



Talking with Dad

BY KJERSTEN JOHNSON

We had just finished dinner at my grandparents' cabin, and I was outside playing with my five little brothers when my dad walked out and called to me.

Of course when your dad calls you like that, you're afraid you may be in trouble. So I trudged over and mumbled, "Yeah, Dad?"

Surprisingly, he said, "How would you like to go on a motorcycle ride with me?" I'm sure my eyes must have widened to the size of golf balls as I quickly responded, "Yes, of course I want to go."

Soon my dad was leading the way as we each drove a motorcycle down a path that winds through the majestic forest surrounding our cabin and then climbs to the top of a hill. As we rode, I was so excited that I could barely keep the throttle on low. Once or twice my dad had to tell me to slow down.

My mind wandered as we rode. I was curious why I had been given this special treat and my brothers hadn't. When we reached the top of the mountain, Dad said, "This looks like a nice place to stop and rest." So we parked our motorcycles and sat down

on some rocks overlooking the forest. We were both quiet for a moment, enjoying the beauty around us. As I glanced over at my dad, I noticed his thoughtful stare and knew something was coming.

He and I had never really talked a lot. I guess it was just too hard for him to express himself to anyone but my mom. Then he interrupted my thoughts and said, "Kjersten, your mother and I have been talking, and we have decided you are now mature enough to know some of the details concerning our marriage and family." I could tell by the words he used and by the way he said them that he had been planning this talk for a while.

His voice was soft as he began. "Your mother and I first met at the fire station where I was a student firefighter, and she worked in the office. We began dating, and I realized she was different from the other young women I had dated before. I was a carefree young man who had been brought up in another church. But I hadn't really paid too much attention to religion.

I was so excited to go on a ride with just my dad. We ended up talking in a way we never had before.



“I had very few values or goals at that time,” he continued, “and I really didn’t care.” He leaned forward and intently confided in me. “Kjersten, your mother set the most shining example of righteous living I had ever seen.” As he said this, a warm feeling swept over me.

My dad told me details concerning their marriage, my birth, and our family that I had never before heard. He told me the story of his conversion to the Church and how because they were first married civilly, they had to wait a year before they could be sealed in the temple. He also shared with me some of the adventures he and Mom went through in that first year of marriage. For the first time, pieces to a few little puzzles fell

into place. I finally understood why my parents’ marriage and sealing dates are different and why they say that the first year of their marriage was the hardest they ever had.

As he related these things to me, his eyes would sometimes flicker with sadness and other times crinkle with laughter. I don’t remember exactly how much I understood back then, but I distinctly remember the feelings of surprise, confusion, and love that alternately came over me.

This experience really made an impact on me. I realized

what a miracle families are, and it gave me a greater understanding of God’s plan. I also gained a greater faith in the gospel and an appreciation for the effects it can have on people’s lives. We discussed many things on that mountain, but there is one thing I will not forget. I have never felt so much gratitude and thankfulness in my heart as I did when my father told me of his strong love for God, the gospel, my mother, and our family. I realized the numerous ways the gospel had touched his life, as well as mine.

My father and I became very close that day. For the first time, I saw him as a real person with feelings and emotions and not just some ruling body who had to give me permission to have fun. I also think my dad learned more about me too. I will never forget that special talk with my dad and the feelings of love and understanding we shared. ■

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR PARENTS

BY LDS FAMILY SERVICES

These tips can help you have positive communication with your parents and others.

- **Be open to opportunities for talking.** Sometimes opportunities for good communication arise when you’re least expecting them.
- **Listen with your heart.** Try to understand the motive and intent of what your parent is saying.
- **Show interest.** An attentive listener helps others feel safe enough to share their feelings.
- **Periodically summarize what you hear.** This shows that you’re sincerely listening to what your parent is saying.
- **Ask questions.** Questions can help both of you know that you’re on the right track.
- **Remember that parents are people too.** They have feelings, and they want to be close to you.

As you and your parents practice good communication skills, you can have a closer relationship that blesses you both.