

Ensign

A detailed illustration of the Nativity scene. Mary is seated in the center, holding the infant Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes. Joseph stands behind her, holding a staff. Several other figures, including a shepherd with a staff and a man holding a glowing light, are gathered around the manger. A white sheep is visible in the foreground. The scene is set in a stable with a dark, textured background.

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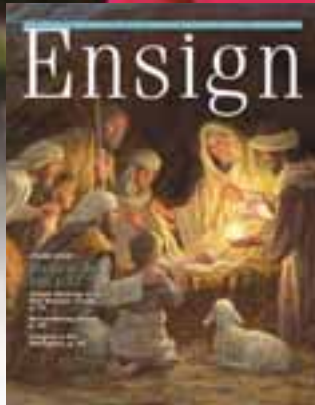
I Moroni, Wander Whithersoever, by Jorge Cocco

“Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished; and I make not myself known to the Lamanites lest they should destroy me. . . .

“And I, Moroni, will not deny the Christ; wherefore, I wander whithersoever I can for the safety of mine own life” (Moroni 1:1, 3).



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The Nativity, by Jon McNaughton



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PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

Giving, not getting, brings to full bloom the Christmas spirit.

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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

Do you—or does someone you love—serve in the military? Share how the gospel has helped you with the challenges unique to military life—the more specific, the better. Topics might include dealing with separation, protection from harm, spiritual promptings, conversion to the gospel, returning to Church activity, using the priesthood, or dealing with temptation. Please label your submission “Military” and send it by January 20, 2009.

We also welcome other submissions that show the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. You can find this and other calls for articles online at <http://ensign.lds.org>. *Ensign* Magazine Writers’ Guidelines are posted on the same page under “Resources.”

Send submissions to ensign@ldschurch.org or *Ensign* Editorial, 50 E. North Temple Street, Room 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA. Include your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, ward (or branch), and stake (or district). Because of the volume of submissions we receive, we cannot acknowledge receipt. Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified. If you would like your manuscript, photos, art, or other material returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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USING THIS ISSUE

Enjoy the blessings of the temple. On pages 20 and 23 are stories of members who commit to attend the temple in spite of difficult family or financial circumstances. Consider what you can do to increase your temple attendance or become worthy to hold a temple recommend.

Share the Christmas spirit. Several articles in this issue focus on the blessings we receive when we give to others, even under difficult or uncomfortable circumstances (see pages 4, 9, 12, 16, and 60). Consider ways you can help your children experience the spirit of giving during the Christmas season.

Celebrate the season. To find out what Christmas events are taking place in your area or are available via satellite broadcast, go to the "News and Events" link on LDS.org. Select "Calendar" and then click on the individual event for further information. Remember to check your individual stake and ward Web site calendar for local events.



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COMING IN JANUARY

Look for articles on:

- *Studying the Doctrine and Covenants.*
- *The blessings of institute.*
- *The Prophet Joseph Smith.*





The Best Christmas Ever

BY PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

At this season of the year, the airways are filled with the music of Christmas. My heart often turns to home and to Christmases past as I listen to some of my favorite Christmas songs, such as this one:

*Oh, there's no place like home
For the holidays, 'cause no matter
How far away you roam
If you want to be happy in a million ways
For the holidays, you can't beat
Home, sweet home.¹*

One writer said: “Again Christmas, abiding point of return. Set apart by its mystery, mood and magic, the season seems, in a way to stand outside time. All that is dear, that is lasting, renews its hold on us: we are home again.”²



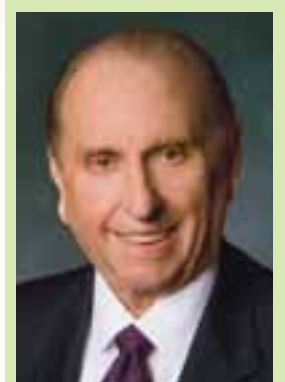
President David O. McKay (1873–1970) declared: “True happiness comes only by making others happy—the practical application of the Savior’s doctrine of losing one’s life to gain it. In short, the Christmas spirit is the Christ spirit, that makes our hearts glow in brotherly love and friendship and prompts us to kind deeds of service.

“It is the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ, obedience to which will bring ‘peace on earth,’ because it means—good will toward all men.”³

Giving, not getting, brings to full bloom the Christmas spirit. Enemies are forgiven, friends remembered, and God obeyed. The spirit of Christmas illuminates the picture window of the soul, and we look out upon the world’s busy life and become more interested in people than things. To catch the real meaning of the “spirit of Christmas,” we need only drop the last syllable, and it becomes the “Spirit of Christ.”

Remembering Him

When we have the spirit of Christmas, we remember Him whose birth we commemorate at this season of the year. We contemplate that first Christmas day, foretold by the prophets of old. You, with me, recall



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the Christmas spirit.
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Margaret
and Nellie
pulled
from under the beds
several boxes filled
with hand-me-downs
they had been given
by their mother's
merchant friends. It
was heavenly chaos,
with the Kozicki
children picking
whatever clothes
and footwear they
wanted.

the words from Isaiah: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"⁴—meaning "God with us."

On the American continent, the prophets said: "The time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent . . . shall dwell

in a tabernacle of clay. . . . He shall suffer temptations, and pain. . . . And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God."⁵

Then came that night of nights when the shepherds were abiding in the fields and the angel of the Lord appeared to them, announcing



the birth of the Savior. Later, Wise Men journeyed from the East to Jerusalem, “Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. . . .

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”⁶

Times change; years speed by; but Christmas continues sacred. In this marvelous dispensation of the fulness of times, our opportunities to give of ourselves are indeed limitless, but they are also perishable. There are hearts to gladden. There are kind words to say. There are gifts to be given. There are deeds to be done. There are souls to be saved.

A Gift of Christmas

In the early 1930s, Margaret Kisilevich and her sister Nellie gave a Christmas gift to their neighbors, the Kozicki family, which was remembered by them all their lives and which has become an inspiration to their families.

Home to Margaret back then was Two Hills, Alberta, Canada—a farming community populated largely by Ukrainian and Polish immigrants who generally had large families and were very poor. It was the time of the Great Depression.

Margaret’s family consisted of her mother and father and their 15 children. Margaret’s mother was industrious and her father was enterprising—and with all those children, they had a built-in labor force. Consequently, their home was always warm, and despite their humble circumstances, they were never hungry. In the summer they grew an enormous garden, made sauerkraut, cottage cheese,

sour cream, and dill pickles for barter. They also raised chickens, pigs, and beef cattle. They had very little cash, but these goods could be exchanged for other commodities they could not produce themselves.

Margaret’s mother had friends with whom she had emigrated from the old country. These friends owned a general store, and the store became a depot for folks in the area to donate or trade surplus hand-me-down clothing, shoes, etc. Many of these used items were passed along to Margaret’s family.

Alberta winters were cold, long, and hard, and one particularly cold and difficult winter, Margaret and her sister Nellie noticed the poverty of their neighbors, the Kozicki family, whose farm was a few miles away. When the Kozicki father would take his children to school on his homemade sleigh, he would always go into the school to warm himself by the potbelly stove before returning home. The family’s footwear consisted of rags and gunny sacks cut into strips and

wrapped about the legs and feet, stuffed with straw, and bound with twine.

Margaret and Nellie decided to invite the Kozicki family, by way of the children, for Christmas dinner. They also decided not to tell anyone in their family of the invitation.

Christmas morning dawned, and everyone in Margaret’s family was busy with the preparations for the midday feast. The huge pork roast had been put in the oven the night before. The cabbage rolls, doughnuts, prune buns, and special burnt sugar punch had been prepared earlier. The menu would be rounded out with sauerkraut, dill pickles, and vegetables. Margaret and Nellie were in charge of getting the fresh vegetables ready, and their mother kept asking them why they were peeling so many potatoes, carrots, and beets. But they just kept peeling.



Their father was the first to notice a team of horses and a sleigh packed with 13 people coming down their lane. He, being a horse lover, could recognize a team from a long distance. He asked his wife, “Why are the Kozickis coming here?” Her response to him was, “I don’t know.”

They arrived, and Margaret’s father helped Mr. Kozicki stable the horses. Mrs. Kozicki embraced Margaret’s mother and thanked her for inviting them for Christmas. Then they all piled into the house, and the festivities began.

The adults ate first, and then the plates and cutlery were washed, and the children ate in shifts. It was a glorious feast, made better by the sharing of it. After everyone had eaten, they sang Christmas carols together, and then the adults settled down for another chat.

Charity in Action

Margaret and Nellie took the children into the bedroom and pulled from under the beds several boxes filled with hand-me-downs they had been given by their mother’s merchant friends. It was heavenly chaos, with an instant fashion show and everyone picking whatever clothes and footwear they wanted. They made such a racket that Margaret’s father came in to see what all the noise was about. When he saw their happiness and the joy of the Kozicki children with their “new” clothes, he smiled and said, “Carry on.”

Early in the afternoon, before it got too cold and dark with the setting sun, Margaret’s family bid farewell to their friends, who left well fed, well clothed, and well shod.

Margaret and Nellie never told anyone about their invitation to the Kozickis, and the secret remained until Margaret Kisilevich Wright’s 77th Christmas, in 1998, when she shared it with her family for the first time. She said it was her very best Christmas ever.

If we are to have the very best Christmas ever, we must listen for the sound of sandaled feet. We must reach out for the Carpenter’s hand. With every step we take in His footsteps, we abandon a doubt and gain a truth.

It was said of Jesus of Nazareth that He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”⁷

Do we have the determination to do likewise? One line of holy writ contains a tribute to our Lord and Savior, of whom it was said, He “went about doing good . . . ; for God was with him.”⁸

My prayer is that at this Christmas season and all the Christmastimes to come, we may follow in His footsteps. Then each Christmas will be the best Christmas ever. ■

NOTES

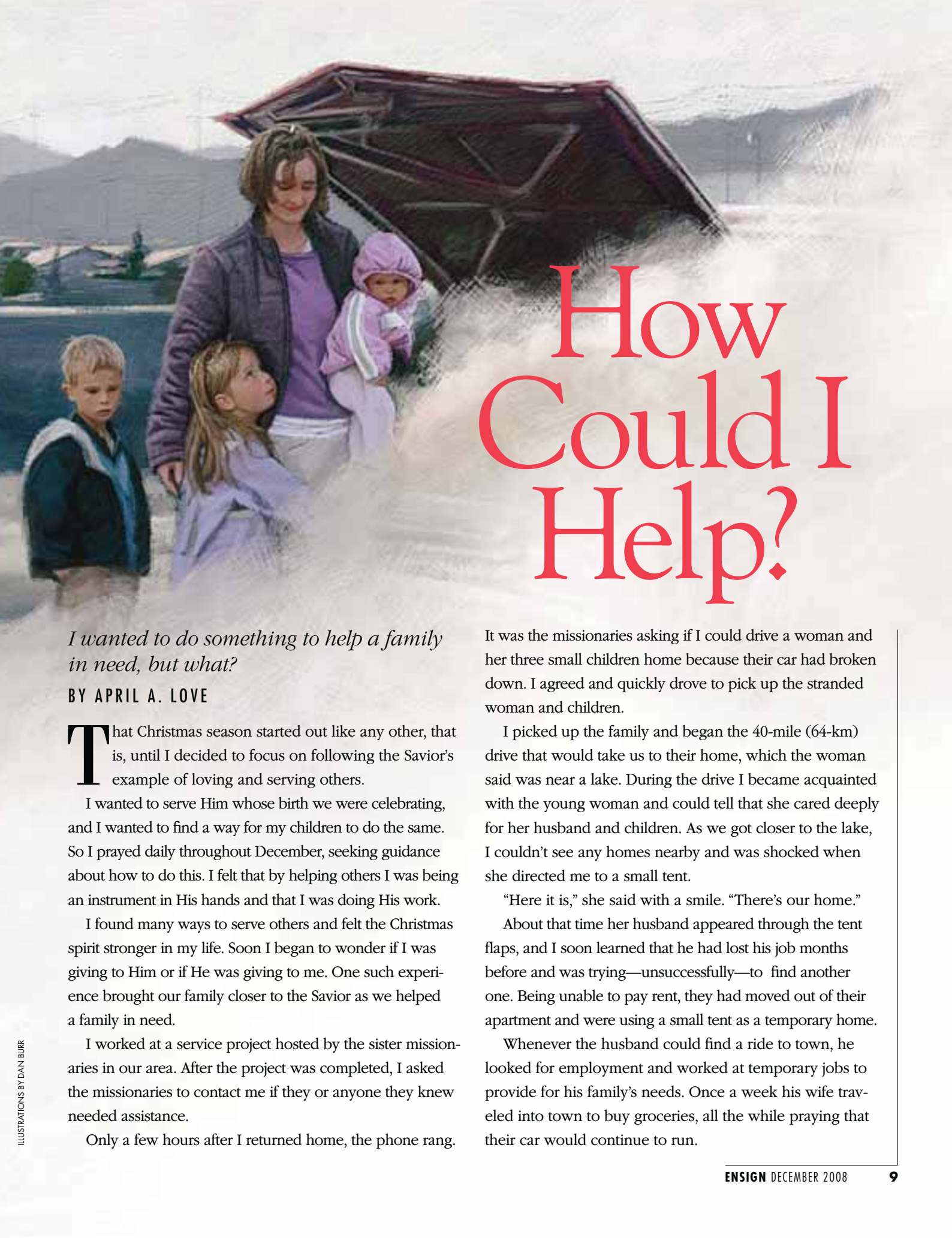
1. Al Stillman and Robert Allen, “Home for the Holidays.”
2. Elizabeth Bowen, “Home for Christmas,” in Mary Engelbreit, *Believe: A Christmas Treasury* (1998), 27.
3. David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals* (1953), 551.
4. Isaiah 7:14; see also Matthew 1:18–25.
5. Mosiah 3:5, 7–8.
6. Matthew 2:2, 10–11.
7. Luke 2:52.
8. Acts 10:38.

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. Following are some examples:

1. Ask a family member to read aloud the quote by President McKay. If we are to have the best Christmas ever, we must follow in the Savior’s footsteps. Have the family members trace their feet. Then invite the family to take some time after your visit to prayerfully write an act of service on each footprint that the family members could do for others. Suggest that they place the footprints so they lead to a picture of the Savior, illustrating how acts of service help us come closer to Him.

2. Invite family members to share a few memorable Christmas experiences. What made these experiences great? Read or tell the experience of the Kozicki family. Invite the family to find ways this month to serve others, helping them enjoy the Christmas season.



How Could I Help?

I wanted to do something to help a family in need, but what?

BY APRIL A. LOVE

That Christmas season started out like any other, that is, until I decided to focus on following the Savior's example of loving and serving others.

I wanted to serve Him whose birth we were celebrating, and I wanted to find a way for my children to do the same. So I prayed daily throughout December, seeking guidance about how to do this. I felt that by helping others I was being an instrument in His hands and that I was doing His work.

I found many ways to serve others and felt the Christmas spirit stronger in my life. Soon I began to wonder if I was giving to Him or if He was giving to me. One such experience brought our family closer to the Savior as we helped a family in need.

I worked at a service project hosted by the sister missionaries in our area. After the project was completed, I asked the missionaries to contact me if they or anyone they knew needed assistance.

Only a few hours after I returned home, the phone rang.

It was the missionaries asking if I could drive a woman and her three small children home because their car had broken down. I agreed and quickly drove to pick up the stranded woman and children.

I picked up the family and began the 40-mile (64-km) drive that would take us to their home, which the woman said was near a lake. During the drive I became acquainted with the young woman and could tell that she cared deeply for her husband and children. As we got closer to the lake, I couldn't see any homes nearby and was shocked when she directed me to a small tent.

"Here it is," she said with a smile. "There's our home."

About that time her husband appeared through the tent flaps, and I soon learned that he had lost his job months before and was trying—unsuccessfully—to find another one. Being unable to pay rent, they had moved out of their apartment and were using a small tent as a temporary home.

Whenever the husband could find a ride to town, he looked for employment and worked at temporary jobs to provide for his family's needs. Once a week his wife traveled into town to buy groceries, all the while praying that their car would continue to run.



Their plan had worked for a few months, but it was now cold and keeping warm was difficult. Before long their money would be gone, and they would not be able to afford food or transportation.

Yet they seemed full of faith and were surprisingly optimistic. The woman simply said that they knew everything would be all right. They had prayed and knew God would watch over them. They thanked me warmly for giving them a ride home, and though I felt uncomfortable leaving them out there in that condition, they assured me that they would be fine.

All the way home I couldn't stop thinking about them and knew I had to do something more for them. But what? I wished my family had money to fix their car, to buy them food, or to pay for their apartment until the husband could find work—but we didn't. I began to pray for direction about how to help this family.

By the time I arrived home, I had a plan. The next day in Relief Society I told the sisters about the family living

The family was grateful for the warm clothes, blankets, and food provided through the Relief Society of our ward, but they were even more grateful to Heavenly Father.



in a tent, and I asked if they would help gather supplies for them. It wasn't long before warm clothes, blankets, and food began arriving at our door. A few days before Christmas, my husband and I took the items out to the family by the lake. They were appreciative to us and the Relief Society sisters, but they were especially grateful to Heavenly Father. I still was uncomfortable leaving them but felt it might be unwise to invite them into our home.

As Christmas drew near, my heart ached for this family. I wanted them to have a traditional Christmas in a home, with a tree, and with the security of a stable job. I continued praying, "What would Thou have us do?" But it seemed that no answer came.

On Christmas Eve I decided to cook the turkey and side dishes ahead of time for the next day. Throughout the day more goods arrived for the destitute family, so my husband and I decided to take the food and gifts out to them that evening. I felt glad that they would have a semblance of Christmas with a turkey dinner and presents for the children. But then I realized that the family would have no way to cook the dinner and that they wouldn't even have room for all the gifts in their small, already overcrowded tent. Shortly thereafter, I felt prompted to deliver it all anyway—and to take them our own turkey dinner, since it was already cooked.

Our family loaded everything into our van and headed for the lake. Our children had each chosen one of their own gifts to give to the other children. We were all excited to see how they would respond when they saw their presents. Despite our growing anticipation, I worried that these gifts would not be useful for this family. However, I reminded

myself that I had felt prompted to bring *everything*.

When we arrived, we were surprised to see the family packing their belongings into their car. The husband explained that he had found a job and that his boss had provided an apartment for them and was even paying the first month's rent. They were to move in that day.

"Put everything in our van!" we told them. "We'll take you. You can make it all in one trip that way."

Excitement filled the air as we loaded their belongings into our van and took them to their new home. While we moved the family into their new apartment, I realized that Heavenly Father had answered both their prayers and mine. He blessed this family with a warm home, a stable job, a traditional Christmas dinner, and even with a Christmas tree, which their new neighbors brought over. Before we left, we embraced this family and the young mother said, "We knew God would answer our prayers. We all knew it."

Driving home that night, I recognized that my children had caught the true spirit of Christmas. They seemed more excited about giving than they had ever been about receiving. "Did you see the look on Jimmy's face when I gave him my train?" one child asked. "And on Annie's face when I gave her my doll?" another remarked.

When we arrived home, we found a large box on our doorstep. Inside it was a beautiful turkey dinner with all the trimmings. We will never know who provided that thoughtful gift on Christmas Eve—we hadn't told anyone we had given away our own Christmas dinner. But what we will always know is that our awkward attempt at a gift for the Savior had turned into a most precious gift for our family—a Christmas experience we would never forget. ■



Room in the Inn

BY ELDER NEIL L. ANDERSEN

Of the Presidency of the Seventy

On a bright, crisp winter afternoon we pointed our van toward the mission home in Bordeaux, France. It was December 24, 1990, and we were on our way home for Christmas.

