

Hi Micah,

I've been wanting to write you this email for some time but kept telling myself I would do it "eventually". Your latest video of Joseph to return #2 has pushed me to finally do it. (just finished watching it)

I have been watching your videos for the last 6 months and I can't tell you enough how much it has meant to me that you have listened to the Spirit and followed through with creating the YT channel. I am the prime definition of a "Drunkard of Ephraim" who has been in the process of waking up to become one of "Joseph's Boys". I am a 38 yr old husband/father of 3 little girls, so I think we are in a similar phase of life -- the young/middle aged:)

I was born in SLC UT and grew up in the typical generations of membership in the church family. In fact I am a direct descendant of Hyrum Smith. I have always been a "good" boy/son/father/husband/etc, but I definitely have been asleep. At different times in my life I have felt increase in my testimony (eg. mission) but in general it has been stagnant -- which probably means it was slowly going out. I was concerned with the things of the world/babylon more than the truth and my true purpose for being here.

Around the 2016 timeframe there started appearing more videos and articles around the internet about the timing of the 2nd Coming including so many things that I know now to not be significant -- things like the blood moons, Ezra's Eagle, many non-LDS prophecies around the presidents and timing of things, etc, etc -- but I appreciate that they at least began the process of my waking up because the timing of the 2nd coming has always been of interest to me. But those ideas/videos etc eventually wore off and I returned to the "drunkard" status :) (probably because they didn't have the fulness of truth to back them up)

Then last year, like so many, when the pandemic hit, then the Earthquake in UT, it was like a major wakeup call to continue to seek for truth about the timeframe we are living in and also to get myself to wake up spiritually. I feel so fortunate to have found your videos. You have been just the kick in the pants that I have needed to get myself and family on track spiritually and prepared temporally. Though we have a lot of improvements to make still, we are on the right track now, which brings peace to my soul. It is amazing how much the Spirit of Truth, often times through your teachings and through my own scripture study of course, has worked miracles in my life.

I want to tell you how much I have grown to LOVE the Prophet Joseph over the last 6 months. I want to be considered one of his "boys" like nothing else I have ever wanted. I want so badly to join with him and "grandpa" Hyrum to stand up for the truth and redeem Zion and, with them, prepare that City for our Savior when the time comes. I truly believe that we ARE that generation. The world is ripening so fast I can hardly believe what I see and read every day.

Thank you again Micah (and Ashley) for your sacrifice to bring out the truth. I know that someday (hopefully as we build the New Jerusalem) I will be able to give you a big hug and tell you that in person. God bless you and your family.

Ben

Aloha Micah & Ashley,

Last week Saturday, I kept having the thought that I should send you my wake-up story. I brushed it off because I thought, "I don't know them or any of these people, why would they want to hear that." The next day during the fireside, you said you were going to do a wake-up/testimony fireside. I know I need to work on following promptings.

(It was getting kind of long so I tried to condense it.)

About 10 years ago through a summer job I met my would-be husband. After work one day he drove me home. On his dashboard was his missionary name tag. I immediately blurted out, "Oh you're a Mormon." He proceeded to tell me about his mission and answered questions I had about the gospel. One of the things I struggled with was why were there prophets and apostles back then, but not today. Why had God stopped communicating with us? I'm sure that must feel like a golden question to missionaries when they're asked that by investigators.

After learning that Christ has restored the Church as it was during his mortal ministry, I agreed to meet with the missionaries. That invitation was of course successful because in a few years we were sealed in the temple. During the early part of our marriage, I thought to myself that Heavenly Father must be allowing me to have a "break." Life was rough for me growing up and now I was living comfortably. Little bumps here and there but nothing that a new-convert fire couldn't overcome. I had a great husband, 2 wonderful little children. "All was well in Zion."

Then last September, my faith was tested to the extreme.

When you're reading a good book you can point out the foreshadowing for events that will happen later on in the story, however, in real life, we cannot see the connections and can only see those moments in hindsight. I will share two points that stand out to me now.

1. Our 18 month old son was a typical little boy. Loud, rough, and mischievous. My husband used to say that they may be loud and all over the place at times, but at least they're healthy enough to do that, it means they're alright. Our children were a joyful handful.

2. Around late summer, I started to have what I thought were very disturbing thoughts come to my mind. What would I do if my son were in a car accident? Would I be able to forgive those who were at fault? Would I be able to get up and bear my testimony on the Plan of Salvation at his funeral? I would think to myself, yes of course, now why am I thinking these things in the first place? How morbid am I? I just recently shared that with my husband and he told me he had had similar thoughts as well. He also didn't share it with me at first because he didn't want to sound crazy either.

