

THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • AUGUST 2013

Ensign

**Opening the
Channels of
Revelation, pp. 22, 48**

What about Sarcasm? p. 34

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Change It All, p. 66**



"All things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator."

Alma 30:44

A massive young star cluster, NGC 3603, in the Carina spiral arm of the Milky Way.

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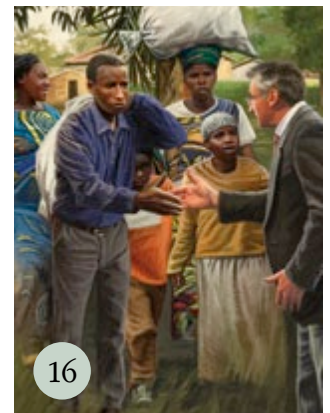
Front: Photograph by Frans Lemmens. Back: Illustration by Michael Gibbs. Inside front cover: Photograph by NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team/DOD.



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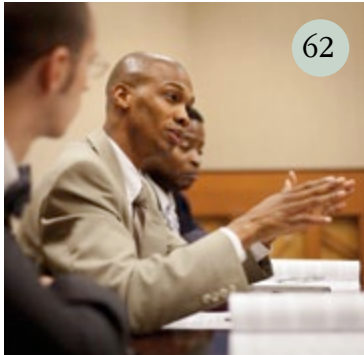


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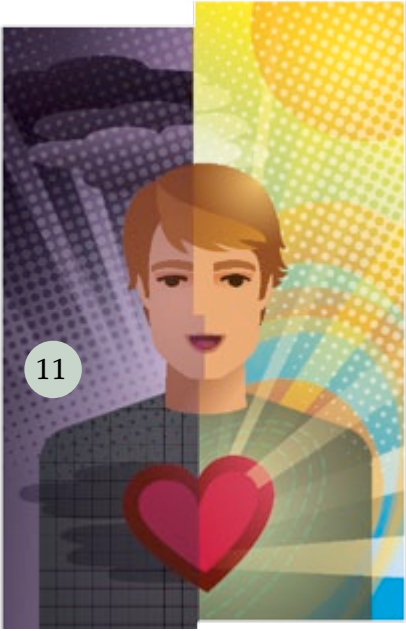


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A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
August 2013 Volume 43 • Number 8

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Family Home Evening Ideas

This issue contains articles and activities that could be used for family home evening. The following are some examples.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CODY BELL

“In His Own Time, in His Own Way,” page 22: After studying Elder Oaks’s article, discuss with your family the topic of revelation and the importance of the Lord’s timing. You could share Elder Oaks’s example of inviting the U.S. president to speak at Brigham Young University and then ask how this example can be applied to communication with Heavenly Father. You may also wish to share a personal experience about receiving revelation.

“Finding Sanctuary in the Gospel,” page 58: With your family, read about Church members in

Africa who have found ways to stand in holy places. Consider discussing ways to make your home a refuge from the world. With

younger children, you could do the following activity: Write different gospel actions (such as scripture study, prayer, and being kind) on pieces of paper placed in a circle on the floor. Next, hum part of a hymn while everyone walks around on the papers. When you stop humming, have each family member talk about how the action he or she is standing on can help make your home a sanctuary.

UNIFIED BY FAMILY HOME EVENING

As the only Church member in my family, I wanted to hold family home evenings to share spiritual experiences. After receiving my mother’s permission, I planned one. The four of us who attended were nervous, and we only had a prayer, a snack, and a religious video. As we continued to meet, more of the family joined us, and we eventually added an opening song, a game, and a religious discussion. Now, after over a year, our love for the Lord and each other has increased, and I realize this life is about families uniting to do God’s will.

Teresa Flores-Long, Arizona, USA

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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

We welcome donated submissions showing the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. Please submit articles through ensign.lds.org. Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified.



**By President
Henry B. Eyring**

First Counselor in the
First Presidency

RECOGNIZE, REMEMBER, AND Give Thanks

God asks that we give thanks to Him for whatever blessings we receive from Him. It is easy for us to become mechanical in our prayers of gratitude, often repeating the same words but without the intent to give our thanks as a gift of the heart to God. We are to “give thanks . . . in the Spirit” (D&C 46:32) so we can feel real gratitude for what God has given us.

How can we remember even a part of all God has done for us? The Apostle John recorded what the Savior taught us about a gift of remembrance that comes through the gift of the Holy Ghost: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

The Holy Ghost brings back memories of what God has taught us. And one of the ways God teaches us is with His blessings; and so, if we choose to exercise faith, the Holy Ghost will bring God’s kindnesses to our remembrance.

You could test that in prayer today. You could follow the command “Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things” (D&C 59:7).

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) suggested that prayer creates time to do that. He said: “The Prophet Joseph said at one time that one of the greatest sins of

which the Latter-day Saints would be guilty is the sin of ingratitude. I presume most of us have not thought of that as a great sin. There is a great tendency for us in our prayers and in our pleadings with the Lord to ask for additional blessings. But sometimes I feel we need to devote more of our prayers to expressions of gratitude and thanksgiving for blessings already received. We enjoy so much.”¹

You could have such an experience with the gift of the Holy Ghost today. You could begin a private prayer with thanks. You could start to count your blessings and then pause for a moment. If you exercise faith, with the gift of the Holy Ghost, you will find that memories of other blessings will flood into your mind. If you begin to express gratitude for each of them, your prayer may take a little longer than usual. Remembrance will come, and so will gratitude.

You could try the same thing as you write an entry in your journal. The Holy Ghost has helped people with that since the beginning of time. You remember that the book of Moses says, “And a book of remembrance was kept, in the which was recorded, in the language of Adam, for it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration” (Moses 6:5).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) described that process of inspired writing: “Those who keep a



TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

In his message, President Eyring invites us to remember Heavenly Father's kindnesses in our prayers. Discuss with those you teach how praying with gratitude can help us recognize God's hand in our lives. Consider kneeling to pray with those you teach and suggest to whoever says the prayer that he or she express only thanks.

You could also study the importance of gratitude by reading these verses in addition to the verses that President Eyring mentioned: Psalm 100; Mosiah 2:19–22; Alma 26:8; 34:38; Doctrine and Covenants 59:21; 78:19; 136:28.

book of remembrance are more likely to keep the Lord in remembrance in their daily lives. Journals are a way of counting our blessings and of leaving an inventory of these blessings for our posterity.”²

As you start to write, you could ask yourself, “How did God bless me and those I love today?” If you do that often enough and with faith, you will find yourself remembering blessings. And sometimes you will have gifts brought to your mind that you failed to notice

during the day but that you will then know were a touch of God's hand in your life.

I pray that we may make a continuing effort in faith to recognize, remember, and give thanks for what our Heavenly Father and our Savior have done and are doing to open the way home to Them. ■

NOTES

1. Ezra Taft Benson, *God, Family, Country: Our Three Great Loyalties* (1974), 199.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, “Listen to the Prophets,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 77.

Take Inventory



President Eyring quotes President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) as saying that “journals are a way of counting our blessings and of leaving an inventory of these blessings for our posterity.” In general conference in October 2012, President Thomas S. Monson gave his testimony of journal writing. He shared some experiences from his life, adding, “My daily journal, kept over all these

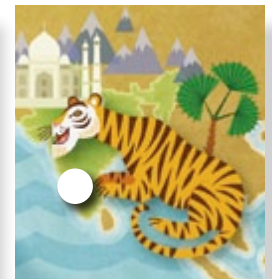
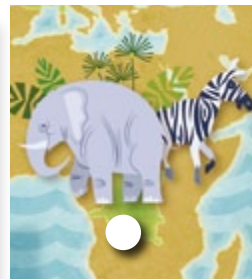
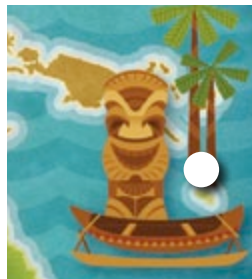
years, has helped provide some specifics which I most likely would not otherwise be able to recount.” He counseled, “Take an inventory of your life and look specifically for the blessings, large and small, you have received” (“Consider the Blessings,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 86). Work at following the counsel of these prophets and set goals to write in your journal.

CHILDREN

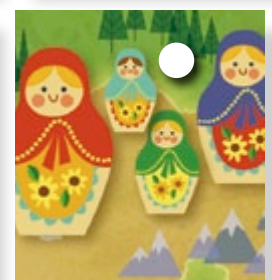
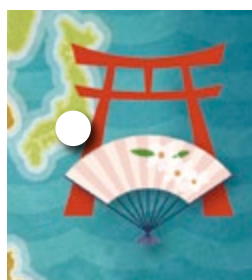
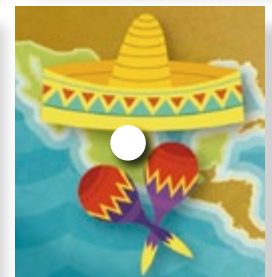
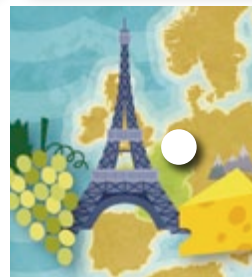
Many Ways to Say Thank You

*“All over the world at the end of day,
Heav’nly Father’s children kneel down and pray,
Each saying thank you in his own special way.”*
(“Children All Over the World,” *Children’s Songbook*, 16.)

Match the different ways of saying thank you with the countries of the world where those languages are spoken. Some of these languages are spoken in more than one country!



- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. gracias (Spanish) | 5. spasiba (Russian) |
| 2. malo (Tongan) | 6. arigatō (Japanese) |
| 3. thank you (English) | 7. asante (Swahili) |
| 4. shukriyaa (Hindi) | 8. merci (French) |



VISITING TEACHING MESSAGE

Prayerfully study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life. For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.

Welfare

The purposes of Church welfare are to help members become self-reliant, to care for the poor and needy, and to give service. Welfare is central to the work of Relief Society. President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught:

“[The Lord] has from the beginning of time provided ways for His disciples to help. He has invited His children to consecrate their time, their means, and themselves to join with Him in serving others. . . .

“He has invited and commanded us to participate in His work to lift up those in need. We make a covenant to do that in the waters of baptism and in the holy temples of God. We renew the covenant on Sundays when we partake of the sacrament.”¹

Under the direction of the bishop or branch president, local leaders assist with spiritual and temporal welfare. Opportunities to serve often



begin with visiting teachers who seek inspiration to know how to respond to the needs of each sister they visit.

From the Scriptures

Luke 10:25–37; James 1:27; Mosiah 4:26; 18:8–11; Doctrine and Covenants 104:18

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, “Opportunities to Do Good,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 22.
2. Joseph Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 63.
3. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 63.

Faith, Family, Relief



From Our History

On June 9, 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith charged the sisters in Relief Society to “relieve the poor” and to “save souls.”² These goals are still at the heart of Relief Society and are expressed in our motto, “Charity never faileth” (1 Corinthians 13:8).

Our fifth Relief Society general president, Emmeline B. Wells, and her counselors launched this motto in 1913 as a reminder of our founding principles: “We do declare it our purpose to . . . [hold] fast to the inspired teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he revealed the plan by which women were to be empowered through the calling of the priesthood to be grouped into suitable organizations for the purpose of ministering to the sick, assisting the needy, comforting the aged, warning the unwary, and succoring the orphans.”³

Today the Relief Society has a worldwide reach as sisters extend charity, the pure love of Christ, to their neighbors (see Moroni 7:46–47).

What Can I Do?

1. How am I preparing to care for myself and for my family spiritually and temporally?
2. How can I follow the Savior’s example as I help meet the needs of the sisters I watch over?

APRIL 2013 CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK

“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken; . . . whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

As you review the April 2013 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in future issues) to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.

STORIES FROM CONFERENCE



Teaching the Honest in Heart

By President Henry B. Eyring
First Counselor in the First Presidency

In 1955 I became an officer in the United States Air Force. My bishop at home gave me a blessing just before I left for my first station, which was in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

In his blessing he said that my time in the air force would be missionary service. I arrived in church on my first Sunday at the Albuquerque First Branch. A man walked up to me, introduced himself as the district president, and told me that he was

going to call me to serve as a district missionary.

I told him that I would be there for training for only a few weeks and then I would be assigned somewhere else in the world. He said, “I don’t know about that, but we are to call you to serve.” In the middle of my military training, by what appeared to be chance, I was chosen from hundreds of officers being trained to take the place in headquarters of an officer who had died suddenly.

So, for the two years I was there, I worked in my office. On most

evenings and every weekend, I taught the gospel of Jesus Christ to people the members brought to us.

My companions and I averaged more than 40 hours a month in our missionary service without once having to knock on doors to find someone to teach. The members filled our plates so full that we often taught two families in an evening. I saw for myself the power and the blessing in the repeated call of prophets for every member to be a missionary.

On the last Sunday before I left Albuquerque, the first stake was organized in that city. There is now a sacred temple there, a house of the Lord, in a city where we once met in a single chapel with Saints who brought friends to us to be taught and to feel the witness of the Spirit. Those friends felt a welcoming home in the Lord’s true Church.

From “We Are One,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 62–63.

THE GENERAL MISSIONARY FUND

In the April 2013 general conference, President Thomas S. Monson talked of the remarkable and inspiring response of young people to serve missions. He said, “To help maintain this missionary force, and because many of our missionaries come from modest circumstances, we invite you, as you are able, to contribute generously to the General Missionary Fund of the Church.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Welcome to Conference,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 5.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- How has your life been blessed by your missionary service or the missionary service of another?
- Why do you think prophets ask for the gospel to be taken to all the world?
- How can you help those in your area who are no longer active in the Church to feel the witness of the Spirit?

Consider writing your thoughts in your journal or discussing them with others.

Additional resources on this topic: *Gospel Principles* (2009), “Missionary Work,” 189–195; “Missionary Work,” in *Gospel Topics* on LDS.org; and Jeffrey R. Holland, “We Are All Enlisted,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 44–46.

PROPHETIC WORDS ON MORAL ABSOLUTES

“God reveals to His prophets that there are moral absolutes. Sin will always be sin. Disobedience to the Lord’s commandments will always deprive us of His blessings. The world changes constantly and dramatically, but God, His commandments, and promised blessings do not change. . . . We must not pick and choose which commandments we think are important to keep but acknowledge all of God’s commandments. We must stand firm and steadfast, having perfect confidence in the Lord’s consistency and perfect trust in His promises.”

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Obedience to Law Is Liberty,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 88.

MISSIONARY INVITATION: CATCH THE WAVE

- “You teenagers, embrace your new curriculum and teach one another the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Now is your time to prepare to teach others about the goodness of God.
- “Young men and women, your education is ever important. . . . We encourage you to apply to your institution of choice *before* beginning your mission.
- “You parents, teachers, and others, catch the wave as you prepare our rising generation to be worthy of missionary service. Meanwhile, your exemplary lives will attract the interest of your friends and neighbors.
- “You adults, catch the wave with help for the spiritual, physical, and financial preparation of future missionaries.
- “You senior couples, you plan for the day when you can go on your mission.
- “Stake presidents and bishops . . . hold keys of responsibility for missionary work in their units.
- “You ward mission leaders . . . are the connecting link between members and missionaries in this sacred work of rescuing God’s children.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Catch the Wave,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 45, 46.



FILL IN THE BLANK

1. "Darkness will not gain victory over the _____ of Christ" (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Hope of God's Light," *Ensign*, May 2013, 77).
2. "The Church is a _____ where followers of Christ attain peace" (Quentin L. Cook, "Personal Peace: The Reward of Righteousness," *Ensign*, May 2013, 34).
3. "We who have mortal bodies have the _____ over the beings who do not" (Boyd K. Packer, "These Things I Know," *Ensign*, May 2013, 8).
4. "As we give up commitment and fidelity to our _____, we remove the glue that holds our society together" (L. Tom Perry, "Obedience to Law Is Liberty," *Ensign*, May 2013, 87).
5. "If you're not a full-time missionary with a missionary badge pinned on your coat, now is the time to paint one on your _____" (Neil L. Andersen, "It's a Miracle," *Ensign*, May 2013, 78).

Answers: 1. light; 2. refuge; 3. power; 4. marriage partners; 5. heart.

BE WISE IN HOW YOU EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY

- "To share the gospel, young members in Boston started several blogs. Those who joined the Church began their learning online, followed by discussions with the missionaries. . . . One of [the bloggers] said, 'This isn't missionary work. This is missionary fun.'"¹
- "Why not choose a time each day to disconnect from technology and reconnect with each other? Simply turn everything off."²
- "Mark important scriptures on your device and refer back to them frequently. . . . You could soon have hundreds of passages of scripture memorized. Those passages would prove to be a powerful source of inspiration and guidance by the Holy Ghost in times of need."³

NOTES

1. Neil L. Andersen, "It's a Miracle," *Ensign*, May 2013, 79.
2. Rosemary M. Wixom, "The Words We Speak," *Ensign*, May 2013, 82.
3. Richard G. Scott, "For Peace at Home," *Ensign*, May 2013, 30.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DENISE RENEE BIRD

HELPING THE POOR AND THE NEEDY

"Using funds donated by generous members, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sends food, clothing, and other essentials to relieve the suffering of adults and children all over the world. These humanitarian donations, totaling hundreds of millions of dollars in the last decade, are made without any consideration of religion, race, or nationality. . . . During the last quarter century we have assisted nearly 30 million people in 179 countries."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Followers of Christ," *Ensign*, May 2013, 98.

To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit conference.lds.org.

WHOLESOME LANGUAGE

The words we use can testify of Christ, comfort the needy, compliment a friend, or express love to a family member. We can also say words that inflict emotional pain, spread gossip, profane, or belittle. Helping your children use wholesome language will bring peace and encouragement into your home. In this month's *New Era* on pages 10–11, Larry M. Gibson of the Young Men general presidency discusses the importance of clean language:

“What we feel in our hearts is what we think about, and what we think about is what we speak about. Thus, it is true that the words we use reflect the feelings of our heart and who we really are. . . .

“Each of us can enjoy the blessings of having the Spirit *always* with us, as promised when we partake of the sacrament each Sabbath day. It will depend on us—on how we act, what we do, and, yes, even what we say.”

