

Resolutions and Conversion

By Trace Rogers

Full length talk too long to give in church

January 1, 2017

"You must choose your own path through life." Dauntless Motto in book Divergent

"It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities." from Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

"But until a person can say deeply and honestly, "I am what I am today because of the choices I made yesterday," that person cannot say, "I choose otherwise." Stephen R Covey 7 habits of highly effective people

"We all make choices, but in the end our choices make us." Ken Levine

"Desires dictate our priorities, priorities shape our choices, and choices determine our actions." Dallin H Oaks

In the Doctrine and Covenants, we read "Let every man choose for himself"

In Moses, "Thou Mayest choose for thyself".

Our lives upon this earth are full of choices. From the mundane: What will I eat for breakfast? Will I work out today? To the very important: What career am I planning to follow? What will I do with my life? To the eternal: Who shall I marry? What is truth? Are there eternal impacts to the decisions I am making today?

Throughout our lives, decisions and thoughts of truth can change as we mature, age, and go through life experiences. Today's truth may be tomorrow fallacy, and today's theory may be tomorrow's truth. The blessing of those who believe in ongoing revelation is that new or expounding truth can, should, and will be revealed in the time of the Lord. Some things, those in the past believed as truth, through further light and knowledge become understood differently. We have come to better understand that we need to be malleable in our understanding of truth.

Conversion is a lifelong process. The choices we make along with our desire to improve, sometimes on our own, and other times with the help of others, is how we accomplish our goals. We get closer to the person we want to be and hopefully who our Father in Heaven would want us to be.

Before I continue, I want to be clear that I have many sins, weaknesses, false understandings, and many other things I must improve. I would expect most of us do. I want and need to be a better home teacher, a better friend, a better saint, a much better father, a significantly better husband, and better to my fellow man. This will be a lifelong and even eternal process for me but to reach my goals, I must have more than a desire. I need to take action to make improvements.

Today, as we begin the new year, I would like to relate to you a story I wrote over the past 2 weeks. I would anticipate that various aspects of this story may relate to you, your loved ones, ward or family friends, or others in your acquaintances.

One year not long ago, there lived a fine man. Someone you might easily recognize as the person around the corner. He tried to do what was right. He attended church each week, attended to his callings. He tried to have daily scripture study with his family with varying amounts of success and family home evenings generally occurred.

You see, George Hardy was like many of you. He had a family, went to work each day, was striving to do everything asked of him. He was the every man's latter day saint. While he knew he had many faults, he was trying to work on them and seemed to always have the correct answer that aligned to what he heard at church over the pulpit. Even though he didn't necessarily always follow that counsel, he knew within himself what he ought to do.

This brings us to two weeks before the end of the year. Before heading off to bed, George was overwhelmed looking at his schedule that would continue through the end of the following year. There was just too much on his schedule to be accomplished with the time he had. In looking at the list, the first thing he saw that could come off his plate was home teaching.

Just to be clear, George had 5 families to home teach:

The Williamsons had been in the ward a long time. They had 6 young children and John had a very busy work schedule. Samantha was an amazing mother. Their house was always immaculate. The kids, while young and sometimes noisy in sacrament meetings, were pretty well behaved. They seemed to have things together.

The Francums were a happy family of Heather, Sam, and their two children Eve and Derek. They had been in the ward about 6 months. George saw them every week at church and it seemed to him that things were going well for them.

The Lindens had a single teenage son named William. George saw him every week preparing the sacrament. Brother and sister Linden both served in the primary. That family seemed to be coasting along the iron rod.

Bill Bohn was a single adult with whom George would sometimes accompany to the temple. Bill was in his mid 30s, he was always willing to help anyone in the ward when there was a need. To George, Bill always seemed to be the one around him who most exemplified the love of Christ to all in whom he crossed paths.

Finally, there was the Granger family. The family that always had everything together. All the boys were eagle scouts and all the girls earned their young women's medallions. All the boys and most the girls served missions. They seemed to go to every activity and made time to go to the temple each month. They did more than their fair share of cannery and building cleaning assignments. Josh, the father, had previously served as the Elder's Quorum President and a counselor in the bishopric. He was, at that moment, serving as a teacher's quorum advisor. The Grangers seemed to always have a positive attitude. They were the quintessential LDS family,

Up to this point, as a home teacher, George believed he was on par with the rest of the quorum. He saw his families almost monthly and would always ask if there was anything they needed from him. Each time they said no. These families were well balanced in the Gospel and didn't need him taking away their precious family time.

