An Open Letter to My Wife on Our 20th Anniversary….

*Dearest Janese,*

*Here we are on our 20th anniversary. We have no big plans today. No grand gestures. We’re pretty busy and will probably have to save most of the celebrating for this summer when there is a little more time, or at least fewer directions we’re going. Today will be fairly normal, except that I’ll be thinking a little more about you, and us, and twenty years of happy marriage.*

*To say we’ve been happy is an understatement at best. But we discuss that all the time. I do want to express a few things to you today that we don’t always talk about, but I want to avoid some of the overused sentiments that I see on cards and in movies. I hope you’ll understand…*

***“I can’t believe it has been twenty years!”****— Of course I believe it. I knew from the get-go that we were going the distance. I suppose that everyone thinks they are going to “make it” when they start out in marriage. But there is something about starting a marriage in the temple that causes, even forces, you to think about not only this life but the next. In my mind, an “eternal marriage” isn’t a marriage defined by time so much as a marriage unbound by time or space or any outside influence. The reality of it is this: you and I will always be central to one another in every conceivable way, whether in this life or the next. I have an assurance of that. Twenty years? We’re just getting going…*

***“We were meant to be!”****— This is a tough one. I’m not sure I’m convinced that there is a “one and only” out there for everyone. There are roughly 7 billion humans on the earth. Finding “the one” seems like a pretty tall order. Though I can’t imagine being anywhere near as happy being married to someone else, I’d bet that you could have found someone else and been very happy. I’m pretty average and you adapt well, so you would have been fine. But, with all of that said, I do believe that now, and starting twenty years ago, you and I were meant to be. You are my one and only. I act on that knowledge every second of everyday. Our relationship is inspired and “on purpose”. I don’t wonder about life with anyone else. I just spend my time wondering about what I can do to make ours better.*

***“I can’t imagine life without you!”****— This overused phrase might actually work here. You were gone this last weekend. I hated it. It isn’t that I mind time away from you. And it isn’t that I don’t want you to have time away from me. Jeesh, I would want time away from me. But there were a million times in the day when I wanted to tell you something or ask you something or get help from you or offer help to you. I had funny things to say and I’d laugh and say them to myself and imagine you rolling your eyes and trying not to laugh so as to not encourage me. But really, I can’t remember life without you. I can remember life events from before I knew you, of course. But I can’t remember what it feels like not to be yours. Every memory I have contains at least hints of you in the periphery, even though I didn’t know you way back then. There were a lot of choices I made when I was young that were intended to benefit you, even though you didn’t exist then. But you did. You were always there.*

***“We’ve been through so much together!”****— True, but this sentence never actually does justice to what a couple has actually lived through. What does “so much” mean? We’ve endured four babies quickly come and go before we were able to hold them. We’ve happily been blessed with five babies that have come and stayed. We’ve heard that dreaded news of “breast cancer” and endured some very sleepless nights while counting on doctors and nurses and clinics and relying on the Lord to allow us the experience that would best bless us. We’ve lived through night-shifts, finals weeks, lost engagement rings, sleepless nights of sick children, demanding callings in the church, financial strain and financial ease, differing opinions. “So much” doesn’t begin to describe it. And the “so much” that we’ve lived through doesn’t begin to describe what it coming. We’ll be sick. We’ll have more financial worries. We’ll have flooded basements. We’ll have fires. We’ll worry about our children and their children and their children. Death will make an entry at some point. We’ll lose parents, posterity, and at some point, one of us will step across the veil and leave the other behind for a while. I really hope that we leave this life relatively close to one another, but I hope you go first. I can’t stand the thought of you being alone here. Yes, we’ve been though some things and we’ll go through some things. But we’ll always have each other.*

***“I love you more than you can know!”****— This one may be accurate. In fact, I think I love you more than I can know.*

*Janese, thank you for saying “yes”. Thank you for going “ralking” with me (not a misspelling, just an inside piece of information). Thank you for the card and the peach pie. Thank you for holding my hand on the basketball court at our apartment building (actually, thank you for not letting go. I tricked you a little on that one). Thank you for accepting an invitation to kiss goodnight (I can remember that exact square of the sidewalk we were on). Thank you for saying “yes” on the couch in the Logan Temple. Thank you for following through six months later in that same temple (I suppose you could have changed your mind). Our wedding day will always be one of my favorite days to exist. Thank you for being willing to have children. That has been the source of deep heartache and complete happiness for us. Thank you for coming home last weekend…*

*There is more. Of course there is more. We’ve been married twenty years. But thank you for being who you are. The twenty years ago you, the current you, the future you, and the eternal you. The eternal us. I love you…*

*Love,*

*Bri*