My wife, Kathy, and I, along with our four children—Camey, age 14, Brandt, 13, Kristen, 10, and Derek, 8—had just experienced a week to remember. Because of the distances involved in our mission, we had not brought the missionaries together for a Christmas celebration. Rather, we had traveled as a family to every city in the mission, bringing a feeling of family togetherness, involving the children in sharing a special Christmas program. Our family had rejoiced with each of the missionaries in the great privilege of sharing the restored gospel of Christ at this glorious time of year.

On our final day we had been joined by four wonderful missionaries. The large blue van, now full, was filled as well with the

Christmas spirit, and Christmas carols and favorite stories made the travel time pass quickly. Kristen and Derek were becoming more excited with each hour as they anticipated the surprises Christmas morning would bring. We could almost smell the turkey dinner being prepared at the mission home by a wonderful missionary couple awaiting our return. The feeling of Christmas was in the air.

It was not until late in the afternoon that we realized there might be a problem. For much of the morning we had experienced some difficulty in shifting our van from one gear to another. We had stopped to check the level of the transmission fluid, but all seemed to be in order. Now, with darkness setting in and our van still two hours from Bordeaux, third, fourth, and fifth gears stopped functioning altogether.

We limped along the tree-lined country road in second gear. It would



At a time when only our Heavenly Father could bring us home, He had heard our prayers.



be impossible to drive to Bordeaux in this condition, and we looked for possible help. Our first hope was a convenience store just preparing to close. I asked about possible rental-car locations or train stations nearby. We were far from any city of any size, however, and my questions brought little response.

I returned to the van. The concern and disappointment showed on the faces of our younger children. Would they not be home for Christmas Eve? Would they spend this most special night of the year in a crowded mission van? After they had brought happiness and cheer to missionaries far from home, would their Christmas come alongside a forgotten French country road far from their own home?

Kristen knew to whom we could appeal, and she immediately suggested a prayer. Many times as a family we had prayed for those in need—for the missionaries, the investigators, the Church members, our leaders, the French people, our own family. We bowed in prayer and humbly asked for help.

By now it was dark. The van crept forward, moving at a jogger's pace through the pine forest. We were hoping to reach a little town just three miles (5 km) ahead. Soon our lights caught a small sign with an arrow directing us to Villeneuve-de-Marsan.

We had driven the two-lane road from Pau to Bordeaux many times, but never had we journeyed off the highway to the little town of Villeneuve-de-Marsan. As we hobbled into the town, the scene was like many small French villages. Homes and small shops were attached one to another, crowding the narrow road leading into town. People had closed their window shutters early, and the streets were dark and deserted. The lights in the ancient Catholic church in the center of town showed the one sign of life as they glowed in preparation for the traditional midnight mass. We rolled past the church, and the van hesitated and then stopped. Fortunately, we found ourselves in front of a lovely country inn. The lights were on,

and we determined that this was our last chance for help.

To avoid overwhelming those in the inn, Kathy, Camey, and the missionaries stayed in the van while I took the three younger children inside. I explained our situation to the young woman at the front desk. She could see the beleaguered faces of my children, and she kindly asked us to wait while she called the innkeeper, Mr. Francis Darroze.

Camey came in to see how we were doing. As we waited for Mr. Darroze to arrive, I silently said a prayer of thanksgiving. We might not make it back to Bordeaux for the night, but how good of our Father in Heaven to lead us to a nice hotel! I shuddered as I realized how easily we could have spent the night in the van in a remote area of France. I could see a restaurant in the next room, and I was amazed to see it open on Christmas Eve. We would have a good meal, a hot shower, and a comfortable sleep.

Mr. Darroze arrived in the clothing of a traditional French chef, with his double-breasted chef's coat buttoned all the way up to his chin. He was the owner of the hotel, a man of importance in the community. His warm eyes and quick smile communicated that he was a gentleman as well.

I told him of our dilemma, of the 10 of us in the van, and of our destination in Bordeaux. As he noticed my accent, I added that we were Americans and in one sentence told him why we were in France.

He instantly sought to help us. About 10 miles (16 km) away was a medium-sized city with an active train schedule. He called to ask about the next train to Bordeaux but found that it would not leave until 10:15 Christmas morning. All rental-car companies in that larger city were closed.

The disappointment was evident in the faces of my young children. I asked Mr. Darroze if he would have room in the inn for our family and the four missionaries to spend the night. Although we wouldn't make it home,





Mr. Darroze quickly shook his head and his finger in disapproval. The spirit of Christmas giving filled his soul. “No,” he said, “I will take nothing.”

at least it was a great blessing to have found such suitable accommodations.

Mr. Darroze looked at the children. He had known us only a few minutes, but his heart was touched with the brotherhood that crosses all oceans and makes us one family. The spirit of Christmas giving filled his soul. “Mr. Andersen,” he said, “of course I have rooms here that you can rent. But you do not want to spend Christmas Eve here in the inn. Children should be home as they await the excitement of Christmas morning. I will lend you my car, and you can go to Bordeaux tonight.”

I was amazed at his thoughtfulness. Most people would view strangers, especially foreigners like us, with caution. I thanked him but explained that there were 10 of us and a small French car would never be sufficient.

He hesitated momentarily, but his hesitation was not to diminish the gift but to expand it.

“At my farm about 10 miles from here I have an old van. It is used for farming and has only the two seats in front. It will travel at only about 45 miles per hour (70 kph), and I

am not certain the heater works well. But if you want it, I will drive you the 10 miles to my farm to get it.”

The children jumped for joy. I reached into my pocket for my cash or credit cards. He quickly shook his head and his finger in disapproval.

“No,” he said, “I will take nothing. You can bring my van back to me when you get time after Christmas. It is Christmas Eve. Take your family home.”

Sometime shortly after midnight the lights of Bordeaux came into view. The children and the missionaries had fallen asleep in the back of the innkeeper’s van. As we drove the familiar streets leading to our home, Kathy and I thanked our kind Heavenly Father for our own Christmas miracle. At a time when only He could bring us home, He had heard our prayers.

We were home on Christmas Eve, even though in Villeneuve-de-Marsan there was room in the inn. ■

“Room in the Inn” was originally printed in Christmas Treasures (Deseret Book, 1994).

3 Christmas Stories

COOKIES AND CAROLS

By Bethany F. Bingham

The more we caroled and shared baskets of cookies, the more excited we became.

Armed with 10 plates of cookies and 10 copies of a Church Christmas DVD, our youth group set out on a snowy Mutual night to sing Christmas carols to the neighbors. It was the bishop's idea, a chance for leaders and youth alike to meet the people who live near our Church building in Connecticut.

The house across the street had a huge, barking dog, and the only way to get to the front door was by passing him. No one appeared to quiet the dog, and I wondered how we would be received. As we sang our first carol, the youth stood back, hesitant to be on the front line. A woman answered the door, and one of my fellow leaders handed her a plate of cookies and the DVD. The

leader informed her that we were from the church across the street and wanted to express our appreciation to them for being good neighbors. She was pleasantly surprised and listened politely until the end of our song.

With the first home behind us, our confidence grew. We walked a little more quickly to the small apartment complex next to the church. This time the woman who answered the door recognized two of our youth. She had been their teacher in elementary school, and she reached out to give them a big hug.

This positive encouragement was all we needed. From then on, Kourtney, one of our Mia Maids, wanted to deliver the cookies and DVD at every door. As leaders, we no longer had to physically move the youth closer to each doorstep—they encouraged each other.

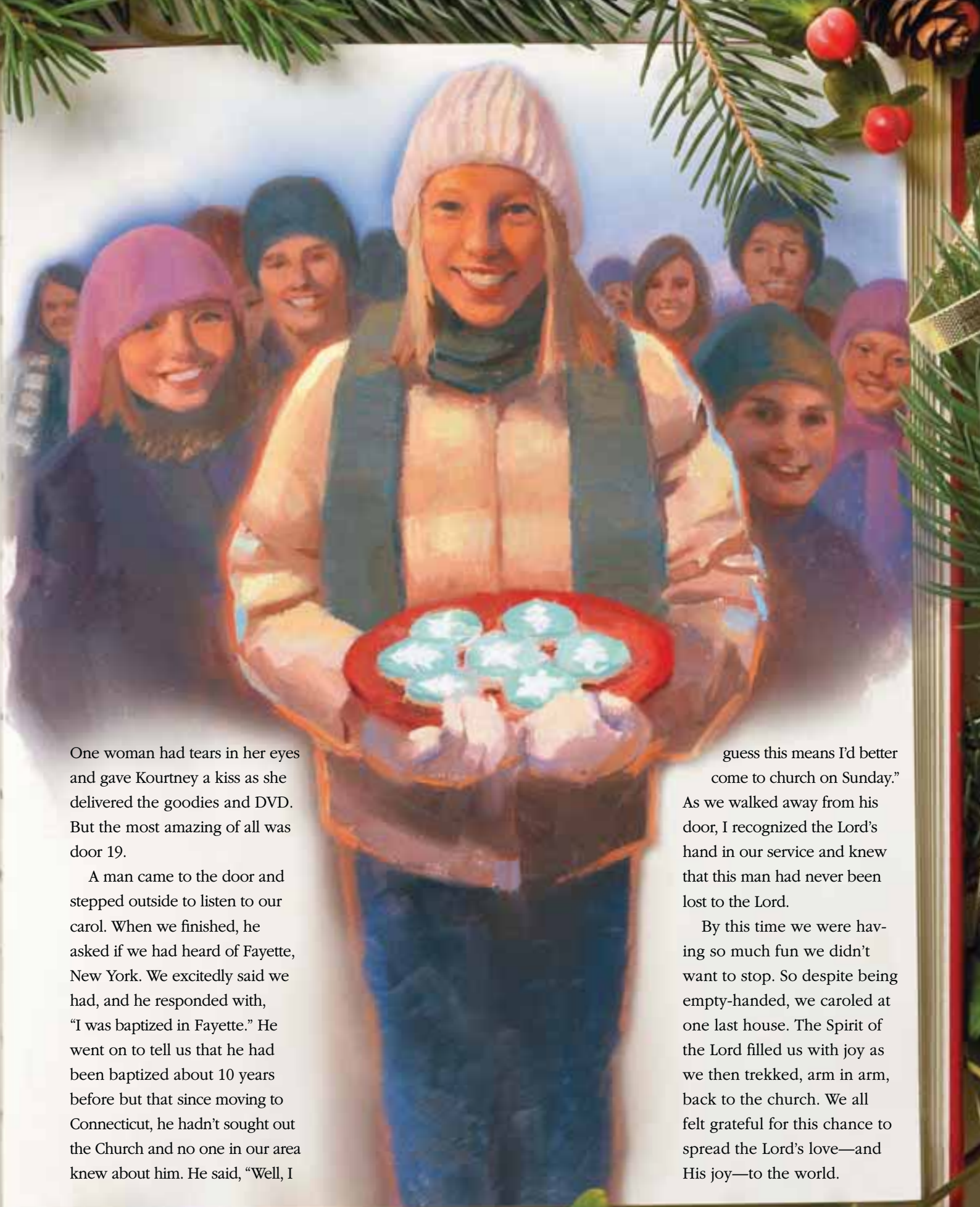
Although one man listened uncomfortably to our song and declined our gift, every other person who answered a door was gracious and appreciative.

THEY CAME WITH HASTE



“Did these shepherds, personally invited to undertake a search for the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, concern themselves with the security of their possessions? Did they procrastinate their search for Christ? The record affirms that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem. . . . And they came with haste” (Luke 2:15–16; emphasis added).

President Thomas S. Monson, “In Search of the Christmas Spirit,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1987, 5.



One woman had tears in her eyes and gave Kourtney a kiss as she delivered the goodies and DVD. But the most amazing of all was door 19.

A man came to the door and stepped outside to listen to our carol. When we finished, he asked if we had heard of Fayette, New York. We excitedly said we had, and he responded with, "I was baptized in Fayette." He went on to tell us that he had been baptized about 10 years before but that since moving to Connecticut, he hadn't sought out the Church and no one in our area knew about him. He said, "Well, I

guess this means I'd better come to church on Sunday."

As we walked away from his door, I recognized the Lord's hand in our service and knew that this man had never been lost to the Lord.

By this time we were having so much fun we didn't want to stop. So despite being empty-handed, we caroled at one last house. The Spirit of the Lord filled us with joy as we then trekked, arm in arm, back to the church. We all felt grateful for this chance to spread the Lord's love—and His joy—to the world.



A SMALL, SNOW-COVERED TREE

By Darrell Smart

*When we arrived at the cemetery,
we were touched by what we found.*

One day, shortly before Christmas, our third child and first son, Bay, was born. As I said good-bye that evening to my exhausted but joyful wife and left the hospital, the warmth and joy that accompanied the birth of my son overwhelmed the cold chill of that clear December night.

The following December we celebrated the first birthday of our dark-eyed, dark-haired son. The day after Christmas, during an evening of games at the home of my in-laws, our revelry was interrupted by an awful shriek from my mother-in-law: "He's not breathing!" She had gone to check on Bay, who had been sleeping on her bed, and discovered his cold, lifeless body. We immediately rushed our son to the hospital, attempting CPR on the way. We were grief-stricken to learn that nothing could be done to save his life. He had died from sudden infant death syndrome.

Since then, Christmas has been filled with a much deeper meaning for our family. Each year on Christmas Eve when we take down our other children's stockings to fill them, one solitary stocking is left on the fireplace mantle. Throughout the remainder of the holiday the stocking serves as a reminder of Bay.

Each year, around the time of Bay's birthday, my wife and I drive to the cemetery where he is buried. At each visit we find that someone else has arrived before us and placed something on our son's grave: one year it was delicate, small flowers; the next year, a stuffed bear; the next, a little Christmas tree decorated with miniature ornaments. We have no idea who is responsible; the gifts, which touch us deeply, are never accompanied by a note or card.

When I hinted to my mother-in-law that I knew her secret, she denied responsibility. The following year while she and my father-in-law were serving a Church mission abroad, we again found that someone had placed a gift on our son's grave. Even after inquiring with other family members and friends, we were unable to solve the mystery.

Ten years after our son's death, a series of snowstorms prevented us from traveling short distances. As a result, our annual visit to our son's grave site was delayed until several days after Christmas. When we finally made it, we saw a small, decorated Christmas tree, mostly buried in the snow, standing bravely at the head of Bay's small grave. The effort it must have taken for someone to get to the cemetery through the heavy snowfall overwhelmed us. Tears streamed down our faces as we realized that someone still shared our grief and loss.

After that, we were more resolved than ever to discover the identity of our benefactor and thank him or her for showing us such compassion. But as we reflected more, we realized that whoever was doing these acts of kindness did not want to be identified. We decided to allow our friend to remain anonymous. We replaced our need to thank our friend with a desire to simply live better.

It is now harder for us to speak ill of or criticize any of our friends or family members, because any one of them may be our anonymous friend.

Often while doing service, my wife and I pause to examine our hearts: are we doing good things to be seen by others or for the pure love of Christ and of our fellowmen?

For us, charity—humble and never seeking its own—is symbolized by a beautifully decorated Christmas tree, half-buried in snow, resting in a quiet cemetery.

IN SHEPHERDS' FIELD

By Annie Tintle

As I thought about the place where the Savior was born, I began to understand His role as the Shepherd of mankind.

While attending Brigham Young University, I studied in Jerusalem with approximately 170 students during the fall of 1998. As the Christmas season approached, we began to focus our studies and field trips around the birth of the Savior.

It was cool and windy the evening that 40 of us pulled up to our last and most anticipated stop for the day. Tradition held that Shepherds' Field, located just outside of Bethlehem, was the place where the ancient shepherds sat watching sheep on the night of the Savior's birth, never anticipating what would soon be proclaimed to them.

The field was nothing like I had imagined. I saw a terraced hill with hardly any greenery. We walked down a rocky path, and each of us found a quiet place to sit and write in our journals. I finally found a large rock to sit on. It was cold, uncomfortable, and surrounded by thorns.

When we were told we would be able to see the local shepherds and their sheep, I wasn't prepared to see children in rags. But even though they were dressed in worn,



secondhand clothing, their eyes were bright. Open-palmed, they approached our group's chaperone. After asking the children their names, she gave each one a few shekels. One of the children carried a newborn lamb. He approached me and offered to let me hold it.

As I took the warm baby lamb in my arms, I began to see the situation differently.

The Savior knew about the life of a shepherd. He knew about the cold nights, rocky trails, and danger of thieves and predators. He

knew shepherds sometimes held the baby lambs in their arms, standing watch while waiting for the darkness to pass.

While the Wise Men were able to bring the Christ child gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, the shepherds could offer little in the way of material gifts. Their sacrifice was simply in coming to offer humble hearts and joyful spirits in partaking in the celebration of their infant Lord.

The Savior has brought the gift of joy to our cold and dreary world. He has promised to stand watch through the long, dark night, despite the terrors and hardships this life can bring. He knows us, His sheep. He is our Shepherd.

That night, for the first time, I began to understand the promise in the gift of our Savior. ■



Gather to the TEMPLE

BY ELDER CLAUDIO R. M. COSTA

Of the Presidency of the Seventy

When Benedito Carlos do Carmo Mendes Martins decided to take his family to the nearest temple in 1992, he needed 15 days off work to make the arduous round-trip from his home in Manaus, in northern Brazil. It was a busy time for his company, however, and his boss refused to give him time off.

Because the family had prepared, sacrificed, and saved money to make the trip, they prayed that they might somehow still be able to go. Their prayers were soon answered.

“The day before the trip, I was diagnosed with parasites,” Brother Martins said. “I was so happy to be sick!”

His doctor immediately prescribed medication and a two-week medical leave of absence from work, which, by law, his company was obligated to give. The next day the family left for the temple.

“I took my medicine with me, and during the trip I received injections,” Brother Martins said. By the time he returned, the parasites were gone.

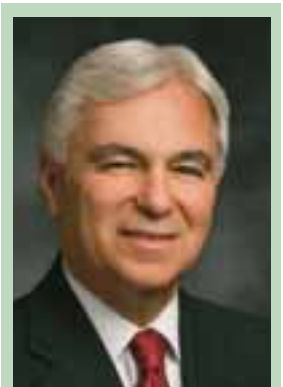
“I came home with faith in and a

testimony of the ordinances of the temple,” he said, “especially the ordinance of being sealed to my wife and three children.”

Before Manaus became part of the Caracas Venezuela Temple District in 2005, the nearest temple was the São Paulo Brazil Temple, located thousands of miles away in southeastern Brazil. Some Latter-day Saints in Manaus were so determined to go to the temple that they sold their homes, means of transportation, work tools—anything of value—to raise money.

To reach São Paulo, members would travel by boat on the Rio Negro to its nearby confluence with the Amazon and from there east to the Rio Madeira—a distance of about 70 miles (115 km). Then they would travel more than 600 miles (965 km) southeast on the Rio Madeira to the city of Pôrto Velho. From there they would board buses and trek another 1,500 miles (2,400 km) to São Paulo. After serving in the house of the Lord, they would make the seven-day return trip.

When Saints from Manaus prepared to make their first trip to the temple in



For many Latter-day Saints throughout the world, attending the temple requires great sacrifice. When Saints from Manaus, Brazil, made their first trip to the temple in Caracas, they were so happy they declared, “Now it takes us only 40 hours to get to the temple!”

Caracas, they were so happy they declared, “Now it takes us only 40 hours to get to the temple!” To get to Caracas, the Saints had to endure a 1,000-mile (1,600-km) bus ride that included traveling through unsettled parts of the Amazon jungle and changing from a larger bus to a smaller bus at Brazil’s border with Venezuela. The distance was shorter, but the trip still required substantial monetary sacrifice, with the added expense of obtaining passports.

As the Saints embarked, they sang, “Rise, Ye Saints, and Temples Enter.”¹ To maintain reverence and stay focused on the purpose of their trip, they held firesides on the bus and watched Church movies such as *The Mountain of the Lord*.

