Never Alone

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James Moyer Tenney never knew his earthly father, but he knew his Heavenly Father--for, you see, James Moyer Tenney was obedient.

1 A Heavenly Desire to Obey 1792

Martha Tenney's supply of tears had hours before been exhausted, but her gasping sobs--fostered by her broken heart--seemed destined to continue forever. Before sunrise on that October day, James Moyer, her lover, had secretly departed from the small village of Chetton, in Shropshire, England. Though he had left a note regretfully proclaiming his sorrow for abandoning her, he had declared nothing regarding his future intentions. But Martha understood his heart: she knew he would never return. The church wedding, planned for the next week, would not take place then or ever. The unborn child who stirred within her bosom would never know his father.

In the days that followed, the damp, frigid air of winter, coupled with bitter despair, often caused the twenty-year-old maiden to long for a quick heaven, a heaven that would free her from the cold air that froze her thin body and from the emotional pain of broken dreams.

On January 7, 1792, a small portion of such a heaven found a place in her heart. As Mrs. Elliot, the local midwife, laid the baby in Martha's arms, all the sorrows and resentments of her past were pushed aside. Martha smiled as she saw that her little one bore the features of his father, and for that she was glad. She held her infant son close to her bosom as she softly whispered,

"Hello, my dear little James Moyer. Yes, you will be called James Moyer Tenney. That name suits you fine."

In the weeks that followed, Martha and her baby continued to live with her family in their small farm cottage. Martha was deeply sensitive about the imposition that she felt this placed upon her mother and father. She was always quick to arise in the night to attend to little James so that his cries would not disturb her parents' sleep. But this night the crying of one-month-old James could not be silenced. Martha's attempts to quiet her infant boy were in vain. Nursing, rocking--nothing satisfied. At wit's end, lifting her son so that her lips were almost touching his tiny ear, she desperately but softly whispered, "Little James, listen to me. Grandfather is tired. He has to work so hard. You must stop crying so that he can sleep."

The infant's tiny body seemed to stiffen in resolve as if exerting himself to hear every word of his mother's fervent appeal. He sobbed one more time, took a deep breath, and was silent. Instantly, little James Moyer Tenney was asleep.

Martha gently laid him in the small wooden box that served as his crib and tucked his blanket around him. Minutes later, as she lay in her own bed, she wondered, What could have happened? Was it the milk and the dry diaper? Could the food and the warmth have caused him to so suddenly fall asleep? No, it was more than that. It was those things plus something else, something marvelous. Martha knew her little son slept because she had asked him to sleep. But, she wondered, how could a baby hear and understand and obey? She turned in her bed as her mind seemed to transcend its normal bounds. She sensed that her son had brought with him from another place a divine desire to listen and to obey.

Prompted by gratitude for such a profound blessing, she gently whispered, "Dear God." As she spoke her emotions welled up within her and allowed her mind to run free. She remembered things which cannot be remembered, things which made her happier than she had ever before been. Finally with deep emotion she continued, "Dear God, my little son has no earthly father, but you are his father and he is your son. As he grows and as he lives, he will need direction. Please tell him in his heart what to do. I know he will always obey." The sleep that can only be born of perfect peace soon overcame Martha Tenney.

2 Yes, Father 1802

That boy will never amount to a hill of beans. It would be easier to build this fence alone than to have to tell him every little detail of what to do. He can't do anything on his own. If he was my real son, instead of my stepson, I'd boot him across the field until he realized he has some brains inside his thick skull."

"Oh, Samuel, he's just a ten-year-old boy," Martha said as she moved closer to her frightened son. "Please don't shout at him anymore. He'll do better. Just try to be patient and teach him. He is the kind of boy who will do whatever you tell him."

"That's the problem," Samuel said with a mocking tone. "In the two years we've been married I've watched him--he just stands there until someone tells him what to do. Ain't that right, boy? You're a dummy, aren't you!"

"Yes, Father," James said as he stood with a bowed head.

"Yes, Father. Yes, Father. I'd just like to hear you say no. Just once, say no. Can you say no?"

"Yes," James replied with a pained and nearly silent whisper.

"You see, Martha. He can't say no. Say no, boy!"

"He doesn't want to say no to you. You're his father. He wants to obey you. Can't you understand that?"

The quivering youngster did not speak. His mother moved behind him and placed her hands on his shoulders. With pain in his eyes, James looked away from his stepfather and toward a flock of grazing sheep.

Martha, feeling the pain of her son, could not restrain her tears. She emotionally appealed the boy's case, "Oh, Samuel, he's such a good boy. If only you would not be so harsh. If only you would teach him, James would learn. You can scarcely get all the work done. You've told me that once he understands he works hard. He could help you if you'd just help him. If you'd just ... if you'd just love him."

Martha, realizing she had asked too much, dried her eyes with the corner of her apron, and made a final plea, "Please, Samuel. Be patient with him."

"Patient! Patient! Patient! I'm tired of being patient. He's looking at those sheep out there

because he is just like one of them. Why don't you get out there, boy, and eat grass with those sheep. You are more like a sheep than you are like a human being."

Martha walked around in front of her forlorn son. Looking out across the gently sloping green hill, she silently spoke to an unseen person. "James Moyer, oh, James Moyer, I wish you were here. You could teach him as only a true father can." Then looking back at her son, she longingly whispered, "Oh, if you only had a father who would teach you and encourage you and love you. You'd learn and you'd grow and you'd become one of the great ones."

Martha picked up the empty lunch basket and walked across the meadow and down the lane that led home. She remembered the night she first knew that James would listen and obey. The memory of that night plus the closeness she felt to her son made her anxious to be in the privacy of her home where she could find the comfort of talking to the boy's Heavenly Father. In the distance a meadowlark sang. As Martha heard its melodic and heavenly sound, she felt it was a sign that God was nearby and that the sweet sound of his voice would be the voice her little lamb would follow all the way to his destiny.

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3 He Answers Prayers 1804

When the sun is shining in England it is the most delightful of all lands, and being there at such a time is much like being in heaven.

On such a day, twelve-year-old James and his two young friends, the Frandsen brothers, laid down their hoes and made their way toward the edge of the potato field. Gleefully, they hurried toward the nearby canal. Swimming in the cool water made their midday break pure pleasure.

As the three boys approached the banks that held the slowly flowing water, William Frandsen shouted, "Last one in is a-----fool."

"Cut out the swearing," James shouted as he hurried forward.

"Don't tell me to cut out nothin'," William said in an irritated tone. "You think you are so----- good."

"I'm not good, but there isn't no sense in swearing."

Henry, William's older brother, was irritated by James's rebuke of his younger brother. He

mockingly shouted, "James, why don't you mind your own business! Everybody around here ain't as religious as you and your mother."
James replied, "Reverend Morris said that those who curse aren't entitled to God's blessings."
William, becoming more upset, responded, "Who cares what Reverend Morris says. My father says he doesn't even know what he's talking about. Besides, what difference does it make if maybe there ain't no God to bless anybody anyway?"
Astonished at such a thought, James hastily replied, "What do you mean--ya pray, don't ya?"

"I did when I was a kid, but I don't much no more."
"Me neither," Henry said like a mocking bird.

"I guess you pray a hundred times a day, don't you, James?"
"Not that many," James replied with honesty. "But I pray at least a few times."

"Why?"

"'Cause I need things and 'cause I'm thankful."
"I don't think God answers prayers, so I don't pray," William said with an all-knowing smirk.
"Well, he answers my prayers," James said firmly.
Doubtingly, William asked, "When did he ever answer one of your prayers?"
James was silent as he considered the surprising question. Finally he replied with soberness. "When my mother was sick last week, I prayed she'd get better and now she is."

"She would have done that anyway. I'll bet you prayed for your grandfather and grandmother a couple of years back when they had the flu, and they both died anyway."
Before James could consider an answer, the two other boys began to run the last few yards to the canal. There was no more time for such serious talk. A minute later the three young friends were in the water.
All too soon it seemed, James, sensing that it was time to head back to the potato field, pulled himself onto the bank. Putting on his trousers, he said, "Let's get back to work."
"No! Let's stay here," called back William, who was still enjoying the fun. "Mr. Scott, the foreman, has gone to the village. He won't be back for two hours. He won't know what time we get back to work."
"Come on. Let's go," James pled as pleasantly as he could.

"Go ahead, dummy," William shouted as he pushed Henry's head under the water.
James almost begged, "Come on."
Henry shouted out mockingly, "You go back and go to work, and maybe if you pray real hard you can get so much help from God that you can weed our rows too."
Both boys laughed.
James felt discouraged as he walked slowly back toward where he had left his hoe. A few minutes later as he grasped a large weed, he wondered why he was as different from his young friends as a weed is from a potato plant--and he wondered which of the two he was.
As if searching for an answer, James looked toward the western horizon. From the field he could see his house. He could see three men and a woman standing by a carriage that was parked nearby. He wondered why they were there.
Several minutes later he saw his stepfather climb across the stone wall and then continue on toward him. James stood perfectly still as his father approached. He sensed that something was wrong.
Two minutes later the two stood face to face. "James," Samuel said in an unusually warm and tender tone. Then he seemed unable to say more as he looked heavenward. There was a long silence. Finally, the stepfather took a deep breath and said what James by now already knew.

"Your mother just died."

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4 Alone 1804

Twelve-year-old James Moyer Tenney longingly swept his dark eyes from one to another of the thirty or so raindrenched friends and family members who had come to pay their respects to Martha Tenney. Though each felt the youngster's gaze focus upon him, none could bear the pain of looking back. Finally his forlorn stare lifted up to his stepfather, who at that exact instant looked down at his ... his son. For a brief instant, pure love bound them as one. But then, being unable to bear this pure revelation of the boy's sorrowing soul, Samuel Hughes looked away.
Alone again, James impulsively reached out to grasp his mother's hand as he had always done whenever he needed security. Instantly he realized she was not there. There was no hand, no

eyes, no smile, no love, no mother. James was alone, and it seemed to him that he would be forever.

Two men on each side of the open grave held the ends of ropes that draped under the two ends of the coffin. Each let the rope slide through his hands as the plain, long, gray wooden box dropped lower and lower into the ground. James watched as it disappeared from sight and then splashed into the water that had collected at the muddy bottom.

The services were soon over, and the small group dispersed. Reverend Morris placed his left hand on Samuel's shoulder and gently suggested, "Let's you and I and the boy go inside the chapel, out of the rain, and talk."

James stared silently at the cold stone walls as the reverend admonished his stepfather, "Now, Samuel, more than ever, you have reason to return to a life of faith. You need to come to church. You need to pray. You need to set an example for young James. You need to love him and teach him." For the first time James saw his stepfather cry. And he heard him exclaim, "I will, Reverend Morris! I will!"

