

MY EXPLODING PEACHES

I thought I was the perfect parent . . . until I had children.

For me, parenthood has been a refiner's fire. My weaknesses seem to come out as I become stressed, sleep deprived, worried, or upset. Of course, parenthood's blessings make up for those moments, but I have found that I have a temper. It's humiliating to admit, but I used to yell or throw things to get my children's attention.

I would resolve time and again not to lose my temper, but I would still lose it in times of stress. Heavenly Father knew I needed something dramatic to help me.

One evening after a long day of bottling peaches, I put on the last batch and decided to take a short nap. I was sure I would wake up in time to take the bottles from the steamer.

I didn't.

My husband, Quinn, and I were startled awake by the sound of exploding jars. I ran to the kitchen and saw shattered glass and gluey peaches over every surface of the room. Apparently, the steamer water had evaporated, heat and pressure had built up, the top of the steamer had blown off, and six of seven peach jars had exploded.

"I think I'll clean this up in the morning," I said.

Bad idea.

By morning the hot peach muck had solidified into hardened, glass-filled mounds all over the kitchen and

dining room. The plastered peach-glass tidbits had even found their way behind countertop appliances and into every nook and cranny, including behind the fridge.

Cleanup took several hours. I had to soak the glass-filled mounds with wet paper towels and then try to wipe them up without cutting myself.

As I cleaned, a familiar voice

ran into the kitchen and saw shattered glass and gluey peaches over every surface of the room.

whispered to me: "Mary, when your temper explodes, as did these jars, you cannot easily fix things. You cannot see where and how your anger hurts your children and others. Like this mess, that hurt hardens quickly and is painful."

Suddenly, the cleanup took on new meaning. The lesson was a powerful one. Like my anger, there was no quick cleanup. Weeks later I was still



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRADLEY H. CLARK



DID WE DO THE RIGHT THING?

finding little clumps of peach rock embedded with glass.

I pray that someday my patience will become as great a strength as it was a weakness. Meanwhile, I am grateful that the Lord's Atonement is helping me better control my temper so that I can spare my loved ones any more messes caused by exploding anger. ■

Mary Biesinger, Utah, USA

I was a well-known journalist who had written for some good magazines and newspapers in Lima, Peru, but my way of life—far from God—was tormenting me more each day. Because of this, I accepted a job as a proofreader for a magazine in the Ventanilla District, located far from my home. I was desperately seeking a way to get away from my current circle of friends. In Ventanilla, I felt in my heart that my life would change.

I was occasionally attending church with my girlfriend, María Cristina, when two good, stubborn missionaries convinced me to ask Heavenly Father in prayer if the Church was true. I did so, and what I experienced was indescribable. I had never felt the Spirit so strong as on that unforgettable day.

Married and baptized a short time later, María Cristina and I rented a small, uncomfortable room in Ventanilla. Because of my hard work, I was advanced from proofreader to editor at the company's magazine and newspaper. I had never been an editor before, and I was happy with the position. Even so, things started to change when our publications began to lower their standards, publishing items of questionable morality. These changes, ordered by our directors, opposed Church principles and values.

I had always wanted to be an editor, but the situation made me

uncomfortable. Our bishop suggested that if we did things that pleased our Heavenly Father, He would bless us. After my wife and I thought it over and prayed about it, we felt prompted that I should quit my job.

A few days later I was beginning to feel stressed out and wondered if I had done the right thing. After resigning, I had sent résumés to several companies but had heard nothing back. María Cristina suggested that we pray again, and we did so. We prayed that everything would turn out well and that we would not lose faith even though the bills were piling up.

A few hours later my wife encouraged me to call one of the companies. Somewhat unbelieving, I called. I was astounded when an official there said he was just about to call me. He wanted to know if I could start the next day!

We wept for joy. Our Heavenly Father had answered our prayers.

We had to leave our ward and many good friends for my new job, but we left with stronger testimonies. I now have respectable work and a good salary, and we have a nice place to live. Above all, we have been blessed with the certainty that when we do the things that please God, we receive His blessings. ■

Carlos Javier León Ugarte, Lima, Peru

I LOVE YOU

As my mission's zone conference was coming to a close, I stood outside wondering, "What am I doing in this foreign country? How am I going to do all that is expected of me?"

