

GOSPEL DOCTRINE Lesson 34: Faith in Every Footstep

(D&C 136)

LESSON GOAL: To help us understand how the pioneers' journey to the Salt Lake Valley parallels our journey back to our Heavenly Father and to help us appreciate the sacrifices made by the pioneers.

1. The Lord instructed the Saints regarding their physical preparations for their journey.

Before they left, the Lord gave them instructions in D&C 136, "The Word and Will of the Lord concerning the Camp of Israel in their journeyings to the West." The protective canopy for their journey was a solemn commitment to be obedient and righteous. Read the first ten verses:

- A covenant and promise to **keep all the commandments** and statutes of the Lord (2)
- **Organize companies** under the direction of the Quorum of the Twelve, with a president and two counselors and with captains of hundreds, fifties, and tens (3)
- This shall be our covenant--We shall **walk in all the ordinances of the Lord** (4)
- Let each company **provide themselves** with all teams, wagons, provisions, clothing they can (5)
- **Prepare** for those who are to tarry [**remain behind**] (6)
- Let each company. . . decide how many can go next spring to take teams, seeds, farming utensils as pioneers to **prepare for putting in spring crops** (7)
- Let each company bear an **equal proportion** in taking the **poor, the widows, the fatherless** (8)
- Let each company **prepare houses and fields** for raising grain for those who are to remain behind (9)
- Let every man use all **his influence** and property to remove this people to ... **a stake of Zion** (10)

2. The Lord instructed the Saints regarding their conduct.

Heber C. Kimball (May 28, 1847) walked around the wagons of his division and was disturbed by the levity, gambling, and profane language: "There was at times much merriment in camp. There were musical instruments brought along and those who could play them. There was **dancing**, too, occasionally, notwithstanding the absence of ladies; the **games of quoits**, of **checkers**, some **card-playing** for amusement, **scuffling**, **wrestling**, the telling of **humorous stories of doubtful propriety**, **loud laughter**, the playing of **practical jokes** and the like were indulged." On May 29, **Brigham** said, "I had rather risk myself among the savages with ten men that are men of faith, men of mighty prayer, men of God, than to be with this whole camp when they forget God and turn their hearts to folly and wickedness. Yes, I had rather be alone; and I **am now resolved not to go any further with the camp unless you will covenant to humble yourselves before the Lord and serve him and quit your folly and wickedness**. For a week past nearly the whole camp has been card-playing, and checkers and dominoes have occupied the attention of the brethren, and dancing and 'hoeing down'--all this has been the act continually. Now, it is quite time to quit it. And there have been trials of law suits upon every nonsensical thing; and if those things are suffered to go on, **it will be but a short time before you will be fighting, knocking each other down and taking life. It is high time it was stopped**" (CHC, 3:184)

Notice the divine requirements in the passages from D&C 136:

- **Don't build yourself up** without the Lord's counsel, or ye will have no power (19)
- **Keep all your pledges** one with another (20)
- **Covet not** that which is thy brother's (20)
- Keep yourselves from evil to **take the name of the Lord in vain** (21)
- **My arm is stretched out to save my people Israel** (22)
- **Cease to contend** one with another (23)
- **Cease to speak evil** one of another (23)
- **Cease drunkenness** and keep the Word of Wisdom (24)
- **Let your words edify** one another (24)
- **Restore to your neighbor** what you borrow from him (25)
- If you can't repay your neighbor, **go and tell him straightaway** (25)
- If you find what your neighbor has lost, **be diligent to give it to him** (26)
- **Be a wise steward** over personal possessions (27)
- **Engage in appropriate recreation**. If thou are merry, praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer (28)
- Call on the Lord thy God with supplication; **seek comfort from the Lord** when in sorrow (29)
- **Fear not enemies**—have faith in the Lord (30)
- Let him that is ignorant **learn wisdom by humbling himself and calling upon the Lord** (32-33)

Marvin J. Ashton: When one considers the bad feeling and the unpleasantness caused by contention, it is well to ask, "Why do I participate?" If we are really honest with ourselves, our answers may be something like: "When I argue and am disagreeable, I do not have to change myself. It gives me a chance to get even." "I am unhappy and I want others to be miserable too." "I can feel self-righteous. In this way I get my ego built up." "I don't want others to forget how much I know!" Whatever the real reason, **it is important to recognize that we choose our behavior. At the root of this issue is the age-old problem of pride. "Only by pride cometh contention."** (Prov. 13:10.)