Then the kindly and sensitive cleric knelt on the stone floor directly in front of James. He pressed the boy's two hands together within his own. Softly he said, "Look into my eyes, my son."

James slowly lifted his bowed head until his eyes met the near-divine gaze of this pure man. Softly the minister spoke, "James, you and your mother shared a perfect love. She was proud of you. You have been an obedient son. You were faithful in coming to church with your mother. Perhaps no boy ever loved a mother more."

Now it was the minister who looked away. He had never seen sorrow as he saw it in the soul of his young friend. Gaining strength, his tear-flooded eyes looked again at the tender child. "James, God loves you. He will be with you always, and you'll never be alone. Your mother is gone for now, but always remember she is not gone forever. If you do as she taught you, you will someday be with her again. Will you promise me that you will be faithful and obedient? Will you promise me that you'll always pray and do what God tells you?"

James felt the minister's big hands tighten around his own, but he could not answer. Breaking the silence with a pleading appeal, the man of God asked again, "Will you promise me, James? Will you?"

Instantly the young boy remembered the day that his mother died. He had heard over and over again the words of Henry Frandsen, "Maybe there ain't no God to bless anybody anyway." He

had decided then that he would never pray again. Yet bathed now in the love of his friend, he could feel that God was near and James could not restrain the prompting of his heart. The silence of the stone church was broken by his simple and profound reply: "Yes."

Reverend Morris bowed his head, and James sensed he was silently reaching out to God.

The rain had lessened by the time James and his stepfather walked the two miles to their empty house. Samuel wanted to reach out and put his hand on the boy's shoulder, but he couldn't. He had for too long been at a distance. Now in this time when he needed to give and receive love, he couldn't cross the bridge to the boy's heart because there was no bridge there.

An hour later, after the evening's meager meal, Samuel slipped from the house without a word. James knew when his father went out of the door that he would be at the pub until it closed.

James Moyer Tenney was alone--alone as only those who have no family can be alone.

As he sat silently staring into the embers of a dying fire, his mind was drawn to happier times. He envisioned his mother moving about the room, sweeping the floor, moving the steaming pots that hung in the fireplace, and reading to him from the Bible. Tears filled his eyes as he remembered himself sitting on her lap. In his mind he felt her arms circled around him, and he felt her warmth as she drew him tightly to her.

Suddenly, though the young boy was still sitting staring at the flickering flames, he could see himself in the next room on his knees beside his mother. As he had done so often during his lifetime, once again he heard her pray.

Some hours later, James was startled by his stepfather's voice. "Wake up, boy, and get to bed. You shouldn't sleep in that chair. The fire is out and you'll freeze."

James looked up at his stepfather. His first impulse was to say, "I love you." But he restrained himself because he knew Samuel would act as if he didn't want to hear such things. Yet nothing could keep the boy from looking at the older man with an unmistakable look of love.

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5 Ambition, Romance, and Hope 1816

One of the great mysteries in Chetton in the early years of the eighteen hundreds was why James Moyer Tenney was so happy when he apparently had so little to be happy about. Since his stepfather had moved to Bridgenorth some ten years before, he had lived alone. He slept in the

attic of the manor house and ate with the domestic servants.

His short stature and his narrow shoulders caused the unkind to refer to him as "the runt." And his homely face and his noncommanding presence caused many to not refer to him at all.

His lack of muscular power did not equip him well for the physical labor that had become his lot in life. He seemed destined to forever be a lowly member of the crew and to never be in charge of anything more important than a hoe.

Apart from his unimpressive outward appearance, his habit for hard work and his jovial nature made him a most desirable acquaintance and employee. By being at work at five-thirty each morning instead of the required six o'clock, by never taking time to rest, and by staying an extra ten minutes, he could get as much work done in a day as the more physically strong.

The nine others on the farm crew would have been irritated with his work habits, which by comparison made them appear to be a bit sluggardly, but somehow it was quite impossible to get upset at "good ol' James." Unless, of course, it was at his narrow views on God's commandments. But James had learned throughout the years that people didn't like to be reminded of their shortcomings; so when the subject of God came up, he usually fell silent lest he become engaged in an argument. His fame as an employee spread at least two miles in each direction, admittedly in part because his good nature caused him to sing while he worked. His off-key voice added little credence to his claim that the next year he planned to leave Shropshire to star in the London opera.

In the fields, while others rested James would continue to labor, but to lessen the anxiety of the rest of the crew he would explain, "Ah, thank you for clearing out of the way and giving me room to flex my mighty muscles." He'd then bend his arm by bringing his fist back to his shoulder, revealing his scrawny but rock-hard tendons and ligaments, and shout, "You are gazing upon the strongest man in the whole British Empire!"

For twenty-four-year-old James, these outward antics were to a slight degree a hypocritical reflection of his inward pain. Deep within himself he longed for something that wasn't so now, and, at times, he was sure would never be.

His strict obedience to what he considered heavenly principles caused him to feel, most of the time, that he was in favor with God. But God was quite invisible and seldom, if ever, rewarded that obedience with a public pat on the back. The longing James had was for just a pittance of appreciation and respect from his neighbors and fellow workers. In his private, silent

conversations with himself he often remarked, "I don't desire more money. I just wish I could have the satisfaction of being thought of as being of some importance. I wish just once I could hear other people say: 'There is James Tenney' (not 'the runt'). 'There is James Tenney' (not 'the funny little chap'). 'James Tenney' (not just 'a good, religious man'). 'James Tenney' ('a real success')." Thinking like that or dreaming like that often caused James to become excited and imagine himself doing all sorts of magnificent things.

The carriage driver, who had for seven years driven for the farm owner and his family, was moving to London to drive for a nobleman. James loved horses, and in his imagination he could see himself sitting up there on the high seat, driving the lady and the children to market. The other laborers would wave and show deep respect. He envisioned himself sitting up front, straight as a board and holding the reins with the dignity of a squire.

Even with such lofty fantasies, it nearly made James ill to push his courage outside of its normal limits and to the heights it took to inquire about the position. The farm boss listened with what seemed like great respect as James explained his desire. Encouraged as he was by this reaction, his hopes soared and caused him to say more than he had intended to about how well he'd do if he became the driver.

When James had finished his appeal, the farm boss replied: "I can't answer you now, James, but I'll talk to the big man tomorrow and see what would be his pleasure. As you know, it's his decision, not mine."

That night as James left the small attic where he lived alone he hurried along on a most pleasant errand. As he walked he sang with fervor his favorite song, "God Save the Queen." He moved quickly to the edge of the field, jumped the stone wall, climbed the gently sloping hill, crossed the stream, and approached the small house of Margaret Monroe. Margaret was the daughter of the local harness maker. He could scarcely wait to tell her that he was soon to be the new carriage driver.

Later as he and Margaret walked along toward the few shops that served Chetton, James noticed that she seemed friendlier than ever. In the dim light of dusk, her blonde hair seemed to radiate a halo around her beautiful face. There was no way James could tell others or even explain to himself how much he liked her. Just thinking about her caused him to feel light-headed, but now having her at his side almost made him incapable of breathing.

As they walked along, he reached out and took her hand in his. She didn't pull away. James

closed his eyes so as to allow his face to use its full strength to smile.

For a few minutes he was silent, but he was thinking: "I wish Charles and Abott and the rest of the farm crew could see me now. Maybe then they'd give up teasing me about being afraid of girls. If they could see my hand a-holdin' Margaret's, they'd have to change their tune." Without his realizing it, his silent thoughts changed into an audible whisper. "They'd have to change their tune to a love song."

"What?" Margaret asked.

"Oh, nothin'. Nothin'. I was just saying I sure do like love songs."

"Me too," Margaret said, and her warm reply sent a surge of excitement up his spine.

After an hour or so they were back at Margaret's house. Tomorrow James must be up at four-thirty. He knew that if he ran home he could still get six hours of sleep. As he attempted to say good night, Margaret seemed to want him to tarry. He could sense that he could kiss her there by the doorstep. "But," thought James with almost wild emotion, "that, as Reverend Morris said, will come with marriage." Suddenly breaking away from Margaret, he ran toward his home and his happy tomorrow. His usual nightly prayer was filled with desire and gratitude, and as he said amen he felt that God was near and would make all his hopes and dreams finally come true.

The next morning, the foreman came a few minutes early to talk to James before the rest of the crew arrived. "I talked to the big man," he gently explained. "When I first mentioned your name, he wasn't sure who you were. I told him, 'You know, Tenney, the little chap. The one some call the runt. You know him. He's been working with us since he was a boy.' Suddenly it clicked with him, and he said, 'Oh, you mean Sam Hughes's son.'

"He knew you then. Yeah. He remembered you right off then."

"Does he want me to be the driver?" James couldn't help but interrupt.

"Well, he was interested. Especially when I told him how much you can be trusted and how regular you are in going to church. Then I told him how you come to work earlier than the others and how hard you work. He was real interested. He thought about it for a few seconds. Then he said that he wanted to talk to Abott. He said that he'd seen Abott down at the pub on Saturday night and that he and Abott had had a few glasses of ale. He said that Abott really impressed him."

James was flabbergasted at the mention of Abott's name. His words poured out with unusual

rapidity: "Did you tell him about Abott leaving work early three days last week because he was sick after drinking so much the night before? Did you tell him how Abott complains about every little thing? And how you can't even count on him to finish what he starts? Did you tell him that Abott hasn't set foot in church in ten years, and how he ain't got an ounce of respect for a single one of God's commands?"

"No, I didn't say nothin' about that. Besides, that sort of thing is none of your business, James. The big man can choose who he wants, and if he wants Abott to be the driver that is who he'll get." Sensing the disappointment James felt and wanting to make him feel better, the foreman said: "You don't want that job anyway. What would I do if you left my crew? We can get along without Abott, but you, well, we need you with us, James. You think about it while you cut the hay. You'll be a lot happier here with the crew. That kind of fancy stuff isn't for you. Being the driver for the big man isn't all it's cracked up to be. There's no pleasing his wife. She'd make your life miserable."

James had never been so disappointed. But, as he did so often, he covered his inward feelings by turning to humor, "I suppose Abott ought to be at the rear end of the horses. That's where he fits in best."

The foreman laughed heartily, slapped James on the back, and shouted, "You are a great one, James. I'm glad you feel all right about things. Let's go to work."

Three months later, as James sat at the back of the parish church, he reasoned that perhaps it was as Margaret said: "I don't want to marry a man who's afraid to kiss a girl good-night." Or perhaps Abott's new job as driver was what had turned the tide. But no amount of such thinking could lessen the pain he felt as he watched Margaret Monroe exchange vows with Abott.

