

# SUNSTONE

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## THROUGH EYES OF LOVE

READING THE STORIES IN THE “FOR Better, For Worse, For Apostasy?” article in the November 2006 SUNSTONE left me with a strange feeling of *déjà vu*. The pressures devolving on couples who become spiritually and theologically unyoked are enormous—coming at them from family, friends, and others in the Church.

I especially appreciated the wisdom of Page Kimball's words: “I realized that I needed to stop looking at Thomas through the Church's eyes.” So often we look at our spouse, parents, or children through the eyes of the Church and, in so doing, judge them to be inadequate, rebellious, or apostate instead of looking at them through the eyes of love. In my own extended family, parents have told children to leave the home because they started smoking or drinking. In the families of many of my acquaintances, children have been “sent away” to prevent shame for pregnancies. It seems that many in the Church are programmed to reject, expel, and alienate family and friends who turn from the principles of the Gospel instead of embracing them. As Robert Kirby so eloquently stated, “It's the height of irony to divorce someone over God, particularly since faith in him is supposed to be all about patience, forgiveness, and love.”

Like those in the SUNSTONE essays, my first marriage began when my wife and I were both “true believers.” During the next fifteen years, as I studied Church history and doctrine, I drifted from orthodox believer to a closet fundamentalist and ultimately into agnosticism. Like Page's father, I shielded my then-wife as much as possible from the roller-coaster that was my spiritual life, but she overheard conversations I had with friends that caused her to feel threatened. Ultimately, in answer to prayer, she heard a clear voice say that if she didn't divorce me, I would destroy her testimony of the gospel. I tried to point out that changes in opinions and beliefs occur from inside a person and that no one would be able to change her views without her consent, but arguments along those lines did nothing to alter her decision. Convinced she was following the path God wanted her to travel, she filed for divorce.

Discussed only briefly in the SUNSTONE essays is the source of what is probably the primary pressure on unequally yoked partners—how to instruct the children of the marriage. My ex-wife is adamant in requiring

that our daughter be raised in the LDS tradition. I have supported that over the last five years out of a desire to maintain peace within the family. But I resent having my daughter taught that her father is the “bad guy” for not believing in the gospel. While we walked together among the ancient cliffs of Arches National Park this past summer, I shared with my daughter a bit about the age of the rock formations we were witnessing. She then asked if I believed in Adam and Eve. When I replied that I didn't, she asked if I believed in Noah and the ark. Again I answered in the negative. “Dad,” she retorted, “you are weird.”

I don't mind being weird, but I fear that one day she will be told to fear my opinions, told that I am “blinded” by the sophistries of men and that I will not be worthy to live with her eternally. After struggling with this issue for nine years, I want my daughter only to grow up open-minded enough to form her own belief system, not one inherited whole from her mother, father, or her church.

In the end, I believe feelings of contention and fear are driven more by our own insecure belief systems than by genuine love for spouse or child. Too many members seem willing to relinquish a relationship with a spouse or child here in mortality in exchange for some unknowable reward for “faithfulness” in the hereafter.

BRIAN H. STUY  
Lehi, Utah

## SHINING A LIGHT

I WAS FASCINATED AND VERY MOVED by H. Parker Blount's article, “Scarlet Threads in the Lineage of Jesus” (SUNSTONE, November 2006) regarding Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba, the only four women besides Mary listed among Jesus' forebears, each of whom had in her history sexual experience that we condemn today but which actually was part of what allowed these women to make the contributions that they did. Had they been “better dead than morally unclean” our history would be less rich than it is. And it is instructive that the sacred text that brings us these women does so without condemnation.

I contrast this with the inhumane guilt our own religious community heaps upon the young especially, as they navigate the challenging ground of sexual behavior. The loss of self-esteem, of sexual and emotional health and sometimes even of life itself of many of our brothers and sisters is devastat-

ing. Just the other day, one of the gay men whose story is told in my recent *No More Goodbyes: Circling the Wagons around Our Gay Loved Ones* wrote me that his first suicidal thoughts had come at age seven. He felt certain that it would be better for him to die than to turn eight and become accountable for the sinful feelings he was experiencing.