In a journal compiled by those who were part of that first trip, Church members recalled their blessings, not their sacrifices. One sister wrote: “Today I am going to the temple for the first time. Yesterday I celebrated my 20th anniversary as a member of the Church—so many hours, days, and years of waiting and preparing. My heart is full of gratitude and happiness for my friends, priesthood leaders, and especially Jesus Christ, His Atonement, and this opportunity to go to the house of my Heavenly Father.”

A brother who was sealed to his wife and children on that trip said the temple gave him a glimpse of eternity. “I have no doubt that if we keep the covenants we make in the temple, we will have a happier and more abundant life,” he wrote. “I love my family, and I will do all I can to have them with me in the celestial kingdom.”

The Brazil Manaus Mission was created on July 1, 1990, to take the gospel to six states in northern Brazil. At the time, the Church was relatively unknown in those states and had few members. But as the Lord declared in the Book of Mormon, those who repent and come unto Him



**Architectural rendering
of the temple to be built in
Manaus, Brazil.**

will be numbered among His people in the latter days (see 3 Nephi 16:13).

Today there are eight stakes in the city of Manaus, in Amazonas State, additional stakes in the other states, and seven districts within the mission boundaries. As I contemplate the growth of the Church and the role that temples play in the Lord’s efforts to gather His children, my mind is drawn to His promise in the Book of Mormon: “Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance” (3 Nephi 21:28).

As a mission president in Manaus from 1990 to 1993, I saw many of the

Amazon people embrace the principles of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, join the Church, and “come in unto the covenant” (3 Nephi 21:22). As a result, the power of the priesthood began to bless their lives and their families—especially through the ordinances of the temple.

Church members in northern Brazil rejoiced in May 2007 when the First Presidency announced that a temple, Brazil’s sixth, would be built in Manaus. For the Martins family and the growing number of Latter-day Saints in northern Brazil, having a temple in Manaus will be a great blessing. For many Saints throughout the world, however, attending the temple will continue to require great sacrifice.

May those of us who live near a temple show our gratitude by increasing our temple attendance. And may we, like the Saints in northern Brazil, emulate the example of the Nephites who “did labor exceedingly” to gather to the temple “that they might be . . . where Jesus should show himself unto the multitude” (3 Nephi 19:3). ■

NOTE

1. *Hymns*, no. 287.



Temple Blessings

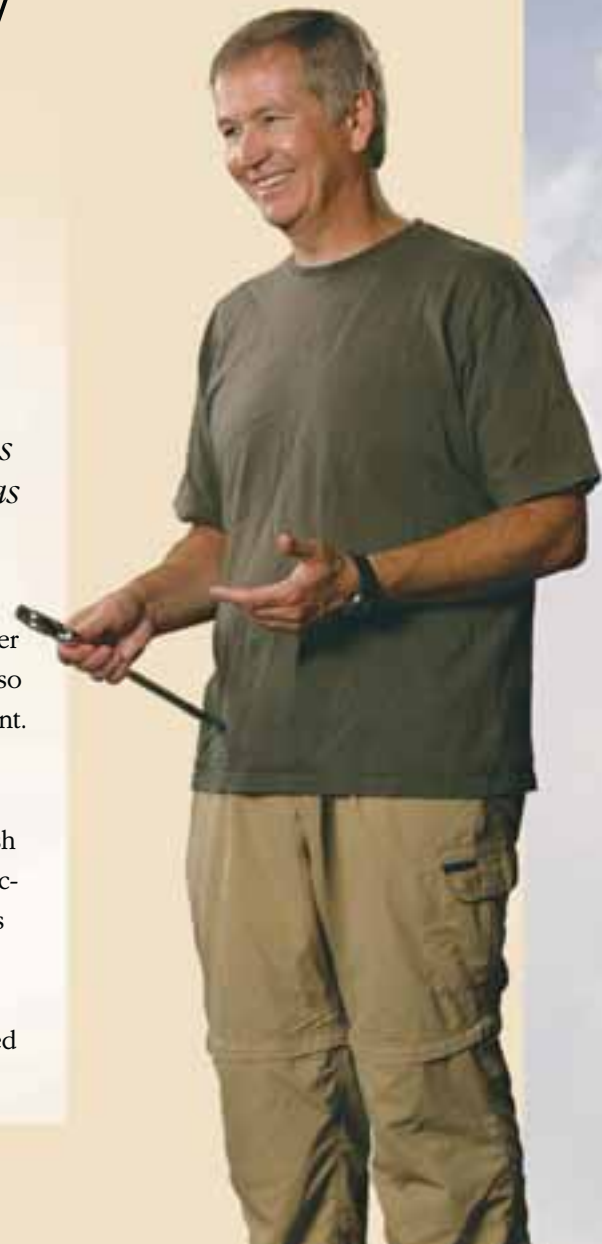
— IN A —

Part-Member Family

BY KAY PRZYBILLE

My temple attendance gave me insights that improved my relationships with my husband, who was not a Latter-day Saint, and our children.

In June of 1986 I drove my mother to the Cardston Alberta Temple so she could receive her endowment. I had already received my endowment, but my nonmember husband and I lived in a remote part of British Columbia, and I had allowed my recommend to expire. Therefore, I was able to walk with my mother to the recommend desk but could follow her no farther. I went outside, leaned against the temple wall, and cried.



After that experience, I determined never to be left outside of the temple again. My husband supported me in my decision, and I was soon attending the temple as frequently as I could. There I learned principles that made a profound difference in my personal life and in relationships with family and friends.

Changes in My Life

First, I noticed a change in my patience level. I had spent years trying to keep my temper under control without much success. As my temple worship taught me about my relationship to my Heavenly Father and to other people, my attitude changed. I came to realize that my family and friends were people I knew before I came here. They were not in my life to thwart or annoy me but to work with me so I could learn life lessons. I gained understanding as I tried to learn what they were trying to teach me, and I gained patience to accept that they progressed at their own speed. I also realized that life was not a struggle to teach others to be perfect so that I could be happy; it is a happy journey toward perfection with people I love.

The second change was in my attitude toward my husband. Before our marriage, I had determined to place him as the head of the family and not to walk away from our relationship.

Despite my resolution, I struggled with accepting his choices and sometimes allowed his habits to affect my happiness. In the temple I learned that together we had the potential to be perfect eternal companions. From my new observation point, I saw that when we worked together, we were whole. Our weaknesses and strengths, interests and talents complemented each other's so well that we were stronger as a team than we were as individuals.

As I learned to accept my husband's differences, I became less critical and adopted a spirit of cooperation and teamwork in our marriage. I found I was growing more quickly into the person I wanted to be. Moreover, when my husband felt more cooperation from me, he was more loving toward me as well.

The third area of improvement was finding faith that I could allow our four children, who are now grown, to live their lives without my feeling responsible to make them live a certain way. Some of them were less active in the Church, but I still wanted to influence them for good without infringing on their agency. On one particular visit to the temple, I put their names on the prayer roll and prayed long and sincerely in their behalf. I received a profoundly peaceful assurance that all would be well with them.

When meditating on the experience later, I realized that Heavenly Father loved them even more than I did because He understood them better. He wants to bless them and have them return to Him, and He will provide them with learning opportunities. Now when I begin to worry, I remember that experience and do what I can, knowing the Lord will do the rest.

A fourth alteration in my life came as a sense of general peace settled over me, resulting in part from my temple attendance giving me a better eternal perspective. I am confident that the Lord is in charge, that there are enough resources on this earth for us to live comfortably, that there will be oases of virtue within the desert of evil. I no longer think of myself as being alone. The Holy Ghost is my companion, and I can talk to my Heavenly Father in prayer throughout my day. I used to agonize over decisions; now I seek the Spirit's promptings and act on them as I make choices. And since I no longer feel the need to require others to live the way I think they should, I have more time and energy to "work out [my] own salvation" (Mormon 9:27).

This new perspective lifted a great weight off my shoulders. The Lord meant it when He said:



In the temple, I learned that my husband and I had the potential to be perfect eternal companions. From this new observation point, I saw that we were stronger as a team than we were as individuals.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:29–30).

Family Blessings

Continued temple attendance would be essential for me if the only blessings I received were the personal ones of peace, assurance, and patience. But there have been other experiences—many others—that have blessed me and my family.

- I have become involved in family history and have had many wonderful experiences involving family members, both mortal and those beyond the veil.

- In November 1993 our second daughter married in the temple, and I was able to attend the sealing.
- In May 2006, after 37 years of marriage, my husband joined the Church. In August 2007 he and I were sealed, and our second daughter was sealed to us. Our oldest daughter, who was sealed to her husband and daughter in November 2006, was sealed to us in August 2008.

I am forever grateful to a mother who led the way by being baptized when I was seven and who later inspired me to get my temple recommend again. Following her example has brought numerous personal blessings, and those blessings have extended to other members of my family. ■



Consecrate Thy Performance



In pondering and pursuing consecration, understandably we tremble inwardly at what may be required. Yet the Lord has said consolingly, "My grace is sufficient for you."

BY ELDER NEAL A. MAXWELL (1926–2004)
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Neal A. Maxwell served for two years as an Assistant to the Twelve and for five years in the Presidency of the Seventy before being sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on October 3, 1981. He died on July 21, 2004, in Salt Lake City after an eight-year battle with leukemia. Elder Maxwell delivered this timeless sermon on consecration during general conference in April 2002.

These remarks are addressed to the imperfect but still striving in the household of faith. As always, my immediate audience is myself.

We tend to think of consecration only as yielding up, when divinely directed, our material possessions. But ultimate consecration is the yielding up of oneself to God. *Heart, soul, and mind* were the encompassing words of Christ in describing the first commandment, which is constantly, not periodically, operative (see Matthew 22:37). If kept, then our performances will, in turn, be fully consecrated for the lasting welfare of our souls (see 2 Nephi 32:9).

Such totality involves the submissive converging of feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds, the very opposite of estrangement: "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13).

Many ignore consecration because it seems too abstract or too daunting. The conscientious among us, however, experience divine discontent because of progression mixed with procrastination. Hence, loving counsel is given with the confirmation of this direction, encouragement to continue the journey, and consolation as we experience individually the inherent degrees of difficulty.

Be Fully Submissive

Spiritual submissiveness is not accomplished in an instant, but by the incremental improvements and by the successive use of stepping-stones. Stepping-stones are meant to be taken one at a time anyway. Eventually our wills can be "swallowed up in the will of the Father" as we are "willing to submit



Breathtaking
submissiveness
was achieved by
the Savior as He
faced the anguish
and agonies of the
Atonement and
“would that [He]
might not drink
the bitter cup, and
shrink.”

... even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 15:7; 3:19). Otherwise, though striving, we will continue to feel the world’s prop wash and be partially diverted.

Illustrations involving economic consecration are relevant. When Ananias and Sapphira sold their possessions, they “kept back part of the price” (see Acts 5:1–11). So many of us cling tenaciously to a particular “part,” even treating our obsessions like possessions. Thus,

whatever else we may have
already given, the
last portion is the
hardest to yield.

Granted, partial surrender is still commendable, but it resembles, more than faintly, the excuse, “I gave at the office” (see James 1:7–8).

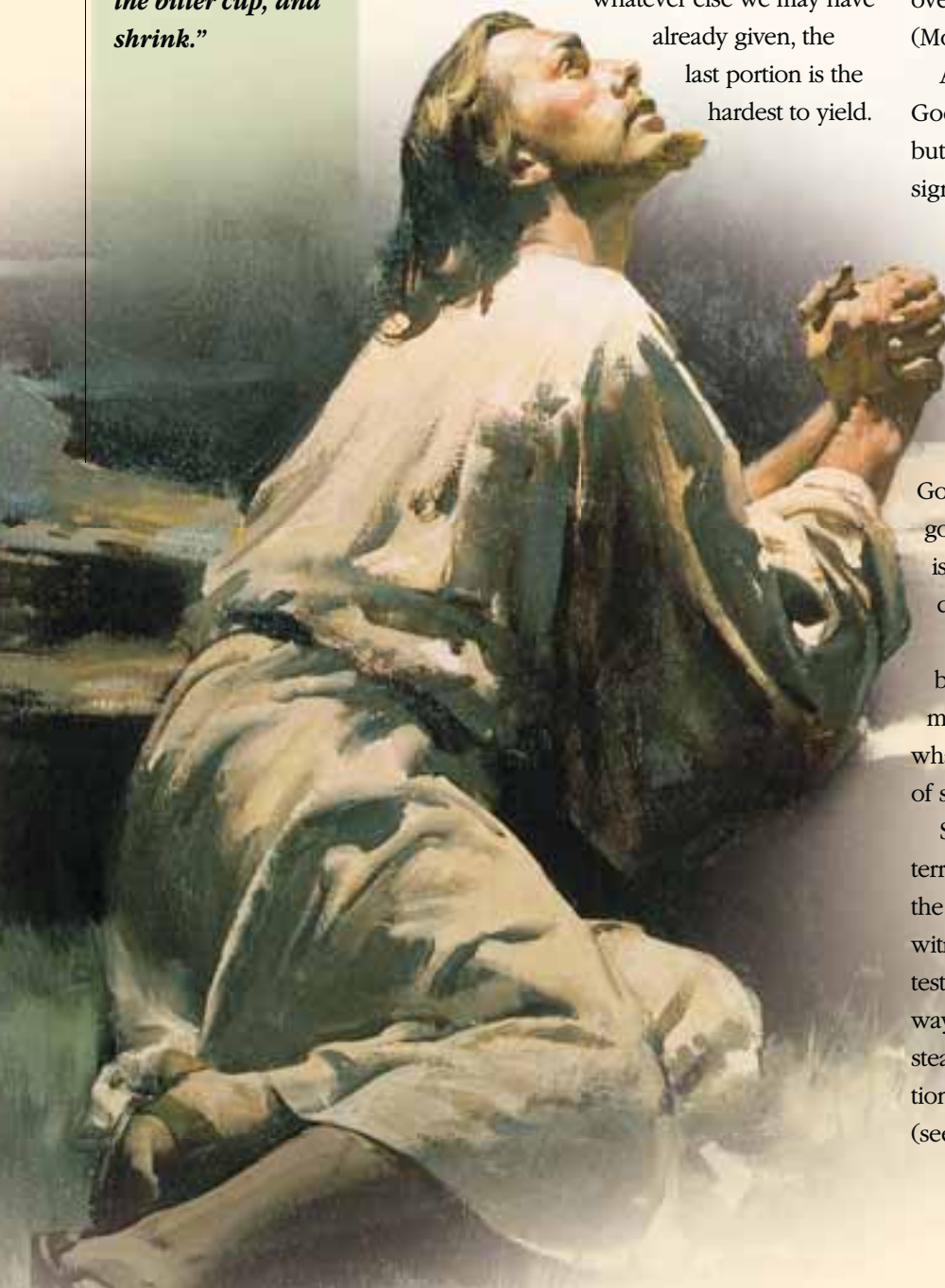
We may, for instance, have a specific set of skills which we mistakenly come to think we somehow own. If we continue to cling to those more than to God, we are flinching in the face of the consecrating first commandment. Since God lends us “breath . . . from one moment to another,” hyperventilating over these distractions is not recommended! (Mosiah 2:21).

A stumbling block appears when we serve God generously with time and checkbooks but still withhold portions of our inner selves, signifying that we are not yet fully His!

Some have difficulty when particular tasks enter their sunset phase. John the Baptist is a model, however, saying of Jesus’s growing flock, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Mistakenly regarding our present assignments as the only indicator of how much God loves us only adds to our reluctance to let go. Brothers and sisters, our individual worth is already divinely established as “great”; it does not fluctuate like the stock market.

Other stepping-stones remain unused because, like the rich, righteous young man, we are not yet willing to confront what we yet lack (see Mark 10:21). A residue of selfishness is thereby exposed.

Shrinking occurs in so many ways. The terrestrial kingdom, for example, will include the “honorable,” clearly not bearers of false witness. Yet they were still “not valiant in the testimony of Jesus” (D&C 76:75, 79). The best way to valiantly testify of Jesus is to become steadily more like Him, and it is that consecration that carves out the emulative character (see 3 Nephi 27:27).



Do Not Put Other Gods before God

In meeting these recited challenges, spiritual submissiveness is fortunately and helpfully adroit—sometimes helping us to “let go” of things, even mortal life, other times to “hold fast,” and still other times to use the next stepping-stone (see 1 Nephi 8:30).

But if we lack proportion, the next few yards can seem so formidable. Though aware of how God blessed ancient Israel to escape from mighty Pharaoh and his hosts, myopic Laman and Lemuel still lacked faith in God to help them with a mere local Laban.

We can also be deflected if we are too anxious to please those who are ascendant in our professional and avocational niches. Pleasing “other gods” instead of the real God still violates the first commandment (Exodus 20:3).

We sometimes even defend our idiosyncrasies, as if these protrusions somehow constituted our individuality. In a way, discipleship is a “contact sport,” as the Prophet Joseph testified:

“I am like a huge, rough stone . . . and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else, striking with accelerated force. . . . Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty.”¹

Since knees often bend long before minds, holding back this “part” deprives God’s work of some of mankind’s very best intellects. Far better to be meek like Moses, who learned things he “never had supposed” (Moses 1:10). Yet, sadly, brothers and sisters, in the subtle interplay of agency and identity, there is so much hesitation. The surrender of the mind is actually a victory, because it then introduces us to God’s stretching and “higher” ways! (Isaiah 55:9).

Ironically, inordinate attention, even to good things, can diminish our devotion to God. For instance, one can be too caught up in sports and the forms of body worship we see among us. One can reverence nature and yet neglect nature’s God. One can have an exclusionary regard for good music and similarly with a worthy profession. In such circumstances, the “weightier matters” are often omitted (Matthew 23:23; see also 1 Corinthians 2:16). Only the Highest One can fully guide us as to the highest good which you and I can do.

On the two great commandments, Jesus declared emphatically, everything else hangs, not vice versa (see Matthew 22:40). The first commandment is not suspended just because of our vigorous pursuit of a lesser good, for we do not worship a lesser god.

Acknowledge God’s Hand

Before enjoying the harvests of righteous efforts, let us therefore first acknowledge God’s hand. Otherwise, the rationalizations appear, and they include, “My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:17). Or, we “vaunt” ourselves, as ancient Israel would have done (except for Gideon’s deliberately small army), by boasting that “mine own hand hath saved me” (Judges 7:2). Touting our own “hand” makes it doubly hard to confess God’s hand in all things (see Alma 14:11; D&C 59:21).

At a place called Meribah, one of the greatest ever, Moses, was fatigued by people clamoring for water. Momentarily, Moses “spake unadvisedly,” saying, “Must we fetch you water?” (Psalm 106:33; Numbers 20:10; see also Deuteronomy 4:21). The Lord mentored remarkable Moses through the pronoun problem and further magnified him. We would do well to be as meek as Moses (see Numbers 12:3).

Jesus never, never, never lost His focus! Though He went about doing so very much good, He always knew that the Atonement awaited, pleading with perspective, “Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour” (John 12:27; see also 5:30; 6:38).

As you and I develop additional love, patience, and meekness, the more we have to give God and humanity. Moreover, no one else is placed exactly as we are in our opportune human orbits.

Granted, the stepping-stones take us into new territory which we may be very reluctant to explore. Hence, the successful users of the stepping-stones are powerful motivators for the rest of us. We usually pay more attention to those we quietly admire. The hungry prodigal son remembered the menus in his home, but he was also drawn by other memories, declaring, “I will arise and go to my father” (Luke 15:18).

Consecration Returns to God What Is His

In striving for ultimate submission, our wills constitute all we really have to give God anyway. The usual gifts and their derivatives we give to Him could be stamped justifiably “Return to Sender,” with a capital S. Even when God receives this one gift in return, the fully faithful will receive “all that [He] hath” (D&C 84:38). What an exchange rate!

Meanwhile, certain realities remain: God has given us our lives, our agency, our talents, and our opportunities; He has given us our possessions; He has given us our appointed mortal spans complete with the needed breaths (see D&C 64:32). Guided by such perspective, we will avoid serious errors of proportion. Some of these are far less amusing than would be hearing a double quartet and mistaking it for the Tabernacle Choir!

