

# TO BE TO

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Of the Seventy



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When I was 14 years old I was living comfortably as the youngest child in my family—the only one still at home with my parents. We lived in the southern Utah town of St. George, a place steeped in the traditions of its pioneer founders. With both my father and mother born of this stock, I grew up with a strong sense of our pioneer heritage. The stories I heard growing up all centered on our community and the people who lived there. This wonderful heritage was at the center of who my parents were.

So it was a great surprise to me when my parents announced their intention to move. My father didn’t have a new job to go to. He didn’t have business contacts where we were going. But we were going to move from a place that had anchored our family for generations. We were going to leave an extended family of aunts, uncles, cousins, neighbors, and friends, and

we were going to move to a larger city.

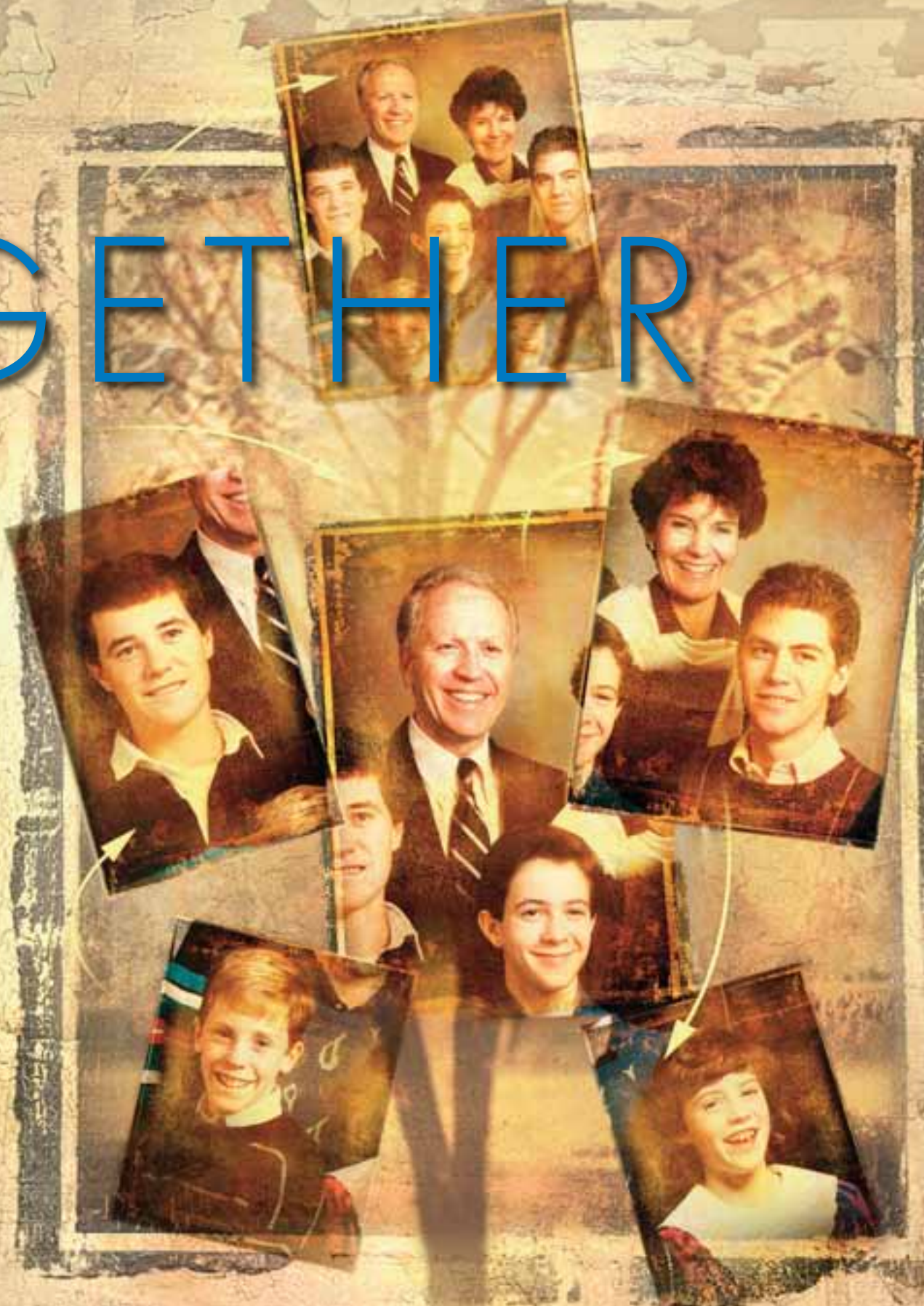
The reason my parents wanted to move was to live in the same city as their married children and grandchildren. They did it because my father and mother believed nothing was more important than being with and nurturing their immediate family.

