

Separated by a Flood, United by Prayer

Trapped in their bedrooms, barricaded by furniture, and clinging to tree branches, the members of the Torres family did the only thing that could save them.

By Melissa Merrill

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September 25, 2005, started out as a calm, peaceful Sunday for Victor Manuel Torres Quiros, his wife, Yamileth Monge Ureña, and their family. They had returned from church and were resting, reading, and enjoying a quiet, rainy afternoon at their home in the mountains of Costa Rica.

It had been raining most of the weekend, nothing unusual for the area or the season. About 5:00 p.m., Brother Torres observed that the river running near their property had risen more than usual and was getting closer to the house. He calmly alerted his family, and as a precaution he and his 11-year-old son, Erick, began placing blankets at the doors to keep water from seeping inside.

Moments later the river swelled to the point that the water was more than a meter-and-a-half (five feet) deep around the house. Within seconds the water crashed through the

windows. (The family learned later that a landslide had caused the sudden surge of water.) Brother Torres shouted to his family to run for the backyard, where there were some trees and higher ground. His three teenage daughters, Sofia, Korina, and Monica, immediately left the house.

But Sister Torres couldn't make it outside. So she ran with Elizabeth, a young child in the family's care that weekend, to a bedroom. They quickly climbed onto the bed, which, amazingly, floated. Neither had any idea where the others were or whether they were OK. Little Elizabeth reminded Sister Torres, "Don't cry. Remember that our God loves us." Then they began to pray.

Brother Torres had been following his daughters outside when he realized he didn't know where Erick was. Fighting the current, he went back into the house. He found Erick standing on a pile of rubble—a displaced wall, some furniture, trash, and several branches

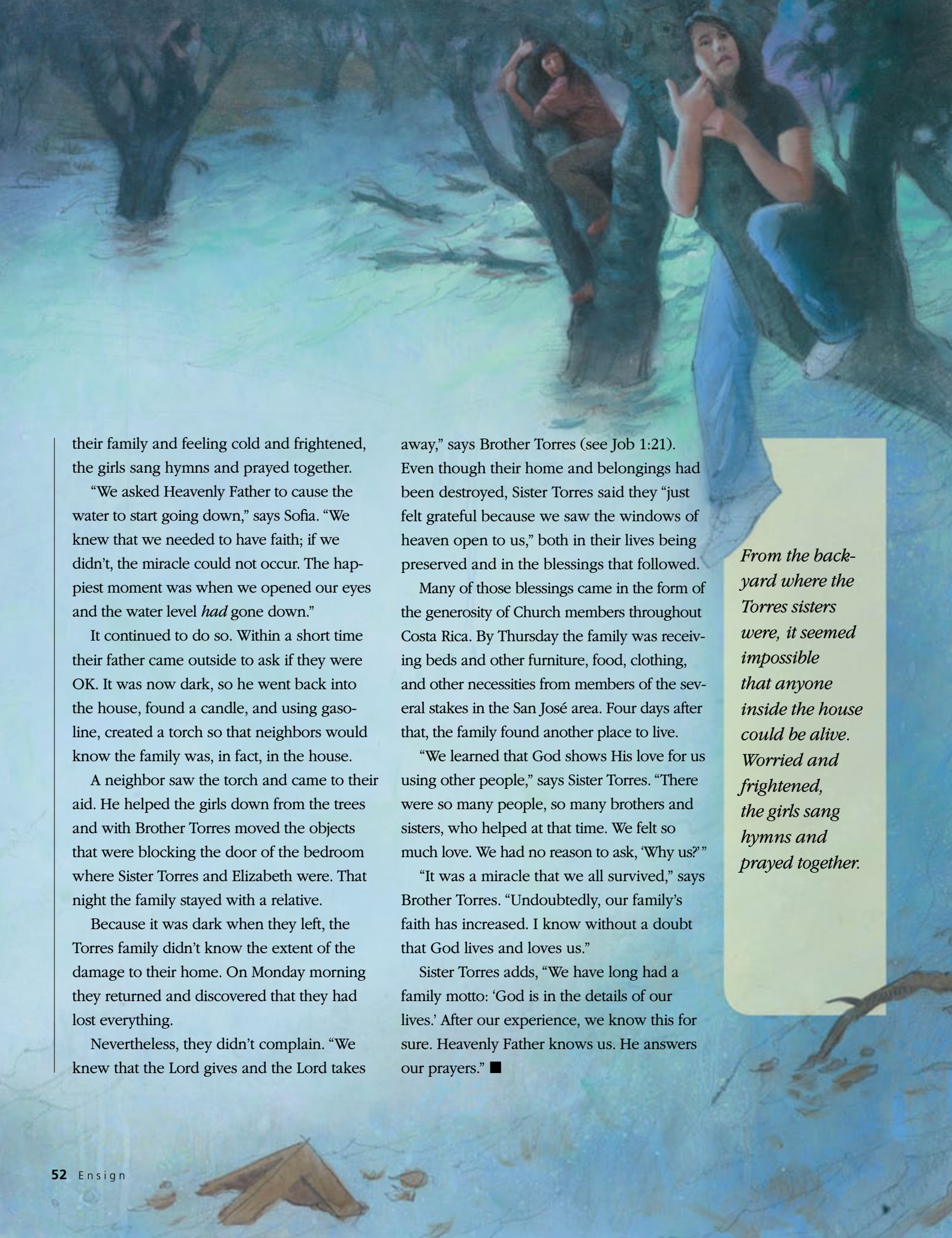
that the water had pushed against a closed door. Together, they moved to the kitchen, where Brother Torres set Erick in a safe, high place. Brother Torres then discovered that the water had wrapped a nylon cord around his legs, making it difficult for him to move. Even so, he managed to push the refrigerator and some furniture away, preventing the door from closing and trapping him and his son.

