

OFF KEY BUT ON TARGET

By JaNeal B. Freeman

My father sang a line of music all his own—not tenor, not bass, but somewhere around and all over both of them. Even though he couldn't tell a middle C from an A flat, Dad sang out loud and strong.

I never remember being embarrassed by my father's singing, but I do remember being both amused and puzzled by his joyful noise. Didn't he realize other people were listening?

My dad loved the hymns of the gospel, and he wasn't about to let a lack of talent get in the way of worshipping through music. He sang with joy, enthusiasm, and emotion. I loved how he could sing a hymn like "The Spirit of God" with energy and conviction and then a few minutes later sing the sacrament hymn with tenderness and reverence.

One afternoon my father taught me a powerful lesson through a hymn. I was playing the piano as I often did to unwind after a day of high school. My father, always watching for a little one-on-one time, came in and joined me. It was a routine I was familiar with: he would page ahead in a songbook, find a song, and then have me play it while he sang.

On this particular day, Dad pulled out the hymnbook and turned to a hymn.

"This is a great song. One of my

favorites," he said, placing the book on the piano. It was "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief." Dad told me it was a favorite hymn of the Prophet Joseph Smith and that Joseph had asked John Taylor to sing the song at Carthage a short time before Joseph and Hyrum were martyred.

Then Dad sang all seven verses while I accompanied him. In that moment, two amazing things happened. The first was that my father sang the whole song without missing a note. His A flats were actually A flats! Dad's voice was unpretentious and simple, and to me it sounded beautiful. The second amazing thing was less surprising but much more important. As my father sang, I knew that he loved Joseph Smith and had a testimony of his prophetic call. The Spirit bore witness to me that Joseph Smith was a prophet.

My father passed away a few years later, and I often think of that day and the impact it had on me. An important part of my testimony of the gospel is held firmly in place because a father who "couldn't sing" chose to sing with all of his heart. ■



TAKE TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

"Besides showing youth the way by example, we lead them by understanding their hearts and walking alongside them on the gospel path. To truly understand their hearts, we must do more than just be in the same room or attend the same family and Church activities. We must plan and take advantage of teaching moments that make a deep and lasting impression upon their minds and hearts. . . .

"I would hope that we would have the opportunity of bearing our testimonies that we know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ. I would hope that we would bear our testimonies so that our children will know where our hearts are and that we love them. The greatest love and the greatest teachings should be in our homes."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Our Duty to God: The Mission of Parents and Leaders to the Rising Generation," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2010, 95, 98.