

Funeral Talk for Melvyn T. Shelley

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I am a child of God and He sent me to parents who taught me the gospel by words and by example. (Of course, they learned a few things from me, too!)

When I was in high school, two of my best friends were Luke Ong and my first cousin, EvaLynn Despain. We spent a lot of time together studying and playing. After high school, EvaLynn went to ASU, Luke went to Stanford, and I went to BYU.

I looked forward to spending time with Luke and EvaLynn when I came home for Christmas that first year. However, I soon learned that EvaLynn and her friend Mark had been flying in a private plane that day and it had not arrived at its destination. Search and rescue teams were already out looking for them. I wanted to go help with the search. I prayed fervently that they would be found alive. A day or so later, the empty plane was found. It had crashed on a snowy mountain near some cabins. We hoped EvaLynn and Mark would be found safe in one of the cabins. Instead, their frozen bodies were soon located.

This was my first experience with the death of a close friend. It was very hard for me. I wondered why she had to die so young. Why hadn't our prayers been answered? Mom and Dad tried to comfort me.

Although I had read and been taught about the resurrection, I now needed a stronger witness of life after death. I read again in the New Testament that on the 3rd day after His death and burial, Jesus came forth out of the tomb. He appeared to several men and women, and then to His apostles. They felt his flesh and bones. Later, 500 people saw Him. In the *Book of Mormon*, I read that over 2500 people saw the resurrected Christ. He invited each one of them to feel the wounds in His hands, feet, and side so they would know He was "the God of the whole earth" and had been "slain for the sins of the world." (3 Nephi 11:14)

The prophet Amulek taught that "... all shall be raised from this temporal death. The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; ... even as we now are at this time..." (Alma 11:40-43) The prophet Alma said "...the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, ... are taken home to that God who gave them life.... the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness,... where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow." (Alma 40:11 - 12)

When loved ones die, we can become bitter or better. As I read and prayed, I knew by the sweet whisperings of the Holy Ghost that EvaLynn was happy and that one day I would see her again. I felt EvaLynn was prepared to meet God. I wanted to be prepared, too.

My Mission to Argentina

About six months later, I began my mission in Argentina which is primarily a Catholic country. Most people believed that unbaptized infants who die are condemned to purgatory. We taught them about the spirit world and that infant baptism is not necessary.

They believed in heaven and hell. We taught them about the three heavens and that each person will go to the kingdom that has the law he is willing to obey in this life. (D&C 88:38-39)

As a judge, my father sometimes sent to prison people who were unwilling to live the laws of the land. Once, he sentenced a man to a lengthy prison term. The man protested, "But Judge, I don't know if I will live that long!" Dad leaned forward and said, "Well, just do the best you can."

In this life, prisons separate criminals from law-abiding citizens. Even so, one heaven will be for unrepentant criminals who love to kill, steal, commit adultery, etc. Another heaven will be for good people who live the laws of the land and live the golden rule. The third heaven will be for people who love to obey the laws of God, seek to become like Christ, and invite others to do the same.

I returned from my mission very grateful for prophets and the *Book of Mormon*. My faith in God and in life after death had increased greatly.

Mom's Death

When my mother passed away about five years later, I was grateful that she was finally out of pain. Her death was much easier for me than EvaLynn's had been because of my increased understanding of the gospel. I was grateful for temple ordinances that make possible eternal marriage and forever families.

Dad and DeAnne

Dad told us that when God closes a door He opens a window, and after the door of Mom's life closed, DeAnne was his window. We are very grateful that DeAnne and her family joined ours. Dad and DeAnne enjoyed doing genealogy and serving missions together. Dad also loved working in the temple.

There would be no need for doing genealogy if we did not believe that families can be together forever. Genealogy and temples stand as witnesses "of our conviction of immortality." Both "are concerned with life beyond the grave. For example, there is no need for marriage in the temple if we were only concerned with being married for the period of our mortal lives." (President Hinckley)

Dad Loved Sports

Dad loved sports—especially football. He played football in both high school and college, though he never made the traveling teams. During a college practice, Dad made one tackle because someone knocked him down in front of the runner and another when his finger got caught in the runner's jersey.

Many young boys dream of playing football like Steve Young, basketball like Michael Jordan, or golf like Tiger Woods. They spend many hours watching and trying to imitate these athletes. They join teams, listen to coaches, follow team rules, practice many hours a day, study the game, and often have personal trainers. Other boys do not want to become good athletes enough to endure long practices, listen to a coach, or submit to team rules. However, they can still enjoy playing sports as amateurs or watching others play.

Christ Wants Us To Become Like Him

For many years, I believed the "atonement" referred to Christ's suffering in Gethsemane, His death, and resurrection 2000 years ago. I now understand that "atonement" refers to the *process of helping us become like Christ* so that we can be "at-one" place with Him. Gethsemane and the resurrection were two essential parts. If I do not want to become like Christ, Christ's suffering in Gethsemane is of little benefit to me.

In 1830, Christ restored the *Book of Mormon* and His church through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is designed to help people become like Christ. The prophets and church leaders are our coaches and the scriptures help us learn of Christ so we can become like Him. Wards and families are our practice fields, church callings are the positions we play, the commandments are our team rules, and the Holy Ghost is our personal trainer. As a team, we can do more good for others than we could ever do as individuals. The church is not a spectator sport. Other religions do not expect as much, nor do they produce the same results. It is not always easy to be a faithful member of the Church of Jesus Christ, but it is worth it!

Christ suffered for my sins in Gethsemane 2000 years ago. Today, He helps me *learn from my experiences* and He helps me *clean up my messes*. Many years ago when one of my young sons threw a rock and put a dent in a truck, the repair bill was \$400. I had my son pay all he could, which turned out to be a few dollars, and I paid the rest just as Christ does for me.

Recently, a friend told me about one of his former bishops who was caught soliciting a prostitute while serving as a stake president. He was consequently excommunicated from the church. However, with the help of his wife, the church, and the Savior, he was later rebaptized. About a month ago, this man and his wife spoke at their mission farewell. The man said, "I have been rescued." When I am about to drown in the stormy seas of life, Christ invites me to take His hand and be rescued, too.



The Holy Ghost is Our Personal Trainer

Christ invites each of us to receive the Holy Ghost, our personal trainer, who helps us to SEE as He does and to DO what He would do so that we can be more like Him.

Years ago a good friend said, "My son is coming home from his mission a year early... disfellowshipped. Only my wife and I are going to meet him at the airport. It will be a very sad reunion. If we were meeting

him a year from now, the whole family would go and we would have a big party.” The spirit prompted me to say, “What if you killed the fatted calf like the Prodigal son’s dad did and had a big party for him?” I could sense the spirit was working on him and I returned to my office. Later, he told me that the whole family had gone to meet the son. They had a welcome home party that lasted until about midnight. After everyone else had finally gone to bed, my friend had a very different talk with his son than the one he had imagined the week before. The son later married in the temple and became an Elder’s quorum president in his ward. I believe that seeing the love of his earthly father helped him feel the love of his Heavenly Father. He too had been rescued.

It is not always this easy to know which thoughts and feelings are my own, which ones are from the Holy Ghost, and which ones are temptations from an evil spirit (D&C 46:7). The following experiences have helped me learn the difference. The bullets (•) after the experiences highlight what I learned.

