

God Knows You



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Dear Brothers and Sisters Aloha,

What a great privilege it is to speak to you today.

Several years ago my wife and I moved from Idaho to Utah. Very soon after we moved I was given a Stake calling so I was not in our ward very often, maybe once a month. After about 4-5 months a nice lady in our Ward came up to my wife and said to her, “who is that nice young man that is with you at church, is he your boyfriend”? From that point on, I affectionately refer to Leigh Anne as my girlfriend.

I want to thank her for her kind words about me. Now I get to tell you a little bit about her. That is the advantage of speaking after her. Leigh Anne is an amazing person. She is flowing with talent! Leigh Anne is an expert interior designer, photographer, chef, baker, and hair stylist and I could go on and on. She has a rock solid testimony of the gospel and loves to serve people. She was recently called to be the Relief Society President in our Ward which is the perfect calling for her. Most important, Leigh Anne is a great mother, wife and she truly is my best friend and I love her beyond my ability to express it in words.

After several months of pondering what topic I should speak on, I finally chose something that is close to my heart. That topic is simply, “God Knows you”. I have had many real life experiences where I knew He was watching over me. I hope and pray that my message today will touch you.

Let me begin by telling you about an experience that I had about four years ago. I went on a business trip up to Canada. The flight from Salt Lake to Toronto was uneventful. When I arrived in Toronto it was early evening and I waited only a few hours for my connection to North Bay. I had been to North Bay several times, the company I worked for had a factory there. I had also served my mission in Toronto and North Bay was my last area so I loved to make this trip because I had so many great memories.

I boarded the short one-hour flight and immediately fell asleep. It was a long day of travel. About 40 minutes into the flight I woke up because there was a lot of commotion going on. I was still groggy from waking up so I was confused as to why so many passengers seemed to be on edge. I asked the person sitting next to me what was going on. He told me that the pilot had made an announcement that he was having problems with the landing gear. I was asleep and did not hear the announcement.

A few minutes later, the pilot came on the PA system again and gave some further explanation. He said that there was a warning light that had come on which informed him that the landing gear would not fully engage which could be a big problem. He told all of us that he was now going to circle the airport and continue to try and get the landing gear to come down and lock into place.

For the next 30 minutes we circled the airport. The flight attendant did her best to try and calm the passengers but that was not working. Many had worried looks on their faces and some were crying. She then gave all of us the steps that must be taken in order to prepare for an emergency landing.

She told us that we have place our feet flat on the floor, bring our heads down close to our knees with the hands on the back of our head. She asked us to put away any sharp objects (keys, pens etc.)

Next, the captain came on the PA system and said that the warning light was still on but he was hopeful the landing gear had gone down. The problem was he could not tell if it had actually locked into place. He said, Ladies and gentleman, here is the plan. We will circle the airport a few more times and I will start dumping our fuel. You will see emergency vehicles out on the runway please don't be alarmed as this is standard procedure. We will be landing in approximately 10 minutes.

So up to that point in time I was actually quite calm. But when I looked out my window and saw all the emergency vehicles on the runway the thought went through my mind that I could die. My life literally flashed through my mind very rapidly.

We then started slowly descending and the flight attendant yelled the words, brace-brace-brace, heads down—stay down, heads down--stay down. She repeated the words over and over again. Finally, we all felt the wheels of the aircraft gently touch down on the runway and we were on the ground safely. The landing gear had locked into place. Immediately everyone cheered and clapped. As we got off the plane there was a myriad of emergency equipment with flashing red lights and emotional family members greeting many of the passengers.

That night as I got to my hotel, I simply got on my knees and thanked my Heavenly Father for helping the plane to land safely. I felt His love for me and I also felt distinctly that He knows me personally and was watching over me.

The next experience I want to share with you is how I developed my own testimony. I grew up in a great family with amazing parents. They were kind and loving and I knew they loved our Heavenly Father. We lived in Salt Lake and I have fond memories of my childhood. I was so lucky to have a group of amazing friends. In High School my priorities were sports, girls, friends, work and family. School was fun for the social aspect but I did not enjoy the academic side at all. As for the Church, I simply went because my family and friends went. I really did not have much of a testimony, mainly because I did not put forth the effort to read my scriptures or say my prayers much. I went along life in kind of a happy-go-lucky way which means “cheerfully unconcerned about the future”.

Well, that all changed as I finished High School and had to make some important decisions about where my life was headed. My inclination was to take the easiest path possible. I was sick of going to school for 12 years so the thought of going to college was not appealing. Although, I knew that is what I needed to do. I had always been taught to serve a mission but did not really want to go because I knew it would be difficult.

As I approached my 19th birthday I was very uncertain about my future. However, I had convinced myself that I was not going to go and spend two years of my life on a mission if I did not know the Church was true.

Finally, I decided to get down on my knees and ask God if this really was the true Church on the earth. I spent hours and hours at night kneeling at my bedside. This went on for several weeks without any results. I was becoming impatient because the only feelings I had were confusion. And then it happened! It was very slow and extremely subtle but each night as I got on my knees to pray I did something a little different. Instead of doing all the talking I decided to listen. Instead of confusion, I started to feel a warm calmness that I had really not felt before. Each night as I knelt to pray the calming feeling became stronger and stronger until I knew that my decision to go on a mission was the right thing to do and that the church was indeed true. The advice given to Joseph Smith applied directly to me. In Doctrine and Covenants section 9:7-9 it says,

Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me.

