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Email from Mom, 20 August 2012

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To: Phillip Larsen <phillip.larsen@myldsmail.net>

Cc: John Larsen <john@larsen-family.us>

Good morning, Dear Elder Phillip Larsen!

I'm so glad to be able to email you each week! I love and cherish this time "with" you! How are you doing? Today is one of three P-days you have left on your mission. I've been so happy to hear that you are still working hard, maybe staying "Always in the Middle" of your mission, as President Uchtdorf said in the First Presidency Message in July. Did you see that? Can you find it on lds.org? It's a really good article, a good thought, about being able to understand life a bit better, and to live more meaningfully.

I had good intentions of continuing last week's email when I got back from my appointment, but then it never did happen. So, I guess we'll go from here, now, with a new email, this week's news and thoughts.

Well, Dad's email gave you the recent news, about the dinner with Amy's family, and about Bradford's move. A couple of thoughts on it: When I went to Girls' Camp on the 8th of August, I was able to talk to several sisters there, as well as be there with the girls. One of the sisters I talked to for awhile was Vicky Anderson, from the Merrimack Ward. (You know, the mother of Nicholas Anderson.) By the way, she said her son, Chris, announced his engagement two weeks before that, and would be married in two weeks, so I guess that's coming up soon. Anyway, I told her about Bradford, and how, though I love Amy, and am happy to have her as a daughter-in-law, I was not happy about their choice to live together before the marriage. She told me about her daughter who is married to a good man, but a non-member. They are expecting their first baby very soon, and Vicky has made blankets for this baby, and has a closet full of clothes to give to the baby. She said we just need to "love them to death". She talked to someone who used to be in their ward, whom I never knew. Anyway, this brother had a son who was gay. He talked to Vicky when her daughter got married, and told her it is our job as parents to just love our children, love them unconditionally, and to also love the people they bring into our lives. He said "You can imagine what that might mean in my situation." Vicky is grateful that her daughter is married to a good man, who loves her, and is just loving her daughter and family as much as she can. She gave me a hug, and told me she understood how I was feeling, and it was so comforting to know that. And loving Bradford, and Amy, too, is the thing we can do now.

The other thought I had came after our lovely dinner with Amy's family. Amy's sister-in-law, Jia, told me as we were leaving, that one of her sisters had moved to Burbank and joined the Mormon Church. I was not sure I understood correctly (hard to hear, also she has a bit of an accent), so I asked Bradford about it when we got home. He said the sister had either joined the Church, or was investigating it. And the more I thought about it, the thought came to me that Heavenly Father uses all of our situations, even the poor choices we might make, to fulfill His purposes. I can see the possibility that a whole family might be brought to know of the gospel, because of Bradford and Amy. Amy's family sees our family, as well as Jia seeing her sister, and there will be chances to share the Gospel through our interactions with them, and through loving them. I'm not sure yet how Bradford and Amy living together ahead of time will play into all of this, but I am sure Heavenly Father knows and loves them, and still has His arm extended to them. Things will work out.

On Thursday of last week, I attended Stake Council, and got to hear two missionary reports! They were

Jared Forsyth (who went to the Germany Frankfort Mission), and Ryan Hill, who went to an Arizona Spanish-speaking mission. Both are from the Lowell Ward. I loved hearing their reports. We clear the table of things before the missionaries come in, so my notebook was on the floor under the table, but I wrote down what I could remember after they finished. Jared Forsyth said missionaries don't actually have much to do with teaching, but it is done by the Spirit. He told the story of a Chinese man he taught, and they asked him to pray. When the man was finished, he said, "What is this? Why have I not felt this before? How can I feel it again?" It was so wonderful that the man felt the Spirit as he prayed, and had felt it at home when he prayed, as well.

I can't remember what Ryan talked about, but I know there was something I wanted to write down. Drat those memories that leave as soon as they come into our heads! Anyway, they both bore their testimonies in the languages of their missions, and I understood BOTH of them! I was amazed. And I thought of how next month you will be doing your report to the High Council. I'm thinking it will be on the 13th of September. You will be asked to talk about some spiritual experiences you have had on your mission, and to bear your testimony in Portuguese. Dad and I will be there, too, and maybe the rest of the family.

And, last night Bro. Craig Nelson called to ask if you would speak in Sacrament Meeting on the 16th of September (after your report to the High Council). The topic for the month is "Scriptures", and he is thinking of having you work that topic by telling how the scriptures helped you with your mission. 12-15 minutes. This is just something to keep in the back of your mind.

And now for a closing thought, President Uchtdorf said in that message that I told you about, "When I speak to our young missionaries, I often tell them they are in the middle of their missions. Whether they just arrived the day before or are to depart for home the day after, I ask them to think of themselves as always being in the middle.

New missionaries may feel they are too inexperienced to be effective, and so they delay speaking or acting with confidence and boldness. Seasoned missionaries who are close to completing their missions may feel sad their missions are coming to a close, or they may slow down as they contemplate what they will do after their missions.

Whatever the circumstances and wherever they serve, the truth is that the Lord's missionaries are daily sowing countless seeds of good tidings. Thinking of themselves as always being in the middle of their missions will embolden and energize these faithful representatives of the Lord. AS it is with full-time missionaries, so it is with all of us."

So, dear Phillip, my dear son, keep on keeping on, and serve well. The Lord is on our side, and His work and His glory is to bring to pass our immortality and eternal life. And what a blessing that we can help out in that work!

I love you very much!

Love,
Mom