When Heber J. Grant was called to be an apostle, he said he had two spirits striving with him. One said, “You are unworthy to be an apostle. You are not as good as the others. You should quit and resign.” The other spirit said, “**Continue your labor for good.**” It took six months for Elder Grant to learn which was the Holy Spirit and to stop heeding the evil spirit.

- When I begin to feel unworthy or discouraged, the spirit whispers “Continue your labor for good.”

In a talk to new mission presidents about personal revelation, Elder Boyd K. Packer said:

Be ever on guard lest you be deceived by inspiration from an unworthy source. You can be given false spiritual messages. There are *counterfeit spirits* just as there are counterfeit angels.... The spiritual part of us and the emotional part of us are... closely linked.... We occasionally find people who receive what they assume to be spiritual promptings from God, when those promptings are either centered in the *emotions* or are from the adversary. [“The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, p. 55]

Good counterfeit money *feels* and *looks* enough like the real thing that few can tell the difference. A perfect looking \$20 bill printed on toilet paper would not *feel* right. We would never accept a *red, 57 dollar bill* with *Mickey Mouse’s* picture on it even though it was printed on paper that *felt* like real money. In the scriptures, we learn about spiritual counterfeits. Evil spirits have quoted scripture, used “words that are *pleasing*,” and appeared as angels of light. Evil spirits have counterfeited many gifts of the spirit (D&C 46) such as prophesy, healing, miracles, and speaking in tongues. Another type of counterfeit experienced by some young people who are dating might be called “hormonal revelation.” When Joseph Smith talked about detecting spiritual counterfeits, he never said that a *feeling* was the key difference. Instead, he often used the scriptures to show how the message *contradicted* gospel principles, or Church policy and procedure. He taught the importance of *two or more witnesses* (D&C 6:28) and the role of priesthood leaders in detecting counterfeits (D&C 46:27). While in the Missionary Training Center (MTC), a missionary from my branch went to the temple and had the feeling that she should go home. Her branch president, district president, MTC president, and finally an apostle each counseled her to stay. She chose to go home. I heard later that her life was not very happy.

Moroni also explains a way to detect counterfeits.

...every thing which *inviteth to do good*, and to *persuade to believe in Christ*, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God. But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to *do evil*, and *believe not in Christ*, and *deny him*, and *serve not God*, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil... (Moroni 7:16-17).

- Priesthood leaders, scriptures, and teachings of the living prophets help us detect “good” counterfeits.

At the start of my mission, all new missionaries attended a meeting with an apostle in the Salt Lake temple. One missionary asked, “What if we have bad thoughts?” The apostle answered, “**You cannot keep a bird from flying over your head, but you can keep it from building a nest in your hair!**”

- Not all thoughts are my own. Bad thoughts do not necessarily reveal the true me. Moral agency requires that I make choices between good and evil. If the evil spirit could not prompt me to do evil like the Holy Ghost prompts me to do good, I would not be an agent unto myself. (D&C 29:39)

Once an old Cherokee Indian said to his grandson: “A fight is going on inside me. It is a terrible fight between two wolves. One is evil— he is contention, anger, hate, envy, regret, greed, pride, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, discouragement, despair, misery. The other wolf is good— he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same

fight is going on inside every person.” The grandson thought for a moment and then asked, “Grandfather, which wolf will win?” The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.” (Author unknown).

- I feed one or the other by choosing the thoughts that I dwell on or act upon.

The Way that SEEMS Right

Shelleys *always* do the right thing!... after exhausting *all* possible alternatives. Each alternative *seemed right* at the time, but “good judgment comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgment.”

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Prov. 16:25)

Using water to put out a fire seems right, but people have died from explosions caused by throwing water on chemical fires. Lost hikers have died of dehydration even though they were carrying plenty of water because it seemed right to them to conserve their water. I have often done what once “seemed right.” The bullets (•) after the following unconnected stories highlight what I learned by experience.

One day, my young son, Aaron, picked up a pitcher of milk. I told him *three* times to put it down. He disobeyed me and spilled milk on the table and floor. I angrily said, “If you ever do that again you will be grounded for the rest of your life! Now, get a rag and clean it up!” He started whimpering. His mom said, “Honey, he’s just a little boy.” I did not care! Mercy was not going to rob justice. As I drove to work that morning, I was still mad and thinking about the milk. “If he continues disobeying his parents, he will become another Laman and Lemuel. How can I make sure he honors and obeys his parents?” About halfway to work, the spirit interrupted and said, “You have never taught him how to pour.” My anger immediately changed to excitement as I started planning a “pouring lesson”. That evening we sat on stools at the sink for 20 minutes as he practiced pouring water into a glass. At first the pitcher only contained a little water. We tried different glasses and different amounts of water. We laughed as he experienced both failure and success. Finally we invited his mom in for “show and tell.” What had seemed right to me that morning, would have led to the death of my relationship with my son. I had been rescued.

- Focus on what I do want and how to do it instead of what I do not want and how to stop it.

Like my dad, I wanted to help my kids learn to play sports well. Since I had been a baseball pitcher, I wanted to help my oldest son learn to throw *right*. I focused on what he was doing wrong and got frustrated with how slowly he was learning. It wasn’t long before he refused to play baseball. What seemed right to me killed his desire to learn. Later as I read the book, *The Inner Game of Tennis* (W. Timothy Gallwey), I learned a better way to help my children learn physical skills like pitching. Each of my other kids benefited and learned to enjoy sports. Although I regretted how I had treated my oldest son, I was grateful to be rescued before doing any more damage.

- The *intent* of fault-finding may be to help, but the *result* is a dislike of the subject and the teacher.

To prevent people from falling off a cliff, we install fences and post warning signs. As new parents, we did similar things to protect our children from falling off moral cliffs (e.g., murder, stealing, fornication). However, we did not clearly teach which things were *signs* and *fences* that were intended to keep them a safe distance away from the moral *cliffs*. Thus, some of our kids thought that if they ignored signs or jumped over fences, they had already committed moral felonies and would go to spirit prison or hell. Like the Pharisees and the hell-fire-and-damnation preacher in the movie *Hawaii*, my focus on “not sinning” made it difficult for our children to love the gospel and find joy in living it. They saw Christ not as a loving savior, but as a vengeful god who was quick to punish the smallest sin. They did not want to become like Christ.

When my teenage son, David, refused to go to church, I began insisting. Disobedience would not be tolerated! The harder I pushed him, the more he resisted. After many months, the spirit reminded me that I had voted for agency in the preexistence and yet I was implementing Satan’s plan in my home. I was told to treat him like an investigator in the mission field. If I had treated investigators the way I was treating my own son, I would have driven them away from the church, too. As I followed my promptings, our relationship improved. The way that seemed right was leading to the death of our relationship. I had been rescued.

- “Unhappiness comes from my attempts to control people or events over which I have no control.”
- “For peace of mind, resign as general manager of the universe.”
- I voted for agency!

When I punished my children or denied them a privilege, they often said they hated me. I would get mad and send them to their rooms until “they could talk nice” and honor their parents. Then as I was studying the words “bless” and “curse” as used in the commandment “Bless them that curse you,” I noticed that in Spanish and Greek, bless means “to speak well of” and curse means “to speak evil of.” I started feeling that I should say *kind* things to others when they said *unkind* things to me. When my children said they hated me, I began to say “I love you too!” When they criticized me, I started saying “Thank you for caring enough about me to give me feedback.” This improved my relationships with my kids. I was rescued again.

