

## *A Last-Minute Change*

By Jackie Auman

**I**n November 2001 my younger sister was diagnosed with a serious form of cancer. She was 45 years old and the mother of four sons, one serving a mission in Portugal. Immediately, her ward and stake in Arizona, as well as her family, began to fast and pray in her behalf. But before the end of May, the cancer had won the battle, and she fell into a coma. After we received priesthood blessings and prayed fervently, we decided to remove her from life support. The doctors assured us that her passing would be quick. But eight days later her status had remained the same, making each day long and grievous.

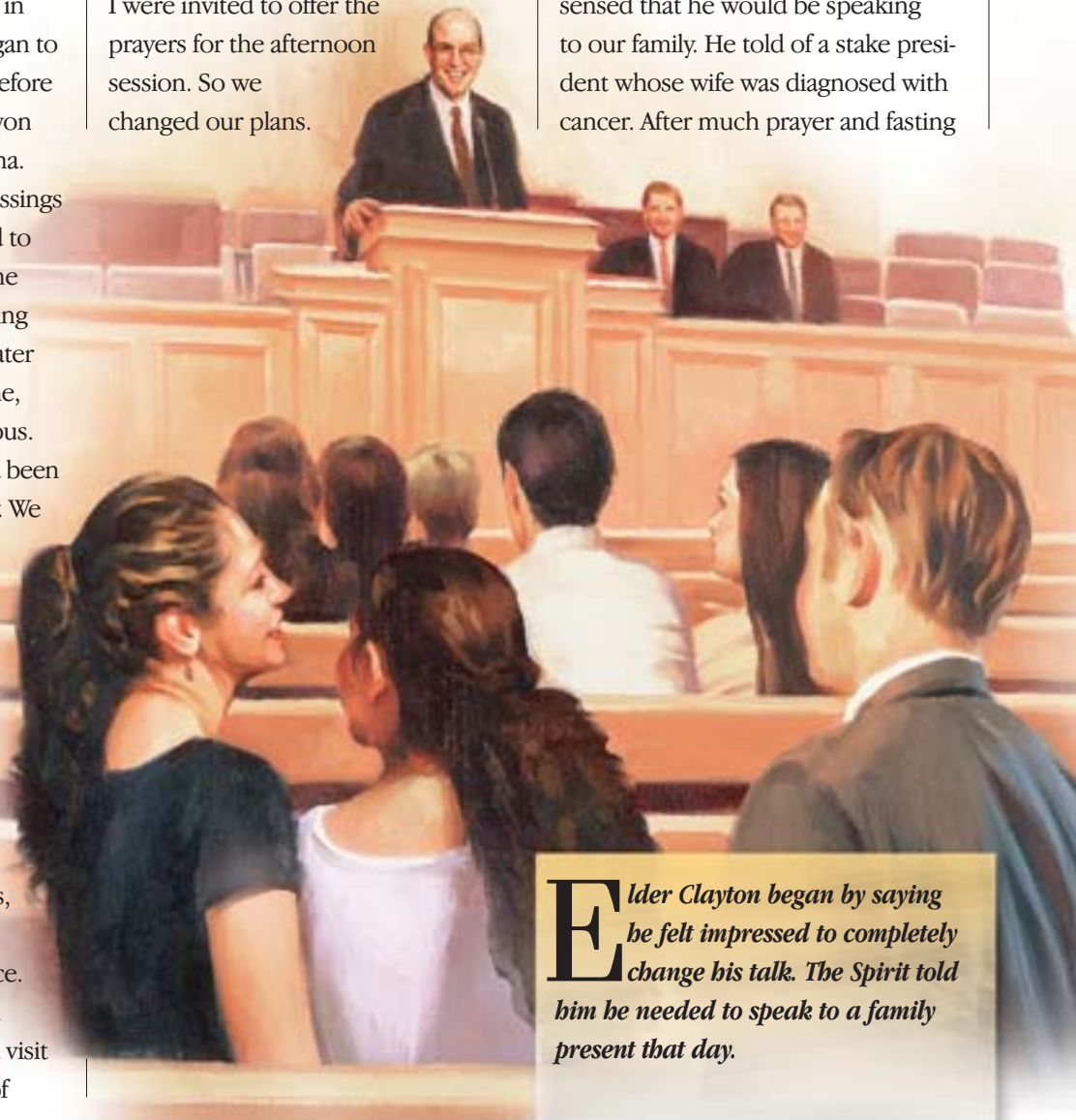
The previous few months had been a time of reflection for our family. We loved my sister, and although we understood the plan of salvation, it was difficult at times to have faith in the Lord that all would be well. Somehow we felt that if we had enough faith, my sister would be cured. So we questioned the power of that faith. We knew that Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers, but we were devastated by His answer and unable to feel at peace.