September 12, 2020 is the day I can point to and say this is the day I started to wake up. This was the day of the accident. The day that I poured my whole heart out to Heavenly Father begging for a miracle, even though I knew in my heart he was already gone. This was the day a visible hole was created in my life. Everywhere I looked, I could only think of how he was now missing from that moment. The pain and despair was too much, I felt like I was drowning. I turned to the scriptures and whatever doctrine I could find about the spirit world, resurrection, children passing away before the age of baptism, etc. It was

only by holding on to the iron rod, to my Savior, that I was able to keep my head above water. I soon came across this quote from Pres. Joseph F. Smith:

"for it was revealed from God, the fountain of truth, through Joseph Smith the prophet, in this dispensation, that in the resurrection of the dead the child that was buried in its infancy will come up in the form of the child that it was when it was laid down; then it will begin to develop. From the day of the resurrection, the body will develop until it reaches the full measure of the stature of its spirit, whether it be male or female."

I knew that the first resurrection happened at the Millenium, so I wanted to find out when the Millenium was going to happen. When would I see my baby again? That led to many LDS Youtubers with their last-day timelines. I agreed that "the end" must be soon because of how far society seems to have fallen, but the way they looked to other sources to piece together their timelines did not make sense to me. My Youtube feed eventually suggested one of Micah's timeline videos. It was completely different than the other videos I watched and was based solely on the scriptures and modern revelation. I felt like a switch had turned on and my mind had a flood of understanding. I binged a good chunk of the videos on the channel then came across Defending Zion in the featured channels tab and binge watched those videos. It was even more pure scripture and modern revelation. Then I came across Blake's video about little children who pass away before accountability and I felt that I had "pricked my heart with the word." I knew that the things these two brethren discussed in their videos were what I needed to study and learn. This is the doctrine that would help me on the path to being with my son again, not Enoch's calendar or the star constellations on specific dates.

Whether the Lord calls me to the New Jerusalem or asks me to tarry a little longer, I just pray with all my heart I will be found worthy on that great Millennial day to have my son returned to me.

I share these things in the name of our Beloved Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dani Soliven

My wife and I have been married going on twelve years now and we've always tried to be conscientious about food storage, family history, holding callings etc. Of course we knew there was always room for improvement but most times we would hit a wall with how to proceed, especially with our scripture study. The Come Follow Me was an absolute godsend. The spirit testified immediately to us of it's importance and we implemented small daily lessons as a family during or right after dinner, nothing big just 10-15 minutes. We had always prayed together as a family however after the lesson we would have family prayer and have felt a much stronger feeling of peace and love. Fast forward to February of 2019 I was getting ready to get up for the day and I heard the words, "Food storage, get food storage now!". This was a little hard to hear because we had some financial commitments at the time that we were trying to work on. It took me the better part of the week to try and figure out how I was going to speak to my wife about this. When I finally did she looked me in the eyes and said, "I am so glad you said that because I have also had really strong promptings to do that."

As we started to really plan out what it would take to do this it became clear this was going to take time and sacrifice. Wanting to heed to the prompting we both received we dove in. We spent each week truly looking up what it would take to be sustained for at least one year. Starting was overwhelming and it took a few months to get into the swing of things but we finally found a good system that worked for

us. We realized that this kind of preparation would take true sacrifice. My wife's job gives Christmas bonuses, that money went to food storage. We started allocating funds every week to our goal of one year. Every time we thought things looked good and we were done more items seemed to come into our heads. We have been very humbled with this entire process that has unfolded. It's been a true blessing.

Doing this has also led me to prayerfully seek out those in my neighborhood in whom the Lord would like me to help along these lines and that's all it took because no sooner did I ask and three names came to my mind. Two out of the three were receptive and one of those families was downright shocked because they had felt a similar feeling about food storage but this was our first time ever meeting. When they asked me why I came over to speak with them I told them exactly why, that I had prayed to know who I could talk to and help and they came to mind. They were to say the least very touched by this. These efforts have cascaded into other neighbors becoming more engaged. As always, I made it very clear with every household, I spoke with that our conversations would remain between us so as not to draw any unwanted attention.

