

## *The Lord Is My Light*

Growing up in a small town in Idaho proved to be very advantageous for me because I was always surrounded by committed members of the church who taught me the gospel and who demonstrated how to live it.<sup>1</sup> It was particularly helpful because my father, who was a member but not actively participating, lived in a way that could have influenced my choices. This was especially true as a teenager when the decisions I made became more crucial in determining the course my life would follow.

Our family had always lived in town, but when we moved out to the country where there weren't any street lights, I found that the roads were somewhat scary after sunset. I wouldn't have ventured very far outside at night with a friend, much less by myself. I was afraid of the dark.

One serene summer evening, I found myself alone at home finishing the dinner dishes and cleaning up the kitchen. While working, I opened the refrigerator and saw a bottle of alcohol on the shelf. I also knew that a drawer nearby held some cigarettes. In our home, there were family members who didn't live the Word of Wisdom, but it was never a temptation to me. I had no desire to try either of them and had never considered either smoking or drinking before.

After I completed my tasks, I climbed up on the kitchen counter to relax for a few minutes. Suddenly, the thought came into my mind that I could smoke one of the cigarettes and drink some of the alcohol. This idea was very confusing to me. It was followed by, "You are alone. No one will ever know."

Instead of persuading me, the thought that I was alone had the opposite effect. I felt sure someone else was there. This someone wanted me to break my promises to Heavenly Father and was hoping to entice me away from the things I knew were right.

I became frightened but remembered that I could pray and receive help, direction, and the companionship of the Holy Ghost. I bowed my head and said a silent prayer. After that, I knew I needed to hop down from that counter and get out of the house. Like the story of Joseph in the Old Testament, I felt I needed to flee from temptation (Genesis 39:12).

Normally, I wouldn't have been brave enough to venture out onto the unlit country roads, but this prompting from the Spirit gave me courage beyond my own. I realized that I felt more concerned about what was inside my house than what I would find outside. I threw open my front door, sprinted down the driveway, and raced out onto the road.

As I ran, a hymn poured into my mind. It was as if a choir was singing to me: "The Lord is my light, then why should I fear, by day and by night, his presence is near."<sup>2</sup> Breathless from

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<sup>1</sup> See original publication: Gail H. Johnsen, "The Lord is My Light," *Deseret News*, August 6, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> "The Lord Is My Light," *Hymns*, no. 89.

running, I could still hear the words of this hymn sounding over and over in my head. The music continued until I was ready to turn around and go home.

I felt trepidation as I walked back into my house, but as soon as I pushed open the front door, I was no longer nervous. I knew I was safe.

I have often heard people quote the scripture in the New Testament that says, “But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able” (1 Corinthians 10:13). That scripture never made sense to me because I saw so many people around me succumb to sin. But studying the Book of Mormon clarified it for me, as it has clarified so many other scriptures. In order to receive the blessing of being protected against temptation, we have some work we need to do. For example, Alma explains “But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, *that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear*” (Alma 13:28, italic added by author). Here, Alma identifies four things required to overcome temptation. Fortunately for me, I felt prompted to pray.

My prayer was heard and answered in a miraculous way that night. Again, I came to know for myself that not only does God hear and answer prayers, but that He truly knows each one of us, and our circumstances. If we will continue to call upon Him, He will bless, nurture, and watch over us.

After this incident in my home, living the Word of Wisdom became even more important to me. I learned that it is a commandment with a blessing and a promise. The blessing is that those who obey “Shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones; And shall find great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures, And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.”

The promise is “that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them” (D&C 89:18-21).

The day that I had this skirmish with an unseen force, I received hidden knowledge. I was able to see that even though the adversary was there enticing me, the Lord’s Spirit would always be available to help, guide, and protect.

While I was in high school my friends and I were out together on a summer evening and later that night went to a friend’s home who wasn’t a member of the church. When someone pulled alcohol out of the refrigerator and started to pass it around, I decided to leave the house in order to adhere to my principles. This was before cell phones, and I had to walk down some dimly lit streets to get to a hotel and borrow a phone to call for a ride home. I was particularly frightened because a young woman had recently been murdered in our town while she was going to the grocery store at night.

Perhaps the earlier experience strengthened me to be able to go out on that unfamiliar street to avoid a spiritually dangerous situation. I believe that each confrontation that we overcome prepares us for future challenges. The Lord is always lighting our path in the present and for the future. I am grateful for the spiritual and temporal safety I had in both instances. The Lord most surely is our light and “walking by faith, I am blest ev’ry hour.”