If Satan can succeed in creating in us habits of arguing, quarreling, and contention, it is easier then for him to bind us with the heavier sins, which can destroy our eternal lives. **A contentious spirit can affect almost any phase of our lives.** An angry letter written in haste can haunt us-sometimes for years. A few ill-advised words spoken in hate can destroy a marriage or a personal friendship, or impede community progress.

Let me share with you some suggestions for alleviating contention:

- **Pray to have the love of God in your heart.** Sometimes this is a struggle, but the Spirit of the Lord can soften hard feelings and mellow a callous spirit.
- **Learn to control your tongue.** There is an old maxim and an excellent one: "Think twice before you speak and three times before you act."
- **Don't allow emotions to take over; rather, reason together.**
- **Refuse to get embroiled in the same old patterns** of argument and confrontation.
- **Practice speaking in a soft, calm voice.** The peaceful life can best be attained not by those who speak with a voice of "great tumultuous noise" but by those who follow the Savior's example and speak with "a still voice of perfect mildness." (Hel. 5:30.)

There is no time for contention. We must have the will and discipline in our daily lives to fight contention. I promise the valiant God's help in their efforts to conquer this horrendous foe. Let us "Cease to contend one with another; cease to speak evil one of another." (D&C 136:23.) We only have time to be about our Father's business. (*Ensign*, May 1978, 9).

3. Under the direction of President Brigham Young, the Saints journeyed to the Salt Lake Valley.

Two years before the Prophet Joseph Smith died, he prophesied that "the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains," and that some of them would "live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 255). In fulfillment of this prophecy, some 70,000 Church members from all over the world made the trek to Utah between 1847 and 1869.

President Gordon B. Hinckley: When they came through Emigration Canyon and Brigham Young looked out over this valley, it was not a promising sight. The salty lake was in the west. The canyon streams emptied into it. The soil was hard and baked. No plow had ever broken this soil. These people knew nothing of the climate. They knew nothing of its rainfall or snowpack. Yet here was Brigham Young, 46 years old, leading a pioneer company to this valley, to be followed by thousands of others. He said, "This is the right place." (*TGBH*, 516)

Brigham Young: "If it is necessary for us to be tried in all things, then weep not, mourn not because we are tried, neither let us object to the Lord directing our course in that path wherein the trials necessary for our perfection lie. If it is in sailing across the sea in ships, in being sick and cast down, in witnessing the sorrow of our dear friends, in receiving temptations and trials to which we have before been strangers; if it is in crossing the country from the United States to this place, by railroad or by ox team, no matter how, the Lord leads His people in this way expressly to give them trials which they have not passed through before, and which it is necessary they should have. **While it is necessary that we should be tempted and tried, it is not necessary that we should give way to temptation**" (*Journal of Discourses*, 12:163).

4. Present-day application of scripture to our lives

Elder Dallin H. Oaks: "We praise what the pioneers' unselfishness and sacrifice have done for us, but that is not enough. We should also assure that these same qualities are guiding principles for each of us as we have opportunities to sacrifice for our nations, our families, our quorums, our members, and our Church. . . Other great qualities in our early pioneers were **obedience, unity, and cooperation.** We have all thrilled at the example of the Saints who responded to President Brigham Young's call to rescue the stranded handcart companies, or to pull up roots in settled communities and apply their talents and lives to colonizing new areas. . . Our people have always been characterized by their loyalty and obedience to the direction of their leaders, by their unity, and by their extraordinary capacity to cooperate in a common venture. (April Conference 1997)

Elder Marvin J. Ashton: "Certainly preparation precedes power, and if we can prepare ourselves, we have no need to fear. The present and the future belong to those who have the power that comes through preparation" (*Ye Are My Friends* {Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972}, 19).

