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# A CLOSER LOOK

Any times we as humans view a subject as a jeweler views a precious stone. At first glance, we notice the obvious with our naked eye. But as we take "a closer look", under magnification as spiritual jewelers, our vision is clearer. One such subject requiring this is the first Nephite temple built in the Americas, as recorded in the Book of Mormon.

II Nephi 5:15,16 reads "And I did teach my people to build buildings, and to work in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of gold and of silver, and of precious ores. which were in great abundance. And I, Nephi, did build a temple and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land; wherefore, it could not be built like Solomon's temple. But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon:..." He first tates the great abundance of materials and then in verse 16, seeminglycontradicts that by saying that there were not so many precious things to be

found on the land. In reality, there is NO CONTRADICTION! Let's turn in the Bible to I Kings 10:11,12 "And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones. And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the Lord, and the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day: (see also II Chronicles 9:10,11). Yes, there were many precious materials in abundance in the Americas. But not as many as went into the building of Solomon's temple. This is the key to understanding what Nephi meant. Hiram, King of Tyre, sent many exotic materials that were not even found in Jerusalem. The special grades of gold and the amazingly beautiful wood of the almug trees, which beauty was so tremendous "it was never seen unto this day", the writer states. When the Queen of Sheba saw the beauty of all this, the scripture says "there was no more spirit in her." It took her breath away as Solomon made his ascent to the Lord's house! These exotic items and others had to be shipped to Joppa,

from Ophir and other foreign lands where Solomon's men would carry them from the port at Joppa to Jerusalem. They were not indigenous to the Americas when Nephi's temple was built proving the harmony of the Book of Mormon with the Bible.

These seemingly contradictory phrases also occur in the Bible as well. For instance, the Prophet Ezekiel states that King Zedekiah would not see Babylon even though he would die there. (see Ezekiel 12:12,13) Jeremiah also prophesied of King Zedekiah being taken to Babylon to die. How then was it possible that he wouldn't see it? Let's take "a closer look" — The answer is in Jeremiah 52:8-11, which tells us they first took King Zedekiah to Riblah; where they slew his sons and put out his eyes, blinding him before carrying him to Babylon, where he remained until the day of his death. So, he truly didn't see Babylon even though he went there to die. Thank God for the "closer look" His Holy Spirit gives us who, unlike Zedekiah, are not spiritually blind.

# # # # # #

# Can You Imagine— MOSES

By Sister Carolynn O'Connor

The Bible shares a significant **L** amount of information about the life of Moses. The first few books of the Bible are very clear about his life and journey. Even before Moses' birth, the dramatic events unfold. The king of Egypt at the time declared that all babies born male were to be killed by the midwives because the Hebrews were too numerous and would overtake them. God had blessed them abundantly. Can you imagine being asked to kill the males of each of your people? Can you imagine living in a time or place where this was even a possibility? The midwives did not agree to do it fearing God more than the king. God blessed them richly for their faith.

The life of Moses is one of great strength. From the time he was given away to be raised by Pharaoh's daughter he prevailed. He was raised like royalty but chose to free the people that he came from.

As a young man he killed an Egyptian because he was beating a Hebrew man. When he was found out he fled and lived among the Hebrews marrying Zipporah. While there the Lord spoke to him through the burning bush telling him that he would lead his people.

Can you imagine choosing to stand up against the only family you have known to demand freedom from bondage for the people of your birth? Maybe some of you have experienced the displeasure or persecution when you converted from the religion of your birth to The Church of Jesus Christ. Maybe you too have suffered the loss of relationships with your

family. Now imagine that your family comes after you trying to destroy The Church of Jesus Christ and kill the members?

Abraham Lincoln is one of my favorite leaders. He is credited with freeing the slaves in the United States. He, however, was not required to physically lead them to freedom by way of leaving this land or giving up all that he knew of his life. Moses did. He demanded release and when he did not get it, the Lord worked with him to bring plagues upon the people. Can you imagine the patience of Moses when after each plague he went to the Pharaoh and begged for release?

Can you imagine knowing that so many people were counting on you to free them from the abuse and torture that they endured all their lives? Sometimes we think about the Israelites or other groups that have endured or suffered throughout the ages of time as a people who must have been different maybe even complacent to their lots in life, working for nothing but to stay alive. This situation however tells us differently. When given a leader they could trust, they were willing to leave what they knew for lands unknown for even the possibility of a better life. In those days it was not just traveling to a new city to start over, for these Israelites it would mean traveling for 40 years.

