

PROLOGUE

From the beginning, let's pretend we are barefoot, walking in the footprints of individuals making history. We feel the outline of their impressions as we stand on our own feet within their soles. Perhaps they wore sandals, boots, hand-me-downs from an older brother or sister, or just rubber cut from a worn boot or an old tire. Maybe they wrapped their feet in cloth or animal hide and tied it around at their ankles. Perhaps they walked barefoot. Can you feel the sores on their feet? Their feet hurt as they walked and walked, stepping on the thorns and sharp rocks of life's trials. They are out of breath and cold, but they continue pressing forward. They bathe their tired feet in the cool, clear running water of the streams along the prairies and the mountains. Weary, hungry, scared, and exhausted, they keep moving forward. They placed one foot in front of the other, determined to hold on, moving forward—never back. Then, their footprints disappear. Why? Were they riding a horse, wagon, train, or maybe one of the nation's first gasoline automobiles? When we stop to imagine and *feel* these footprints, they are inspirational even in their trials.

Are your footprints shaped like theirs? They grew strong and supple in their childhood and youthful years, then wrinkled and scarred with age. Still their footprints enterprisingly pressed forward through eras of transition, celebration, and war.

And now, while you walk in their footsteps, you also create your own. May our prints offer a clear path—strong, never-ending, and faithful—linking the past to the future for those generations yet to come.