

5/10/09

Dear Heather,

This is the first Mother's Day I won't get to be with you since I became a mother. I miss you and hope you have a wonderful day! :)

This year has been a growing one for you and I am so proud of the many things you have done! You started out last summer getting the job with Regina. You took such good care of Logan. That was such a perfect job for you and a perfect blessing for Regina and Logan. The Lord's hand was truly manifested!

You have continued to develop the talent the Lord has blessed you with in photography and even in spite of fears, anxiety, grumpy clients, and lack of transportation and better equipment, you kept at it and have produced tons of BEAUTIFUL photographs and made no small amount of money from it! (Like 5 or 6 weddings, 8 or 9 engagement shoots, 4 or 5 bridal shoots, 10 or more family shoots, and a few senior packages. That is amazing!!! You are a wonder woman!) Three cheers for Heather!!!

You have had some real internal and external battles to fight this year and in each one you have come out the victor. I am so proud of you and grateful that you never gave up and that you were blessed with the strength to overcome. I thank Heavenly Father daily.

I am so impressed that even though you didn't make it last year, that you tried again and got accepted to be an EFY counselor for this summer!!! I know you will do an awesome job and have some incredible experiences. It is not easy to make it and YOU did!! Yippee!

I am so thankful for you and am so proud and humble to be your mother. You are truly a choice daughter of God!

I love you!

Love, Mom

6/15/09

James,

Well, I sure do want to see you! I hope you get this email before you leave! We have a month to get you out here before Damon leaves. We'll see what we can do.

We got back a week ago from our vacation and jumped right into the swim team season. Last Monday we got back and on Tuesday night we had a swim meet. We got there at 5 pm and didn't leave till almost 11. Tonight we have another meet. I can't wait! (JK)

I went to a funeral last Tuesday as well and it was for the husband of one of my counselors in Relief Society. He was diagnosed with Lukemia less than a month ago and was given two weeks to two months to live. It's given me a lot to think about. Those kinds of events really make you stop and think about life in a clear way. It's sobering how life is so brief and you never know when it's going to be your turn to die. I'm thankful for every day that I have to live and for the chance I have to spend another day with those I care about and that they have another day to live too.

The trip was really nice. We had a relaxing time at Mom and Dad's. We went to the park for dinner one night and spent a day at Boomers. The boys drove the little go carts for hours. There were no lines and no crowds. It was great! Dad also took Spencer and Taylor out to teach them how to drive a stick shift. I was still working on the movie I made for Damon's parents' 50th wedding anniversary. It turned out pretty good and was overwhelmingly well received! It made a pretty profound impact on his parents. It was fun to be back in Los Altos after over 20 years. I hardly recognized it. And I was able to see one of my long lost good friends and visit with her for an hour or so at Damon's parents reception they had. We had a fun day at the beach too.

Now we need to get Damon ready for the mission. It was neat to have Mom and Dad at the temple when he went through. Guess what? Now parents can't go in the MTC to drop their

sons off. They just drop them off at the door and say goodbye. They are using the swine flu as their excuse, but I guess they have wanted to do it for a while. So that is kind of a bummer. Oh well. I guess I can't get as emotional and have to sit through the little movie, etc.

Well, have a great last week! We will be praying for you and for one last baptism, and for your safe trip home. Wow! It's so amazing how time catches you off guard sometimes. You're going along in missionary mode and going along and going along. Then suddenly it's the end. And you go home and that's that. It's kind of weird in a way. But maybe it's not that way for you. I don't know. Anyway, I know Mom and Dad are SOOOOO excited to have you come home!! Take care and work, work, work! You've been a great example for my boys and I really, really appreciate your positive attitude and diligence in being such a great missionary! I know the Lord will bless you so much for your sacrifice and willingness to teach.

Love you!

Tiff

9/1/09

Hi Elder (Damon) Janis,

I just wanted to let you know that Grandpa Stucki passed away on Sunday morning. I will be coming out for the funeral which will be on Friday. Sarah's baptism (John's daughter, Sarah) is on Saturday, and hopefully I can see Heather too. He passed away peacefully. Grandma has been in Cedar City this whole time. She is in Provo right now with Whitney and then will go down again on Thursday.

I will be writing a letter to you today. It's been a little distracting with making all these plans, so I will write to you today and get it sent off.

I love you so much!! Have a terrific day!

Love,

Mom

9/15/10

Hi Damon,

How are you? I hope you are awesome! Your letters sound good and I can't wait to hear of the explosion in missionary work that's happening!

Life has finally slowed down! When I got home from Idaho, Daenon was here because Brandon and Mindy were still in Utah. So they got back on Sunday and they came over for dinner. At about 9 that night they left and it was just the four of us. Wow! It was a rocky start to the start of the school year! No more trips planned and we can finally have a schedule. Taylor has asked that we start over in The Book of Mormon as a family and read looking for "in the strength of the Lord" messages and discussing them for our family scripture study as Elder Bednar talked about. So we are ordering new ones and Dad's going to get bookmarks and pencils for us and it looks like we will have some really good devotionals! Kind of like the kind you wanted.:) Better late than never, eh?

Yesterday I almost caught up on blog posting. A lot happened in August! I still have two more posts that I know of and maybe I can get them done before you get on. We'll see! A post I won't do but it's been real is when Dad and Taylor were in DC going to the rally, I was gathering the last of the wood from the trees in the backyard with Spencer and Deanon. I was taking two heavy bags out to the front and was on the sidewalk. The two bags swung in front of my legs and I just tripped and went down. I didn't have time to get my hands free, so I just came down. Luckily I kept my head up and it was fine, but the brunt of the fall went to one hand and it's knuckles. My shoulder also landed hard and my knees, but clothing covered them and they were slightly scratched. Here's a picture:

I have scabs on them now and they're almost gone, but I can't tell you how many times a day my knuckles just happen to rap against something hard! And it's hard to knock on a door with my left hand.

Amy just had her baby. It's a boy: Daniel Michael Coons. Here's a picture:

It won't copy. Sorry. He looks like all the other boys. Surprise! :) Grandma Scott went out for a week to help.

I can't think of anything else. This week I am short-winded. Amazing! I hope your week is full of incredible memories and journal entries! I sent your memory cards and they should arrive tomorrow. I sure hope you don't go somewhere awesome today and miss some beautiful pictures!! I'm so sorry it took so long to get them back to you!

Emily gave a great Family Home Evening lesson on charity Monday night. It is a life-long pursuit, but the only thing worth really striving for, because if at the end of your life you accomplished tons of things but are found wanting in the charity department, you will be nothing. (I'm speaking hypothetically, not YOU personally:)) And charity is not about taking in a casserole, but about becoming full of love no matter what the circumstance you are in. That when you are reviled, betrayed, scorned, laughed at, etc. you only have love in your heart and you don't let it affect you. It's totally non-ego, non-pride, and non-natural man oriented. I am not really challenged that way because everyone surrounding me is almost always kind and it seems easy to have charity when I'm in that environment. So it's one thing to SAY, and another to DO. Hence, this probationary time called LIFE, to DO the lab work.

I know you are in environments on your mission that help you develop true charity and I know you have many stories and could testify to that! Missions are the BEST!!!!!! I'm so glad you are out in the field, harvesting the Lord's people! You are doing a marvelous work and a wonder! I love you so much and there's not a day that goes by that you are not in my thoughts. I pray daily for you and know that Heavenly Father is watching over my dear son!

Expect miracles! Until next week!

Love, Mom

11/11/09

Hi Damon!

Since you haven't sent your email yet I thought I'd send this email. I just put our letters in the mail today and then realized that today is Veterans Day and the post office is closed, so you might not get our letters till Monday. Maybe you'll get it on Saturday.

I hope everything is going SUPER! Can't wait to hear how things are going. I didn't ever hear much about Elder Francis like where he is from or how many kids are in his family, what his interests are, etc. Fill me in on your new comp!

I started rehearsals for the Stake choir. I think this is a choir that you might actually enjoy, Sister Seibert is fantastic! She has great pieces and we cover about 5 in one hour. She moves rapidly and doesn't spend time on notes, but on dynamics and polishing and stuff. It's really fun and the music is so gorgeous, especially with how many people participate! Me, Dad, Taylor and Emily are all in the ward choir for Christmas. Dad doesn't like the music particularly, but I'm ok with it. We have a huge group coming to choir, it's pretty cool!

Well, I hope you have a great week and our letters arrive speedy delivery!

I love you!!! You are "the BEST!" (-Nacho) Expect miracles!

Love,

Mom

9/29/10

Hi Damon,

After I sent you my email I remembered your fluent Portuguese and wanted to add to it for fun with your investigators. Actually, to say I'm hungry, you say eu estou (ehstoe) com (cone) fome (foamy). And to say I'm thirsty, it's eu estou com sede (pronounced sehgee). Then to say I like ice cream you say eu gosto (gostoo) de(gee) sorvete (sor vehee).

Anyway, that's almost all the Portuguese I know, so there you go! ;) If you'd like to know anything else, ask Dad, of course. Maybe he could write his testimony in Portuguese! I'll stop giving ideas now! I hope you have a great day!

I love you!

Mom

10/6/10

Hello Elder (Damon) Janis!

Have you found out whether or not you are staying or going this next transfer? Did you enjoy Conference? Where did you watch it? Did you have any investigators or less actives watch with you? I thought of the family from Brazil a few times. There were two speakers and one that said the prayer that I recognized their Brazilian accent. We enjoyed Conference a lot! So much counsel to strengthen us and increase our faith as well as some things to improve on. I loved President Monson's talk about sincere gratitude. I have a strong testimony of that! And I have been trying to be more grateful over the last two years. But last night as I was writing in my journal, I was writing about how Dad ordered a lot of gold and how we have a gun and some ammo and a sun oven and food storage and water storage and then I started writing about how blessed we are to have the means to get prepared at the same time as supporting Spencer at college and you on your mission and get Emily set up with a new room, and Taylor in braces and Taylor and Emily in piano lessons, and cell phones and 3 cars and a nice home and we can take vacations and trips and go on a weekly date! And I just felt so much MORE

gratitude! And realized how much the Lord has and is opening up the windows of Heaven and pouring out blessings!

And then I started thinking about how I'm so grateful for my children and that you all have testimonies. And how you are serving so diligently and willingly on your mission, and how Spencer is blossoming at school and how Taylor and Emily are so cooperative this year in home school and doing so well. And I thought how grateful I am to have such a wonderful husband who loves me and seeks my happiness and is my best friend and who is such a great father and works from home and provides so much for us and is constantly learning and is such an excellent teacher and etc. etc. etc. And I just was more in awe.

Then I said my prayers and had more to thank Heavenly Father for: I am so grateful that I haven't had to work; that Dad provided enough that I could stay home with my children to raise and nurture them. And I am so thankful that I can and have home schooled you children and could keep you near me and be more a part of your lives. And then I thanked Him for the gospel and for prayer and the Holy Ghost and the Atonement and repentance and the Restoration. It was a truly wonderful experience! And that is what President Monson counseled us to do. Amazing things happen when we follow the prophet! In fact, Dad taught his class on Monday about that. D&C 21:4-6 says, "4 Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; 5 For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith. 6 For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory." It was like the heavens shook as I wrote in my journal and prayed. So wonderful!

Yesterday I worked with Taylor for an hour cleaning his two rooms that he is living in right now. It's crazy! He is busy with home school and his HCC classes during school hours, and then when Cinco gets out, he picks up Marcus Anderson and they go to the YMCA and work out and then hang out together till dinner. After dinner he is pretty wiped out and goes to bed. So he has been sleeping in Spencer's room, but all his stuff is in his room. And he doesn't seem to care! He could probably have lived like this the whole year! Well, yesterday I took

everything of Spencer's and put it in a pile in his room. I will get a bin to put it in. Then Taylor went through all of his clothes and we transferred them to Spencer's room. That was the first phase. It will take some more time going through all of Taylor's stuff, but I think I may be able to help Taylor eliminate all clutter and help him learn how to keep his life orderly and clean. That is one of my goals for this year.:) So we are organizing all the upstairs bedrooms and I'm excited.

Brandon and Mindy got a dog for their boys. It's a girl Chihuahua mix they call Chia. We invited them over to watch the last session of Conference and they asked if they could bring her. I have a hard time saying no, which is bad. But I said ok and it was ok. She didn't bark and she didn't have an accident. But she was a little wild running around the game room during the session making it a little hard to concentrate. She is a cute dog and I'm glad for Daenon that he has a companion. But it's gotten Emily all fired up about wanting a dog again, so ugh.

Saturday I cleaned my shower, which I've been doing every Saturday for a few weeks now and only takes about 10 min. Then I cleaned my bathroom. Well as soon as I finished, I started smelling a gross odor. I had taken the garbage out, the laundry was sorted, and the towels were in the laundry. I couldn't figure out what it came from. As the day progressed the smell got worse. And it still hasn't gone away and we still can't find the source. It smells like a dead, decomposing animal. It may have somehow gotten into the walls or under the counter behind our tub or something. It is not very pleasant. It hasn't gotten any worse than the first day. I just keep all the doors shut so the smell doesn't come out of my room into the rest of the house. And the smell mostly stays in the bathroom. Fun!:(

It's now Wednesday morning and I came into my email to pull up my saved draft that I started to you last night and found TWO letters in drafts that I had started to you and never finished. Which means that there were TWO weeks I thought I had sent you a letter, when in fact I hadn't. I feel TERRIBLE!!! I'm so so sorry! I do not know how that could have happened, I usually can't rest until the letter is sent. I must have thought I had sent it after getting distracted or something, because I never had that "Oh no! I never finished my letter to Damon!" panic attack. I am so sorry again! Here is the letter from June 30th that I started. I

don't know if it will make sense this late and if you remember the circumstance, but I did start a letter to you:

Hi Damon!

As always, estoy agradecida your letters and emails! They are interesting, uplifting, and inspiring. The two stories you told us in your letter about the inactive members are very sad. We all have influences on each other, and parents and spouses can have some of the most influence. I know when I was relief society pres. and went out to contact less actives, it was sad. One mom called me to tell me her daughter had just moved into our ward, that the daughter had not married in the church and hadn't been active since, that we would be rejected as visitors in the name of the church, but that if some members who lived in the neighborhood could just stop by in a friendly neighborly way and maybe have a playgroup or something she could join,... and I could hear the love and anguish and desperateness in this mother's voice for her daughter. I felt for her! (The Mercer's were on the block and welcomed them to Katy, but I never saw the daughter at church.) I hope this sister you visited can make the tough climb back to church. It's like, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Breaking habits is the hard part ('cause being active in the church is a big commitment), as well as going against a husband's wish. But as you said, miracles happen.

And here is my September 15th email:

Hi Damon,

How are you? I hope you are awesome! Your letters sound good and I can't wait to hear of the explosion in missionary work that's happening!

Life has finally slowed down! When I got home from Idaho, Daenon was here because Brandon and Mindy were still in Utah. So they got back on Sunday and they came over for dinner. At about 9 that night they left and it was just the four of us. Wow! It was a rocky start to the start of the school year! No more trips planned and we can finally have a schedule. Taylor has asked that we start over in The Book of Mormon as a family and read looking for "in the strength of the Lord" messages and discussing them for our family scripture study as Elder

Bednar talked about. So we are ordering new ones and Dad's going to get bookmarks and pencils for us and it looks like we will have some really good devotionals! Kind of like the kind you wanted.:) Better late than never, eh?