Later, after the bridal party had departed, James helped the minister tidy up the chapel.

"You were sort of sweet on Margaret, weren't you, James?"

"Well, I was for a time, but I turned her aside when I found out she didn't deserve to be as happy as I could make her."

The two laughed together. James could laugh with almost everyone in the village. But there was only one man around with whom he could cry, and that was his dear friend Reverend Morris. This great man had been there through the everyday joys and the frequent disappointments and sorrows that had been the fabric of James's life.

"Oh, Reverend Morris, what will become of me? Margaret seemed to make me happy, but I didn't do the same for her. Sometimes I feel that apart from you and God I am quite unlovable."

The minister sat silently. He sensed James needed to talk. Giving an occasional understanding nod, the Reverend just listened.

"Abott, Abott. How could she marry Abott? He sits up there so straight and tall, and he drives the carraige like he thinks he's king. And Reverend, he is nothing. When you really know him, you realize he is less than nothing. And me, well, I try so hard, and all I ever get is ..." James faltered as a tear found its way slowly down his cheek. "I just don't understand why. You know, Reverend, it wasn't just that Margaret married somebody else. When it comes right down to it, I'm not sure I really loved her. But it's just that no matter what I want, I can't seem to get it." Finally James had said it all.

The minister had no answer. He looked into the eyes of his wondering friend and gently said, "Hope, James. Keep hoping. There is something good out there for you. I can feel it in my bones. Someday soon, son. Someday soon."

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6 Elizabeth 1818

Never!" shouted James to his friend Charles, who was working with him pulling weeds from the half-grown corn.

"Never is a long time," came the emphatic reply.

"Look. I've told you before, Charles, that I don't need a wife and children any more than I need more of these pig weeds."

"You ought to at least see her. You might change your mind." Charles then added in a tantalizing tone, "She's just your height, and she's as religious as the Apostles Peter and Paul and you all rolled together into one body." Then pausing while he put all his strength into pulling a tree-sized weed and tossing it back over his shoulder, Charles spoke again. "I told her about you, and she told me she likes chaps whose hair looks like a bird's nest, who's built like a scarecrow, and who sings like a screech owl." Charles, who was the best friend James ever had, added, "I'm just

joking. I told her you look and act like a prince. Come on, James, you'll like her. She enjoys kidding around and laughing. She lives in Abdon, where my Emily lives. They'll both be at Bridgenorth Market on Saturday. She wants to meet you.

"We can get Saturday afternoon off, and we'll walk over there. When you see her, your old heart will pound and you'll marry her right in front of the potatoes and carrots."

Both men laughed as James threw a spearlike pig weed at his friend.

"Okay. I'll go."

"Good," Charles shouted gleefully. "I'll beat you to the end of the row."

On Saturday the two friends were at Bridgenorth, standing just inside the north side of the market. After several minutes two young ladies approached them. "James, this is Elizabeth Bray. Elizabeth, this is my friend, James Moyer Tenney." With that, Charles and Emily laughingly turned and, hand in hand, walked away. Charles turned and briefly looked back, winking a dramatic wink at his uneasy friend.

James stared awkwardly away from Elizabeth and toward a nearby lady who was selling squash and beets. What, he wondered, can I say to someone I don't even know? Elizabeth broke the awkward silence. "I love coming here."

"Yeah. It's good."

"Mmm, smells good," Elizabeth said with a smile. "Let's go buy a piece of new-baked bread. Want to do that?" she asked.

"Yeah. It smells good. I'll buy some strawberry jam to spread on it. After all, men don't live by bread alone."

Elizabeth laughed. James liked the sound of her laugh--soft and delightfully contagious.

As they stood against the back of a wagon and ate, James felt a quiet, peaceful joy. He felt comfortable. Elizabeth wasn't the prettiest girl he had ever seen, but she was certainly pleasant to look at. Her brown hair and her dark eyes contrasted well with her fair skin.

"Do you know other scriptures?" Elizabeth asked.

"Other ones?"

"Yes. Besides the one about bread. You know, the one where you said, 'Man doesn't live by bread alone.'"

James shrugged his shoulders to give a humble impression and replied, "I know a few, but not too many. I go to church, but I'm not too good at memorizing."

"Me neither. But I love the Bible."

"Me too." James answered. As the two talked, James felt that somehow he was in church without really being in church at all.

"What about your parents?" Elizabeth asked. "Are they religious?"

"My mother died when I was twelve. I was raised a couple of years by my father--well, my stepfather. My real father, he ... Anyway, what about you?"

"You must have been heartbroken when your mother died."

"I was. I really was."

"Was she sick a long time?"

"A little while. I thought she'd get better. I prayed that she would, but I guess God needed her up there."

Elizabeth, seeing his eyes moisten with tears, sensed the pain that still lingered in her new friend's heart.

"Do you pray a lot?"

"Yeah, I pray regularly."

"Me too."

Silence followed. But James's mind was racing to keep up with his emotions. Secure, tender feelings flooded his heart. He'd never told anybody, not even the minister, about praying for his mother. He struggled to hold back the tears. But this woman was so easy to talk to.

"I'm sorry about your mother."

James, who had been looking toward the top of a nearby building, lowered his gaze until his eyes met hers. He sensed that for him and for her things would never again be the same.

7 The Wedding Guest 1818

It happened so quickly. Later James considered in his mind that perhaps it really didn't happen at all, but his heart knew it had been as real as the gentle breeze that had blown Elizabeth's dark hair across the side of her face. Just as Reverend Morris had taken his place at the altar, James's eyes had been drawn to a place just to the right of the narrow front window. The morning sun's rays caused a beam of light to brightly illuminate a small portion of the otherwise dimly lit edifice. James looked, blinked to clear his eyes, and looked again. He was right--standing in the light was a woman! She nodded her approval, and he uttered an almost audible gasp and his eyes flooded with tears as he recognized the loving smile of his mother. When his eyes cleared, the figure was no longer to be seen, but James sensed with all his senses that somewhere in the chapel she watched on.

James listened intently as Reverend Morris spoke to him and Elizabeth. He was glad his bride had agreed that their wedding could be in Chetton and that his minister, his teacher, one of his dearest friends could unite them in marriage.

Elizabeth looked radiant in the simple white dress she had so carefully sewn. Charles, his best man, and all the farm crew were on the first few rows of wooden benches. Elizabeth's father and mother and her brothers and sisters were there. James had no family and so none--well, none except perhaps his mother--were there.

The reverend was gentle and filled with love as he spoke to his young friends about the sanctity of the marriage covenant. He then began to pronounce the wedding vows. Finally he said, "I pronounce you, Elizabeth Bray and James Moyer Tenney, husband and wife, legally and lawfully married until ..." Reverend Morris's voice broke, and it was long, silent seconds before he could go on--"until death do you part."

After the brief festivities that followed the wedding ceremony, James stood at the side of the small baptismal font near the front entrance. There he vigorously shook hands with all who had been so kind as to come.

After saying good-bye to all, James began as usual to tidy up the building. Reverend Morris spoke firmly to him. "Now, James, don't you be running around straightening things. I know you always want to help, but today you are our special guest. This is your day, James--yours and Elizabeth's. Mrs. Morris and I can straighten things around. You take Elizabeth and get on your

way!"

"Oh, Reverend, we'll just help a little and then we'll be off, but before we go, could I talk privately to you for just a minute?" The two friends walked to the front of the chapel near the pulpit.

"Reverend," James said cautiously. "Something really different happened here today. Just before you began speaking to Elizabeth and me, I looked behind you. Right there, just to the right of that window, the light was shining through. And standing in that light, I saw my mother."

The reverend's eyes moistened, and, as he nodded in agreement, he softly said, "Yes, James, I know she was here. I didn't see her, but she was here."

Silence followed for several seconds, then James spoke. "You know, I'm not sure about something, and, Reverend, I think you agree. I'm not sure death really ends things--I mean things like marriage. I think heaven is ... well ...a place where people who loved each other here will be together there. I don't really think death will ever part Elizabeth and me."

The reverend didn't reply with words but rather with a gentle nod of his head.

The two friends embraced, and soon James and Elizabeth were on their way to Claverly, where James would work as a farmhand and Elizabeth as a parlor servant. There they would have their own cottage where they could love and pray and have a family and a small bit of ground on which they could keep a few chickens and grow a bit of food--a place which to the young couple was a bit like heaven.

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8 Gratitude 1843

Sometime, Elizabeth couldn't quite recall just when, her mother had taught her how to make a chicken and dumplings meal. To James there never had been nor ever would there be anything as delicious as Elizabeth's chicken and dumplings. Over the years such savory victuals had become a semiannual tradition for James and Elizabeth and their seven children. Only on the most special occasions could the humble Tenneys afford such an exotic treat.

Times were difficult in England in the 1830s and '40s. Some folks were leaving their farms and going to the cities to work in factories. James considered moving, but nothing ever could or ever would have enough appeal to draw him away from his home--Shropshire. He was born in the

gentle hills that lined the banks of his beloved Severn River. James was a farmer. That was all he knew. He loved the soil, the cattle, and the sheep, and had no desire to engage in any other occupation.

Through the years, hard work took its toll on his scrawny body. The damp winters caused his bones to ache and his lungs to become congested. He worked through his discomfort because he felt there was no choice, and he was quite right.

One day while shearing sheep, James had been bent over for so long that he could scarcely straighten his pained back. In spite of the gnawing ache, a smile crossed his wrinkled face. Standing up and putting both hands at the small of his back, he suddenly saw in his mind a vision of Elizabeth. He could see her standing in the front doorway of their cottage, her dark hair fluffed up in the front. On the back of her head was a white bonnet. She quickly turned her head to the side to whip a few loose strands of hair from in front of her eyes. She wore a white apron over her dark blue dress. James longed to be with her and felt that if he were to shout her name, she would see him from her place in the doorway and wave.

"Come on, Tenney, what are you standing there grinning about? Grab that sheep. Three more and we've got 'em all." Reuben Corley's words interrupted James's vision of heaven.

As he walked along the willow-lined path that led home, James could not restrain himself from singing. He loved to sing. Just a few steps from his threshold he caught a faint fragrance of food. An incredulous expression crossed his face. Could it be? Yes, it was unmistakenly chicken and dumplings! But why on a Wednesday?

As he entered the small cottage, Elizabeth, who was at the far side of the small room, turned away from her kneeling position near the fireplace. She said, "Just give me a minute to turn this pot." Then arising, she moved quickly toward James. She embraced him and shouted, "Happy twenty-fifth anniversary, my dear James."

