



# A BOUQUET OF BLESSINGS

By Debbie H. Seare

Years ago, as a Mia Maid adviser, I had the opportunity to attend girls' camp. I enjoyed my time outdoors with the young women but felt envious of the girls' carefree nature and zest for life. Though I had been an energetic Mia Maid 14 years before, my life had changed drastically since then. I had been hospitalized five times since the birth of our first child. Later, while attending to the needs of two young toddlers, I had suffered from multiple health problems, including clinical depression. Unlike the young women, who seemed far removed from such challenges, I felt weighed down by my trials.

Toward the end of camp, the young women gathered for an early-morning devotional. The speaker, Sister Hansen, had recently returned from serving a full-time mission. She spoke fondly of her experience and then told this story.

Following a zone conference, her mission president had presented each of the missionaries with a fresh red rose. He gave no explanation for his gift, and this young sister took the rose home to her modest apartment. It had been a long train ride home for her and her companion, and in her exhaustion and eagerness to get some sleep, Sister Hansen had laid the rose on the table, where it lay withering for a week. By the time she noticed it again, there was nothing to do but throw it away.

As she looked at the stiff and blackened rose, she felt a little guilty for neglecting it. Several months flew by, and she didn't give the rose another thought until it was time for another zone conference. Just as before, the mission president gave each missionary a red rose. This time, however, Sister Hansen carefully wrapped the stem in damp paper



and held it gently on her lap during the long train ride. When she arrived at her apartment, she recut the stem and placed the rose in a glass of water. To her surprise and delight, the rose bloomed the following day. Under her care, it thrived and perfumed the small apartment for several weeks.

Sister Hansen told the campers that blessings from Heavenly Father are like roses. We can ignore them, thereby receiving no joy or pleasure from them, or we can recognize and enjoy the blessings the Lord has lovingly given us.

I pondered Sister Hansen's words and decided that when I returned home, I would try to recognize and give thanks for blessings every day. I began by purchasing a notebook and labeling it "My Blessing Book." I found it refreshing to take a breather from my health problems and other challenges to write about the blessings I enjoyed. Some days I expressed gratitude for family members and loved ones, while other times I wrote about a beautiful piece of music or about a rainfall on a hot day. As I made daily entries in this book, I noticed I was beginning to focus less on my poor health and

more on the abundant blessings the Lord has graciously poured into my life.

Sister Hansen's message changed my experience at girls' camp and, more important, my emotional well-being. Being happy is not the result of a carefree life but of a careful effort to recognize the Lord's hand in our lives. When we do so, we cannot help but feel the love He has for us. Expressing my gratitude daily has allowed me to enjoy my own bouquet of heavenly blessings. ■

*The author lives in Idaho, USA.*

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