firm foundation in Christ. The *Book of Mormon* teaches the value of this foundation and redemptive power.

12) 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 whereon if men build they cannot fall. (Helaman 5:12).

26) And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved. (Omni 1:26).

To have “true charity” we strive to emulate the pure love of Christ by doing things as near as we can in the way He would do them.

Painting the sky of the Oquirrah Mt. Temple, I remember thinking I should paint the sky a little less intense than it really was. The message came to mind that this sky was created by the Lord and really was that blue. Why would I believe for even a second that I could do it better than God did it? Using various blue tones, I was able to closely duplicate the color of the sky in

the photograph. As I began painting the temple against the intense sky, it practically glowed on the canvas. The contrast created a focus of light on this magnificent temple of God.

The daily progression as I painted this increasing light, reminded me of our progression of light as we, Come Unto Him. I have included a few shots of these progressive steps in the painting process at the end of this chapter.

Learning of our Savior Jesus Christ, and emulating his attributes, helps us become more charitable as we strive to receive our own spiritual light. It may also lead us, when necessary, to a change of heart.

Like painting, our road to perfection is an ongoing process. Little by little, each of us work out a way to complete our canvas of life, guided by His ever present light.



Progression of Light



Sweet is The Peace

“Forgiveness is a divinely afforded gospel process which ultimately offers, sweet peace.”

Chapter Eight

Forgiveness Is a Process

Sweet Is The Peace –Mount Timpanogus Utah Temple

Painting the Mt. Timpanogus temple was a joy and a blessing from day one. We took a little four day trip from St. George north to visit our children and grandchildren in Kaysville, which included a detour to American Fork to take some pictures of this temple.

We had imagined our day to get to the temple while the afternoon light was still good, and got there with plenty of time. It was a beautiful day. The sky was a radiant blue and the temple was illuminated by the late afternoon sunlight. We had not done all of our planning homework however, and discovered when we arrived that the temple was closed for a two-week cleaning and the gates were locked all around.

We separated and moved in opposite directions outside the fence, each hoping to find a vantage point that would suffice. I was getting a little discouraged because the temple is built on a very busy corner, and there wasn't a lot of room to establish the distance needed for the painting photo. My sweetheart, working on the opposite side of the temple, used the rear parking lot to create the optimal distance advantage needed. The west end of the lot was far enough removed to get the job done, and he got a beautiful shot.

I was delighted as we sat in the car and reviewed our photography. It was amazing to see what his efforts had captured. There was no need for the deciding process with this one because I knew instantly when I saw his photo that it would provide the perfect inspiration for this painting.

The majority of these paintings get their names from music—many from our beloved LDS Hymn book. Because my life is blessed by church activity and a strong musical background, most of this music is memorized, and the melodies and words come readily to mind while I paint. It wasn't far into the process on this one, when I found myself singing in my head, "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings", Hymn book number 14. The words of the second verse, written by Mary Ann Morton, read:

*Its laws and precepts are divine
And Show a Father's care.
Transcendent love and mercy shine.
In each injunction there.*

Somehow as I sang this verse in my mind, a recurring memory came to me that was disturbing. Several years ago, there was a communication conflict which occurred concerning the care of my sweet mother as her health declined as a result of Alzheimer's disease. The situation created opposing opinions that escalated and resulted in emotional discord in our family. The tension eventually erupted into unkind words and wounded souls. I felt devastated with the outcome.

Although I thought I had been forgiving and successfully turned my bitterness over to my Savior, these seemingly sincere efforts didn't seem to be resolving some lingering negative feelings. The memories and heartaches continued to surface unexpectedly from time to time.

It has been my lesson for life to realize that;

"Forgiveness is a Process."

It often takes time to work through the healing of deep wounds. Difficult and hurtful situations are often hard to let go of and can be damaging to relationships as well as self-esteem. If nurtured, these bitter feelings can fester, resulting in depression and anxiety. I have heard it said

that worry about the past causes depression and worry about the future, causes anxiety. Letting go of both and living in the moment is possible through trust in the Savior and His saving grace.

It was as I painted the beautiful white fence and gate of the Mt. Timpanogus Temple, that healing thoughts came to my mind about the “gate” forgiveness provides to allow us to be worthy to enter the presence of the Lord. It became clear to me that for some reason, I was harboring the pain from my family situation. Although my prayers and words reflected that I forgave my loved ones, I still retained a wounded spirit, including some angry emotions. It became clear to me that I was not allowing the Lord’s gate to be open to his healing. Letting go of the pain, was the part of the process that I was refusing to do.

On that liberating day as I painted, I realized that letting go was a choice, a test, to prove how I would exercise my agency. It was a defining moment for me. The third verse of “Sweet is the Peace” reads:

*Faithless tradition flees its power
And unbelief gives way.
The gloomy clouds, which used to lower
Submit to reason’s sway.*

There was a “Sweet Peace” that filled my heart as I swung open the gate and really let go of my negative feelings. I feel peace each time I look at this miracle painting and I am grateful those “gloomy clouds” are gone. Sweet Is The Peace.

“Don’t measure how valuable you are by the way you are treated.”

Sometimes thoughtless words are like sharp spikes in our relationships which bring us pain. We have the power and the ability through our Savior, to really let go of soul damaging pain through forgiveness. Years ago President Spencer W. Kimball left with us this pertinent message which always applies.

“The lesson stands for us today. Many people, when brought to a reconciliation with others, say that they forgive, but they continue to hold malice, continue to suspect the other party, continue to disbelieve the other’s sincerity. This is sin, for when a reconciliation has been effected and when repentance is claimed, each should forgive and forget, and restore immediately the fences which have been breached, and restore the former compatibility.” (President Spencer W. Kimball, “The Miracle of Forgiveness,” pp. 262-263, Bookcraft Inc. 1969).

Once again, the *Book of Mormon* helps us hear the word of the Lord relative to the forgiveness process.

30) Yea and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me.

31) And ye shall also forgive one another your trespasses; for verily I say unto you, he that forgiveth not his neighbor’s trespasses when he says that he repents, the same hath brought himself under condemnation. (Mosiah 26: 30-31).

24) And may God grant, in his great fullness, that men might be brought unto repentance and good works, that they might be restored unto grace for grace, according to their works. (Helaman 12:24).

President Monson helps us realize that even the small things that pull our relationships apart need to be quickly forgiven. Love and healing are the result.

“Forgiveness should go hand in hand with love. In our families, as well as with our friends, there can be hurt feelings and disagreements. Again, it doesn’t really matter how small the issue was. It cannot and should not be left to canker, to fester, and ultimately to destroy. Blame keeps wounds open. Only forgiveness heals. (President Thomas S. Monson, “Love—the Essence of the Gospel,” April Conference, 2014).

We need to see the “me” at the end of the word blame. What is my contribution to the conflict? None of us have a clue, at any given moment, what any other child of God is dealing with in their experience here on earth. All we can do is pray for those who offend us and ask for forgiveness for those things we, sometimes unknowingly, do to others. Certainly, when we recognize our mistakes, we must quickly do all we can to restore losses we create.

As I reflected on forgiveness, the following story came to mind. It was written while our family was on assignment with the Church Education System at the University of New Mexico Institute of Religion. This story is about saving some flowers at the end of the growing season, but really, eternally about much more.

Saving Impatiens

It was obvious that summer was over. Even in New Mexico, the air changes in October and the nights grow cold. But it wasn't until the lady in front of me at the grocery store said she heard it on the news, that I really did anything about the plants. It was going to freeze. If the weatherman had said it on the news, it must be true, and the time had come for action.

The Impatiens had struggled this summer. There around our little trees, they had thrived the summer before, but not this year. They remained small, really about the same size they were when I planted them out in June. But yet, cheery with their bright little five petaled blooms in shades of hot pink and white, they were still very much alive.

Needing pots and soil I went looking for a deal. In October, you are a little late for seasonal bargains and it was more difficult to find inexpensive pots than I had anticipated. I settled on two, one larger than I wanted, and the other, no prize to look at. However, they would do in the sun-room and the flowers could grow there throughout the winter, and go back out on

the porch in the spring when the threat of frost had passed. I picked up a huge bag of potting soil and felt confident that it would be far more than I needed for the two “fake” terra cotta pots.

Our son Nathan, a high school freshman, is the designated planter in our family—not by his choice. When he returned from school, I pointed out what needed to be done and expected the plants would be taken care of. Unfortunately, the life of a high school freshman is sometimes more involved than you might think, and his agenda and mine don’t always coincide. Luckily for the Impatiens and our son, it did not freeze on Friday and there would be more time on Saturday, or at least I thought so.

They were all good things, an Eagle Scout project for one of the other guys, helping his dad, and babysitting for a neighbor. By late Saturday afternoon, I could see the planting was not going to happen. Everyone else was gone until after dark, and it really was turning cold. This time the weatherman had it right. If the plants were going to be saved this year, I would have to do it.

I took out a rug because most of our yard has natural landscaping. They call it “xeriscape” in New Mexico, which basically means you decorate your yard with rocks of various colors and sizes and don’t try to grow much because of water shortage. The rug protected my knees against the sharp rocks as I knelt beside the scalloped brick tree ring.

I thought about how well the Impatiens had grown the year before, filling up the flower rings with hundreds of blooms and dark, healthy foliage. In comparison, these plants were pathetic, barely larger than the original bedding plants. The leaves were a sickly yellow green and much smaller than the leaves of the previous plants. It didn’t make sense. They had been planted in new soil, the kind they advertise on TV for beautiful flowers, and watered and fed

regularly. I could see the pots would not hold all of these plants, so I began selecting the best looking ones to transplant.

Scooping down into the soil, I found that there was very little root supporting the plants and soon discovered why. The grubs were big and fat. I knew immediately what they were when I saw them, because there was a picture of them on the front of the lawn pest granules my husband recently purchased for our cherished little patch of grass in the back yard.

So that's why they had not grown! All summer I'd been tending to their needs without knowing that deep underneath where they couldn't be seen, these fat little grubs were having a banquet on the roots of my plants. I felt responsible, sad, and a little bewildered at the discovery. I was careful to inspect each root ball as I removed it so I would not transplant the little pests into my pots.

The first pot was full, and I moved to the second ring to retrieve the best plants from there. This time, it was harder to select which ones would go to the sun-room to thrive and grow over the winter, and which ones would be left to cruel and certain death. There was a nagging pain at making the choice. Pulling one out and leaving another, I started to get emotional about the whole project. After all, whose fault was this anyway? These plants had done the best they could given their circumstances and yet, really hadn't had a fair shot at life. It was like all of us really, and my thoughts quickly changed from bedding plants to the people I love.

Our oldest daughter, now grown up with a family of her own, has dealt with "grubs" from the time she was tiny. At the age of three, she changed from a happy, normal child, to an almost unrecognizable frail being, hanging in the balance between life and death over a period of many months.

The events of that disease are another chapter, but the experience left her with crippling learning disabilities. One wise counselor described these lasting effects using filing cabinets to explain her situation.

He told us that all people have some kind of filing system in their heads. Events, facts, and all other incoming data is stored away in the brain where it can be systematically retrieved when necessary. Our daughter's filing system, he felt, had been dumped out on the floor, leaving her to search through the rubble each time she needed something until she found what she was looking for. Although it was a pitifully broad generalization, it seemed to be the way it was for her.

I remembered all the futile, frustrating hours of study doing side by side homework with her throughout her school years only to find that at the end of the study sessions, she remembered very little of what we had covered. Countless good, patient teachers, friends, and other professionals had never given up on her and found creative ways to teach her to read, study, and eventually graduate from school. I will be forever grateful to these people and to her for her willingness to survive through it all as she picked herself up from failure and pain time and time again.

And what about God? Does he give up on us when we can't see the light at the end of the tunnel? Not a chance! His love and support are constant and dependable. His light is always there for us to grasp if we are willing to keep trying.

Every one of us have grubs of one kind or another eating away at our roots. All of us struggle to:

“Bloom where you are planted.”

The second pot was all filled up now. There wasn't room for anymore and I picked up my rug and headed for the house. Somehow, I just couldn't leave the rest of them out there for the frost. Only about an hour of daylight left, I hurried back to the store for another pot.

As in my story, none of us know what is driving another's behavior. We can't know what God knows about his children. There is truth taught in raising a family. From the time we are small we are taught that mortal life is a time to learn, grow, and experience temptation. It is a time to be tested and prove the intent of our very souls. It usually doesn't happen like Alma the Younger with an angel in our face, but more like every stage of childhood; we roll over, crawl, walk and learn one moment at a time. Opportunity presents itself, we accept it and make the best of it, ignore it until it goes away, or turn it into a chance to learn from our experience.

“Our greatest test of free agency is how we react to our circumstances.”

I am grateful for this painting lesson which helped me gain a healthier perspective and freed me from my own “self- inflicted” cage. This lesson helped me understand and appreciate how my choice of attitude and action opened the gate for complete forgiveness through the love and sacrifice of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness is a divinely afforded gospel process which ultimately offers, “Sweet Peace”.



Time and Eternity

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

Proverbs 3:5-6

Chapter Nine

Trusting the Lord Makes Life Easier—Always Remember The Power of Faith.

Time and Eternity – Ogden Utah Temple

Because we lived in Davis County for many years, we were close enough to witness the process of demolition and reconstruction of the original Ogden Temple, first dedicated in January of 1972. The original temple appeared to be a similar design to the Provo temple, also dedicated in 1972.

The new Ogden Temple is much different in design and very beautiful. When we attended the open house before the dedication of the new remodeled Temple, I was pleased to discover they had preserved a large beautiful old timepiece on the northeast corner of the temple lot.

When we returned to the temple at a later date to do our photo-shoot, I tried to capture this vintage, Times Square looking clock with the temple in the background. The distance to do justice to the temple which was the primary focus, was just too great. When I got a shot of the temple I liked, the clock was obscured. When I got a promising shot of the clock, the temple was too far away to capture the detail I wanted.

Using a play on words with this scenario, the painting is titled Time and Eternity. It is actually a composite of two photographs--taking the liberty to move the clock closer to the temple than it really is. I think they call this “artistic license.”

Often life requires that we make compromises to make the puzzle pieces of life fit together. Our free agency is our artistic license to decide what stays, and what is discarded or put on hold for another chapter in our lives. Believing that the Lord will always be there to help us sort through these choices is such a comfort to me. My testimony that, as Elder Bednar says,

“God is in charge, not you, not me,” gives me courage to move forward when the puzzle pieces are scattered wildly before me on the floor.

I remember such a wild time a few years ago when my husband and I found ourselves standing at one of those cross-roads we all come up against in life. Lonn taught Seminary and Institute for many years on the Wasatch Front. In time, we were able to afford a larger home for our growing family in Centerville. Because the house needed lots of TLC, we were able to buy it at a greatly reduced price. After years of hard work, money, and time, the home was beautiful, and we were very comfortable in our situation.

With lots of help from my cherished friend and accompanist, my vocal coaching career had taken off, and I was finding great joy and satisfaction teaching private vocal sessions. We designated a lovely room just inside the front door of our home, for singing lessons. We called it “The Songbird Studio.”

Much of my time was devoted to my music endeavors, which included many hours away from my family singing with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, now known as The Tabernacle Choir on Temple Square. My family was extremely supportive, especially my sweetheart, who was a single parent every Sunday morning for years. With a family of seven children and one dog, there were many days when he had to be all things for both of us. I will always be thankful for this love and unselfish service which he and my children offered me.

One day early in the spring, of 1997, Lonn received a phone call that would quickly pull apart the puzzle of my life. It was a puzzle I had worked tirelessly and passionately to put securely together. We were being asked if we would be willing to leave the Wasatch Front and accept a teaching assignment out of state. His reply to the voice on the other end of the call was

that he would approach me with the idea, but doubted I would go. He explained that because I was in the choir, he didn't believe I would be willing to relocate out of state.

Later that night when we had a chance for a long discussion, I found myself feeling really conflicted. Considering a move would require some thought and prayer on our part before we were prepared to make a decision. For me there were heavy feelings of dismay at the proposition.

The following morning, remembering those little things people do to sort out difficult choices in life, I got out a piece of paper and folded it vertically in half. On one side I wrote the words, "Reasons to Stay", and on the opposite side "Reasons to Go." Taking a pen from the drawer in the kitchen, I sat down at the table and began to brainstorm. In the first column, "Reasons to Stay" I listed several things that were important to me. My number one reason to stay was the Tabernacle Choir. My reasons to go listed things like being willing to work where we were needed, giving our family a missionary experience, and many other more selfless things.

It was about then that our youngest daughter Natalie stood at my elbow. "What are you doing Mom?" she asked. I explained to her that her Dad had been asked to move to a different place to teach out of the State of Utah. I told her I was writing down on one side of the paper reasons why moving would be a good idea, and on the other side, reasons why moving would not be a good idea. Seeing these reasons side by side I explained, might help me decide what to do.