Because of this, George decided beginning this month he would no longer visit in the homes of each family. Instead, he would simply chat with them in the hall at church and see how things were going. He was almost certain they would say things were fine and everything was going well. He would then continue doing this each month of the new year.

As George said his prayers that night, he added some comments about his home teaching families to protect them through the holidays. He then said something that would change him and the direction of his life. George prayed, "please help me understand what I can do to help me come closer to thee and better understand those around me. Help me become a tool for thee to better help the lives of those within my influence."

So, even though George was busy, even though George had many things on his mind, he was still willing to, at least, vocalize his desire to help his Heavenly Father help those around him. What he didn't realize was how deeply his prayer was about to effect him.

As with life, most tales have activities going on outside of the purview of the main character. What George didn't know was this same evening, Sister Williamson, Brother and Sister Francum, Bill Bohn, William Linden, and Josh Granger all prayed for help and prayed for thanks for their home teacher Brother Hardy. They thanked their Father in Heaven for the blessings he had been in their lives and asked that he would be protected. What George didn't realize was his prayer along with these other prayers were heard and their effect was about to impact George's life.

For that night, several years ago, George had what for all he could determine was a vision. Later in life he came to say it was a beautiful blessing. George became a new man that night ...

... but before I get too far ahead of myself, we should continue.

George lay in bed stressing about all the things he had to get done and the busy year ahead. Eventually he fell asleep and midway through the night he suddenly felt a presence. He didn't know whether he was awake or dreaming, but he looked across the room and saw a person standing there. He was shocked and somewhat scared not knowing what to expect from this stranger. The man looked calm and appeared very kind.

Eventually the visitor spoke with a soft voice and said, "George, my name is Jeremiah and I am here in answer to your prayers."

That did not calm George's nerves as now he was wondering if this individual was a person of flesh and bones or spirit. Also, George did not understand what prayers Jeremiah was answering.

It seemed that Jeremiah could read George's mind because he answered saying, "I am a spirit and I am here to answer the request you made tonight to '... understand those around you and become a tool to better help the lives of those within your influence.'"

Jeremiah asked George who he already knew he could help. After listing several people, Jeremiah asked George why he had not mentioned his home teaching families. George stated that of all his acquaintances his home teaching families were already closest to God and there were many others who could benefit more from his help.

Jeremiah calmly asked, "Are you sure about this?" George told him he spent time seeing them each month and they never seemed to need anything. They all seemed to have everything together when it came to their faith and priorities. They didn't seem to need any help from him.

Jeremiah then asked, "Would it surprise you to know this very evening at least one person in each of your home teaching families prayed specifically for help from their Heavenly Father for difficulties they were each going through? Furthermore, they each prayed for you and voiced thanks for you and your service to their families."

George was surprised. He had no clue as to why they might be praying for help and was surprised each of them prayed for him. He didn't feel he was doing anything spectacular as a home teacher.

Jeremiah then continued, "George, if you agree, tonight you will be given an amazing gift. You will have the opportunity to see a future in which you visit each of your families this week. This is not necessarily what will happen, but one of many possible futures that could happen. The one true fact from this experience is you would understand the reason why each of your home teaching families prayed for help this very night. My question to you is whether you are willing so see this potential future and be willing to live with the consequences of knowing the struggles of your families?"

George contemplated whether he truly was willing to take upon himself this information. Once he learned their struggles, his relationships with them would be forever altered. The burden of this information would put a level of responsibility on him to be there to support them. In the end he answered in the affirmative and said he would be willing to see this potential future.

George and Jeremiah were suddenly in the Williamsons' family room. It seemed to George he had just finished giving the message for the month. He knew the next question was the one he always asked, so he did, "Is there anything I can do for your family?"

Sister Williamson then became a bit more solemn and said, "Brother Hardy, last Sunday, I was extended a calling and asked to consider it through the week. It is a challenging calling that will require much of my time if I fulfill it to the level that would be expected. I have been praying nonstop trying to understand what I should do. I am already almost overwhelmed with my life before this potential additional burden. I feel the role of mother and wife are the most important responsibilities I have at this point of my life and these two responsibilities only take all my time. I strongly believe that if I accept this calling I will need to forego some of my current responsibilities. Up to this point I have never said no to a calling and I really don't want to start now. I understand the bishopric most likely prayed and considered for some time before extending this calling to me. I don't want to lessen that process. I just don't know what to do Brother Hardy."