- “To improve human relations, treat people like humans and not like relations.”
- “If I do as I have always done, I will get what I have always got.”
- “Blessed are the flexible for they shall not get bent out of shape.”

One Saturday one of my sons left without having mowed the lawn. When Elona asked me to mow it, I was not happy, but I started anyway. It was my son’s responsibility, not mine! Later as I was muttering and mowing, the spirit brought a scripture to my remembrance. “if a man being evil giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore ...he is counted evil before God.” (Moroni 7:8) It seemed rather stupid to do all this work and then have it counted for evil! I decided that if I was going to give gifts of my time to my family I might as well do it cheerfully so I could get the points. What had seemed right resulted in unhappiness.

- “You have agency. You can do it willingly or unwillingly.” (Madge Shelley) However, my happiness depends not only on *what* I do, but on *how* I do it, which includes my attitude.

Years ago, I felt I should study covenants and commandments as contained in the scriptures. While studying the phrases “evil speaking” and “the Lord’s anointed,” I learned that the Hebrew word *Messiah* and the Greek word *Christ* both mean the anointed one. Moses anointed Aaron a priest. Saul was anointed king. David was anointed to *become* a king and later was anointed king of Israel. One day in the temple, I wondered, “Does that mean I should not speak evil of *anyone* who has been anointed to become a king or queen?” I suddenly felt I needed to think and say kind things about people I saw every week at church, work, home, or in the mirror. It no longer seemed right to say unkind things of anyone. The following quote applies well here, and I share it knowing that my wife will once again cringe!

- “Samson killed 1,000 Philistines with the jaw bone of an ass.
Every day 10,000,000 relationships are destroyed with the same weapon.”

I used to get upset while watching sporting events. Then one day, I somehow felt like I was watching a football game from a tall and spacious building. With pride I was “point[ing] the finger of scorn” (1 Nephi 8:33) at referees, players, or coaches who made mistakes. This experience caused me to reflect on my previous behavior and to change what I think, say, and do during and after games.

- “cease to find fault one with another” (D&C 88:124)
- “let your words tend to edifying one another” (D&C 136:24)

My Strengths Can Become Weaknesses

The prophet Ether taught that our weaknesses can become strengths (Ether 12:27). However, Elder Oaks has also taught that our strengths can become weaknesses (BYU devotional, 7 June 1992). This is consistent with thoughts I had read years earlier in a book called *The Divine Center* by Stephen R. Covey. Below are some examples they gave along with some personal experiences related to strengths becoming weaknesses.

- Work:** To love one’s work is a strength, yet early in our marriage this became a weakness for me. My desire to excel at work became so consuming that it led me to neglect certain aspects of family life and church responsibilities. I enjoyed the challenge of my work as well as the “honors of men.” I had a hard time turning down projects. I did not want to delegate too much work to graduate students who could not do it as fast or as well as I could. I often worked evenings and weekends to meet deadlines. It became difficult to meet deadlines without sacrificing quality, health, and family. Although my wife was understanding and supportive, I felt I should be spending more time with my family. Eventually I started following the promptings of the spirit to delegate work to students and help them succeed. I also turned down several projects so I could better fulfill both my family and work responsibilities. I was rescued.
 - It may be good to be busy, but **BUSY** can also stand for **Being Under Satan’s Yoke**.

A good friend of ours shared how he was rescued from his work-centered life.

The first year of my marriage to Kris was the best year of our lives. We spent a lot of time together playing, studying, and working. Within two years we had our first daughter. Every few years we had another child until we had our six children. As a result, Kris was very busy.

I started my MBA and my PhD programs. I had a job and was in the bishopric. I was spending all day Sunday and a couple of nights a week doing church work. My work at the university was very heavy. After graduating, I had to get my CPA certification. I also needed to do research and publish to get tenure. I started writing books and consulting. As a result, I didn't spend enough time doing fun things with my wife. That created a problem in our relationship.

Last Christmas, I found out that I had a brain tumor and immediate surgery was required. The doctor told me that I might lose my ability to speak and remember. When I first awoke after surgery, I remembered my wife's name and then the names of my children! Then I remembered my testimony of the church. I decided nothing else was really important.

I found out later that my wife had been praying that we could spend more time together. My brain tumor was not the answer she expected, but it was the answer. Now that I can't work and I need her help to do even simple things, we spend a lot of time together and our relationship has improved.

No success can compensate for failure in the home. I realize now that I spent way too much time focusing on that which was not so important. I hope I get healthy and have an opportunity to be a better husband.

- b. **Church Activity:** We are encouraged to make church attendance and activity a priority. It becomes a weakness, however, when we neglect other responsibilities. Elder Oaks once said the brethren were concerned that some BYU students were neglecting their studies because they spent so much time in the temple or in filling their church callings. Some people put church before family. A bishop asked a man who always sat on the front row during church if he would accept a church calling. "Of course," he replied. The bishop then called him to the position of father and explained that during church he should sit in the back and help his wife with their children instead of sitting on the front row alone.
- c. **Family:** Creating love within a family and safe guarding family time is a strength, but it can become a weakness as well. Some people decline every opportunity to serve in the church because they fear it will take family time. They do a poor job at work because they feel they cannot deny any request from a spouse or child. Love of children can become neglect of spouse and vice versa.
- d. **Helping Others:** The desire to help others and bear one another's burdens is a strength. However, this can become a weakness if we do for others what they should do for themselves. Spending too much time helping others can also distract me from my family, church, and work responsibilities. I have had to learn that although God may use my hands to help other people, my hands are not the only hands that He can use. Elder Maxwell's shared something that has been helpful to me. He said: "I have on my office wall a wise and useful reminder by Anne Morrow Lindbergh concerning one of the realities of life. She wrote, 'My life cannot implement in action the demands of all the people to whom my heart responds.'" (Elder Neal A. Maxwell, *Deposition of a Disciple*, p. 58)
- "Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided..." (D&C 10:4)
- e. **Giving and Self-Reliance:** It is wise to be self-reliant and strive to have enough to share with others. Because I have been given much, I too must share with guests, strangers, and the needy. When I do, God "doth immediately bless" me (Mosiah 2:24). But even the desire to pay my own way can become a weakness. Some people who gladly pay fast offerings become too proud to accept assistance when in need. If I refuse gifts from others or insist on paying for everything I receive, I deny them the blessings of giving. If I refuse gifts that I cannot pay for, how can I accept the gift of the atonement which I can never repay? It has not been easy for me to receive gifts graciously even though I would like others to receive gifts from me. I have learned to accept gifts without insisting on immediate repayment so that God can bless the giver of the gift. Instead, I look for opportunities to return the favor with future gifts and to give gifts to others (e.g., pay it forward).
- The expression "What goes around comes around." applies to giving gifts of time or material goods.
- f. **Choose The Right:** Even my desire to live high church standards is a strength that can become a weakness. I can become "puffed up in pride" and use my standards like a stick to pat myself on the back or to beat on others who do not live my standards. At times I have tried to command and compel my children to do what is right instead of inviting and enticing them to live gospel standards

- g. **Talents:** Talents and gifts of the spirit are strengths that the Lord delights in helping us to develop. However, they can become weaknesses if we become lifted up in pride and look down on others instead of using these gifts that all may be profited.
- “Never let your abilities make you lose your humility.”

