

# DAD'S KEYS AND

*After I prayed, the Spirit guided me—and then warned me.*

By Mark Elliott

**A**s a 16-year-old I learned that the Lord does indeed listen to and answer sincere prayers, even those of a young man.

My father followed the counsel of the Brethren that we should be prepared with not only food but also fuel, and so each fall my younger brother and I would help him cut and haul firewood to be stored for future need. In the area of Virginia where we lived, trees were being downed to make way for new construction. There was a time allotted for those who wanted to cut up the wood and haul it off. One bright fall day, my father announced that we would drive out to one of these construction sites and get a truckload of wood.

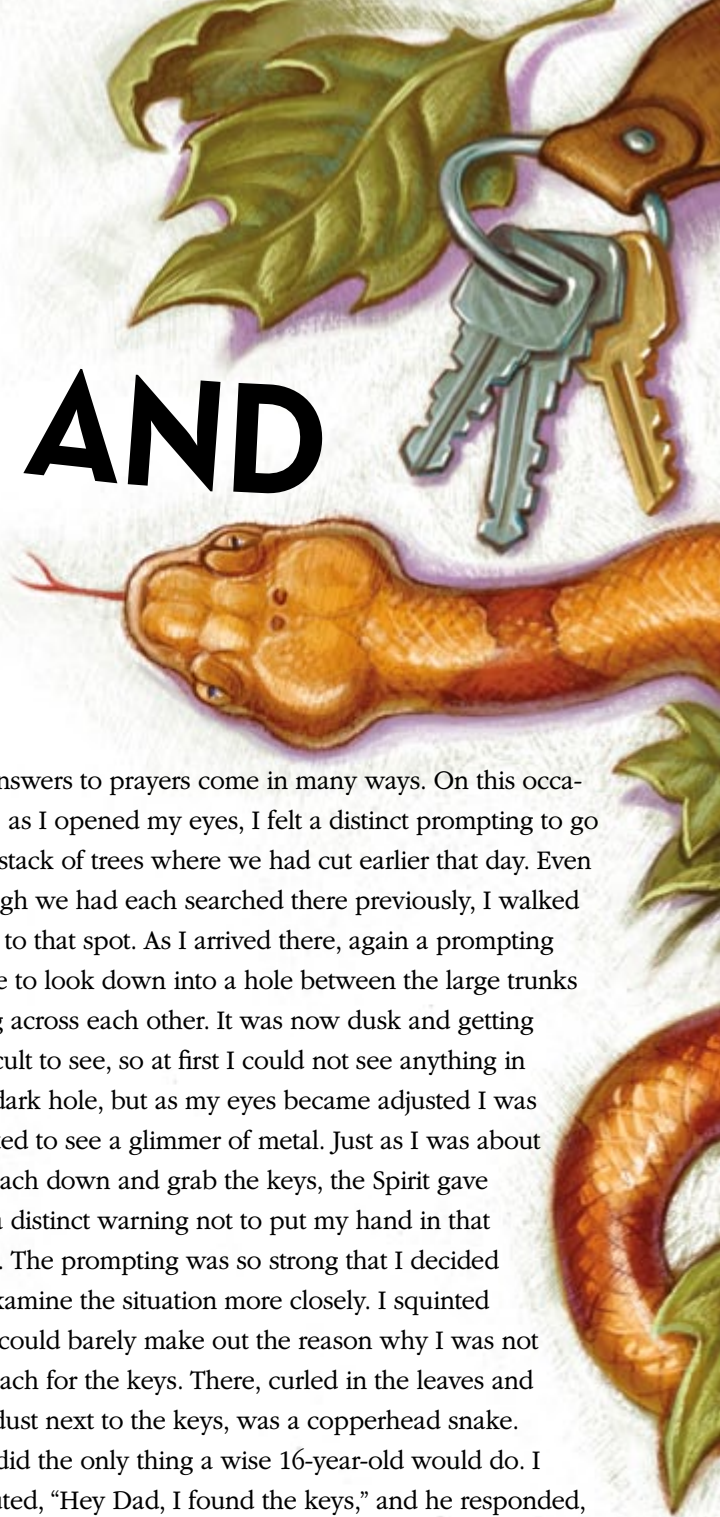
It was my father's job to work the chainsaw and cut the trees into pieces that my brother and I could haul to the truck. We had worked late into the afternoon when my father announced that we could pack up. After reaching into his pocket, he looked at us and said, "Oh no. I lost the keys." At first we thought he was kidding, but then he pulled his pocket inside out and revealed a large hole. All three of us started to search where we had been. We looked and looked but could not find the keys.

It was getting late and cold. We had not dressed for the cool of evening, and it would have been a hike of several miles on country roads to get to where we could reach a phone. It was not a life-threatening situation, but to a tired 16-year-old, it seemed desperate. After searching for as long as I could, and realizing the futility of our efforts in this maze of wood and sawdust, I took the only course I thought was left. I went behind the pile of trees and there humbly pleaded to our Heavenly Father. I explained to Him what our situation was and asked if He could help us find the keys.