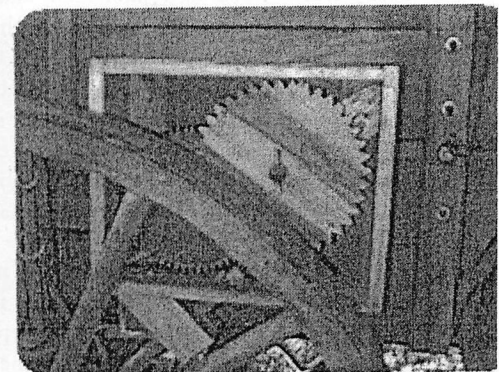
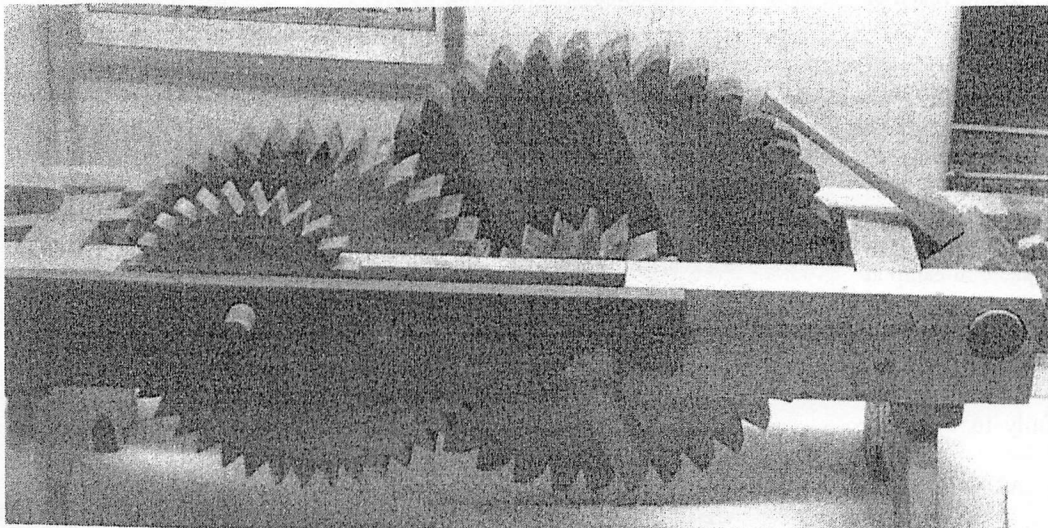
David S. King: "Adversity is no excuse for losing faith. On the contrary, there are many historical examples where faith has been intensified in direct proportion to the intensity of affliction. **When the storms of adversity begin to howl, the Lord's people react by wrapping their faith, like a warm mantle, more tightly around them.** And so the painful changes and vicissitudes of life, instead of breaking down the orderliness and goodness of the universe and its Master-Creator, are actually stepping stones to glory, an assurance that our yearning to attain perfection may one day be satisfied" ("Dealing Successfully with Change," *Ensign*, Feb. 1981, 24).

Elder M. Russell Ballard: "Our faith can help us be equally bold and fearless during the course of our respective journeys, whether we are parents working with a troubled child, a single parent trying to raise a worthy family, young people struggling to find a place in a wicked and confusing world, or a single person trying to make the journey through life alone. **No matter how difficult the trail, and regardless of how heavy our load, we can take comfort in knowing that others before us have borne life's most grievous trials and tragedies by looking to heaven for peace, comfort, and hopeful assurance.** We can know as they knew that God is our Father, that He cares about us individually and collectively, and that as long as we continue to exercise our faith and trust in Him **there is nothing to fear in the journey.** Like the pioneers of 1847 who ventured west along a trail that kept them relatively close to life-sustaining fresh water from rivers, particularly the Platte and the Sweetwater, **we need to follow and partake of the Living Water of Christ** to refresh our faith and sustain our efforts as we travel the road through mortality.

"Life isn't always easy. At some point in our journey **we may feel much as the pioneers did** as they crossed Iowa--up to our knees in mud, forced to bury some of our dreams along the way. We all face rocky ridges, with the wind in our face and winter coming on too soon. Sometimes it seems as though there is no end to the dust that stings our eyes and clouds our vision. Sharp edges of despair and discouragement jut out of the terrain to slow our passage. Always, there is a Devil's Gate, which will swing wide open to lure us in. Those who are wise and faithful will steer a course as far from such temptation as possible, while others--sometimes those who are nearest and dearest to us--succumb to the attraction of ease, comfort, convenience, and rest. **Occasionally we reach the top of one summit in life, as the pioneers did, only to see more mountain peaks ahead,** higher and more challenging than the one we have just traversed. Tapping unseen reservoirs of faith and endurance, **we, as did our forebears, inch ever forward** toward that day when our voices can join with those of all pioneers who have endured in faith, singing: "All is well! All is well!" (April Conference, 1997)

Elder M. Russell Ballard: "We are the inheritors of a tremendous heritage. Now it is our privilege and responsibility to be part of the Restoration's continuing drama, and there are great and heroic stories of faith to be written in our day. **It will require every bit of our strength, wisdom, and energy to overcome the obstacles that will confront us.** But even that will not be enough. We will learn, as did our pioneer ancestors, that **it is only in faith—real faith, whole-souled, tested and tried—that we will find safety and confidence as we walk our own perilous pathways through life**" (Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 83; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 61).

