I have been a single parent for ten years now. During that time, I have learned to deal with upheavals and get along without many things. One thing, however, that has remained constant in my life is the gospel. Without the love and care of Heavenly Father and my fellow Saints, I could not have made it to where I am today: a relatively stable, striving mother who has the joy of the gospel.

In college, I made a personal decision to continue attending church even when my Latter-day Saint roommates failed to do so. Within a year after I was married in the Salt Lake Temple, I found myself again having to make the same decision when my husband became less active. I was disappointed and disillusioned. For some time, I struggled with attending church regularly.

The years passed, and two children joined our family. A wise bishop called me to teach the Merrie Miss girls in Primary. I accepted the position with feelings of inadequacy. As I prepared those lessons, though, I realized that I was reteaching myself things that I already knew but hadn’t thought about for a long while. My understanding of and faith in many gospel principles grew strong again. My capacity to serve, my abilities, and my testimony all increased, and soon I was called as a counselor in the ward Primary presidency. Later, I became the ward Primary president.

Despite my husband’s lack of progress, my motivation to attend church increased as I grew in the gospel. I began to take charge of my personal spirituality. I felt keenly my responsibility as a parent to teach the gospel to my children by example; I wanted them to know and experience the joy of living the gospel, a joy which I had learned firsthand.

I cherished my reawakened testimony and the friendships I found at church. However, my renewed Church activity contributed to difficulties my husband and I were experiencing at home. He seemed angry because of my increased involvement. His temper flared often. To share anything of a spiritual nature with him became impossible.

At one point, my husband told me that the children and I must stop going to church. As I tried to comply with his request, I felt my spirit begin to shrink. Would I be able to make it without feeling the encouraging spirit of the members? Could I help my children grow in the gospel without actually attending church? It was only because of my relationship with Heavenly Father that I had come this far. I felt my responsibility for my own earthly happiness and eternal salvation and my need to teach my children the principles of the gospel.

My husband’s attitude about my church attendance was only one of many serious problems in our
marriage. As time went by, I exhausted all my options for saving our marriage. After great agony, many weeks of sleepless nights, and intense prayer, I decided to divorce.

Divorce cuts deeply into one’s feelings of self-worth. A divorced person feels derailed, off-balance, and sometimes unworthy. As I continued going to church, however, I found it to be a salve for my open wounds. After the divorce, I needed our Heavenly Father more than ever before, and he was always there for me, loving me, comforting me, and blessing me.

After years of staying at home as a wife and mother, I now needed a job to help support myself and the children. It was difficult to make this change, because I am domestic at heart. My home and my children were my life. But despite my having been out of the job market long enough for intimidating word processors to have replaced typewriters, I was blessed with a good job only five minutes from my home. Heavenly Father seemed to be aware of my concern about being away from home; if my children needed me, at least I was close.

Though it hasn’t been easy, I have learned much as a single parent. I have learned that being single does not mean one is broken and needs to be fixed. I have learned the atonement of Jesus Christ can turn our bitter experiences into sweet ones if we do all we can to learn from adversity and become purified by it. I have learned that keeping the commandments brings peace but not necessarily an easy life. I have learned that it is through our struggles that we get to know our Heavenly Father and come to understand our worth as his child. I have learned that our Father’s gifts are constant: there is never a sale, nor does the price fluctuate. I have learned that we are free to choose our destiny; Heavenly Father seldom solves our problems for us without any effort on our part, but he gives us the purpose and strength we need to deal with them. More than anything else, I have learned to appreciate the power of prayer.

In the early years of being alone and raising my children, I had a hard time sleeping. Sleep does not come easily to me anyway, and at one point I had slept very little in several days. Late one night, I began to feel desperate. It is hard to be competent at work when I’m tired, and that concerned me. I knelt by my bed and prayed for the Lord to quiet my mind and let me sleep. I climbed back into bed and lay quietly. The words of a hymn came into my mind: “The Lord is my Shepherd; no want shall I know. I feed in green pastures; safe-folded I rest. … No harm can befall with my Comforter near” (Hymns, 1985, no. 108).

I seemed to feel loving arms around me. With the words “my Comforter near” softly echoing in my mind, I slept for the rest of the night. I appreciated the Lord’s tender display of love to me when I so desperately needed it. I have no doubt that Heavenly Father lives and loves me.

I acknowledge many good things in my life. I have friends and neighbors who are wonderful and inspired. My extended family live in another state, but they care for me and watch over me with great tenderness. My wonderful children have truly been my greatest strength. They are trying to do what is right, and I appreciate how hard they work to help with family responsibilities. They have sacrificed and learned, and they have set a good example for me and have taught me much.

We want to be an eternal family, and we know it is possible. Though mine is not a complete, picture-perfect Latter-day Saint family, I believe the Lord when he said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour
and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). He didn’t exclude anyone. He invites all into the fold.

What has the gospel done for me as a single parent? It has given me the courage to meet my challenges, to sacrifice, to set high goals, and to rely on my Heavenly Father. It has helped me to focus on every confirmation that God lives. My faith has increased through my trials. I have come to know a joy that I never would have known had I chosen not to apply the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to a loving Heavenly Father for his patience while I continue to learn. I feel whole. I feel guided and watched over. Most of all, I feel at peace.