Suggestions for Teaching Youth

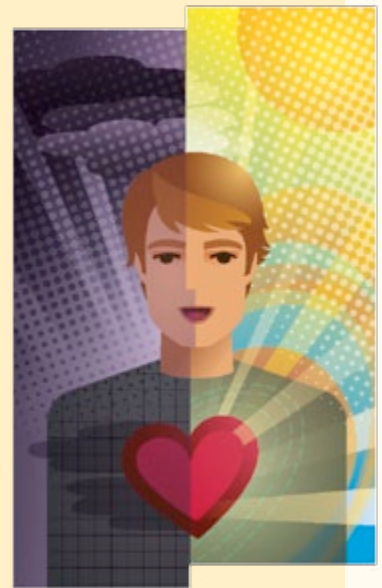
- You could read with your family the section on language in *For the Strength of Youth* (pages 20–21). Discuss what to do

when those around you use bad language.

- Read Brother Gibson's article on pages 10–11 of this month's *New Era*. Use his article to set goals to help each other use wholesome language.
- Study and discuss the scriptures listed to the right.
- Read “Choosing Not to Gossip” on page 12 of this month's *New Era* and talk about the dangers of gossip. Discuss why gossip happens and how to avoid it.
- Watch videos and read youth articles on the power of language. Go to youth.lds.org and click on the “For the Strength of Youth” tab. Click on “Language.” To the right of the page is a “Related” section that features videos such as “No Cussing Club” and youth articles about not putting others down.

Suggestions for Teaching Children

- Consider reading “The Words We Speak” (Rosemary M. Wixom, *Ensign*, May 2013, 81); “Those Words” (*Friend*, Dec. 2011, 44); or “A Soft Answer” (*Friend*, June 2011, 32). Talk about how we feel



SCRIPTURES ON LANGUAGE

Psalm 34:13–14

Proverbs 10:11

Isaiah 50:4

Matthew 15:11

Ephesians 4:29, 31

2 Nephi 32:2–3; 33:1

Doctrine and Covenants
20:54; 52:16; 100:5–6;
136:23

when we say nice things to each other.

- Discuss things you don't say in your home. Set goals to say “please” and “thank you” and give compliments more.
- Talk about how everyone is happier when we say kind things to one another. Sing “Kindness Begins with Me” (*Children's Songbook*, 145) or another song about kindness. ■

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

How one great love story finally reached the temple—in a surprising way.

By Joshua J. Perkey

Church Magazines

As Vinca Gilman gazes pensively into the Alaskan forest beyond her home, she thinks fondly of her husband, now long since passed away. Ward Kepler Gilman was a strong, striking man, a World War II veteran, a doctor, and a faithful husband. But it took a journey of faith and a new chance at the gospel for Vinca and Ward to be united eternally.

Vinca Helen Gilman's story begins in Denmark. She was born near Vordingborg, a town on the same island as Copenhagen. She was raised in a family with seven children, including three adopted boys.

Then came World War II. Through the mercy of God, she and her parents survived the Holocaust and three years of prison camps, an experience she would now rather forget.

After the war, her family rebuilt their lives. One day, Vinca and her parents were staying in a summer home in Aarhus in Jutland. There they happened to meet a pair of missionaries, who were seeking a place to stay. The young men were so kind and friendly, Vinca's parents agreed to

let them board in the guest quarters.

"I attended church with them for a short time," Vinca recalls, "but my family wasn't really into religion at all. My father was of Jewish descent, and my mother was Lutheran, but we weren't raised in a religion. And then I had to return to school."

The missionaries later visited her briefly in Copenhagen. Although Vinca enjoyed the visit, she was not yet ready to accept the gospel.

"I moved to Salt Lake City around 1950," Vinca says. "I was a nurse, but I had to renew my certificate to practice in the U.S."

The move gave her a chance to learn English better. It also gave her another opportunity to learn about the Church. She lived in the Beehive House and worked at a doctor's office across the street. She also played the cello in the Utah Symphony and made a number of good friends.

"I attended church with them too. And I walked on Temple Square during my lunch hour every day. But I still thought of religion as something you could decide to make a

part of your life as you liked."

After two years in Salt Lake, Vinca moved to Sacramento, California, USA, and lived for a short time with the family of one of the missionaries who had taught her in Denmark. When she made enough money as a surgical nurse to support herself, she moved out on her own. She and the missionary dated and eventually became engaged.

"Things didn't work out," Vinca recalls, and when they broke off their engagement, she moved on, losing touch with Church members.

Not long after, Vinca met Ward, a dentist and oral surgeon who was born and raised in Sacramento. He was a strong, handsome man who had served as a navy officer during the war. Though 11 years older than Vinca, he swept her off her feet, and the two were married in 1954.

They bought a home not far from his practice. Though they could not have children, they had a wonderful, loving marriage. They worked, they traveled, he painted, and she continued to play her music. Life was good for many years.



Ward passed away in 1985. Vinca lived on in their home until about 1999, when she started feeling anxious to move. Her home was large, more than she needed, and she felt a desire for change. She discovered a small town that suited her in Haines, Alaska. She retired there, and so things would have ended if the missionaries had not come knocking on her door once more in 2006.

At last, after many chances and many years, the timing was right.

“I never really had known much about religion,” Vinca says, “but I knew some things that made me ask questions, things that disappointed me or seemed strange.

“When I learned about this gospel, everything just made sense: the plan of salvation, what is expected of us, the promises made, the Book of

Mormon. I like especially the Church doctrine of temple work for those who pass away who have not been introduced to the gospel. I felt at ease about it; it was something I could accept because it was clear and open to me, like coming home.

“I finally did what I should have done a long time ago. I don’t know why it took me so long. I had met a lot of wonderful people, and they all had some influence in my decision to join the Church. It did take years, but getting baptized was the best thing I ever did.”

Vinca was baptized on October 14, 2006—on her husband’s birthday. Just a year later, she attended the temple for the first time and was sealed to Ward (by proxy) for time and all eternity. For Vinca, the experience of attending the temple and of being

sealed to the love of her life “was unbelievable, beautiful.”

Having gained this supernal blessing of being sealed to her beloved husband, Vinca desires now to share temple blessings with her relatives. Though she is 86 years old and suffers from kidney failure, she is motivated.

“I hope my husband and his parents and my parents and my own brothers and sisters will accept the gospel. I have a lot of temple work to get done.

“One of my main projects in life now is to do as much temple work as I can, as much genealogy as possible. I feel I have a reason for living here. Even if I live to be 100, it’s all right. I have things to do now. It feels good, really, to be able to do it.”

As Vinca turns her gaze back to her house to head inside, she is filled with the hope that comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Being a member of this Church “has been a blessing in so many countless ways. You feel peace of mind. You feel stronger. When things are absolutely gorgeous, you feel, ‘Oh boy, this is heaven.’ It makes you feel grateful for living.”

Vinca lives with a grateful heart—because the fire of the gospel and the hope of eternities with her loving husband burn bright within her. ■

For more on strengthening your marriage, see L. Whitney Clayton, “Marriage: Watch and Learn,” Ensign, May 2013, 83.

NEWS OF THE CHURCH

Visit news.lds.org for more Church news and events.

New Area Leaders Assigned

The First Presidency has announced the following changes in area leadership assignments effective on August 1, 2013. All members of Area Presidencies are members of the First or Second Quorums of the Seventy. ■

Presidency of the Seventy



Ronald A. Rasband
Assists in All Areas



L. Whitney Clayton
Utah North
Utah Salt Lake City
Utah South



Donald L. Hallstrom
North America Northeast



Tad R. Callister
North America Southwest



Richard J. Maynes
North America Northwest
North America West



Craig C. Christensen
Idaho North America Central



Ulisses Soares
North America Southeast

Africa Southeast



Carl B. Cook
First Counselor



Dale G. Renlund
President



Kevin S. Hamilton
Second Counselor

Africa West



Terence M. Vinson
First Counselor



LeGrand R. Curtis Jr.
President



Edward Dube
Second Counselor

Asia



Larry Y. Wilson
First Counselor



Gerrit W. Gong
President



Randy D. Funk
Second Counselor

Asia North



Koichi Aoyagi
First Counselor



Michael T. Ringwood
President



Scott D. Whiting
Second Counselor

Brazil



Jairo Mazzagardi
First Counselor



Claudio R. M. Costa
President



Eduardo Gavarret
Second Counselor

Caribbean



J. Devn Cornish
First Counselor



Wilford W. Andersen
President



Claudio D. Zivic
Second Counselor

Central America



Kevin R.
Duncan
**First
Counselor**



Carlos H.
Amado
President



Adrián
Ochoa
**Second
Counselor**

Europe



Patrick
Kearon
**First
Counselor**



José A.
Teixeira
President



Timothy J.
Dyches
**Second
Counselor**

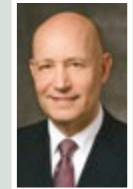
Europe East



Randall K.
Bennett
**First
Counselor**



Larry R.
Lawrence
President



Per G.
Malm
**Second
Counselor**

Mexico



Benjamín
De Hoyos
**First
Counselor**



Daniel L.
Johnson
President



Arnulfo
Valenzuela
**Second
Counselor**

Middle East/Africa North



Bruce D.
Porter



Bruce A.
Carlson

**Administered from Church
Headquarters**

Pacific



Kevin W.
Pearson
**First
Counselor**



James J.
Hamula
President



O. Vincent
Haleck
**Second
Counselor**

Philippines



Ian S.
Ardern
**First
Counselor**



Brent H.
Nielson
President



Larry J.
Echo Hawk
**Second
Counselor**

South America Northwest



W. Christopher
Waddell
**First
Counselor**



Juan A.
Uceda
President



C. Scott
Grow
**Second
Counselor**

South America South



Jorge F.
Zeballos
**First
Counselor**



Walter F.
González
President



Francisco J.
Viñas
**Second
Counselor**



By Elder
F. Michael Watson
Of the Seventy

Obedience

THE HALLMARK OF FAITH

*May we strive to live in obedience to the commandments,
following divine direction from the Lord's chosen servants and
receiving promised blessings from His hand.*

Obedience to the laws and commandments of God has been and ever will be necessary for those searching to become recipients of the Savior's promised blessings.

In May 1833 the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation in which the Lord declared:

"Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come. . . .

"And no man receiveth a fulness unless he *keepeth [God's] commandments*.

"He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things" (D&C 93:24, 27–28; emphasis added).

By studying and obeying the truths found in the laws and ordinances of the gospel, we learn of and receive the gospel's promised blessings. In accordance with Heavenly Father's wisdom and timing, the truths that guide Latter-day Saints are becoming available to all of God's children.

For, as He declared, "this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has counseled: "Obey the laws of God. They are given to us by a loving Heavenly Father. When they are obeyed, our lives will be more fulfilling, less complicated. Our challenges and problems will be easier to bear. We will receive the Lord's promised blessings. He has said, "The Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days."¹

The words of President Monson ring true to an earlier time, when Nephi declared to his father, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7).





Often, those wishing to be counted among the believers already have a desire to become obedient followers of truth. Such was the case with 42 individuals who attended a district conference in Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Obedient to the promptings of the Spirit and with faith in every footstep, they had walked six days so they could attend the conference.

A children’s hymn reminds us of our duty and direction:

I will go; I will do the thing the Lord commands.

I know the Lord provides a way; he wants me to obey.²

As we remember the counsel of our prophet to faithfully keep the commandments and as we recall Nephi’s response to his father, we will become a blessed people.

Following direction from the angel Moroni, the Prophet Joseph told his earthly father what had transpired. Joseph Smith’s father, upon learning that his son would be entrusted with the gold plates, said “that it was of God, and told me to go and do as commanded by the messenger” (Joseph Smith—History 1:50). Anything short of obedience to the counsel Joseph had received from both heaven and earth would have changed the course of history.

When Can We Be Baptized?

Our missionaries pray and go and do, trusting that the Lord will give no commandment unto them save He will prepare a way that they may be successful through

their obedience and willingness to serve. They trust in His promise: “Whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88).

Many individuals who seek the truth willingly follow the teachings of our missionaries. Often, those wishing to be counted among the believers already have a desire to become obedient followers of truth. They likewise are willing to go and do.

Such was the case with 42 individuals who attended a district conference in Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo. They came willingly because they had read and heard the truths of the Restoration, they had begun living associated principles, and they had desires to become members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.³

Obedient to the promptings of the Spirit and with faith in every footstep, they had walked six days so they could attend the conference. Their first question to the presiding authority after arriving was, “When can we be baptized?”

They understood that the Lord would eventually make it possible for the missionaries to teach them in their homes and to bring them the truth they had sought for so long. About 200 others who could not make the six-day journey waited for the word that the missionaries would soon seek them out.

A Prayer of Faith

In the country of Angola, opposition threatened to thwart the desire of faithful and obedient Saints to see the gospel take root in their land. The Lord had sent His servants to

open the door to missionary work, but on the eve of their scheduled travel, visas still had not been granted. When Church representatives visited immigration officials about the delay, they were turned away.

With approval from the First Presidency to dedicate Angola for missionary work, Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and others awaited word in Johannesburg, South Africa. At the same time, faithful member Paulina Lassalette da Cunha Gonçalves tried to open what seemed to be a closing door. She hoped to obtain letters of invitation that would grant permission for the Church party to enter Angola. Once there, they could then obtain necessary visas.

Within minutes of government offices closing in Angola, Elder Christofferson assembled with those waiting in the Africa Southeast Area offices. Then, kneeling in prayer, he asked Heavenly Father to intervene. In that same hour, immediately following his prayer of faith, the letters of invitation were signed.

A loving Father in Heaven had prepared the way for the day of dedication. At the request of Elder Christofferson, a humble prayer of thanks was offered for the granted miracle.⁴

The words of a Primary song ring sweet and unmistakable:

*Heavenly Father, are you
really there?
And do you hear and
answer ev'ry child's
prayer?⁵*

Yes, He is there, and yes, He does answer the prayers of His obedient children.

Obedience has been the hallmark of the prophets, and this source of spiritual strength is available to everyone who faithfully follows the servants of God. President Monson has impressed upon the Saints the need for obedience to the commandments, for “in this there is safety; in this there is peace.”⁶

May we strive to live in obedience to the commandments, following divine direction from the Lord’s chosen servants and receiving promised blessings from His hand. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Believe, Obey, Endure,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 128.
2. “Nephi’s Courage,” *Children’s Songbook*, 121.
3. I was present at the district conference in Kananga attended by the 42 investigators.
4. I had the blessing of witnessing firsthand the events in Johannesburg and of traveling with Elder Christofferson to Angola; for a news report on his and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s visit to Africa, see “Apostles Bless Two African Nations,” *Church News*, Nov. 6, 2010, 8–10.
5. “A Child’s Prayer,” *Children’s Songbook*, 12.
6. “Keep the Commandments,” *Children’s Songbook*, 146.

Obedience has been the hallmark of the prophets, and this source of spiritual strength is available to everyone who faithfully follows the servants of God.



Scripture Study FOR FAMILY STRENGTH



STUDY WITH A PROMISE

“When individual members and families immerse themselves in the scriptures regularly and consistently, . . . other areas of activity will automatically come. Testimonies will increase. Commitment will be strengthened. Families will be fortified. Personal revelation will flow.”

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), “The Power of the Word,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 81.

Build a strong foundation for you and your family through more consistent and meaningful scripture study.

By Lori Fuller
Church Magazines

The following ideas may help you and your family reap the rewards of enhanced scripture study. These examples are only suggestions and can be adapted to your individual and family needs.

Study with a Question

Coming to the scriptures in search of answers is a good way to enhance your scripture study. You can begin your study with a prayer, asking to find answers to your specific questions. As you read, highlight

scriptures that address your questions. Write notes in the margins of your scriptures or in a separate notebook.

If studying as a family, you could begin each scripture study by asking your children if they have any questions they are trying to answer. As you read, look for scriptures that answer these questions, and stop to discuss them.

Study by Topic

Pick a topic you would like to learn more about, such as prayer, and read the entry in the Bible Dictionary or in the Guide to the Scriptures. Then read the scriptures listed on



that subject in the Guide to the Scriptures, Index, or Topical Guide. Within the list of scriptures, highlight the most helpful verses. After highlighting your favorite scriptures on prayer, you will have a personalized reference on the topic. You could also purchase an inexpensive copy of the scriptures and mark in a designated color all the scriptures you find about a certain topic. Pick another doctrine to study when you finish and use a new color to mark the verses.

If studying as a family, pick a topic together and assign each child to silently read a few scriptures then share his or her favorite. It may take several days to complete a topic, so keep track of what you have learned by discussing it and taking notes at the end of each study session.

Study for Guidance

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, once explained how he used scripture study to find specific guidance for his life and calling. After praying to Heavenly Father about what to do, President Eyring wrote down a list of answers, color-coded each item on the list, and pasted a copy in an inexpensive set of the scriptures. He explained, “The first [answer on the list] was ‘I am to be a witness that Christ is the Son of God.’ Then I read my scriptures looking for ideas that taught me how to witness that Christ is

the Son of God. Every time I came to something, I marked it in blue. Soon I developed my own topical guide around what I thought the Lord wanted me to do.”¹

If studying as a family, decide on several areas you would like to work on together. Write down these concerns and keep them in a visible place. As you read, assign each child to look for and highlight scriptures relating to a specific concern.

If just reading a few verses a day is difficult, and more in-depth study seems impossible, or if just getting your family to sit down together is a struggle, don’t despair and don’t give up. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled that while no one episode of family scripture study may seem especially memorable or even successful, “our consistency in doing seemingly small things can lead to significant spiritual results.”²

As we seek to read the scriptures more consistently and to enhance our scripture reading with meaningful study, the Lord will bless our efforts. He will guide us as we structure our scripture study and will make it more rewarding for us and for our families. ■

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, “A Discussion on Scripture Study,” *Ensign*, July 2005, 24.
2. David A. Bednar, “More Diligent and Concerned at Home,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 20.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID STOKER





**By Elder
Dallin H. Oaks**
Of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles

IN HIS OWN TIME,
IN
His Own
Way

*Revelation is a reality. It comes in the Lord's way
and according to the Lord's timetable.*

Iwould like to examine some principles that apply to all communications from the Spirit—communications to the person who teaches, to the person who seeks to learn, and to every member of the Church.

First, we should recognize that the Lord will speak to us through the Spirit in His own time and in His own way. Many people do not understand this principle. They believe that when they are ready and when it suits their convenience, they can call upon the Lord and He will immediately respond, even in the precise way they have prescribed. Revelation does not come that way.

Qualifying for Revelation

Fundamental to any effort to receive revelation is a commitment to do all we can with our own efforts and judgment. This means we need to serve and to work.

Going forward with our service and work is an important way to qualify for revelation. In my study of the scriptures I have noted that most revelation to the children of God comes when they are on the move, not when they are sitting back in their habitations waiting for the Lord to tell them the first step to take.



