

The Gospel News

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HEAR THE LORD OF HARVEST SWEETLY CALLING

By Evangelist Larry Watson

When we first purchased land bordering the Navajo Nation, my wife and I eagerly looked forward to having a garden of our own. It didn't take long for me to discover that gardening in New Mexico was a far cry from what I was used to in balmy California. We knew about the short growing season (only three months) and the dry climate; but we were not prepared for what may only euphemistically be called "soil" in that part of the country. I was soon going to experience the real meaning of the scripture: "...Cursed is the ground for thy sake; Thorns ... and thistles shall it bring forth to thee ... In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread..." (Genesis 3:17-19).

The findings of soil tests conducted on nearby acreage revealed that the dirt was more suitable for making bricks than for growing vegetables. But this was 1979, my wife and I were young and idealistic—"we can do this," we thought. But it wasn't going to be easy!

The first step was tough—breaking the clods without breaking our backs. The second step was just plain unpleasant—hauling manure. But, ever the optimist, I tried to put a positive spin on it by making a family activity out of it. We took the kids with us to the stockyards and called it a "family fun night." Of course, no amount of positive spin could convince our children that shoveling the "ripe" stuff was anything resembling "fun"; but it was free, and in abundant supply!

We then drove up to the mountains to haul topsoil that we could spread in our yard. By that time we were almost too tired to sow the seeds! The watering and weeding soon followed, but it seemed that all of the hard work was soon forgotten with the joy of seeing the little seedlings germinate. That first year we had a wonderful harvest, and we figured, "this is going to be a piece of cake." We couldn't have been more wrong! Suffice it to say we still had much to learn about gardening in the "wild west"; but more importantly, we had a lot to learn about sowing the spiritual seeds of the Kingdom.

The challenges were endless. There were the varmints who snuck in at night while we were sleeping. We would erect a hedge and think—"there, that ought to do it!" only to have the neighbor's livestock get loose and finish off what the rabbits had left behind. Having fended off those attacks, we began to labor under a false sense of security. The next summer we got off to an early start and were thrilled to watch the seedlings thriving in the enriched soil, only to have the entire crop wiped out when a late-spring killing frost came through one night. Another time, just days before harvest, a hailstorm struck, destroying everything in its wake.

The scripture teaches us to pray for our land, our crops, and our possessions. Fortunately I had a full-time job so we weren't dependent upon the yield, but we did learn to pray more earnestly over every seed we planted, and with some favorable results.

But the Lord was not done yet with that little garden; after all, this young couple still had a lot to learn about the mysteries of the Kingdom. It was the spring of 2000 and Vanessa and I were busily preparing for a June wedding for our daughter Kathy. It was an exciting but exhausting time; so all we had energy for was a handful of transplants and a smattering of seeds; and they would have to make it on their own because we had to leave for an extended trip shortly thereafter.

(Continued on page 3)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 It's a month of Thanksgiving	2 Be thankful for the love we share in the family of God	3 Be thankful for your parents	4 Be thankful for the right to vote	5 Be thankful for the gift of the Holy Spirit	6 Be thankful for the Book of Mormon	7 Be thankful for the GMBA
8 Be thankful for your branch or mission	9 Be thankful to See the Morning Light	10 Be thankful that God loves YOU	11 Be thankful for the veterans who fought for your freedom	12 Be thankful for the youth	13 Be thankful for sunny days	14 Be thankful for the place you live
15 Be thankful for those who work in the mission fields	16 Be thankful that the Lord hears your EVERY prayer	17 Be thankful for the food on your table	18 Be thankful for the ministry	19 Be thankful for our freedom of religion	20 Be thankful for each breath you take	21 Be thankful for the hope of eternal life
22 Be thankful for the opportunity to serve God	23 Be thankful for your children	24 Be thankful for the smiles you receive today	25 Be thankful for each trial you have overcome	26 HAPPY THANKSGIVING Be thankful for everything	27 Be thankful for your spouse	28 Be thankful for the song in your heart
29 Be thankful that Christ died for your sins	30 Be thankful for your health	1	2	3	4	5

October 2015
S M T W T F S
1 2 3
4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17
18 19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30 31

December 2015
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19
20 21 22 23 24 25 26
27 28 29 30 31

November 2015

"...that ye humble yourselves even to the dust, and worship God, in whatsoever place ye may be in, in spirit and in truth; and that ye live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you" (Alma 34:38).

Blast From The Past

Side By Side

It was a joint venture, in some respects very much reminiscent of the first celebration of Thanksgiving in the fall of 1621. Now, three hundred fifty-six years later, members of the Church would celebrate in another Thanksgiving feast, this time amidst the Navajo community of New Mexico. They had established Side By Side, a non-profit corporation dedicated towards American Indian self-sufficiency, and through numberless activities and labors formed a lasting bond of friendship with the Red Lake community. A warm Saturday on November 26, 1977 would bring members of Side By Side, who were also members of the Red Lake Branch (later, Tse Bonito) together with native Navajos to share in a pot luck dinner. Evangelist Larry Watson:

We were all so young then, in our twenties and early thirties. We arrived in the community from Southern California (most of us) with high hopes of seeing an entire nation of people give their lives to Christ, and learned valuable lessons along the way of the importance of God's timing, and proving our sincerity by remaining there through the good times as well as the bad. Now, over 40 years later, many of us are still there, by the grace of God; and as the hymn says "just seeing what the Lord will do tomorrow."

The Side by Side sign (with Kimberly, Dennis and Judy Calabrese's daughter). ►



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.

THE CHURCH OF
Jesus Christ

HEAR THE LORD OF HARVEST SWEETLY CALLING Continued from Page 1

When we finally returned home, I remember walking out to the backyard, not expecting much, but what I saw there astonished me. Yes, the garden was very impressive; but it was the variety that stunned me the most! Huge vegetables were thriving that I hadn't even planted that year! I began to realize that they were from previous harvests that had gone to seed and then come back on their own. In amazement, I dropped to my knees and began to thank our creator for His faithfulness. I then heard a still, small voice speaking to my heart—calling me by name—saying that just as our labors from season's past yielded seeds buried in the ground which germinated in later years, so it would be spiritually.