"Ohhhhh!" James said, embarrassment and pleasure mixing awkwardly in his voice. "It is. So it is," he replied. Then he quickly added, "I'm sorry I forgot," as he took her in his arms. "You know, Elizabeth, heaven must be a small place because every time I think I'm in heaven, the first person I see is you."

Soon the Tenney family gathered together for prayer. James wanted to make the prayer short because of the waiting dumplings, but he could not. There was so much to be grateful for.

As they ate, James had a feeling that he was far more important than a king.

9 Wondering 1850

It's a long way to walk. You are worn out from cutting hay all day, and you have a whole field to do tomorrow. You need your sleep. Are you sure you have to go tonight?"

> "Elizabeth, I have to go. He's dearer to my heart than any man I've ever known. The letter says he is failing fast. If I don't go tonight, I'll never see him again."

As James hurriedly walked down the lane, he shouted back to his beloved wife of thirty-two years, "Don't worry, I'll be back before dawn."

Soon he was on the rutted road that led the nine miles from his present home in Claverly to his boyhood home of Chetton.

During the long, lonely walk his mind considered a multitude of thoughts. When it came to thinking, James always maintained that remembering the past was more pleasant than considering the future. Future things were such a big mystery, but the past was certain and could be counted on.

Both his past and his future prompted this journey to his friend and champion, Reverend Morris. The very thought of that godly man brought James joy. Although James had admired the three ministers who had served during the thirty or so years he had lived in Claverly parish, none commanded his love and respect as did Reverend Morris. He often felt that their views on Christ's teachings were a bit different than his own. Sometimes he wondered about looking into a nonconformist church, but he couldn't do so, because of his feelings for Reverend Morris.

As he walked, James wondered why Reverend Snedwick, who was the first parish priest he had known in Claverly, had become the rural dean of the twenty or so parishes. Why had not this honor come to Reverend Morris, who was by far the better man in James's estimation. Perhaps, thought James, the Lord has a different standard for judging than the standard I would use. As he neared Chetton his mind raced at high speed in an effort to keep pace with the memories associated with each tree, each hedgerow, each field, and each house. In the distance he saw the small cottage where he had loved and been loved by his mother, Martha. For a moment, he stood, silently looking and remembering.

Moving on, he rounded the bend in the narrow road that led between two rows of linked cottages. Beneath his feet he felt the irregular surface of the cobblestones. He hastened up a slight hill, at the top of which stood the old parish church. For James, seeing the stone walls of this sacred structure was like looking up and seeing the Holy City itself. He remembered the many times that he had walked this same gentle hill hand in hand with his mother.

He hurried to the back of the building, where he saw a dim light burning in the small vicarage. In response to his gentle knock on the door, Mrs. Morris seemed to glow as she said: "Oh, James, come in. He loves you so dearly. He always called you the obedient one. He will be so glad you're here." Her expression saddened. "He is slipping fast. He might not seem to recognize you, but I think he will know it is you."

Mrs. Morris, sensing that the two friends should be alone, silently slipped out, closing the door behind her.

James sat close to the bed. He reached out and took the old priest's hand and softly said: "It's me, James. Martha's son. You taught me to read. You taught me ... Remember me?"

There was no change of expression on his friend's face.

James added a little awkwardly, "Elizabeth, you remember her. You ... well, you performed our marriage. She's fine. She married a really good chap, you know." James smiled as he remembered the many times the two of them had joked and laughed.

James paused for several seconds. He was deeply sorry that this man who had always been so full of love and kind words could not now respond. "I wish you knew Elizabeth better. Everybody loves her. I love her dearly. She has been a comfort to me. Our sons and daughters are all good workers, and they love God and their fellowman. William, our oldest, he served his apprenticeship and is now a tanner, married to Jane, and has two children. Can you imagine me, the little runt, being a grandfather?"

James laughed again. "Cute little children they are, too. Our second son, Thomas, is also married. And Martha. You remember Martha. She's married to a fellow named Banks. He's got a little money. She lives a mile away in a nice house. All the other children still live at home. But they are old enough that they don't like to hear me sing anymore. When they were little I'd sing them the songs of the Severn River and of the five straying sheep. They'd laugh when I'd get on my hands and knees and act like the sheep. His wool tickled him so much that he couldn't quit laughing. They used to love it when I'd give them sheepback rides. But now, as I say, they are

older. I miss the old days, Reverend. 'Course, I've got the grandchildren now, but it's not quite the same. I could get the children to laugh, but when it was time to get them to sleep Elizabeth would sing. She sounds like an angel, Reverend, just exactly like an angel. When she sings I just sit and smile. Little Sarah sounds a lot like her mother. She and her mother both sing in the parish choir, you know."

James sat silently. Talking to his unconscious friend was a bit like talking to God: you didn't know for sure if you were being heard, but you somehow knew that you were.

> "I sure miss seeing you and hearing your sermons and getting inspired advice. I guess I've told Elizabeth each one of your sermons ten times or more. We all get older fast, don't we? My life is moving on. In the years I've got left I guess I'll just keep shearing sheep and pulling weeds until I die. That is all I know how to do."

A habit formed throughout the years caused James to tell Reverend Morris things that he could never say to another soul. "I've been kind of a failure, you know. Oh, I know you don't think I have, but I have. I'd love to have done more with my life like you have. I'd like to have everybody love me and respect me like they do you. Oh, I know I couldn't have nobody feel about me the way I feel about you. But I wish I could do a little more in the world than build a fence or pitch manure off a wagon and into a field. It looks like I'm just headed down the same old row of cabbage.

> "I used to dream of doing more, but now I'm afraid that if something different came along I'd probably back away from it. The only question left in my life is when I'll get to the end of the row and go on to a better life. Maybe in heaven I will be able to learn and grow and be more like you. 'Course, with the little I've accomplished here in this life, I'm not sure God would trust me with much up there."

James felt his old friend's fingers tighten around his clasped hand. It wasn't real noticeable, but James sensed he had been rebuked. Despite that, he continued with his speech.

"Maybe if Mother had lived I could have made more of myself. About all I did that she dreamed I'd do is marry a good wife, have a good family, and stay faithful in the church. I'm still faithful, Reverend. Most people who know me think I'm too faithful. They don't call me the runt anymore. Now some call me the 'fanatic.' I'm not fanatic. It's just that when it comes to doing what God says, I believe in doing it.

"I don't mean to be as religious as I am. Sometimes I wish I could back off and enjoy laughing at some bad jokes and swearing and that. But I can't. I just can't."

James was choked with emotion and sat silently for a few seconds.

"Being religious don't get me anywhere. Oh, it gives me good feelings a lot of the time, but it never has helped me get a better job or anything. It hasn't protected me from discouragement and disappointment. 'Course, nobody but you knows this stuff I've been telling you. I joke around and act like I'm the happiest man in Shropshire. And really I am happy. Elizabeth loves me. I love her. She thinks I'm a good man, and I can tell she loves and respects me. The children do, too. I just wish I could do something to make her proud of me. I wish I could, well, be noticed in some way so that people would tell her, 'Elizabeth, you sure did marry a great man.'

"Reverend, why is life the way it is? I mean, it's really good and that. But why does God put a dream inside of us and then make life so we can't ever get close to the dream without it flying away like a bird? Why can't somebody like me be a man of God like you?"

The minister's hand tightened. Leaning forward, James could see the priest's lips part as he struggled to speak. Finally, James heard the almost silent words. "You will be, you will be."

As James opened the front door to leave, Mrs. Morris called out, "Just a minute, James!" She came to his side and softly said, "Oh, James, thank you for coming. He loves you so. Just before he took sick he said to me, 'You know, I've been thinking about life. You remember James Tenney. He hasn't got much as far as the world is concerned, but in his heart he has got everything. He's living proof that when you're happy with what you've got, you get more happiness. But when you are miserable about things, all you can expect is more misery.'" She concluded by saying, "I just thought you'd like to know that."

The long walk home was a journey of joy. James, who made up hundreds of sermons but never gave one of them to anybody but himself, spoke out loud. "I'm a farmhand and each day I work in a field. Life is like working in a field. But part of the field is over a little hill. You can't see it from where you are, but if you keep plowing and stay happy and don't look back, you'll eventually get to an unknown part of the field and then you'll be surprised with what you discover."

The next night as James lay in his bed, just before he fell asleep he heard his second oldest son, Thomas, say to Elizabeth, "Two men gave it to me at Bridgeport. They said they would come here in a week. It's a religious book like the Bible."

James wanted to hear more, but it had been nearly forty hours since he had slept.
The next evening, after a full day's work, James asked Thomas about the men and the religious book. Thomas told his father the little he knew. The men he had met told him of a new religion with a book from God and said they would be coming back next week.
James was excited to talk with the men and anticipated their return. The next week when he met with them, he was thrilled with what he heard and felt. He could not understand all that the missionaries from America said, but he sensed that they were messengers of truth.
As he read of Nephi, he could see in that ancient prophet all that he had ever longed to be. He wanted to pick up the book and run all the way to Chetton to show Reverend Morris. Reverend Morris would love Nephi. But it was too late. His dearest friend had died a week before.

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10 Farewell 1850

When you joined the Mormons, that seemed strange enough to me, but now this crazy idea of almost going without food to save all your money to go to America. I just don't understand you and Mother anymore. Shropshire is our home. The Church of England is our church. I know how much you love Reverend Morris. If he were still alive, it would break his heart to know you were a Mormon. How can you turn your back on all you know and just leave?"
"Martha, I've told you. We don't want to go and leave you and your two little ones. The thought of not seeing you again is more than I can bear." Trying to gain some relief from the pain he felt, James looked away from his oldest daughter. "Next to your mother I love you more than I love anyone else in the world."
Her words were interrupted with deep, uncontrollable sobs as Martha pleaded, "Oh, Father, your little grandchildren Ann and James need you. They love your songs and your stories. Don't leave them. Please, please don't go. Please ..."
James felt his daughter's trembling hand grasp his shoulder. The appeal of her words ceased, but her gentle sobs continued.
The two sat on the crude wooden bench behind the house. After several moments of silence, Martha spoke--this time without emotion.

"Father, I've talked to my husband, Edward. He told me that if you stay here, he will be able to support you and Mother in your old age. You belong here, not in some desert in another world. Can't you see that, Father? Talk to Mother. She'll understand. This is the place for you. You can still be Mormons here. Mr. Tomkin is a Mormon, and he said he'd go back to the Church of England rather than set one foot out of Shropshire."

The impact of Martha's message caused James to flinch as if he were struck by a bullet. He could not bear the pains of what he felt. He arose, walked several paces, and then stood uneasily by the side of the well. Looking down at the dark water, he spoke to Martha, who had followed him and who had hope for a favorable reply.