There was a silence in the room and then Jeremiah spoke and it seemed only George could hear what was said. "What are you asked to do in your role as home teacher? How can you be a tool to better help those around you? How can you be the answer to someone else's prayer?"

The recent words of President Uchtdorf then came to George's mind and he shared them, "...no matter our circumstances, no matter our challenges or trials, there is something in each day to embrace and cherish. There is something in each day that can bring gratitude and joy if only we will see and appreciate it."

George then said, "I can see the joy in your life Sister Williamson, your children, your husband, your attitude, your service. I can see that you are heavily weighing your options. I think I can understand how difficult this is for you. The decision is yours to make and I believe that our Father in Heaven will love you independent of the decision you make and the bishopric will understand either way. When you make your decision, please let the bishopric know of your struggles, so if you decide to accept the calling, they will understand your sacrifice and may be able to find other ways to lighten your burdens. If you decide not to accept, they will better understand why and will most likely work to find something that will work within your abilities as a wife and mother right now."

Another quote came to George's mind, he said, "Sister Williamson, President Uchtdorf recently said, 'Our Heavenly Father sees our real potential. He knows things about us that we do not know ourselves. He prompts us during our lifetime to fulfill the measure of our creation, to live a good life, and to return to His presence.' Sister Williamson, I have faith that our Father in Heaven sees you and understands you and will help you make the right decision for you and for your family."

Sister Williamson said thank you as tears were coming down her cheeks.

Jeremiah and George then reappeared in George's bedroom. George then spoke. "Sister Williamson is such a loving person. She seems to always have things together. I am completely surprised she was struggling as much as she was. Did I do okay Jeremiah?"

Jeremiah then spoke and said, "You did well. It is important to understand we really never know what is happening in the lives of those around us. Their outward appearances and projections may differ slightly or significantly from the lives they live in their homes and in their heads. Our role during our lives on earth is to be there to support each other. To help each other progress through this life despite the challenges."

Jeremiah then said, "George, are you still willing to go down this road of enlightenment in better understanding your home teaching families?"

George considered only a short time before answering, "Yes."

In a moment George and Jeremiah appeared at the front door of the Francums. After ringing the bell, the door opened to a tearful sister Francum. Upon seeing George, she started crying even more, but invited him into the house. Even though Jeremiah stood next to George, he didn't appear to be noticed.

Almost as soon as George sat down with the Francum family, Heather spoke and said how happy they were to see him and how they had just prayed the previous night hoping he would stop by. George just sat in awe. Eventually he spoke up and asked what he could do to help.

Brother Francum spoke in a broken voice and said they had been grateful that almost as soon as they moved into the ward Brother Hardy had shown up to welcome them and let them know he was their home teacher. He seemed to always show sincere interest in their family and he was the first person they thought of when they heard the news. At that moment brother Francum broke down and began to cry in earnest.

George didn't know what to do now but somehow felt, and followed his conscience, to reach across and place his hand on Sam's shoulder and ask, "Of what news were you made aware?"

Sister Francum spoke up stating the day before their 6 year old daughter Eve was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer that was terminal in all previously known cases. George suddenly felt the weight of this knowledge. He felt sincere pain and grief for what this family must be going through.

Brother Francum then said, "How could a loving Father in Heaven allow this to happen? How can I pray to Him now? How can anything good come of this? I keep wishing if this cancer had to impact our family, why couldn't it have fallen on me? That would at least allow Eve to have a full and happy life?"

As Sam continued crying he said, "George, we strive to do everything we are asked. We think we are following the commandments and serving in our callings. But still we are given this curse. Our daughter will suffer a painful end of her life. We will not see and she will not experience all the milestones in her life. Where is the joy in this? Why George, why?"

There was a silence in the room and then Jeremiah spoke and only George could hear it. "What are you asked to do in your role as home teacher? How can you be a tool to better help those around you? How can you be the answer to someone else's prayer?"

As George sat trying to think of what he could say, he suddenly remembered a book he had recently finished. He had found the book *Planted* while wandering through *Deseret Book*. It caught his eye so he purchased it. He thoroughly enjoyed reading it and loved the insights the author Patrick Mason brought to help him better understand discipleship.

