

TIE A KNOT AND HANG ON

By Karen Paul

I grew up in a small town in Canada. When I was 13, my father lost his job and our family relocated to Edmonton in order to survive. A few months after we moved to the city, my mother and father had a violent argument, resulting in my mother being hospitalized for six months. After a time, she allowed my father back into our household. This devastated me, and I turned to alcohol and drugs to escape the anger welling up inside.

At precisely this time, the missionaries found me. As I met families in the local ward, I was impressed with the respect the spouses had for one another and the affection parents showed their children. At age 16 I was baptized.

My first year of membership demonstrated that I would have to endure some growing pains. I had left behind the friendships and lifestyle that had served as my escape from the violence in my home. Unfortunately, my ward did not seem to offer the comfort of new friendships to fill in the gaps. I didn't feel accepted and was ready to return to my old way of life when a missionary challenged me to stay true to my baptismal covenants. I reluctantly recommitted myself, but I felt as though I was hanging on to a rope that was slipping through my fingers.

Soon afterward I was called to be Laurel class president. I felt very inadequate; there were several Laurels in the ward who were far more qualified. When my new calling was announced, one of the girls in the ward expressed her dissatisfaction. "How could they call you?" she said. "You hardly attend church. What do you know?"

She was right; I didn't know anything. I felt sure my calling would drive many of the Laurels to inactivity—including me. The whole situation seemed too much to bear. If anyone was at the end of her rope, I was.

When I met with my class adviser, Marlene Evans, I told her that someone had made a huge error. However, she assured me that I had been called for a reason. She began to work tirelessly with me, and I went to her home on a regular basis to learn my responsibilities. With her encouragement, I could eventually conduct a meeting without my knees knocking together.

Once Sister Evans gave me a card that read, "When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on." She indicated that the rope represented life, and that by not taking righteous actions, we let life slip through our fingers. The knot represented the decision to hang on to the gospel and the security it brings.

I remembered that lesson throughout the coming months. I was attending high school full-time in addition to taking correspondence courses. I was working evenings and Saturdays. I paid for my own tuition, fees, books, clothes, and room and board. There were many times I felt I was at the end of my rope. Was I a super kid, doing it all and by myself? No, but I tied a knot and held on.

Today, I am a university graduate, working as a social worker. I married in the temple and have four children. They have been to the temple and have served missions. And I have served in leadership positions in the Young Women organization. Each time I do, I take every opportunity I can to share Sister

Evans's message with the youth. Her caring and her message changed my life.

I wouldn't have the abundant blessings I enjoy today if I hadn't learned to tie a knot and hang on. ■

