

After years of watching him stray from gospel standards, we wondered what else we could possibly do.

Our son was a very active child, and my wife and I spent a great deal of time with him as he grew, trying to satisfy his seemingly endless need for attention. It was difficult not to neglect his five younger siblings as we tried to create an environment in which he could be happy. Although we took him to several family counselors, by the time he reached 16 years of age, he was well on his way to failure in school and was spending his time with other troubled youth, none of whom lived gospel standards.

We were devastated. We had begun our married life with goals consistent with the gospel—regular church and temple attendance, family prayer and scripture study, and family home evening. We were not perfect, but at least we were consistent.

When our son dropped out of high school, we tried hard to find something for him to do that would meet his financial needs and give him some self-respect. His aunt and uncle were running

their own business, and they took a chance and gave him a job, which worked out for him. He was bright and a good worker, but the job was only temporary, so after a while we found ourselves looking for something else for him to do. Finally, a kind home teacher found him a job as a welder. He excelled at the job and soon moved up to a position as a traveling technician. But he was still not living gospel standards, and we struggled with his personal and social problems almost daily. Many nights passed without our knowing where he was or what he was doing.

As our son turned 19, it became agonizingly difficult for us to hear departing missionaries speak in church. We questioned ourselves over and over again, wondering where we had gone wrong.

I have heard it said that the death of a loved one is the most difficult challenge one has to face, but I believe the spiritual death of a loved one can be even more difficult to accept. In *Faith*

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY CARY HENRIE

Our son's choices

NAME
WITHHELD

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Precedes the Miracle, President Spencer W. Kimball states that “there is no tragedy in death, but only in sin.”¹ While those who unexpectedly lose loved ones in death may understandably feel it is a tragedy, President Kimball’s statement is true in the ultimate sense. Children who die young are lost to us in this life but not in eternity. Children who stray and never come back may be lost eternally. That thought weighed heavily upon us as we continued our struggle with our son’s choices.

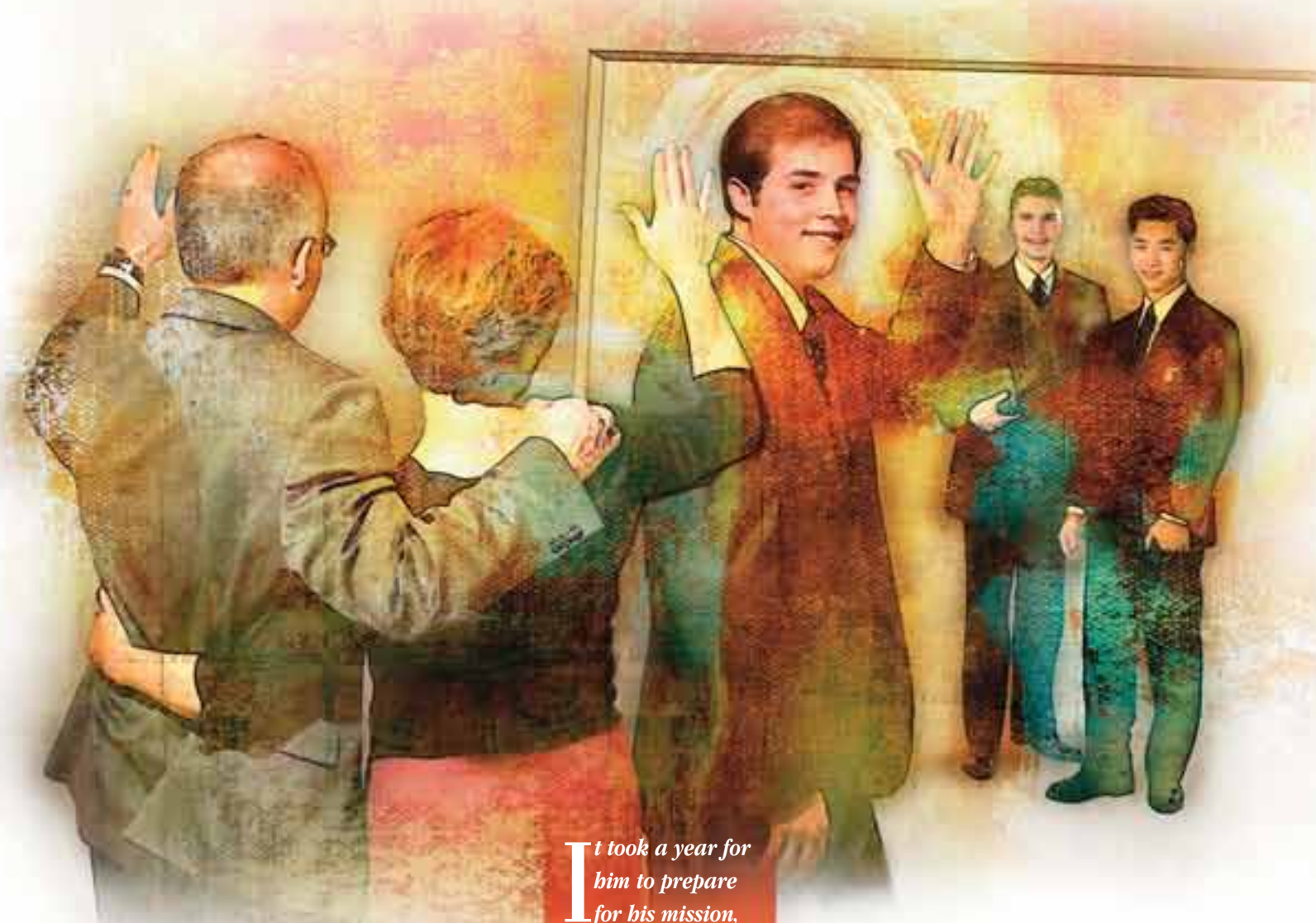
Then one evening as I lay in bed pondering the situation for what seemed like the 10,000th time, I heard a voice say simply, “Don’t worry. All will be well.” What did that mean? I wondered if all would be well with us as his parents so long as we remained faithful, no matter what happened to our son, or if it meant that eventually all would be well with him.

