RECEIVING PERSONAL GUIDANCE AT STAKE CONFERENCE

By John J. Naylor

In 2009 the company I worked for merged with another and moved its headquarters out of Kansas, where I lived. No one in my department was retained at the new company, so I found myself unemployed.

I had been out of work for a year once before, in the 1990s, and I learned then how important networking is, so I began networking even before my job formally expired. The importance of networking was reaffirmed when I went to a two-day career workshop offered through the LDS Employment Resource Center in my area.

I let as many people as I could know that I was looking for work. There were some good days and some bad, but many of my contacts led to applications and even promising interviews. One opportunity seemed particularly promising but vanished when the hiring manager learned I didn't have a particular set of software skills. My self-confidence dissolved as the phone interview ended. I worried about my ability to find another job.

For the next three days, I didn't do much except worry. That weekend, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was visiting for stake conference, and even though I knew what a rare privilege it was to hear an Apostle of the Lord, I went to the priesthood leadership meeting feeling anxious and discouraged.

Elder Bednar introduced the format of the meeting as a question-and-answer session and promised that it could be a revelatory experience for each of us. He instructed the congregation to take notes not on what he said but on what the Spirit told us.

As I sat in the meeting and listened to his counsel, I decided that I should ask his advice about dealing with unemployment because there were many others in my situation. I thought about the question I wanted to ask: "What advice would you offer to those of us who are looking for work?"

I imagined how Elder Bednar might respond. As I did so I had an overwhelming impression that the Lord knew me, that He loved me, that He understood my predicament, and that so long as I stayed faithful and kept doing the things I was doing in searching for work, everything would turn

out OK. That message came so clearly and powerfully into my heart and mind that I didn't stand to ask my question. I no longer needed to. I no longer felt the anxiety and worry that had plagued me.

When Elder Bednar asked for one more question I raised my hand. He called on me and I said, "Elder Bednar, I wish this meeting could last all night. It *has* been a revelatory experience. I had a question I was going to ask, but I don't need to ask it now because I have received an answer."

Elder Bednar then asked how many others had had that experience. Dozens raised their hands. It was a beautiful shared experience for the men of our stake that night. My heart had been changed during that meeting; I knew the Lord was going to look out for my family and me, and the sadness I had previously felt left me.

It was another month and a half before things started to come together—at least from my standpoint. In reality, the Lord had started working in my life long before I saw His hand. Two weeks before the meeting with Elder Bednar, I had received an e-mail from a friend. At the end of the note he asked if he would see me that night at the meeting of a professional club we both belonged to. I had no idea about the meeting, as the original invitation had been sent to my former work e-mail address instead of to my personal account. But now that I knew about it, I rearranged my plans to attend the meeting and to network. I worked hard that evening to strike up conversations with a number of people and to hand out my card, but when I left after the meeting, I felt as though I had made no progress.

It turned out that I had, indeed, made a contact that night that eventually led to my current employment. Much like I had received late notice of the meeting on the morning of the day it was to be held, the man I met that night was a last-minute stand-in for one of his colleagues whose plans had changed earlier that day. I feel strongly that the Lord arranged these circumstances for both of us so that we were able to connect that night.

I am grateful to have work now and for the subtle miracles that the Lord worked in my behalf to make it possible. And I am grateful that He speaks through His servants to give us peace and hope in times of distress. ■

After months of searching for a job, I wondered what else I could do. The answer came during stake conference.