

5/2/11

Damon,

Well, I hope you are doing great and enjoying your assignments and the area that you are serving in right now. Hopefully you have a little more control and are getting busier with **your** priorities!

I don't know what to say about my week! It was good, I am so blessed! Dad and I have been watching a 40+ hour set of DVD's about that EFT I told you about. It's so cool! Dad has done some on his allergies and hasn't had ANY symptoms! Anyway, I believe finding EFT was an answer to a fast, and Heather has an appointment this Friday with a lady out in Sandy who does it and I have some real hope she can put at rest many issues she's been carrying around with her for too long. So my heart is a little lighter than usual.

It's interesting how personal beliefs are tough to change and if they are challenged, we become defensive and maybe antagonistic. Just because Galileo said he believed the earth revolved around the sun, he was locked up and under house arrest. But it was because he threatened peoples belief system. Jesus Christ did the same thing. We discussed in Sunday school one example of that. When he healed the blind man, the leaders couldn't understand how he did it and so they wanted the blind man to deny Jesus which he didn't, so they basically excommunicated him. At every level, he challenged their belief system. Just the miraculous healing, plus healing on the Sabbath were two. Joseph Smith challenged peoples belief systems as well! (on so many things, and had multiple witnesses and even a tangible book) But new and different ideas, even that are true hit at your core, so that's why there's so much opposition and resistance to change. Unless you are questioning your own belief system and searching for something else, you are not open to it. This is a concept I have been thinking about just lately. I could help someone get rid of a headache through EFT, but some people would resist the technique because it goes against their belief system that tapping a few times on their face would take it away.

Anyway, I have a lunch appointment and I'm out of time. I hope you have a wonderful week and feel my love. I am looking forward to hearing your voice on Sunday. As Dad said, we have church from 1-4, but if during that time is the only time you can call, we'll get home for that! What would you like? A conference call with Heather and Spencer on it, or do you want to just call them separately? Dad can arrange a conference call number if you would like that. Just let us know!

Espera milagros!

I love you so much!

Love,

Mom

5/1/11

Hello!

Well, an exciting week for Y'ALL! (That was especially said for Damon and Spencer who refused to say that growing up!:D) Heather buying her OWN car! Woohoo!!! Damon getting more and more responsibilities! You'll do super! Spencer getting a 91% on his first Chemistry test! Awesome! Taylor getting a new longboard and Emily slowly, but surely still working on her room, getting Taylor to install a cute, new ceiling fan, and was called as Beehive president! I hope it was a happy week overall for each of you!

You each are progressing SO well in each of your different situations, and they are all so different, but I am so proud and happy to know that. I know you are each touching lives around you and making a big difference because of who you are. I really think that is what life is all about: helping people feel their worth and Heavenly Father's love. When our motives are pure like that, amazing things happen. I was just talking to my visiting teaching companion, who is a single mom and really struggling. And she told me that I am the only one in the ward who has told her in the year that she's been in the ward that she is a good mom. I know that meant a lot. My heart went out to her. I know that didn't solve all of her problems, and I'm not saying this to brag, just to make a point. But we all need a lift and validation and somehow things aren't as bleak when we know someone else believes in us. Being kind is up there on my list of the most important things to do and be. I haven't always been kind and I'm not always kind now, but I am trying harder lately.

I would love to hear from you about one of the many things you did this week that was kind! You are all kind. And I love you so much!

Dad and I closed on our third rental house this last week. Dad's going to town now that he has hired a guy to do all the rehab work.:) The back yard is still weed free and so pleasant. Swim team starts tomorrow, so think of Taylor at 3:30 our time and picture him diving in the cold water and starting possibly the last swim season we will ever be part of.:) I only have to work at 2 meets this year!

I hope this week is just as wonderful for all of you! I love you all and think of you and pray for you.

Love,
Mom

5/8/11

Dear Heather,

Happy Mother's Day! What a wonderful day for me, because it celebrates the glorious fact that I have YOU in my life! I am so thankful for you!

This past year has been a really tough one for you, but no matter what the obstacle, you are a shining example of a winner to me. You get up and face the day and put on your beautiful smile. That alone is worth celebrating!!!!

You have belonged to three different wards which is a challenge, but you have made friends, touched lives, and continue faithful. How grateful I am!

You have been an angel to Blair and Danae's family, giving back massages, cleaning house, preparing food and not only watching their children, but loving their children.

I know each photo job you take pushes you out of your comfort zone and is challenging. But you blow me away with your perseverance and your art! Your gift is magnificent! You have touched so many peoples lives through your photography, and your work will be treasured for the rest of their lives. It is such a gift and talent and I'm so proud of you and grateful that you have continued to develop it!! And I know that each client you have touches your life as well.

Yea for you in getting your GED too!! You set the goal and accomplished it.

After incredible efforts to get a job, you finally have one! Yea for you!!!! And after selling the Mercedes and borrowing Blair's car for months, which I know was a big challenge, you have your very own car! I'm so proud of you! That is a huge accomplishment! Just huge!

As much as you are going through internally, you have been a friend and support to so many: Madison, Kaity, Kylee, Alissa, and all the friends that are on missions, to name a few that I'm aware of. Your kindness is not unnoticed. As Elder Holland said last November, "I have struggled to find an adequate way to tell you how loved of God you are and how grateful we on this stand are for you. I am trying to be voice for the very angels of heaven in thanking you for every good thing you have ever done, for every kind word you have ever said, for every sacrifice you have ever made in extending to someone - to anyone - the beauty and blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

I love you so much Heather. I am so grateful to be your mother. You were a pure joy to raise, a precious flower in my bouquet. I wish I had a rose for you this morning! I haven't been able to figure it out. But maybe next year! I hope you have a beautiful day!

With all my love,
Mom

5/8/11

Dear Spencer,

Happy Mother's Day! It is a wonderful day because I can celebrate the glorious fact that YOU are in my life and my son. I am so grateful to be your mother! And I am so proud of you!

This has been a really amazing year for you! You have grown in so many ways! First off, you have grown physically!:) You are a BIGGER boy this Mother's Day than last Mother's Day! But seriously, I know you have had goals and have worked incredibly hard to achieve them!!! Even though it drove me crazy (:D) I am totally impressed with your tenacity and drive.

You have also grown academically, learning so much and applying yourself to full-time university studies. And you got A's and B's!!! And all that plus playing football and reffing football. Yea for you!!!!!!! And even coming home you learned all about electrical systems and how to get a home ready and rented. You have so much ability in all of those areas, Dad has so much confidence in you.

You've grown in leadership abilities, through being first assistant in the priest's quorum and then volunteering to lead in Biddulph Hall. You helped organize the scripture study and prayer group and also temple trips. I'm so impressed.

You have grown spiritually too. I could feel it as you came home last semester in your relationships with Taylor and Emily, plus the fact that you continued to (try to) have the scripture group with Brandon when you got home. You are preparing for your mission in all these ways: physically, mentally, spiritually.

You are such a wonderful son! I wish I had a rose for you this morning sitting by your bed. I haven't figured out how to do that, but maybe someday I will! I love you so much, you are so precious to me!

I hope you have a beautiful day!

With all my love!

Mom

5/8/11

Mom,

Thank you so much for your letter! I appreciate everything you said. I hope YOU have peace and contentment today as well. You are an incredible mother! Cream of the crop, the best of the best. Your love, dedication and commitment to your children is a monument to motherhood!