March of 2020 we a banner year for us. We pulled our two kids 9,11, out of school. This of course took time to also figure out but WAS WITHOUT A DOUBT ONE OF THE BEST DECISIONS WE HAVE EVER MADE!!! The benefits and blessing are too many in number to list here. Our children will be home schooled moving forward. I will admit this is 99.9% all my wife. She does it, I am merely the teacher's assistant. Between her working from home and home school it has put a real strain on her but she will tell you it is worth every sacrifice. Her employer was not pleased when she informed him of her decision to stay home. I gave her a blessing a few years ago and the Lord promised her that if she would always put her children first, she need not fear and He would bless her. This has come to fruition because not only has her employment worked out she has received three raises since she had a heart to heart with her boss about her priorities. "Kids come first". She told him.

I'll just briefly mention having a garden. Do it! It's so worth it. There's nothing like it.

Through all of this it has become very clear to our family that the Lord knows and understands our circumstances, He is so very aware of our abilities and our limitations. He knew it would take us as long as it has. When covid hit and people started to become toilet paper frantic the shelves emptied very fast here. We were grateful the Lord gave us a year's head start, I say start because we haven't stopped and are always looking to build upon what we have been prompted do. It's been a bit sad to see a lot of people around us going right back to the complacency they were in before. We even hear sayings like, "I can't wait until things go back to normal", and, "This whole thing is sure inconvenient. We just need to go back to the way things were."

October 2020 general conference was a wonderful experience. Of course, I had my favorite speakers, Elder Bednar, Elder Holland, but I really enjoyed Bishop Waddell's talk, "There was Bread". Last but certainly not least our beloved prophet gave wonderful council. As I sat intently listening a few things came to mind. One, was to make my fast offering a sacrifice, or in other words increase our donation. Two, I heard the words, "Get thee to Zion", in my mind. As I shared this with my wife I told her that I want to be in agreement with her on the amount we would give regarding fast offerings. I threw a number out, her eye brows raised, and as we sat there I saw her look of surprise turn to one of commitment. Now the other, get thee to Zion, I'm not really sure what that means entirely. But I have genuinely tried to make our household more holy as if we were striving to live as dwelling residents in

the New Jerusalem. Maybe I can't bring me or my family to the New Jerusalem just yet, but maybe I can bring Zion to us. I made the suggestion some months back that it would be nice to be able to shut all electronics off on the Sabbath, one day when we're ready. Believe it or not my daughter actually made the suggestion that we should try this idea a few months after suggesting it. After some reluctance from pretty much everyone, lol, we all decided to commit to this idea. We were all surprised at how hard this actually was. It's going to sound a bit odd but we felt like we had some withdrawal affects from this. This too was a wonderful decision though and have felt blessed because of it.

(Micah, my children informed me that listening to your firesides don't count as electronics on Sunday and I have their permission to listen to you. I speak of you and your papers often and my family is well acquainted with your efforts. I just thought it was a cute little thing they said.)

Through all of our experiences I have to say the one action that has led us to becoming more like a Zion people has been to be able to have the sacrament in our home. This I believe is the most sacred of all ordinances. Our family has been privileged to have had special experiences doing this. Please know your not alone. There are others out there just like you, those striving to become a Zion people. I know the Lord will help you in whatever circumstance you find yourself. Above all trust in Him always.

Until Zion,

Sterling, Chelsea, Lucy, & Liam Ricks

Vineyard, Utah

Hi English Family,

Feel free to share the following story and cut it down if you like.

I have always been worried about work. I have a large client/customer that, if they decided to leave, would result in a huge decrease in compensation. In the summer of 2019, while driving home from work, I received an impression that I didn't need to worry about finances anymore. I knew this was from Heavenly Father, because He has whispered things to me in the past in the same fashion.

Unfortunately, I still worried off and on, but maybe not as much as before, until October came and the client changed and the amount of work coming from them was cut in half. The holidays was a stressful time and I couldn't enjoy much of it. Eventually, COVID hit and that made us all think that work would drop even more. It didn't in reality, but the worry was still there. I read the scriptures and followed Come Follow Me more earnestly.

Come June of 2020, I read Aaron and King Lamoni's story and realized that it is the "center" of the Book of Mormon in terms of page count. In his prayer, King Lamoni said he would give up all his sins to know God. I felt I needed to do the same and so I did. As a result of this type of prayer, my desires to follow worldly things (e.g., sports, politics) decreased greatly, which had been decreasing slowly in the previous months. However, just a few weeks later, my aunt recommended a YouTube (YT) video about us being in the 7th seal and that the 7 years of tribulation started in 2017. It was all so exciting and I felt like I was missing out. I read books and writings recommended by these people. I followed their FB groups. I saw YT videos about people's dreams. I was getting ready for bat guano to hit the fan in November. I was deceived.