Brigham Young: "All intelligent beings who are crowned with crowns of glory, immortality, and eternal lives must pass through every ordeal appointed for intelligent beings to pass through, to gain their glory and exaltation. Every calamity that can come upon mortal beings will be suffered to come upon the few, to prepare them to enjoy the presence of the Lord. ... **Every trial and experience you have passed through is necessary for your salvation**" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 345).



A Mormon Roadometer (Odometer) by William Clayton and Orson Pratt

THE
LATTER-DAY SAINTS'
EMIGRANTS' GUIDE:

BEING A
TABLE OF DISTANCES,
SHOWING ALL THE
SPRINGS, CREEKS, RIVERS, HILLS, MOUNTAINS,
CAMPING PLACES, AND ALL OTHER NOTABLE PLACES,
FROM COUNCIL BLUFFS,
TO THE
VALLEY OF THE GREAT SALT LAKE.

ALSO, THE
LATITUDES, LONGITUDES AND ALTITUDES
OF THE PROMINENT POINTS ON THE ROUTE.
TOGETHER WITH REMARKS ON THE NATURE OF THE LAND,
TIMBER, GRASS, &c.
THE WHOLE ROUTE HAVING BEEN CAREFULLY MEASURED BY A ROADOMETER,
AND THE DISTANCE FROM POINT TO POINT, IN
ENGLISH MILES, ACCURATELY SHOWN.

BY **W. CLAYTON.**

ST. LOUIS:

MO. REPUBLICAN STEAM POWER PRESS—CHAMBERS & KNAPP,
1848.

PREFACE.

When the author first compiled the following work, it was not with a design to publish it, although well aware of the advantages which emigrants, traveling to the VALLEY OF THE GREAT SALT LAKE, would continually realize by having it in their possession. However, there were so many who applied for copies of it—and the labor of writing a copy being considerable, as well as requiring much time—it was concluded to publish it in its present form, by which means it can be afforded at a price which will bring it within reach of any person wishing to have it.

Many works have been published, and maps exhibited for the instruction of emigrants, but none which ever pretended to set forth the particulars contained in this work, so far as regards the route from Council Bluffs to the Great Salt Lake. The distances from point to point are shown as near as a Roadometer can measure; and by this means the traveler can know, each day, the kind of country lying before him, and how far he must go in order to find a suitable place to camp at night.

The author feels a delicacy in saying much in favor of the "Guide," but is well aware that, when its merits have been tested by experience, no person will repent of having purchased it. It is, therefore, submitted cheerfully to the consideration of an intelligent public.

AUTHOR.

St. Louis, Mo., 13th March, 1848.

EMIGRANTS' GUIDE.

PROMINENT POINTS AND REMARKS.	Dist. miles.	From W Qns. miles.	From C of G S L miles.
Winter Quarters, Lat. 41° 18' 53" - The road good, but very crooked, following the ridges, and passing over a continual succession of hills and low lands.	-	-	1031
Pappea, ten feet wide, high banks. - Some timber on the creek, but it is difficult to water teams. After this, the road is crooked and uneven to the Elk Horn.	18	18	1013
Elk Horn, nine rods wide, three feet deep. Current rather swift, and not very pleasant to ferry. Plenty of timber on its banks. (See Note 1.)	9	27	1004
Creek, ten feet wide, steep banks. - This creek has a good bridge over it, but little timber on the banks. There is a high post, erected near the bridge, for a guide to it.	2	27½	1003½
Platte river and Liberty Pole. - - Plenty of timber, but you will probably have to go to the river for water—distance about a quarter of a mile. The nearest and best road to water is round the east point of the timber.	11½	39	992
Small Lake (narrow) south side the road. No timber on the Lake.	3½	42½	988½
Circular Lake, or pond, close to the road, (south.) - - - No timber. In the neighborhood of this, the road runs alongside a number of small lakes, or ponds, for two miles; but there is little timber near them.	2	43½	987½
R. R. and T., road joins the river, Lat. 41° 27' 5" - - -	9	52½	978½
This is a point where a branch of the river runs round an island, on which is plenty of timber. Not much water in the channel, but plenty for camping purposes.	-	-	-
Indian Grave, north side the road. - This is a large pile of earth, about eighty yards north of the road.	7½	59½	971½
R. R. and T., road joins the river. - Plenty of timber and water, without leaving the road.	2	60½	970½
Shell creek, 12 feet wide, three feet deep. This creek is bridged, and a few rods lower is a place to ford. Plenty of timber on it. After this you will probably find no water for twelve miles, without turning considerably from the road.	2	62½	968½
Small lake, south side of the road. - Plenty of water in the Spring season, but none in Summer. It was entirely dry, October 18, 1847.	5½	68	963