I did study it out in my mind and my confusion left me. My intense feelings of calmness was the Holy Ghost burning within me. I immediately went to visit with my Bishop. We filled out my mission papers and I have never looked back, I knew for myself that the church was true. My mission changed my life forever. Brothers and Sisters I testify that God really does know me and answered my prayers.

The next event I would like to tell you about is my mission. I got called to serve in Toronto, Canada. I had several amazing spiritual experiences where I knew that God knew me. I would like to share two of those experiences with you.

The first happened about a year or so into my mission. My companion and I were tracting on a very hot and humid summer day. We saw a man who was out in his yard working so we wondered over to say hi and introduce ourselves. He invited us in and gave us a cold drink of water. We asked if we could share a message about Jesus Christ with him. He went and got his wife and teenage daughter. We shared our message and could immediately tell that there was some interest. We asked if we could come back and we set up another appointment.

We had a great experience teaching Malcom, Barbara and Debbie. We came back each week and eventually taught them all of the discussions. This took a few months. Finally, we challenged them to be baptized. This was a difficult decision because they had belonged to another church. However, they made the commitment and were baptized. I got transferred to another area shortly after they were baptized. I kept track of them for a while. I knew that Debbie their daughter had latched on to the Ward Young Adult Program and made many friends. I was so excited to hear their progress.

I kept in touch with the family for a few years after my mission but ended up not hearing anything for over 30 years. Then, one day I received a message on Facebook. The message said, "Hi Elder Millerberg, this is Debbie Bliss do you remember me? You and your companion baptized me over 30 years ago. I have remained active in the church and during a young adult trip to the Washington D.C. Temple I found my husband. I have a beautiful family and love the Gospel. I want to thank you and your companion for bringing me such a wonderful and eternal gift. YOU WERE MY MISSIONARY!"

The second experience happened just two months before the end of my mission after I got transferred to a small town in Northern Ontario. This was not the garden spot that missionaries typically wanted to go to because it was so cold in the winter. The average temperature in January was about 10 degrees. But I got lucky and was transferred there in May so it was just starting to get warm.

I was also given a new missionary to train. He was from California and very green. He was missing the warm California sun but soon learned to love Northern Ontario. North Bay was a small city of about 50,000 people and it had been closed to missionaries for several months. This always makes things a little more challenging when missionaries have not been in the area because there really wasn't a teaching pool. However, there was an area book that showed the names of those who had been taught some discussions many months before we arrived.

One the names on the list was Ruth Cress. After we had settled a bit we gave her a call. It turns out that she had been taught the discussion several times and her brother and sister in law were members of the Church. However, she had smoked for many years and had never been able to give it up.

We set up an appointment to meet with her. She told us that she wanted to be baptized but just could not give up smoking. So we taught her the 6th discussion again which is the discussion on the Commandments and discussed the word of wisdom. We challenged her again like other missionaries had done and her response was the same --- I just can't give up smoking. We left the discussion quite discouraged because we sensed that she really did know the church was true but she did not have the confidence to quit smoking.

A month went by and we tried to meet with her but she was a busy nurse and worked every other Sunday. We had only seen her at church once. Finally, after 6 weeks we got another appointment with her. My companion and I really did not know what to teach her since she had had all the missionary discussions many times so we decided to show her a short church movie called "the sacrifice". It is a movie about how a Father who is given two choices, one to save his own son from an oncoming train or save several hundred passengers.

The father had to make a difficult split second decision to save all the passengers and watch his son parish. At the end of the movie it draws a parallel with how our Heavenly Father gave up his only son that all of us could be saved.

After the movie she seemed touched but when we brought up baptism she still declined. Well, we left the meeting again depressed and did some tracking for a few hours. Then, we came back to our apartment for a meeting with our ward mission leader.

As we knelt in our small living room to pray the phone rang. It was Ruth and she said, Elder Millerberg and Elder Young do you know why you were sent to North Bay? She said the reason you came was to bring me into the church. She said that for the first time she had felt “A MIGHTY CHANGE” that had given her strength and the faith finally gave up smoking and join the church. She was baptized two nights before I came home from my mission. That was a great memory in my life. These missionary experiences and many others let me know that my Heavenly really does know me.

The next experience that I want to share with you was the most difficult of my life. About six years ago. I started to have some significant health problems.

First, I had developed skin cancer. This was not the small little patches that the dermatologist freezes off. They took a big chunk of skin out of my back which left a five inch scar. My doctor told me if I had waited another year before I came in for the check-up, the fast spreading Melanoma could have likely taken my life.