"Martha, can't you see? I don't want to go. I don't want to leave my land. I love my land. This is my home." James could say no more. Martha came to his side and took his arm in her two gentle hands.

After some silence she asked, "Then, Father, will you stay?"

James pulled away and moved quickly back toward the bench. As he did so he said with an unnaturally stubborn tone: "No. No. I can't stay. I can't stay. I have to go."

"Why does this strange church mean more to you than your family?" Martha shouted as she hurried toward him. "Why?"

Painfully he answered, "Nothing means more to me than my family. If you'd come with us we could be together. It's God's will that we all go."

Martha stepped back. Her shoulders slumped in bitter disappointment. Hurriedly she walked to the lane and soon was out of sight.

James, standing alone, cried uncontrollably. His head moved from side to side in an attempt to convince his heart that what was happening wasn't really happening at all.

A month later many friends were at the train station to see the group off: James; Elizabeth; William, his wife, Jane, and their four small children; Thomas and his wife of one month, Charlotte; James; John; Joseph; and twelve-year-old Sarah. Martha was not there. James had not talked to his daughter, though he had tried, since she had disappeared down the lane. It caused him great pain to know that he would probably never talk to her again.

Brother Tomkins embraced James and said, "I wish I could go with you. I know that is what I ought to do. But with my family and all here, I just can't go. I'll keep things going here at home, and I'll be praying for you folks in Zion. By the way, I'll tell Martha good-bye for you."

The train pulled out of the station. James watched as his past happiness faded from view.

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11 The Journey February 1851

My beloved brothers and sisters, because it is so cold standing on deck on this winter's day I won't keep you here long. I just want to say that this day, February 3, 1851, will be a day you'll never forget. This is the historic day on which you leave behind your beloved England aboard the Ellen Marie to sail for Zion."

James listened intently as the wind blew the damp sea air into his face. The word Zion caused an indescribable feeling to surge through his soul. He had never before seen a living Apostle of Jesus Christ. He didn't even want to blink and thus, even for a fraction of a second, lose sight of Elder Orson Pratt.

The servant of the Lord continued: "There are four hundred Latter-day Saints on board. The journey will be more difficult than anything any of us have ever before undertaken. But with faith and prayer we will put our hands into the hand of the Lord, and we will make it across this mighty deep, and before winter comes again we will be in Zion. Our prophet Brigham Young has written to me and told me that he commends you for your obedience to the call to come to Zion. He awaits your arrival. In the name of Jesus Christ, I ask God to bless you and your children and their children who will, because of your sacrifice, live in the land of Zion forever."

As James followed his family down the narrow stairs that led to the steerage there was no room for doubt in his soul, for he knew that the Lord was at his side and that all would be well.

The space for sleeping was crowded. The place for his son William, William's wife, and his four young children was only six feet square. How could they manage? Each adult had a two-feet-wide space. "Perhaps," James thought, "I can give them a little room where Elizabeth and I are to sleep."

As James pondered the situation, doubt pushed its way into his mind. He wondered: "Can we really make it? Can we live like this for sixty days?" His mind raced back to his home in England. He smiled as he thought of his feather bed, which now seemed as big as an acre of rye. But the smile soon departed as a look of deep concern crept into his eyes.

Now it was time for sleep. James lay crowded close to Elizabeth. In the darkness he heard the

voice of his little granddaughter Mary say, "Mother, make him move over. I'm so crowded I can't breathe." James wondered why there was no answer from the mother. Then he heard her soft, gentle sobs. He quickly left his bed, picked up the child, laid her where he had lain, and found a place where he could sit under the stairs. The sort of pain that hurts in a way that can't be described and for which there is no medicine filled his heart.

The ship rose and then splashed down, rose and splashed down. So it was and ever would be for James Moyer Tenney. Up into the bright light of hope and then down into the dark waters of despair. A longing to go up to Zion but the wish to be back in the comfort of England. There was not room enough to kneel, but there was much room and much reason to pray. James prayed himself to sleep.

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12 Alone April 1851

James shook his head from side to side. A shiver went up and down his spine as he exchanged with Elizabeth some of the horrors of the two-month journey across the Atlantic to New Orleans. "When the little Gordon girl's body was dropped into the ocean, I thought the pain in my soul would take away my life."

Elizabeth, with complete understanding, laid her hand gently on that of her distraught husband. The two were silent as they watched the turning of the huge paddle wheel, each rotation pushing the Alex Scott further up the Mississippi River. In a few days they'd be in St. Louis, then on up the Missouri to Omaha and to the wagon train that would take them on their thousand-mile journey to Zion.

James continued to grip the railing as he softly spoke again. "It was bad enough for our dear friends to lose their golden-haired baby, but if it had been one of our grandchildren I would have never been able to go on living."

As James considered such sadness, his eyes swept toward the distant shore where some people stood around an open campfire. Then he spoke again: "So many times out there on the sea I wondered: Why are we here where we are sick at heart and sick to our stomachs? Why did the Lord ask us to leave Martha and her children?" His voice broke with emotion as his mind was flooded with thoughts of his distant daughter.

Elizabeth stared down into the dark water and listened. She knew that any answers she could give would not be as satisfying as the answers God would send. She knew that James would hear the Lord's voice. He always did in time of need. Besides, there was much time to listen. All the other passengers were asleep here and there on the deck.

"Elizabeth, I ... uh ... well, I wondered so often about coming over here. I know you wanted to and I did too. But you know how to reason things out and to speak your mind. If something isn't right you can explain it away.

"But me, well, I sometimes wonder why my heart is so much more powerful than my brain. Back home when I read the Book of Mormon and listened to the missionaries, my mind so often told me 'No,' but my heart always said 'Go!' It was my heart that said: 'Join the Mormons. It won't be the easy way or the popular way, but do it anyway.' Then when Brother Lyon told us about Zion and the gathering and the temple, I knew the Lord wanted us to go. He wanted us to leave the green hills of Shropshire and so much of the things we love--including part of our family--to go to the land of ..." With that James looked up into the starry sky.

After several seconds he continued with painful emotion, "Elizabeth, are we both crazy? Why did we say good-bye to Martha?" James raised his hand from the rail and bowed his head into the palm of his right hand. "Why does the Lord ask us to do such hard things?"

Stroking the hand of her husband, Elizabeth spoke the only words that could make any difference. "It's your heart that makes me love you, James. It's my heart that tells me you are the greatest man in the whole world. And it is my heart that tells me the Lord will never leave you alone. He loves you, James. He loves you, and oh, my dear, dear James, I love you too."

James didn't reply. Elizabeth sensed he was deeply touched.

She moved closer to the small man whom she considered to be a giant. Her arm reached across his back and gripped his thin shoulder. Gently, she began to pray.

James loved to hear her pray. He now felt the comfort of the Lord flow into his heart. When she concluded her appeal for strength and peace, James softly spoke: "Oh, Elizabeth. Life has not been easy. So often I've felt so forsaken, but then I think of you. I'm so glad I met you, because when I married you I found heaven itself. I know it is right that we are here. With you at my side and God above we'll get to Zion."

The two weary travelers moved away from the rail and toward their bedrolls. The joy that filled their souls blended the two into one. James slept more deeply than he had since leaving England.

"Father! Father! Oh, Father!" Frantically James was being shaken awake. His eyes were shocked into action, opening and settling on the tear-filled eyes of his oldest son.

"They think it was Mother."

"What? What is wrong?"

"In the dim light of dawn a woman lowered her bucket into the river to get water. The powerful current pulled her off balance and into the river. Two men saw it from a distance. The boat has been stopped, but they can't find her. I can't find Mother--I know it was her." Sobbing uncontrollably he said, "Mother is gone."

James didn't cry. That seemed useless. Life itself seemed useless.

Elizabeth was no longer at his side, and perhaps God was no longer above.

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13 The Brethren 1853

The long, sharp teeth of the two-man saw ripped lengthwise through the remaining few inches of the eight-foot-long cottonwood log. James reached down and, with his right hand, clasped the newly cut board and pulled it across the top of the deep pit. Then, picking it up with both hands, he laid it with the three dozen other planks that he and his two sons had sawed that day. His twenty-one-year-old son, John, fairly flew up the three rungs of the ladder that led to the top of the pit. He was more than anxious to come up from the bottom, where for the past two hours he had taken his turn pulling the saw down through each log as it was laid across the opening. Eighteen-year-old Joseph, working on top, had countered each downward thrust by pulling the saw back up. This was the Tenney family sawmill, in American Fork.

It was Friday, July 21, 1853. Young John, glad it was day's end and with sweat streaming from his forehead, shouted, "It's hot as being in hell down there."

"Good work, boys," James responded as he straightened the rough boards into a more orderly pile. There were just enough to fill the order requested by James Guyman, the second counselor in the American Fork bishopric. In fact, Brother Guyman had arrived with his team and wagon just in time to see the last board come off the assembly line of the man-powered family sawmill.

"You boys head home," James instructed his two sons. "We'll get this here loaded up, and I'll be

home in a few minutes." He liked talking to Brother Guyman and didn't want the boys around to stifle the conversation.

"You and your boys sure provide a good service by sawing these boards for all of us," Brother Guyman said as he lifted his end of the first board onto his wagon.

"Well, we need to earn a living some way. We can't seem to do it with our brains, so we do it with our muscles," James replied with a chuckle.

"Did you hear the news?" Brother Guyman asked as the two threw the second board onto the load.

"No, what news?" James asked.

> "Bishop Harrington got word this morning that two of the Brethren are coming to meet with us in church on Sunday."

"Which ones?" James asked with obvious excitement.

> "Elders Orson Pratt and Lorenzo Snow."

"Orson Pratt," James shouted with the tone of being wonderfully surprised. "I crossed the ocean with him, you know. If ever there was a man of God, it is Orson Pratt."

James stood as if in a daze. Nothing thrilled him as much as knowing that he would get to see and hear from the Brethren.

Brother Guyman brought James back to consciousness by saying, "Could you grab the other end? I've got to get on home to milk the cows."

Suddenly the boards seemed lighter and all the fatigue that James had felt only moments before had fled. The same joyous thought raced over and over again through his mind: "The Brethren are coming."

A moment later Brother Guyman gently commanded his horses to "gidup." James turned to lift the saw on his shoulder and hurriedly walked the hundred yards down the path that led to his one-room log house, a house which he and the boys had built the year before.

He lifted his eyes toward the foothills that rose gently up from the northeast portion of the valley. Then he raised his gaze higher until he saw where the top of majestic Mount Timpanogos met the radiant blue July sky. The mountains were a symbol of power and strength to James. He loved being in the place that to him was the prophet Isaiah's "tops of the mountains." But it wasn't the mountains that made this land Zion. To James, a greater strength and inspiration than

the lofty peaks were the words of the prophet Brigham Young and the other Apostles. This land was Zion to James because this was where the Brethren were. Through the Brethren, James knew that he could hear the voice of the Lord.

