



John Larsen <theclaw56@gmail.com>

Homesick

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

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

Hello, Dear Elder Phillip Larsen,

How I wished I could give you a big hug when I read this! Of course, I want to give you hugs other times, too, but virtual hugs will have to do. ::huggg::

I think the homesickness is normal. Though that doesn't help much, to know that, in making it feel better. And I know, most definitely, that your trouble with the language is also normal, and it will improve by leaps and bounds, and you will speak better each day. As I read Karen Ogden's blog, she talks about the same thing with the language. And when she asked one of the Zone Leaders if he had noticed any improvement in her language skills in the past months, he said most definitely yes. Just be patient.

As for the prayers being answered, I think you are asking about how you recognize an answer to prayers? I mean, sometimes it's obvious, like when we asked for Stanford to get better, the answer was "no". Or when you pray to find something and you never do, the answer is also "no". But maybe you're wondering more about things like, when you ask which house you should tract, or where to study that day in the Book of Mormon or whatever, and you are not sure if you're getting an answer because nothing stands out? Lots of times the Lord lets us make the decisions. Once in awhile He'll make an answer clear. Dad was telling me about a conference talk by Elder Richard G. Scott which talks about this. I'll have to find it and send it to you. Here's one little example from my life, which may apply to yours, too. I have this list of people to write to, emails and letters, and my recent goal is to connect with someone (with a note or nice email or maybe a phone call) every day, to get through the list. People keep getting added to the list, too. And I can't seem to get through it all at once so there is no list left. It's the same with my calling, things to do, wards to visit, but I can't keep up with what I think needs to be done. So I pray about which ward to visit, or which person to call/write to/email each day. And sometimes a person comes to mind and I begin thinking about that person. Sometimes it's someone on the list already (I owe them a letter or thank-you note or it's one of the ladies I visit teach). Sometimes I just begin thinking about someone and wonder about that person. I figure that may be an answer to me of which person to contact that day. And if nobody stands out particularly, I just go through the list and pick someone. Because

those things that you are doing are all good, it all needs to be done, and maybe it doesn't matter which gets done first. Does that help? Does that make sense?

Here's one more quick thought about it: awhile ago I was praying to feel the Spirit more, to recognize spiritual experiences. I also wanted to feel Stanford's spirit, to know he's happy and busy, and will I really see him again? I asked the Lord what I needed to do to have those blessings, what did I need to change in my life or do differently? What was my part in getting those blessings that I was requesting? I began noticing as I would read the Ensign and listen to talks and such that two things would stand out to me: scripture study, and journal writing. Every time I would read something or listen to a talk, the people would somehow mention those two things. They are things I struggle with, but I as I began to see a pattern in what I was hearing and reading, I decided the Lord was letting me know that if I were more diligent in those two things, I would get what I wanted. And I don't think it's like a "reward", like "I'll give you a piece of candy if you go clean your room." I think scripture study would put teachings and thoughts into my mind, to be able to be retrieved later when I need them. And journal writing would help me to focus on something each time I write, to think about my day and to notice all of the spiritual experiences and tender mercies the Lord gives me, so I would have something to write down. It would help me to see what is there all along, that maybe I just don't notice when I don't spend the time to read, ponder, and write my thoughts. I still struggle with those two things, but when I do them, it makes a difference.

I'm glad you're still loving the work even though it has been hard. You'll continue to love it, and love the people, and you'll see more and more blessings in your life as you serve the Lord.

Love you!

Mom

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