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PRAYER, SACRIFICE, AND SERVICE: THEMES IN THE MORMON FOLK NARRATIVE TRADITION

by

Jacob D. Vane

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

American Studies

Approved:

Steve Siporin Major Professor	Elaine Thatcher Committee Member
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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2012

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ABSTRACT

Prayer, Sacrifice, and Service: Themes in the

Mormon Folk Narrative Tradition

by

Jacob D. Vane, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2012

Major Professor: Dr. Steve Siporin
Department: English

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of the Mormon folk group. Specifically, I aimed to analyze the Mormon folk narratives that center on three core values of Mormonism: prayer, sacrifice, and service. This project was an introductory approach, pointing the field of Mormon folk studies toward the study of these three narrative types. As these themes are central to Mormonism, my purpose was to offer more insight and understanding about Latter-day Saints. Looking at these stories, I examined the ways in which Latter-day Saints believe and practice the doctrinal principles that undergird these themes. Furthermore, I discussed the manner in which and the purposes for which Latter-day Saints share these narratives. I analyzed each of the three narrative types in terms of their history, context, structure and patterns, performance qualities and functions, and meaning.

This study examined narratives that I collected from various places in Utah. The stories that I collected through interviews formed the foundation of my study.

Additionally, I obtained stories by observing storytelling events and conversing interpersonally and in small groups with Latter-day Saints. In order to obtain a larger sampling, I collected some stories from LDS published works. I ended up compiling at least thirty stories for each narrative type.

The results of the study included a greater understanding of how prayer, sacrifice, and service operate in Latter-day Saint life. Answered-prayer narratives were found to be a critical aspect of Mormon supernatural belief, as Latter-day Saints seek to involve God in everyday life. Narratives of sacrifice revealed the various ways in which Mormons seek to give up valued activities and interests in order to draw closer to God. Furthermore, service narratives exposed how Latter-day Saints commit themselves to service upon joining the Church and subsequently participate in a multitude of various service opportunities. My analysis of these three narrative types demonstrated essential aspects of what it means to be Mormon.

(104 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Prayer, Sacrifice, and Service: Themes in the Mormon Folk Narrative Tradition

Jacob D. Vane

The primary objective of this study was to increase understanding about members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by researching how prayer, sacrifice, and service operate in the lives of Latter-day Saints. I studied and analyzed these values and themes by interviewing Latter-day Saints and collecting stories of their personal experiences. I also researched these themes in Mormon history. The academic field of Mormon folklore has often studied topics that offer a slightly improved understanding of Mormons. My approach was to help focus Mormon folklore studies on the core values of this religious group—values that significantly broaden understanding. Prayer, sacrifice, and service are just three of these central values. By looking at how Latter-day Saints experience and share their experiences with these values reveals in greater depth what it means to be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As this religion is growing across the world, it is productive and beneficial for society to understand why Latter-day Saints believe and act the way they do.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In his book, *The Story is True: the Art and Meaning of Telling Stories*, American folklorist Bruce Jackson writes, “Stories are the primary devices by and with which families define themselves. Who and what is the family? Listen to the stories going around the table—that’s who and what the family is” (2007, 55). Storytelling is a dominant aspect of family life. Not only does the sharing of stories in these intimate settings provide family members opportunities to bond, but they allow the family to discover meaning in life together. Thus, family narratives act as a window into everyday life and reveal what the family deems important. As an example, one of my informants, Marcy Brown, recounts a story of getting lost in an African village with her children:

> We were in Africa—in Marrakesh on the border of the Sahara Desert—and just finishing up a day of touring with a guide. We had been told never to go into the old city, called the Medina, without a guide because the twisting, turning, narrow streets were impossible to navigate. It is also a very dangerous place to be without a guide because human trafficking and kidnapping are prevalent. I decided to take my five children back to the Medina at dusk as the markets were closing to buy a few things we had seen earlier in the day. We intended to not go very far in and felt sure we could easily find our way back to the gate. Instead, when we finished shopping and the merchants packed up and headed home, we went only a couple of blocks before realizing we were disoriented and lost. We just could not see the gate anywhere. We decided the best thing to do was follow the streams of people who were, we thought, leaving just like us. We did that for several minutes and still didn't see the gates. The crowds began to thin and we realized the people we were following lived in the Medina and had led us even deeper into the maze. And it was almost dark. Strangers were calling to us and eyeing my beautiful daughters and asking things like "How many camels for your daughter, lady?" We were frightened. We spoke no Arabic and felt totally alone and vulnerable. We decided to pray. Just after our prayer we noticed a small shop with a few lights still on and several veiled women sewing. We went to them and asked if they spoke English—they all shook their heads “No.” Just then a little boy, about eight years old, popped out from behind the counter and we showed him a picture we had of the city gate. He said "I take you!" And he did. For almost an hour we followed this young boy through winding streets and around buildings until we

> finally reached the city gate. We were safe. And it was nothing short of a miracle. We were blessed and our prayer was answered. (2012)

This story has been repeated numerous times in the Browns' Latter-day Saint family. I have heard it shared by Marcy and her children numerous times—too many to count. Yet, the story does not stand alone; it exists amongst other answered-prayer narratives in the family. For example, Marcy's husband, Roy, relates an experience of nearly drowning and praying for help (Brown 2012, see Appendix A). Additionally, daughter-in-law Anne tells a story of finding her father's lost knife after prayer (Anne Brown, March 12, 2012, personal correspondence with author, see Appendix A).

These answered-prayer narratives exist in variation within the family. Mormon folklorist William A. Wilson stresses that family "narratives . . . focus primarily on recurrent values and themes" (1991, 141). Broadening the application of this idea, the same concept is prevalent in the Mormon folk narrative tradition. The Browns are not the only family that communicates answered-prayer accounts. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (sometimes called Mormons due to their belief in a scriptural record, the Book of Mormon) share personal experiences in which prayers are answered. These experiences are narrated in church talks and classroom discussions, as well as conversations outside of church. Lost car keys are discovered; the jobless find employment; and those in physical danger are protected—all in response to prayer. Although the details are different in each story, the ultimate theme is the same: God answers prayer. Like answered-prayer narratives, other stories in Mormon folk culture predominately revolve around the core values and beliefs of Mormonism, yet these themes have often been under-researched or overlooked in the study of Mormon folklore.

Review of the Literature

The early literature in Mormon folk studies presented informative and intriguing findings for the field of folklore, yet research often drifted toward topics that offer slight or unclear insight into the Mormon folk group. Folklorist Hector Lee published the first book in Mormon folklore in 1942, entitled *The Three Nephites*. The Book of Mormon records that three church leaders of ancient America were blessed to overcome death; the stories Lee examines are accounts of these three Nephite leaders mysteriously ministering to people in modern times. Although Lee collected these legends from Mormons, such stories are not common amongst most Latter-day Saints, nor are the descriptions of the three Nephites in the Book of Mormon as central to the book as is the theme of Christ. In fact, the introduction of the Book of Mormon proclaims that individuals "get nearer to God by abiding its precepts, than by any other book." In 1956, Austin and Alta Fife followed with their book, *Saints of Sage and Saddle: Folklore among the Mormons*, which also explores Three Nephite legends, as well as J. Golden Kimball stories and themes of treasure hunting and polygamy. While he was a graduate student at Indiana University in 1963, William Wilson reviewed the Fife's book and later reflected on his assessment, "In the main, I praised the book—and it deserves praise; but I also criticized what struck me as the work's exaggerated emphasis on the supernatural at the expense of any discussion of Mormon moral and spiritual values and of the motivating principles of sacrifice and service which I knew from experience were essential parts of being Mormon" (1989, 108). Yet, Mormon folklore studies continued to focus on fantastical supernatural stories. In 1971, Thomas Cheney edited a book length compilation of the folklore of Utah, entitled *Lore of Faith and Folly*. The book includes a chapter written by

J.H. Adamson on supernatural tales wherein Three Nephite legends are once again studied (Cheney 1971, 254). Even Wilson was eventually also drawn to Three Nephite stories. After spending much of his career collecting and writing about these legends, Wilson returned to his prior assessment and confessed:

> I should have followed my own instincts. . . . In my work with Mormon traditions in general I let myself be too easily influenced by what folklorists generally have considered to be memorable in religious folklore—that is, with dramatic tales of the supernatural rather than the quiet lives of committed service that I knew really lay at the heart of the Mormon experience. (1989, 108–9)

A Mormon himself, Wilson recognized that an excessive academic focus on Three Nephite stories and other tangential topics had produced a distorted and incomplete conception of Mormon folk culture. In a 1995 article, titled "Folklore, a Mirror for What? Reflections of a Mormon Folklorist," Wilson exposed how academic research can often gravitate toward dramatic areas of study—both for researchers and their audiences—yet the contribution of this exciting material may be minor, offering slight understanding of the folk group from which it comes. A fascination with the dramatic can crowd out the everyday stories that—though mundane to some—are more revealing of the folk group under study.

> We folklorists have long been aware that our informants often shape the materials we collect to please us and to meet our expectations. We seem far less aware that as we prepare these materials for publication or public presentation, we frequently behave in similar ways—that is, we shape our data not to reveal the essence of the material we have collected, but to please and meet the expectations of those who will read our publications or view our presentations. The result is that the mirror we hold up to capture the nature of a particular group will reflect not the attitudes and values of the group but our own or those of our scholarly or public audiences. . . .
>
> Unless we somehow find ways to let our readers experience, at least in part, what it means to belong to these groups, then we will have devoted our lives to the study of the non-essential; we will, in the final analysis, have studied something other than what really exists and will have missed the religious emotional cores whose elucidation is the principal justification for our

> investigations. It remains for us, then, to have the courage at last to let our people speak for themselves, unhindered by shackling preconceptions of scholars. (1995a, 15, 20)

Although Three Nephite stories have their place in Mormon belief, too much attention to these stories, without consideration of the more central values of Mormonism, produces a slanted understanding of the Mormon folk group. Wilson clarifies the results of his work, "The picture I have drawn [with Three Nephite stories] is not inaccurate; it is simply incomplete or, perhaps better, not quite in focus. It is, therefore, an uncertain mirror for truth. . . . The task for future Mormon folklore study will be to enlarge the picture, and to bring the images reflected in it into sharper focus" (1989, 109). Ultimately, he reasons that "these Nephite stories are far less typical and far less revealing of Mormon values than is the personal experience narrative" (1995a, 18).

Wilson encourages future studies to focus on the "stories [that] are cut from the marrow of everyday experience" (1993, 522). The day-to-day stories that Latter-day Saints share expose more about the group.

> Narratives shared by members of a like-minded group serve as a mirror for culture, as a reflector of what members of the group consider most important. Thus the stories we Latter-day Saints tell provide valuable insights into our hopes, fears, dreams, anxieties. . . . If we want to understand Mormon hearts and minds, we should pay close heed to Mormon oral narratives. (1989, 97)

During the past three decades, Mormon folk studies have discussed significant Latter-day Saint values, yet Wilson's charge to "enlarge the picture [and] bring the images . . . into sharper focus" still remains largely incomplete and unfinished. Mormon folklore scholarship has included work on these noteworthy narrative types: testimony narratives (Gilkey 1979, Lawless 1984); missionary narratives (Wilson 2006b, Rudy 2004); temple stories (Wilson 1995b); conversion narratives (Eliason 1999); stories of

service (Wilson 2006c); and personal revelation narratives (Mould 2011). Each of these studies has improved understanding of the Mormon folk group, but many values central to Mormonism are still under-researched or overlooked.

Approach and Methods

This thesis explores and examines three core themes in the Mormon folk narrative tradition: answered-prayer narratives, sacrifice narratives, and service narratives. Previous research has neglected or insufficiently studied these central themes and values, even though they stem from everyday experience stories of Latter-day Saints. Furthermore, my goal is to embrace Wilson's charge to let Latter-day Saints "speak for themselves" and through folkloristic analysis offer a sharpened image and augmented understanding of what it means to be Mormon (1995a, 20). By looking at these stories, I demonstrate and analyze the ways in which Latter-day Saints believe and practice the doctrinal principles that undergird these themes. Moreover, I illustrate and discuss the manner in which and the purposes for which Latter-day Saints share these narratives with one another and others. Specifically, my analysis utilizes the folkloric theories, methods, and an adapted overall organization that Eric Eliason employs in his introductory analysis of LDS conversion narratives; that is, I examine these three different narrative types for their histories, contexts, structures and patterns, performance qualities and functions, as well as their meanings (1999, 141). Each of these narrative types is treated individually, each in a separate chapter. Even though some narratives include more than one of these themes—such as an answered-prayer narrative also possessing an element of sacrifice—I have grouped the narratives based on what I perceive to be the principal theme of each

story. This study is introductory rather than comprehensive. It initiates a folkloristic study of these key narrative types. Thus, each narrative type can be further analyzed in terms of context, patterns, and performance qualities.

Firstly, the literature on Mormon supernatural folklore still offers an incomplete perspective on Mormon supernatural belief, with Three Nephite legends remaining the most renowned topic in the field. Wilson counsels, "What we must remember is that the Nephite accounts are really only a small part of a much larger body of Mormon supernatural lore" (1988, 23). A recent book, *Between Pulpit and Pew: the Supernatural World of Mormon Folklore*, explores a Mormon perspective on Cain as Bigfoot, a Loch Ness-type monster in Bear Lake, Utah, and Mormon interpretations of unidentified flying objects (Reeve and Van Wagenen 2011). Though insightful, these topics likewise fall short of offering a substantially increased understanding of Mormon supernatural belief. In 1999, Eric Eliason introduced the study of Mormon conversion stories, which contain an important supernatural element; but these stories have not yet been explored further since his introductory article. Eliason asserts that "the study of supernatural experiences and beliefs will remain a key area of study in Mormon folklore" (Stanley 2004, 150). Eliason's assessment proved to be accurate. In 2011, Tom Mould's book, *Still, the Small Voice*, was published. Mould explores and analyzes Mormon personal revelation narratives—a significant supernatural topic in Mormonism, since Latter-day Saints continually seek spiritual communication from God. Mould explains, "Stories of personal revelation are spiritual stories of communication with the divine" (2011, 23). In stark contrast to Three Nephite stories and past Mormon supernatural folk studies, these personal revelation narratives are a prevalent part and important aspect of everyday

Latter-day Saint life. Furthermore, answered-prayer narratives are likewise relevant and common amongst members of the Latter-day Saint community. Although Mould discusses the role that prayer can play in the revelatory process, Mould's work differs from, and appropriately does not include, a study of the more tangible and visible answers to prayer that Latter-day Saints also experience and share. The widespread realization of answered-prayers in the lives of Latter-day Saints makes these stories relevant for folkloric study. Thus, my analysis of narratives of concrete and physical answers to prayerful petitions unites with Mould's work to paint a more complete picture of the supernatural sphere of Mormon folk culture.

Additionally, Wilson has been the only folklorist to consider the themes of sacrifice and service in Mormon folklore. Wilson explains, "Intense service willingly given by church members, is seldom reflected in most of the folklore made available to the non-Mormon world through past scholarly studies . . . [although] these stories go to the heart of what it means to be Mormon" (2006c, 256). While Wilson equates the two themes of sacrifice and service in his article, "Teach Me All That I Must Do: The Practice of Mormon Religion," I analyze each of these themes separately. Service narratives often include an element of sacrifice, but this is not the only familiarity that Latter-day Saints have with the concept of sacrifice. For example, Latter-day Saints often make great sacrifices to go on missions, giving up school scholarships, promising jobs, girlfriends or boyfriends, and close family associations for two years. Yet, the people that these missionaries end up teaching often make tremendous sacrifices themselves, as they seek to join the LDS Church. Ryan Carlisle shares the sacrifices of a lady he taught in Taiwan:

> Sometimes when people were baptized they would get disowned by their family. And this lady, she had a couple of kids. Her husband had recently left her. She was an awesome person, totally into the gospel. But her family basically gave her an ultimatum. She lived with her parents, she drove their car. "Either you stop going to this church or you can't drive our car anymore." So she got her car taken away, her house taken away, her family, basically. But she just knew what she needed to do and she said "I'm still going to this church, no matter what." Then she had an older couple in her ward that told her, "Hey, we have an extra van. Do you need it? We'll give it to you for a very good price." But I think they ended up giving it to her for free when they heard what had happened. Then another couple in the ward was moving, so she took over the house for them. Things just went well for her after she was baptized into the church. (2012)

Stories of sacrificing for spiritual reasons abound, yet until now, they have remained largely overlooked. Furthermore, although Wilson has discussed missionary and temple work in his introductory study of service narratives, there are yet many more service experiences that Latter-day Saints assume and share; these stories are of family, local congregation, community, welfare, and humanitarian service. Therefore, as I explore these service narratives in greater breadth and analyze them in greater depth, a clearer image of how this value operates in Latter-day Saint life will surface.

This is an academic treatment of a religious topic; specifically, a folkloristic study of Latter-day Saint narratives. As an insider to the Latter-day Saint folk group, I will offer an emic analysis that "honors, rather than dismisses, the belief systems under study" (Mould 2011, 6). Furthermore, with sensitivity toward my informants and how Latter-day Saints, in general, may view such a study, I echo Eric Eliason's explanation:

> The term folklore has an unfortunate popular pejorative connotation that can make people nervous in religious contexts. So I should make clear that to approach . . . narratives from a scholarly folkloristic perspective is not to question their veracity, but rather to analyze their contexts, histories, structures, functions, meanings, and performative and aesthetic features. In fact, approaching this topic as folklore does not cancel its religious nature; rather, acknowledging these stories' sacredness allows one to come to an even richer understanding of their meanings for those who tell them. (1999, 137)

Additionally, a point of clarification may be necessary: the term “supernatural” is not normally used amongst Latter-day Saints; they most often refer to what others call the supernatural as the “spiritual.” Despite this distinction, I will utilize the designation of “supernatural” when necessary in this academic treatment of the topic.