I have learned that the only solution to strengths becoming weaknesses is to put God first. Only with the help of the Holy Ghost can I know how many and which balls God wants me to juggle at a time. However, He will let me try to juggle as many as I want until I am sufficiently humble to seek His help.

First Aid for Trespasses

For many years, it seemed right to punish my children when they hurt each other. Then I listened to a conference talk by H. Burke Peterson.

Some years ago a group of teenagers... went on an all-day picnic into the desert [near] Phoenix.... These young people were picnicking and playing, and during their frolicking, one of the girls was bitten on the ankle by a rattlesnake.... They could immediately begin to extract the poison..., or they could search out the snake.... [T]he girl and her young friends pursued the snake. It... avoided them for fifteen or twenty minutes. Finally, they found it, and rocks and stones soon avenged the infliction.... Within another thirty minutes they were at the emergency room of the hospital. By then, the venom was well into its work of destruction. A couple of days later... it was found her leg would have to be amputated below the knee....

What will you do when hurt by another? ... The longer the poison of resentment and unforgiveness stays in a body, the greater and longer lasting is its destructive effect. (Ensign, Nov. 1983, p. 59)

As I listened to this story, the spirit helped me realize how many times I had chased snakes instead of getting the poison out. After that, when my children came to me crying because a brother or sister had hurt them, I no longer chased the snake. Instead, I snatched up the child and hurriedly began an “emergency operation” to get the poison out. “Doctor Shelley” would check the ticklish parts of the body to see how far the poison had spread. Soon we were both laughing. It was much more fun to get the poison out than to chase snakes.

When I was a scoutmaster, I knew that scouts could get hurt in wilderness settings. To help scouts *be prepared*, we taught them principles of safety and first aid so they could *prevent* or *treat* injuries. In life’s wilderness, we need similar preparation. In life, “...many of us have been wounded. Some have received wounds... from the very people they should have been able to trust for help. This is a terrible but common paradox. By the abundance of wounds around us, it would seem that a major function of this earth life is to teach us what to do about wounds.” (M. Catherine Thomas, *Spiritual Lightening*, p. 117)

Sometimes people get hurt by what another person says and they can never seem to let go of it. Holding grudges, like picking a scab, prevents wounds from healing. Once, Dad went with his mother-in-law to buy her a plane ticket from Winslow back to her home in Mesa. When asked whether he wanted a one way ticket or a round trip ticket, Dad responded, “Would *you* buy a return ticket for your mother-in-law?” We are not sure if Grandma ever forgave Dad.

Other times, people get hurt by what others do *not* say or do. They have unmet expectations. For example, when people attend a new ward they may wait for others to speak to them. They get offended if no one makes a big enough fuss to make them feel welcome. Some become inactive because they don’t get enough attention. When Elona and I were newly married and moving from apartment to apartment, we learned a way to *prevent* these hurt feelings. During our first months in a new ward, our goal was to know the names of the members before they knew us. We called them by name as we introduced ourselves to them. We have made great friendships and found every ward we’ve lived in to be a friendly ward.

Not all first aid for trespasses is this easy. A branch president at the MTC shared an experience he had after teaching some missionaries the importance of forgiveness as first aid for the wounds of life. They had read the scripture, “he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin” (D&C 64:9). After the lesson, a missionary said: “A man came into my high school and began to randomly shoot students. My friend and I sneaked up on the man and jumped him. My friend was shot. I knocked the man down and began slugging him repeatedly in the face. I can’t forgive this man who shot my friends.”

I wondered how this missionary could be guilty of the greater sin for not forgiving a killer. As I pondered this, I remembered Shakespeare’s play, *The Merchant of Venice*. In the play, Shylock, a Jewish money lender, hates Antonio, a confident, pleasant Christian merchant. When Antonio seeks a short-term loan,

Shylock agrees to lend him the money. However, if the loan is not repaid on time, Shylock can cut off a pound of flesh from any part of Antonio's body. Antonio's friends are horrified, but Antonia laughs and says his ships will be in long before the required time. Antonio signs the contract. As the days pass, tempests at sea and other misfortunes cause the loss of all of Antonio's anticipated fortune and the loan comes due. In court, Shylock demands justice and requests that the pound of flesh be taken from the chest nearest Antonio's heart. Shylock refuses to show mercy. A friend of Antonio offers Shylock twice the amount of the loan. Shylock refuses to let mercy pay twice the demands of justice. Then the wise judge grants Shylock the right to cut a pound *of flesh* as agreed. However, if Shylock spills a drop of blood or cuts any more or less than exactly one pound of flesh, his own life will be forfeit. Shylock suddenly wants mercy not justice.

Perhaps one reason an unforgiving person may be guilty of the greater sin is that he, like Shylock, rejects Christ's offer to make restitution for the trespasser. God's mercy does not rob justice because a mediator (Christ) pays the demands of justice *before* granting mercy to the trespasser. If I reject His offer, will He offer to make restitution for my trespasses? When I forgive, Christ compensates me for the wrongs I have endured. When I forgive, I turn the trespasser over to God to receive what he deserves. When I forgive, I become more like a "savior" than a "terminator" on Mount Zion. When I forgive a past debt, I am not required to trust the debtor either now or in the future. The requirement is to forgive.

- "Some days I'm the pigeon; some days I'm the statue." If I want others to forgive me, I must forgive.

Recently I read the following story that illustrates a benefit of forgiveness.

Some years ago, I saw an interview with a young lady in her early twenties who had been on her way to pick up her son from a daycare center. When she stopped at a red light, a man pulled up next to her and shot her in the face. They caught the man and he admitted that she had done nothing to him. He was just angry and wanted to hurt someone. The young lady was blinded. Her husband couldn't cope with a handicapped wife and divorced her. The parents of this newly handicapped, divorced, single mother wanted her to come back home where they could take care of her. However, she wanted to be independent.

The interviewer said, "You must really hate this man." When she didn't respond, the interviewer said "Come on, you need to get this out in the open. It will do you good."

She said, "This man intruded into my life absolutely uninvited, and exerted a great amount of control over me for one brief instant. If I hate him, resent him, or do anything but forgive him, he continues to exert control over me that he was never welcome to in the first place." (Don Fossum, "Dear Reader," BYU Bookstore News, Winter 2004)

Self Blame and Guilt Trips are Not Repentance

During a baseball game when I was 13, my team was ahead by 3 runs. The bases were loaded and we needed only one more out to win the game. I was playing second base. The batter hit a pop fly in my direction, but I lost the ball in the lights. When it landed about 10 feet behind me, I ran, picked it up, and quickly threw it toward the shortstop to get the runner out at second base. It was a bad throw and the ball sailed out to the left field fence. All four runs came in. We lost because of my error, and my teammates were mad! I went on many guilt trips because of that error and relived the whole experience many times. That was the only game we lost all season. My teammates often reminded me that I had cost the team a perfect season.

Five years later, I was playing second base during a softball game in the same ballpark. The bases were loaded with two outs. One more out and we would win. The batter hit a pop fly that I lost in the lights. It landed 10 feet behind me. I ran back, picked it up, and quickly threw it toward the shortstop. I stared in amazement as it sailed out to the left field fence. All four runs came in. Each time I had relived my error over the past five years, I was practicing to do the same thing in a similar situation. If I had been wiser, I would have mentally and physically practiced *what I wanted to happen* in that situation.

