

One of the most awful things about the whole divorce was losing my temple recommend. When Dan and I told the bishop of our decision to end the marriage, he asked us both to relinquish our recommends, saying to me that he was not asking me to repent of anything, but that he did not feel this was a good time to go to the temple. He said he would return it as soon as Dan was totally removed from the house and the divorce was settled and feelings were soothed. It -as really hard for me to take. I agreed with him in my head. But emotionally, it was really wrenching. For years when they asked that question: "Is everything going well in your family relations?" I had been very frank in saying "No," but they always extended my recommend, anyway, saying it was to help me get the strength I needed and in recognition of the fact that I was doing everything they asked me to do to try and keep the marriage together (taking counseling, etc.). I felt I had done everything they asked and everything I could, and even though I knew I had some bitter angry feelings and it was no time to go to the temple, still I just had not anticipated that happening at that time. It was awful enough to come to that decision and to lose my recommend in that same session, with no anticipation--I went home (actually, "home" at that time was in my small room at Dinny Lewis'--I had moved out)--feeling pretty devastated. Further, it took so many months before Dan quit coming home every weekend (he was transferred to New Jersey the week after I moved out)--and to get things resolved--it was just last weekend that he finally moved his things out--so it has dragged on since the end of October and has seemed like years and years in terms of waiting to get things resolved.

But last week, after Dan moved out his things, the bishop said that now that he will not be coming home weekends and things are more settled, I can anticipate going to the temple with the ward temple trip the last weekend in August. So, if I get through the interviews next weekend, I can now look forward to that joy again. Don't ever take going to the temple for granted. When the bishop took those recommends, I could not imagine the feelings and wrenchings that would be coming. Looking back, I see he was entirely right--and I certainly have had time enough to look back on my sins and see many things I need to overcome and many reasons to repent. But those of you who have never had a recommend taken away just ought to know that it's one of those things you can't imagine being without--until it happens. There is a tangible spirit that comes with holding that card and when you lose it, you really have lost something very priceless.

But don't feel sad for me. It was more awful than I could describe at times. But I will say that when not going to the temple became absolutely unbearable, and when I felt I really could not go on, the Lord brought the temple to me. I probably saw hell gaping after me like never before, but I also tasted the sweetness of heaven in closer ways than ever before.

Pres. Watkins, our stake patriarch, gave me a beautiful second blessing, just as the divorce was beginning to happen. He said I had built my life on a foundation of faith, but it would be even stronger after this. That is really true. It's easy to have faith when things seem to be holding together. When the things that matter most to you are threatened or gone, that's when I learned how much more faith I needed. It certainly has a growing experience, not that I don't still have a long way to go.

Pres. Watkins also said that the day would come when I would look back and see that, wrenching as this all has been, it was a positive step for each member of the family. He said the Lord would guide me each step of the way and that I would be able to support my children and still serve the Lord and build His kingdom. He said it would not be long before the dark clouds would clear and I would find many reasons to rejoice. And he gave me many blessings regarding my children which are very comforting. I can see that this the direction of things, and I feel very grateful.

Daniel and Laura are such good kids. They have matured so much and seem to have had a much easier time adjusting to the situation than I have. They are such a joy to me. I feel the Lord couldn't have blessed me with two better kids to face this with.

Daniel went right out and got himself a job this summer. He's working at the American Diabetes Assoc. full time, as typist, envelope stuffer, errand runner, phone-answerer, is making \$3.70 an hour and doing a very good job. I got a call from his boss last week telling me what an outstanding young man he is and telling me she would give Daniel a recommend letter any day. Daniel walks to work every day, gets himself there on time, and has been such a help to me. He has matured so much and grown so much (over 6' now), but still has that enthusiastic, "Life is such an adventure," kind of personality. He's still so much fun to be around.

Laura has also been busy. She has sometimes had three babysitting jobs a day. I told them they would have to earn their own clothing now, and they're really serious about it. I guess my concern now, is they are lining up jobs for after school starts, and I think their main concentration should be grades. I'm hoping I can earn enough to help them a little once school starts, so they can spend more time studying. Laura has been such a loving support in all.

Our boarder is moving out (found a cheaper apartment in another city), so I am answering the phone a lot trying to find a new renter (they are answering an ad). I finally decided to give up on bringing in Church members. They all come from Utah and think the rents are outrageous and I'm trying to rip them off. The bishop thinks my rent is reasonable. I think it's outrageous, too, but I can't afford to keep it running for less. The bishop told me to total my expenses in running this house and divide it by four to determine my actual costs--then subtract from my rent to determine what tithing to pay on the rent. At that rate, I won't have any tithing. You consider taxes and insurance and all the other costs, and I should be charging a lot more. Oh, well. Anyway, I advertised to charge \$600 a month for just the studio and \$700 if someone wanted to use our kitchen and laundry with the studio, and the phone has been ringing constantly. So that's a sign that the rent is reasonable enough.