My research has relied on two methods for collecting narratives. The first is from my own ethnographic fieldwork, and these stories form the foundation of my study. I have collected narratives from informants in and surrounding various cities in Utah: St. George, Provo, Salt Lake City, and Logan. Although the majority of these narratives were collected in interview settings, I also gathered stories from casual exchanges and personal correspondence, as well as from observation of narrative-telling events in family and church settings. In fact, as Bruce Jackson also observed while interviewing a friend, many of the formal interviews were “more conversational than interviews” (2007, 206). This was especially the case as many of my informants knew of my being a Latter-day Saint. Because of my insider status to the Mormon folk group, those I interviewed felt comfortable sharing stories in an authentic manner, without worrying about being misunderstood. As we share a unique vocabulary in LDS culture, my informants could rely on their common Latter-day Saint language and manner of speech. Furthermore, I found that the telling of these stories in interview settings was similar to the manner in which they are told in church meetings or family home evenings. Once the informants knew that I was also LDS, they felt more open to share and include details that they may have glossed over otherwise. These narratives from my own fieldwork comprise half of the data of my study.

The second portion of collected narratives are drawn from various LDS published books and articles. Once largely a Utah-based religion, the LDS Church has branched out beyond the borders of the United States, with members now dwelling in most of the countries of the world. This Latter-day Saint folk group is large. Considering such a geographical span, it is obvious that most members of the LDS community do not know one another; however, they do share common traditions—especially narrative traditions. In order to obtain a larger sample of Latter-day Saint narratives, I have compiled published accounts from LDS Church magazines. Thus, stories from Latter-day Saints living in Europe, South America, Africa, and various places in the United States join the narratives from Utah that I have collected, enhancing this study by making it a broader reflection of the folk group's narrative tradition. Many of these accounts are taken from the LDS Church magazine, *Ensign*. I should make known that stories appearing in the *Ensign* magazine are examined by the editors for doctrinal soundness, whereas my field recordings were not. Therefore, folk beliefs that do not appear in published stories may arise in the accounts I have collected. I believe that this does not hinder my analysis because the folk narratives that I have collected are the base of the study. The fact that Latter-day Saints in other countries experience and share similar stories of answered-prayers, sacrifice, and service is accomplished through the use of stories from the *Ensign*.

Additionally, I have included some narratives from LDS Church leaders—the General Authorities of the church. These leaders are likewise members of the Latter-day Saint folk group. Although they act as the heads of the church and clarify church doctrine, they also share narratives from their personal lives. As Tom Mould notes, "They share their own experiences . . . and occasionally those of their family and friends and, in

so doing, collaboratively construct an understanding from each other" (2011, 26). The General Authorities are likewise "practicing religion" in their own lives like any other member; therefore, they share stories from their own experiences (Wilson 2006a, 174). In fact, during the October 2011 General Conference—a semiannual event in which General Authorities provide religious instruction via satellite to members of the church throughout the world—the president of the LDS Church, Thomas S. Monson, shared an answered-prayer narrative from his boyhood (2011b, 84).

Thus, exploring and analyzing narratives from numerous Latter-day Saint sources creates a more accurate understanding of how prayer, sacrifice, and service operate in the Mormon folk narrative tradition and in the overall Mormon folk culture. William Wilson reminds us, "As folklorists, our aim should be to discover what it means to be human; as folklorists interested in religious behavior, our aim should be to discover what it means to be human and religious" (2006a, 180). The ultimate goal of this thesis is to uncover in greater depth what it means to be Mormon.

CHAPTER 2

ANSWERED-PRAYER NARRATIVES

Exploring Latter-day Saint answered-prayer narratives reveals a significant supernatural belief of Mormonism. Through these narratives, it is evident that Latter-day Saints believe that God plays an active part in their lives. They turn to Him in prayer, and they report and share His answers in the stories they tell. Examining these narratives that originate in Latter-day Saint families and in church settings uncovers a wide variety of situations in which Latter-day Saints pray to God for heavenly aid. A Latter-day Saint from Springville, Utah, Amberli Cranford, describes how her mother would regularly tell her accounts of answered-prayers:

> Ever since I was little, she has always told me about things that she has prayed about and how those prayers have been answered. Just today, she talked about how she prayed to have help in her home-life, not thinking so much about the worries of work, and how especially, because she had family in town, and she didn't want to have those worries in mind, and how she prayed to Heavenly Father to help her not think about those things and how that prayer was answered. So ever since I was little, she's constantly told me personal experiences of what she has prayed for and how that prayer was answered. (2011, see Appendix A)

The frequent telling of answered-prayer stories reveals a Latter-day Saint dependence upon God, a desire for godly influence in their lives, and a hope that He will aid them in their various circumstances. Praying is a serious, day-by-day practice for Mormons, and the experiences that arise from these daily prayers enter the folk narrative tradition. As Latter-day Saints hear accounts of answered-prayer, they also desire to pray for godly involvement in their own lives. For many, listening to such narratives helps them recall their own answered-prayer experiences.

Additionally, as family members share their experiences with one another, they create a support group in which they are able to empathize and encourage one another while strengthening bonds of familial affection and love. Sheila Vane discusses the essential role that prayer played as she sought to balance a career in addition to caring for her young children at home:

> When you have to work, and you still want to keep your children number one, that's always in your prayers, even while you're working, helping you to be able to prioritize, so that your family still stays number one, that your children still know that they are still the most important thing to you. When you . . . communicate that to Heavenly Father, opportunities and doors are opened that help you, at least for me, to work but still keep your kids number one. (2012)

This tradition of communicating answers to prayers was likely passed on to her children, as her son, Jordan, tells how prayer helped him in a moment of worry. He had been hunting with his brother, Riley, and his friend. Riley had taken a different path than he and his friend, and after a while Jordan began to worry. Not knowing where Riley was, they prayed. And after the prayer, they were able to find him (J. Vane 2012, see Appendix A). Thus, prayer and narratives about answered-prayer also become remedies to preserve close family relationships, particularly at times when Latter-day Saints feel that family members are in danger.

Also, Latter-day Saints share stories of answered-prayers in receiving help from others. A pregnant woman was bedridden and prayed for God to send someone to invite her to church. In the following days, two women from the ward—visiting teachers—came to help her" (Walkowiak 2011, 66). The Relief Society is the Latter-day Saint women's organization, and each woman in Relief Society is assigned a visiting teaching companion, and together they are normally assigned 2–4 other women in the ward to watch over, care for, and share simple gospel lessons with (the men have a similar

assignment as home teachers to minister to the families in the ward). Another young woman had a challenging day at school and felt overwhelmed with college. She prayed that God would send someone to cheer her up. Later on, she looked up and saw her visiting teacher, whom she had never seen on campus before. Her visiting teacher approached her, and they ended up talking for over an hour. She considered this an answer to her prayer (Cutler 2009, 70–71). Although these stories may seem mundane, they are significant to the Latter-day Saints who experience and share them.

Latter-day Saints also share stories in which God answers their prayers as they seek to serve others. Narratives stress the answered-prayer theme especially when Latter-day Saints are seeking to do God's work in blessing other people. Ryan Carlisle shares a narrative regarding such an experience when he was a missionary in Taiwan. He and his companion met a man that was really interested in learning more about the church. They visited with him, but he soon had to leave. As they parted ways, Carlisle realized that they had not obtained his contact information, so they couldn't get in touch with him. For the next several days, they prayed that they would somehow be able to find him again. The city they lived in was huge. But one evening, while riding their bikes, Ryan's companion decided that they should knock on a particular door. As they did so, the man opened the door, shocked that they had found him. The man joined the church soon thereafter (2012, see Appendix A). This narrative emphasizes the Latter-day Saint belief that God is involved in their lives.

These answered-prayer narratives expose a more accurate reflection of Mormon supernatural thought and belief than has been emphasized in past folklore scholarship. When Latter-day Saints are experiencing challenges and need help, they pray to God.

When they desire to feel close to God, they pray. Melissa Farr's brief narrative illustrates this. She expresses how she worked in a demoralizing environment and prayed to God to open up a way to get out of this situation. After her prayers she was able to transfer to a different location (February 29, 2012, personal correspondence with author, see Appendix A). These narratives of answered-prayers illustrate how prayer is a central element of Mormon supernatural experience.

History

Latter-day Saints claim a rich history of heavenly answers to prayer. The tradition of receiving and sharing answers to prayer commences with the founder of the LDS Church, Joseph Smith.

> Among few people has the telling of stories played a more important role than it has among the Mormons. Indeed, the preeminent event in the Mormon experience—the starting point for all subsequent events in Mormon history—has been made known to generations of Mormon youth and to numerous converts to the Mormon faith by the telling and re-telling of the "Joseph Smith Story." (Wilson 1995b, 305)

In 1820, Joseph Smith was 14 years old, living with his family in the area of Palmyra and Manchester, New York. He was concerned about religion largely because of the contesting members of the different Christian denominations of the day. Joseph Smith biographer Richard Bushman specifies that the Presbyterians, Methodists, Society of Friends, and the Baptists were the "four churches [that] met within a few miles of Smiths' house. . . . The churches were augmented by revivals . . . creat[ing] a 'stir and division' amongst the people" (Bushman 2005, 36–37). Even the Smith family was affected by this, as half the family joined the Presbyterian Church, and the other half remained at

home. Confused at this religious tension, Smith sought to determine which church he should join:

> During this time of great excitement, my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness; but, though my feelings were deep and often poignant, still I kept myself aloof from all these parties, though I attended there several meetings as often as occasion would permit . . . but so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong. My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult were so great and incessant. (Smith 1980, 3–4)

Smith's inner turmoil of not knowing what to do led him to search for answers in the scriptures. He came across the Bible verse that promises, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him" (James 1:5 [King James Version]). He realized, "I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is ask of God. I at length came to the determination to ask of God" (Smith 1980, 4).

Joseph Smith determined to pray for help and ask God which church he ought to join. He went to a secluded place in the woods to offer his prayer and later recounted:

> I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God . . . I saw a pillar light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said—pointing to the other, "This is my Beloved Son, hear Him." My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to speak, than I asked the personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right—and which should I join. I was answered that I must join none of them. (Smith 1980, 5–6)

Though Eric Eliason treats this vision in his study of conversion narratives, and Tom Mould discusses this story as a personal revelation narrative, it is also an answered-prayer narrative. This vision marks the beginning of what Latter-day Saints refer to as the

restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. LDS doctrine details that the church Christ established during his mortal life was lost after his followers apostatized and his apostles were killed. The belief that there needed to be restoration of the fullness of the gospel and the church of Jesus Christ is paramount in Mormonism. Joseph Smith's vision of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ—his answered-prayer—signals the start of this restoration. Bushman elucidates, "In the minds of Mormons today, the events of that morning marked the beginning of the restoration of the Gospel and the commencement of a new dispensation. The vision is called the First Vision because it began a series of revelations. But at the time, Joseph did not know this was the First Vision" (Bushman 2005, 39).

Two other visionary events illustrate the continuance of this answered-prayer narrative tradition. Over three years after this First Vision, in the fall of 1823, Smith again sought heaven's help. He desired to know his standing before God—essentially what God would have him do. He describes, "After I retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God . . . for I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had done" (1980, 11). As he prayed, once again he was encompassed with light, as an angel named Moroni appeared to him. Smith records that Moroni told him of a book, written on gold plates, which gave an account of former inhabitants of the continent. Moroni explained that the record contained the fullness of the gospel, as delivered by Jesus Christ to those inhabitants. This answer to Smith's prayer paved the way for him to eventually obtain and translate this golden plate record: the Book of Mormon. Latter-day Saints regard the book as holy

scripture, like the Bible. This answered-prayer story initiates the process by which this book of LDS scripture comes about.

During the translation of the record, Joseph Smith and his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, encountered a passage referring to baptism. They wondered about the authority to baptize. “Joseph said the question of authority disturbed them enough that they broke off the translation and went to the Susquehanna River to pray. In the middle of the prayer, in the brightness of day, a ‘messenger from heaven, descended in a cloud of light’” (Bushman 2005, 74). Smith later explains that the messenger was the New Testament prophet, John the Baptist, who came to confer the Aaronic Priesthood upon him and Cowdery. Having given them this priesthood authority, John the Baptist instructed them to baptize one another. He also told them that the higher priesthood, the Melchizedek Priesthood, would be conferred on them in due time, which occurred not long after. Christ’s original apostles Peter, James, and John came and conferred this higher authority upon Smith and Cowdery. To Latter-day Saints, this divine authority is essential in order “to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof” (The Articles of Faith 1:5, [*The Pearl of Great Price*]). Believing that this authority was taken away when Christ’s apostles were killed, Mormonism asserts that Christ’s divine authority was restored to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery; this authority is now given to all male members of the church, but the prophet and president of the church is the only one authorized to exercise all the keys and powers of the authority. Currently, Thomas S. Monson is Joseph Smith’s sixteenth successor. Yet again, a significant story in Mormon history—upon which a significant facet of Mormon theology depends—not only came about as an answer to

prayer but has been traditionally passed down to Latter-day Saints today as a narrative of answered-prayer.

Latter-day Saints continue to tell and re-tell these three stories, among many others, from early church history. “To Latter-day Saints, stories of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Eliza R. Snow, Parley P. Pratt, and other founders to Mormonism are now sacred history” (Eliason 2007, 28). Though the tradition of sharing answered-prayer narratives dates back to these early days of the church, it continues to thrive in the modern Mormon community.

Context

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett asserts, “The text [of a narrative], of course, is extremely important, but without context it remains lifeless” (1975, 105). Indeed, answered-prayer narratives have little life without the contexts in which they are created. Mary Hufford’s definition of “context” is useful: “Context is a frame of reference created in order to constitute and interpret an object of attention” (2003, 146). The most important frame of reference for the understanding and interpretation of answered-prayer narratives is the religious cultural context. This is quickly noticeable in examining Ryan Carlisle’s story of praying to help a little girl find her lost toy:

> She couldn’t find a toy. So we said, “Hey, what should we do? Let’s ask Heavenly Father for help.” I remember looking at the dad (not a member of the LDS Church) and he was like “What the heck are you doing?” But we all kneeled down and said a prayer, a really simple prayer. And then we said, “What should we do now?” And she said, “Everyone let’s look for the toy.” And I remember we went in and started looking for the toy. The dad and mom said they looked all day, and nothing. We were looking around for a little bit, and the dad comes out of one of the rooms, and I remember the look on his face (wide eyes) holding the toy. He actually found it. (2012)

For those unacquainted with Mormon praying practices, like the father in the story, the idea of praying for a lost toy might seem odd. Yet, for Latter-day Saints this is a normal behavior; such prayer is part of daily life. Mormons are encouraged to pray at least every morning and every night. Furthermore, The Book of Mormon counsels, “ye must pray always . . . ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul” (2 Nephi 32:9). Several other scriptures in the book command to “pray oft,” “pray continually,” and “pray without ceasing” (1 Nephi 18:3; Alma 26:22; 34:27). Joseph Smith further counseled to make every undertaking a subject of prayer (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2007, 130).With such direction and encouragement to pray, it is not hard to see why Latter-day Saints pray for things like lost objects. Furthermore, another Book of Mormon verse adds, “ask . . . for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal” (Alma 7:22). To Latter-day Saints, all things, even temporal aspects, are items to bring before God in prayer. Nothing is too small a matter to pray about. And, as the story demonstrates, children are even taught to pray from the time they are little.

For Latter-day Saints, prayer is part of the process for receiving strengthening power to be able to perform and accomplish seemingly trivial tasks or serious undertakings. Carlisle’s narrative illustrates the importance of both the need to ask God for help and the necessity to exert individual effort to bring about the desired result. The Bible Dictionary, which appears in the LDS edition of the King James Version of the Bible, contains this clarification concerning prayer:

> Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other. The object of prayer is not to

> change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them. Blessings require some work or effort on our part before we can obtain them. Prayer is a form of work.

Therefore, LDS doctrine counsels against merely offering up a wish-list to God; rather, Latter- day Saints ought to ask God for help and then go out and expend the energy necessary to bring the answer to pass. Church leader Gene R. Cook expounds on this in his book, *Receiving Answers to our Prayers* while demonstrating the principle through personal experience narratives in his own family (1996).

Yet, the purpose of prayer is as much about being able to achieve, as it is about simply involving God in one's life. The *Doctrine and Covenants*—an additional volume of LDS scripture, which is a collection of recorded revelations of prophets of the church, mostly from Joseph Smith—contains this counsel from Christ, "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient for you" (88: 63). The final clarifier, "expedient for you," undergirds the Latter-day Saint belief that God knows what is best for each individual and that God's will is to be done. God sees the complete picture, whereas mortals only see things in terms of mortality. Latter-day Saints seek to hold to the conviction that God grants those things that will be eternally beneficial for each soul, though the trying nature of mortal circumstances can often make this difficult.

Furthermore, prayer is seen as a means to draw closer to Christ. It is believed to bring the abstract idea of God into real life. By involving God in everyday tasks, Latter-day Saints expect to experience a godly influence in their lives, thereby feeling a deepened association and even a personal relationship with the divine. This idea of

building a bond with God through prayer is mentioned in the narrative that Amber Nicholl tells about her dad, as he was learning about the LDS Church:

> My father is a convert to the LDS and had an experience with prayer as he was investigating [the church]. He was working as a mason and was working high on some scaffolding. After a day or two of rain . . . this is Portland we're talking about, so it's always raining . . . he dropped his keys from several stories above and lost track of where they had landed. As he descended from the scaffolding, he began to pray for help in finding his keys, since he didn't have any other pairs made up. As he approached where he thought his keys had fallen, he just hardly saw something shining through the mud, and sure enough, they were his keys. His faith was strengthened and he began to build a relationship with his Heavenly Father, which led him further into the LDS faith and testimony. (February 29, 2012, personal correspondence with author)

After he finds the keys and his prayer is answered, the first things she mentions are that "his faith was strengthened" and "he began to build a relationship with his Heavenly Father." Latter-day Saints believe in a personal God that is actually and literally the Father of the spirits of all humanity. Thus, prayer is communication between child and parent, and Latter-day Saints believe this to be quite natural—conversing in a similar manner as one would speak to a mortal parent, yet with an added measure of respect.

