



“Is Not This the Fast That I Have Chosen?”

Through the example of an investigator family, I learned that the Lord’s promises are sure when we obey the law of the fast with faith and purpose.

By Alexandria Schulte

I was serving as a full-time missionary in Texas, USA, when I first read Isaiah 58. Here the Lord outlines the doctrine of the law of the fast, listing nearly 20 specific blessings for those who are obedient to His law. Prior to my mission, I had seen many of these blessings in my own life and in the lives of friends and family members. Yet it was through the examples and faith of an investigator family that I truly came to understand the reality of the Lord’s promises when our fast is acceptable before Him.

“Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am” (Isaiah 58:9).

By the time my companion and I started teaching Corina Aguilar, she had already expressed a desire to come to church. After learning about the Restoration of the gospel and reading and praying about the Book of Mormon, she felt that the Church was true. There was just one thing holding her back: her husband, Manuel.

Corina would not attend church by herself—she was determined that her entire family learn about the gospel together. However, Manuel was busy working long hours, and when he came home, the last thing he wanted to do was listen to a couple of missionaries.

Corina began praying that Manuel would have a desire to meet with us, but weeks passed with no change in his attitude. Then, one day at the end of a lesson, Corina asked us about fasting. We were late for another appointment, so we briefly explained that when we fast, we go without food

or drink for two consecutive meals. During that time we pray to Heavenly Father for help and guidance for ourselves or for others. With a promise that we would teach her more during our next visit, we hurriedly left.

A few days later we visited Corina again. During the lesson she surprised us when she said sadly, “I don’t think I can fast.” She explained that since our last visit, she had been fasting. She would go through the day without breakfast or lunch and would then eat dinner. Following that meal, she would start again, not eating anything until the next day’s dinner. This pattern continued for three days. “I tried really hard,” she told us, “but it was so difficult.”

Amazed at her faith, we quickly explained that normally a person fasts for only one day. Then, curious to know the motive for such sacrifice, we asked, “Corina, can we ask what you were fasting for?”

“For my husband,” she responded.

We were impressed by her desire to follow the commandments of the Lord and seek blessings for her family. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Often when we fast, our righteous prayers and petitions have greater power.”¹ So it was with Corina. The next week Manuel agreed to meet with us. Although skeptical, after learning about the plan of salvation, he too began to pray and even kept a copy of the Book of Mormon in his truck to read during his break at work. Eventually Corina, Manuel, and their three children began attending church together.

Curious to know the motive for such sacrifice, we asked Corina what she had been fasting for. “For my husband,” she responded.

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free” (Isaiah 58:6).

Although he made great progress, Manuel struggled to obey the Word of Wisdom. He had been drinking alcohol since he was a young man. Not only did he have difficulty stopping, but he also feared ridicule from his friends.

Corina also felt enslaved by her husband’s habit, and for years she had struggled to help him. Now, with newfound faith and a testimony of the power of fasting, she began to fast regularly for Manuel to have strength to obey the Word of Wisdom.

Corina’s love for her husband reminded me of the story in the New Testament when a father pleaded with the Apostles to heal his ailing son. Although they exercised faith, they were unable to perform the miracle. The Lord, however, made the child whole, afterwards explaining that “this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21).

