

Chapter 6

POSTPONED

Before I knew of Jeff's temple takeover plan, he mentioned a specific date when this miraculous event of an earthquake and mountain raising was to occur. Symbols, a part of the millwork on the exterior temple doors were the basis for his conclusion. This gave us an actual date, which became not only the revealing of a mystery of God's great plan for mankind, but also meant we must be able to come into His presence on that date. To fail would mean postponement for another year. Yet, worse than postponement, would be the cost for our sin and failure. What would next be required of us if we were to fail or be unprepared at the appointed time? This was a very real and threatening question, which urged us on in an increasingly reckless manner. I am reminded of a recent prison review in which was discussed the possibility of my security level being lowered. One of the staff members asked me if drugs or alcohol were associated with my crime, to which I responded, "There were no drugs or alcohol, but I was most definitely intoxicated." Indeed we were all intoxicated; mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

It was essential for us to be prepared to enter the Temple upon the designated day; not only for ourselves, but for all of mankind. What a pity to look at it all now and see how completely ridiculous it was.

With plans to raise the mountain cancelled, we began seeking instruction for the next window of opportunity the following year. Even though we knew that more would now be required because we had failed, it seemed Jeff's urgency was also less than it had previously been. Basically, he'd managed to con us into another entire year of servitude by the cancellation of so great an event. I guess he felt he might as well use us to get things a little more comfortable around the farm. With so many willing and helpful hands, it began to look more like a park than the collection of junk that it had been before.

Jeff and Alice kept everyone pretty busy with various chores, yet we also began a number of new projects. Sharon was talented at quilting and Susie had created beautiful embroidery work since her childhood. We brought a loom with us, so the prospect of an old-fashioned crafts center began to take shape. Danny excelled at most any form of art. He could make dollhouse furniture with tiny tools, which he used under a magnifying glass. Referenced in the *Book of Mormon*, we accepted our responsibility to be "an industrious people," and each of us had a specific function. Jeff and Alice "burdened" themselves with the arduous task of antique shopping. Jeff hung some sheet-rock in the barn, dividing it into rooms for various shops, although it was

never completed. Much like the apple trees on the farm's thirteen acres, none of Jeff's projects ever seemed to bear fruit. But then again, they did manage to keep us quite busy and gave us purpose—and this may have been the only real intention that ever existed in them.

Regularly scheduled chores were assigned to all, but I took up the slack, working anywhere I was needed. Susie was assigned the laundry, which she took home each day to be returned at night prior to Jeff's evening class. Richard was the landscaper, planting trees and flowers throughout the yard wherever Alice designated. Debbie was the main cook whose duties also included the grocery shopping. With the *Book of Mormon* to guide us, we were to become "one heart and one mind," and to some degree we were. But not to the glorification of God, since everything we did was to the subjugation of ourselves to the agenda of Jeff.

Life developed into a robotic revolution of work and study. Susie and I would awaken at 6:00 a.m. to begin her day of laundry and my workday at the power plant. At 4:00 p.m. I would come home, pick up the laundry Susie had done to that point, eat supper, all within about 15 minutes, and leave again to do chores at the farm. Around 7:00 p.m., I would return home to pick up Susie and our children and be back at the farm for 8:30 class. The kids would be in their pajamas with sleeping bags ready so that when we arrived back at the farm, we could lay them down to sleep.

Susie's domestic labors increased. Besides laundry she was told to become more intense about keeping house. Susie was a good housekeeper, but she was told she should consider her tasks "as unto God." She had beautifully stenciled the walls, which she washed weekly. When I came home from work, supper was on the table. By the standards of today's culture, Susie was subservient to me. She was told God had a purpose for her, which was to provide on earth the most heavenly atmosphere possible for her husband and children. Even there was the ever-present threat of the price of failure. I was as a servant in Abraham's household and if Jeff said "go and do," I "went and did." Susie and I were also to be one, unified in our purpose to God. Ironically, we both became so busy with chores that we were quite subservient within the greater Lundgren household.

