

Chapter 13

CONFINED WITHOUT WALLS

With the onset of warmer weather, the location of this first camp soon became a little too bustling with activity. Fishermen passed by on their way to the river about a hundred yards away. Just off the side of the main road bordering the river's edge, we quickly found ourselves in the center of the summer traffic as activities increased. Departures from camp were always cleared through Jeff. If we wanted to take a hike in the woods, permission was required. Voluntary or prolonged interaction with other campers was prohibited. A degree of interaction was necessary in order not to draw attention to ourselves, yet for the same reason, the least exposure necessary to outsiders was also essential.

Ironically, the only thing restricting any of us from simply leaving the camp was our conviction that Jeff was the seer and would know in advance our intentions of doing so. Even after Tonya and Molly were removed from Dennis' tent, and he was marked for death, he remained in the camp; never attempting to leave for help. Sometimes campers would be so close that interaction with them was unavoidable. Our perception of these people is difficult to describe. We saw them as "the world." That meant, to us, that they were spiritually dead. Only those who were on the journey toward Redemption ("feel and see" encounter) had even a spark of life within them; and this too was our fault. If we had been better servants and not hindered Jeff so long by way of our multiple sinful procrastinations, we would have already been able to establish Zion. Then the living "dead" would have a place to look in order to find "life."

We were to establish an ensign so that all nations would have a place to turn for peace. The people around us were perceived by us as not having peace. They were seen as in turmoil. We had the seer, we had the promise: therefore, we had the hope in an otherwise hopeless world. We pitied those around us, yet felt responsible for them as well. The sad reality was that it was we who were spiraling deep into a hopeless state of mental and spiritual bondage. We were not a light on a hill, radiating God's truth and loving hope to those around but were becoming increasingly drawn into a vacuous black hole which sought only to strip us of any trace of God's light within our hearts.

It was essential for us to make trips outside the camp for purposes performed in accordance with Jeff's instruction. We rented a storage locker at Elkins, West Virginia, to store items for which we did not have space at the camp. Initially, items which we weren't ready to use were stored there. Weights and weight training equipment, barrels of wheat, and a grinder were

the types of articles which offered no immediate use to us. However, as we became more settled in, trips would be made to retrieve items from the storage area. Greg and Debbie were once sent to Washington, D.C., to mail letters. We had been instructed to write a letter to family members mentioning that we were well and not to worry about our disappearance. All letters were reviewed by Jeff before being mailed. Once the letters were ready, they were taken to Washington to keep from disclosing our location. I heard later that Jeff had instructed the Averys to write a letter prior to their deaths. I don't know if this is true, or if the family members of the Averys ever received such a letter. Jeff's attempt to disguise our location somehow failed. A few months later, Danny's father actually found us after only two weeks of searching. From this encounter we would learn that the letters mailed by Greg and Debbie had actually been postmarked from West Virginia. We interpreted his visit as a friendly one, despite the fact that he was entering a zone of danger for himself. I have no way of knowing exactly his perception of us, but I'm reasonably certain it was a frustrating and bizarre experience for him; bizarre in the aspect of the setting within which he found his son living, and frustrating in that he surely felt powerless to free Danny from it.

When the contract agreement for the rental truck came due, Greg followed me in his car and we made a trip to Washington D.C., for its return. During this trip I stopped, by way of Jeff's instruction, making a phone call to my son's school in Ohio, since we had never informed them we would be taking Matthew out of school. Along with having the storage locker in Elkins, we also did a great deal of shopping there. I made a few trips, but after a while, it became more of a weekly outing for Jeff and his "naturals." He and Alice, with the three younger Lundgrens, would go into town for groceries, and it would be obvious from the empty paper wrappers that it was a junk food run as well. Damon seldom went with them during these runs. It was clearly unfair that the other children of the group were unable to get a treat like that once in a while, and perhaps Damon thought it more fair if he stayed in camp with the others. A chastisement occurred once when Jeff found out that Tonya and Molly were washing their hair at the laundromat because of easy access to hot water. This was determined by Jeff to be unfair to the rest of us, as we did not have equal access to such a luxury. The issue remained as one of the many threats that seemed to ever hang over our heads, but clearly Jeff never considered his own abuses of unequal advantage.

Along with these occasional laundry runs, there were regular trips to town for drinking water and diesel fuel for the generator. At the first campsite I usually made the water runs. At the second location, we would find a spring that gave us more immediate access to fresh water, eliminating our need to go into town for water. This is how we interacted with the world, but were no longer a part of it. Much as in the words of Jesus who said "let the dead bury their dead" (Luke 9:60), we thought those who were not with us were against us (Romans 8:31). Sometimes I would be allowed to take Matthew and Amy with me on the water runs. It now sounds strange to think that any form of

permission would be required for taking my own children on a short drive in order to help fill some plastic jugs with water. Although they went with me only a few times, it was gratifying to be able to give them an opportunity to enjoy the warmth of being inside the car.

