

Worth

written by

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CHARACTERS

JANE

Female. Early-mid twenties. Attends one of the Brigham Young Universities. A faithful, fully believing member of the "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints", also know as the LDS or Mormon Church.

BISHOP TAFT

A Bishop for the LDS Church, specifically a ward for students at BYU. Fourties to fifties. Genuinely cares for those he presides over.

Author's Note:

A Bishop is the leader of a local LDS ward (congregation). They are considered LDS clergy, but have no theological training. These men must continue to hold their own employment while carrying out the duties of Bishop, a role they hold for around ten years. Virtually all bishops are married.

The office of an LDS bishop, currently belonging to Bishop Taft. A set of scriptures (the "quad") sits on his desk.

TAFT is already at his door, holding it open. His last appointment just left.

BISHOP TAFT

(Speaking out the door)

David, would you mind sending in Jane before you two leave?

Enter JANE

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)

Have a seat.

TAFT takes a seat behind his desk, and JANE sits in the chair opposite.

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)

How are your classes?

JANE

Fine.

BISHOP TAFT

Just "fine?"

JANE

Biology is kicking my butt. I really don't want to have to take it over again, but you know...

BISHOP TAFT

You're going into nursing, right?

JANE

(tired)

Yeah.

BISHOP TAFT

Well you know, one of my favorite quotes is from Elder Cook: "We must live by faith, and not by fear."

JANE
(chuckles nervously)

That's right.

BISHOP TAFT leans forward, hands clasped together on the desk.

BISHOP TAFT
Jane, I'm sure you're wondering why I wanted to talk to you today as well.

JANE
Is this about David?

BISHOP TAFT
No, he's doing quite well. Working through the repentance process. I'm impressed that you come with him to our meetings.

JANE
He's a good guy. He deserves someone to be here for him.

BISHOP TAFT
It's hard, being so far away from home. I'm glad he has someone like you.
You two talk about tying the knot yet?

JANE
(surprised, embarrassed)
Is he... um... Ready for that?

BISHOP TAFT
He's hasn't used in a few months, so yes, I think he's worthy enough to start going back to the temple. I gave his recommend back to him today.

JANE
(relieved)
That's good. Pornography is so difficult to stop so I just.. Thank you. He's been working so hard and-

BISHOP TAFT
I actually wanted to talk about you, Jane.

JANE stares at him, eyes wide.

JANE
 (nervous, almost like she
 feels guilt)
 Oh. Um... what about?

BISHOP TAFT
 We've missed you in Sunday School, and the Relief Society
 president tells me that she hasn't seen you at any of their
 events.

JANE
 I've been so busy with-

BISHOP TAFT
 I understand you have a lot on your plate. But there's more
 to church than just Sacrament Meeting.

JANE
 Of course! I haven't been feeling well, so I thought leaving
 early wouldn't be-

BISHOP TAFT
 You remember your Ecclesiastical Endorsement?

Beat.

JANE
 I'm sorry, I thought I was supposed to renew that at the end
 of the semester.

BISHOP TAFT
 If I'm going to sign your Endorsement, I need to know that
 you've earned it. You're supposed to regularly attend church
 activities.

JANE
 I know.

BISHOP TAFT
 Your endorsement is a requirement for ongoing enrollment,
 so...? What's been going on?

Beat.

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)
 Is everything alright?

Beat.

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)

Jane, I care about you. I only want to help.
 (with all the weight a moment
 like this deserves)

I've been impressed by the spirit to ask you about your
 testimony.

Beat.

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)

How do you feel about the church?

*BISHOP TAFT waits for an answer. JANE looks down as
 she collects her thoughts.*

JANE
 (guilty)

I'm not sure.

BISHOP TAFT

Do you believe that Heavenly Father leads this church?

JANE

I think so.

BISHOP TAFT

Alright. That's a start.

JANE

I just...

TAFT waits. Gently stares her down.

JANE (CONT'D)

My sister came out as gay.

BISHOP TAFT
 (not a big deal)

Alright.

JANE

She introduced me to her girlfriend. They seem happy.

BISHOP TAFT

Trust me Jane, you're not the only one to come to me about this. You may be surprised at how many people you know who deal with same-sex attraction, even here in the ward.

TAFT waits for a response. JANE gives him nothing.

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)

Do you have a testimony that the church is true?

JANE

("of course I do")

Yes.

BISHOP TAFT

And the prophets teach us that same-sex relations are a sin.

JANE

Yes.

BISHOP TAFT

Then Jane, the thinking has been done. I'm sorry that your sister has these feelings, and I'm sorry that she's been deceived into thinking that it's normal to act on them. It's hard, when the world preaches one thing and the Lord's prophets preach another. But we have to dare to be different. We can't give in to the world's opposition of the truth.