- Guilt trips feed the wolf that I do *not* want to win. Guilt trips reinforce bad habits and mistakes.

When my son, Adam, was 15, he and his friend were riding their bikes to pay a surprise visit to a girl. They decided to race, and the exhilaration of being in the lead caused Adam to forget exactly where he was. Suddenly he saw the corner where he needed to turn, and without thinking, he leaned right. He was going too fast and the loose gravel sent him flying right into the windshield of a car which had stopped at the intersection. His head made a four inch indentation in the windshield, and filled his eyebrow with small shards of glass. After he was released from the emergency room, we took him to visit the young lady. She refused to look at Adam for a week because she felt responsible for the accident. After all, she reasoned, it never would have happened if he hadn't been coming to see her.

When two missionaries were killed, the mission president blamed himself for not being worthy enough to receive revelation to prevent this. He felt God was punishing him because he struggled with some bad thoughts even though he had never acted upon. He felt he could not change his thoughts, so he decided to act upon them. He committed adultery and was subsequently excommunicated.

Parents often blame themselves when their teenagers reject their religion, use drugs, steal, kill, or break the law of chastity. It is easy to think that this never would have happened if they had been better parents. When Elona and I were going through such a time, a counselor implied that I was to blame because of things I did or did not do when my son was young. The counselor was a travel agent for guilt trips and I refused the trip. When I asked the counselor what I could do to help the situation in the future, he had no helpful suggestions. Fortunately, the spirit again taught me how to improve my relationship with my son.

When I am tempted to blame myself for the choices of my children, the spirit reminds me that I cannot change the eternal destiny of anyone else. I can only speed up or slow down their arrival. Because Christ's atonement will eventually compensate for my mistakes as a father, my children's own choices will determine their eternal destiny.

A friend told me that he had recently been concerned about the physical and financial welfare of his adult son who lives a gay lifestyle. My friend had reflected on a difficult time several years before, when the spirit had told him, "I expect you to love him, not change him." He had continually prayed for his son's welfare but he was again worrying about his son. A few days later, my friend's beloved old dog, who was now blind, strayed from their fenced yard. He searched to no avail and prayed that the dog would somehow find his way home. By nightfall he still hadn't seen the dog. The morning came and the dog was still no where to be found. However, when he returned from work, he found the dog locked up in the backyard. He wondered how this all had come to be. That evening, his daughter explained what had happened. For some reason she had decided to take a different way to work that morning and had seen the lost dog wandering around. She brought him home and secured him safely once again in the backyard. When he thanked God for the dog's safe return that night, the spirit asked, "Do you think I care more for your dog than your son?"

- It is better to love my children and trust God than to use compulsory means, blame myself, or worry.

When things have not worked out according to my will, I have often been tempted to blame myself or someone else, and to feel that life is unfair. The spirit reminds me that *in football, every play starts from where the ball is, not from where it could or should have been*. In life, if I am humble, the spirit will help me know *the next play* or step to take, regardless of where I am now. However, there will be no forward progress while I sit around wishing that things were different, complaining about where I am, blaming others for where I am, or wondering what if something else had been done. I might even be penalized for delay of game or for arguing with the referee.

Mistakes and the Courage Zone

Because mistakes can be painful, embarrassing, expensive, or unfixable, I am often tempted to choose to stay in my comfort zone rather than risk doing new things and making mistakes. This seems right, or at least desirable, but it leads to a small comfort zone and deprives me of significant growth and happiness.

I did not really want to accept my call to be an assistant scoutmaster because I did not enjoy bugs, sleeping outdoors, backpacking, or getting cold. This calling "forced" me out of my comfort zone many times. I went downhill skiing for the first time in my life with the scouts. I hoped to learn to ski without falling because I did not want to be embarrassed, break a leg, hit a tree, or go off a cliff. But falling is a part of learning. Once I had learned to ski well enough to have fun, I was glad I had entered my courage zone.

Scouting helped me remember that the only way to make my comfort zone bigger is to leave my *comfort zone* and enter my *courage zone*. I began encouraging my children to enter their courage zones. I enjoyed helping them learn to deal with the falling and the growing pains that are part of the courage zone. When my daughter, Tina, was learning to ride a bike, she often fell and scraped her hands and knees. She cried and wanted to quit trying until we started to call her scrapes "daredevil badges." Then she became proud of the scabs on her knees and elbows.

- If I am not falling, I am probably not learning anything new.
- "Only the mediocre are always at their best."

When Tina was learning to ski, she would carefully aim her skis so she could go slowly across the slope. When she got close to the trees on the other side, she would sit down in the snow, aim her skis to the other side of the slope, push herself up, and ski to the other side, where she would again sit down as she approached the trees. She said, “Dad, I wish I could turn.” I then taught her a little secret. I said, “Instead of looking at the trees you do not want to hit, turn your head, shoulders, and eyes so you can focus on where you *do* want to go.” When she tried it, she excitedly exclaimed, “Dad, Look! I’m turning!”

- You will go where your nose is pointed whether you want to or not, so don’t look where you don’t want to go. Instead, focus your mind, heart, and body on what you do want to happen.

Children learn to ski faster than adults. While adults focus on the “right way” to ski and want to avoid mistakes, children are playing and falling. The fear of making mistakes slows down learning. Angela enjoyed skiing until she took a lesson and learned the “right way” to do something. The more she tried to do it right, the more she fell. Soon she got discouraged and sat in the car. A few hours later, her mom bribed her to go down the hill one more time and to forget the “right way.” She did not fall, and she had fun again.

When Dad and DeAnne were in the MTC preparing for their first mission, one couple insisted on having a private tutor to teach them Spanish because they did not want people to hear all of their mistakes. As DeAnne studied the language she didn’t care who noticed her many mistakes. She learned faster than the other couple and delighted others as she laughed with them at some of her mistakes.

- When I focus on not making mistakes, I am looking at the trees that I do not want to hit and then I wonder why I keep hitting them. When I accept my mistakes as a little child does, I improve.
- “I wouldn’t care what others think of me if I realized how little they do.”
- “Blessed are they who can laugh at themselves, for they shall never cease to be amused.”

My children are usually quite willing to enter their courage zone. Unfortunately, they have also started using my words against me whenever I hesitate to enter *my* own courage zone. When Jon challenged me to go rappelling off an 80 foot cliff, I wasn’t sure I really wanted to do it. However, after a few times down the ropes, I liked it so much I wanted my other children to share in the experience. I even persuaded my wife to do it! Recently, when I was hesitant to try fixing a bent car bumper, my mechanic son-in-law, Ryan, reminded me of what I had taught my kids about the courage zone. He helped me find the parts in a junkyard and we spent two days making the needed repairs. It gave me a great opportunity to work with my son-in-law, and rescued our van from being terminated.

- I believe that Christ is committed to helping me enter my courage zone so I can grow because he expects me to help my children enter their courage zone so they can grow. I believe that Christ treats my mistakes and sins as learning opportunities because he has taught me to treat the mistakes and sins of others as such.

Our expectations influence our desire to enter and remain in our courage zone. One sister missionary in my branch at the MTC had only been there three days, and she was in tears because she could not speak French yet. I reminded her that learning a language is like a seed. She must water, weed, and nourish it with faith over quite a long period of time before she would be able to enjoy the harvest. Many miracles take time.

