

TAKING THE BUS TO KOLOB

Now, I ask you, could my life progress toward eternal life driving a bus? My answer is, “Yes!”

By John Barney

Emilie and I met one week before I turned 42, and we have been married now for six years. Prior to that, I was a seemingly lifelong single Latter-day Saint man.

I can tell you from experience that it was not easy for me to remain steadfast in the gospel without being yoked to a supportive partner. Lots and lots of people do it, but it can be tough. My testimony was never rocky, but my enthusiasm waned every now and again.

Nevertheless, I made a promise to myself and to the Lord a long time ago that when things got somewhat challenging, I would always stay here, inside the fence. And I did.

Doctrines from the Family Proclamation

In the past, when accused of being too picky about a potential spouse, I would tell people I had only two requirements in choosing a wife: (1) I must love her; (2) she must love me. But here was the catch—they had to happen at the same time!

I honestly used to think that “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” didn’t apply to me very much. Like the photographer who takes the family photos, I just wasn’t in the picture. Then I realized what a dumb thing that was for me to think. As a result, when I started to feel spiritually paralyzed, I focused on two doctrines in the family proclamation to give me the strength to continue my activity in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

First: My Heavenly Father loves me. I can’t deny there were times during my lonely sojourn that I felt some bitterness toward God. I felt that I must have missed my opportunity to have a family due to some sin on my part, or maybe just because I was too shy at the wrong moment. It frustrated me to think there might have been some point along the way that the person I was to marry was there, but for lack of being able to hear the whisperings of the Spirit, I missed her because I was somewhere between sin and repentance. I tried not to believe this was the case, but those unhealthy and unholy thoughts would sometimes creep into my mind and lead to self-pity.

Second: God has a plan for me. I accepted His plan in the premortal existence. His plan is that I come to earth and obtain my physical body and gain the earthly experience I personally need to progress toward perfection and eternal life. And it is also true that my wife, Emilie, needed to gain the experience that she personally needed to progress toward perfection. Since Em and I feel we were meant to always be together—always—who am I to say when our meeting should have taken place?

My Plan for My Life versus God's Plan

God's plan didn't necessarily match the life I planned out as a young man. I was quite sure of the following:

1. I would go on a mission to Japan at age 19. I went to Kentucky at age 20.
2. I would go to Brigham Young University from age 21 to 25. I went to Miami of Ohio from age 25 to 29.
3. I would marry in the temple at age 23 and have five or six kids. I married at 43. Em has three kids.
4. I would work for IBM, or someplace like that, and make a great salary. Didn't happen.



When things didn't work out as I planned, it was all I could do to maintain hope for family happiness until I was 41. At that point I really and truly gave up. A year later I met Emilie and everything changed. I can bear testimony that you can trust in God's plan for your life. The family proclamation is alive and well and hanging on a wall in our home.

Both Em's life and my life really started to progress together toward eternal life on a bus ride. Here's how that happened.

My Desperation Job—Driving a Bus

In 1996, after graduating from college, I moved back home to Spanish Fork, Utah, to help my dad take care of my mom. I landed a desperation job driving a bus from Spanish Fork to BYU in Provo. It was supposed to be a temporary job, but I stayed.

Now, I know one doesn't need a B.A. degree in history

and psychology to become a bus driver. So it was difficult for me to not constantly question my life, especially when I struggled to pay off my student loans. Thoughts of "I'm a loser" often weighed on my mind as I carried folks to and from.

Then it happened! I met Emilie! Now, I ask you, could my life progress toward eternal life driving a bus? My answer is, "Yes!"

Em lived in Cedar City, Utah, at that time, which is not far from the northernmost part of Zion National Park. One of the big attractions in that part of the park is a collection of beautiful red-rock canyons appropriately named Kolob Canyons. In the scriptures, Kolob is the star "nearest unto the throne of God" (Abraham 3:2).

Em's car had been totaled in Cedar City the day before she was to travel north to her parents' house in the small town of Elmo for Thanksgiving. She decided to rent a car to make the trip, but then there was a big snowstorm in the



mountain pass between Cedar City and Elmo. So she drove the 200 miles up to Spanish Fork to pick up her sister, Lysie, who happened to be a friend of mine—and who also thought I would make a good match for Em. They decided to leave for their parents' home a day later than planned so that Em and I could get to know each other.

That's the day Em rode with me on my last bus route for the day. We talked and talked, and then after I finished my route and dropped off the bus at the garage in Spanish Fork, we decided to watch a movie. Everything just clicked.

Kolob—Our Favorite Place

After our first date, I made a lot of trips to Cedar City to date Em. We often spent time in Zion National Park, especially Kolob Canyons. Of course, being “nearest unto the throne of God,” it felt like heaven. We even took our wedding photos there.

I honestly don't know how to express the strength of my conviction that Heavenly Father loves me, that Jesus Christ died for me, and that Jesus Christ lives. I'm grateful to know of my own divine nature and destiny, as well as Emilie's divine nature and destiny. I'm grateful that our two destinies are sealed together for eternity. I'm not really a loser—never was one.

This is my story, and I realize that not everyone's story will include marriage in this life. So for those of you getting close to or having already passed your “give-up point,” my advice is to remember these two things: (1) you are a child of God, who loves you, and (2) God has a plan for you. We can and must continue to trust in a bright, eternal future. One day you will find your spouse in your own way and according to your own timetable—just as Em and I did, taking a bus bound for Kolob. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