For example, it is significant to note that the revelation known as “the Word and Will of the Lord concerning the Camp of Israel” (D&C 136:1) was not given in Nauvoo as the Quorum of the Twelve planned the exodus from Nauvoo in those sorrowful days following the Martyrdom of the Prophet in 1844; nor was it given on the west bank of the Mississippi River. It was given at Winter Quarters, Nebraska, after the Saints had spent a punishing year moving from Nauvoo westward across Iowa to temporary camps on the Missouri River. The revelation to guide the movement of the Saints across the plains was given on January 14, 1847, when the Saints had already gone about a third of the way to the valleys of the mountains.

We will get promptings of the Spirit when we have done everything we can, when we are out in the sun working rather than sitting back in the shade praying for direction on the first step to take. Revelation comes when the children of God are on the move.

So we do all we can. Then we wait upon the Lord for His revelation. He has his own timetable.

Timing and Type

About 35 years ago, when I was president of Brigham Young University, we were making plans to persuade the president of the United States to speak at the university. We had particular times that would suit our convenience, and we had in mind some things we wanted him to say and do while he was there. But all of us were wise enough to know that we could not contact the highest authority in the United States and invite him to come to the BYU campus—even to speak to 26,000 people—and put conditions on his appearance.

We knew that in inviting the president, we had to say in effect, “We will welcome you whenever you can come

and for whatever time you choose to be here and for whatever you choose to say and do while you are here. We will accommodate our schedules and our arrangements entirely to your visit.”

Now, if that’s the way a community of 26,000 people must approach the highest authority of a nation, it should not be surprising that one person—however important—is in no position to put conditions upon or to impose personal timing upon a visit or communication from the Highest Authority in the universe.

Indeed, this is the principle the Lord revealed to His children in the great revelation printed in the 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord said, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (verse 63).

Next, the Lord declared that if our eye is single to His glory, our whole body will be filled with light and we will be able to comprehend all things. Then, His instruction continued with this great promise: “Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and *it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will*” (verse 68; emphasis added).

The principle stated in that revelation applies to every communication from our Heavenly Father. We cannot force spiritual things.

In most cases, “his own way” is not the thunderous interruption or the blinding light but what the scriptures call the “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12; 1 Nephi 17:45; D&C 85:6). Some have misunderstood this principle. As a result, some have looked exclusively for the great manifestations recorded in the scriptures and have failed to

*We need to know that
the Lord rarely speaks
loudly. His messages
almost always come
in a whisper.*



From revelations to Hyrum Smith (depicted above) and Oliver Cowdery, we learn that God teaches us by the power of His Spirit, which enlightens our minds and speaks peace to us concerning the questions we have asked.

recognize the “still small voice” that is given to them. This is like making up our minds that we will learn only from a teacher who shouts and that we will refuse to listen to even the wisest teaching that comes in a whisper.

We need to know that the Lord rarely speaks loudly. His messages almost always come in a whisper.

Revelation as Enlightenment and Peace

One of the greatest explanations of how the Spirit teaches us is in the revelation given to Oliver Cowdery at Harmony, Pennsylvania, in April 1829. In this revelation the Lord told Oliver:

“Yea, behold, I will *tell you in your mind and in your heart*, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

“Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation” (D&C 8:2–3; emphasis added).

Similarly, the Prophet Joseph Smith referred to the spirit of revelation as “pure intelligence,” which “may give you sudden strokes of ideas.”¹ In another revelation, Oliver was reminded that he had inquired of the Lord and that “as often as thou hast inquired thou hast

received instruction of my Spirit” (D&C 6:14). How did that instruction come? “Behold,” the Lord said, “thou knowest that thou hast inquired of me and I did *enlighten thy mind*” (verse 15; emphasis added). That same teaching was repeated in a revelation given to Hyrum Smith in which the Lord said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall *enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy*” (D&C 11:13; emphasis added). These are great descriptions of the way the Lord communicates with us by His Spirit.

In further instruction to Oliver Cowdery, the Lord reminded him of the time he had prayed that he might know “the truth of these things” (D&C 6:22). And the Lord described how He had answered that prayer and given Oliver a revelation: “Did I not *speak peace to your mind* concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?” (verse 23; emphasis added).

From these revelations we learn that God teaches us by the power of His Spirit, which *enlightens our minds* and *speaks peace* to us concerning the questions we have asked.



The Lord did not communicate with Adam immediately after he obeyed the command to sacrifice the firstlings of his flocks. The scripture says, “And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam” (Moses 5:6).

Revelation Is a Feeling

We also learn from these revelations that being taught by the Spirit is not a passive thing. Often the Lord’s communication does not come until we have studied matters out in our own minds. Then we receive a confirmation.

The process was explained to Oliver Cowdery in another revelation received at Harmony, Pennsylvania, in April 1829. The Lord described why Oliver had not been able to translate the Book of Mormon:

“Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

“But, behold, I say unto you, that *you must study it out in your mind*; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, *you shall feel that it is right*” (D&C 9:7–8; emphasis added).

This may be one of the most important and most misunderstood teachings in all the Doctrine and Covenants. The teachings of the Spirit often come as feelings. That fact is of the utmost importance, yet some misunderstand what it means. I know of persons who think they have never had a witness from the Holy Ghost because they have never felt their bosom “burn within” them. The burning of the bosom,

I suggest, is not a feeling of caloric heat like combustion but a feeling of peace and warmth and serenity and goodness.

Revelation Is Not Constant

Revelation is not constant. The Lord’s way puts limits on how often He will speak to us by His Spirit. Not understanding this, some have been misled by expecting revelations too frequently.

Commenting on the workings of the Spirit, President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has said, “I have learned that strong, impressive spiritual experiences do not come to us very frequently.”²

To illustrate that point, consider what we are taught about our first parents after they were cast out of the Garden of Eden and shut out from the presence of the Lord. The Lord gave Adam a commandment that he should sacrifice the firstlings of his flocks as an offering unto the Lord. He obeyed. Did the Lord communicate with him immediately? The scripture says: “*And after many days* an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam” (Moses 5:6; emphasis added).

William E. Berrett, one of our finest gospel teachers, who served as an administrator at BYU and for the Church Educational System, said this about the matter of constant

or continuous revelation: “Those who pray that the Spirit might give them immediate guidance in every little thing throw themselves open to false spirits that seem ever ready to answer our pleas and confuse us. . . . The people I have found most confused in this Church are those who seek personal revelations on everything. They want the personal assurance from the Spirit from daylight to dark on everything they do. I say they are the most confused people I know because it appears sometimes that the answer comes from the wrong source.”³

The Prophet Joseph Smith said something similar. When the Saints “supplicate at the throne of grace,” he counseled, they shouldn’t do so over trivial matters but rather should “pray earnestly for the best gifts.”⁴ That is an important principle. We pray continuously for guidance, but we shouldn’t expect *continuous* revelation. We expect *continuing* revelation, which is the continuing assurance of revelation whenever we seek guidance and our circumstances are such that a wise and loving Lord chooses to give it to us.

Revelation and Testimony

Visions do happen. Voices are heard from beyond the veil. I know this. But these experiences are exceptional. And when we have a great and exceptional experience, we rarely speak of it publicly because we are instructed not to do so (see D&C 63:64) and because we understand that the channels of revelation will be closed if we show these things before the world.

Most of the revelation that comes to leaders and members of the Church comes by the “still small voice” or by a feeling rather than by a vision or a voice that speaks specific words to our hearing. I testify to the reality of that kind of revelation, which I have come to know as a familiar, even a daily, experience to guide us in the work of the Lord.

Not understanding these principles of revelation, some people postpone acknowledging their testimony or their spiritual progress until they have experienced a miraculous event. They fail to realize that with most people—especially those raised in the Church—the precious revelation that gives us a testimony is not an event but a process. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) observed: “Being born again is a gradual thing, except in a few isolated instances that are so miraculous they get written up

in the scriptures. As far as the generality of the members of the Church are concerned, we are born again by degrees, and we are born again to added light and added knowledge and added desires for righteousness as we keep the commandments.”⁵

We should understand that the Lord will speak to us in His own time and in His own way. This is usually by what the scriptures call the “still small voice” of enlightenment. We are often obliged to act upon our best judgment, subject to the Spirit’s restraining impressions if we have strayed beyond permissible limits.

Revelation is a reality. It comes in the Lord’s way and according to the Lord’s timetable.

I testify that these things are true. We have the gift of the Holy Ghost, the right to the constant companionship of the Spirit of the Lord to testify of the Father and of the Son, to lead us into truth, to teach us all things, and to bring all things to our remembrance (see John 14:26; 16:13). ■

From an address delivered to new mission presidents on June 27, 2001.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 132.
2. Boyd K. Packer, *That All May Be Edified* (1982), 337.
3. William E. Berrett, in Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *The Holy Ghost* (1989), 29–30.
4. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 131.
5. Bruce R. McConkie, “Jesus Christ and Him Crucified,” in *Brigham Young University 1976 Speeches* (1977), 5.

*With most people—
especially those raised
in the Church—the
precious revelation
that gives us a
testimony is not an
event but a process.*





By Elder
Mervyn B. Arnold
Of the Seventy

A NEW Writing

*May we, through our faith
and diligence in feasting upon
the scriptures, receive “a new writing”
—personal revelation that blesses our lives.*

Several years ago, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles asked me to come to his office. Prior to our visit, he had seen me with my old set of scriptures, which I had read many times and had marked up with different colors of pencils, pens, and markers.

Elder Scott smiled and said, “Elder Arnold, I would suggest you never open your old set of scriptures again. Go buy a new set, and when you have finished reading the new set, close them, and then go buy another set. You will learn much more, and after a few new sets, perhaps you will start to understand what it really means to feast upon the scriptures.”

I will be forever grateful for that advice. As Elder Scott recommended, I have since read various sets of scriptures. Although I am not suggesting that every Church member needs to follow this practice, I have found it personally rewarding. I would like to share some insights I have learned since receiving Elder Scott’s wonderful advice.

Over time I have come to appreciate the differences among reading, studying, searching, pondering, and feasting on the scriptures. *Reading* is to learn from what one sees in writing or print. *Studying* is an act of contemplation. *Searching* means to look carefully to find or discover something. *Pondering* is to weigh in the mind. *Feasting* means to partake abundantly.

All the steps leading up to feasting on the scriptures are important. However, when we actually begin to feast, we spiritually take part in—or make a part of us—the teachings of the Savior, “whether [those teachings are] by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants” (D&C 1:38). As we begin to incorporate into our souls the teachings of the Savior, we begin *to take part* in the “mighty change” of heart spoken of by Alma (Alma 5:12).

Feasting upon the Word

“Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ,” Nephi tells us.

“Wherefore, I said unto you, *feast* upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you *all things what ye should do*” (2 Nephi 32:3; emphasis added).

This feast becomes possible as we contemplate what we read (study), look over the verses carefully and thoroughly in an effort to discover something (search), and weigh in our minds what we have read (ponder). We can then apply the scriptures (feast) in such a way that the teachings of the Savior and His prophets literally become part of us and mold us into what we must become to live in the presence of God.

As we feast upon the scriptures, the menu seems to change each time we open them. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has noted how this takes place: “I was reading the Doctrine and Covenants for the 15th or 20th time. Their direction [on a particular subject] came to my mind with such freshness and impact that I thought they might have been newly inserted in my book.

From Nephi we learn that the Lord is willing to give us a new writing not only to guide us spiritually but also to help us temporally.

That is the way with prayerful study of the scriptures. The scriptures do not change, but *we do*, and so the same scriptures can give us new insights every time we read them.”¹

A Pattern for Revelation

One morning I found myself reading about the Liahona: “And there was also written upon [the pointers] *a new writing*, which was plain to be read, which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and it was written and changed from time to time, according to the faith and diligence which we gave unto it” (1 Nephi 16:29; emphasis added).

As I read, studied, searched, pondered, prayed about, and feasted upon this one verse over the next several days, I experienced many thoughts and feelings. I realized that here the Lord has given us a pattern for receiving “a new writing,” or personal revelation. Portions of that pattern are given in the verses before and after the 29th verse. A few of the key words in the pattern are *to ask* (“whither shall I go . . . ?”), *to heed* (“we did follow”), and *to look* (“behold the things



which are written”). Receiving a new writing will happen only “according to the faith and diligence and heed” we give to the pattern. (See 1 Nephi 16:23, 16, 26, 28.)

After reading, studying, searching, pondering, and feasting upon the scriptures and the words of the living prophets over a number of years, I have learned there are some things I can do as I seek for a new writing. Looking up footnotes, for example, greatly enhances the feasting process and allows additional insights that otherwise might not be revealed. For example, look at footnote *b* for 1 Nephi 16:29, where one of the references states “that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6). Another reference cites the story of Naaman (see 2 Kings 5:13), who was healed of leprosy simply by following the counsel of a prophet to bathe in the river Jordan seven times.

Our new writings, our own personal revelations, can be greatly enhanced as we ponder how small and simple things can greatly change our lives and the lives of our loved ones. President Brigham Young (1801–77) stated, “Our lives are made up of little, simple circumstances that amount to a great deal when they are brought together, and sum up the whole life of the man or woman; and yet in our passing from one to another our little acts and incidents seem to be very minute or simple, but we find that they amount to a great deal.”²

From Nephi we learn that the Lord is willing to give us a new writing not only to guide us spiritually but also to help us temporally. Nephi tells us what he did after he broke his bow: “I, Nephi, did make out of wood a bow, and out of a straight stick, an arrow; wherefore, I did arm myself with a bow and an arrow, with a sling and with stones” (1 Nephi 16:23).

Nephi clearly did all in his power to obtain the desired temporal blessing. He did not wait around for someone to come to his tent door and hand him the food his people desperately needed. He went to work.

Nephi, however, did not then pick up the Liahona and start up the mountain. Rather, he followed God’s pattern of seeking guidance through a living prophet.



It is vitally important that we not only feast upon the scriptures but also follow the counsel of the Lord and His living prophets.

“And I said unto my father: Whither shall I go to obtain food?

“And it came to pass that he [Lehi] did inquire of the Lord” (1 Nephi 16:23–24).

It is vitally important that we not only feast upon the scriptures but also follow the counsel of the Lord and His living prophets. And we must not be selective in our obedience, picking and choosing which counsel or commandments we will heed.

After Nephi had done his part, the Lord gave him a new writing “upon the ball” so that he was able to secure food to meet the physical needs of his people (see 1 Nephi 16:30–31).

The Lord Will Provide

Upon returning home from serving as a mission president, I found myself in a serious financial situation. Before my departure in 1985, I worked in a building and development business with two wonderful partners. In the early 1980s, however, the economy had begun to slip into recession. Building came almost to a halt, and things did not look good. We liquidated almost all of our assets to pay off our loans. During my time away, my two partners managed to keep the business going.

I felt much like Nephi. My bow, the economy, was broken. But like Nephi, I knew that if we did everything within



We need to be greatly interested in and committed to our scriptural feast—not texting, talking on the phone, or sandwiching in a minute here and there.

our power—in our case, work at anything and everything to earn a living—the Lord would provide. I found out that blessings come in different ways. Sometimes they came to us through the help of family and loved ones. Sometimes they were totally different from what we had prayed or hoped for.

During those difficult years, my partners and I lived on much-reduced salaries. Meanwhile we endeavored to keep the commandments, attend the temple, pay our tithes and offerings, and complete our assignments in the Church.

This situation went on until one day a man who was not a member of the Church received a prompting. This righteous man, with whom I had done just one real estate transaction more than five years earlier, called me on the phone. He said my name had been on his mind and would not go away. He asked me to come see him. That meeting turned into many business transactions that not only helped us get on our feet but also allowed me to retire a few years later so I could offer my services to the Lord full-time.

A Pattern for Feasting

One pattern that has helped me feast upon the scriptures can be found in President Joseph F. Smith's (1838–1918) vision of the dead (see D&C 138:1–11):

“I sat in my room pondering over the scriptures . . .” (verse 1).

Find a quiet place with few interruptions and distractions. For me that means reading early in the morning.

“Reflecting upon the great atoning sacrifice . . .” (verse 2).

Some people want to read and check off one chapter a day, but sometimes I will spend an entire hour on one verse as I reflect, ponder, and pray over what I am reading, especially if I read footnotes.

“While I was thus engaged . . .” (verse 5).

We need to be greatly interested in and committed to our feast—not texting, talking on the phone, or sandwiching in a minute here and there.

“I opened the Bible and read . . .” (verse 6).

Elder Scott teaches that reading the scriptures can provide illumination for our minds and set the stage for us to receive communication from above.³

“As I pondered over these things which are written, the eyes of my understanding were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me . . .” (verse 11).

This is what feasting is all about. As our eyes are opened, our ears are able to hear, our hearts begin to feel what the Lord would have us learn, and we take part in the feast by acting upon feelings and impressions—by implementing what the Spirit prompts us to do in our lives. Changes will gradually take place, including in our countenances, and we will be better prepared to meet our Lord and Savior “at the great and last day” (2 Nephi 2:26).

May our Heavenly Father bless each of us to enjoy the sweetness of feasting upon the scriptures. And may we, through our faith and diligence in feasting, receive “a new writing”—personal revelation that blesses our lives with “understanding concerning the ways of the Lord” (1 Nephi 16:29). ■

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “Sins and Mistakes,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1996, 62; emphasis added.
2. Brigham Young, “Discourse,” *Deseret News*, Oct. 17, 1877, 578.
3. See Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 6.

Reading the Scriptures despite My Dyslexia

Name withheld

When I was 21, I met the sister missionaries, and they gave me a Book of Mormon and invited me to read it. I am dyslexic, so I said I couldn't read. But they said I should try anyway. I was annoyed that they didn't understand my condition, but I agreed to at least try. I knew they weren't asking for their personal gain, so I obeyed.

At first I read only because the missionaries asked me to and I knew they thought the Book of Mormon would help me. And it did. I joined the Church soon after they gave me my first copy of the Book of Mormon. I have read it every day since then for the past 16 years.