After eight years of prayer

and regular fasting, my wife and I felt we had done just about all we could. Then, finding inspiration in the Book of Mormon account of Alma praying with faith for his wayward son (see Mosiah 27:14), we decided to show our determination to do our part by fasting more often and with increased sincerity. We told the Lord that we didn’t know what He could do but that we needed serious help. We felt we had exhausted our own options with our son, and we needed the Lord to do something—anything. Our prayers were soon answered in a marvelous way.

Our son was 24. He had quit his job as a technician and had begun traveling by car up the California and Oregon coast, hoping to find a job with one of the companies for which he had performed his services. He was unsuccessful; it was winter, and he soon found himself with a stalled car in a cold and rainy Oregon town. He was discouraged and at





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a dead end. As he sat in the car, his thoughts turned to the possibility of a mission, and a special, warm feeling came over him, starting at the top of his head and traveling down through his body. He later said he wished he could have kept the feeling with him forever.

My wife and I were very surprised one evening to see him walk in the front door. He came into the living room, sat down on the couch, and said, “Mom and Dad, I want to go on a mission.” We could hardly believe our ears.

The next day he went to the barber and had his hair cut, made an appointment with our bishop to begin his spiritual recovery process, and began reading the scriptures on a regular basis. His actions were as astonishing to us as his conduct had been years earlier. When we walked into sacrament meeting with him the following Sunday, he looked neat and trim in his new, dark suit, with scriptures in hand.

It took a year for him to prepare for his mission, but the time finally came. The three of us drove to the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah. We sat in a large room and

listened to a member of the MTC mission presidency describe what was going to happen. He told us as parents that we would have a few minutes to say good-bye to our

missionaries, after which we would not see them for the duration of their service. We stood and gave our son a last hug and said good-bye. Then as he turned and walked away from us toward that door, I heard a voice say, “All is well. All is well.” I was overcome with emotion and could not speak.

Our son served a faithful mission, returned home, met a fine young woman, and was married in the temple. He entered a junior college, where he finished his high school training and two years of college. He then entered Brigham Young University and graduated with honors. Today he has a good job and serves on his stake high council.

I am grateful to a Father in Heaven who knew how and when to reach our son. I know that if we put our trust in Him, He will open the way. ■

NOTE

1. *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 101.