

**BUT IF NOT**

"The faithful will not be totally immune from the events on this planet. Thus the courageous attitudes of imperiled Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are worthy of emulation. They knew that God could rescue them. 'But if not,' they vowed, they would still serve God anyway (see Daniel 3:16–18)."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Encircled in the Arms of His Love," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 17.

A RIVER OF Peace

Despite my grief, I move forward with my head held up in faith and hope in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

By Lanise Heaton

The day our oldest son died in an accident, the loss opened a piercing wound in my soul. Yet I knew I could count on the Savior's atoning power to help carry my heavy burden of sorrow and pain. My husband and I asked our home teachers to give each of us a blessing. We knew strength would come to us beyond our own. Our Savior has promised He will not leave us comfortless (see John 14:18). I have clung with an iron grip to that promise and testify that so has He.

Isaiah teaches that the Savior was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). If anyone could succor us, I knew He could, on a very personal level. Yet I also knew that if He instantly snatched our grief from us, there would be no growth, no dawn of understanding.

Despite the heartache, I have experienced a constant underlying river of peace that flows from the Savior (see 1 Nephi 20:18). At particularly hard moments, days, or even weeks, His peace has carried away my sadness. I have but to ask for it. Heavenly Father doesn't want us to go through mortality alone.

As I reflect on the accident that took my son's life, an Old Testament account comes to mind:

"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

"But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods" (Daniel 3:17–18; emphasis added).

The important part is "But if not." We must keep the faith no matter what



happens. Heavenly Father could have sent angels to carry my son out of harm's way, but He didn't. He knows what it will take to sanctify us so we can be prepared to come home to Him. Everything will turn out OK. But that doesn't mean we will never mourn or cry again. Our mourning is a result of our love, but our hearts don't have to be troubled.

The greatest gift we can give those on both sides of the veil is to move forward with our heads held up in faith and hope in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, even if each step is taken with tears streaming down our faces. For we are promised that "the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ" (Mosiah 16:8). One day "the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isaiah 25:8). ■

HOW DO WE COPE WITH GRIEF?

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles addressed this question in his October 2006 general conference address:

"I think that of all the days since the beginning of this world's history, that Friday [when the Savior was crucified] was the darkest.

"But the doom of that day did not endure.

"The despair did not linger because on Sunday, the resurrected Lord burst the bonds of death. He ascended from the grave and appeared gloriously triumphant as the Savior of all mankind.

"And in an instant the eyes that had been filled with ever-flowing tears dried. The lips that had whispered prayers of distress and grief now filled the air with wondrous praise, for Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God, stood before them as the firstfruits of the Resurrection, the proof that death is merely the beginning of a new and wondrous existence. . . .

"Because of the life and eternal sacrifice of the Savior of the world, we will be reunited with those we have cherished."

"Sunday Will Come," Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2006, 30.

In an upcoming family home evening, consider discussing death, the Resurrection, and the plan of salvation. See, for example, 2 Nephi 9 and Alma 11–12.