Tender Mercies of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Newsletter for Latter-day Saint brothers and sisters in prison, and also those imprisoned who are not members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, yet seek spiritual enrichment and the Savior's peace.

"...the **tender mercies** of the Lord are over all those whom He hath chosen, because of their faith..." (1 Nephi 20)



From the Editor: Welcome my inmate brothers and sisters to the introductory issue of this Latter-day Saint newsletter. My name is D. Recently, I recognized your great need for mail in general, and more specifically, spiritually uplifting contact with the world outside the fences. I

have come to know many good men and women who happen to be inmates. Men and women the Savior loves. I agonize over you, my friends and brothers and sisters. Truly, you are still cherished sons and daughters of our Father in Heaven. I prayed to know what I could do for you sons and daughters of Heavenly Father who are sometimes forgotten. I began writing as many of you as I could. I fasted and prayed to reach more of you. That idea morphed into this newsletter. I believe the Lord has inspired me to reach out to as many

inmates as possible and share His love and "tender mercies" with you through this newsletter. I wish to express my love, and the Savior's love, to all of you. I pray for the Lord's guidance, help, and inspiration as I attempt to honor His will upon these humble pages. I love the Lord. I testify of His love for each of you. I testify that I personally know that He lives. In His Holy Name, Jesus Christ, amen.

--Brother D.



Each issue of this newsletter will feature a front page inspirational message by a stalwart Latter-day Saint. For our inaugural edition we are blessed with a testimony of the Atonement by Brother Dan Pope, Weatherman for ABC Channel 4 News, and faithful son of our Heavenly Father.

The Atonement Is Far Reaching, Personal and Eternal. By Dan Pope

It is my honor to write a few words to address you, my brothers and sisters here at the Utah State Prison. I hope my words will touch your hearts and allow the Comforter to help you understand my message in the Spirit it is presented.

I have gained insight into what the Atonement means to me as a person, through my own experiences, through prayer, through pondering and study. The



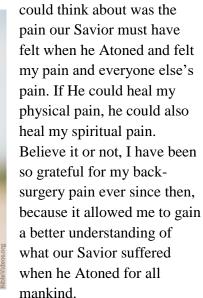
Atonement is far reaching and was the greatest thing to happen for all of us...up to this point...and for all eternity. The pain our Brother, our Savior, our Lord paid for us cannot be expressed in physical value. Our existence now, today, is wrought with difficulties, pain, misunderstandings and mistakes; making it very difficult to understand it in a spiritual and eternal perspective--while we exist, here, and now. I lost my 23-year-old son to suicide last October. His hope in life vanquished. He made several big mistakes and was in such pain he felt he could not go on. He suffered from Bi-Polar Disorder, Anxiety, Asperger's and a host of dependencies and addictions. I carefully share this personal thing with you because the Atonement has been able to help me get through one of the most painful and difficult things I have ever had to pass through in this mortal life. Most of us think of the Atonement as a way for us to be personally

forgiven of our sins, by accepting Jesus Christ and repenting of our mistakes. The Atonement allows us to be cleansed and purified because Christ paid for our sins when he suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane. He saw every sin, every evil act, and each mistake each one of us would make in our lives. It was in the Garden where he was able to get to know each of us

individually and he literally paid for our sins by asking us to simply accept him as our Savior. In the case of my son (who the Savior loved and Atoned for his sins as well), the Atonement allowed me to know he wasn't doomed to Purgatory. I knew through the Holy Ghost's testimony to me, that Jesus Christ had already paid for my son's misgivings; even his last act in this life. The power the Atonement was able to give to me personally in this moment, was a comfort I could never have been able to possess or develop on my own.