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I have scabs on them now and they're almost gone, but I can't tell you how many times a day my knuckles just happen to rap against something hard! And it's hard to knock on a door with my left hand.

Amy just had her baby. It's a boy: Daniel Michael Coons.

Ok, now I'm back to October 6th. I'm so sorry again! Amy's baby was born on September 4th. I think I wanted to send a picture, but couldn't decide and then something or someone distracted me and I must not have gotten back. Like I said, I don't know how I forgot so completely, I seriously can't rest until I've sent your letter out. Update on my hand: the ring finger knuckle is all better with a little scar. The tall man finger :) is healed on the skin, but it's still slightly swollen at the knuckle and hurts a little to bend all the way still. I don't know if it fractured slightly or it is still bruised or sprained. I will wait a little longer before I do anything drastic like go to a doctor.;)

As you can see with the emails from TheJanClan, I have been busy blogging this week as well. Finally!

Dad was teaching one of his first lessons in the D&C this year and realized something so obvious, yet neither of us had realized it before. The Doctrine and Covenants is just that: a book full of doctrines and covenants! They were discussing a set of three verses and Dad asked them to find the doctrines and covenants in them and they found like five or something! So since that time, their class has been searching for doctrines and covenants. The verses I mentioned above, in my humble opinion, have one doctrine ("his word ye shall receive as if from mine own mouth" - what the prophet says is what the Lord would say.) and one covenant (if you give heed to the words and commandments of my prophet, then I covenant that the gates of hell shall not prevail against you, I will disperse the powers of darkness before you, AND cause the heavens to shake for your good and my name's glory.) It is so cool to see that! Next time we study the D&C in Sunday School, I will mark each doctrine with one color and each covenant with another color! The thing about covenants is how powerful they are. To compile all of them in a nutshell: if you do this, then I will bless you this way, that would really get you thinking! And doing! I may not be able to wait till Sunday School studies it. I may need to know the covenants sooner than 2 years. After I finish the Book of Mormon I will. I am actually marking a new Book of Mormon in one color all the references to the strength of the Lord, and another color to all the covenants I can find in the Book of Mormon. I am in 2 Ne. and am finding many of both!

I hope I haven't rambled too much! I love you so much Damon! Your letters are wonderful and you sound so good! Keep up the great work! Good luck in the next assignment you are given whether there is a change or not! If you move, I'm sorry you won't be able to participate in Jesus' baptism. You have a good attitude, though! Know that we are thinking of you every day and praying for you every day. Have a wonderful week! Love you!

Expect miracles!

Love, Mom

Hello Elder (Damon) Janis!

We got your letter today (Tuesday) and it sounds like you couldn't be busier! I'm praying for you that you'll be able to accomplish all that you need to do. Tell us about your district, who is in it. Are they all Spanish missionaries, or Eng and Spanish? Do you have a weekly district meeting? What are your responsibilities? I hope the baptism was wonderful! I'm glad you and your companion are getting along! Have you heard from Justin yet? I hope he's written to you. Have you had the general authority come to your mission yet? DO TELL!! :)

What happened this week?.....Hmmm.....Well, I bought a lot of food and non-food stuff to add to our year's supply. I shopped at HEB and Sam's Club, and compared prices. More peace of mind. Making slow progress getting Taylor's rooms organized, he isn't around a whole bunch. Today I weeded yet again the flower bed on the side of the garage, and mulched it. Hopefully that will keep the weeds down more. I need to mulch every three months and maybe after a year of being that consistent, the weeds will finally abate. It looks really nice right now though. My back will be feeling it tomorrow!:)

Emily has been wanting to learn Portuguese and she and I went to see Elder Costa of the Pres. of the Seventy speak this past Saturday up at the Stake Center by piano lessons. He is from Brazil and he told us that when he reads the scriptures, he reads one chapter in Portuguese, then the same chapter in Spanish, and then the same chapter again in English. So Emily and I were talking about that on the way home and I had just read in that book, A Thomas Jefferson Education, that to learn a language, get a classic book in that language, and a translation and read them side by side. By the end, you will be much more fluent in the language. I think you suggested I do that with the Spanish Book of Mormon. I have a Spanish copy. Anyway, Emily asked Dad if he would help her and read the Book of Mormon with her in Portuguese and he agreed. They are starting with one verse a day. They read the verse in English first, and then they go one word at a time in Portuguese, Dad helping with pronunciation and translation. Emily's loving it. In three verses, she's already recognizing certain words. I'm tagging along too. I will try to start the Spanish as well, using the Church's website to listen to the verse in Spanish for pronunciation.

Speaking of Elder Costa, he came out to speak to all the LDS scouts that attended a Sam Houston Area Council 100 year Scout anniversary jamboree. Taylor went and really enjoyed hearing him. Well, an area authority arranged for him to speak to all the young women and leaders in the whole Houston area the day before he spoke to the scouts. So we went and it was really good! They (general authorities) are so much more personal in person.:) He counselled the young women to have meaningful prayers, study, not just read, the scriptures, by likening them to us, and thirdly to smile every day. Very good counsel!

Now it's Wed. morning, 6:01. Heather has been having some good experiences, I hope she's sharing with you. She took a really really cool picture a week or so ago and I thought I'd share. I don't know if she does, but I think this picture could be a Mormonad totally!



She has been studying and reading scriptures and talks and books and is feeling the Savior's love and I'm so glad! I'm so glad she can be with Blair and Danae too. I googled The Fourth Missionary and found it online, so I sent her the link. I haven't talked with her since she got it,

but she texted me and told me she was excited to read it. I appreciate you sending it to us! It is very good! It's all about the heart and charity, which in my studying, is our life's quest to develop and become.

I feel so blessed to have such wonderful children! You all are so amazing! You are doing good things in your life and blessing so many people! I love you Damon! I am so glad you are doing well and that you are where you are doing what you are doing! I love the gospel! I love Jesus Christ, He is the only way to happiness. He never forces, just lets us know He loves us and invites us to come to Him. And as we do, keeping His loving commandments and following His wonderful prophet, we feel peace and joy.

You are such a joy to me. You are such an example to your brothers and sisters. They all love you so much. We are all cheering you on and know that you are giving your best to teach and testify to all who will listen. Have a super terrific week! Expect miracles!

Love, Mom

Hi Damon,

I thought Dad would mention this, but I just read his letter to you and he didn't, so I will. He is teaching the Quest class each month as you know. Lately he has been asking the audience why they came. And he gets their feedback and then talks about financial freedom. But this month he realized that he wants to take every opportunity within his circle of influence to point people to God, be it through his seminary class, family, Bite-sized Belief blog, and even through this Quest class. So at the class he taught last night, after asking them why they came, he explained that if we are just searching for money or financial freedom, but don't have our lives right with God, we will only be partially successful, that God will magnify us and our efforts as we seek to do His will. He said he saw several people nodding as he spoke. He was very brave and I'm so proud of him!

Yesterday he was also on Steve's radio show talking about Quest. I'm surprised he didn't mention it. He said it went well. I totally forgot to ask him what time it was on and what channel. Hopefully it was recorded and I can listen to it today.

Anyway, that's a PS for you! Love you!

Mom

10/27/10

Hello Elder (Damon) Janis!!!

How are you? Is it cold? Dad said there is snow in Rexburg. It is still high 80's and even 90's here. We had a cold front a few weeks ago and it was so nice, but that didn't last and I'm still sweating when I wake up in the morning.

Taylor's skin has broken out pretty bad so I suggested that he eat raw food for a while. He said, how about this next week? So everybody got on board and we're eating raw mostly. On Monday I made snacks to get us through the day. For dinner I made a soup with asparagus, garlic, avocado, tomatoes, and some spices all blended up and then I heated it up on the stove a little. I thought it tasted ok and Dad finished it up first, but Taylor had a bit of a time and couldn't quite finish his, and Emily gagged down about half of her bowl with courage.:) I found a raw pumpkin pie recipe online and made it for the dessert. I used a pumpkin I had bought for the daddy daughter YW activity. (Which was a great success, and I'll let Emily tell you about it.) I cut the top and the bottom off, then peeled the outer skin off with a knife. That was a lot of work because it was a pretty large pumpkin. Then I cut it in half and then quarters, then scraped the strings and seeds out. Then I chopped it in smaller pieces. I soaked some dates. The crust was made with walnuts, dates and a little salt. I put it in my fancy-dancy food processor and whizzed it up and it made a very nice crust to put in the pie pan. Then I put the pumpkin pieces, dates, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, a dash of vanilla, and a little almond milk in the food processor, whizzed that up and, viola! There was the pumpkin

pie filling! I poured it in and put it in the fridge to set a little. I also made some almond milk vanilla ice cream. Emily didn't like the pie, but the rest of us did.

Tamara Martinez started a cooking class with Rebecca and Emily last week. They are going to learn to make healthy recipes. So last week Emily went over to Rebecca's house and they made meatless encheladas with fake cheese and fake meat and it tasted so good! I came to get her and they hadn't quite finished making so I stayed and got to eat with them. So we made it for dinner a couple of days later. Yea! Another recipe!:) So this week for cooking class, I offered to do it at our house. We did raw spaghetti, with the zucchini pasta. It turned out really good. Everyone ate it except Cade Martinez. He ate a few bites though. I had the girls make almond milk and then chocolate ice cream, but the ice cream maker didn't work for some reason. So I served some of the pumpkin pie and it was a big hit with all of them. Cade gobbled it up.

In the afternoon, I went visiting teaching and it took way long and it was dinner time. We were all so hungry and I had used up all the zucchini and most of the tomatoes from lunch. I was going to make the same thing for dinner. So I suggested we go to a soup/salad restaurant called Sweet Tomatoes. I felt bad starving my family. I can never do visiting teaching without it impacting the family. Ugh!

But so far, everyone is still in the raw game. Hopefully we'll see some improvement in Taylor's face. Anything we try, I always have you in the back of my mind, because if it works for Taylor, it should work for you. I am on a search for healing and have learned much but the answers have been slow in coming. I discovered a website the other day that talked about a book that helped them so much with anxiety. I went to Amazon to check it out. There were 112 reviews. 2 rated it a 1 star. 2 rated it a 2 star. 2 rated it a 3 star. 6 rated it a 4 star. And 101 people gave it a 5 star rating! It's an older book, written by a British doctor. But the reviews were so positive, I ordered it for Heather. Between the reviews and the little bit I could read of it online, it gave me a better understanding of what Heather's been dealing with. I hope it helps her! She doesn't talk about it too much, and her panic attacks from her senior year are mostly gone, but if she can work through even some of the layers of anxiety she still has, she would be much happier.

I read Dad's letter to you and he misunderstood me. I don't mind him jumping into another adventure, I just thought he was painting a more negative picture of his situation than it warranted. We've been so richly blessed. If he feels stagnated, I definitely want him to pursue his passions and find his mission in life. (Just thought I'd clarify:))

Ok, so this week I have started reading the Spanish Book of Mormon from where I'm at in the Book of Mormon. I'm actually in 2 Nephi in the Isaiah chapters. But I'm getting about half of it, so that's exciting! I found a fun rhyme in chapter 13 verse 23 where it says the fine linen: los linos finos. I like how that just rolls off the tongue!:) I think I've read 4 chapters! Yea!

Keep up the great work Damon! What a great experience this is! And without tracting, it will really give you an opportunity to think outside the box, using your creativity, **and** be led by the Spirit. Again, you are doing your mission more like the Savior did His. He didn't travel far, but wherever He went, He served and loved and invited. And those who were receptive, followed. I know you are doing a wonderful job! I'm so proud of you! Have a wonderful week! Expect miracles!

I love you so much!

Love, Mom

11/3/10

Hello Damon!

It sounds like you are very focused on your branch. I am so glad! When we watch those we care about make decisions that we know aren't in their best interest, it is so difficult! That is how a parent feels! But the Lord has a more eternal perspective and though we see someone in a moment of their life, the Lord is so patient. I love a little quote I used to see when I was growing up: Be patient, God isn't finished with me yet. As a parent it is so hard to let go and

put your trust in the Lord, but when you do, and "wait on the Lord," you see His hand and realize He never gives up.

I guess the warm days are gone for you for many months. We fluctuate between hot and cool. Right now it's cool and the past 2 nights we've gotten rain, which has been rare for many weeks.

So the mid-term elections were yesterday and we stayed up till around midnight watching the results come in. It was hopeful to see some good news. Not all was good news, but most was. I feel bad for Colorado, it fell to Democrats again. But a very clear signal was sent to Washington, that the We The People are exerting ourselves again and we are going to watch them very closely. We know what they're up to and we won't have any more of it. We have almost lost our republic and we can't ignore it any longer.

There are some rough days ahead, though. The Republicans won the majority in the House, but the Dems still barely have the Senate. (But that's ok, because the Dems can't totally blame stuff on the Republicans as a scapegoat.) The terrible laws will stop for now, but Obama will get his agenda furthered through rules and regulations in his departments. So it will be under the radar and we the people have to be more vigilant.

Today the Federal Reserve meets and will probably choose to print another trillion dollars which will devalue the dollar even more. It could cause energy prices and food prices to go way up. You may want to stock up on cereal in the next couple of weeks if you eat that a lot. I heard that General Mills has announced that they will be raising the cost of cereal by November 15.

Enough of that. I heard from Justin yesterday. He said that he emailed you a letter about a month ago and he hasn't heard from you. He is resending it. Could you email me today and let me know if you got either or both and I will let him know. I think he is anxious to hear from you! We had a nice chat.

I have to go to piano lessons with Taylor and Emily. I hope you have a great week! Have faith and go forward in the strength of the Lord! And then you can.....EXPECT MIRACLES!

Because they will be there! I love you so much Damon! You are just a fantastic person! Tell your companion thank you for sending us each a letter! That was unexpected and very thoughtful!

Love,

Mom

11/8/10

Heather,

I love you ! Because YOU are my daughter and from the moment I knew you existed (when the pregnancy test came back positive) I have loved you with an incredibly, overwhelming love. And each year I love you more. I remember when you were about 7 months old, and there were days when I told Dad I thought my love had reached almost the bursting point and it wasn't possible to love any more. And then the next day, the love expanded even more! I am so grateful to be your mother!

Hope you have a wonderful day!

Love, Mom

11/9/10

Heather,

I love you because you are a good counselor. I knew I needed to call you and ask your counsel about the Young Women in Excellence program. It just wasn't feeling quite right. As we talked and came up with the idea to interview mothers, I KNEW that was the answer! I have interviewed 8 of the 18 moms so far and it has been awesome!! They are saying such

wonderful things, both about their daughters, and also about the Personal Progress program. They are very nervous and self-conscious, (poor Sister Smith said she'd rather have a gynecology appointment than get in front of a camera!:D She told me that twice! I felt so bad putting her through it!) but they are still doing it and I think are feeling a bit of the purpose in this event. I really am feeling like this will be a treasured experience for the girls! I am so grateful I called you!!! You take people's feelings and thoughts seriously, can think level-headed, and you have a wisdom and maturity that is grounded in correct principles. You were a fantastic EFY counselor and touched many young girl's lives, and even recently, I'm sure you were a blessing to James. I know Emily has come to you for advice and probably the boys as well. There are countless others you have touched in that way (Kirsten, Janey, Ivanna, to name a few more). What a blessing you are!

Hope you have a wonderful day!