I love what Elder Holland said last October, "I have struggled to find an adequate way to tell you how loved of God you are and how grateful we on this stand are for you. I am trying to be voice for the very angels of heaven in thanking you for every good thing you have ever done, for every kind word you have ever said, for every sacrifice you have ever made in extending to someone - to anyone - the beauty and blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ... to all the moms and dads and families an faithful people everywhere, I thank you for sacrificing for your children (and for other people's children!), for wanting so much to give them advantages you never had, for wanting so much to give them the happiest life you could provide." I think of you when I read that and say Amen! You are an amazing woman with strength and faith and testimony that inspires and strengthens me and all the rest of the family. You have done so much and sacrificed your life for your family and I am so grateful!!!

I truly, truly hope your day is beautiful for such a beautiful mother!
Love, Tiffany

5/8/11
Mom,

Happy Mother's Day! I will be talking to you today, but sometimes the written word expresses things the spoken word can't and it lasts longer too!

I just want to tell you what an incredible mother you are!!! Your love, sacrifice, faith, and character have shaped me and guided me and strengthened me all my life.

Your love is constant, and a power in my life. I have always known and felt your love, yet, just like the air I breathe, I take it for granted. Of course my mother loves me! But there are some who don't have that wonderful blessing that is as essential for a healthy life as air. And I thank Heavenly Father frequently for your love, because it is such a blessing to me! I have felt your love throughout my life in your every day tasks like making my bed or doing my laundry, cooking meals every day, sewing dresses, doll's clothes, and costumes, nursing me back to health when I was sick, celebrating all my victories and mourning when I mourned. Reading aloud books to me, helping me with homework, typing my papers on the typewriter at the last minute, playing games, coloring, going to all my concerts, talking and listening to me on the phone, and packages at holidays. Countless are the ways in which I feel and see your love. Thank you!

Your sacrifices are also many. Just bringing me into the world was a sacrifice that now I can totally appreciate!:) The time you sacrificed to raise me, especially as a baby and infant, (the years I don't even remember) because it was so constant and full-time, thank you! I know a mother sacrifices for her children in ways they never will know, because mothers just do what it takes to give their child the best chance for happiness, and you don't tell your child what you gave up for them, because it was worth it in the end. And each child requires different sacrifices from their mother. So, for all the sacrifices you made for me that I don't even know about, thank you!

That reminds me of what Elder Holland said last October, "I have struggled to find an adequate way to tell you how loved of God you are and how grateful we on this stand are for you. I am trying to be voice for the very angels of heaven in thanking you for every good thing you have ever done, for every kind word you have ever said, for every sacrifice you have ever made in extending to someone - to anyone - the beauty and blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ... to all the moms and dads and families and faithful people everywhere, I thank you for sacrificing for your children (and for other people's children!), for wanting so much to give them advantages you never had, for wanting so much to give them the happiest life you could provide." Hearing this and thinking of you I say with all my heart, Amen!

Your faith is steady and sure, a lamp that has lit my feet through my life. It's quiet, unselfish and humble. You go about doing good without fanfare, serve faithfully in your callings and bear humble testimony of the Savior and his gospel. I am inspired by your beautiful example of faith Mom.

And your character is near to an angel's. Your kindness and charity in it's full definition (suffereth long and is kind, envyeth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, believeth all things; charity never faileth) is what I hope to be like someday.

I love you so much Mom! I hope you have a beautiful day, because you are such a beautiful mother!

Love,
Tiffany

5/8/11
Danae,

I just was thinking of you on this Mother's Day and wanted to send some love your way!

Thank you for all you do for Heather. You are an angel in my life and hers. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Have a beautiful day!
Love,
Tiffany

5/9/11
Hi Damon,

It was sooooo wonderful talking with you yesterday! You sound really good! You sound like you are on fire and are moving up to the next level of missionary work for the final sprint! Yea! And I'm so excited about your wonderful family that is soaking up the gospel! I hope you can teach many more families just like that! And it sounds like your companion is better than expected, so just love him with all your heart and feel the joy!

In the Beehive class we had a lesson on missionary work like I told you yesterday. There was a quote he read that I really liked. It is taken from "A Visit With Elder Gordon B. Hinckley" and it says, "We all like comfort; yet industry is at the heart of missionary work. This has not changed since the time of the Savior. He said, '...whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's the same shall save it.' (Mark8:35) That is particularly true with missionary work. The greatest challenge has always been to go before the Lord in prayer and ask for strength and capacity and direction, and then go out and go to work. The Lord has declared: 'If therefore thine eye be single [to my glory], thy whole body shall be full of light.' (Matt 6:22) If a missionary works with an eye single to the glory of God, then the darkness goes out, the darkness of laziness, the darkness of sin, the darkness of procrastination, the darkness of fear, and these are all factors that influence missionary work." I really like that. It sums things up pretty good I think. I like the scripture about having your eye be single to the glory of God and the promise that you shall be filled with light. I wonder what having your eye single truly means. I'm sure it's something like always having a prayer in your heart, always remembering Him, trying to see people as the Lord sees them, trying to do as He would do. President Hinckley seems to be saying also that working with all your heart, might, mind and strength gets the job done too. And I know that's what your goals have been your whole mission. I'm so proud of you!

I had a really nice Mother's Day! Emily and Taylor made breakfast for me. Dad made stroganoff for dinner. I talked with YOU!, Spencer, Heather and Grandma Scott. A very nice day!

It sure is getting warm here. I saw a forecast for the week and it looks like we will be in the low 90's all week. We haven't had any rain for months. I just read an article that says from October through April Houston has received less than 6 inches of rain, the lowest on record. It's an extreme condition and causing problems. The Sealey Branch had a fast on Fast Sunday for it.

I hope you have a wonderful week, meet many families that are kept from the truth because they know not where to find it. (D&C 123:12)

I love you so much! Mother's Day is really a day that I celebrate YOU being in my life. You have learned so much this past year and accomplished so much, touched so many lives. I am so grateful and I know Heavenly Father is too, and they are blessing you.

Espera milagros!
Love, Mom

5/15/11

Hello my wonderful children!

I hope you all had a good week! It was great to talk to you last week Heather, Damon and Spencer!! I know I speak for all the family when I say how wonderful it was for each of us to talk to you Damon, even if it was for just a few minutes! On Mother's Day morning, Taylor and Emily made me breakfast in bed and I appreciated that. I have had breakfast in bed so many Mother's Days, you all have been so enthusiastic about it!:)

Two weeks ago I asked what kind thing you had done that week, and Heather told me about giving Danae a back massage and Damon told me he paid for an Elder's lunch who was out of money, and Emily told me that she had helped me in the kitchen (which I was very appreciative!). Thank you for sharing! It warmed my soul.

On Friday I took the opportunity to go to the temple. It was our Stake's "Fill the temple week" so I spent about 4 hours there doing about 3 different things. I'm grateful I could go. It was peaceful. I also learned that one of the purposes of sorrow in this life is to learn good from evil. I spent time searching the scriptures in the Celestial room of the temple on this subject. Here are some of the things that impressed me: Satan told Eve if she took the fruit her eyes would be opened and she would be as the gods knowing good and evil(Gen 3:5) and then in verse 22 it says, "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil,..." So knowing good from evil is a godlike attribute that we must learn to become like Heavenly Father. In verse 16 the Lord tells Eve that because she ate the forbidden fruit, "I will greatly multiply thy **sorrow** and thy conception" and in verse 17, the Lord tells Adam, "cursed is the ground for thy sake; in **sorrow** shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." So having sorrow fulfills a fundamental principle.

Then, in Moses chapter 5, verse 10, Adam says, "Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God." And in verse 11, Eve says, "Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient." So they were both glad to have sorrow that they could have their eyes opened and learn to know good and evil.