NOTE 1. If the Elk Horn river is fordable, you leave the main road a mile before you strike the river, and turn north. After leaving the road *three-fourths* of a mile, you will cross a very bad creek or slough, being soft and miry; but, by throwing in long grass, it will be good crossing. You then travel *three-fourths* of a mile further, and arrive at the ford. You will go up stream when fording, and gradually come nearer to the opposite shore, till you strike a piece of low land on the west side; you then pass by a narrow, crooked road, through the timber, till you arrive on the open prairie. You will then see a *post* erected in near a south direction, about a mile distant. Go straight to that post, and you will find a good bridge over the creek—and there, again strike the main road. From here, you have before you near five hundred miles travel over a flat, level country, and a good road,

PROMINENT POINTS AND REMARKS.	Dist. miles.	From W Qns. miles.	From C of G S L miles.
Bridge over a deep ravine. - - - This is dangerous to cross, and a wagon may be easily upset. The road lays through a forest of small timber, and is unpleasant traveling.	2	1014	17
Brown's creek and spring. - - - Not a bad place to camp, but there is a much better one, half a mile lower down.	2	1014½	16½
Cold spring on Brown's creek. - - - Within a rod of the road, on the east side, under a grove of Black Birch bushes. Good place to camp, but some miry. Good camping any where for two miles lower.	2½	1017½	13½
Leave Brown's creek. - - - You now ascend another high mountain, by a steep and crooked road. On both sides this mountain, there are many Serviceberry bushes.	1½	1019½	11½
Summit of last ridge. - - - The descent is very steep, all the way, till you arrive on the banks of Last creek.	1	1020½	10½
Last creek. - - - You cross this creek nineteen times. Several of the crossings are difficult. There are several side hills which require care in teamsters. Three camping places on it, but the road is rough.	2	1021	10
Mouth of the Canyon. - - - You now enter the Valley of the Salt Lake. The road at the mouth of the Canyon bad, and rough with stumps. Afterwards, descending and good.	5	1026	5
CITY OF THE GREAT SALT LAKE. -	5	1031	

Winter Quarters -- #1

It took the Saints 131 days to travel the 310 miles from Nauvoo to the settlements in western Iowa where they would pass the winter of 1846–47 and prepare for their trek to the Rocky Mountains. This experience taught them many things about travel that would help them more quickly cross the 1,000 miles of the great American plains, which was done the following year in about 111 days.

A number of settlements of Saints stretched along both sides of the Missouri River. The largest settlement, Winter Quarters, was on the west side, in Nebraska. It quickly became home to approximately 3,500 Church members, who lived in houses of logs and in dugouts of willows and dirt. As many as 2,500 Saints also lived in and around what was called Kaneshville on the Iowa side of the Missouri River. Life in these settlements was almost as challenging as it had been on the trail. In the summer they suffered from malarial fever. When winter came and fresh food was no longer available, they suffered from cholera epidemics, scurvy, toothaches, night blindness, and severe diarrhea. Hundreds of people died.

Winter Quarters -- #2

Yet life went on. The women spent their days cleaning, ironing, washing, quilting, writing letters, preparing their few provisions for meals, and caring for their families, according to Mary Richards, whose husband, Samuel, was on a mission in Scotland. She cheerfully recorded the comings and goings of the Saints at Winter Quarters, including such activities as theological discussions, dances, Church meetings, parties, and frontier revivals.

The men worked together and met often to discuss travel plans and the future site for the settlement of the Saints. They regularly cooperated in rounding up the herds that foraged on the prairie at the outskirts of the camp. They worked in the fields, guarded the perimeters of the settlement, constructed and operated a flour mill, and readied wagons for travel, often suffering from exhaustion and illness. Some of their work was an unselfish labor of love as they prepared fields and planted crops to be harvested by the Saints who would follow them.

Brigham Young's son John called Winter Quarters "the Valley Forge of Mormondom." He lived near the burial grounds there and witnessed the "small mournful-looking trains that so often passed our door." He recalled "how poor and same-like" his family's diet of corn bread, salt bacon, and a little milk seemed. He said mush and bacon became so nauseating that eating was like taking medicine and he had difficulty swallowing. ⁴ Only the faith and dedication of the Saints carried them through this trying time.