As he hung the saw on the outside of the log wall, he could smell the newly baked cornbread that fourteen-year-old Sarah had baked. She had taken over the household duties since the tragedy on the Mississippi. As James entered the room he excitedly announced, "Guess what?" Before anyone could reply, he shouted, "Elders Orson Pratt and Lorenzo Snow are coming to speak to us on Sunday morning."

A slight tinge of disappointment came into his heart as the family's only response was, "Sit down, Father, so we can eat."

James awoke at five o'clock Sunday morning. He hurried with a bucket to the banks of the nearby American Fork Creek. Quickly he scooped up a full measure of the cold mountain water, then headed back toward the house. Soon he had washed himself clean and had trimmed his beard. He wanted to look his best because in just three more hours he would be with the Brethren.

It was almost more than James could endure to wait for the appointed hour. He tried to read the scriptures, but his mind kept moving ahead to what was going to happen. Finally the time came when he felt he should walk, or perhaps run, to the one-room school that also served as the church. He was the first to arrive. An hour later Brother and Sister Chipman approached. Soon twenty or so others gathered near the door. Then, in the distance, James could see Bishop Harrington's wagon approaching. Shielding his eyes from the morning sun, he could see Bishop and Sister Harrington and the children. He could also see two men--the Brethren. He had to restrain himself from running forward to meet the wagon before it could get to the building. But he knew there were others there, others who were far more important than he, others who should be the first ones to shake the hands of the Apostles.

A few minutes later, after greeting several others, the Brethren stood squarely in front of James. Within himself he felt unworthy of the honor of shaking hands with these men of God. Most timidly, he reached out and shook the hand of Elder Orson Pratt. As he did so he wanted to speak with power, but his voice quivered and broke as he said, "Hello, I'm a ... I'm ... I'm not sure you remember me. My name is--"

Brother Pratt interrupted him, "Oh, I remember you, Brother Tenney. I'll never forget you. Let's

see, it's James, isn't it? James Tenney, my old shipmate. We had quite a crossing of the old Atlantic, didn't we? I remember how you kept us all buoyed up with your stories and your songs. I don't think some of us would have made it if you hadn't gone around nursing the sick. I remember the prayer you gave during the big storm. Remember you! I'll never forget you. How are you, my dear friend?" As the Apostle extended this warm greeting, he reached out with his other hand and held it on James's elbow.

When James heard the words "my dear friend," he could not respond. His throat seemed to close and tears streamed down his face. It was as if his feet were not even touching the ground.

Elder Pratt turned to Elder Snow and said, "My friend James here left beautiful Shropshire, England, to come to Zion."

"Shropshire," replied Elder Snow, laughing. "Why, a man would have to be crazy to leave those green hills to come to this desert."

"No, James isn't crazy," Elder Pratt replied. "It's just that when the Lord calls, James Tenney obeys."

Soon everyone had moved inside and had taken their seats. James sat as close as he could to the front. He cupped his hands on his knees to keep them steady. He didn't want others to see that he was trembling. It wasn't excitement that caused him to feel so unsteady. It was much more than excitement. It was something that ran so deep that it was without description. Over and over again he heard the words "my friend James." When Elder Pratt had said those words, it became the happiest moment of James Moyer Tenney's new life in Zion.

It had been as if the Lord himself had come down and said, "James Tenney, I know you. You are my friend."

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14 The Fort 1853

Pulling the reins with a quick reflex, Sam Langton brought his galloping mare to a sudden stop. "Where are you going with your house, James?" he asked.

"We're a moving it inside the fort that the Brethren told us to build."

"Oh, yeah--you mean what they said at the meeting," the visitor said as his horse moved about

nervously. "You know, I've thought a lot about what they said. My advice to you is that I wouldn't be so quick to move in. There is another side to this thing."

James looked away from his visitor and glanced back at the small log building. Seeing a sudden jerk on the rope that went from the house to his horse's collar, he shouted, "Be careful, boys. That whole wall will collapse. If we take it slow and pull it gentle, it will just slide right along on those four logs. Sarah, you hold old Jennie as tight as you can. Just slow and easy, and by sundown we'll have this here place a-sitting right where she belongs."

"What do you mean when you say there's another side?" James asked.

"Well, Brother Tenney, you and I both know that the Brethren are way off up there in Salt Lake City. I'm not sure they understand what really goes on out here in the sticks. You see, I've known Indians long before I ever joined this here Church. I can always tell when they're fixin' to cause trouble. I've watched these Indians around here. They are a peaceable bunch, and I can tell you for sure they aren't going to do anything to us. They like us being here. They have a lot more to eat now that we've settled in here than they had before we came."

"Are you telling me you aren't going to move your house in and help build the fort?"

"Well, I don't know. I might later on. But right now, I've got more than I can handle with my cattle. I don't have time to worry about moving my house and building a fort."

James could scarcely believe what he was hearing from his church-going friend. "Don't you care what the Brethren tell us?"

"Well, yeah, in some ways. But in things like telling us about Indians, I'm not so sure. Anyway, I'd better be getting out to my cattle. Good luck keeping those logs together."

That night James and his family were settled in their same house but on new land. John remarked, "I'm not sure I'll be able to go to sleep without the sound of the stream against the rocks."

Sarah answered, "Me neither. It sure is hot out here away from the trees."

"Don't you be complaining," James said in a slightly rebuking tone. "This is where the Lord wants us, and that is all that matters."

15 The Wall 1853

I don't want to work on this thing tonight. All I do is get up in the morning and go saw boards all day and then come home and go out there and slop around in that muddy clay."

"I know it isn't easy, son, but we are obligated to build the wall behind our house. When everybody has done their portion, we'll have a fort wall clear around the place. If we don't build our part, then no matter what our neighbors do there will be a gap for the Indians to come pouring through and scalp us all before we know what has hit us."

The dejected young man replied. "The neighbors haven't got their part of the wall nearly as high as ours, and some of them haven't done any more than just put up the framing boards. They haven't even hauled in a single wagonload of clay."

"Well, that's their business. Besides, when we get done we can help them with theirs. We're all in this together, you know."

"If we ever get ours done, I'm not helping nobody else, I'll tell you that much," Joseph replied disgustedly. "Besides, Arza Adams is in the bishopric, and he hasn't even moved into the stupid fort."

"Don't you criticize Arza. He's a busy man with that grist mill. He is a faithful man. He'll probably move in real soon now."

"No, he won't. I talked to his son. He said Arza said that he isn't worried as much about the Indians as he is the grasshoppers."

"Well, I don't know about that. All I know is that the Brethren said to move in here. Then, when all fifty families have built a wall in their backyard, we'll have a secure place to live. That is what we are going to do, and I don't want to hear one more peep of complaining from any of you."

The boys knew that their father could be talked out of a lot of things, but when it came to what the Brethren said and what James felt came in answer to his prayers, there was no budging him. Soon they were shoveling clay and mixing it with the water they had carried some one hundred yards from the stream that meandered through the middle of their thirty-seven-acre fort.

During the next few weeks, the framing boards were moved higher and higher. Gradually the

wall was rising. The boys continued to work and also to complain, but deep down inside they felt that their father was right.

16 The Idea 1853

The cool air of late fall made sawing cottonwood logs into boards a bit less burdensome. But the evening hours were cold, and building the wall after sundown became a chilling task. By late November, the wall was six feet wide at the base, had risen some seven feet, and stretched itself across the full width of the Tenney property.

No other family's wall could equal the height of the Tenney wall. Some had theirs up four feet. Some, two feet. Several of the men said that due to other pressing matters they wouldn't begin their work until the following spring. They explained that at that time they would work extra hard and complete the task quickly.

Bishop Harrington had hired two men to help him, and his wall was up to four feet. To him the wall was the community's first and foremost priority. Brigham Young would be coming through the area in the spring, and the bishop wanted to be able to show that the community had made satisfactory progress and had heeded the counsel of the Brethren. He was deeply concerned with the apparent ??ck of overall dedication to the effort.

At a special priesthood meeting he announced ??is displeasure at the lack of progress. After quoting as best he could recall the words of Elders Pratt and Snow, he fairly shouted as he said: "We have all seen the progress made by Brother Tenney and his boys. Brother Tenney holds no office in the Church nor in the community. He is just a hardworking, humble man who neither seeks nor gets any special recognition. If he, who incidently works like a slave wit?? his sons at his little sawmill, can build a wall, so can each of ??s."

James felt discomfort at being singled out for such recognition. He could sense that the bishop was not bringing him the admiration of his fellow townspeople, but rather their disdain.

At the conclusion of the meeting, he overheard his neighbor whisper: "Tenney spends so much time on that wall that he never works on his house. That little shack is a disgrace to the whole community."

Deeply discouraged, he considered. What is the use? Others don't seem to care much what the

Brethren say. And the Indians haven't attacked yet and they probably won't. As he realized what had just come into his mind, he felt like a traitor to the Brethren. After all, the Brethren had sort of said the Indians would attack, so who was he to doubt?

Disheartened, James walked the half mile to the spot where his house had stood before the move. It was a beautiful place beneath some high overhanging cottonwoods. The sound of the stream soothed his soul, and he silently prayed, "Oh, Lord, what am I to do? How can I get others to obey?" The sound of the splashing water was heaven's only reply.

The next month James felt that all his friends were questioning his judgment, but this caused him to be even more determined to add to the wall, which by Christmas was at the eight-foot level. His most discouraging moment came when his best friend said, "James, you are the most foolish man in this town. I saw you and your boys out there in the cold December air working on that stupid wall. You'll make those boys hate the Church and the Brethren and the Lord himself. Let up, man! Nobody's working on the wall this time of year. There is even some talk that come springtime some of the folks will move out of the fort and back along the river."

James's temper flared. He responded with fevered emotion, "I'll tell you who is foolish--it is you! You and all those others who don't care nothing about what the Lord counsels us to do. You'll think stupid when the Indians come charging in here and we are all laying there dead."

> "Oh, come on, James. Cool off and settle down. If the Indians were going to attack, they would have done it already. They've all moved on south for the winter."

The tone of his friend's voice softened as he said, "James, when it comes right down to it, there isn't anybody in this town, including the bishop, whom I admire more than you. I know you are only doing what you feel is the right thing. But take it a little easy, will you? We all love you. But ..."