So, why write about this now? Coincidentally (if there is such a thing), on Saturday, March 14, 2015, at the Southwest Region Conference, I was asked to write about this experience for the Gospel News. I didn't give it much thought at first—until the next day at our worship service in the Mesa Branch. That morning, 12 Navajos came to the service—nearly all of whom knew each other from the reservation. They were surprised to see each other in Church, of all places, and so far away (nearly 300 miles) from home. Most of them had moved to the Phoenix Metro area to seek employment and educational opportunities not available to them up north. Away from their families, they felt a void, and a little homesick. Two of them had recently gotten back in touch with us after many years of little to no contact at all. They were all searching for the Lord and had been drawn back to the Church. And, the connection to my experience, you ask? In many cases we had labored for years to bring the gospel to their parents as they grew up with our children in Navajoland. That same day, after the service was over, one of the three asked for her baptism. I am reminded of the words, "... let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). All I can say is, Amen to that!

Word Up

The Case For Christ: Holding The "Word Up" By Elder Doug Obradovich



*Is reading scripture difficult for you?
Do the "thees" and "thous" make Christ's words seem irrelevant,
even losing their potency in translation?
Let's take a deeper dive into Jesus' message and see if we can make sense of it all.
If successful, let's agree to hold the "Word Up"!*

"Rise, take up thy bed, and walk" (John 5:8).

After missing his junior year of football due to a serious back injury, our son, Kiley, returned his senior year. While in much pain throughout, the worst came during the last game. On four different occasions he was flat on his back, seemingly unable to move. Each time he was left contemplating whether he'd ever play again. He continued to get back up. The playoff game ended in loss, but Kiley won a tremendous life lesson.

I'm sure his year of non-football seemed to last 38, but the man in the verse above truly waited that long ("which had an infirmity thirty and eight years") to hear Jesus ask, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Once a year an angel would heal the first to climb into the pool, Bethesda, and the man missed his opportunity. Assuming Christ was referencing this lost chance, he responded, "another steppeth down before me." Jesus responded with an audacious challenge, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk," and the man was healed "immediately" as he "took up his bed, and walked."

Maybe you find this amazing, hoping to someday witness such an event. While not so dramatic or obvious, could you have already either seen or experienced such an event? Many times in our lives, we are down figuratively due to financial devastation, debilitating spiritual setbacks, emotional discouragements, and/or other attacks on our individual spirits. Sometimes it's easiest to remain incapacitated, but we have all responded to Jesus' encouragement, "Rise, taken up thy bed, and walk."

In one of my lowest spiritual times, when one of my dearest friends in church was losing his wife without warning, I was devastated for him. Brother Joe Catone, Sr., perceived this and simply asked, "Do you remember last Sunday when you said....?" and began to reiterate my recent testimonies back to me. He recounted my blessings when I couldn't. My faith in God was restored. Brother Joe was saying, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

Each time Kiley climbed off the ground, he was learning the life lesson of recovery. We can also allow Christ's bold victorious affirmation to wash over **"Rise"** = Get up from your lowest point. **"Take up thy bed"** = Collect your 'stuff'; not permitting such emotional baggage to weigh you down any longer. **"Walk"** = Begin moving forward / away from your place of pain. Miracles aren't always physical healings. So, keep Jesus' words in mind when you find yourself down: **"Wilt thou be made whole?"**

Do you have a favorite verse you'd like us to dissect? Please send it in to: "Word Up"



This past summer, the theme of the GMB Campout was "FREE," allowing us to recognize and celebrate how Christ has made us free. For the sake of those who were unable to attend the Campout, I will be sharing an overview of some of the seminar material in a series of articles over the next few months. This month's article will focus on what we are (or need to be) freed from – "The Innermost Prison."

Have you ever been in prison? Even if you haven't, you've probably seen it depicted in movies or TV shows such that you have an idea of what it would be like. So, what is it like? The following provides a general description:

- You can't go where you want to go
- You can't do what you want to do
- You can't be with who you want to be with
- You may be physically restrained (by cuffs or even chains) such that you don't have freedom of movement
- Others tell you what to do and you must do it
- Others may treat you poorly and you have no recourse

All of the above have one thing in common – you have little or no choice regarding your life when you are in prison. You may receive the "basics" of life (food, clothing, shelter) but all of your choices are removed. Based on the above, any time we find ourselves with limited choices, we are basically in prison.

In general, most people you meet would not admit to being imprisoned by life and would feel they are already free to make their own choices. People who do not know God often feel that religion inhibits freedom. This is actually a trick of the enemy who is hoping we don't notice that we are being bound one thread at a time until the threads finally form a strong rope that cannot be broken. Some people may feel that they have plenty of time to make their way out of their prison but they're so comfortable in their "freedom" that they never get around to it and then time runs out and the door is shut forever.

In general, we are pretty much free to make our own choices. However, it is important to understand that we are not free from the consequences of our choices. For example, we are technically free to perform any illegal act.

However, if we're caught and arrested, the consequence of that choice is no longer within our control.

Even if we're law-abiding citizens, there are many "normal" everyday activities that are not necessarily wrong or sinful that can still imprison us and affect our service to God. A list of such activities can include a job, a home, our family, a boyfriend/girlfriend, friends, an education, etc. To understand how these normal things can imprison us (limiting our choices as described above), recognize that any of us can be the person who:

- Stays in a job you hate because you need the high salary to support the lifestyle you've become accustomed to
- Stays in an abusive relationship because you feel like you can't find something better
- Stays away from church because your "education" tells you this can't be real

Look back at the bullet points at the beginning of this article that described being in prison and notice how many of them can be applied to everyday activities that we sometimes allow to limit our choices (can't do what you want to do, others make decisions for you, etc.).