A quote came to his mind, "Family, friends, home and visiting teachers, Relief Society and quorum presidencies, bishoprics, and stake leaders can't cure cancer, but they can provide support, relief, comfort, strength, a listening ear, and love." George's love for this family continued to grow.

What George said was in no way enough to solve the families immediate, life altering struggle, "Sam and Heather, I do not understand why something like this is allowed to happen and don't expect to understand any better tomorrow than I do today. But, what I do know is I am here for you." George began crying himself. "I am here to mourn with you, I am here to sit with you. I will pray with you, I will pray for you. I will suffer with you."

Just after that Jeremiah and George reappeared in his bedroom. George's tears continued flowing. Jeremiah was the first to speak, "You see George, your families do have true needs and struggles. I realize if you don't go see your families, others may fill their needs, but you have a great opportunity. You know them. You already have a relationship with them. They already trust you in their homes. Do you see now what benefit you might have in visiting them in their homes?"

George agreed and then said, "I don't know what I would do if I were them. Such a traumatic thing to happen. Possibly something too hard to bare. I only hope that I might be able to be someone that could help lighten their burden through this terrible time in their lives."

George sat in contemplation for a short time while the tears eventually stopped flowing and then said, "I am still willing to continue in this evening's discovery."

"Let's continue then," Jeremiah said

George and Jeremiah then appeared in the home of Brother and Sister Linden. There ensued a great gospel discussion until their teenage son William spoke up saying, "Brother Hardy, everything you are saying is fine for some people but I don't think any of it applies to me anymore. I've come to realize through study and discussion with others that there is no God. I just don't see anything that proves it to me. Science continues to prove out theorems through physical evidence and there just isn't any physical evidence of God. Science can explain why things have happened much better than the existence of God can. Because of all I have found, I just don't know why I need any of this church stuff anymore. I can be a good person without needing a church. And since I now think this life is all we have there is nothing that I need to prepare for for any eternal life. So, Brother Hardy, why would I need to keep going to church if I'm an atheist?"

While George was trying to think of an answer to Williams' questions, he again heard the words of Jeremiah, "What are you asked to do in your role as home teacher? How can you be a tool to better help those around you? How can you be the answer to someone else's prayer?"

George did not have an easy answer to William's question. Tonight he realized there are not always easy answers. Life was not a true and false test of easy questions before we die; it was more than that. He thought back again to the book *Planted* by Patrick Mason and remembered something and quoted it to William,

"Sometimes we tend to think we are either in or out, that we either believe or don't believe. But humans are more complicated than that. We have believing and unbelieving parts in us. We might think we disbelieve, but with some other part of ourselves we believe. It works the other way as well—even devoted believers have questions and problems. The human psyche, including our spiritual life, can rarely be reduced to mere binaries. We experience and live in paradox all the time.... such creative tensions are not necessarily a marker of mortality's flaws but rather the very definition of living on this side of the veil."

George then said, "William, I must be honest with you, I've never seen God. I truly don't know whether he exists. I strive to have faith that He does. I have seen things in my life that help increase my faith that God exists, but that doesn't prove it. You might be right that God is just a figment of our imaginations invented to help us get through the hard times and have someone to

thank during the good times. But, something in me hopes that He is there. I made a choice earlier in my life to try to follow a path where I choose to believe in a Heavenly Father. Along that path, I am trying to do what I can to help others. As I would hope a God, if he exists, would want me to. I find in church I have many opportunities to do that."

"William, I know many great citizens of our community who are atheists. I also know many who believe in God. Interestingly enough, I also know some who have moved from one camp of belief to another and vice versa. But, you know what I have consistently found in both?"

William answered, "What?"

"I've found people searching for truth. Truth can be found in Science and I believe and hope truth can also be found in God. I think it is wonderful that you are searching for truth where you can find it. I hope you continue searching. I hope you would allow me to be a part of your journey of searching. I am also continually searching and I would love to hear what you find along the way. Would you let me continue to be a part of your journey?"

"I guess," William said.

With that Jeremiah and George were suddenly in the home of Bill Bohn and George was letting Bill know how much he appreciated all the work he was doing in the ward. He let Bill know he had heard from another sister how much help Bill had been at the service project the previous week. George then told Bill how much he enjoyed their trips to the temple.

George then noticed that Bill seemed to be contemplating whether he wanted to share something with George. After a moment, Bill spoke up and said, "I need to tell you something George, I think I've fallen in love."