My recent past has been full of disappointments and personal challenges. There have been many successes as well. Six years ago, I had back surgery to repair

broken "Pars" that normally would have held my L5 vertebra in place. However, over the course of 30 years, it had swiveled back and forth, completely disintegrating my disc between the L5 and the S1 in my lower back. I suffered this lower back and sciatic pain for many, many years; until I could no longer put off surgery. In the days following my surgery, I felt pain like I had never felt it before. Previously, I was able to manipulate the pain, to temporarily alleviate spikes of sciatic and lower back distress. This time, however, the pain was intense and it would not go away. I felt as if I were going to pass out at any moment. I had no idea that there could be so much agony from surgery, however, they had pounded out bone spurs, jacked me up 9 millimeters and put in titanium plates and screws. It was bound to hurt a lot! Ultimately after about 7 or 8 days, the surgery pain subsided. In the several months that followed, all I



The Atonement is all encompassing and complete. It heals everything. It is eternal. It is the pure love of Christ. It is the only thing we really need in order to sustain us through personal sorrow, personal agony, personal mistakes and individual difficulties. It transcends this life and makes everything better, even when there is sickness, misery, discomfort, agony and anything else that makes us feel weak and insignificant. I have a testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I know he suffered for you, for me, and for every son and daughter of our Father in Heaven. I share these things with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.



From the Tabernacle

In the 1920s, radio was a fairly new technology that captivated the public. In 1922 KSL launched as a small station from the top of a building in downtown Salt Lake. Station manager Earl J. Glade had a shining idea: a national weekly broadcast of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The initial broadcast of what we now know as *Music and the Spoken Word* aired on July 15, 1929. KSL's only microphone was hung from the ceiling to capture the celebrated sound of the famous choir. Ted Kimball, a nineteen year old youth with little experience, ascended a ladder between choir numbers to declare the next song. Soon, commentary was added to these announcements. Many great spiritual thoughts were born of these messages. Principally, just three men have taken the reins as regular announcers for this beloved longest running program in broadcast history—Richard L. Evans, J. Spencer Kinard, and Lloyd D. Newell. Their messages are always inspirational and always non-denominational. In the feature "From the Tabernacle:" I will include one of these powerful, timely, and profound messages in some newsletters. Even the messages from many years past contain great wisdom that applies to the world we live in today. The first message from the Tabernacle I will include in this newsletter was given by Richard L. Evans on 19 May 1940. World War II had begun on 1 September 1939. The world was entering a frightening new chaos. The address was titled "Answer to Confusion".

Answer to Confusion

Given by Richard L. Evans on 19 May 1940

Upon the lips and in the hearts and minds of many there sometimes comes this question: Why would a wise and just God permit such violent and unjust events as we are all each day aware of? And, failing to find the answer, men frequently lose faith and become critical and sometimes cynical. But all of us should be reminded that one of the first principles of the plan of life is the free agency of man—the right of choice. It was so in the heavens before time began, and we are told that a challenge to the right of choice was once the cause of a war in heaven and has been one of the causes of all war since history has been kept and recorded. In other words, our Father in Heaven does not force men to be good. If He did, there would be no reward for being good, and none of the development that comes from deciding for ourselves.

Men are stunted and stifled when they are compelled to live according to someone else's pattern or forcibly made to fit into someone else's mold. That is why, in His wisdom, the Lord God does not regulate every detail of our lives, any more than our earthly parents dictate everything we do. They teach us what we ought to do, despite which, in the headstrong use of our own free will, we still manage to get ourselves into much trouble. The Father of us all gave us commandments, principles, rules of life, which, if observed, will lead us to our highest possibilities here and hereafter; and, so far as the Creator is concerned, it is given to each one to determine how far he will live by these rules and realize the results.

This God-given, inalienable right of choice is essential in the highest sense to the making of a man under divine plan and purpose—essential even though in misusing freedom some people impose injustice on others. But those who unjustly suffer at the hands of others will not be forgotten: the Lord God, in His own time and in His own way, will see that all of us receive what we should receive, according to the choices we have made with the freedom we have had. And there will be complete compensation for the seeming injustices we frequently see.

