



By President
Thomas S.
Monson

TRUE TO THE FAITH OF OUR FOREFATHERS

John Linford was 43 when he and his wife, Maria, and three of their sons made the decision to leave their home in Gravely, England, to journey thousands of miles to join the Saints in the valley of the Great Salt Lake. They left behind their fourth son, who was serving a mission, sold their belongings, and took passage in Liverpool aboard the ship *Thornton*.

The journey by sea to New York City, and thence by land to Iowa, proved uneventful. Troubles began, however, shortly after the Linfords and other Latter-day Saints who had sailed on the *Thornton* left Iowa City on July 15, 1856, as part of the ill-fated James G. Willie handcart company.

The harsh weather and arduous travel took their toll on many in the company, including John. He eventually became so ill and weak that he had to be pulled in a handcart. By the time the company reached Wyoming, his condition had deteriorated significantly. A rescue team from Salt Lake City arrived on October 21, just hours after John's mortal journey ended. He had died early that morning near the banks of the Sweetwater River.

Was John sorry he had traded comfort and ease for the

struggles, privations, and hardships of taking his family to Zion?

“No, Maria,” he told his wife just before he died. “I am glad we came. I shall not live to reach Salt Lake, but you and the boys will, and I do not regret all we have gone through if our boys can grow up and raise their families in Zion.”¹

Maria and her sons completed their journey. When Maria passed away nearly 30 years later, she and John left behind a legacy of faith, of service, of devotion, and of sacrifice.

To be a Latter-day Saint is to be a pioneer, for the definition of a pioneer is “one who goes before to prepare or open up the way for others to follow.”² And to be a pioneer is to become acquainted with sacrifice. Although members of the Church are no longer asked to leave their homes to make the journey to Zion, they often must leave behind old habits, longtime customs, and cherished friends. Some make the agonizing decision to leave behind family members who oppose their Church membership. Latter-day Saints move forward, however, praying that precious ones will yet understand and accept.

The path of a pioneer is not easy, but we follow in the footsteps of the ultimate Pioneer—even the Savior—who



subsequent trials she endured for her family and the Church.

At a 1937 graveside ceremony dedicated to Maria's memory, Elder George Albert Smith (1870–1951) asked her posterity: "Will you live true to the faith of your ancestors? . . . Do strive to be worthy of all the sacrifices [they] have made for you."⁷

As we seek to build Zion in our hearts, in our homes, in our communities, and in our countries, may we remember the resolute courage and abiding faith of those who gave their all that we might enjoy the blessings of the restored gospel, with its hope and promise through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. ■

NOTES

1. See Andrew D. Olsen, *The Price We Paid* (2006), 45–46, 136–37.
2. *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (1971), "pioneer."
3. Luke 18:22.
4. John 14:6.
5. John 7:37; see also 3 Nephi 9:22.
6. "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 30.
7. See Olsen, *The Price We Paid*, 203–4.

went before, showing us the way to follow.

"Come, follow me,"³ He invited.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life,"⁴ He declared.

"Come unto me,"⁵ He called.

The way can be trying. Some find it difficult to withstand the mocking and unsavory remarks of foolish ones who ridicule chastity, honesty, and obedience to God's commands. The world has ever belittled adherence to principle. When Noah was instructed to build an ark, the foolish populace looked at the cloudless sky and then scoffed and jeered—until the rain came.

On the American continent long centuries ago, people doubted, disputed, and disobeyed until the fire consumed Zarahemla, the earth covered Moronihah, and the water

engulfed Moroni. Jeering, mocking, ribaldry, and sin were no more. They had been replaced by sullen silence, dense darkness. The patience of God had expired, His timetable fulfilled.

Maria Linford never lost her faith despite persecution in England, the hardships of her journey to "the place which God . . . prepared,"⁶ and the

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Consider asking those you teach to think of people in their lives who have gone before and been pioneers for them. Then ask them when they've had to be pioneers and prepare the way for others. Invite them to ponder the moments that they've had to sacrifice and why it was worthwhile. You could then challenge them to record their testimony of "the ultimate Pioneer," the Savior.