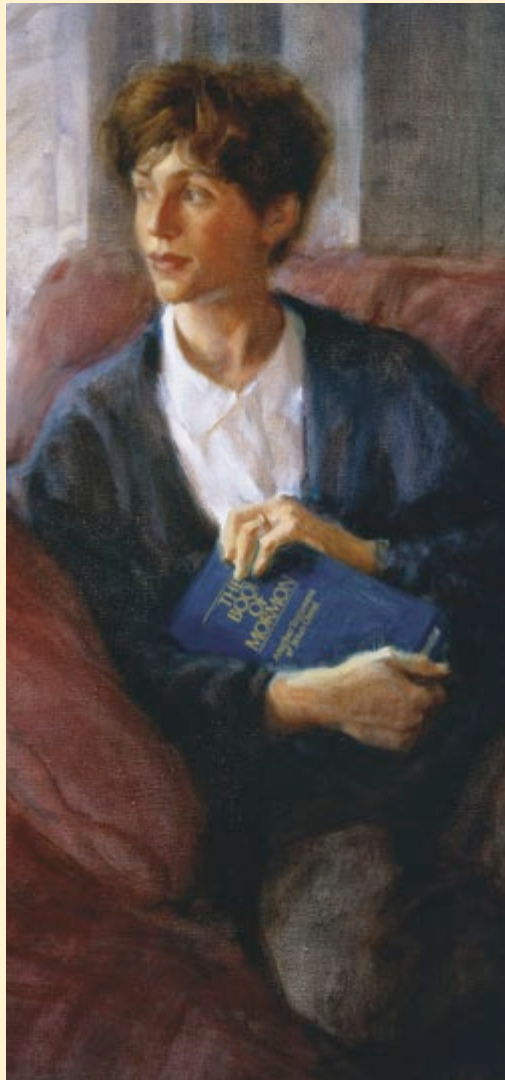
For the first five years, I couldn't understand any of the words I saw in the scriptures, but I read a line or two each day. Eventually I read the entire standard works as well as *Jesus the Christ* by Elder James E. Talmage. Although I can now understand only small pieces of what I read, I am glad I have continued to read the scriptures. I believe that when I am resurrected, everything I have read will come flooding back into my mind. So even

though it might seem futile to read a book that I will never completely understand in this life, I still keep the commandment to read daily because

I want to be obedient. Besides, I have found that regular scripture reading gives me the opportunity to be taught by the Spirit.

I have also listened to audio recordings of the scriptures. At night, after saying a prayer and reading the scriptures, I listened to the recordings as I fell asleep. By listening to the scriptures as well as trying to read them, I was able to get to know the scriptures really well. I have also listened to general conference and devotionals online so that I could hear the prophets talk about the gospel.

Daily scripture study is part of living the gospel, so I work at it. I didn't join the Church to be half active; I joined to be fully active. Even though it's hard, I read the scriptures every day because the prophets have asked us to. There is no point in hearing a commandment and not doing it. ■



“Perseverance is essential to us in learning and living the principles of the gospel and . . . will determine our progress as we strive to reach exaltation,” taught Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (“Never Give Up,” Ensign, Nov. 1987, 10).



NO CORRUPT COMMUNICATION

Getting to know people in my new area helped me realize that sarcasm is part of what the Apostle Paul called “corrupt communication.”

By Jennifer Grace Jones

Church Magazines

I moved away from my college town immediately after graduation and was eager to make friends in my new area. I quickly acclimated to a good group of people, and I enjoyed getting to know them. But some of my new friends relied on sarcasm to be funny, sometimes exploiting others’ weaknesses for humor. At first I ignored it. However, months of interactions in which humor came at the expense of someone’s feelings—including mine—left my heart heavy. I yearned for friends who would encourage me instead of make fun of my shortcomings.

I returned to my college town for a short visit and reunited with women whom I admire for their faith, vigor, and optimism. We spent the day playing sports and talking. They were eager to hear about my life, and they listened without belittling me. We laughed hard and often—but never at someone else.

As I sat with these women in the afternoon sunlight, I looked into their cheerful faces, and my heart lifted. Their kindness soothed like a balm, and I resolved to become a better friend, especially when it came to uplifting others with my conversation.

The Greek root for sarcasm is *sarkazein* and means “to tear flesh like dogs.”¹ One dictionary defines sarcasm as irony designed to “give pain.”² Sarcasm has many uses in our communication: it can convey aggression and insult,³ it can be used to dominate others,⁴ and it can communicate contempt and anger.⁵ Not all sarcasm is intentionally sinister, but it has a hypocritical edge because it requires us to say the opposite of what we mean. Some use it for humor, but it often damages our relationships because it leaves our friends and family doubting our sincerity and confused by what we say.



SPEAKING TO CHILDREN

“Helaman’s sons were persecuted and put in prison. . . . Then came a voice. . . .

“‘. . . It was not a voice of thunder, neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise, but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it did pierce even to the very soul.’ [Helaman 5:30.]

“We can learn from that voice from heaven. It was not loud, scolding, or demeaning; it was a still voice of perfect mildness, giving firm direction while giving hope.

“How we speak to our children and the words we use can encourage and uplift them. . . . They come to this earth ready to listen.”

Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president, “The Words We Speak,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 81.

Our Words May Minister Grace

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) identified the damage that sarcasm inflicts on our relationships:

“Everywhere is heard the snide remark, the sarcastic gibe, the cutting down of associates. Sadly, these are too often the essence of our conversation. In our homes, wives weep and children finally give up under the barrage of criticism leveled by husbands and fathers. Criticism is the forerunner of divorce, the cultivator of rebellion, sometimes a catalyst that leads to failure. . . .

“I am asking that we look a little deeper for the good, that we still voices of insult and sarcasm, that we more generously compliment virtue and effort.”⁶

The Apostle Paul taught similar principles to the Ephesians: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29). According to this scripture, all our communication should uplift others and strengthen them in the Lord.

The conversations I had with the women in my college town exemplified Paul’s counsel. We spoke of our missions and maintaining spirituality after returning home; we spoke about the careers that would lead us to serve God and others; we spoke about what it would mean when we had the chance to start our families. And when I left, I felt fortified in my faith in the Savior and optimistic about my future.

Sarcasm Is No Joke

As I’ve observed sarcasm in social interactions, I’ve noted that those who use it tend to underestimate its negative effects because they assume that what they say is humorous instead of hurtful. People who use sarcasm often think their targets are too sensitive or naïve when feelings get hurt.⁷ “She just can’t take a joke,” they say. In more disturbing cases, sarcasm communicates contempt for others and gives people the “dishonest opportunity to wound without looking like they’re wounding.”⁸ If someone feels hurt by such sarcasm, the one who made the verbal jab will often respond with something like, “I was only teasing! Lighten up.”

Parents and siblings who use sarcasm against young children often cause more damage than they ever intend. Studies show that children as young as five years old can detect sarcasm immediately.⁹ Although children discern sarcasm, they don’t have the ability to understand it fully. Parents are “much more proficient at using [sarcasm] than children,” and it can become a veil for “undisclosed anger, annoyance, even jealousy.”¹⁰ This unequal power changes parental sarcasm from a joke into a form of bullying.¹¹

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that we must be extremely careful in how we communicate with children: “Be constructive in your comments to a child—always. Never tell them, even in whimsy, that they are fat or dumb or lazy or homely. You would never do that maliciously, but they remember and may struggle for years trying to forget—and to forgive.”¹²

Mothers and fathers sometimes use sarcasm with each other when trying to deal with confrontation, but this may not be the best way for them to model conflict resolution. When used to correct others, sarcasm is often interpreted as more offensive, mocking, and aggressive than direct criticism.¹³ Children who are brought up in overly sarcastic environments may learn that sarcasm is the only way to cope with problems, and this shortchanges their ability to communicate honest feelings.¹⁴

True Humor and Charity

Eliminating hurtful sarcasm doesn't mean our homes need to be empty of humor or necessary correction. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that "a good sense of humor helps revelation" and that it "is an escape valve for the pressures of life."¹⁵ Whereas sarcasm stems from light-mindedness where nothing is taken seriously, true humor blossoms from lightheartedness and helps cultivate beautiful, healthy family cultures.¹⁶ Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that "husbands and wives deal with their imperfections best with patience and a sense of humor."¹⁷

Honest correction is necessary—especially in parent-child relationships—in order for families to flourish. Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that "the invitation to repent is an expression of love. . . . If we do not invite others to change or if we do not demand repentance of ourselves, we fail in a fundamental duty we owe to one another and to ourselves. A permissive parent, an indulgent friend, a fearful Church leader are in reality more concerned about themselves than the welfare and happiness of those they could help."¹⁸

But correction must be handled very carefully. Whatever the feedback, it is best delivered in an honest way and when we are motivated by only the pure





ANSWERING QUESTIONS

What does it mean to take the Lord's name in vain?

We are commanded not to “take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Exodus 20:7), meaning we should always use the names of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ with reverence and respect. Using the names of Deity in vain means using them without respect, insincerely, or in a blasphemous (insulting or irreverent) way. (See L. Tom Perry, “Obedience to Law Is Liberty,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 87.)

love of Jesus Christ—not by selfishness, arrogance, or frustration. The scriptures admonish us to reprove others only “when moved upon by the Holy Ghost,” and we are to show “an increase of love” toward those we correct so that they “may know that [our] faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death” (D&C 121:43–44).

Nothing about sarcasm communicates an increase of love. When I look back on that afternoon with the women in my college town, I am reminded of when the prophet Alma decided to travel throughout the land of the Nephites to preach because the power of the word of God “had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just.” In fact, uplifting words and testimony had a more powerful effect on the Nephites than war or any other thing that had happened to them. (See Alma 31:5.) So it was for me. The love these sisters showed me in their conversation ministered to my needs, cast out my fears, and helped my faith to thrive. ■

NOTES

1. Richard Chin, “The Science of Sarcasm? Yeah, Right,” *Smithsonian.com*, Nov. 14, 2011, smithsonianmag.com.
2. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “sarcasm.”
3. See John Haiman, *Talk Is Cheap: Sarcasm, Alienation, and the Evolution of Language* (1998), 20.
4. See Elizabeth Svoboda, “Sarcastic Masters,” *Psychology Today*, July/Aug. 2007, 44, available online at psychologytoday.com.
5. See John Gottman, *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail: And How You Can Make Yours Last* (1994), 80–81.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Continuing Pursuit of Truth,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1986, 2, 4.
7. See Lisa Merlo-Booth, “The Sting of Sarcasm Doesn't Belong in Relationships,” Nov. 30, 2009, *Straight Talk for Women* (blog), lmerlobooth.typepad.com.
8. Paul Coughlin, “Parental Sarcasm Is No Joke,” *Focus on the Family*, May 2008, focusonthefamily.com/parenting/articles/parental_sarcasm.aspx.
9. See Chin, “The Science of Sarcasm?”
10. Coughlin, “Parental Sarcasm Is No Joke.”
11. See Coughlin, “Parental Sarcasm Is No Joke.”
12. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Tongue of Angels,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 17.
13. See Maggie Toplak and Albert N. Katz, “On the Uses of Sarcastic Irony,” *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 32, no. 10 (Sept. 2000), 1467–88.
14. From interview with Sean Evans, LDS Family Services, Sept. 19, 2012.
15. Richard G. Scott, “How to Obtain Revelation and Inspiration for Your Personal Life,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 46.
16. See Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families* (1997), 34.
17. Russell M. Nelson, “The Doctrinal Importance of Marriage and Children,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Feb. 2012, lds.org/broadcasts.
18. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 39.



Recent Internet trends have shown that cyberbullying—the use of technology such as cell phones, computers, social media, and websites to humiliate another person—has proliferated. Statistics estimate that 42 percent of young children and teenagers have been bullied online.¹ Whereas children could traditionally find in their homes a safe haven from bullies, “today’s bullies use technology to spread rumors and threats, making life miserable for their victims throughout the day and night.”² And the shroud of Internet anonymity allows bullies to harass their targets almost without repercussions.

Counsel from an Apostle

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught against all forms of cyberbullying: “One of your greatest protections

against making bad choices is to not put on any mask of anonymity. If you ever find yourself wanting to do so, please know it is a serious sign of danger and one of the adversary’s tools to get you to do something you should not do. . . .

“ . . . It is common today to hide one’s identity when writing hateful, vitriolic, bigoted communications anonymously online. . . .

“Any use of the Internet to bully, destroy a reputation, or place a person in a bad light is reprehensible. What we are seeing in society is that when people wear the mask of anonymity, they are more likely to engage in this kind of conduct, which is so destructive of civil discourse. It also violates the basic principles the Savior taught.”³

What to Do

If you are a parent, consider counseling with your children and writing


a family agreement that sets rules for how you use the Internet in your home. Use the guidelines found in the “Entertainment and Media” section of the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet. Discuss the following as a family:

- Where children can go on the Internet and what they can do.
- How much time they can spend on the Internet.
- What to do if anything makes them uncomfortable.
- How to protect personal information.

NOTES

1. See Susan Keith and Michelle E. Martin, “Cyber-Bullying: Creating a Culture of Respect in a Cyber World,” *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, vol. 13, no. 4 (Winter 2005), 224–25.
2. Keith and Martin, “Cyber-Bullying,” 225.
3. Quentin L. Cook, “What E’er Thou Art, Act Well Thy Part: Avoid Wearing Masks That Hide Identity” (Church Educational System devotional for young adults, Mar. 4, 2012), lds.org/broadcasts.





WORLDS WITHOUT NUMBER

The heavens declare the glory of God.

By R. Val Johnson
Church Magazines

One of the great truths restored in our day is that we are literally spirit sons and daughters of God. In scriptures brought to light by the Prophet Joseph Smith, we read these words of our Heavenly Father: “I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh” (Moses 6:51; see also Moses 3:5).

Perhaps because the concept of *father* is easy to grasp, or perhaps because the idea that we are the offspring of God is so empowering (see Acts 17:28), we sometimes tend to focus on that personal relationship and forget that our Heavenly Father, through His Son, is also the Creator and Ruler of the universe. To Moses, He declared:

“I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name. . . .

“And worlds without number have I created; . . . and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten” (Moses 1:3, 33).

The God we worship is more powerful than we can comprehend. The Father, through His Son, not only created the heavens and the earth but also is the power that sustains those creations. Speaking of the Savior and the light, or power, by which He creates and governs, the Prophet Joseph wrote:

“He . . . ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth. . . .

“Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—

*A planetary nebula in the
Musca constellation.¹*

“The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God” (D&C 88:6, 12–13).

While God is able to comprehend and govern all things, we mortals struggle to comprehend even the most rudimentary of His works. And yet, we are blessed to live in the fulness of times “in the which nothing shall be withheld. . . .

“ . . . If there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—

“All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and . . . all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times” (D&C 121:28, 30–31).

That promised knowledge is being revealed to us by faith, foremost in the revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is also coming to us by study. (See D&C 88:118.) Astronomers, with the aid of powerful instruments, are helping us glimpse the extent of God’s dominions. While astrophysics in the future will surely be modified as more is learned of the universe, what we have learned so far is mind-boggling. And if anything is true



of the research done over the past several decades, it is that the more we learn, the more incredible our view of God's creations becomes.

Caught up in the wonder of this expanding view of the cosmos, we can only kneel in awed reverence before Him, the creator and sustainer of it, and express gratitude that this divine, all-powerful Being is our Father. And we stand in stunned astonishment to learn that the purpose of all the work He has done is to bring about our immortality and eternal life (see Moses 1:39). Knowing all this, should we not gladly obey His counsel and, with eagerness, receive the ordinances and covenants that will guide us to eternal life with Him?

What follows is just a glimpse of the majesty and glory of our Heavenly Father's handiwork.



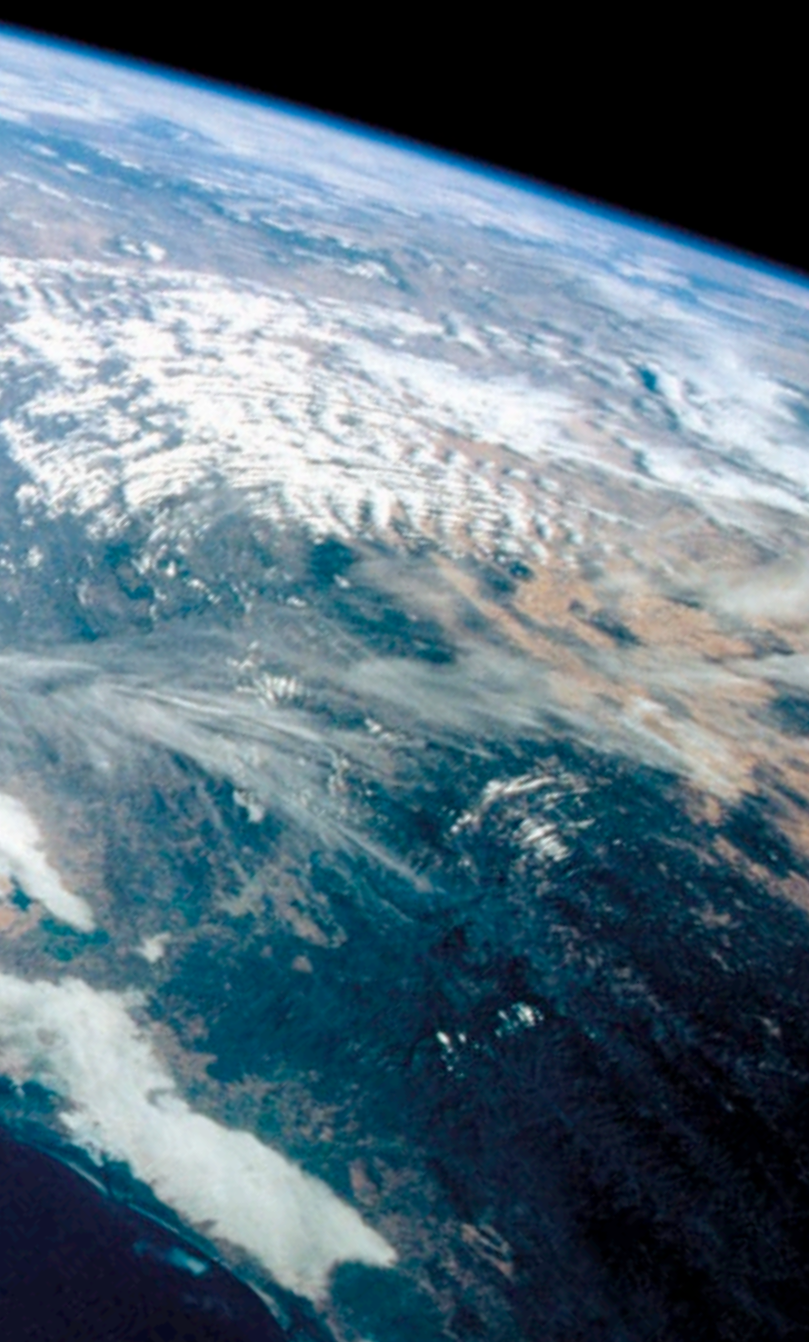
In the Beginning

Our sun was created to give light and life to the earth on which we live. For example, the miracle of photosynthesis enables plants to convert sunlight into the matter we eat and to release into the environment the oxygen we breathe. Our planet is just the right distance from the sun—neither too far away (and thus too cold) nor too close (and thus too hot) to sustain the amazing diversity of animals, plants, and people that populate it.