Similarly (but often in even more devastating ways), activities that are classified as sinful can lead to imprisonment in the way we have defined:

- Use of drugs and alcohol can easily lead to addictions which severely limit our choices in life
- Promiscuity can lead to unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and broken relationships, all of which limit our freedom
- Dishonesty generally results in having to come up with additional untruths to cover past lies, sometimes making it difficult to even remember the details you have made up in concocting the story
- Hate and envy often drive us to do things that are wrong; we may feel like we just can't help ourselves from doing these things

Notice how the activities described above lead to imprisonment whether or not the person thinks they are wrong (sinful). Those of us who seek to follow God's commandments can appreciate why God classifies these activities as sinful – it's not a matter of trying to limit our freedom but rather an attempt to grant us more freedom.

(Continued on Page 11)

B&M Branch & Mission News

Holding Positions While Calling Replacements By Sister Sarah Kuzio

On December 7, 2014 the Imperial, Pennsylvania Branch witnessed the authority of the Priesthood being given to one of our brothers and also honored a dear brother who went onto his reward. There was a sweet Spirit in the air that was immediately felt entering the building. The piano and flute were playing hymns sung by the saints. The meeting was opened with hymn #102 of the Songs of Zion, "If You Would Labor in Zion." How fitting as Brother Jeff Buffington answered the high calling of a minister of The Church of Jesus Christ. The evangelists also presented a plaque to Sister Arlene Buffington in honor of the late Brother Bob Buffington's years of service as an evangelist.

Brother Tony Ricci, who presented the plaque to Sister Arlene, opened the meeting. He spoke of Brother Bob's life as an evangelist and the bittersweet feeling of ordaining his son, Brother Jeff without Brother Bob present to witness it, although he assured Brother Jeff that Brother Bob already knew. Brother Tony also recognized Sister Arlene and rejoiced with her knowing that her two sons were called of God to be ministers of The Church of Jesus Christ. Each of the evangelists present then greeted Sister Arlene with thanks for being a faithful and dedicated wife throughout Brother Bob's years of service.

Brother John Mark D'Antonio followed with scripture from the first chapter of Joshua. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Brother John Mark was speaking of the promises of God and of how Jesus was with Brother Bob throughout his years in the ministry and how he will also be with Brother Jeff.

Brother Paul Palmieri spoke of the process of the ordaining of a minister. He spoke of the authority given of Jesus Christ that would be bestowed upon Brother Jeff after the ordination. Brother Jim Calabro then washed Brother Jeff's feet and Brother Bob Buffington, Jr. ordained him an elder of the Church.

During the anointing, Brother Jeff spoke of the large shoes he has to fill after the passing of his father. Brother Jeff went on to say, "It's going to take God's help. I know everyone here knows my dad and is probably thinking, 'Well he can't fill those shoes.' But with God's help I'll try." Brother Jeff concluded by playing a song on his harmonica, dedicating it to his dad, #32 "One Last Pruning" of the Songs of Zion.

We are thankful for God's calling and ask and pray that everyone will remember Brother Jeff and his family as he begins this new journey with God. May God bless you all.

Thanksgiving and Thankfulness *By Elder Donald Ross*

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This month our nation celebrates a day of Thanksgiving. It started a few centuries ago, beginning in 1621 with the Pilgrims and Native Americans joining together in thanksgiving for the bounties of life.

In September 1620, a small ship called the Mayflower left Plymouth, England, carrying one hundred and two passengers, a group of religious separatists who were seeking a new home where they could freely practice their faith. The group also included other individuals that were lured by the promise of prosperity and land ownership in the "New World." The journey across the Atlantic Ocean lasted sixty-six days. They anchored at Cape Cod, which was far north of the intended destination at the entrance to the Hudson River. A month later, they crossed the Massachusetts Bay and began to build a village at Plymouth.

Throughout the first winter, which was brutal, the colonists remained on board the ship. They suffered from scurvy, exposure, and outbreaks of contagious disease. Only half of the passengers and crew lived to see their first New England spring. In March, the survivors moved ashore, where they received an amazing visit from an Abenaki Indian who greeted them in English! Days later, he returned with another Native American, Squanto, a member of the Pawtuxet tribe who had been kidnapped by an English captain and sold into slavery before escaping to London and subsequently returning to his homeland on an exploratory expedition. Squanto taught the Pilgrims how to cultivate corn, catch fish in the rivers, extract sap from maple trees, and avoid poisonous plants. He helped the settlers forge an alliance with the Wampanoag, a local tribe, which lasted for more than fifty years and tragically remains one of the only examples of harmony between European colonists and Native Americans.

In 1621, the Plymouth colonists and Wampanoag Native Americans shared an autumn harvest and feast that is one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations in the colonies. The menu included lobster, seal, swan, and deer. Days of fasting and thanksgiving became commonplace on an annual basis in other New England settlements.

President George Washington issued the first Thanksgiving proclamation. He called on Americans to express their gratitude for the happy conclusion to the war of independence and the ratification of the U.S. Constitution! In 1863, after a thirty-six-year letter-writing campaign to governors, senators, and presidents by Josepha Hale, author of the rhyme "Mary Had a Little Lamb," President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 heeded her request and designated Thanksgiving a national holiday.

What is thanksgiving? It is an acknowledgement and confessing with gladness, the benefits and mercies which God bestows either upon ourselves or others. Do we as a nation still acknowledge Thanksgiving as a day to give thanks to the Almighty for His providence, goodness, and mercy? Not really! It has become a day of merchandising in lieu of giving thanks to the Lord for everything He has done and does for us, our families, and the nation.

We read throughout the Scriptures, both Bible and Book of Mormon, that it is our duty to give thanks for what Jesus Christ has done for us. He died that we might live. He died for our sins. He promised us eternal life if we serve Him, obey His commandments, and endure to the end.

Alma 34:38 states, "...that ye humble yourselves even to the dust, and worship God, in whatsoever place ye may be in, in spirit and in truth; and that ye live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you."

