

BY DIANE TERRY WOOLF

After my husband died suddenly, I looked at my five children and my future and asked the Lord one question: "How?"

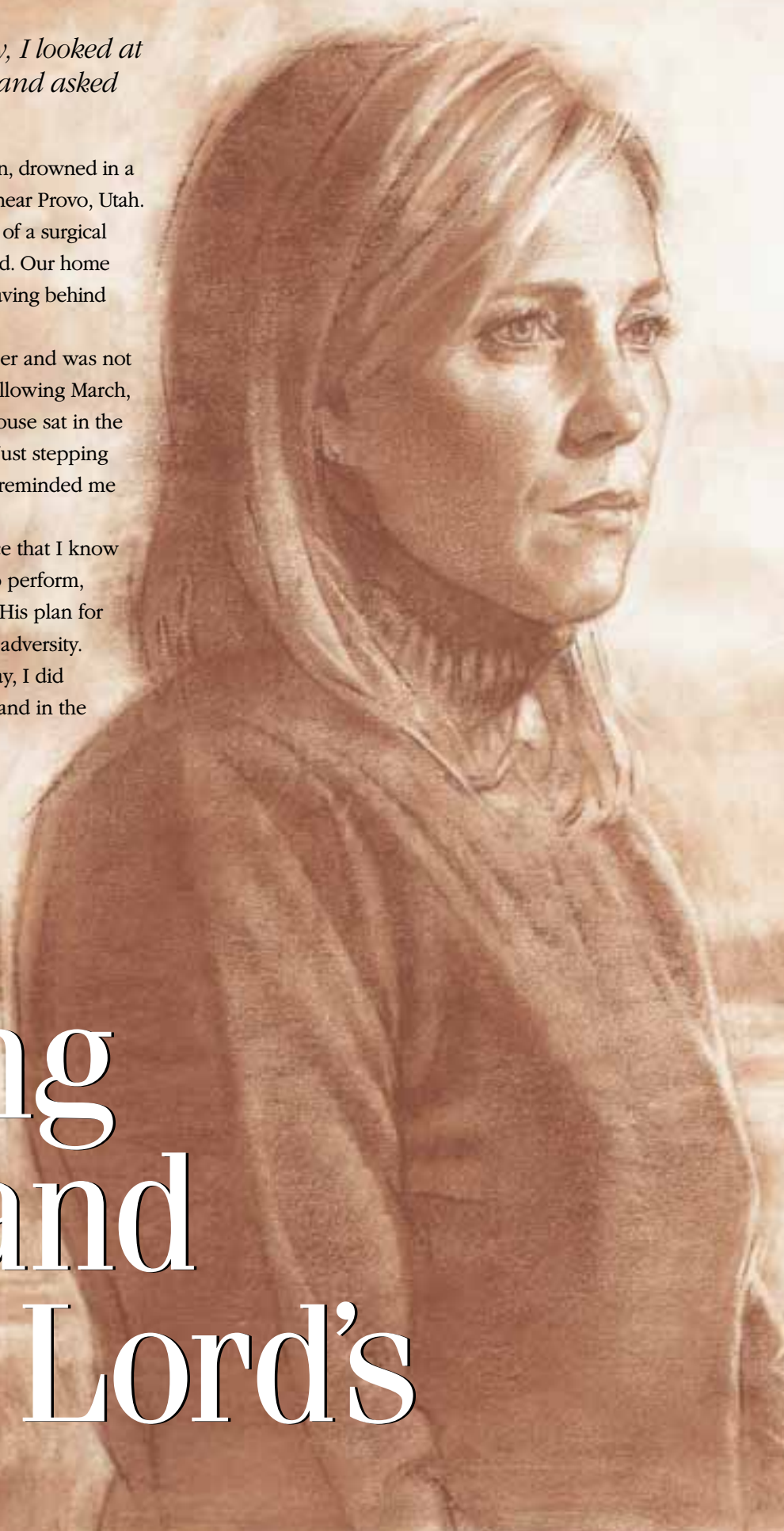
When I was 36, my husband, Bryan, drowned in a hunting accident on Utah Lake, near Provo, Utah. He was two and a half years out of a surgical residency. I was pregnant with our fifth child. Our home teacher drowned searching for his body, leaving behind a wife and four children.

My husband's body was lost in November and was not recovered from the frozen lake until the following March, about two weeks after Anne's birth. Our house sat in the foothills of Provo with a view of the lake. Just stepping out the front door and looking at the lake reminded me of his death.

Ironically, it is because of this experience that I know that God loves me, that I have a mission to perform, and that I can trust in God's power and in His plan for me. That is the power that can come from adversity.

