

Encircled in the Arms of His Love

By Lorna Lee R. Anderson

When he was only a year old, our son Nolan suffered a stroke related to complications from spinal meningitis. Now 14, he struggles with a low-pressure shunt, learning challenges, and paralysis of one side of his body.

Despite his rocky road, Nolan has surpassed our expectations. Every milestone he reaches brings us much joy. He has developed patience and a determination worthy of emulation.

My husband, Ryan, and I, along with our five other sons, have all grown spiritually from our experiences with Nolan. At times we get discouraged and worry about his future,

but then we count our blessings, recognize the love and concern our Father in Heaven and His Son have for each of us, and remember a prayer that was answered when Nolan was six.

One evening when we were unsure how to handle Nolan's challenges, my husband and I knelt to pray about his welfare. As we petitioned the Lord, we expressed particular concern about Nolan's behavior as related to his perception of his self-worth. We sincerely asked for Nolan to feel the love of our Savior and know of his great worth as a child of God.

The next morning Nolan came directly into the kitchen, where I was cooking breakfast. Before breakfast he would usually play with his brothers

or plop on the couch. But he seemed intent as he climbed a stool at the breakfast bar, looked up at me, and said, "I had a dream last night."

I sensed his seriousness, and my interest was immediately piqued.

"Really?" I asked. "What happened in your dream?"

"Jesus was there," Nolan replied simply, "and He held me."

I have a testimony that our loving Father in Heaven hears and answers our prayers and that our Savior is our advocate with the Father. They know us individually. They are aware of our needs and our capabilities. They know how to succor us.

Moroni tells us: "If ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth . . . unto you. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:4-5). I have learned that this scripture pertains not only to obtaining a testimony of the Book of Mormon but also to any question for which we are sincerely seeking an answer. When we face challenges, heartache, and trials, our hearts are keenly sincere and our intent intensely genuine.

How grateful I am to be a member of the Savior's Church, where I have learned much of His gospel through study, service, and the Holy Ghost. How grateful I am to know our Savior will help, comfort, and guide each of us. I know that we can all be encircled "in the arms of [His] love" (D&C 6:20) as we come unto Him. ■



I Know That My Redeemer Lives

By Christy Rusch Banz
Church Magazines

As a freshman at Brigham Young University–Idaho (then Ricks College), I missed my family. But after a few months of classes, I had settled into college life and was enjoying myself. When the telephone call came, I was in my apartment, studying.

“Christy, I have some bad news for you,” my mother said, her voice

breaking. “Your father passed away tonight from a severe heart attack.”

Emotions flooded over me as I tried to comprehend what I had just heard. I had seen my father only a few days before, but I had no idea it would be for the last time. Dad’s death was a shock to our entire family; it was also a shock to my home ward. Dad was only 53 years old, and he was serving as our bishop.

The days that followed were filled with visits and phone calls from family, friends, ward members, and neighbors. We felt a tremendous outpouring of love from those around us. At Dad’s funeral, family members shared memories of our life with him, and we testified of the plan of salvation and of life after death.