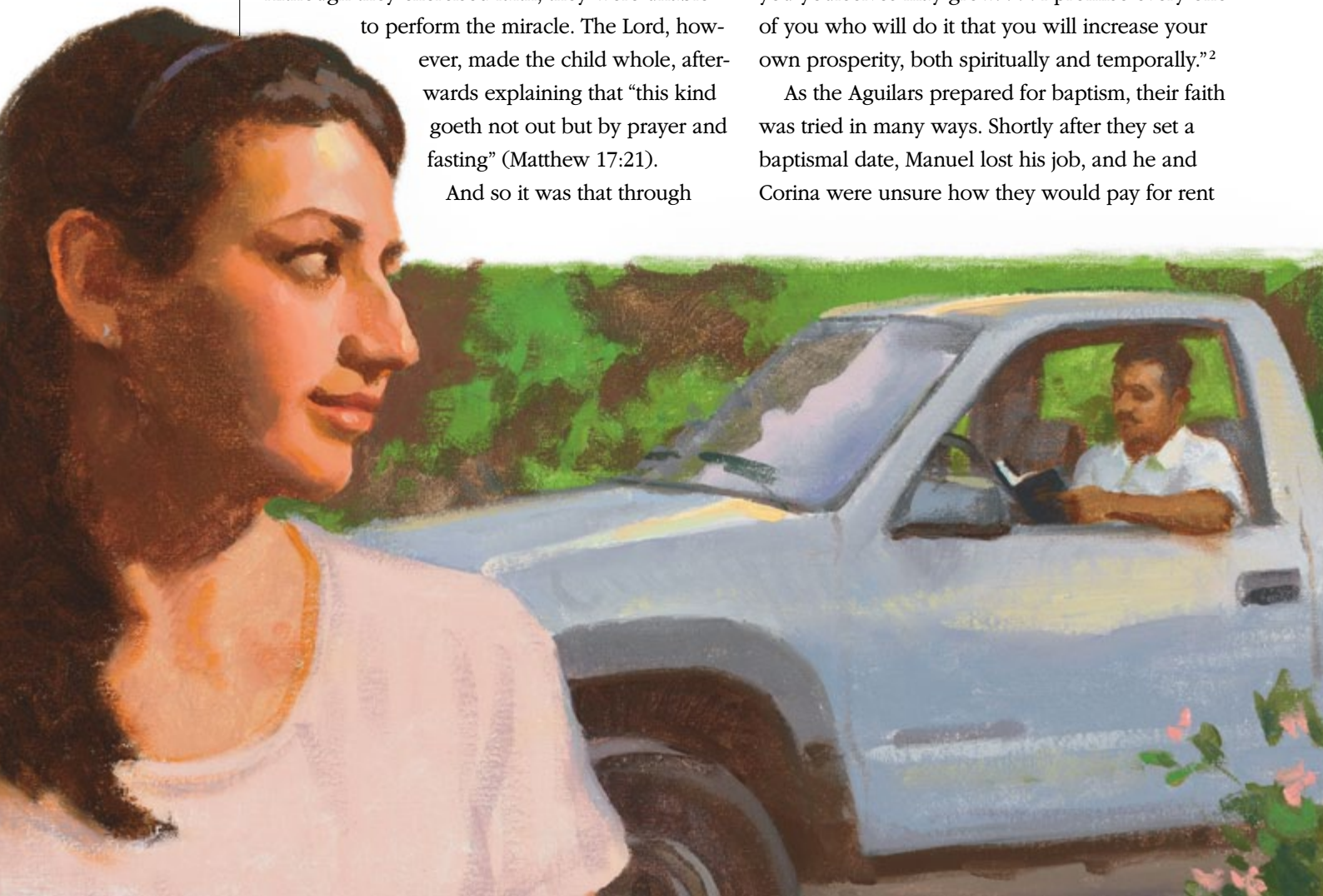
And so it was that through

prayer and fasting Manuel gradually gained the strength to break free from his habit. And although he was initially mocked by his friends, they soon gained a greater respect for him as he demonstrated his loyalty to the Lord by following His commandments.

“The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, . . . and thou shalt be like a watered garden” (Isaiah 58:11).

Along with providing help, strength, and guidance from the Lord, fasting gives the opportunity to “draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul” (Isaiah 58:10) through paying a generous fast offering. President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught: “Be liberal in your giving, that you yourselves may grow. . . . I promise every one of you who will do it that you will increase your own prosperity, both spiritually and temporally.”²

As the Aguilars prepared for baptism, their faith was tried in many ways. Shortly after they set a baptismal date, Manuel lost his job, and he and Corina were unsure how they would pay for rent



and utilities, let alone food for their children. Although they received some financial help from family, it was not enough to meet all of their financial obligations.

