

God governs in the affairs of men.

--Benjamin Franklin

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

--Proverbs 3:5-6

## Principle Ten

### PARENTS HAVE A RIGHT TO RECEIVE DIVINE GUIDANCE

As representatives of a loving and caring Father in heaven, it is our duty and our privilege to receive his guidance. It has been my experience that he is anxious to give us this guidance we need; however, being ever careful not to violate our agency--he awaits our invitation. To attempt to govern in our homes alone, without his aid, would be like traveling in a horse-drawn wagon when a jet airliner is available to reach a destination. It would be like bailing out an ocean liner with a teacup instead of using the hydraulic pump standing ready for use. All the principles in this work are insignificant compared to the one all-amazing truth--he lives!

Once an agnostic, I rebelled at the idea that there was a personal God. Then, after my conversion, I still rejected the idea that he hears and answers prayers. After all, I thought, why should the great and wonderful Creator of the universe even care what happens to our puny lives down here? I questioned the sanity of those who claimed answers to prayers, and I even questioned the sanity of those who prayed expecting answers. It all seemed too unbelievable--too

arrogant--to believe that there was anyone out there willing to hear prayers, let alone answer them. So although I was converted to a theological system of doctrine, I was not converted to the practical application of that knowledge. C. S. Lewis expresses well the difference between conversion of the mind and conversion of the heart:

Faith may mean (a) A settled intellectual assent. In that sense faith (or belief) in God hardly differs from faith in the uniformity of Nature, or in the consciousness of other people. This is what, I think, has sometimes been called . . . “notional” or “intellectual” or “carnal” faith. It may also mean (b) A trust, or confidence, in the God whose existence is thus assented to. This involves an attitude of the will. It is more like our confidence in a friend (*A Mind Awake*, p. 137).

Though it seemed reasonable that someone created the universe and put all things in their orderly pattern, it seemed the impossible dream to expect someone divine to care about my individual life, especially when the number of God’s children boggles the mind. Even now, my only defense for acquired faith in prayers is that they have been answered--and, even more astonishing, prayers unsaid were heard and answered. In spite of my intellectual incredulity, experience has taught me that there is someone, somewhere, who cares. Some would say that we have guardian angels, while others would claim that Father in heaven answers every prayer himself; but, regardless of the mechanics of the process, I am convinced that it works, and that anyone who wants to find out for himself can do so by following a simple formula: experiment-- try it out.

Some of us give up on our ability to receive answers and guidance in prayers because of a lack of understanding. We assume that a loving Father in heaven would surely know our concerns without us expressing them, but, respecting our free agency, our loving God waits to be invited into our lives. Some of us think that we should only call on him when we are in trouble, but in order to receive

the full benefits awarded to the children of God, we must call upon him on both the troubled and the peaceful days of our lives. When we establish a prayerful life--daily, consistent prayers, study, meditation, reaching upward for strength and guidance--we lay the foundation for receiving his guidance on our good and not-so-good days; we, by holding out the welcome sign invite spiritual help on a day-to-day basis.

In order to assist those who are groping for the faith to follow the experiment, I share the following experiences from our family journals. Since God is unchanging and impartial, his strength and guidance are available to all who ask.

### **The Fire in the Bedroom**

One night I awakened from a deep sleep with the realization that there was a fire in my eldest son's bedroom. Later I wondered how I could have known--there were two closed doors between us, and I would not have been able to smell the smoke. But somehow I knew . . . somehow I saw.

I leaped out of bed, ran down the hall and opened the door to his tiny upstairs bedroom. He was asleep on his bed. The comforter had slid off the bed and onto the floor; there was smoke coming from it. Picking it up I discovered the source: a small electric heater radiant with red heat had ignited the blanket-- a hole the size of a basketball was smoldering. I quickly took it outside a balcony door.

### **Don't Do Another Thing Until You Find Jennifer!**

It had rained for five days straight. Now with the sun streaming through the windows and the mist of evaporating water painting a dreamlike haze over our property, I determined to take the two little girls for a walk--Anna, then four, and Jennifer, two.