She left me, and soon returned with a piece of paper of her own with two sides folded down the middle, She said she was also making a list of the reasons to stay and reasons to go. When I got the opportunity to take a look at her list, my heart sank. It was a defining moment for me as I realized that her number one reason to go was polar opposite to my number one

reason to stay. Her “Go” list read; “Mom would not be in the choir and have *time for me.*” Wow! What a wakeup call. So many of her growing up years had been spent with me gone on tour with the choir, recording with the choir, practicing with the choir etc. My last year in the choir, I was away on choir assignment at least part of one-hundred and fifty-nine days of the year. What a huge chunk of her young life I had missed. I knew exactly what the Lord would have me do.

There is an unforgettable image in my mind of my husband’s stunned expression when he returned home that night and I greeted him with this comment; “I think we should take the assignment.”

The puzzle pieces began to fly. Within three months, we were living in Albuquerque New Mexico with our dog and three of our seven children who were still living at home. For the next four years Lonni taught in the Institute of Religion at the University of New Mexico. Although it was a huge adjustment for me, it was an experience I would not choose to delete. Trusting the Lord and the power of faith provides a safety net when putting together the puzzles of life. My experience thus far in mortality has been repeatedly blessed by this realization.

When I was a young girl, we attended weekly meetings for the young men and young woman which was called Mutual. These meetings were held on Tuesday nights. At the beginning of the meeting there was a short opening exercise. Each year there was a designated scripture theme which we all repeated in unison at the beginning of each meeting. One year the scripture selected was Proverbs 3:5-6. I memorized it then, and it has always been important to me.

- 5) Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
- 6) In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Many years later when my husband and I walked into our furnished apartment on the day we arrived to our mission in Virginia, the first thing I saw, was this scripture, framed on the wall. When we went upstairs to see the rest of the apartment, the shower curtain was printed with these same words; “Trust in the Lord.” It was like a welcoming love note from the my Heavenly Father.

When the puzzle pieces are down and we find ourselves out of our comfort zone, it is so reassuring to remember that the Lord knows us better than we know ourselves. It is in these uncomfortable moments that we learn and grow. These growing sequences provide an ideal time to take inventory of where we are, and what we need to change in order to align our will with the will of our Father in Heaven. This requires trust and faith and is often a humbling experience. In the *Book of Mormon* chapter of Ether 12:27 we read:

27) And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.

We have a talented teacher in our ward by the name of Dianna Hall. With her permission I would like to quote a segment from the message she shared in our Sacrament Meeting in January of 2020:

“As I was pondering on trust, I narrowed it down to only three times we need to trust the Lord; with the past, the present, and the future.

When we trust the Lord for the past, we rely on the atonement of Jesus Christ to make right the things we can’t make right. Elder David Bednar said:

“The first and natural consequence of trusting in the Savior is repenting and turning away from evil. As we exercise faith in and on the Lord, we naturally turn toward, come unto, and depend upon Him. Thus, repentance is trusting in and relying upon the Redeemer to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Each of us must {rely} wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save” because only “through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” can we become creatures in Christ and ultimately return to and dwell in the presence of God.” (Elder David A. Bednar, “Gather Together in One All things in Christ,” October Conference, 2018).

Trusting in the Lord by repenting takes care of the past—what about trusting in the Lord for the future? Elder Holland commented:

“The future of this world has long been declared; the final outcome between good and evil is already known. There is absolutely no question as to who wins because the victory is already known. There is absolutely no question as to who wins because the victory has already been posted on the scoreboard. The only really strange thing in all of this is that we are still down here on the field trying to decide which team’s jersey we want to wear!” In other words, we can rely on the Lord because he’s already won the battle. (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “Embrace Who You Really Are,” (<https://www.ldsbc.edu/embrace-who-you-really-are>)).

But what about the present? How do we trust the Lord in the present? “Could our present day challenges be for a *wise* purpose that we know not? What if while I am *panicking* about the now, the Lord is *preparing* for eternity? Is there no other way?

Surviving a trial successfully has everything to do with trust. Do we truly believe that God is doing what is best for us even if the world around us is falling apart?” (Dianna Hall 2020).

I so appreciated Dianna's basic approach to this eternal truth. It reminded me that my personal puzzle pieces are known by my Savior and he is always near, ready to guide and support me as my completed puzzles are torn apart. It is then with his help, that I piece each new challenging puzzle together. The following two scriptures have been a great strength to me when my puzzle pieces are scattered.

24) "Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted one with another" (Doctrine and Covenants 90:24).

33) But if ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, if ye do this, he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage. (Mosiah 7:33).

There will always be unexpected detours in our travel plans as we go through life. I believe this was part of the Lord's plan from the very beginning. I loved this little quote from a Church News article about the role adversity plays in our ever changing lives.

"If we follow the pattern of the living God throughout scripture, we must admit that adversity is *not* an unfamiliar guide. If this life is a school of learning, and adversity one of the greatest teachers, we can all plan on spending some time with this particular instructor."

(Church News, "Why did This Happen?" April 24, 2016).

"When we choose to have faith we are prepared to stand in the presence of God." (Elder Robert D. Hales, "The Voice of the Lord" October Conference, 2017).

I believe choosing to trust the Lord when adversity presents itself is key to being qualified to stand with him. In the thirty sixth chapter of Alma in the *Book of Mormon*, Alma gives to his son this advice:

3) And now, O my son Helaman, behold, thou art in thy youth, and therefore, I beseech of thee that thou wilt hear my words and learn of me; for I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day. (Alma 36:3).

We are blessed when we listen to the messages of prophets, seers, revelators, and others placed along our path to help us find the pieces in our individual puzzles. Sister Lisa Harkness reminds us that when we seek the Lord and trust Him completely, He will guide us as we follow his plan.

“Have the courage to look toward Him and receive His healing, transformative power, you can trust the Redeemer of the world. As the Lord said to Joshua, “I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” (Sister Lisa Harkness, BYU devotional, February 11, 2020).

As Alma taught, when we are troubled, we can depend on our Heavenly Fathers help, if we ask in faith.

13) And now the spirit of Alma was again troubled; and he went and inquired of the Lord what he should do concerning this matter, for he feared that he should do wrong in the sight of God.

14) And it came to pass that after he had poured out his whole soul to God, the voice of the Lord came to him saying;

15) Blessed art thou, Alma, and blessed are they who were baptized in the waters of Mormon. Thou art blessed because of thy exceeding faith in the words alone of my servant Abinadi.

16) And blessed are they because of their exceeding faith in the words alone which thou hast spoken unto them. (Mosiah 26: 13,14,16).

Trust and faith go hand in hand as we strive to stay steady on the path the Lord has provided for our journey back to him. These final, inspirational messages from the *Book of Mormon* prophet Mormon, are powerful promises for us today:

21) Behold, I say unto you that whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing, whatsoever he shall ask the Father in the name of Christ it shall be granted him; and this promise is unto all, even unto the ends of the earth.

27) O then despise not, and wonder not, but hearken unto the words of the Lord, and ask the Father in the name of Jesus for what things soever ye shall stand in need. Doubt not, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him.

37) And may the Lord Jesus Christ grant that their prayers may be answered according to their faith; and may God the Father remember the covenant which he hath made with the house of Israel; and may he bless them forever, through faith on the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.
(Mormon 9: 21, 27, 37).

Recognizing that trusting the Lord simplifies my life is such a huge blessing. It is truly my safety net when the puzzle pieces begin fall apart—and they *continue* to do so.

“Trust in the Lord, with all thine heart.”



Lead Me Into Life Eternal

“Submitting our will is at the heart of changing our nature. As we strive to submit our will to God’s—to think and live more like Him—we are transformed from the carnal to the spiritual man.”

Elder Tad R. Callister

Chapter 10

Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are Anxious to See Us Change Our Lives, and They Will Help Us When We Make the Choice to Be Righteous—Choose the Savior

Lead Me Into Life Eternal –Payson Utah Temple

*Lead me into life eternal By the gospel's holy call.
Let thy promise rest upon me; Grant me ready strength for all.*

*Father, all my heart I give thee; All my service shall be thine.
Guide me as I search in weakness; Let thy loving light be mine*

*Hear me as I pray in meekness; Let my strength be as thy day.
Give me faith, the greater knowledge; Father, bless me as I pray.*

This lovely LDS Hymn, number 45 with text by John A. Widstoe came to mind right away as I completed my sketch and got the ball rolling on another painting. I considered the song title for possible use for the Payson Temple painting, but it wasn't until several weeks into the project that a little miracle occurred which totally validated my first impression for this title. It was this message from the Lord that led to this title selection: Lead Me Into Life Eternal.

The Payson Temple was completed in June of 2015. We had recently moved to St. George and were on our way home after spending a few days with family and friends in Davis County. The open house tours for the temple were in session, and we visited the idea of attending the open house but then decided we really couldn't afford the time. However, as we neared Payson we had a change of heart and as a last minute decision, pulled off the freeway, drove to the temple, and joined the open house crowd.

Because we were traveling and had not really planned to attend, we were not in our Sunday attire. I remember feeling out of place and quickly scanned the crowd looking for others dressed in casual clothing. We saw several standing in line to view the inside of the temple in

their day to day attire but I still felt uncomfortable. I feel a deep reverence for temples and said a silent prayer asking the Lord to forgive me for not being properly dressed.

People who planned ahead to attend the open house, carried a reservation ticket, and those of us who just showed up were ushered to a holding line. This line was systematically funneled into the regular line just a few at a time in rhythm with the ebb and flow of the crowd. Although we felt a little penitent with our last minute decision, we were grateful they were accommodating drop-ins.

The temple interior was so amazing. We were in awe of the detail and craftsmanship throughout. The exterior architecture was beautiful and unique, featuring rounded columns and windows. I had followed the process as the construction progressed and was anxious to begin painting this temple. Attending the open house increased my desire to prepare for the challenge. Doubtful we would be coming north anytime in the near future, we recognized the opportunity and took advantage of our time at the open house to get the necessary painting photos.

The grounds were filled with hundreds of guests, and it was impossible to get a clear shot of the grounds and temple without our view being blocked by unaware visitors. We did our best given the situation and were blessed to get a promising photo standing on the northeast corner of the temple lot.

Safely back at home in St. George, I began the project. When I had completed the sky, I was elated. Things were working out well, and I thanked the Lord for helping me create a wispy cloud look in the sky. There was no doubt the Lord was again, "letting me hold the brush." The blue feathery sky is my favorite part of this painting.

Because my reference photo was littered with wonderful people it was difficult to sketch a literal plan for the landscape around the temple. There were many days I struggled to know

what to do and relied continually on direction from the spirit. The rounded walls I had so admired at the open house, were very difficult to accomplish. There were many do overs, and I recall feeling grateful for the forgiving nature of acrylic paint.

When at last the temple phase was completed, I realized that I had filled the canvas up with sky and temple leaving little room for forward landscaping. Once again, because my photograph was dotted with people, it was difficult to know what the actual landscaping looked like. I prayed for inspiration to create something that would complement this extraordinary building.

I could see pieces of a fence along the east of the temple but couldn't really decipher where it began and where it ended. There were sidewalks in almost every direction but knowing where they connected was still a guessing game with the limited view. When I stood back and looked at the painting, I was dismayed. It was obvious to me that my design had not created enough foreground space to give significant depth to the painting. I was at a loss as to what to do. The thought of starting over on this one just did not feel right, and I went to my knees to ask for help.

Many miracles have accompanied me on my journey, and once again, the Lord spoke to me. This time however, it was not just an impression, or a dream. I actually heard in my head, a gentle voice speaking to me; "Don't wall them out, welcome them in." At first, I wasn't sure what that meant, but as I studied the long iron fence painted across the front of the building, it became obvious to me. There was no gate, no opening to the temple, and no sidewalk leading the way to this temple of my Lord where eternal gates are open for those who enter. "Don't wall out, welcome them in."

I added a walkway on an angle with a wide opening. Almost immediately, the short space at the bottom of the canvas appeared to more than double in height. It was an optical illusion, but it worked beautifully. Distance was created and the path to eternal blessings was now clearly in place. Singing the song “Lead me Into Life Eternal” over and over during the painting process, now had *sacred* meaning for me. Lead Me Into Life Eternal became the perfect title for this piece.

This experience led me to an expanded understanding and appreciation for the lesson I learned. When we choose the Savior as our guide, He is anxious and ready to help us find our way back to Him. Every decision we make can be directed by Him if we, don’t wall Him out, but welcome Him in.

I believe Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are waiting with open arms to welcome each of us in. We have been blessed with so many sources of direction to help us find our way back if we are willing to be teachable. I love the Primary song number 164, “I will Follow God’s Plan,” included in the Children’s songbook. It was written by Vanja Y. Watkins and the words are inspiring.

*My life is a gift; my life has a plan.
My life has a purpose; in heaven it began.
My choice was to come to this lovely home on earth
And seek for God’s light to direct me from birth.
I will follow God’s plan for me,
Holding fast to his word and his love.
I will work, and I will pray;
I will always walk in his way.
Then I will be happy on earth
And in my home above.*

It requires work, faith, and prayer to “Choose the Savior.” Elder Neil L. Anderson defined the faith necessary to follow our Savior’s plan in this meaningful quote from His conference address:

“Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is not something ethereal, floating loosely in the air. Faith does not fall upon us by chance or stay with us by birthright. It is, as the scriptures say, “substance . . . , the evidence of things not seen.” Faith emits a spiritual light, and that light is discernible. Faith in Jesus Christ is a gift from heaven that comes as we choose to believe and as we seek it and hold on to it. Your faith is either growing stronger or becoming weaker. Faith is a principle of power, important not only in this life but also in our progression beyond the veil. By the grace of Christ, we will one day be saved through faith on His name. The future of your faith is not by chance, but by choice.” (Elder Neil L. Anderson, “Faith is Not by Chance, but by Choice” October Conference, 2015).

Repeatedly, Heavenly messages have come which make possible every step of the way in the painting of these temples. As I look back at the experience of each one, it is with a spirit of unbelief and reverence that I gratefully acknowledge that my hands were involved in the work. All glory be to God for this project. My faith, so very weak in the beginning, continues to grow each day as this sacred partnership with my Savior continues.

As the project evolved from painting to writing this book, I began to understand that for many days over the past eight years, I made choices. For example, for years I made the choice to get out of bed, go for a walk with my husband, and retire to my folding chair in the sunroom to paint for the rest of the morning. This choice over time, resulted in accomplishing my goal to paint the first seventeen operating temples in Utah.

Today, I made the choice to get out of bed, go for a walk, and sit down at the computer to work on this book. In time, this pattern will also lead to a completed project. I have faith that God will help me each day as I make the choice to move my feet.

Faith becomes more and more accessible as we choose to act. Many days, physical or emotionally crippling pain are apparent as I begin these sessions. At the end of these sessions, I am keenly aware that two, or sometimes three hours have lapsed, without the presence of the debilitating pain I often experience. This little daily miracle assures me the Lord is with me and increases my faith.

Heavenly Father is ready and anxious to help each of us in our righteous desires to change, grow, and progress. Choose to seek and hold on to this gift of Faith.

12) O be wise; what can I say more? (Jacob 6:12).

Alma speaking to his son Helaman as he entrusted the sacred records to him said:

44) For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land.

45) And now I say, is there not a type in this thing? For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ, if we follow their course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise. (Alma 37:44-45).

As in 1 Nephi 3:7, we can be assured that; "...the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."

33) But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33).

We are told through modern scripture in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, 58:26-27, that we are expected to do “. . . many things of their {our} own free will, and bring forth much righteousness,” and not wait to be asked to do good things.

Our agency and ability to make decisions is a blessing when we “Choose the Savior.” Elder Uchtdorf says it this way:

“Faith is more than belief. It is complete trust in God accompanied by action. . . . Faith yoked with consistent action fills the heart with kindness, the mind with wisdom and understanding, and the soul with peace and love.” (Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Just Shall Live by Faith,” April Conference, 2017).

In Ether chapter three we read the wonderful story about the faith of the brother of Jared. This story provides a pattern for each of us:

A situation presents itself where there is no readily apparent solution: no light in the vessels. In faith we ask for help to remedy the situation; the brother of Jared requests help.

We are required to act, to move our feet; the brother of Jared forms sixteen clear stones out of molten rock.

After doing all we can, we ask the Lord in faith to make up the difference; the brother of Jared, with total faith acknowledges that the Lord has all power and asks for the light to come. His faith in the Lord Jesus Christ moves the brother of Jared to action and is rewarded with great spiritual and temporal blessings.

9) And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them. (3 Nephi 26:9).

In these moments when our faith is tried and our situation seems difficult, it is important to remember the Lord is not doing this *to* us, but *for* us. Elder Hales gave us this pertinent message in His 2004 Conference address:

“When the challenges of mortality come, and they come for all of us, it may seem hard to have faith and hard to believe. At these times only faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his Atonement can bring us peace, hope, and understanding. Only faith that He suffered for our sakes will give us the strength to endure to the end. . .” (Elder Robert D. Hale, “Finding Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” October Conference, 2004).

Sometimes things happen in our lives that we do not understand. At these times, because we can't see what our Father in Heaven sees, we feel he is chastening us. This is often a prompting for change in our focus or behavior. When change is needed, our faith in Jesus Christ gives us the strength we need to choose to repent and return.

16) Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16).

I love Elder Holland's very bold and explicit words of wisdom, concerning repentance, and making eternally necessary changes in our lives:

“To disbelieve that we can change is clearly a satanic device designed to discourage and defeat you. When you get home tonight, you fall on your knees and thank your Father in Heaven that you belong to a Church and have grasped a gospel that promises repentance to those who will pay the price. Repentance is not a foreboding word. It is following faith, the most

encouraging word in the Christian vocabulary. Repentance is simply the scriptural invitation for growth and improvement and progress and renewal. You can change! You can be anything you want to be in righteousness...” Do not misunderstand. Repentance is not easy or painless or convenient. It is a bitter cup from Hell. But only Satan, who dwells there, would have you think that a necessary and required acknowledgment is more distasteful than permanent residence. Only he would say, ‘You can’t change. You won’t change. It’s too long and too hard to change. Give up. Give in. Don’t repent. You are just the way you are.’ That, my friends, is a lie born of desperation. Don’t fall for it.” (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “For Times of Trouble”, BYU Speeches, March 18, 1980).

Elder Callister wrote a wonderful book on the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I love the hope I recognize in this paragraph:

“As long as we have the slightest spark of repentance within us, Christ and his Atonement are standing in the wings, anxiously waiting to be summoned. The question is not whether the Savior paid the purchase price for all our sins—He did—but whether we are willing to avail ourselves of his sacrifice by repenting. (Tad R. Callister, The Infinite Atonement, page 102, 2000 Tad R. Callister, used by permission, Deseret Book Company.)

Repentance allowed, and initiated, brings about a transformation of our natures. We choose God’s will over our own. We change from the natural man to a contrite spirit. Elder Callister refers to King Benjamin’s address in Mosiah:

“King Benjamin taught that we transform our natures as we become “submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19). That key—to cheerfully submit our will to God’s will, however difficult or inconvenient it may be. Blessed with a

physical body, great knowledge and tremendous spiritual power, the Lord didn't pursue His own wants and desires. He said, 'For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.' (John 6:38). (Elder Tad R. Callister, "Our We Just Changing Our Nature?" Church News Feb. 16, 2020).

Elder Neil A. Maxwell gave this memorable observation as a valuable insight to all of us as we strive to choose our Savior.

"The submission of one's will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God's altar. The many other things we 'give' are actually the things He has already given or loaned us." (Elder Neal A. Maxwell, BYU Devotional Address, January 12, 1999).

In this same vein Elder Callister helps us understand the saving long term benefits to submitting our will to God's will.

"Submitting our will is at the heart of changing our nature. As we strive to submit our will to God's—to think and live more like Him—we are transformed from the carnal man to the spiritual man. And in that process, a refining and purification takes place that gives us the eternal perspective and spiritual stamina we need to make positive, lasting changes in our lives. Then, at year's end, we have not only made behavioral changes but character changes, and we become, as Peter said, "partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)—in fulfillment of our paramount goal in life." (Elder Tad R. Callister, "Are we just changing our behavior when we should be changing our nature?" Church News, February 16, 2020).

"Conversion is a process, not an event. Conversion comes as a result of righteous efforts to follow the Savior. These efforts include exercising faith in Jesus Christ, repenting of sin, being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end in faith." (The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*)

The Lord loves his children and is ready and waiting to bless us according to his will and our faith. We have our agency and can choose to believe in his love and mercy therefore qualifying for promised blessings, or we can choose to reject the gift and lose the blessing.

29) If thou art sorrowful, call on the Lord thy God with supplication, that your souls may be joyful. (Doctrine and Covenants 136:29).

This joy is made possible through the atoning sacrifice of our Savior Jesus Christ. I like to think that maybe the letters of the word JOY stand for what Jesus Offers You. Elder Hales teaches us how we become eligible to receive the blessings of this sacrifice so lovingly offered us.

“The Lord is the ultimate caregiver. We must surrender ourselves to the Lord. In doing so, we give up whatever is causing our pain and turn everything over to Him.” ‘Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.’ (Ps. 55:22). ‘And then may God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son’ (Alma 33:23). Through faith and trust in the Lord and obedience to His counsel, we make ourselves eligible to be partakers of the Atonement of Jesus Christ so that one day we may return to live with Him.”(Elder Robert D. Hales “Healing Soul and Body,” Ensign, January 1999).

19) And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end. (3 Nephi 27:19).

God gives us *agency* so we can learn; He lets us *learn* so we can change; He helps us *change* so we can return.

Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are anxious to see us change our lives, and they will help us when we make the decision to be righteous. I am so grateful for the many avenues of support provided to guide us home if we are willing to be teachable.

“Don’t wall Him out, welcome Him in.” Choose the Savior.



Be Still My Soul

“Our connection with heaven is the most valuable blessing we have and the most important one we can secure. It strengthens every worthy connection in our lives.”

Elder L. Whitney Clayton

Chapter Eleven

We Receive Personal Revelation When We Are Humble.

Alma 5:27, 28.

Be Still My Soul – Monticello Utah Temple

*Be still, my soul: The Lord is on thy side,
With patience bear thy cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change he faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: Thy best, thy heavenly friend
Thru thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

*Be still, my soul: Thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as he has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.*

*Be still, my soul: The hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul: When change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.*

What a beautiful message this song presents. It has always been one of my favorite melodies, and the text is so comforting for our times. The text was written in German by Katharina von Schlegel, and translated into English by Jane Borthwick, LDS Hymns number 124.

This song lives in an experience we had while obtaining a photo for this painting. It involved an amazing, *sacred* miracle which I would like to share with you.

For months we had looked for an opportunity to schedule a visit with some “lifelong” friends the Peterson’s, who live in Loa Utah. One day in the spring of 2018, we got out our Utah

State road map to assess the best way to get from St. George to Loa. We found that there were two ways to travel; one of them would take us through Monticello.

It had been on my radar for some time to make a trip to Monticello to take photos for the painting of that temple. Looking at the road map, we discovered, there are no short-cuts to get there. It would be a long seven hour journey each way, regardless of which route we chose.

Our plan evolved into a two-day mini vacation. We would leave on Friday and arrive in time to get evening photos of the temple. We would then stay overnight in Monticello making possible early morning shots as well. It was also our desire to complete a session at the temple while we were there. After the session on Saturday, we would make a loop to Loa to visit our friends before heading back home.

With this plan in mind, we contacted the Petersons. The timing was good for them, and they graciously invited us to stop for a visit and dinner that afternoon.

The drive was quite beautiful, flowing with color and fascinating rock formations. Lon and I really enjoyed this quality time together. As we moved closer to Monticello the weather changed from sunshine, to a sky filled with foreboding gray and dismal rain clouds. When we arrived, we attempted to take some pictures, but it was raining too hard. We stopped at a local restaurant for dinner and then retired to our motel for the night.

Early the next morning, we were up and dressed, hoping to catch a little sunshine. The sky was very dark, and the rain was still coming down. There was no chance to get early morning photos.

Waiting for a change in the weather, we completed a pleasant session for a couple of hours inside the beautiful temple. Walking outside after the session, we were greeted by an even

blackier sky and no sign of the sun. We took some pictures, but they were not what we needed for the painting.

It was then that our faith in prayer and in miracles prompted us to ask the Lord for his help. We stood near the street on the southeast corner of the temple lot and prayed together. “Heavenly Father, we have come a long way to get pictures of this temple for the painting. Could you please give us just a little sunshine on the temple so we can get the photo we need to to inspire the painting?”

Immediately looking eastward, we watched the heavy rain filled clouds part. The sun was bright and the temple behind us glowed with its reflected, glorious light. We each had a camera in our hands, ready to go. We took as many pictures as we could very quickly. Within moments, the opening in the clouds closed and the sun was gone. We felt a wonderful warmth all around us. We had witnessed a miracle, an immediate answer to our prayer.

“Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know His voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.” Telling this story even now, brings humble tears of gratitude. I believe our hearts must have been prepared to be worthy of this miracle. I hope to always retain the feeling and *remember* the lesson we so humbly learned that day.

When I painted the dark sky, it turned out a little lighter than it actually was. Other than that, the completed painting looks very much like the “miracle” photograph. We receive revelation when we are humble.

It is my opinion that our understanding of humility may sometimes be incomplete or misunderstood. Earlier in life, my own perspective of humility meant being quiet, or not letting anyone know when you did something good. While this thinking has merit and truth, it is my belief that there is an additional, deeper meaning to consider.

Doing good is never a problem. How we respond to that good, or maybe even great accomplishment in life, is the key. When we take all the credit for our accomplishments, and fail to recognize God's hand in our success, we become prideful. Pride has no home in humility.

3) And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich or poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.

5) And there were great and marvelous works wrought by the disciples of Jesus, insomuch that they did heal the sick, and raise the dead, and cause the lame to walk, and the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear; and all manner of miracles did they work among the children of men; and in nothing did they work miracles save it were in the name of Jesus. (4 Nephi 1:3, 5).

When hearts are right with the Lord, miracles can happen. Our talents, strengths, and all good comes through gifts from our Savior. Over the years I have learned, and then relearned when necessary, from this truth recorded in President Benson's Teachings:

“Beware of Pride – Are Ye Stripped of Pride? This is the warning voice of the Lord to us now, in our day. We have obtained so much control over the resources of the earth, so much understanding of the biology of life, so much capacity to travel and to communicate instantly that we have become ‘puffed up’ in our learning and our apparent control and power. (President Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” Teachings of the Living Prophets, Benson page 228).

Understanding that all we have and all we are that is good comes from the Lord helps us avoid falling into the spiritually dangerous waters of a prideful attitude. Elder Kim B. Clark defines so very well, “modern day” pride.

“Pride and its children—materialism, envy, arrogance, greed, thirst for recognition, and lust for control and dominion—have become rampant in our culture and society. Modern

Babylon is awash in pride.” (Elder Kim B. Clark, BYUI Devotional “Are Ye Stripped of Pride”, 2009).

There is no sin in a positive self-esteem. Every one of us is a valuable, capable, gifted son or daughter of God. When our focus is on Christ, self-esteem helps us build confidence as we strive to do good works. His light leads us to find those “heavenly gifts” waiting to be developed and shared.

The pitfall comes when our own *ego* gets in humilities way. We had a brother in our ward congregation say it in this way; “Ego stands for; Edging God Out.” If we allow our self-esteem to be fed by a belief that we are successful only because of our own hard work or efforts, we can quickly cross the line and lose sight of the source from which all blessings come.

“When your world spins out of control, remember who and what is constant.”

When pride and ego have moved us out of line from where we need to be, remembering who and what is constant, can help us regroup. No one likes to be corrected, but the Lord’s chastisement is often a loving call to action.

Early in the “Paint by Prayer” process, I wrote a chapter entitled “Good to Know”. This chapter comes from an on-going journal of sorts containing stories written about important life impressions. The earlier stories; The Shoe, Flying Non-Rev, and Saving Impatiens are also from this journal of chapters in my little book of life. These chapters of life extend throughout my earthy experience thus far. It has been very interesting for me to note as I read earlier chapters, the change in my perspective from time to time.

Most recently, preparing my thoughts about this Painting Lesson on humility, I had a chance to evaluate some past thoughts and feelings and clearly identify God’s hand creating a change of heart in me. I wish to share this chapter to illustrate the progression of my journey to

understanding humility. This story was written about half-way through the painting process of the seventeen Utah temples.

“Good to Know”

It is 2:49 in the morning and it has been a while since I wrote down my thoughts. The rain is falling gently outside and my thoughts are melancholy, but not sad, just reflective and I think important on some earthly/eternal scale.

I mentioned earlier to my sweetheart that I am feeling a conflict with my upcoming “life changes” right now. Many years ago, early in our marriage, we decided to serve a mission together after retirement. We recently received a call to the West Virginia, Charleston Mission. This is a Church Education Mission, and we will serve at the Southern Virginia University in the Institute Program. I am grateful for the call, but a little nervous about my responsibilities. With trust in the Lord however, I am confident blessings will come as needed if I do my part.

These early morning thoughts come from past experiences where I struggled to find a balance between *gratitude* for opportunities given me, and the sense of *loss* when goals fell short of my personal hopes and dreams.

For many years I was blessed with the gift of song. As a small child, my parents taught me to sing. My two older sisters and I learned as little children to trio-- singing in three parts-- and soon became program material for church, clubs, competitions, fashion shows and other community events.

As I grew older, many opportunities were mine because of this gift and I will be forever grateful for all of that. There were however, some personal goals that were never realized.

It is impossible for me to know what other people feel and experience, so for some, this chapter may seem ungrateful. I do acknowledge that my opportunities are unique and offered me satisfaction that may have been enough for others. I do not wish to minimize my thankfulness for the things I experienced for I have been truly blessed.

With years of work, study, experience, and some sacrifice on the part of parents and others in my life, my vocal capabilities progressed. There were times, not consistent, but very apparent, that something wonderful was being fed through me from above. These little moments instilled in me a deep desire to master my voice so I could consistently count on this quality of sound. Stemming from those moments, came goals.

For several years, I was blessed with the opportunity to sing with the Tabernacle Choir. This blessing came with some inconvenience to my family. I know some of them resented my time away, and I want those children to know that I appreciated the time and experience allowed me, and sincerely hope they can forgive me for taking this opportunity.

I want to record for my posterity, a few of these singing moments that were very personal to me during this time. These moments put me within almost touching distance of some goals I had created for myself with my vocal study.

The Tabernacle on Temple Square was built and in use long before the Salt Lake Temple was completed. Over time it has housed innumerable talents and programs. Over the course of my lifetime, I had many opportunities in one group or another, to sing in this historic building. One of my goals was to someday “solo” there.

When the Tabernacle Choir recorded the Christmas CD titled “Noel,” I had an audition to be a soloist for a number on this CD. I was selected as the backup for this recording. That meant that if the soloist chosen was unable to sing for the recording, or the concert that followed,

I would be the “fill in” person. I tried to sincerely pray for the soloist’s success but fell short on that one. I really wanted the chance to do this.

During those same years of experience, I studied private voice with Blanche M. Christensen, former soprano soloist for the Utah Symphony and a wonderful mentor and friend. During one of these lessons, my voice achieved a powerful new level of sound that was thrilling and begged repeating. When the moment passed, Blanch made this comment to her accompanist; “The funny thing is, she has no idea what it is she just did. If she had started earlier with me, she would have had a professional career.” I wanted desperately to develop the ability to consistently produce that sound.

At another time during those years, I had the opportunity to study in a small group with JoAnn Otley, professional soprano soloist and wife of the conductor of the Tabernacle Choir, Jerald Otley. The group was exploring the healing powers of singing. It was a combined vocal experience consisting of ten to fifteen members associated with the choir who gathered periodically in the Otley home in Holiday to be taught.

At the conclusion of one of these sessions, I asked JoAnn if she could help me secure the consistency I desired in my voice. Her answer was yet another defining moment for me. She said, “Jeannine, you have the talent. I have helped mothers like yourself work very hard to get career skills, and then held their hands and breaking hearts as their marriages and families fell apart. You have to decide what is most important to you.” I left her home that day praying I could do what the Lord would have me do, and realizing I was already very aware of what that was.

There were many rewarding singing moments still to come and it was a joy to be a vessel in the hands of the Lord for many years. It was with great sadness that I left behind that part of my life because of illness which permanently damaged my vocal cords and my lungs.

With this “almost made it” mentality, I was blessed with a second gift which, once again, has developed into some ambitious goals.

Painting these temples, I have felt privileged to be an instrument in the hands of the Lord. My goal is to paint all seventeen working temples in Utah and write a book for my grandchildren featuring images of the temple paintings, my testimony, and some text—not sure just what yet.

There has been a sense of urgency to complete this goal. Health and age restraints cause me to worry that time and capacity could leave me falling short of realizing this goal also. The mission is requiring me to take a break in the painting phase of my life and interestingly, moving me back into the singing phase.

My assignment at Southern Virginia University, is to work with the Institute choir. Although I trust it will be all right, it will be a new experience to conduct music classes with no singing voice.

The continuing perspective is still developing and has more to come, but for now, I am beginning to understand that goals not recognized in this life are not the end of the story. Eternity is out there with promise of *continued* talents and abilities in our eternal progression.

I am so thankful for the Plan of Salvation. Although I desire to complete my paintings and publish a book for my posterity, I realize we do not always get what we desire in this life. There is peace in understanding that when we fall short of our goals, eternal progression is still available to us. We can choose to stay on track to eventually achieve our righteous goals on an eternal scale. “Good to Know.”

Now, looking back at this story with added perspective, I recognize not only my own pride and ego, but also some enlightenment and correction from the Lord. Elder Christofferson explained this path of correction so beautifully in his Conference address in 2011.