Thankfully, a brother sent me Micah's Abinadi video, which was super eye opening. I started to wake up "properly." I watched all of his videos and slowly walked away from the metaphorical edge. I never read the scriptures the same again. I understand the scriptures better and the words of latter-day prophets. I have a greater desire to gather Israel and follow the Lord in His work. I am not where I want to be yet (what true saint is satisfied with where they are?), but I have made a lot of temporal and spiritual progress in the last 9 months, for which I am very grateful. I eat better and exercise more. I am a better husband and father. I spend more time with my kids. My wife loves the new me. Not sure my kids do because we spend time on Sundays going over Isaiah 😊

Thank you, Micah and Ashley, for the great work you are doing.

Sincerely,

Daniel

"Like so many fellow drunk Ephraimites, I was not "living up to my privileges," and then Covid put some things into motion for me. Now I can look back and see the sinful things I was doing that were in opposition to covenants I had made in the temple and between me and the Lord personally. I won't go into what those were, and now that I've repented I can see just how entrenched into our Church culture these practices and ideologies are. I was also still holding on to hurt from a particular incident that happened 5 years prior. I had seriously considered "going inactive" over it because I felt so betrayed, and in reality, abused. While it wasn't a doctrinal problem, I just had extreme cognitive dissonance with some social aspects of the Relief Society and other cultural issues in my ward (I was at that time in the RS presidency). Needless to say, I learned a lot from that experience, but it was extremely painful. Spoiler alert: I stayed active in the Church--went through the motions--but didn't have that FIRE like I had in the past. I had been doing so much to try and forgive and get past it and while I made progress through the years (thanks to my Savior), there were still negative feelings there that I could not deny and would, in all honesty, keep me from the presence of God.

So when Covid turned our world upside down, I noticed a lot of activity from active members on social media sites, like Youtube. These members were awake, and although there was a "war of words" at times, I was excited that people were discussing "meat" online and I felt the Spirit reminding me about my testimony of these things. These conversations drew me to the scriptures and to study deeper than I probably had since we started having children 6 years earlier. Being in the scriptures naturally led me to recognize some of my mistakes and to repent. I had especially been preparing for General Conference and was particularly close to the Spirit due to my return to an immersion in the scriptures.

Well, the Sunday before GC I had a distinct impression that I needed to start sleeping in pajamas. I thought it was strange and I'm embarrassed to say I was extremely comfortable only ever sleeping in my garments. Maybe it was a habit I picked up from nursing babies at night. It seemed like a strange thought, that the Spirit would tell me to wear pajamas to bed, but I obeyed. Then a few days later (the Wednesday before GC) I had this experience: I had trouble getting to sleep that night (which is unusual for me). There were, without a doubt, unclean spirits in my room. I had had those feelings a couple times before (prior to this return to the iron rod) but they didn't last long after I would pray and fall asleep. I had always closed my eyes and hid under my blankets praying for Jesus to save me because I would get scared! Well this night it seemed to take longer than before and I was extremely restless for what seemed like the whole night, but finally, I got a stretch of sleep and had a "dream" that two angels

were at my side. I thought it was strange that their faces were veiled, but now I think I know why they did that. Anyway, these angels, who I now believe were my grandparents, were here to minister to me in a distinct way. I was somewhat confused as to what they were doing at first, but then I realized....they seemed to be giving me a priesthood blessing! I didn't hear any words nor did I see how they placed their hands, I just knew they were at my bedside while I lay there and I was relatively calm. I could see light filling my mind. The best way I can describe it is that they were cleaning it up and erasing things—like my mind had been darkened, and they were enlightening it. That morning when I woke up, I immediately recognized something was different. The negative thoughts and feelings I had about the experience from 5 years ago were gone! Tears of gratitude and feelings of joy filled my heart! That last bit of ache and resentment was gone. This was truly a gift of charity that I had been given. I had been filled with so much Love and Light! I can tell I've healed too, because if I try to retell the story to myself of how awful that experience was, I can't even find words or feelings to describe it and then I have a stupor of thought (whereas before, I could have written a novel). Obviously my memory is not completely swiped but, but there is no victim-like feeling there. What I experienced was real and almost unspeakable, and I couldn't have done that on my own, no matter how badly I wanted or tried.