Favorie Scriptures:



Book of Mormon:

"The Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell: I have beheld His glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of His love." (2 Nephi 1:15)

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary: and they shall walk, and not Faint." (Isaiah 40:31)

Old Testament

Doctrine and Covenants:

"I the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise." (Doctrine and Covenants 82:10)

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort: Who comforteth us in all our tribulation." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

New Testament

Pearl of Great Price:

"For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39)

Points to Points:

- When the Father and the Son first appeared to Joseph Smith, They called him by his name, "Joseph."
- When the Savior addressed Joseph in the revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants, He referred to him as His brother, and when in a group of the collective Priesthood the Savior referred to him, and them, as "brethren."
- But, when Joseph was imprisoned and in distress, so agonizingly near the end of his rope, the Savior lovingly and compassionately called him "<u>My son</u>." What a testament to the Savior's understanding of our earthly agonies and trials. Also, what a marvelous testimony of the Savior's willingness to, and knowledge of how to, comfort us in our lowest and most painful moments of our earthly lives.
- "<u>My son</u>, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; And then, <u>if thou endure it well</u>, <u>God shall exalt thee on high</u>." (Doctrine and Covenants 121:7-8)

TEN FUN FACTS:

- Bees are born fully grown.
- The king of hearts is the only king without a mustache.
- Mangoes have noses and can smell. They also can get sunburned.
- > Peaches are members of the almond family.
- > The top of the Empire State Building was originally built as a place to anchor blimps.
- The blue whale produces the loudest sound of any animal. At 188 decibels, the noise can be detected <u>500</u> miles away.
- > NFL referees earn an average \$173,000.00 per year.
- Banging your head against the wall burns 150 calories per hour.
- ➤ In Japan Ronald McDonald is called Donald McDonald because the Japanese have no "R" sound.
- The Gospel of Jesus Christ is true.

BEHIND THE HYMNS:

"The Spirit of God"

Text: William W. Phelps (1792-1872; LDS)

Music: Anonymous (ca. 1844)

Tune name: ASSEMBLY

Because it is so closely tied with important events in Church history, and because it is part of such joyful occasions as temple dedications in our own day, "The Spirit of God" is one of the most significant and beloved hymns in Latter-day Saint hymn tradition. It truly affords an opportunity to sing and shout "with the armies of heaven."

For the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio, the year 1836 opened with hope and anticipation. Their-brethren in Missouri were at peace, at least temporarily, with their Clay County neighbors. Joseph Smith had purchased ancient Egyptian artifacts and was preparing to translate the book of Abraham. During the previous year, Emma Smith had published a hymnbook for use throughout the Church. "The Spirit of God," already published in that hymnbook, was printed again in January 1836 in the newspaper called *The Messenger and Advocate*.

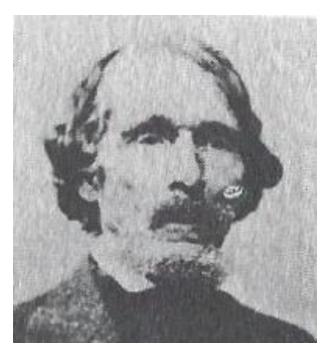
William W. Phelps's hymn text anticipated one of the most important milestones in Church history - the dedication of the Kirtland Temple on March 27, 1836. The minutes of that ceremony indicate that this hymn and "Now Let Us Rejoice" (no. 3) were sung to the same tune -HOSANNA - during that meeting. "The Spirit of God" was sung immediately following the dedicatory prayer, which is given in its entirety in section 109 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

The dedication of the Kirtland Temple was accompanied with remarkable manifestations of the Spirit. Joseph Smith reported: "A noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels.... The people of the neighborhood came running together (hearing an unusual sound within, and seeing a bright like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple), and were astonished at what was taking place." (History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts [Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1948], 2:428.)

This Pentecost-like spirit is reflected in "The Spirit of God." The words of the traditional Hosanna Shout, in which the entire congregation participates during temple dedications, are repeated in the chorus, "Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb!" The hymn is sung today at

every temple dedication and is also frequently used in conferences and on other occasions that call for a strong expression of rejoicing.

