

# An Honored and



BY NAIDA STEPHENS TIMS

**M**y marriage was over. Despite temple covenants, after almost 20 years and 4 children, the strife and contention had driven a wedge between us that I could no longer live with. I consulted a lawyer. He acknowledged the grounds for divorce and outlined various legal steps to be taken. He asked me if my husband

and I had seen a counselor. No, we had not. It was his custom, he said, to have his clients visit with a counselor prior to initiating legal proceedings. Would I consider doing that? Of course I would. Nothing anyone could say to me would alter my intention of getting out of this misery. But this was going to be costly. I asked if my clergyman would be acceptable. Yes, that would be fine.

I made an appointment with my bishop. He listened

# Invited Guest

*I was set on divorce until our stake president counseled us to invite the Holy Ghost into our home.*

and said he would like us to see our stake president. I was irritated and angry as I stomped up the steps to President Leatham's front door. I knew he was going to tell us it was Satan who was destroying our marriage. I did not need to hear that. I knew exactly who was destroying our marriage. It was my husband, Ken. I could no longer tolerate the criticism, the lack of consideration, the constant bickering. If he would show more thought and care, everything would be just fine.

President Leatham greeted us and invited us into his living room. I was immediately impressed with a feeling of peace and calm. He listened to us attentively. Then he proceeded to tell us exactly what I had expected. In the peacefulness of his home, however, the Spirit touched me. President Leatham reminded us that we had made sacred covenants with the Lord, and having done so, we were a covenant family. What we did not know was that as a covenant family we were literally at war with Satan and his angels. Our home was under attack, and Satan was winning. I couldn't argue with that. He told us we didn't need to succumb to grievous temptations for Satan to win. He said we had allowed the spirit of contention to invade our home, and it had destroyed love, respect, and honor. It had eroded the principles of the gospel in our family.

Then he told us what to do about it. We were to go home and gather our children about us and explain to them what was happening to us and why. He told us to gather every morning and invite the Holy Ghost into our home and ask Heavenly Father to bless us with a spirit of love and affection for one another. Then each of us should behave toward other family members as we would if an honored and invited guest were in our home. At the end of the day we were to kneel together and thank Heavenly Father for His blessings of that day and ask Him to fill our home with His Spirit as we slept.

We sat silent on the way home, pondering what we had learned. I was remembering our hands across the altar—Ken's, mine, two toddlers', and the three-month-old baby fist, like a pink rosebud on top. Where had it all gone? I knew I was as responsible as Ken. I reached over and took his hand. "I'm willing to try if you are," I said. He looked at me, searching my face; then he smiled. "I am, I am!" he said.

The purpose of morning and evening prayer took on new meaning as we followed President Leatham's counsel. Things began to change immediately. The children were horrified to learn that I was considering divorce and readily agreed to participate in our plan. We took turns inviting the Holy Ghost into our home and thanking Heavenly Father at night. The spirit of contention began to wither and die.

One morning I was downstairs and heard my teenage daughters shouting at each other upstairs. Recriminations and names were flying. I hurried to the stairs and took the first step on my way to quell this outburst in my usual way—by shouting the offenders. Then suddenly it became very quiet. I stopped on the stair and heard my oldest daughter say: "Wait a minute! You know what we're doing, don't you?" Her sister whispered, "Yes." It was quiet again. Then, "Let's kneel down and pray." I heard the rustling of their clothing as they knelt. I didn't hear the whispered prayer, but there was rustling again as they stood. Then, "I love you, Sissy." "I love you too." I heard rustling as they embraced and sniffles as the tears flowed. I backed down the stair and went to a quiet corner alone and thanked Heavenly Father for being there.

That was more than 30 years ago, and we are still together as a family. There have been many battles with that spirit of contention invading our home, but knowing the enemy and recognizing his presence has made us strong in knowing what our armor is and how to protect and respect our honored and invited guest. ■