“God uses another form of chastening or correction to guide us to a future we do not or cannot now envision but which He knows is a better way for us. If we are open to it, needed correction will come in many forms and from many sources. It may come in the course of our prayers as God speaks to our mind and heart through the Holy Ghost (Doctrine & Covenants 8:2). It may come in the form of prayers that are answered no or differently than we had expected. Chastening may come as we study the scriptures and are reminded of deficiencies, disobedience or simply matters neglected. Correction can come through others, especially those who are God-inspired to promote our happiness. Apostles, prophets, patriarchs, bishops, and others have been put into the Church today, just as anciently, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).” (Elder D. Todd Christofferson, “As Many As I Love, I Rebuke and Chasten,” April Conference 2011).

20) Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. (2 Nephi 31:20).

I love the joy and the energy of our LDS Hymn “Press Forward Saints.” The above scripture is the basis for the song with text by Marvin K. Gardner. The first line from each of the three verses provide a “roadmap” to personal revelation.

Press forward Saints, with steadfast faith in Christ,

Press forward, feasting on the word of Christ,

Press on, enduring in the ways of Christ,

(Press Forward Saints, LDS Hymns number 81).

As we press forward and step into the dark with faith, the light will come. Our connection with Heaven gives us the assurance we need to take that leap of faith when necessary. Elder Clayton helps us to better understand this connection.

“The connection that matters most, is the one shared with God, as individuals connect with God by making and keeping covenants. These covenantal connections to Him become the guideposts for our lives. They help us measure where we are on the strait and narrow path. They lead us to the fruit of the Atonement—forgiveness, peace of conscience, and love. As such, individuals should seek after everything that promotes the keeping of covenants. Our connection with heaven is the most valuable blessing we have and the most important one we can secure. It strengthens every other worthy connection in our lives.” (Elder L. Whitney Clayton, “Getting Started and Staying Connected” BYU Commencement April 21, 2011).

As we connect with heaven, we are prepared to change and grow. In the Doctrine and Covenants, chapter 98 , verse 8 we read:

8) “Verily I say unto you, all among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.”

A contrite heart is ready for progressive correction. It is the natural man in each of us that does not like to be corrected. However, if we trust in God and his plan for our happiness, we are more likely to see the wisdom in being willing to accept and grow from constructive criticism that may come our way. When we are willing to listen and act on correction, the Lord will guide

us and move us forward in a positive direction. When we fail to submit to correction, we limit help from the Lord which in turn could hinder our opportunity to grow.

In the “movie of my life” on the other side as I imagine it, I hope not to view a lot of opportunities to grow that I rejected because I was too proud or stubborn to listen or ask for help in response to the Lord’s correction.

“Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, in fact it is just the opposite.”

27) Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could you say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins?

28) Behold, are ye stripped of pride? I say unto you, if ye are not ye are not prepared to meet God. Behold ye must prepare quickly; for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand, and such an one hath not eternal life. (Alma 5:27, 28).

There is an evolution taking place in all of us as we are chastened by life’s experiences and work out our own salvation. I see now that the devastating loss of my voice led to blessings of both earthly and eternal importance. I am ever so thankful for my opportunity to paint, to write, and to learn from this painting lesson,

“Good to Know”.



Monument of Purity

Chapter Twelve

When We Receive Gifts From God—It is Not Only OK, But a Responsibility to Share Those Gifts.

Monument of Purity – St. George Utah Temple

Getting a satisfactory photograph to use as a model for the St. George Temple painting took several attempts. Because we live in St. George, these photo shoots were like a little date. My sweetheart and I would jump in the car and drive the ten minutes from home to take the pictures. We tried many distances and angles on different days and at varied times of the day resulting in lots of stops for ice cream cones but no suitable photos. The beautiful tall trees on every side of the temple adversely limited our photography options.

Praying for inspiration, I remembered there was a tall, five story medical building on the corner of the block south and east of the temple. We drove to the building, went inside and asked if it would be possible for us to take some pictures from the roof of the building. The answer was no for understandable liability reasons, and I went home feeling a little frustrated. We needed to get a photo above the trees and again asked for the Lord's help. I remember wishing we knew someone with a camera mounted drone.

A few weeks later it occurred to me that just maybe we could get permission to access the windows on the top floor of the medical building. A view from the fifth floor just might work. Because this is a patient residency floor, the nice lady at the front desk referred us to a human resource person who, after listening to our lengthy explanation, gave us permission to take the pictures. Lonni and I were able to make an appointment with the charge nurse on the fifth floor, and they were expecting us the next day when we arrived. A recording of this photo shoot would have been a great entry for America's Funniest Home Video. It was really very comical and we laugh when we remember it.

The best window access for the shot was in the middle of a common area where patients in wheelchairs were gathered. There was an up-right, antique piano in front of the window on one side. On the other end of the window was very large, sprawling, floor-to-ceiling rubber tree plant. This alone made the shot difficult, but there was yet another obstacle.

It was almost Valentine's Day, and there was a huge heart made of thick black wire and red lights on the outside of the building. This decoration was strategically centered like a picture in a frame, directly over the large window. It was beautiful all lit up at night, but blocked our clear view of the temple. Lonnn had to do some amazing acrobatic moves, climbing camera in hand between the "man eating" rubber tree plant and the piano to access the view. The good news is we were successful getting a suitable photo--black wire heart and all.

The St. George temple is very special to us not only because we live in St. George but because both my husband and I were called to serve as ordinance workers in this historic temple.

At the end of the training for this temple service opportunity, an individual interview with one of the matron's assistants was required for the women. This interview was to determine if the new sisters were prepared to begin their assigned responsibility rotation. When I entered Sister Dunn's office for my interview, she was at her desk studying a folder of historical information preserved from dedicatory records for the St. George Temple. She explained to me about the folder and commented on the informative reading experience. She then shared with me some interesting notes about the way this temple had been dedicated by progressive steps.

Apparently the pioneer saints who built the temple were hungry to be able to receive the sacred ordinances of the temple. In order to hasten the work, they dedicated each part as it was completed. This made it possible for the completed areas to become operational, even before the entire temple was finished.

I was in the final stages of painting this temple at the time of the interview and asked if she would be willing to let me borrow the dedicatory information when she was finished with it. My hope was to discover something that might inspire a title for this painting. Unlike some of the other titles that came to me early in the painting process, I had not yet identified a name for this almost completed beautiful white temple. I was pleased when she smiled and handed me the folder at the conclusion of my interview. I thanked her and found a quiet place to study the information during my unassigned time.

The first of these dedicatory prayers was offered by Elder Wells, a counselor to Brigham Young. His dedication was very specific and detailed. I remember reading that he dedicated the *foundation* to be resilient against the elements and grow stronger with time instead of decaying. I also remember that he blessed all parts of the building to last as long as was necessary.

This information is so interesting to me now, because at the time I am writing this, the temple is closed for a three year structural and internal renovation. The reports on the progress, as parts are removed and excavated, conclude that the edifice is in remarkable shape for a building completed in 1877. How amazingly strong the foundation still is today was specifically noted in the report.

Toward the end of this dedicatory prayer, Elder Wells dedicated the building to be a “Monument of Purity.” When I read these words, I was thrilled to realize I had been given a perfect name for this temple; Monument of Purity.

There are no colors on the exterior of this temple. It is beautifully white, white, and white. My constant prayer as I worked on the painting, was to find a way to give the walls, windows and steeple, depth and shape, while maintaining the glorious “Purity” the whiteness represents. Those prayers were answered.

As the temple is being remodeled, a new annex will be added to the northwest end of the temple. For the most part, the new construction on the temple will be somewhat obscured from the southeast view. From this angle the remodeled temple will still look much the same as the painting.

Gifts from our Heavenly Father are often given not for us alone but to be shared to bless the lives of all his children. This painting lesson; “When we receive gifts from God, we have a responsibility to share”, is a truth that has raised some personal, conflicting feelings throughout the painting process. Although I know that my ability to paint these paintings and write this book are gifts from God, I still struggle with knowing how to balance the sharing part with humility. It was a comment made by a friend that helped me put this into perspective.

The Fergusons, a delightful couple that served with us on our mission in Virginia, recently came to St. George to pay us a visit. We were reminiscing about the mission experience and catching up on current topics. The conversation eventually turned to my painting project. I showed them the painting of the St. George Temple still in production at the time.

There are a few of these temple paintings on the walls of our home. However, the majority are stored in a walk-in closet in our bedroom. They are quite large and framed, so they require a lot of closet space. It is much too hot in the summer in St. George to store paintings in the garage. When asked what I intended to do with them, I shared my testimony that I believed this project was entirely God given and directed. I explained that I hoped to find a way to share this blessing. They requested I show them some others that were not on the wall, so I retrieved two additional paintings from our closet. Discovering that they were all in the closet, Brother Ferguson made this comment: “I don’t think these paintings are blessing any lives sitting in your closet.”

His comment was a disturbing wake-up call. It gave me reason to reflect on my feelings about sharing the gifts we are blessed with. Later that day I found time to search the scriptures for some clarity.

8) And again, I exhort you my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many; and come from the same God. And there are different ways that these gifts are administered; but it is the same God who worketh all in all; and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them.

17) And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will.

18) And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that every good gift cometh of Christ. (Moroni 10:8, 17, 18).

There are many references in the scriptures about sharing the gifts of God. Some of these verses refer specifically to sharing the light of the gospel, but broader meanings to these scriptures may also apply. Not hiding our “light under a bushel, but putting it on a candlestick to give light to all in the house” and, “letting your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”, are two that came to mind. (Matthew 5:15-16). When we read the account in Alma, when Aaron rebukes Ammon, saying: “Ammon, I fear that thy joy doth carry thee away unto boasting”, we get this wonderful reply.

12) 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; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name forever. (Alma 26:11-12).

The struggle for me learning this lesson goes way back to childhood instruction from my parents about “Not tooting your own horn”. I believe early in life there was some confusion in my own understanding about what it means to be humble. This stumbling block I now see clearly in perspective may be an issue for others as well. It has been my observation that when someone creates or achieves something special, and is acknowledged by others, many of us tend to try to excuse or apologize away the recognition.

In the case of my own learning, it has been a light “switched on” to really understand that these are God’s paintings, made possible through His sustaining inspiration and direction. For me to respond to someone’s sincere complement with comments like, “Oh don’t look to close,” or, “They really aren’t that good,” is in essence, discrediting God’s work. Always remember the source of your genius. There is nothing wrong with finding joy in your accomplishments, as long as you share the joy and the credit. I loved Elder Anderson’s comments in his conference address centered on “spiritually defining” moments.

“Embrace your sacred memories. Believe them. Write them down. Share them with your family. Trust that they come to you from your Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. Let them bring patience to your doubts and understanding to your difficulties. I promise you that as you willingly acknowledge and carefully treasure the spiritually defining events in your life, more and more will come to you. Heavenly Father knows you and loves you!” (Elder Neil L. Anderson, “Spiritually Defining Memories” April Conference, 2020).

As our confidence is strengthened by our life experience, we become more intuitive and able to be a strength to those we meet along our way. When we see another’s need, we are better prepared to share or assist because we have a greater understanding of their situation.

Each of us have gifts the Lord has blessed us with. We have a responsibility to divide these gifts with others within our reach to help them along their journey. Years ago, after our sixth child was born, our family experienced a division of gifts which beautifully blessed our lives and will never be forgotten.

I had been very ill and needed a surgery that had to be delayed until two weeks after our baby was born. This was a painful procedure with heavy medication required. Following this operation I was unable to care for our newborn or our large family for almost three months.

It was just before the holidays at a time when a mother has so many additional holiday related responsibilities. Many people, including family, friends, and ward family, came forward and shared their gifts to relieve our desperate situation.

My sweetheart took care of Nathan, our newborn, during the night, and a loving sister in the ward cared for our tiny baby when Lonon left home to teach his Seminary classes each morning.

Someone built a cleverly designed Choo-Choo train which circled our carport, It was composed of railroad cars created using cases of canned goods. The engine for the train featured a tall round box of Quaker Oats representing the smokestack for this lead car. It was a thoughtful, clever gift and the groceries were a tremendous boost to our strained financial situation that season.

My sister-in-law made look alike Cabbage Patch style dolls as Christmas gifts for each of our six children. These dolls were dressed in unique brightly colored outfits with a matching pajama set sewn to fit each child. The doll even had hair the same color as the child it was intended for. This included a complete set for our new baby. It was such a beautiful labor of love.

Twin teenage brothers in our ward did a delightful “Twelve days of Christmas,” beginning with the delivery of a Christmas tree on “the first day of Christmas”. It was so much fun for all of the family. The children watched each day with great anticipation, to see what would magically appear on our doorstep for each verse of the song. We still display the remaining Christmas tree ornament representing “four calling birds” on our tree every year, in remembrance of the blessings of that special Christmas years ago. Although the brightness of this last calling bird has dulled with time, the memory never will. I can’t recall all twelve days, but I do remember that most of the gifts were things our family needed. The “Three French Hens” for example, were large frozen roasting chickens from the grocery store, with individual name tags saying, “My name is Brigitte, Simone, or Clarisse” attached to each French hen.

This was a difficult time for our family, rescued with joy and unselfishly delivered through the service of many who saw a need and acted upon it.

There is a song that came to mind as I prepared this chapter. It was another song my sisters and I sang as a trio in our youth, and then again in subsequent choir settings. The words of the song are a poem by John Donne, put to music arranged by Edwin R. Fissinger. The words relevant to this chapter read:

*No Man is an Island,
No Man stands alone,
Each Man’s joy is joy to me,
Each Man’s grief is my own.
We need one another,
So, I will defend
Each Man as my brother,
Each Man as my friend.*

What a blessing it is for both giver and receiver when we listen to the promptings of the Spirit to help the Lord “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.” (Doctrine and Covenants 81:5).

As in the poem, we each “defend” one another in many ways. There are so many incidents recorded of valiant men and women in our history which inspire us to share our gifts. We can ask for and receive direction as to when and where these gifts are needed. Sister Julie B. Beck offers this perspective:

“The ability to qualify for, receive and act on personal revelation is the single, most important skill that can be acquired in this life. . . It requires a conscious effort to diminish distractions, but having the spirit of revelation makes it possible to prevail over opposition and persist in faith through difficult days and essential routine tasks . . .When we have done our very best, we may still experience disappointments, but we will not be disappointed in ourselves. We can feel certain that the Lord is pleased when we feel the Spirit working through us.” (Julie B. Beck, *Daughters in My Kingdom*, p.158).

Multitasking through our routine day can pull us away from our good intentions to accomplish other eternally important things. There is a constant selection process occurring within our limited time. Setting aside gifts waiting to be developed because we view them as not of eternal priority is, in my opinion, erroneous. I believe all gifts are intended to be nurtured and shared. There are so many ways to use these talents to bless others. Feelings of guilt for taking the time to develop and share God given gifts may paralyze inherent creativity and hinder our eternal progress.

Give yourself a little credit for what you do with your God given talents. You are strong and capable. You make a positive impact on those you interact with and “defend” every day.

“Remember when you look at how far you have to go, that you also remember how far
you’ve come.”

It is OK for us to share our gifts. They are given in love from our Heavenly Father and shared through the gifts of our Savior Jesus Christ. We become instruments in God's hands by developing and then sharing those blessings He has so freely given us.

Accept with joy the "responsibility" to develop and share your personal strengths and eternal gifts.



Praise to the Lord



Glory to the Lord

Chapter Thirteen

Today I Am an Artist – With My Savior, I Can Do All things-- Give All Glory and Gratitude to the Lord.

Praise to the Lord – Cedar City Utah Temple

Glory to the Lord – Vernal Utah Temple

*Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!
Join the great throng, Psaltery, organ and song,
Sounding in glad adoration.*

*Praise to the Lord! Over all things he gloriously reigneth.
Borne as on eagle wings, safely his Saints he sustaineth.
Hast thou not seen How all thou needest hath been
Granted in what he ordaineth?*

*Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy way and defend thee.
Surely his goodness and mercy shall ever attend thee.
Ponder anew, What the almighty can do,
Who with his love doth befriend thee.*

*Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me adore him!
All that hath breath, join with Abraham's seek to adore him!
Let the "amen" Sum all our praises again,
Now as we worship before him.*

This hymn, "Praise to the Lord," was sung at the dedication of the Cedar City Temple, December 10, 2017. The text was written by Joachim Neander and translated by Catherine Winkworth, LDS Hymns number 72. Because we live in the same "neck of the woods" as the Cedar City Temple, we were invited to participate in the dedicatory ceremony relayed to our chapel in St. George. We also had the privilege of attending the open house for this temple. It is beautiful inside and out and has the most unusual steel blue roof. Our photo shoot for the painting of this temple is a pleasant memory.

We left home early in the morning hoping to capture the light of the rising sun on the temple. There is a large hilly, natural landscape area opposite the temple on the southeast. Our day turned into a great hiking adventure.

We parked the truck along a trail and split up. Lonnn went one direction and I in the other. We climbed through sagebrush and Cedar trees trying to make the most of our limited photography skills. It was a perfect spring day and the tulips and daffodils around the temple were at the peak of their beauty. The morning sun created nice shadows on the south side of the temple. I was grateful for these shadows when I started doing my sketch.