Since that time I have found great joy hearing apostles and prophets speak about angels and reading about them in the scriptures. Particularly, Moroni 7 speaks to me deeply: (vs 29-32) "And because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men." I do believe I had this experience with the angels because "angels are coming to visit the earth" in preparation for some important events. Now I am trying to strengthen my faith to the point "nothing shall be withheld." I know He who sent those angels to me loves us. He is the Life and Light of the world. Oh, and wear pajamas to bed, you never know Who may show up."

-Name withheld

Hi Micah,

My wake up story is fairly simple. Last fall I was in my car taking my 11 year old home from swim practice. We normally talk about what he did at swim practice or school or just listen to the radio. This one day he unexpectedly blurted out "I can't wait for Jesus to come." I simply said something like that's a good thing to be excited about. Then he asked me, "Are you going to be there too?" I said I didn't know, but I hope so. At the time I was thinking that Christ's second coming was still a ways off.

After this I started searching on the internet. First I found YouTube videos like Jodi Stoddard's. Eventually, I found your channel. Your videos made a lot more sense to me. Thank you for all your efforts. It has greatly helped me understand the doctrine.

Regards,
Troy Frerichs

So, a little history - both of my parents are converts, and I was raised in the church. Growing up I always more or less did all the things that are expected of an average church member, going on a mission, getting sealed in the temple, having children, serving in the church, etc. Throughout my life I have had many great experiences and specific moments that helped build my testimony, yet I always sort of struggled with a baseline feeling of just "going through the motions" and sort of grinding through life in various states of church activity. I read the scriptures on occasion, but not diligently. I remembered to pray most nights, but not with much faith. I always went to church, but I wasn't very "active" on the inside.

That is the general state I was in when about five years ago I received the calling to serve as elders quorum president in my ward (I will note that this is the ward I grew up in, as I moved back to my hometown after college). I didn't know it at the time, but I eventually received the testimony that the Lord doesn't call people for who they are at the time, but for how He can teach them and test them - for who He can help them become. At the beginning of this calling, I put in an average effort and fulfilled my duties for the most part, but still continued going through the motions. While serving in this calling I had the opportunity to hear from a member of the quorum of the twelve who came to speak to a smaller group of priesthood leaders (in a multi-stake event). One of the things he said at this meeting that really stood out to me was something to the effect of "the brethren are aware of the challenges faced by many of the members today, and are concerned for them (particularly younger families). We want people to view their church membership as more of a blessing than a burden, and not the other way around."

As he said that last statement it hit me like a ton of bricks. I had been going through the motions for so long that serving in the church felt like more of a burden than a blessing to me at the time. I felt like he was addressing me specifically at that moment. As this apostle continued to speak and bear his testimony of the Savior, the spirit I felt there was so strong and so intense that I wouldn't have been surprised to see Jesus walk into the room. That meeting and this apostle's testimony of the Savior had a profound effect on me, and the love I felt leaving that meeting seemed to stick with me for several days afterward. My desire to fulfil my calling began to increase, as did my love for those in my quorum and ward.

This was really the beginning of where I can identify starting to wake up. As time went on, eventually the announcement was made that the elders quorum and the high priest groups would be combined. A few months later I met with my Stake President and he issued the calling for me to continue serving as elders quorum president. This was slightly overwhelming to me at the time as I would now be the priesthood leader for many of the brethren that were my priesthood leaders growing up (including two of my previous bishops). At the end of our meeting the Stake President gave me a blessing. I don't remember anything he said in that blessing, but I vividly remember what the Lord told me in my heart and mind. He gave me very specific directions on the next steps He wanted me to take in my life, showing me a picture in my mind of things He wanted me to change, and so I began to do what He told me.

Being called as the elders quorum president again seemed "weightier" than before. I also took my responsibility more seriously, and soon I really began to notice the stark disparity between my testimony at the time and what I desired it to be - especially in how I felt about Jesus Christ. I would occasionally hear other people bear their testimony of the Savior in such profound ways. They loved Him so personally. They seemed to know Him so well. He had literally changed their lives. To me, for the most part I really only understood logically who Jesus was at a basic level. I knew what He did. I mean, I had some spiritual experiences and I had a testimony, but for the most part, despite being raised in the church and going on a mission, I only had a pretty surface level understanding. I had read about Him in the scriptures, and I knew ABOUT Him, but I didn't KNOW Him. I realized then that despite the many spiritual experiences I had had to that point in life, I couldn't testify with all my heart and my whole soul that I loved Him. That I knew Him. That I had been changed by Him - and this disparity bothered me almost endlessly.