James had heard all he felt he could stand. He turned quickly, hurried to the open door, and left his friend's blacksmith shop. He walked as fast as he could in the direction of the lake. As he walked along, he repeatedly shook his head and muttered, "Why can't these people understand?" Walking seemed to soothe his feelings. Love flooded his thoughts as he looked heavenward and whispered: "Dear Lord, I love these people. But I can't build their part of the wall. What can I do to help them?"

In a flash of inspiration, an idea came into his mind. A smile of satisfaction crossed his face. Excitedly he said, "That's it. In just one night I can show them, and then after that the wall will

rise like the morning sun."

There was no need to walk further. With a burst of enthusiastic energy he hastened home.

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17 The Attack 1854

Sound traveled perfectly through the frigid January night air. Standing atop a small hill about two thousand yards north of the town, James could plainly hear the barking of Ed Conder's year-old mongrel. She and the other dogs often tormented the cattle in the community corral, which was in the center of the fort. The clarity of sound at such a distance would help when all else was ready.

Tonight was not the night. The moon was almost full, and even now, at one o'clock in the morning, its reflection on the snow made it easy to see for hundreds of yards. James was careful to crouch low as he gathered dry sage brush into a pile as high as a horse. Within an hour he had made seven such piles, each one about thirty yards from the next.

Satisfied that he had accomplished his preliminary mission, the determined but desperately cold James headed back down the hill toward his humble home. He could scarcely contain the excitement of what was to be his gift to his fellow townspeople.

The next day, while he and the boys worked at the saw pit, James felt weak and dizzy. He reasoned that it was the lack of sleep, but his lungs also felt tight and his bones ached. He sensed that sickness was beginning to grasp his fragile body. He prayed that he would remain strong enough to carry out his mission.

For the next three days his chest and throat became more pained. A constant cough made it difficult to sleep. His daughter Sarah, deeply concerned for his health, pled with him to not go to work but to stay home and rest. She cried as she said, "Father, you look so sick; I'm afraid if you don't stay in out of the cold that you could die." Die! Not yet, thought James. Not until I've saved this town. And then ... well ... then it would be worth it.

Finally the time was right. James sat by the fire until all three of his children were asleep. Then he quietly walked out to the community corral. The clouds kept the moonrays out of the valley. There was no light in any windows and it appeared that all the townspeople were asleep. James returned to his house, where he quietly scooped some burning embers from the fire into a metal

bucket. Then he quickly left his house and headed north. It was difficult to hold back his cough, but he knew he must. Leaving town without his being noticed was essential to his plan.

He passed through the north gate and made his way toward the strategic hill. Gasping to catch his breath, he sat the bucket of embers down on the frozen snow next to the first of the seven piles of brush. A tinge of doubt entered his mind, which surprisingly caused him more pain than the cold air which attacked his hands, feet, and ears. Slowly he looked up into the clouds. Never, since he had thought of the plan, had he asked the Lord for confirmation. "Surely," he said softly, "you, dear God, sustain me in my desire to get the people to obey." James felt no answer.

A moment later he knelt at the side of the first pile of brush. His nervousness plus the bitter cold air caused his body to shake violently. He dumped the hot embers under some of the small twigs. He blew his breath on the coals until they became brighter and finally burst into a small flame. Blowing so vigorously caused his lungs to burn, and he began to cough almost uncontrollably. The flames of the small fire now seemed eager to reach out to the larger fuel. He pulled out several small burning limbs and placed them into his bucket. He ran rapidly to the second pile. In a matter of minutes he had ignited all seven fires.

But the demands to move so quickly had caused him to be painfully out of breath. He stood holding on to the trunk of a cedar tree gasping for air.

The short rest and a fervent appeal to heaven restored enough strength for him to stand to his full five-foot-three-inch stature. Taking a deep breath, he let out a bloodcurdling Indian war cry, the like of which no one, not even the fiercest Indian, had ever heard or even imagined.

This horrifying sound rang through the night air like a bullet racing to its target. Less than a minute later he saw a dim light appear in the window of one of the houses.

James was jubilant as another, and then another dim light appeared in the valley below. Suddenly he had new energy. With another deep breath he again screamed his mighty war cry. This second time the frightening sound seemed to fill every inch of the entire valley.

By now each of the seven fires was reaching higher and higher into the night sky.

Increasingly more windows glowed with newly lit lamps. A shot rang out and a voice cried, "Indians! Indians!"

James could not restrain himself from jumping up and down with excitement. His plan was working. His next war cry was louder than the first two.

It was too dark to see, but he could hear the panic of the townspeople. He could hear the voices

of those who still lived along the creek. The fathers were frantically hurrying their families toward the inner safety of the fort.

James was exhilarated by the success of his plan, but he also felt pained at the fear he was causing those he loved. He knew now that the entire community was in a panic as they huddled in their homes with rifles poised for the imminent attack. He knew that children were crying, the women praying, and the men looking painfully at the pitiful wall.

Thirty minutes later James knew he had accomplished his mission. The townspeople would not sleep this night nor would they ever forget. The seven fires were dying down. It was time to head home. He secretly circled to the east of the fort. He made his way to the south and waited in the darkness for things to settle down. Stealthily, he made his way to his small house. He explained to his children that he had been waiting up at the north wall for the attack, but that he was now convinced that it was safe. Soon he was in the warmth of his bed. But his body was bitterly cold, and he shook uncontrollably.

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18 Everything 1854

Just before dawn the cloud cover had been swept away by a north wind. That made the morning air even colder. The seven mysterious fires that had heated the small town in such an unforeseen manner had long since faded into dry, ashen embers.

Bishop Harrington, hoping to reassure his distressed and fearful people, hurriedly went from house to house checking to see that all was well. He announced to the menfolk that at noon a special meeting would be held in the Church building.

During the morning hours, no one felt composed enough to go about any regular work. Instead, they hovered together in small groups discussing what they had seen, heard, and felt during the fearful night--the night that none of them would ever forget. Some reported having seen the silhouettes of at least fifty Indians against the snowcovered foothills. Another reported he had heard what sounded like a thousand horses thundering along just outside the eastern wall. Some acknowledged that never had they felt so close to death.

At the noon gathering it was obvious that even those who seldom heeded the bishop's voice were more than anxious to hear and obey. It is doubtful that a more somber or sobering meeting had

ever been held here or anywhere. Bishop Harrington, who seldom smiled even when surrounded by the best of circumstances, seemed more grim than the reaper himself.

"Brethren," he said as he clutched the wooden pulpit, "our lives have been spared by our Almighty God. Last night, thousands of Indians were massed against us to destroy us. I believe that because of our prayers they were prevented from attacking us. But what does the future hold? Tonight and each night we will post guards. We will all be ready to protect our wives and our children."

The bishop then seemed overcome by remorse and for several seconds stood silently gazing toward heaven. Finally his speech turned into a prayer. "Oh, God, our Father, please forgive us for not building the wall." The bishop's voice broke with emotion and he sobbed openly.

The opening prayer uttered by Arza Adams, who was known for his religious fervor, was rousing. Before getting to his amen, Arza had blessed every door, every window, and every wall of every house so that the Saints would be safe. He promised the Lord that whatever the bishop said, he and the others would do. As the meeting continued, there were no negative voices when it was proposed that the wall be completed by the end of May. Those who had not yet moved inside asked others to forgive them for not doing so and promised they would be inside within a week. Testimonies were shared, and tears made the new resolves seem more convincing.

As the meeting neared its conclusion, Bishop Harrington arose again to the pulpit and spoke. "There is one among us with whom I know the Lord is most pleased. Perhaps it was because of him and other obedient ones that the Lord protected the rest of us. He and his sons have been an example to us all." Then he almost shouted as he said, "James Tenney, before we adjourn, please come forward and call down God's mighty blessings upon this humble people."

After some seconds of silence, John called out, while all sat with bowed heads, "Father is sick and could not come."

"Well," responded the bishop, "I shall go to his house and wish him a fast recovery. John, you are always at your father's side working on the wall. You come up here and pray for us." John felt a surge of pride that made him feel more love and respect for his father than he had ever felt before.

Twenty minutes later the bishop approached the Tenneys' door. As he raised his fist to knock, he heard James coughing. He paused to listen. He had heard the same sound before.

A perplexed look crossed the bishop's face as he thought, Last night, when I couldn't sleep and

walked out to see if the water for the cattle was free of ice, I heard someone coughing up north of town.

He knocked quickly on the rough wooden door. Without waiting for any answer he entered. James continued to cough and finally was able to stop long enough to gasp, "Good afternoon, Bishop."

The bishop didn't reply as he walked across the creaky floor. Reaching the bedside where James lay, he stared deeply into his sick friend's eyes. There was a long silence as each man fixed his gaze upon the other. Finally James looked away. Somehow, for the first time in his life he could no longer let his eyes meet the eyes of another.

In that disconcerting moment, each of them knew that the other one knew. James felt a surge of guilt that caused him to long for instant destruction. In a matter of seconds, his mind called back every act and thought of the past week. He had known all along that it was wrong. But over and over he had forced aside the gentle promptings that he had hoped were his mortal doubts. He now knew why he could never really pray for the Lord's help in carrying out such a foolhardy plan. As he considered his folly, he couldn't bear to be in the presence of this man of God. Gently, he pulled the buffalo hide cover over his head and wept.

The bishop desired to reach out and rip the blanket away. Then perhaps he could physically beat the old fool. Restraining himself, he spoke firmly, "James, pull that cover off your head and look at me."

James felt he could never again look at anyone. But the bishop had spoken, and he slowly pulled the furry covering down to his shoulders. His eyes focused on the rough boards of the ceiling. He could not look toward the bishop.

The bishop pulled a chair close to the bed and sat down. Leaning forward, his head was not more than a foot away from the tear-filled eyes of his friend.

Sensing the remorse that James felt, the bishop tried but could not keep anger from reflecting in his voice. "James, I can't believe you did this. What in the world were you thinking of? What you did is the most stupid and irresponsible act that I've seen in all my sixty-five years. And coming from you, the most respected man in town, makes it a million times worse."

James's eyes remained focused upward and it seemed as if he had not heard the rebuke.

"Why? Why did you do it?" the bishop asked in anger. The bishop's wait for a reply was met with silence. He spoke again, "You could have been shot and killed, or worse still, in all the

panic and confusion, some innocent person could have been killed."
Coughing deeply three times in rapid succession caused James to lift his shoulders off the straw mattress as he attempted to lessen the pain in his throat and to catch his breath.
The bishop felt little compassion for the obvious agony and sensed a further opportunity to attack. "Being out in that cold air has likely given you a case of pneumonia, but then maybe that is just what you deserve."
Silence followed. The bishop didn't know what to say. James felt so defenseless and ashamed that he wasn't sure he would ever speak again.

"I suppose there is no choice in this matter. There will have to be a Church court held, and you may be excommunicated. What do you have to say about that?"

