

# Living in MY FATHER'S SHOES

By Adam Hansen



*I had never realized how much my parents do for me until I had to fill in for my father.*

**T**he summer before my senior year of high school, my father was looking for work. After speaking with my mother, he approached me one day and explained that he had found a job that would meet our family's financial needs but that he would have to work in San Jose, California. We lived in New Hampshire, some 3,000 miles (4,800 km) away, and because of the economic climate at the time, we would not be able to sell our house and move to California. He would just commute back and forth across the United States.

I told my dad I supported his decision to accept the position. Because he would be able to fly home only every other weekend, my "support" included assuming some of his responsibilities at home. I had to be "the man of the house," he told me.

Although I was generally an obedient son, I think I—like many teens—failed to grasp just how much my parents really did for our family. But with this transition, my perspective, attitude, and behavior slowly began to change.

The changes were subtle at first—for example, I started making more of an effort to keep the house clean, help my younger sister with homework, and take the lead in home teaching our assigned families. I sacrificed a lot of personal time as well, even temporarily halting progress on my band's CD. I began to mature. I began to trust in the Lord more to keep myself organized and motivated daily.



Not all the changes were daily and subtle, of course. In autumn, as the last leaves fell from the trees and frost replaced the dew on my car each morning, I knew big trials were coming.

Winters in New Hampshire are long, cold, and abundant in snow. My family has a relatively large driveway that needs to be shoveled after every snowfall. We had a tractor that had been converted into a snowblower, which should have made the job a lot easier. However, the tractor was quite finicky in starting and tended to break a drive belt almost every time we used it. Needless to say, I spent many hours that winter keeping the driveway and sidewalks clean. I balanced my duties at home with my job teaching private music lessons and with carrying a heavy school course load. Looking back, I know I could

## EXPRESS AND SHOW YOUR LOVE



"We can begin to become more diligent and concerned

at home by telling the people we love that we love them. Such expressions do not need to be flowery or lengthy. We simply should sincerely and frequently express love.

"... Children, when was the last time you told your parents that you love them?

"Each of us already knows we should tell the people we love that we love them. But what we know is not always reflected in what we do. We may feel unsure, awkward, or even perhaps a bit embarrassed.

"As disciples of the Savior, we are not merely striving to know more; rather, we need to consistently do more of what we know is right and become better.

"We should remember that saying 'I love you' is only a beginning. We need to say it, we need to mean it, and most importantly we need consistently to show it."

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "More Diligent and Concerned at Home," *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 17–18.

not have done all this from my own strength; I had to rely on the Lord.

One time during a particularly intense blizzard, our tractor tore a drive belt in the middle of our driveway. My mother and I soon discovered we had no more extra belts. The tractor had to be pushed back into the garage. With the wind chill, the temperature was about 20 degrees below zero (-29° C). My fingers were so cold they had become almost nonresponsive. Unfortunately, the tractor wasn't going to go anywhere by itself, so Mom and I put it in neutral gear and tried to push it.

Our initial efforts were futile. Even with heavy-duty snow boots we couldn't get enough friction to push the tractor forward. I remember falling and bruising my knees several times as my feet failed to get any traction on the slippery ice. I was cold, I was miserable, and I wanted hot chocolate. If we were going to get this done, we needed a

different approach.

It became apparent that we needed to literally put our "shoulders to the wheel," simultaneously pushing down with all of our strength on the front side of the tires. Because we were pushing down instead of forward, we were able to move the tractor! Slowly but surely, we pushed the tractor back into the garage.

That experience was just a single event, but there were many others culminating in my change of perspective. In that year of living in my father's shoes, I gained a tremendous new appreciation for everything my parents do for me. Just thinking about their love for me now brings tears to my eyes.

Perhaps one of my greatest realizations, however, was that many of these changes were things I could have—and should have—been doing all along. I didn't have to wait for my dad to work on the other side of the country to realize that daily service could lighten my parents' burden or that each kind act could make my family more unified and more receptive to the Holy Ghost, leading to more peace, happiness, and comfort.

My experience, as powerful as it was, has taught me not to wait until I find myself thrust into another's shoes to start appreciating them. Fortunately, that is not the only way to empathize with and appreciate others—through service and strong communication we can learn to see the world from another's point of view. I am grateful that I had this experience and have made more of an effort to recognize all that my parents do for me, thank them, express my love to them, and show that love by joining in their efforts to serve the *entire* family. **NE**

