



*Losing our way is easy if our
daily decisions don't connect to
our eternal destination.*

LOST & FOUND



By Adam C. Olson

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Shortly before turning 30, Roberta Tuilimu, realized she wasn't happy. She had three beautiful children, and she loved their father, Daniel Nepia, but Roberta and Daniel weren't married. Daniel wasn't a member of the Church, and it had been a long time since Roberta had attended regularly.

She was a long way from the temple marriage she had always dreamed of as a young girl who went to church every week with her parents in Auckland, New Zealand. But turning her back on her eternal goals wasn't a one-time decision; it had been a slow turn completed gradually through little decisions she made each day.

“I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick” (Ezekiel 34:16).

Decisions Disconnected

For Roberta one decision clearly sticks out as the moment she first stepped off the gospel path, though a number of other choices had likely brought her to that point. As a teenager Roberta skipped going to church a couple of weeks to do homework. “It’s interesting that it can start with something that seemed so small at the time,” she says.

After missing a couple of weeks it was much easier for her not to go the next week. Weeks of only sporadic attendance turned into months. After she turned 18, her friends convinced her to go clubbing late at night on Saturdays, which made it even harder to get to church on Sundays. It also led her to start drinking.

“I knew it wasn’t right, but I thought that I could stop straightaway if I wanted to,” she says. “I tried to justify my decisions.”

She was living a lifestyle incompatible with entering the temple, yet after meeting Daniel, she took him to the Hamilton New Zealand Temple grounds and told him she wanted to be married there.

“I knew that’s where I wanted to go,” she says. But each bad decision seemed to make the next bad decision easier—leading her further from her desired destination. Soon Roberta and Daniel were living together.

“There was a disconnect between what I wanted—what I knew was right—and the decisions I was making,” she says. “I was in the now. I didn’t connect current decisions with where they would take me.”

The Lord Seeks the Lost

As far as she was from where she had intended to go, Roberta was not lost to the Lord. Though Daniel and

Roberta didn’t realize it at the time, the Good Shepherd, who came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), had been seeking after them all along.

The Spirit had been working on Daniel, such as when Roberta had taken him to the temple grounds and when Roberta’s father had blessed their children. Though they had moved several times, with each move they ran into—and occasionally studied with—the missionaries.

Then, after relocating again in 2006, they ran into some old schoolmates, Dan and Lisa Nathan, who were active members of the Church. Daniel and Roberta had just moved into the Nathans’ ward boundaries.

For three weeks Roberta put off Lisa’s invitations to go to church with her. “I didn’t want to have to explain my situation,” she says. “But I decided I wanted my kids in Primary.”

Soon Daniel and Roberta were meeting with the missionaries again. Daniel began attending church, where a good Gospel Principles teacher made a difference. The visiting teachers visited every month. The couple even met Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles during a special devotional.

Roberta sees in their experiences evidence that Heavenly Father had prepared “a whole bunch of good people who helped us.”

Consider Your Ways

Through various experiences and people, Heavenly Father had provided Daniel and Roberta opportunities to “consider [their] ways” (Haggai 1:7). But they had to “commit [their] way unto the Lord” (Psalm 37:5) before they could make any progress.



“I knew my ways had not been His ways,” Roberta says (see Isaiah 55:8–9), “but I hadn’t known how to connect the two.”

The turning point came when the missionaries asked Daniel and Roberta to decide where they wanted to go, spiritually speaking, and what they needed to do to get there.

“When we decided in the end that what we wanted was to be where His way leads,” she says, “we started looking at what it would take to follow His way there.”

In the months that followed, Roberta worked to turn her back on the poor decisions in her past and return to the path she had left more than a decade earlier. Just as her turn from the gospel path as a teenager began with small decisions, Roberta’s return to the path began with doing seemingly little things each day.

“When I started trying to do the basics every day—individual and family prayers, reading the scriptures, taking the kids to church, helping others when I can—I could feel Heavenly Father looking after us and hearing our prayers,” Roberta says. “Our family was happier.”

Those little decisions helped strengthen Daniel and Roberta when it came time to make the big decisions. They decided to get married. Then, nearly a year after Daniel and Roberta started meeting with the missionaries, their desire to be together with their family forever led Daniel to be baptized.

Finally, after two years of trying to match what they did each day to what they wanted in the future, Daniel and Roberta were sealed in the temple—fulfilling Roberta’s childhood dream.

Live Today for Eternity

As part of Heavenly Father’s plan, Daniel and Roberta have the opportunity to decide each day which way they will choose—theirs or His. The couple is now more conscious of the direction their daily choices will take them.

From personal experience they understand how easy it is to lose their way when daily decisions are made without considering their effect on eternal destinations. But they are also grateful to have learned firsthand that there is a way back.

“I know the Lord loves me and wants me back because He blessed our lives with the people we met along our journey who helped us return,” Roberta says. “He never forgot me during my time away from the Church.”

Thanks to the love—and the atoning sacrifice—of the Good Shepherd, “the wicked [can] forsake his way, and . . . return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him . . . , for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7).

Now the Nepias are trying to stay focused on where they want to be. “When you realize there is more to this life than what’s *now*,” Daniel says, “it changes your choices.” ■



DECISIONS DETERMINE DESTINY

“It has been said by one, years ago, that history turns on small hinges, and so do people’s lives. Our lives will depend upon the decisions which we make—for decisions determine destiny.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Decisions Determine Destiny,” *New Era*, Nov. 1979, 4.