When something dear was stripped away, I did what many of you have done—I put my hand in the hand of the Lord. This is what I learned.

Putting My Hand in the Lord's



Ask How, Not Why

I cannot deal with the *why* of adversity because I have no concrete answers for the *whys*. But I can speak of *how* one continues a life that has taken a detour from a self-plotted course.

Asking why is an exercise in frustration because Heavenly Father generally does not answer the *whys* of our lives here in mortality. Faith in God is not developed by having all the answers. Immediately after Bryan died, my prayers were desperate and pleading. I had always lived a good life, and I felt that I had lived to be blessed, not punished.

When my specific “instructions-to-God” prayers were not answered, I learned the supreme importance of making myself available to listen, be instructed, and receive comfort. Instead of instructing God, I began to prayerfully say: “I don’t understand, but I know that You do. I love You and I trust You. Please guide me to know how to do what I must do.”

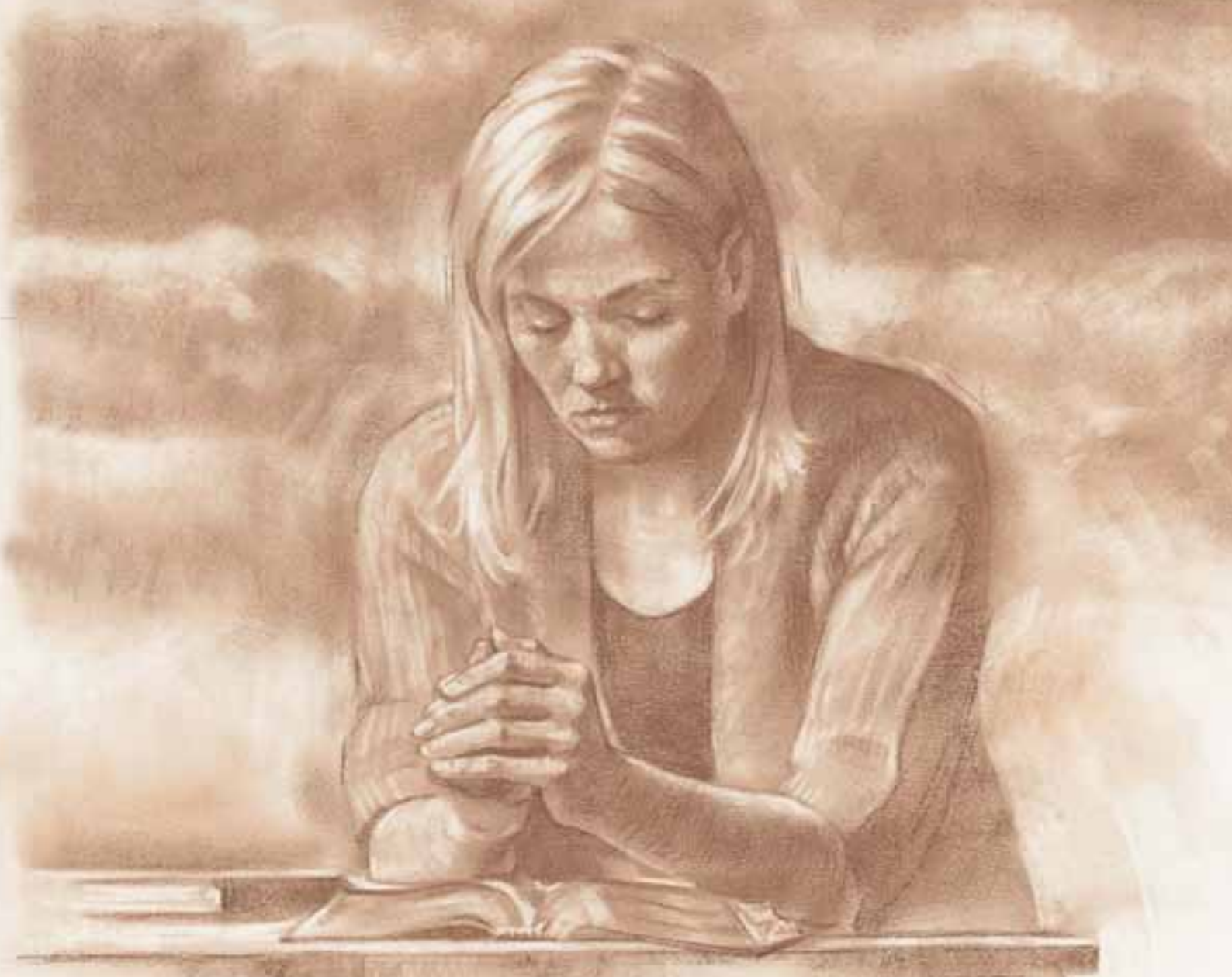
I remember reading my scriptures with a hunger I had never experienced before. In Doctrine and Covenants 78, I found these words: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you. And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom

is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours” (vv. 17–18). I knew the Lord was leading me along in ways I had never anticipated.