Love, Mom

11/10/10

Heather,

I love you because you are an artist. It is part of your divine nature and a talent you have. You have always created! You loved to draw pictures when you were little and give them to me or Dad as gifts all the time. You drew a picture of Jesus that hung on the fridge and decorated the kitchen for months. It was so good! You really liked arts and crafts and made all kinds of things, tons! Like that paper mache cat, painted rocks, candles in shells, friendship bracelets, claymation, and bead art. You did a column for our newspaper on art projects for a while, and you liked to take art projects with you to babysitting jobs when you were first babysitting. You were always decorating your room too! You took that colored pencil art class and really produced some wonderful art that gave you confidence, and even made that beautiful horse picture for the Chinese New Year contest in a magazine. I was SURE you would win! You got

a book on drawing portraits and took off on drawing people, even giving them as gifts on cards. You really could draw well!!

And then you found photography and your talent has grown and grown! You truly are an artist. You capture a moment and then create art and emotion from it. President Uchtdorf, in a General RS meeting in 2008, "Creating and being compassionate are two objectives that contribute to our Heavenly Father's perfect happiness. Creating and being compassionate are two activities that we as His spirit children can and should emulate... Creation brings deep satisfaction and fulfillment. We develop ourselves and others when we take unorganized matter into our hands and mold it into something of beauty.....The more you trust and rely upon the Spirit, the greater your capacity to create. That is your opportunity in this life and your destiny in the life to come." You truly exemplify these words, and I know that as you create art, you feel happiness. I am so glad you have such a talent!

I hope you have a really wonderful day!

Love, Mom

11/10/10

Hi Damon!

I just sent you Justin's email. He gave you his address, but it is incomplete. I asked him if he lived in Provo. He didn't reply, so if he does live in Provo, his zip code would be 84606. Hopefully that works!:)

You sound very attached to your branch and the youth and it sounds like you are having a very positive influence on some of them. That is so wonderful! And your companion mentioned in one of his letters to us that you have been teaching him many things and implied or even said that some of those things are helping him in his life, not just in missionary work. It reminds me of a line in your patriarchal blessing that says something about how you will be an influence on individuals, that your ministry will be to the one. I am already seeing this being

fulfilled. In our family you have a profound influence on all your siblings. There is Justin who you have impacted greatly and then all those on your mission. You are a wonderful person and have a lot of wisdom you have gained. You have held fast to the gospel and applied its teachings and have tasted the fruit and know what you are saying and can testify humbly and simply with the Spirit bearing witness. I love you!!!

So I opened my mouth in my presidency meeting where we were discussing what we should do for the Young Women in Excellence program that we normally do each November that celebrates the young womens' accomplishments in Personal Progress that year. Kind of a big court of honor, only there are no awards given out. So I said it would be cool to make a movie with the girls talking about the Personal Progress program and about the experiences and projects they have done this year. I was then put in charge of it. :D Anyway, I announced to the girls that I would be calling them to make an appointment to video them and told them what to be thinking about. But it wasn't totally feeling right. I wasn't sure the girls had anything positive to say about the program or if they have the vision of it.

So I decided to call Heather and see what she thought. As we talked, she suggested the leaders get video-taped and talk about the girls. Then I said, what about the mothers? And she got very excited and we talked more and that's what I decided to do. I have filmed 11 or 12 of the 19 mothers so far and it is so cool to hear their perspective on the program for their girls; they totally see the purpose and articulate it so well! Hopefully the girls can catch a glimmer of it when they watch the movie! Also I asked the moms if they would think of one of the values their daughter really exemplifies and give examples. This has been very touching. Some of the moms choke up as they are speaking. I am planning on having background music and of course it will enhance the spirit and emotions. The moms are sending me pictures of their daughters, so while they are talking about them, the movie will show the pictures. I have it all sort of pictured in my mind. Hopefully I can make it happen. I'm really excited.

So that's been the focus of the past 2 weeks. The Young Women in Excellence is going to be on December 1st and it's going to be a dinner for the moms and young women and then the movie. Aunt Amy called a couple of weeks ago and said that Greg is going out of town for two

weeks in a row in November and since both of their moms have come out to help with the baby and they are both coming back the first week of December for the blessing and Eric's baptism, she couldn't ask them to come out and help while Greg was gone. So she said she was thinking, who could possibly help out? And she thought of ME! So I got online and the ticket only cost \$220, so I booked it and I'm going out this Saturday to Cleveland Ohio for a week! It is going to be so fun! But that means I have to get all the moms filmed before I go so that when I get back, I will have 1 1/2 weeks to edit and create the movie. Yikes! Life is full! That is what MY patriarchal blessing said.:) Speaking of P. blessings, I would love to have a copy of yours!

I am still reading the Book of Mormon in Spanish and it's coming along! I need to find a different time to do it, though, because I do it right before bed and my eyelids start to droop. I want to keep going but my body shuts down. But whatever the language, the Book of Mormon is such a powerful testimony of Jesus Christ and of His love and Heavenly Father's love. They are such a part of our lives and yet with the veil and their law of agency, they give us so much space to try to learn and grow on our own. It sometimes feels like we ARE alone, but we aren't. And it's through the tender mercies that we recognize His hand and realize He isn't so far away after all. It's so comforting.

I love you Damon! You are doing a wonderful work there in Carbondale and Aspen! The Lord is with you! Have a wonderful week and expect miracles!

Love,

Mom

11/11/10

Heather,

I love you because you are kind and considerate. Your whole life you have been kind to me. You wouldn't raise your voice at me or call me names. That is HUGE!! You always seemed to

be the first to apologize if we had a disagreement, yet I had been the one to be more at fault. You were always telling me you loved me either in a note, or in acts of service. You are so good and sweet. I think the word KIND is undervalued in the world, even brushed over in church. But the second description of what charity is, is "charity is kind." It's even in the Boy Scout Law. And I think the world is having a shortage of kindness today. So I want to recognize it and celebrate it in YOU today, my sweet Heather!

Hope you have a wonderful day!

Love, Mom

11/12/10

Heather,

I love you because you are courageous. That despite fear, you go forward anyway. Going to Challenger in the middle of the year took courage and you shone! You were the star of the show! Going to Cinco Ranch High School took courage and you did great! Going to BYU each and every semester that you went took a LOT of courage and you persevered through with all of the challenges you were struggling with. You have overcome some tremendous health conditions and that took oceans of courage. Some friendships and relationships required incredible courage to heal or to end and you found the strength to do it. And you have showed courage each and every time you pick up the camera and go to a photo shoot. I am so proud of you and the things you have accomplished in your life that were hard and sometimes frightening. You are strong and of good courage and I am filled with amazement and deep admiration!

Hope you have a wonderful day, Heather! I love you so much!

Love,

Mom

11/13/10

Heather,

I love you because you are beautiful! From the moment you were born you have been beautiful! You have beautiful eyes that take in the world around you and then, through your art, help us see the same beauty that you see. Your smile is gorgeous! I know Grandma Janis likes to tell you how your first summer we stayed with them and it was a very hard summer for her. But every day when she came back from swim lessons, there you would be with a great big smile that would make the world right again and melt her heart. Your smile just has a way of doing that with everyone. Your hair is beautiful and your skin! Oh to have your hair and skin! :) Your hair has such body and curl, which was adorable as a child! And when you took over doing your hair, you could do it up in the cutest buns ever! Any way you do it, straight, curly, short, long, it always looks great! And your skin is so smooth and olive and perfect! I love you Beauty!

I hope your day is beautiful!

Love,

Mom

11/15/10

Heather,

I love you because you have such faith! Faith in Heavenly Father and faith in Jesus Christ. I remember when you were young, you would always suggest that we pray if we had lost something.

You had your faith challenged to the core a year and a half ago and when it got to the point where there was just a desire, you planted it as a seed and nourished it till it became bright again. I thank Heavenly Father every day for such a strong daughter!

The message of your sixth year program at girl's camp was full of faith and you shared your testimony of Heavenly Father and the Savior's love for each girl. I still remember asking you what you wanted to communicate in the program, and you thought for a minute and then with certainty, you said you wanted them to know that Heavenly Father loves them individually and unconditionally. I was blown away by how profound that statement was and I know you were the one who was supposed to write it that year. It was a beautiful program of faith!

This summer you have exercised a tremendous amount of faith to trust in the Lord and let Him guide you and help you get things straightened out. You are still in the middle of it and you are still moving forward with faith. You are truly amazing to me!

Therefore, be faithful; and behold, and lo, I am with you, even unto the end. Even so. Amen.
- D&C 105:41

I hope you have a terrific day tomorrow!

Love, Mom

10/17/10

Damon,

Hello! And greetings from Cleveland, Ohio! "To be precise..." Twinsburg, Ohio. It's pretty cold here, but not as cold as it is in Aspen!! I am really enjoying myself! Amy and her boys are too

fun. I feel like I've gone back in time to you boys about 12 years ago. Wow! Time has flown! Just reading and playing games and being silly. Eric turns 8 on Dec. 3rd, I think, and he reminds me a lot of you. He likes jokes and is really quick-witted. He actually made up a joke and told us and it was really good! Question: What do you get when you cross a cat with a baseball song? Answer: Take "meow-to" the ball game)! :D A real sweet, smart boy, always learning and reading, except when he gets to play Gameboy Pokemon.:)

Yesterday while Eric was in school, Amy and I took the three little boys to the John Johnson Farm, a Church historical site. It is about 35 miles away from Kirtland, OH and only 25 min. drive from Amy's. When we went to the Kirtland sites, we heard about the farm, but Dad didn't want to make the extra trip to it, so we didn't go. I had been a little disappointed, but I got to go yesterday! We were the only ones there, so we got our own tour and it was great! Joseph Smith and Emma and their twins lived there with the Johnsons for a whole year. It was there that a mob dragged Joseph Smith out of bed and out the door and tarred and feathered him and then he spent the night peeling it off and then preached a sermon the next morning, which was Sunday, on the front porch. Then six days later, one of the twins died. In the upper study room, Joseph and Sidney Rigdon worked on some of the translation of the Bible, and worked on getting the Doctrine and Covenants published. They also saw the vision of the three degrees of glory in that room, where they saw Jesus and Heavenly Father and testified and signed their names to it. It's the 76th section, as I'm sure you know.

So that was really cool to see the house and feel the spirit and the missionary, a senior man, testifying to us. I'll blog about it when I get home and you can see a few pictures.

Dad mentioned that I missed my flight in Detroit. I had flown in and found my gate for the second and last leg of the trip. The flight was delayed by a long time. My gate was in one of those big multi-gate rooms and I didn't hear my flight called. The flight I got on the next day only had about 20 people on it, so it was probably similar the night before. They probably only had one call, everybody rushed on and they probably figured if I wasn't there, I wasn't coming, and just left. I was reading a children's chapter book Shelby had lent to me and didn't hear that boarding call. It made me sick when I realized. They were so nice, though and changed my flight and put me up in a hotel for free because of the flight delay. So it worked out and I

flew in the next morning before church started. Of course, Emily thought it was hilarious and typical me. Hmmm...:)

As you mentioned in your letter how you feel frustrated when people you have served and taught haven't quite caught the vision of the glorious gospel and the joy it can bring you. And how you are so glad that our family is trying to stay on the strait and narrow. I feel the same! I am SO GRATEFUL that my children all have testimonies and are striving to do what's right. It is a blessing I don't take for granted at ALL! There are so many people I know who can't understand why their children rejected their teaching when they leave the home they were raised in. But we have to remember that they are Heavenly Father's children and it is His work and glory to bring their immortality and eternal life to pass, and He has a different time table and He sees much clearer than the rest of us. We can just love, pray for, serve, and trust in the Lord, having faith that it will all work out in the end. But I am so grateful that my heart isn't heavy for a child who has lost their way!!!

I hope you have a terrific week! Usted es un hijo maravilloso, y usted es un hijo maravilloso de Dios!! I love you!!!! Expect los milagros!

Love,

Mom

11/17/10

Heather,

I love you because you are such a good friend. When you were a baby, you would just stare at people, and then when you could talk and walk, everyone you met was a friend. You would make friends with everybody. You know the ingredients, know the formula, have the knack, ummm.... **magnify the divine quality** for being a good friend: kindness, bearing their burdens, really listening, serving, and loving!

You are friends to all, you are no respecter of persons. Rich, poor, popular, unpopular, member, non-member, struggling or wayward member, nice or mean! And something that I am so grateful that you developed, or rather, inherently possessed, is that you are friends to those who don't have friends. You have been kind to Victoria, and to Hannah. You care for those who are younger. I remember Sister Warden telling me that Melana was having a hard time fitting in with the girls in her ward, and there was some Wed. night activity that you were in the gym, saw her and went over and talked to her. She said all the other girls knew you and liked you, yet because you noticed Melana, they respected her more and it made her day. She said Melana didn't know if you knew her name, but you called her by her name.

I think I mentioned to you how I saw Sister Field a couple of weeks ago and she said she found a note you had written to Ashley and how sweet and supportive it was. You take time to let others know they are important and loved and that is a ministry that is so Christlike. What you are doing marking The Book of Mormon for Sydney (sp?), not giving up on her, or Bailey, or Madison, is also such a Christlike quality of friendship that you radiate.

And you have always been a good friend to me. You understood me when the boys just ran around being wild. You cared about how our house looked as much as I did and we would talk about what it needed and you would help clean it up so many times. I could talk to you and you cared and I knew it. When you were young and we would be reading a good book together and a friend would come to play, you almost always chose me and our cozy reading over the friend. I love our talks, and our laughs. You are such a wonderful person and I feel so BLESSED to count you among my most cherished friends!

I hope you have a wonderful day!!

Love, Mom

11/29/10

Dear Damon,

I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving! Eat anything unusual? Or was it the usual fare? Are you taking lots of pictures? (Hint, hint!)

We had a good Thanksgiving. Shelby and Jeff came over on Wednesday and left on Saturday night, and Brandon and Mindy came over every day and ate lunch and dinner and visited. Mindy was so good to get the kids playing games! Friday night she got all of us involved playing a fun game called Mafia. It was so good to visit! Brandon was in Utah for a few days and so he came to Thanksgiving late, as he flew in that day. He brought a package back for Mindy from Kylee. Dad recorded her opening it on his i-phone. Only Brandon knew what was up. So she opened it and it was a teddy bear. It had a note that said to push a little button on it and Kylee and Ryan started singing "You'd better watch out, you'd better not cry, ... I'm telling you why, Santa Claus is coming lskdjflsk sldkfjsldk. We didn't understand. So Brandon said to listen again. It took about 4 times for me to understand the last two words. It took Mindy another 2 times before she understood. The words were: Kylee's pregnant! It's a fun video! Dad uploaded it to Youtube right then, and then emailed it to Brandon (all on his i-phone sitting in his chair! Technology these days!:D), who sent it out to the Dover and Janis family. Dad thinks my reaction when I figure it out makes it the best, but it's really funny when Mindy finally gets it too! :) We are all so excited for them! I choked up when Mindy got it. She started to cry. It's such an awesome thing, parenthood!

Did I tell you that we decided to go to California this year for Christmas? Grandma Scott was SO excited when I asked if that would be ok. :) We're going to drive, so it will be a long trip. So when you call, you'll need to call Grandpa's phone. The number is: 209-538-0443. We'll tell you again, I'm sure. I don't know for sure when we will be leaving to go to California, but I'm thinking around the 20th.