It was around this time that I began to notice more of a pull from the Lord. As I drew nearer to Him, He drew nearer to me, and I began a more serious effort of building a relationship with Him. In doing so I realized that for my entire life I had completely misunderstood the concept of grace. I recalled a lesson as a missionary (I served in the U.S. in the Bible belt) where I had debated the principle of grace with a non-member and I realized now that I had taught false doctrine at the time. Once my eyes were opened to having misunderstood this doctrine, it was as if the scales of darkness just started falling and I began to be flooded with more and more light from the Spirit. It was wonderful.

Jumping ahead just a bit, eventually I became more familiar with the concept of making one's calling and election sure and eventually receiving the Second Comforter. These were things I had heard about at one point but always viewed them as unattainable, or only for prophets in the scriptures for some reason, until I read the words of Joseph Smith encouraging members to diligently strive for these blessings for themselves - and so I began to take this idea more seriously that I myself may be able to one day come to have a sure knowledge of the Savior. I began to ponder on these things quite a bit. I had some work to do, and I knew it wasn't going to be easy, but I felt supported by the Lord in seeking after Him in this way.

It was around this time that I once again received the opportunity to hear from another apostle in a smaller setting. At one point in the meeting, he tactfully shared some things of a sacred nature that further solidified these concepts I had been learning about and pondering. With the guidance of the Spirit, I carefully shared with my elders quorum part of what this apostle said in that meeting. One brother in particular, who had just moved to the ward under somewhat miraculous circumstances, seemed touched by what I said. In the next few days while we were serving together during a move in the ward, this brother struck up a conversation with me about gospel topics that he had tried sharing with members in his last ward (in Utah) but had always been met with resistance. Over the next several weeks I had occasion to serve with this brother repeatedly and each time our conversations about the gospel developed more and more. We developed a wonderful friendship, and it was a very spiritual period for me where I was learning so much each day.

Eventually this brother gave me a book that talked about Zion being a real place and the need for members of the church to diligently live the principles of the gospel in order for enough of us to become worthy for the Lord to establish it among us. It blew my mind. I had never heard that, but the truth of it burned in my soul. I devoured that book, and committed to put in a more serious effort to do whatever I could to help establish Zion. After that it was as if a fire had been lit inside of me. I felt the Spirit with me almost constantly. The scriptures were opened to my understanding and I was filled with an intense

desire to study the gospel as much as I possibly could. I began recognizing things in the scriptures I had never seen before and reading them was truly a joy in a way it never had been before. I was directed by the Spirit to read Lectures on Faith, and as I did so I felt my mind expand and grow. I also began to notice things I had never seen before in my patriarchal blessing that pertained to Zion and the last days.

The Lord was changing me - making me a new man. I was more patient with others. I was kinder at home. I was better at work. I fasted more often. I had more opportunities to serve. I gave more blessings. My prayers to God were more personal and I began receiving line upon line from Him the things I needed to improve upon in my life. I quit swearing. I stopped several bad habits. One by one, He kept giving me directions on what I needed to do next to be closer to Him. I felt a great shift in my motivation to serve - now doing so because of my love for Jesus Christ and all He did for us - all He did for me personally, and I could feel a small part of the love that He had for those that I served. I one day realized (as it is described in Mosiah with the people of King Benjamin) that I had experienced a "mighty change in heart" and I had no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. I often felt, as Alma describes, "to sing the song of redeeming love." The gospel had finally become more of a blessing than a burden and it was AMAZING. I was awake to many things at this point, and began to recognize a great urgency that the time of the Lord's return was drawing very very near. I wish I could say this is where my story ends, but unfortunately I didn't maintain my focus as I should have.

I'm not entirely sure how it started to happen, but eventually my intense desire to study the gospel brought me out to the periphery of gospel topics. Besides the brother in my ward that helped wake me up, there were few to talk with about these things. I tried sharing what I had learned with my wife, my extended family, my quorum, and my ward. Everywhere I looked, people were just mostly asleep. I should have been more patient, but I'm a VERY impatient person. Without realizing it at the time, I began to get further and further away from the doctrine by going online and reading the opinions of others. I stumbled across several different blogs, and began corresponding with some of these people online (even some apostates).