Then, one year later I went in for my annual physical. They did the standard lab work and I was on my way. A week later, the doctor called me and said my PSA levels were high and told me to come back in and take another blood test which I did immediately. The PSA test came back with the same results, I had Prostate Cancer. I could not believe it! Cancer twice in two years! Initially, the doctor could not really tell how serious the prostate cancer was with the blood test so it was a very scary time in my life. There were a few options of treatment and we decided on a pretty aggressive course of action. The operation was successful and the doctor informed us that the all the cancer was removed and there was no sign that it had spread.

With my melanoma and my prostate cancer my doctor found them in the early stages. I know my Heavenly Father was watching over me during this time in my life and the Holy Ghost had prompted me to visit my doctor with regular check- ups. I was also given sacred Priesthood blessings.

During the next few years I had three more surgeries, one on my ankle, my knee and finally my shoulder. This added up to a grand total of five surgeries in six years. The bad news was I felt like I was literally falling apart but the good news that I told my wife was that I was rebuilt. This was truly was the most difficult challenge of my life so far but at the same time it was the time when I felt closest to my Heavenly Father because of the miracle he gave me and my family of finding the cancer early and preserving my life. He knows me and watches over me. I would like to read a quote by Elder Uchtdorf, he said,

Brothers and sisters, the most powerful Being in the universe is the Father of your spirit. He knows you. He loves you with a perfect love.

God sees you not only as a mortal being on a small planet who lives for a brief season—He sees you as His child. He sees you as the being you are capable and designed to become. He wants you to know that you matter to Him.

Finally, I would like to tell you how my wife and I ended up here in beautiful Laie. A little over a year ago, I had decided to start to look for another job in the Salt Lake area near where we lived. I had worked for the same company for over 12 years and felt like it was time for a change. We were very comfortable in our home, our ward and had no intentions to move. The job market was good in Salt Lake and I started looking for another opportunity.

One night as I was watching the Utah Jazz game on TV an email came to me. I opened it up and it had a job listing for an HR Director at BYU Hawaii. I laughed and said to myself wouldn't that be a great job. Especially with a foot of snow in our yard. But we wanted to stay in Salt Lake so I quickly deleted the email and finished watching the game. A few weeks went by and I did not give it another thought until I received a second email with the same BYU Hawaii job listing. This time I opened up the job posting and looked at it more closely. However, I still thought it was a huge long shot but I went ahead and applied on-line which only took me a few minutes. After I had finished applying, I did not give it another thought until, to my surprise, I got an email a few days later from the recruiter (Sister Lake) asking me for more information.

At this point in the process, I decided to tell my wife. She had always wanted to live by a beach. I told her about it, she just laughed and said, we can't move to Hawaii! I laughed too and once again did not give it much thought since the recruiter told me there were over 50 candidates. Another few weeks went by and Sister Lake contacted me and told me that I had made the top 10 and they wanted to do a Skype interview with me. It was the first time that I thought that maybe I had a shot at the job. So I carefully and prayerfully prepared for the Skype interview. I had made a list of 10-15 common interview questions and prepared my answers. To my surprise the interview panel asked almost every single question I had prepared for (in order). When the interview ended I told my wife about the experience. For the first time she had a worried look on her face and she knew that this was a real possibility.

We got an invitation to fly over to Oahu to interview for the job. The interview process went well and I was offered the job. We had decided to stay a couple of extra days on Oahu to enjoy the beach and check out potential housing options. However, I could tell that Leigh Anne was very worried about being so far away from our family and leaving our comfortable life in Utah. I had some of the same concerns. In fact, I could tell that she was leaning towards staying in Utah. I suggested we go to the Temple and see how we feel. On Saturday morning we went to an Endowment session.

To be honest, I felt pretty good about moving to Hawaii but I knew the easy decision would be to stay in Salt Lake. I knew in my heart that if this is where the Lord wanted us we should go but I knew Leigh Anne was not comfortable with the move. So during the entire temple session, my prayer was simple. I told the Lord that I was willing to move but only if my wife felt like this was the right decision for our family. After we finished the temple session, I met her right outside the front door. Leigh Anne had a solemn look on her face and was very quiet. I could not tell from her expression what she was thinking. We walked around behind the temple and sat down on a bench.

She immediately broke down and started to cry. She said she had a clear vision of our life in Hawaii and went into great detail about what it would be like. She was given direct revelation from our Father in Heaven. She said we have no choice but to move. The Lord wants us here. The rest is history. During the next few months the Lord literally opened up the windows of heaven and poured out many tender mercies to make our move to Hawaii a good one. So many things fell into place. We were worried about what to do about our home in Utah. Our good friends ended up renting it. There was uncertainty as to where we would live. We ended up in a beautiful home.

Brothers and Sisters, I know that God loves each one of you individually. He knows exactly what is going on in your life right now (today!). He knows that many of you are worried about your upcoming finals. He knows some of you are searching for your eternal partner which may not be an easy process. He knows that many of you are graduating and are unsure about your future. He knows that some of you married students are struggling to make ends meet. I testify that he knows you and is waiting to bless you.

I would like to end with my testimony. It is that our Heavenly Father lives and He loves each one of us. I testify and I know that my Savior atoned for my sins. I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet that God. I know that the Book of Mormon is true. All that is good in my life is because of this wonderful gospel. I love my wife and family and say these things In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.