Additionally, just as faith is strengthened by witnessing answers to prayer, so does prayer require faith to receive answers. A verse in the *Doctrine and Covenants* directs, "Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith" (8:10). The Book of Mormon expounds on this: "Behold, I say unto you that whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing, whatsoever he shall ask the Father in the name of Christ it shall be granted him; and this promise is unto all . . . and may the Lord Jesus Christ grant that [your] prayers may be answered according to [your] faith" (Mormon 9:21, 37). Therefore, faith is necessary in order to attain answers to prayer. Yet, remaining faithful can often be a point of difficulty—to believe and persist in faith in the midst of

challenging situations. Heather Bair strives to continue in faith as she seeks answers to prayer: “My loving God answers my prayers. I know that He is there to support me. He knows me better than I know myself. He sees a bigger picture than I can see. I decide to act on this faith and go forward with a positive attitude” (February 8, 2012, personal correspondence with author).

In consideration of religious context, two more points bring added clarification. First, LDS doctrine stresses that prayers not use “vain repetitions;” therefore, the words of a prayer are not memorized, though they are largely influenced by vocal prayers heard in family and in public, as well as the sentiments of the heart. Also, Latter-day Saints do not solely ask for things in prayer, but prayers are likewise used for the expression of gratitude. Setting these answered-prayer narratives within their religious context improves interpretation. Additional cultural and social contexts surrounding the narratives will be discussed later, in light of performance and function.

Structures and Patterns

Although each answered-prayer narrative has unique characteristics, it possesses several commonalities with other stories of answered-prayer. Specifically, the texts of these narratives follow similar structures. Jeff Todd Titon explains, “Structuralist approaches . . . are not concerned with unique meanings in individual texts. Instead, structuralist strategies probe relations and patterns among a group of texts” (2003, 71). Applying this framework of structuralism reveals that out of the more than thirty answered-prayer narratives, one of the dominant basic structures is this:

1. Individual or group has lost or could possibly lose something or someone.

2. Individual or group prays to God for help to find or to preserve item or person.
3. The item or person is—in some cases, miraculously—found or preserved.

This simple structure suggests the Latter-day Saints often share answered-prayer experiences in situations of loss. Yet, within this particular structure, there are recurring motifs. In considering motifs in connection with answered-prayer narratives, Tom Mould's clarification is helpful to understand:

> Motifs can be identified according to specific objects, characters, phenomena, actions, behaviors, or relationships. Many are tied to theme. . . . Applying this process to the narration of nonfiction is understandably problematic. To suggest people recounting their own sacred experiences are borrowing motifs and formulas from other stories can be offensive. People sharing . . . experiences are reporting, not creating. Nonetheless, as experience is interpreted and translated into narrative, generic norms prove valuable tools for narrators. Patterns in experience become patterns in narrative. The use of these patterns in sharing . . . narratives does not undermine their truth; it merely suggests that people have worked out a way of communicating effectively, efficiently, and expressively with their peers. (2011, 193)

Three of the motifs in this structure of answered-prayer narratives are: losing objects, losing jobs, and losing someone.

Losing Objects

As noted previously, Latter-day Saints often pray for lost items, stressing how it is common practice to pray over any situation or problem. Yet, such narratives also illustrate what Latter-day Saints do when they do not know what else to do: pray. Amber Nicholl's story of losing her father's keys demonstrates this common pattern:

> As a young girl, I went with my father to his office in a professional complex. As we were leaving the office building on that Saturday afternoon, when no one was in the parking lot or around to help, I said, "Dad, catch!" I tossed him the keys to the car right as he yelled, "No!" He dove for the ground. I hadn't noticed the sewer grate between he and I before I let the keys leave my hand. The keys slipped right through his hands and into the drain full of green waste. At that moment, I began to cry and pray. I pleaded with Heavenly Father for help, as my

> dad reached his arm into the gook, soiling the top of his forehead and hair, searching for the keys. I pled with as much faith as I could muster that the keys would be found and I would not feel guilty or get in trouble. After much prayer on the part of my father and me, he was able to grab the keys right before they were sucked down the very bottom drain into the sewer system. I know my Father answered our prayers. (February 29, 2012, personal correspondence with author)

With the keys in the sewer, the best thing that she determines that she can do is to pray. This story reveals how Latter-day Saints pray their way through tricky situations. When human reason and strength seem insufficient to tackle a problem, they pray. Indeed, the moment that she realizes the keys fell into the sewer, she begins praying. This is a typical approach: when circumstances turn difficult, Latter-day Saints pray to God for help. These narratives expose this practice. Furthermore, analysis of this pattern exposes the Latter-day Saint belief that God knows everything, even the location of lost keys. Thus, Mormons approach God with some confidence, knowing that He can direct them to be able to find lost objects.

Losing a Job

The motif of praying for employment after losing a job is a dominant pattern in many of the narratives compiled for this project. A poignant feature of these narratives is the expressions of helplessness that open the narratives as a job has been lost. Most of the stories are of husbands and fathers trying to provide for their families. All the more moving are the narratives of single mothers seeking to find work in addition to caring for their children, alone. Another key feature in several of these narratives is how unforeseen jobs arise after prayer, such as in Isaac Cranford's story:

> My wife and I had only been married a few months. I was installing insulation and it just was really dead. I had been making a lot of money and it was exciting, and all of sudden there was just no work. So I had several days when I didn't have work, and it was just getting scary for us to meet all of our financial obligations.

> We just started praying that something would happen, that another door would be open. And I was just thinking in my mind that Heavenly Father is just going to help the work pick up. But I continued praying. We had been praying as a couple, but I had been praying and I found the opportunity to talk to a manager in the company about being a salesman, instead of an installer. The guy wasn't really hiring at the time, but I convinced him to give me a shot, and he did. And it was a better income for us anyway. It was another answer to prayer because another door had been opened when we were hitting hard times financially. (2012)

Even though a job is lost, after a period of prayer, a new job appears. The job is most often unanticipated and surprising. Some narratives do not specify exactly how the job is better, but many, like this one, explain the improvements and advantages of the new job. In this case, the income was better. In Sheila Vane's narrative, she receives an increase in pay, but more importantly to her, she is able to be with her children more often, and "keep them number one" (2012, see Appendix A). A subtle aspect of these narratives is the belief that God is opening up a better opportunity through the loss of the previous job. Some narratives stress the challenges of such a situation, while others, through the lens of experience, share how God led them to a new opportunity that surpasses the previous employment. Thus, these narratives, like other answered-prayer narratives, reveal a common Latter-day Saint belief that God is involved in the lives of his children.

Losing Someone

This motif is not just focused on narratives of answered-prayers in connection with death but also encompasses situations in which Latter-day Saints are parted from family or friends in some way. David Vane explains how prayer helped him and his son when his son was struggling on his mission, "I'd get his letters right in the beginning. I'd pray for him. I'd pray that things would get better for him. I'd get a letter from him the next week and things were good. Things were going better. What's neat about it was it

would turn around right after I prayed. It was so timely" (2012). Worry is often more apparent in these narratives, as is the struggle to be faithful. Such emotion comes through with the pattern of phrase repetition. In this case, the narrative includes the repeated phrase "I prayed," which emphasizes not only frequency, but the emotion of the experience.

An account from a World War II survivor expands this idea of repetition. Enemy troops were coming into a young girl's European village. With her parents, she hid behind blackout curtains while the troops came toward their home. Her father prayed, "Father in Heaven, please blind those soldiers. Make our house invisible so they won't see it." After he prayed, her mother prayed, and then she prayed. And the soldiers passed by the house (Flade 2011, 67). The determination to continue in prayer, one after another, not only reveals nervousness and desperation but also earnestness. For Latter-day Saints, it is not the quantity of prayers that matters but that continuing in prayer emphasizes sincerity.

Another pattern evident in many of these narratives is how prayers are offered with greater specificity. In September 2005, a Costa Rican family experienced a devastating flood. One of the daughters explains how part of the family was trapped in a bedroom and part of the family was clinging to tree branches. Those in the trees could see the house filling with water and worried for the family members inside. They closed their eyes and "asked Heavenly Father to cause the water to start going down. We knew we needed to have faith; if we didn't, the miracle could not occur. The happiest moment was when we opened our eyes and the water level had gone down" (Merrill 2011, 52). The family does not just ask for help in general, but they ask God specifically to "cause the

water to start going down." This pleading for specific results is especially frequent in the narratives of more traumatic situations when human life is in danger.

This structure dealing with loss, with its accompanying motifs, is just one of several structures. Future structuralist studies can explore other motifs in answered-prayer narratives, such as asking God for friends or visitors, for help with family unity, or for healing.

Performance Qualities and Functions

Cultural and social contexts are explored further through analysis of the performance qualities and functions of answered-prayer narratives. Richard Bauman explains, "The structure of performance events is a product of the interplay of many factors, including setting, act sequence, and ground rules for performance" (1977, 28). Although answered-prayer narratives are shared in LDS classrooms and home settings, I will analyze how they are narrated in LDS sacrament meetings. Given the introductory nature of this study, there is not room to explore all of the various settings for answered-prayer narrative performance. Therefore, each of the three narrative types—answered-prayer, sacrifice, and service—will be examined in a different performance setting. I will examine sacrifice narrative-telling in church classrooms and the sharing of service narratives by Latter-day Saints families in their homes. Future studies can explore each of these narratives in other places of performance. As I examine the telling of answered-prayer narratives in LDS sacrament meetings, I will at the same time expose several aspects of act sequence and the rules for performance in these formal speaking settings.

The ultimate function for sharing answered-prayer narratives is to edify. Tom Mould observes that “above all else, the sharing of personal revelation is effective, successful, and deemed ‘good’ if it brings the Spirit and edifies the listener. No greater function can be achieved. No matter how much a person stumbles through their story…, if the story edifies the listener and evokes the Spirit, the performance is good” (2011, 83). The same is true of answered-prayer narratives. Indeed, the major purpose of all instruction, sharing, and teaching in the LDS Church is for the purpose of bringing about edification. One LDS Church publication defines edification in this way, “to build up spiritually or to bring one closer to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2001, 2). Thus, of William Bascom’s four major functions of folklore, the primary purpose for sharing answered-prayer narratives is to educate, yet even more specifically, to educate spiritually (1954, 344). The narrative telling settings vary, yet the more sacred nature of answered-prayer narratives situates them as a tool for edification. The performance of these narratives is not drastically different in church settings than it is in family home evenings, but sacrament meeting is more formal.

Sacrament Meetings

Sacrament meetings are the primary Sunday worship meetings. The ward, which is the local congregation, presided over by a bishop, gathers together in one body. After hymns, prayers, and the passing of the sacrament (communion), two or three members of the ward speak to the congregation. Mould is accurate in his assessment that in these church meetings, “doctrine must claim center stage. When stories . . . are shared, they are framed by the assigned topic, serving as an example rather than the focus” (2011, 100).

Therefore, these speaking assignments are not solely storytelling events. Members teach the doctrine from the scriptures and the words of the General Authorities. Yet, this doctrinal focus does not cancel out room for narratives. Often Latter-day Saints share principles of the gospel, accompanied with experiences from their own lives in practicing such principles, making doctrinal concepts more comprehensible. Some commence speaking with a personal story to capture the audience's attention; others follow the teaching of doctrine with an experience story; and still others weave narratives throughout their gospel instruction. Additionally, speakers may share stories from the lives of church leaders. Thus, answered-prayer narratives are often told in such settings. These are formal meetings, with hardly any audible participation of the congregation. Members in the pews may laugh at a joke or a story, but there is no applause or speaking loudly to one another. A spirit of reverence is expected to prevail through the meeting, though little children often have difficulty sitting still or staying quiet. Even though the congregation listens quietly, it is still very much involved in the storytelling. The response of the audience is visible to the speaker—as members may be alert or otherwise. Significantly, speakers will often utilize stories to keep the congregation engaged with the message.

Additionally, on the first Sunday of the month, sacrament meeting is altered to be a fast and testimony meeting. Members come to the meeting fasting—going without food or drink for a period of time, normally for two meals—and instead of set speakers, any member of the ward may come to the pulpit and share their testimony. "To bear testimony is to give a simple, direct declaration of belief—a feeling, an assurance, a conviction of gospel truth" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2004a, 198).

Frequent declarations include, “I know that Jesus Christ is my Savior;” “I know that the church is true;” “I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God;” and even “I know that Father in Heaven answers prayers.” Though these expressions of belief are brief, many Latter-day Saints share experiences in connection with their testimony. Thus, storytelling can be a significant part of these fast and testimony meetings, as this example from a sacrament meeting in Logan, Utah, illustrates: After he shared that he knows that God hears and answers prayer, Sam Ellsworth told the congregation an answered-prayer narrative from the previous day. He manages a pizza restaurant, and on this day the restaurant had a large order of hundreds of pizzas. He had been preparing for this order for several days, and that morning he was ready to start cooking, but he could not find an essential dough making tool. He looked all over the restaurant and could not find it. So he walked into his office and kneeled down and prayed. After this, an employee told him exactly where the tool was (2012, see Appendix A). His tone was soft, and he appeared humbled by God’s answering him in a time of need. His meek and unassuming approach in telling the narrative helped foster edification. Hence, as Elliott Oring argues, “There are, perhaps, no more important factors in the rhetoric of truth than intonation, countenance, and demeanor” (2008, 138). His reverent treatment of the narrative helped others regard it as such also. As Latter-day Saints heard this story, they were reminded that God is aware of them and that he hears and answers prayers. They were inspired to pray more frequently.

Meanings

Jeff Todd Titon clarifies, “We folklorists do not only study texts; we do not only study performances. We try to understand persons in performance generating texts and giving and finding meaning in their lives” (2003, 79). For Latter-day Saints, the sharing of answers to their prayers witnesses and confirms a belief in God, for both teller and audience. These answers to prayer mean that God is an interactive God, who hears the petitions of His children and grants them answers that are for their good. As Latter-day Saints make their undertakings—whether minor or major—a matter of prayer, they are involving God in their lives, while inviting His blessings upon their efforts. A belief prevails that Latter-day Saints should “pray as if everything depends on God and work as if everything depends upon themselves.”

A final narrative demonstrates an everyday supernatural belief of Latter-day Saints: When Taylor Redding was seven years old, his father was diagnosed with cancer. Although he was angry at first, he turned to God in prayer: “That night I got on my knees and prayed to God with everything in my soul that my dad would be all right and be able to watch me grow up” (Taylor Redding, February 9, 2012, personal correspondence with author, see Appendix A). His dad received treatment for the next six months. Redding considers his prayer answered as his dad’s cancer has been in remission for nearly twelve years. Redding observes, “As I continue to pray and increase my faith that my prayers will be answered, I recognize small miracles on a day-to-day basis. I no longer rely on prayer for just the major trials in my life, but I rely on prayer for everyday living” (February 9, 2012, personal correspondence with author, see Appendix A). Ultimately,

these answered-prayer narratives reveal Latter-day Saints to be a faithful body of believers that pray for and acknowledge God in the details of their lives.

CHAPTER 3

SACRIFICE NARRATIVES

Previous Mormon folklore scholarship has viewed the principle of sacrifice in terms of service. Yet, for Latter-day Saints there are many other facets of sacrifice. Though some of the narratives discussed in this chapter contain an element of service, the principal focus of the narrative is on sacrifice. The LDS Church teaches, "To sacrifice is to give up something we value for sake of something of greater worth. As Latter-day Saints, we have the opportunity to sacrifice worldly things for the Lord and his Kingdom" (2004b, 149). Sacrifice is "giving to the Lord whatever He requires of our time, our earthly possessions, and our energies to further His work" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2009, 149). Narratives of sacrifice expose the ways in which Latter-day Saints seek to live this doctrinal principle. Many times sacrifice involves giving up items of a worldly nature for spiritually significant purposes. Consider the following: A teenage girl in Costa Rica determined not to attend a school dance, despite the pressure of friends because it was going to be held on Sunday. She really wanted to go, but she was resolute in her decision to sacrifice going on a Sunday. Soon after her decision, the dance was changed to Saturday, and she was able to attend (Meza 2010, 68). Sara Vane tells of a time when she had to sacrifice working on Sunday:

> When I was 16, I was job searching. After many applications and interviews and not much response I was finally offered a job at a popular fast food hangout. I was excited about it. I had written on my application that I was not available to work on Sundays, but after I had been offered the job they told me that I would have to work an occasional Sunday. I felt kind of sick about it because I really wanted the job, but I felt that I had made a personal commitment to the Lord that I would keep the Sabbath day holy. I told the company that I would love to take the job, but would not be available to work on Sundays. They told me that they respected me for my position, but would not hire me if I didn't work some

> Sundays. I didn't end up accepting the job and went home very sad and discouraged. About two days later another popular fast food joint that wasn't open on Sundays called me and told me that they wanted me to come and work for them. This particular place was my first choice and the job that I wanted the most. I had interviewed with them a few weeks previous, but never heard any reply. I had assumed that the job was a lost cause. I happily accepted the job and thanked the Lord for blessing me. I really felt inside that the Lord had recognized my sacrifice and willingness to keep his commandments and as a result I was blessed with something much better. Not only was I blessed with a better job, but more importantly with knowledge that the Lord is mindful of me and is there to help me even in something as little as a teenage job. (2012)

As Latter-day Saints seek to keep the Sabbath day holy, they try not to work or play on Sunday. It is a day set aside for rest and worship, which often necessitates sacrificing other interests. These narratives expose how Mormons strive to place higher priority on spiritual ideals rather than temporal concerns.

