

I worried I would never be satisfied with my marriage, until a reflection in the mirror changed my perspective.

When I prayed about getting married, I felt a strong assurance that the Lord supported my decision. The day I was married in the temple, I felt peace. However, soon after the wedding, I was overwhelmed with regret. I felt that I had made a mistake and wondered why I had been so confused as to misunderstand the promptings of the Spirit.

Both my doubts and my tendency to criticize my husband increased with time. His background and preferences were different from mine, and I judged him self-righteously. Different expectations led to discord, and my resentment created a large void between us. My husband knew I was unhappy, but he couldn't understand why or what he should do about it. My attempts to explain my feelings were critical and judgmental. In time, my husband grew increasingly silent, which only further frustrated me.

I watched other couples jealously. Newlyweds at church all seemed to be so in love that they could hardly stop gazing at each other. I watched more mature couples complete each other's sentences and share private jokes in just a glance. I wondered why the Lord had allowed me to make eternal covenants in a relationship that would always be void of such intimacies. I felt I would never know the love that other couples shared.

For several years I struggled to understand why I had felt so confident that the Lord had confirmed my decision to marry when obviously it had been a mistake. I felt abandoned by the Lord. I prayed for help in understanding and improving the quality of my marriage, but I felt no improvement. I thought about divorce but could not find any comfort as I considered the option. After our first child was born, I felt that I would be forever trapped.

One morning I was doing laundry when I caught a

glance of myself in a mirror. The reflection surprised me. I had not showered or groomed for the day, and as I looked at myself, I thought I was lucky that anyone would *want* to wake up next to me every day. For the first time, I found myself feeling grateful to my husband for loving me. I examined myself with new eyes and thought about our marriage from his perspective. The revelation that followed had little to do with bad hair and no makeup but much to do with my behavior. I considered all the contention I had introduced into our home. For the first time, I felt real gratitude for my husband—he had continued to love me even though I had been critical and ungrateful.

A Reflection ON GRATITUDE

BY MICHELLE VAN TASSELL

That simple moment changed my perspective as well as my relationship with my husband. Now, years later, we share the intima-

cies I once coveted in other marriages. My husband and I still retain our different backgrounds and our own preferences and mannerisms, but I stopped dwelling on issues I couldn't change. The peace of the Spirit has returned to our home, and I am grateful for the witness I received to marry my husband.

When I look back at those early years of our marriage, I am sickened by the damage I did and the divorce I contemplated. A reflection in the mirror opened my heart to the promptings of the Spirit and helped me to develop a perspective of gratitude that has completely transformed my marriage and my relationship with my children.

Recently I had dinner with a group of friends whose lives are more glamorous than mine.

FAMILY

Hearing about their travels, shopping, and salon treatments left me wondering if I was truly satisfied. But upon returning home, I stood in the doorway and listened to laughter from the basement, where my husband and children were playing happily. The quiet voice of the Spirit touched me again, and I was overwhelmed with gratitude for my family. All I could think was how lucky I was to have each one of them.

I am grateful for the lesson of gratitude I learned years ago in front of a mirror and continue to learn as I yield to the Spirit. I love my husband and our children and cherish our time together. And I am grateful for my decision to marry my husband and for the blessings of the temple that seal us for eternity. ■

ILLUSTRATION BY DILEEN MARSH

