



# The Atonement at Work

*I knew the Lord had a plan for my son, but when he chose a path I wished he hadn't, I wasn't sure how he was going to come back.*

## NAME WITHHELD

I joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1992 in the Netherlands. However, my husband didn't join and wouldn't allow our children, Alex and Petra, to be baptized (names have been changed). Even still, the three of us attended church and had regular family home evenings.

All went well for several years until Alex, then 13,

announced that he was no longer willing to go to church or attend family home evening. As he got older, things continually got worse. It was difficult for me to stay close to Alex because he not only began drinking and smoking, but he also lied about his behavior. It broke my heart, and I shed many tears and offered many prayers as I pleaded with Heavenly Father to help my son.

Then one night while sitting quietly in the temple, I saw a picture in my mind. It was of a young man passing the sacrament. It seemed that the Lord was reminding me of the reality and power of His Atonement, encouraging me to love my son and to stay by his side.

However, as time progressed, life actually got rougher. After Alex's father and I divorced, Alex got really depressed. I knew he needed help, but he didn't want my help and wouldn't listen if I tried to talk to him.

One night our branch president asked if he could come talk to Alex. Alex was irritated but did agree to have a conversation. After the meeting, Alex was angry with the branch

president for encouraging him to serve a mission, saying, “If the branch president really was a man of God, he would know better. He would know that I’m not worthy to go—so why bother me?” That night I knew the Lord had a plan.

The plan began to take shape in an unexpected way when I received a phone call from the local police station. Alex had been arrested. My new husband and I put on our coats and in the middle of the night picked Alex up from the police station. We didn’t make a scene; actually Alex’s stepfather and I said very little.

When we got home, Alex told us what had happened when he and his friend had stolen a scooter. He was so sorry for what he had done. I saw for the first time a broken young man.

The arrest was a turning point for Alex as he began to realize the consequences of his actions and where he was headed. From that day on, so many blessings started to come our way.

The next day Alex told us that he had asked the officer to call us because he knew that we loved him. He also realized how much he had hurt us, and he appreciated that we had stayed calm.

Alex had several member friends who reached out to help him. One invited him to Church activities. Another gave him a Book of Mormon and challenged him to read it. And despite his suffering from dyslexia, I would find Alex reading it now and again.

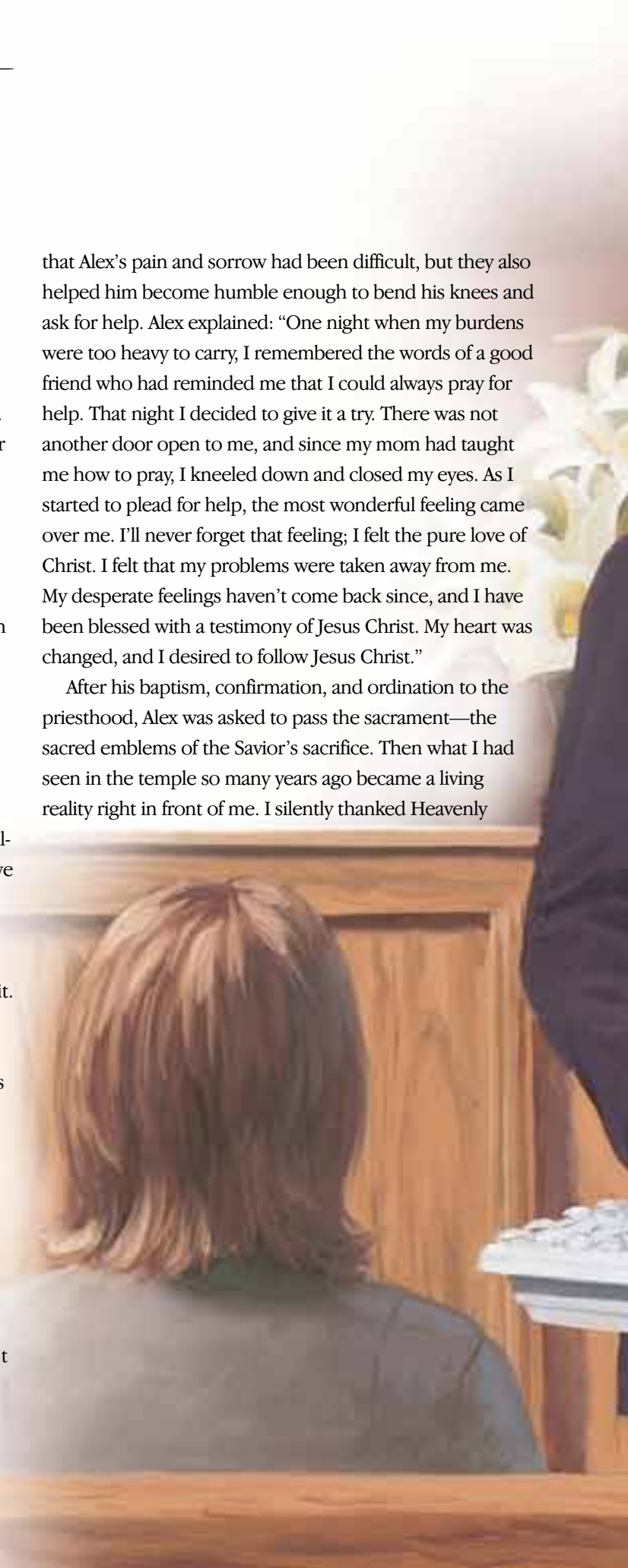
The next blessing—if I could actually count them—was when Alex asked if we would buy him a suit since he had decided he wanted to go to church. I thought he meant just for Christmas. But to my great surprise, he continued attending even after the holidays.

The next blessing seemed almost too much for me to comprehend. Alex announced that he was going to be baptized. He didn’t need any help from me and arranged everything himself with assistance from his friends and the missionaries who were teaching him. I almost couldn’t believe my eyes when the day came, and I was able to see my son in white, making sacred covenants.

Later as he related the story of his conversion, I realized

that Alex’s pain and sorrow had been difficult, but they also helped him become humble enough to bend his knees and ask for help. Alex explained: “One night when my burdens were too heavy to carry, I remembered the words of a good friend who had reminded me that I could always pray for help. That night I decided to give it a try. There was not another door open to me, and since my mom had taught me how to pray, I kneeled down and closed my eyes. As I started to plead for help, the most wonderful feeling came over me. I’ll never forget that feeling; I felt the pure love of Christ. I felt that my problems were taken away from me. My desperate feelings haven’t come back since, and I have been blessed with a testimony of Jesus Christ. My heart was changed, and I desired to follow Jesus Christ.”

After his baptism, confirmation, and ordination to the priesthood, Alex was asked to pass the sacrament—the sacred emblems of the Savior’s sacrifice. Then what I had seen in the temple so many years ago became a living reality right in front of me. I silently thanked Heavenly





Father for what I was experiencing. It was a holy moment for me.

The story could end there, but fortunately it hasn't. I have since watched as the Atonement has continued to work in the life of my son. Remember our inspired branch president? My son's testimony has continued to grow, and the invitation of our branch president became a reality. Alex recently finished serving as a full-time missionary. He spent two years reaching out and helping others—as the Lord reached out to him.

I am grateful to be Alex's mother, but I am even more grateful for the Atonement of Jesus Christ that works in the lives of all of us. ■

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