## **A Difficult Move**

We moved when I was a young teenager. I didn’t know anybody at school. I didn’t know anybody at church. I moved out of a small town into a big city. I trusted my parents, but I was a little bewildered as to why we really needed to move. Over time I came to see, and I see even more clearly since I’ve become a father, the great commitment my parents had to our immediate family.

Knowing how committed my parents were to our family made it easier for me to make this difficult transition as a teenager. I came to realize that many of the temporal things I thought were important to my father were not. I came to realize that

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nothing was as important to him as his family and the eternal covenants that bound us together. My father and mother would go wherever they needed to go and do whatever they needed to do to continue nurturing their relationships with children and grandchildren. Knowing this was of immense comfort to me.

In our small town, I had felt sheltered and protected. It was difficult leaving everything I knew, everything I was comfortable with. I felt lost moving into the city, but I trusted my parents. They had always given me every reason to know that they loved me, cared for me, and wanted me to be happy.

By the end of my first year, I decided I could make it in this new place, and I started to reach out to other people. I made good friends, and I started to fit in and feel comfortable. The best place I found help (besides my family) was at church. I started to come out of my shell because I started to participate more with the youth of the ward. They helped me feel good about who I was and what I was doing. They welcomed me and helped me feel a part of a church family—like the church family I had left in St. George.

### **The Need to Change**

The lesson I learned from this experience became even more important many years later when I had five teenage children of my own. Like many families, we occasionally found our family relationships a little strained or uneven. On one such occasion I felt like the key to family harmony was for my children to see things my way and act in ways I thought were right. They were not doing anything bad, I just felt they should change their attitudes to conform more closely to mine. To me, that seemed like the answer, but as I pondered the solution, the Lord spoke to me through my feelings. In my heart and mind came the message, “It is better to be one than to be right.”

I wasn’t quite sure what that meant. But I heard and felt it. After a lot of thought and prayer, I began to understand that it was more important for our family to be one than it was for *me* to be right. That realization pierced

me to the core, and I could see that even if I were right about how things ought to be done, that knowledge alone would not bless my family. I remembered that the Lord had said, “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). I realized that the only way to gain what we all really wanted was for us to be one and that if I insisted on holding to what I perceived as the moral high ground, we would not likely resolve our differences.

Most importantly, the message implied that I shouldn’t be expecting my children to change: *I* needed to change. Suddenly I could see that if *I* would change and do the things that would make us one as a family, everything would work out. The Lord truly helped me, and almost overnight I began to change. I focused on loving my children without conditions, without expecting them to change. I simply wanted to love them—and for them to love me.

That was not a dramatic change, but it was an important change of heart and mind. As my children became aware of the transformation taking place in their father, it was surprising how quickly we became one again. The strains we were experiencing just melted away. Harmony returned. Once again our home became a place of love.

Since those long-ago days my children have all married and now have their own families, and as parents my wife and I take such delight in them. We are all such good friends—best friends. My prayers were answered. Not the prayer to change my children, which is what I prayed for at first, but for the change that came over *me* as a result of my prayers. The Lord answered my prayers by helping *me* change.

### **What My Father Knew**

My father understood the importance of being one as a family, and he valued his relationship with his posterity above all other earthly pursuits. That was the reason we had moved from our longtime home in St. George. And that’s what I better understood when my children were teenagers. The tender mercies of the Lord helped me see that my relationship with my family would last forever, and that was more important than just being *right*. **NE**

**came to understand the importance my father placed on being one as a family and why he valued his relationship with his posterity above all earthly pursuits.**