- The evil spirit wants me to focus on what I cannot yet do, and to feel bad for not being “perfect.” The Holy Ghost invites me to accept the small growth I notice each week while watering and waiting.

When my wife and I were helping our children learn to walk, we were pleased with every attempt our toddlers made. We encouraged them to get up after each fall and to keep trying. When they could take only a few steps, we encouraged them to try to walk just a little farther. We celebrated their progress and effort.

- I will never become like Christ except I become as a little child, willing to cheerfully fall down, to get up many times, and to celebrate my progress. Falling is part of the learning experience. “*God is easy to please, but difficult to satisfy*” because He wants us to keep improving. He is pleased with our progress, and at the same time he wants us to keep progressing. (Eternal progression!)

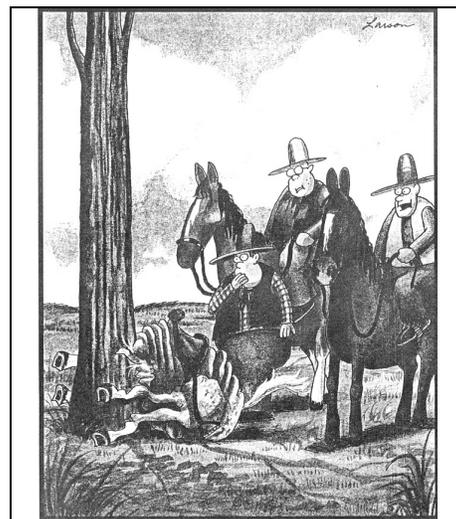
When our oldest son, David, was a Boy Scout, I was helping him fix a leaky water faucet to earn a merit badge. I told him to take off the faucet but I neglected to tell him about the shut-off valve below the sink. As he loosened the faucet, the inevitable happened. Water sprayed everywhere! I quickly showed him where to

turn the water off under the sink. We laughed at what had happened and I helped him clean up the mess. He will probably remember to turn off the valve when he works on a faucet in the future. I wondered how many times God lets me do things that He knows will make a big mess so that I can learn from my own experience.

- Mistakes can make learning experiences more effective.

When our children became old enough to drive, we did all we could to help them prepare to be safe drivers. Still, we knew they would each probably get in an accident sometime. When David had his first accident he felt really bad. I gave him a Far Side cartoon of a horse and rider that had crashed into a tree. On the inside, I wrote: “Congratulations! Welcome to the Shelley Fender Bender Club! ... ***There are no mistakes, only learning opportunities.***” I then explained in the card how to learn from the experience to become a better driver. I have given this card to each of my children after his or her first accident.

Not all learning opportunities are painless. As I was learning to drive, I was only going a few miles an hour when Dad told me to stop. I stepped hard on the power brakes and the car stopped immediately! Dad slid into the dashboard, and cracked a couple of ribs. Grimacing in pain, he said, “Well, I did tell you to stop.” I learned about power brakes, and Dad started using a seatbelt.



What are you going to tell your dad?

Not all learning opportunities are inexpensive. David’s 360 degree turn on an icy road cost \$400. Jon learned what happens if jumper cables are crossed (\$200). Adam learned that a car moving slowly through an intersection can conceal another car coming from the opposite direction (\$900). Aaron learned that even though it isn’t your fault, you can still end up being responsible for a lot of damage (\$1800).

Blessings are Often Disguised as Problems

When bad things happened to “bad” people, I used to believe they just got what they deserved. However, I often wondered why bad things happened to good people. It just did not seem fair—especially when bad things happened to me!

Later, when I was studying the word “affliction” as contained in the scriptures, I learned that bad things happen to both good and bad people to “stir them up in remembrance of their duty” to love God and their neighbor (Mosiah 1:17). I also learned that the Lord strengthens and eventually delivers those who cheerfully submit to His will (Mosiah 24:12-16). War, famine, and natural disasters cause people to pray and help their neighbors. Rather than complaining about problems or analyzing them from every angle, I now try to look for solutions that involve loving God and neighbor. The Serenity Prayer reflects this attitude.

*God grant me the **serenity** to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and **wisdom** to know the difference.* (Reinhold Niebuhr)

When life is hard and I wonder, “why me?” the spirit reminds me that opposition is necessary for me to grow and become strong. Who would pay to watch a football team play without an opposing team? How good would such a team become? Players see their weaknesses while playing an opposing team, and they strive to improve “that they may become strong.”



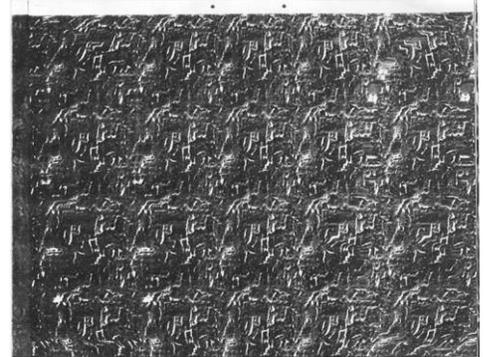
When Joseph Smith was in prison, the Lord listed many “bad” things that could happen to people and then He said, “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be *for thy good*. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (D&C 122:7–8) The following story illustrates how “bad” events may become blessings.

When a farmer’s only horse ran away, his neighbors said, “That’s bad!” He responded, “Maybe.” When the horse returned with several wild horses, the neighbors said, “That’s good!” He said, “Maybe.” When his son was thrown from one of the wild horses and his leg was broken, the neighbors said, “That’s bad!” He said, “Maybe.” When the broken leg prevented his son from going to war with their sons, the neighbors said, “That’s good!” The farmer said, “Maybe.”

- “Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and *all things shall work together for your good*, if ye walk uprightly....” (D&C 90:24)
- Thank God for the blessings I enjoy, as well as for the blessings I do *not* enjoy.

Free to Choose How I View Life

Years ago, my wife bought a large picture. I thought it was ugly and a waste of money. She excitedly said that if I looked at it just right I would see a 3D picture. I was skeptical. After staring at it for awhile, I suddenly saw a 3D image. Now I was excited! I practiced to see how fast I could see 3D. I showed it to my scouts and friends. Weeks later a friend and I were looking at another 3D picture, but we saw different 3D images. I learned a different way to see 3D. I have since learned 10 ways to focus my eyes to see 3D.



When I show a 3D picture to a group, some love it. Others hate it because they have tried and failed many times. I helped 99% of them see 3D for the first time in a few minutes. Some were so happy they cried or hugged me. The picture had not changed.

- My focus determines what I see and how I feel.

Some missionaries in the MTC feel like they are in heaven because they focus on what they like about the MTC. Others focus on what they do not like and feel like they are in hell.

- “I can complain that rose bushes have thorns.
Or, I can rejoice that thorny bushes have roses.”
- “The mind can make a heaven of hell or a hell of heaven.”

When Nephi’s bow broke, Laman focused on the problem and blamed others. While Laman was complaining, Nephi focused on finding a solution. He made a bow and went hunting for food. It seems right to think and talk about one’s problems. A pro baseball player in a batting slump spent hours watching videos trying to understand what he was doing wrong. He did not improve until his coach had him watch videos of himself hitting well.



“We’re just not reaching that guy.”

- If I focus on analyzing my problems or complaining about them, they will increase. If I focus on seeking solutions, I will find them.
- “How can I...?” is a more useful question than “Why can’t I...?”