I searched in the triple combination under the word "Good" and there is so much that ties into this concept. Lehi talks about the Fall and how we are free to choose because Jesus redeemed us so that we can act and choose between good and evil. Abinidi and Alma also talk about these things. And Moroni talks about how every good thing comes from God and that which enticeth us to do good is of God. It just emphasized the point that life is all about choosing between good and evil! What a concept!:) But the idea that sorrow teaches us to learn good from evil struck me. Our trials have a very noble purpose: to help us progress in our training to become gods. I was grateful for the bit of revelation I received and wanted to share it with you.

I love you all so much! I know you are all choosing good and trying to follow the Savior. I am so grateful!

I hope your week is wonderful and you feel the Lord's love and my love!

Love, Mom

5/16/11

Hi Damon!

I hope things are going well and your plans are coming along with the zone and your goals! Are you doing any Spanish work right now? Do you think you'll have any Spanish work the rest of your mission? I hope so! I hope you meet a family this week that has been waiting for you for the last two years and you can take them through the gates of baptism!!!!

Taylor may not have taken the opportunity to write, he was reading a book all day yesterday. Saturday he taught swim lessons for the Greenway team. He's been assistant coach for the first two weeks for them. They actually have a sign up sheet for any of the parents to sign their kids up for Saturday private lessons from the coaches if they want. So Taylor raked in some money there. Then he came home and ate and then was off with his two friends to mow 5 lawns and make more money. So he's getting pretty rich... and tan!:))

I don't know how much you know about the Janis Family Reunion this year. It's June 8-12 in Nauvoo. Blair and Danae are in charge of it. It is the same week as Emily's girls camp and so I have mixed emotions because I hate making decisions between two good and very important things. Of course family comes first, so Emily will be coming to the reunion, but she doesn't really want to. I called Shelby last night to see if Emily could go to Julie's camp and she said of course. Shelby is the Stake girls camp director, just called a couple of months ago. The week of their girls camp is the same week Taylor has EFY in San Antonio, so maybe Dad and I will take a trip ourselves somewhere. That would be really nice!

I keep forgetting to ask you, but do you need us to start arranging housing for you at BYU? And if you do, do you have any stipulations or special requests? I don't know what Dad has done as far as re-enrolling you or anything and I know you aren't supposed to think about this stuff hardly at all, but I wanted to know when you need us to start doing anything.

I am so grateful you are happy and serving the Lord. I am so grateful you have a strong testimony of the gospel and are progressing so much in your life. It is a real comfort to me and a deep joy I feel when I think about it. Keep going strong, you amazing missionary you! Espera milagros!!!!

I love you so so so much!!

Love, Mom

Hi my FANTASTIC children!!!

You are all amazing, I can't say it enough! Each of you touch so many others lives in significant ways and in your own personal ways too. Like I was just reading Heather's blog and she was up on Ensign Peak and ended up taking pictures of a random group of people and a married couple and they were so happy with her pictures! How lucky those people were to be there right at that time when a world-class photographer just so happened to be there and be so kind and generous with her talents!!! I feel so lucky and grateful to be so related to all y'all!!

Dad, Taylor, Emily and I ran in the Katy Stake's 3rd annual 5K fun run yesterday and it was fun! (Dad won't admit that) Lots of people there. No medals for any of us, though I know Taylor got 5th in his age category (male 0-19) and I came in 4th in mine (40-44 I think) Anyway, here are a couple of pics:

Before the race

Emily coming in to the finish line

It was humid and in the 80's, but the day was overcast and there was a slight breeze which was so welcome!

Well, I just thought how running and races are so analogous to life and I know that's kind of cheesy, but I'm going to try to do it anyway.:) Actually I'm going to diverge for a second and say that as I've been weeding this past month, I have been amazed at my success in keeping the weeds down and how a little bit of effort on a consistent basis makes a huge difference. It's reminded me of how if we do the basic small things consistently like reading the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon, and have daily prayer, life can stay in control so much more. But every year I have had to go out to a jungle and whack the weeds down and break my back and sweat pulling up huge weeds and those awful prickly brambles and even in the last couple of years another takeover vine called Morning Glory. It takes hours and is painful and I feel like cursing the ground. If we let our lives go without staying connected to our Heavenly Father, we could find ourselves in a big jungle that's hard to get out of. There's a great scripture that says "that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass." The weeds I am pulling right now are tiny and so simple to pull. I just need my fingers, no gloves, no tools. And the yard looks great! Here are a couple of pics to show the contrast:



last year Morning Glory literally covered the back landscaping. It made for a beautiful picture (thank you Heather! You are amazing!) but you can't see the fountain. It had completely covered the tree at the back right of the yard and I pulled it off having to use all my body weight. I thought I would NEVER win that battle. It all died in the winter, but I knew this spring it would come up. When I did the back breaking work of clearing everything out and getting all cut up from the bramble vines, I planted flowers, a couple of new bushes and mulched. Less than a week later I went out and weeded. There were about 500 little Morning Glory starts poking up through the ground. It was a little discouraging, but I pulled them up. A few days later, I went out and there were a few hundred MORE, so I pulled them up. Now I weed once a week and there are several starts and about 50 bramble starts, but they come out so easily. Here is a picture of the backyard after I got it mulched. It looks pretty much the same now. Some of the flowers are flourishing even more and some died, but it's about the same:



and:



Ok, so I was going to do the running analogy, but I think the weed one won.:) So my loving counsel to you is to keep the weeds small in your life by reading your scriptures and praying. They don't take the challenges of life away, like weeding doesn't keep the weeds from ever growing again, it just keeps them manageable. Jesus said it this way:

24¶Therefore whosoever ^aheareth these sayings of mine, and ^bdoeth them, ^cI will liken him unto a ^dwise man, which ^ebuilt his house upon ^fa rock:

25And the ^arain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and ^bbeat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a ^crock.

26And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a ^afoolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that ^ahouse; and it ^bfell: and great was the fall of it.

The rain came and the winds blew on both the wise and the foolish, but if you are founded on the rock from the daily consistent spiritual nurturing, you won't fall, or get taken over by the weeds of life or Satan. So was the analogy too cheesy? The visual and the actual weeding has been a good lesson to me and I just wanted to share it with each of you. If you have any insights I would love to hear it!

I love you so much. I hope you have a super week! Let me know if I can do anything for you!
Love, Mom

5/29/11

Hello my super wonderful extraordinary children!

I hope you've all had a fantastic week! I was thinking, you are all tired, Heather from her graveyard shift job, Damon from all his mission responsibilities, Spencer from lots of studying, and Taylor from running in a million directions (and seminary!) I think Emily is the only one still with lots of energy and not a lack of sleep.:) A week ago Thursday, Emily, Aunt Mindy, Daenon and I went to the Kemah Boardwalk and spent the whole afternoon there. We all got day passes and went on ride after ride. It was a hoot! Here are a couple of pictures:



Yes, I was being thrown around across from them, but managed to get quite a few funny pictures of these two.



The Bullet was very fast, very loud and very jolting. Aunt Mindy and I succumbed about 5 times, and then decided to just take pictures.



So Dad, Emily and I finished watching hours and hours and hours of these EFT DVD's and the last session was called "The Palace of Possibilities." It was pretty cool. I thought I'd share some of the notes I took.

-My consistent thoughts become my reality.

-Listen to the words you use. Are they consistently positive? or negative? If you said these words: miserable, stressed, depressed, fail, exhausted, rejected, you would experience them

in a mini way just saying them and would feel more negative. On the other hand, if you said these words: excited, confident, energized, jazzed, success, loved, you would experience them in a mini way just saying them and would feel more POSITIVE!!:) So you can condition your system by using exciting, energized awesome words. And also replace or downplay negative words by using the opposite or less intense words. For example: **I can't** - possible, I don't know how yet, I'm open to the possibility; **problem** - challenge, opportunity; **stressed** - energized, got a lot on my plate; **depressed** - a little down, in a slump; **I failed** - I stubbed my toe; **exhausted** - need a refueling, pooped; **rejected** - misunderstood, they don't know what they're missing.

