

The Earrings

The day after my wife lost her gold earring, I realized we had lost something so much more important.

BY VIKTOR MAKAROV

Once, for my wife's birthday, I gave her a pair of wonderful gold earrings. They suited her very well since she has a long, graceful neck, and the earrings were made in the shape of concentric circles bound together so they could move and play in the sunlight. My wife, Yelena, looked stunning whenever she wore them. She loved these earrings.

Then came the day of that best of all holiday celebrations, our branch Christmas party. I was in charge of this activity for our branch in Penza, Russia, so I was hurrying, wanting to get there as quickly as possible to make sure everything was ready for the activity. Yelena did not hurry but continued carefully getting ready. When my patience gave out, I told her to stop with her makeup, insisting that she looks great even without it. That was my mistake. She told me that she wasn't going anywhere, and I would have to go to the party alone.

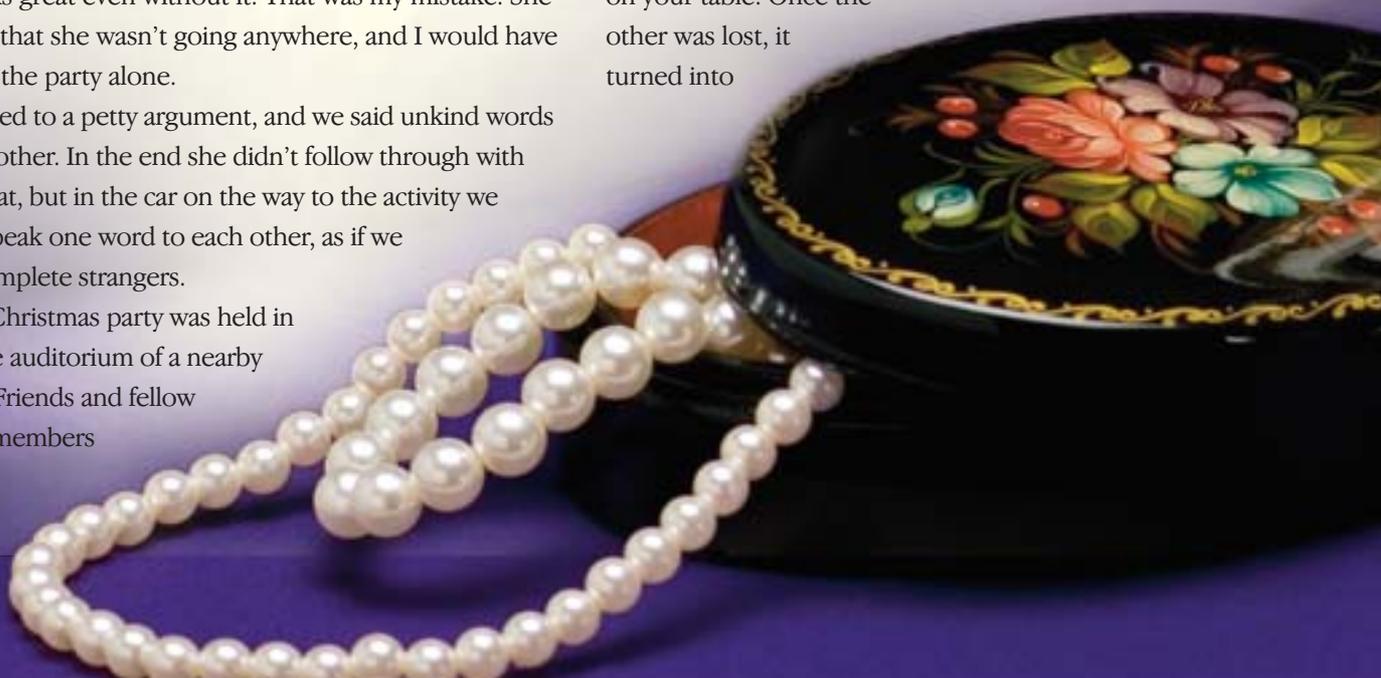
This led to a petty argument, and we said unkind words to each other. In the end she didn't follow through with her threat, but in the car on the way to the activity we didn't speak one word to each other, as if we were complete strangers.

Our Christmas party was held in the large auditorium of a nearby school. Friends and fellow branch members

had helped us decorate the room with flowers and pictures of our Lord's life and death. When we arrived we sat down in our seats, and my wife discovered that she was wearing only one earring. This was an unpleasant surprise, and we completely forgot about our argument. We looked all around us, but in vain—the earring was nowhere to be found. We decided it would be best to forget about it for the moment and watch the wonderful concert our friends had prepared.

Although the concert really was fabulous, my wife and I weren't able to fully enjoy it. Our day was spoiled, and we returned home in low spirits. We were sad to lose the earring, not only because it was expensive and beautiful, but more important because it was a gift of love for my wife.

When I woke up the next day, I realized we had lost something else much more important than a gold earring: the unity between us. Turning to Yelena, I said, "Look at this other earring. See how beautiful it is and how the light plays on it. Think about how much gold and effort were required to make it, and see how it's just lying there alone on your table. Once the other was lost, it turned into



PHOTOGRAPH BY EMILY LESHMAN, POSED BY MODELS



something far less than when it was part of a pair.

We are like this also. When we are united, we can be a beautiful, powerful, and creative force for good. But when we are not united, we don't have the same strength, power, or beauty."

Tears appeared on my wife's face. She came over and embraced me. Her voice shook as she spoke, but her words touched me from head to toe: "We should never argue. We should be like Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We love each other, and we had our marriage sealed for eternity in the holy temple. The devil wants to destroy all families on earth, but he can't do it if we are united. I love you even more after this incident. God has shown us what a family really is."

I held her in my arms, tears streaming down my cheeks. Now I knew that I held in my arms my greatest blessing. ■