Looking back I now realize that in my intense desire to meet the Lord, I started looking for shortcuts to Him and I allowed myself to be deceived by those who claimed to have seen Him for themselves. Brothers and Sisters, I can testify that there is no shortcut to the Lord. Just like Micah has said, you can't quit your band, put on a toga, pray super hard, and have Christ appear in your living room. It will take significant time, effort, and repeated trials for the Lord to prove you and test you that you will serve Him at all hazards - it isn't a process one can enter into lightly. ANY claim to the contrary is Satan, the great counterfeiters "get rich quick" scheme and it is false doctrine.

Continuing on, as I kept corresponding with certain bloggers (mostly apostates), without realizing it at the time I began to let go of the rod and started to get lost in strange paths. I know it sounds almost insane and incredibly unwise that I would have been corresponding with apostates, but most of these guys seemed so sincere and seemed to share my love of the Savior and of Joseph Smith and the restoration. It was in the waters of church history where things got muddy for most of them, and eventually me, as I started to believe some of the things they had to say.

Eventually, the brother that helped me wake up moved away, and I now understand that just like some new converts who latch on to the missionaries who taught them, that's what I had done with this brother to a certain extent. It was a gut punch when he left, and without noticing it, I continued to spiral. I stated earlier that I didn't maintain my focus as I should have. In looking back on this time, I realized that I was reading the standard works less and less, and instead of allowing the Lord to direct

my paths, I was the one directing my paths. I mistakenly thought that because I was on the quest for truth, that I was still on the path to God.

Brothers and Sisters, again, I want to testify and add a word of caution. Satan has been at this for a long time. He knows perfectly well how to use our strengths as our weaknesses, and how to tie things up in nice little packages that look wonderful. He is willing to give you A LOT of truth if he can just slide in one critical lie, and that's part of what happened to me. Looking back at my journal entries and email correspondence from that time, I now see that I didn't heed the early warnings from the Spirit, and in my pride, without recognizing it I went on thinking I was on the right path.

Eventually, as I went deeper down the rabbit hole, I started to believe the church was in apostasy. News flash - IT ISN'T! However, as we have likely all experienced at one point or another, the members of this church (including leadership at all levels) are not perfect, and once you take the stance that I did and you go looking for negativity and evidence that "things don't seem right", it's almost as if you can find it everywhere. I often found myself on a particular online forum where all types of evil and slanderous subtleties were thrown about and the flaxen cords began to grow thicker and thicker. The deeper you get entrenched in these pernicious ideas, the more convincing the lies become until like Korihor, you begin to believe they are true and this causes you to withstand the truth. If anyone listening to this is even flirting with these ideas, I implore you to stop. Please! I promise you, there is nothing there but death, hell, and destruction. What I didn't notice until later, was that the so-called "evidence" I thought I had been seeing was actually just garbage doubt feeding into my confirmation bias - which is a VERY strong tool of the adversary.

In fact, President Nelson just very wisely counseled about this at the last general conference in his talk about increasing our faith, stating "Take your questions to the Lord and to other faithful sources. Study with the desire to *believe* rather than with the hope that you can find a flaw in the fabric of a prophet's life or discrepancy in the scriptures. Stop increasing your doubts by rehearsing them with other doubters. Allow the Lord to lead you on your journey of spiritual discovery."

I had neglected to do all of these things, and searching these strange paths had become lost in the mists of darkness. It was an odd place to be, feeling awake, yet feeling lost. It should be no surprise at this point that I began to feel distanced from the Lord. During this time period, when I had brought things to the Lord, the last things I had remembered Him saying were to "stay in the church" and to "ignore" the doubts people were hurling about the brethren. However, like a dog returning to its vomit I just couldn't leave it alone. I became confused. I became depressed. I became angry. Fortunately, I still continued to have occasional moments of clarity and light, but it wasn't like before. Even though it may seem obvious from an outsider's perspective or in hindsight, at the time I didn't know how badly I was off the rails and I just couldn't see where I had gone wrong. I thought the Lord was testing me, and in a way He was, but I had brought on my own difficulties - not Him.

I felt like I had been spiritually poisoned. I read parts of books written by various apostates, and scoured through blog post after blog post searching for that feeling I once had. I was looking in all the wrong places. My study of the Book of Mormon was probably one of the few things that kept me afloat during that period. Eventually, by the April 2020 general conference, my faith in the Lord's chosen servants was hanging by a thread. But even though my faith had been shaken, I still tried to prepare as President Nelson had suggested and had been studying about Joseph Smith leading up to the conference (although admittedly not as diligently as I could have). It was a memorable conference for me alright - probably even unforgettable, but not for the reasons that it could have been. During almost the entire

conference I just felt dead inside. I felt disappointed. When they did the Hosannah Shout, I felt nothing but fear. I was afraid the church, from the top down, had fallen into apostasy, and I couldn't shake it.