This importance of spiritual interests is especially evident in the stories that Latter-day Saints share of the sacrifices that they make in serving missions. In Mormonism, young men are expected to serve proselytizing missions, in which they teach doctrines and principles of the LDS faith to people who are interested. Young women, though not expected to serve, are welcome to do so if they desire. Likewise, unmarried seniors and senior couples also serve various types of proselytizing and service missions. Service missions could include efforts like working at church-owned farms, canneries, and storehouses. Leaving home and family to serve missions is a significant sacrifice. A young man tells of his experience leaving his 73-year-old great-grandmother, who had raised him since he was a little boy. He was concerned about who would care for her while he was gone (Lallana 2011, 66). Yet, the decision to serve a mission requires sacrificing more than just family. Amberli Cranford’s sacrifice narrative is representative of many similar stories, revealing what missionaries leave behind:

> It was a sacrifice to serve a mission because I had always planned on finishing my degree first. And I kind of didn't want to break up my schooling in the middle because when I came back, I wouldn't know anybody. Everybody that I had made friends with would have been graduated and I would have been starting again from scratch. I just didn't want to be in an awkward position, so it was really hard to decide to go. I had been given a lot of financial aid for the next semester, and I would have had to give that up. So that was a hard sacrifice. And I was dating a boy really seriously and he wasn't a member of the church. And I knew even though he was supportive of me going, he wouldn't be there when I got back. Even if he was, it probably wouldn't work out. So if I left, I would be leaving him permanently. That was really hard for me to do, but that was a sacrifice I wanted to make to serve a mission. (2012)

Even after leaving on a mission, it can be challenging for Latter-day Saint missionaries to adapt to a highly structured missionary life, as well as the foreign culture in which they serve. Some narratives indicate that a number of missionaries contemplate directly returning home. Even the fifteenth president of the church, Gordon B. Hinckley, considered immediately returning home when he was a young missionary in England. Yet with some encouragement from his father, he determined to stay (Dew 1996, 64). This decision to endure the hardships that accompany missionary labors further stresses a commitment to sacrifice.

Though Latter-day Saints share many stories of sacrificing temporal concerns to obey the commands and laws of God, narratives also reveal that they make sacrifices to obey the laws of the land in which they live. Dan Watson describes an experience when he drove President Spencer W. Kimball (then LDS Church President) from St. George, Utah, to Las Vegas, Nevada, for a conference. As Watson was driving, President Kimball was resting in the passenger seat, yet at one point in the drive, he asked, "Brother Watson, how fast are we going?" Watson replied, "President, we're going about seventy miles per hour." To which President Kimball responded, "We like to go the speed limit if we are not following a lead car." Watson slowed down to the 65 mile per hour speed

limit, saying “Yes, President.” Ever since then Watson has always sought to drive the speed limit (December 20, 2010, personal correspondence with author). A man from Latin America explains that after his baptism into the LDS Church, he determined that he would not only pay his tithing but would also fully pay his taxes, something his business competitors did not do. He was blessed for his honesty (Andersen 2007, 75). Latter-day Saints share these narratives of sacrifice as they seek to be honorable citizens in the communities in which they reside and to live the principles of their religion.

History

Narratives of sacrifice have been shared since the early days of LDS Church history. Some of the most prominent stories of sacrifice are those of the Mormon trek to the western United States. The church was organized in Fayette, New York, in 1830. Not long after, persecution drove the Latter-day Saints to Kirtland, Ohio. Encountering similar problems in Kirtland, they moved to Missouri and then to Nauvoo, Illinois. But in time, persecution even reached Nauvoo. Mormon leaders determined to seek safety and led the Latter-day Saints west. This trek brought tremendous suffering, as these Mormon migrants experienced severe cold, hunger, and death of friends and loved ones. Handcart companies would follow in the years after as more members and European converts made their way west, experiencing many of the same problems. Through all of this moving, settling, and resettling, Mormons dealt with challenging hardships and made demanding sacrifices to continue with the body of Saints. Today, many members and leaders of the church still recount sacrifice narratives of these Mormon pioneers.

Additionally, the LDS Church pattern of sending missionaries commenced soon after the church was established. At that time, married men were called to serve missions, which required leaving wives and children behind. An account of Robert B. Thompson reveals the depth of these sacrifices to serve:

> The day appointed for the departure of the Elders to England having arrived, I [stopped at] the house of Brother [Heber C.] Kimball to ascertain when he would start [on his journey], as I expected to accompany him two or three hundred miles, intending to spend my labors in Canada that season. The door being partly open, I entered and felt struck with the sight which presented itself to my view. I would have retired, thinking that I was intruding, but I felt riveted to the spot. The father was pouring out his soul to . . . [God, pleading] that He who 'careth for sparrows, and feedeth the young ravens when they cry' would supply the wants of his wife and little ones in his absence. He then, like the patriarchs, and by virtue of his office, laid his hands upon their heads individually, leaving a father's blessing upon them, . . . commending them to the care and protection of God, while he should be engaged preaching the Gospel in a foreign land. While thus engaged [in giving those blessings] his voice was almost lost in the sobs of those around [him], who [were trying in their youthful way to be strong but having a very hard time doing so]. . . . He proceeded, but his heart was too much affected to do so regularly. . . . He was obliged to stop at intervals, while . . . big tears rolled down his cheeks, an index to the feelings which reigned in his bosom. My heart was not stout enough to refrain. In spite of myself I wept, and mingled my tears with theirs. (Holland 2005)

These early Latter-day Saint families often lived in near-poverty conditions. Thus, missionary service imposed heavy burdens upon the families that stayed behind, as well as the husbands and fathers that left to serve—often both were left to provide for themselves. Latter-day Saints continue to share these stories, reminding each other of the strenuous sacrifices that early Saints made for the establishment of the church.

Just as pertinent for Latter-day Saints are the stories of sacrificing luxuries and conveniences for godly pursuits. LDS Church apostle D. Todd Christofferson shares how his grandfather sheared sheep for a living. He had improved his skill and worked hard to provide for his family. He saved up a considerable sum, which would have greatly

improved his farm and his home. However, he was then called to serve a mission. After fulfilling this call and returning home two years later, he observed that his savings had adequately sustained them for two years, and there was just a little money left (Christofferson 2010, 18).

This commitment to sacrifice is demonstrated in numerous stories of missionary work. “Because of his missionary service, it took Wilford Woodruff three years to build his two-story brick home, yet he was only able to spend about sixty-four nights in this home before he had to bid it farewell [and leave Nauvoo with the rest of the Saints]” (Koltko et al. 2006, 45). Yet, he did not just lose his home; Woodruff endured great persecution during his missionary service including being stoned while performing baptisms in England. While there, his wife wrote to him that their daughter had passed away (Woodruff 2006, 72, 108).

In Kirtland, and again in Nauvoo, early Latter-day Saints sacrificed in order to build temples. They gave time, energy, and resources to construct these temples. In Mormonism, the temple is of paramount significance. It is here that Latter-day Saints participate in ordinances in which they make “sacred covenants, . . . and [couples] can be married for time and eternity, thus making it possible for families to be together forever in God’s presence” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2004a, 86). Within the temple, Latter-day Saints also perform temple ordinances for the deceased—those that did not receive them while living. Therefore, given the centrality of the temple in Mormonism, Latter-day Saints sacrificed to build the Kirtland temple, yet only two years after the temple was completed they were forced to leave Kirtland. Later, during the construction of the Nauvoo temple, Latter-day Saints gave generously—in some

instances all that they possessed—in support of the building of the temple. Contributions included china, quilts, horses, wagons, cows, sheep, pork, grain, money, tools, supplies, as well as the necessary labor and craft (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1996, 59). Yet not long after the temple was completed, the Saints were again forced to leave, and the temple was burned by persecutors.

Stories of sacrifice to build those early temples continue in the folk tradition. Yet, narratives also abound of sacrifices to simply attend the temple. Even today, with LDS temples erected all over the world, some Latter-day Saints still make significant sacrifices in order to make it to the temple. A few years ago, a group of over a hundred members of the church in Manaus, Brazil, journeyed four days by boat, three days by bus—with nowhere comfortable to sleep—before they arrived at the temple in São Paulo (Monson 2011a, 91). Such a narrative suggests that this is likely a frequent occurrence, especially for those that do not live close to a temple. For the Latter-day Saints in Punta Arenas, Chile, “it is a 4,200-mile round-trip bus ride to the Santiago temple. For a husband and wife it can take up to 20 percent of an annual local income just for the transportation alone. Only 50 people can be accommodated on the bus, but for every excursion 250 [Saints] come out to hold a brief service with them the morning of the departure” (Holland 2004, 31). Making such a sacrifice reveals not only the importance of temples to Mormons, but how Latter-day Saints believe in and seek to practice giving themselves to God and his work.

Context

Mary Hufford compares a text to a picture on the wall and the frame which surrounds it as its context. She elaborates on the necessity of the contextual frame, "The frame around the picture distinguishes the picture from its surroundings, invoking a different set of interpretive rules for what is inside the frame" (2003, 147). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the doctrinal significance of sacrifice in Mormonism in order to interpret and understand the meaning of sacrifice narratives.

Latter-day Saints believe that sacrifice is a necessary part of mortal life. Mormonism asserts that sacrifice has always been a commandment from God:

> From the time of Adam and Eve to the time of Jesus Christ, the Lord's people practiced the law of sacrifice. They were commanded to offer as sacrifices the firstlings of their flocks. These animals had to be perfect, without blemish. The ordinance was given to remind people that Jesus Christ, the Firstborn of the Father, would come into the world, and He would be perfect in every way, and He would offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2009, 149)

Although the law of sacrifice entailed the offering of animals before Christ, Latter-day Saints still believe in this law, only now the offering is more personal. The Book of Mormon records Christ commanding the inhabitants of the American continent after his resurrection, saying "And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and burnt offerings. And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:19–20). Therefore, sacrifices are no longer animal-centered, but human-centered. To Latter-day Saints a "broken heart and a contrite spirit" means "to be humble and receptive to the will of God . . . and to feel deep sorrow for sin

and a sincere desire to repent" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2004b, 149–150). Repentance is the process of turning away from sin and toward God.

Latter-day Saints seek to keep God's commandments, those recorded in scripture and those given through the prophet. A fundamental commandment is the Word of Wisdom. This is considered the Lord's law of health, in which Latter-day Saints are required to live healthy and avoid harmful substances, specifically alcoholic drinks, tobacco, coffee, tea, illegal drugs, as well as any addictive or damaging substance. This often becomes an area in which LDS converts need to make sacrifices. Ryan Carlisle shares of how a lady in Taiwan sacrificed drinking tea and coffee:

> Before we taught her about the Word of Wisdom, she had already thrown out all the tea and stuff from her house and the coffee. And we went in to teach about it, she was already prepared. She came to church before we even asked her. There were times when she asked, "What do I do in business meetings? What do I do, everyone drinks tea or coffee?" She said, "The first couple of times I pretended to drink, but I don't want to do that for the rest of my life, so what should I do?" And we told her, "Just be honest with them, tell them that you don't drink it anymore." And she was really concerned about that, but she did it, and she said she felt really good after that, and I think she said she brought a friend to church after that because of her sacrifice. (2012)

The narrative exposes the difficulty Latter-day Saints sometimes experience when uncommon aspects of an LDS lifestyle come into contact with the non-Mormon world. Thus, there are two levels of sacrifice in the story: giving up tea and revealing that new behavior in a community that may not understand. This is particularly evident in a story of church leader Robert C. Oaks, who was at the time a colonel in the United State Air Force. While having dinner with senior officers of the Soviet Union in 1976, Oaks drank lemonade while everyone else was drinking vodka. An admiral leading a toast noticed this and ordered him to drink vodka. Oaks declined, yet the admiral persisted. Eventually an interpreter told the admiral that it was because of his religion, and the tension diffused

(Faust 2004, 53). In the spirit of sacrifice, the story illustrates the doctrinal command and cultural ideal to remain true to Latter-day Saint principles and persevere in moments when those principles are attacked. In other stories, Latter-day Saints seem to enjoy being different. An LDS apostle, L. Tom Perry, shares a story of participating in cocktail hours with business associates. He did not drink alcohol, though everyone else did. In order to make it clear that he did not drink, he began ordering a glass of milk. He enjoyed standing out and having the opportunity to share his beliefs (Perry 2011, 48–49). Looking at these three narratives shows how perspectives can change; something that is once viewed as a sacrifice becomes no sacrifice at all. David Vane expresses this outlook when asked about paying tithing, "It really hasn't been a sacrifice" (2012). Therefore, commandments such as paying tithing, fasting, attending church and the temple, keeping the Sabbath day holy, and young men serving missions entail sacrifice. Yet continual obedience yields a habit that no longer recognizes that the commandment even entails sacrifice anymore. Thus Latter-day Saints' approach to sacrifice is largely to further devote oneself to God.

Latter-day Saints believe that mortal life is a period of testing and repenting, a preparatory step to eternal life hereafter. One cannot enter the celestial kingdom—the place where God dwells—without sacrificing natural, ungodly tendencies. A Book of Mormon prophet teaches,

> For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticing of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 3:19)

This putting off “the natural man” becomes a priority and constant part of Latter-day Saint life. In seeking to sacrifice ungodly attitudes, behaviors, and activities, Latter-day Saints also strive to acquire more saintly and child-like attributes, as listed in the verse. Another Book of Mormon verse directs, “Yea, come unto [Christ], who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him” (Omni 1:26). Hence, as Christ offered himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, Latter-day Saints seek to sacrifice their sins and work toward a Christ-like character. In this way, they believe that they are fully devoting and offering themselves to God.

Structure and Patterns

Examining the structures of sacrifice stories reveals that many of these narratives rely on a basic plot model. As Sandra K. D. Stahl argues, “The experience related in a personal narrative is not exactly like the plot of any traditional story, but its formation into a story plot could and probably does depend upon a model for plot resource as contained in traditional narrative” (Stahl 1977, 15). A common plot type in sacrifice narratives revolves around a moment of decision, where Latter-day Saints must choose how to act: either exert effort to live Latter-day Saint principles or not. This basic plot follows this structure:

1. Individual or group faces a decision to sacrifice a possession or interest.
2. Individual or group decides to give up the possession or interest.
3. Individual or group is blessed for sacrificing the possession or interest.

These stories confirm Tom Mould's point that narratives carry an "expectation for dramatic tension and resolution" (2011, 138). The moment of decision can create this tension, as well as the subsequent unforeseen outcomes. I will analyze this structure in focusing on two of the recurring themes in sacrifice narratives: tithing and fasting.

Tithing

The theme of tithing in Latter-day Saint sacrifice narratives is common. Mormons are to pay ten percent of their income in tithing to the church. In these narratives, the scenario of whether to pay tithing or not is normally a result of not having enough money. This is the case in all but one of the narratives collected for this project. The narratives expose this predicament of not having enough money to pay tithing and meet other financial obligations. Greg Burgoyne's story depicts this dilemma:

> I stared at the folded bill in my hand as I realized I still needed to pay tithing on money I earned during the last week of my summer job. . . . I had just started my final year of medical school and had many school expenses. I sat there fiddling with the bill, thinking about paying tithing. My summer job had ended, and it was unlikely I'd find a job that would fit into my busy schedule. However, my parents had taught me to pay a full tithe. This money belonged to the Lord, and I knew it. With that thought, I placed the money in the envelope and paid my tithing. In the days following, as I searched for a job, I prayed that the windows of heaven would open to me. (2011, 71)

The tension is evident as Burgoyne mulls over whether to pay or not. In some narratives, like this, the reasons for not paying are listed out, which seems to mimic the drawn out mental assessment of the actual experience. It also builds anxiety as simple logic seems to suggest that paying tithing would be a foolish choice when such daunting bills are due. Nevertheless, Burgoyne pays his tithing and ultimately finds a convenient job that pays three times more than he originally thought it would (2011, 71).

Another structural component of these narratives is the focus on the blessings that come from paying tithing. After the dramatic tension is resolved, the blessings prove to validate the decision to obey. Several narratives quote, to some degree, God's promised blessing to faithful tithe payers as recorded in the Bible, that He will "open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). Latter-day Saints interpret this promise to mean that one cannot fully comprehend or even expect the blessings that will come from paying a full tithe. These narratives include a variety of types of blessings; many include several layers of blessings, such as this story:

> My parents were newly married and super poor. They got paid, and if they paid tithing they couldn't buy other stuff. They needed like milk or groceries. So they paid tithing saying "we know we need to do this." So they paid it. That Sunday a wealthy older couple were going out of town and they said, "Hey, could you just watch our house? Just stop by every once in a while and check on it. We have some stuff in the garden that you can take." So they would watch it. The family had left them a note with food baskets and extra milk, and they had all this extra stuff. The note said, "Take all this extra milk and vegetables, and by the way here's some extra cash." After that my dad got a way better job. (Carlisle 2012)

The blessings continue to come with increasing intensity. Not only are there vegetables available in the garden, but there is also extra milk, food baskets, and even money. Ultimately, not only did they receive much needed help during their time of need, but the narrator's father also received a better job shortly thereafter—all these blessings traced back to paying tithing. Melissa Farr shares a similar result: "Times are tight but we always pay our tithing. The sacrifice is worth it because I recently got a pay raise, which was a miracle" (February 29, 2012, personal correspondence with author). A structural analysis reveals that Latter-day Saints share these narratives of tithing to emphasize the blessings that come from paying, even if finances are stretched.