Once, shortly after our arrival there when it was still quite cold, we had somewhat of a family outing. It turned out to be a disappointment due to the rainy weather, but it was still time together. Although we were with each other every day within the area of the camp it seemed as though we were actually quite distant. When possible, I tried teaching Matthew and Amy. As their father, this was not only my pleasure, but my duty as well. I'm saddened today to reflect on that memory of us being molded into the greater household, thereby diminishing the affection and loyalty of individual family units. So, on our family outing, we were sent to Elkins with a list of items to bring back from storage and also some things to buy at the store. The drive was nice, and just the four of us being together was great, but the rain clouds refused to break up. When we got to the storage locker I dug through to find what we were looking for, the kids remaining in the car to stay dry. Once again, Jeff managed to give us just enough money to buy the items needed at the store, so when we got hungry, we simply had to wait until we got back to camp. By this time we no longer had any discretionary money for ourselves. We pulled into a McDonalds in order to use the restrooms, which was a treat in itself, given the arrangements we had at camp. But being unable to afford anything to eat, returned to camp. Jeff had expressed the need for me to be back by a certain time, so the entire trip turned out to be quite hectic. In looking back, due to the limitations he put on our trip to keep us reminded of his priorities and the need to get back quickly, Jeff surely didn't trust me. Despite his claim of being the seer, with supernatural control over various acts of nature, the rainy weather was just an added disappointment.

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WHILE AT THIS FIRST CAMP JEFF DID QUITE A LOT OF SHOOTING, sometimes at a shooting range. Damon was instructed to teach me how to clean the two guns I had, and in doing so he realized that they had never been sighted in. With this, he asked Jeff if we could go to a quarry area nearby and fire a few shots. Conservation of ammunition was important to Jeff, so less than two dozen rounds were fired between both guns; but on another day, Jeff would have me and the other men expend a thirty-round clip in a sudden burst. So sighting in my two guns with Damon would be the grand total of experience I had firing them. What it amounted to was that Jeff prided himself in being a better shot than the rest of us and he intended to keep it that way. He also enjoyed shooting, but like any other plaything, it was a habit that required money, and we were no longer bringing money in.

Grocery runs would be an ongoing part of our survival, but we also supplemented our food supply with what we found in the wild. This was an area

of responsibility for Sharon, as she looked for various herbs and berries for us to eat. Jeff also began poaching deer. I'd never been much of a hunter, so skinning a deer and preparing the meat was a new experience for me. Keith showed how to do it the first time; after that the men in the group became skilled at getting the deer skinned and quartered very quickly. This would usually be done at night, then the next day we would all work on the remainder of the butchering. All but Jeff and Alice, that is. The perception was that we were all quite fortunate to have Jeff the mighty hunter to provide for us. I suppose he considered himself to be a cross between Nimrod of the Bible (Genesis 10:9) and Nephi of the *Book of Mormon* (1 Nephi 5:22–30). Nephi's bow had become broken and as the bows of the other men had lost their spring, he was the sole provider. Nephi's broken bow had been made of steel and was impossible to replace, but he was able to make one out of wood. By contrast, it had always been we who had provided for Jeff and his family. He did nothing to ensure that our needs would be met except by way of his manipulations for us to provide for him. Yet in Jeff's eyes, everything was his; sadly, it was that way in our eyes too. In the *Book of Mormon*, Joseph Smith illustrates the concept of there being two basic types of people: the industrious ones who build, and the predators who exploit. Like the Nephites, our challenge was to be an industrious people. Unfortunately, the description of the Lamanites now seems to be a better portrayal of our group as a whole. "And because of their cursing which was upon them, they did become an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety, and did seek in the wilderness for beasts of prey" (2 Nephi 4:39) Yet in our defense, most of us truly were industrious. We simply found ourselves overtaken by a doctrine that greatly influenced our vision as the object of our labors. By all description of the Lamanite behavior, Jeff was a supreme example, yet we mistakenly perceived his leadership as essential and our labors as scripturally sound.