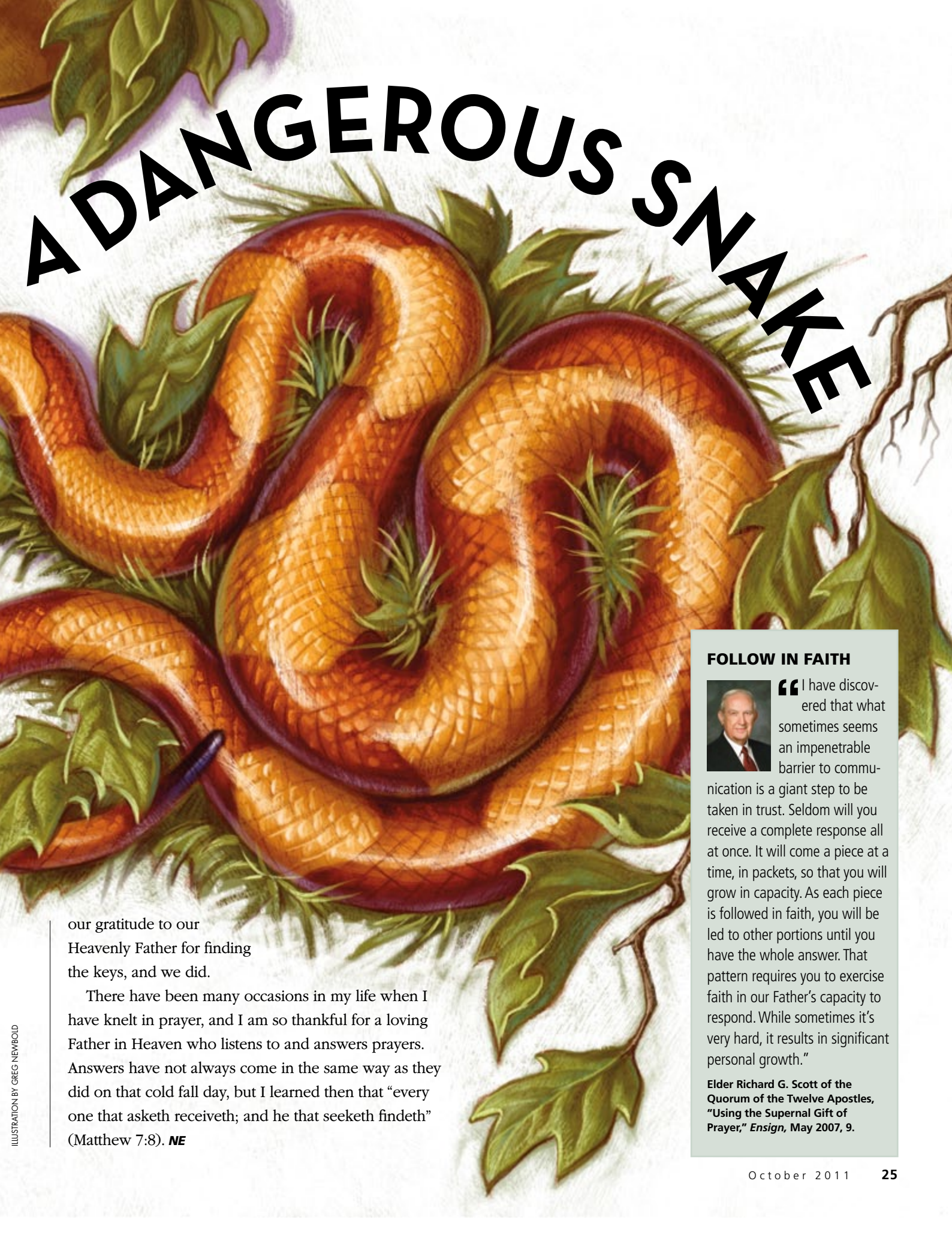
Answers to prayers come in many ways. On this occasion, as I opened my eyes, I felt a distinct prompting to go to a stack of trees where we had cut earlier that day. Even though we had each searched there previously, I walked over to that spot. As I arrived there, again a prompting came to look down into a hole between the large trunks lying across each other. It was now dusk and getting difficult to see, so at first I could not see anything in the dark hole, but as my eyes became adjusted I was excited to see a glimmer of metal. Just as I was about to reach down and grab the keys, the Spirit gave me a distinct warning not to put my hand in that hole. The prompting was so strong that I decided to examine the situation more closely. I squinted and could barely make out the reason why I was not to reach for the keys. There, curled in the leaves and sawdust next to the keys, was a copperhead snake.

I did the only thing a wise 16-year-old would do. I shouted, "Hey Dad, I found the keys," and he responded, "Where?" I yelled, "Over here." Then with a pause and a smile I added, "And you can get them out!" When my dad got to where I was, I explained to him our dilemma about the location of the keys and how our friend the snake was guarding them. My father got a long stick, slowly lowered it so as to not disturb the snake, and pulled out the keys.

Soon we were in a warm truck with a full load of wood and ready to head home when my father asked me how I ever found those keys. I told him. He believed me and reminded me that we should take a moment to express



# A DANGEROUS SNAKE



our gratitude to our Heavenly Father for finding the keys, and we did.

There have been many occasions in my life when I have knelt in prayer, and I am so thankful for a loving Father in Heaven who listens to and answers prayers. Answers have not always come in the same way as they did on that cold fall day, but I learned then that “every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth” (Matthew 7:8). **NE**

## FOLLOW IN FAITH



“I have discovered that what sometimes seems an impenetrable barrier to communication is a giant step to be taken in trust. Seldom will you receive a complete response all at once. It will come a piece at a time, in packets, so that you will grow in capacity. As each piece is followed in faith, you will be led to other portions until you have the whole answer. That pattern requires you to exercise faith in our Father’s capacity to respond. While sometimes it’s very hard, it results in significant personal growth.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 9.

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