About the Author of this Hymn:



W. W. Phelps (William Wines Phelps) LDS. American, 1792-1872, born in Hanover, New Jersey.

The revelation instructing him to be baptized and to become involved in the publication work of the Church can be read in section 55 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Among his numerous activities important in early Church history, he served as a scribe to the Prophet Joseph Smith and was an editor of the first Latter-day Saint hymnal.

Though excommunicated for a two-year period, he was reinstated as a member and crossed the plains to Salt Lake City in 1848. He was one of the first regents of the University of Deseret and a member of the Utah legislature. He was known for his powerful spirit, powerful testimony, and his powerful hymns.

Crazy World Records

Crazy World Records

As verified by Guinness World Records

- ✓ The world's smallest man is just 21 1/2 inches tall.
- \checkmark The world's highest vertical standing jump onto a platform is 4 feet 10 inches.
- ✓ Longest fingernails: 10 feet 2 inches.
- ✓ Longest time spent naked buried in snow in full snow contact (except for head): 46 minutes 7 seconds.
- ✓ Largest onion: 17 pounds (bigger than a huge watermelon).
- ✓ Beekeeper She Ping in China covered his body with 331,000 bees (73 pounds of bees).
- ✓ Tallest natural Mohawk: 3 feet 8.6 inches.
- ✓ Largest Flag: Romania 1,146 feet long by 744 feet tall.

<u>Conference Talks – The Best of the Best...</u> The Tender Mercies of the Lord

<u>David A. Bednar</u> Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

I testify that the **tender mercies** of the Lord are available to all of us and that the Redeemer of Israel is eager to bestow such gifts upon us.

Six months ago, I stood at this pulpit for the first time as the newest member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Both then and even more so now, I have felt and feel the weight of the call to serve and of the responsibility to teach with clarity and to testify with authority. I pray for and invite the assistance of the Holy Ghost as I now speak with you. This afternoon I want to describe and discuss a spiritual impression I received a few moments before I stepped to this pulpit during the Sunday morning session of general conference last October. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf had just finished speaking and had declared his powerful witness of the Savior. Then we all stood together to sing the intermediate hymn

that previously had been Hinckley. The intermediate hymn Israel" (Hymns, no. 6). Now, the music for the various determined many weeks my new call to serve. If, suggest an intermediate hymn for conference—a hymn that would spiritually soothing for me and address in this Conference



announced by President Gordon B. that morning was "Redeemer of

conference sessions had been before—and obviously long before however, I had been invited to that particular session of the have been both edifying and for the congregation before my first Center—I would have selected my

favorite hymn, "Redeemer of Israel." Tears filled my eyes as I stood with you to sing that stirring hymn of the Restoration.

Near the conclusion of the singing, to my mind came this verse from the Book of Mormon: "But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the **tender mercies** of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance" (1 Ne. 1:20).

My mind was drawn immediately to Nephi's phrase "the **tender mercies** of the Lord," and I knew in that very moment I was experiencing just such a tender mercy. A loving Savior was sending me a most personal and timely message of comfort and reassurance through a hymn selected weeks previously. Some may count this experience as simply a nice coincidence, but I testify that the **tender mercies** of the Lord are real and that they do not occur randomly or merely by coincidence. Often, the Lord's timing of His **tender mercies** helps us to both discern and acknowledge them.

What Are the **Tender Mercies** of the Lord?

Since last October I have reflected repeatedly upon the phrase "the **tender mercies** of the Lord." Through personal study, observation, pondering, and prayer, I believe I have come to better understand that the Lord's **tender mercies** are the very personal and individualized blessings, strength, protection, assurances, guidance, loving-kindnesses, consolation, support, and spiritual gifts which we receive from and because of and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Truly, the Lord suits "his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men" (D&C 46:15).