But first, they needed the Lord to encourage Pharaoh to allow them to leave. We can assume that Moses was a strong and faithful man as God chose him to lead the people.

When we read of the plagues that the Lord sent, imagine the actual situation the people of that time were forced to endure. Can you imagine an infestation of lice, locust and frogs? Can you imagine all of the water, even the water already in vessels, turning

to blood? Stop to consider this for a moment. Can you imagine even the smell?

The final and most unbearable, of course, would have been the dying of the first-born son. Imagine Moses spreading the word to the Israelites that all that they needed to do was to wipe the blood of a lamb over their door and the Lord would spare their children. I imagine that nothing can try the faith of even the most diligent of followers than the threat to the lives of their children. Can you imagine the desperate looks of the parents as they questioned Moses as to the safety of their families? Did Moses plead with God for the strength and assurance that he needed to reassure the people?

When finally Pharaoh, after the loss of his own son, allowed Moses to lead the people, can you imagine the scene as over two million people and all that they could carry or bring began the journey. These people that worked as slaves, led by the man who grew up in the home of their abuser were willing to face the unknown and move on.

When they reached the Red Sea and saw Pharaoh's men in pursuit, was there a sense of desperation? I wonder if Moses feared or if he unequivocally knew that the Lord would deliver them again. In Exodus 14:13 it reads, "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever." As he faced the sea and raised his arms to part it, can you imagine the utter astonishment as the water parted leaving only dry sand for them to walk across. How marvelous that must have been as their feet touched the dry earth that only seconds ago was covered in water! It is said

(Continued on Page 3)



## **Purpose – Mission – Vision**

### **Purpose Statement**

• To fulfill the plan of God by bringing salvation through Christ to all people.

#### **Mission Statement**

- The Church of Jesus Christ will teach the Gospel to all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things commanded by Jesus Christ.
- To draw Israel to Christ through an effort focused on the Native Americans of North and South America.

#### Vision Statement

• The full manifestations of God's Spirit and power among the Saints, resulting from living and worshipping in unity and righteousness, stimulate continuous growth of the Domestic Church—even at a rate of doubling over a five year period—while strengthening the International Church.

### Can You Imagine—MOSES

Continued from Page 2

that the walls must have been three miles apart for the number of people to travel across in that short time.

When Moses was called to the mountain to receive instruction from the Lord and was given the Ten Commandments I can't imagine how he must have felt. When he began the hike down the mountain to share the new commandments with the people, can you imagine the pure and utter disappointment in seeing the golden calf built to replace the very Lord that had spared them? The people relied on Moses solely to guide them and after only a short time away; they were unable to sustain the direction he had given them.

Most amazing about the journey

is that the Lord provided sustenance for them each and every day. Can you imagine relying completely on the Lord each day for food and water? Can you imagine the heavens raining with just what you needed each day? What I can't imagine is how in seeing all of these miracles and how God delivered them each day, the Bible says over and over of their journey that the people were murmuring against Moses and God. He spared them from the plagues, spared their firstborn, delivered them out of Egypt, parted the Red Sea, provided food and water for them in a desolate land and they still complained? Are we anything like the Israelites today? Does God find the same displeasure in our murmuring today?

Can you imagine after 40 years in the wilderness when they reached the promised land that Moses was unable to enter because he had broken the "tablets of stone"?

As a child I always thought that this part seemed unfair. After all of the work that Moses did, the sacrifices he made, I felt that he should be allowed to go in.

As an adult, I see it a little differently. Moses sacrificed his life for the will of the Lord. He could have stayed as royalty. He could have turned his head to the people of his birth. He knew that God had a plan for him and he accepted that knowing that it would not be the easiest thing to do. When he did his job and delivered the people, God's plan was fulfilled. He was not required to continue to lead them. His work was done. There was no need for him to follow them in. His life was a true example of sacrifice and dedication to the will of the Lord.



## The Grand Experiment

By Brother Anthony Cardinale

Some people say certain things just don't mix, and even shouldn't be together. The result of such mixing is an accident waiting to happen, a recipe for failure. All around us we see divisions played out in the media, such as between economic groups, racial lines and religious affiliations. E pluribus; Latin for "Out of Many, One", is a phrase on the Seal of the United States of America, but as a country we have failed to reach such a lofty goal. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his famous speech titled, "I Have a Dream," said, I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal." Unfortunately, it appears that the United States of America and other nations of the world are more divided by the day. The dream of a diverse and multicultural society living in harmony appears to be an elusive dream that is unattainable in reality. Can people of difference really live in harmony?

