

KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE SHORE

By Richard M. Romney
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A canoe trip to an island in a nearby national park sounded like the perfect opportunity to get closer to my son. The Aaronic Priesthood leaders and the young men in our ward had been planning the trip for months, and I was able to accompany them.

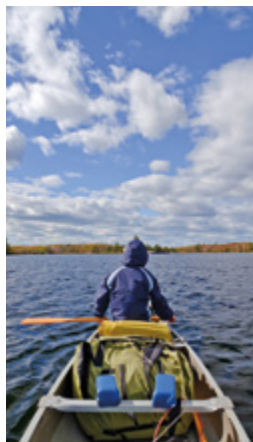
My son McKay was in great condition, participating in three sports in high school. That's probably one reason the leaders put us in the same canoe—they knew he could paddle hard if the need arose. I had some experience guiding a canoe, so we seemed like a good team.

I was also eager to have the time on the lake to talk. McKay had been through a lot since the death of his mother, and I hadn't always been able to respond in the best way to his needs and interests.

We had training, we had life vests, we knew how to swim, and we had experienced leaders guiding us.

What we hadn't counted on was the wind. We had paddled for several miles, then cut across the middle of the lake and were nearing the shore when an unusually strong headwind kicked up.

The other canoes were able to make it to shore, but McKay and I were in the final boat. The waves were picking up, and we were turning off course as we paddled and paddled,



My son taught me a powerful lesson about where to look and how to endure.

trying to make any progress at all. I was becoming exhausted and alarmed. I dug into the water and pulled with all my might, trying to steer us back on course, but we seemed to stay exactly in the same position.

We were in danger of capsizing when finally I admitted aloud that I didn't know if I had the strength to continue. Then my son said, "You're looking at the waves, Dad. You won't get anywhere doing that. You've got to keep your eyes on the shore. See that tree on the hill? That's our goal. Focus on that, and we'll make it."

He was right. Once I focused on the tree, I could stay on course. My arms felt renewed strength. McKay called cadence for the strokes—"Pull. Rest. Pull. Rest." And steadily, we moved.

We reached the shore, others reached out to help, and we sat and caught our breath. That night in our tent we talked, father and son, about our experience.

Together, we remembered what President Thomas S. Monson has taught about the lighthouse of the Lord: "It beckons through the storms of life. It calls, 'This way to safety; this way to home.'"¹

That afternoon, a tree on the shore had been our lighthouse. When I was close to despair, my son had wisely counseled me not to look at the waves but to keep my eyes on the shore. And we had pulled together, in more ways than one. ■

NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, "Standards of Strength," *New Era*, Oct. 2008, 2.