Ammon fell to his knees and began to pour out his soul in prayer and thanksgiving to God for what he had done for his brethren; and he was overpowered with joy. See Alma 19:14.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:6, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

Once again, the Apostle Paul, writing to the Colossians in chapter 2: 6-7, states, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built upon him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

It is incumbent upon us to give thanks daily to Jesus Christ, not sometimes or occasionally, but daily! May the Lord richly bless each and every one of you. May our prayers of daily thanks reach His throne! God bless you all.

I am thankful...

For the new opportunities God has provided for us by relocating our family to the Mesa Branch from California. It was a big scary decision to leave all that we knew, but we were welcomed with open arms and the love of God by our wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ!
-Alanna Wiktorowicz, Mesa, AZ Branch,

For family, health and friends.
-Brother Mike Italiano, Youngstown, OH Mission.

good reminder not to complain.

I am in constant prayer for many that do not have good health, and take that for granted. There are so many that do not go well, I need
-Sister Edna Calabrese, Detroit, MI Branch #2.

For my family, my health and the love of the saints.
-Sister Laura Stone, Creekside Branch, MI

That my family is all here in Albuquerque, our new home and that we are part of building a new mission of the Church!
-Sister Debbie Meo Kyriakakos, Albuquerque, NM Mission.

That I have someone to share the holidays with!
-Sister Natalie Shawver, Cincinnati, OH Mission.

That God chose me to be a leader in the family to shine His guiding light.
-Sister Alyse Urban, Creekside, MI Branch.

For the family of God that we have through the Church. They are always there to support you through prayer and love when you need it most.
-Sister Karen Jo Pandone, Detroit, MI Branch #2.

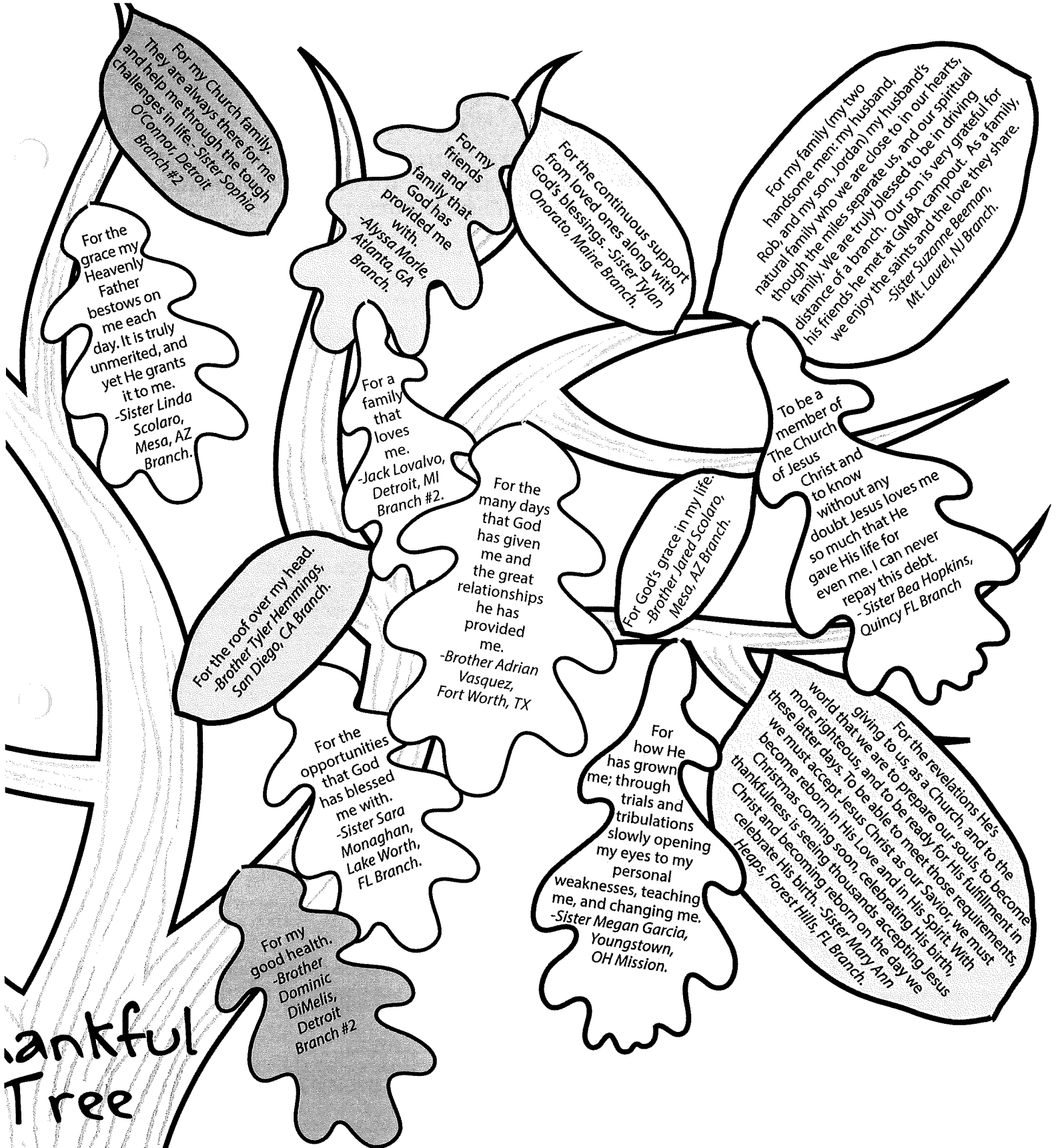
For my family and for what God provides every day.
-Sister Athena Severson, Hollywood, FL Branch.

For just getting through another year with God's help.
-Sister Vanessa DiFede, Lake Worth, FL Branch.

For my new daughter-in-law, my two twin grandsons, and my step granddaughter. Also that two of my three children are in the Church. My prayer is that some glorious day that God will call my daughter and daughter-in-law into the Church, but most of all that He will bless this mission here in South Carolina. That we will grow and someday be a branch of The Church of Jesus Christ and that we can bring souls to Christ to be saved.
-Brother Garry Camden, Sr., Coastal Carolina Mission.