I had been in Sicily, Italy, for little over a week, but already I felt discouraged. My time in the missionary training center had seemed like a wonderful dream, but because of my inadequacies, I now felt as though I were in a nightmare.

"Dearest Father," I prayed, "I wanted to be a great missionary. Now that I am here, I realize I don't have the talents, skills, or intelligence to accomplish what I have been sent to do.

I thought I knew this language, but everyone speaks so quickly, and any words I try to utter just get tangled up in my tongue. I don't think my companion likes me. My mission president can barely speak English. I don't have anyone to talk to. Please help me."

I knew I had to go back inside, but I lingered on the street just a few minutes longer. Suddenly I felt three tugs on the back of my overcoat. I turned around to find a beautiful little girl and slowly knelt down next to her on the cobblestone street. She wrapped her arms around my neck and whispered in my ear, "*Ti voglio bene.*"

"What did you say?" I replied in

English, knowing perfectly well she didn't understand me.

She stared at my name tag. "Sorella Domenici," she read, "ti voglio bene."

I knew the meaning of the phrase. It was one of the first phrases we had learned as missionaries. It was a phrase that could speak directly to the soul. It means, "I love you."

Those words were just what I needed to hear at that moment. The Savior had sent a special messenger to deliver them to me. I led the little girl into the building.

"She must be the child of one of the members," I thought. I wove my way through groups of missionaries, hoping her mother would spot her.

When I found my companion, I asked, "Have you seen this little girl before?"

"What little girl?" she replied, looking confused.

I looked down at my side. The little girl was gone.

I stood in the open doorway of the building and glanced up and down the deserted street. As I pondered, a whisper I not only heard but also felt echoed through my soul: "Sorella Domenici, ti voglio bene."

I didn't know who the little girl was, but I knew that the Savior loved me. ■

Natalee T. Frstrup, Utah, USA



I turned around to find a beautiful little girl and slowly knelt down next to her on the cobblestone street.



The next afternoon I felt prompted to take what I was cooking for dinner to Sister Morgan and her husband for their anniversary.

WAS MY MEAL TOO SIMPLE?

For a couple of years, I visit taught a neighbor and friend named Sister Morgan. She was a few decades my senior, so I learned as much from her and her life as she did from my visiting teaching messages.

While I was her visiting teacher, Sister Morgan was diagnosed with cancer. I marveled at how bravely she endured her medical treatments and how she almost always had a smile on her face.

During one of my visits, she mentioned that the following day was her wedding anniversary. Our conversation soon led to other things, and our visit ended.

The next afternoon I felt prompted to take what I was cooking for dinner to Sister Morgan and her husband for their anniversary. At first I ignored the prompting because I was cooking an ordinary weekday meal. Surely such simple food would not do justice to such a special occasion.

But the prompting would not leave me. I called my husband at work, hoping he would agree that the idea was a bad one. Instead, he encouraged me to call Sister Morgan and tell her I was bringing over dinner.

Embarrassment over my simple meal and what I thought was presumptive behavior on my part kept me from calling my friend, but I could not shake the feeling that I should share my dinner. So I put the food on a serving dish and nervously walked across the street.

As I entered their yard, I found Brother and Sister Morgan getting into their car. I announced that I had brought dinner for their anniversary and that I hoped they didn't mind.

A smile spread over Sister Morgan's face. She explained that they had resigned themselves to celebrating their anniversary at a local fast-food restaurant because her cancer treatments

left her too tired to cook or go anywhere else. She looked relieved to be able to stay home for dinner.

A sense of relief and happiness washed over me as they accepted my simple meal.

Not more than two months later, just as Sister Morgan had completed her cancer treatments, her dear husband passed away from a sudden illness. Their anniversary just weeks before was their last.

I learned a great deal that summer about following the Spirit's still, small voice in serving others. The service we are asked—or prompted—to give may be uncomfortable, inconvenient, or simple in our eyes, but it may be just what is needed. This experience gave me courage to serve in any capacity the Lord needs me, and it increased my faith to do "the errand of angels" ("As Sisters in Zion," *Hymns*, no. 309). ■

Jennifer Klingonsmith, Utah, USA