George was filled with joy for his friend. "I'm so excited for you Bill. When did this happen? When can I meet her? This is so awesome."

George then waited for a response from Bill. It didn't seem to come. Bill sat there a little more distraught now. He finally spoke up, "George you don't understand. It can never work out. You can not meet her because it's a man. I didn't want this to happen. I want you to know that I am still worthy to attend the temple. I am keeping the covenants I've made there. I don't know what to do but I know what I should do. I know I am at a crossroads in my life. The decisions I make now might greatly impact my standing in the church. I have been suffering alone and have been continually fasting and praying for help to know what to do. I love the church. I love everything about it. Throughout my life as I have continued to struggle with my feelings, the one thing I knew was I wanted to always remain temple worthy. What should I do George?"

George just sat there not understanding what he just heard. George cared a lot for Bill. He was a good friend. George had no idea Bill was gay. He didn't know what to say. This is when he heard Jeremiah's voice again, "What are you asked to do in your role as home teacher? How can you be a tool to better help those around you? How can you be the answer to someone else's prayer?"

Two things then came to George's mind. The first was something he had recently heard from Elder Christofferson, "We live in an imperfect world. Not all the pieces of the puzzle seem to fit.

But having an eternal perspective and believing in a just and merciful God gives us hope that all will work out in the end." The second was a quote from Elder Cook, "As a Church nobody should be more loving and compassionate. ... Let us be at the forefront in terms of expressing love, compassion, and outreach. Let's not have families exclude or be disrespectful of those who choose a different lifestyle as a result of their feelings about their own gender." George also thought about the scripture in Matthew, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

After some thought George finally spoke, "Bill, I hope you know you are a great friend. I'm sorry if I've ever given you the impression you could not share this part of your life with me. I want you to know that I am here for you. This is not a decision to be taken lightly and I can tell you are suffering as you go through this. I can see you understand what a decision like this could mean to you and your interaction with the church. I can feel your determination to stay worthy to enter the temple, but also understand the feelings that accompany love."

George then said, "Bill, I cannot tell you what you should do. What I can tell you is that our friendship is secure. I hope you know that I will be there for you either way. I hope you understand that. It can't be easy for you but I hope I can be someone you can lean against as you go through this, weighing your options and finding peace through your decision however difficult it may be."

After some silence, Bill said tearfully, "Thank you George. I have struggled to understand who I could confide in. I appreciate your kindness."

George and Jeremiah were again in George's bedroom. George's heart was full. His love for his families continued to grow. He had a sincere desire to be someone in whom they could trust and someone with whom they could confide. Someone they could rely on to be there for support during all their difficulties.

Jeremiah spoke, "The Grangers are the last family to see. George, are you sure you still want to continue this journey?"

After George agreed, they both appeared in the Granger's living room. This time only brother and sister Granger sat before him.

Brother Granger began, "Brother Hardy, these past few days have been some of the most difficult in my adult life, I feel like my gospel foundation has been ripped from me. Earlier this week while preparing for my next teacher's quorum lesson, I was studying several topics on lds.org. I came across some information that didn't make sense to me. This information didn't align with what I had been taught growing up and didn't align with my current understanding of the church or the Gospel."

Brother Granger continued, "It spun me down several long nights of reading from various official church websites. I won't share with you what caused this, but it has shaken my testimony and brings so much doubt in my mind that I wonder if I can even continue in the church. I have served my whole life in this church and am wondering if any of it was worth it. I have prayed all week for help in this. I have hoped that an answer to my prayers would easily explain away my

concerns. My paradigm has shifted and I don't know if I can ever go back to where I was before this week began. Is there anything I can do Brother Hardy? Please help me."

George sat again amazed. Before him sat his example. Josh was the person he thought had everything under control. The person he thought was the strongest of his acquaintances in the church. George continued to sit somewhat dumbfounded... Finally, Jeremiah's words came to him again, "What are you asked to do in your role as home teacher? How can you be a tool to better help those around you? How can you be the answer to someone else's prayer?"

A portion of the story of Job from Job Chapter 2 came to George's mind, "Now when Job's three friends heard of all ... that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place...to mourn with him and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off ... they ... wept; ... they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." George wanted to be as sincere as Job's friends.