It is never too late to have a happy childhood. If I focus on the good things I have learned from the bad things that have happened to me, I will recognize many blessings that I once thought were bad things. Likewise my family may have learned from my example what to do, or what *not* to do. Both are valuable.

The gospel helps people see life differently. For example, for people who do not believe in life after death, a funeral can be a very hopeless and sad occasion. For those who believe in the resurrection as we do, a funeral can be a hopeful and happy occasion.

- The gospel does not change the facts. It changes my interpretation of the facts.

Inner and Outer Gospel

For many years, I wanted to “be perfect even as [my] Father... in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). I assumed that meant I had to make every choice correctly and be without sin. The “way that seemed right”

was to avoid all sins of omission and sins of commission. I became very much like the Pharisees of old who identified 613 commandments in the Old Testament that they felt applied to all people. I soon learned that it is impossible to be without sin. I also learned that I was not happy trying to live that way.

Years later I learned that the Greek word which had been translated as “perfect” in the Matthew 5:48 did not mean “without sin.” It meant “complete” or “fully developed.” It was also a temple word referring to one who had completed all temple ordinances.

I also learned the difference between the *inner* and the *outer* gospel. I had been trying to live the *outer* gospel which focuses on what other people could see my body do (e.g., church attendance, family prayer, tithing,...). The *inner* gospel refers to whether or not my heart and mind seek to know and do the will of God. The Liahona was given to Lehi’s family to guide them through the wilderness to the promised land. The Liahona, which represents the Holy Ghost, illustrates the difference between the inner and outer gospel.

	Outer Gospel	Inner Gospel
Goal	Focus on destination (Celestial Kingdom).	Focus on the path to the destination.
Commandments	Many commandments or laws.	One commandment (D&C 130:20)
Righteousness	Avoid or repent of all possible sins of omission and commission. Make a long “to do” list and complete all of it. This is like trying to eat everything on a restaurant menu at each meal.	Look and follow the Liahona’s directions today. Hear and obey the spirit’s promptings. This is like eating only one thing on the menu and feeling satisfied.
Consequences of sin	Punishment, pain, suffering	Lack of progress, hunger and thirst
Faith in God	Believe in the existence and nature of God.	Look and follow Liahona today. Hear and obey the spirit’s promptings.
Repentance	Search my past with a magnifying glass to find and then repent of each past sin. Pay for all of my own sins (penance). Self-punishment in the form of guilt trips. Follow <i>yesterday’s</i> promptings.	Look and follow Liahona today. Strive to repent of sinning. Change what I do in the present by learning from the past and planning for the future. Hear and obey <i>today’s</i> promptings.
Purpose of prayer	To ask and thank for blessings.	To learn God’s will and to ask for help in doing it. To thank God for blessings I enjoy and those I don’t.
Christ	He will punish me harshly for the slightest sin. Ignoring <i>signs</i> , and jumping <i>fences</i> will be punished as moral felonies.	He treats my sins and mistakes as learning opportunities. He helps me to clean up my messes and to know the next step from where I am now. Afflictions and problems are blessings in disguise.
How I feel	I expect happiness but find unhappiness.	I find peace and happiness now and in the future.

After dropping off my daughter at school one wintry day, I sat in my car waiting for a break in the endless stream of traffic. When I started to turn, I saw a bicyclist in front of me falling to the ground. I slammed on the brakes. I had not noticed him approaching. He was on his feet and heading away before I could get out of the car so I called to him, asking if he was okay. He assured me that he was fine and hurried off. After recovering from the shock and thanking God that the boy had not been hurt, I felt that in the future I needed to be more cautious and more diligent in looking both ways in similar situations. As I pulled away, I glanced in my rearview mirror and pondered the incident I had just experienced.

I have known some people who drive through life always looking in the rearview mirror, constantly blaming themselves for hitting people along the way. Then they wonder why they keep hitting more people. Others people learn from past experience and are often able to prevent future sins in similar situations. I prefer to repent of sinning by looking forward so I do not hit more people.

- I can choose to “prepare and prevent, OR repair and repent.”

About a year after his mission, my son Jon went to the temple where he had a feeling that should marry a young lady he had dated before his mission. Although they had dated only a few times since his mission, he told her about his experience and proposed. Without her own confirming witness, she accepted his proposal because he had a “revelation.” As they dated and prepared for marriage, the young man’s had *repeated* feelings they should not get married. He felt that he should go ahead with the wedding because of his

experience in the temple. I asked him, “Should we continue in the direction the Liahona pointed a month ago while ignoring the direction it is pointing today?” He wondered why he had that experience. We discussed the good things that he and she had learned. He finally broke the engagement. I set several guidelines:

1. Take a preparation for marriage class to know what to look for and what you are getting in to.
2. Go steady with her and date frequently for at least three months before proposing.
3. Do **not** tell her that you received a revelation. Ask her to marry you and be willing to wait for her to get her own witness if she has not already received it.
4. Once you are married, you will have many blessings disguised as problems. Look at your Liahona daily for guidance. Temple marriage requires the signatures of your bishop and stake president. If you feel divorce is the solution, counseling with them. If they both agree, you have two more witnesses.

Later he married a young lady after each had *repeated personal confirmations*.

My wife and I went to a seminar taught by C. Terry Warner. Often as I listened to the experiences of other people, the Holy Ghost let me know how it applied to my relationships. Later, Terry shared the following story during a BYU devotional (*Honest, Simple, Solid, True*, C. Terry Warner, 16 January 1996).

I received a while ago a letter from a woman whose father had been emotionally neglectful and whose husband turned out to be much the same way. When she tried to talk about why he was distant, he said it was because she was always angry.... She wrote later:

... I decided to write all of this down for my husband to read, and enumerate the many times I had felt emotionally deprived.... The longer I wrote, the more I began to have a feeling come over me that what I was writing was false. The feeling continued growing..., and I knew intuitively that the feeling was coming from God.... “How could it be false?” I asked angrily. “I lived it. ... I saw and felt it. How could it be false?” But the feeling became so powerful... that I could no longer deny it.... So I... began to pray, saying, “If it is false, show me how it could be false.” And then a voice spoke to my mind and said, “If you had come unto Me, it all would have been different.”

I was astounded. I went to church. I read the scriptures often, I prayed pretty regularly, I tried to obey the commandments. “What do you mean, ‘Come unto You?’” I wondered. And then into my mind flashed pictures of me wanting to do things my own way, of holding grudges, of not forgiving, of not loving as God had loved us. I had wanted my husband to “pay” for my emotional suffering. I had not let go of the past and had not loved God with all my heart. I loved my own willful self more. I was aghast. ... That day I repented of not loving God, of not loving my husband, of blaming, of finding fault, of thinking that others were responsible for my misery.

I returned home but did not mention to my husband anything of what had transpired. But I gave up blaming.... I prayed more earnestly and listened to His Spirit. I read my scriptures and tried to come to know Him better. Two months passed, and one morning my husband awoke and turned to me in bed and said, “You know, we find fault too much with each other. I am never going to find fault with my wife again.” I was flabbergasted, for he had never admitted he had done anything wrong in our relationship. He did stop finding fault, and he began to compliment me and show sweet kindness.... Almost overnight our relationship became warm and sweet. Three years have passed, and still it continues warmer and happier. We care deeply about one another and share ideas and thoughts and feelings, something we had not done for the first 16 years of marriage.

