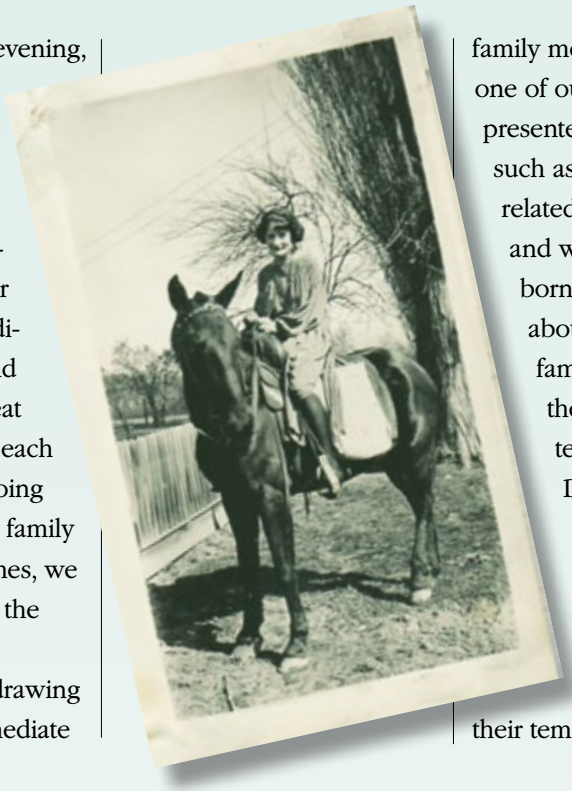
Spotlighting Our Ancestors

For family home evening, we used to have family spotlights. A name of a family member would be drawn, and the family would get to hear details about the individual, their likes and dislikes. It was a great way to get to know each other better. After going through our various family members several times, we decided to enhance the spotlight activity.

Now, instead of drawing the name of an immediate family member, we select one of our ancestors. The presenter shares details such as how they are related to us, when and where they were born, and specifics about their immediate family. We highlight their baptismal and temple ordinances. Did they receive them during their lifetime? If not, how long did they have to wait for their temple work to be done? When possible we also share stories from their lives, including their conversions.



PHOTOGRAPH © ROSALIE WESTENSKOW

Spotlighting our ancestors has had a tremendous impact on our family. Our children are young and are already realizing the importance and sacredness of the temple and its grand purpose. They are seeing their ancestors as real individuals that they are connected to and with whom they will one day be reunited.

Natalie Flynn Carlson, Utah, USA

HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

"The Strength of Our Heritage," page 36: Read the article to your family, then reread this statement by Elder L. Tom Perry: "Just as the pioneers made the desert blossom as a rose, so too our lives and families will blossom if we follow their example and embrace their traditions." Consider asking, "How can our family better follow the example set by the early pioneers?" You may want to close by singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints" (*Hymns,* no. 30).

"Facing the Future with Hope," page 15: You may wish to summarize the story of Brother Grilo or tell a personal story of you or someone you know facing the future with hope. Help family members apply the message to their lives by asking questions like, "What are some challenges that make it hard for you to have faith in the future? What can you do to keep a positive attitude as you face these challenges?" Conclude by reading the last two paragraphs of the article.

"When Good Plans Don't Work Out" page 26: Before discussing the article together, you may want to ask if anyone can share an experience of a time when they had a plan that didn't work out the way they expected. Read or summarize the article, and then discuss what can be learned from the examples of these young adults who found happiness in living their "plan B."

WHEN GOOD PLANS Don't WORK OUT

By Stephanie L. Barnes

Planning for the future is important, especially for young adults. But what happens when the best-laid plans don't work out?

Jung Sung Eun of Korea didn't meet the qualification exam to become a teacher. Tina Boyer of Utah, USA, lost a job that she had expected to turn into a career. Todd Schlemmer of Ohio, USA, received a spiritual confirmation to marry but saw her engagement come to an end. Alessia Mazzolai (name has been changed) of Italy ended what appeared to be the perfect relationship.

No one likes having to revert to "plan B." But even when our plans fall through, Heavenly Father does not abandon His children. There are multiple good ways for life to work out. In time, we may even find that the roadblocks that changed our plans gave us needed insight and experience (see D&C 122:7) and led to something better.

Building Character, Not Résumés

Sung Eun had worked hard to achieve her lifelong dream of becoming a teacher. She explains, "Because I have always tried to do my best in all I do, I have almost always been able to obtain what I hoped and prayed for." But that didn't happen when she took the teacher qualification exam. "When I failed it," she says, "I felt I had lost all my dreams in one day."

Tina wasn't initially wounded when another company acquired the one she worked for. The new organization promised her a long-term position, so she moved closer to her work with high hopes of an exciting new job. When the company laid her off a few months later, she felt "lost, confused, sad, and quite scared."

Rather than focus completely on building their résumés, Sung Eun and Tina realized they could also focus on building their character. Both women found comfort through gospel study and prayer.

"The Apostle Paul was a wonderful friend who helped me be patient and continually confront challenges," says Sung Eun. "He always had a positive attitude and willingly waited for what God had for him, rather than hoping for his own timing.

"I learned something from his example: the period of waiting is not merely the process that we must go through to get what we want. Rather, it is a process by which we become who our Heavenly Father wants us to be through changes we make."

Tina found that the change she needed most was a shift in perspective. "I was surprised to discover that I had measured my self-worth in worldly ideas of value," she remembers. "I felt valuable because of my employment and position, which were taken away. I now find my self-worth in the eternal truths that I am a daughter of my Heavenly Father and I have divine potential. These truths can never be taken away."

Both Tina and Sung Eun admit that while building character isn't always pleasant, the fruits of personal growth are sweet. Sung Eun says, "The year after I failed the teacher qualification exam was not only the most painful and depressing time period, but it was also the most precious. I became more able to truly understand other people's difficulties and had a desire to help them with real interest and care."

The examples of Amaron and his brothers in the Book of Mormon showed Tina how the Lord was stretching her faith to help her reach her full potential. "The Lord's plan was for the Nephites to raise their Lamanite brothers instead of using a miracle to solve the problem," she explains. "The sons of Mosiah were given a task that required greater faith, but they were also given a promise that if they bore their afflictions with patience, they would receive success (see Alma 26:27). Being patient is one of my hardest trials because I want to understand my entire plan—but I realized that Heavenly Father's plan and timing for us will always be the best."

Keeping the Commandments No Matter What

Todd faced a bright future upon returning from his mission. While attending school, he met a wonderful young woman. After several months of courtship and a spiritual confirmation, Todd proposed and she accepted. They planned their wedding for the end of the summer, and Todd returned