



# Thankful FOR FAST OFFERINGS

*Our lifestyle changed dramatically  
after my husband lost his job.*



By Debra LeBaron de St. Jeor

It was a shock the day my husband, Keri, lost his job. He went to work one morning to learn that the company had shut down overnight. This came shortly after an accident I'd had that resulted in extensive surgery and intense physical therapy. We found ourselves with no job, mountains of medical bills, and a young family to provide for.

Keri returned to school so he could get his teaching credential. When he finished, he accepted a teaching job in a small Idaho town, and we moved to a remote farm 45 miles from his work—it was the only place we could find to rent. In many ways, it was an isolated and difficult time. Keri left for work early in the morning, and because he had coaching responsibilities as well as lesson plans to create, he would not return home until late at night. He drove our only vehicle to work each day, which left me without transportation.

We had four children and lived in a clean but cramped trailer with three tiny bedrooms. The girls' room could fit only a single bed. In the boys' room, we were able to fit both a bed and a crib, but the aisle between them was so narrow that you couldn't turn around in it.

Our living conditions were adequate but lacking in some basic amenities. We had no telephone, no washer or dryer, and no money. In spite of this, we were happy. The children had no idea that we were considered poor; they spent their days playing outside with the carefree abandon of

childhood. They unearthed treasures in the dirt, picked wildflowers, discovered new hideaways, and created masterpieces out of straw and twine.

I had a daily routine that I followed. At the end of the day, I would bathe the children and then leave the water in the tub, throwing their clothes in to soak overnight. In the morning, after our oldest son was off to kindergarten, I made the day's bread. While it was rising, I scrubbed all the clothes by hand in the bathtub and hung them outside on the clothesline to dry. My hands became so chapped and raw from this daily ritual of scrubbing clothes in harsh detergent that they cracked and bled almost constantly. But we had no money to buy lotion.

We worked hard to provide for our family—my husband teaching school and coaching, me taking care of our children. Because of the way the pay schedule was set up with the school district, my husband worked for almost two months before we received his first paycheck.

I was able to handle our new lifestyle and the extra challenges we were facing—the isolation, the lack of

amenities, and chronically chapped hands—until the day we ran out of milk and had no way of buying more. I was worried about our children's nutrition and about the lack of calcium for their growing bodies. That was the night I cried about our situation.

When my husband got home that night I said, "We can't do this by ourselves any longer." He drove into town and phoned the bishop. The next day, we received food and other necessities from the Church—including lotion. We said many prayers of thanks to the Lord, asking Him to bless those who had contributed fast offerings so that our family could eat.

Now, more than 20 years later, our children still remember the day we went "shopping" with the Relief Society president, and they got to choose their favorite kind of cereal. We have all developed a strong testimony of the Church welfare program—especially fast offerings. We feel very blessed every time we pay into it. The fast-offering program is truly an inspired program from a loving Heavenly Father to help those in need. ■

*The author lives in California, USA.*



#### HELPING THE SAVIOR CARE FOR THE POOR

"Your fast offering will do more than help feed and clothe bodies. It will heal and change hearts. . . .

"I bear my witness that Jesus is the Christ, that in His Church we are invited to help Him as He cares for the poor in His way, and that He promises everlasting blessings will come from our helping Him."

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Is Not This the Fast That I Have Chosen?" *Ensign*, May 2015, 24, 25.