No wonder President [Gordon B.] Hinckley . . . stressed our being a covenant people, emphasizing the covenants of the sacrament, tithing, and the temple, citing sacrifice as the “very essence of the Atonement.”²

Jesus’s Example of Submissiveness

Breathtaking submissiveness was achieved by the Savior as He faced the anguish and agonies of the Atonement and “would that [He] might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” (D&C 19:18). On our small, imperfect scale, we face tests and wish that these would somehow be taken away.

Consider this: What of Jesus’s ministry if He had performed additional miracles but without the transcending miracle of Gethsemane and Calvary? His other miracles brought blessed extensions of life and lessened suffering—for some. But how could these miracles possibly compare with the greatest miracle of the universal Resurrection? (see 1 Corinthians 15:22). The multiplying of

the loaves and fishes fed a hungry multitude. Even so, recipients were soon hungry again, while those who partake of the Bread of Life will never hunger again (see John 6:51, 58).

In pondering and pursuing consecration, understandably we tremble inwardly at what may be required. Yet the Lord has said consolingly, “My grace is sufficient for you” (D&C 17:8). Do we really believe Him? He has also promised to make weak things strong (see Ether 12:27). Are we really willing to submit to that process? Yet if we desire fulness, we cannot hold back part!

Having our wills increasingly swallowed up by the will of the Father actually means an enhanced individuality, stretched and more capable of receiving “all that [God] hath” (D&C 84:38). Besides, how could we be entrusted with His “all” until our wills are much more like His? Nor could His “all” be fully appreciated by the partially committed.

Frankly, it is our prospective selves we betray by holding back whatever the “part.” No need therefore to ask, “Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22). Rather, let us inquire about our individual stumbling blocks,

“Lord, is it this?” We may have known the answer for a long time and may need resolve more than His response.

The greatest happiness in God’s generous plan is finally reserved for those who are willing to stretch and to

pay the costs of journeying to His regal realm. Brothers and sisters, “come, let us anew [this] journey pursue.”³

In the name of the Lord of the outstretched arm (see D&C 103:17; 136:22), even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Subheads added; spelling, style, and source citations standardized.

NOTES

1. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 1:185.
2. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 147.
3. “Come, Let Us Anew,” *Hymns*, no. 217.

T*he multiplying of the loaves and fishes fed a hungry multitude. Even so, recipients were soon hungry again, while those who partake of the Bread of Life will never hunger again.*



My Answer at the Door



BY VICTOR L. HARRIS

Shortly after Janet and I became engaged, the missionaries began teaching us the gospel. Janet had been raised a member of the Church but had not attended regularly since her teens; I had worshipped infrequently at a Baptist church while growing up.

A foreboding feeling consumed me, but as I prayed, I felt light pierce the darkness of my heart.

I couldn't shake the feeling that Forrest's time was going to be short. I tried rejecting the thought, but the apprehension wouldn't fade.

Although I already believed Jesus was our Savior, I was surprised to learn other aspects of LDS doctrine; Christ's visit to the Americas, Joseph Smith's First Vision, and a living prophet all were new to me. I compared points of doctrine in the Book of Mormon and the Bible and learned how to pray. While I continued to take the missionary discussions over the next two years, perhaps with an intellectual more than a spiritual approach, we attended church regularly. The ward's bishop performed our wedding ceremony.

Through it all, though, I really had no strong feelings one way or the other about the Church, no real conviction or testimony. In retrospect, I realize I was simply going through the motions

without a heartfelt desire to know the truth. It took a personal crisis to finally break through my intellectual cobwebs and to help me undeniably feel and see the Spirit in action.

Our second son, Forrest, then two months old, had been sickly since birth. One night while I was driving home with him and our two-year-old son, Houston, Forrest's condition weighed heavily on me. I recalled the missionaries' discussion about how we each have different things to accomplish in life and varying time spans in which to do them. The feeling that Forrest's time was going to be short consumed me. I tried rejecting the thought, but the apprehension wouldn't fade. Tears flowed down my face as I drove.

I arrived home just before Janet. I situated Houston with some toys and sat down with Forrest on my lap and looked at him. I couldn't shake the awful feeling and began crying again. Houston sat next to me, held my hand, and looked at me as if asking, "What's wrong?" I didn't know. That made me cry even harder. I felt out of control, as if something unstoppable was happening in front of me.

In the midst of the gloom, the thought came to pray for help. I prayed fervently, humbly thanking Heavenly Father for all He had blessed me with. I recognized my shortcomings. I acknowledged that perhaps Heavenly Father had other plans for Forrest, but I pleaded with Him to continue to entrust me with him, to allow him to tarry, to bless and heal him.

I immediately felt a ray of light and hope pierce the darkness in my heart. As the gloom began to fade, Janet arrived home. I set Forrest down and went to her. Her moist eyes and the tissue in her hand betrayed the fact that she had been crying. I asked what was wrong. She



NOW IS THE TIME FOR PERSONAL CONVERSION

"Now is the time for each of us to work toward our personal con-

version, toward becoming what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. As we do so, we should remember that our family relationships . . . are the setting in which the most important part of that development can occur. The conversion we must achieve requires us to be a good husband and father or a good wife and mother. . . . Exaltation is an eternal family experience, and it is our mortal family experiences that are best suited to prepare us for it."

Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Challenge to Become," Ensign, Nov. 2000, 33.

surveyed the used tissues on the end table and my red eyes and asked me the same question. During her drive home, Janet had experienced the same foreboding thoughts about Forrest, thoughts so powerful that she was also moved to tears. We held each other there in the living room and sobbed.

There was a knock at the door. We dried our eyes, and I answered it. It was one of the ward members with two missionaries. He apologized for stopping by without an appointment but said they were in the neighborhood and had a feeling they should stop by. He asked if there was anything they could do for us. I said, "Yes, could you please give my son a blessing?" They proceeded to anoint Forrest

with consecrated oil and give him a blessing of health. I thanked them, and they excused themselves.

Forrest's health improved immediately. At Forrest's next appointment, the doctor was impressed with his condition and weight gain. "Was it by chance?" I wondered. Such bleak feelings were not usual for me, and I couldn't explain why I felt better after praying, how Janet had the identical experience at the same time, or how the elders stopped by at the right moment.

I pondered these events over the next two months and concluded that I had been foolish in trying to pass them off as coincidence. I was baptized in January 1985, and our family was sealed in the Dallas Texas Temple in June 1986. I am so thankful that the Lord demonstrated to me that He answers prayer, that the priesthood is powerful, and that the Holy Spirit can be a powerful influence in our lives. My life has been richly blessed by this experience, which helped me know our Father in Heaven in ways that I never could have learned through intellectual study alone. ■

Becoming Spiritually Whole

A woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a bright pink hoodie, is shown in profile, looking down at an open Bible she is holding. She is standing in a garden filled with vibrant pink and purple flowers. The background is softly blurred, showing more greenery and flowers. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

After years of frustration about my physical challenges, I finally turned to the Lord to heal my heart.

BY SHARI PHIPPEN

“**W**hat’s wrong with your eye?” The innocent question came on a bus ride home from school in the eighth grade. I never imagined it would start a series of doctor appointments, tears, stares, and questions that would continue for the next 14 years.

That afternoon I told my mom what my friend had noticed—that my left eyelid was drooping. She made an appointment with my pediatrician at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland. Unable to find the cause, my doctor had me hospitalized for three days. The tests from that visit and every subsequent visit over the next four years yielded the same result—nothing conclusive.

During this time I received many priesthood blessings and visits from family members and ward friends, each expressing kindness and compassion. In a thoughtful letter filled with testimony, my stake president encouraged me to turn to the Savior to find comfort. Even so, I struggled to understand why I was facing this challenge.

Three years later my family moved to southeast Idaho, and I began to travel to Salt Lake City to see if the doctors there had any answers to our questions. What was wrong? Could it be fixed? How serious was it? I decided to have some minor cosmetic surgery to lift my eyelid. Initially it was a success, but within a year, my eye was drooping again. Doctors suspected I had a form of muscular dystrophy, but the determining test was extremely painful, so I decided to forego the procedure.

Little children would ask me what was



THY FAITH, BY JUDITH A. MEHR

The scriptures tell of a woman who was plagued with an illness and had spent years trying to determine what was wrong. It seemed as if the story were written about me.

wrong, but adults would just stare or talk about it when I was out of the room. Some people even called me names; “Cyclops” was the most common. And I started to wonder if it was the reason I was single. In my heart I knew these things did not affect who I was, but it was difficult not to let the staring and comments hurt me. And when I developed chronic double vision, I became really discouraged. Why was the Lord giving me this trial?

One particularly frustrating night, I was reading my scriptures and came across the story of a woman who was plagued with an illness and had spent more than a decade seeking medical advice, trying to figure out what was wrong. Instantly, I was drawn to the story. It seemed as if the story were written about me. As I read with tears streaming down my cheeks, I was particularly impressed by these verses:

“But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell

I know that my imperfect body is temporary; someday I will be made physically whole. But for now, wholeness comes not from being physically perfect but from faith in a Savior who will calm, comfort, and heal my heart.

down before him, and told him all the truth.

And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague” (Mark 5:33–34).

In a tender moment, the Spirit taught me about what it means to be made whole.

It does not always mean a healing of our physical infirmities. Rather, it means that when we come to the Savior, He will first heal our hearts and then, sometimes, He will heal our bodies. To be made whole, we have to reach out to Him in faith. In the case of the woman in the story, she literally reached out and touched the hem of the Savior’s garment. In my case, I had to pour my heart out in prayer.

After two more years of testing and one outpatient surgery, I had an answer—mitochondrial myopathy, a form of muscular dystrophy. To this day I do not understand what it fully means. I do understand a little about what causes it and what I can do to lessen its accompanying symptoms and complications. While it is not life threatening, there is no cure.

About four years have passed since I received my diagnosis. In many ways, nothing has changed. I still have double vision most of the time. Children still ask questions; adults still stare. My eye is almost closed; eventually, it may close entirely.

In the most important way, however, everything has changed. The Savior continues to heal my heart as I come to Him with my burden. I no longer worry about the staring and questions, and long ago I stopped



AN ABILITY TO BEAR OUR BURDENS

“Healing blessings come in many ways, each suited

to our individual needs, as known to Him who loves us best. Sometimes a ‘healing’ cures our illness or lifts our burden. But sometimes we are ‘healed’ by being given strength or understanding or patience to bear the burdens placed upon us.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “He Heals the Heavy Laden,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 7.

worrying that it was the reason I am not married. I have learned compassion for others with physical struggles. I make an effort to withhold judgment. Mostly, I have learned that being physically imperfect does not affect my ability to live the gospel, serve

others, hold callings, or pursue my goals and ambitions. I am limited only by my own fears. I know that my imperfect body is temporary; someday I will be made physically whole. But for now, wholeness comes not from being physically perfect but from faith in a Savior who will calm, comfort, and heal my heart. ■



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Read about the woman in Mark 5:22–34 and act out her story. What was the result of her determination and faith? Share the story of Shari Phippen. Discuss how her faith and determination healed her spiritually. What challenges and trials do we face, and what is required of us? Conclude by reading the quotation by Elder Oaks.

2. Share the story of Shari Phippen and ask family members to listen for the name or label people gave her. Then read the last paragraph of the article and ask if the label is a true description of who Shari is. Discuss how we can have compassion for others and make an effort to withhold judgment.



4 Tips for Family Night

BY DEANN STARKEY

We made family home evening the best night of the week.

Several years ago we began to seriously consider how effective our family home evenings were. There were many times we wondered if we were really getting through to our young children. They seemed to do well if we were playing board games, but they struggled to listen and behave during gospel discussions.

As parents, we cherished the time together with our children, but more important, we knew how vital it was that we teach the gospel to them. Yes, they would learn gospel principles at church, but would they understand the importance of living these principles if we didn't also teach them in our home? This question has crossed my mind many times as my husband and I have tried different ways to teach the gospel to our children on Monday night.

Through trial and error, we have found four principles that help make family home evening a time not only of having fun together but also of learning concepts that strengthen our testimonies of the gospel.



Participation

1 Even the youngest of our four children seemed to want a “job” for family home evening. We made a chart that allowed for each family member to be in charge of something each week and hung it in our dining room. At the end of family home evening, we rotated each name to a new responsibility. This way, we all knew ahead of time what we needed to do to be ready the next week. This increased participation, provided structure for the evening, and created a more reverent atmosphere.

For example, not long after our youngest son, Hunter, turned five, he was assigned to share a scripture. As he and I talked about what kind of scripture he wanted to give, he became excited and ran from the room to get his copy of the children’s reader *Book of Mormon Stories*. He turned to the picture of Lehi holding the Liahona and then announced that he wanted his scripture to be about how Lehi received the Liahona. We decided that rather than have me read a scripture for him to repeat, he would tell the story to the family.

The following week it was Hunter’s turn to give the lesson. He again chose to talk about the Liahona. However, this time he also talked about how following the example of Jesus and making good choices keep us close to Heavenly Father. Although I helped him organize his thoughts, he chose which gospel principles he wanted to share. How sweet it was for us, his parents, to witness Hunter developing a testimony of the restored gospel.

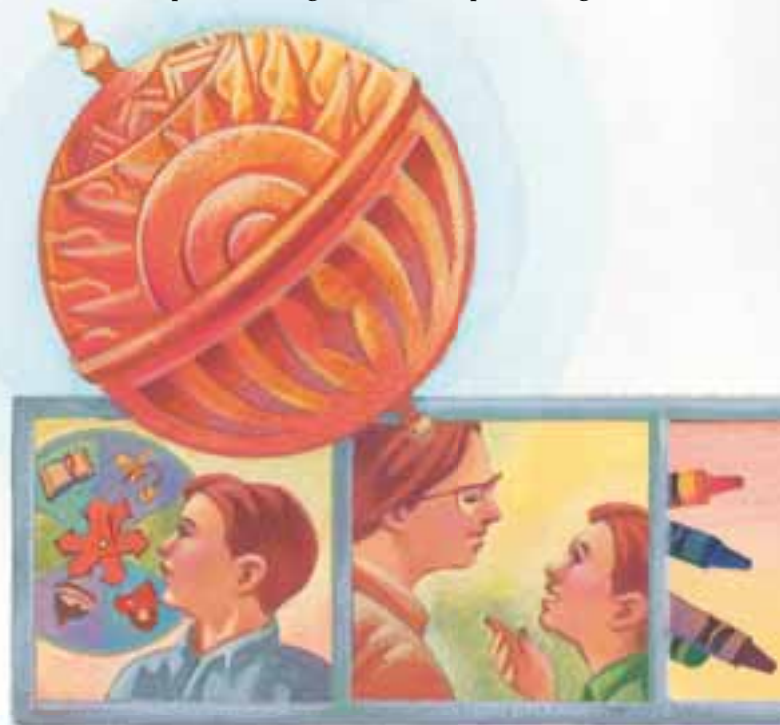
2

Preparation

We place the family home evening chart in a place where everyone can see it throughout the week. Because of this, it provides a constant reminder of what each family member needs to do to prepare for Monday night. After our family scripture study on Monday morning, I ask the children if they need anything special for their part for family home evening. Generally, the responses include help with the treat or lesson, but occasionally someone asks for a picture to go along with a scripture or the words to a song.

We decided we wanted to provide our two youngest children opportunities to teach the lesson. In order to help them, I have made several short, simple lessons they can give. This helps our family in more than one way. Our children enjoy being able to pick their own topics, and their father and I like the fact that using and delivering these lessons also helps them prepare to give Primary talks.

For example, when our oldest son, Easton, was preparing for his baptism, he taught us about baptism using one



of these lessons. Several months after his baptism, he was assigned to give a talk about the same subject for the Primary sacrament meeting program. Many of the things he included in his talk came from his family home evening lesson. He felt confident as he gave his talk, and he was able to bear a sweet testimony about baptism and its importance.

3

Simplicity

Even as our older children are becoming teenagers, we have found that keeping the lessons short, simple, and focused on areas of interest has been a key ingredient to having effective family home evenings. We often incorporate simple object lessons to illustrate our lessons. For example, once we turned off all the lights and gave each family member a flashlight. Then we danced to songs about sharing the light of the gospel with others. Simple object lessons like this have created memorable nights and reinforced gospel principles.

4

Flexibility

Despite our best efforts to keep Monday nights clear of other activities, sometimes things come up that are unavoidable. When we know in advance that this is going to be the case, we reschedule family home evening for another night or, if possible, we attend the event as a family and go out for ice cream or have a treat at home afterward. We have found that being flexible while still making family time a priority has increased our unity and love for each other.

Blessings from Holding Family Home Evening

Family home evening has proven useful in gauging where my husband and I need to focus our attentions for our family. It has given us great insight into our children's understanding of gospel principles and has given us the opportunity to answer their questions. There is no greater feeling than to see our children touched by the Holy Ghost as they gain a testimony of our Savior and His gospel.

It is within our home that we perform our greatest work in teaching our children to live the gospel and to make righteous decisions. Our example and love for family home evening has truly made it the best night of the week. ■



I REMEMBER

Joseph



JOSEPH SMITH BY WILLIAM WHITAKER, © DESERET MORNING NEWS, MAY NOT BE CORIZED

Many who knew the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote of their experiences with him. Here, some of those accounts accompany artwork featuring the Prophet. Some accounts were written near the time of the event depicted in the art and others long after, but they all give insight into his life as a man and as a prophet of God.

Jesse N. Smith, the Prophet's cousin, said: “[Joseph Smith was] incomparably the most God-like man I ever saw. . . . I know that by nature he was incapable of lying and deceitfulness, possessing the greatest kindness and nobility of character. I felt when in his presence that he could read me through and through. I know he was all that he claimed to be.”¹



JOSEPH IN THE GROVE, BY A. D. SHAW, COURTESY OF MUSEUM OF CHURCH HISTORY AND ART



JOSEPH SMITH REBUKING THE GUARDS IN RICHMOND JAIL, BY SAM LAWLOR

Right: Emmeline Blanche Wells wrote: “In the Prophet Joseph Smith, I believed I recognized the great spiritual power that brought joy and comfort to the Saints. . . . The power of God rested upon him to such a degree that on many occasions he seemed transfigured. . . . The glory of his countenance was beyond description.”²

Far left: A grove of trees often became the setting for the Prophet to speak to the Latter-day Saints. Amasa Potter recalled: “I remember the Prophet arising to preach to a large congregation in the grove west of the Temple in Nauwoo. . . . Joseph stated that every Latter-day Saint had a [spiritual] gift, and by living a righteous life, and asking for it, the Holy Spirit would reveal it to him or her.”³

Left: Parley P. Pratt wrote of the time the Prophet Joseph Smith and others were held as prisoners in the jail in Richmond, Missouri. They had listened for hours to the dreadful blasphemies and filthy language of the guards. “On a sudden [Joseph] arose to his feet, and spoke in a voice of thunder, or as the roaring lion, uttering, as near as I can recollect, the following words:

“‘SILENCE. . . . In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still.’ . . .