That I had a mother who was a good example and role model on how to live my life. She raised me to love the Lord and she never let adversity or anyone keep her from her fellowship with Christ. I am thankful for the love she always showed to everyone. Holidays were always a time to be together no matter how far apart we lived. My mother left a big footprint to fill. I will always cherish her memory and remember her teachings. I truly was blessed to have her as my mother.
-Sister Kathleen Pastorelli, Lake Worth, FL Branch.

Thankful Tree



For my Church family. They are always there for me and help me through the tough challenges in life. -Sister Sophia O'Connor, Detroit Branch #2

For the grace my Heavenly Father bestows on me each day. It is truly unmerited, and yet He grants it to me. -Sister Linda Scolaro, Mesa, AZ Branch.

For my friends and family that God has provided me with. -Alyssa More, Atlanta, GA Branch.

For the continuous support from loved ones along with God's blessings. -Sister Tylan Onorato, Maine Branch.

For my family (my two handsome men, my husband, Rob, and my son, Jordan) my husband's natural family who we are close to in our hearts, though the miles separate us, and our spiritual family. We are truly blessed to be in driving distance of a branch. Our son is very grateful for his friends he met at GMBA campout. As a family, we enjoy the saints and the love they share. -Sister Suzanne Beeman, Mt. Laurel, NJ Branch.

For a family that loves me. -Jack Lovalvo, Detroit, MI Branch #2.

For the many days that God has given me and the great relationships he has provided me.

-Brother Adrian Vasquez, Fort Worth, TX

For the roof over my head. -Brother Tyler Hemmings, San Diego, CA Branch.

For God's grace in my life. -Brother Jared Scolaro, Mesa, AZ Branch.

To be a member of The Church of Jesus Christ and to know without any doubt Jesus loves me so much that He gave His life for even me. I can never repay this debt. -Sister Bea Hopkins, Quincy FL Branch

For the opportunities that God has blessed me with. -Sister Sara Monaghan, Lake Worth, FL Branch.

For how He has grown me; through trials and tribulations slowly opening my eyes to my personal weaknesses, teaching me, and changing me. -Sister Megan Garcia, Youngstown, OH Mission.

For the revelations He's giving to us, as a Church, and to the world that we are to prepare our souls, to become more righteous, and to be able to meet those requirements, we must accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, we must become reborn in His Love and in His Spirit. With Christmas coming soon, celebrating His birth, thankfulness is seeing thousands accepting Jesus Christ and becoming reborn on the day we celebrate His birth. -Sister Mary Ann Heaps, Forest Hills, FL Branch.

For my good health. -Brother Dominic DiMelis, Detroit Branch #2

The miraculous healing of our son, Allen. God spared his life and gave undeniable evidence of His anointing power found through the faith of the Saints of the Restored Gospel. All Praise to Emmanuel, God is surely with us! -Brother Bryan and Sister Heylen Griffith, Forest Hills, FL Branch.

As a mom, I have the opportunity to share the joy and the reason for the season with my children. The two things I love the most about Christmas are the music and the opportunity to give from the heart. I love that at Christmas time, songs of Jesus and His birth are all over the radio and sung by so many unashamedly. Also the feeling that fills people's hearts to give from the heart without sense of self. These are things that I want to make sure my children see and feel and that they know that it is because of Jesus that we have these things to be thankful for. -Sister Rachel Cotellesse, Lakeside, AZ Branch.

Seeking Him First in a World That Puts Him Last It's more than just believing in God. It's actually following Him By Sister Michelle Watson

You've heard it a million times. Maybe more. From the pulpit. In Sunday school. From godly mentors. We Christians say it all the time.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and..." What comes next? *"all these things shall be added unto you."* This oft-quoted verse basically means that when you put God first, He provides everything you need. That's a pretty comforting thought considering the fact that most of you have a lot of life ahead of you, and you may be wondering just how it's all going to fall into place: college, career, marriage, etc. Just put God first, and He'll take care of it. Sounds simple enough. But wait, Bible scholars. Who can tell me what words are missing from the verse I just quoted? Anyone know?

What Exactly Are You Seeking?

Matthew 6:33 reads like this: *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

I think it's very interesting that Christ adds this clarifying phrase. He's kind of saying, *"Put the things of God first. You can do this by acting like me. Be righteous by following my example."*

Oh, my dear young people. It really is that simple — just follow in the Master's footsteps, and the path will lead you to unspeakable joy. But how difficult is it to really act like Jesus these days? I think it's becoming harder and harder, especially for people your age.

Compromising Positions

The world is constantly calling you to compromise your beliefs — Christ's teachings. Many times, you do compromise, thinking it's no big deal because *"life's just that way nowadays"* or *"everyone does it."* Then, things don't turn out the way you expect. You find yourself in a bad marriage, an unhealthy career, or in debt up to your eyeballs, and you wonder, *"Why didn't God provide?"*

I don't want you to find yourself asking that question 10 or 15 years from now. The key to preventing many of life's woes is right there in Matthew 6:33 — put Him first.

Your No. 1

Take a second and consider several areas of your life:

- Career/job/school
- Romantic relationships
- Finances
- Entertainment choices
- Personal relationship with God
- Commitment to the church and the saints

Now, honestly ask yourself, *"Am I putting God first in these areas?"* Phrased another way, *"Am I following Christ's commandments in these areas?"* It's all too easy to make little (or big) compromises here and there, leaning on popular logic and opinion to make decisions instead of looking to God's word.

For example, have you made it clear to your boss that you can't work Sundays? Have you joined a fraternity or club whose members engage in less than godly behavior? Perhaps you've found someone special, and your physical relationship is less than pure. *"It just made sense to move in together. Plus, if I didn't, then she'd think I didn't love her."* Do you tithe ten percent off the top, or do you give what's left over? Do you spend time with God before you spend time with the TV? *"I'll watch this first and then read scripture..."* except

you don't. Do you make it a point to support church activities, or is there always something else going on when it's conference weekend?

I hope that you feel convicted reading that list of questions — sheesh, I feel convicted writing it!

