

Dear Readers:

I graduated from high school with President Larry and Sister Lisa (Gleaves) Laycock. Recently they were called to serve a mission in the Chile Santiago East Mission and they left the comfort of their home with their youngest son, Landon, June 2009. Now because of the many earthquakes in Chile, they are not only serving spiritually for their church, but they are also now physically serving the people of Chile and teaching their young missionaries the importance of being prepared.

If you would like to follow their mission blog, go to: <http://santiagomissioneast.blogspot.com/>

The following is a letter that Lisa wrote to their friends and family after the first 8.8 earthquake:

"Dear Everyone,

I am writing to let you all know how very grateful we are for your prayers, concern, and love. Please keep praying! We need the Lord's help and guidance in order to do all He would have us do to learn what He would have us learn from this earth quake tragedy, and to minister in the way He would have us minister.

During the past few days, we have witnessed many events which serve to remind us that the Lord is in charge and that as missionaries and members of His church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are performing His work, and as President Monson teaches, "When we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to His help." I want to share with you a few miracles that will help you to understand our profound feelings of gratitude.

When we were set apart for this calling, Elder Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles taught us many important lessons. He spoke from personal experience when he was a mission president in Argentina. One message that he shared with us is this: "At times, during your mission, you will be awakened in the middle of the night or the early morning hours with thoughts of specific things you should do for certain missionaries. Do not ignore these thoughts. They are promptings from the Holy Ghost who will communicate with you in the stillness of the night or the peace of the early morning hours. He will speak to you then because that is when you are still enough to hear."

Elder Scott further instructed us to keep a notebook beside our bed so that we could record these precious promptings. He said that by the next morning, we would be likely to forget the promptings if we didn't write them down.

We have been astonished at the fulfillment of Elder Scott's prophetic words. We have received many promptings in the exact manner that Elder Scott described. We are so thankful that Elder Scott taught us how to recognize and act upon these precious promptings. Had he not taught us, we may not have given these promptings the attention they require.

Nearly two-and-one-half weeks ago, I was awakened at around 4:00 AM by just such a prompting. I did not hear a voice, but the thought was as clear as if it had been in the form of spoken words: "There is going to be an earthquake. Prepare your missionaries." I sat up in bed and immediately remembered Elder Scott's counsel. That morning I told Larry what had happened. He immediately set to work organizing our missionaries to prepare for an earthquake.

In talking with our office missionaries to arrange for them to put together a list of everything we would need to prepare...in both Spanish and English...we discovered that the Lord had also let two of our office missionaries know of the possibility of an earthquake (in the form of dreams) and the need to prepare our mission.

We set a goal and arranged our schedule so that we could visit every apartment in the mission to check for safety and to review with our missionaries what to do in case of an earthquake. What a wonderful experience we have had as we have met with them and shared scriptures with them about being spiritually and physically prepared. "...if ye are prepared, ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30).

We instructed every missionary to have a "go-bag" (36 hour kit). We reviewed our emergency action plan with them of where to go and what to do if they had phone service and in case they did not. We gave everyone a paper with all instructions in English and Spanish, and we reminded them that "this life is the time to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32-34). We shared with them our thoughts and feelings about the need for spiritual and physical safety.

Some of them became frightened and asked us if we knew something they didn't know. We smiled and repeated "...if ye are prepared, ye shall not fear." We didn't want to unduly alarm them, but we did want to impress upon them the need to be prepared. We tearfully reminded them of our recent transfer conference where we had shared our feelings about our dear Elder McKay Burrows who was unexpectedly called home in January while serving his mission in Romania...how he was prepared in every way to meet God. We reissued our challenge to "be prepared" in every way. Then we knelt with them in their apartment and dedicated each apartment, asking for a blessing of safety and security to be upon every apartment.

When the earthquake came, we were prepared. We did not experience the panic that many felt. We knew we were prepared. Because of the words of the Lord's chosen Apostle, Elder Scott, we had listened and heeded the quiet, but clear promptings of the Holy Ghost. We were blessed with peace in the midst of chaos. We learned an important lesson: our preparation helped us to avoid panic and fear, but the Lord, in His wisdom, allowed us to experience enough discomfort to know that He has all power. He is in charge. We are nothing without Him. We are dependent upon Him for every breath we take. Only He can save us from death and destruction. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is our perfect example. If we follow Him, we will be saved through obedience to the laws and ordinances of His Gospel.

As the earthquake became more violent, the mission home groaned and wailed. The power died, so the whole city was black. The windows made a hideous screeching sound, and flying objects banged against swaying walls. The printer/fax machine, books, book ends, and fifty-pound television burst from the entertainment center and crashed to the floor, cabinets emptied, drawers flew open, the refrigerator moved, water sloshed out of the toilets, the floor jolted up and down as we ran across it trying to hold onto the walls to keep from falling down, and the piano toppled over like a small toy. As we made our way to the back yard, I remember thinking, "God is all-powerful. He is our only refuge from this horrible mess." I prayed and prayed for Him to still the earth.

When we reached the back yard, we watched in terror. By the light of the moon we could see the swimming pool water form giant waves and crash out onto the rocks. House and car alarms screamed into the night...some from being crushed by falling debris and others, I guess, from the bizarre movement of the earth. I am not sure if the intense rumbling sounds came from the earth itself or from everything else that was shaking so violently. Finally, it stopped.