“The quailing guards . . . begged his pardon, and remained quiet.”⁴





FLOWERS FOR A LADY, BY LIZ LEMON SWINDLE, FOUNDATION ARTS, MAY NOT BE COPIED

BROTHERS, BY LIZ LEMON SWINDLE, FOUNDATION ARTS, MAY NOT BE COPIED

Above: Mercy R. Thompson wrote of the Prophet, “When riding with him and his wife Emma in their carriage I have known him to alight and gather prairie flowers for my little girl.”⁵

Inset above: This painting depicts Hyrum and Joseph Smith pulling sticks. Mosiah L. Hancock wrote, “Brother Joseph offered to pull sticks with anyone—and he pulled them all up one at a time.”⁶



JOSEPH MUSTERING THE NAUVOO LEGION, BY C. A. CHRISTENSEN, COURTESY OF BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ART

Left: Eunice Billings Snow wrote: “I saw the ‘Nauvoo Legion’ on parade with the Prophet, . . . with his wife, Emma Hale Smith, on horseback at the head of the troops. . . . He so fair, and she so dark, in their beautiful riding-habits. He in full military suit, and she with her habit trimmed with gold buttons. . . . His favorite riding-horse was named Charlie, a big black steed.”⁷

Right: Parley P. Pratt recalled, “On the 21st day of February, 1835, I took the oath and covenant of apostleship, and was solemnly set apart and ordained to that office; and as a member of that quorum under the hands of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer.”⁸

Below: Lucy Walker Kimball wrote: “He well knew . . . that he must sacrifice his life for the principles God had revealed through him. . . . I have often heard him say he expected to seal his testimony with his blood.”⁹ ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2007), 499.
2. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 502.
3. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 117.
4. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 351.
5. Mercy R. Thompson, “Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Juvenile Instructor*, July 1892, 399.
6. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 431.
7. Eunice Billings Snow, “A Sketch of the Life of Eunice Billings Snow,” *Woman’s Exponent*, Sept. 1910, 22.
8. Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1938), 95.
9. Lucy Walker Kimball, “Lucy Walker Kimball (Autobiography),” *Woman’s Exponent*, Nov. 1910, 34.



JOSEPH SMITH ORDAINING PARLEY P. PRATT AS AN APOSTLE. BY WALTER RANE. © 2002 IRI



THE PROPHET REINED HIS HORSE. JUST ONE LAST LOOK AT FAIR NAUVOO. BY HAROLD HOPKINSON. MAY NOT BE COPIED

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

How can I stand up in the workplace for what I believe without seeming self-righteous or judgmental?

I am a research scientist, and most of my peers follow a secular philosophy. Typically, they avoid making value judgments and try to show respect for another person's religion. My secular colleagues become defensive if they are misinterpreted as being judgmental or disrespectful when they merely intend to share their observations.

I have learned not to respond to co-workers' questions as though they were criticizing me.



I have learned not to respond to their comments or questions as though they were criticizing me. Instead, I speak straightforwardly and unapologetically. I answer their questions frankly—in the same way I answer their questions about my scientific opinions and research methods. I have found that even our disagreements offer me chances to grow and develop in my faith, just as scientific disagreements offer me opportunities to grow and develop in my understanding of the natural world.

I have been privileged to have many open and enlightening discussions about my religion with my peers, and though we choose to live according to different beliefs and standards, we can do so with mutual respect and understanding.

Soren Harward, Pennsylvania

One of the most enjoyable jobs I've had was with a large company consisting of mostly young men who were good employees and fun individuals. However, some of them used language that made me cringe. I had many a late-night discussion with my wife about how to approach the situation. I didn't want to seem self-righteous or strain relationships.

After much prayer, I decided that I just needed to be straightforward and politely let these individuals know that their cursing made me uncomfortable. Most of them, though surprised at my request, apologized and made noticeable efforts to clean up their language around me. It helped that I had established good relationships

with them and had proven myself a hard worker.

I have also learned that we need to do what is right despite what others might think about us. If we do so, Heavenly Father will bless us. For example, while I was still working at this same company, I was regularly expected to work very long hours. Between this and a demanding Church calling, I realized that my family and I were suffering because I had so little time for them.

I had a very honest and professional conversation with my boss and let him know that the hours were affecting my family life and that my family was more important than my job. He understood but couldn't make any guarantees. I knew that I would need to leave the company. As much as I miss the fun of the work and the friendships I had made there, it was the right choice. Heavenly Father has since blessed me to work for a wonderful company that places high value on work-life balance. My family is happy, and our testimonies have grown.

Benjamin Defnet, Oregon

I used to work as a nurse in a high-stress environment in which standards were dictated by the world. I was the first "Mormon" that many of my co-workers had ever met. I realized not only that my co-workers did not know or understand my beliefs but also that they were likely to judge the Church based on my actions.

I strove to avoid participating in spreading gossip, telling or listening

to inappropriate jokes and stories, or taking part in the often boisterous complaint sessions held at the nurses' station or break room, because these detracted from the Spirit. However, I tried to be respectful of co-workers' beliefs and personal decisions. I had to remember that even though we may not believe the same things or act in the same ways, we are all children of our Heavenly Father and all of us are valued and cherished by the Lord.

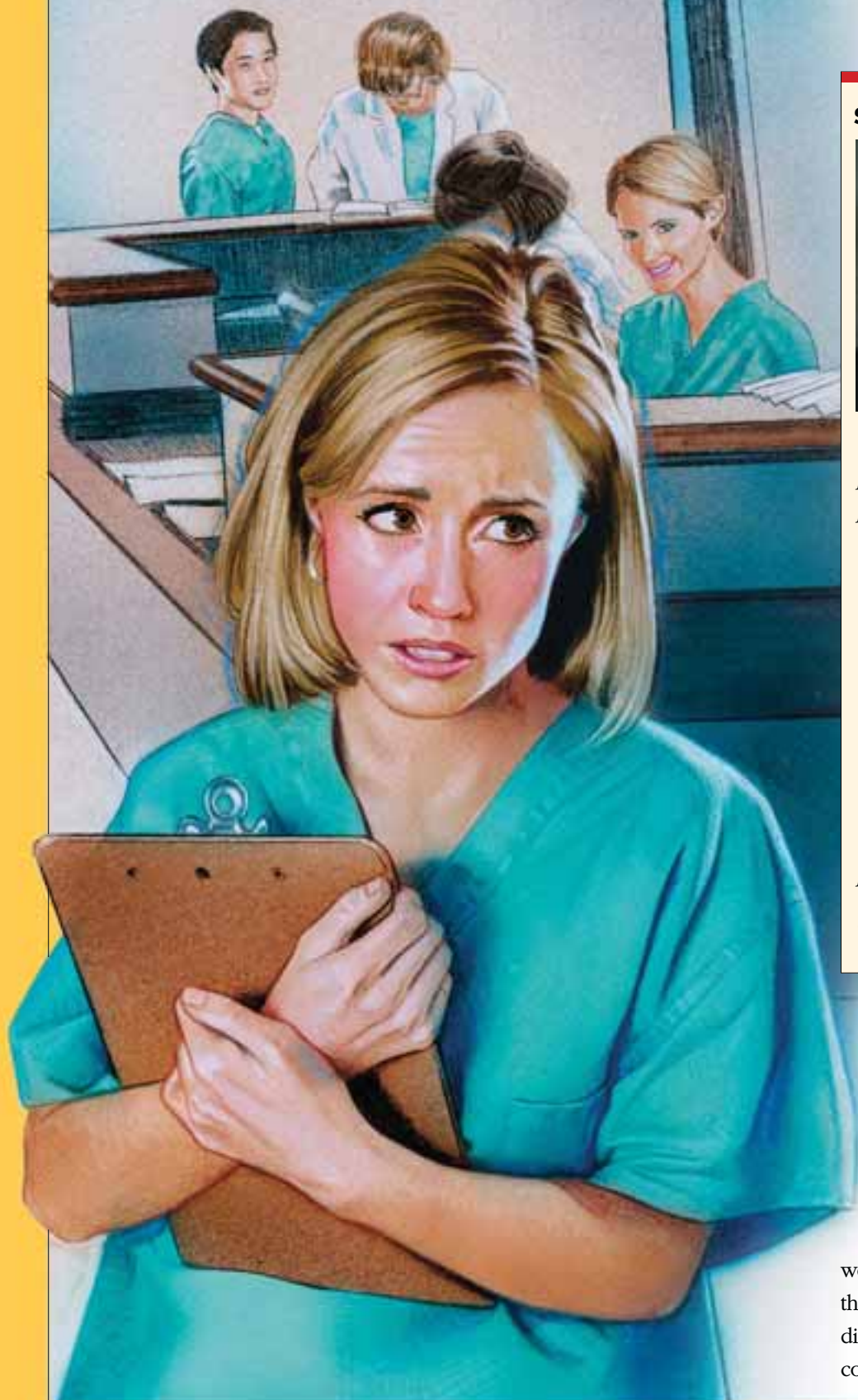
I also tried to have a positive, patient, and helpful attitude in hopes that my co-workers would find it easy to work with me. Although I wasn't perfectly successful, I confidently and reverently shared my gospel beliefs and standards when approached and when appropriate.

I learned that by politely avoiding situations and behaviors that detract from the Spirit and by showing Christlike love for others, I was able to stand up for what I believe while maintaining positive relationships with my co-workers.

Name Withheld

I work with a small group of women for a few hours each week. About a year ago a new woman joined our group. She often used foul language. I was very uncomfortable but didn't want to appear "preachy" by asking her to stop talking that way. Since I didn't know her very well, I was not sure what her reaction to my comments would be. However, I decided that if I didn't say something, the atmosphere would continue to deteriorate.

When a co-worker swore, I explained that I wasn't comfortable listening to that language. Even though she didn't understand my point of view, she immediately began to make changes.



STANDING FOR TRUTH



"We need individuals who have the spiritual, righteous influence that will motivate

others to enduring good. We need politicians of integrity, business-people who are honest and morally clean, attorneys who defend justice and the legal system, and government officials who preserve principle because it is right. Above all, we need mothers and fathers who will preserve the sanctity and safety of the home and the integrity of the family, where faith in God and obedience to His commandments are taught as the foundation of a productive life."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Living Right," Ensign, Jan. 2007, 14.

I decided on an approach that I thought would bring some humor into the situation. The next time she used a particularly offensive word, I placed my hands over my ears and said, "That word hurts my ears."

She was shocked. She said that we were all adults and she didn't see what the problem was. I explained that I didn't speak that way and I wasn't comfortable listening to that language.

I don't think anyone had ever told her that her language was offensive. Even though she didn't quite understand my point of view, she immediately began to make changes in the way she talked when we were together.

Now she seldom swears around me, and if something slips out she apologizes. The truly amazing part is that she is very protective of me and makes sure to explain to others that they need to watch how they talk around me.

It took a lot of courage to speak up, but I'm glad that I did. We have become friends. She respects me, and I have had opportunities to talk with her about the gospel.

Carolyn Johnston, Canada

When my wife and I married 30 years ago, I was a sales engineer for a raw materials company in California. My wife was a member of the Church at the time, but I was not. After a while I began to more fully appreciate my wife's beliefs, and I decided to take the missionary lessons. During this time I became concerned that my co-workers might no longer accept me because of the major life changes I was making as I began to live the gospel. However, one of my co-workers noticed that I was different and commented positively about what he had observed.

I admitted to him that I was worried that becoming a member might hurt my future as a successful employee. He assured me I was on the right track and then revealed that he was a bishop and

did not experience any difficulty being both a Mormon and a salesman. We had a prayer together in his office, and one month later I was baptized. My success was not hindered by any means, and as time progressed, my fellow

I took a Book of Mormon to work each day.



SHARE YOUR IDEAS

An upcoming Questions and Answers feature will focus on the following question:

How do I achieve balance in my life given all the demands on my time?

If you'd like to contribute your ideas and experiences, please label them "balanced life" and follow the submission guidelines under "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" in the contents pages at the beginning of the magazine. Please limit responses to 500 words and submit them by January 15th.

employees and customers respected me for following my convictions.

Bill Dain, Utah

When I first began working in my current job, I felt a little uncomfortable with the surroundings. My co-workers were friendly but sometimes crude. I learned that in order to be comfortable I needed to set an example.


I took a Book of Mormon to work each day. My co-workers often asked why I read this book instead of the Bible. I simply replied that studying the Book of Mormon provides me with inner peace and helps me get answers to my problems.

To help my co-workers understand my feelings about different topics, I shared copies of the *Ensign* with them and I talked with them about what they read. For example, my co-workers sometimes play music with a lot of profanity. I gave them an *Ensign* with an article about clean music. I then explained that I listen only to music that invites the Spirit into my life.

I have explained that I do not drink coffee or tea, and when they ask why, I explain the Word of Wisdom. They have respected me for my beliefs.

If one of my co-workers is discouraged, I sometimes will leave a sticky note on her desk to cheer her up, or I'll tell her that Heavenly Father loves her and I do too. Smiling and asking people how they are doing makes them feel good and gives them a chance to talk about their concerns and ask for advice. Doing these things has made a huge difference.

Samantha Seenaraine, Guyana ■

A woman's face is shown in profile on the left, holding a clear plastic water bottle. The background is a dense array of colorful fiber optic cables in shades of green, blue, and purple, creating a vibrant, glowing effect. The overall composition suggests a connection between technology, energy, and human health.

In recent years there has been an explosion of energy drinks with high levels of caffeine—a drug with greater risks than many realize.

THE ENERGY DRINK EPIDEMIC

BY THOMAS J. BOUD, MD

“**D**octor Boud, your patient Mrs. Jones (name has been changed) is in the emergency room with a double pelvic fracture,” reported my nurse Jamie. My concern grew as I remembered treating Mrs. Jones for the past several years for her severe osteoporosis. Given her age, the length of the healing process, her current health problems, and potential complications, a pelvic fracture was serious indeed.

As I reviewed her medical chart, a long sequence of events flooded my mind. Mrs. Jones was one of my favorite elderly patients;

I had been caring for her for many years. I was treating her for several serious conditions, including an irregular heart condition and insomnia, and I was treating her with aggressive therapy for severe osteoporosis.

In addition, I had repeatedly tried to convince her to eliminate one particular habit that I knew was making her condition worse, a habit that often is not taken seriously and that can have an enormous impact on one’s health. This habit involves the abuse of a drug to which most people give little thought, even though it is now the most commonly abused drug on the planet. What was her habit? Excessive cola consumption. The drug? Caffeine.

One must keep in mind, of course, that from a medical point of view there are certain appropriate uses for caffeine. For example, doctors will sometimes prescribe caffeine for use in neonatal care. In addition, used in moderation, caffeine may not pose significant health risks. It was the resulting side effects from overuse of the drug that gave me such concern in Mrs. Jones’s case.

I found the situation terribly saddening. Mrs. Jones loved serving in Church callings and had given energetic and dedicated spiritual assistance to others for many years. She had recently served wonderfully and faithfully as her ward Relief Society president. However, her double pelvic fracture not only prevented her from actively serving but in her case was life threatening. I could not help thinking about her high caffeine intake—six or seven colas every day—and how likely it was that this chemical had contributed to her current health problems, including dehydration, an irregular heart condition, insomnia, and osteoporosis, each of which

increased the seriousness of the situation.

The Rise of Caffeine Abuse

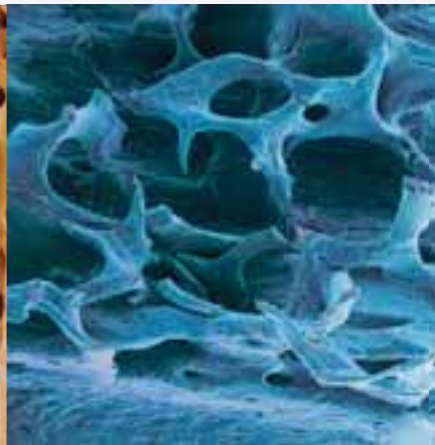
Although Mrs. Jones’s condition represents an extreme, the reality is that doctors are seeing more and more patients with caffeine-related symptoms

and medical conditions. This situation has been made worse by the exploding use of heavily caffeinated beverages known collectively as “energy drinks.”

The numbers are staggering. In 2006 alone, approximately 500 new brands of energy drinks were introduced into the market. In addition, 7.6 million young people have reported having used energy drinks, and consumption has more than doubled in the past three years. The energy drink industry has ballooned into a \$3 billion-a-year enterprise.¹ The companies that produce energy drinks use aggressive marketing techniques directed toward youth and college-age consumers, yet little data on the health hazards of these beverages has been publicized. This means that many people are drinking energy drinks with a poor understanding of the potential



SUSUMU NISHINAGA/PHOTO RESEARCHERS, INC.



STEVE GSCHNEISSNER/PHOTO RESEARCHERS, INC.

Seen through a microscope, healthy bones are strong but porous (left image).

Bones with osteoporosis are brittle and fragile from loss of tissue (right image).

Regular Cola
41 mg Caffeine

Tea, Brewed
47 mg Caffeine

Coffee, Instant
57 mg Caffeine

Coffee, Brewed
107.5 mg Caffeine

500 mg

400 mg

300 mg

200 mg

100 mg

0 mg

physical and medical side effects of the caffeine contained in the beverages they consume.

Not all caffeinated drinks are created equal; the quantity of caffeine varies greatly from product to product. To put this into perspective, consider that most cola soft drinks have from 22 to 55 milligrams (mg) of caffeine, compared to a common cup of tea that varies from 26 to 47 mg. Coffee may have from 57 mg for a cup of instant to 180 mg for a cup of brewed. By comparison, energy drinks may have from 80 to 500 mg of caffeine in one can.² Companies compete to market the product that provides the biggest jolt. To do this, manufacturers combine caffeine with other substances such as alcohol in order to intensify its effects. These beverages often come in large containers and are frequently loaded with calorie-heavy sugars.

The Effects of Caffeine Abuse

What are the consequences of high caffeine consumption? First and foremost, caffeine is a central nervous system stimulant that can lead to addiction. Both as a doctor and as a member of the Church, I recognize the physical, mental, and spiritual dangers of any addictive



Webs created by a caffeine-free spider on left and a caffeinated spider on the right.



substance. Any addictive behavior, whatever the source, can lead to a loss of spiritual health and freedom.

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) said, “Some addictions can control us to the point where they take away our God-given agency. One of Satan’s great tools is to find ways to control us. Consequently, we should abstain from anything that would keep us from fulfilling the Lord’s purposes for us, whereby the blessings of eternity may hang in jeopardy. . . . Any kind of addiction inflicts a terrible price in pain and suffering, and it can even affect us spiritually.”³

I have treated a number of caffeine-related medical conditions. Milder conditions include jitteriness, agitation, insomnia, difficulty concentrating, and rapid heart rate. Use of caffeine can lead to a decrease in cerebral blood flow in adults and could increase the chance of compromising long-term

growth in infants.⁴ Caffeine can also precipitate other conditions that can lead to further problems. Here’s an example: Using caffeine on a long-term basis to compensate for tiredness resulting from life-style choices results not only in sleep deprivation but also in physiological stress. These in turn can lead to an increased level of certain hormones that

Weak Energy Drink
120 mg Caffeine

Average Energy Drink
220 mg Caffeine

Extreme Energy Drink
500+ mg Caffeine

CAFFEINE CONTENT IN COMMON BEVERAGES

Source: www.energyfiend.com/the-caffeine-database

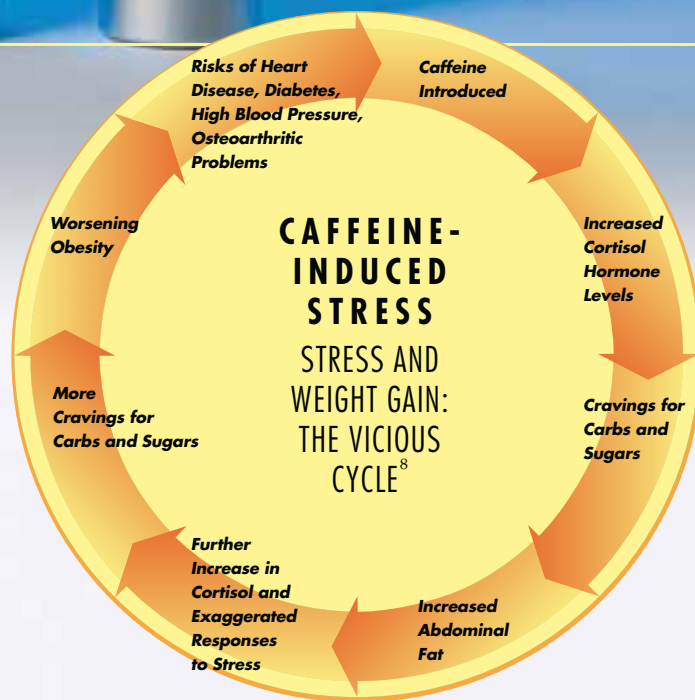
While most sodas can be purchased in 12-ounce cans, energy drinks are sold in a variety of volumes, many of which are greater than 12 ounces. The orange line depicts the amount of caffeine in various beverages per 12 ounces. The yellow line depicts the total amount of caffeine in each can or bottle as it is normally sold.

can lower one's metabolism. A lower metabolism leads to an increased craving of carbohydrates and sugars and often will result in weight gain. Ironically, many people use these drinks in order to lose weight, whereas just the opposite may occur. Many physicians believe that this process has contributed significantly to the current problem of obesity in the United States. Weight gain has a negative influence on the medical conditions of sleep apnea, diabetes, depression, and even cardiac and cerebrovascular disease.

