

Joining The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was by far the most rewarding spiritual journey of my life.



challenges to my personal standards, my mother happened to go to mormon.org and ask for the missionaries to visit again. I decided I needed to look into the Church again, too.

I appreciated how the members and missionaries were so welcoming and willing to answer my questions, such as why the Holy Ghost is a gift and how families can be sealed for eternity. And when I learned about basic aspects of the Church, such as the fact that we were all spirit children of God and that there are modern-day prophets, through my prayers the Spirit revealed to me that the teachings are true.

When I first attended a Latter-day Saint ward, I felt a sensation of joy and pure energy I had never experienced before. Peace and contentment flowed through me as I soaked in the loving atmosphere and listened to heartfelt testimonies. Everyone radiated happiness, and their giving spirits touched me. I later found out that these feelings came from the Holy Ghost.




However, the first time I strongly felt the Holy Ghost's guidance was when I was reading the pamphlet titled *The Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. I could identify somewhat with Joseph Smith's confusion, and I saw pure truth in the statement: "They teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof" (Joseph Smith—History 1:19).

Joseph's story penetrated so deeply into my core that I felt a burning sensation in my chest and began to cry. At that moment, I knew with all my heart that this is the one true Church. After reading the pamphlet, I told my mother, "I know it is true. I am ready now."

Ultimately, my experience with the Joseph Smith pamphlet was the catalyst for my baptism and confirmation—and much more. My mother and I were baptized in March 2009, my father was baptized two months later, and we were all sealed in the temple just over a year later. Every day, I am grateful that I converted to the Church. The Holy Ghost has been a constant, loving companion to me, and He has influenced my life in both major and more mundane ways, as well as in ways I was not even aware of at the time.

In fact, I once received a strong impression from the Holy Ghost that a friend needed comfort, so I spent more time with her and gave her short notes telling her how much she meant to me. A couple of days later, she found out that she had been rejected from the college she had applied to, and I was better able to comfort her in her disappointment.