Our Stake choir with the Catholic church is gearing up. This year it is at the Epiphany church, so we have an orchestra and I'm doing that too. OH I wish you could hear it!! Maybe it will get recorded. I don't know. Every year it gets better and better! I love the songs this year and they are difficult. Sister Seibert is still directing and she is so awesome! You would like singing under her! Not boring! I feel like I'm getting a little Mormon Tab experience. The choir really sounds incredible!

The Young Women in Excellence movie is coming along really well. I'm excited! The program is on Wednesday night. I hope it inspires the girls to keep strong and live the values in the personal progress program even more, and hopefully understand them more! And I hope it is a bonding experience for them and their moms.

I talked to Heather last night and she just posted some pictures she took of Grandpa/ma Janis. I thought I'd share them with you:



I also attached another picture of them to the email. Aren't they great pictures???!!!!
Hopefully Heather can do the same for Grandma/pa Scott at Christmas!

Question: Are you in an apartment with just your comp or are there more missionaries living in your apartment?

I hope you have a fantastic week and teach tons of discussions and commit dozens of wonderful people to baptism! The gospel is so wonderful. It is so true. Go forth in the strength of the Lord and nothing will be impossible. He will prepare the way for you to accomplish that which He has commanded. Espere milagros!

I love you so much! I'm so proud of the glorious work you are doing! It is a sacrifice, but the Lord compensates so richly it's so worth it! You are such a good example to your family and friends!

Love,

Mom

12/13/10

Hi Damon!

Well, Heather is here and it's good to see her. We have our tree and stockings up, but I haven't finished decorating. I'm not 100% committed to putting it all up since we are leaving town before Christmas, but I'll probably get the nativities out today. It's been so busy! I helped Taylor study for the ACT and also am helping him study for his geography final. Then there have been many hours of stake orchestra and stake choir practice, a piano recital, ward Christmas party (that was all Saturday), then yesterday was the stake choir concert with Epiphany. It went really well, but it was a big commitment!

It sounds like you are integrated into the new ward and area really well. I'm sorry to hear about the senior comp in the other companionship. He definitely doesn't sound like he's a "fourth missionary." He will miss out on many blessings and experiences if he doesn't let his heart soften. And it's hard to influence it. It's also hard to watch! But he has a responsibility, and the story in the Book of Mormon about Alma the younger talking to his son Corianton, talks about how Corianton was causing people to disbelieve because of his behavior. Of

course Corianton's sins were a lot worse, but when you are set apart as a missionary, your behavior is under scrutiny at all times. And if it's not right, it can really hinder the work.

You asked a question a couple of letters back that I didn't answer and I don't think anyone did. Dad did play in the ward Turkey Bowl on Thanksgiving. I bought him a Nike dry-fit shirt (black) to work out and run in, and he wore that. So he was looking all buff. No one passed to him, but he caught an interception and did some great blocking! :)

Dad was reading aloud your letter about the tapping noises the other night and Taylor and Emily were in a very silly mood. Dad commented that it was probably a clogger who has restless leg syndrome and that got them started. They couldn't stop laughing for about 10 straight minutes and then some. I finally brought out the camera to video them thinking it would make a great video, or stop them. It kind of worked. I'll send it to you.:)

I have a greater appreciation for the Atonement. There was just a small aha moment, but trying to explain it just sounds more like those stories like the seminary class that had the donuts and the boy that had to do push ups for each student and by the end of class he was sweating and the class was crying, or the story about the big boy who took the whipping for the little boy who took his lunch. But somehow it was more real to me, how for everything that we do to hurt another person, Jesus was punished in a very terrible way. People in the church who want revenge don't understand that *that* is what the Atonement was! And if the person doesn't repent, then they *will* suffer as Christ did, just not right now. But when the Lord says, "I the Lord will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men," it's because He has paid a terrible price for that wrong, and He can judge the heart of the person to know whether they meet His criteria for true repentance. I think if you know that with all your heart, it would be easier to forgive someone, as well as be humbled to the depths in gratitude that He loved us enough to take our punishment for us. I'm so grateful to Him for His sacrifice; I love Him so much!

I love YOU so much too and hope you have a very wonderful week! Because of His love and sacrifice, His grace and mercy, His overcoming all opposition, it is the most joyous labor that

you are engaged in: spreading His love, His offering of grace and mercy! I hope you feel it in greater abundance this season!

Expect milagros!

con mucho amor!

Mom

PS: Someone asked me if you have gloves and I said I didn't know. Could you please tell me today? Thanks!

12/27/10

Hi Damon!

I hope you had a VERY merry Christmas!! It was so good to talk to you!!!! I think we are leaving on Saturday, so if you want to send the letter to Grandma Scott's address, we'll get it here. Their address is: 2500 Walnut Grove Way, Modesto, CA 95355. How many dinner appointments did you have on Christmas?:D Did you find something to do with the money?

We have been enjoying Grandma and Grandpa Scott, James and Whitney, Jacob and little Ethan. Ethan is SOOOO cute! He doesn't like to eat so Whitney will put on an Office episode that has this song at the beginning and he lets Whitney shove food down while he watches it. Well, a couple of times I have just danced around and sung songs and been silly and it has worked to distract him into getting fed. Poor Whitney!:) It's been a chill time, we've played games, put a 1000 piece puzzle together, sung songs, read little stories, felt the Spirit each night. We did the Nativity pageant without costumes this year on Christmas Eve and it was really nice. Grandpa played the guitar to accompany the songs except for The First Noel and Silent Night. Our stake choir had a beautiful arrangement of the first noel that we sang this

year and so I made copies of it and we had a practice CD that I played. James played Silent Night on the piano for us.

Heather got two little lenses for her iphone camera: a fisheye and a macro/wide angle lens. She was so excited (as I knew she would be) and immediately started taking pictures. Here's one she put up on her blog, it makes Christmas look so cozy! It's so great to have Heather with us to take pictures!



The fisheye lens gives you the sense of looking into a crystal ball and seeing what's going on, huh?

I feel so blessed! My life is so wonderful and full! I am most especially grateful for the family I have, for my parents, siblings, husband and children and all the love I give and receive from them. Also most especially grateful for the gospel, for the Savior who made all things possible and gives us all hope because of the great Atonement. Traditions like Christmas tie these two amazing blessings together and that's why I love Christmas, a time to strengthen family bonds with extended family as well as my nucleus family with fun traditions like candy in stockings,

candlelight dinners in Dec., pajamas Christmas Eve, reading The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, and putting on our own pageant. Then the whole reason we celebrate is to honor and worship the Christ, who was born to save the world from sin, heal all wounds, make everything right, overcome death and bring us a fullness of joy. It's the best holiday!

I love you Damon! I hope your week is full of wonderful memories to treasure for the rest of your life! Know that we are praying for you, thinking of you and hoping you have success and joy in your service! You are an amazing person! You are so positive and just press forward with all your energy. You are such an example to so many! Heather says that Blair reads your letter and Ethan's letter each Sunday at dinner to his family. Your letters and example are influencing Daniel and Evan. I know that Chad, Dover, Spencer and Taylor are extremely influenced by your great example as well. And Brian too! Keep up the great work!

I love you so much! Espera Milagros! (is that right? I'm going off memory)

con mucho amor, Mom

1/3/11

Hello Damon!

Well, we've had a really wonderful vacation seeing so much family! It was so good to see Whitney and her adorable little guy, Ethan! They came over every day and we had a lot of fun with them. Heather did a photo shoot of their little family. Here is a couple of pictures from it:





After Christmas we went to San Francisco and ate some clam chowder at Pier 39. It was a gorgeous day so every Californian seemed to decide that Pier 39 was the place to go. So after milling in the teeming mass of people for an hour, we decided to leave and we went to the Oakland Temple and looked out at the view, and enjoyed the Christmas lights when they came on. It is such a gorgeous temple!

Last night Grandma had Blair, Allaire and Alissa's families over for dinner and Shalayne and Dover too. Dover has moved to Utah to work and I think take some community college classes. I don't understand. But Shalayne has transferred to UVU and they are looking for a place to live. The family dinner was very nice and loud and the dinner yummy!

At the dinner last night, Grandma Janis had asked everyone before hand to think of a goal they have for the new year and to share it after dinner with everyone. I told the kids the night before so they could think about it. Spencer immediately said, "gain 30 pounds in 30 days" or something like that. (Picture me rolling my eyes:) So last night when we went around, he said

he had two: to read the Book of Mormon one more time before his mission, and to keep up the prayer/scripture study group he started at BYU-I. (Picture me with my eyebrows raised in happy surprise:)) He never ceases to amaze me! My goal is to write Dad and my courtship story in novel form. That's what we're doing in our little writing class once a month, so I will work on it outside of our class, one chapter a month till it's done. It should be a fun project!

Have you set any goals for this year? I hope so. You have worked so hard and I know the Lord is pleased. When we have goals, though, it gives us focus. I'm sure you work with goals on a daily, weekly and monthly level, and don't need the new year to spur it, but maybe because it is a new year, you can reflect and set overarching goals for the next 7 months.

I love you and am so glad that we could talk a bit on Christmas! As always, I pray for your success and safety and opportunity and growth. I hope you see all of these this week, and as usual, espera milagros!

Love, Mom

1/9/11

Hi Damon!

I am so sorry to hear that you have been sick and keep getting sick! I should send some herbal tea stuff! I'm sorry you have had to be out in this freezing weather too!

I'm so glad to hear that the money helped! And I am glad that you and your comp are doing better together this time around. Are you the senior comp this time, or were you also last time, I don't remember. Also, with this new companionship responsibility, are you still district leader? You have had some unique challenges and I look forward to hearing in more detail all that you are learning. It's so hard to write it all. Hopefully you are writing much of it in your journal!

You asked me on Christmas about the missionary work in our ward and I told you that we had a special ward fast on Fast Sunday this month and will also have another one in February specifically for missionary work in our ward. But what I don't think I told you was that in addition to that, our ward mission leader passed around a calendar in Sunday School for families to sign up on a day during the month that they would also fast for missionary work, so that every day this month there will be several families fasting for missionary work. Dad, Emily and I will be fasting on Tuesday this week. The boys are fasting today because tomorrow they are going on their own "diet" to bulk up and I hadn't communicated to them about the fast in enough time. Anyway, I think this is a good start for missionary work. I read a really good article on fasting in the Ensign yesterday. It was from the March 2010 issue. (It's been in my bathroom most of the year; I'm trying to read them, but not succeeding. Though, just this week I read almost the whole January issue in one evening! Go figure!) Anyways! This article talks about the power of the fast and it's given me some ideas for different areas in my life. But it broadened my view of the fast. (Do you get the Ensign?) It is by Robert L. Simpson, a former member of the first quorum of the seventy. I will put it at the end of my email.

Did you like all the blog posts I FINALLY got to blogging about? I have had these posts weighing on me. It felt good to blog again. I will hopefully add some more soon. Maybe tonight! Tomorrow Emily will start homeschool again. The boys are working on the rental property. They should be done tomorrow and we can start trying to rent it.

I have NOT gotten sick this past month and it's a miracle! I let down on the way I've eaten really bad! When we were in Modesto, we went to a pizza buffet like Cici's (fics:D), and I ate and ate and couldn't seem to stop! Dad went back for seconds and there were about four really big, I mean, really big people trying to get to the pizza and he grossed out and went and sat back down. :) Now that we're back in Katy, we are back to our green smoothies! Ahhh!

We had a wonderful sacrament meeting today. A brother Brett Allen (he has twin daughters) spoke and it was really good on faith and how we have to choose faith, it doesn't just come. He was 18 when he joined the church. He had faith it was true, but when he decided to get baptized, his parents started trying to get him to stop, giving him anti stuff and even having

ministers come over and try to convince him otherwise. So it was a pretty low time and he had times of doubt, but through it all, he held on to his faith and it has blessed his life. He also told of when his wife was expecting the twins, they found out they had a bad condition that could be fatal to both. So they needed surgery that was 70% that one would survive and 50% that both would die. His wife's father gave her a blessing and told her it would all go well and everything would be fine. They chose to have faith and it worked out very well. It was a very good talk.

Then we had one of the full time elders speak. He spoke about the white handbook and about obedience. He said that recently Elder Kikuchi (sp?) of the 70 came and promised them if they were strictly obedient, 6 out of 9 investigators would join the church.

Then Brother Branning came from the stake and gave a great talk about how the stake presidency has given the stake members a challenge to live by the similar rules of missionaries: rise early and retire early, study the scriptures, say prayers, keep the commandments, attend the temple, give service, share the gospel. I think there are a few more, but that's the gist. He is such a good speaker. He too spoke of his conversion and how he had a testimony and wanted to be baptized, but the rule was to wait 4 weeks, so he had 2 more weeks. Then Elder LeGrand Richards came and spoke in their stake and the missionaries took him and got him on the second row on the side. He had a great experience and was able to talk with him and Elder Richards said, "do you know what your mission in life is?" He didn't, so asked him what it was. He said, "to bring people to Christ."

It was a really uplifting meeting. Thought I'd share it. I hope you are having a wonderful time! You are in our thoughts and prayers every day. I love you and am so proud and grateful that you are serving the Lord in this great work and in the specific assignments He has given you. You are working with one at a time, and that is how He ministered as well. Have a great week!

Espera milagros!

Love, Mom

Here's the talk:



The law of the fast is a perfect law, and we cannot begin to approach perfection until we decide to make it a part of our lives.

Robert L. Simpson was born on August 8, 1915, in Salt Lake City, Utah. He married Jelaire Chandler in the Mesa Arizona Temple on June 24, 1942. They had four children. Elder Simpson's first calling as a General Authority was as First Counselor to Presiding Bishop John H. Vandenberg on September 30, 1961. He later served as an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Elder Simpson died on April 15, 2003, in St. George, Utah, at the age of 87. The following article comes from a general conference address originally given in October 1967. Punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing have been standardized; subheads have been added.

One of the most neglected and yet most needed laws for this troubled generation in a modern world of acceleration and distraction is the law of the fast. Fasting and praying have been referred to almost as a singular function from the earliest times. Adam's generation fasted and prayed, as did Moses on Sinai ([see] [Deuteronomy 9:9–11](#)). ...

... Following the Master's visit ... to the Western Hemisphere, the people were told to continue in "fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord" ([4 Nephi 1:12](#)). So complete and sincere were the people in obeying His commandments "that there was no contention among all the people, in all the land; but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus" ([4 Nephi 1:13](#)). Wouldn't it be thrilling to enjoy such a condition today!

Prayer and Fasting Today

His law has been reconfirmed in our day, for through a modern prophet . . . , He said, “I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth” [D&C 88:76]. Then in the very next verse He mentions gospel teaching almost as a prime product of the prayer and fasting process. In the words of the Lord:

“And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

“Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand” (D&C 88:77–78).

No man or woman can hope to teach of things spiritual unless he is directed by that spirit, for “the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.

“And all this ye shall observe to do as I have commanded concerning your teaching, until the fulness of my scriptures is given.

“And as ye shall lift up your voices by the Comforter, ye shall speak and prophesy as seemeth me good;

“For, behold, the Comforter knoweth all things, and beareth record of the Father and of the Son” (D&C 42:14–17).

A Promise for Every Teacher

Oh, that every teacher might catch the spirit of this promise and claim this offered partnership, available to all who are engaged in the teaching of truth.

There are no better examples of teaching by the Spirit than the sons of Mosiah. The Book of Mormon tells us how they became “strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

“But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God” (Alma 17:2–3).