As my experience with Mrs. Jones demonstrates, high caffeine intake can cause a number of other serious problems as well, such as elevated blood pressure, gastrointestinal disorders, and even osteoporosis. Other commonly known physiological effects of caffeine consumption include acid reflux, urinary incontinence, restless leg syndrome, tremors, irritable bowel syndrome, and atrial fibrillation. Research also indicates a close relationship between caffeine use and elevated cholesterol levels and, potentially, coronary heart disease.⁵

Despite its frequent use as a performance enhancer among high school and college athletes, caffeine can also cause agitation and even episodes of rage.⁶ Furthermore, chemically dependent athletes are at risk of disciplinary action from their athletic programs because many sports programs have banned caffeinated energy drinks as a form of cheating.

In addition to rage and agitation, other mood disorders negatively affected by caffeine include ADHD, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, anxiety, and even depression.



I have seen many patients whose depression has actually worsened after continued excessive caffeine intake. In addition, some of them have suffered severe rebound headaches and even required hospitalization for congestive heart failure. Unfortunately, there have also been deaths reported as a direct result of caffeine overdose.⁷

Caffeine Abuse and the Word of Wisdom

Now what does this mean for us as Latter-day Saints? While we are counseled against taking addictive substances or harmful drugs, the Word of Wisdom does not



THE BODY IS A TEMPLE

“The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are’ (1 Corinthians 3:17). May we keep our bodies—our temples—fit and clean, free from harmful substances which destroy our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “True to the Faith,” *Ensign*, May 2006, 19.



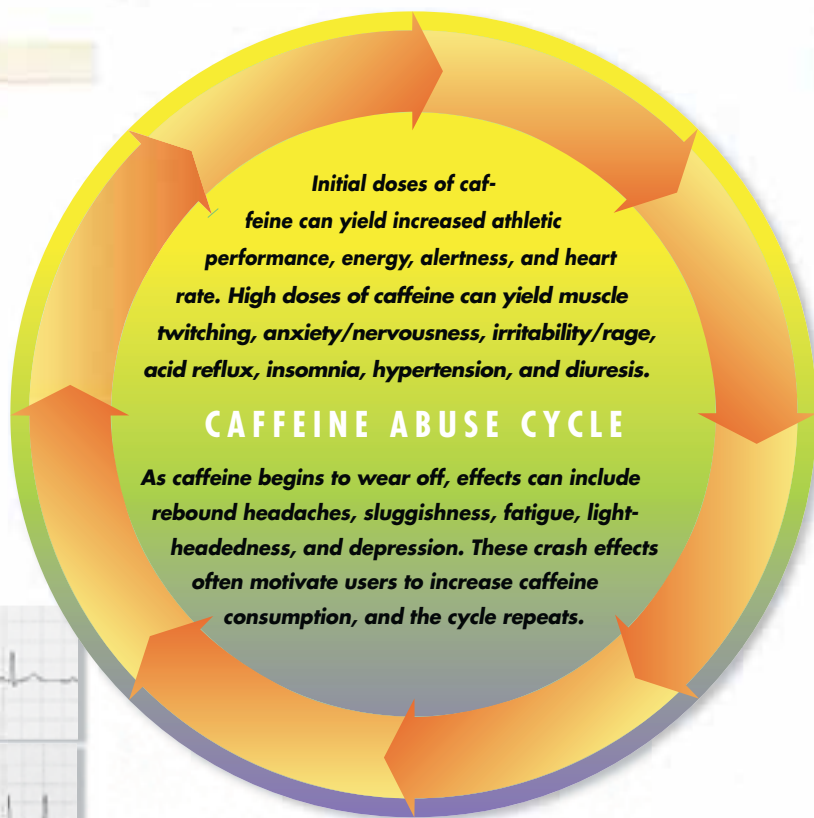
Top EKG represents a normal heart rate. The bottom EKG represents a heart rate after consuming caffeine.

specifically prohibit caffeine. However, I believe that if we follow the spirit of the Word of Wisdom, we will be very careful about what we consume, particularly any substance that can have a negative impact on our bodies. This is true regarding any drug, substance, or even food that may be damaging to one’s health. This includes caffeine. Think of all the problems that excessive caffeine use causes that could be avoided by following this counsel. Had my patient Mrs. Jones avoided caffeine or at least used it in moderation, she likely would have fared much better.

Of course, not everyone who drinks caffeine will have a negative health consequence. However, both the quality and the quantity of life can be affected by the misuse of caffeine. Fortunately, the Word of Wisdom provides a guide to help strengthen and protect both our bodies and our minds and keep them healthy so that we can function at our greatest potential and be available for the Lord’s service. Note some of the glorious blessings promised for those who follow its counsel:

“All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

“And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;



“And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint. “And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them” (D&C 89:18–21).

How marvelous these promises are, that we may walk and not faint and run and not be weary and that the destroying angel will pass us by! Great spiritual treasures are available to those who actively seek to keep the Lord’s commandments. Even when faced with overcoming an addictive tendency such as caffeine abuse, we can improve. It may take great effort, but we can do it. The power of the Atonement can give us the strength to overcome these challenges, and the Holy Ghost will be our support and our guide. In addition, our minds and hearts will be invigorated, our bodies will be healthier and stronger, and we will find a wealth of hidden treasures that will provide greater peace in our lives. ■

Dr. Boud works in family medicine at a primary care facility and volunteers for the Church as a consulting physician in the Missionary Medical Department.

NOTES

1. See Sharon Worcester, “Energy Drink Trends Alarm Some; No Data Back Safety,” *Family Practice News*, Feb. 1, 2007, 1.
2. See www.energyfiend.com/the-caffeine-database.
3. James E. Faust, “The Power to Change,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 123–24.
4. David K. Stevenson, “On the Caffeination of Prematurity,” *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Nov. 8, 2007, 1967–68.
5. See Clifford J. Stratton, “Caffeine—the Subtle Addiction,” *Ensign*, June 1988, 60–61.
6. See Worcester, “Energy Drink Trends Alarm Some,” 45.
7. See Sarah Kerrigan and Tania Lindsey, “Fatal Caffeine Overdose: Two Case Reports,” *Forensic Science International*, Oct. 4, 2005, 67–69.
8. James O’Keefe, MD, and Joan O’Keefe, RD, *The Forever Young Diet & Lifestyle*, 2006, 233.

The Other Part of

FORGIVENESS

BY BECKY DASTRUP

I was struggling to forgive some acquaintances who had hurt me. Each time I thought of the situation and how sad I was, I felt angry all over again. I decided to talk with a friend, a fellow Christian of a different faith, about my struggle.

I told him that I wanted to retain the lessons I had learned but not the pain or anger. I asked, “How can I let my bad feelings go—not just ignore them but actually let them go?”

He responded with another question: “What did Jesus tell us to do with our enemies?”

“Forgive them,” I said, “but I can’t seem to follow through with that, even though I want to.”

“Yes,” he agreed. “Jesus did teach us to forgive, but He told us to do something else, something that I think makes it possible for us to forgive.”

My mind went blank. I couldn’t think of anything. My friend reminded me that the Savior taught us to pray for our enemies. He then pointed out that if others are having a bad enough time that they are ready to hurt us, they too must be hurting inside. When we pray that they will be able to resolve their difficulties, that they will be able to find happiness, he said, we can’t help but feel kindness and love toward them.

A peaceful assurance fell over me. That was it! The Savior’s words—“pray for them which despitefully use you” (Matthew 5:44)—were the answer I was searching for. I took those teachings to heart. I found that in praying for the people who I felt had wronged me, I was able to feel peace rather than anger or resentment. Each time I remembered my hurt feelings, I said a prayer in my mind for my acquaintances, and I immediately felt better. In time, I actually started to feel concern and compassion for these people. I even had a desire to help them if I could.

I am grateful to have had this gospel-centered conversation with my friend of a different faith. It increased my desire to openly speak about my beliefs so that I could have more enlightening experiences like this one. I had been guided and comforted and was blessed to find an answer to a challenge. ■

A peaceful assurance fell over me. That was it! The Savior’s words—“pray for them which despitefully use you.”

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW REIER, POSED BY MODEL

FROM A SMALL AND SIMPLE INVITATION

BY TOM SMITH



Through an invitation from a friend to read the Book of Mormon, I learned that “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass”

When President Gordon B. Hinckley invited Church members in 2005 to read the Book of Mormon, I was reminded of how a similar invitation had changed my life. Through an invitation from a friend to read the Book of Mormon, I learned that “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (see Alma 37:6).

In the spring of 1979, during my senior year at the University of California, Irvine, I was enrolled in an upper-level Spanish class. I had just left class with my friend Rick Meyers when he asked, “What are you writing your term paper on?”

“The Panama Canal Treaty,” I responded. “What are you writing about?”

“I’m writing about Christ in America,” he stated enthusiastically. I was intrigued and asked him what he meant.

He clarified, “I’m writing about when Christ came to America.”

“I didn’t know He did,” I admitted.

“Well, He did,” he continued. “And since you’re a history major, you would probably like to read the history about it.” When I said I would, Rick invited me to his apartment, where I met his wife and received my first copy of the Book of Mormon.

Later that afternoon I was at home reading when my brother-in-law, Fred, entered and asked me what I was reading. I told him I was reading the Book of Mormon. He surprised me by saying, “I’ll bet you didn’t know I’m a Mormon.” He explained that he had gone to church when he was a boy but had stopped attending when he was 14. Then he said, “You know, seeing you read that book makes me want to read it. Can I borrow it tonight?” I gave him the book, and he stayed up most of the night reading. The next day he went to his bishop and asked how he might return to the Church.

Several days later he invited my sister Marty and me to listen to the missionaries the next Sunday. Marty and I were active in our parents' faith, but we accepted the invitation to attend church with the missionaries after listening to their message. Within two months Marty was baptized.

I continued attending worship meetings with my parents, but I would also go to sacrament and priesthood meetings each week. One Sunday after listening to many testimonies in fast and testimony meeting, I went to the pulpit and said, "I have listened to you all say you know this Church is true. And I do not know that. What I know is that the church I grew up in is a good church and that its members are good people. But with all my heart I want to know if this Church is true. And if it is true, I will join it."

As soon as I said these words, I was filled with a peaceful assurance that indeed the Church was true. I said nothing more. I returned to my seat next to my sister and told her, "I want to be baptized next Sunday." She said, "But you just said you did not know the Church was true."

"Yes," I whispered, "but I know it now!"

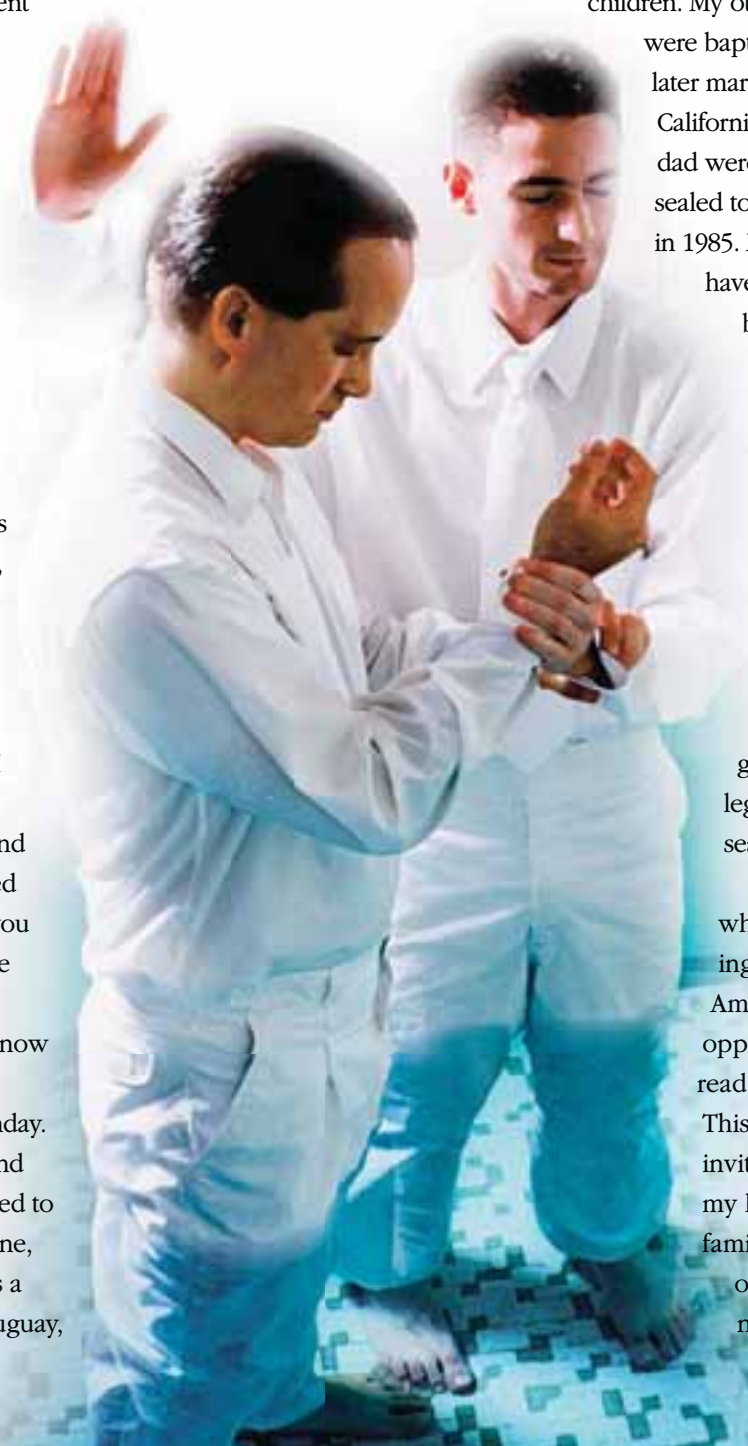
I was baptized the next Sunday. A simple invitation from a friend to read the Book of Mormon led to my sister's baptism, then to mine, and then to my call to serve as a missionary in Montevideo, Uruguay,

where I saw many more of Heavenly Father's children enter the waters of baptism. Surely from small and simple things do great things come to pass.

After returning from my mission, I dated Becky, a girl I had dated before leaving for Uruguay. We were married in the Jordan River Utah Temple, and we now have eight children. My other sister and a brother were baptized, and each was later married in the Los Angeles California Temple. My mom and dad were baptized in 1984 and sealed to four of their six children in 1985. My remaining brothers have both recently been

baptized. My widowed grandmother, who told me when she was 78 that she was too old to change religions, was baptized when she was 85 and has been sealed to my grandfather. Many generations of our ancestors have now gained the same privilege and blessing of being sealed for eternity.

I am grateful to a friend who told me he was writing his paper on Christ in America and then took the opportunity to invite me to read the Book of Mormon. This small and simple invitation not only changed my life and the lives of my family but began a journey of conversion that will never end. ■



Living by the Light of Christ



*The power of the
Lord's Spirit "quick-
eneth all things" in
the lives of the worthy.*



BY ELDER SPENCER J. CONDIE
Of the Seventy

Sister Wendy Lelo is a faithful, persistent, competent area family history adviser in New Zealand. After making considerable progress on a family line, she suddenly ran into a brick wall.

In exasperation, she laid aside her pedigree charts, certificates, and other records and began reading the scriptures. Like Lehi, as she read she was soon “filled with the Spirit of the Lord” (1 Nephi 1:12). The Spirit whispered impressions regarding some previously unexplored areas of research. After following those impressions she was

It would not be equitable for some people on the earth to learn how to judge between good and evil while others are denied this opportunity. Mormon declares the profound doctrine that “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil.”

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, BY DEL PARSON



able to link 10 additional generations to the family line she had been pursuing.

If we live worthily, we too can know the truthfulness of the Lord’s declaration that “the power of my Spirit quickeneth all things” (D&C 33:16).

Doing Right for the Right Reasons

Near the beginning of the Book of Mormon, Lehi teaches his son Jacob of the great gift of moral agency, telling him that “it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11), which makes possible freedom of choice.

After reviewing the historical consequences of the choices Lehi’s posterity made over the course of nearly

a thousand years, Mormon fittingly concludes his sacred record with poignant counsel to his son, Moroni—and to us—about using agency to judge between good and evil. Mormon exhorts us not only to do right but also to examine our motives in doing the right thing for the right reasons:

“God hath said a man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent it profiteth him nothing” (Moroni 7:6).

This observation should cause each of us to examine the intent of our hearts as we write tithing checks, conduct family prayer, hold family home evening, and do our home teaching and visiting teaching.

Mormon then gives Moroni a fool-proof method for making righteous decisions: “That which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God” (Moroni 7:13).

It would not be equitable for some people on the earth to learn how to judge between good and evil while others are denied this

opportunity. Mormon declares the profound doctrine that “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God” (Moroni 7:16).

Mormon then cautions, “Seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully. . . .

“Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good

thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ” (Moroni 7:18–19).

Enlightenment on the Light of Christ

We recall the incident in Acts 10 when Cornelius, a prayerful Italian centurion, saw in a vision an angel who instructed him to send for a man named Peter, who was in the city of Joppa at the time. Peter responded to Cornelius’s invitation and taught him the gospel.

Speaking of this incident, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught,

he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. . . .

“And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;

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

“The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things” (D&C 88:6–7, 11–13).

The Light of Christ can be diminished within us if we fail to heed Mormon’s counsel to lead lives filled with faith, hope, and charity. John warned us:

“He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

“He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

“But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” (1 John 2:9–11).

In his eloquent teachings on charity, Mormon tells us how we can regain the Light of Christ after

having alienated it through unkind feelings toward others. He defines charity as “the pure love of Christ” and then exhorts us to “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen” (Moroni 7:47–48).

May we be filled with this love as we search diligently in the Light of Christ. ■

NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2007), 97.

The Light of Christ can be diminished within us if we fail to heed Mormon’s counsel to lead lives filled with faith, hope, and charity, which he defines as “the pure love of Christ.”



MORMON ABRIDGING THE PLATES, BY TOM LOVELL

“There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him.”¹

Modern scripture provides enlightenment regarding the Light of Christ:

“He that 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 truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also

JESUS CHRIST IS THE LIGHT, LIFE, AND HOPE OF THE WORLD



Teach the scriptures and quotations that meet the needs of the sisters you visit. Bear testimony of the doctrine. Invite those you teach to share what they have felt and learned.

How Is Jesus Christ the Light and the Life of the World?

1 Nephi 17:13: “I will also be your light in the wilderness; . . . wherefore, inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall be led towards the promised land; and ye shall know that it is by me that ye are led.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Jesus Christ is the light and the life of the world. All things were made by him. Under the direction and according to the plan of God the Father, Jesus Christ is the Creator, the source of the light and the life of all things. . . .

“Jesus Christ is the *light* of the world because he is the source of the light which ‘proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space’ (D&C 88:12). His light is ‘the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world’ (D&C 93:2). His example and his teachings illuminate the path we should walk. . . .

“Jesus Christ is the *life* of the



world because of his unique position in what the scriptures call ‘the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death’ (2 Nephi 11:5). His Resurrection and his Atonement save us from both physical and spiritual death” (“The Light and the Life,” *Liahona*, Dec. 1997, 42–43; see *New Era*, Dec. 1996, 6).