George thought a little more and then said, "Brother Granger, I can not begin to understand what you are going through right now. In my own life, I have not yet experienced this level of struggle as it relates to the church and the gospel. What I do want you to know is I am willing to stay with you in the wrestle you are going through. I want to be there to support you. To see what direction your path takes and to be someone you could rely on to listen and not judge. To be a sounding board."

George continued, "Brother Granger, I just had a couple thoughts come to mind from a book I recently finished. I think this book might help you in the internal turmoil you are going through."

"It is possible to live within the church even while racked with doubts, questions, and feelings of alienation. When you run into trouble, exiting the church is not the only option. There are many benefits of staying within the community even if you are distressed by one or more of its aspects, and even if you have to renegotiate some terms. In most cases, issues can be best worked through in the company of other Saints rather than by leaving them and the church behind."

The second quote was:

"People make choices, sometimes impulsively and sometimes after great deliberation and an agonizing wrestle within their souls. Some choose to minimize their involvement as they work through their issues, without cutting the cord completely. Some of those who leave for a time return. In short, there are models all around us of people who endure and even thrive in the face of paradox, not in spite of it. Disaffection and disaffiliation are not the inevitable routes for those who doubt and struggle."

George then said, "Brother Granger, while I can't understand everything you are going through, would you consider what I've just shared. Also, if I were to loan you the book which these quotes are from, would you consider reading it as you continue your wrestle?"

With some hesitation Brother Granger agreed.

With that, Jeremiah and George were back in his bedroom. Jeremiah spoke, "George, you had the amazing opportunity to see a potential future in your life. You learned some very personal struggles of your families and you now have the chance to determine what you will do with this information."

With tears continuing to flow, George graciously thanked Jeremiah for this overwhelming experience. He then expressed to Jeremiah that he hoped he could live up to the blessing that had been shared with him that night.

At that moment George's alarm clock went off.

The story never explained what happened in the lives of George's families. We don't even know what actually transpired when George visited each of his families before the end of the year, all we know is he did. George was there for them.

That evening several years ago, It seemed like George's heart grew three sizes. His ability to love and his desire to understand those around him. He resolved to strive to always make time for the sacred opportunity to be a part of his home teaching families' lives.

He remembered the story told in the Book of Mormon when the patriarch of the initial family, Lehi, related a dream. George now interpreted it slightly differently due to the experience he just completed.

"And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy. And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. ...And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my (home teaching) famil(ies) should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit."

George wanted to share this joy. The joy of being a support and help to those in whom he could. For many years that followed, George was lifted up by this experience. It helped direct many of George's life decisions. It focused his efforts outwardly to his wife, his family, and those around him. George became a tool to better help those around him and in so doing became the answer to many people's prayers.

This story ends with Jeremiah asking EACH OF US, "What are we asked to do in our roles as a home and visiting teachers? How can we be tools to better help those around us? How can we be the answer to someone else's prayer?"

Brothers and Sisters, as we begin the new year, my hope is that each of us, especially me, will continue to strive to follow the admonition of President Uchtdorf,

"To avoid some of the deepest regrets of life, it would be wise to make some resolutions today. Therefore, let us:

Resolve to spend more time with those we love.

Resolve to strive more earnestly to become the person God wants us to be.

Resolve to find happiness, regardless of our circumstances."

May we strive this year to be more cognizant of our own paths through this life, May we strive to have more resolve towards conversion. May we lighten the loads of those around us. Even if this means we become more involved in others lives to better understand the burdens they may be traversing.

Remember the words of Christ in Luke 22, "... I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Whether you relate personally to one of the home teaching families in this story or not, might I close this talk by sharing with you something that touched me greatly within the book I have previously quoted,

"My plea to those who are struggling in the church and feel adrift is simple: Find some kind of tether that works for you. Find something or someone in the church to connect to, even while everything else seems tenuous. Find a way to stay in the orbit of the church as it orbits around the Son. For those who already feel their feet are planted on solid ground, my plea is also simple: Be the type of friend, family member, or fellow church member who provides the safe connection that we all so desperately need."

Brothers and Sisters, I hope to dedicate the rest of my life in the continuing search for truth. I love the Savior. While I haven't had significant manifestations of his existence, the ones I connect to Him are very cherished and strengthen my hope and faith and buoy me up during the hard times.

My prayer is that each of us can work towards being that someone who can be tethered to when someone close to us feels adrift. May we become the answer to someone else's prayer.

In the sacred name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.