Class would last from 8:30 p.m. until around midnight or later. A new development was that of "sessions" held after class, for the chastisement of any who were identified as having a particularly rebellious sin issue to deal with. Again, the definition and identification of sin within the group was relative to our belief that Jeff was the choice seer. There were totally ridiculous issues held up before us as sin. One such issue was the purchase of chocolate chips. Jeff had given Richard a specific amount of money, with instructions to go to the convenience store and buy a large bag of Nestle Toll House chocolate chips. As ridiculous as this scenario will sound, I hope the reader will sympathize with the fact that these were real and threatening issues to us. When Richard arrived at the store, he was faced with a dilemma. They had Nestle chocolate chips, but not in the large size bag. There was another brand

in the large size and there were small bags in the Nestle brand, so he had to choose. To complicate things, he only had enough money for one large bag, but not enough for two small ones. Panic set in as he tried to make a choice based on Jeff's instructions. Should he buy a large bag of a different brand and have enough, or should he buy the designated brand in the smaller bag and not have enough? Unfortunately, Richard made the wrong choice (assuming, of course, that there was a right one), and brought back a large bag of the other brand. Such a silly little scenario resulted in Richard having to endure a session (chastisement) after class, which lasted for nearly four hours. This session involved everything from personal humiliation as a sinful failure, to the threat of Almighty God's wrath in the form of some massive devastation of lives. How did we allow such a trivial event to create such intense anxiety?

In military boot camp if one failed, all failed. If an undershirt was folded the wrong way it could bring fury from the training instructor toward the individual, but had an effect on the entire group, as well. This, of course, develops discipline and harmonizes the efforts of many into an organized and formidable force, for purposes of war. Yet with us, it was not boot camp for induction into the nation's military—we were being inducted into a service of "higher" authority and more needful purposes—purposes of saving an already dwindling number of people from the coming judgment of God. We were, therefore, under great scrutiny, not by a training instructor of our nation's military, but by God Himself. Nothing, then, was considered too trivial because it was the trivial things that were identified as the dross of our purging process.

A person who becomes subject to such a surreptitious process begins to use the very programming that is, in fact, destroying them. Like a computer virus, the more it is used, the more the virus is spread. Each movement creates more mutilation. Similarly, our minds became locked in a maze and each turn spiraled us deeper into the entrapment. All I had to do was stop and accept the freedom of what Jesus accomplished when He died upon the cross and rose on the third day. He fulfilled the mystery. He opened the way for us simply through our faith. As a child, I endured terrible nightmares. Yet there was always a point when I realized I was dreaming. In my dreams, I could escape the monsters by waking up. But I was not dreaming now. I was very much awake.

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I LOST MYSELF IN PREPARATIONS for threats that were not there. Eventually, we began to panic as, feeling always off balance, we would stumble along seeking sure footing with God and our service to Him. On such occasions, Jeff would state that he'd far rather his children enter into God's kingdom "halt or maimed" than to be whole and "cast into everlasting fire." This teaching was taken from the biblical passage of Matthew 18:8, but like everything else he taught, it was subject to gross misinterpretation.

One night at class, my children were talking instead of going to sleep as they were told to do. Their little voices drifted into the living room where we sat in class. Jeff heard them and told Susie to bring them out to him. No words can adequately express the shame I now feel over watching them stand in front of him, trembling, while he showed them a huge stick that he slammed on his desk. God had become legalistic to us. He had become a God of toe-the-mark-wrath and judgment. We were so wrapped up in fear of our children's eternal souls that it seemed necessary to create this display of threat and anger.

Verse six of Matthew 18 speaks of those who “offend” his little ones. That word is translated from the same Greek word from which we get scandalize. To scandalize or seduce a child into sin is an awesomely terrible thing; it would be better to maim oneself than to exhibit such behavior. In a sense, this could be taken as a warning against false prophets such as Jeff who prey upon the naïvely innocent at heart. We are called to be as little children, faithful and trusting. But people such as Jeff are desirous of only one thing, to scandalize those with the innocence of a childlike heart. With a distorted perversion of this precept, we were instructed to watch over our children vigilantly for hints of sin in misbehavior. In my deep shame, I recall spanking my children, too hard at times. This was not due to anger toward them, but rather due to fear that I might lose them. The most precious gift of stewardship a man can receive from God is his children. That opportunity to parent is now gone from my grasp.

There are many reasons I could hate Jeff, but my purpose in writing is not to express hatred. Rather, it is to provide some way to clearly view what is otherwise a very dark and incomprehensible issue. Jeff created abuses and even the deaths of his followers. Though I could find a degree of pleasure in exercising a father's vengeful wrath upon Jeff, there is neither opportunity for, nor healthy benefit from such otherwise justifiable passions.