Is there a priesthood or auxiliary leader any place in this Church who wouldn’t give all to possess such power, such assurance? Remember this, above all else, that, according to Alma, they gave themselves to

much fasting and prayer. You see, there are certain blessings that can only be fulfilled as we conform to a particular law. The Lord made this very clear through the Prophet Joseph Smith when He declared, “For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world” ([D&C 132:5](#)).

Now, the Lord could not have stated the position more clearly, and, in my opinion, too many Latter-day Saint parents today are depriving themselves and their children of one of the sweetest spiritual experiences that the Father has made available to them.

The Monthly Fast Day

In addition to the occasional fasting experience for a special purpose, each member of the Church is expected to miss two [consecutive] meals on the fast and testimony Sunday. ...

Competent medical authorities tell us that our bodies benefit by an occasional fasting period. That is blessing number one and perhaps the least important. Second, we contribute the money saved from missing the meals as a fast offering to the bishop for the poor and the needy. And third, we reap a particular spiritual benefit that can come to us in no other way. It is a sanctification of the soul for us today just as it was for some choice people who lived 2,000 years ago. I quote briefly from the Book of Mormon: “Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God” ([Helaman 3:35](#)). Wouldn’t you like this to happen to you? It can, you know!

Did you notice it said that those who do this have their souls filled with “joy and consolation”? You see, the world in general thinks that fasting is a time for “sackcloth and ashes,” a time to carry a look of sorrow, as one to be pitied. On the contrary, the Lord admonishes:

“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

“But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

“That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly” ([Matthew 6:16–18](#)).

Blessings of Fasting

Now, we turn to the most important part of this great law. So far we have only discussed those areas that bless us. The real joy comes with the blessing of the poor and the needy. For it is in the fulfillment of this wonderful Christlike act that we practice “pure religion and undefiled” spoken of by James [see [James 1:27](#)]. Can you think of a better or more perfect Christian function than “pure religion and undefiled”? I can’t.

The Lord, speaking through Moses, observed:

“If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:

“But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him” ([Deuteronomy 15:7–8](#)).

Then He goes on to promise him who gives: “The Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto” ([Deuteronomy 15:10](#)). He concludes: “Therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land” ([Deuteronomy 15:11](#)). ...

A Perfecting Law

Yes, the law of the fast is a perfect law, and we cannot begin to approach perfection until we decide to make it a part of our lives. When you start and stop the fast is up to you, but wouldn’t it be nice to culminate it and be at your spiritual peak for the fast and testimony meeting?

How much you give the bishop as a donation is also up to you, but isn’t it thrilling to know that your accounting with the Lord has been paid willingly and with accuracy?

Satisfaction Comes with Obedience

... Have you ever noticed how satisfying it is way deep inside each time you are obedient to Heavenly Father’s desires? There can be no equal to the peace of mind that always comes as the reward for obedience to truth.

The world needs self-discipline. You can find it in fasting and prayer. Our generation is sick for lack of self-control. Fasting and prayer help to instill this virtue.

The world’s future depends upon an urgent return to family unity. Fasting and prayer will help to guarantee it. Each person has greater need for divine guidance. There is no better way. We all have need to overcome the powers of the adversary. His influence is incompatible with fasting and prayer. ...

... I join my testimony with Alma of old when he declared:

"Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

"Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit" ([Alma 5:45–46](#)).

The sons of Mosiah "had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God."

The real joy comes with the blessing of the poor and the needy. For it is in the fulfillment of this wonderful Christlike act that we practice "pure religion."

1/17/11

Hi Damon!

How was your baptism?! I hope all went well! I'm sure I'll find out later today when you write, but I was thinking of you on that day!

This past week I have tuned into Emily's homeschool and helped her get back in the routine of it, staying by her side through it. She stayed true to her raw diet, just eating veggies and smoothies. She is in Beaumont as I write. I am heading out to spend the day and bring her back tonight as soon as I finish this letter. Shelby and I met half way on Saturday and Emily has been there for the weekend, since it's Martin Luther King, Jr's birthday and there's no school today. Spencer has cooked all the meals for him and Taylor this week as well. I will probably blog about that too. It's teaching him lots of life skills: shopping, budgeting, menu making, cooking. Good for the mission, good for life. So it's funny sitting down to dinner with everyone and having three different meals on the table. I can't believe I'm allowing this! I am adapting to the changing season I'm in I guess.

On Saturday morning, Mindy and I went downtown Houston to a fruit tree event. This organization called Urban Harvest has a fruit tree sale each year and so we decided to go and buy some trees. I bought a lemon, an orange, and a banana tree. Mindy bought a limequat, which is a kind of lime tree we think. We found a better price on blueberry trees online, so in a week or two we will be ordering 3 trees each. So we will plant these in a couple of months. Till now, they are in our kitchen beautifying that room. I'm excited to have some fruit trees in our yard. We had to cut the 5 trees down to do it and I finally got serious last summer. We are still working on getting our backyard in shape. Right now it looks pretty beat up!

I taught a lesson in Beehives yesterday on coming to know the Savior. I talked about the picture of Him knocking on a door that doesn't have a handle on His side. The girls were fascinated with the concept, I don't think they ever learned about how it's up to US to let Him into our lives. So I suggested for our activity this Wed, we make a little door with Christ's picture behind it, to remind them to choose each day to let the Savior into their lives. They are really excited about the idea. Some simple concepts they are still discovering and the Spirit was there. I have 5 new Beehives since September and they seem to be starting to soak up the gospel, realizing *they* have responsibility and opportunity, and they are excited I think.

I hope you have a great week! I am so so so glad you are having a wonderful experience with your companion and are learning some true and universal principles in relationships! I hope you can keep busy! You are doing a great work and I'm so proud of you!

I love you soooooo much!

Espera milagros!

Love, Mom

1/21/11

Hi Heather

I'm glad you made some friends right off the bat at the singles ward!! I hope you get together and have some fun!

I'm glad Grandma is doing a dinner for all of you. She said she was going to invite James to come as well. Did he come? He left his sunglasses in the van, so I left them with Grandma hoping he would come. I'm glad you were able to give Grandma a back rub. She lets you do a lot for her and you are so willing. You two have a special bond and I love that!

I'm glad the week without Blair and Danae went well. I thought about you all week. Every time I thought of calling you it was a bad time. I'm glad you are still friends with Chris and that he made at least one night not so lonely. You WILL find that best friend that you will also marry. Have faith and wait patiently on the Lord. Get ready for it and do what you need to do and the time will be right.

I'm sorry that Kaity is struggling a little. It is tough with little ones. From my vantage point though, those years are so precious and I would love to be in her situation with two sweet, innocent, adorable ones that I could just love and hold and kiss and sing to and play with and take out on outings and just enjoy. It seems like each stage in our lives we need to try to see the beauty of and enjoy, because we won't get some of the perks of that time ever again. So relish *your* single, simple life, and then when the next phase comes and new good things and other challenging things come, relish the good in that phase, etc. I'm glad you are able to brighten her life, though. You are so good and sweet!

Have you called Kylee? I know what you mean by being glad she is going through a hard time. I will never forget one time when Mei Li and I were walking to church our second year at BYU, and ahead of us was a girl in our ward who was a cheerleader and she had about 3 guys escorting her. Her hair was super long and gorgeous and she was so pretty. Mei Li called her "the perfect woman" haha. So we saw her and Mei Li said something about how perfect she was and how perfect her life was. I had this thought and told her that maybe this girl's father died, or maybe she will get cancer in her 30's or she'll never be able to have children. We only see a snapshot of her life right now and it *looks* perfect, but we don't know

the whole story. That's always stuck with me. Life is hard for everyone, just at different times and intensities. I hope Kylee is doing ok.

I hope that *you* are doing ok more than anything, though. I think of you at least hourly. My heart is "full drawn out in prayer" constantly for you. I pray that you may find joy in your heart that never goes away and that you are healed in your mind, body and heart of all that you suffer with. I love you so much! I don't think words can express how deeply I feel these words!

As far as I go, I cut my hair too and chopped a lot off, but didn't take a picture of the sink:). It's layered a little and is just below my shoulders. Emily trimmed the uneven stragglers in back for me.

These past two weeks I've tuned into home school with Emily to get her going again. It's taking me a while to get back to normal life, but I'm glad to be spending time with her. She is staying true to her raw diet, just eating veggies and smoothies. She went to Beaumont over the weekend and I went to pick her up on Monday and had a fun time with Shelby. Shelby and I met half way on Saturday. Spencer has cooked all the meals for him and Taylor this week as well. He is going off that cookbook "Muscle Chow" that he got for Christmas. He's planning menus, buying the food (I'm giving him part of the cash from our weekly food budget) and he's cooking all kinds of dishes for them. He made a homemade granola, and is making beautiful fruit salads, grilling salmon, etc. It's teaching him lots of life skills: shopping, budgeting, menu making, cooking. Good for the mission, good for life. So it's funny sitting down to dinner with everyone and having three different meals on the table. I can't believe I'm allowing this! I am adapting to the changing season I'm in I guess.

On Saturday morning, Mindy and I went downtown Houston to a fruit tree event. This organization called Urban Harvest has a fruit tree sale each year and so we decided to go and buy some trees. I bought a lemon, an orange, and a banana tree! Mindy bought a limequat, which is a kind of lime tree we think. We found a better price on blueberry trees online, so in a week or two we will be ordering 3 trees each. So we will plant these in a couple of months. Till now, they are in our kitchen beautifying that room. I'm excited to have some fruit trees in our

yard. Now if we can just get the backyard ready! Taylor is taking so long to get the trunks down! Ugh!

I taught a lesson in Beehives Sunday on coming to know the Savior. I talked about the picture of Him knocking on a door that doesn't have a handle on His side. The girls were fascinated with the concept, I don't think they ever thought about how it's up to US to let Him into our lives. So I suggested for our activity this Wed, we make a little door with Christ's picture behind it, to remind them to choose each day to let the Savior into their lives. They got really excited about the idea. So on Wednesday I got a brilliant idea! Those vinyl picture frames I got you and Emily would make a perfect door! So I copied one that takes a 5X7 with a fancy top and copied it onto cardstock. Then I figured out how to cut the part where the picture goes into a door and I bought the picture of the Savior in red at the distribution center at the temple when I took Emily and Taylor to piano. We taped the picture so that when you open the flap, there's the picture. We drew a doorknob on the door and I printed a scripture on colored cardstock that they glued to the front or inside of the door. They really liked it. The scripture is Revelation 3:20 : "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Most of the scriptures that have the word knock in it say for *us* to knock, but this one is Him knocking. I really want the girls to feel His love and hear Him inviting them. I told them in the lesson that there are two ways to look: one to the Savior, who has suffered for everything we have done wrong and paid the price and still loves us and still invites us to come to Him. And two is the world or Satan. I asked, what has Satan done for you? What does he care about you? It's only through coming to the Savior, doing His will and following Him that we have peace and true happiness in our lives.

A similar thought process I've had lately is that eventually we will ALL come to Him, except the sons of perdition, whether in this life or the next, and we will eventually feel His love and the peace He gives and will stop fighting. There's a scripture mastery scripture that I read recently and saw it in a different light. It's D&C 130:18-21 "18 Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. 19 And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his **diligence** and **obedience** than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come. 20 there is a law,

irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of the world, upon which all blessings are predicated- 21 And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by **obedience** to that law upon which it is predicated." I had always thought it meant secular learning, but I don't think that's really what the Lord is saying. I think it's understanding the gospel and following Him in diligence and obedience that is the message. That we will be so much further along our road to eternal progression the better we know the gospel and let our will be swallowed up in His will for us. It's got me thinking. I just see everyone now on their own road to perfection and to Heavenly Father. It's a personal road and we alone make the choices and discover His love sooner or later. I don't know if I'm even making any sense. But there are some thoughts I've had lately!:)

I didn't plan on THIS huge of a response. I hope you have a great day! I will try to call. I love you so much!!!

Love, Mom

1/24/10

Hello Elder Janis!

It sounds like you are keeping a positive attitude and fulfilling the assignment from your mission president. And you are doing it very well too!!!!!! It's so sad that not every missionary looks at each day and each week and these two years as the greatest opportunity that will never come back and that they need to make the most of every moment, giving their heart, might, mind and strength to building the Lord's kingdom. The blessings are just sitting there, waiting to be taken, it's just up to US to fulfill our end of the agreement. The Lord is always there with His! It seems like a no-brainer, but distractions can be very powerful! You have a great attitude, though and I'm so glad!!! And I hope you can see Josh baptized!

Dad mentioned that we went to San Antonio last Thursday and we came back Saturday. It was really nice!! My quality time bucket was pretty low and now it's very full!:) Dad's been

pretty focused on this new stuff going on at Lifestyles, plus he's been going in to work Monday through Thursday, plus teaching and preparing for Seminary. I'm not complaining, I'm very grateful for my life, I just really appreciated the trip! Grandpa Janis had given us a couple of sealings to do for his side of the family when we were in Utah, so we went to the San Antonio Temple and did those sealings plus other ones some other people there had. It is a gorgeous temple!!!! We really had a nice time!

I am decluttering the house some more and we will probably be adding some new furniture and getting rid of old stuff. I am excited!

My lesson in Beehives on Sunday about coming to know the Savior and then our Wednesday activity making a door that opens up to a picture of Christ has really got me thinking lately. For their door project I printed a scripture on colored cardstock that they glued to the front or inside of the door. They really liked it. The scripture is Revelation 3:20 : "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Most of the scriptures that have the word knock in it say for *us* to knock, but this one is Him knocking. I really want the girls to feel His love and hear Him inviting them. I told them in the lesson that there are two ways to look: one to the Savior, who has suffered for everything we have done wrong and paid the price and still loves us and still invites us to come to Him. And two is the world or Satan. I asked, what has Satan done for you? What does he care about you? It's only through coming to the Savior, doing His will and following Him that we have peace and true happiness in our lives.

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Then yesterday in sacrament meeting, Sister Demers quoted Alma 29:1 Oh that I were an angel. And I love that verse because there is a beautiful song using those words for the text. But the next verse really struck me: "Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth." I have always read repentance verses like a judgement and power commanding way, like, "you sinners are so bad! Repent, you terrible people!" but I think that sometimes it is with love and a pleading invitation that the Lord and His servants declare repentance. Like, please repent and follow me because I am meek and lowly of heart and you shall find rest to your souls. His invitation is everywhere in the scriptures! That if we just would turn to God, that they wouldn't have "more sorrow", but would have peace and joy. It's a cause and effect and the Lord knows, but we sometimes would just kick against the pricks and continue sorrowing and living in darkness and wonder why. I choose to turn to the Lord and have peace!

I hope you have a great week and see muchos milagros!!!! (By the way, I am in the Book of Omni in the Spanish Book of Mormon! I am really enjoying it!)

I love you so much! You are in my thoughts and prayers so so much! I am so grateful for you!

Love,

Mom

1/31/11

Hi Damon!

