

## *They Were Listening*

It was stake conference for the Fair View Heights Illinois Stake.<sup>1</sup> To attend, our family had to travel an hour and a half to get to St. Louis where the stake center was located. At that time my husband and I had five children, who ranged in age from about 12 months to 12 years old. The children were usually ready to run and play by the time we arrived, but we still had the entire meeting ahead of us.

This particular Sunday, I had to manage the entire group by myself because my husband, Gary, was singing in the stake choir. I was prepared with scripture-based coloring books and quiet toys because I knew my children would struggle to be reverent through the two-hour service. I was a little anxious about my ability to handle this task.

I found seats for my family in the overflow section of the chapel so that we might not be disruptive to others, and hoped that I would be able to glean something from the messages while I attended to my children's needs. I placed the three older children to the right of me and the two youngest on my left side.

The stake presidency had assigned a young married sister to address us. She had been asked to speak about how to cultivate and maintain love in our marriages. I had just looked down to check my children and although they were quiet, they didn't seem to be paying attention to the speaker at all. As a matter of fact, from their faces and their occupations at the time, I felt quite certain that they were not listening to one word she was saying. Then the sister said that good marriages included, "warm, affectionate sex."

I was looking and listening to the speaker, but with my peripheral vision, I saw several heads jerk in my direction. I turned to see what had caused the reaction and saw wide eyes staring at me. My oldest son leaned closer and whispered, "She said sex!"

Since that day, I have felt sure that children hear a lot more in church than we think they do. I have felt that it will always be important to be in the right place at the right time. As Sister Elaine L. Jack expressed in her talk entitled, "Walk with Me": "We've been given tools to develop that spirituality. We are told to attend church meetings, work hard in callings, go to the temple, be generous in offering to the Lord, hold family home evening and visit one another. But simply being there does not sanctify us; statistics do not drive eternal progression. Still, we cannot ignore that being in the right place at the right time will put us in a frame of mind to learn, in an environment where the Lord's influence is invited and strong."<sup>2</sup>

Coming to church can develop into all kinds of learning experiences, and even though some of our activities there are not ideal because we may spend some of our time in the mother's lounge, walking the halls with a fussy baby, or wrestling tired children through Sacrament meeting, I believe that we may all learn and feel more than we think. I also hope to set an

---

<sup>1</sup> See original publication: Gail H. Johnsen, "The Right Place at the Right Time," *Deseret News*, September 5, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Elaine L. Jack, "Walk with Me," *Ensign*, May 1994.

example of consistent attendance in church that may influence my family and give them a solid foundation of gospel activity. I continually pray that I will be found doing the right thing, in the right place, and the right time.