Fasting

As noted previously, Latter-day Saints practice fasting—going without food or drink for a period of time, generally for two consecutive meals. Members of the LDS Church generally fast on the first Sunday of the month in connection with fast and testimony meeting, as explained earlier. However, Latter-day Saints may fast at any time they desire; there is no restriction on how frequently one can fast. Additionally, Mormonism stresses that fasting needs to be accompanied with prayer and centered on a specific purpose. Latter-day Saints may fast for any purpose, such as the improved health and wellbeing of a loved one or for help in making difficult decisions. Sacrifice narratives of fasting differ slightly from tithing stories. The point of tension is centered on the complexity of the issue or the decision. The dilemma is less about deciding to fast, than it is about how to resolve the hard situation. The sacrifice involved in fasting is a means to help with moments of difficulty. Isaac Cranford tells of a time when he and his wife fasted. In his employment he is paid a monthly salary, yet in order to make commission he must pay back the salary to the company. The reliable employees are able to do this; those that don't are let go. The narrative explains how he had a goal to pay back his salary every month for 24 months. For 23 months straight he was able to do so, yet in the final month he was worried he wouldn't be able to pay because sales were down:

> I was really disappointed because it was my goal. So my wife and I started fasting that month, every week, which was a sacrifice because I can't fast because of anxiety. Doctors have told me not to fast because it aggravates my anxiety. It can onset it. And my wife doesn't fast because of migraines, that going without food brings on. It was something that neither of us had done in a while and something that would be very hard for us. But we did it once a week that month and prayed. But the last day of the month, I didn't think that I would be able to pay it back,

> but it turned out that I did. I even made commission that month. It's a little thing but our sacrifice of fasting worked. (2012)

The narrative illustrates that fasting brings an increased power to prayer. In this story, the magnitude of the sacrifice is amplified as he and his wife normally do not fast for medical reasons. As Latter-day Saints sacrifice food and drink, they are sacrificing the temporal for spiritual reasons, although the sacrifice also benefits them in temporal ways. The narratives conclude stressing how the situation is resolved in a favorable manner.

Several stories also include a couple or a group fasting together. Nathan Call tells of an experience in which his ward congregation joined in fasting for one of his friends that had life-threatening medical problems. Call explains how this fast saved his friend's life (February 9, 2012, personal correspondence with author, see Appendix B). As in this story, ward congregations fast together in special circumstances. By doing this together, they bring an increased focus and emphasis on the issue. The majority of narratives of fasting that were collected for this study include groups fasting together for a specific purpose.

Fasting also includes an element of caring for the poor and needy. In addition to going without food or drink for two consecutive meals, Latter-day Saints are expected to donate a fast offering. The "fast offering should be at least the value of the two meals that you do not eat" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2004b, 68). The tension in stories of donating fast offerings is comparable to the tension in tithing narratives—when money is tight, Latter-day Saints must decide how much money to contribute. In fact, most of the stories collected for this study consist of Mormons contributing a generous fast offering—several specifically mention doubling fast offerings. Brooke Mackay shares an experience of doing this. She was newly married, and her husband was

trying to finish his education. They struggled to survive, yet one Sunday morning she decided to double her fast offerings, though hesitantly. A few days later, she had car problems. She worried because the mechanic told her it would likely be expensive. She couldn't afford these expenses, especially after doubling her fast offerings. She was devastated. But later that day the mechanic called and told her that there was a manufacturer recall on her car's problem. She was relieved, but even more, she was thankful she had doubled her fast offerings. She regarded the fortunate recall as a blessing resulting from her generous donation (2010, 66). David Vane also says, "My mom would double her fast offerings and we did the same thing—you seem to be blessed, you don't miss it. Good things do come your way. We never hurt for money, things were tight. We had to go cheap on things in the beginning—building the house. But we were all right" (2012). Thus, although fasting is a common practice, examining the structure of these narratives shows that the stories Latter-day Saints normally share are stories about fasting during challenging times.

Performance Qualities and Functions

The function of these narratives, like those of answered-prayers, is to edify; specifically, Latter-day Saints share stories of sacrifice to remind, reassure, and inspire. These narratives are utilized to help listeners recall how fellow Latter-day Saints, even Mormon prophets and pioneers, sacrificed in the past. Experiencing sacrifice can be difficult; thus, the sharing of narratives can help alleviate some of that stress by reassuring the audience that others have overcome similar situations. At the same time, the telling of such narratives inspires Latter-day Saints to likewise offer themselves in

support of the church, its leaders, and their fellow members. Stahl asserts, “The personal narrative seems the ideal vehicle for expressing ‘attitude’” (1977, 22). The storyteller’s approach imparts an attitude toward sacrifice.

In sharing the following sacrifice narrative, Ryan Carlisle begins in a fun, lighthearted manner, speaking of how he did not want to attend church on a particular Sunday. But as the narrative moves into how the church meetings ended up influencing him, his tone softens and the narrative becomes more heartfelt:

> That morning I did not want to wake up. Rachel, [my wife], was gone to work, and there were basketball games on, and I didn’t want to wake up anyway. I didn’t feel like going to church. I just wanted to stay home. But I just decided, “I’m going to go today.” During sacrament, I sat down, not feeling it at all. But after it started I think I cried a couple of times during the testimony meeting. Sunday school was amazing; it was just what I needed to hear. Then there wasn’t a teacher in priesthood, and I ended up having to wing the lesson. And I was honest with the guys, “I did not want to come to church this week, today, but it strengthened my testimony big time cus it was just what I needed. That’s why you do the mundane things, like church and prayer. There’s times that you really, really need it. But it was a good spiritual experience. (2012)

This lighthearted beginning grasps the attention of the audience. Additionally, in many cases, audience members can relate to this desire to sleep in and relax. Yet, the moment of decision comes, which the audience can also relate to. This manner of easing the audience into the meaningful part of the story—how attending church blessed him—helps make it more significant to them. Additionally, Carlisle uses his hands in the telling of the narrative, which further captures the attention of the audience. Moreover, the movement of his hands mimics the tone of his voice, becoming more slow and gentle during the last half of the narrative. The attitude of the performer toward the narrative does influence the attitude of the audience toward the topic. Furthermore, the performance often reveals the value that the teller places on the experience. In this case,

Carlisle is nearly moved to tears in sharing how helpful the church meetings were to him that day. As Bruce Jackson says, “A story is not the sequence of events only; it is also the specific words with which that sequence is given utterance and the way in which those words are uttered” (2007, 50).

Most sacrifice narratives, although they may start off in a facetious manner, are shared in a solemn, yet uplifting tone—due to the serious and essential nature of sacrifice in Mormonism. Though missionaries make great sacrifices to serve, their families—especially parents—likewise make significant sacrifices in parting with them for 18–24 months. Five of Marcy Brown’s six children served as missionaries. She expresses how difficult this was, especially when one of her daughters departed to serve in Spain just after September 11, 2001. An already worrisome experience became frightening, and the situation became even worse when a few weeks later, Marcy was in a nearly fatal car accident. While recovering, days later, Marcy received a letter from her daughter’s mission president, in which he wrote that Marcy’s family would be blessed by her daughter’s missionary service. The letter was dated the day of Marcy’s accident. Marcy feels that her surviving the accident is a result of the sacrifice of her daughter serving a mission (2012, see Appendix B). Like this narrative, stories of sacrifice can be a tool for empathy, as listeners may be going through trying sacrifices in their own lives. Parents of missionaries share such experiences with each other to reassure one another that the sacrifice is worth it. Missionaries do the same. The settings for the performance of these narratives are the same as for answered-prayer narratives: sacrament meetings, church classes, conversations held outside of church, and family gatherings. Specifically, the

telling of sacrifice stories in church classes exposes how Latter-day Saints seek to help and support one another during this time together.

Sunday School and Other Church Classes

Sunday school is normally the second part of the three hour block of Sunday worship services. The children receive gospel instruction in Primary, where teachers and leaders adapt teachings to the various levels of each age group. The young men and women have their own classes, and the adults typically attend the Gospel Doctrine class, though new members, as well as people investigating the church, usually attend the Gospel Principles class. Sunday school is a smaller group than sacrament meeting. Instructors have their own styles, but Sunday school instruction is not solely a lecture. Latter-day Saints typically feel more comfortable talking and responding to questions. This provides an atmosphere where stories, even sacrifice narratives, are often shared.

During the third meeting, men and women divide into separate classes; women gather in Relief Society, while men attend priesthood meeting. These meetings are like Sunday school; only the class size is smaller as men and women meet separately, which creates an even more intimate setting in which Latter-day Saints share personal experiences. Of all three Sunday worship meetings, this class is often the gathering time when stories are shared the most. Not only does the small group size foster narrative-telling, but identity is further established due to grouping by gender. Therefore, both women in Relief Society and men in priesthood feel an increased sense of belonging to their respective groups, which increases the narrating of personal experiences. While women may shed tears when sharing stories, like sacrifice narratives, it is less socially acceptable for men to cry when relating experiences. However, men do occasionally

show emotion while telling personal stories. Furthermore, in Relief Society and in priesthood, Latter-day Saints share experiences in connection with the theme of the lesson. Generally, Latter-day Saints believe the stories that they hear from others in such settings. The impact of the story rests largely on the motive and intent of the teller. Latter-day Saints attend these meetings to be edified, and edification is impeded when listeners sense that the teller is sharing a story solely for self-aggrandizement.

Meanings

Latter-day Saint sacrifice narratives reflect the priorities of this religious folk group. As Mormons seek to place spiritual items first in their lives, sharing these narratives with each other helps remind them of what is most important: a commitment to God. Sacrifice narratives are centered on giving up worldly interests, possessions, time, and energy in order to live in harmony with doctrinal guidelines. In order to obey the commandments of tithing, fasting, living the Word of Wisdom, serving missions, keeping the Sabbath day holy, and many others, sacrifices are required. These narratives expose how valued resources or habits are given up for higher valued, spiritually significant purposes. Sacrifice narratives reveal a Latter-day Saint attitude toward everyday life, seeking to be less concerned with the temporary and more focused on those things that they deem eternally important. Latter-day Saints believe that “sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1985, 27). They do not place limitations on what these blessings could entail and in their narratives often express surprise at how things work out after their sacrifice, acknowledging all blessings

as coming from God. Although sacrifice is difficult and challenging, Latter-day Saints steadily close these narratives with an expression like: “it was well worth the sacrifice.”

CHAPTER 4

SERVICE NARRATIVES

Mormon culture presents Latter-day Saints with ample opportunities to serve others. Members of the LDS Church hold callings in their local congregations—positions of responsibility that range from teaching children, to scouting with young men, to playing the piano in church meetings, to serving as an employment specialist, or presiding over the ward Relief Society. There are many callings to fill in each ward. As the church operates on a lay leadership, no one is paid for their work. It is all volunteer-based. At the same time, Mormons steadily come up with service projects to help particular individuals and groups in need, branching out beyond the boundaries of church membership. One young woman organized a clothing drive for the poor and needy. After collecting items throughout her community, she took them to a homeless shelter. She describes how she felt in coordinating the project:

> Never before have I felt so good inside or had so many emotions going on inside of me that I just got to the point where I could no longer contain myself. I began to cry the second we started to unload all the bags…. The feeling was unreal, but I was so pleased with all the people who were part of such a big service project…. Nothing brings me more joy than service. (Mckell Hunsaker, February 8, 2012, personal correspondence with author, see Appendix C)

These sentiments are common in the Mormon folk narrative tradition, as Latter-day Saints minister to one another and to others. It is evident that serving others is a fulfilling part of Latter-day Saint life.

William Wilson's study of Mormon service efforts discusses missionary and temple work (2006c). My chapter builds upon Wilson's work and exposes and analyzes other service opportunities that Latter-day Saints assume and the subsequent narratives

that they share. Some of these stories will not be unique to Latter-day Saints but are definitely part of the Mormon experience and the Mormon narrative tradition, as Wilson explains:

> The acts of service described in these stories are certainly not peculiar to Mormons. They are the kinds of actions one hopes each decent human being might undertake when encountering fellow human beings in need. For Mormons striving to practice their religion, however, they are centrally important. . . . Though more pedestrian in character than dramatic . . . tales, these stories take us much closer to the core of Mormon moral and humane values. . . . In studying Mormon folklore, we neglect them at our peril. (2006c, 260)

Though these stories may seem more mundane than fantastical narratives, they are more revealing of the Latter-day Saint folk group. Simple acts of service are typical features of Mormon culture.

However, this service extends more broadly since the LDS Church humanitarian work aids people in need throughout the world. Members of the church assist in this work as they help assemble hygiene kits, make quilts, and even offer aid in disastrous circumstances. Amberli Cranford tells of the service she gave during the fierce southern California fires in 2007. She assisted with the “Mormon Helping Hands” church relief effort, serving in refugee centers, cleaning up burnt avocado fields, and helping residents with burnt homes and buildings (2012, see Appendix C). That same year, “the church responded to major earthquakes in 5 countries, massive fires in 6 countries, hunger and famine in 18 countries, and flooding and severe storms in 34 countries. In total the church and its members responded to 170 major events” (Burton 2008, 51). Each year, members of the church continue to serve people affected by natural disasters; they also help with church-sponsored initiatives to improve public health and welfare. Narratives spring from these opportunities to serve as Latter-day Saints share their experiences with one another.

David Vane shares his experiences of serving with his dad on a church welfare farm. He explains how his father taught him that he was serving God as he weeded in a beet field (2011, see Appendix C). These narratives of service are centered on helping people, but Latter-day Saints believe that in so doing they are serving God.

History

In July of 1839, hundreds of Latter-day Saints were camping in Commerce, Illinois. Having been forced out of the state of Missouri, they temporarily resided there along the Mississippi River, while seeking a new place to rebuild. At this time, many church members fell terribly ill with malaria and other diseases. Stories of Joseph Smith's selfless acts of service stem from this trying time. Sick himself, the Latter-day Saint prophet arose one morning and set out to minister to those who were ailing. He tended to Brigham Young and gave him a healing blessing, and then went among the Saints camping along the river, caring for them and giving them blessings. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2007, 379) As Latter-day Saints claim divine priesthood authority, one of the uses of this power is for the healing of the sick by the laying on of hands. Thus, a tradition of sharing narratives of giving healing blessings originates from early events like this one in Commerce, where Joseph Smith served his sickened Saints.

While journeying to the west in 1856, many Mormon pioneers pulled handcarts through harsh conditions in the early winter weather and rugged terrain. Several died from hunger and cold. Many stories continue to be told today about this event in Mormon history. The account of Brigham Young's reaction when he found out about

these destitute Saints is often shared. He stood at the pulpit in the original tabernacle and informed the rest of the Saints about the situation:

> Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. . . . That is my religion. . . . It is to save people. I shall call upon the Bishops this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow, nor until the next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. . . . I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. Go and bring in those people now on the plains. (Young 1856)

After hearing this, the Latter-day Saints assembled food and prepared horses and wagons. "The following morning, 16 mule teams pulled out and headed eastward. By the end of the month, there were 250 teams on the road to give relief" (Hinckley 2011, 55).

Even though church service is a significant part of Latter-day Saint life, church leaders repeatedly stress that the most important service should happen in family life. Therefore, serving in the home is a dominant theme in Mormon service narratives. Heber J. Grant, seventh president of the church, served his family in simple, yet meaningful, ways. His daughter, Lucy Cannon, shares some of these acts of service:

> Each birthday of every child and grandchild a letter and a check come to them either delivered personally or by mail. His love and blessing always go with the gifts and fall like a benediction upon us all. . . . [And] tears of gratitude and appreciation fill my eyes when I think of his tenderness to me in times of sickness. . . . I had a severe sickness when I was twelve years old. . . . Those weeks when I was so ill, even though we had two trained nurses, father scarcely left the room night or day. As I was improving, he read to me by the hour. He brought me presents and dainties as I was able to enjoy them. . . . What I say of myself is true of all my sisters when they have been ill. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2002, 140–141)

Family service stories such as these are widely shared by Latter-day Saints, emphasizing the high regard Mormonism places on the trait of selflessness, especially in the home. President Grant's successor, George Albert Smith, was likewise generous in helping

others. While on his way to the church offices in Salt Lake City one morning, he noticed a construction worker with only a sweater on. As he conversed with the worker, he learned that the worker did not have a coat. President Smith took his coat off and gave it to the worker, saying “This coat is yours. It is heavy wool and will keep you warm. I just work across the street” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2011, 13).

The service narrative tradition also includes stories in which Latter-day Saints take on service opportunities that may even pose risks to them. When James E. Talmage was a young father, he found out about a neighbor family that had been stricken with diphtheria. He did not know the family, but immediately went to the home. He found one child already dead, two children in great agony, and the baby in the family was also showing symptoms. He spent the day tending to the sick children, preparing the body for burial, and cleaning the home. The next morning he came back and found another child had died during the night. As the last sick child was suffering, he held her through the morning, until she eventually passed also. He helped the family with burial arrangements and spoke at the funeral. He did all of this—a young father himself—for a family of strangers (Wirthlin 2007, 184–85). This tradition of service continues in present-day Latter-day Saint culture and is a central aspect of Mormonism, as well as a dominant theme in the narrative tradition.

Context

The religious context for these service narratives reveals that the life of a faithful Latter-day Saint is a life of service. When people are baptized into the LDS Church, they covenant with God to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, meaning that they are

"willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light," to "mourn with those that mourn," to "comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 18:8–9). In essence, Latter-day Saints promise to give their lives in meaningful service.