I am sorry to hear that you have been discouraged with your companion situation. It seems like you told me that Brother Bott said that you BYU students were cream of the crop and would probably be seen by your presidents as the strong ones that they would give their struggling elders to as companions. Is that right? Well, that is definitely the case with you, and I don't remember what he said to do about it, but maybe you do. I know that in the last 23 years of marriage I have learned what you are learning, that you can't change someone. You can only change yourself. Some want to fight against God and his laws and that doesn't lead to joy. Ok, I have two thoughts shooting off in my head, so I'll try to get it out hopefully in a way you understand what I'm trying to say!:)

The part about trying to change someone can feel frustrating. But you don't have to be an object and let them control you, as Elder Bednar so wonderfully spoke about. You can act. And the scripture that comes to my mind is D&C 121:41-46 which you know, but applied here can take on new meaning: "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile- Reproving betimes with sharpness (one synonym for sharpness is clarity or focused, not necessarily harsh), when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy; That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death. Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; (and here is the promise, which is such glorious language!) then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall dist upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever." Those are things you can do, and become.

The other thought was fighting against God and His laws. Dad has been going very slow through section 88 in the D&C in seminary. Today they discussed verses 34 and 35 among others and this is what it says: "And again, verily I say unto you, that which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same. That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willeth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still." They talked about how if you choose to keep a law, you have protection, like the law of chastity. If you don't choose to keep that law, there are consequences, you are out of its circle of protection. He asked Scott Minor if there were laws in body building and Scott said yes, like you can't cheat on the form or your muscle won't build right. So Dad said, you can whine all you want or say that's not fair, but it's the law. You have the choice, it's what you want and are willing to do to get it that matters. And spiritual laws are the same. You can choose to follow and receive happiness, joy, all that the Father hath, or you can condemn yourself by the law. But it's there and it's universal and it ain't goin' away any time soon!:) And each of us is responsible to choose. We can't make choices for another. And that's where D&C 121 comes in to what we CAN do.

So those are my two thoughts for what they are worth. Hopefully you can take some meaning from them!

Last week was full of visiting with lots of ladies. I visit taught two and was on the phone with several, and I took Lynnanne Eddington, who just moved back from Canada recently to the grocery store. This week I am hoping to work on the house and yard more. Mindy came over on Saturday and we planted more seeds in our garden, bought tons more seeds at Home Depot, and planted them inside in little starter pods of dirt. We are so excited to be growing food! After that, I went to our stake women's conference which was awesome! We had classes and I learned how not to get taken advantage of for a funeral, and how to make junk into beautiful things for my home. Yea! I have new ideas for my dining room. We'll see how it goes.

I don't know if Emily emailed you this week. Right now she is at a girl's house who homeschools and who has a horse and miniature ponies. So she will be back around 12:30 and I'll have her write. Hopefully you'll get it!

I heard Samantha Sarlls is engaged. Her soon-to-be husband is named Kip. So it will be Kip and Sam.:) James Morris gets home from his mission tomorrow. Wow!

I love you so much Damon! You are doing a great work. Learning to love unconditionally your companion, your district, your ward, your investigators, and everyone else is one of the most important things we do in this life. You are getting a wonderful opportunity on your mission! Keep up the great work! I'm so proud of you! The gospel is true, the Savior lives and He loves us unimaginably.

Espera Milagros!!!

Love, Mom

2/7/11

Hello Damon!

That story is amazing about your investigator and how the wife passed away and your comp had actually LIVED in a funeral home! What a providential blessing for all involved!! (Except the funeral home that wasn't allowed to rip him off!:)) I hope you will be able to baptize him and in a year, and he can go to the temple and get sealed to his wife! Actually, does it pose a problem if they weren't married before she died? I'm sure there's a way!

I know Dad suggested writing to the girl that your comp is distracted by, but I wonder if a letter to her father as well would help. He is a bishop after all and may not know this is going on. Just a thought. Maybe your comp is back on track! I just paused and realized that no one got the mail on Saturday and we hadn't read your letter. So I hastily shuffled out the door with my trusty key and found your letter!!! I read it and it sounds like you are learning so much and

have everything in hand. I am so glad you are learning so much! Relationships, whether it's husband/wife, parent/child, siblings, extended family, mission companions, work relationships, friends, etc. are so delicate and fragile and need lots of love or charity to thrive in. There is not enough of it in the world.

I was talking with Taylor yesterday about a friend of his that is bothering him. He was really open to my pontifications, sweet guy!:) But I was talking about charity and the first two things that Paul says about charity is that charity suffereth long and is kind. Those two have to go together for a relationship to work and grow. And I think you said as much when you said you've learned that being patient is more than just grinning and bearing, or smiling and gritting your teeth, or something like that. I also said that the truly noble and great people that are our heroes and those we respect the most are the ones that live that higher law, have integrity, humility and charity. The reason they are so respected is because it is HARD to live those qualities. And most people don't. They take the path of least resistance, give in to the "natural man," and are selfish and lazy. It is what makes George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Joseph Smith, and Jesus who they are. I have many memories of each of you children when you took the higher road. I expect you to be of that character. I felt strongly to raise you children that way. One incident about you, was when you took Victoria Craig to Homecoming. You grew about 10 notches in my Admire and Respect Hall of Fame! You were a hero to many that night.

And you are of that character to help your companion. I can tell from your letters that you truly have tried to have charity towards him. I'm so grateful!!

I got a cold on Saturday after running seven miles. It's probably because I ate a third of a chocolate orange that I had left over from Christmas while Emily was in her voice class and I was out in the car reading The Witch of Blackbird Pond. I also taught the Beehives last Wed. how to make cinnamon rolls and I ate a couple of them. My immune system was compromised and I am reaping the harvest.:) (But they were so good!) I think with the lemon water I drink each morning as well as our spinach and fruit smoothies, it will be over shortly, though.

We had Stake Conference this weekend and the Sunday morning session was one of those regional broadcasts from Salt Lake. Even Saturday night President Allen didn't know who would be speaking. But we got to hear from Elder Ballard and President Monson!! It was wonderful! President Monson spoke about rescuing people, the elderly, the less-active, those in our family. Between the Saturday evening session and the Sunday morning session, I have a big list to do! President Allen spoke about missionary work and he told us it is not enough to just be good examples and pray for missionary experiences. We were counseled to invite to action. So these things are hard, but I need to go forth in the strength of the Lord and go and do. I hope to have something to share soon!

I hope you have a super terrrrrrific week! I love you so much! I love the Gospel and it's glorious blessings! I know the Savior loves you and me and that He lives and is there for us.

Espera Milagros!

Love, Mom

2/14/11

Hi Damon,

We are in Beaumont and having a good time. Jared's ordination went well and I got some pictures. I will try to blog. It was cool seeing Spencer, Taylor and Brian in the circle.

Last Saturday I ran 8 1/2 miles and it felt really good. I am doing a different training program this time. I am only going to run three times a week instead of four, the two times in the week running 5 miles each time, and on Saturday incrementally longer and longer runs.

Dad is letting me use his computer and I'm having a hard time thinking and talking to Shelby and Dad is breathing down my neck to finish. So this letter is going to be a little choppy this

week. But there is a package coming. I don't know if you will get it today, but know that it was meant for today. Happy Valentine's Day!

Our garden is still surviving in spite of the below freezing days and nights we've had. Many nights I've had to cover it with sheets. I think we're good for now, though. I need to blog about that too! We harvested some radishes the other day and they were yummy.

Yesterday at church in Beaumont, because of Stake Conference last Sunday, they had their fast and testimony meeting yesterday. And there was a dad who got up and spoke about his son who is leaving on his mission this week. I guess his son rejected the church a couple of years ago and he joined the marines. Then somehow he got out. but a year ago when Conference was on Easter, there was a barbecue in between the second session and priesthood session. The dad was talking to someone and they decided to go find his son and invite him to the priesthood session. They looked all over and he wasn't at his apartment and no one knew where he was. So they went back to the church and watched the priesthood session. He said the whole session was about missionary work. He wished his son was there so bad. Well, later that night, his son called and said, "Dad I want to go on a mission." He asked what made him decide. He said that he had gone to the priesthood session out at another stake center and he felt like the whole session everyone was just speaking to him. The dad called it his miracle Easter. It was such a wonderful story!

The first night we came to Beaumont, Shelby had the missionaries over for dinner. They were on splits, so the other guy that came got off his mission 1 1/2 years ago and he was in the Denver South mission! We figured out that he left on Sept 24, 2009, which was the day you came in, so you were probably in that coming/going meeting with him. :) Small world! He's out here selling pest control I think.

Well, I hope you have a fantastic week! I am excited to hear about your new companion. As much as you want to say or know about him. I love you and am so proud of you! You are such a wonderful son and person and missionary! The gospel is true, and the problems of the world can really be solved through faith in Christ. It sounds so simple, and it is! I am so happy you are bringing this message of hope to many people.

I love you so much!

Espera milagros!

Love, Mom

2/21/11

Hi Damon,

Your letters sound so good. What a wonderful power fasting is! I'm so glad everything came together and you accomplished your assignment with the help of the Spirit and the power of fasting. The lesson you learned in loving him and accepting him without trying to manipulate or argue is such a life lesson that I think many people come to only after years of marriage or after they have raised a super strong-willed child. And some people never learn that. You practiced charity! In Paul and Moroni's definition I see you worked on suffereth long, kindness, not easily provoked, seeketh not her own, thinketh no evil, edureth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, never faileth. I am also excited that you have more area of your ward to work in and to have so much to do! Yea!

Saturday I ran 10 miles. Whew! It wasn't too bad and I wasn't sore the whole day. But I was pretty tired and had a tough time getting other things done. Luckily it's not an ongoing thing, just till March 12. Did I mention that Dad and Emily and Taylor will be running the 5K (3.1 miles) at the same event? Emily actually ran 3.2 miles with me on Saturday, so she now knows she can do it! It was slow, but I'm really proud of her. When she started running a few months ago, she was determined, but she complained or cried so much. But now that she has persevered, she is much stronger and doesn't complain.

Dad and I are reading a book Glenn Beck wrote with a psychologist about his overcoming alcoholism and drug addiction and 7 principles that helped him get there. We are reading it aloud to each other. It is really good. His mother committed suicide when he was either 11 or 13 and he tells about Pat Heaney and his conversion to the Church. The principles we've read

about so far are truth, courage, faith, friends, and family. It's a very inspiring story and he really opens himself up and shares insight that gets you thinking introspectively.

Emily finished the Algebra 1/2 book last week, so she's moving on to Algebra! And she gave her first youth talk in Sacrament Meeting yesterday and did a great job.

Taylor's reading books that I'm shoving at him like crazy. Since January he finished up The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, and has read The Hiding Place, about a Christian lady who hid Jews and she and her sister were taken to a concentration camp. Did you ever read that one? He has also read The Screwtape Letters, by C.S Lewis, a book of letters by the devil or one of his servants to his servant, and we had a really good discussion about that book and how even though Satan doesn't let up and it seems like sometimes we are surrounded, "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." He is now reading A Tale of Two Cities, by Charles Dickens, about the French Revolution. I started it too. It's been since high school that I read it.

And Spencer got the latest house rented out all by himself! Dad helped him run a credit check on someone, but he took the calls and got them to fill out applications and got the tenants to fill out and sign the lease agreement. It was a really good experience for him!

I hope you have a really productive and spiritually high week! You are doing so good, I'm so proud and grateful!!!!!! I had a girl's camp meeting on Thursday and sat by Cindy Morris and she said that having James serve his mission has brought her true joy that is so full. I teared up and knew exactly what she was saying. My joy is full knowing the service to our Heavenly Father you are freely giving.

I love you so much! Espera Milagros!

Love, Mom

2/28/11

Hi Damon,

I'm so glad to hear that you have been having a lot of work to do and a lot of success! That is so great about Trino and the boy getting baptized! I hope you took pictures! :)

I had a full week. On Monday we had the Elders over for dinner and they gave a nice message. One of them at the dinner table quoted a scripture that he had just read that day and I found him today at church and asked him the reference again, because it was a GREAT missionary scripture I thought. It is 1 Peter 3: 14-16 "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give and answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." This scripture may be more applicable for the missionaries here in the Bible belt than for you serving the good, humble, meek, Latino people in Denver. But I wanted to share it with you.

On Tuesday we had cooking class at our house (after I ran 5 miles) and Emily and Rebecca made hummus (blended garbanzo beans and some garlic, lemon juice and a little tahini - or sunflower seed paste) and whole wheat pita bread to dip in the hummus. They also chopped up fresh vegetables to dip in the hummus too. It was successful!

On Thursday morning I ran 5 miles, cleaned up, went to a YW presidency meeting, then got home in time to have a gardening class at my home. Nineteen women and about that many children came! It was crazy, but Emily, Daenon and Rebecca helped watch some of the kids upstairs. Tamara Martinez taught some gardening stuff, and then we went out to my garden and me and Mindy talked about that. The women all seemed excited about it. There were two non-members who came. Then that evening we had another gardening class and 2 men and 5 women came. One of the ladies was also a non-member. So I think it was a positive experience for them. We began and ended with a prayer each time, and I think everyone was friendly. It was a fun day!

On Saturday (yesterday) I ran 11.5 miles! It wasn't bad and I wasn't too sore! Today I am not sore at all. Next Saturday I will do the same and then the next Saturday I'll run the 13 mile half marathon. I don't think I will be as sore this time as I was last time. Yea!

I hope you have another wonderful week with your energized companion. It really makes a difference who you are yoked with! I'm sure there are more amazing things just around the corner.

Espera Milagros!

I love you so much! You are in my prayers and in our family prayers every day. We all think of you and talk of you all the time. Thank you for all your letters! You are a wonderful letter writer and I'm so grateful that you are so consistent.

Love,

Mom

3/7/11

Hi Damon,

Your letter was wonderful as usual. We all enjoy hearing from you! It sounds like everything is very busy but you have high spirits! That's funny about the 3-D pirates book! That's also funny about the uptight grandma! :)

So on Saturday the Young Women had a garage sale. We have had most of the stuff for it in our garage. I have filled the van three times and unloaded it. The Martinez family all of a sudden decided to move and they found a home that they bought in Katy 4th ward. Sister Martinez donated tons of stuff to the garage sale. Emily and I helped her do some sorting twice last week. The day of the garage sale was the only day of the week we had cold, windy and rainy weather. Just our luck. It was pretty miserable. But we still made \$800 in spite of

that fact. It will defray the cost of each girl that goes to girls camp by \$40. The weather was bad for the garage sale but it was great for running! I ran 11.6 miles later that afternoon and it felt great. I hope the weather this Saturday is cool.

I can't think of what's been going on. Just the usual: homeschool, cleaning, laundry, grocery shopping, cooking, piano lessons, garden, cooking class, voice class, a date with Dad :), running, working out at the gym, sleeping, Young Women, letter to you:), church, visiting teaching, etc, etc, etc. Taylor started working in the Pre-Calc book last week. I hope he continues. It will serve him well.

I started reading The Fourth Missionary again yesterday. It is so good! He just nails it. But unless your heart is changed, the words mostly go over your head. I love the gospel. I love the Lord. I lean on Him for strength and for healing the things in my life that I have messed up. I am so grateful for His love, for His Atonement, for His Plan. It makes everything wrong in the world right. That brings me so much peace.

Spencer just told Taylor, "I think my legs have potential." :) Oh that boy!

I love you so much Damon. I am so grateful that you are serving so faithfully and in all assignments you are given with a positive attitude and with humility, relying on the strength of the Lord. Keep up the great work! We will pray for you that you may have the 10 baptisms that are waiting for you!!! Espera Milagros!!

Love,

Mom

3/14/11

Hello my dear son!