I went back to the doctor last week, and he says the fibrous disease is going away and I don't have to go back for another six months. This is certainly another answer to prayer and to a priesthood administration.

So, this is a bit of catchup with what has happened this past year. Bishop Garff agrees with David that I should go ahead and get the temple divorce at the same time and not wait until all the principals have moved away and the materials are lost. Bishop Garff has never done this before, but suggests that instead of getting a temple divorce, I simply have the temple sealing annulled. It sounds easier, but leaves a few questions in my mind. For instance, what happens if the temple sealing is annulled and either Daniel or Laura should die? Are they then sealed to me? It is all too traumatic sometimes for me to even think about.

At any rate, I feel nothing but gratitude in my heart today for the many blessings I enjoy. I'm free right now of any feelings toward Dan that might be negative. I feel more serene and hopeful and healthy than I've felt in a long, long time. I'm enjoying our home and the progress in getting it cleaned up and fixed up. The garden is prospering. I've had more produce than any other year--wonderful, wonderful squash and tomatoes. I'm truly enjoying my job and work with the nicest people. I've even had time for some of the best missionary opportunities ever. Daniel and Laura are growing in so many wonderful ways. I love all of you and thank you for your prayers which have benefited us so greatly.

*Love,
Harlan*

of waiting for the child custody news and whether we could keep the house and stay in White Plains and whether I could afford to go to school and so many other things. I guess I've just lost too many babies. I thought I was going to have a heart attack waiting while the bishop started out by telling me the economic decisions. I had to finally stop him and say, "Please tell me about the kids." He said he started telling Dan about the kids and was interrupted with Dan's "Please tell me about the economics."

Anyway, I get custody of the children. Dan has visiting rights every other week from Friday at 7 p.m. until Sunday, 7 p.m. He has custody rights and decision-making authority when they are with him. I do the rest of the time. We divide holidays evenly and alternate. He gets them four weeks a year--once for a two-week stretch and then two one-week stretches.

I get \$400 a month child support. Period. No alimony. I also get the house, lock and barrell--also the mortgage payments and bills (taxes, etc.). Let's see if I can support this. My base salary is only \$15,000 a year, but they guarantee me \$25,000--but \$200 a week is draw on my commissions. So, after that draw, I have to count on commissions to bring my salary up where I can support this home. Dan and I were barely making it before when he was making \$53,000 + \$16,000 benefits. It will be a miracle and blessing if I can keep things going (especially since, with this new job, the sales don't seem to come very fast). But, somehow, I feel quite serene that things will work out.

I wanted to go back to school and get my master's and work my way into teaching, somehow, but finally decided against it. The classes are so expensive, and the education ones they were forcing me to retake were really a drag. I got an internship with the Blindbrook schools for \$4,000--for this they would get my substitute teaching a half year, and my student teaching another half year--while I would have had to borrow significantly to keep the house running. Then I wasn't really guaranteed a job when all was finished. I loved my teaching (aide) so much at Fox Meadow Elementary in Scarsdale last year--but I finally gave into the reality of my circumstance and took a sales job with CALL-USA, a company that operates in the building right next to where Dan used to work. In fact, we compete with AT&T for long-distance telephone service; but we also lease our lines from them. We are basically a reseller of AT&T telephone lines, relying on guaranteed savings and personalized customer service to cut a share of the pie for ourselves. We don't really compete with Sprint, MCI, or the big-guys. We're just trying to eke some money out of the small pieces of pie left. My company is run by Bill and Laura Grad, both about three years older than I, who with other investors started the company three years ago. They've made 3 million since, and none of it has gone into office amenities. No air-conditioning. Waste-baskets that are sawed-off cardboard boxes. But they seem thrilled to have me aboard, the two other salespersons are very friendly to me, I can walk there from home in twenty minutes, and it's a job. I'm finding that I can get more appointments than the other salespersons and that few people hang up on me in my telemarketing. I'm liking it a lot more than I thought I would, and my bosses are so pleased, they offered me a deal I negotiated for an additional 3% a month of the billing I bring in, in addition to the 25% initial commission. So maybe I can make some money.

In the meantime, Bishop Garff, at my request, arranged to release me from Public Communications and gave me the most wonderful Primary class. Since I began, two more children have started coming out, and I now have 18 children on the roll. They are seven and eight years old, with about half of them just-baptized. They have to be some of the most beautiful, noble, anxiously righteous kids in the Church. It is just the sweetest, warmest job I could ever have prayed for.