Mormonism stresses the importance of Christ's New Testament teaching, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). A Book of Mormon prophet provides additional emphasis on this principle: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). Thus, the service that is rendered to another human being is considered a service to God. Additionally, Mormons seek to mirror their service after accounts of Christ's ministry—both in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon—caring for those in need, for children, as well as for the poor, sick, and destitute. Roy Brown recalls a story of the ministry of his great grandmother:

> She was as faithful as they come. She wasn't a prominent member of the church, not noteworthy like a prophet or apostle, but she was the epitome of what it means to be LDS. She served as her ward Relief Society president twice. While in Logan, she was serving in the church a lot and there was a bad sickness going around—either malaria or scarlet fever—well, she still had young children at home. And there was a family way across town with very sick children, and the family needed help. She decided that she would go and help, but her children begged her not to go, thinking that she would get sick, and their family might catch the illness. She resolutely determined to go, and she did. She went and helped the family and never got sick, neither did her children. (2011)

While engaged in service, Latter-day Saints believe that they are entitled to heavenly protection and help, as is evident in this story. As she ministers in a Christ-like manner to this sickened family, she is confident that she will be shielded from the disease. She comes in the name of Christ, on his errand, for the blessing of the family. Furthermore, an overall concern for individuals and families dominates the service

narrative tradition. Even though several service stories are of Latter-day Saints helping big groups of people, the bulk of these narratives are individual- and family-centered. Sheila Vane shares a story of ministering to a friend that has struggled with health problems for the twenty-five years that she has known her. After visiting this woman in the hospital following shoulder surgery, she says,

> I walked into her room, and she was trying to eat her dinner. She was fighting to get this tomato on her fork, eating with her left hand because it was her right shoulder that she had the surgery on. So I said, "Let's use the spoon and I'll scoop it onto the spoon." And that worked pretty good. She was able to do it herself. But then she wanted the cobbler. She didn't want the hard part, but the soft part in the center. So I was digging around for the soft part for her, and then I said, "Do you want me to feed you?" And she said, "Yes." And we laughed, and we enjoyed that. She's very limited in what she can do. When I went to see her, I had only been there a few minutes and physical therapy came in and said, "Ok, come on, it's time for therapy." And she said, "I don't want to go. Sheila's here." And the lady said, "She can come with us." So she didn't even think anything about it and said, "Come on, let's go." And I said, "Ok." (2012, see Appendix C)

The friendships and bonds that form through service are cherished by Latter-day Saints, as the narratives indicate. After sharing this story, Sheila Vane ultimately concludes, "When you give that kind of service, they're not friends anymore; they're family" (2012).

The church provides many opportunities for members to serve and build these relationships. The structure of the church is organized in such a way that each member is watched over. Each man that holds the Melchizedek Priesthood and some of the young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood carry the responsibility to home teach—each family in the ward is to have home teachers. Each woman in the ward has visiting teachers. In addition to these responsibilities, each church member normally holds a calling—a position of responsibility that requires service. Furthermore, the children are taught and cared for in Primary. The Young Men and Young Women organizations teach and watch over the youth of the church. Ryan Carlisle tells of a Young Men's leader who

had a valuable, positive influence on him during a challenging time in high school (2012, see Appendix C). Amberli Cranford describes a similar experience in her life with a leader in the Young Women organization (2012, see Appendix C).

Ultimately, Latter-day Saints believe that offering service brings them closer to God. The Book of Mormon records, "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart" (Mosiah 5:13). Thus, Latter-day Saints believe that as they serve God, they are coming to know him. This knowledge can come in no other way.

Structures and Patterns

Within service narratives, "the basic theme and structure are retained while character and situation are changed" (Stahl 1977, 15). This basic structure of the stories of giving service is generally consistent:

1. Individual or group becomes aware of a need and service opportunity.
2. Individual or group undertakes the service opportunity to satisfy the need.
3. Individual or group realizes personal blessings from serving and/or witnesses how the recipients of the service opportunity are blessed.

Although the types of service, people, and locations vary, this simple structure is quite constant. Although the direction of the service is reversed, narratives of receiving service have essentially the same structure as narratives of giving service—both will be included in this analysis. Some of the major themes in service narratives include: church callings, home teaching, visiting teaching, family service, community work, tragic events, sickness, youth activities, and priesthood blessings. Since I will only touch on a few of

these themes in exploring this service narrative structure, there is ample room for more in-depth study of structure and themes in future studies.

Service narratives commence with an individual or group discovering a service opportunity. This discovery occurs in a variety of ways in the Latter-day Saint narrative tradition. A situation of distress can alert Mormons to recognize a need. Amberli Cranford describes how her father helped her after she found out that her pet guinea pig died: “I was really young, and I was really upset cus I watched my guinea pig die, which was a traumatic experience for me. I loved that little thing. My dad bought me some flowers and wrote me a little card saying he loved me and that he was sorry that I had lost my little friend” (2012). Often the service opportunity is part of a calling—an assigned responsibility in the church. As mentioned previously, each member of the church is to have a calling, which requires service. Additionally, each man is a home teacher, and each woman is a visiting teacher; so each Latter-day Saint adult has the responsibility to watch over other people in their local congregation. Service opportunities also come suddenly and unexpectedly, as is often the case in times of emergency.

Latter-day Saints share narratives about experiences of receiving healing blessings, but men in the church also share stories about instances of giving such blessings. In the LDS Church, priesthood blessings are given by those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood—which all male members in good standing normally possess. Blessings are given as priesthood holders lay their hands on the head of the recipient and speak words of comfort, counsel, and when necessary, healing. These healing blessings are given at times of sickness or injury. Generally, two or more men administer a healing blessing. These narratives clearly have a supernatural healing theme; but to the men who

hold the priesthood, hearing and telling stories of administering blessings reminds them to be alert and worthy for opportunities to utilize the priesthood in giving blessings to others. For priesthood holders, these narratives are stories of service. Many healing blessing narratives are about moments of urgency when a blessing is performed in a time of emergency. David Vane tells about receiving a blessing after a tragic car wreck, “That wreck I was in, Ardend Stoddard said that my heart actually stopped beating on the way to the hospital, and he gave me a blessing there in the ambulance. They were performing CPR, and they kind of got me back to life” (2012). Michael Rigby describes a situation where his friend was in danger and needed a healing blessing immediately:

> I was traveling home with a group of friends. One of them, Dan, did not feel well. So he and I went to the grocery store to buy some Aleve, which we painfully discovered he was allergic to. About an hour after taking the pill, he started to have violent seizures that scared me to tears. I have never felt so hopeless, every muscle in his body tensed up and he was breathing so heavily. The yells for help will never leave me. “Give him a blessing!” I yelled. We acted fast and gave him a blessing. After this his panting and breathing slowed down a little, but he still needed medical attention fast. So we rushed him to the hospital. I stayed with him half of the night until the doctors let him go home. He was better. (February 9, 2012, personal correspondence with author)

Thus, in each of these stories, the service opportunity is unexpected; priesthood holders react fast and give a priesthood blessing straightaway. These narratives of healing blessings demonstrate how the recipients are uplifted by the service of priesthood holders. Rigby’s narrative illustrates that Mormons still recognize the necessity of medicine. Most of these narratives include medical treatment in addition to receiving blessings. Therefore, a healing blessing does not discount the need for the aid of medical professionals. But at the same time, professional treatment does not lessen the power of priesthood blessings to Latter-day Saints. Virginia Gillis tells her story of fighting breast cancer. She received treatment and surgeries for three years and through this time relied

on priesthood blessings. She attributes her recovery to healing blessings (Gillis 2011, 67). Ryan Carlisle mentions how priesthood blessings often trump medical diagnosis: “You always hear stories of doctors being blown away or people being amazed after blessings” (2012). The common feature in all of these narratives is the priesthood holders that come to minister and bless in times of need. The people and the situations vary, but the plot is essentially the same.

Service narratives also illustrate how blessings come to both those who serve and those who are served. David Vane tells of an experience of passing out water to marathon runners with a group of young Latter-day Saints:

> It’s fun helping with the St. George Marathon. You feel needed. It’s an aid station that we worked at and we passed out water and Gatorade to the runners. I had a gal come up, and she was hammered. We were at mile nineteen, so they had run for quite a while. She almost collapsed right in my arms and wanted water. I said, “Rest here for a bit; have my chair.” She all but passed out. We got her some water and what she needed and helped her. I feel honored to help them out, be of assistance to them. (2012)

These narratives emphasize that Latter-day Saints enjoy being able to serve others. Often the service opportunity is as great a blessing for the person or group serving as it is for those who are served. Some narratives even indicate that family members are blessed by the service of a Latter-day Saint. Roy Brown describes how he accepted a church calling and was promised that because of his service in the calling his unemployed son and son-in-law would find quality employment in their chosen fields. Two weeks later they found satisfying and meaningful work (2012, see Appendix C). Looking at the structure of these service narratives reveals that Latter-day Saints serve in several ways—in their families and in the church. The narratives stress that Latter-day Saints value being able to serve and help those in need.

Performance Qualities and Functions

Service narratives are shared in church meetings, informal get-togethers, and family gatherings at home. Though the telling of a story may be more serious in a sacrament meeting, the performance is similar in other settings. Barbara Johnstone claims that “narrative is a comfortable, familiar resource in conversation” (1990, 5). This assertion is applicable to the sharing of service narratives in small groups and classes, as well as in interpersonal exchanges. As life for a Latter-day Saint presents so many opportunities to serve, any given member of the church likely has many service stories to share. For most members, hearing a service narrative stimulates memories of one’s own experiences serving, which produces a casual, yet meaningful, telling atmosphere where Latter-day Saints share experiences with each other.

Although the sharing may be more conversational, the principal functions of strengthening, encouraging, and inspiring are still at work. A church-published resource for teaching includes this instruction for the telling of stories: “Relating personal experiences can have a powerful influence in helping others live gospel principles. When you tell about what you have experienced yourself, you act as a living witness of gospel truths” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1999, 180). Therefore, in order for the story to accomplish its purpose, it must be genuine. In church classes, stories must be pertinent to the lesson topic, for these classes are not simply storytelling events. However, instructors regularly ask for members to participate in sharing their personal stories about the lesson topic with the group. The telling of one story often inspires the sharing of a similar story by another member of the group. Two or three stories may be shared before the instructor moves ahead with the lesson. Yet, outside of church

meetings, in home or visiting teaching, family home evening, or other informal gatherings and activities, conversational storytelling may continue for long periods of time. This is particularly evident when returned missionaries share service stories from their missions with one another.

Though the sharing of these narratives can deepen the bonds of friendship between participants, in church settings they also inspire Latter-day Saints to engage in service. William Wilson explains, “Every telling of a story is in some ways an exercise in behavior modification, an employment by the narrator of a rhetorical strategy designed to persuade the audience to accept a certain point of view or to follow a certain course of action” (1989, 97). Hence, the telling of these stories encourages Mormons to serve, both in the church and outside the church. These stories can help Latter-day Saints to perform their callings and fulfill the duties of service that are required of them. Of course, these stories have a similar function in family life as well. Marcy Brown shares this story about her grandfather with her children:

> When I was young, I would often hear stories about my relatives and ancestors. One of the last truly faithful members of the church was my great grandfather Hansen. The story goes that in forty or fifty years he never missed a home teaching assignment. This is just the way he was steady and constant. His bales of hay were stacked with such precision and exactness, and this is the way he conducted his life. He never missed a home teaching visit in forty or fifty years. (2011)

The story suggests that her grandfather faithfully home taught for forty, possibly fifty years, meaning that he ministered to each of his home teaching families at least once a month for those many years. This narrative encourages her children to follow her grandfather’s example. The same story told in a priesthood meeting may be a bit more serious. Ward leaders repeatedly emphasize the importance of home teaching and that

each home teacher needs to watch over the families that he is assigned. Stories are often shared to instruct and inspire home teachers to tend to this duty. Irvin Fager describes his attempts to home teach a man that wanted nothing to do with him. One night Fager decided to drop by again, and he found the man more responsive and willing to visit. He learned that the man was going to the hospital the next day because of back problems. Fager offered to give him a priesthood blessing; the man accepted. The next day, the man found out he had lung cancer. Fager was able to visit with him only once more, before the man passed away two days later. Yet, he had been able to serve him (Fager 2011, 68) Stories like this remind Latter-day Saints of their duties to serve and inspire them with the idea that they can make a positive difference in the lives that they are called to serve.

Family Home Evening

Family home evening settings are ideal storytelling events. In 1915, prophet and president of the church, Joseph F. Smith, and his counselors (constituting the First Presidency and ruling council of the LDS Church) began a church-wide effort to strengthen the family. They extended a challenge to parents in the church to gather their children together once a week and hold a “home evening,” wherein they could pray, sing, read scripture, teach each other gospel principles, and participate in activities that would build unity. The church has made it clear that although family home evening should begin and end with prayer, it is not intended to be a formal class. In 1970, the First Presidency designated Monday night as the time to hold family home evenings. Since this announcement, the church has kept Monday nights free from church activities so that families can gather and participate in family home evenings. Additionally, family home evening responsibilities are often assigned and rotated among family members so that

even the young children can participate in picking a song to sing, giving a short lesson, or sharing a story.

This family time together at home resembles the Tuscan veglia tradition of central Italy. The veglia was a storytelling event and an "evening gathering of family and friends by the fireplace" (Falassi 1980, xviii). Though family home evenings are not an exclusive storytelling gathering, narratives are often shared with one another. In 1983, the church published *Family Home Evening: Resource Book*. However, this book is not an instruction manual on what to do in family home evenings; rather, it is a resource for ideas. The informal nature of the event allows each family to conduct their evening together in a manner of their choosing. Yet, the book does offer this suggestion to encourage family participation: "Use your own family's experiences to illustrate ideas in the lesson. Children enjoy remembering and talking about their past experiences" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1983, 163). Therefore, personal and familial experience stories often arise in these family home evening settings. Specifically, service narratives are shared more frequently and more comfortably within this intimate family setting.

In family home evenings, church meetings, and interpersonal exchanges, "personal experience narratives tend to occur in clusters or rounds; that is, they frequently appear as 'second stories' in response to other personal narratives. Such clusters of stories are linked by similarities in topic or theme" (Allen 1989, 236). Sharing service narratives is like this. As one person shares a story of service, it ignites the memory of others in the group, and they also recall similar stories from their own lives or from stories they have

previously heard. Hence, the narrative telling goes around the group, as members share service experiences with one another.

Meanings

Latter-day Saints believe that they should be "anxiously engaged in a good cause" (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 58:27). This is a day-by-day effort in the family and church aspects of life. Yet, members of the church believe that no matter where they are, they can offer service to help someone in need—no matter how large or small the need. Service is the principal means of doing good. As Wilson notes, "Simply doing good, then, is one of the central emphases of the church" (2006c, 259). The LDS Church is a church of service. As Latter-day Saints share their service experiences with one another, they recognize additional opportunities to serve and are inspired to be more selfless in ministering to others. These narratives act as "behavioral models urging individuals to help others as God has helped them" (2006c, 257). In serving other people, Latter-day Saints believe they are serving God. Ultimately, through service, members of the church believe that they are coming to know God in greater depth. In doing so, they believe that they are becoming more like God—living the way God lives, in service to others. Service produces a character change from selfishness to selflessness. Ryan Carlisle describes the change that he felt after his missionary service: "The mission totally changed who I was, the way I thought, everything about me" (2012). Service narratives convey the message that the ultimate aim of service in the Mormon folk culture is to become more like Christ while helping others toward that goal as well.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Folkloric study and analysis offers valuable insights into folk groups, enhancing understanding and meaning. In Mormon folklore, tangential topics have received the bulk of attention. Focusing excessively on lore that only grants slight understanding into a group ends up producing an unclear, incomplete—and sometimes inaccurate—perception of the folk from which the lore comes. William Wilson offers a solution to avoid dwelling overly on the peripheral:

> If we will look not just at a body of abstracted beliefs but at actual behaviors, at the process of believing, at how religious people, Latter-day Saints and others, enact their convictions in daily life, we may discover what we have been after all along—a better understanding and appreciation of what these people feel and believe most deeply. (2006c, 260)

Wilson's position urges Mormon folklore studies to focus more on what Latter-day Saints do and how they behave. The folk narratives that Latter-day Saints share expose behavior, the practice of religion, and what Mormons consider most important. These narratives act as a window into everyday Latter-day Saint life and center around the core values of Mormonism. Analyzing the narratives that stem from these values shows how Latter-day Saints apply the principles that they believe and how they share their experiences doing so with each other.

Ultimately, Wilson's reminder undergirds this study: "As folklorists, our aim should be to discover what it means to be human; as folklorists interested in religious behavior, our aim should be to discover what it means to be human and religious" (2006a, 180). By examining these three central themes in the Mormon folk narrative tradition, we have been able to come to a deeper understanding of what it means to be

Mormon. Latter-day Saints are a believing people. Mormons have faith in a God with whom they interact day-by-day. They believe that they can talk to Him about anything and that He answers their prayers and assists them in daily life. They approach Him in prayer when making decisions, experiencing difficult situations, and in moments when they are unsure what to do. Yet, at the same time, they rely upon an omniscient God to help them find simple things that are lost. Although such concerns may seem trivial to outsiders, answers to these prayers are, for Mormons, further manifestations of both His reality and His awareness of them individually. Additionally, Mormons pray for God's omnipotence to prosper, heal, and protect their mortal efforts to accomplish tasks and strengthen their obedience to His commands. Latter-day Saints believe that they each have a personal relationship with God.

