

God Will Provide

By Janet S. Porter

The Life and History of Phineas Wolcott Cook
pp. 32-35, using his own words

CHARACTERS (7 – 4 males, 2 females, Narrator)

PWC (Phineas Wolcott Cook)

Ann Eliza (his wife)

Irene (his mother, Irene (Churchill) Cook)

A Boarder

Hiram (Hiram Cook, a boarder)

John Guthrie (friend of PWC)

Narrator

Ann Eliza: Phineas, it's September 7, 1845, the day of the church conference at the Comstock Branch. Tomorrow we're to be baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

PWC: Shhhh, don't say it so loud. If my parents hear, they'll never let us go.

Ann Eliza: All right. I'll speak softly. Your sister Eliza and her husband Salmon Hall are coming to pick us up in their wagon at 2 this afternoon. She said she would have dry clothes for us.

PWC: I know my parents have been watching for signs we might be baptized. They once believed in the church after listening to the missionaries, but now have turned completely against it. In fact, when I read the *Book of Mormon* and *The Voice of Warning*, I had to hide them in a dead tree and read a few pages at a time. My only chance was during spring plowing while the oxen rested. All that so my family wouldn't know I was reading church books.

(PWC and Ann Eliza leave)

Narrator: Phineas and Ann Eliza were baptized Sunday, September 8, 1845 in the Kalamazoo River and were confirmed by Elders Edward M. Webb and Crandall Dunn. They tried to keep a secret, but it didn't take long for the Cook family to find what had happened. From that moment there was almost constant turmoil, especially from his mother, Irene Cook.

(Irene, a boarder, and PWC come to the stage)

Irene: Gentlemen, I hope you had good night's sleep in our boarding rooms. Now we have a fine breakfast for you. Please sit down, and don't fail to notice my son Phineas Jr. cooking the pan cakes. He was recently baptized a Mormon, what do you think of that?

Boarder: I heard a lot about those Mormons

Irene: Yes, I'm sure you have. And none of it was good, right?

Boarder: You're right. I've heard that Joe Smith was the worst of all sinners, and that the world is a better place after he was killed.

PWC: Mother, do you have to keep a public house of entertainment? You force me to bear faithful witness to the truth.

Irene: Gentlemen, have you heard other stories about Joe Smith? I'm sure you know about...

PWC: *(Standing straight and speaking to everyone)* Really, Mother, I think that's enough. I want everyone here to know the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been again restored to the earth. God has brought back to our wicked world the truths of the ancient church, the truths that were taught at the time of Jesus Christ. This is the last time it will be restored in its fullness, and we have an amazing opportunity to accept the truths taught by Jesus Christ Himself. The least you can do is to listen. Through the wonderful Atonement of Jesus Christ, God has a more liberal salvation for man than any of us realized, and you can have the opportunity to learn in this life what is required to live in His presence forever! When you have the chance, listen to the Mormon missionaries, or stay after breakfast and talk to me.

Irene: I'll have none of it. Just keep eating, and Phineas, you just keep making pan cakes.

(They leave the stage. PWC and John Guthrie return.)

PWC: My mother really has it in for me, John. She tries to persuade every traveler who stays at her boarding house that she has a son who was deceived by the Mormons. But, I'll tell you, the more they say, the stronger my testimony, and the more I feel to maintain my beliefs.

John Guthrie: Well, I think you may have another opportunity to maintain that belief. A man named Hiram Cook has come and is asking about breakfast. He is getting some feed for his horse in that stall over there.

PWC: Hello, Mr. Cook. Cook happens to be my name too. Where do you come from?

(Hiram walks to PWC)

Hiram: I lived in the southeast corner of Iowa, across the Mississippi River from Hancock County, Illinois.

PWC: And isn't that across the river from the city of Nauvoo? You may know something about the Mormons, for you must have lived near some of them.

Hiram: I have heard stories about them, but personally knew nothing of them. I never had anything to do with them, and never troubled myself about them.