- The way to do whatever you want to do already exists, you need only tune into it. There is an antennae in your brain that will tune into and detect what you tell it to and is important to you. It's like Dad always says, if you put your mind to it, you will see improvement and find a solution. There's ALWAYS a solution.

I hope that made some sense to you! So this week, think more positive words and tell me if it makes a difference in how you feel and how you respond to life!

I love you all so much! I thank Heavenly Father every day for each of you in my life! I hope your week is what you want it to be! You are amazing, successful, brilliant, caring, talented, beautiful people!

Love,
Mom

5/30/11

Hi Elder Janis!!!!

This has been a crazy week. Heather works a graveyard shift down in Provo 2 nights a week from 10 PM to 6 AM and both nights she called me as she was heading down to work. The first night we talked till around 1:30 am, and the second night we talked till 3! But it's good to spend more time with her. I take what I can get!:)

You had some really good insight in one of your last letters. You said, "...I've be been through the refiner's fire on just about every front imaginable, but I recognize that it's the Lord preparing me and trying me." That is such a good attitude!!!!!!! So many people get bitter, leave the church, give up, blame everyone but themselves, etc. when they are put through the hard times. But you have the faith and understanding to know that Heavenly Father loves you and will use these difficult times to shape you into someone stronger, better, more capable, more refined and more fit to accomplishing great things in your life. It's because you are humble and have a soft heart.

I finally updated the pictures on the wall of you children. I went through pictures Heather has taken over the past 2 years and picked one out. She ordered them and I got them a week ago. Some of them were vertical, so I had to go to the store and get more brackets to screw into the frames so they would hang that way. Then I put the pictures in. Then I had to measure and hammer and level and pull nails out and adjust and hammer and level. I moved them into the family room, since I am really close to buying a real dining room set and want that room to be more formal. So I finally got all the pictures hung. The glass is a little dusty. I didn't notice it till the next day, so I need to dust them. But I took a picture and here it is:



I know they are going to be replaced at the end of the summer hopefully, but it feels good to have more recent pictures up!

I feel so blessed. I have so much: family, the gospel, all the comforts and necessities of life, love, learning new things, a nice home, good health, freedom. I have it all. I am so grateful! My life isn't perfect, I'm always worrying about at least one of my children, but it's practically perfect! Heavenly Father has richly blessed me. He is so good.

I am glad things are going well with your companion and you are still learning things to do better. I hope this week is another wonderful, full, productive and miraculous week! You are just a great example! After the seminary graduation last night, we were walking out down the hallway of the church with Markus Anderson and his dad and we passed the missionary plaques and started talking about you and Markus remembered that the first Sunday they were here, it was your farewell. Brother Anderson said that you were the only one of the boys he had taught before that remembered him. He started talking about how you, Colby and James were the best in the group and that you were the best of all. He was so complimentary. You really are wonderful! I love you so much! Espera Milagros!

Love,
Mom

5/31/11
Hi Virginia,

I just thought I'd send you the "victory scriptures" I found this week. Thought you might could use a little boost! You are such a wonderful person! Thank you for thinking of me when I'm sure you've got your own things to worry about. You are so thoughtful!

Tiffany

Lift up your hearts
and be glad,
for I am in your midst,
and am your advocate with the Father;
and it is his goodwill to give you the kingdom.
D&C 29:5

Look unto me
in every thought;
doubt not,
fear not.
D&C 6:36

Learn of me,
and listen to my words;
walk in the meekness of my Spirit,
and you shall have peace in me.
D&C 19:23

Wherefore, I am in your midst,
and I am the good shepherd,

and the stone of Israel.
He that buildeth upon this rock
shall never fall.
D&C 50:44

Behold, I will go before you
and be your rearward;
and I will be in your midst,
and you shall not be confounded.
D&C 49:27

And again, be patient
in tribulation
until I come: and,
behold, I come quickly,
and my reward is with me,
and they who have sought me early
shall find rest to their souls.
Even so. Amen.
D&C 54:10

When through the deep waters
I call thee to go,
the rivers of sorrow
shall not thee o'erflow,
For I will be with thee,
thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee
they deepest distress.
"How Firm a Foundation" verse 4

6/6/11
Hi Damon!

You sound so good! You are such a great example to your brothers! We're trying to help Spencer get his papers in, he's not moving as fast as we want and his bishop has a lot on his plate and isn't moving as fast as we'd like either. But he's making progress. Brandon Morris is going to the Philippians and Josh Davies is going to Pocatello, ID Spanish, if Spencer hasn't told you. Also, Markus Anderson, Taylor's friend, his brother, Daniel just got his call and he's going to Paris, France. So we'll see about Spencer! He says that many of the calls are having October MTC start dates right now, so he may be here a while.

We just got a wedding announcement from Lacey Clay. She was married in the Anchorage, Alaska temple last week. I'm happy for her, but her announcement is the worst announcement I've ever seen! Just saying.:)

I know you've been working with less actives. What is it that you say and do? How do you reach them? I know Dad really liked that on his mission too. It's interesting, Jen Hanson told me a year ago that she had an amazing experience and felt like she got a new heart. Here she was a strong, active member of the church and yet had an even greater transformation for her. She is on fire and is such an amazing missionary. Like the sons of Mosiah, she can't stand that anyone should be left out of the Celestial Kingdom, and she only wants to do God's will in her life. That's all she cares about. I'm grateful to be her friend and to have her share with me.

Damon, I love the gospel and I love Jesus Christ. My testimony is more precious than gold. As I've been searching for victory scriptures and finding them so readily, it amazes me how much the Lord loves us and how much he wants to bless us. I am so humbled by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for me and for everyone and I feel his unconditional love and maybe a little of his perspective on how he views all of us who sin and how it helps us to become more humble and meek and submissive and refined.

I hope you have a super week! You are so precious to me! I am cheering for you! And praying for you and thinking of you! Espera milagros!

I love you!!!!!!

Love,
Mom

6/12/11

Hi my childlings!

Well, Nauvoo was wonderful! It was so good to see you and be with you Heather! And we of course missed you Damon and Spencer! It was a really great family reunion, though many of your age were missing and it felt incomplete.

We were able to go to many of the places at Nauvoo that we didn't get to the last time we were there. We went to the blacksmith shop and got "prairie diamonds" which were nails bent into a ring shape. We went to the school house, the tinsmith, the printers, and the boot makers. We also went in the family living center where they showed other various life skills such as rope making, bread making, candle making, weaving, and such. Then there was a fun place for kids outside that had pioneer games. Taylor, Dover, Derek, Chad and Daniel really enjoyed the stick and hoop game where you put a hoop onto two sticks and when you pull them apart the hoop shoots off and someone else catches it with their sticks. They made up rules for a kind of lacrosse/ultimate game, and played it for a long time! The little kids loved

the place because you could dress up as pioneers and play house in two little play houses, and walk on stilts and other fun games.

We went to like four shows that were all musical and super good and funny. There were sooooo many missionaries there, young and old, on 3 month assignments, 6 month assignments and full-time missions. It was great! I was ready to sign up to come!

The Janis Family went on a 2 mile handcart trek that was pretty challenging and even dangerous! It was muddy and had many hills that could have been a problem if the handcart got out of control. Several people slipped. Taylor, Chad and Dover had one handcart and on the hills they ran like wild Indians, whooping. I got some pictures on Heather's camera and Mindy got it on video. Pretty funny. The trek was a great family binder and was very satisfying. I think it was because it was rigorous and everybody was needed to help and we did what needed to be done and it just felt awesome to accomplish it.