Moving in His Majesty and Power

Light travels at 186,282 miles (299,792 km) per second. As far as we can tell, nothing in the physical universe can go faster. Because light travels so fast, and because its speed is constant, we can use it to measure the incredible distances in the universe. Light from the sun takes only eight minutes to reach earth, which revolves around the sun at an average of 93 million miles (149.7 million km). A number of other planets and objects revolve around the sun. Circling the sun at the edge of this solar system is a cloud of small, icy objects. They are so far away that it takes seven hours for light from the sun to reach them. That is nothing compared with the distance to our nearest stellar neighbor. Light from Proxima Centauri travels more than four years to reach us. Light from the nearest galaxy, Andromeda, travels to us in about two million years. Because of the sheer size of the universe, astronomers commonly measure distances in light-years, so Andromeda is said to be two million light-years away.

*Left: Mexico, including the Baja California Peninsula, as seen from space.²
Above: The planet Saturn.³*





**WE ARE
EVERYTHING
TO GOD**

"This is a paradox of man: compared to God, man is nothing; yet we are everything to God. While against the backdrop of infinite creation we may appear to be nothing, we have a spark of eternal fire burning within our breast. We have the incomprehensible promise of exaltation—worlds without end—within our grasp. And it is God's great desire to help us reach it."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "You Matter to Him," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 20.



Great Is Our Lord, and of Great Power

Most stars are grouped into communities called galaxies. Our own, the Milky Way, is a medium-sized spiral galaxy more than 100 thousand light-years in diameter. It has between 200 and 400 billion stars. Yet it is only one of billions of galaxies—estimates range from 100 billion to 500 billion. The largest galaxy discovered so far has 100 trillion stars. All those stars come in a dazzling array of colors and sizes, some more than a thousand times larger than our own.

Together, all the galaxies in the visible universe contain an estimated 30 billion trillion stars. Yet that number may be a small fraction of all there are. Evidence suggests that we can see only about 5 percent of all there is (the rest is “dark matter” and “dark energy,” so called because it can’t be seen or detected directly by the instruments we have). The universe, in fact, may be infinite in size.

And God controls it all.

Left: Spiral galaxy in the Coma Berenices constellation.⁴

Above: Two merging star clusters in the Tarantula Nebula.⁵



In His Own Image

In recent years, with advanced telescopes and other instruments, scientists have begun to search not just for stars but also for planets around those stars. The number of planets discovered is growing rapidly. As of March 2013, the number surpassed 900, and some appeared to lie in the same habitable zone as our earth. The number of planets in our galaxy alone could easily be in the hundreds of billions. Considering that there are hundreds of billions of galaxies in the visible universe, the number of planets is so large as to be incomprehensible—truly worlds without number (see Moses 1:33–35).

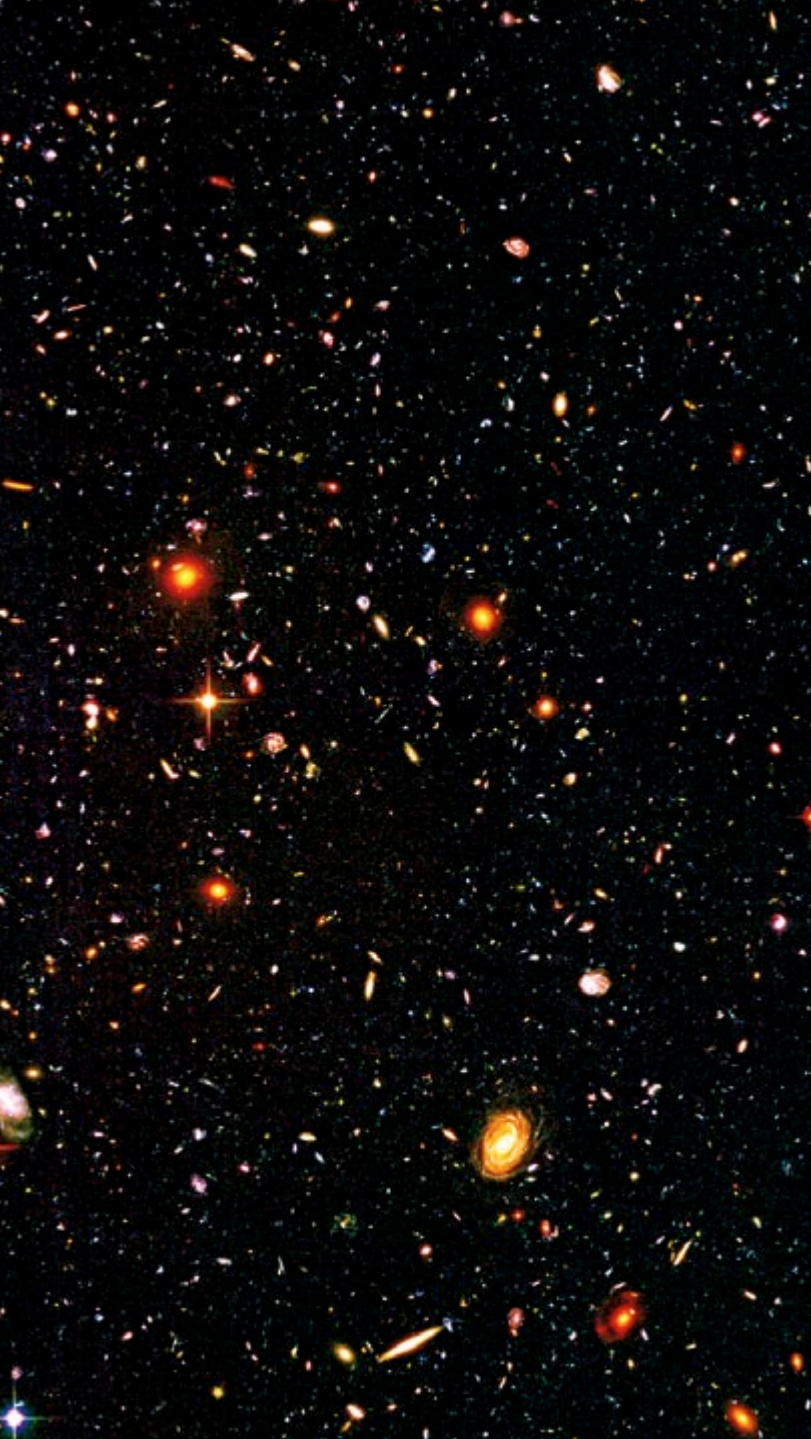
And scattered among them, as the Prophet Joseph Smith testified, are worlds whose “inhabitants . . . are begotten sons and daughters unto God” (D&C 76:24; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, “Out of the Darkness,” *Ensign*, June 1971, 2). ■

*Above: Christus statue.⁶
Center: Hubble Ultra-Deep Field image showing thousands of galaxies.⁷
Right: Another view of the Tarantula Nebula.⁸*

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

What do Latter-day Saints believe about the nature of God?

We understand that the Godhead consists of three separate individuals: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit” (D&C 130:22). While the bodies Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have are physical, they are not mortal; they are immortal and glorified. All divine



beings are imbued with that glory—variously described in scripture as light, power, truth, and Spirit (see D&C 88:6–68)—and can thus be considered “one” (see John 17; D&C 20:28; 3 Nephi 11:35–36). Through this Spirit, God “comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; . . . and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever” (D&C 88:41; see also Psalm 139:7–12; Bible Dictionary, “God”). For more information on this topic, see Christoffel Golden Jr., “The Father and the Son,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 99–101.

NOTES ON IMAGES

1. Pages 40–41: Nebula NGC 5189, made up of materials expelled by a dying star, is about 3 light-years across and approximately 3,000 light-years from Earth; courtesy of NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA).
2. Pages 42–43: View of Mexico taken from the *Atlantis* space shuttle, NASA Identifier: STS081-711-042; courtesy of NASA and www.dvidshub.net.
3. Page 43: The planet Saturn as photographed by *Cassini* robotic space explorer; courtesy of NASA/JPL/Space Science Institute.
4. Pages 44–45: The spiral galaxy NGC 4414, similar in form to our Milky Way Galaxy, is located about 60 million light-years from Earth; courtesy of the Hubble Heritage Team (AURA/STScI/NASA).
5. Page 45: Two merging star clusters in a region of active star formation known as the Tarantula Nebula, about 170,000 light-years from Earth; courtesy of NASA, ESA, and E. Sabbi (ESA/STScI).
6. Page 46: Detail from the *Christus*, sculpture by Aldo Rebecchi, based on an original by Bertel Thorvaldsen.
7. Pages 46–47: Composite image known as the Hubble Ultra-Deep Field (HUDF). The image was created from multiple exposures taken of the same area of seemingly empty, black space. Because the light from this area was so distant and faint, multiple exposures were needed to gather enough data to create the HUDF image. Almost all the specks of light visible in this photograph are galaxies (approximately 10,000). The area of this photograph is about the same area of the night sky that would be seen looking through an eight-foot-long soda straw. Courtesy of NASA, ESA, S. Beckwith (STScI), and the HUDF Team.
8. Page 47: The Tarantula Nebula is part of the Large Magellanic Cloud, a galaxy located near our Milky Way Galaxy; courtesy of NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA).



By Elder Patrick Kearon
Of the Seventy

OPENING
OUR
HEARTS
TO
Revelation

*As we sincerely seek and are worthy to receive, our
Eternal Father often communicates with us through revelation.*

My parents loved me dearly—of that I had no doubt. But when I was 10 years old, I had to attend boarding school in England while my parents continued to live thousands of miles away in Saudi Arabia. The separation was an enormous trial for me.

The brightest spot in any week came during breakfast time when mail was delivered. I would receive letters from home with such happiness and relief. I would wait until I could be alone to carefully unseal them and then eagerly read the messages of love, reassurance, and advice from my parents. I savored every line and felt, for those moments, closer to home and closer to my parents' love, and I received the courage I needed to continue on for another week.

There is much in the natural course of mortal life that can make us feel alone and afraid, even while we are surrounded by people, as I was at boarding school. And we all feel far from home at times.

Messages of love, reassurance, and guidance from home, however they arrive at your door or in your inbox, can have a powerful influence in steadying you along your journey while you are away from home. They remind you that you are loved and cherished. Letters, cards, texts, emails, and phone calls from Mom and Dad, brothers and sisters, grandparents, relatives, and friends go a long way to help us when we face challenges and adversity far from the comforts of home.

Of course, in many ways we are all far from home. The metaphor here for our eternal home is clear. Do you ever feel homesick and long for your eternal home and for the love and affirmation and pure truth and light we know exist there?



PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY DEL BENSON

Daily Guidance

Our Eternal Father has not let any of us leave His presence without the opportunity to access His love and guidance—every day of our lives. President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, assures us, “[The Father] offers us, through prayer in the name of His Son, the opportunity to commune with Him in this life *as often as we choose*.”¹ Sometimes we forget this. Sometimes we doubt this. Sometimes we cut ourselves off from it.

But He has endowed us all with the Light of Christ to enable us to judge right from wrong and to determine light from darkness and truth from error (see Moroni 7:16).

As we repeatedly respond to the Light of Christ and train ourselves to “lay hold upon every good thing” (Moroni 7:19), we increase our sensitivity to the things of the Spirit and enhance our ability to receive messages from our eternal home. As we sincerely seek and are worthy to receive, our Eternal Father often communicates with us through revelation—messages that come to us in the reflective moments of prayer, through the words and enlightenment of the scriptures, from the teachings of the prophets, or in the peaceful melodies of heavenly music. His messages are often quiet, and we can miss them if we are not ready to receive them.

In fact, it is often *because* we are so busy receiving other messages that we impair our ability to receive the much-needed messages from our eternal home. We live in a world in which messages surround us, even bombard us. Our smartphones, our computers, and our tablets are constantly buzzing, beeping, and vibrating with every new text, social media update, email, and photograph. It really is instant and insistent messaging.

We must be selective in the messages we choose to receive. It is vital to our spiritual well-being that we not consume so much of our time receiving good messages that we make ourselves unavailable to receive the best messages.²

To return safely to our eternal home, we must remain in constant communication with our Heavenly Father. If we place barriers between ourselves and the source of that critical communication—revelation—we will be unable to receive the messages of guidance we need from Him.

Many conditions of the heart may affect our ability to tune in to and receive messages from our Heavenly Father. I will touch upon three.

Hearts Burdened by Cares and Clamor

We may not *know* we are doing it, but occasionally we cut ourselves off from divine communication when our hearts become overburdened by the worries, pressures, irritations, and deadlines of daily life. Our hearts can become blocked from the peace and comfort the Lord would give us if we are too troubled and concerned. When we stay up too late and work too hard in order to meet our daily demands, fatigue sets in, we become overtired, and the world looks like a much gloomier place; things get out of perspective and out of proportion.

When you are feeling overwhelmed and overburdened, it seems impossible to slow down, find a quiet space, and draw close to your Heavenly Father. Just the mere suggestion that you carve out some time from your already overscheduled day may increase the sense of pressure you feel. You may doubt that choosing to spend that segment of quiet time will actually yield much benefit, and so you think your time is better spent getting on with something else. However, that’s when problems can arise.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, teaches a vital truth with regard to our hearts being burdened by the cares and clamor of daily life. He says:

“The Spirit does not get our attention by shouting or shaking us with a heavy hand. Rather it whispers. It caresses so gently that *if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all*.

A segment of time when we can be still, quiet, and removed from our busyness will help recenter us, refocus our priorities, and bring us back into a position to receive and feel the messages our Heavenly Father wishes to send us.



“Occasionally, it will press just firmly enough for us to pay heed. But most of the time, if we do not heed the gentle feeling, the Spirit will withdraw and wait until we come *seeking and listening*.”³

We must each find and then guard a time each day to remember these words of the Lord: “All flesh is in mine hands; *be still* and know that I am God” (D&C 101:16; emphasis added). A segment of time when we can be *still*, quiet, and removed from our busyness will help recenter us, refocus our priorities, and bring us back into a position to receive and feel the messages our Heavenly Father wishes to send us.

When we make ourselves ready and take the step of faith to put Him first (and why not first?) at some point in our day, we find peace even in the midst of an otherwise hectic schedule.

Hearts Hardened by Sin and Unworthiness

There can be no doubt that those with hearts carrying sin and unworthiness place barriers between God and themselves. Sometimes a heart can carry sin for so long that it becomes desensitized to spiritual things and incapable of receiving and feeling the messages of the Lord. If there is something you carry in your heart that is blocking you—in any degree—from truly connecting with your Heavenly Father and feeling His love and His plan for you, resolve now to make it right. Hearts become hardened by unworthiness, particularly when we continue to live as if that unworthiness were not actually there. This is compounded and complicated when we partake of the sacrament or participate in other ordinances as if our hearts were clean when really they are not.

Nephi teaches a beautiful truth when he says:

“The Lord God worketh not in darkness.

“He doeth *nothing* save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him” (2 Nephi 26:23–24; emphasis added).

In the spirit of that loving, tender reminder that He does nothing save it be for our benefit and that He laid down His life that He might draw each of us unto Him, the Savior

Himself says, “Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him” (D&C 59:5).

What is holding you back from giving Him your whole heart, your whole mind, and all your strength?

Let your heart *feel* the reality of Lehi’s teaching about your perfectly loving and perfectly forgiving Savior: “Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (2 Nephi 2:7).

He offered Himself as a sacrifice for *you*, and His suffering can answer the ends of the law for *you*. “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42). Can we ever hear this promise too often?

Hearts Malnourished by a Poor Digital Diet

As with so much in life, what we consume is a choice, so if you spend much of your time consuming one kind of message, don’t be surprised that you become influenced by it. Spending too much of our time with social media, celebrity or entertainment news, games, and the pursuit of online, time-hungry activities constitutes a poor digital diet. When we choose to consume the attitudes and opinions of the mass media, we find our own values and viewpoints following suit. We tell ourselves we’re not being affected by these messages, but that is not possible.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles posed these questions:

“1. Does the use of various technologies and media invite or impede the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost in your life?

“2. Does the time you spend using various technologies and media enlarge or restrict your capacity to live, to love, and to serve in meaningful ways?”⁴

We need to be aware that many of today’s messages in the media can cause us to doubt our faith, compromise our convictions, and view the world through cynical eyes. But we *can* deflect deceptive messages with our faith intact if we are connected in a vibrant, continuous stream



to the source of truth and light. If we have questions or doubts, we get answers from Heavenly Father through the delicate and precious channels of revelation that operate when we remove all barriers to our hearts. *We* choose to “look to God and live” (Alma 37:47).

I love what President Packer has taught: “We are not obedient because we are *blind*, we are obedient because we can *see*.”⁵

I recently experienced a reminder to watch my own digital diet when I had been consumed with a particular strand of news stories one day. I had a sense that I had spent too much time on it, but it was only later, when I picked up a book by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and read a few chapters, that I became acutely aware of the contrast. The news I had been so consumed with left me feeling unsettled and uneasy, whilst the book brought me peace and a sense of order and calm.

Conclusion

We believe that we are that we might have joy (see 2 Nephi 2:25), and that means joy here and now as well as in eternity. It is hard for us to feel joy, however, when we make choices that block the very messages that bring it to us.

As you examine the condition of your heart and the barriers you may be putting in the way of your communication with God, you will know what you need to do, and you will know what you need to change. I invite you to act *now*. Be bold in choosing to remove any obstruction to the sweet, comforting, guiding messages of love from your Father in Heaven.

The most important message any of us could receive or carry is a reminder of who we are and how we are loved



TURN YOUR HEART TOWARD THE LORD

“Lift up your soul in prayer and explain to your Heavenly Father what you are feeling.

Acknowledge your shortcomings.

Pour out your heart and express your gratitude. Let Him know of the trials you are facing.

Plead with Him in Christ’s name for strength and support. Ask that your ears may be opened, that you may hear His voice. Ask that your eyes may be opened, that you may see His light.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Hope of God’s Light,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 75.

by our Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. When the truth and reality of this message sink deep into our hearts, we are drawn back to Them—to Their love, to Their light, and to Their arms.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, fervently declared:

“Brothers and sisters, the most powerful Being in the universe is the Father of your spirit. He knows you. He loves you with a perfect love.