Sixteen years later, after my son came home ill from his mission, he and I had the opportunity to visit with Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1926–2004) about my son’s situation. Our meeting occurred early in the morning after one of Elder Maxwell’s chemotherapy treatments. He shared a scripture that had helped him personally: “And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things” (1 Nephi 11:17).

Faith has to be sufficient when we do not know why. We must simply remember “that he loveth his children” and that we cannot—right now—know the meaning of all things. We must say, “I love You and I trust You.”

The scripture Elder Maxwell shared with us applied to my feelings after Bryan’s death, as well as my son’s situation. Everything in life can shift, change, or leave, but our Heavenly Father, our Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost never change. They are the one great constant to lead us along. We do not know the meaning of all things, but we can be sure “that he loveth his children.” Because we are so loved, God may not answer why, but He will tell us how we can do whatever we must do.



Live Worthy of Help

Each of us can strive for the Spirit, which we need to direct our lives. After losing Bryan, I tried harder to keep the commandments and make myself available, as the head of my home, for personal revelation. My children and I continue to read our scriptures daily and to have regular family prayer. One of the blessings I most appreciated was that it felt like the Holy Ghost was present in our home. I felt a great sense of peace amid the grief of loss and change. As Doctrine and Covenants 6:20 says, “Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love.”

Through reading my scriptures, I found

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answers directed specifically to me. I remember struggling with one of the natural human reactions to death: anger. I was mad that Bryan had died and left me. But I was tired of being angry, so I began praying for relief. One day I read Alma 5:12: “And according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart.” From that moment, peace flowed into my heart and anger left; I had a direct answer to my pleading. There is power in the scriptures to answer prayers.

Seek Personal Revelation

The temple is one of the places where we can receive personal revelation. Truman G. Madsen wrote, “The temple is the catalyst whereby the self is revealed to the self.”¹

If we come prepared, we are entitled to revelation that pertains to our physical and spiritual welfare. We find out who we are and what the Lord would have us do.

I am not saying that we can snap our fingers, attend the temple once, and all our questions will be answered. We must work to receive answers.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “The Lord will speak to us through the Spirit in his own time and in his own way. Many people do not understand this principle. They believe that when they are ready and when it suits their convenience, they can call upon the Lord and he will immediately respond, even in the precise way they have prescribed. Revelation does not come that way. . . . We cannot force spiritual things.”²

I have sought answers for my life and have received personal revelation, but it has been in His own time and in His own way.

Submit Your Will and Be Strengthened by Christ

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). But in order to be strengthened by Christ, we must become as children, “submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19).

We are here to learn to submit to our Father’s will.

Appreciate Growth in Adversity

My experiences have made me more thankful for the Atonement than I would be if I were still that 36-year-old woman who knew so little about how “all these things shall



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give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7).

Later I was blessed to marry a wonderful man. Bill’s wife had died, leaving him with five children. I watched my husband draw my five children under his wing also.

I would not go back a day because of what I have learned. Though pain and loss bite deep, it is comforting to know that painful experiences are not wasted. Elder B. H. Roberts of the Seventy (1857–1933) said that “those who have to contend with difficulties, brave

dangers, endure disappointments, struggle with sorrows, eat the bread of adversity and drink the water of affliction, develop a moral and spiritual strength, together with a purity of life and character, unknown to the heirs of ease, and wealth and pleasure.”³

The challenge is to love God, keep our covenants, and live the great plan of happiness even when loved ones die and other trials and disappointments occur. It is not just the attractive, smart, and wealthy who are expected to endure in faith to the end. That is expected of all of us. The challenge is to remember why

we are here: to work out our salvation, alone or married, childless or with a quiver full of children; to shout for joy and then to work at being joyful; to remember that the Lord stands ready to succor us through the Holy Ghost. He will go before us and be on our right hand and on our left (see D&C 84:88). I have faith in these things because I have experienced the tutoring love of God. ■

NOTES

1. *The Highest in Us* (1978), 98.
2. “Teaching and Learning by the Spirit,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1997, 10–11.
3. *The Gospel: An Exposition of Its First Principles* (1965), 278.