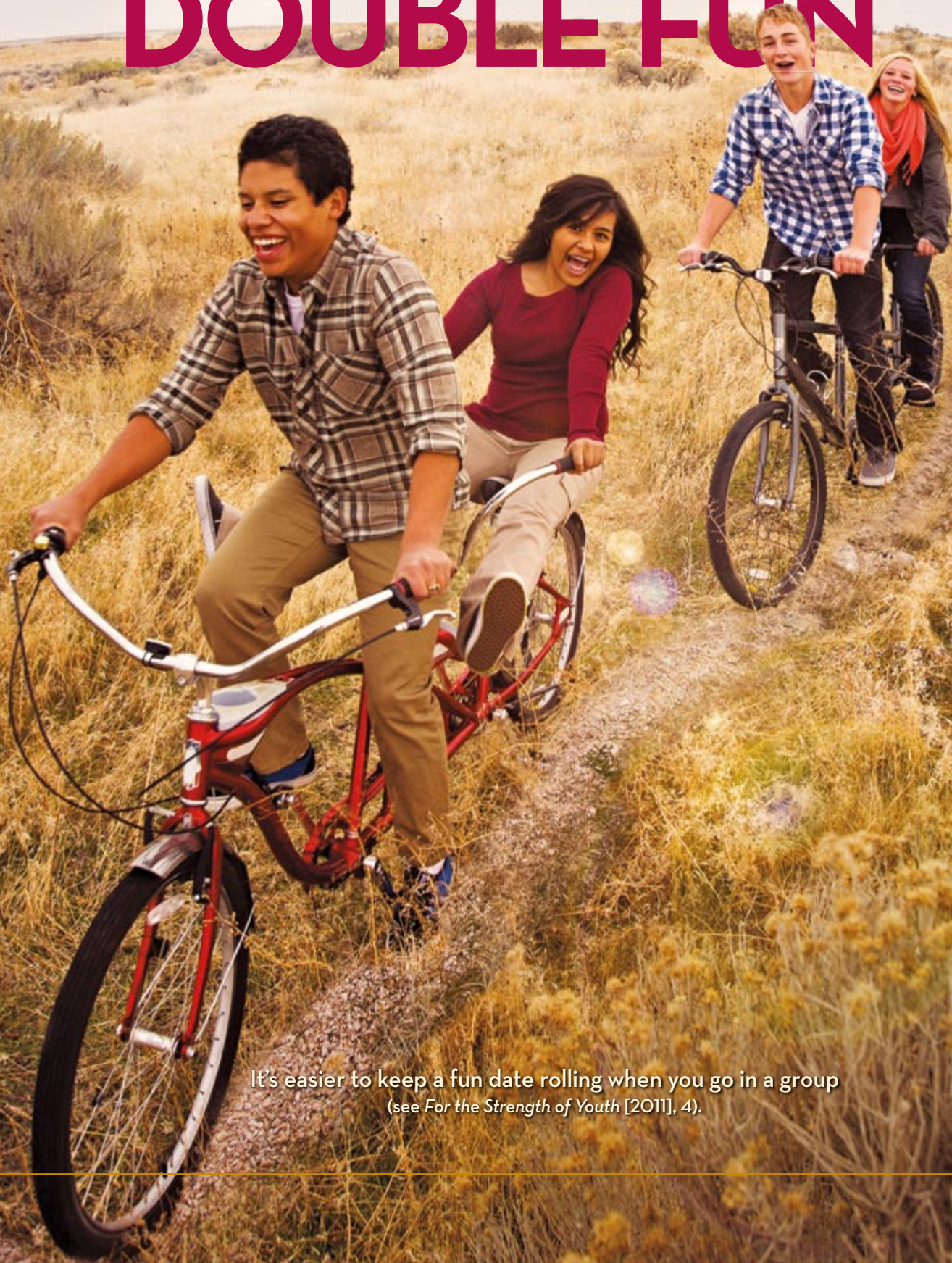
I now live surrounded by people with high standards who share my views about the true importance of loving relationships, and I look forward to one day being married in the temple and sealed for eternity. Converting to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has enhanced and given new meaning to my life. I keep the Joseph Smith pamphlet with me even today, because every time I read it, I am filled with joy about God's gift of truth to me. **NE**



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MORMONAD

DOUBLE DATE DOUBLE FUN



It's easier to keep a fun date rolling when you go in a group
(see *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 4).

By Ray Goldrup

Blind CURVE

*I couldn't see the danger just around the corner,
but I received a warning.*

For my 17th birthday, my dad presented me with his old Volkswagen. I was ecstatic. Imagine—my very own car! I was anxious to take a drive. A *long* drive. Somewhere. Anywhere. I suppose my excitement was, in part, a result of a boyish, budding sense of independence.

The long-awaited and sorely anticipated journey finally arrived the following summer when my parents gave me permission to drive a few states away to visit a cousin. My 15-year-old brother, Tom, accompanied me. My dad hugged me and cautioned, “Keep your sense about you, Ray. And be careful.”

It was a memorable trip, mainly because it was my—rather *our*—maiden voyage, of sorts. Our first real time away from home. That, in itself, was the real adventure.

As with all adventures, this one came to an end, and it was time to go home. We were tired and ready to return to the comfort of our own beds.

Tom was asleep in the backseat of the car as I snaked my way through the mountains on a high, narrow road. I had been driving all day, and it was late, so I couldn't wait to get down off that mountain, pull off the road, and get some sleep, at least enough for a brief respite before finishing the final leg of our journey.

Being saddled with an aching want for sleep, along with a youthful helping of inexperience and irresponsibility,

I was driving too fast for the conditions of the road. The night was blacker than a bad tooth. The sickle-thin cut of moon in the inky sky and the feeble, confetti-like throw of star glow provided scant illumination on the dark road. I negotiated the narrow, serpentine roadway using the almost-just-as-meager aid of the vehicle's headlights.