“. . . He wants you to know that *you matter to Him*.”⁶

My witness is that your Eternal Father in Heaven is real. He lives, and He loves you, adores you, and cherishes you—including those of you who are thinking, “Well, not me.” Jesus Christ is His Son, His gift to us all, the Savior of all mankind.

I conclude with the words of President Thomas S. Monson: “Remember that one with authority placed his hands on your head at the time of your confirmation and said, ‘Receive the Holy Ghost.’ *Open your hearts*, even your very souls, to the sound of that special voice which *testifies of truth*. As the prophet Isaiah promised, “Thine ears shall hear a word . . . saying, *This is the way, walk ye in it*.’ [Isaiah 30:21.]”⁷ ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on February 14, 2012. For the full text, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, “Exhort Them to Pray,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2012, 4; emphasis added.
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Good, Better, Best,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 104–8.
3. Boyd K. Packer, “The Quest for Spiritual Knowledge,” *New Era*, Jan. 2007, 4; emphasis added.
4. David A. Bednar, “Things as They Really Are,” *Ensign*, June 2010, 23.
5. Boyd K. Packer, “Agency and Control,” *Ensign*, May 1983, 66; emphasis added.
6. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “You Matter to Him,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 22; emphasis added.
7. Thomas S. Monson, “Be Thou an Example,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 113; emphasis added.

Move Forward

IN FAITH

What should you do when you have to make a decision and you've prayed about your choices, but you're still unsure of what to do?

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has stated, “It is the plain and very sobering truth that before [and after] great moments, certainly . . . great spiritual moments, there can come adversity, opposition, and darkness” (“Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2000, 7).

But opposition doesn't mean that Heavenly Father has abandoned you. He is there, and He will guide you. Sometimes we must move forward in faith until our way is illuminated. Following are some insights from modern prophets about patiently waiting for answers and guidance.

Walk to the Edge of the Light



“Shortly after I was called as a General Authority, I went to Elder Harold B. Lee for counsel. He listened very carefully to my problem and suggested that I see President David O. McKay. President McKay counseled me as to the direction I should go. I was very willing to be obedient but saw no way possible for me to do as he counseled me to do.

“I returned to Elder Lee and told him that I saw no way to move in the direction I was counseled to go.

He said, “The trouble with you is you want to see the end from the beginning.’ I replied that I would like to see at least a step or two ahead. Then came the lesson of a lifetime: ‘You must learn to walk to the edge of the light, and then a few steps into the darkness; then the light will appear and show the way before you.’ Then he quoted these 18 words from the Book of Mormon:

“Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith” (Ether 12:6).

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Edge of the Light,” BYU Magazine, Mar. 1991, magazine.byu.edu.

Proceed with Trust



“What do you do when you have prepared carefully, have prayed fervently, waited a reasonable time for a response, and still do not feel an answer? You may want to express thanks when that occurs, for it is an evidence of [Heavenly Father's] trust. When you are living worthily and your choice is consistent with the Savior's teachings and you need to act, proceed with trust. As you are sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit, one of two things will certainly occur at the appropriate time: either the stupor of thought will come, indicating an improper choice, or the peace or the burning in the bosom will be felt, confirming that your choice was correct. When you are living righteously and are acting with trust, God will not let you proceed too far without a warning impression if you have made the wrong decision.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer,” Ensign, May 2007, 10.

GO FORWARD

Right before I graduated from college, my wife and I were pondering two questions: when we should begin having children and where to go after graduation. We spent many hours talking about these intimidating issues but hadn't come to any conclusions.

One particular Sunday, our conversation slowly turned into a debate, which

then escalated into an argument. At that moment, the doorbell rang. We were surprised to find our home teachers standing in the doorway.

We invited them in and listened to their message. One of our home teachers began talking about Moses and the children of Israel making their escape from Egypt. When the children

of Israel got to the shores of the Red Sea, they could go no further, and the Egyptians were quickly approaching. The scriptures say that the children of Israel "were sore afraid" (Exodus 14:10). When Moses prayed for guidance, the Lord responded, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Exodus 14:15).

As soon as our home teacher read that scripture, the feelings of frustration and fear melted away. My wife and I realized that we had been sitting on the banks of the Red Sea wondering what to do but that in order to "see the salvation of the Lord" (Exodus 14:13), we would have to go forward.

In our case, going forward meant making an informed decision, working diligently, and trusting in the Lord. We had to stop debating and start acting in faith. As we followed the Lord's guidance, the sea of choices before us parted, and we were able to walk through unscathed. We are grateful for the blessings we received from moving forward in faith and for home teachers who inspired us to take the first steps.

Steven Scott Stokes,
North Carolina, USA



Don't Take Counsel from Your Fears



“Let us not take counsel from our fears. May we remember always to be of good cheer, put our faith in God, and

live worthy for Him to direct us. We are each entitled to receive personal inspiration to guide us through our mortal probation. May we so live that our hearts are open at all times to the whisperings and comfort of the Spirit.”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Be Not Afraid,” Ensign, Oct. 2002, 6.

Wait Patiently for Revelation



“The gradual increase of light radiating from the rising sun is like receiving a message from God ‘line upon line, precept

upon precept’ (2 Nephi 28:30). Most frequently, revelation comes in small increments over time and is granted according to our desire, worthiness, and preparation. Such communications from Heavenly Father gradually and gently ‘distil upon [our souls] as the dews from heaven’ (D&C 121:45).”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Spirit of Revelation,” Ensign, May 2011, 88.

Know That God Will Provide

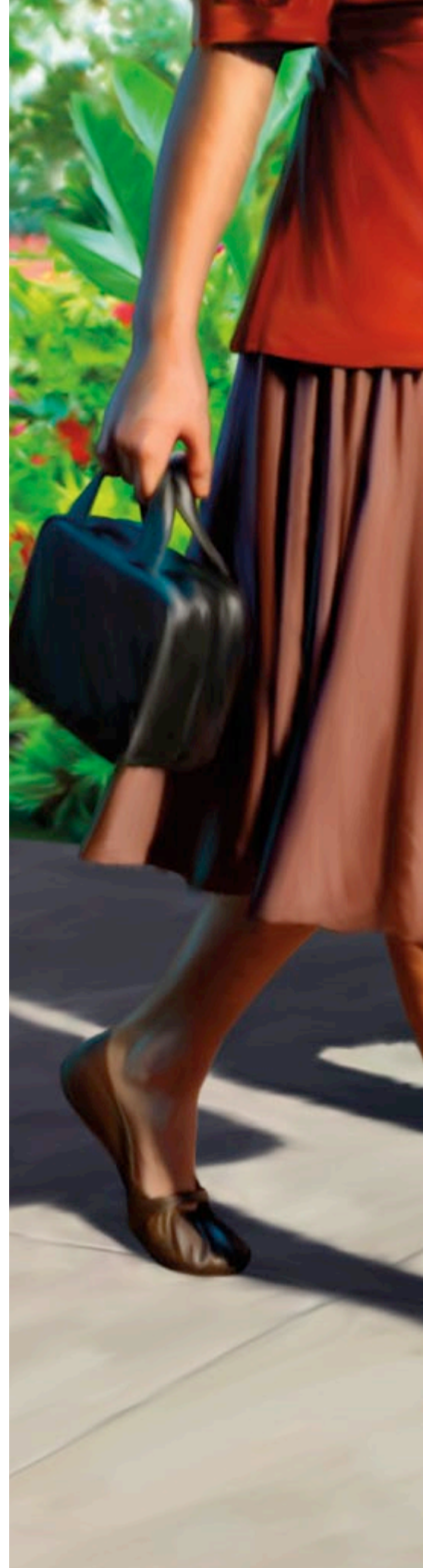


“During [a] busy season of my life, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin extended a call to me to serve as stake president.

“During my interview with him, many thoughts raced through my mind, not the least of which was the unsettling worry that I might not have the time this calling would require. Although I felt humbled and honored by the call, I briefly wondered if I could accept it. But it was only a fleeting thought because I knew that Elder Wirthlin was called of God and that he was doing the Lord’s work. What could I do but accept?”

“There are times when we have to step into the darkness in faith, confident that God will place solid ground beneath our feet once we do. And so I accepted gladly, knowing that God would provide.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Why of Priesthood Service,” Ensign, May 2012, 59.





FAITH PRECEDES MIRACLES

I wanted to be a missionary ever since I was young. It started as a simple desire and continued to grow. But life in the Philippines was difficult. My father and brother didn't have jobs, so I was the only one who could help my mother support our family. Because I was helping my family financially, my savings for my mission built up slowly.

I wasn't sure how things would work out. One night I read Ether 12:12: "For if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith." Then I read a message from President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) regarding faith: "It takes faith—unseeing faith—for young people to proceed immediately with their family responsibilities in the face of financial uncertainties. . . . It takes faith to fill full-time missions. But know this—that all these are of the planting, while faithful, devout families, spiritual security, peace, and eternal life are the harvest."¹

These teachings helped me understand that I needed more faith to submit my mission papers and to be a full-time missionary. I knew that even though it was hard, God would help me.

My branch president interviewed me and told me afterward that the last thing I needed to do was make the initial payment and then be interviewed by the mission president. I felt so happy

and excited. I would get my paycheck that week, and I would be able to give the required amount. However, when I got home, I found out that my father was in the hospital. I felt overwhelmed when I realized we had to pay the hospital the exact amount I needed for my mission payment.

But Heavenly Father prepared a way. We got some help from relatives and members of the Church, including my branch president. Miraculously my father was out of the hospital after one week, and I was able to make my payment. Two weeks after I turned 22, I received my mission call to the Philippines Olongapo Mission.

I know that Heavenly Father made it possible for me to submit my mission papers. I know that if I continue to trust in Him and to act in faith, He will make impossible things possible. He will answer all our prayers, and He will continue to guide us as long as we continue to obey Him. ■

Cheenee Lagunzad,
Bulacan, Philippines

NOTE

1. Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 11; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 143.

Finding Sanctuary

IN THE GOSPEL

Members in Kenya stand out as they live the gospel and form refuges from the world.

By Matthew D. Flitton

Church Magazines

With a population over three million, Nairobi, Kenya, is the most populous city in East Africa. It is a busy place full of cars, trucks, and *mutatus*—vans that serve as a private bus system—rushing through the streets. It's a city of railways, tourism, and manufacturing and is home to the second oldest stock exchange on the continent.

But to the south, less than five miles (7 km) from the heart of Kenya's capital city, is a quiet countryside. In Nairobi National Park the land is protected and looks as it has for hundreds of years. Against the city's skyline, giraffes, water buffalo, wildebeests, zebras, hippos, hartebeests, eland, and rhinos browse and graze. Lions sleep under acacia trees. The park offers these animals a refuge from the press of civilization.

PHOTOGRAPH OF NAIROBI, KENYA, BY MATTHEW D. FLITTON; PHOTOGRAPHS OF OIPA, STEPHEN, AND RHINOCEROSES BY JAMES DALRYMPLE

Throughout Kenya there are smaller sanctuaries of another kind. Members of the Church have created havens from the pressures of the world. By living the gospel, they are making holy places to stand in (see D&C 45:32; 87:8).

Gaining Strength through Values

Opra Ouma says that remembering the Young Women values gives her the strength to live the gospel. “Even if I’m not with the LDS young single adults, when I’m out in the world, I can apply the Young Women values and still be safe,” she says.

Opra first learned these values before she was baptized. When she was 17, Opra saw the missionaries on the street one day and wondered who they were. She studied the gospel for a year and was baptized after she turned 18. The community of Latter-day Saints fortifies her spiritually.

“When I’m at the church with fellow young single adults, I feel safe, but when I’m outside there, I don’t feel very safe because most of the time I’m the only Latter-day Saint among the group,” she says. “Sometimes it’s challenging because the standards of the world and the standards of the Church are totally different.”



Opra Ouma

Holding to the Rod

Scripture study has helped Stephen Odhiambo Mayembe to find answers that he says we can’t find by ourselves. “By studying the scriptures, we can find the answers to some of the problems we have in our day-to-day lives,” he says. “And also by studying the scriptures, it gives us that courage to endure to the end because the scriptures will always be there to teach us and tell us what to do.”

Studying the Book of Mormon helped Stephen gain a testimony of the Church. During a visit to his aunt who was a member, she invited him to go to church. After he started reading the Book of Mormon, he prayed to know if it is true and received an answer.

He says that reading the scriptures regularly helps him keep Church standards even when those around





KEEP THE STANDARDS OF THE GOSPEL

“We must be vigilant in a world which has moved so far from that which is spiritual. It is essential that we reject anything that does not conform to our standards, refusing in the process to surrender that which we desire most: eternal life in the kingdom of God. The storms will still beat at our doors from time to time, for they are an inescapable part of our existence in mortality. We, however, will be far better equipped to deal with them, to learn from them, and to overcome them if we have the gospel at our core and the love of the Savior in our hearts.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Stand in Holy Places,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 83–84.



Stephen Odhiambo Mayembe

him question his beliefs. “By being a member of the Church, my faith has been strengthened, and through that I can say that I cannot be shaken [see Jacob 7:5],” he says.

Waiting On the Lord

Sharon Poche has found that deciding to be different makes it easier to live the gospel. She is committed to keeping the commandments, and her friends respect that choice. She chooses to keep herself out of situations that would make it difficult to live righteously.

“When you decide to play on that line, that really thin line, then it gets hard because you can fall over anytime,” she says of the line between good and evil.

Sharon found the Church as a 14-year-old

when her mom decided to be baptized. Reading the Book of Mormon took a lot of effort because Sharon, who is a member of the Nandi tribe, speaks Kalenjin as her native language. Despite difficulties, she began studying the Book of Mormon in English. “I had this feeling that this was a good thing, and I had a warm feeling, so I continued. I prayed until I knew it was true,” she says.

Sharon wanted to get baptized, but her father wouldn’t allow it. So for four years, Sharon attended church, seminary, and youth activities while she waited for the chance to join the Church.



When Sharon turned 18, she was baptized and confirmed. She went to college and studied psychology. She married Joseph Poche in February 2013. Shortly after, they traveled to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple to be sealed. She said that studying the gospel helps her focus on the important things in a world that could easily be distracting.

“I know what life is all about and why we’re here on the earth,” she says. “That knowledge helps me to focus on the things that are most important.”

Growing Strength

Inside the Nairobi National Park is a sanctuary for black rhinos. This facility raises and relocates this endangered animal to other parks to help restore the animal population, which was hunted to near



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SHARON POCHE

Joseph and Sharon Poche

extinction. It has been recognized as one of the most successful and important sanctuaries in Kenya.

Likewise, the gospel provides sanctuaries where Church members can come, receive strength, gain courage to spread the gospel, and establish strongholds of faith. ■

For more information on this topic, see Robert D. Hales, “Stand Strong in Holy Places,” Ensign, May 2013, 48.

Below: Rhinos graze in Nairobi National Park.







THE LEADER'S ROAD TO Revelation

Local priesthood and auxiliary leaders share four principles that have helped them to act with inspiration in their callings.

By Richard M. Romney

Church Magazines

“**W**hen I was first called, I felt overwhelmed,” says a branch president who has now served for several years. “I had faith that Heavenly Father knew how to bless the members and their families, but how could I know what He specifically wanted *me* to do to help them?”

The president knew two principles that had strengthened him as a convert to the Church and as a young father: scripture study and prayer. So he put them into practice with renewed purpose.

“As I did, I felt that I should read what it says in Doctrine and Covenants 9:8, to ‘study it out in your mind; then you must ask [the Lord] if it be right.’ When I read those words once again, I knew the Lord was already guiding me on the road to revelation.”

That is a road all leaders must travel to be effective in their callings. And as they seek the inspiration to which they are entitled, they learn over and over again that certain gospel principles facilitate divine guidance. Here are four of them.

1. Counsel Together

“I found that even when I felt strongly inspired to do something, I gained reassurance when I talked it through with my counselors,” says a former branch Relief Society president. “Sometimes they would simply confirm that they felt the same way, and we would go forward in unity. But sometimes they helped me to see things I hadn’t seen, and we could either modify what we were doing or be more sensitive in how we did it. Then we would still go forward in unity.”



TRUST INSPIRATION

"I am always humbled and grateful when my Heavenly Father communicates with me through His inspiration. I have learned to recognize it, to trust it, and to follow it. Time and time again I have been the recipient of such inspiration."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Stand in Holy Places," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 84.

Counsel is also available through checking the handbooks, studying general conference messages, and praying with faith.

"Some of the best counsel I receive comes when I read and reread the talks from general conference," says a ward Young Women president. "Then when I kneel in prayer, I ask Heavenly Father about the things I have studied and how to apply the teachings of living prophets and general auxiliaries to help the young women."

A counselor in a stake Sunday School presidency says, "When we meet as a presidency, we always review a short passage in *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*. As we regularly review the instructions we've already received, the Spirit helps us to stay in agreement with the guidelines."

"I take great comfort in the fact that the Lord's Church is a church of councils," a stake president says. "It is a choice experience to preside in councils where people with a lot of combined wisdom and experience pray together and then discuss the best way to proceed. Their inspiration enables me to think through alternatives, listen to the Spirit, and then have full confidence in taking my decision to the Lord."¹

Sometimes seeking counsel means finding someone with greater expertise. "I was trying to help a family with financial problems and felt impressed to have them talk to a brother in the ward who is a financial adviser," says a recently released bishop. "He was able to help them in ways that I would never have been able to."

Another bishop, who had been counseled that bishops need to allow other ward leaders to step up and do their duty, relates this

experience: "A widow in our ward wanted to be visited by the bishop at least once a week. In her mind, only a visit from the bishop would do. I tried to see her as often as possible, but I had many responsibilities, including a young family. Finally, with one of my counselors, I went to see her again.

"As we talked, I felt prompted to say, 'Dear sister, you know that as your bishop I love you. And because I love you so much, I have asked two of our faithful Melchizedek Priesthood holders and two of our wonderful Relief Society sisters to each check on you at least once a month, more often if needed. They will report back if you have any needs or concerns. Would that be all right?' 'Oh yes, bishop,' she said. I asked if she would like to know their names, and she said yes. When I told her, she said, 'Those are my home teachers and visiting teachers!' And I said, 'Now you understand the way the Lord has established for us to watch over you.'"

2. Listen with Care

Leaders also say the ability to listen and discern is helpful in seeking inspiration.