After our hiking experience, we drove around and looked for a place to get photos from the north side of the temple. We found a vacant lot among the beautiful homes on a hill northeast of the temple. We parked the truck, and I got out with camera in hand. Walking down the hill of the vacant lot looking for a good view, I noticed a man working in his back yard a few yards from where I was standing. "Can I help you?" he asked politely. I explained that I intended to paint the temple and was looking for a good view for photographs. He told me I was on his property. Feeling a little alarmed, I apologized and started to leave. What happened next was a pleasant surprise. "If you want a really great view", he said, "come in and get a shot from our balcony."

I motioned toward the truck for Lonnn to join us. We introduced ourselves, and this man took us inside his lovely home. The balcony was in the rear of the home. We walked through the house, into a bedroom, and onto a large deck where there was indeed, an incredible view of the temple. We were able to get some very nice pictures from the balcony. After thanking him for his hospitality, we requested his mailing information, promising to send him a print of the temple painting when it was completed. Although we did not choose the balcony angle for the

painting but instead, selected a close up shot from the south, the photo shoot that day was a joyous memorable experience.

The painting lesson, “With my Savior, I can do All Things,” refers to an on-going life lesson. In every phase of life, I have been blessed through the love, gifts, and sacrifice of my Savior Jesus Christ. This lesson has been repeatedly reinforced and defined throughout each part of the painting experience.

Praise to the Lord seemed a perfect title for this painting, not only because the hymn was performed in the dedicatory services for this temple, but also because this entire project, (the paintings and the writing of this book), come with a testimony filled with gratitude for the inspiration. All Glory to the Lord, I am so very aware of my own limitations. Here is a little story to illustrate:

I saw a funny card in the store but didn’t buy it. Later that day, I decided I would go get the card for my friend who needed a good laugh. Unfortunately, when I returned to the store the card was no longer there. The card was made up of two basic stick figures. One was holding a straight stick and the other was missing its central line or its “back.” The card read, “Don’t worry, I’ve got your back!” Returning home, I decided this card was so simple, perhaps I could duplicate the idea in a homemade version of the card for my struggling friend. After a couple of unsuccessful tries to draw a stick figure, I called her on the phone to visit, instead of sending a card.

On my own, I can’t draw a convincing stick figure. “Paint by Prayer,” is a heaven guided step at a time process. Although I have gained some skills as each new challenge presented itself, my testimony is firm that all glory belongs to the source from which all blessings come. Without the constant direction from the Holy Spirit, this entire project would not be possible.

The roots of my understanding that, "God can help us do all things", began developing many years earlier in my life. Although this realization has been enhanced by this project, the ideas were planted early in our marriage.

Before I learned to say, "Today I Am an Artist," I learned to say, "Today I Am a Baker." The memory of this early baking experience came to mind recently, as I was planning a meal for some guests.

We were having our neighbors over for dinner, and I dashed to the store to buy my favorite frozen roll dough. Because of the Corona virus scare things have been a little sparse, and there was no frozen dough of any kind in the store. Really wanting fresh, warm bread for our menu, I thought of another solution. I realized that although a number of years have lapsed since making my own bread, (you know, the thing where you put the yeast in a cup of warm water and a little sugar to get it growing), I could make rolls without dough from the store. Creating rolls for dinner that day brought back some valuable memories.

People tell me sometimes that I am a good cook, but that definitely was not always the case. I clearly remember (if clearly is possible at my age) the first time I attempted to make rolls from scratch.

It was my husband's first teaching position after graduating from Utah State University. We moved to a remote, wonderful little place called Randolph Utah to teach music. Referring to Randolph, my husband would always say: "It isn't the end of the earth, but you can see it from there." It had been some time since the schools in the area offered music classes of any kind, so the experience was a "from scratch" situation in many ways. Teaching music from the ground up was challenging.

There was only one dine-in restaurant in the small town, and we discovered right away that it served the best hot rolls and cinnamon buns we had ever experienced. As providence would have it, the woman the school suggested would be a great accompanist for Lonnn's newly formed choir, was also the multi-talented baker of the restaurant rolls. She became a true friend, and helped us in so many ways, but for this story, she was my mentor, my "roll angel".

We were expecting our first baby, due just a few months after we moved to this new location. I was very large, uncomfortable, and tired. I remembered someone telling me that making bread was as "easy as pie." I decided one morning to take it on and went to work.

Because I had a mother who was an excellent pie maker I surmised, if it was easy as pie, surely I could make bread. I pulled out my cookbook and did my best to follow it exactly. However, those who know me well might tell you that I almost never carefully measure anything and I may have made some errors by guessing. My bread was dry and hard and terrible. It actually was so bad that it ended up in the garbage. Being in my last weeks of pregnancy I was emotionally unstable. I remember crying and feeling very sorry for myself.

I was raised with parents who taught us, "If you fall off the horse, you get right back on." We did not actually have a horse when I was at home, but I got the message. I also was instructed by many faithful leaders that prayers about anything, are heard and answered. I decided to give prayer and bread another try.

In answer to my prayer, Gayle Argyle (my roll angel), listened to my plight and came to my rescue. She walked me step by step through the process of making not only edible, but eventually, very good bread. Because she lived on a ranch some distance out of town, the coaching took place over the phone. It took some practice, but over time and with her help and much prayer, I was successful.

What transpired during that cooking lesson was far more than just the blessing of being able to make bread. Yes, I did use this skill to make eight loaves of bread at least once a week to feed seven growing children over the next many years. But more important, it was the beginning of another insight that has blessed many endeavors throughout my life. I learned to say with confidence before beginning a task, “Today, I Am a Baker.”

When you make a positive declaration of your goal and bring the Lord into your plan, you *can* with faith do all things. I am reminded of the great faith of Nephi in his declaration:

50) And I said unto them: If God had commanded me to do all things I could do them. If he should command me that I should say unto this water, be thou earth, it should be earth; and if I should say it, it would be done.

51) And now, if the Lord has such great power, and has wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it that he cannot instruct me, that I should build a ship? (1 Nephi, 17:50-51).

In my scriptures I have written with my red pencil just below this verse, under “build a ship” the words, “or paint a temple.” I don’t recall when in the painting process I wrote it, but it is so meaningful to me. Right above the verse in the top margin I also wrote; “God can help us do anything!”

This lesson has evolved through many opportunities in my life. Bringing the Savior into any endeavor makes all the difference. Once you choose to do something, make a plan. Ask God to help you. Don’t listen to others negative opinions about your ability. Satan wants us to believe we are not smart enough, or brave enough, or good enough to step out of our comfort zone and shine.

It helps proclaim your trust in God to say out loud, “Today I Am an Artist.” I learned to say “Today I Am an Author” and sit down at the computer and start to write. If I sit down at the piano and say, “Today I Am a Composer,” the music comes. You can accomplish, with God’s help, whatever worthy endeavor you choose to pursue.

In a recent stake conference this comment was made: “You have this life because you are strong enough to handle it.” I love this encouraging thought, and I *believe* it. I also know where that strength comes from. Gratitude is so key to our progression. Recognize the Hand of the Lord in all things you do, then express your gratitude and give all glory to him.

One of my favorite ways to put into perspective our need for gratitude is studying King Benjamin’s address to his people in Mosiah chapter 2. It reminds me that everything we have and everything we can become is made possible by the Lord.

23) And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him.

24) And secondly, he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast?

25) And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you. (Mosiah 2:23-25).

Step into the darkness with faith that the light will come. The Lord is there to guide our every step, but we must be *willing* to move our feet. Do what you can in your little space. Trust that you have great gifts and can do all things with God’s help.

In Alma chapter 26 there are some very relevant verses that come often to mind when reflecting on the Lord's gifts.

8) Blessed be the name of our God; let us sing to his praise, yea, let us give thanks to his holy name for he doth work righteousness forever.

11) . . . I do not boast in my own strength, nor in my own wisdom; but behold, my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God.

12) 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; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name forever.

Again, 1 Nephi chapter 17 is such a great example for us. In this story Nephi is asked to build a ship; he doesn't question, but rather, asks for instructions:

9) And I said: Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?

12) Yea, and how is it that ye have forgotten that the Lord is able to do all things according to his will, for the children of men, if it so be that they exercise faith in him? Wherefore, let us be faithful to him. (1 Nephi 7:9, 12).

13) I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Philippians 4:13).

Believe you can. Start somewhere. It has been a great lesson for me to learn that when there is something I would like to try to accomplish, the very first step is the hardest. Don't worry too much about getting it perfect. Remember the Lord values your effort as well as the outcome. If you don't get it right the first time, God will always give you another opportunity to learn.

Each time I start something, it is with some trepidation. Those self doubting, inadequate, unqualified, I am not good enough thoughts, come back again and again. Repeated trusting in the Lord, has helped me in the past and continues to help me overcome this weakness in my character. Taking that first step is always the leap of faith God requires of us to allow him to be on board for whatever goal we desire to achieve.

There is an important reason for grouping two temples together in this painting lesson. “Praise to the Lord,” and “Glory to the Lord” are thoughts deeply embedded in this painting lesson book. I know without a shadow of doubt that, although I continue to doubt myself from time to time, this entire project has been inspired, directed, and accomplished only with the Lord’s constant help.

Glory to the Lord - Vernal Utah Temple

The Vernal Temple was an interesting challenge for me. The original structure was the old Uintah Stake Tabernacle Building in Vernal Utah. When President Joseph F. Smith dedicated this Tabernacle in 1907 he prophesied, “I would not be surprised if the day will come when a temple will be built in your own midst here.” The building was renovated to become a temple of our God and dedicated on November 2, 1997.

My husband’s family owned a small cabin that we loved in Beaver Springs Ranch, a few miles east of Oakley Utah. We were spending some time there in the summer of 2018 and decided to take a road trip from there to Vernal. Vernal is not on the way to anywhere our family routinely goes. It was our destination only for the purpose of obtaining photos for the painting of this temple.

We studied the map and expected the journey to be accomplished easily in one day.

Because of narrow winding roads, road construction, and resulting slowed speed limits, it took a long, long, *long*, time to get there. The drive was interesting and new to us and although it took the entire day to get there and back, it was well worth the time and effort.

Upon arrival, we parked our car and took a walk around the block to assess the light and photo possibilities. There are high brick walls, or tall cast iron fencing in close proximity to the temple on all sides. This created a challenge to procure an adequate photograph. We took many pictures from various vantage points.

Returning home to St. George, we studied the pictures. The winning photograph was taken from the southeast corner of the temple lot. Although part of the temple structure is obscured by a brick wall, we selected this less traditional view because we felt inspired by the breathtaking light on the tower and the Angel Mornoi.

The painting's title, "Glory to the Lord", was inspired by a beautiful soprano solo included in Rob Gardner's, Lamb of God production. While we were serving our mission at SVU, the music department did a magnificent performance of this work on Easter Sunday. The title of the solo is "Gloria," but the words are; "Gloria, Glory to The Lord." This music moves me to tears every time I hear it. The student who sang it at SVU had such a marvelous voice. When I heard her sing this solo, my soul rejoiced.

Earlier, my vocal skills would have allowed me to sing this song and I wanted desperately to once again have the ability to feel the joy of singing "Glory to the Lord." There is a great sense of loss when I remember those singing sensations that I can no longer create in mortality. I have hope that in the next eternal phase of my progression when my voice is restored, I might have opportunity to sing just once, this beautiful song to my Savior. But for now, I'm grateful to be able to listen to others sing it and hold that hope in my heart.

16) Therefore, let us glory, yea, we will glory in the Lord; yea, we will rejoice, for our joy is full; yea we will praise our God forever. Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy, and of his long-suffering towards the children of men? Behold, I say unto you, I cannot say the smallest part which I feel. (Alma 26:16).

President Monson helps us understand how important it is to always recognize the Hand of the Lord in all we do. In His October Conference address of 2010 he said this:

“Gratitude is a divine principle. The Lord declared through a revelation given to Joseph Smith: ‘Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things . . . And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things’ (Doctrine & Covenants 59:7, 21). In the Book of Mormon we are told to “live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which [God} doth bestow upon you’ (Alma 34:38). Regardless of our circumstances, each of us has much for which to be grateful if we will but pause and contemplate our blessings.” (President Thomas S. Monson, “The Divine Gift of Gratitude,” October Conference, 2010).

Sincerely giving thanks not only helps us recognize our blessings, but it also unlocks the doors of heaven and helps us feel God’s love. Recognizing and being grateful helps me put my blessings and my trials into perspective.

“I heard someone once say when asked if their glass was half empty or half full, that they were just thankful they had a glass.”

I have always been inspired by that twist of wisdom. Elder Bednar taught us how to feel a greater appreciation for our blessings by channeling our prayers.

“Let me recommend that periodically you and I offer a prayer in which we only give thanks and express gratitude. Ask for nothing; simply let our souls rejoice and strive to communicate appreciation with all the energy of our hearts.” (Elder David A. Bednar, “Pray Always,” October Conference, 2008).

This quote from Elder Bednar taught me a valuable lesson about gratitude. It took some restraint in the beginning and a little practice to pray in this way, asking for nothing. Doing so however, has helped me gain this testimony: God *already* knows what I need and what my challenges are. It brings me great peace to offer, occasionally, a prayer expressing only my eternal gratitude for my blessings.

Gratitude is something that I feel ever so much stronger than at previous times in my life. There is reason every minute of every day to be thankful for lots of little things. There will always be something that needs to be improved, fixed or discarded. However, being thankful for what is good and stable, and for the opportunity to make changes when needed, is such a blessing.

If we fail to find happiness in circumstances as they are in the present with hope of things being better in the future, we lose the value of life’s precious moments and they only come once. There is always something out there to hope for. Love the moment you have now and experience every drop of joy you can squeeze out of whatever worthwhile thing you are doing right now.

Time is moving faster than ever before for me. There are many things I would like to accomplish. Discovering that when I try something new, the hardest part of doing it is just getting started, has been a valuable lesson for me. Dwelling too much on all the reasons to wait to begin a new challenge, is much harder than just jumping in and trying it. Finding time to say,

“Today I Am an Artist,” happens when I get the canvas and paints to the table and sit down and pick up the brush. Opportunities come and go too quickly. God has given every one of us a multitude of things we can do, or learn to do, if we just quit thinking about it and begin.

Each time I start a new project, the memory of divine help with past projects, gives me courage to move ahead into the unknown. I have never written a book, but with the Lord’s help, many positive things have happened in my life. I have no reason to doubt that same assistance will be available for me as I move forward.

I am so grateful for the confidence this painting lesson has offered me.

“Today I Am an Author!”



The Lord Is My Light

“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 unto you.”

Doctrine and Covenants 88:63

Chapter Fourteen

God is a God of Miracles—Appreciate the Little Miracles

The Lord Is My Light – Brigham City Utah Temple

*The Lord Is My Light, then why should I fear?
By day and by night, his presence is near.
He is my salvation, from sorrow and sin.
This blessed assurance, the Spirit doth bring.*

*The Lord is my light, though clouds may arise,
Faith, stronger than sight, looks up thru the skies.
Where Jesus forever in glory doth reign.
Then how can I ever in darkness remain?*

*The Lord is my light, the Lord is my strength.
I know in his might I'll conquer at length.
My weakness in mercy he covers with power,
And, walking by faith, I am blessed every hour.*

*The Lord is my light, my all and in all.
There is in his sight no darkness at all.
He is my Redeemer, my Savior, and King.
With Saints and with angels his praises I'll sing.*

*Chorus
The Lord is my light; He is my joy and my song.
By day and by night he leads me, He leads me along.*

This beautiful hymn with text by James Nicholson, LDS Hymns number 89, was with me for weeks as the Brigham City Temple painting evolved. The words and music were an inspiration and kept me focused on the *miracle* that was happening right before my eyes. The Lord Is My Light seemed to me a fitting title for this painting.

It makes me smile when I remember the trip we took to Brigham City to get our photo shoot for this temple. My sister Jill and her husband Dennis live near the temple. We made arrangements with them to stay overnight at their beautiful home, hoping to get the pictures we desired early in the morning just as the sun peeked over the mountains to the east.

When we arrived in Brigham City in the late afternoon, Lonn and I did a little scouting to discover where we could get the best angle for the morning photo shoot. We knew before coming that could be a challenge because the Temple sits on a very flat plain in the middle of the valley. We recognized it might require a little miracle to obtain the close-up picture we desired.

We stopped at locations on every side, studying this beautiful temple from various distances but could not find a suitable photography view. Our scouting adventure included stopping to ask some roofers working on a house two blocks east of the temple if they had a clear view from the top of the roof on which they were standing. Unfortunately the workers indicated that trees blocked their ability to see the temple clearly.

Later, however, our little miracle was provided, beginning with a unique idea that blessed our photo shoot. Dennis had recently purchased a large new truck with a double cab. He retrieved a very tall step ladder from his garage which just fit in the back of the truck. The idea was to use the elevated truck bed combined with the tall ladder to create some height advantage.

We piled into the truck at about 7:30 the next morning, ladder loaded, and began our quest for photographs. The sky was very dark, signaling the forecast for heavy morning rain. We realized we would need to be extremely efficient to accomplish our photo shoot goals ahead of the predicted cloudburst.