The walk to the outbuildings on our eight acres had never been more beautiful. The oak trees and plants sparkled with diamond water droplets over our heads, and the ground and grass under our feet sloshed with every step. I could hear that the stream, usually dry in

the summer, was full of rushing rainwater. Arriving at the millhouse, we walked around to see how the chickens had fared through the storm. Looking into the chicken pen, I was surprised to find them knee-deep in mud. I thought to myself, "Someone should be taking care of these chickens. Someone should put hay over the mud." Then I realized that with the boys in school, I was the only someone who could do it. With great reluctance to approach the filthy task and with resentment that the Sorensen boys were not doing their chores, I left the girls and walked to the nearby barn to get an armful of hay.

I entered the barn and was gathering the hay, when I felt an impression say to me: "Go find Jennifer." I attempted to ignore it--after-all--she was right there by the chicken pen. Walking across the yard with an armful of hay, I again sensed that I needed to look for Jennifer. Grumbling, I said to myself, "I didn't want to take care of the chickens anyway, and if I stop to find Jennifer I'll never finish!" As I approached the pen, I saw Anna playing with a neighbor boy, but the baby, Jennifer was not with them. Again I felt the impression: "Go find Jennifer."

I asked, "Have you seen Jennifer, Anna?"

Pointing to her friend, she giggled, "There she is!"

I was in no mood for jokes and rationalized to myself, "She's alright. She has to be around here somewhere. If I go look for her every time she's missing, I'll never finish this job, and I hate doing this in the first place. Here I have five sons, and I'm taking care of the chickens!"

As I entered the chicken pen and stepped into the mud, I again heard and--this time felt with a forceful reprimand, "Don't do another thing until you find Jennifer!"

Dropping the hay onto the mud, I immediately left the pen. I wasn't really sure of the source of the promptings, but I knew I had better follow it. Looking around and not seeing her, I asked myself, "Where could she be in danger? Where should I look?" It all seemed so strange; little ones usually stay with the older children--and just a minute ago she was right here. There were two areas of danger--the street and the stream. To my knowledge, she had never wandered alone down to the stream.

I silently asked, "Where should I go?" Immediately, and straightway, I ran to the sound of the rushing water.

My first sight of the water was terrifying---the usual small winter stream-- was now a deep, muddy-brown, raging river. My heart sunk as I realized that if I did see her blond hair moving through the water, that there would be little that I could do. There was no sign of her. Anxiously, I headed further down the embankment. Looking to the left, I saw her; she was sliding down the hill on her tummy toward the raging stream, her white, high-top shoes but a few inches from the water!

I picked her up and nestled her in my arms, overwhelmed with gratitude for a guiding influence that persisted, despite my complacent attitude.

### **Get Out of Here; the Tree is Coming Down**

Early one Saturday morning, as the children awoke and scampered downstairs to watch cartoons, Norm and I stayed in bed, talking and listening to the tremendous windstorm outside. Our home is old--built in 1907--and when the wind blows it creaks and groans with its age. The oak trees form a canopy over it and with every windstorm there is the possibility that a limb will crash to the ground. We have a rule that when the wind blows, everyone must play inside. Knowing all the children were safe in the house, we felt secure and comfortable.

Our sixteen-year-old son, Norman Ray, came into the room, looked out the window next our bed, and said, "I've got to go take the SAT test, but when I come home, I'm going to climb that tree to the top--look at it swaying with the wind."

The tree he wanted to ride with the wind stood directly next to our house and outside our bedroom window. It was the tallest tree on our property, a pine tree about 80 feet high and about five feet in diameter at the bottom.

Norm got up, showered and dressed. Then looking out the window, he said, "I'd better go move the car; if that tree falls it could

go down right on top of it.” Then, he said, “You’d better come downstairs; that tree could fall.”

As he walked away, I said, “Make sure everyone stays inside; we don’t want a branch falling on someone’s head.”