Our stake conference in Utah was scheduled for June 2, with a visit from an Area Seventy. Because of

the number of members in the stake, stake conference was divided into two sessions. Our three sons who were attending a singles ward in the stake were assigned to the morning session. The rest of the family was to attend the afternoon session. My husband and I decided that attending the morning session as a family would be best. Shortly after we made that decision, however, my husband and I were invited to offer the prayers for the afternoon session. So we changed our plans.

During the Saturday evening session of conference, we noted a change. Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Seventy had been assigned to our conference at the last minute, replacing the Area Seventy.

On Sunday afternoon Elder Clayton began by saying he felt impressed to completely change his talk. The Spirit told him he needed to speak to a family present that day. I immediately sensed that he would be speaking to our family. He told of a stake president whose wife was diagnosed with cancer. After much prayer and fasting



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by family members, friends, and members of her stake, she had fully recovered.

Elder Clayton then talked about another stake president, one whose wife had died of cancer during his service as stake president. She left several small children in his care. Many people had also fasted and prayed for her recovery. This story was particularly touching to Elder Clayton because this woman was his wife's only sister.

Elder Clayton went on to explain that no matter how much faith is exercised at times like these, sometimes the answer is no. Then he read what has become one of our family's favorite scriptures, Daniel 3:17–18:

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

“*But if not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (emphasis added).

Elder Clayton did not speak of any doctrine that was new to us that afternoon. But a miracle happened that left us in awe. The Lord made sure we would be in attendance during the afternoon session by inspiring someone to ask us to pray. He also arranged for one of His servants, one who had had an experience similar to ours, to speak to us. And finally, He gave us someone wise and obedient who had lived his life

in such a way that he could hear the Spirit and respond accordingly. Our spirits were touched in indescribable ways by that experience.

The next day we received the call telling us my sister had passed away. Although we were saddened, a sweet spirit of comfort was in our home as we prayed for her family—this time with full confidence that the Lord's will had been done—and thanked Him for His precious answer to our prayers. ■

## *I Remembered the Crickets*

By Dennis Birks

I was born in England in 1942 into a loving family of a mother, father, and sister. When I was seven, we were blessed with another addition to our family—a baby boy. My mother loved the Savior but was not a member of any particular church. She would attend the nearest church and encourage my sister and me to attend with her. Consequently, I learned a great deal about

Jesus Christ and hoped to find a church to strengthen my faith in Him.

One day there came into our house a large picture book called *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Annual*. I do not know where it came from. At the time I thought that perhaps one of my friends had brought it over and forgotten to take it home. It had picture stories of Buffalo Bill and Billy the Kid, just the kind of information that was important to a boy who wanted to be a cowboy. It also told the story in pictures of a persecuted people who were expelled from a beautiful city by a lawless mob and forced to trek hundreds of miles and endure endless torment before they established a new

home in a western wilderness. Each little picture told





a dramatic story of suffering and faith, and the story included a few pictures of a miracle involving crickets eating crops and seagulls eating crickets.

I read the story several times before I realized that the poor, persecuted people were members of a church. Then it slowly dawned on me that this church was the one that I was looking for. I wanted to join that church. Unfortunately, I was presented with a problem. The last picture in the story described Salt Lake City, Utah. From another source I was able to learn that Utah was in the United States of America. Since I had no hope of traveling from England to Utah, I would have to give up my plan of joining the Church. It never occurred to me that the Church might be located anywhere other than the United States.