This woman was taught by the spirit that happiness results from living the **inner** gospel, not the **outer** gospel. When I catch myself finding fault with others, the spirit often whispers, “If you had come unto me, it all would have been different.”

I am Grateful for the Atonement of Christ

As the Holy Spirit helps me see life as Christ sees it, I am less judgmental of myself and others. I am also amazed at Christ’s love, wisdom, and power. I am grateful for what Jesus did for me 2000 years ago. I am also extremely grateful for what He does for me each day. He allows me to do what *seems right* to me so I can learn by my own experience why it either works, or does not work. He invites me to receive the Holy Ghost as my personal trainer so I can learn to view life as He does and to do what He would do. He brings ideas to my remembrance or gives me new ideas when I need them. He has given me a wife and children so I can learn how He loves me. He allows me to make messes and then helps me know what I can do to clean them up before He cleans up the rest. Some messes I can clean up quickly; others may take a lifetime. Some messes I can clean up by following my promptings; others only He can clean up in His own due time. He takes upon Him the sins of the world because He created or allowed them as part of the plan of agency.

(Mosiah 26:23)

- “I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me,... I marvel that he would descend from his throne divine to **rescue** a soul so rebellious and proud as mine.” (Hymn 193).

At funerals, I am especially grateful that Christ's resurrection makes possible the resurrection of my loved ones. This knowledge has helped us with my Dad's ups and downs during the last few years.

Dad's Passing

About two years ago, doctors thought Dad would probably only live another 3-6 months. Our family is particularly grateful we have been able to have him with us these last 18 months. We each have special memories we shared with Dad during this extra time.

We have prayed for him and given him priesthood blessings, always keeping in mind "Thy will be done." This week the blessings were for comfort, not for healing.

Dad passed away quietly on Tuesday, November 4th, 2003. Our family has had many comforting spiritual experiences as a result of Dad's passing.

- a. Some came before he passed away. Others came after.
- b. Some came while we were with him in the hospital. Others came in the mornings alone.
- c. Some came with specific counsel or messages that have been confirmed. Others came with strong but general feelings.
- d. Some came while we have been talking with friends and family. Others came while we were alone as answers to prayers for help in preparing our talks.
- e. Some came to us while giving priesthood blessings. Others came while receiving blessings.
- f. Some came to us directly. Others came indirectly through family members.

The day we arrived in Mesa, my mind was focused on preparing this talk and finding out how my brothers and sister were doing. My wife, Elona, felt that we should go visit DeAnne, but we had been told she was very busy with company, so we hesitated to put more chaos in her life. However, Elona's promptings continued, so after a few hours we called and found that DeAnne was very eager for us to come over. We took Ken with us and had a wonderful visit. I am grateful I was there as Ken and DeAnne shared some of their recent spiritual experiences. Each person has different spiritual gifts and experiences that all might be profited (D&C 46:12). I have been blessed many times by the things my wife has learned by the spirit. Sometimes the spirit confirms what she shares with me when she shares it. Other times the confirmation comes only after I follow the counsel she has received. When I have wondered why I don't have her gifts, the spirit reminds me to focus on using my gifts that she may be profited and to be grateful for her gifts. Just as a quarterback needs receivers, linemen, and running backs with different abilities than he has, I am grateful that I followed my promptings to marry someone with gifts that I did not have. I know why "the man [is not] without the woman...in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11)

When I have wished that I could see the Savior, the Spirit has reminded me of what the resurrected Christ said many years ago to about 2500 people. They had *seen* Him, *touched* the prints of the nails in His hands, and *heard* His loving voice. Yet he said to them, "... more blessed are they who shall **believe in your words** because that ye shall testify that ye have *seen* me, and that ye **know** that I am." (3 Nephi 12:2) They will believe because God "will manifest the truth of it..., by the power of the Holy Ghost." (Moroni 10:4)

I know that my Redeemer lives.

He lives to bless me with his love.

He lives to plead for me above.

He lives to silence all my fears.

He lives to wipe away my tears.

He lives to calm my troubled heart.

He lives all blessings to impart. (Hymn 136)

Death is like leaving the mission field. After my mission in Argentina, it was hard to say goodbye to companions and loved ones there. My friends at the airport shed tears as they said goodbye and watched the airplane disappear into the sky. They did not see the tears I shed for them on the plane, nor did they feel the concern I still had for their welfare. They did not feel my excitement as I anticipated seeing my family again. They did not see the wonderful reunion when I got off the plane and was hugged by my Mom, my Dad, my brothers and my sister.

When Dad left us on Tuesday, his love and concern for us did not stop. We feel sad that he is no longer with us here, but we did not see his reunion with loved ones who have passed on before. The following lyrics beautifully express these feelings.

<p>Goin' home, goin' home, I'm a goin' home; Quiet-like, some still day, I'm jes' goin' home. It's not far, jes' close by, Through an open door; Work all done, care laid by, Goin' to fear no more.</p>	<p>Mother's there 'spectin' me, Father's waitin' too; Lots o' folk gather'd there, All the friends I knew, All the friends I knew. Home, I'm goin' home!</p>
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We know that Dad is now in the spirit world awaiting the resurrection where his “spirit and [his] body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; ...” (Alma 11:43)

Wednesday night, Elona, Ken, and I went into the living room where DeAnne had Dad's reading light on near the chair where he always sat. Before leaving, I walked alone down the hallway where I had walked with Dad and his walker during my last visit. I stopped to look at an enlarged family picture of him with his parents, his brothers, and sisters. Printed on the pictures were the names of his ancestors. At that time and since then, I have had a strong impression that this is what he looks like now and this is what he will look like when we see him again in the resurrection.

- He will no longer be called Bones.
- He will stand up straight again and will walk without the help of a walker.
- Dad and Mom will look quite a lot like they did when I stepped off the plane after my mission.
- My one regret is ... that Dad will no longer be able to stick his teeth out at us!

From our personal experiences, we know that Dad is excited to be out of his worn out physical body and to be with my Mom. We know that they are still aware of our needs and concerns. We are grateful they have been able to communicate their love and counsel to us directly and indirectly. Tomorrow, Dad will be buried next to Mom. Then, Mom's vacation will be over and Dad will begin his new assignment in the heavenly temple of our Lord.

Now that both Mom and Dad have passed on, the following words have a double meaning to me.

<p>O my Father, thou that dwellest In the high and glorious place, When shall I regain thy presence And again behold thy face?...</p> <p>In the heavens are parents single? No, the thought makes reason stare! Truth is reason; truth eternal Tells me I've a mother there.</p>	<p>When I leave this frail existence, When I lay this mortal by, Father, Mother, may I meet you In your royal courts on high?</p> <p>Then, at length, when I've completed All you sent me forth to do, With your mutual approbation Let me come and dwell with you. (Hymn 292)</p>
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I know my parents live and that I will see them again. I know God is a loving heavenly father committed to helping me learn the principles of happiness. I am grateful for what Christ did 2000 years ago to make resurrection possible for all and to make exaltation possible for those who strive to become like Christ. I am grateful for the gift of moral agency that allows me to learn by my own experience to distinguish between good and evil. I am grateful for Christ's help each day in finding solutions to my problems and in cleaning up the messes I make. I am grateful for the many times He has rescued me. I am grateful for my earthly father who taught me by his words and actions to love God and His scriptures, and to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost. I am grateful to my wife and children for helping me learn how to love others and how God loves me.

I share these thoughts and feelings in the name of my Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.