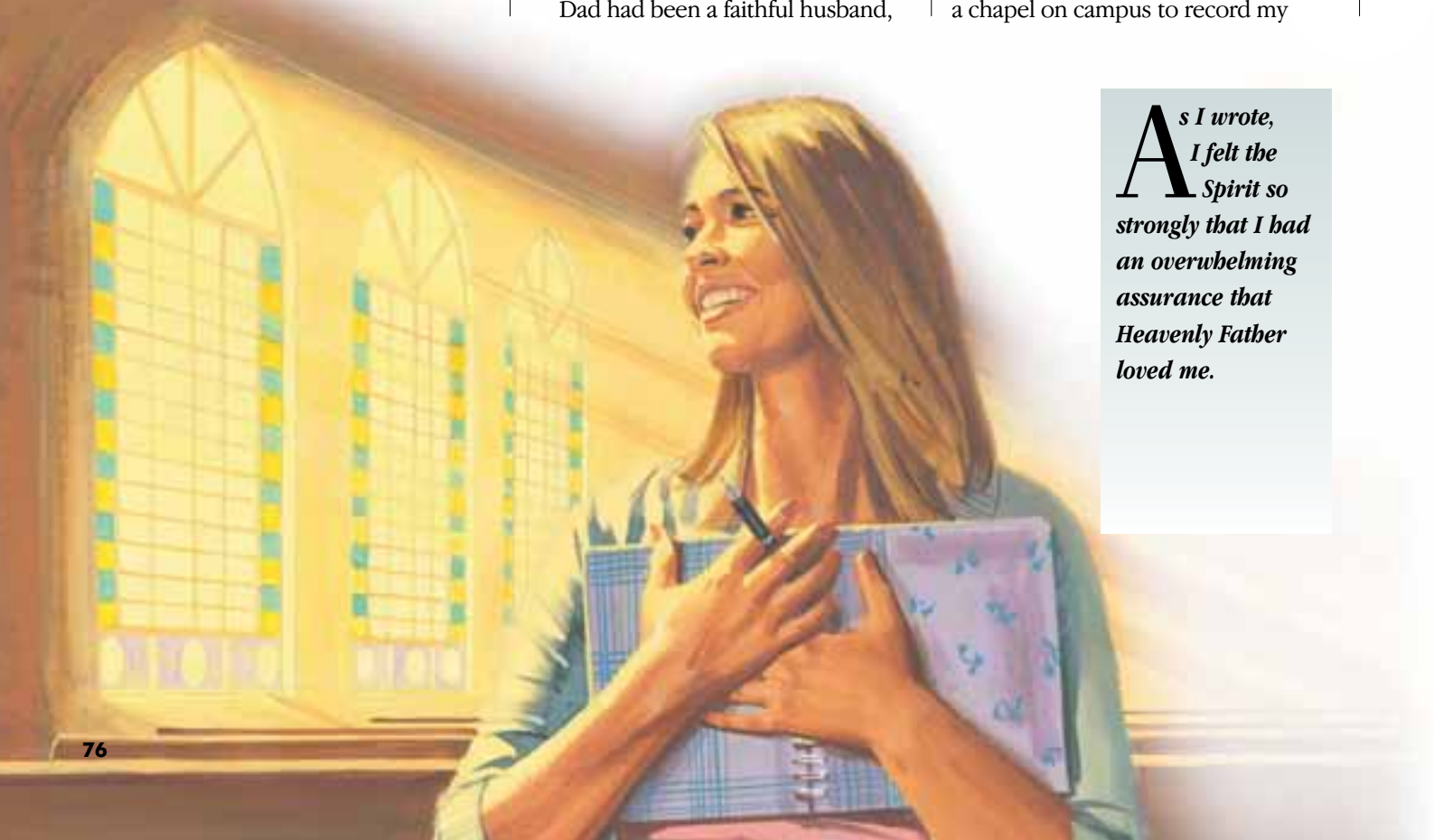
Dad had been a faithful husband,

a devoted Latter-day Saint, an avid Scouter, and a wonderful father. Many people were blessed because of the life he had lived. After the funeral my oldest brother dedicated the grave, and as a family we stood and sobbed through “I Am a Child of God” (*Hymns*, no. 301).

The day after the funeral I returned to school. I wasn’t thrilled to be back, but I knew I had to go on with life and fulfill my responsibilities. Some days were easier than others. I spent a lot of time thinking about my father, and I relied on my knowledge of the plan of salvation and my faith in Jesus Christ to help me face my challenges and questions.

About two weeks after my father passed away, I took my journal to a chapel on campus to record my

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feelings and the events surrounding Dad's death. As I wrote, I felt the Spirit so strongly that I had an overwhelming assurance that my Heavenly Father loved me, that He had a plan specifically for me, and that I would never be left alone. As I finished writing, bells sounded from speakers atop the nearby student center playing the hymn "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" (*Hymns*, no. 136). Words from the hymn instantly came to my mind:

*I know that my Redeemer lives.
What comfort this sweet sentence
gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was
dead.
He lives, my ever-living Head. . . .
He lives to silence all my fears.
He lives to wipe away my tears.
He lives to calm my troubled heart.
He lives all blessings to impart.*

I do know that my Redeemer lives, and I know He loves me. Because He

rose from the dead, I know that my father and all of our loved ones who have gone before us will also live again. What a comfort it is to know these truths. ■

My Unexpected Easter Feast

By Marianne Monson

Easter was always a special holiday while I was growing up. After church my parents would teach the family a lesson about the Atonement and Resurrection; in the evening we would have a scrumptious feast. Friends often joined us for dinner, which was both joyous and delicious. Because of these traditions, Easter became my favorite holiday—a sacred family time to celebrate the Resurrection of the Savior.

One year while studying in London, I found myself alone on Easter. My ward did not meet until late afternoon, so the morning stretched before me. I thought of my family, miles away, celebrating the day without me, and my heart felt empty and sad.