I snuggled into the bed and thought, “That tree? There’s no way that tree would ever fall down--maybe one of the mush oaks, but never that tree.” I scanned its history. It had survived generations of people: the Wappo Indians who ground acorns from the giant Oaks, the pioneers who first tilled the ground, the farmers who planted orchards of plums, apples, and almonds surrounding it, and the Sorensen kids who romped about its roots and climbed its branches. My mind began to wander. There are those who worship cars or houses--Norm and I worship our land and huge trees--each one of them towering like Gods over our heads. Only those who have a large family would understand. When we bought our eight acres in 1976, we experienced a freedom that we had never known before. There were trees to climb and trees to gather food from--apples, plums, almonds, peaches, and walnuts. Creek beds to discover, jungles to cut through. There were nooks and crannies everywhere for hiding and playing. It was like going to heaven!

While the property welcomed our bustling family, the old home however, did not. Like the crotchety people who used to live in it, it groaned with the weight of seventy-years or more. It seemed like it moaned with pain when the children scampered from one end to the other. But we were suffering too; it had only two bathrooms, one small narrow kitchen that used to be the left side porch of the house, and three “real” bedrooms. I say real bedrooms because there was one tiny room with a lowered ceiling that should have been used for a storage closet but instead--out of necessity--became another bedroom. The house became a never -ending remodeling project that began with paint and wallpaper and progressed to sledgehammer and dump truck, but despite it all, we loved our home.

As I lay there in bed that morning every so often I remembered my husband’s warning to go downstairs in case the tree should fall, but I rationalized, “That pine tree is the strongest one on our property; it would never fall down.” Then I heard in my mind an urgent

command, or prompting, or whatever you want to call it...“The tree is coming down; get out of here!”

I threw off the covers and ran down the hall and stairs. As I reached the top of the staircase, I heard the incredible sound of the fall through the corner of the house. When the tree hit the ground, it rumbled like an earthquake. The mighty pine tree had fallen! It crashed through a corner of the house--next to where I had been lying, and down through the first floor library--a newly remodeled and decorated room. Glass went flying everywhere. Norm and I nearly bolted into each other as I reached the bottom of the stairs. Upon his face I could see the mirrored reflection of my own emotions--terror, and unbelief. “It fell,” I shouted, “I can’t believe it; it fell.”

Knowing that as long as the wind blew there was a chance that other trees could fall, we gathered up the children and took them to a neighbor’s house down the street. When we returned, we found that another tree had fallen across the parking lot . . . right where the car had been.

Surveying the damage was depressing--the house, plumbing and electricity--could be repaired, but the trees could not be replaced. The pine had caught in the branches of a giant oak tree as it fell and sliced it in half. But the oak tree had actually guided the fall away from the house; had it fallen directly onto the house it could have killed everyone still asleep. The pine tree and the oaks--another oak tree was also in the destructive path of the fall--stretched across the lawn, their branches stuck high into the air. We had lost three main trees! Our hearts grieved for the trees! After surviving hundreds of years, one mighty windstorm had downed them.

As I stood on the porch anticipating the months long repair and clean up, I found myself asking, “Why would this happen to us?” Immediately I sensed a response: “But I saved your lives.”

## **Go Straight Home**

One father related this experience. While he was in a business meeting, away from home, he felt the strong impression to call his son--a thousand miles away. He left the meeting, went to the nearest

phone, and called home, but his son was not there. He continued to call all his son's friend's homes until he knew instinctively that he had reached the right place.

His son's friend answered the phone but said, "Your son is not here."

The father responded, "I know that my son is there; put him on the phone right now."

The boy answered, meekly, "O.K."

His son answered the phone, and the Father said, "I don't know what you are doing, but I want you to go straight home." His son obeyed. The father later learned that this group of boys were planning an evening of dangerous and illegal activities.

## **Summary**

These have been dramatic experiences; there have been numerous others--times when angry hearts were stilled; when lost children were found; when insight was given to help an erring child; when faith was restored. It seems that when we feel least understood, least appreciated, and least able to press on, our Father--whose stewards we are--stands most ready to strengthen, comfort, and guide us. We have only to ask--to reach out--and he is there.