My heart breaks for him and for so many others. I thank Brother Parker for helping to reframe this difficult subject by shining light on a part of our scriptural history we have never noticed.

CAROL LYNN PEARSON  
Walnut Creek, California

## WISE ADVICE

SINCE READING MICHAEL ASH'S thought-provoking "The Sin 'Next to Murder': An Alternative Interpretation" in the November 2006 *SUNSTONE*, I've found myself reflecting on the evolution of my own beliefs. What I've come to realize is that any questions I may have entertained over the years have come not so much from the writings of those "critics, ex-members, and even borderland members" who, Ash suggests, "intentionally lead others away from the gospel by the things they do, say, or write." Rather, I've found that the greatest challenges have come from well-meaning, faithful, generally orthodox members who, in defense of their own deeply felt convictions, have believed it necessary to resort to dogmatism, intolerance, secrecy, and suppression—at least, as I've read them. I don't doubt that in doing so, such members honestly believe they have in mind the best interests of the kingdom and its citizens. But the end result has invariably been—again, in my experience—the begging of larger, more challenging questions.

Ironically, when Ash, in a footnote, dismisses John-Charles Duffy's concerns regarding the incivility evident in some recent apologetic writings by suggesting that Duffy "seems to take a humor-impaired approach to apologetic discourse," I can't help but wonder if Ash himself—whose tone otherwise is generous—may be veering dangerously close to the "sin" of "holier-than-thou-ness" he also cautions readers to avoid. (Or perhaps Duffy isn't the only humor-impaired reader.)

Finally, I hope that Ash's concluding counsel—that we all need continually to examine and re-examine our own "inner motives"—finds a prominent place on all of our to-do lists. It's wise advice that none of us should ignore.

GARY JAMES BERGERA  
Salt Lake City, Utah

## REID'S MORMONISM

I WRITE TO CORRECT A COUPLE OF impressions the November 2006 *SUNSTONE* may have left regarding Senator Harry Reid. In the mention of Reid's ascendancy to the majority leadership in the People section (p.76), *SUNSTONE* states Reid grew up in a Mormon family. The article in the Mormonism and Politics section (p. 75) left unclear where Senator Reid's membership resides.

Senator Reid was asked to speak in the Washington, D.C. stake conference 19 November 2006. He was introduced by stake president Nolan Archibald as an active member of the Chevy Chase Ward. In his moving and poignant conversion story, Senator Reid said that his first contact with the LDS Church came when he left his home in Searchlight, Nevada, to go to high school in Henderson. Life in Searchlight was devoid of religion and antithetical to a moral upbringing, as understood in the Church today. In Henderson, he was introduced to the LDS seminary program by a friend there and attended early morning classes.

After attending the College of Southern Utah (now Southern Utah University) in Cedar City, Senator Reid enrolled at Utah State University in Logan, where he majored in political science. It was there that he was given the missionary lessons by stake missionaries—one of whom he described as crip-

pled but who braved the ice and snow of Logan winters to teach him—and joined the Church between his junior and senior years.

VANCE C. PACE  
Kaysville, Utah

## DIFFICULT DILEMMA

I FINALLY GOT AROUND TO READING P. D. Mallamo's "Anythang Will Help" (*SUNSTONE*, September 2006) and found it both entertaining—and familiar. Eight years ago, just after I had started a new job at the Church Office Building, I got to know "Mark," who used to sit with his "Homeless" sign and plastic cup on the planter box near the crosswalk between the ZCMI Center and the Church Administration Building. At the time, Mark was living in a tent up in the hills. His reason for being homeless was Mallamo's number nine: bad luck. He was soft-spoken and not mentally ill. He had a pretty good work history but also a persistent tobacco and alcohol habit.