We are all driven by varied individual personalities and backgrounds. There are also differences in socioeconomic status, culture, language and other factors that naturally shape our lives and cause divisions/distinctions from others, which complicates us living in harmony. The underlying question is what could be so overpowering to override individual mind sets and allow people to live together in true peace. The commonality or single denominator for living in peace is the Spirit of God, the fellowship of

the brotherhood and sisterhood. The true Spirit of God that overrides all prejudices, breaks down all barriers and simplifies all the complicated differences to a basic simple declaration. The decree is "I love you unconditionally as Christ loves me." The Spirit of God is blind to all differences of culture, race, etc. We are called as Christians to become unified with one purpose and one heart working sideby-side in the vineyard of the Lord as equals. Galatians 3:27-29 states: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." There is no lack of understanding of others by those of different upbringing and culture when we see with the eyes of God, who is called "LOVE". (I John 4:16). The Spirit of God [the tie that binds] is a magnet that always attracts us to other Christ-like people and creates that special and deep bond between Christians, regardless of race diversity. We relate and call each other "brother" and "sister" because we are family—the family of God.

The Bell Branch, located in the city of Los Angeles, California, has a diverse membership of English and Spanish speaking cultures. As representatives of The Church of Jesus Christ, we feel a responsibility to be an example of this grand experiment of unity amongst different people for the purpose of serving God. I Corinthians 12:12 relates the goal of the Church, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." All of our services are bilingual [English/ Spanish] and songs are sung in both languages throughout our meetings. The music is accompanied by alternating instruments of guitar and piano. Heartfelt testimonies ring out every Sunday and our love is expressed to each other in many ways. English and Spanish speaking members communicate their love towards each other on a regular basis, even if sometimes only in fragmented words and sentences. Non-verbal communication of smiles, hugs and handshakes speak for themselves; no translation needed. The grand experiment and dream can only be achieved through the help of the Lord and the Spirit of God. The Bell Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ continues to declare to the world that "YES" people of difference can live and worship in true harmony.

There is an old hymn titled "Blest Be the Tie that Binds" that speaks of the love and fellowship that we share in the Bell Branch. The hymn goes as follows:

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one
Our comforts and our cares.

We share each other's woes, Our mutual burdens bear; And often for each other flows The sympathizing tear.

When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again.

This glorious hope revives
Our courage by the way;
While each in expectation lives,
And longs to see the day.

From sorrow, toil and pain, And sin, we shall be free, And perfect love and friendship reign Through all eternity.



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# Editorial Viewpoint . . .

Some people today who do not believe in God may ask, "Where is God?" The answer to that question should be, "Where is He not?"

"O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139:1-10).

God is in far greater control of our lives than we think. He not only is our Creator, but is intimately involved in every action we take, every word we speak, and every thought we have. We can go to the ends of the earth, and get as far away from The Church of Jesus Christ as possible, and He will be there. Every move we make is observed by Him. He knows our "downsittings", or failures. He knows our "uprisings". He is behind us, recording our sins, or in grace blotting out the remembrance of them. He has foreknowledge of all our deeds and provides for all of our wants. We cannot out race Him because He is always ahead of us, and we cannot turn back because He is behind us. God is magnificently present wherever we are.

You may be running from God today. Maybe it is embarrassment for sins you have committed, maybe it is fear of failing in His Church, maybe it is fear of losing the things of this world, or maybe it is fear of the unknown. You can run, but you can never hide. God surrounds you and I. He formed every bone, blood vessel, muscle and every cell in our body at the time we were conceived in our mother's womb. No doctor today can really explain how a human being is formed so perfectly in the womb. That is because His ways and thoughts are higher than ours. Our wisdom is foolishness to Him. You can't run from Him because He is inside of you.

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" (Psalm 139:14-16).

Since God is everywhere, people can stop looking for Him. All they have to do is reach out. Whether you are baptized in The Church of Jesus Christ or not, you may feel distant from the Lord at this time. He does not feel distant from you. You may not fully believe in Him or His Church at this time, but that's okay—He believes in you, and if you are really searching, He will reveal Himself to you at the right time in your life. Our steps are ordered by Him. We could not even take our next breath without Him. He is God.

Who wouldn't want to believe in, and follow after a God like this? Is there anything in this world that you can lean on or rely on like Him? He is going to "lead us with His hand". He will "hold us with His right hand". Is there anywhere else you'd rather be? Is there anywhere else you would feel safer? He knows every secret about you and I, and if we just trust, love and serve Him the best we are able to, He will keep us forgiven and sanctified and lead us with His "very high hand" to the Promised Land.