In that the Nephites are an icon of Mormonism for good and righteous behavior, most Mormons (no matter their faction) are hard working, industrious people. While these are indeed noble attributes, works should never be confused for grace. "For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after* all we can do" (2 Nephi 11:44). To think that we only have salvation as a result of this growing process makes the entire doctrine of Christ out to be a coercive necessity for works. The quote above is a misleading notion that *Book of Mormon* believers have believed and trusted for nearly two centuries. We can do nothing to enhance nor diminish the grace of God toward us (Romans 8:38–39). Perhaps young Joseph Smith and his colleagues, in compiling the book, confused grace with fellowship. We can truly hinder our fellowship with God by living a lifestyle in darkness. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; But if we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:6–7). But our salvation is already complete by way of God's grace. We are to grow in that grace, in that we grow "from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18) in fellowship with Him.

However, “for it is by grace you have been saved, through faith: and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God: not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9, NIV). It is by faith that the blood of Jesus has truly washed us clean of all sin and we find God’s grace. His grace is already there, but we find it by believing in faith that His Son, Jesus, did *already* die for our sins. “while we were yet sinners” (Romans 5:8). Even the faith it takes to discover His grace is a gift from God. Yet Nephi would have us believe that we don’t have salvation until after we do all we can do.

To grow in fellowship starts with the assurance of salvation in Him and continues with the desire to increasingly open our hearts to His love. Yet we are taught not only in the following passage, but by the overall view of Mormon doctrine, that no salvation is possible until [after] works are performed.

“And notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled; for, for this end was the law given: Wherefore, the law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ, because of our faith.”
(2 Nephi 11:45–46)

This teaching comes from the proposed time period of 600 B.C., therefore, we are to believe that there was a need to continue on with the performance of Old Covenant law, despite the claim that the Nephites already had a deep understanding of what Jesus would do in the future. I must admit that this only makes sense in a sewer of logic sort of way. But compare it with the 10th chapter of Hebrews. “And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:17–19). If the law was so dead in the Nephites, as mentioned above by way of their faith toward Christ who was yet to come, then why did they keep it so very much alive in their daily performance of it?

This type of contradictory doctrine and behavior is common within cult settings, and so it’s also the exact issue that Jeff’s doctrines revealed in us. We perceived ourselves as living the Nephite lifestyle, yet we accomplished exactly the opposite. We were “Lamanites” in every way. It is by faith in the blood of Jesus that we no longer need to carry the blood of goats and calves into the Holy of Holies. Yet Mormon, and other cult teachings, suggest that works must continue in order for salvation to be accomplished. After all, if we fail to do all that we can do, it’s quite clear that we cannot be saved. Paul, however, introduces the standard by which others must be measured on this issue. “If what a man had built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames” (1 Corinthians 3:14–15, NIV). This scripture says that our fellowship may fail the refining fire of God’s all piercing scrutiny, and our flaws will be revealed, but the heart that embraces the remission of sins as offered through the blood of Jesus shall be saved. Indoctrination by way of

contradiction will eventually create an unstable individual who already comes with an altered perception of reality. Reality becomes not only distorted, but fluid and ever-changing. The only thing solid and stable was our rock-hard convictions toward Jeff's authority over us. We had no idea what lay in our future; not by way of Jeff's teachings, nor by any limited view of our own. Our eyes were solely locked onto Jeff, with no view of where we were going, or what God's plan for us, collectively and individually, really was. We lived not only in an ever-changing reality, but one not even visible to us. Our reality was one that only the seer could see—and all we could see was him.

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.” (2 Corinthians 4:3–5)

I can now truthfully say that I was lost, but now am found. Jeff pretended to teach of Jesus, yet to the contrary, taught only exaltation of himself. We became blinded to any vision of truth because all we could see was Jeff.

An ancient myth speaks of the great leviathan (Job 41) as a sea monster so great that its tail could eclipse the light of the sun. Anything that hinders our view of God (through nothing in and of itself) greatly affects the one whose vision is hindered. Any insignificant creature can create a shadow, but to the eyes of the one whom the shadow covers, the shadow is all that they see. No light, just darkness (1 John 1:6–7). The result is a devastating depravity. “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). People such as Jeff oppose God in that they exalt themselves. The *Book of Mormon* captivates its disciples with the search for the seer, not the messiah, which eclipses the relationship that could and should be established in Jesus; if only He was their focus of scrutiny. I'm not proposing that Mormonism is the only means or doctrine capable of hindering our view of God, but no matter what we believe and where we place our trust, care must always be given that nothing restricts us from seeing clearly. “But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness” (Matthew 6:23).

There we were, living in the open wilderness with no ties to the “world.” We had cast it all away in search of a better and essential communion with God. “And save they shall cast these things away, and consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the depths of humility, he will not open unto them” (2 Nephi 6:84). Yet He did not open unto us. We became fools, but our efforts only managed to increase and deepen our captivity.