

THE WINDOW AT THE POOL

By Becky Heiner

Our family relationships can help us learn, understand, and live the gospel.

Our vacation was ending. Over waffles that morning, we planned how to make the most of our time at the hotel before enduring the five-hour drive home. My husband decided to take our three young daughters for a final escapade in the pool. I would take advantage of a treadmill in the workout room.

The treadmill I chose faced a wall-sized window overlooking the swimming pool. Shortly I saw a family, my family, make their way to the pool. Towels, shoes, and T-shirts flew everywhere as the girls excitedly prepared to jump into the water. Normally I would be following behind them, gathering up clothes and shoes and, quite honestly, being a bit annoyed by it all. Instead, I saw this family from the outside looking in, as though the

giant window before me was a movie screen. As my feet pounded a rhythm on the rotating belt beneath, I watched.

I saw how happy everyone was, laughing and playing together, and I thought about the times I had become discouraged by the petty arguments that inevitably arise in a family, by the uneasy feeling that, despite my best effort, I was failing to teach my children to love each other. But as I watched, I saw people who were happy together. I discovered that I wasn't failing to teach them to love one another; I was just failing to notice that they could.

I watched one of the girls jumping from the pool's edge over and over again into her daddy's arms. I thought about all the big jumps she would make throughout her life and hoped she would trust Heavenly Father to

catch her each time. I knew that with each jump she was learning to trust and that being part of our family was a safe way to learn that trust.

Another daughter sought to perfect a swimming skill. I saw how her family's encouragement kept her trying. There would be times in her life when she would need that same support in the face of more difficult challenges.

And then I watched as our third daughter was accidentally bumped into the pool. Upset and angry, she sputtered her way out of the water and into a chair. Immediately her family noticed she was missing. I watched each one lovingly encourage her to rejoin them. She eventually did, and I thought of her future, of all the times she would be hurt and feel like giving up. I hoped she would always find in the love of her family the strength to endure.

Suddenly, the realization hit me: our families can be a key to our ability to learn, understand, and live the gospel. Nephi noted that "by small means the Lord can bring about great things" (1 Nephi 16:29). And so it is with families. Yes, parents struggle. But every effort to teach and train and love, no matter how small, matters.

My little movie drew to a close. As I turned off the treadmill and watched my family gather their clothes, I felt renewed determination to keep going, to keep doing all the little things that I sometimes worry don't make a difference. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