Going to the temple was also a highlight of course. It is such a beautiful temple and so historic too. Anyway, these are a few pictures I got on my phone. I took more on Heather's camera and she took even more, but this is a tiny glimpse:



I'm pointing to James McDonald, our ancestor from Ireland who died from a few hour exposure to cholera on the pioneer trail at the Platte River. His name is in the Pioneer Memorial down Parley Street just on the bank of the Mississippi River.





Pulling the handcart. It was empty and only 2 hours and we weren't all dressed up, but it gave us a flavor.



Some of the kids on the front row in the Cultural Hall before watching a cute musical production called "Just Plain Anna-Amanda"



Heather and Emily being silly in their Buc-ee's pjs.

I love you all so much! I hope you have a great week! I hope you can work at something as hard and satisfying as the pioneers. Here are a few quotes about work that I want to share:

"By work we sustain and enrich life. It enables us to survive the disappointments and tragedies of the mortal experience. Hard-earned achievement brings a sense of self-worth.

Work builds and refines character, creates beauty, and is the instrument of our service to one another and to God." -Elder Christofferson

"Work is an antidote for anxiety, and ointment for sorrow, and a doorway to possibility. Whatever our circumstances in life, my dear brethren, let us do the best we can and cultivate a reputation for excellence in all that we do. Let us set our minds and bodies to the glorious opportunity for work that each new day presents." -President Uchtdorf

Love,
Mom

6/13/11

I hope your week was wonderful! You sound good and strong! You are coming onto the last transfer. Make it the best yet! I know you will!

The countryside that we've been driving through this week has been beautiful! Rolling hills, trees, rivers. Nauvoo was so pretty, I'm sure it was a hard thing for the pioneers to have to leave and get to desert Utah.

I really enjoyed Nauvoo. I wasn't ready to leave. I felt the same the last time we were there. I hope I can go again, there's a spirit there. It may be because of how many missionaries are there running it. Maybe Dad and I can serve there someday! I hear they are worked pretty hard, doing tours all day, then sometimes not getting dinner before they are supposed to be at the shows that they do. But what a great experience!

One of the senior men there knew Grandpa Janis. Grandpa had been one of his dental school instructors, and then when Grandma/pa went home from Mongolia, he was called to be the Mongolian mission president. He was a character!

Blair and Danae did such a nice job on the reunion. Blair started off by talking about Zion and what that meant. Then he talked about Zion's opposite: Babylon. At the end of the reunion, he tied it up by telling about how when he left on his mission, Brandon said something to him that had a profound effect on him. He said, "This will be the beginning and a great opportunity for you to learn humility." Blair said he took it to heart and even prayed that very night to be able to learn humility and the Lord has been answering that prayer ever since.:)

Then Blair said that the main difference between those who are part of Zion verses those who are aligned with Babylon is that those in Zion are humble and those in Babylon are full of pride. It was very profound.

Have a super week! And to quote a victory scripture: "And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost;

and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be."

Know that I love you and am praying for you and the work. Know that I'm proud of you and your diligence and obedience and your righteous desires! Espera Milagros!

Love,
Mom

6/19/11

Hello my amazing children!

I am so grateful for all of you and love you so much! Heather, it sounds like you have been working like crazy! I hope you get some rest soon! I saw Sister Elliott and her new daughter-in-law at Jenny Wilkes' bridal shower and they both were raving about your pictures! Yea!!! Damon, I hope this last transfer to Grand Junction is a great wrap up to the beginning and you'll see how far you have come full circle! Spencer, keep plugging away on your semester, and I can't wait to hear that your papers are IN! Taylor, congratulations on two blue ribbons in the 50 free this week! And Emily, I'm so proud of you for being a good friend to Abigail Riggs this weekend and helping her to feel valued as a person and friend.

This Wednesday and Thursday I flew to Denver for an EFT workshop. (I thought of you the whole time Damon!) The flight Wednesday morning was at 6:05 AM and I got up early, but was pushing my luck. I flew out of Hobby, which is a smaller airport, so I thought I would be ok getting there closer to my flight. Well, a million people were there and just standing in line to get my ticket I heard my flight called. Then there were a million people in the security line that I missed my flight! Ughh!!! So I missed the morning of the first day. But luckily I had read a ton and watched a ton before, so it was just covering the basics. It was a good workshop! The instructors were an old couple from England. They were really sweet.

With this being Father's Day, I just want you children to know that I am so grateful to be married to your great dad! He loves each of you so much and would do anything for you. He is wise and gentle, kind and conscientious. He is a good example and treats the priesthood that he holds very seriously. His testimony is at the heart of everything he does. He has worked hard to provide us all with a wonderful life and I feel we are so lucky to have been blessed with him in our lives!

I also want to tell you how much I love Heavenly Father. I know he lives and that he loves us more than we comprehend. I love this talk by President Benson "Jesus Christ- Gifts and Expectations" (Dec. 1988) In it is a quote that I love and when I went to find it I liked a lot all around it, so I'm going to send a bigger one than I expected. (The quote I like is in purple):

"We once knew well our Elder Brother and His and our Father in Heaven. We rejoiced at the prospects of earth life that could make it possible for us to have a fulness of joy. We could hardly wait to demonstrate to our Father and our Brother, the Lord, how much we loved them and how we would be obedient to them in spite of the earthly opposition of the evil one.

Now we are here. Our memories are veiled. We are showing God and ourselves what we can do. **Nothing is going to startle us more when we pass through the veil to the other side than to realize how well we know our Father and how familiar His face is to us.**

God loves us. He is watching us. He wants us to succeed. We will know some day that He has not left one thing undone for the eternal welfare of each of us. If we only knew it, heavenly hosts are pulling for us—friends in heaven that we cannot now remember who yearn for our victory. This is our day to show what we can do—what life and sacrifice we can daily, hourly, instantly make for God. If we give our all, we will get His all from the greatest of all."

I hope you all have a wonderful week and can feel the love that I send your way daily! Know that you are all in my prayers and I think of you so much!

Love,
Mom

6/20/11

Hi Damon,

I kind of summed up my week in the letter to you children. I don't know if I have much more to say. Probably, though. ;) I met some really nice and interesting people at the EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique) Workshop. Such different backgrounds and beliefs. This one guy was raised Catholic, but told a group of us walking to lunch that he believes we don't get it right the first time around in life, so we come back and have another go at it. He believes in reincarnation. Another lady from India follows Buddhism and believes we are all perfect already and connected to the Universe. Some of what she said reminded me of the book "The Secret."

It's so interesting how we all perceive life and the world and God so differently and try to make meaning of it. I just feel grateful for the restored gospel! It makes so much sense! It is loving and meaningful. It's orderly. We have prophets who lead us. We have a great plan of happiness. We have commandments and scriptures, prayer and priesthood power. There are ordinances and covenants, eternal progression and a divine destiny. The restored gospel is founded on the teachings of the Old and New Testaments; it FITS! And it wasn't just one person that had one vision, it was mainly one man, but with many other witnesses on many occasions and then it transferred to another when he died and has continued till today. The

doctrines are in harmony with ancient scripture and with principles and laws that govern the universe.