James stared upward. His expression remained the same.

"James, tell me why? Why? What were you thinking of? Others, yes. I can see them doing something stupid. But you? You've been the steadiest man in the whole town."

The bishop's tone revealed his total disbelief that this humble, caring, dedicated man could have done such a deed. He shook his head from side to side and then lowered it in the palm of his hand. For several minutes the two sat, neither speaking. During that time the bishop's anger ebbed and was replaced by concern.

"What shall we do about this, James? I don't know what the others will think when they find out. They'll be angry, and I sure won't blame them. Your good name that you spent a lifetime getting will be gone just like that. Maybe I shouldn't tell them. I don't know what to do."

James turned his head and looked into his bishop's tear-filled eyes. He softly spoke, "I'll leave town as soon as I get strength enough to go. I don't fit in here anyway. I never have. I don't seem to fit in nowhere."

"You're wrong there, James. The people around here all have a deep love for you. Why else would so many seek you out when they need a priesthood blessing? They all know you are a man of God."

"No, I don't think so. I'm just a hardheaded, narrowminded old fool. All my life I've tried to do the right thing, but nothing ever works out. It's no use going on." With those words, James felt he had made his full, hopeless case.

The bishop no longer felt any anger, just deep compassion. If only he could somehow undo last night and its tragic event!

He sighed as he said, "Oh, James, James, James! What shall we do?" Leaning back on the two back legs of the chair and gazing upward, he said, "Give me some time to think. Maybe we can explain things so that everything will be all right again."

"No, Bishop. Everything won't be all right. Things have not been all right since ..." James paused and was filled with too much emotion to continue.

"Since what?"

Suddenly James felt his heart open wide, and all the hurt and all the sorrow of his life flooded into his mind.

"Bishop, when I was a lad in England, nobody could have prayed harder than I did that my mother would live. But she ... she died. I tried to get mad at God for taking her when I needed her love more than I needed food or air. I vowed to never pray again."

James breathed slowly, carefully, then spoke again. "'Course, I couldn't stop praying because I didn't know what else to do. And when I prayed I could feel that God was so near."

Coughing once again caused him to sit up in his bed. The bishop sat patiently waiting. Finally James spoke again, "Whatever the Lord wanted, I tried to do. But it never got me anywhere. People around me told me I was too religious and tried too hard to do things right. I'd work hard on the farm in Shropshire, but when there was a promotion coming I'd think I'd get it because of my hard work, but then somebody else, somebody I thought was undeserving, would get it and I'd be out of luck.

"Oh, I'd laugh it off. But it hurt, Bishop. It hurt real bad.

"There was this one girl. She was a beauty. I wanted her to love me. I treated her as if she was the Queen of England. I dreamed I'd marry her and show everybody that I was a somebody. But ... well ... you know ... I felt totally rejected when she rejected me and married the biggest nitwit in the town.

"No, Bishop, nothing ever works out for me. It seems like the Lord says to me, 'James, you be sure and do exactly all the hard things I tell you to do. But don't you expect any special favors from me.'"

After a pause for reflection, a smile crept across his gaunt face.

"Elizabeth? Oh, dear Elizabeth. Now, there was the time when the Lord seemed to forget who I was. He got me confused with someone else, and before he knew it he had given me the top prize of all time." James reached out and put his hand on the hand of his friend. "I wish you could have known her, Bishop. You would have loved her. You probably would have called her as Relief Society president. She wasn't like me. I'm never called to any position of leadership. But she was a leader. Everybody loved Elizabeth. She filled my whole heart and soul with joy. I wish you could have heard her sing. What a woman! Bishop, I loved her more than life itself."

The smile gradually faded as James continued. "I miss her, Bishop. I miss her so much. If she'd been there last night ..." Suddenly sobs rocked his whole body.

It seemed to Bishop Harrington that the room had been suddenly transformed into a temple. James continued. "She helped me find the gospel, you know. She found it first and then helped me see. She gave me confidence. She gave me love." James's voice faded, and it seemed as if he was in another world as he repeated, "She gave me love."

Sensing that James was weakened physically, the bishop spoke. "James, I'll go now. You get some sleep. I'll send Sister Chipman to bring you some medicine. We'll talk again this evening."

"No! No!" James pleaded as he reached out and clutched the elbow of the bishop as if to prevent him from standing. "Don't go. I need you, my friend, my bishop. To me you are the Lord. I know the Lord has called you and, oh, how I love you, my bishop."

The bishop didn't want to leave, and he moved his chair even closer so as to better hear his friend's weakening voice.

"I tried so hard to be worthy of the Lord's trust. I even dreamed that someday he would let me be like the Brethren and like you. I wanted to be a leader. But I just wasn't cut out for that. It broke my heart to leave my beloved England. I can still feel my daughter Martha in my arms and the tears on her face mixing with mine as she begged me to stay. She wouldn't come here, and we couldn't stay there. She could not understand, and I couldn't either. All I knew was that the Lord beckoned us to come to Zion, and we really had no choice. Of course, others heard the Lord call them to come, but they reasoned they had cause not to heed the call. Strange thing was that they seemed the wiser and the happier. No painful good-byes, no great sacrifices." James was silent as he seemed once again to wonder why. Then with new energy he continued.

"But I had Elizabeth. And no matter what else I didn't have, with her at my side I had

everything. We tried to do exactly what the Lord asked. I can still feel her at my side as she was when we'd kneel in prayer. We said we wanted this or that--things like a house and some land--but all we ever really wanted was to be together and to have a family that walked in truth."

After a quiet pause, James lifted both his hands up from his bed and then let them fall as a gesture of futility. "We just wanted to be together. But we couldn't even have that. You might have heard the story, Bishop. I never told nobody. I never could talk about it. 'Course, stories like that get around, and you've likely heard. But coming up the Mississippi ... she was drowned." James's voice broke, and he was totally engulfed in grief. "Oh, God, how could you let it happen? She was so good. Her children needed her. I needed her."

Suddenly James began to cough uncontrollably. The bishop could see blood in the corner of his sick friend's mouth. He hurriedly went to the water bucket. He lifted James up and put the cup to his lips. After a swallow the coughing ceased.

Visibly weaker and with a quiver in his voice, James spoke again.

"After that, when we got to St. Louis, I decided to turn back--go back to England. I couldn't go on to Zion without Elizabeth. I told the Lord about my plan, but I just couldn't get his approval. He somehow told me that if I'd go on, he'd be with me all the way. I knew he wanted me here. I knew Zion was where my children and grandchildren and their children belonged. So I came West. It was so lonely ... so lonely, but somehow I was never alone."

The bishop leaned forward and put his right hand on his friend's forehead. There was much fever there. He could just barely hear the words: "Don't worry about me, Bishop. It don't matter whether I live or die."

Struggling for breath, James continued to talk. "Brother Brigham told us to come to American Fork; the family wanted us to stay in Salt Lake City. But the prophet wanted us here, so here is where I wanted to be.

"Then Elder Pratt. Oh, I love Elder Pratt. Please don't tell him what I've done. He trusted me. He called me his friend. Promise you won't tell him about me being a fool." James shook his head from side to side as he once again felt the pain of his guilt.

"Anyway, the Brethren said to move in and build a wall. I believed them. I moved in and started building a wall." James's eyes seemed to sparkle, and new strength came into his voice as he said: "Look out back. You can see it. You can see the wall. My sons, my dear sons and I, built

that wall. If I stayed here, I'd have her up to twelve feet by June."
The bishop stood, walked a few paces, and gazed out at the wall that glistened in the January sun. "It's a beauty, James. It's firm and strong. It sort of reminds me of you."
The bishop returned and sat down. "I wish I could get the others to build their part. I'd do anything if I thought I could get them to ..."
The bishop paused as he realized what he had said. The two men looked deep into one another's souls, and a sense of understanding passed between them.

"Oh, Bishop, I didn't want to hurt nobody. But once in my life I wanted to prove that obeying the Lord was, well, was the right way.

"But I was wrong. I tried to scare the hell out of people, and that is not the Lord's way."
The bishop waited for James to continue. Then he could see that his tired, sick friend had closed his eyes and was asleep. Bishop Harrington pulled the bed covering up across his friend's shoulders. Then he turned, walked to the stone fireplace, and placed two new logs on the fire. He would send Sister Chipman, the closest thing the town had to a doctor. He opened the door to leave, but then turned and looked back at his faithful friend.
Sensing the need for divine help, he returned and knelt beside the bed. He prayed silently that if it was the Lord's will, strength would come back into this weakened and weary body.
As he knelt with his eyes closed, he was startled when James suddenly spoke. He saw his friend's eyes were open, but they were not seeing things of this world.

"Bishop, is there some chicken and dumplings cooking over there in the fireplace? I can smell 'em cooking.

"Elizabeth? Is that you singing, Elizabeth?"
Then there was silence. Bishop Harrington didn't move. He was glad that he was on his knees, for he knew he was in a holy place.
James spoke again, "What did you say, Elizabeth? Everything is ours? Shropshire and Zion both?"
The bishop could not see others, but he could feel their presence. James continued, "Mother, oh, my mother. I've missed you so. Thanks for coming to my wedding.
"The children. I can have them, too?" With his voice touched with the tone of perfect gratitude,

James softly inquired: "Is it so? Oh, Elizabeth, is it so? I can have everything just the way I've always wanted it? No more good-byes, no more heartbreak?

"But Elizabeth, last night I did such a foolish thing. What about that?

"You think the Lord probably thought what I did was sort of funny? You know he understood?

"And did you, Elizabeth, did you understand? Oh, good.

"Oh, Elizabeth, I'm so glad that I can be with you again.

"Can I go with you now?"

The bishop raised up from his knees and put his hand onto the arm of his dear friend. He felt a peace such as he had never known before.

There was silence. There were no more words from James. No more coughs, no more pulse. James Moyer Tenney was dead. The sorrowful, joyful bishop knew that his faithful friend--the great James Tenney--had gone to a place where he would forever fit in.

Bishop Harrington looked down and whispered, "Goodbye, good-bye." He turned and walked slowly from the small, humble home that contained the few worldly possessions of the Tenney family.

Word would spread quickly that James was gone. Sarah, John, and Joseph would weep, and the townspeople would bow their heads in perfect respect. James's other children who lived in Salt Lake City would have to be notified.

The bishop had a funeral sermon to prepare. Sometimes funerals aren't the best place to tell the whole truth, and so it would be in this case.

Author's Note

Some of the features of this story are based on the life of one of my ancestors, who was indeed obedient and who was never alone.

Some six thousand of this man's descendants now live in the Intermountain West and live in truth--because he was obedient.