When the calm came, we had to sit down because our legs were weak and unstable. My legs stayed wobbly all day and night yesterday. Today the muscles in my legs hurt like I ran a marathon. The aftershocks have been extremely unsettling. Each one begins like the one last night started. We just close our eyes and wait to see if it escalates or dies down. .I have never experienced anything like this!

We were awakened this morning by a very strong after shock. Larry jumped out of bed and yelled, "Welcome to another glorious day in Chile!" We just had to laugh. We moved a mattress into the floor in our bedroom and made Landon sleep in our room. He was in his room with the door locked the night before and we couldn't wake him up. He never locks his door, but he was playing a joke on Larry because every morning Larry wakes him at 5:30 AM for seminary by tickling him unmercifully. So Landon had decided to stop him.

When we couldn't open his door, in the middle of the quake, we thought he was trapped, so we screamed and banged. Landon thought that everything was falling off the walls because we were banging so hard on the door. I think we scared him more than the earthquake did!

Today, we attended a strong ward where Larry was invited to speak. The entire chapel and beyond was filled. People were so humble and so teachable. Larry taught the importance of doing the small things. He taught about Jesus Christ and the opportunity we have to love one another and to share what we have with others.

It was a great blessing for us to be with these beautiful Chilean people. Some have lost their homes...or at least parts of their homes. But they are strong and they want to serve the Lord. He taught of the scripture in Luke 21:11,13 which says, "and great earthquakes shall be in divers places...and it shall turn to you for a testimony." He also welcomed the sweet young woman who was in the congregation with the missionaries...her first time attending church...and then he invited her to be baptized from the pulpit. He asked her to please invite us to her baptism, and she said, "I will." The Lord always knows what His people need.

Landon was reading in Alma 15:17 today. He said, Mom listen to this. This is what is happening here in Chile just like in happened in Ammonihah. The people were humbled and "checked as to the pride of their hearts and began to humble themselves before God, watching and praying continually that they might be delivered from Satan, and from death, and from destruction.

Our hearts are filled to the brim with gratitude for all of the blessings we have received in the Chile Santiago East Mission. We see miracles every day. In the midst of great pain and suffering, we can always find our Savior. He stands with His arms open, pleading for all of us to humble ourselves and come unto Him. He loves us. He invites us to accept His gift...the atonement. He invites us to repent. He wants us to love one another and to serve one another. He wants us to bring our families and those we love to Him. We can do it. We can do all that He asks, no matter how difficult it may seem. "With God all things are possible"

We are having a devotional tomorrow for all of our missionaries to talk about the last week of Christ's life in preparation for Easter. We want to remind our missionaries to teach and preach with increased vigor of Christ. Last Monday in our office meeting, Larry suddenly stopped in the middle, and said, "During the prayer, I had a very strong impression that March 2010 is going to be our best baptizing month we have ever had in this mission."

Now we know why he received that feeling. We are going to prepare to bring many souls to the waters of baptism in March. Please continue to pray for us and for the people of Chile. Please pray for the missionaries to have strength and courage to do all that is being required of them, even in difficult times.

We are so thankful that the tsunami did not turn out badly in Hawaii. Who would ever think that an earthquake in Chile could threaten the shores of Hawaii? Thankfully, the Lord is in charge. He is the one to whom we must turn for refuge from every storm. He has the power to save us."

Since this letter was written, there have been many aftershocks in that area of the world that would be considered full-fledged earthquakes! President and Sister Laycock took heed of an inspired warning and prepared all of their missionaries with information and made sure that each missionary prepared an emergency kit. Because of this preparation nobody was seriously harmed, they were shaken up, but okay. They prepared, they planned and everybody knew what they were expected to do. How comforting that must have been. Get your Under-the-bed kit put together, check out your 72 hr. kit and make sure that it is complete, and for goodness sakes – GET YOUR WATER STORED! Plan and be prepared.

I asked Pres. and Sister Laycock if I could share their letter with all of you. This is their response:

"Dear Dawn,

... Of course you have our permission to use the letter that Lisa wrote. **We hope that it will encourage and help others.** We intended that the letter go to just our family and a few close friends, including the Burrows family whose son died in Romania in January while serving his mission. But once the letter was forwarded on to many others, Meridian Magazine asked us to verify its truthfulness, which we did. **We know that both spiritual and temporal preparation is so important to our Father in Heaven's plan.** We are happy to hear that you are helping others to learn this important lesson. When we heard that the earthquake in Chile would threaten our children who are living in Hawaii going to school at BYU-H, **we were glad that we had given them 72 hour kits as a gift for Christmas a little over a year ago.**

Thankfully, the big waves never reached Hawaii, but there is great solace in being prepared. **"If ye are prepared, ye shall not fear."**

I am enclosing a copy of the English version of the document that we sent out to our missionaries before the quake. If you see anything that we can improve in the instructions that we gave, please let us know so we can refine and improve it.

May the Lord bless and keep you and your family in his eternal care always.

With love,

Larry and Lisa"

Bold emphasized by Dawn

