

If ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you (Mosiah 2:22).

A PROPHET'S COUNSEL

BASED ON A TRUE STORY
By Jane McBride Choate

Deborah hadn't meant to listen to her friends' conversation, but when she heard her name mentioned, she couldn't resist listening.

"Did you know that Deborah's mother is having another baby?" Cassie remarked.

"How many children does that make for them?" Tiffany asked.

"Five. Or six. Something like that." Cassie laughed. "I don't know how Deborah stands it. I can't stand one little brother, and she has three—or four. Plus a baby sister!"

Deborah wanted to tell the girls that she loved all three of her brothers and her little sister. She

wanted to tell them that her family was none of their business. But her throat was so tight from being upset that she could barely swallow back her tears, much less speak.

After school, instead of waiting to walk with her friends, she hurried home by herself. She found her mother in the living room, rocking two-year-old Samantha.

Deborah smiled at the sight. Samantha was snuggled against her mother, thumb in her mouth.

"Let me take her." Deborah lifted her little sister and carried her to the crib. After kissing Samantha's



cheek, Deborah laid her down.

Mom began picking up the toys that littered the living room floor.

Deborah took over the task. “You shouldn’t be doing that. Didn’t the doctor say you’re supposed to take it easy?”

Her mother gave her a grateful smile. “Thanks, sweetheart. I don’t know what I’d do without you.”

The words wrapped Deborah’s heart in a cocoon of warmth.

“Why are you and Dad having another baby?” she asked hesitantly as she put the toys into a basket.

Her mom sat down and placed a hand on her rounded stomach. “There’s a life growing here. A special spirit that Heavenly Father has chosen to send to our family. It’s a wonderful feeling. And a sacred one.” She looked at her daughter curiously. “I thought that you were

excited that we were having another baby—aren’t you?”

“I am.” Deborah had looked forward to having another baby in the family since the moment her parents had announced the news.

“But?” her mom prompted.

Deborah thought about making something up, but she could never fool her mother. “Some girls at school were saying that our family has too many children already.” She swallowed hard. “They said that the world has too many people, that you shouldn’t be having any more children.”

A shadow crossed her mom’s face. Deborah sat beside her and leaned against her mother’s arm.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to make you sad.”

“I’m just sorry that you had to hear that. Many people don’t understand the blessing it is to bring another spirit child of Heavenly Father into our home.” Her

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mother settled back in the sofa. "When we were married, your dad and I didn't wait to start our family, like many couples do. When you were born, he was still in college, studying to be a teacher. People told us then that we should wait to have children."

"Wait for what?" Deborah asked.

"Until your dad was out of school and had a good job. Or until we had a house and money in the bank. People have a lot of reasons for waiting to have children.

"President Ezra Taft Benson was the prophet then. He counseled families to not wait to have children, so we didn't." Her mother squeezed Deborah's hand. "You were our first. And you were very, very precious to us. It didn't matter that we didn't have a lot of money or that we had to make do with what we had. You were more than worth it, and you still are. So are your brothers and your sister and whoever is coming this time. Your dad and I love each of you with all our hearts."

"I'm glad you listened to the prophet."

"So am I, sweetheart."

The following day, Deborah found Cassie and Tiffany and other friends in the cafeteria. She

took a deep breath. "I heard you talking yesterday, and I know that you think our family is too big. The truth is, we're not big enough. There's another spirit in heaven waiting to come to earth, to be part of our family."

The girls looked embarrassed. "Do you really like having so many brothers and sisters?" Tiffany asked at last.

"Sometimes they can be a pain," Deborah said honestly. "But I love all of them. And I wouldn't trade any of them for a new pair of jeans or anything else."

Cassie slid over to make room for Deborah. "Sit down and have lunch with us. Maybe you can teach me how you put up with little brothers."

Deborah grinned. "First, you have to know how to make truck noises."