With a short but sincere prayer for God's help, the four of us moved quickly from one location to another. Dennis drove the truck and at each stop, Lonn positioned himself on the very top of the ladder, towering over the cab. Watching his struggle to stay balanced as he clicked the camera created some very tense moments for me.

There is a gas station on the corner just north and east of the temple. We noticed that there was a little rise behind the station giving us just enough elevation, with the truck and the

ladder, to clear the roof of the building and provide a perfect view. We were in position just as the sun reached an ideal angle permitting the temple to glow against the black, rain filled sky behind it. Our efforts were rewarded with a breathtaking shot taken just in the nick of time as the huge raindrops began to plummet.

There is a good chance anyone who observed us that morning may have concluded we were a little crazy. They could not have understood that a miracle was taking place. Thank you, dear Lord for little miracles.

The painting lesson “God Is a God of Miracles” was first noted and recorded in my earlier story: “He Let Me Hold the Brush.” This was the story about my experience with the first Salt Lake Temple painting. Since that time, there have been little miracles almost daily as each new temple painting was accomplished. There is so much joy and satisfaction resulting from the constant companionship of the Spirit of the Lord. The joy experienced creates a sense of need similar on some level with addiction for me.

I understand addiction on a small scale because I love chocolate. I am aware that I crave it and eat too much of it. When I allow myself to have it--I need chocolate! This comparison may seem almost irreverent, but having this close connection with the Lord day after day, became a beautiful kind of addiction. Each time I felt the hand of the Lord guiding my hands as I painted, I experienced joy and gratitude for that divine help. I need my Savior!

Even now as the paintings are completed, I recognize I still desire to continually have this peaceful closeness with His Spirit. This closeness invites miracles.

9) For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?

11) But behold, I will show unto you a God of miracles, even the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and it is that same God who created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are.

15) And now, O all ye that have imagined up unto yourselves a god who can do no miracles, I would ask of you, have all these things passed, of which I have spoken? Has the end come yet? Behold I say unto you, Nay; and God has not ceased to be a God of miracles. (Mormon 9:9, 11, 15).

Miracles are possible through faith in the unchanging, ever present blessings our Savior provides for us. His promises are afforded to every one of us if we are prepared to participate in that partnership with Him. Elder Uchtdorf gives us a simple recipe for this preparation.

“If we will only have the courage and faith to walk in His Path, it will lead us to peace of heart and mind, to lasting meaning in life, to happiness in this world, and to joy in the world to come. The Savior is “not far from every one of us.” We have His promise that if we seek Him diligently, we will find Him.” (Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Church Education System Devotional, January 13, 2013).

21) Behold, I say unto you, that whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing, whatsoever he shall ask the Father in the name of Christ it shall be granted him; and this promise is unto all, even unto the ends of the earth. (Mormon 9:21).

Elder Donald L. Hallstrom defines a miracle as a “beneficial event brought about through divine power.” He teaches us the importance of faith in the process.

“Often we describe a miracle as being healed without a full explanation by medical science or as avoiding catastrophic danger by heeding a clear prompting. However, defining a *miracle* as “a beneficial event brought about through divine power that mortals do not

understand” gives an expanded perspective into matters more eternal in nature. This definition also allows us to contemplate the vital role of faith in the receipt of a miracle. Moroni taught, “Neither at any time hath any wrought miracles until after their faith.” Ammon proclaimed, “God has provided a means that man, through faith might work mighty miracles.” The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith, “For I am God, . . . and I will show miracles . . . unto all those who believe on my name.” (Elder Donald L. Hallstrom, “Has the Day of Miracles Ceased? October Conference, 2017).

19) “And if there were miracles wrought then, why has God ceased to be a God of miracles and yet be an unchangeable Being: And behold, I say unto you he changeth not; if so he would cease to be God; and he ceaseth not to be God, and is a God of miracles.” (Mormon 9:19).

From my limited perspective, each painting conceived and completed represents a miracle because this gift was God given and received by faith. It is my belief that any righteous goal we attain in this life where the hand of the Lord is recognized as the source constitutes a miracle. These verses in Moroni chapter seven, give credence to this belief.

26) And after that he came men also were saved by faith in his name; and by faith, they become the sons of God. And as surely as Christ liveth he spake these words unto our fathers, saying: Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you.

29) And because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased: Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men.

33) And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me. (Moroni 7: 26, 29, 33).

President Monson blessed us with his teachings on faith and miracles in his 2014 conference address.

“We were not placed on this earth to walk alone. What an amazing source of power, of strength, and of comfort is available to each of us. He who knows us better than we know ourselves, He who sees the larger picture and who knows the end from the beginning, has assured us that He will be there for us to provide help if we but ask.” (President Thomas S. Monson, “We Never Walk Alone,” October Conference, 2014).

We have the promise: “Pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good.” (Doctrine & Covenants 90:24),

We do not walk alone in our journey of life. Our Savior is beside us and aware of our needs, hopes, and desires. Often his little miracles come through the love and service of others we meet along our path. I wrote a little story about some little miracles which each occurred resulting from a previous incident. These little miracles happened within a time period of one week while serving our mission at Southern Virginia University. I titled this little story: “Ring of Love.”

Ring of Love

The student was a little nervous. I guessed it might be her first time to teach a Relief Society lesson. I can’t recall her name, but she was beautiful, very tiny, and I thought to myself that she resembled my sister Jill. Somehow, the lesson topic slips my mind, but I do remember where the card came from.

As part of her lesson she asked us to take out our mobile device and send a short message of love to someone on our phone list. I sent my message to my grandson Brayden. She handed

us a note card and asked us to write on the front of the card the message just sent, and on the back, any impressions that came to us during the lesson. At the close of the meeting, I tucked this card in my purse, and forgot entirely about it.

It was such a delight to work with the Institute Choir. One of the very first students I met at SVU was a lovely girl who became a dear friend. She brought her younger sister to choir the first semester and added a second sister the next semester who recently returned from her mission. It was at a sister trio rehearsal for, “In this Very Room” a musical number for our upcoming Easter concert, that these lovely girls became a part of my miracle story.

Unknown to our students, my heart had been very heavy for several days because of a difficult situation back home with one of our children. That story is for another day, but the morning of this rehearsal, my mind was full of worry about my child. The back to back Saturday morning ensemble schedule had been emotionally taxing. These three sisters were the last ensemble on the morning schedule. I just needed to hold it together for one more group.

Nicole, the first of the sisters I met, had accepted an invitation to serve as our choir president. She was a joy to me and always gave me a hug when I saw her. I had previously informed her that these hugs saved me from getting too homesick. Today however, as the session ended, the hug triggered a release to my stress and I started to cry. This wasn't just a tear or two that could be excused as something in my eye, but more like the dam breaking as the shower came in an embarrassing outburst of emotion. Mortified by my loss of control, I explained briefly about my back at home situation and got the most beautiful response from Nicole. She asked if she and her sisters could offer a prayer for me.

I have a firm testimony of the power of prayer but have never had such an unexpected, sweet offering as I listened to these young sisters circled around me praying for my peace and comfort. This blessing became the foundation for another miracle.

Later that same week, my husband and I attended a forum on campus and were spiritually fed by an inspirational address from a visiting authority. Temperatures change dramatically in Virginia and it turned cold and windy while we were warm inside. Neither of us had thought to bring a coat. There were materials needing to be picked up from an adjacent building and delivered to the Institute after the forum. My sweetheart, who is always concerned for my comfort insisted I go ahead to the Institute only a short walk away, while he collected the materials. I had a flyer to prepare, and so I really appreciated the extra head start minutes.

As I walked up the street against the wind, I recognized a very nice lady who works on campus pulling up beside me. Rolling down the window of her car, she offered me a ride to the Institute. With the humidity factor in Virginia a strong wind can make the chilly air go right through you, so although it was actually further to get to the Institute by car than to walk as the crow flies, I welcomed the shelter of her warm car. It only saved me a few minutes to ride rather than walk, but those added minutes resulting from a small kind gesture, made the next little miracle possible.

Almost immediately as I entered the Institute building an elderly woman who I did not recognize came to our office door. Inside our office, she introduced herself to me and said she was looking for Sister Jones, the Institute Secretary. I had noticed Sister Jones at the forum and encouraged the woman to have a seat and wait a few minutes for her to return. However, she was in a hurry, and asked me to relay a message which I wrote down and left on the desk for Sister Jones.

Within minutes after leaving me, the woman was back at my door looking very distressed. After inquiring what the problem was, she explained to me that a ring belonging to her great Grandmother was missing. In her agitated state, she scanned my desk as if looking for this ring which she described as a black oval with a carved, ivory cameo. She was apologetic about caring so much about a material thing, but noted that it was more important to her than about anything she owned.

She recalled as she arrived being aware of the ring on her finger as she pulled the heavy Institute door open against the force of the wind. She commented to me that she jammed her finger as the ring caught the weight of the door. Therefore, she was *very* sure it had come off somewhere *inside* the building.

I asked her where she had been inside the building and offered to help her retrace her steps. For the next several minutes we combed the very limited area which included the restroom. We even sifted through the waste bin to make sure the ring had not inadvertently been dropped with her paper towel.

As I walked with her down the hall to the foyer where she had entered the building, she crumpled onto the sofa and began to sob, shaking almost uncontrollably. Recently blessed with a kind prayer circle from three young sisters, I was inspired to ask her if I could offer a prayer for her. She agreed, and I put my arm around her shoulders and asked our Heavenly Father to help her feel at peace and know that everything would be all right. I assured her that our loving Father knew where the ring was, and that he would comfort her. She left the building still sobbing, and I hurried down the long hall and back to our office to work on my flyer.

Passing the water fountain, a distinct impression came into my mind. A voice in my head spoke clearly: “go back and check around the water fountain.” I was so excited by the message

that I practically sprinted the short distance back, and was not at all surprised to see that black and white cameo ring on the floor, in the corner under the fountain. It was an awkward reach and I was thankful no one was in the hall as I bent to pick it up.

I rushed to the door to see this lovely sister walking some distance down the way. I called out to her and she turned and waited for me as I ran toward her with her little treasure held securely in my hand.

Out of breath, I stammered an explanation about the message from the Lord. I indicated that it was truly one of God's little miracles. Her reply was, that to her; it was a huge miracle. Although it was still very cold and windy outside as we parted, I was filled with warmth and joy through the love of my Savior.

Returning to the office, I opened my purse looking for a paper with a phone number that I needed to set an appointment. A small note card slipped from my purse, falling to the floor. As I picked it up, I recognized it as the message card from the previous Relief Society lesson.

The words of the back of the card read:

Find someone every day to strengthen.

Always remember the power of prayer.

Be more thankful for the Holy Ghost.

Appreciate the little miracles.

Choose the Savior

The ring of kindness was completed with this "love note" to me from my Heavenly Father—I felt so very blessed! Often small acts of kindness and love make possible God's little miracles.

Faith, prayer, and miracles are present in many of our cherished scripture stories.

In Alma chapter thirty-seven we read about the Liahona and how faith was necessary for Lehi and his family to experience the saving direction given from the ball.

40) And it did work for them according to their faith in God; therefore, if they had faith to believe that God could cause that those spindles should point the way they should go, behold it was done; therefore they had this miracle, and also many other miracles wrought by the power of God, day by day.

41) Nevertheless, because those miracles were worked by small means it did show unto them marvelous works. They were slothful and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence, and then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey. (Alma 37: 40-41).

President Benson and our scriptures teach us that through faith in our Heavenly Father, we can find hope for the future, optimism in our present tasks, and inner peace.

“We will all have disappointments and discouragements—this is just a part of life. But, if we will have faith, our setbacks will “be but a small moment” and success will emerge out of our seeming failures. Our Heavenly Father can accomplish miracles through each of us if we will but place our confidence and trust in Him.” (Ezra T. Benson, Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: p.71).

12) For if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith. (Ether 12:12).

We also have reference to the faith of Alma and Amulek, Nephi and Lehi, and Ammon:

16) Yea, and even all they who wrought miracles wrought them by faith, even those who were before Christ and also those who were after.

18) And neither at any time, hath any wrought miracles until after their faith; wherefore they first believed in the Son of God. (Ether 12:16,18).

President Monson gives us other scriptural examples that demonstrate that faith comes before miracles can occur.

“Faith precedes the miracle. It has ever been and shall ever be. It was not raining when Noah was commanded to build an ark. There was no visible ram in the thicket when Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. Two heavenly personages were not yet seen when Joseph Smith knelt and prayed. First came the test of faith—and then the miracle. Remember that faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other. Cast out doubt. Cultivate faith.” (President Thomas S. Monson, “The call to Serve,” Ensign, November 2000, p. 48).

In Moroni chapter 7, he asks if miracles have ceased, have angels ceased to appear, and other questions. His answer:

37) Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain. (Moroni 7:37).

Believing and seeking often opens the door for the Lord to bless us.

63) 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 unto you.

64) Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you that is expedient for you. (Doctrine and Covenants 88:63-64).

When we seek the Lord in faith, his promises are sure. I am so thankful for the little miracles that have occurred in my life. Not only the painting miracles but also many other positive assurances that when we knock doors will be opened for us.

Recognize and appreciate the little miracles that occur throughout life. They are “love notes” from your Heavenly Father.



Millennial Day

“Those who make this world a better place, one caring and loving act at a time, and who strive to live the blessed, satisfying, and peaceful life of a disciple of Jesus Christ are those who will eventually find joy.”

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Chapter Fifteen

Line Upon Line – Becoming a Disciple of Jesus Christ.

Millennial Day – Jordan River Utah Temple

From the very onset of this project, the gift has been given literally, “Line Upon Line.” The lesson learned comes with an incredible realization of a parallel between painting temples one stroke at a time and, the one choice at a time process of becoming a disciple of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The title Millennial Day, selected for this art piece, was inspired once again by a familiar hymn, “The Day Dawn is Breaking.” The text was written by William Clegg, LDS Hymns number 52.

*The day dawn is breaking, the world is awaking,
The clouds of night's darkness are fleeing away.
The world-wide commotion from ocean to ocean,
Now heralds the time of the beautiful day.*

*In many a temple, the Saints will assemble
And labor as saviors of dear ones away.
Then happy reunion and sweetest communion
We'll have with our friends in the beautiful day.*

*Still let us be doing, our lessons reviewing,
Which God has revealed for our walk in his way.
And then, wondrous story, the Lord in his glory
Will come in his power in the beautiful day*

*Then pure and supernal, our friendship eternal,
With Jesus we'll live, and his counsels obey.
Until every nation will join in salvation
And worship the Lord of the beautiful day*

*Chorus
Beautiful day of peace and rest,
Bright be thy dawn, from east to west.
Hail to thine earliest welcome ray,
Beautiful, bright, Millennial Day.*

On a crowded timeline, we once again found a few days we could spend with our family in Kaysville. It is a five hour drive each way which cuts into our quality time with our kids, and especially the grandkids. In addition to our visit, we hoped to carve out a little time while we were in the vicinity to accomplish a photo shoot for three more temples.

Early Sunday morning we made a decision to use the hours before our afternoon church meetings to take the pictures I needed. Our daughter was desperate for some personal space without the constant demands from little children, so we loaded car seats and a two and four-year-old in pajamas into our car and were on our way. Our goal for the morning was to have some one-on-one time with the kids as we made a loop around the valley to get pictures of the Jordan River, Oquirrah Mountain, and Draper Temples.

Because it was Sunday we were dealing with locked gates which created a bit of a challenge to obtain photographs of the Jordan River Temple. This Temple is on a very busy street and every entrance to the temple was protected with tall black iron fencing. Because we were unable to access the temple grounds, there was no safe place to let the kids run free. Consequently, I stayed in the car with the little ones while Lonni handled the photo shoot.

With the limited access I was doubtful we could get the photo I needed for this painting. As I watched my sweetheart cross the busy street and take shots from the middle of the road I found myself offering a little prayer that he would not get run over and that we might get enough reference material to start painting this temple when we returned to St. George. It was a pleasant surprise to see what showed up on his phone camera screen—very nice and full of possibilities.

We moved on, to the other two temples where open access allowed the kids freedom to experience the temple grounds with us as we took our pictures. This was both more fun and

productive with no limiting fences around the Oquirrah Mountain or Draper Temples. We had a joyful morning with the kids and came away with great pictures of children and temples.

Safely back home in St George the work began. I excitedly completed my sketch and penciled in a skyline for the top of the Jordan River Temple. Identifying this skyline gives me a sense of where the top of the tallest spire will be positioned on the canvas. This helps me determine where to paint brilliance in the sky, allowing the statue of Moroni to shine. Throughout the process, the words from the Hymn “The Day Dawn is Breaking” kept coming to mind. The song ends with the words, “Beautiful bright, Millennial Day.” Eventually I made the choice to title this painting, Millennial Day.