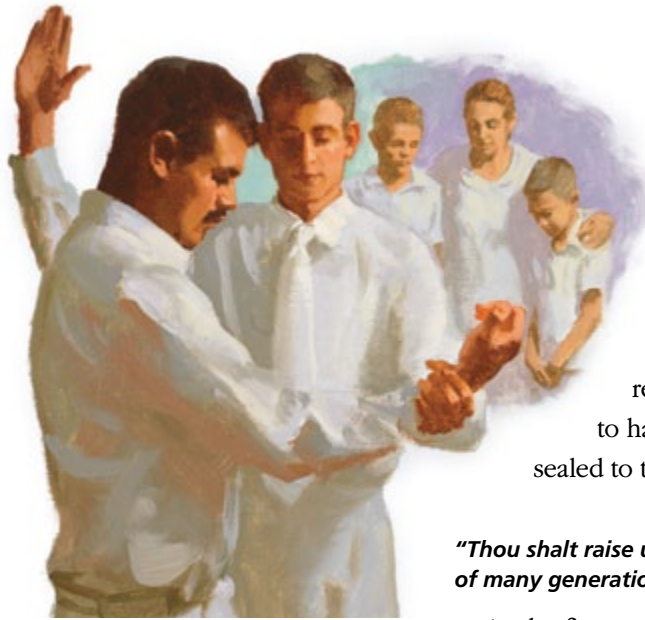
Not seeing any other alternative, the couple decided to have a garage sale. They first sold the few luxuries they had in their apartment, and then they began selling whatever they could spare. After about a week, they had come up with enough money to pay the rent for that month but still felt fearful about how they would endure the months ahead.

It wasn't long before the members of the branch came to their aid. The branch president met with Manuel to see what other assistance they needed. And as a branch they did what they could to help the Aguilars through the situation.

As the Aguilars continued to follow the commandments and did everything they could to provide for their family, they saw many blessings—including new job opportunities. They learned that even in times of trial, the Lord promises that He will provide for us if we are obedient.

“Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, . . . and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward” (Isaiah 58:8).

On November 9, 2008, Manuel, Corina, Jovani, and Lupito Aguilar entered the waters of baptism. The youngest, Mariela, looked forward to turning eight and being baptized. Manuel soon received the Aaronic Priesthood and later the Melchizedek Priesthood.



A year later Manuel and Corina entered the temple to receive their endowment, and they are now preparing to return to the temple to have their children sealed to them.

“Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations” (Isaiah 58:12).

As the first members of the Church in their family, Manuel and Corina are pioneers who, through their examples of faith and sacrifice, are setting a righteous pattern for their posterity and for others. Not only have they helped their children receive the blessings of the gospel, but they have also shown friends and extended family the joy that has come to their lives through obedience to the commandments. Some have also met with the missionaries and been baptized.

Fasting opens the door to unique blessings of strength and comfort. Like the Aguilar family, we all face trials and difficulties as we strive to follow the Savior. We may struggle to overcome personal weaknesses or temptations or agonize over the mistakes of others. We may feel downtrodden by physical or emotional pains or have to endure periods of economic hardship. Whatever the burden we may carry, fasting helps us “cast [our] burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain [us]” (Psalm 55:22). As we obey the law of the fast with faith and purpose, we will witness in our own lives the blessings promised in Isaiah 58. ■

NOTES

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “The Law of the Fast,” *Liahona*, July 2001, 89; *Ensign*, May 2001, 73.
2. Marion G. Romney, “The Blessings of the Fast,” *Ensign*, July 1982, 4.

Through prayer and fasting Manuel gradually gained the strength to break free from his habit, and the Aguilars prepared for baptism.