And so matters rested until 11 years later. By that time my family had immigrated to Australia and settled in Sydney. There my brother began investigating a new religion. He brought home a few pamphlets that interested me and said he would ask the elders to call. I agreed, thinking I would be visited by a couple of distinguished old men. I was quite surprised when two young men about my own age called and taught me the basics of the plan of salvation. I was intrigued and agreed to

undertake a series of discussions.

I listened to the missionaries but had no intention of joining the Church, especially when I learned about tithing. One day, however, one of the missionaries started talking about some pioneers who had been forced to make a long march to a place called Salt Lake City. I pricked up my ears and started to ask questions. Was this the church with the crickets and seagulls? When he mentioned Brigham Young, I immediately recognized the name and realized I had arrived at a major crossroads in my life. If I was to join any church, this was the one.

The problem of tithing was solved when I learned about the Word of Wisdom. I calculated that I spent 10 percent of my income on cigarettes and alcohol. So by paying tithing I would not be any worse off financially, and the money would be put to a far better use than clogging my lungs with black tar and poisoning my liver.

In the meantime, my brother had also given the pamphlets to my mother. She agreed to read them on the train to work that day. When she came home in the evening, she was totally converted to the Church. She was disappointed to hear that she had to have a series of missionary

lessons before she could be baptized!

So we all joined the Church—first my brother, then I joined a week later, and my mother was baptized and confirmed a week after that. My father held out for 21 years but finally joined in 1985. We were all sealed in the Sydney temple a year later.

I have been to Salt Lake City several times and have visited Church historic sites in Palmyra, Kirtland, and Nauvoo. In all the places I go, I am reminded of the story in the Buffalo Bill picture book and never cease to thank the Lord for bringing it into my life when I was a boy of 10. ■

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## *One Person, One Bucket*

By James W. Ritchie

**O**n July 12, 2004, I awoke at about 5:20 a.m. and took my regular peek out the window. The guard at our compound gate was very much awake. A lady was shaking her fingers in his face, and another 25 women were standing against the fence, each carrying one or more empty buckets or basins. I quickly got dressed and went out.

The water had been shut off the day before in Tema—a city of 100,000—and for miles around. No one had had water for about 24 hours, and panic was beginning to brew. We hadn't noticed the problem

because the Ghana Missionary Training Center, where I was serving as MTC president, has a large storage tank, and we pumped from that storage whenever we needed water. Even though no fresh water was being added, we were living off our storage.

Also, for some reason, there was still some water in our meetinghouse's outdoor tap (in the same guarded compound), and someone had alerted the masses that the Mormons had water. They were coming from all over with their pails to fetch it. The custodian had beaten me to the meetinghouse and was opposed to letting anyone in. He was sure it was only a matter of a very short time before we would also be without water.

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I summoned the guard and the

custodian. I asked the custodian what the Savior would do. I asked him to ponder the good or the bad will that our decision would generate. I told him that the water might very well run out in our tap, but it would be better if it ran out with a neighbor's bucket catching the last drop. He agreed, and we opened the gate and tried to create order among the ever-increasing crowd of people who were running to get in. We begged them to limit their take to "one person, one bucket." It was now about 6:15. The line was long and the water pressure low, but the tap kept producing.

We believed the water would stop. Nowhere else in town was anyone getting water. We had everyone join us in prayer and ask Heavenly Father to let this one tap continue

producing water for these very thirsty people. The tap never stopped. And the people were so grateful.

Another wonderful thing happened during this crisis. We checked the MTC storage tank, and it was only half full. We didn't want to advertise that we

had this water because we thought we could save it for real emergencies if the crisis went on for days. But then a pickup truck with several large barrels in the back pulled into the compound. It was from the Tema General Hospital. They also had a large storage tank for emergencies, but it was already empty, and they had thirsty patients. So we let them back their truck up to the MTC tank and fill their barrels from our emergency supply. We told them to come back for more if needed. We would share until our cache was gone. They were grateful.

At about 3:00 p.m. that afternoon, the water in the city was restored, and those in line took their empty buckets and ran home. But the good feelings still linger. ■