After almost a year, and feeling fairly confident that Mark was telling me the truth, I talked a friend of mine, a vice-president at a large corporation, into hiring Mark to do part-time clerical work. The company did a full background check, which came up clean. The job got him off the street. I next saw him probably four years later when I went to lunch with him and the friend who had hired him. Mark looked like a completely different person—well-dressed, well-groomed, and, well, ordinary. Unfortunately, Mark's luck didn't last. One morning he came



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JEANNETTE ATWOOD

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to work drunk. The company has a no-tolerance policy, so Mark was out of work again. I don't know where he landed, but he never showed up on the street again.

My association with Mark changed my habit of giving money to panhandlers. According to Mark, many are not homeless at all but professional beggars. The veteran Mallamo describes, for instance, the one with one leg and a dog, owns a house, and word on the street says he can make \$200 a day when he brings the dog. A work colleague of mine walked past the couple with the pill bottles and luggage one day as they were taking a break in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. He heard the man scold his wife

with, "You've got to look sicker!" And the woman in the pink coat at the north gate of Temple Square, the one who wouldn't talk with Mallamo? Well, she told me her name was Evelyn. She also told me her story—parts of which didn't add up. In return, I explained to her why I do not give money to panhandlers and why I donate generously instead to organizations that help the truly needy. She had no problem with this and never again asked me for spare change when I walked by, but she did generally put on a gloomy face and, when I inquired, said that things were not going well. For old time's sake, I did give her five bucks the week before Christmas last year.

I no longer work in Salt Lake City, but I think about these street people now and then. They present a difficult dilemma to trusting, goodhearted, employed citizens. I suppose each of us has to find a solution he or she feels comfortable with. Good luck.

R. K. TERRY  
Orem, Utah

YET JUDGE WE DO

SUNSTONE'S SEPTEMBER 2006 ISSUE contains statements that I feel are a bit unfair to everyday members of the Church who are trying to do their best. There are many sides to every issue, and I would like to present another point of view concerning beggars in the street.

For sixteen years, I lived, worked, and volunteered in the Temple Square complex. I was paid to be a consultant and teacher in the Church's Family History Library, whose archives are a gift that Mormons give freely to the whole world. We strive to keep our collections safe, available, and understood by everyone who walks through the doors. We seek to protect our patrons as well as our records.

Our patrons come from all over the world. They save up to spend a week or two in local hotels and walk to the Library day and evening to use their short time in town doing research. Many prefer to come in the

winter when the library is less crowded and hotel rates lower. I always felt I was the luckiest person I knew to be able to work there, that my days and evenings were times of service. I didn't mind the dress code—I dressed professionally both as a teacher and a consultant. I felt safe and needed.


Then one day I was in the Library when suddenly I heard the strident voice of an elderly woman pulling a cart filled with gold rocks about the size and shape of a large potato. She knocked on the table at which I sat and held up an example. "See these lovely rocks which I am selling for only a dollar! Every person needs one or several." She demonstrated. "You can break your car window if you have lost your keys, or you can hit someone on the head who is threatening you." I thought to myself, "Yes, you can also smash our microfiche readers, break up our microfilm, and destroy our computers with your golden rocks." I quickly got up to notify Security.

We were always grateful that Security was around when we had to work until 10:00 p.m. on the darkest nights and knew that the homeless and others (some with harmful intentions) were outside nearby. We felt real fear of many in the street. During my working years, there was a murder in the library—a sweet volunteer in her eighties was shot in the forehead. In separate incidents, a patron was killed and a bullet took down one of my favorite Security guards—a wonderful man who cared at night for an invalid wife. Another time, a fellow historian was blown apart by a homemade bomb just a few short blocks away.

I continually tiptoed past street people who asked for a handout. I could not afford to give to everyone, so I always tried to let the Spirit guide my giving. Once I ignored that Spirit and did not sleep that night fearing that I had missed someone whom I had been singled out to help. Generally I saw the same people with the same illiterate signs, persons who chose not to accept help at nearby shelters and use free medical resources and facilities.

Street drugs and alcohol are a growing problem and visibly represented in our homeless community. It is difficult to know how to deal with street addicts.