After a few weeks of progress on the painting I realized that there were words engraved on a section of a wall on the front right hand side of Temple. Looking at a relatively small photograph, I was unable to read what the words said. From my past experience I knew those words probably included the name of the Temple. Also, most of the temples have the words, “Holiness to the Lord, The House of the Lord,” written somewhere on the temple walls or the grounds.

I have a large, hand-held magnifying glass that I like to refer to as my “Sherlock”. I often use Sherlock to help me see more clearly small details in a photo my eyes can’t decipher. However, this magnification did not help at all this time. Because these are all fairly large canvases, I recognized there was a great possibility the writing on that wall would be legible in the painting. Looking ahead I was very aware that at some point it would be paramount for me to know what the writing on the wall said, word for word.

After multiple painting days I completed all the trees surrounding the wall and filled in other background as best I could. It was time to complete the mystery wall. It occurred to me

that the Temple Department of the Church might be able to give me the information I lacked, so I gave them a call. There was a pleasant, helpful voice on the other end of the line who agreed to review the files for the Jordan River Temple to see what she could discover for me. After a few minutes time, she apologetically told me she had been unable to find any material that satisfied my question about the wall. She offered to transfer me directly to the Jordan River Temple office.

The transfer was completed and once again, the office staff was very kind, but no one knew what the writing said. They connected me to the temple Recorder, expecting he might have an answer for me about the “writing on the wall.” He was very accommodating but admitted to me that he also did not know exactly what the wording was. He offered to take a picture of the wall with his phone during his lunch break and e-mail it to me. I was elated and thanked him for his kindness and help in the matter. I did not hear back from him that day and was hesitant to call again as not to interrupt the work of the temple. I told myself I needed to be patient.

Our daughter Mandy does beautiful pencil sketches. Previously, she had helped me with several temples, drawing small, measured to scale angels which look like the ones in our photos. I use each tiny sketch as a model to paint an Angel Moroni on the tall spire gracing each temple which features an angel. As I waited for the information from the Temple Recorder, I asked her to do her sketch for this temple so I could complete the spire while I waited. She did it, but something did not look right. It appeared that one arm was holding the trumpet and the other one was bunched up. We extended the arm out to the side and I liked that much better and painted it that way. Moroni looked magnificent and I was pleased with the outcome.

At this point, there was no way I could go any further on the painting without obtaining the information about the wall. I was at a complete stand still.

Feeling a little like a squeaky wheel, I picked up the phone and was once again connected with the Recorder. He kindly explained he had sent the e-mail with a picture attached and was surprised it had not been received. He suggested he could send it again, this time in a text. Thanking him again for his effort on my behalf, I watched in great anticipation for the text to arrive. Still, no messages came. I couldn't understand why two attempts had failed, but clearly, I would not bother him again about the wall.

Computers and the Internet are a mystery to me. I know how to type a document and look through the e-mail, but beyond that, not much. My sister says I am a "Technitard." I remembered a friend telling me she could find almost anything on Google. Out of sheer desperation, I moved myself out of my comfort zone and courageously clicked on Google. It was more than a little intimidating.

Once on board, I typed in LDS Temples and to my amazement, there they were! I found the Jordan River Temple and clicked on it. Wonder of wonders; not one, but four photos magically appeared. One of these was a great shot of the "wall of unknown words" and I could clearly read every part of it. The wall reads: "The House of the Lord, Holiness to the Lord, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Jordan River Temple."

What transpired next was a little miracle. Right below the temple pictures, where I couldn't possibly miss it, was a short list of temple trivia. The third fact listed about this temple reads, "It is one of five completed temples where the Angel Moroni is holding the gold plates." Of course I didn't know it, but the Lord knew. If the message had come through from the Recorder, I would never have discovered that the reason the arm of the Angel Moroni looked

bunched up, was because he was holding a Book of Mormon. I said a little prayer of gratitude and repaired the Angel to be as close to the way God designed it as possible. It was a “Beautiful, Bright, Millennial Day.”

The Spirit of the Lord is available in even the smallest details when we seek Him. My awareness of this “Spirit of light” has grown with the painting of each of these temples. Finding this Light of Christ line upon line in our lives is much like the process of painting a temple.

Because I studied business and music in college, and not art, I am dependent on inspiration and common sense to know what comes first, next, and last in the painting process. It makes sense to me that whatever in the photograph is furthest away, must be painted first. Line upon line, layer upon layer, the evolution from a bare white canvas to a completed painting takes place. The canvas fills up from the top down. Tiny things, like a blade of grass or leaves in the foreground of the painting, will be much larger and more detailed than those further away.

As we go through life, our perspective changes. Because we experience line upon line spiritual and intellectual development, we see things we may not have previously noticed with more clarity as we progress. The foreground of our lives has a richer, more defined content because of our increased knowledge and light. Elder Uchtdorf’s message, “Bearers of Heavenly Light,” teaches all of us that we are entitled to this light.

“The Light of Christ fills the universe. It fills the earth—and it can fill every heart. His light is available to all—great or small, rich or poor, privileged or disadvantaged. If you open your mind and heart to receive the Light of Christ and humbly follow the Savior, you will receive more light. Line upon line, here a little and there a little, you will gather more light and truth into your souls until darkness has been banished from your life.” (Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Bearers of Heavenly Light,” October Conference, 2017).

Section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants gives us more insight to the Light of Christ on the *canvas* of creation:

6) He that ascended up on high, also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth;

7) Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made.

8) As also he is in the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made;

9) As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made;

10) And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand.

11) And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;

12) Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space. . . .

13) The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (Doctrine and Covenants 88:6-13).

The light of Christ enables us to progress and learn line upon line as we each strive to complete our canvas of life. In the General Conference of 2012, we learn from Elder Daniel L. Johnson line upon line building steps to become a disciple of Christ.

“Making the covenant to be a disciple of Christ is the beginning of a lifelong process, and the path is not always easy. As we repent of our sins and strive to do what He would have us do and serve our fellowmen as He would serve them, we will inevitably become more like Him. Becoming like Him and being one with Him is the ultimate goal and objective—and essentially

the very definition of true discipleship.” (Elder Daniel L. Johnson, “Becoming a True Disciple,” October Conference, 2012).

Line upon line throughout our journey, choices are made which define us. I love this bold statement from Sister Harkness about meaningful choices:

“Choose to stand and be not moved from the roots of your faith and the source of revelation. Stand and be not moved from the blessings of your covenants. Stand and not be moved from the work our Father in Heaven has sent you here to do,” (Sister Lisa Harkness, BYU Devotional, Feb. 11, 2020).

As Sister Harkness taught us, our path to become a disciple of Jesus Christ is strewn with choices.

I saved an article from the Church News entitled, “Habits of the Humble” from 2017. It was very well written and has been beneficial to my understanding of discipleship. This paragraph from that article simplifies what we must do:

“To be accepted by Christ and become one of His disciples, we are required to have the ability to change. Ours is the pathway to improvement and not the quest for the pleasures of the world. We must repent. We must sacrifice our own desires for the will of God.” (Church News, “Habits of the Humble” March 26, 2017).

Doctrine & Covenants 45:32 reads: “My disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved.” When we become aware of our weakness and acknowledge need for change as we move through various cycles of our lives, we progress as disciples of Christ. We become worthy to stand in Holy Places.

It has sometimes been a painful process to recognize faults in my own behavior as I seek heaven’s help to make necessary changes. In second Nephi there is a fun little unintended word

pattern someone pointed out to me. The verse talks about staying on the path and making essential changes to become “spiritually minded.” Look for the beginning letter of the last five words in this verse, it may make you smile.

39) O, my beloved brethren, remember the awfulness in transgressing against that Holy God, and also the awfulness of yielding to the enticings of that cunning one. Remember, to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually-minded is life eternal.

SMILE – 1 Nephi 9:39.

The path to becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ is long and requires constant spiritual nourishment. President Uchtdorf instructs us to be patient and diligent as we continue to seek this path.

“Too often we approach the gospel like a farmer who places a seed in the ground in the morning and expects corn on the cob by the afternoon. When Alma compared the word of God to a seed, he explained that the seed grows into a fruit-bearing tree gradually, as a result of our “faith, and [our] diligence, and patience, and long-suffering.” It’s true that some blessings come right away: soon after we plant the seed in our hearts, it begins to swell and sprout and grow, and by this we know that the seed is good. From the very moment we set foot upon the pathway of discipleship, seen and unseen blessings from God begin to attend us. But we cannot receive the fullness of those blessings if we “neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment.” Knowing that the seed is good is not enough. We must “nourish it with great care, that it may get root. “Only then can we partake of the fruit that is “sweet above all that is sweet, and . . . pure above all the is pure” and “feast upon this fruit even until [we] are filled, [we] hunger not, neither shall [we] thirst.” (President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Way of the Disciple,” Ensign, May 2009, p. 76-77).

This thought caused me to consider what I am cultivating? How am I implementing the light of Jesus Christ in my life to help me become a disciple of Christ? Elder James E. Faust identified five Christ-like characteristics of a disciple of Christ.

1. Jesus “went about doing good.” (Acts 10:38)

“We can all do something good every day—for a family member, a friend, or even a stranger—if we will look for those opportunities.”

2. Jesus was the Good Shepherd who watched over His sheep and had concern for those that were lost.

“We can seek out the lonely or those who are less active and befriend them.”

3. Jesus had compassion.

“We too can have compassion. We are reminded in the Book of Mormon that we are ‘to mourn with those who mourn’ (Mosiah 18:9).

4. Jesus bore witness of His divine mission and of His Father’s great work.

“We can all stand as witnesses of God at all times” (Mosiah 18:9)

5. Jesus invited “the little children to come unto {Him}” (Mark 10:14)

“Our children need our attention and love as well as our care.”

“Discipleship brings us comfort in times of sorrow, peace of conscience, and joy in service—all of which help us to be more like Jesus.” (Elder James E. Faust, “Discipleship,” October Conference, 2006).

Our Savior Jesus Christ taught us not only by words but through actions. Elder Ballard shared this defining statement:

“The Love of the Savior is an active love. It is not manifested through large and heroic deeds but rather through simple acts of kindness and service.” (Elder M.Russell Ballard, “Finding Joy Through Service” April Conference 2011).

Active love may be as simple as trying to find someone to strengthen every day. My sweetheart has always been such a great example of simple acts of kindness and service to me, our children, and grandchildren. He quietly finds little things to do that mostly go unnoticed by the recipients of his service. I appreciate these constant acts of service and love over many years of our marriage. As our children have grown and had families of their own, it is wonderful to hear comments from time to time indicating that they have noticed their Dad doing many things as close as he can to the way the Savior would do them. Service requires not only love but action. Sharing of our resources includes more than just our material blessings. Sister Cheryl A. Esplin explained what some of these resources might be in her Conference message in April 2016.

“All of us can incorporate some service into our daily living. We live in a contentious world. We give service when we don’t criticize, when we refuse to gossip, when we don’t judge, when we smile, when we say thank you, and when we are patient and kind. Other kinds of service take time, intentional planning, and extra energy. But they are worth our every effort. Perhaps we could start by asking ourselves these questions:

- Who in my circle of influence could I help today?
- What time and resources do I have?
- In what ways can I use my talents and skills to bless others?

What might we do as a family? (Sister Cheryl A. Esplin, “He Asks Us to Be His Hands,” April Conference, 2016).

Little things done in quiet ways often bring joy to both giver and receiver. President Uchtdorf said it best:

“Those who are a little kinder, a bit more forgiving, and a touch more merciful are the merciful who will receive mercy. Those who make this world a better place, one caring and loving act at a time, and who strive to live the blessed, satisfying, and peaceable life of a disciple of Jesus Christ are those who will eventually find joy.” (President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “A Disciple’s Life,” Ensign, August 2017).

Our Millennial Day can come to us line upon line as we strive to emulate the attributes of our Savior Jesus Christ and strengthen each other. I am so grateful for light and insight personally obtained through this painting lesson.



Everlasting Beginnings

“Our anchor is the hope our Savior provides. We can depend always upon his light. This light helps us focus on what really matters.”

Chapter Sixteen

Hope is Our anchor—Hang in There! Everlasting Beginnings – Draper Utah Temple

The photo shoot for this temple was shared with two beautiful little grandchildren, Grayson and Maggie. Still dressed in their pajamas, they explored the maze between the raised planters, as my husband and I took some quick pictures of the Draper Temple early on this lovely Sabbath morning.

Our granddaughter Hannah was soon to be married in this beautiful Temple so I was anxious to get started on the painting. My hope was to complete it in time to give the happy couple a framed canvas copy as a wedding gift.

Someone made this comment: “The temple is a place for Everlasting Beginnings.” I cannot remember where I heard the phrase, but it came to my mind as I the painting progressed. I felt that Everlasting Beginnings was the an ideal fit for the title for this painting.

It has been my observation that a pattern surfaced in the progression of every one of these paintings. They each began with an almost giddy excitement as I completed my sketch and actually started to paint. The sky always came first preceded by a short prayer that went something like this: “Dear Lord, please help me to make a believable sky.”

Next, came the outline of the temple and background markers for mountains and other skyline features. All background identified, the work on the temple began with an expression of gratitude for help with the sky, and a prayer that this temple might be a thing of beauty and inspiration for all those who seek peace.

Somewhere after days or often weeks of progress, I found myself at a place where I tried to rush the work. This always resulted in setbacks. Instead of moving the work forward, it

halted my progress for a time or moved it into reverse. I remember saying to my husband at least once on every painting, “I think I have just ruined this one.” This comment was followed by washing brushes and leaving my work for days and, sometimes weeks, in the beginning.

Recognizing this repeated scenario, it occurred to me that I knew what to do about it; I needed to get myself back in line with the spirit. The next time this pattern surfaced, I was able to make spiritual corrections, reduce the time gap, and get on with the project. Bottom line on this lesson is we all get discouraged when things don’t go the way we hoped or expected they would. One of Satan’s greatest tools is discouragement. He prompts us to dwell on our mistakes and believe our situation is hopeless. President Benson left us with better advice.

“There is a tendency for us to lament our losses, about decisions that we have made that we think in retrospect were probably wrong decisions. There is a great tendency for us to feel badly about the circumstances with which we are surrounded, thinking they might have been better had we made different decisions. We can profit by the experience of the past. But let us not spend our time worrying about decisions that have been made, mistakes that have been made. Let us live in the present and in the future.” (Ezra T. Benson, *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church*, 1988, p. 387).

Because from the beginning of this project I knew that things progressed only when I was aligned with the spirit, I was blessed to recognize these setbacks as just that. It was two steps forward and one step back followed by three steps forward and two steps back, eventually culminating in the realization of my goal.

Often in the progress of a painting there was a point when I would ask God to help me identify whatever needed correction so that this work could proceed. This was not always related to paint, canvas or brushes. Sometimes I just needed to put it all aside to take care of

preparation for my primary lesson or give my family attention and let them know they were loved. It became increasingly more obvious to me that I often let the project become priority over equal or eternally more important matters. Many times, over the eight years it became a matter of repentance before I was able to get back on the path and proceed with the painting.

The great eternal sacrifice of our Savior makes it possible for us to repent and put our feet securely back on the path he has provided for our return. What a great blessing this is for our mortal experience. I am deeply grateful for the lesson that this, “Anchor of Hope,” is available to us because of gifts from and through our Savior’s love. I love this thought from Sister Mary N. Cook about anchors:

“An anchor is defined as something “that provides stability or confidence in an otherwise uncertain situation.” Your testimony will be your anchor and will give you the confidence to stand “steadfast and immovable” in keeping the Lord’s commandments in an uncertain world.” (Sister Mary N. Cook, “Anchors of Testimony,” April Conference, 2008).

This lesson helped me acknowledge that little everyday efforts to do the will of our Savior and strive to follow his example strengthen my anchor and bring me closer to the “Heavenly gift” which is peace and hope. (4 Nephi 1:3). Our anchor is the hope our Savior provides. We can depend always upon his light. This light helps us focus on what really matters.

“Always remember that you matter, you are important, and you are loved, and you bring
to this world things no one else can.”

All of us share in the blessings of this light. President Uchtdorf helps us understand the value of this gift.

“Light, allows us to see things as they really are. It allows us to discern between truth and error between the vital and the trivial. When we are in the light, we can make righteous choices based on true principles. When we are in the light, we have a perfect brightness of hope because we can see our mortal trials from an eternal perspective.” (Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Bearers of Heavenly Light”, October Conference, 2017).

Moroni speaks of the “sufficient hope” we require to guide us back home.

3) Wherefore, I would speak unto you that are of the church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ, and that have obtained a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord, from this time henceforth until ye shall rest with him in heaven. (Moroni 7:3).

Sufficient hope comes from choosing good over evil through the light of Christ.

19) Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the Light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ. (Moroni 3:19).

President Thomas S. Monson taught us to appreciate the gift of hope and the direction his light provides for our journey.

“Like a bright search light of truth, His gospel will direct our journey along the pathways of life. Oh how blessed are we to have this never dimming, always glowing hope and the eternal knowledge that belongs to us and that we share with the world: that the gospel has been restored to earth, that God lives, that Jesus is His son, our elder brother, our mediator with the Father, our Lord and our Savior, God’s greatest gift to us.” (President Thomas S. Monson, “God’s Gifts to Polynesia’s People,” Conference Report, October, 1966).

