

Our Long Road to the Temple Together



NAME WITHHELD

I wanted desperately for our family to be sealed in the temple. Why couldn't my husband share that goal?

When I joined the Church, the gospel filled a huge void. Where I once felt painful emptiness, I now felt a wave of peace, joy, and purpose. Each time the missionaries taught us, they presented both my husband, who was a member but not active for most of his life, and me with a challenge corresponding to the discussion they presented. As we accepted each one, my hopes and expectations for us grew. While I wasn't naive in thinking that it would be



My husband had followed the ambulance to the hospital, full of love and concern for me. Could that love also help him follow the path that would take our family to the temple?

pure eternal bliss from that point on or that my life would suddenly be free of obstacles and disappointments, I did think that our home would become more of a sanctuary. I wasn't exactly prepared for the challenges that lay ahead—or for the fact that we would encounter them at home.

The first indication of a problem came shortly after I started meeting with the missionaries. I woke up one Sunday morning and started getting our three children ready so that we could be on time to the first meeting at church. My husband looked at me and said, "I thought we were just going to go to sacrament meeting." That attitude was reflected in the weeks and months that followed. Although my husband occasionally attended sacrament meeting, I usually found myself taking the children to church on my own.

Still, I found blessings in my own gospel progression. I went to the temple to do baptisms for the dead not long after I joined the Church. After changing into white clothing,

I glanced at myself in the mirror just before exiting the dressing room. In the past I had struggled with feelings of self-doubt, questioning my worth, my appearance, and everything I did. But in that moment at the temple and for the first time in my life, I liked what I saw. I believe that I caught just a tiny glimpse of what my Heavenly Father sees in me. It was then that I made my Father in Heaven and myself a promise: I would do everything within my power to get my family to the temple.

Several months later I shared this experience with my stake president. I told him, "I have to go to the temple. I have to keep moving; otherwise, I will go backwards." When I did go to the temple, my husband supported me but made it clear that he was not ready to do the same.

That frustrated me. Didn't he want an eternal family? Some days I questioned whether I had the strength to go on conducting every family home evening and leading every family prayer. I often let him know I was disappointed. After a while tension started to creep into our family life.

My closest friends and Church leaders counseled me to be loving and patient. I wanted to believe that those things would get my family to the temple, but I was afraid that it might never happen. I was also afraid for our children; I wanted them to have the example of a father who was valiant in the gospel. I found hope through prayer, my patriarchal blessing, and scripture study, but I would become fearful again when I looked at friends and family

members who had waited years—even decades—for their spouses to commit to baptism. I realized that I couldn't control what happened long-term, but I could focus on being a good example. I shifted my focus from changing my husband to being the best person I could be.

As for the tension, I realized—long after I should have—that the adversary had more control over my family when I allowed anger, resentment, and fear into our home. My husband was still the person I had fallen in love with and married, and I needed to stop punishing him. So I relaxed a little, rarely showing my disappointment, and when the hurt inside seemed unbearable, I became familiar with the distance from my pain to my knees.

During this time, my cousin, his wife, and their daughter relocated to our area. My cousin's wife and I became very close. At one point she shared intimate feelings with me about their experience losing a baby girl at an almost full-term pregnancy. While I couldn't say, "I know how you feel," I could tell her what I knew about the plan of happiness. I hoped that she would feel that what I was saying was true. She did. She joined the Church, and her husband, who was already a member, became active again. They were sealed a year following her baptism. I sobbed through the entire ceremony.

I felt as if my body were split in two. One half of me was doing backflips for them—I was so happy! But the other half was full of confusion: How was this happening so quickly for them? Had I not been working hard enough? Was this ever going to happen for my family?

We wanted to have another child, and I became pregnant—but then I miscarried. The pain in my heart seemed almost impossible to bear. Meanwhile (and unbeknownst to me), my husband's interest in the Church was growing. He had begun studying various events in Church history and was listening to recordings about the lives of modern-day prophets. Things were changing, little by little.

But I was too consumed in the pain of my loss to notice. Even though my pregnancy wasn't very far along when I miscarried, the experience was difficult emotionally and physically and left me feeling weak, tired, and numb. I distanced myself from my husband. I heard a continuing dialogue in my mind of what I would say to him if he asked me about my feelings, but I couldn't bring myself to talk

about my desire for an eternal family only to be disappointed again. I needed spiritual support that I feared he was not ready to offer.

He knew something was very wrong and asked me one day to share my feelings. The tears flowed freely as I poured out the desires of my heart. I said to him, "I want you to go to the temple when you're ready, but I need to know if you are with me on this or not, because I don't know if I can do this much longer."

The hurt on his face pierced me. He said, "When I followed the ambulance to the hospital when we lost the baby, I prayed more than I ever have in my whole life. And I've thought more about going to the temple in the last few months than I ever have. But sometimes I just don't know if I can make you happy because your expectations are so high." And then he left the room.

I suddenly felt the weight of what I had imposed on him. I reflected on the previous years that I held him to my standards instead of being satisfied with the pace that he was capable of maintaining. I thought about how many times I had silently punished him when I should have put my arms around him lovingly.

He came to me later and told me how much he loved me and that all he could promise was that he'd do his best. From then on I happily let him do just that. Before I knew it, we were sitting in the bishop's office sharing our goals.

We were sealed in the temple on November 26, 2005, and it was beautiful. Our sons were reverent yet bubbling over with excitement. Even our two-year-old radiated the knowledge that something really special was happening. Seeing them joined with us in the sealing brought tears to everyone in the room.

In retrospect, I realize that the timing was just what our family needed it to be. My husband was thinking about spiritual things a lot sooner—and a lot more—than I thought he was. We both wanted the same good things for our family.

My testimony of the Lord's temples and the ordinances performed there is stronger than ever. I am grateful that our family now has eternal opportunities. What I feel after our experience exceeds all the joy I ever imagined for us. ■

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