From the kitchen, Erick and Brother Torres could see the girls in the backyard, but they did not know how Sister Torres and Elizabeth were doing. Brother Torres suggested that together, they ask for Heavenly Father's help.

Meanwhile, outside and up a guava tree, the girls were also praying. Sofia, Korina, and Monica could see water gushing through their home. From all appearances, it seemed impossible that anyone remaining inside could be alive. Worried for

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their family and feeling cold and frightened, the girls sang hymns and prayed together.

“We asked Heavenly Father to cause the water to start going down,” says Sofia. “We knew that we needed to have faith; if we didn’t, the miracle could not occur. The happiest moment was when we opened our eyes and the water level *had* gone down.”

It continued to do so. Within a short time their father came outside to ask if they were OK. It was now dark, so he went back into the house, found a candle, and using gasoline, created a torch so that neighbors would know the family was, in fact, in the house.

A neighbor saw the torch and came to their aid. He helped the girls down from the trees and with Brother Torres moved the objects that were blocking the door of the bedroom where Sister Torres and Elizabeth were. That night the family stayed with a relative.

Because it was dark when they left, the Torres family didn’t know the extent of the damage to their home. On Monday morning they returned and discovered that they had lost everything.

Nevertheless, they didn’t complain. “We knew that the Lord gives and the Lord takes

away,” says Brother Torres (see Job 1:21). Even though their home and belongings had been destroyed, Sister Torres said they “just felt grateful because we saw the windows of heaven open to us,” both in their lives being preserved and in the blessings that followed.

Many of those blessings came in the form of the generosity of Church members throughout Costa Rica. By Thursday the family was receiving beds and other furniture, food, clothing, and other necessities from members of the several stakes in the San José area. Four days after that, the family found another place to live.

“We learned that God shows His love for us using other people,” says Sister Torres. “There were so many people, so many brothers and sisters, who helped at that time. We felt so much love. We had no reason to ask, ‘Why us?’”

“It was a miracle that we all survived,” says Brother Torres. “Undoubtedly, our family’s faith has increased. I know without a doubt that God lives and loves us.”

Sister Torres adds, “We have long had a family motto: ‘God is in the details of our lives.’ After our experience, we know this for sure. Heavenly Father knows us. He answers our prayers.” ■

From the backyard where the Torres sisters were, it seemed impossible that anyone inside the house could be alive. Worried and frightened, the girls sang hymns and prayed together.