Late one night, I was approached by a young woman with a neat appearance. She said that she had run out of gas and just needed "enough money to buy a gallon which can take me to my ATM machine." Helpfully, I offered two dollars. For the next two weeks, I observed her

 Pontius' Puddle



JOEL KAUFFMANN

# TOUCHSTONES CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS



**S**UNSTONE HAS BEEN EXCITED BY THE RESPONSE TO THE NEW TOUCHSTONES section that has run in the previous four issues. We're taking a break from it for this issue in an attempt to build up a larger cache of reflections to draw from. The next three topics are: "THE WARD," "POSSESSIONS," and "FAMILY DINNER." Please send us your stories and musings right away!

*TOUCHSTONES is a SUNSTONE section that debuted in the December 2005 issue. It was inspired by "Readers Write" in The SUN magazine. TOUCHSTONES topics are intentionally broad in order to give room for personal expression. Writing style is not as important as the contributor's thoughtfulness, humor, and sincerity. SUNSTONE reserves the right to edit pieces, but contributors will have the opportunity to approve or disapprove of editorial changes prior to publication. To submit a reflection, please send it typed and double-spaced to SUNSTONE, 343 North Third West, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84103. Electronic submissions can be sent via email to TOUCHSTONES editor Allen Hill at: ALLEN@SUNSTONEONLINE.COM. Due to space limitations, submissions should be kept somewhere around 400 words, but we are willing to make exceptions for exceptional pieces.*

wandering the street introducing the same sad story to passersby. Joining my husband for lunch one sunny afternoon, I listened as he told me of his generous response to a young lady whose "car had run out of gas and she needed to buy enough to get her to her ATM machine." Naturally I had to tease him about joining our "gift-giving" club. On our way back to the Library, we passed a young mother with two tiny children in a stroller who was struggling to find some change for the young woman who "needed to purchase a gallon of gas to get to her ATM." My husband was unhappy at being conned and warned the young mother away. The thwarted beggar nearly attacked him before she disappeared.

We did love the street musicians and always tried to find a little cash for someone who was willing to share a special talent. We had loved street musicians in San Francisco and Europe. We love them equally on the streets of Salt Lake City.

Best of all, I loved to visit the temple on my day off and tried to show respect for the house of the Lord—washing my hair, wearing my Sunday best, and carefully ironing my temple clothes. My preparations were for a visit to a temple of God, not to impress street people (or journalists) who wanted to send me on a guilt trip for wearing finery and ignoring their needs.

MORMONS ARE THE most generous persons I know of. They pay a full tithe, add a fast offering, and find money for humanitarian aid and the Perpetual Education Fund to help scholars in Third World countries.

Mormons also donate to the United Way and the Red Cross. We donate canned goods and turkeys to shelters at Thanksgiving. With tinkling coins, we answer Salvation Army Christmas bells. Locally we volunteer at Welfare Square, canning beans and tomatoes, baking bread and rolls. We make quilts for homeless infants, tying knots if we can't stitch. We are proud when we learn that a trainload or planeload of goods, which we helped collect and donated money toward, takes off to answer frantic calls for help from victims of earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, or fires. LDS physicians and nurses use their vacation time to fly from their homes and families and help take care of newborn infants and children from the Third World who would die without their help and knowledge. Members (including my son-in-law and teenage grandson) volunteer to help rebuild homes that were demolished by "Katrina," paying their own expenses for travel and materials. We are a community of volunteers and givers.

Mormons are reluctant to brag or discuss their offerings. To do so seems to take away the sacred importance of these gifts. Once one of my young sons complained when I encouraged a tithe, "It seems like we have to buy our way to heaven." I agreed that a gift should be rendered silently. But when an LDS-oriented magazine seems to want to chide the neatly dressed member to honor the beggar in our midst, it is time to point out in return what the article writer stated, "Judge not, yet judge we do daily" (p. 20).

LYNNE WATKINS JORGENSEN  
Salt Lake City, Utah




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