PWC: Well, perhaps you could tell me something about that area, for I am thinking of moving there. Come in with me to breakfast, and I'll get you some food.

(PWC, Hiram and John leave.)

(Irene, PWC and Hiram Cook come to the stage.)

Irene: And who might you be, traveler?

Hiram: My name is Hiram Cook. I come from Iowa and the Mississippi River near Hancock County, Illinois.

Irene: Well, *that is* interesting. You must know something about the Mormons, and if you do, for heaven's sake, do tell it, for I have a son that's a Mormon here, and if you can say anything that will stop him from going off with them, I wish you would do it.

Hiram: Ma'am, these eggs are delicious, and the ham is the best I ever ate. Can I have more, please? And a few more of those pancakes. I'm mighty hungry.

Irene: Yes, of course, have all you want. Now tell us about those Mormons.

Hiram: "Well, I lived in Nauvoo and butchered and sold beef to the Mormons for three years.

PWC: What? You told me...

Hiram: That's right. I lived with them three years. They was the meanest of all people living.

PWC: That's not what you said in the barn.

Hiram: Could I have just one more piece of that wonderful ham, and another helping of eggs?

Irene: Of course, fill up your plate.

Hiram: Those Mormons are so dishonest they would steal the cents off a dead man's eyes. I saw old Joe Smith dead drunk many a time, and know him to be an old scoundrel and imposter. Hell is too good for him.

PWC: Wait. This man is a liar, and I can prove it. My friend John Guthrie was in the barn with me and heard this man say he didn't even know any Mormons. I should go out and get John to tell what he heard.

Hiram: *(Grabs his hat off the chair)* Well, thanks for that wonderful breakfast. I won't need to eat the whole rest of the day. Goodbye. Have to go now.

PWC: I wish you wouldn't inspire people to tell lies about the Mormons, Mother. I don't have time to defend myself every moment. I think I need some peace and quiet. I'm going out to work on Father's house now.

(Irene leaves and PWC begins hammering. A missionary comes in.)

Missionary: Are you Phineas Cook?

PWC: Why, yes I am.

Missionary: My name is Edward Willard. I have been sent to tell you the time has come for all the Saints to gather, for the church is going to move to Vancouver's Island or someplace in the far west. It is not known yet where, but you are required to do as Abraham did: to go to a land that should yet be shown.

(The missionary leaves and Irene returns)

PWC: Mother, I think you shall soon be rid of your irritation. I have just been called to save my family by going with the saints.

Irene: Oh, is that so? Well, I have one consolation: you haven't any means to command with which to go.

PWC: You must know by now of my great faith in God's purposes. I have great confidence I can find a way to be obedient to this commandment. The God I serve is rich, for the earth is His, and the fullness thereof, and I have no fears about getting away. If I do the best I can, the Lord is bound to open the way for me, and he surely will do it if I am obedient.

Irene: Perhaps your God *is* made of silver and gold, but mark my word: You have neither the resources nor the power to accomplish such a task. You have no money, no wagon, no team...nothing. I am sure you shall be back to winter.

PWC: I *will* find a way to go, even though I have no resource to accomplish it right now. If God has called me, I will go, even if I have to carry my children on my back. Somehow *God will provide a way*.

Family Discussion

In stressful circumstances, people often get angry and say unkind or hurtful things.

How did Phineas Wolcott Cook respond when people around him criticized, bullied, and even lied?

In what ways do you feel threatened about your beliefs?

Phineas took those stressful times as an opportunity to bear witness of the truth of the gospel. He was able to do it because he had made up his mind ahead of time what to say and how to respond.

We are all placed in difficult circumstances in which we may be tempted to respond with anger, revenge, or by refusing to defend the truths being criticized. If we make up our minds far ahead of time what we will say and do, we, like Phineas, will be able to defend our beliefs and remain obedient to the principles of the gospel—even when threatened or humiliated.