I am grateful you have the opportunity to share this message full-time! I feel like I'm not doing what I should do. I'm not inviting. I'm enjoying talking to people on the swim team about you and your mission and all that's involved and people are impressed, but I'm not going any farther. Speaking of which, Alex Cochrane (do you remember him? He was older and on the team at the first. Kind of a big guy with a big head, then he would DJ at some meets later on. A really nice guy.) Well, he asked how the family was so I told him you were on a mission and he said, "Oh! Is he one of those guys that gets to wear the name tags and white shirts?" And I said yes and he got excited and kind of celebrated. Then he asked what I thought of the South Park Broadway hit "The Book of Mormon." He got the sound track and said if you look past all the "South Park sarcasm" the underlying message he got was that it was good to believe in something and to try to let others know about it. I just said that I had read an article that one of the public relations spokesperson for the Church had written an article for the Washington Post talking about what the Church has actually done in Africa during the time it took South Park to create and produce "The Book of Mormon." And that the publicity for the Church, whether good or bad, is raising awareness of us, which I saw was a good thing. He said he was raised Catholic, but considers himself an open-minded Christian and thinks it's wonderful if a person believes and worships God, that that is the most important thing. To a degree I agree, which I did. But we got interrupted. I don't know if I would have taken the opportunity to share the "extras" that our doctrine and Church offer to those who already worship God. Someday I will be bolder.

Daniel Wilkes in his talk said that at the beginning of his mission his mission president told them that your mission has the ability to change your very DNA. I thought that was pretty cool. Basically saying the Lord can and will give you an new heart and change you into a new creature if **you** will.

I hope you have a miraculous week and use the boldness that you have exercised on your mission to testify and teach many people about the glorious restoration! Question: Are you back speaking Spanish and working with the Hispanic people again? I love you and am so proud of your heart! Because it is your heart that is in the right place and the right disposition. You are a wonderful missionary and a wonderful son! Espera Milagros!!!

Love,
Mom

6/27/11

Hi Damon!

Well the house is empty except for me and Dad. Taylor and Brian just left for EFY an hour ago. Dad and I will leave in 3 hours to go to Arizona.

Your last letter was interesting. I'm sorry your companion has a need to be in charge. I think there is a human need to feel important and to be special. So many of us in childhood get knocked down and told in one form or another that we aren't important or special. Then we deal with that the rest of our lives, and it takes the form of bullying or ego problems, demeaning others, being controlling parents, etc. But as we understand the gospel and develop a relationship with Heavenly Father and feel his love, as we then take that love and serve other people, our need for glory or importance isn't as great. I think it's one of the refining qualities of the refiner's fire, or like that analogy you used in FHE about the rough rocks that get smoother over time in the river. I think your mission has been smoothing you and it shows in your response to your companion this transfer. You are such a sweet, wonderful person and I love you so much!

Be sure to take lots of pictures this last month. Enjoy every minute of every day! Try to feel love and give it away abundantly! I love the gospel. It's true! We have prophets on the earth, and they are true prophets! The Book of Mormon is TRUE! It is powerful! It changes lives. It testifies on every page of God's hand in our lives, of his love, of the Savior's mission, of the battle between good and evil. I love it!

Have a wonderful week! I love you so much! Thank you for your hand-written letters! They have been a wonderful blessing to get each week! I'm so glad you will write a few more! Espera Milagros muchos!

Love,
Mom

7/4/11

Hi my wonderful children!

This has been a great week for me, I hope it was for you! We have had Jeff and Shelby over this weekend and I didn't get to the computer to write yesterday, so I'm up early this morning before anyone is up so I can write a few things to you.

Dad and I enjoyed a week together at a resort in Arizona in 115 degree dry desert weather. And we LOVED it!:) He had about 3 business meetings while we were there, but most of the time we could vacation. We went to the Mesa temple and did a sealing session, sealing couples together and sealing children to parents. It was really nice. There was a lady who was there who was 100 years old! The temple sealer said that she comes faithfully 5 days a week to the temple!

The other days we sat under tent things and Dad wrote a book, I read it and gave him feedback, I read other things and we relaxed. I'm so thankful we were able to do that! It felt

like Heaven except you all weren't with us!:) Here are a few pictures: (I don't have time to format the vertical pictures. Ugh!)













I felt so spoiled and overindulged, but it was really wonderful!

I hope you all have a wonderful Fourth of July! The whole story of the founding of this nation is so inspiring to me. We live in the Promised Land! It is truly a blessing I thank Heavenly Father for often! President Benson gave a beautiful talk about the Constitution and here is something he said in it:

"Look back in retrospect on almost six thousand years of human history! Freedom's moments have been infrequent and exceptional. We must appreciate that we live in one of history's

most exceptional moments—in a nation and a time of unprecedented freedom. Freedom as we know it has been experienced by perhaps less than 1 percent of the human family.

History is not an accident. Events are foreknown to God. His superintending influence is behind the actions of His righteous children.

Long before America was even discovered, the Lord was moving and shaping events that would lead to the coming forth of the remarkable form of government established by the Constitution. America had to be free and independent to fulfill this destiny. As expressed so eloquently by John Adams before the signing of the Declaration, “There’s a Divinity which shapes our ends.”² Though mortal eyes and minds cannot fathom the end from the beginning, God does.

In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Savior declared, “I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose.” (D&C 101:80.) These were not ordinary men, but men chosen and held in reserve by the Lord for this very purpose.”

I am not very eloquent in getting thoughts out and so I like to use quotes to express myself. I guess I'm lazy. But I am thankful for the men who sacrificed so much and had the courage to form this country. I am also grateful for all who have sacrificed to preserve our freedoms all these years.

I love you all so much! I pray for you every day and pray that you will be watched over and blessed.

Love,

Mom

7/4/11

Hi Damon,

We have a ward 4th of July party that the YM and YW are in charge of and I have to be there in 35 min. so I am going to have to be brief!

In the book I am going to read out loud on our trip called Divine Signatures, by Gerald Lund, he talks about touring a mission with a friend who was the mission president. And as they were driving, the president got a few phone calls by zone leaders reporting in and the president would ask them after they reported if they had any small miracles, or something like that. Then he would listen. So Elder Lund asked what that was about and the president said that he felt inspired to encourage the missionaries to not get discouraged if an appointment

fell through because the Lord knew they would be there at that time and there might be another reason they were there and to look for it. He started getting all kinds of feedback from the missionaries as soon as he did and they were truly miracles! I was reminded of your appointment that didn't go through and then you met Steve.

That's my thought! Miracles are everywhere! The Lord knows where you are and where his other children are who want to know the truth. Pray for it and it will happen!

I love you so much and am so proud and grateful for your faithful service! Keep up the great work! You are awesome!

Love,
Mom

7/10/11

Hi my super fantastic children!!!

I realized when Dad and I were in Arizona that we were all in different states: Dad and I in Arizona (redundant), Heather in Utah, Damon in Colorado, Spencer in Idaho, Taylor in Texas, and Emily in Louisiana (at Julie's girl's camp)!!! That was crazy! I thought it was cool, but I will much prefer it when we are all in Texas! (and Florida:) Just TOGETHER!!)

This past week Shelby's family was here for the 4th of July and left Tuesday, but Julie and Rachel stayed. Taylor went to an overnight Camp Journey week camp, so Dad was outnumbered with all of us girls. He managed to survive. It was fun having the girls and we played lots of games and drew with markers and sang camp songs and had a good time. Now Taylor is back and I am happy to start gathering my chickees in.

Dad and I went out two nights this weekend with two different couples. We rarely go out with someone else and to do two in a row was a REAL out of the ordinary thing! Dad, AGAIN managed to survive! Friday night we went out with Eric and Jennifer Hansen. Dad finished his first draft of his seminary teaching book and Jen had read it and wanted to discuss it, so we went to dinner and then to their home and had a nice talk and discussed things about the gospel and in a sense shared our testimonies as we talked and it was really uplifting.