How is the threesome going? I hope it is helping the work move forward faster, kind-of the divide and conquer thing! I laughed hard when you talked about going into the "mom's 'Grandma is coming!' mode!" My visiting teachers came last week and I rallied everyone for 20 minutes to transform the main rooms. They need it again today, but no company is coming, so I don't have the leverage. Bummer! I guess one of the Johnson twins had medical problems and is home right now dealing with it. He has to wait a few months, so he has a job and is going crazy. He hasn't been to our ward, though, he's going to Sealy. Just a couple of weeks ago they announced that Sealy was split into two branches, an English branch and a Spanish branch. Brother Doug Bingham is Branch President over the English branch I believe. I think Elder Johnson will be going back out into the mission field in June or July. What a trial!

I hope the baptism was a wonderful experience too! I look forward to seeing pictures of both baptisms! What a highlight of your mission! A really special day!

While you were making all the preparations for your baptism, I was running 13 miles! It was a great day for running and I ran the whole way. Taylor didn't go because there was an autistic camp he wanted to participate in, so Spencer ran in Taylor's place. Spencer wanted to win but didn't. There were some runners from a Michigan university bussed down for the run. The winner did the 5K (3.1 miles) in 15 min. Spencer said he kept up with them for about a mile and then his legs started to burn and he couldn't keep up, so he just quit the race. Ugh! Dad and Emily did great. Chad Janis showed up and we didn't know about that. He ran the 1/2 marathon as well. Brian did too and came in first in his age category and Chad came in 3rd. Brian's time was 1 hour 54 min. Chad's time was 2 hours and my time was 2 hours 20 min. I shaved off 15-20 min. of last year's time. I recovered really well. Yesterday my thighs were a touch sore and that's all. But I was really tired all day. Anyway, it was fun! Roark and Becky and Laura and Sarah were somewhere on the trail and we all passed them and they cheered. That was fun! So funny we didn't know each other would be there! They left right after Chad finished, they could never find the starting/finishing line, so Chad found them and they went back to their hotel and then headed to Florida for Disney World for Spring Break.

It's Oak pollen season again and Emily is trying to stay inside. I'm going to try to work on the yard this week. We have had a hard time agreeing on what to do during Spring Break.

Spencer doesn't want to go anywhere, Taylor is up for everything, Emily is a bit picky too. But last night we finally found something that everyone is up for: some resort on Lake Conroe. So we'll see how that goes. Last night we read a talk Pres. Uchdorf gave at the Priesthood session about pride. It is such a good talk. Each of us has something we can work on!

Spencer and Taylor went with the missionaries to the Abello's home a couple of weeks ago (Ivana's house) and the Elders are teaching her two younger brothers. They have been coming to mutual (scouts) and they want to get baptized. Taylor went to another discussion last week and the dad was there and was a little combatative, but it got Taylor thinking. He picked the boys up for church and took them home after church yesterday. I think Taylor and Spencer really enjoyed this experience, and will probably continue to fellowship the family.

I hope you have a very fruitful week! I am so grateful that you are serving and learning and growing and having the best two years ever! The gospel is true. The blessings are maravilloso!! Life and the cares of the world and the distractions that seem so important or entertaining are so bland compared to the grand design of the Plan of Salvation. Coming unto Christ and learning to love our fellow men, including and especially our family, developing charity is what this life is all about. Rejoice in the glorious message and smile your wonderful smile and tell everyone you see about it.

I love you so much Damon. You are an amazing son!!!! Have an amazing week! Espera Milagros!!!!

Love,

Mom

Hi Damon,

I am in Utah right now. Danae had a Janis women retreat and invited all the Texas moms. I have been worried about Heather and decided to go and have some fun with her and the other Janis women. I flew here an Friday and will leave Monday. We had a great time being crazy. We had dinner at a cafe near Danae's house then went back to Danae's house and put food all over our faces. (natural masks/facials) Then we danced to a wii game that kylee brought. Because i have been running so much i could keep up nd didn't get tired, so i danced for provably 1-2 hours. The next day i felt fine, but by that night my calves were killing me! I had danced in the balls of my feet most of the time. So I am feeling the pain now.:)

I haven't read your latest letter but maybe I can have dad read it to me when he gets home from church before I send this.

I'm sure the kids and dad will tell you about the resort place we went to at the end of Spring Break. I left early to go to Utah, but I had fun and it was good to pending time together. When we are home, Taylor is always doing things with friends. I am so grateful we could do that and that dad provides so well. It is an enormous blessing and I hope I don't take it for granted.

Sent from my iPhone

3/27/11

Hello my beautiful, wonderful, precious children!

Emily was telling me about a young mom she babysits for and how she is always gushing to her about how wonderful her children are and I thought, "How wonderful! I was always too worried that people would think I was a bragger to do that. But I felt it in my heart and I just want you to know how proud I am of each of you and think you are 5 of the most incredible people that have come to this world!!!! Do you know that? I hope that isn't a secret to you. So I'm saying it now for the record, and will try to remind you occasionally!;)

When I was in Utah last week, Grandma Janis mentioned that Aunt Becky sends her children a letter each week. I write to Damon, but I thought that I would try to correspond a little more with the rest of you. (Even though all but Heather and Damon are gone right now, everyone is pretty busy with their own activities, so it feels like I need to write to be sure you all have heard from me once in a while:))

I have just finished another book (Oh no! Not another book!!! Yes! Another book) and it's called "Putting on the Armor of God: How to Win Your Battles With Satan" by Steven A. Cramer. Grandpa Janis gave it to his children a few years ago and I picked it up a few months ago and have been picking away at it. It's really good. I remember Damon giving us a Family Home Evening lesson about the armor of God after he came home from BYU and it was really good! Brother Cramer uses two scripture passages as the foundation for his book. The first is in Ephesians 6:10-18:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints...

And the other one is in D&C 27:15-18:

Wherefore, lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand.

Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you;

Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me, and be faithful until I come and ye shall be caught up, that where I am ye shall be also. Amen.

I have a few thoughts about these scriptures. First, the war in Heaven was real and it was difficult. But we all chose the right. Yea for us!!!! We were reserved for these last days and we have a mission to perform. The adversary knows that. A few years ago I was in the temple and had impressed upon my mind the words of my patriarchal blessing, "Your mission in life is to preach the gospel and to rear a fine and noble family that will help to build and strengthen the Kingdom in these, the last days." And then the impression came that because of who YOU (my children) are, there will be opposition to keep you from doing that (build and strengthen the Kingdom). I was counseled in my blessing, "Have faith, live faithfully, and all things will work for your best good." Similar statements are made to all of us in D&C 98:3, 90:24, 105:40, and 100:15. Beautiful promises. The opposition is real. But one of the pieces of the armor of God is the shield of faith. Faith in Jesus Christ. If you hold to your faith in the Savior, He will be a shield between you and the fiery darts of the wicked.

Second, in the Ephesians version, Paul tells us what the sword of the Spirit is: the word of God. That's what the Savior used against Satan after his 40 day fast. He quoted scripture to him. We need to know the scriptures so that we can attack. It is our offensive weapon. Last night at the Young Women General meeting, President Eyring spoke about nourishing our testimonies and it totally goes along with this. In Alma 32, the way we nourish the seed in order to enjoy the fruit is by having meaningful prayer, studying the scriptures consistently, and by obeying the commandments of God. Otherwise, what happens? The plant of our testimonies withers and dies and then we pluck it up. But it's NOT because the seed was bad, and it is NOT because the fruit isn't desirable. It's because we failed to nourish our testimony. The fruit is "most precious, sweet above all that is sweet, white above all that is white, pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst." It is so easy to slack off, yet that is just what Satan is waiting for. If we don't have the sword of the Spirit sharpened and ready, we will be more vulnerable to attack.

Third, I love an idea from the book. Brother Cramer talks about carrying "victory scriptures" with us and searching for them. They are the nuggets of truth (magical nuggets of knowledge:)), scriptural treasures that if we read frequently and internalize them, they will be our weapons of defense. It's like our personal rod of iron that we hold fast to as we are in our mists of darkness. They are the kind of scriptures we underline or mark in our scriptures. But how many times do we go back and look at those passages that we underline? So each week, I will be sending you some "victory scriptures" on index cards that you can keep on hand and carry just a few with you each day, to review and glance through throughout the day. I would love to hear if you find any, and what scriptures are powerful to each of you!

I love our Savior. He gives me hope and peace and joy. Because of His sacrifice and resurrection I have the ability to live with Him and with YOU forever and that is true joy for me.

I love you!!!! I hope you have a wonderful week!

Love,

Mom

3/28/11

Hi Damon!

I have to make this quick, but it's my 2nd letter if you include the one I sent yesterday to all you kids. I got stuck in a long phone call and there you go! :)

Sorry about last week's cut-off letter! I wrote the letter on Sunday, but needed a nap so I just put it down. The next day I didn't have a chance to finish before I got on the plane to head home till I was in my seat. I got on and hit what I thought was the save button, but it was the send button! So it sent a partial and they told everyone to turn their phones off. So when I got into Phoenix, I got on Dad's email to see if you had written and you had. So there it is! The rest of the story.

Last week after my layover lasted longer than expected in Phoenix (see Dad's letter if you don't know what I'm talking about;)) I got home and kept going on weeding the back yard. On Thursday I pulled out some dead bushes that had died in the bad freeze this winter and went to the Houston Garden Center and bought mulch, bushes and flowers. The back yard looks so fresh and beautiful! I am so happy when I look out! Yea! I just have to weed every few days instead of every year. Weeding is so much like repenting! That's what I thought about as I weeded this time, because there were some really nasty weeds. They started out so innocent, and if I had plucked them out right away, it would have been so easy! I could elaborate, but I think you'll get the point!

I love you Damon, I pray for you, I think of you. I hope your new assignment is going well! You have a wonderful ability to teach. I still think your farewell talk was the best I've ever heard. Your thought, prayer, inspiration and talent made it so. The Lord will work a mighty work with you as a wonderful instrument in His hands!

I hope you have a super fantastic week! Espera Milagros!

Love, Mom

4/3/11

Dear wonderful children,

I am here to tell you today that you are top notch, amazing, people!!! I get so many compliments and comments about you all, ALL the time! You stand out, you know how to win friends and influence people. I think one reason is because you live the Golden Rule. You all are gifted with that.

I loved General Conference. It was very strengthening. I definitely have a lot to work on! I noticed how many talks were on trials and I am reminded again of how everyone has their own unique challenges in life and how nobody is exempt. But there is help through them. I am so grateful for countless people who have touched MY life and YOUR lives in helping us through the tough times. Especially friends and family. See how many people, just off the top of your head, that you can count, that have made a difference to you because they cared. It is humbling.

We are not alone. I am grateful we have each other. There is strength in our family. We are a family by divine design and I know how much you all love each other. That is a rich blessing from Heaven! Keep your relationships strong and you will continue to be an ever greater blessing to each other!

Have a wonderful week in all that you strive to accomplish, and know that I will be praying for your success!

I love you.

Love, Mom

4/4/11

Dear Damon,

I hope you got the package last week. I felt so bad that none of us had written before you got on the computer! I was in the middle of my letter to you when I got a phone call and POOF! the window of opportunity was gone. I hope I'm not too late today!! After I sent the package I realized that the shirt I sent you is the name of a gum, but also the name of a GUN! So it fits right in to Rifle! :) I don't know if you got that or not, but when *I* realized I had to laugh. That kind of reminds me that yesterday we had Brandon, Mindy and Daenon over for the second session of Conference and we were talking about how Spencer went to EFY that one year as Doug Graves. He said he thought about going as Ben Dover, but thought people would catch on too much. Mindy said that her Grandma Dover's first name was Eileen, and she never got the correlation until her 8 year old grandson got it and had to point it out!!:) Poor lady! :)

I love your letters. It sounds like you are still constantly learning, which is wonderful because that is what life is all about. I like your approach to zone leader, caring for the elders in your zone and not being lazy. I love what Covey said about title leadership verses moral leadership. The mark of a great leader is one who leads with his principles, not his authority. Again, the Savior is the best example. And he led by example, not just telling the people what to do, He DID it. And He loved unconditionally.

This week flew by. I saw Sister Heaney and she told me about a technique that she is learning about called Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) that can help reduce stress, or pop emotional disruptions in your body that might trigger illness or other problems. Dad and I have been reading about it. The guy who founded it has helped vets with post traumatic stress disorder and helped them get their lives back.

I also weeded for two hours on Friday. There were probably 2,000 Morning Glory seedlings that popped up from seeds that fell from last year's crop. Ugh! I will fight this and conquer! Why can't good plants grow like that?!

Take care! I am soooo excited to talk with you on Mother's Day!!! You are doing so well! I'm so proud of your efforts, and your willingness to learn all that Heavenly Father is trying to teach you! Keep up the great work! Give your all, be creative and do everything you can to let people know about the incredible blessings the gospel has for them!!!

Espera milagros!

I love you!!!

Love, Mom

4/10/11

Hello my amazing children!

Just here to remind you again that you are the BEST! I love you so much!!

I started studying the Book of Mormon by topic last week to find victory scriptures, and started in the beginning of the index. I found many listed under the topic "Affliction". Isn't that interesting that victory scriptures would be located in verses where the word affliction is? I believe that it's through affliction we learn and experience the most growth. I just read 3 quotes that are really good:

"No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God...and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and

tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire." -Apostle Orson F. Whitney

And Heavenly Father doesn't just leave us alone to suffer. Elder Scott said "God loves us perfectly and would not require us to experience a moment more of difficulty than is absolutely needed for our personal benefit or for that of those we love." And President Harold B. Lee said, "Sometimes when we are going through the most severe tests, we will be nearer to God than we have any idea."

That gives me comfort. So having faith in the Savior is like looking forward to the future when His purposes will be made known to us and we will see the point of it all.

I have faith that He is watching over US and is close by. I know that. I feel His presence and His guidance. Faith gives us reason to hope and to look forward to the future! I know that you are all pursuing good things in your lives and I am so proud of you! I hope and pray for your success every day.

I hope you have a wonderful week! I feel it in my bones that this week will be a good one for you all. Let's all think to thank the Lord for our many blessings and dwell on the positives. Sometimes it helps me to think of how things could be so much worse and I can always think of someone that does have it worse and I feel to thank Heavenly Father for my life! I thank Him for YOU every day!

I love you so much!

Love, Mom

4/11/11

Damon,

You sound wonderful and you sound like you are learning and growing and contributing and blessing as you serve. How did your appointment go with the guy that you met after the appointment fell through with the others? He sounded very interested! Is Carbondale part of your zone? What cities does your zone cover? Is your companion a Spanish elder too or not? Are you able to speak Spanish at all? Do you study the language in the morning? So many questions!

This week I managed to keep the back yard weeded and still looking nice. Yea me! Spencer and I have been picking out new light fixtures to put up in the house and he's been replacing them. I have a hard time picking them out, but Spencer is a help. He's a pretty good handyman, though his clean up afterward could use a little more energy.:) Taylor is getting sales and marketing mentoring from Dad and he just revised his flyer for lawn mowing and it's much improved! Hopefully he'll get more clients!