How Can I Find Hope in Jesus Christ?

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

“The gospel of Jesus Christ has the divine power to lift you to great heights from what appears at times to be an unbearable burden or weakness. The Lord knows your circumstances and your challenges. He said to Paul and to all of us, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee.’ And like Paul we can answer: ‘My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly

therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me’ (2 Corinthians 12:9)” (“Have We Not Reason to Rejoice?” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 19).

Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president: “Mormon asks, ‘What is it . . . ye shall hope for?’ His answer tells us of the three great hopes: ‘Ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal’ (Moroni 7:41).

“When you were baptized, you became participants in the first great hope, the Atonement of Christ. Every time you worthily partake of the sacrament, you have the opportunity to begin again. . . . Your hope and faith in the Savior will increase as you repent and make personal changes. . . .

“The second great hope is the Resurrection. You are all promised that through our Savior Jesus Christ you will be resurrected. . . .

“With the hope of the Atonement and the Resurrection, you have a third great hope, the hope of eternal life. . . . Because you have a Savior, you also believe in a happy, eternal life of creating, serving, and learning. You are already in the strait and narrow path, and there is hope smiling brightly before you. . . . You just need to stay in, pressing forward with a brightness of hope” (“There Is Hope Smiling Brightly before Us,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2003, 103–5). ■

WHAT LITTLE WE HAD WAS ENOUGH

By Sueli de Aquino

Christmas was coming, but this year we were not going to celebrate with an abundance of food and toys. Papa had passed away, and Mama had begun receiving a small pension as a widow, along with a little rent money.

We were in the living room of our apartment, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The room was quiet. Then suddenly we heard a sound as if someone had arrived outside the building.

I got up and looked through the blinds of the window, from which I could see the entrance to our building. I saw a homeless woman. She had a few bags and wore tattered clothes. I observed her for a few moments, curious to see what she would do. She opened a small paper sack, took out a few cookies, and began to eat them. Soon afterward she opened another little sack that contained a few coins and began to count them.

My young heart was moved, and I softly called to my mother, "There's an old woman outside. Come and see." My mother looked, and she also was moved. She asked me to get the can where we kept a little money, and without making a sound, she left our apartment and

W*e wept in gratitude that the little we had was enough to give joy to someone who had less.*

silently dropped the bills from the building's hallway window.

I stayed by our window and watched the bills fall. The old woman saw one fall and then another and another. Trying to discover where the money had come from, she looked at the windows of the building. They were all closed. Then something

wonderful happened. She looked to heaven and extended her wrinkled hands. Then she placed her hands on her chest and gave thanks for the gift she had received.

Behind the blinds of the window, we wept in gratitude that the little we had was enough to give joy to someone who had less. ■



CAROLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

By Heather Beauchamp

Music and singing have always been very important to my family. While I was growing up, my sister would play the piano while my five other siblings and I gathered around and sang our favorite Church songs. These times are among my fondest memories.

After graduating from high school, I lived near my family until I married a wonderful man who was stationed in our town with the U.S. Air Force. A year and a half later, my husband and I, along with our two-month-old daughter, were transferred to a base across the country. We had another child, and with all the expenses that come with two babies, we had not been able to return to visit our families. With six children still at home, my parents couldn't afford to visit us either. Living so far away from my family and missing my husband due to his frequent military assignments, I was often subject to feelings of loneliness. Holidays were especially difficult.

On Christmas Eve in 1996, while my husband and I were taking part in our traditional Christmas Eve activities with our two young children, my thoughts kept turning to my parents and siblings. I gazed at

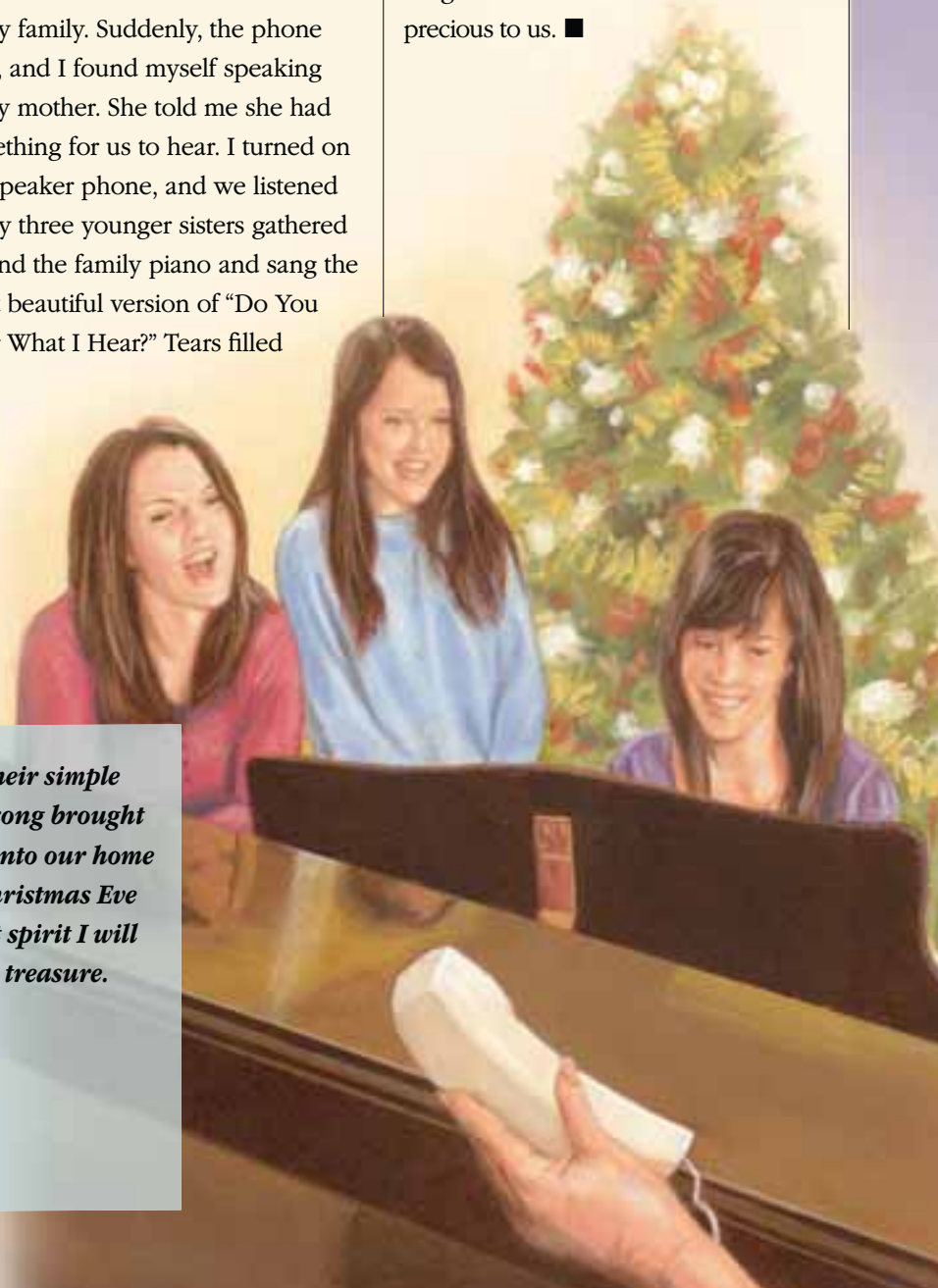
the clock and knew they would all be sitting down on a blanket laid carefully out on the floor and eating a "Christmas feast picnic" of fruit, little sausages, cheese, and crackers while my father read the account of Christ's birth from the scriptures. In my mind I pictured their faces. Mine would be the only one missing.

As I pondered, I prayed for a way to feel more connected with the rest of my family. Suddenly, the phone rang, and I found myself speaking to my mother. She told me she had something for us to hear. I turned on the speaker phone, and we listened as my three younger sisters gathered around the family piano and sang the most beautiful version of "Do You Hear What I Hear?" Tears filled

our eyes as my husband and I listened to the three-part harmony coming from our phone. We could almost feel my family in the room with us.

Their simple song brought into our home that Christmas Eve a sweet spirit I will always treasure. Of all the gifts we received that Christmas, many purchased from stores and carefully wrapped and labeled, it was that sweet song that was most precious to us. ■

Their simple song brought into our home that Christmas Eve a sweet spirit I will always treasure.



MY BEST CHRISTMAS GIFT

By Ketty Teresa Ortiz de Arismendi

I was barely two years old when my mother became seriously ill. Because she had no one to leave me with, she took me with her to the hospital in Tupiza, Bolivia. She died shortly thereafter, leaving me all alone.

During my childhood and early teenage years, I was passed from one place to another, never knowing what it was like to have a family, never receiving any kind of gift—not even for my birthday or for Christmas.

Left on my own, I faced a lot of challenges and dangers while growing up. It was only later that I learned I was never really alone and that an invisible hand was watching over me.

When I was 15, I was invited to live with a Latter-day Saint family. Their daughter, slightly older than I, took me to Mutual. Everyone there welcomed me and paid attention to me. For the first time in my young life, people treated me with love and kindness.

I was introduced to the missionaries, who began teaching me. Soon I realized that I had a loving Heavenly Father, who had protected me throughout my life. I accepted the gospel and was

That evening I received my first and still most cherished Christmas gift: membership in the Lord's Church.

baptized on Christmas Eve 1978. That evening I received my first and still most cherished Christmas gift: membership in the Lord's Church.

Other gifts followed. Two years later I met a young man who was not a member of the Church. I took him to church with me, and after he made his own baptismal covenants, we were married. Later Heavenly Father blessed my husband and me with three children, who were sealed to us for time and all eternity in the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple.

When I was young, everyone called me “the poor little orphan girl.” When I recall this memory today, I feel grateful because I have the blessing of knowing that I have a Father, who has always loved me. I have also tasted of the Savior's infinite love. He restored His Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was chosen in the premortal world and labored diligently to translate the Book of Mormon. I know that it contains the fulness of the gospel.

I received my first and best Christmas gift at age 15 and have enjoyed the Lord's tender mercies ever since. I still feel gratitude in my heart for that gift and strive to keep my gaze fixed on the next life, where I hope to thank the Father and the Son and live forever with my beloved family. ■

AN UNEXPECTED LESSON

By Erin Wilson

After making a career move to New York City, I was out shopping one December evening for items for my new apartment. A storm had recently hit the city, and knee-deep snow lined the streets. I was bundled up in a warm down coat as I made my way to the train with a bustling crowd of holiday shoppers.

I waited impatiently for the train to arrive, thinking about my shopping list. When the train finally arrived, I stepped onto the car, scanning the seats for a place to sit. The nearest seat was directly across from an old homeless man. He had no warm coat or heavy clothing. He just had some plastic bags filled with trinkets.

I did not want to sit near his offensive odor, and his rugged appearance made me wonder if he was dangerous. Mostly, I did not want to be hit up for cash. I abruptly walked to the other end of the car and took a seat. All the other passengers also filed to the end of the car, leaving the man alone.

Soon a young man boarded the train and settled down in the seat directly in front of the homeless man. Without hesitation, the young

man extended a welcoming smile, a handshake, and a jolly hello. The man's face brightened, and they began a pleasant conversation. They talked for the next 15 minutes, enjoying each other's company.

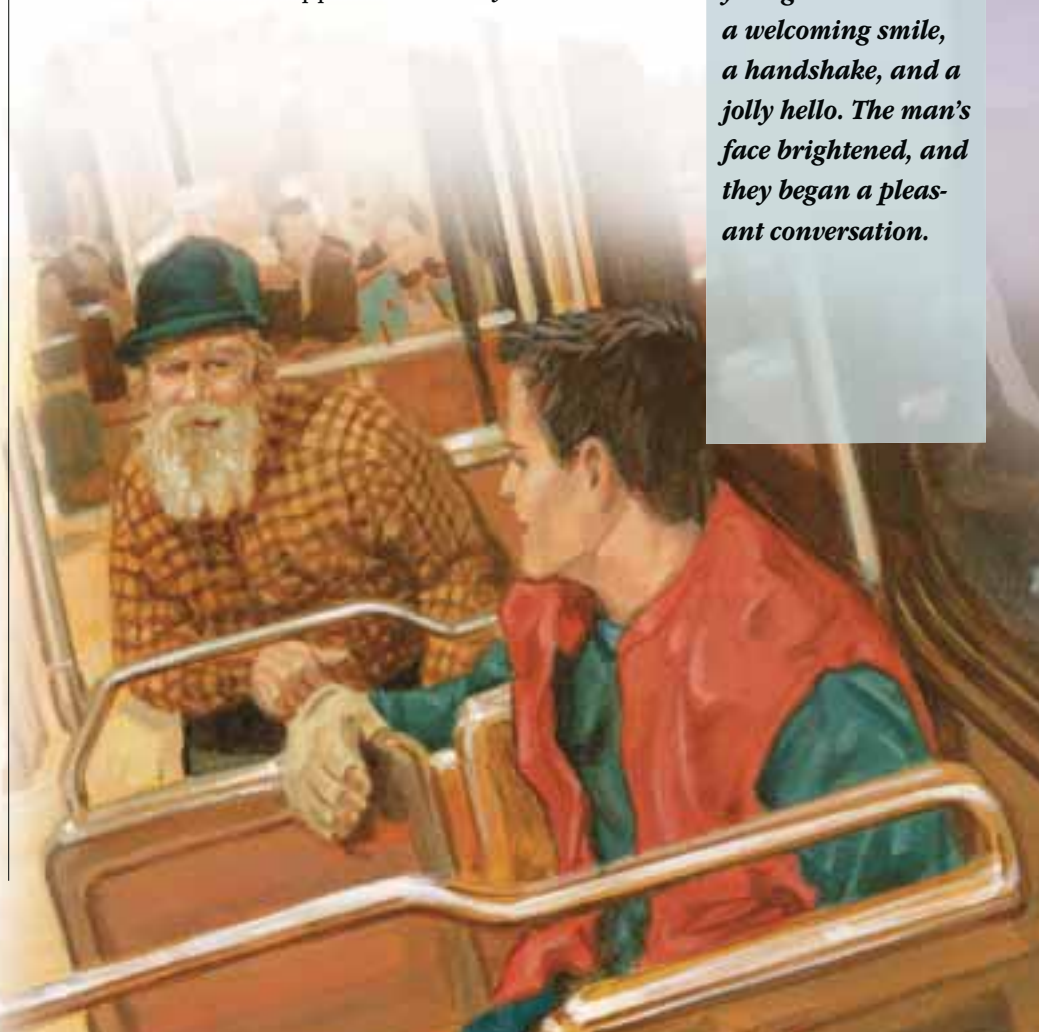
As I watched, I was reminded of the true spirit of the Christmas season. While deeply engaged in conversation, the young man stood up and removed his vest, shirt, and a second long-sleeve shirt he was wearing underneath. Standing in his undershirt, he then handed the long-sleeve shirt to the homeless man. The old man accepted it graciously, and the two continued their conversation. I stepped off

the train at the next stop, touched by the young man's kindness. I felt guilty for my selfishness, but I had a desire to be a better person.

The King of kings came into the world in the most humble of circumstances, in a lowly stable. The world was given a precious, saving gift—the Son of God. I am grateful for the gift of the Savior in my life and for the reminder of His infinite love and compassion for God's children. That Christmas season, I felt a renewed desire to be

kinder, more selfless, and more like my Savior, Jesus Christ. ■

Without hesitation, the young man extended a welcoming smile, a handshake, and a jolly hello. The man's face brightened, and they began a pleasant conversation.



OUR BEST TRADITION YET

“Dad in charge of Christmas?” The idea shocked us kids, but Mom and Dad had already made the decision. It all started with their unintended Christmas tradition of fretting about the budget. Mom wanted to have a “good” Christmas, creating a special atmosphere in our home to reflect the season. She tried to be frugal, buying discount items in the off-season. But everything added up. Dad insisted that the world shouldn’t dictate to us how much we spend on Christmas. Besides, there were expenses for needed items that had to be considered first.

Finally, Mom suggested, “Maybe you’d like to be in charge of Christmas this year. You buy the presents, and let’s see what kind of Christmas you can come up with for our family.” With a little apprehension, Dad agreed. After pondering a new plan and discussing it with Mom, he announced at family home evening his idea for a “spend-less

Christmas.” Each person in the family would make a \$25 gift for another family member. On Christmas morning, we would take turns sharing our gift and expressing our warmest feelings for the recipient. We would do this one at a time until everyone had presented his or her gift. The idea was to try to make gifts that showed we cared—gifts that expressed love.

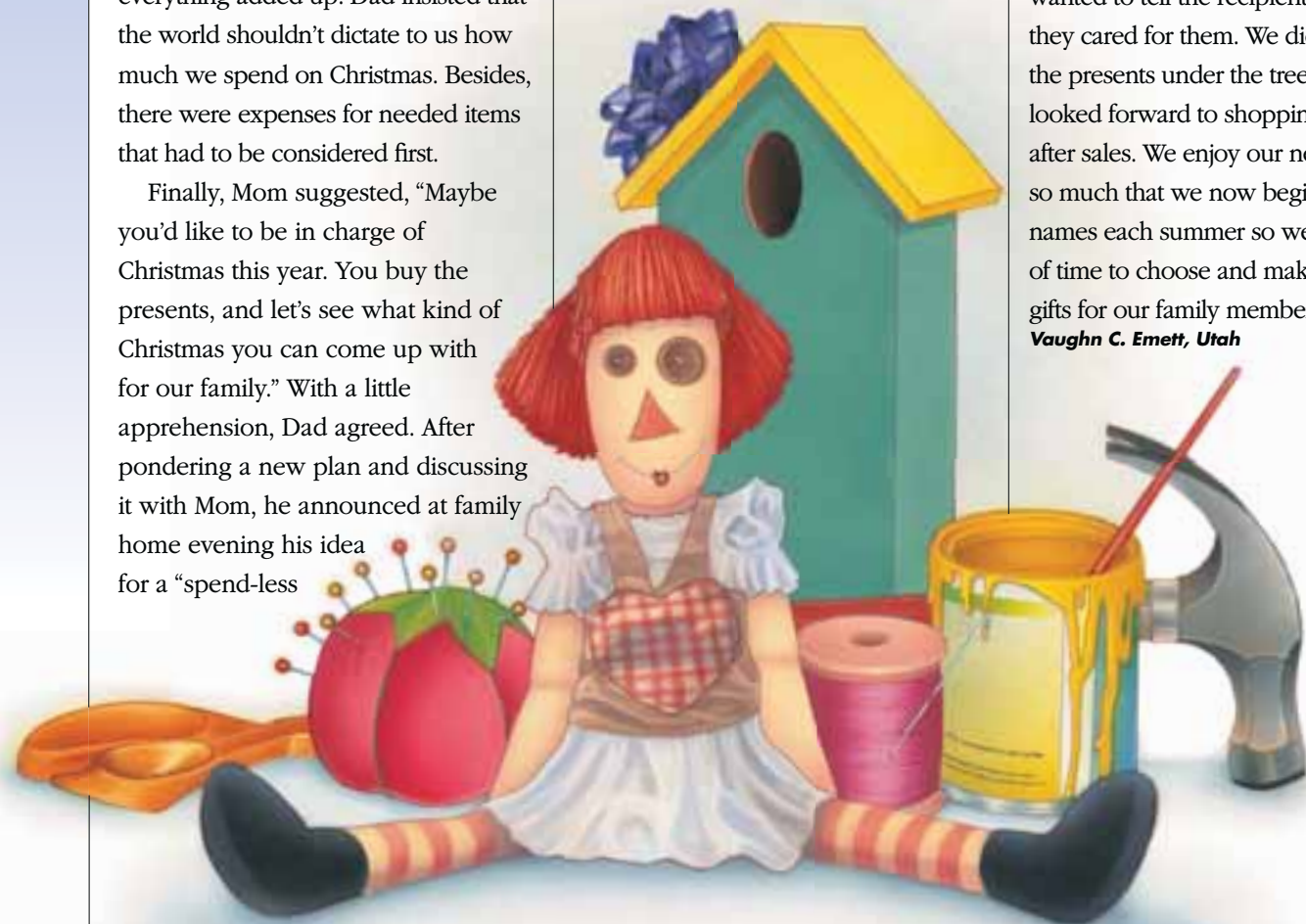
Some of us children were worried about the plan, thinking of all the fun things our friends would have that we wouldn’t. That’s when Dad explained part two of the plan. The rest of the

Christmas budget would be divided among us and spent the day after Christmas when many items go on sale. This would help our family’s resources go farther. We could get clothes and other items we needed at a reduced cost.