It's so easy to rationalize our behavior. Many times, we think, *"God understands. He knows my heart."* He understands the reasons why I'm having sex. He knows I'm only watching that smutty TV series because I'm bored. He's privy to all the reasons why I don't give money to church. He knows that my heart was at the Sunday service even though I slept in.

Yes, He knows and understands. And He loves you regardless. But that doesn't mean He's happy about it. He wants something better for you.

I care quite a bit about the young people who I know, so I feel compelled to tell you — all of you — the truth. And here it is: you can't ignore God's commandments (ignore the *"righteousness"* part of the verse) and expect to enjoy God's best in your life.

Sticking to the Standard in a Changing World

Things that weren't acceptable when I was a teenager (a very, very short time ago) are now considered normal. You guys have access to so much more evil stuff than I did pre-Internet. Have you heard anyone say the following things?

- You can't expect to find a job where you don't have to work Sundays.
- Nobody stays a virgin till marriage anymore.
- You have to go into debt at some point. It's inevitable.
- This movie isn't that bad.
- I can worship God privately in my heart and leave it at that.

You guys, no. God says,

- Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8)
- Flee fornication (1 Corinthians 6:18)
- The borrower is servant to the lender (Proverbs 22:7)
- If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness (Matt. 6:23)
- Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only (James 1:22)

Just because society changes its standards doesn't mean God changes His. We can't read God's word and twist it to fit how we want to live. We have to follow His path, His plan.

It's the only road that leads to the joy you're seeking. It will definitely require temporary sacrifice right now, but you will thank yourself — and God! — later when you're reaping the benefits.

Two Plus Two Equals...

You guys are smart, so you fully understand the laws of cause and effect. If you study for a test, you do well. If you don't, you bomb. If you work hard at your job, you progress upward. If you don't, you get fired. If you eat right, you stay healthy. If you don't, you have to buy bigger jeans.

It's easy to accept these logical cause-effect relationships, but, for some reason, we don't understand why life gets so hard when we stray from God's path. We wonder, *"How did I get to this point?"* Duh. Compromise your walk with God, and you tie His hands.

I don't know about your generation, but my peers often want to enjoy all the benefits of believing in God without actually having to follow Him. When we do this, we honor Him with our lips, but our hearts are far from Him (Isaiah 29:13).

(Continued on Page 11)

The Singers By Brother Kerry Carlini

"O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?" the king cried. It was a time of great need. The kingdoms of Moab, and Ammon, among others, had formed an alliance to battle against the kingdom of Judah. Yet their king, Jehoshaphat, would stand firm against such aggression. "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." For Jehoshaphat, a righteous leader – who had brought his nation back from out of the depths of sin to the ways of God – would stand in faith. What follows are five amazing facts regarding his nation's deliverance:

- 1 Upon hearing of the pending battle, Jehoshaphat's first course of action was to proclaim a fast throughout all Judah.
- 2 Once the people had gathered and Jehoshaphat prayed, the Spirit of the Lord came upon a Levite, Jahaziel, who prophesied, "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle...for the battle is not yours, but God's."
- 3 On the following day, just before the pending fight, Jehoshaphat appointed singers to go before the army in worship, saying, "Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth forever."
- 4 Then, as the singers went forth, the Lord miraculously set an ambush, causing the enemy to utterly destroy themselves.
- 5 Finally, in coming upon the dead, Jehoshaphat and his army would find an abundance of riches and precious jewels, requiring three days to carry away the spoil.

II Chronicles 20th Chapter



Ladies' Uplift Circle News

Southwest Ladies' Uplift Circle History By Sister Rachel Cotellesse

The area includes four Ladies' Uplift Circles: Mesa, Lakeside, Tse Bonito, and Albuquerque, NM. Our branches and missions were organized as a district in June 1975. It is not certain what year the Area Circle was established; however, Sister Sarah Watson was the first elected President.

Our first local circle was organized on November 21, 1974 in Phoenix, AZ. Sarah Watson was elected President, Sarah Neill, Vice President, and Sandra Saczko was the Secretary. This circle is now called the Mesa Circle. They are an active group of women as of today. They raise money to distribute among the area missions and branches as well as to help those in need in their local. They have an active Little Ladies' Circle, established in early 2000, which the entire Area is very proud of. They now hold their own meetings and do outreach services with the help of the Mesa Circle.

The Lakeside Circle was established

in 1970 with the help of Brother Joseph Calabrese. The circle has been a very important part of the branch's work among the seed of Joseph from the beginning. They have always worked with the women on the White Mountain Apache Reservation. Sister Tish Palensar and Sister Doris Armstrong would travel to the homes of the women on the reserve and with their sewing machines and material in tow; they taught the Apache women how to quilt. This was a big success and continued for many years. The Circle has also provided layettes to be distributed to the new mothers on the reservation. This program has been supported by the local and by many other locals throughout the Church. The Circle continually works among the seed of Joseph and helps in any way to support the ministry.

The Tse Bonito Circle was established in 1974. Sister Judy Watson was the first president. They have always worked with the Navajo women and meet in their homes. They have mentored the women and young girls. The layette project was established by the sisters there many

years ago and is continued today. They are small in number but have a very strong circle even today.

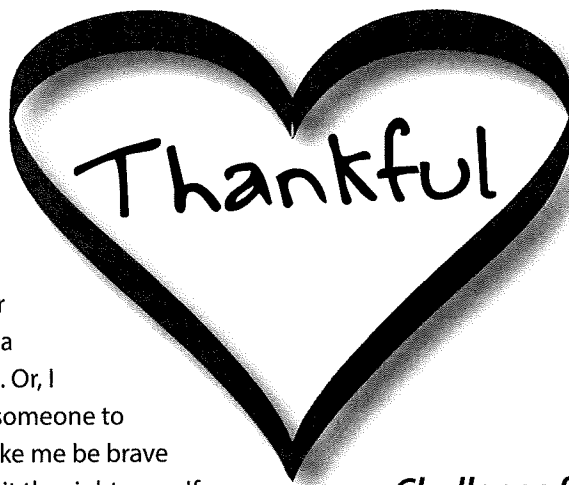
The Albuquerque, NM Circle was established in 2012. Sister Debbie Kyriakakos is the President. They are still establishing themselves. They hold meetings at sisters' homes and help the ministry when there is a need.