Influenced by a blog post from one of these apostate members, I had even stopped paying my tithing that year (which "felt" right at the time). I didn't use it on other things. I just retained it for several months - waiting for further direction from the Lord, and eventually that direction came, but not in the way I was expecting at the time. Eventually I came across videos from Brother Guerrero on YouTube. He seemed like a humble follower of Christ. I was intrigued by what I heard and eventually came across a video of his that included a presentation given by Jodi Stoddard. I listened to the whole thing and was filled with questions. I even contacted Jodi Stoddard via Facebook to discuss an error I found in her presentation - which she had already noted and said she was planning to fix, by the way, but that's probably besides the point.

Anyhow, I shared her video with some friends and family members and went on naively thinking, as a "lax and lazy learner", that the seventh seal had been opened and that the tribulation had started. Fast forward a few months - I believe I was on the Facebook group "Worldwide United" that, if I remember right, formed sometime after President Nelson's worldwide call to fast in relation to the Coronavirus. Somewhere on some random post about the seventh seal, someone had posted a link to Micah's first video "The Seventh Seal 2000; To Be or Not To Be."

When I started listening to the video, I wasn't in the right frame of mind to hear it. Micah sounded argumentative to me, and reminded me of an annoying "know-it-all" elder from my mission who loved to Bible bash with people (who by the way, is actually, to this day, a really solid guy and a stalwart member of the church). Regardless, I kept listening to the video. Micah brought up solid points that I couldn't refute. He relied on the scriptures, and he knew the doctrine. Good, solid, logical doctrine based on the scriptures should win against opinion any day of the week - but you've got to be willing to listen. Having some difficulty with Micah's tone (which I have actually come to love, but I was kind of a snowflake at the time), I went to his family website and started reading more of his papers. I'm more of a visual learner anyway, so I found this approach more helpful for multiple reasons. After reading the seventh seal paper, I started at his first one and gradually read through everything he had posted. Fortunately, I recognized truth as it was being taught in plainness, and my false conceptions of last days events started melting away.

The most influential papers of his that I read were, besides the seventh seal paper, were his paper on the parable of the ten virgins, Joseph Smith to return, and the keys of the kingdom. Finally, it started to feel as if my spiritual poisoning was being remedied. As I read through all the material, I was originally compiling a list of questions for him, but as I continued to read pure doctrine and to feel more of the light and love of the Savior, my questions were answered and my list grew smaller. I corresponded with him a few times and his papers, and answers to the questions I did ask, helped me see the error of my ways. Leading into the October 2020 general conference, although my spiritual health was on the mend, I was still troubled to an extent about the state of the church and about tithing. My wife encouraged me to fast and pray about my questions, leading into the conference, which I did.

At the October conference it was nearly a 180 degree difference from my experiences of the April conference earlier that year. God answered my prayers, and I knew that the church was not in apostasy, I needed to repent and pay my tithing (which I then did - fortunately I had been setting it aside), and that I needed to follow the keys. For the largest part, I also quit reading most of the blogs, books, and forums that I had been involved with. The wonderful thing about the material that Micah and others put

out there is that it relies so heavily on the standard works and the words of prophets and apostles, that it is almost impossible to go through it and not get deeper into the word of God, which is where I should have stayed to begin with - holding to the iron rod. I now feel like the poison is gone, that the Lord has healed me, and that His light and love have been restored in my life. I am feeling closer to Him every day, and now know that I am once again awake and firmly on the right path.

Now, I know that it is not Micah or Blake or any other person specifically, other than the Lord Jesus Christ and a loving Heavenly Father that has brought this light back into my life, but I am grateful for the faithful brothers and sisters that have responded to the call to fight for the cause of Zion - and to testify boldly of the doctrine of Jesus Christ in plainness. I love the Lord Jesus Christ, and I eagerly await the day that Zion is established and He comes to dwell among His people, where all the humble followers of Christ will live together according to the laws of the Celestial Kingdom - working toward that great Millennial day of peace and rest. It is my hope and prayer that I, and all of us, may be found worthy to do so as the time grows nearer.

Of these things I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Name Withheld