The Brooklyn Saints

While most Saints moved to the Rocky Mountains by traveling overland from Nauvoo, a group of Saints from the eastern United States traveled a sea route. On 4 February 1846, 70 men, 68 women, and 100 children boarded the ship *Brooklyn* and sailed from New York harbor on a 17,000-mile journey to the coast of California. During their voyage two children were born, named Atlantic and Pacific, and 12 people died.

The six-month trip was very difficult. The passengers were closely crowded in the heat of the tropics, and they had only bad food and water. After rounding Cape Horn, they stopped on the island of Juan Fernandez to rest for five days. Caroline Augusta Perkins recalled that “the sight of and tread upon terra firma once more was such a relief from the ship life, that we gratefully realized and enjoyed it.” They bathed and washed their clothing in the fresh water, gathered fruit and potatoes, caught fish and eels, and rambled about the island exploring a “Robinson Crusoe cave.” 7

On 31 July 1846, after a voyage marked by severe storms, dwindling food, and long days of sailing, they arrived at San Francisco. Some stayed and established a colony called New Hope, while others traveled east over the mountains to join with the Saints in the Great Basin.

The Gathering Continues

From all parts of America and from many nations, by many kinds of conveyances, on horseback or on foot, faithful converts left their homes and birthplaces to join with the Saints and begin the long journey to the Rocky Mountains.

In January 1847, President Brigham Young issued the inspired “Word and Will of the Lord concerning the Camp of Israel” (D&C 136:1), which became the constitution governing the pioneers’ westward movement. Companies were organized and charged to care for the widows and fatherless in their midst. Relations with other people were to be free from evil, covetousness, and contention. The people were to be happy and show their gratitude in music, prayer, and dance. Through President Young, the Lord told the Saints, “Go thy way and do as I have told you, and fear not thine enemies” (D&C 136:17).

As the first pioneer company prepared to leave Winter Quarters, Parley P. Pratt returned from his mission to England and reported that John Taylor was following with a gift from the English Saints. The next day Brother Taylor arrived with tithing money sent by these members to aid the travelers, an evidence of their love and faith. He also brought scientific instruments that proved invaluable in charting the pioneers’ journey and helping them learn about their surroundings. On 15 April 1847 the first company, led by Brigham Young, moved out. Over the next two decades, approximately 62,000 Saints would follow them across the prairies in wagons and handcarts to gather to Zion.

Wonderful sights as well as hardships awaited these travelers on their journey. Joseph Moenor recalled having “a hard time” in getting to the Salt Lake Valley. But he saw things he had never before seen—great herds of buffalo and big cedar trees on the hills. 8 Others remembered seeing vast expanses of sunflowers in bloom.

The Saints also had faith-promoting experiences that lightened the physical demands on their bodies. After a long day of travel and a meal cooked over open fires, men and women gathered in groups to discuss the day’s activities. They talked about gospel principles, sang songs, danced, and prayed together.

Death frequently visited the Saints as they slowly made their way west. On 23 June 1850 the Crandall family numbered fifteen. By the week’s end seven had died of the dreaded plague of cholera. In the next few days five more family members died. Then on 30 June Sister Crandall died in childbirth along with her newborn baby.

Although the Saints suffered much on their journey to the Salt Lake Valley, a spirit of unity, cooperation, and optimism prevailed. Bound together by their faith and commitment to the Lord, they found joy in the midst of their trials.

This Is the Right Place

On 21 July 1847, Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow of the first pioneer company preceded the emigrants into the Salt Lake Valley. They saw grass so deep that a person could wade through it, promising land for farming, and several creeks that wandered through the valley. Three days later, President Brigham Young, who was ill with mountain fever, was driven in his carriage to the mouth of a canyon that opened onto the valley. As President Young looked over the scene, he gave his prophetic benediction to their travels: "It is enough. This is the right place."

As the Saints who followed emerged from the mountains, they, too, gazed at their promised land! This valley with its salty lake gleaming in the western sun was the object of vision and prophecy, the land of which they and thousands after them dreamed. This was their land of refuge, where they would become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains.

Several years later, a convert from England, Jean Rio Griffiths Baker, recorded her feelings as she viewed Salt Lake City for the first time. "The city ... is laid out in squares or blocks as they call them here; each containing ten acres and divided into eight lots, each lot having one house. I stood and looked, I can hardly analyze my feelings, but I think my prevailing ones were joy and gratitude for the protecting care had over me and mine during our long and perilous journey." 9