Our circles are quite a distance from each other, which makes it difficult to come together often. We do have our business meetings at the Southwest Region Conference meetings in March. We work hard to raise money for the many needs in our Area, but we mostly support the work of the Seed of Joseph. We also support one another in the needs of the General Circle and our Area Circle.

Being there for the women of the Church is a very important part of each local Circle. Loving one another and being supportive through prayer is what makes the Ladies' Uplift Circle an important tool of The Church of Jesus Christ.



Having a Thankful Heart



When I was young, I thought it would be great to be an adult so that I would always know what to do. What a big surprise to find out that there were hundreds and hundreds of times every month when I did not really know what was the best decision, or what to say to help someone. I did not know how to do something or where to find the words and energy to speak up for what is fair or right. I realized that life could be so, so hard. I realized that I could go to University or get training to know how to do many things, but there were still times when I was confused, scared, embarrassed, or worried about the right way to do something. I needed help to keep trying.

Then I realized I had the perfect key to figuring out the problems, the scary and the exciting things in life. My mother and others had taught me. All I had to do was ask Jesus—the Son of our God, the Great and only Creator. I started admitting I needed help. I prayed to Him. I started asking Him in my heart to show me the right thing to do. Then when the adventure, or the blessed peaceful things worked out, I thanked the Lord for His mercy and kindness and love in helping me. I thanked Him joyfully. I started talking to the Lord. He helped me over and over. I realized that I liked to be thanked when I helped others. God does too.

I developed a really big thankful heart. Now, when I see something that I want to do, or learn, or someone I want to meet, I say a prayer right there in my heart. I ask God to

open the door for me by giving me a chance to try this. Or, I ask God to send someone to help me or to make me be brave and willing to do it the right way. If the answer is yes, then I take the next step and I thank Jesus for talking to God for me. And then I take another step. I am so surprised and thankful when I see how God helps others and me if we only ask, and then thank Him.

In the Book of Mormon Alma teaches us *"Counsel with the Lord in all the things you do and he will direct you for good. When you lie down at night ask the Lord that he may watch over you in your sleep; when you rise in the morning let your heart be full of thanks unto God; and if you do these things you will be lifted up at the last day"* (See Alma 37:37). Always thank God for His goodness and care.

Who do you owe a big thank you to? Did a crossing guard at school help you? Was a teacher nice? Did someone in your family feed you, or get clothes ready? Did someone take you somewhere? In your family, who works a hard job to get money? Who could you say *"Thank you!"* to every day? Notice even the small things.

WORD SEARCH

KING (David)	SANG	SHOULD
SO	TO	WE
IN	THANK	PRAY
THE	GOD	TOO
BIBLE		

Challenge for November:

If you are eight, find eight people to notice and thank. If you're fourteen, then go for fourteen thanks. If you are thirty or over, that gives you the challenge of thirty unusual thank yous for the month of November. Can you do it? Can you thank the bus driver, your friend's parent who drives you, the grocery clerk and your aunt who loves you or grandparent who cares?

Practice a thankful heart. It will take you far in life. It is another way of showing God that you love Him and appreciate Him. It is the right thing to do.

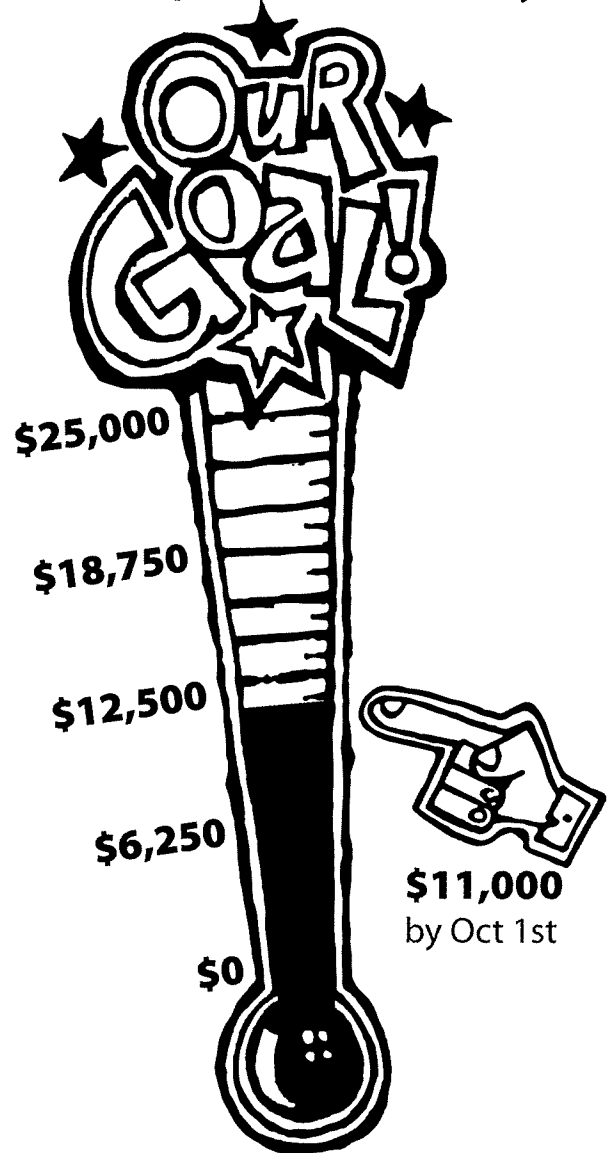
Your friend with a thankful heart

Sister Jan

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The Innermost Prison *Continued from Page 4*

Of course, there are spiritual consequences (the "innermost prison") that result in living a sinful life. Some of these would be the following:

- No relationship with God
- Ineffective prayer life
- No desire to read the Word of God
- No desire to attend church

Sadly, we see this condition becoming more prevalent, both among people who don't know the Lord as well as with some who once began a walk with Christ. If we see ourselves moving in the direction of the innermost prison, it is important that we seek to strengthen our relationship with the Lord. Likewise, we should point others toward Christ, not as a form of imprisonment but rather to deliver them from prison as only He can.