JANE

(nervously)

I don't know if... I don't think that their relationship is a sin.

BISHOP TAFT

Jane, you know-

JANE

When I was with them, all I felt was love. I felt...

BISHOP TAFT

You know what the-

JANE

I felt the spirit. I was taught, since I was a baby, that the spirit would testify to me of things that were true.

BISHOP TAFT

Jane, have you considered-

JANE

My last year of Girls Camp, at the end-of-camp testimony meeting, all of my friends got up, one by one, and bore their testimony that they knew the church was true. Everyone was crying. I was crying. But inside... I felt nothing. I prayed so hard to feel what everyone else was feeling- the "burning in the bosom" that would let me know, without a doubt, that the church was true. But I never felt it.

Beat.

JANE (CONT'D)

I asked my sister why she left the church. She told me things about Joseph Smith that I was never taught. He married a 14 year old without Emma knowing. He-

BISHOP TAFT

Have you considered the possibility that you are also being deceived?

JANE

(nervous)

By what? Satan?

BISHOP TAFT

Maybe, yes. What you're talking about with Joseph Smith may have happened, but it's not uncommon for people to take things out of context to make the church look bad. Or to apply modern morality onto people of the past.

JANE becomes quiet, thinking.

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)

My advice to you is to hold true to your testimony. To what you know.

Beat.

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)

David mentioned that you were questioning the church, but Jane, you're delving into anti-mormon-

JANE

I thought you said that the spirit "*impressed*" on you that you needed to ask about my testimony?

BISHOP TAFT

I felt that you-

JANE

Did the spirit tell you to talk to me, or my boyfriend?

TAFT gets a blank piece of paper from his desk.

BISHOP TAFT

Jane, I have some scriptures I want you to read.

JANE

I don't know if I believe the church is true anymore.

Beat.

BISHOP TAFT

Jane, you just told me that you-

JANE

What was I supposed to say? What did you expect me to say?

BISHOP TAFT

(kind, but assertive)

I expect you to be honest with me.

JANE looks down, wrestling with her guilt.

TAFT opens the scriptures on his desk, thumbs through them, and writes some down on the paper.

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)

Read these scriptures, Jane. Pray on them. Let's make an appointment for-

JANE

(distressed, assertive)

Please stop.

TAFT and JANE look at each other suddenly, surprised.

JANE (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry! I didn't meant to... I just...

JANE stares at him. Silence.

JANE (CONT'D)
I might need a break.

BISHOP TAFT
From what?

JANE
From the church.

TAFT sighs.

JANE (CONT'D)
I... I feel like I've been lied to. Not by you! By...
Like what you said about "anti-mormon" lies. I've been
reading. A lot. That stuff isn't lies, it's history.

JANE takes a breath.

JANE (CONT'D)
My school is named after an abusive, racist, horrible man. I
don't know if I want his name on my resume.

BISHOP TAFT
(Still gentle, but emotional)
Brigham Young was a product of his time. I know how difficult
it is to understand why he did what he did sometimes. I
wonder why our current prophet does what he does sometimes
too. But whatever flaws they have, however much you may not
understand, they are prophets of God.

TAFT takes a moment to collect himself.

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)
(coldly)
If you choose to stop attending church, I have no choice but
to withdraw my endorsement.

JANE deflates.

JANE
Doesn't that mean...? I'd be kicked out of school.

BISHOP TAFT

You signed the contract when you entered the school, Jane.

Long pause.

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)

You're a Junior?

JANE

Yes.

BISHOP TAFT

Don't throw away your entire degree based on whims. You deserve an education.

JANE

I can't just transfer, I... A fourth of my credits are religious classes.

BISHOP TAFT

I've heard that transferring can be difficult, yes. Stick with it, Jane. Don't throw away everything.

Silence.

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)

Pray about it.

JANE

(More to herself than to the
Bishop)

I've prayed about this harder than anything I've ever prayed for in my entire life.

BISHOP TAFT

Pray again.

TAFT offers the paper to JANE.

JANE doesn't move- she's thinking.

BISHOP TAFT (CONT'D)

Study these scriptures. Pray on them?

Beat.

JANE

(regaining her confidence)

If I keep coming to church. Keep taking the sacrament. Keep giving 10% of my income... I'm telling my sister that she's wrong, aren't I?

BISHOP TAFT

You know that's not what the church-

JANE

I met with my sister two months ago. How much do I need to pray and study before I get to the answer you want?

Silence.

JANE (CONT'D)

I appreciate your help, Bishop.

JANE gets up to leave.

BISHOP TAFT

Is this really worth losing your education?

Beat.

JANE

You know what I just realized? I haven't done anything wrong. If the church doesn't think that I'm worthy enough to receive an education here... then yes. I think it might be worth it.

Jane leaves, closing the door behind her, leaving TAFT alone.

END OF PLAY