



By David R. Baumgarten

Growing up, I always had great faith that prayer is direct communication with Heavenly Father. This faith came from listening to my parents tell of an experience my family had when I was a toddler.

In 1938, when I was almost two years old, my father drove trucks for a food products company in the San Bernardino, California, area (USA). One of the stores on his delivery route was in Big Bear Village, high in the San Bernardino Mountains. One morning in May, Dad decided to take Mom and me with him on his route. There was still snow on the northern slopes of the mountains, but it was a beautiful day and the sky was bright blue.

At one stop my mom let me get out of the truck to play in the sunshine. When my dad was done with his delivery 15 minutes later, my parents realized I was gone. They called for me and searched the area but could not find me. Panicked, they sought help, and the people in the store joined them. Later, 200 men from an emergency response group came to help. Soon the sheriff's department, the forest

service, and a number of volunteers from town came, and by late afternoon more than 400 searchers were combing the area. But they couldn't find me.

On the second day, more searchers came. The Red Cross set up stations so searchers could eat and rest. A plane from a nearby air force base searched from the sky, and a Native American tracker who was well known for finding lost hikers helped. He found one of my sandals and a few footprints, but nothing more.

As the second day was ending, many of the workers gave up. The Red Cross stations closed down. Mom heard a group of men saying that a young child could never survive the cold and danger of the mountains alone. They were sure I would not be found alive.

Meanwhile, Dad and a few others left to make one final effort. The darkness was closing in, but they were determined. They formed a line across the edge of the village, each person about 20 feet (6 m) from the next person, and walked straight ahead into the forest.

My Father's Prayer

In desperation, my father knelt in the woods and offered a prayer.

After a while, my dad found himself separated from the others. He had gone farther than any of the searchers had gone before. It was here, alone, that he fell to his knees and began to pray. My dad had prayed many times before, but now his prayers were filled with desperation over me, his lost son. He poured out his soul to his Heavenly Father, praying that I would be found.

As he finished his prayer, he felt as if someone grabbed his shoulders, stood him up, and turned him in a specific direction. He started running in that direction even though he was tired and hungry. He tried to slow down, but something urged him onward. When at last he stopped, he heard a cry. He listened and heard it again. He walked over a small hill, and there I was—half under a bush, face in the mud, one shoe missing. I

was more than four miles (6.4 km) from the store and 1,800 feet (550 m) up the mountain.

Overcome with gratitude for the answer to his prayer, Dad picked me up and began to carry me down the hill. He found a road, and soon a car picked us up and took us to the village. When the car stopped, my inconsolable mother saw my dad in the backseat holding me. I was bruised, scratched, and hungry, but very much alive.

Hearing this story throughout my childhood and youth was the start of my faith in a loving Heavenly Father who answers prayers. As I grew, I experienced answers to my own prayers that strengthened my faith and testimony. I know that the Heavenly Father who answered my dad's prayers all those years ago in the woods hears and answers our prayers today. ■



LISTEN FOR THE ANSWER

"To those within the sound of my voice who are struggling with challenges and difficulties large and small, prayer is the provider of spiritual strength; it is the passport to peace. Prayer is the means by which we approach our Father in Heaven, who loves us. Speak to Him in prayer and then listen for the answer. Miracles are wrought through prayer."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Be Your Best Self," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 68.