Recall how the Savior instructed His Apostles that He would not leave them comfortless. Not only would He send "another Comforter" (John 14:16), even the Holy Ghost, but the Savior said that He would come to them (see John 14:18). Let me suggest that one of the ways whereby the Savior comes to each of us is through His abundant and **tender mercies**. For instance, as you and I face challenges and tests in our lives, the gift of faith and an appropriate sense of personal confidence that reaches beyond our own capacity are two examples of the **tender mercies** of the Lord. Repentance and forgiveness of sins and peace of conscience are examples of the **tender mercies** of the Lord. And the persistence and the fortitude that enable us to press forward with cheerfulness through physical limitations and spiritual difficulties are examples of the **tender mercies** of the Lord.

In a recent stake conference, the **tender mercies** of the Lord were evident in the touching testimony of a young wife and mother of four whose husband was slain in Iraq in December of 2003. This stalwart sister recounted how, after being notified of her husband's death, she received his Christmas card and message. In the midst of the abrupt reality of a dramatically altered life came to this good sister a timely and tender reminder that indeed families can be together forever. With permission I quote from that Christmas card:

"To the best family in the world! Have a great time together and remember the true meaning of Christmas! The Lord has made it possible for us to be together forever. So even when we are apart, we will still be together as a family.

"God bless and keep y'all safe and grant this Christmas to be our gift of love from us to Him above!!!

"All my love, Daddy and your loving husband!"

Clearly, the husband's reference to being apart in his Christmas greeting referred to the separation caused by his military assignment. But to this sister, as a voice from the dust from a departed eternal companion and father, came a most needed spiritual reassurance and witness. As I indicated earlier, the Lord's **tender mercies** do not occur randomly or merely by coincidence. Faithfulness, obedience, and humility invite **tender mercies** into our lives, and it is often the Lord's timing that enables us to recognize and treasure these important blessings.

Some time ago I spoke with a priesthood leader who was prompted to memorize the names of all of the youth ages 13 to 21 in his stake. Using snapshots of the young men and women, he created flash cards that he reviewed while traveling on business and at other times. This priesthood leader quickly learned all of the names of the youth.

One night the priesthood leader had a dream about one of the young men whom he knew only from a picture. In the dream he saw the young man dressed in a white shirt and wearing a missionary name tag. With a companion seated at his side, the young man was teaching a family. The young man held the Book of Mormon in his hand, and he looked as if he were testifying of the truthfulness of the book. The priesthood leader then awoke from his dream.

At an ensuing priesthood gathering, the leader approached the young man he had seen in his dream and asked to talk with him for a few minutes. After a brief introduction, the leader called the young man by name and said: "I am not a dreamer. I have never had a dream about a single member of this stake, except for you. I am going to tell you about my dream, and then I would like you to help me understand what it means."

The priesthood leader recounted the dream and asked the young man about its meaning. Choking with emotion, the young man simply replied, "It means God knows who I am." The remainder of the conversation between this young man and his priesthood leader was most meaningful, and they agreed to meet and counsel together from time to time during the following months.

That young man received the Lord's **tender mercies** through an inspired priesthood leader. I repeat again, the Lord's **tender mercies** do not occur randomly or merely by coincidence. Faithfulness and obedience enable us to receive these important gifts and, frequently, the Lord's timing helps us to recognize them.

We should not underestimate or overlook the power of the Lord's **tender mercies**. The simpleness, the sweetness, and the constancy of the **tender mercies** of the Lord will do much to fortify and protect us in the troubled times in which we do now and will yet live. When words cannot provide the solace we need or express the joy we feel, when it is simply futile to attempt to explain that which is unexplainable, when logic and reason cannot yield adequate understanding about the injustices and inequities of life, when mortal experience and evaluation are insufficient to produce a desired outcome, and when it seems that perhaps we are so totally alone, truly we are blessed by the **tender mercies** of the Lord and made mighty even unto the power of deliverance (see 1 Ne. 1:20).

Who Are They Whom the Lord Has Chosen to Receive His **Tender Mercies**?