The next night we went to dinner with a man -who Dad hired to do the make-ready for our last investment house- and his wife. It was interesting. They are Catholic (they say they are cafeteria Catholics: they pick and choose which of the things taught they want to adhere to:)) But they launched right into religion with us saying we seemed like really good people and then started asking all sorts of questions about the Mormons. They had no exposure to the Church. So we were able to dispel a few misconceptions and Dad gave a 30 second First Vision story. Anyway, throughout the conversation, we discussed the Word of Wisdom (he asked if Mormons drank alcohol - he had two mugs of beer during dinner) the temple (they

live on the same street as the temple) prophets, Jesus Christ is our Savior, the priesthood, and of course missionaries. The couple just kept saying how good we were, that they could just tell we were good when they met us, etc. I know they felt the goodness of the Holy Ghost with us. It was a cool experience.

I know the gospel is true so deep down in my soul. The Holy Ghost peacefully and powerfully has testified to me over and over again. I know the Savior suffered for our sins, and carried our personal sorrows, afflictions and burdens. On the cross he carried them alone. He did it to fulfill all righteousness, to do his Father's will, in order to succor us in our times of need, and he did it alone so that we would never have to be alone. After discovering over 100 victory scriptures so far, and I am not even CLOSE to exhausting the resources, I have a deeper sense of Heavenly Father's love and anxious desire to bless us beyond our understanding. I feel so blessed, to overflowing sometimes as I count my many blessings. And as I have said before and I will say it again, and again, and again, I count you five beautiful, intelligent, talented, kind, AWESOME children among the greatest of my blessings! Please believe those words, and please know that Heavenly Father loves you deeper and more profoundly than you can comprehend.

I love you so much! I hope you have a beautiful week and can feel His love and my love each day of this week!

Love, Mom

7/11/11

Hi Damon!

Ok, I need to know if you received a package I sent a few weeks ago. The reason is because the day you were transferred, I was in Denver at the EFT workshop and asked Dad to call the mission home and get your new address and change it on the blog. Well, he did, but either they read it to him wrong, or he heard it wrong. But he said it was 610 25 1/2 Road instead of 620. So I finally looked at your envelope and saw 620 and called the mission home and *they* said 620, so I feel terrible! I sent a package to 610 and I don't know if they figured it out! Uggggh! I just switched the address on your blog today. I knew it was weird, because 620 was the same apartment you were in back at the beginning of your mission. I should have double checked! Dad is so good at what he does and I think I'm pretty good at what I do, but if either of us tries to do the other's job, it never goes quite right.:(:)

I am so glad you are having a fantastic last few weeks! I hope you see lots more miracles! And I can't wait to hear all about them! I was hoping your last couple of months would be the best ever! And it sounds like they are! Hip hip Hooray!!!

Spencer is slowly but surely getting his papers all ready. This Wednesday evening he has a final interview with his bishop and if that goes A-OK then he can schedule with the Stake President and get them submitted. If he can get in to the Stake President soon enough, he

might get his call in the little window of time we are all home before Florida. That would be so awesome and my nerves are strung as tight as Flewder Flan's harp :) and it feels like I'm back in the fall when Spencer and Taylor were finishing up their Eagle merit badges and projects and it was so close, we barely got it done to have the triple court of honor! I just need to breathe and let what happens happen. "Cause *THESE THINGS HAPPEN!*" :)

Anyway, I'm SOOO sorry about the address mix up! I hope you have an AWESOME birthday!!!!!! Big, huge, elephant-sized miracles on that day!:) I love you soooooooooooooo much!! I'm so proud of you!!!! Keep going strong and ESPERA MILAGROS!!!!

Con mucho amor!!!!
Mom

7/17/11

Hello my incredibly wonderful children!

Well, in the anticipation of everyone being here, I finally made a decision and bought a dining room table and chairs! So the library: it is not, and the lounge: it is not. It is for once in 13 years, a DINING room! Here are two pics:



The sunlight coming through the windows makes the color on the walls look really green, but it's the same color as usual. Here's another with more normal lighting and I got a runner and centerpiece. I actually got curtains too. You can see the rod leaning up against the wall behind the chairs, but obviously they haven't been hung. Then I'd like a rug and a new light, some things on the walls, a plant, etc. I'll spread the decorating out over a few months. This will be a start.



So each day I do a little organizing and a little cleaning, but not nearly enough! I'll probably kick into high gear this week! But I don't think I'll look nearly as frantic as I used to. :)

We watched a movie the other night called "Fat, Sick and Nearly Dead." Dad found it on Netflix randomly. It's a documentary about this guy in Australia who was overweight (a pretty big gut) and had a skin disease of rashes that broke out all the time. He decided to do a 60 day juice fast. He came to America and the first 30 days he was in New York, and the second 60 days he drove across the country to Southern California. You see him progress and lose

weight. He talks to people and he actually meets a truck driver at a random truck stop who weighs like 400+ pounds who is about his age and who has the same skin disease he does! He tells him about his juice fast and moves on. Well a few months later he's back in Australia and he gets a phone call from this guy asking for help. So he flies back to America and shows the guy what to do. And then the camera people stay with the truck driver guy and document *him* and after a few months this guy has lost 200 pounds! And his life is so different. It's a really inspiring movie!

So Dad went out and bought the same juicer and has started a 10-day juice fast.:) He's on day 4. It's been tough, and he was up in Dallas doing it too! But he has lost 8 pounds already! Emily and I are joining him on the juicing today. Emily says she's in it for a week, I think I'll go 3 days. I'm just looking for a cleanse. If you get a chance, text Dad and cheer him on! :)

When Dad and I were in Arizona and he was writing his book about seminary, it occurred to me that the pattern of search, analyze, apply, testify is not only great in seminary, or Sunday School, or church classes, it would probably be really good for family scripture study. I ran it by Dad and he agreed to try it out. And so did Taylor and Emily. So each day, one of us reads ahead of time (just a few minutes) and finds a block of verses where we are and comes up with the questions. Then before we read, the person will tell us what to look for and then we read. Then we have a discussion around the questions.

So Emily did her first time on Friday and she asked me to help. She had already figured out how many verses we would read and what the search question was and her thoughts on where she wanted the discussion to go. We read Mosiah 10:1-7 and her search question was, "What did Zeniff send out in order to protect his people from the Lamanites?" Here are the verses:

1And it came to pass that we again began to establish the kingdom and we again began to possess the land in peace. And I caused that there should be ^aweapons of war made of every kind, that thereby I might have weapons for my people against the time the Lamanites should come up again to war against my people.

2And I set guards round about the land, that the Lamanites might not come upon us again unawares and destroy us; and thus I did guard my people and my flocks, and keep them from falling into the hands of our enemies.

3And it came to pass that we did inherit the land of our fathers for many years, yea, for the space of twenty and two years.

4And I did cause that the men should till the ground, and raise all manner of ^agrain and all manner of fruit of every kind.

5And I did cause that the women should spin, and toil, and work, and work all manner of fine linen, yea, and ^acloth of every kind, that we might clothe our nakedness; and thus we did prosper in the land—thus we did have continual peace in the land for the space of twenty and two years.

6And it came to pass that king ^aLaman died, and his son began to reign in his stead. And he began to stir his people up in rebellion against my people; therefore they began to prepare for war, and to come up to battle against my people.

7But I had sent my spies out round about the land of ^aShemlon, that I might discover their preparations, that I might guard against them, that they might not come upon my people and destroy them.

So the answer to her search question, what did Zeniff send out in order to protect his people from the Lamanites, was: spies. the analyze question was: how vital were the spies to Zeniff and his people, and why? And we discussed that the spies were very vital and could be the difference between life and death for their people.

Her apply question was: How are the spies and our modern-day prophets similar? And we decided that our prophets warn us of Satan's current and new attacks, or his future attacks so that we can be aware of them and not get swept into the current philosophies of men.

Her testify question was: Have you ever heard the prophet speak about something and then see it come out later and because of that you were more prepared? (or something like that:)) We talked about the Family Proclamation and how when it came out, there were some things we could see, but since that time, the attack on families has accelerated and without that warning, we could have gotten swept up into the current trends of thinking.