At first I wanted to indulge in self-pity, but then I began to wonder what

I could do to make the day meaningful. My mind turned to the people I passed daily in the crowded subways. As in many big cities, the subways often sheltered homeless men and women needing a handout. My heart had often been touched by their need, and I realized that



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I wasn't the only one in London spending Easter alone. Helping strangers suddenly seemed like a good way to show my gratitude for the wonderful Easters I had enjoyed as a child.

I made several sack lunches containing sandwiches, fruit, crackers, and drinks. Then I headed to the subway, searching out the people I had sometimes avoided. Most were truly grateful for the food. To each I said, "Happy Easter!"

When I had one lunch left, I came upon a man who looked particularly downtrodden. His clothes were filthy, his face was lined with suffering, and his eyes held deep sorrow. As I offered him the lunch, he looked up at me in surprise.

"What is this?" he asked.

"It's lunch, sir," I replied.

"Thank you, thank you very much," he said. His expression suddenly changed to one of joy and gratitude. He clutched the sack eagerly, holding it as if it were a precious treasure.

"You're welcome," I said, touched by the look on his face. "Happy Easter, sir."

"Happy Easter!" he replied.

As I walked home, the words of King Benjamin came to my mind: "For behold, are we not all beggars?" (Mosiah 4:19). I realized that without the Savior, all of us would be cast out, downtrodden, and left alone. But the Savior reaches out to us and offers us something we want desperately: the

hope that we can be pure, that we will live again, and that we will return to Him someday.

Faced with sin and death, I also stand before the Savior as a beggar. He reaches out to me, offering mercy. Someday when I stand before Him, my face will register profound gratitude, which I had glimpsed, in small part, on the face of this humble man.


Walking home, I began to weep. My loneliness was gone, replaced with joy and a deeper understanding of King Benjamin's words and the Savior's mercy. I silently thanked the Lord for this man's unexpected gift to me. I had offered him a simple lunch; he had returned to me a true Easter feast. ■

The Savior's Saving Hand

By Scott McCoy

One summer while I was growing up in Arkansas, my neighbors invited me to join them for a couple days of camping, fishing, and swimming at a large reservoir near Sardis, Mississippi. We spent several days enjoying all sorts of outside activities.

On our last day we were getting our final swim in before heading home. As my friends and I were throwing a beach ball back and forth, the ball sailed over my head and



landed a few feet beyond me. The wind immediately started blowing the ball away from me along the top of the water. I started after it, but the wind kept blowing the ball just beyond my reach. In a short time I had reached the markers that bordered the shallow swimming area. The ball had been blown beyond the markers toward the main body of the reservoir.

As I approached the markers, I gave little thought to swimming beyond them. The ball was not that far in front of me, and I was sure I could catch it. After all, I had completed a lifesaving course and proudly wore the course emblem on my swimming trunks. I felt comfortable in water and confident that I was strong enough to retrieve the ball.

The wind, however, continued to



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keep the ball outside my reach. Sometimes I would get so close to it that I could touch it with my fingertips, only to see it sail off again. Finally, a gust blew it far beyond my reach.

I was not aware of how far I had traveled until I stopped to rest. The water seemed much darker and colder than it was in the shallow swimming area. When I looked back toward the shore, I realized that I was close to the middle of the reservoir. I decided to abandon the beach ball and swim back to shore. I was tired and worn out, but I wasn't worried. I was young and felt that I would be all right.

But as I tried to return to shore, the wind that had assisted the beach

ball worked against me. It seemed that no matter how hard I swam, I made little progress. My arms and legs began to burn and ache. I stopped to dog paddle and float, trying to regain my strength.

Then I heard a familiar sound—the sound of a motorboat. I was happy and relieved to soon see a man in a small boat pull up beside me and offer me a ride to shore. My arms and legs were spent. I couldn't even pull myself into the boat, so I put one arm over the side and hung on while the stranger slowly towed me back to the swimming area. I grabbed one of the markers, let go of the boat, waved a thank-you, and swam to shore.

Fifteen years later I once again found myself in trouble. For a long

time I had been swimming in a reservoir of sin. Pursuing a worldly course and seeking after things of little or no value had left me floundering in deep water. My strength was spent, and my hope was failing. The things I had pursued remained just out of my reach, and darkness seemed about to engulf me.

In desperation I cried out to Heavenly Father. Like the man in the boat, the Savior came to my rescue when I needed Him most. Through a latter-day prophet of God, He led me to the Book of Mormon. He led me along the path of repentance and cleansed me of my sins in the waters of baptism. He then placed me on high ground, where I have attempted to stay ever since. ■