Lehi’s vision of the tree of life, depicts man’s frailties that sometimes if not checked, pull us off the path and away from the iron rod and into the mists of darkness. Although we may

desire to follow the plan, sometimes, because of our poor choices we become temporarily blind to God's ever present light.

Elder Uchtdorf testifies of God's light as a meaningful resource for hope.

“There may be some among you who feel darkness encroaching upon you. You may feel burdened by worry, fear or doubt. To you and to all of us, I repeat a wonderful and certain truth: God's light is real. It is available to all! It gives life to all things. It has the power to soften the sting of the deepest wound. It can be a healing balm for the loneliness and sickness of our souls. In the furrows of despair, it can plant the seeds of a brighter hope. It can enlighten the deepest valleys of sorrow. It can illuminate the path before us and lead us through the darkest night into the promise of a new dawn.” (Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Hope of God's Light,” *Ensign*, May 2013).

One of my greatest blessings in life, was raising seven wonderful children. Being a parent to that many kids gave me ample opportunity to need this anchor of hope. Here, is a simplistic example: Seven individual spirits behave in seven different ways. Just when you think you are beginning to figure out how to best address a certain behavior, you realize that the same approach that worked for one child, has no effect at all on another.

My life-line in parenting, marriage, career, managing a home and yes, even painting temples, is my hope in our Savior Jesus Christ. Without this sustaining beakon, the daily ups and downs could prove overwhelming for me. President Eyring gives us this assurance that God is aware of our situation and is always there for us:

“... There is another improvement I am confident will come. Families across the Church are searching for ways to strengthen and protect their children against the evils around them. In some cases those parents are desperately trying to bring back some in their family who

have wandered. I am confident that there will be, increasingly, a reward given by God for their efforts. Those who never give up will find that God never gave up and that He will help them.” (President Henry B. Eyring, “The True and Living Church,” Conference, April, 2008).

There is great gratitude in my heart for the promises we are given; that we have heaven’s help in raising our families. When we exercise faith and are obedient to the laws and ordinances provided for our safety and happiness, that help is readily available to us. Elder Steven E. Snow defines hope through our Savior Jesus Christ in his 2011 Conference Address:

“When Nephi prophesied of Jesus Christ at the closing of his record, he wrote, “Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men” (2 Nephi 31:20). This “perfect brightness of hope” of which Nephi speaks is the hope in the Atonement, eternal salvation made possible by the sacrifice of our Savior. This hope has led men and women through the ages to do remarkable things. . .” (Elder Steven E. Snow, “Hope,” Conference, April, 2011).

Even the most faithful disciple will know difficult times. Our trials do not define us as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is my belief that what we do with those trials, and how we respond to and endure our challenges, qualifies us. In all things we face in our experience here on earth, we can depend on our Savior’s unchanging anchor of hope. This hope gives us reason to rejoice.

35) Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were men that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding; he comprehendeth all things, and he is a merciful Being, even unto salvation, to those who will repent and believe in his name.

37) Now my brethren, we see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his bowels of mercy are over all the earth. Now this is my joy, and my great thanksgiving; yea, and I will give thanks unto my God forever. Amen. (Alma 26: 35, 37).

12) 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 yea are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall. (Helaman 5:12).

Our LDS Hymn, “How Firm a Foundation,” number 85, text by Robert Keen, is based on the above scripture. The first verse reads:

*How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said,
Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled.*

I am eternally grateful for this refuge and firm foundation of hope in my life. It is this anchor of hope that both stabilizes and prevents me from drifting into despair when the difficulties of life seem oppressive.

4) Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God. (Ether 12:4).

When the road seems dark and things are not going the way you planned, remember; God's light is constant. His promises are sure. He is your firm foundation and your hope. He is your anchor and your stability, *always* and forever.

Led by His light, each of us have the beacon of direction we require to not only endure, but arrive victorious!

Hang in There!



Love You Forever

“We are not left alone to wander through mortality without knowing of the master plan which the Lord has designed for His children. He has bound Himself by solemn covenant to give us the blessings of heaven according to our obedience to His law.”

Elder L. Tom Perry

Chapter Seventeen

Go Ye Now in Peace

Love you Forever –Manti Utah Temple

This painting was actually my fourth endeavor to capture this temple. The first painting was accomplished years ago and was my debut for painting anything of my own creation. Lonn's grandfather left us with a black and white glass slide of the Manti Temple; probably photographed before I was even born. It was a beautiful summer shot of the temple and I tried to duplicate the picture in color substituting a blue and pink sky and snow on the ground to coordinate with my "eighties" decorating in our home.

I remember as a child my mother saying to us, "Necessity is the mother of invention." I often appreciated that comment as opportunities surfaced through the years to create a multitude of little home accents when we couldn't afford to buy. This snowy Manti Temple painting hung in a cheap frame I purchased from Deseret Industries in four different homes as we moved through life. It now hangs in a more suitable frame in our daughter's home.

The second attempt was the painting Where it All Began, featured in the original seventeen operational temples in this book. The third was one I painted for our home in St. George which I titled Coming Home. It is an odd size, made to fit a lighted, recessed alcove in our family room. There were some basic structural flaws in the paintings design, and after looking critically at it in our home for a few years, I decided to try again.

This time I purchased a significantly larger canvas to replace Coming Home in the lighted alcove. We obtained a beautiful photo from the porch of a charming bed and breakfast Inn where we spent the night. It is just down the hill from the temple. I used this photo as my inspiration for this fourth painting of the Manti Temple.

All the paintings in the series of the seventeen operating Utah Temples, are the same size, 24”x 30”. This canvas is 30”x 40”. Working on this larger canvas was a new challenge for two reasons. The first, being the size of the painting, and secondly, my method of painting with the canvas flat on the table instead of using an upright easel as many artists do. It wasn’t far into this project when I realized that seated at the table, my arms were not long enough to reach the temple which is in the upper half of the canvas. This made it necessary to flip the painting and paint the entire temple structure upside down. It was a stretch for my brain to transfer spatial relationships and movement to accomplish this. Once again, I fervently sought the Lord’s help in completing this difficult endeavor.

I included this additional Manti Temple painting in the book intentionally to provide a parting “love note” for my posterity. The title of this last painting in this book, Love You Forever, was chosen as I retired from painting for a season to write these pages.

Publication of this book has been a goal since about the fourth temple painted in this series. It occurred to me early on that with a large family it would be impossible to leave originals of temple paintings for each member of my posterity. The book however, would make it possible for all of them to have a copy of all the paintings in this series. Writing a book featuring my testimony and the temple images was an inspired idea for me and something I have felt driven to complete as soon as possible.

In addition to the completed operational temples, I hope to paint all the recently announced new temples in Utah. All of these are in some stage of progress as I write this text. The Lord willing, perhaps there will be a sequel to this book, but for now I am grateful to be realizing my original goal.

The Lord has directed this endeavor from its inception. I believe His direction is available to all his children who sincerely seek it. Elder L. Tom Perry shared this beautiful insight about the Lord's sustaining direction throughout our lives:

“We are not left alone to wander through mortality without knowing of the master plan which the Lord has designed for His children. He has bound Himself by solemn covenant to give us the blessings of heaven according to our obedience to His law. Oh, remember, remember that these things are true, for the Lord God has revealed these eternal truths unto us”. (Elder L. Tom Perry, “The Plan of Salvation” Ensign, November 2006 p. 69).

This last chapter is titled, “Go Ye now In Peace.” This title was inspired by a song that has great meaning to my spirit. It was written by Joyce Eilers and published by Jenson Publications, Inc. in 1981.

The message so beautifully shared in the song assures us that the Lord will always be with us to provide the strength necessary to succeed when trials feel oppressive. It teaches us that our God who sent his only begotten son to break the bonds of death and bless all mankind through his sacrifice, would not leave us alone to find our own way back to him.

Somewhere about the middle of my husband's teaching career with the Church Educational System, Lonon had the opportunity to work with Richard Openshaw and the Show Choir at the University of Utah Institute. This song became their “signature song” and the students sang it everywhere they went on tour, and at the end of all scheduled programs. We had the opportunity as a couple to travel with this choir and hear this beautiful music sung over and over. I came to love it then.

Later, we accepted a position at the University of New Mexico Institute of Religion and Lonon selected this music for a choir he directed as part of his assignment there. This same piece

of music would be introduced years later to his choirs at the LDS Business College. In every instance it has become an instrument of spiritual strength for many.

When we were blessed to serve a mission teaching Institute at Southern Virginia University this song again became an important part of our message of our Savior's love.

My life has been blessed with numerous miracles over these many years. I would like to share a cherished miracle connected to our mission experience.

When we decided the time was right to submit our mission papers, we completed the process, then waited with great anticipation to see where the Lord would have us serve. We had expressed interest in Southern Virginia University but were told that there was a two-year waiting list for this opportunity. Due to an unexpected cancellation at the mission department, it was a pleasant surprise to receive a phone call a few weeks later requesting we be ready to serve at SVU in just a few short weeks.

When the formal call arrived by mail with our mission assignment, it indicated that Lonni would be teaching religion classes, and my major responsibility would be to teach the Institute choir. Although we were each delighted with our assignment, I had some concerns, and rightfully so.

As mentioned earlier in these chapters, music has been an important part of my life since I was a little child. My two older sisters and I started our performance career when I was about four years old. Because my father taught at Snow College, in addition to the public and school performances, there were several musical theatre opportunities. When Snow's performing arts department needed children, they called my Dad. These opportunities were available to me throughout my growing up years.

Later as a college student, I had *many* performing opportunities. After leaving home and starting our own family, there were musical performance adventures which included an entire summer cast as a pioneer family in the production of “Promised Valley” at the Salt Lake City playhouse.

Years later, also mentioned in an earlier chapter, I taught private voice lessons for many students and had the wonderful opportunity to sing and tour with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

The dilemma with the mission assignment was not related to skills, I had plenty of experience. It was more complicated than that.

Two years previous to our mission call, my voice became weak and my doctor sent me to see an ear, nose, and throat specialist. After doing a scope of my vocal cords he had some bad news for me. He informed me that my vocal cords had been damaged, burned by acid reflux. I had been treated for acid reflux for the past twelve years and was surprised and dismayed at the diagnosis. He suggested that I not even try to sing in order to preserve what was left of my speaking voice. This report was devastating for me. He insisted that I get an appointment with a lung specialist as he felt certain my lungs were also affected.

It was a great shock to have his concerns verified by a pulmonologist. Apparently, my lung tissue was also badly damaged. After much testing, the doctor sternly cautioned me with this choice: I could relocate where the air quality was better or die. We moved from the smoggy Wasatch front to the clear skies of St. George a few months later.

Part of our missionary preparation process required us to complete an interview with our Stake President. Because we had recently moved and were new to the area, we had never met President Almquist. As we entered his office, he politely indicated that he had another pressing

commitment and asked us just one question, “Do you both have a current temple recommend?” When we indicated that we did, he signed our mission papers and we parted.

A few weeks later, as we prepared to leave, we went again to his office to be set apart for the mission. Because we had no previous opportunity to get to know our Stake President or for him to know us, he could not have known about my background in music or the trouble with my voice. He could not possibly have known that I had been called to teach a University level choir without the use of my singing voice. He could not have known that for months I had silently cried many tears as I sat in sacrament meetings, not able to sing the words of the sacrament hymns or be a part of a ward choir.

However, the Lord knew what I needed. He knew all about it and what happened that night was such a blessing. President Almquist, this good man who knew nothing about me, laid his hands on my head and blessed me saying, “I bless you that your skills of the past will be restored when you need them.”

The first few days of our mission at SVU were before the students arrived for the new semester. We walked excitedly around campus greeting these eager young people as they appeared a few at a time throughout the week. We invited all with whom we came in contact to join us at the Institute. One of these students, a senior, invited us to gather with the students to sing hymns on the front steps of the campus main hall. This beautiful building was originally built in the late eighteenth century as a grand southern hotel. It was part of the original property purchased for the building of the University. The designated time for the singing was nine o’clock Sunday evening. Apparently, this singing had been a beloved tradition since the school was established. We gratefully accepted the invitation.

We arrived on time and were intrigued and a little surprised to see a large crowd gathered on the massive steps at the front of the old building. One student, also a senior at the school, reverently moved from one area to another inviting a random student to choose which hymn the group would sing next. He then used a small recorder to deliver the pitch to all. The singing began; it was magnificent!

I stood behind my husband in the crowd as the first few hymns were sung. I wanted desperately to be able to sing with them. Then, quite suddenly, I heard the words of President Almquist's blessing spoken to my mind: "Your skills of the past will be restored when you need them." I decided to experiment upon the word; I would try the blessing. I began to sing. Lonni turned in amazement and we both rejoiced at what was happening. I was singing again with no hint of difficulty. Tears of gratitude filled our eyes as we recognized the miracle. It was truly a comforting expression of God's love.

Over the course of our stay in Virginia, the Institute choir performed several concerts and sang for community assisted living centers and other events. In addition to the scheduled choir class, we also had practice time scheduled every Saturday morning from eight to twelve, rehearsing in half-hour increments solos, trios, and quartets with piano and instrumental accompaniments. At the end of each choir class held in the chapel, we would stand in a circle and sing "Go Ye Now in Peace."

For all of this, my voice was there when I needed it. It was a wonderful miracle, and although my singing voice has not stayed with me, the blessed memory always will. I will be forever grateful for this miracle.

At our final gathering with the choir as our mission ended, I bore my testimony to these students I had come to love and said goodbye. As I called for a closing prayer Tyler, one of our

talented young men, stood and invited the choir to stand. They sang for us, “Go Ye Now in Peace.” The tears flowed in gratitude for them and this choice experience.

Writing about the painting experience over the past months has been a joy to me. It has produced so many beautiful memories and left me in awe of my Savior’s love. This quote by Joseph Smith has become meaningful to me:

“Love is one of the chief characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race.” (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church Volume 4* page 227, Deseret Book).

My wish for all of us is recorded in King Benjamin’s address to his people:

15) Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all. Amen. (Mosiah 5:15).

It is my testimony that these temple paintings and the writing of this book, were accomplished only through the Hand of the Lord. Of my own self I am nothing, but with God, I can do all things.

I know that God lives. This is His church and He directs the affairs of His organization here on earth through his prophets, seers and revelators.

I believe that Joseph Smith saw and heard all the things he claimed to see and hear. I believe that priesthood keys, laws and ordinances, and temple blessings were restored through Jesus Christ our Savior.

I know my prayers are heard and answered in His time, and His way.

I know that through our faith and obedience, we will be blessed to be together with our loved ones for eternity through covenants and ordinances secured in his Holy Temples.

It is my greatest hope that my posterity (and anyone else reading this book) will always remember that you are loved. I hope you will believe in your gifts and know how strong and capable you are. Please believe that when trials and difficulties of life arise (and they will) if you are willing to turn to your Savior in faith, you will *never* be alone.

“Go Ye Now In Peace”.

Love You Forever!

Painting Thoughts

These wonderful little thoughts are some I collected over the years. They have become a strength to me. I have included them where appropriate throughout the text of the book, centered with quotation marks, but have no information as to where they originated. I would like to offer a “thank you” to those who shared these little inspirations with the world.

“Always remember that you matter, you’re important and you are loved, and you bring to this world things no one else can.”

“Don’t measure how valuable you are by the way you are treated.”

“Remember when you look at how far you have to go, that you also remember how far you’ve come.”

“When your world spins out of control, remember who and what is constant.”

“I heard someone once say when asked if their glass was half-empty or half-full that they were just thankful they had a glass.”

“Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, in fact it is just the opposite.”

“Everyone is just trying to get home.”

“Our greatest test of free agency is how we react to our circumstance.”

“Imagine what we could accomplish, if we had no fear.”

“Forgiveness is a Process.”

“Bloom Where You Are Planted.”

*Special Thanks to my sister and friend Jannette for sharing her time and expertise with the mechanics of this text.

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Jeannine Howell Buckley

Jeannine Howell Buckley was born, third of six children in rural Utah to Demont and Arlea Howell.

She graduated from Snow College and Utah State University, and married her sweetheart in the Manti Temple. Together, they have raised seven children and enjoy twenty-four grandchildren. She and her husband served a Church Education Mission at Southern Virginia University .

Always interested in the arts, she became involved in music and theatre at a young age and performed with her two older sisters for local programs and many theatre opportunities. As a member of the Utah Oratorio Society and later the Tabernacle Choir, she was blessed to perform in many countries. This experience led to a career teaching private voice which was interrupted by illness resulting in damage to her vocal cords and lungs, ending her singing career.

Devastated at this loss she was inspired and blessed to develop a new creative outlet as an artist and author. She feels her art and writing are divinely directed and has painted many pieces relevant to her family history in addition to those featured in this book. She was awarded the first--place prize in the St. George 2019 Poetry to Art Contest.

She presently resides with her husband in St. George Utah where she continues to write and paint.