Emily and Rebecca had cooking class last week at our house and we made homemade salsa, homemade black beans, and homemade corn tortillas. I went to Fiesta and bought Mansa and a cheap wooden tortilla press. It was fun and the tacos tasted maravilloso! Then for Young Women, the Beehive class did a spaghetti sauce cook-off. There were 6 girls so they had 3 teams of two. I had bought a bunch of ingredients and they were busy and creative and did a great job. Brother Kallis and Brett Allen and Taylor's friend Wendell were the judges. Emily and Emma deGraaf won! Then on Saturday Emily had her voice class recital. It went really well. She did a great job. She sang "When You Believe" from Prince of Egypt. It's a really beautiful song and a powerful message de fe y milagros. (I'm moving really slow in the Spanish Book of Mormon, but I'm steadily reading each night. I'm on Mosiah chapter 10. I have also kept up with writing in my journal the whole time you've been gone! Yea me again!:))

Dad found out about a couple of jobs he thought Heather would be qualified for. She's been wanting a job because her income with photography is not consistent enough and she wants and needs a car and to get on her own. He helped her with her resume. She has been doing quite a few photo shoots and has a few more lined up, so that's good. I think her own inhibitions are keeping her from an incredible photography business, but time will only tell.

I hope your week is full of wonderful experiences! I love you so much and am so proud of the work you are doing!!! My joy is so full when I think of you it makes me think of the tithing scripture where the Lord will pour down a blessing and there will not be room enough to receive it. That is how I feel. The gospel is true, it is beautiful and precious. I'm so grateful for the Atonement. Nothing compares, everything is void without it. Progression, growth, learning, joy, peace and hope all exist because of it. Because of it, there is a plan of happiness, mercy and salvation. What an awesome message you have to share with the people of Rifle, Colorado!

I look forward to hearing the latest from you today! Have a beautiful day! Espera milagros!

I love you.

Mom

ps. Do you have any pictures??? When you send the card I can put Emily's concert song on it.:)

4/17/11

Hello super terrific amazing wonderful children!

It's the middle of spring here in Katy (I'm feeling summer in the afternoon air) and it is beautiful! I've been spending a lot of time outside for me, running, and working in the yard and garden. The back yard looks so nice too that several evenings I've eaten dinner out back. And a few times I have just gone out back and sat in one of the beach chairs and let nature permeate me. There are little baby Sparrows in the wooden birdhouse on the side of the garage right now. I sat watching and listening yesterday as the mother and father flew away and came back several times and heard the faintest little squeaks.

I am amazed and grateful at the beauty that Heavenly Father created for us. In every bird call, every variety of tree and flower, the mountains, valleys, oceans, deserts, jungles, forests, and

plains, the changing seasons, rainbows, clouds, the sky and stars in the Heavens, I feel His love. It struck me when I taught Sunbeams how when the earth was created, what if there were no trees, or flowers or birds? What if there were trees, but just one kind, and only one kind of flower? And I thought, "every detail seems to say, 'I love you so much, so while you are away from me, I will make your home beautiful, so that when you see it all you will think of me.'" Do you feel that too? I hope so. And I hope that you know and feel *my* love for you!

With Spring comes Easter, and I love the symbolism of renewed life, rebirth, and eternal hope that spring and nature testify of the Savior in a glorious way! I love how when Jesus made his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, the Pharisees asked him to rebuke his disciples and Jesus answered them, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." The earth knows and testifies of Jesus Christ. I want you to know that I know Jesus lives, and that he loves us so much that he paid an incomprehensible price, and in his words, "how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit - and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink- Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men." (D&C 19:15-19) That price paid for all of our mistakes, our weaknesses, our wrong choices. And I love him because no matter how many times I mess up, he still loves me and is inviting me to come unto him. And he will heal me too.

I hope this week, you will take some time to reflect and read about the Savior and his Atonement and Resurrection and how He impacts you personally. I would love your thoughts.

Have a wonderful week! Good luck with your job interview Heather! You'll do great! Damon, may your week bring lots of testifying of the Savior and lots of hearts softened to hear your message! We are all praying for you and know what a fantastic job you are doing! Spencer, good luck with the start of a new semester! You'll do great and exceed last semesters accomplishments I know! Taylor and Emily, keep up the great work that you are doing, for you

are doing great things! I'm so glad to still be able to daily watch your efforts and progress! I love you all sooooooooo much!!!!

Love,

Mom

4/18/11

Hi Damon,

Thank you for responding to all the questions! I put a Google map on your blog that shows the little towns you are covering. I'm sure it is so gorgeous! I'm so glad you are able to enjoy such magnificent beauty while serving! Thank you for the pictures!!!! They look great! I am looking forward to hearing all the stories behind them! It looks like you are a barber now!:) Ah, the things you learn on a mission!

Tomorrow we are celebrating Passover. It should be good. Taylor is getting his braces off too. He's very excited. I think he had braces during your mission, so you only have seen him with them in pictures. How weird! On Wednesday we are having a Beehive activity making chocolate Easter suckers. The girls want this to be an activity where they invite a non-member friend to come. They are all excited to bring a friend. Emily met a girl that Aunt Mindy introduced her to. Her name is KC. KC's mom works with Mindy at the Kindermusik class and she home schools KC. So Emily has done something with her a couple of times. She invited her, but hasn't heard back from her if she can go. Emily doesn't have a super big circle of acquaintances, but she is wanting to bring a friend. It's amazing to me how eager the girls are to bring a friend! (Why didn't we think of this idea sooner?!) Elisabeth Cammack is our newest Beehive and she brings her school friend every Wed. night. I think she comes more often because she brings the friend, and her friend likes coming. So it's a win-win in my book! So the Beehives are gung-ho missionaries!

Speaking of not having many non-member acquaintances, I don't either! I HAVE to get over my stumbling blocks to missionary work! I don't even really know what they are. I guess I'm not super social and keep to myself. I have been feeling like I am limiting myself subconsciously. Not allowing myself to reach out and open my heart and home to people. I've been learning a little about this EFT thing (emotional freedom technique) that can neutralize the subconscious, or reprogram the negative talk in your mind, and get rid of all sorts of physical and mental problems. I'll try knocking down some of my inhibitions and see if I become a POWER member missionary!:) Can't hurt, right?

I had Jamba Juice with Wendel's mom last week and she was telling me what she's involved in. She teaches at EFY's a class on bullying and how damaging it is and what we can do about it. She also goes around to high schools and does assemblies and stake firesides, etc. She's going to present in seminary to all the grades soon as well. I guess several years ago her daughter was taunted and teased and excluded by her Young Women class and it got so bad she almost committed suicide. So Judy has been on a campaign ever since to help other people and even help everyone she can to understand all the forms bullying takes, its effects, how to heal the bully, how to heal the bullied, or targets she calls them. She says that being a victim is a choice, but a target is a better word because we can have someone target us and fire darts at us, but we have the choice to not let it affect us. Of course, that is very hard, but the delineation makes a lot of sense. It was a very interesting discussion we had and I learned a lot and realized a few things.

Our Sunday School lesson was about Christ's answer to who the greatest in the Kingdom is and He took a child and set him in the midst of them and said that we need to become as a little child and humble ourselves. And as we discussed the qualities of children, the kind Christ was talking about, I thought about their unconditional love and acceptance and how charity helps us to not offend anyone or hurt anyone. I think there are more people than we imagine that are hurting in one way or another because of how someone treated them. Everyone in fact.

That is what is so wonderful about the Gospel. Knowing of Jesus and Heavenly Father's love for each person that is greater than our capacity to love is so grand an idea if you really stop

and consider the implications. That knowledge alone makes life not seem so crazy or pointless. Like, if there were no God or the Atonement, or One who loved me no matter what the rest of the world thought, it might be hopeless for me on really bad days, or if I felt I had no friends. It's hard to get this idea out in words.

Anyway, I hope you have a wonderful week! Your message of hope and love and purpose and peace is so badly needed. Everyone has a pain point that the Gospel can heal and benefit them. Everyone. I'm so grateful to have the knowledge I do. It doesn't take the hardness out of life, just the way I look at it and how I can learn and grow from it. And to know that I have help that is a prayer away. Thank you for all the service and sacrifice you are making. I love you and cheer you on!

Con mucho amor para mi hijo maravilloso!

Mom

4/24/11

Happy Easter my most loved children!

Heather, Damon and Spencer, we (Taylor, Emily, Dad and I) missed you for our peanut M&M hunt this morning. Neither Taylor nor Emily thought to look in the piano, so obviously one of the three of you always got your stash there.:) Dad finally got the six-frame photo frame hanging and it made for a nice ledge for the M&Ms. Here's a picture:



Spencer, Dad used a chisel to gouge a spot for the screws. Yea handyman Dad!:) Damon, these are pictures we took in Florida last summer, so you are painfully missing. But that will be remedied this summer! It's just good to have semi-current pictures hanging on the walls. Next I'm going to tackle the dining room/ lounge, library, etc. pictures. They are SO outdated! (Damon's senior picture, Spencer in braces, etc.)

For the three of you who are gone right now, here's a glimpse into this week. I'll try to blog. Taylor went to youth conference and it was called Moroni's Quest. The kids had to dress up like Nephites -ish. They were put in tribes and each ward was assigned a story from the Book of Mormon to act out. They pre-recorded their voices so that when they did it for the stake, everyone would be able to hear. The kids initially met at the Stake Center and a group of the youth in the Stake started the thing off with Mormon and Moroni talking and then reading a bit from the beginning of the Book of Mormon, which was acted out. Taylor played Laman.

(Because I was a driver I was there at the Stake Center and Taylor did a really great job! Markus played Lemuel. Afterwards, Sister Coates, who was one of the tribal leaders said to them, "you guys are GOOD guys! Not bad guys!" :)) Then the kids were taken way out past Sealy to a ranch where they spent the rest of youth conference in tents and doing the reenactments they had prepared. Katy 2nd did Abinidi and Taylor played Abinidi (and Markus played King Noah:)). He said it went really well. At the end of youth conference, the last scene was when the Savior comes to the Americas. It was at night. The kids were blindfolded and they played an audio of a huge storm. Then they took their blindfolds off and heard a voice like it was Heavenly Father, and there was someone dressed as Jesus that came around and touched each youth's hand. Taylor said it was pretty emotional. Here a couple of pictures:



Before we went to the church. Yes, the duck is clean! Taylor cleaned it a few days ago! :)



From left to right: Giovani Abello (Ivana's brother), Markus Anderson, Taylor, Colter Merrill, Adam Cammack



Well, this is quite the newsy letter! :)

But I want to express my testimony of Easter and its meaning and significance. There was a Plan designed before the world was formed. And Jesus Christ came forward and volunteered to take the Eternal punishment for all mankind to fulfill the requirements of the Plan. It became known as the Plan of Happiness, because through it, we would be happy in the eternities. Prophets were told about the Plan and the Savior from the very beginning and they told the people. Prophecies throughout the ages were given concerning his birth, where, how, who. Prophecies about details of His life and the events leading up to his death and resurrection were given. The Heavens gave signs, the seasons bore witness. Passover and other Holy Days were instituted to point people to it.

He came. He taught, He healed and had compassion. He showed His love every second and the love of the Father. He fulfilled each and every prophecy. Then he endured Gethsemane for all of us. He died a horrible death. He overcame death and sin and in Him is the victory. He was seen by many who have testified to His triumph over death. And the prophecies are

still to be fulfilled of His Second Coming which will happen. Everything points to it. It gives us hope like nothing else can. Hope that all the difficulties we face, all the pain we experience is not in vain. There is a purpose to all of this. And there is love and perfect acceptance, wholeness, peace and joy that comes from it. I am grateful with all my heart for the willingness of our Lord and Savior to suffer, bleed and die for me and for each of you.

I hope you have a beautiful Easter and give thanks for the gifts He gave us that are farther reaching than we even know and grander than we can comprehend. But what we *do* know, let us give thanks.

I love you all with all of my heart. Because of the Atonement and Resurrection I can live with you forever. That is one of the greatest blessings I could ever want!! (quality time anyone?:D)

May you feel my love and Heavenly Father and Jesus' love in abundance today!!!

Love, Mom

4/25/11

Hi Damon!

I'm sorry last week you weren't in as chipper a mood as usual. It does put a damper on writing. Even talking to people. I don't like it when I'm having a rough time for whatever reason and don't want to talk about it, and I see someone and they ask how I'm doing. I just say fine, but I'm really not and I wish I was! The "best" though was when Dad and I were first married and occasionally we would have had a disagreement and I would be walking on campus going to class and run into someone I knew from my single days and they would ask, "So how's marriage?" Ugh! Right that second it was frustrating, but over all it was the best thing that had happened to me. Funny.

I'm also sorry that your companion reminds you of some of the bullies, I mean boys from young men. When I wrote to you last week about bullying from my talk with Wendel's mom I

couldn't help but think of some form of bullying that went on during your days in Young Men. I mentioned it lightly to Sister Hatfield the next day at choir where it was just Jackie, me and Sue Brown. Jackie adamantly agreed that some of you boys weren't treated well. She said Oliver was tormented. And one of the moms (she didn't say who) said to her once, "It's so funny to watch Oliver when the boys tease him." Jackie was stunned. Anyway, I'm sure your companion isn't a bully, but he has some qualities that are similar to those guys and it brings up some of those old feelings I'm sure. I'm sure you've already done this, but praying for him, praying for charity, and serving him in many small ways works miracles in helping to dissipate negative feelings. Now that it's a week later, this is probably all resolved, but I thought I'd throw out the obvious,...just in case!:)

Well, our Beehive activity was a success! Although Emily's friend wasn't able to make it, Emily got sick the day before and wasn't able to even go to YW, so that ended up working out for her. But out of the five girls that came, FOUR of them brought a friend. They all seemed to get along great and a couple of the girls liked it so well they want to come again! And Elisabeth Cammack actually didn't come because there was a family conflict, but she said she would have brought TWO friends! And the one girl who didn't bring a friend hadn't heard the announcement at church the week before and got the message too late or she would have brought a friend. So I think we are on to something and I'm excited to see what the effects will be!

You are an incredible person Damon and have so much to offer. As you are going to members homes, think of new and creative ways to invite them to bring friends to things. Be an agent and act, not an object being acted upon. Maybe you and your companion could organize a community event, like a 5K run and carnival. Get the members involved, go to local radio stations and have it announced, submit it to the local newspaper. Make up and pass out flyers. Get some t-shirts designed. Our stake has done it for the past two years. They get the Christus St. Catherines hospital to come and do free blood tests for people, they get doctors and podiatrists and chiropractors to come out and talk to groups. They have pump it up type inflatables outside for kids and really get the community involved and raise awareness of the church and it has been a great event. The third annual one is coming up next month. Think out of the box. It's so much more fun and can reach out farther into the

community than knocking on doors one at a time. Just an idea. Maybe it sparked a different thought, but go for it! There's no limit to what you can do if you put your mind to it!

You are doing great! Keep your enthusiasm and blow your companion away with the love and joy you have for him, for the people you meet and for the gospel and the Savior. He will catch it and you two will be unstoppable. You'll have people lining up to be baptized!!! I love you so much! As I was talking to Taylor on the way up to youth conference, I was telling him how I saw Sister Walsh and she was telling me how Taylor was doing so well at being Laman, and I said that he definitely was more of a Nephi in my home. So Taylor said that he has always seen YOU as Nephi. Of course I agreed, but it was interesting how he said his whole life you have been Nephi to him. You are such a great example to your siblings and such a loving, funny, intelligent, sensitive, hard-working, talented, and spiritual person. And right now all of these strengths are helping to build the Kingdom of our Lord, and I'm so grateful! I hope you have a really great week and get some baptism invitations accepted! Espera milagros! You are in our thoughts and prayers!

Love,

Mom