Through this association with divinity, Mormons seek to sacrifice the temporal and worldly for spiritual purposes, and bit-by-bit, endeavor to yield their hearts to God in obedience to His commandments. Latter-day Saints believe that they are blessed for the sacrifices they make—not only for their own benefit but for the blessing of others. Yet, at the heart of their purpose of sacrificing is a desire and effort to draw closer to God. In following Christ's example, they seek to give their lives in service to the church, to their communities, and to humanity. This is a service-oriented people who seek to discern opportunities to help others in daily life. In helping others in need they believe that they are in the service of God and frequently conclude service narratives with the confession that there is no joy to equal the pure joy of Christ-like service.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Answered-Prayer Narratives

Transcript of Interview with Amberli Cranford
Springville, UT
March 12, 2011
Tape located in author's personal archive

[00:01]

JV: Like I mentioned before, we are going to be talking about the folkloric type of elements in Mormon parenting. Parents educating their children with religious values. Things like that. So we'll start off first talking about--if it's ok with you Amberli--about your own family growing up, that is. How your parents taught you religious values and any stories they may have shared or traditions that were important to your family, teaching you and your siblings religious values and things like that. So any stories or traditions off the top of your head, first off, that come to mind?

AC: Well, I guess, a tradition or a ritual that I do remember is our mom, she would take us to the library once a week or once every couple weeks. And the library at that time, we didn't have one like within the neighborhood, within our city. It was in St. George, which was a good 10, 20, 10-15 minutes away. But she would always take us over there once a week, or once every couples weeks, to get some books. And she'd read them to us or we'd read them together. I just remember being educated was very important to her, and us just being able to read and learn was really important and that's played a big part in just my religious involvement--a big part of the religion is just being well-informed on the doctrines and things like that. I think that part of that has come from how important books became to me and studying and reading and learning.

JV: Do you think that was intentional on her part, as far as being of religious significance going to the library?

AC: I think so, simply because, I didn't know it at the time, a lot of things that my mom did we really intentional. And I think, knowing that our religion was such a big part of her life and very important to her, I do think so. I know it was important to her that her children understand those religious values that she'd come to know, because she wasn't even as active in the religion until she had her first child. And then she made it a point to take him to church, so that he could learn those things. So I think that everything that she did with us was intentional.

JV: Can you think of any proverb-type sayings that she shared?

AC: The only one that I can really recall, just off the top of my head, is "early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." Something of that nature.

And that's how she lived. She woke up early. She tried to make her days as productive as possible. I think that she was trying to teach us that same value of making our days productive. In the church, that is also something that they teach--to make your days most productive, and a lot of things are centered on the morning. Our religious studies are encouraged to happen in the morning, just makes the rest of the day more productive and to go better for us. So I think that is what she was trying to get at with us.

JV: Any others that you can think of? Any other stories from your father or your mother?

AC: The only other thing that I can remember from my mom. She would tell me the story often. She told it to me, more than once, and maybe to my other siblings too. Just an experience from her childhood. She would constantly talk about her relationship with her brother Alan and just how close they were. One time they were walking home from school and there was a kid picking on her brother Alan, and she punched him in the nose. Just out of defense, but my brothers and I are extremely close, and I think that has been one of my mom's major goals, is that her children remain close together. It's also a principle taught in our religion. And I think that she had, well I know, that that is very important to her. I think her constantly referring to that experience, not that we should all stand up in physical defense of our siblings, but that we should if it ever came to that, that we should stay close and be unified.

[05:00]

[Unintelligible]

AC: I just had one other ritual. Was just that on Saturdays we always cleaned. We would have a list of chores to do and lots of times in the evenings after we'd eat dinner, we'd each have a chore to do that related to cleaning up the dinner. Whether we had to vaccuum or wash the table down or do the dishes, whatever, but work is also something that is very important in our religion and that's something that my mom made a point to instill in us, just by making that a constant ritual. We always knew and even if we complained, we always knew that we had to take part in the dinner clean-up. And we always knew that on Saturday we had to help out in some way to clean up the house. We've all become quite good workers in the house because of that.

JV: That's another good example. As I just read these, a few of these values or principles of the church, do any stories or anything come to mind? The way your parents taught you how to pray, you mentioned about hard work, or to believe in Christ, or believe the church is true, or honesty, or the Holy Ghost's influence, or priesthood blessings, or the significance of family. You touched on a little bit. Do any of those principles or values jog any stories that your parents may have shared

with you or any other traditions or proverbial type of sayings? Ancestrol experiences that they shared or passed on?

AC: In regards to prayer, the only thing that I can think of with my mom, it wasn't necessarily a parable or anything like that, she does it to this day. Ever since I was little, she has always told me about things that she has prayed about and how those prayers have been answered. Just today, she talked about how she prayed to have help in her home-life, not thinking so much about the worries of work, and how especially, because she had family in town, and she didn't want to have those worries in mind, and how she prayed to Heavenly Father to help her not think about those things and how that prayer was answered. So ever since I was little, she's constantly told me personal experiences of what she has prayed for and how that prayer was answered. So that's kind of how she's, with prayer and hard work, like I said, just came from those rituals of cleaning. We all knew when we were supposed to clean, what we were supposed to do in the house.

JV: Honesty?

AC: The only thing with honesty, I don't remember her ever saying much, but if ever there was an instance where somebody were offering to get us in for free. I remember that my brother's girlfriend once got us into the movies for free and I remember my mom being very disappointed in that and saying that it's not her business, that we should have paid for the movie and gone in. And so whenever there were instances where people were trying to give us something for free, she, knowing that it wasn't a gift, she would always tell us that it's very important that we be honest in our dealings with other people. It's also something that's very important in our religion that we're part of.

JV: Thank you. Well, let's move on and talk a little bit more about your role as a parent and how you'll teach your children religious values. Will stories play a role in that? If so, what type of stories will you share?

AC: Well, I've just heard some stories throughout the years and especially when I was a representative of our church, serving a mission, I heard several stories from different people, a lot of them not of our faith, that have meant a lot to me. I've jotted them down and tried to remember them.

[10:00]

AC: They're very good and important in passing on some values to my children. For example, there is one where this woman taught me how to make a monkey-trap. She asked me if I knew what a monkey-trap was. I didn't know, but how do you make a monkey-trap is this: You take a jar or box and you put a hole in it, just big enough for the monkey to get their hand in and you stick a piece of fruit or something shiny in there, anything shiny, the monkey will always reach in and latch on to that object and they won't let go of it. It doesn't matter if you yank the

box away, they will not let go of whatever is inside that box. No matter what, and that's how you catch yourself a monkey. So the question is, would I let go of my material possessions or any of my favorite sins or the things that I do wrong for freedom and obedience. You know, will I sacrifice like Jesus taught his disciples to sacrifice. Like he taught the people to sacrifice. Are we going to sacrifice the things that keep us back from full devotion or dedication or happiness? Or are we going to be like the monkey that we can't let go of the shiny piece of tinfoil or that bit of apple. You know. But I really liked that. I really like what that teaches because I think that sacrifice is a really big part of life when you want to get what you want and want to be happy.

JV: I guess that principle would probably be a main principle of the church.

AC: Yeah, I mean of the LDS Church, you do have to sacrifice a lot to be a disciple of Christ, and that's what the LDS Church strives to teach its members, is that we be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, we sacrifice. Another value that's important in our religion and is important for me to relay to my children is just the presence of God in our lives. He's not some remote spirit who has no interaction with his children here on earth. He's a being who is our Father and he loves us and he's trying to make himself known to us in many different ways. So there's this other story that I really like, that I plan on using with my children. It's about a man who asked God to make himself known to him. So God responded by having the wind rustle through the trees. The man paid no heed, and he asked the Lord again to appear before him. And then a flash of lightning lighted the sky. Again, the man paid no heed, and asked the Lord to make his personage known, for some sign of his existence. Just then a butterfly came and lighted on the man, and it's just like if we see a bee that lands on us. We get so annoyed by those things, or a fly. Some of those are annoying things. A lot of the annoying things in life are those things that we don't really notice, is just, can be one of God's creations just letting us know that he really is there, that he really does exist, that he's a man, that he's our father, and that he loves us, and that he's everywhere we are. We aren't left alone, we're not here in space not just fend for ourselves. He's around. He knows us.

JV: You plan on using that with your children to emphasize that principle?

AC: I do. I think that in this world that we're coming into, changing values, morals aren't as important. God is becoming nonexistant in lots of places. I just want my children to know that God's everywhere. So I think that's a great story to use, and I do plan on using it. Another thing that I've come upon, another story that I've come upon, that I really like to teach the principle of repentance, which is also something very important in the LDS Church for disciples of Christ to do, we are to repent of our sins, to make amends for things, and also the forgiveness that our Heavenly Father extends to us. A great story that I've found to share with my children is about a teacher who asked some students of his class if he ever hated someone. They all raised their hands, and he told them that if everyone hated someone at some point--well, he said that everyone hated someone at some point.

[15:00]

AC: He told them to bring a potato to school in a bag, and the students had to carry this potato around everywhere they went, out to recess, to lunch, everywhere for one month. So after one month, the teacher asked the student to open their bags, and they did, and all their potatoes were rotten and smelly. And he told them that this is like hate, we carry it around with us, sometimes for a long time. You wonder why, it rots inside of us, it turns sour and bitter, so you got to throw it out. You don't want to hang on to it. A lot of times it's like hatred in our lives. Do we really want to hold on to that? No. We want to be rid of it, and how do we do that? We do that through repentance or we forgive people things, the offenses that they give to us. And I think that's really important because a lot of times in the LDS Church, members will leave because they're offended, because somebody has said something to them that they don't like and they can't let go of. And that will happen to my children, it's happened to me, and I think that the story can help my children realize that they don't want to hold on to those offenses, they want to throw them out, get over them, and carry on with life, not let it rot inside of them. So I really liked that.

JV: That's a good story. It made me think of, this is kind of somewhat of a narrow question: I've often heard it explained in a number of different ways or a number of different stories the idea that the belief in the church that [Baby crying] man does the best they can and Christ makes up the rest, type of an idea. I read that in a book from Stephen Robinson about the parable of the bicycle and the girl wants a bike really bad and her dad tells her to say enough money Over a period of time, she saves all she can, and it doesn't amount to much of the cost of the bicycle, but her father, after that period of time, extends the rest of the [Baby crying] what it costs, so the girl receives the bicycle. Basically, illustrating the principle that "after all we can do, we're saved," "we exert our best efforts, and Christ makes up the difference." Have you ever heard a story similar to that or version similar to that?

AC: I can't think of another one, but I have heard that particular parable, and used it as I have taught other people about the church, as I've taught that principle of doing the best we can and then using Christ to help us the rest of the way. I've used that exact parable teaching other people, and I guarantee that I'll use it with my children, just to explain that concept. It's just kind of a big thing in this church, and I don't know, maybe it is in other churches as well. But where we have conference, where the leaders of the church talk to us, a lot of them use stories, that's how Christ taught, and that's how his prophets and apostles today are teaching. But I don't remember exactly what this particular leader was trying to teach, but something about a pickle in a pickle jar. I don't remember, but he was trying to use an everyday thing and people still call it the parable of the pickle. Like I said, I don't remember exactly what that story was teaching, but I do remember it being a big thing in the church for a while. They all remember this

parable of a pickle. You know our current prophet, Thomas S. Monson, he's full of stories, and all of the stories are to teach principles of the gospel, to help us live our lives by. Anyway, I just thought I'd make mention that that's important in our church.

JV: Thank you. Any other stories that you plan on sharing with your children?

[20:00]

AC: One other that I can think of, one that I really like a lot, just because in today's world everything is getting so busy, and family time is kind of decreasing, not just in quantity, but also in quality. There's a story that I once heard of a man that invited his co-worker home to spend time with his family that evening, to have dinner with him, spend a little time getting to know them. The co-worker agreed and the man and the co-worker went to this man's house and before they walked in the door, this man touched the leaves of a tree that overhung the walk as he went in the door. As soon as the door opened, laughter and fun commenced, you know, they had a wonderful dinner, this man was playing with his wife and his children, just having a great time. And at the close of the evening, this man walked his co-worker to the door outside. The co-worker asked the man why he touched the leaves on his way in to the house. The co-worker said that's where he leaves his problems and the worries of work. He leaves them on the leaves of the tree before he walks in. When he leaves in the morning, he picks them right back up. But as long as he's with his family those problems and worries are going to stay on the tree. And I appreciate that story and value that story juse because it can teach a lot of things. One thing, is the importance of family and not to let the worries of the world, the hustle and bustle of the world, effect the time with our families. Our families are important, the most important thing on this earth right now. Heavenly Father gave us our families to comfort us, to strengthen us, and to help us to get back to him. I just think that family time is the most important things that we can have that will kind of shape our society, if you think about it. According to the family time that our children experience, what kind of people are they going to grow up to be. How are they going to contribute to society or they going to contribute at all? And I just, I want their worries to stay outside and I want their family time to be meaningful and be quality family time. So that's the story that I'm going to share with them.

JV: It seems to connect a little bit with the story that you shared earlier about your mom talking about how she defended her brother, emphasizing the closeness that the family should have. As you think about growing up, can you think of any other stories or traditions that emphasize that particular principle of the need to put family time as a top priority, and strive for that?

AC: I can't think of anything off the top of my head. I just remember that wherever that we went with my mom, we always went together. That was just really important that we all go together. Nobody was ever left out. It was important that

we stay unified and that we grow close, like kind of instilled in us. You know she never had favorites, she had different relationships with each one of us, but there were no favorites. She wanted us all to be close, she didn't ever want us to compete with each other. She didn't want any unnecessary sibling rivalry. She wanted us to be unified, and family was first, so we always did everything together. I know that's not a story or anything like that, just something that I noticed.

JV: What about family home evening time, do you grow up having family home evening? If so, what did it consist of? Did stories play a part in that?

AC: We did have family home evening every once in a while. It wasn't always a consistent thing. For a few months, we would do it every Monday evening, but I can't remember it being a completely consistent thing throughout my childhood. I do always remember that it consisted of a hymn we would sing without any accompaniment. It was usually "I Wonder When He Comes Again," which was my dad's choice. He always wanted to sing that song.

JV: My dad too.

AC: It's a good song. And then it usually consisting of us reading something out of the Ensign, a story out of the Ensign, a church magazine.

[25:00]

AC: We didn't always elaborate on that, because usually it was one of us children reading it. We would just read it and be done with it. So I don't really remember any stories, but one ritual that I do recall during those family home evenings is I never really heard my dad speak much of religion really He didn't really make the concious effort of teaching us any principles of the church, but at that time he always felt it necessary, a good idea, I don't know if it was by my mother's prompting, I don't really remember. That was usually when he would bear his testimony to us. I never heard it otherwise. But he would bear testimony of what he knew to be true, of the gospel principles that he knew to be true. Hearing his testimony those few times was good at instilling some of those principles in me.

JV: Would he ever share any experiences in connection with that or just express his beliefs?

AC: Usually he would just express his beliefs. I can't really remember any particular stories.

JV: Was there any other stories?

AC: There's another one that I've also used to teach people some principle. The principle of preparation for, you know, we believe that Jesus Christ will come

again and this is just a principle on the importance of preparing for that and always staying prepared, and one that I will use to teach my children. There was a gardener, who kept this beautiful garden, and this was just an exquisite garden, there were flowers everywhere. All different kinds, and trees, and it was just beautiful, and it was gated. But a photographer for a magazine was walking by one day and just saw how beautfiul and lush this garden was and asked the gardener if he could come in and take some pictures of it for the magazine. And the gardener said "sure." So he let him in and this photographer walked around with the gardener taking pictures of all kinds of beautiful things: the fountains, and just these amazing flowers, and it was just perfect, everything was just perfect, well in order. And the gardener took the photographer up to this terrace, so that he could look out on this vast garden. He looks out and he says, "man, you know, your owner of this garden, you're employer, he must really enjoy the work that you do. He must be really pleased with this garden." And the gardener said, "Yeah, well he really doesn't come very often. Sometimes he will show up one day and I won't see him for a couple of months or a week, or even sometimes years. Just kind of comes and goes." And the photographer looked at him in puzzlement or awe and said, "why do you keep this thing so beautiful? You spend all day, every day out here trying to make this garden perfect, and your employer only comes once in a great while. You don't even know when. What makes you be so diligent about this?" He said, "Well, that's the thing, I don't know when he'll come. But I want to make sure that his garden is just as beautiful as any day, or when he does come." And I just think that that story teaches a lot about self-preparation, spiritual preparation. Just because we always need to be ready, we don't know when the Lord will come again, but we want our gardens, or ourselves, or our lives, to be in order. We're not perfect people, but we want everything to be just right, as right as it can be for when he does come. And I just think that that is an important principle to teach my children.

JV: That's a good story. Maybe one final question from me. I've heard also other stories that are shared seemingly in the church or maybe by missionaries to teach people the need for the proper authority.

[30:00]

JV: To direct and guide the church of Christ on earth--stories ranging from, like an ice cream truck pulling someone over to…

AC: Give a ticket?

JV: Give a ticket, yeah, then not having the authority to do so. Have you heard any other stories like that to illustrate the need for proper authority from God?

AC: Well, I know I have used that one before to teach people that principle and will probably quite similar to that to teach my own children.

JV: You can't think of any variations of that?

AC: No, I mean I've heard people use different, not necessarily an ice cream man, but maybe some other position, that's not a policeman, pulling someone over and trying to give them a ticket and not having that authority. So I mean I have heard, especially as a missionary, other missionaries would use different people. They didn't always use an ice cream truck.

JV: Like a mailman?

AC: Yeah, a mailman or taxi driver, something of that nature. I have heard that.

JV: Alright, anything else, any final stories or would you share any type of proverbial type of sayings with your children?

AC: Well, I think I will pass on that "early to bed, early to rise" one. I liked that one, and I liked what my mom was trying to teach, so I do think I will pass that on. And "an apple a day, keeps the doctor away." Got to eat those fruits and veggies.

JV: Is that kind of to illustrate the health principle?