Next month's article will focus more on how Christ frees us from the innermost prison. For now, I'll leave you with some of the lyrics of Hymn #72 in the Songs of Zion, "From The Innermost Prison":

*Then a voice from the innermost prison
Crying out, disillusioned by grief
Crying, "Sin like a prisoner had bound me"
Crying, "Sin is a robber and thief"
"But the Lord's found the bonds that have bound me
And He's cutting all ties to the past"
When the door to the prison fell open
He cried, "Free, praise the Lord, free at last"*

Seeking Him First in a World That Puts Him Last

Continued from page 8

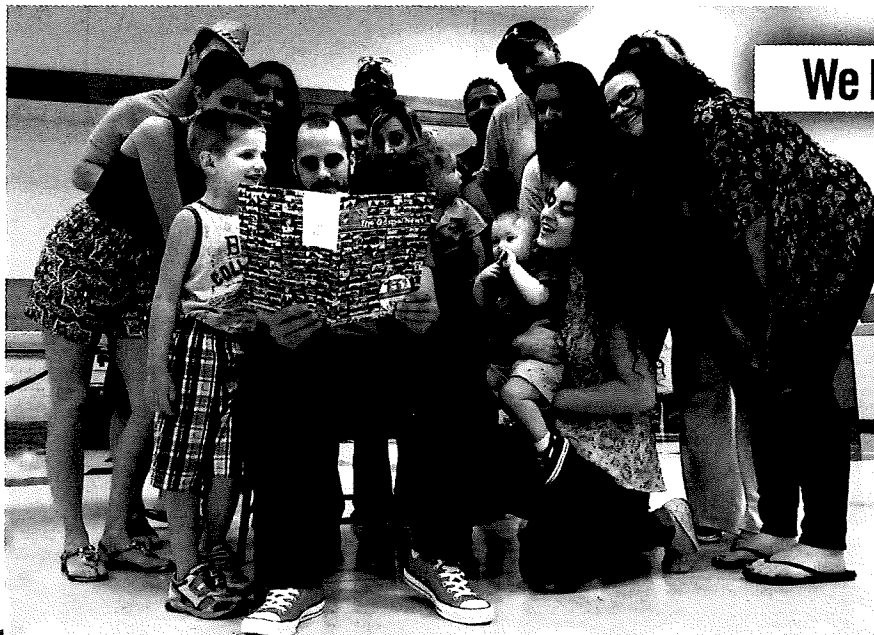
Let Him Be Your Lord

Like most of us readily accept Christ as our savior. We recognize that we need His saving grace, and we gladly and reverently accept it. But are we willing to actually take the next step and allow Him to not only be our savior but our Lord (our leader)?

I urge you all to consider this important matter. The patterns of behavior that you set now can follow you through the rest of your life, so pattern your life after Christ's example now. Keep His commandments even if they seem outdated. Follow His footsteps even if they lead you away from the crowd. Don't worry about what others are doing. Submit your will to His, even if you get weird looks.

I don't know anyone who ever regretted putting God first. Sure, they've walked through some very tough times, but God has always been faithful and provided "all these things" — all their needs — in the end. In fact, God often provides over and above anything we can ask or think when we let His Spirit have its way (Ephesians 3:16-20).

Just imagine feeling joy so great that it pales in comparison to any temporary or fleeting pleasure that you missed out on. I don't think you'll ever regret living for honor and glory rather than your own satisfaction. My friends, there is so much joy in it! Don't settle for less.



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Blessing Bits

BB

I Am That I Am

One evening as we were ready to put our little ones to bed, we noticed Allen had a fever. We knew this meant that we had to take him into All Children's Hospital if it got above 100.4° F. to have intravenous antibiotics due to his medical port. As I drove to the store to pick up medicine to bring the fever down before that critical point, I prayed and begged the Lord to intervene and hold the temperature from getting too high. As I started to play the CD in my car, the song, *I AM, THAT I AM* started to play in the section that says, "God delivered His children and He will deliver today." As I arrived home, Allen had fallen asleep. I checked his temperature before waking him up to give him medicine but I didn't have to, because the fever was gone! God is good and He knows when we need deliverance from time to time!—*Sister Heylen B. Griffith, Forest Hills, FL Branch*

BB

"As ye have done it unto one of the least...ye have done it unto Me"

Part of my calling and ministry has been to purchase and give bottles of water to homeless people. One particular day I had spent all the money I had and I was flat broke. I was half a block away from the place I was staying when I looked down and there on the ground lay a \$50 bill neatly folded in half. As the Lord takes care of the birds of the field, so He always sees and provides for my every need.—*Brother Jimmy Kirkpatrick, Bell, CA Branch*

BB He'll Take Care of Me, So I Am Satisfied

I was traveling to Kansas City recently for training for my new job. I prayed as I was setting out that God would bless my trip and get me where I needed to go in safety.

As I came up over a rise in the road I saw a white dove fly in an arc over my car and the Spirit spoke to me saying, "I will take care of you." Needless to say, it was a good trip. God bless!—*Sister Jillian Mahl, Omaha, Bedford Mission*

Send us your Blessing Bits [in approximately 150 words] and answer the Question of the Month by contacting us at gospelnewsinfo@gmail.com

Q

Question for this month: *What gift would you like to share with your loved ones this Christmas?*

A

Answer from last month: *In addition to being thankful for Jesus Christ and His Gospel, what are you thankful for this upcoming holiday season?* I am thankful for having been of Godly parents. Not only just my natural birth parents, I am thankful for all my spiritual parents, my brothers and my sisters who have been there for me throughout my days in the Church —*Brother Michael R. McGuire, Dedham, MA Mission*

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights. James 1:17