# The

# Children's

### Corner

By Sister Jan Bork

# The Lost Are Found

(Alma 37:35-47)

ear Boys and Girls,

Have you ever been lost before? One time when I was young we were visiting with brothers and sisters at a beautiful home in the mountains with a large group of young people. It was noisy and hot in the house so I decided to quietly step outside on the edge of the forest and be alone for a few quiet moments. I walked over to the forest where the air was nice and fresh and took deep breaths. I could hear the house noises behind me as I felt the cold air rush through the trees. I decided to just walk out a bit into the woods. It was so unusual to be surrounded by the trees. I sat down for a while to just relax and enjoy the clear, cold air. I couldn't hear a sound except the wind in the tall trees. I daydreamed a bit as time passed slowly.

Then I noticed a big snowflake, and another, drifting silently on my head. I stood up. It was getting dark and I realized I was cold. Yikes! I didn't know which way to go. Trees, trees, and more trees in the vast forest surrounded me. I started walking quickly in one direction, then decided I was going the wrong way and rushed off to the other side. The snow kept coming and I realized not only was I lost, but also I had not told anyone I was going away from the group. No one knew where I was. I felt panic. I was in deep trouble and lost on the edge of thousands of acres of trees!



Then I realized that I hadn't even stopped to pray and ask the Lord for help. Lately I'd been very busy in my life and I had not been praying like I used to. I was doing a lot of things without wanting to ask anyone the best way. That included my quiet time with the Lord. Now I was desperate and cold. I begged God to forgive me for all my headstrong [me wanting to be the boss] ways and I asked the Lord to please help me figure out what to do. I started walking down the mountain. Time passed and the trees were blowing in the freezing wind.

All of a sudden I spotted an empty logging road. I was filled with wild hope that it might take me back to the city. I kept praying and followed it through the thick trees. The snow was drifting down and the wind came in gusts as I saw the first street light. I ran to the end of the road and found a highway that I did not recognize. But I was feeling that the Lord was with me. I knew I'd been going down, so my friends' home must be up the mountain. I started walking quickly.

After twenty or thirty minutes [it seemed longer] I saw houses. I walked more and found the right house! When I opened the back door and hung up my coat, I heard everyone's happy laughter and talking. I realized no one had even missed me! Only the Lord even knew what a close call I just had gone through. No one even realized it was snowing or that I had made a bad choice and put myself in danger. Even my family had not

realized I was out alone, going through a scary problem.

I had enjoyed walking away from the group and exploring, but I had gotten myself into serious trouble until the Lord heard my cries and guided me to safety.

The Book of Mormon and Bible are full of stories of people who were lost until they had faith in God and asked him for direction. In I Nephi, God brought the families of Lehi and friends away from the city of Jerusalem that was going to be destroyed. He brought them to the Americas where they could live in freedom

At first, the Lord gave a dream to Lehi to bring his family of four sons named Laman, Lemuel, Nephi and Sam, tents and supplies and leave the doomed city of Jerusalem. Once in the wilderness by the Red Sea, God gave him another dream to go back to the city and get the ancient records engraved on brass from a man named Laban. These records were the first five books of the Bible. They told of Adam and Eve, Noah, the laws God gave Moses, right through the prophets to their day. They also listed all of the ancestors showing that Lehi's family came from Joseph who ruled in Egypt.

God knew that without this information, future generations would be lost and would not know of the love and power of God. The older sons did not want to try and see the powerful man named Laban who was keeping the brass records.

But their brother, Nephi said, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may

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#### The Children's Corner

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accomplish the things which he commandeth them" (see I Nephi 3:7).

It took three visits to Laban's before they got the records. Each time when Nephi was lost and didn't know what to do, he prayed mightily. On the first visit, Laban threatened to kill Nephi's brother, Laman. On the second visit the brothers went and got the gold and silver and property that their family was leaving behind and offered to buy the records from evil Laban. When Laban saw their wealth he ordered his servants to attack the brothers so he could steal everything.

They ran quickly outside the city and hid in a cave. The two angry older brothers picked up a rod [big stick] and started to beat their younger brother. God sent an angel to stop them and told them go back to Jerusalem again and Laban would be delivered into their hands. (see I Nephi 3:29-31). Nephi reminded his brothers that God had delivered Moses from the Egyptians and he could deliver them from powerful Laban! This time it was night and Nephi crept [carefully came] into the city towards Laban's house. The Spirit of God led him. Nephi found Laban drunk with wine, passed out. Nephi was guided to kill Laban with Laban's own sword. The Spirit of the Lord told Nephi ". . . It is better that one man should perish than that a nation shall dwindle [become weak] and perish in unbelief" (I Nephi 4:13).

