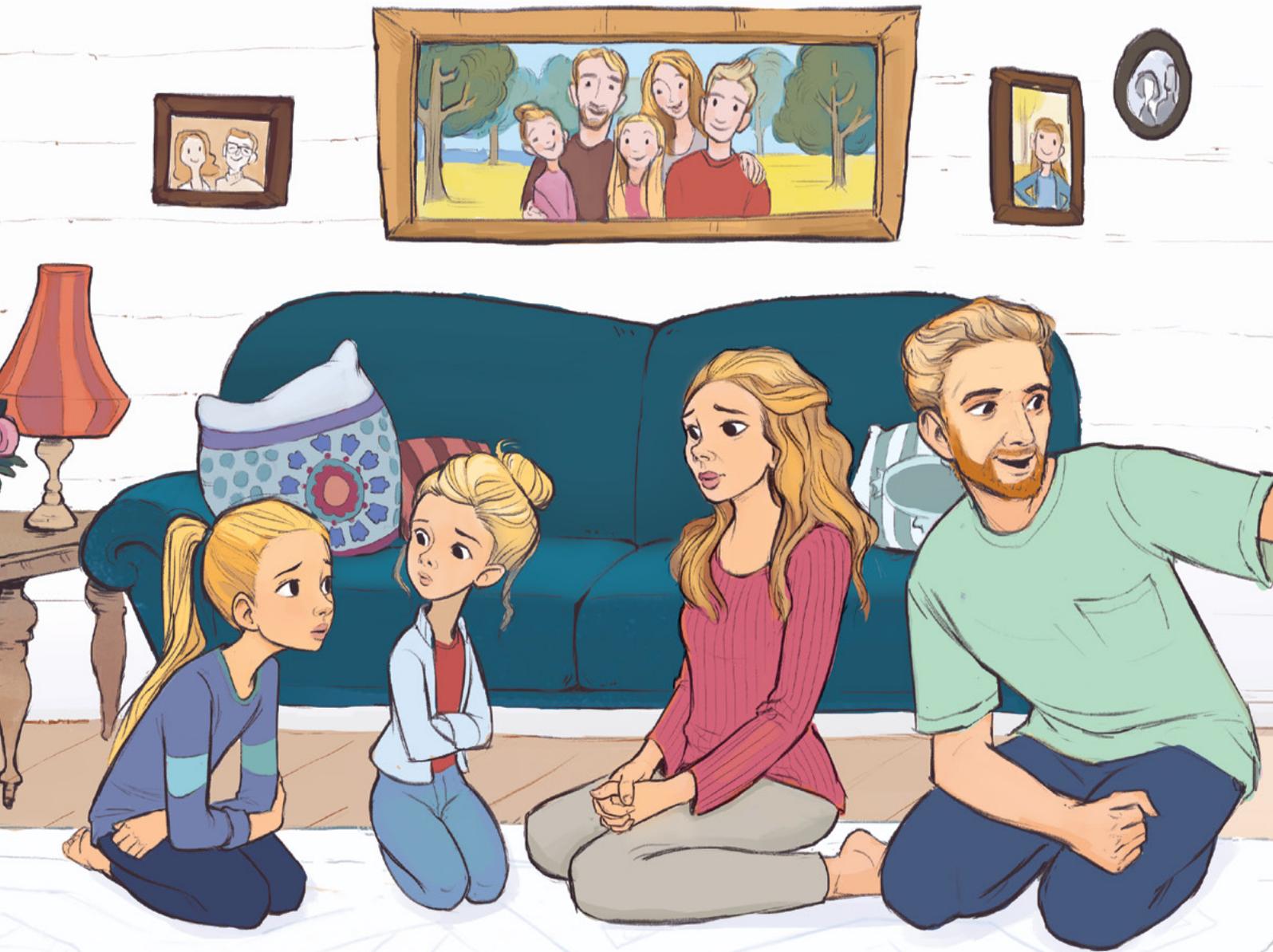


Don't Forget to Pray for Erik



By Julie Cornelius-Huang

Based on a true story

"Ev'ry soul is free to choose his life and what he'll be"
(Hymns, no. 240).

Kari's family knelt by the couch for family prayer. Everyone reverently folded their arms. Papa asked Kari's little sister, Liv, to say the prayer.

"Don't forget to thank Heavenly Father for our *many* blessings," Papa reminded her.

"And don't forget to pray for Erik," Mama added. Mama always reminded them to pray for Erik.

Erik was Kari's older brother. Before he left for university, he and Kari were best friends. She really missed all the fun things they used to do together.

Then a few months ago, Erik told Mama and Papa that he didn't want to be a member of the Church anymore. Kari and her family were surprised and sad. They started praying for Erik every night. Sometimes they prayed that he would feel the Holy Ghost and want to go back to church. Papa prayed that Erik's mind would be clear to make good choices. Mama often prayed that somebody he trusted could help him find the right path. After all of their prayers, Kari couldn't help feeling a little angry. Why hadn't Heavenly Father brought Erik back to church?

Finally, just as Liv had opened her mouth to pray, Kari couldn't hold it in anymore. "Why hasn't Heavenly Father answered our prayers?" she blurted out. Everyone looked at Kari in surprise, but she was too upset to care. For a minute nobody said anything.

"Kari," Papa said, "when you got home from school today, did you put your backpack away?"

"Huh?" Kari asked, confused. What did her backpack have to do with anything? She glanced at the front door and saw her backpack thrown against the wall instead of hung up beside Liv's. "No . . . sorry."

"Didn't Mama remind you to hang it up?"

"Yes," Kari answered. She looked down at her knees.

"Doesn't Mama often remind you to hang up your backpack?"

"Yes," Kari muttered. She still didn't know what this had to do with anything. Wasn't Papa taking her question seriously?

"I know that when we pray for Erik, Heavenly Father *does* answer our prayers—every time. The problem is that Erik may not be listening right now. Erik gets to choose whether he listens to the Holy Ghost, just like you choose whether to listen to Mama about your backpack. But do you think that you will *always* ignore Mama when she asks you to hang up your backpack?"

"No, I guess not," Kari said.

"Someday she'll listen!" Mama said, winking at Kari. Kari smiled.

"So maybe someday Erik will listen too," Kari added.

"Absolutely," Mama said. "Listening to the Holy Ghost is a skill you have to develop. Maybe Erik hasn't learned that skill yet." Kari began to feel a little better.

They all bowed their heads while Liv said the prayer. She prayed that Erik would learn to listen to the Holy Ghost. While Liv was praying, Kari felt peaceful and warm. She knew that Heavenly Father was hearing

their prayers. As Liv listed some of the ways their family had been blessed,

Kari thought of another blessing to add to the list—she understood more about prayer now!

As the prayer ended, Kari knew that Heavenly Father hadn't forgotten Erik. She also knew that He would never forget her. ■

The author lives in Nevada, USA.

WHAT IS AGENCY?

Agency is a gift Heavenly Father has given to everyone. It is the gift to choose what we will do. Heavenly Father helps us, but He doesn't force us to do things. Instead, He lets us choose for ourselves.