"As we meet with sisters, I try to hear more than just the words they are speaking," says a ward Relief Society president. "Sometimes through the Spirit I can feel that they need help. I feel blessed to see it in their eyes or sense it in their demeanor. Sometimes I have even said, 'I am your Relief Society president, and I feel that you need something. How can I be of service to you?' I feel that I often receive inspiration by asking, 'What would the Savior do?'"

"I appreciate the way our bishop listens to the sisters in our ward councils," says a ward



“When I want to feel excited and encouraged,” one bishop says, “I go sit with the Primary children as they sing. It always lifts my heart.”

Primary president. “He always asks how we feel and listens carefully to all that we have to say. Several times he has said, ‘We need to remember that there are many insights that come to wives, to mothers, and to single sisters.’”

“We also need to remember that listening includes listening to the Spirit,” says a high priests group leader. “The most accurate assessment of a leader’s success may be his or her ability to feel and follow the Spirit. President Monson has demonstrated this over and over again.”²

3. Stand in Holy Places

Leaders also find that certain locations are conducive to revelation.

“For me, the ultimate place to feel inspired is in the temple,” says a counselor in a bishopric. “When I want to feel close to the Lord, I go to His house so I can feel free from worries and focus on listening to the Spirit.”

“I have a room in my home that is designated as my office,” says a stake patriarch. “I have asked the Lord to help it be a place where the Spirit can feel welcome. When I am preparing to give a blessing, I go there and pray. It is also where I have interviews and give blessings.”

“Our meetinghouses are dedicated as places of worship,” a bishop says. “Sometimes on a weekday evening, when I want to feel peace, I sit in the chapel. I think about the members of the ward and how much the Savior loves them. Or sometimes I sing a hymn.”

“For me the Primary is a holy place,” says another

bishop. “When I want to feel excited and encouraged, I go sit with the Primary children as they sing. It always lifts my heart.”

“Prayer can make any place a holy place,” says a branch Young Men president. “Think of the revelations that came to the Prophet Joseph when he was in Liberty Jail. He was able to make it a holy place by calling on the Lord.”

4. Act with Authority

“Some members of our ward did not take callings seriously,” a bishop says. “I felt that I could help them by explaining how we, as a bishopric, had prayed to know who should be called and that we had received an answer. I wanted them to know that the Lord, working through leaders with authority, had called them. It made a big difference when they knew their calling was inspired and that the Lord expected them to also seek inspiration in order to magnify that calling.”

He and his counselors had traveled the road to revelation, a road that is open to all Church members and leaders. And by describing the road they had traveled, they also inspired others. ■

NOTES

1. See M. Russell Ballard, “Counseling with Our Councils,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 24–26.
2. See, for example, Thomas S. Monson, “Consider the Blessings,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 86–89.

For additional information about leadership, go to the Leadership Training Library at lds.org/service/leadership.



*There's more to generating classroom
discussion than asking questions.
We need to ask the right type of questions.*

GREAT Questions, GREAT Discussions

By Jack Lyon

A Sunday School teacher asks, “Who were the first two people on earth?” She looks expectantly over her class of teenagers, but no hands go up. The class members look down at their feet or leaf idly through their scriptures. “It’s a simple question,” the teacher says. “Doesn’t anyone know the answer?”

Next door, in Gospel Doctrine class, the teacher asks, “What is the most important principle of the gospel?”

A sister timidly raises her hand. “Faith?” she asks.

“That’s a great response,” the teacher replies, “but not quite what I’m looking for. Anyone else?”

Silence.

Teachers ask questions because they want to involve class members in their lessons. They understand that students who are involved learn more than those who just sit and listen. But questions like those above generally don’t work.

“Who were the first two people on earth?” is an ineffective question because the answer is so obvious that no one wants to respond—or sees a need to.

“What is the most important principle of the gospel?” is also an ineffective question. No one knows the answer the teacher is looking for except the teacher, who is essentially saying, “Guess what I’m thinking.”

These are questions of fact; each has a *specific* answer. But great classroom discussions come from a different type of question—oddly enough, from questions *without* a specific answer. That is the key.

Asking Open-Ended Questions

If you’re a teacher of an adult class, you might ask, “What principle of the gospel has been most important in your life, and why?” Class members will probably pause to think about their experiences—and that’s OK. If you relax and wait a few seconds, hands will start going up, and you’ll hear about real, heartfelt experiences people have had with the gospel. You’ll also notice that one person’s comments will spark comments from others. Before long, the class will be having an interesting and inspiring discussion!

If you want the class to have a discussion about something specific like faith, consider saying something like this: “Today we’ll be talking about faith, the first principle of the gospel.” Then ask a question about faith that doesn’t have a specific answer:

1. “What part has faith played in your life?”
2. “Why do you think the Lord wants us to have faith?”
3. “What are some ways we can increase our faith?”



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA SMITH

There's much more to classroom discussion than getting people to make comments. In the end, it's a highly spiritual matter that can bring the class closer to God.

You'll get lots of answers, and as you do, you may want to write them (in abbreviated form) on the chalkboard. When you're finished, you'll have a nice list you can use to help sum up your discussion.

There's an added benefit to asking open-ended questions: Even class members who don't add to the discussion will be thinking about the questions. Their understanding and testimony may grow even though they haven't said anything.

Discussing the Scriptures

Open-ended questions can be effective during a discussion of the scriptures. Many teachers think that calling on class members to read a scripture passage is a good way to involve them. Unfortunately, it may not be. Some people are not good readers and may stumble over words. Other class members may have a hard time hearing the reader.

The easiest person to hear in a classroom is the teacher, who stands at the front of the class. Also, teachers can stop in the middle of a passage to ask a question and stimulate discussion. As you read the following example, see if you can spot what the teacher does to encourage discussion:

Teacher: "Today we're going to discuss a well-known story, the parable of the prodigal son. But I'd like us to think not just about the prodigal son but also about the

other members of his family. Please open your Bible to Luke 15:11, on page 1305." (Giving the page number helps students who may not be familiar with the scriptures.)

After waiting for class members to find their place, the teacher begins reading: "A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.' Now, what are some things we can tell already about this family?" (Notice the open-ended question.)

Student: "The father seems willing to give the younger son what he wants."

Teacher: "He does, doesn't he? Usually a son wouldn't get his inheritance until after his father died. But the father seems to be a loving, generous man. What else?"

Student: "The younger son seems selfish to me. That's a lot to ask from a father who's still alive."

Teacher: "Yes, it is. He seems to be thinking only of himself. What about the older son?"

Student: "So far he's awfully quiet." The class laughs.

Teacher: "Yes, and that may say something about his character. Let's watch for that as we continue to read."

As you read that example, what did you notice the teacher doing to encourage discussion? You might make a list—it will be your list and your interpretation of the situation, so all of your answers will be right. Why? Because the

first question in this paragraph is an open-ended question, and as long as you answer such a question honestly, you won't give any wrong answers. If you ask similar questions in a classroom setting, the same will be true for class members, which means they'll soon learn that their comments are welcome and that it's safe for them to respond.

In addition, you may have noticed that I did something to engage your mind *before* you began reading. I wrote, "As you read, see if you can spot what the teacher does to encourage discussion." I did this because I knew it would help you think about what you were reading and prepare you to participate in this "discussion" afterward.

The teacher in the example used this technique twice: once when he said, "I'd like us to think not just about the prodigal son but also about the other members of his family," and then when he said, "Let's watch for that as we continue to read." Both suggestions give class members something to focus on so they'll be ready to respond to open-ended questions when the teacher asks them.

Doing this helps class members make a connection with the passage being read. Instead of sitting passively on their chairs, they're reading along and actually thinking about the scriptures. And when the reading is finished, they're ready to respond to questions. Then you just need to call on them and coordinate the discussion.

Notice also in this kind of discussion that you are actually teaching *from the scriptures*, not just from the manual. Although the manual should be used to prepare the lesson and is a great source of open-ended questions, the scriptures should remain the primary focus of our teaching and learning.

Staying Focused

There is a challenge in having a lot of classroom discussion: it's easy for the discussion to get off track. It's important that you prepare your lesson well so that you know where you want it to go and so that you're ready, if necessary, to bring the class back to the main topic of discussion. Usually all you need to provide is a little guidance: "That's

interesting, but I think we're a little off track. Let's get back to our discussion of faith now."

It also helps if you have a clear, interesting introduction so class members know the focus of your lesson. Then have a discussion, guiding things along.

Finally, give an inspiring summary of what was taught. The words of a hymn or poem often make a good summary. President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has said, "Tell your listeners what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you have told them. That is a useful technique."¹

Be sure to bear your testimony of the truths discussed.

Sharing Feelings and Experiences

There's more to all this, however, than just having a great discussion. When appropriate, the Spirit will inspire members of the class in their comments so that they share what the Lord wants the class to hear. As the Lord said to His disciples, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

Of course, we need to be cautious about sharing deeply personal or sacred experiences. But stories from class members can add much to any lesson. As the Gospel Doctrine manual advises: "Share insights, feelings, and experiences that relate to the lesson. Invite class members to do the same."²

There's much more to classroom discussion than getting people to make comments. In the end, it's a highly spiritual matter that can bring the class closer to God.

As you use these techniques, you'll see growth in spirituality and gospel knowledge, including your own. Instead of wondering how to fill up your class time, you'll start running out of time. You may even see an increase in your class size because class members will know they're going to be part of a great discussion—learning from the scriptures, from each other, and from the Spirit of the Lord. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently*, rev. ed. (1991), 354–55.
2. *New Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual* (1997), vi.

By Emma C. Miller

One semester a few years ago, after my college tuition was paid for with grant money, some cash was unexpectedly given to me. As a single mom, I was grateful indeed for this blessing.

On my way home from school, I made a quick trip to the store, grabbing a few items and making my way to the express lane. The cashier finished ringing up a man's order, and when the man handed her the money, she protested, stating it wasn't enough. English was not the man's native language, however, so he had difficulty understanding.

The woman in front of me let out three heavy sighs, then turned to the rest of us in line and rolled her eyes, as if to say, "Can you believe this?" Another lady in line added a few heavy sighs of her own, along with a rhythmic tapping of her high-heeled shoes.

The cashier spoke louder, reiterating that the man needed more money. He dug into his pockets and turned them out empty. She then said loudly, "You don't have enough money!"

Tap. Tap. Tap. The woman behind me clicked her shoes a little louder. The woman in front of me stood with her hands on her hips, shaking her head.

He was short 10 dollars. I had 10 dollars in my wallet. It was some of my "extra" money.

Just because I've never stood in a line at the grocery store as people glared at me for not having enough cash doesn't mean I haven't ever stressed over feeding my family. I can recall countless times I

I wasn't expecting the lesson in justice and mercy I learned while standing in line at the grocery store.

Only 10 DOLLARS



have worried, and it was during those times that I would receive an envelope of money in my mailbox or find a 20-dollar bill in my old jacket, or someone else would bring me dinner or let me “borrow” a can of soup. How could I ever repay their generosity?

This man needed help right then. He didn’t have time to go home and see if there was a 10-dollar bill in an old coat.

“I’ve got it,” I said. I was shaking as I reached in my purse and fumbled to release the clasp of my wallet. The woman behind me looked at me with shock, the woman in front of me with disgust, and the cashier with disbelief. “I’ve got it,” I said again, handing the bill to the cashier.

All of a sudden, 10 dollars didn’t seem like so much—especially considering everything I had been given through the kind acts of others.

I asked myself, “Isn’t this the opportunity I want anyway?” When I pray, I often ask Heavenly Father that I might be aware of those in need. Maybe this was my chance to help one in need. Some might call me foolish, saying that it wasn’t my responsibility to help this man, that he should have planned a little better. They might say that I should have used the money for my own family.

A few minutes later, as I got ready to pay for my own items, the cashier thanked me. She went on to say, “This

is not the first time this has happened. He has come through my line before, and he has come up short before. It’s so frustrating. Usually I have to tell him to put something back.”

Once in my car, I began sobbing. Not because I regretted giving up the 10 dollars. Not because I felt like a do-gooder, though I did feel good about helping. But I was moved because this thought hit me: “How many times in my life have *I* come up short? How many times have *I* taken my case to the Lord in spite of feeling inadequate or unworthy to receive His blessings?”

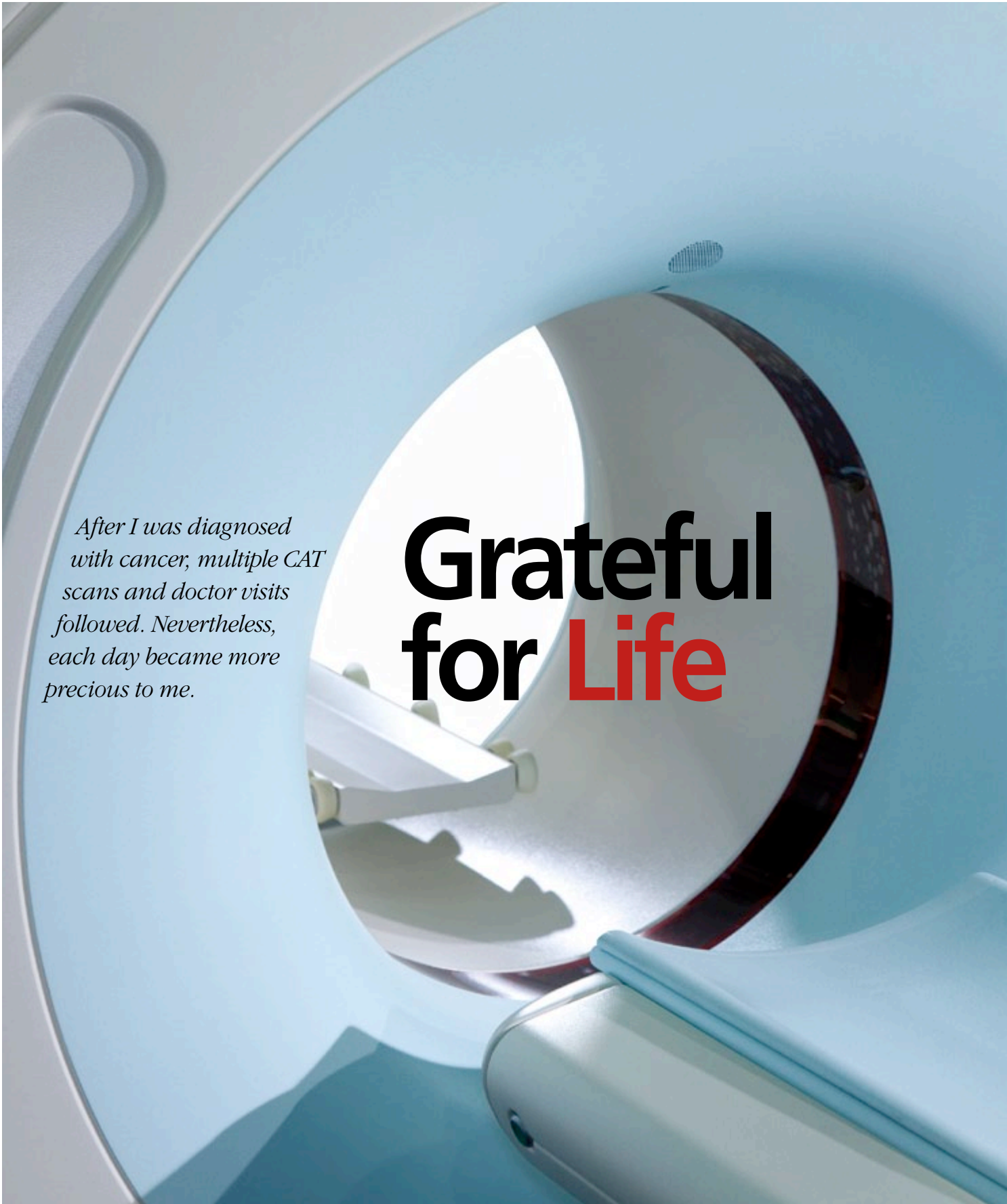
And Heavenly Father doesn’t say, “Again? This isn’t the first time this has happened; you’ve come down this road before. This is so frustrating.” The Father doesn’t call the Savior in and ask Him to explain to us why we can’t have what we so desperately need at that moment. He doesn’t tell us we should have planned a little better. The Savior paid the price for us, and we are saved by His grace, “after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23).

The man at the grocery store probably gave all he had and needed someone to come to his aid. He needed mercy. Justice meant the items would have to be paid for, but mercy meant that someone else could step in and pay the debt.

I cried because this experience solidified for me how much my Heavenly Father truly loves me and that because He loves me, He sent His Son to pay for my sins. And not only did He do that, but He continues to bless me through everyday “angels” who step in from time to time to give me what I need. And sometimes He lets me know He loves me by letting *me* serve someone else. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.





After I was diagnosed with cancer, multiple CAT scans and doctor visits followed. Nevertheless, each day became more precious to me.

Grateful for Life

By Rhett Wintch

For most of my life I have been blessed with exceptional health and enjoyed playing sports that involved physical exertion. A few years ago I became concerned that I might have some health problems. When I went to the doctor for a checkup, he suspected I might have cancer and told me I would need to have surgery in order to determine whether I did or not.

The morning of my operation, I prayed and pondered for hours. Later as I was lying on a gurney, I had the thought, “I’m in excellent shape and I feel great. There’s no way I have cancer.” But I went through with the operation after all. A week later I received the diagnosis that I did have cancer. When I received the news, a whirlwind of emotions penetrated me as I tried to accept the possibility of dying. I was scared but grateful I had decided to go through with the surgery.

Multiple CAT scans, X-rays, tests, and doctor visits followed. My physicians determined that the cancer was spreading into my abdomen and recommended immediate radiation treatment. While the thought of dying scared me, I found peace and comfort knowing that if I died, it would be God’s will and He would strengthen me through my trial.

The first day of radiation was unbelievably scary. When the huge machine locked into place above me, I found myself praying with all my might that the pain wouldn’t be more than I could bear. But it turned out that I couldn’t even feel the radiation, so it wasn’t too bad. Shortly after, however, I became weak and achy, and I vomited frequently. For the first time in my life, I had to stop working and use my medical leave.

The months that followed were difficult, as my struggle to fight the cancer was physically, emotionally, and spiritually draining. Yet somehow I never felt bitter about my depleted state. I felt my Heavenly Father’s love through it all and have seen how my sickness changed my perspective in a way that has brought immense blessings into my life. I developed a deeper love for my Savior and learned many valuable lessons.