The word chosen in 1 Nephi 1:20 [1 Ne. 1:20] is central to understanding the concept of the Lord's **tender mercies**. The dictionary indicates that chosen suggests one who is selected, taken by preference, or picked out. It also can be used to refer to the elect or chosen of God (Oxford English Dictionary Online, second ed. [1989], "Chosen").

Some individuals who hear or read this message erroneously may discount or dismiss in their personal lives the availability of the **tender mercies** of the Lord, believing that "I certainly am not one who has been or ever will be chosen." We may falsely think that such blessings and gifts are reserved for other people who appear to be more righteous or who serve in visible Church callings. I testify that the **tender mercies** of the Lord are available to all of us and that the Redeemer of Israel is eager to bestow such gifts upon us.

To be or to become chosen is not an exclusive status conferred upon us. Rather, you and I ultimately determine if we are chosen. Please now note the use of the word chosen in the following verses from the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

"Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men" (D&C 121:34–35; emphasis added).

I believe the implication of these verses is quite straightforward. God does not have a list of favorites to which we must hope our names will someday be added. He does not limit "the chosen" to a restricted few. Rather, it is our hearts and our aspirations and our obedience which definitively determine whether we are counted as one of God's chosen.

Enoch was instructed by the Lord on this very point of doctrine. Please note the use of the word choose in these verses: "Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency;

"And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father" (Moses 7:32–33; emphasis added).

As we learn in these scriptures, the fundamental purposes for the gift of agency were to love one another and to choose God. Thus we become God's chosen and invite His **tender mercies** as we use our agency to choose God.

One of the most well-known and frequently cited passages of scripture is found in Moses 1:39. This verse clearly and concisely describes the work of the Eternal Father: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (emphasis added).

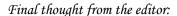
A companion scripture found in the Doctrine and Covenants describes with equal clarity and conciseness our primary work as the sons and daughters of the Eternal Father. Interestingly, this verse does not seem to be as well known and is not quoted with great frequency. "Behold, this is your work, to keep my commandments, yea, with all your might, mind and strength" (D&C 11:20; emphasis added).

Thus, the Father's work is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of His children. Our work is to keep His commandments with all of our might, mind, and strength—and we thereby become chosen and, through the Holy Ghost, receive and recognize the **tender mercies** of the Lord in our daily lives.

The very conference in which we are participating this weekend is yet another example of the Lord's **tender mercies**. We have been blessed to receive inspired counsel from the leaders of the Savior's Church—timely counsel for our day and for our circumstances and for our challenges. We have been instructed, lifted, edified, called to repentance, and strengthened. The spirit of this conference has fortified our faith and fueled our desire to repent, to obey, to improve, and to serve. Like you, I am eager to now act upon the reminders, counsel, and personal inspiration with which we have been blessed during this conference. And in just a few moments each of us will receive one of the Lord's **tender mercies** as we hear the concluding remarks and testimony of President Gordon B. Hinckley. Truly, "the Lord is good to all: and his **tender mercies** are over all his works" (Ps. 145:9).

I am thankful for the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith and for the knowledge we have today about the Lord's **tender mercies**. Our desires, faithfulness, and obedience invite and help us to discern His

mercies in our lives. As one of His servants, I declare my witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer and our Savior. I know that He lives and that His **tender mercies** are available to all of us. Each of us can have eyes to see clearly and ears to hear distinctly the **tender mercies** of the Lord as they strengthen and assist us in these latter days. May our hearts always be filled with gratitude for His abundant and **tender mercies**. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.



To my inmate brothers and sisters, the tender mercies of the Lord will not only get you through this trial, they will help you to thrive even through

incarceration. I testify to you that it is these tender mercies of our Lord and Savior that have gotten me through my trials in life. They are real, they are blessings, and they can get you through your trials as well. I testify that this has been my personal experience. I speak the truth in this. I GENUINELY LOVE ALL OF YOU. I pray for you daily. In the Name of Jesus Christ, amen. -D.