Nephi put on his clothes and called the servant, Zoram, who would give him the records. It all worked out and Zoram also joined their group leaving for the Promised Land. Their father and mother were filled with joy when their sons returned with the brass plates.

Then the Lord sent them back to their friend Ishmael's and softened his heart so he and his big family would join them. He had sons and also daughters for Nephi and his brothers to marry as they travelled to the Promised Land. With much packing and planning they were finally ready to leave. That morning as Lehi arose and went to the tent door, to his great astonishment, he saw on the ground, a round ball of curious workmanship [unusual]; it was of fine brass. Inside the ball were two spindles [long, thin pointers like a compass] and a place where writing would appear from the Lord. (see I Nephi 16:10-30) When they showed faith and prayed to the Lord, it would tell them where to go. Sometimes it told Nephi where to hunt. It told them directions to go in the wilderness that had more food and better ways to walk. (see Alma 37:41,42). It guided their ship when they went to the Americas. They called it the Liahona. When they were wicked or hateful, it did not work, and they lost their way.

It took them eight years to walk from Jerusalem, through deserts and over the wilderness to the ocean where they built a ship to cross the ocean. They became a sturdy, strong group from all the walking. (see I Nephi 17:1-3). But there were no roads and they were fighting and lost many times. Even though God prepared the special type of compass to guide them, the Liahona, it would not work unless they were praying and doing right. When they were bad, it stopped working and they became fearfully lost. (see Alma 37:38-47)

You can see that their gold and silver and riches were not what helped them. Faith and obedience to God saved their lives. They were lost when they quit looking to God for guidance just like we are today. It is simple, but not always easy to realize when we are being willful, or unfaithfully trying

to do things our own way instead of listening to God and making our lives blessed. We each have our own bad habits that we have to fight against. When we give them up to God, our lives get so much better. When we show faith and believe in the promises of God, our lives go well, even in bad times. Why be lost, when the Lord has given us so many wonderful promises to guide us through?

> With love, Your friend. Sister Jan

### WORD SEARCH (see I Nephi 3:7)

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# Blessings at Sterling Heights

By Sister Pierina Difalco

On October 9, 2011, the Sterling Heights, Michigan, Branch had what seemed like a miniconference with visiting brothers and sisters in attendance from Branch #1 as well as the Plumbrook Branch due to their respective branches being closed for General Church Conference.

Brother Paul Stallard greeted everyone enthusiastically by saying "Good morning Saints of the most high God!"

Sister Brooke Difalco asked to be anointed and as she sat in the chair, the word of the Lord came forth saying "Pray in faith, pray in faith". There were seven others who came forth to be anointed after Sister Brooke.

The meeting was opened by Brother Mark Palmieri who read from John 15:11 "These things have I spoken, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." He expounded upon how Jesus Christ was conveying the message of loving one another and keeping His commandments. After Brother Mark was finished, Brother Jerry Chambers followed and told us that the Lord had given to him, as well, the 15th chapter of John, the previous night. Brother Jerry elaborated on the true vine and the branches. He told us how his neighbor and he had pruned this tree until it was practically bare and when they looked upon it they were not sure whether it would survive the winter. However, to their great astonishment, in the spring the tree blossomed and bore much fruit.

Brother Keith Lesperance followed and also spoke about some trees

he had planted all around his property, and how they looked like sticks that no one thought would grow. He felt that his neighbors might be laughing at him for planting these "sticks". As the years went by these "sticks" grew and became beautiful trees scattered all over his property. He expressed how good God is and how much God cares about everything that touches our life.

After Communion, we had a beautiful season of testimony. One of the sisters from Sterling Heights told of how her grandson had a spider bite that looked infected. He was anointed and it cleared up by the next day.

Prior to closing the meeting a visiting brother from Florida, who is a frequent visitor to Sterling Heights, sent the brothers in the ministry a note saying that he had three visions during our meeting. As the ministry anointed the sick God showed him that Jesus Christ was with them doing the same. He later saw Jesus standing with the elders as they preached. He also saw a tree grow upon the Communion table and fruit began to fall under it until there was a numerous amount. We thank God for the wonderful Sunday we spent in His honor.

ADE	PRESS CHANGE
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Phone	
Branch or I	Mission

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- 5. What to do if it is not during business hours?
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