Just as I was about to round yet another sharp curve, I heard a voice within me say, “Slow down. There are two deer around the corner in the road.”

Driving as fast as I was and already upon the turn, I had only time enough to react—to either ignore the voice or hurriedly follow the instruction.

I chose the latter, quickly slowing down as I took the blind curve. And there, just as the voice had forewarned, standing in the middle of the narrow roadway, were two deer, blinded by my headlights and too startled to move.

Had I not heeded the voice, I would have swerved to the left and driven off the edge of the huge drop-off.

After maneuvering around the deer, I proceeded on our route. It was good to be home again. As I lay in my own bed with my hands tucked under my head, I realized that as much as I looked forward to the notion of one day being on my own, I hoped that wherever life found me, I would be living righteously enough to always have the companionship of the Holy Ghost. **NE**



FIVE WAYS TO STAY IN TUNE WITH THE HOLY GHOST

1. Pray for guidance, safety, and protection, and keep a constant prayer in your heart (see Alma 34:19–27).
2. “If something we think, see, hear, or do distances us from the Holy Ghost, then we should stop thinking, seeing, hearing, or doing that thing” (Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “That We May Always Have His Spirit to Be with Us,” *Ensign*, May 2006, 30).
3. Remain faithful in keeping the commandments and standards. “Those who are faithful to God are protected and prospered” (President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “O Remember, Remember,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 67).
4. Sincerely repent of past sins and offer up “a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20).
5. Diligently seek the Holy Ghost by doing that which is uplifting, including reading your scriptures, going to the temple, attending Church meetings, participating in Mutual activities, spending time with family, and having faith in God (see 1 Nephi 10:17).

By Elyse Alexandria Holmes

LEARNING, TEACHING, AND PREACHING *The Gospel*

PRAY AND RELY ON THE SPIRIT

“The message of the Restoration of the gospel must be taught by divine power—the power of the Holy Ghost, who is the third member of the Godhead. . . .

“ . . . As you strive to develop the faith to rely on the Spirit, you should . . . pray for the Spirit. ”

Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service (2004), 3.

“How do you *know* Joseph Smith was a prophet?” the investigator asked.

“OK, deep breath. You can answer this,” Tanner thought to himself. Tanner J. was teaching the First Vision with his companion for one of the first times.

Suddenly, the noise faded into the background, and the room became tranquil and calm. In that moment, only Tanner, his companion, and the investigator mattered to him. Tanner related the First Vision and bore a solemn and sincere testimony of Joseph Smith. Since then, Tanner has never been nervous about sharing his testimony of the First Vision.

But this experience didn’t happen while Tanner was on a full-time mission. It actually occurred three years earlier in his ward building with the first counselor in the bishopric as his “investigator.”

Starting Early

When *Preach My Gospel* was first published, the bishopric of Tanner’s ward immediately recognized its importance. They set aside

You don’t have to wait for your mission to start using Preach My Gospel.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELYSE ALEXANDRIA HOLMES







one Sunday a month, combined all of the Aaronic Priesthood young men, and focused on teaching the principles in *Preach My Gospel*. From then on, every young man was given a copy of *Preach My Gospel* upon receiving the Aaronic



Young men of all ages are studying and using *Preach My Gospel* now to help them prepare to share the gospel.



Priesthood. Aaron C., a priest, remembers feeling excited to enter the

Aaronic Priesthood, but he didn't know what to think about *Preach My Gospel* when he first heard about it. "I hadn't heard about *Preach My Gospel* until the bishop introduced it to me in our interview," he says. "But as we got more into it and learned about it every month, it excited me for my mission and the gospel—to spread the word of Christ."

meetings with 'investigators' and trying to teach the lessons," Aaron says.

Most young men agree that teaching is their favorite part or that they are looking forward to doing it. Ben B., a new deacon, says, "I'm excited to teach because it's going to be applying what I know and teaching it, like what I'm going to be doing on my mission."