More profoundly than any other feeling, I have a deep love and appreciation for our Savior, Jesus Christ, in whom death has no sting (see Mosiah 16:7; 1 Corinthians 15:55).

Gratitude

During this time, I felt an increase in gratitude for the good things in my life. I found that I could be grateful for the times I was able to eat after treatments. I was grateful for how well my body did function—I was still able to see, hear, and feel. I was grateful for each day I felt well enough to take on a shift at work.

People, no matter who they are, now have immense worth to me. I'm so much more keenly interested in their well-being, interests, and beliefs. I have a renewed and magnified gratitude for my wife. I appreciate who she is and what our temple marriage means for us and our family. I am thankful for temple covenants and the plan of salvation, which helps me know that healing comes through the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Courage

As I went through my trial, I felt an increase in my confidence and faith in my Heavenly Father and His promises. The fear I had as I faced possible death gave me more courage than I have ever had in my life. Heavenly Father helped me through it.

I now have more courage to do the things that used to be hard for me, such as sharing the gospel. Before, I had doubts and was sometimes scared. Now I have no problem handing out copies of the Book of Mormon and sharing the gospel with friends, neighbors, and work associates. I share my testimony knowing that my efforts won't be wasted. Even now that I am through all my treatments, I still freely share my enthusiasm and love for the gospel.

I love this new confidence and increased faith in the Savior. I know the Lord will help me as I strive to do as He has commanded.

Appreciation for the Atonement

More profoundly than any other feeling, I have a deep love and appreciation for our Savior, Jesus Christ, in whom death has no sting (see Mosiah 16:7; 1 Corinthians 15:55). My sins, though they be many, are overcome by His atoning grace. Renewing my covenants each week in sacrament meeting is more meaningful now, and my dedication to keeping those covenants is much more resolute.

I find myself frequently pondering the intricacies of the Atonement. I realize that even though sometimes I feel insignificant, I matter in the eyes of my Savior. He wouldn't have suffered the pain of the Atonement for me if I didn't matter to Him. My Savior loves me so much that He was willing to atone for me. Sometimes I look in the mirror and wonder, "Can anyone understand my pain?" Each time, I know the answer is yes. He's suffered my pains and all of our pains, even those that I endured through my cancer treatment.

The spiritual gifts I have received have helped me to cope with and learn from my experience with cancer. My cancer has gone into remission, and now that I have my health back, I have more desire to be an influence for good to all my family, friends, and work associates. My wife and I enjoy attending the temple as often as we can and finding opportunities to help our family and ward.

With all my heart, I thank my Savior for this experience. It has taught me gratitude and courage and given me a deeper understanding of the Atonement. I have truly been blessed as the Lord has strengthened me through this trial. ■

The author lives in Idaho, USA.

IN OTHER CHURCH MAGAZINES

THE NEW ERA

Come, Follow Me Support: Marriage and Family

Most Latter-day Saint youth know the importance of temple marriage, yet they sometimes have a hard time explaining *why* it's so important. As you talk about this subject with youth this month at home or in Sunday lessons, consider discussing some of the ideas found in "Why Temple Marriage?" on page 30.

On page 13, you'll find designed cards with quotations from

Church leaders about the importance of marriage and family. The cards are also available at lds.org/go/E83 for easy downloading or sharing through social media.

THE FRIEND

Scripture Cards

Pages 25 and 26 of the August *Friend* feature cutout scripture cards for helping children learn how to find solutions and comfort in the scriptures and comfort in the scriptures. Additional cards can be printed at lds.org/friend.

Fun Scripture Study Ideas

Try one of the ideas on page 24 of this month's *Friend* to help your children get involved with family scripture study. For example, you could have your children draw favorite scripture scenes, make a jar for scripture-marking pencils, or act out the scriptures as you read them.

COMMENT

A Timely Message

I'm a disabled Vietnam veteran. In late January, I was feeling increasingly depressed, and I was seriously considering suicide. My February *Ensign* arrived in the mail on the day I planned to end my life. I immediately felt guided to the inside back cover. With tears streaming down my face, I read Elder Jeffrey R. Holland's words about trusting God and believing in good things to come. I knew that Heavenly Father had heard my prayers and was speaking directly to me. He knew what I was going through, and He was telling me to be strong and endure to the end. It may have only been a small miracle that took place that day, but due to Elder Holland's timely message, I can assure you that a life was spared and a testimony strengthened.

Name withheld

I WOKE UP TO THE GOSPEL

I was raised by atheist parents and as a young man felt that my life was fine without God. That changed in 1989, however, when my large intestine ruptured, and I lay in a coma for eight days.

I have few memories from my time in the hospital, but I strongly remember envisioning a man in white standing next to me after my operation and telling me it was time to “return and

wake up.” When I resisted, he added, “My brother, you are dead. You either go back, or you stay here.” I did as he said and woke up full of pain.

After leaving the hospital, I had strange dreams that included people I had never met. I had the feeling that I had promised to do something, but I didn’t know what it was. I set about searching and reading about different religions. As I read the New Testament,

I realized that if the truth was on the earth, it would be found in Jesus Christ.

I searched from 1989 to 1994. I felt lost and confused as I searched for the people I kept seeing in my dreams. My struggle and confusion became great, and I found myself praying desperately for answers.

Shortly after these prayers, I met a new co-worker. She learned that I was struggling, and I told her that I was searching for the truth. She brought me a Book of Mormon, which I adamantly refused to accept. But she persuaded me to take it, and I read it all in one night. I immediately knew that I had found what I had been looking for.

When I met with the missionaries, I was astonished to see that one of them was someone I had seen in my dreams. I soon asked to be baptized, but I had to take all the lessons first.

As I studied the gospel and attended church, I found all of the people from my dreams. I knew that the gospel was what I had needed to find. The day of my baptism was one of the happiest days of my life. Six months later, I was called as the branch president. Now, nearly 20 years later, I’m still happily serving in the Church. Along with my family, the gospel is my most precious possession. ■

Name withheld, France

I have few memories from my time in the hospital, but I remember envisioning a man in white telling me it was time to “return and wake up.”



MY MOST SINCERE PRAYER

When I was a freshman in college, I had a part-time job at a convenience store in a small town. I had the closing shift, which ended at 11:00 p.m. Despite the relative safety of the community, I would frequently get nervous while closing the store all alone.

One night I felt particularly anxious. As I finished cleaning the store and made my way to the cash register to shut it down, a feeling of dread came over me. I did not have any logical reason for being so afraid, but I could not shake my nervousness. I did not want to overreact by calling the police, but I also wanted to be protected if there was any real danger.

Finally, I knelt to pray. I told Heavenly Father that I was afraid and didn't know what to do. It was the most sincere prayer I had ever given.

As I stood up, I immediately noticed a vehicle pulling up to the fuel pump nearest to the building. To my surprise and relief, it was a police officer. As he pulled out his credit card to fill his patrol car with fuel, I quickly started my final closing responsibilities. I wanted to take advantage of his protective presence and get as much done as I could before he finished at the pump. When he had finished fueling, he made a call on his cell phone and

sat in his car as he talked. He was still there when I locked up and got in my car. Both of us pulled away from the convenience store at the same time.

As I drove home, I was amazed at how quickly my prayer had been answered. I humbly thanked Heavenly Father for listening to me. I had been taught that I was a daughter of God, but until that night I had never felt His love for me so near or so tangibly. Words cannot describe the peace I felt in my heart. I know that the Lord will bless me if I have faith and ask for His help. ■

Jaimee Lynn Chidester, Utah, USA

As I stood up after praying, I immediately noticed a vehicle pulling up to the fuel pump nearest the building.



I AM A CHRISTIAN

I am a second-grade teacher in a community where Latter-day Saints are well known. So I was surprised one day when a peer told me of another teacher's remark about me. The teacher had said, "Did you know that Mrs. Craig is not a Christian?"

I was torn inside. I had just lost my husband of 28 years, and I had been closer to the Savior and my Heavenly Father than at any other time in my life. I knew that I would have to bear my testimony to this teacher, but I

wasn't sure how to do it. I did not want to offend her, but I also wanted her to know that Latter-day Saints are Christians.

The next morning the Holy Ghost whispered to me what I should say. As I lay in bed, I thought of all the paintings I had in my home of the life of Jesus Christ. Each painting had a special place in my heart and was connected to a special time in my life. Thinking of those paintings brought many tender

The Holy Ghost whispered to me what I should say, and that morning at school I went into my colleague's room.

feelings about the love I have for the Savior.

One painting in particular shows the Savior calming the stormy sea. It reminds me that He conquers all and that I, through Him, can also overcome all things, including the heartbreak of losing my husband.

As I continued to reflect on the paintings, I was overwhelmed with a feeling of gratitude for the blessings that had come to me because I belong to the Savior's Church.

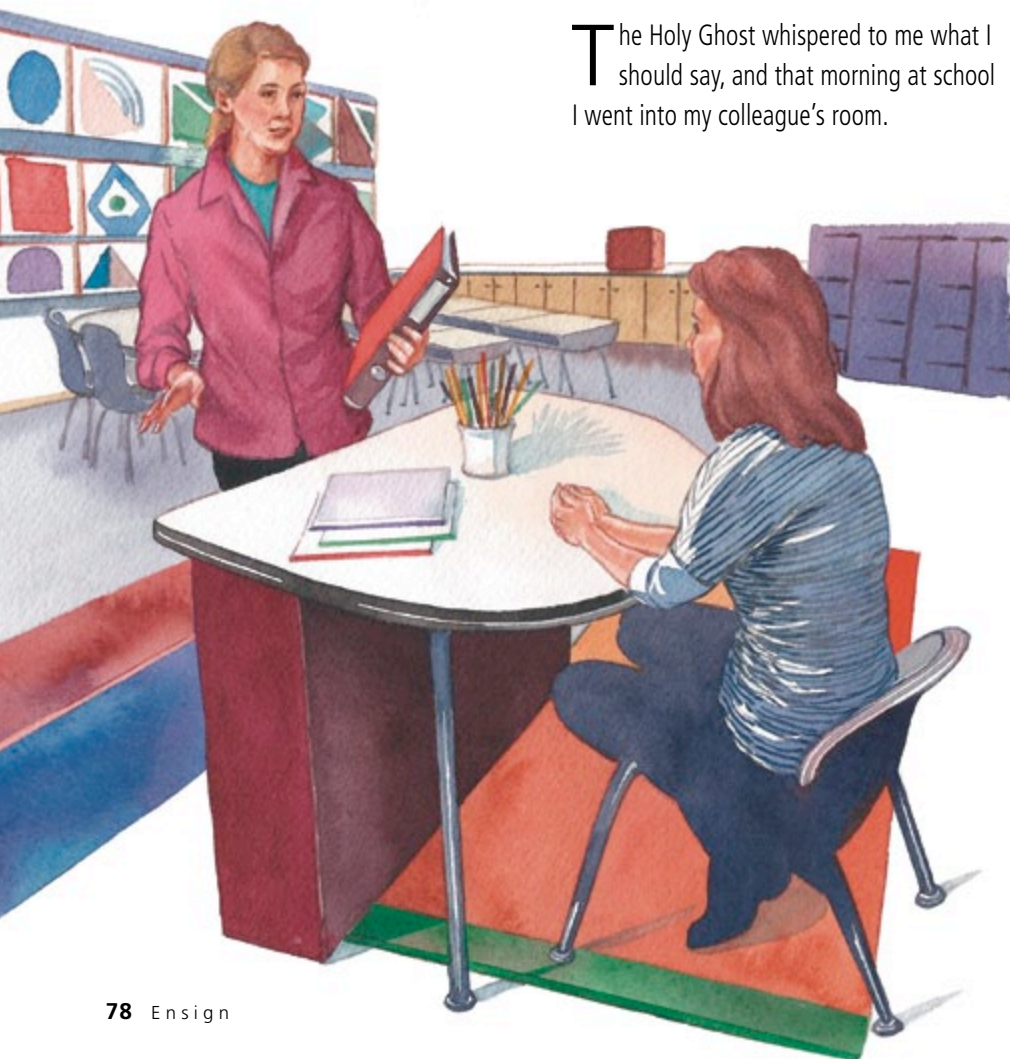
That morning at school I went into my colleague's room and told her I wanted her to know I am a Christian. I asked her, "How many paintings of the Savior do you have in your home?" She told me that instead of paintings, she had two crosses in her home.

I told her about the paintings of the Savior in my home and what the scenes depicted in the paintings meant to me. I then bore my testimony of Jesus Christ and His Atonement.

I also told my co-worker that it was only through my knowledge of Jesus Christ that I had been able to survive the past year. I told her how His tender mercies had helped my children and me get through the difficult time of losing a father and husband.

I hugged her as I left, and she offered a sincere apology. There was no doubt in my heart that she knew that I, a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, am a Christian. ■

Kathy Fjelstul Craig, Arizona, USA



THAT'S NOT WHAT I WAS TAUGHT

One day at work, I had to leave for a few hours to take care of some important errands for my mother.

I went to the office in the morning and told a colleague that I would be absent in the afternoon. During a break she whispered to me, "I can help you with the time clock."

"No, thanks," I said.

As I left the office to catch the bus, my friend followed me to the time

clock. She said quietly, "Why don't you clock in for the afternoon period, and then I'll punch your time card when I go home?"

Before I could utter a word, she added, "Look, our salary is below minimum wage, so it would be OK to do this. It's just a small amount. Besides, we are not the only ones who do it."

I began to consider what she had said. She had some good points, and

I knew she had good intentions. But this was not what I had been taught in the Church.

Gathering all my strength and resolve, I told her softly, "My friend, the Lord is good, and if He blesses us, we can receive from Him more than that amount."

She left and was somewhat annoyed with me for rejecting her offer. While I walked to the bus stop, I worried about how small my paycheck would be. I knew we would have to forego buying some food the following month.

As I walked, I remembered the words of one of the hymns: "Be honest in your heart; and God will love and bless you and help to you impart."¹ A phrase from another hymn came to my mind: "Choose the right! And God will bless you evermore."²

These lines strengthened my decision not to give in to temptation but to trust in the Lord's promises.

Three years have passed since that incident, and I now have a new job. The Lord has definitely blessed me. It took time, but the promise of the hymns indeed came true, and I can feel that many blessings will continue to come to me as I continue to choose the right. I am grateful for the hymns, which give me courage to hold on to that which is right in the sight of God. ■

Irene Taniegra, Philippines

NOTES

1. "Improve the Shining Moments," *Hymns*, no. 226.
2. "Choose the Right," *Hymns*, no. 239.

When I told a work colleague that I would be absent in the afternoon, she told me, "I can help you with the time clock."



GRACE FOR MOTHER DUCK AND ME

By Rosie Kaufman

One spring afternoon I was packing my car to begin shuttling my five young children to and from lessons and practices. As I loaded soccer cleats and dance bags, I noticed a mother duck and her ducklings waddling down the sidewalk of our suburban neighborhood.

As I watched, she began to cross the road. Unfortunately, she chose a gutter grate for her crosswalk, and as she passed over it, her babies followed. Four of her ducklings slipped helplessly between the bars of the grate.

When the mother reached the other side, she realized she was missing some of her little ones and could hear their muffled peeps. Totally oblivious of her mistake, she crossed back across the drainage grate, looking for her missing ducklings and losing two more. With horror and some disgust at her poor judgment, I went to the grate to see if I could lift it. Although I used all my strength, the grate barely budged, and I was late to pick up one of my kids.

Figuring I would have to fix the situation later when I wasn't so rushed, I hopped in the car while muttering self-righteously, "She doesn't deserve to be a mother."

During the next hour and a half, I made many of my recurring parenting mistakes. These are mistakes I have begged forgiveness



Just like the mother duck, I sometimes come up short. And that's when the Savior steps in.

for many times from both my children and my Father in Heaven. Each time I resolve to do better and not to fall prey to these weaknesses again. When I snapped at one of my kids for teasing another, my words echoed loudly in my ears, "She doesn't deserve to be a mother."

Suddenly I felt overwhelming compassion for that mother duck. She was trying to navigate the world with the instincts she was given, just as I was. But sometimes those instincts simply weren't enough, and it was our children who suffered.

I resolved to get the grate off somehow and lift the ducklings out. As I rounded the corner to our street, I saw a small group gathered. My neighbor had lifted the grate, climbed inside the drainage tunnel, and was gently lifting the ducklings out to safety. The frightened little birds scrambled to find their mother, who was pacing nervously in a nearby bush. She hadn't asked for help, but my neighbor had stepped in when her protection was simply not enough. I was overcome with emotion as I thought of the Savior doing the same for my children and me.

Sometimes we come up short, even when we have the best intentions and try our hardest. However, the Savior's "grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before [Him]" (Ether 12:27). It comforts me to know that my shortcomings will not ruin my children and that they will be the recipients of love, peace, understanding, and grace from our Savior. He "reaches my reaching"¹ and wants my family and me to succeed. Our shortcomings will not prevail when we humble ourselves and stand with the Lord by our side. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

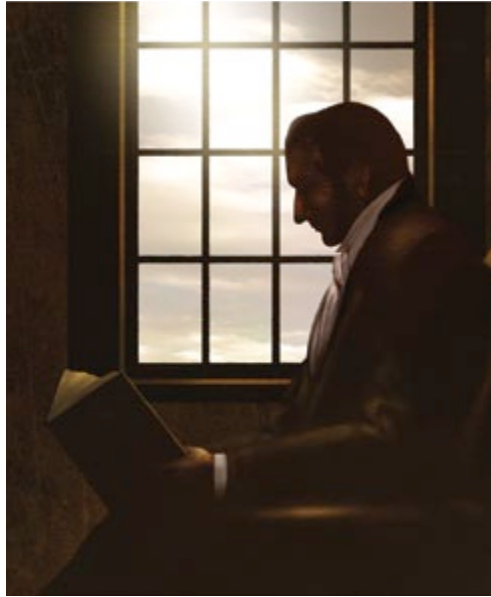
1. "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" *Hymns*, no. 129.

INSIGHTS



How can I find joy when life is difficult?

“So much in life depends on our attitude. The way we choose to see things and respond to others makes all the difference. To do the best we can and then to choose to be happy about our circumstances, whatever they may be, can bring peace and contentment.”



We should recognize that the Lord will speak to us through the Spirit in His own time and in His own way,” writes Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “Many people do not understand this principle. They believe that when they are ready and when it suits their convenience, they can call upon the Lord and He will immediately respond, even in the precise way they have prescribed. Revelation does not come that way.” To read more about how revelation comes to us, see “In His Own Time, in His Own Way,” page 22.