AC: Yeah, that really is important and the word of wisdom in the LDS Church it is quite important to eat healthy to take care of ourselves, not only spiritually, but phyisically. I want to pass that on to my children.

JV: Thank you for your time.

AC: Your welcome Jake.

[32:50]

Narrative Collected from Roy Brown
Springville, UT
May 16, 2012
Interview transcript and tape located in author's personal archive

"In 1964, I was going to school in Hawaii and dating a girl by the name of Margaret. While going around the island of Oahu on a motorbike we saw a beautiful stretch of beach. It was isolated and we were all alone. We decided to take a swim in the ocean. I was a good swimmer and had done a lot of swimming in the ocean, scuba diving and surfing. Margaret was not a good swimmer but I talked her into going in the water. We went out about 100 yards. When we tried to go in we could not make any progress but gradually were going farther out to sea. Margaret was holding on to me because the water was over our head, possibly 10 feet deep and I was swimming the best I could for both of us and we could not make progress. We were in a rip tide, even though

at that time I did not know what a rip tide was or how to get out of one. I knew we were in trouble but I kept reassuring Margaret all would be OK. I was swimming as hard as I could but knew I couldn't last for a long time. There was land off to the right of us but it was much farther away, possibly a quarter mile. I said a silent prayer and the thought came to me to swim to the land off to the right even though it was farther away. It was a fairly strong feeling so I did it and by swimming parallel to the coast we got out of the rip tide and were able to swim to shore. I have since learned about rip tides and have learned that if caught in one you should swim parallel to shore until you get out of it. I did not know it at that time. I have thought about this event several times and realized the Lord's hand in my protection. It has reassured me that the Lord is mindful of me and hopefully has an important mission for me."

Narrative Collected from Anne Brown
Pleasant Grove, UT
February 12, 2012
Personal correspondence with author

"When I was 12 my family was preparing to go to Alaska for a family reunion. In the excitement my dad bought a new Leather Man knife. He was so excited he wanted to give it a test run and somehow miss placed it. He was so anxious to have his new knife for our trip to Alaska that after a few days of it not turing up he offered $20 to anyone who could find it. This was all the motivation I needed! I clearly remember sitting on the kitchen bench praying to Heavenly Father to guide me to the knife and I saw in my mind that it was under the couch cushion. So without opening my eyes I walked over to the couch (it was almost like playing hide and seek - would it really be there?) Once I got to the couch I lifted up the cushion and VOILA! There it was! I took it to my dad and walked away with my reward. I will always remember that experience! It was a testimony to me that Heavenly Father knows everything and that he cares! And he wants us to have fun in this life—he helped me get $20! I know Heavenly Father hears and answers my prayers!"

Narrative Collected from Jordan Vane
Washington, UT
March 8, 2012
Interview transcript and tape located in author's personal archive

"I was out in the desert with my brother, Riley, and his friend, Isaac. We were hunting for rabbits or something. But Riley went off in one direction, and we went in a different direction. After a while I realized that I couldn't see Riley anymore. As time went by I got kinda worried. I didn't know where he was. After looking for him for a while, Isaac could see I was worried. We decided to say a prayer. After this, I decided to start heading home, and that was when I finally found him."

Narrative Collected from Ryan Carlisle
Logan, UT
March 7, 2012
Interview transcript and tape located in author's personal archive

"We had taught a guy, who was a referral, and it went really well. We set up another time to come back, and we couldn't get a hold of him. We found out from another guy that he was in the hospital, he was really sick. So we went and gave him a blessing, and then we had to go right away. After we left, we realized we didn't get his address or anything, and we wanted to stop by and visit him. It was rainy, typhoon, just winds and rain like crazy. We were going around, and my senior companion was a guy that prayed all the time. He would stop on a street corner and pray. He was Tawainese boy. We were just riding around in the rain, like praying all the time. He slammed on his brakes and turned into this one door, and I almost hit him. He knocks on the door, and the guy said, "hold on, one minute." So we were sitting there waiting and waiting, and usually when we knock doors there, like if someone takes forever, we just leave. But we waited and he opens the door, and it's the guy that we taught. I mean this was a big city, there were a million people in the city, and we knocked on his door. And he ended up getting baptized."

Narrative Collected from Melissa Farr
Salt Lake City, UT
February 29, 2012
Personal correspondence with author

"There was a person that made life difficult for me at work. She was very demoralizing. I didn't know what to do and tried to make things work. I prayed so hard that a way would open up for me to get out of the situation. Well a position at another store location opened up, so I was able to transfer to this other location for work. I am much happier now where I am."

Narrative Collected from Sheila Vane
Washington, UT
March 9, 2012
Interview transcript and tape located in author's personal archive

"Telling Heavenly Father what my struggles are and communicating that I want to learn or do something new, there has always been an opportunity, always, that would work for my family. If you have to work, and some when have to work, and you still want to keep your children #1, that's always in your prayers, even while you're working, helping you to be able to prioritize, so that your family still stays #1, that your children still know that they are still the most important thing to you. When you have that desire and you communicate that to Heavenly Father, opportunities and doors are opened that help you, at least for me, to work but still keep you kids #1. There were times when I prayed for specific changes, and it always happened. I was struggling with a supervisor. I just didn't

like the way she treated her workers and I just didn't want to be a part of it. I wanted to work for someone that was kinder and I remember praying specifically for that. I just didn't know how it was going to happen, and in an email a manager asked if any were interested in coming in learning a new program she had to design. I emailed her back and said that I was interested but not full-time, and I'm not interested in working full-time. And she emailed me back saying "why don't you come in and visit with me." My previous boss had communicated not so nice things about me to her, so I was really reluctant and wondering what she had said. So when I went in there, she said, "Are you interested in doing this?" I said, "Yes, I am. I'm interested, but I'm not interested in working full-time." And she said, "Well, what days to you want to work?" And I said, "Monday and Thursday." And she said, "Great, I've got a girl who wants to do Tuesdays and Fridays. Will you come and join us?" And I said, "Yes." She was a kind boss, and that's what I prayed for."

Narrative Collected from Sam Ellsworth
Logan, Utah
March 4, 2012
Oral testimony bearing at church sacrament meeting

He manages a pizza restaurant and yesterday they had a large order of hundreds of pizzas. Sam had been preparing for this order all week, ordering supplies and making sure they had enough ingredients. Yesterday morning he was ready to start cooking, and preparing the order. But he couldn't find an essential dough making tool. He couldn't get started cooking without this simple tool. He looked everywhere and could not find it. Feeling helpless and unsure of what to do, he walked into his office and closed the door behind. He kneeled down and prayed for help, that he would be able to find the tool. After this, he went back out and decided to call a certain employee. The employee told him exactly where the tool was, and Sam was able to find it.

Narrative Collected from Taylor Redding
February 9, 2012
Logan, UT
Personal correspondence with author

"When I was seven years old, one day I was arriving home from school, I found my family waiting for me in the front room. I learned that my father had been diagnosed with leukemia. For the first few hours I was angry and in denial. That night I got on my knees and prayed to God with everything in my soul that my dad would be all right and be able to watch me grow up. Not long after this, my parents headed down to Salt Lake City to the Huntsman Cancer Center. My dad spent six hours down there battling this disease. He watched people he shared hospital rooms with pass away, as he trudged on. I spent my 8th birthday in a visiting room but he was still there to see it. These things were evidence that my prayer was being answered. My prayer continues to be answered every day as my dad has been in remission for nearly 12 years. As I continue to pray and increase my faith that

my prayers will be answered, I recognize small miracles on a day to day basis. I no longer rely on prayer for just the major trials in my life, but I rely on prayer for everyday living."

Appendix B. Sacrifice Narratives

Narrative Collected from Nathan Call
Logan, UT
February 9, 2012
Personal correspondence with author

"My best friend and I, growing up, had a good friend at church named Brandon that had Down syndrome. He had many physical complications through the years. One in specific was very serious and as a result he was admitted to the hospital. When Nick and I became aware of this we decided to fast along with our entire church [congregation]. The fast lasted for the entire day. The following morning we received a phone call that Brandon had miraculously started to improve. In fact, he went from several oxygen tanks supporting him to practically none. Brandon had gone from a very serious and life threatening problem to being healthy once again. I will never forget that my sacrifice not only benefited me, but it saved the life of my friend."

Narrative Collected from Marcy Brown
Springville, UT
March 16, 2012
Interview transcript and tape located in author's personal archive

"Sending a son or daughter on a mission is a sacrifice, but I have a testimony of the great blessings it brings to a family. Five of our six children have served missions, but one incident in particular stands out in my mind because it is very personal and involves life and death consequences. Just a few days after the 9/11 attacks, our daughter Sara left for her mission to Spain. By November she had arrived in the mission. On November 23rd (the day after Thanksgiving) I was driving my car in Orem, Utah when I was hit from behind by a truck that sent my car flying through two fences, rolled, and left me trapped upside down in the car with no way to get out. To see photos of the accident and how completely smashed the car was, it is hard to imagine how I survived the crash or how it would be possible for a person inside the car to not be crushed and mangled. It took firefighters quite a while to use the Jaws of Life to open the back of the car and drag me out. It was a miracle that I survived. Several days later, as I was recovering from the accident, we received a letter from Sara's Mission President in Spain. In part of the letter he wrote that Sara's family would be directly blessed by her missionary service. The letter was dated the day of my accident. I have no doubt that the reason I survived the accident in such a miraculous fashion is due to the sacrifices and service of our daughter. The Lord protects those who serve and blesses their families accordingly."

Appendix C. Service Narratives

Narrative Collected from Mckell Hunsaker
Logan, UT
February 8, 2012
Personal correspondence with author

"When I was a senior in high school, I organized a warm clothing drive for the homeless and needy just in time for the Thanksgiving holiday. It turned out to be a pretty big service project in the end, but while I was collecting items it seemed so small to me. I went around hanging up posters in my neighborhood and in my church, as well as having the big project announced in a ward bulletin. It was so awesome to see a community pull together to help those in need. Whether people donated bags full of old coats or something as simple as a pair of gloves, anything given sure went a long way. After I had collected a truck load of bags full of various winter apparel, my family and I delivered it to the homeless shelter in Salt Lake City, where we also served Thanksgiving dinner later that same day. Never before have I felt so good inside or had so many emotions going on inside of me that I just got to the point where I could no longer contain myself. I began to cry the second we started to unload all the bags into a large inventory room at the homeless shelter. The feeling was unreal, but I was so pleased with all the people who were part of such a big service project. I was so grateful that the community was able to come together and have a good turnout for this one seemingly small project. Nothing brings me more joy than service, and the ability to be of service to someone else in whatever way that is possible. I will never forget the way I felt that day and hope to always keep a heart that is ready to serve wherever and whenever it is needed."

Narrative Collected from Amberli Cranford
Springville, Utah
March 10, 2012
Interview transcript and tape located in author's personal archive

"There was a fire in the area I was serving, just north of Carlsbad, California…there was a marine base. It got hit pretty bad. A place just east of us called Fallbrook got hit really bad with this fire. It gave us a lot of opportunities to give service under the direction of the church, their little "helping hands" program. There was a trailer park, half got burned, the other half was covered in ash and dirt. We went to this trailer park and passed out buckets that the humanitarian part of the church had put together with cleaning supplies and little masks, as you were cleaning up the ash. So we passed out those buckets around and helped people clean up their porches and outside of their trailers and just tried to clean up everything. We also worked at a refugee center while the fire was still ablaze. There were lots of people fleeing Fallbrook and some of the surrounding towns. They had a big school, high school, in Carlsbad set up to receive people, so we just directed traffic and helped people find places to park so that they could move their things into this auditorium of a high school. A lot of the avocado fields had been burned and they needed

to go in and take out old trees so that new trees could be planted. And so we did that several times. We went out to the avocado field and gathered branches and loaded them up while members of the church and those not members of the church were using chainsaws to cut them down. We would gather them and move them so that new ones could be planted. That was the livelihood of many people down there, the avocado fields."

Narrative Collected from David Vane
Washington, Utah
March 14, 2011
Interview transcript and tape located in author's personal archive

"Serving in the church welfare fields, Dad would have you do a good job. A lot of people just had hoes, and they'd just go down the row, make a chop every length of the hoe to kind of thin the beets and get whatever weeds were in the way. Me and dad, we never took hoes. We were more hands on, get down and get them little weeds right next to beets and do a good job. And he did impress upon my mind that they're the Lord's beets, the church's beets. You want to get the best yield, you want to do the best job you can. And I remember him saying that a time or two. "Hey, you're not trying, you're not fooling me, you're not fooling anybody. You're just fooling yourself. It's the Lord's work. It's the Lord's beets. You got to do your job. I don't see the things you miss, the weeds you miss, the doubles you don't pull, but hey the Lord does." You know and I think he tried to impress that upon our minds growing up, along with mom."

Narrative Collected from Sheila Vane
Washington, Utah
March 9, 2012
Interview transcript and tape located in author's personal archive

"I went and visited a friend in the hospital. She's rehabilitating from her shoulder surgery. She was supposed to come home like 3-4 days after the surgery; it's been over 2 weeks now. When I went into see her, her face just lights up when I'm there. Even though she grumbles while I'm there, I realized that for like 25 years this friend of mine has been ill, all those years for one reason or another. She's never been well, I've never known her healthy. I've never known her not sick. For 25 years, whatever she's needed, I've helped her out. When I got thinking about it, that's more interaction than I've had with my sisters these 25 years. So she really is a sister. After I left and was driving home, I got thinking about after this life is over and we're in our next life together, her frail body, that imperfect body that she's carried around her whole life, it will be perfect. She and I will be able to do anything and everything; we won't have any limits, as we've had. I've was thinking about how many times she has been sick, and how many times I've visited her at the hospital, at a rehab place, at her home—so many times I can't even count. And yet that will all be over, when we both leave this world. It's sweet when you think about it. That's a friendship. She probably loves me as much as anybody. She's

kind, but when she gets cranky, I see that side too. She's had 4-5 kidney transplants, both knee surgeries, one shoulder surgery, pins in her fingers, neck surgery. Her whole life has been in the medical world, trying to stay alive."

"I walked in and she was trying to eat her dinner. She was fighting to get this tomato on her fork, eating with her left hand because it was her right shoulder that she had the surgery on. So I said, "Let's use the spoon and I'll scoop it onto the spoon." And that worked pretty good. She was able to do it herself. But then she wanted the cobbler. She didn't want the hard part, but the soft part in the center. So I was digging around for the soft part for her, and then I said, "Do you want me to feed you?" And she said, "Yes." And we laughed, and we enjoyed that. She's very limited in what she can do. Today when I went to see her, I had only been there a few minutes and physical therapy came in and said, "ok, come on, it's time for therapy." And she said, "I don't want to go. Sheila's here." And the lady said, "She can come with us." So she didn't even think anything about it and said, "Come on, let's go." And I said, "Ok." What was really sweet was that she hasn't been able to walk, that's why she hasn't been discharged. So after her physical therapy I told her that she had done so well. She said, "You bring the wheelchair." I said, "You want me to push you in the wheelchair?" And she said, "No, I'm walking, you bring the wheelchair." And I said, "Ok." So she walked back to her room, and said, "I did a good job, huh?" And I said "you sure did." She said, "I'm getting stronger." And I said, "I think you are." That was sweet. When you give that kind of service, they're not friends anymore; they're family. She's just as much a sister to me as my own sisters."

Narrative Collected from Ryan Carlisle
Logan UT
March 7, 2012
Interview transcript and tape located in author's personal archive

"I was not keen on going on a mission. I had a girlfriend and I felt like my life was going well. I had a decent amount of money. I almost paid for the mission upfront, but I was like "hey I could get married and have a decent start right here." The girlfriend and I even talked about some times, maybe running away. Definitely, wasn't living the way I was supposed to be living at that time. Things were terrible with my parents, and it even started seeping into my relationships with my siblings. Little things started happening. It was during a priest quorum lesson, my young men leader, I really respected him. He was more laid back, but he had a strong testimony, and he'd let you know it, but he'd have fun too. That was what I needed at the time. He gave a lesson on keeping a journal—out of all things: keeping a journal, but I was super touched by it. So I started writing down my feelings and my experiences, slowly it changed me into studying my scriptures more, praying more. Then I really wanted to go on a mission after that. It changed my life around. He had a big influence, but also my parents not giving up. At times they drove me crazy and at times probably pushed me away, but at the same time they were always there."

Narrative Collected from Amberli Cranford
Springville, Utah
March 10, 2012
Interview transcript and tape located in author's personal archive

"In Young Women's, I didn't really connect with anybody and I didn't like it there. Sister Keeler was an older woman that nobody else really connected to, but for some reason she felt prompted to reach out to me. She was just very kind to me and she listened to what I had to say. She didn't think my concerns were stupid. She sometimes gave answers and sometimes just listened and told me to pray. She was a great help to me. I don't know what my life would have been like without her. She pointed me in the right direction when I wasn't headed in the right direction."

Narrative Collected from Roy Brown
Springville, UT
May 16, 2012
Interview transcript and tape located in author's personal archive

"Recently, one of my sons and a son in law were having a difficult time finding meaningful employment. They both had been out of quality work for months. I was called into the stake president's office and asked to serve an LDS employment service mission for a year. I was reluctant to accept because my family was having a challenging time on several fronts. I told the stake president if he truly felt inspired for me to take this call, I of course, would take it. I had been thinking about working in the temple. He said he would think about it. A few weeks later he called me in again and said he felt inspired to issue this call and said if I took the calling both of my sons would find meaningful work very soon. And he emphasized very soon. I accepted. I started training two weeks later and on the afternoon of the first training session my son in law was called at 1:30 PM and offered an excellent job in the field he wanted to be in. My son got a call at 3:30 PM of the same day and was asked to do a job interview. He did not get that particular job but a new video business opened up that week and his business took a dramatic turn for the better."