

NOT ACCORDING TO PLAN

By David Dickson

Church Magazines

A trip to the temple with my teenage daughters turned out quite differently from what we had in mind.

When my daughter Lisa turned 12, she wanted more than anything to go to the temple and perform baptisms for the dead with her older sister, her mother, and me.

What a memorable day that was! We decided we wanted to have that amazing experience again soon.

And then I closed my eyes for a few seconds and her 13th birthday came and went. That was when Lisa reminded me that we hadn't gone back to the temple as a family to do baptisms.

I shook my head. Surely she was mistaken! But a quick mental review convinced me she was right. Yes, my wife and I had gone to the temple as a couple. Yes, Lisa and her older sister, Michelle, had gone with their Mutual group. But had it really been over a year since we took our oldest two daughters to do baptisms at the temple?

It was time to adjust a few priorities so we could be in the temple together again. My two teenage daughters and I made plans to attend the following Saturday—no matter what. Of course, we expected the same joyful experience as before.

Arriving at 7:30 a.m., we figured we'd walk right in. Not so. That day was unusually busy, and I hadn't thought to call ahead. When we entered the baptistry waiting room, we learned there would be an hour's wait before we could even change clothes and wait in the baptistry seating area. This was already quite a bit different from our first trip together a year ago.

Still, we knew it would be worth the wait. The three of us sat down and read scriptures and Church magazines. The hustle and bustle of life paused. During that hour I soaked in the spirit and quiet of the temple. Daily life

melted into the background.

In time, they called our names to come to the desk.

That's when we opened Lisa's recommend only to discover it had expired two weeks prior. Now things were *definitely* not like our first temple trip. Not even close.

My beautiful daughter hid her disappointment well until we made it to the parking lot. Then the tears began to fall. Feeling nothing at all like a dad-of-the-year, my thoughts and emotions tumbled around as we climbed back into the car.

Why hadn't I thought to check her recommend beforehand? Surely a nudge from the Spirit could have spared us that moment of discouragement after waiting for so long to be back in the temple together. Had I flat-out missed a prompting?

As we talked on the drive home,



PHOTOGRAPH OF OGDEN UTAH TEMPLE BY RODGER CLAY PICKETT

however, we reached a few conclusions. Conclusion one, we'd been able to spend time inside the temple when we simply wouldn't have if we'd noticed the expired recommend earlier that morning. Conclusion two, we had enjoyed an increased portion of the Spirit for the better part of an hour. And conclusion three, we all felt a strong determination to return soon.

This was not the experience we'd wanted, but we learned a lot from it. We also felt strengthened simply by being there. In short, we were glad we went, even though the experience was nothing like we'd intended.

I suspect that life often follows this pattern. Sometimes the way is thorny and takes us in directions we hadn't planned. But, as the hymn says, if we keep following the Lord's path, He always leads us "to a joyful end" ("Be Still, My Soul," *Hymns*, no. 124). ■