It was a great discussion and Emily did a great job! Yea Emily! So that is something new we have been doing for about 2 weeks, and it's been really cool! I look forward to some wonderful discussions when we are all together! And I'd love for Heather, Damon and Spencer to lead at least one time each when we're all together!:)

I hope this week is a week of miracles for each of you. Expect them and look for them and I'd love to hear about them. The Lord is very aware of each of you and loves you so much!

And so do !!!!!

Love, Mom

2/9/12

Hi Spencer,

I know you haven't asked ever and I haven't said anything about your plans and decisions, but I feel a need to express myself. And you probably already know, that's why you haven't asked. But I need to feel that I was a responsible mother and taught you right.

I feel in the last year you have changed and I don't recognize my son anymore. I don't understand except that I have a feeling you have been wanting in your consistent study of the scriptures and individual, personal prayers and that the adversary is leading you little by little, imperceptibly away from all the blessings and joy that he knows are yours *if* you follow Heavenly Father's plan for you. You probably can't see it, but I see a marked difference. You have the incredible potential for greatness and I promise you that the adversary is working overtime and as covertly as he can to keep you from your mission.

I am fighting him as tenaciously as a mother of a Stripling Warrior can! I am attending the temple weekly and I am fasting twice a week for you and have for a couple of months, and will continue to for the rest of my life if I have to. This is very serious to me. And unfortunately emotional. The other Sunday I think I had a deformed face from all the crying. I am responsible for my response, not you. I understand that. But you need to understand that when you make choices, there are ripple effects and it touches many people, sometimes in big ways. For good and not for good. There are many that look up to you that are watching you right now who may be influenced by your choices.

How can the Lord bless you, He who suffered for you that you might live again and not have to suffer, if you turn away from Him? He can't. "And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated." He is calling you on a mission and you are running away like Jonah. Please turn back and join the army of the **Lord!** This is who I raised you to be! This is your time, your opportunity, your blessing, your privilege! Feel it, know it, own it!

This gospel is the most marvelous message, the most thrilling and magnificent knowledge we can have. To new converts it fills an empty void and brings meaning, and confidence and direction and hope and joy and a greater vision to their lives. There is a God in Heaven who is their Heavenly Father who knows them personally and by name, who loves them with an infinite love. That message alone is so incredible to those who never even know that, that they didn't come from the swamp as the modern day evangelists of environmentalism have preached to them. That they are children of God with a divine birthright, and a purpose for life, to live together as families forever is so much more ennobling than what the world teaches.

That salvation comes through Jesus the Christ and His mission was to free us from sin, from the guilt and pain and misery that so many are hopelessly suffering with, thinking there is no forgiveness.

And there is someone or many that are waiting to hear that from you! You, who have been taught these glorious truths from your childhood, and have been given so much can give and share and love and serve and bless! I raised you for this wonderful day. Embrace it, run with it, and become the *spiritually* jacked giant that is there, lying dormant. Be a warrior in God's army like Moroni who is described, "yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men." I believe in you. I have faith in you, and confidence. And so does the Lord. He's waiting for you to turn to Him and He will be your personal *spiritual* trainer.

I love you. As a mother I have hopes and big dreams for you. I will never stop believing and hoping and expecting. We are not an ordinary family, we are a family whose destiny is to build and strengthen the kingdom in these, the last days. I have faith in that, I believe it and that is what I have devoted my life to doing, both personally and as a mother in Zion. I pray for you and think about you every day. What more can I say? Thank you for reading this.

With all my love,
Mom

2/13/12

Hi Spencer,

I want to just grab you and give you a huge hug and kiss!! I love you, you son of mine. Thank you for your email. I appreciate your thoughtful response and your words. You are very insightful! I have a few comments, and appreciate the dialogue.

Your conclusions are right on! Experiences, belief and sacrifice are the foundation upon which we base our actions. And in fact the same day you sent the email, I went to the temple and those elements are throughout the endowment, especially sacrifice. You have been spiritually tutored by the Holy Ghost I can tell. Sacrifice is part of all religions (including environmental religion: driving (un)Smart cars, recycling, etc.). In Moses we read that Adam was commanded to sacrifice, and the Children of Israel were commanded to sacrifice. Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac. All of those sacrifices were symbolic of the great and last sacrifice of the Savior. Sacrifice is an eternal principle. So, because of my belief in the Savior and knowing He sacrificed for me, I show my discipleship to follow Him by doing what he asks, and to me it seems too small what I can do for him.

Joseph Smith said, "Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation."

He went on to say, "It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those... who have offered their all in sacrifice...unless they, in like manner, offer unto him the same sacrifice." (Lectures on Faith, 6:8) It seems to me that the cycle of experience, then that produces faith, then that produces a willingness to sacrifice is good at first, but at some point we have to step into the dark with our faith and sacrifice before the bigger experiences come. Jesus said, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 16:24-25) President Benson gave a talk about sacrifice in conference in 1979 that is good. It talks about sacrifice and serving a mission. He's pretty direct! If you feel prompted, I recommend it:

<http://www.lds.org/ensign/1979/05/this-is-a-day-of-sacrifice?lang=eng>

Something you said I'm not sure I understand. You said, "I tend to do much better when I am one of the few who is doing the right thing." In relation to a mission, who's doing the right thing? You and the few who are not serving, or the thousands of missionaries? Are they doing the wrong thing? I sense a little false pride in this sentence and because you aren't unique as a missionary, you don't want to go. Because in the next couple of sentences you actually define the life of a missionary and say that that is what you desire: "I do not enjoy making poor choices around people who make good ones. I much prefer to make good choices and show through example how much happier a person could be if they did what I did." That's exactly what missionaries do, because they are out in the world among those who aren't making good choices, and shining as a light and example.

In Alma chapter 5, which is a great self-evaluation chapter, he asks, "And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?" I think this is key. If you have never repented then there is no feeling of indebtedness or love. In Luke 7, Jesus forgives a woman who was a sinner that came and anointed his feet with oil, bathed his feet with her tears, wiped his feet with her hair and continually kissed his feet. The pharisee that he sat with was criticizing Jesus and the woman in his mind and Jesus knew his thoughts and asked him a parable about a creditor who had two debtors: the one owed 500 pence and the other 50. And when they couldn't pay he forgave them both. Which of them will love him most? And the pharisee said the one who owed him the most. And Jesus said yes, and then he compares the pharisee and the woman's actions and said, "Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Because I have felt the Lord's forgiveness in my life and feel such gratitude for his suffering and sacrifice, I will go where he wants me to go, do what he wants me to do, and say what he wants me to say.

I pray that someday you will feel to sing the song of redeeming love for your Redeemer and have a great desire to serve him. I know He is aware of you and loves you infinitely. I hope and pray that you will have some of those undeniable experiences that will give you more faith, but I am not sure that is how the Lord works. Moroni says, "faith is things which are

hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith."

I love you so much!
Love, Mom

2/23/12

My children,

I was sitting on the couch for a moment and looked at all of you in pictures on the wall and was completely overwhelmed with gratitude that I could be your mother! I just cried out, "I have the most amazing children. They are incredible." And I burst into tears. Surprise!:) So I wanted to tell you that you truly are some of the most extraordinary people walking on this planet and I feel incredible joy and gratitude for the privilege of raising you.

I had to email you because none of you were here at the moment, and I couldn't randomly burst out, "DO YOU ALL KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU ALL SO MUCH?!!!!!!", like I could years ago.:) Do you remember that? I do, because sometimes I would just swell with love that I had to burst.

I LOVE YOU ALL SO MUCH!!!!!!!!!!!!

Mom 