Although teaching is one of their favorite parts of the experience, it's often the one they're most nervous about, at least initially. Jordan M., also a deacon, remembers his feelings when he first started teaching from

Fulfilling Your Duty to God

Learning and teaching from *Preach My Gospel* is only one example of how Aaronic Priesthood young men and quorums are preparing for and doing their duty to God to "invite all to come unto Christ" (D&C 20:59). Learn to set your own plans for this aspect of your priesthood service by studying and using the *Fulfilling My Duty to God* booklet.

Derek P., a deacon, had a similar experience: "I didn't really know about it until my interview with the bishop. After he introduced it to me, I was excited for it."

Aaron's brother Ryan also participated, and he is currently serving in the Colombia Bogotá North Mission. Ryan told Aaron how useful this experience was in preparing for his mission. Aaron shares, "He told me that doing this every month has helped him a lot and that he's just learned so much more from it."

Learning to Teach

But these young men say that learning from *Preach My Gospel* isn't the best part. They like how it has helped them to love teaching the gospel. Even though they aren't teaching real investigators, they are placed into companionships and teach in different situations—just like on a full-time mission. "My favorite part has been acting out



Preach My Gospel: “My very first time, I was really nervous. I didn’t really say that much, but as I got older, I’d say more.”

Tanner remembers being nervous about teaching, even though he was 16 when the program was implemented: “I was kind of uncomfortable with teaching the first couple of times, but it really helped me out in the long run.”



Preparing to Serve

Adam B., who is preparing to submit his mission papers, has really appreciated the experience with *Preach My Gospel*. “It gets you used to knowing what you’re going to teach out in the mission field,” he says. Adam also recognizes that knowing *Preach My Gospel* will give him a head start when he gets to the missionary training center and throughout his mission.

Many of the young men, like Adam’s twin brother, Aaron B., feel like *Preach My Gospel* is a great way to strengthen testimony. “It gives you a stronger testimony of missionary work because it helps you understand what you have to teach,” says Aaron.

Zach J. has also felt his testimony of the gospel grow: “I think that being able to teach has given me a better testimony than just hearing a lesson does.”

The young men already on missions are

also grateful for this class approach. Elder Chris Hughes, who is serving in the Scotland/Ireland Mission, says that “by learning [from *Preach My Gospel*] beforehand, I was able to hit the ground running.”

Encouraging Others to Study

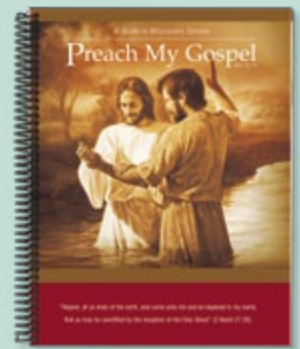
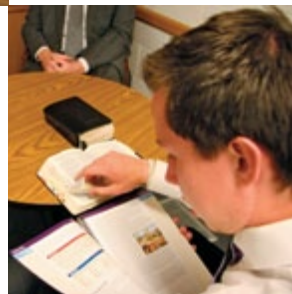
Through this experience, the young men have quickly recognized the importance of

Preach My Gospel.

Alex B. believes that all young men should get to know *Preach My Gospel* during their years in the Aaronic Priesthood. “I think all the young men should do this, because it puts them ahead, gives them more experience, and prepares them for when they get into the missionary training center,” he asserts.

Chris gives this advice to other young men: “Don’t underestimate what *Preach My Gospel*

can do for you as you prepare to serve the Lord. We have been given this tool so we can become the missionaries He needs us to be.” That’s true whether you use *Preach My Gospel* in a class or quorum or just on your own at home. **NE**



NO NEED TO PANIC

By Tanner J.

In my sophomore year of high school, after I had been learning and teaching from *Preach My Gospel*, a friend of mine came up to me during weight-lifting class and said, “Hey, Tanner, you’re Mormon, right?”

A little nervous, I answered, “Yeah, I am.”

“Can you answer a couple questions for me about your Church?” he asked.

I started to panic. What if I didn’t know the answers to his questions, or what if I just sounded stupid? Then I thought about it for a minute: “I’ve done this before. I’ve practiced in the class we have every month, and I can answer these questions. It’s no big deal. Why am I so scared?”

Because of what I had already learned and practiced, I was able to answer some of his questions and point him in the right direction. He got in touch with the missionaries and was later baptized and served a mission.



Order Your Copy of *Preach My Gospel*
Want your own copy of *Preach My Gospel*?
Talk to your bishop or branch president or visit store.lds.org to purchase a copy. You can also visit lds.org/go/22E for a free PDF download.

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

We learn of Heavenly Father from the beginning of our Church experience—from our first prayer to our first time singing “I Am a Child of God” (Hymns, no. 301). What Latter-day Saints know about God the Father is unique, and it makes all the difference to us.

SEEING THE FATHER

Here are three scriptural accounts of people who have beheld the Father:

- Stephen (see Acts 7:56)
- Joseph Smith (see Joseph Smith—History 1:17)
- Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon (see D&C 76:20)

But, as Jesus said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Read More

Turn to page 48 to read more about how you can strengthen your testimony of Heavenly Father.

REAL AND INDIVIDUAL

“One of the great over-arching doctrines of this Church is our belief in God the Eternal Father. He is a being, real and individual. He is the great Governor of the universe, yet He is our Father, and we are His children.

“We pray to Him, and those prayers are a conversation between God and man. I am confident that **He hears our prayers and answers them.**”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “The Things of Which I Know,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 83.

THE ONE TRUE GOD

“The Father *is* the one true God. *This* thing is certain: **no one will ever ascend above Him;** no one will ever replace Him. . . . He is Eloheim, the Father. He is God. Of Him there *is* only one.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Pattern of Our Parentage,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 69.





HEARING THE FATHER

When God the Father speaks, He bears witness of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. For example:

- At Jesus’s baptism (see Matthew 3:17)
- At the Mount of Transfiguration to Peter, James, and John (see Matthew 17:5)
- In a revelation to Nephi (see 2 Nephi 31:11, 15)
- At Jesus’s appearance in the Americas (see 3 Nephi 11:7)
- At the First Vision (see Joseph Smith—History 1:17)

THE SAVIOR’S MISSION TO REVEAL THE FATHER

“In all that Jesus came to say and do, . . . He was showing us who and what God our Eternal Father is like, how completely devoted He is to His children in every age and nation. In word and in deed **Jesus was trying to reveal** and make personal to us **the true nature of His Father**, our Father in Heaven.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Grandeur of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 70.

JOSEPH SMITH TEACHES ABOUT GOD THE FATHER

Joseph Smith taught us much about the true nature of God because he saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and received many revelations.

What kind of being is He? “God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!”¹

What does He look like? “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s.”² “If you were to see Him today, you would see Him like a man in form—like yourselves.”³

What is our relationship to God? “If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves.”⁴ “The Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family . . . as His offspring.”⁵

Why did He establish the plan of salvation for us? “God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, . . . [instituted] laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself.”⁶

What is a key to drawing closer to God? “When we understand the character of God, and know how to come to Him, He begins to unfold the heavens to us.”⁷ **NE**

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 40.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
3. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 40.
4. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 40.
5. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 39.
6. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 210.
7. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 40–41.

HEAVENLY PARENTS: A POWERFUL TRUTH

“Consider the power of the idea taught in our beloved song ‘I Am a Child of God’ (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 301). . . . Here is the answer to one of life’s great questions, ‘Who am I?’ I am a child of God with a spirit lineage to heavenly parents. **That parentage defines our eternal potential.** That powerful idea is a potent antidepressant. It can strengthen each of us to make righteous choices and to seek the best that is within us.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Powerful Ideas,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 25.