We all voted to try this new way for one year. If it was a disappointment, we could return to the old way. Then we drew names and started thinking of a personal, handmade gift for that individual.

How did our experiment go? It turned out so well that *everyone* wanted to tell the recipients how much they cared for them. We didn’t miss the presents under the tree and instead looked forward to shopping the day-after sales. We enjoy our new tradition so much that we now begin drawing names each summer so we have plenty of time to choose and make our secret gifts for our family members.

Vaughn C. Emmet, Utah



SERVING WITH STYLE

When my children became adults and left home, I prayed to find volunteer work. A nearby care center for the elderly came to mind, but I fought the impression because I didn't like going there. The thought continued, so I met with the center's recreation leader. We determined that I would return each week for two hours. Doing what? I didn't know yet. But the ideas soon came.

The first week I stood in the middle of a circle of wheelchairs and helped the residents throw a ball back and forth to each other. Though I felt a bit uncomfortable at first, I was determined to do my best. Soon I was actually having fun. The men and women there seemed appreciative of my company. After visiting a few weeks, I began giving the women manicures during my two-hour visits. They were so glad to see me each week and lined up to take turns. I felt so wanted and needed. The experience was wonderful, and I volunteered there for five years.

During this time I became very close to several of the residents. Though it was hard to watch them eventually pass away, I was happy for the long lives they had lived. When my mother died unexpectedly, I felt gratitude, despite my grief, because she had been able to care for herself



"Picture a Stable . . ."

It's Christmastime and you'd like to help your family focus on the Savior's life. But perhaps you don't have time to prepare a special lesson. Actually, it has already been done for you in the Gospel Art Picture Kit (item no. 34730000; U.S. \$30). All you have to do is select the pictures that depict the Savior's birth and life. Invite family members to choose a picture and share what significance the event played

in the Savior's earthly mission. They might also share why a particular picture and story has personal meaning to them. Of course, this simple idea can be expanded to the classroom as well. Pictures from the ward library can be used to structure an activity in which everyone can participate. The teacher doesn't do all the talking; instead he or she leads a discussion and provides transitions as the students share their thoughts about the topics and stories

portrayed. The scriptural references on the backs of the pictures can be used to encourage more in-depth discussions. As members of the Church, we are fortunate to have a rich supply of beautiful artwork to enhance our gospel learning and to help us invite the Spirit into our homes and classrooms.
Barbara Wren Tuttle, California



at home until it was her time to go. I'm blessed with this enhanced understanding and reassurance as I reflect upon my volunteer work caring for my elderly friends.

Peggy Hyer, Utah

FITNESS FOR FAMILIES

DVDs and video and computer games—they're probably on your Christmas wish list. Your children would love to watch and play them, but have you thought to include gifts that encourage exercise fun?

A few years ago my husband and I took stock of our children's Christmas gifts and realized there was nothing that would promote physical activity. So we returned many of the gifts

we had purchased, and we bought instead a simple badminton set and other items for outdoor fun. If your finances allow, you could include bikes, basketball and baseball equipment, or other outdoor games that encourage an active lifestyle. Gifts need not be expensive. Consider giving simple gifts such as a jump rope, sidewalk chalk to make a hopscotch game, a ball, a sled, or a squirt gun for an outside game of chase.

Even with new Christmas toys to boost their enthusiasm, your children will be more likely to play if you join the fun. Challenge them to shoot hoops or play with you, and see how fast they move! Our children crave our attention, and we love spending time with them—and getting a bonus workout too.

Sheri Garver, North Carolina

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for

2008

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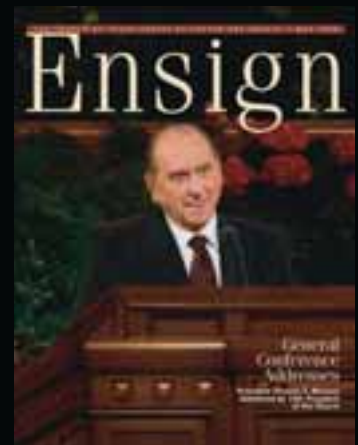
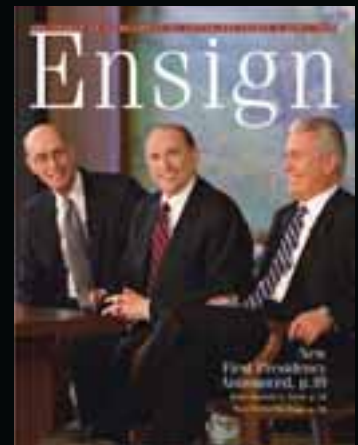
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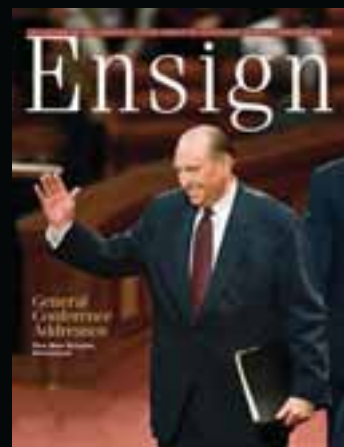
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FamilySearch Indexing: Anyone Can Help with Family History Anytime, Anywhere

By Eric Eames, Church Magazines

As they pore over digitized census records and church ledgers, Church members participating in FamilySearch indexing are reminded that with every click of the mouse a person comes closer to being found and closer to receiving temple ordinances.

The vision of volunteer-based FamilySearch indexing projects is spreading worldwide from Latin America to Asia and from the old to the young. Members with access to the Internet are taking advantage of FamilySearch's user-friendly Web site and taking time to index between classes, during work breaks, or in place of watching television.

For some people like Austin Corry, a university student in the United States and a member of the Logan University 15th Ward, Logan Utah University Fifth Stake, indexing has become a fun, relaxing experience.

"I found time to index 15 minutes here, an hour there," said Brother Corry, who has indexed more than 17,000 names in his spare time. "It really isn't an inconvenience, but a great opportunity to bring the Spirit into your everyday life."

Global Indexing Fits a Busy Life

One of the reasons FamilySearch users worldwide love the indexing

program is because the software is designed to fit a busy lifestyle. Previously known as extraction, indexing was once a time-consuming process of shuffling through paper copies, taking weeks to do a single batch.

With the help of digitization and the Internet, each batch of names now takes some 30 minutes to complete. Volunteers are given a week to complete a batch, and they can save their work at any time and start again later where they left off.

"What I really like about indexing is that you can do it on your time, one batch at a time," said Patricia Mollemans of Germany. "It is not overwhelming; it can be done in half an hour or so. I do

a batch, I upload it, and it's done. I think this is great for a lot of people who would not find the time with the old extraction model."

Indexing creates data files from digitized records, which allows the information to become searchable through a free electronic database on FamilySearch.org. There is no minimum or maximum limit to how many names an individual can do. Every name indexed makes a difference in helping people locate their ancestors.

FamilySearch has a variety of indexing projects available in Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Indexing projects in Czech and Russian are forthcoming. Area FamilySearch managers

are helping recruit index volunteers in many countries to become a part of the global effort.

"Now that records for more countries are available, more members are enthusiastic about participating," said Francisco Javier Gómez, FamilySearch support manager for the South America North Area. "They feel that this is one more proof that the Church is really engaged in helping the whole world to get to know their ancestors."

Indexing Strengthens Testimonies, Unity

In 2007, students in the Logan Utah University Fifth Stake not only met their goal of indexing 100,000 names, but exceeded it by 3,000. They surpassed that total after the first two months in 2008 while on the way to shattering their new goal of 200,000 names.

But results can't always be quantified. Blessings have come to many in the form of strengthened testimonies because of their efforts with the program. Elaine Mander, a FamilySearch representative in West Midlands, United Kingdom, said indexing has brought her closer to heaven more than any other form of service.

The effort put forth in the Logan stake has unified wards. Individually, students have turned their eyes to the temple, gaining a greater appreciation for its significance by committing themselves to maintain their covenants and live temple standards.

"The Spirit is present,"



PHOTOGRAPH BY WELDEN ANDERSEN

Now anyone with a computer and an Internet connection can help with family history.

said Kay Baker, stake high councilor over the indexing work. "As young people get on the computer and start entering names and doing family history work, they find it fun and exhilarating."

Activity has also increased among less-active members as bishops have given them assignments to do indexing.

"[Through indexing] they can serve and feel like they are contributing, and it has helped some of them come back into activity and to correct what was wrong in their lives," said Bruce M. Cook, recently released president of the student stake.

Students Redefining Stereotypes

While family history work is generally regarded as the domain of older members, the students contradict that stereotype. Some ward socials and family home evenings in the stake have turned into indexing "extravaganzas." Between completing index batches, students snack on treats, socialize, or play a game of volleyball. Some of these socials have lasted into the wee hours of the morning, with students signed up to come in at various times of the night. One ward started an indexing marathon at 6:00 p.m. and ended at 8:00 a.m. the next day.

"It was fun to see members of the bishopric and high council stay up through the night with students to [help us] reach our goals," Belinda Olsen, a member of the stake, said.

The indexing has motivated some to begin working



PHOTOGRAPH BY WELDEN ANDERSEN

Members around the world are spending a little time each week to help prepare indexes.

on their own family roots and to do temple work. In 2007 students in the stake researched and cleared some 2,500 family names for temple ordinances.

"I think that it is really

important for all members to become involved with indexing and family history work," Sister Olsen said. "If we always leave the responsibility up to someone else, it will never get done." ■

New Technology Sparks Youth Interest in Family History

FamilySearch public affairs manager Paul Nauta said the Church-owned family history service is thrilled to see the increasing volume of teenagers and college students who are motivated to do indexing work or search for their own ancestors. He also hopes continued enhancements to the FamilySearch Web site will attract more technology-minded youth.

"As opportunities to do family history or volunteer online grow, youth seem naturally primed to get involved," Brother Nauta said.

Anyone interested in family history work can become an indexer by going to the Web site, FamilySearchIndexing.org, clicking on the **Volunteer** link, and following the step-by-step download instructions. ■

New Temple Presidents Now Serving

By assignment from the First Presidency, 39 new temple presidents are now serving with their spouses. The presidents of the Panama City Panama, Rexburg Idaho, and Twin Falls Idaho Temples began serving earlier in 2008 after the temples were dedicated. The president of the Draper Utah Temple will begin serving after the temple is dedicated on March 20, 2009.

Temple	New President
Adelaide Australia	Philip F. Howes
Apia Samoa	John P. Hanks
Asunción Paraguay	David K Udall
Baton Rouge Louisiana	Max P. Brough
Bern Switzerland	Raimondo Castellani
Billings Montana	Ronald M. Morrison
Bismarck North Dakota	John R. Reese
Bogotá Colombia	Jorge J. Escobar
Boise Idaho	Wenden W. Waite
Columbia South Carolina	Brent H. Koyle
Curitiba Brazil	Jason G. Sousa
Draper Utah	Donald L. Staheli
Freiberg Germany	Frank H. Apel
Guayaquil Ecuador	Jorge A. Rojas
Idaho Falls Idaho	Larry G. Stoddard
Jordan River Utah	F. Wayne Chamberlain
Kona Hawaii	Opurainonarii Mo'o
Logan Utah	W. Rolfe Kerr
Los Angeles California	Grant R. Brimhall
Louisville Kentucky	Dale R. Hettfingher
Lubbock Texas	E. Dale Cluff
Madrid Spain	Garry K. Moore
Mount Timpanogos Utah	L. Edward Brown



The Guayaquil Ecuador Temple is 1 of 39 temples with new temple presidents.

Newport Beach California

D. Thomas Borgquist

Oakland California Richard A. Hunter

Ogden Utah Robert R. Steuer

Panama City Panama Ronald D. Jamison

Rexburg Idaho Val R. Christensen

Salt Lake

Sheldon F. Child

San Antonio Texas Marion D. Woods

San Diego California Bruce L. Olsen

Snowflake Arizona Lewis Tenney

Suva Fiji LaRon P. Woolley

Sydney Australia W. John Bailey

The Hague Netherlands

Jacob J. Van Ry

Toronto Ontario Stephen M. Hadley

Twin Falls Idaho Donald R. Gerratt

Vernal Utah Mac W. Holmes

Washington D.C. Earl C. Tingey ■

Church Helps DR Congo Reduce Preventable Deaths

With help from Church Humanitarian Services, vaccination campaigns are spreading from the main cities to the most remote villages in Africa to prevent contagious diseases.

With one out of five children dying there each year from preventable diseases, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has received promotional assistance from the Church to attempt to reverse the trend.

“The childhood death rate in the Congo is very high, because people are unable to afford health care and often delay seeking help until it is too late,” said Sister Marilyn Barlow, a humanitarian services missionary serving in the DR Congo with her husband, Farrell. “Even among Church members it is hard to find a

family that has not lost at least one child, and some have lost many.”

But the real tragedy is that a simple, inexpensive vaccine could have saved many lives. In 2007 Church humanitarian volunteers helped publicize the country’s measles vaccination program. As a result, more than 670,000 children received measles vaccinations.

DR Congo health officials were so impressed by how the Church handled its part of the measles campaign, which included radio and television advertising, they asked for help with another project.

In 2008 the Church paid for the production of updated materials—posters and flip charts—so the government could train health specialists and educate mothers about the importance of

primary vaccinations such as measles, polio, tetanus, and tuberculosis.

“[The Church’s] gift will help us educate families and make them healthier,” said Dr. Charlotte Ngokaba, National Director of Vaccinations in the DR Congo.

Since 2003, nearly 60,000 Church volunteers have teamed with the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the American Red Cross, and local Ministries of Health to decrease the measles death rate.

According to a WHO report, these efforts are paying off. Measles deaths in Africa have dropped 93 percent since 1999. Worldwide measles deaths have fallen 73 percent, from nearly 900,000 in 1999 to an estimated 242,000 in 2006. ■

Church Aids Victims of Hurricanes

Many people were affected by the 2008 hurricane season. Power outages, flooding, and other physical damages to homes left many without shelter. During Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in August and September, more than 20 Church buildings throughout the Caribbean and the United States were used as shelters. Approximately 35 member homes were destroyed, and more than 250 were seriously damaged.

In an effort to help storm-stricken areas, the Church responded quickly, sending much-needed help and supplies. Priesthood leaders worked with other organizations to distribute supplies.

Hurricane Gustav

Hurricane Gustav, the second major hurricane of 2008, formed on August 25, 2008, about 260 miles (420 km) southeast of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and eventually caused serious damage in the Dominican Republic; Haiti; Jamaica; the Cayman Islands; Cuba; and Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas in the United States.

Torrential rain and strong winds blew through Haiti on August 26 as Hurricane Gustav left people homeless and without many necessities. At least four major storms hit the area during



David Dickamore, wearing a Mormon Helping Hands shirt, cuts limbs from a tree blown down by Hurricane Ike in Texas.

the 2008 hurricane season (Fay, Gustav, Hanna, and Ike).

The Church sent three planeloads of supplies to Port-au-Prince, and priesthood leaders worked with multiple organizations to help distribute the aid. Included in the supplies were hygiene kits, hand soap, cleaning kits, tents, generators, plastic sheeting, hammers, and nails. The Church also sent additional funds to purchase food and other necessary relief supplies.

Many Church members in Haiti assisted in putting together and organizing relief supplies that were then distributed to areas of need.

In addition to the relief efforts in Haiti, aid was sent to help victims in the southern United States, also hard hit by the storms. The Church donated more than 20 truckloads of supplies, including more than 7 truckloads of hygiene kits (103,600) and 11 truckloads of cleaning kits (22,176). Food boxes intended to feed a family of four were distributed to some 1,200 families. Each food box included rice, vegetable oil, peanut butter, fruit drink mix, and assorted canned goods.

Additional assistance from the bishops' storehouse in Slidell, Louisiana, provided food, water, generators, tools, sleeping bags, chain saws, tarps, and other smaller items.

Hurricane Ike

The third major hurricane of 2008, Hurricane Ike, stormed through Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and the United States, leaving a trail of destruction in early September 2008. States in the U.S. affected included Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

In preparation for Hurricane Ike, the Church sent supplies to Slidell, Louisiana, and to Houston, Carrollton, Lufkin, and San Antonio, Texas. More than 9,000 cleaning kits were distributed to the various areas before the storm hit.

Other supplies sent as part of the prepositioning strategy included a supply of food and hygiene products along with assorted emergency supplies. Included were blankets, sleeping bags, work gloves, chain saws, wheelbarrows, first aid kits, cots, tents, and water.

In response to the

destruction, approximately 18,500 member volunteer hours were given over a two-day period by approximately

1,300 cleanup workers. During the two-day period about 2,500 projects were completed. ■

ON THE WEB

Church Gives Mormon.org New Look, More Content

To improve Mormon.org, the Church has made navigation and visual changes to the site and added more multimedia content, including testimonies from General Authorities and members around the world and a new video entitled *Finding Happiness*. The updated site launched in September 2008 in English and is expected to be available in Spanish by early 2009. Later in 2009 the site will be made available in an additional 21 languages.

Meetinghouse Locator Updated on LDS.org

The Church upgraded its online meetinghouse locator in August 2008, providing users with more precise directions to meetinghouses throughout the world, access for mobile devices, and lists of different types of congregations nearby, including language-specific wards or branches and young single adult units. The meetinghouse locator can be accessed at maps.lds.org or through LDS.org (click on **About the Church**, then **Find a Meetinghouse**) and Mormon.org (click on **Worship with Us**).

Joseph Smith Manual PDFs Available in 11 Languages

The Church Curriculum Department has expanded the online availability of the manual *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* to 11 languages.

PDF files and MP3 audio files of the manual are available in Cantonese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Files for American Sign Language are also available.

Access the manual and other Church publications at www.lds.org/gospel-library/pdfindex.

Country Web Sites Continue to Grow

New Church country Web sites in English for the countries of the Pacific Area and in Tahitian for Tahiti launched in August 2008. There are now 64 country sites with others (Belgium, Croatia, Hungary, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, and Uruguay) under construction. A link to the different country sites can be found on LDS.org under "About the Church." The country sites get nearly 150,000 visitors per month with about a million pages viewed. ■

SERVING IN THE COMMUNITY

Church Assists Victims in Eastern Europe Flood

The Church sent funds in August 2008 to purchase emergency supplies after at least 65 people died and nearly 90,000 homes were damaged by the worst flooding in 200 years in parts of Ukraine, Moldova, and Romania. Members and

missionaries assembled hygiene and cleaning kits, cleaned up, and helped repair damaged homes, which in some cases were made primarily of mud and straw. The flooding also damaged more than 200,000 acres (90,000 ha) of farmland. ■



This home was one of 90,000 damaged by historic flooding in Eastern Europe.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GERALD D. JACOBS



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOSE MORAS SANDOVAL

Members of the Chilpancingo Mexico Stake plant more than 5,000 trees as part of a service project.

Members in Mexico Plant Thousands of Trees

About 120 members of the Chilpancingo Mexico Stake planted more than 5,000 trees in Petaquillas, a community in Chilpancingo, capital of the state of Guerrero. Members from the stake's eight wards

and four branches helped with the project. Wearing white Mormon Helping Hands vests, members of all ages spread out over the specified area with shovels and spent the day digging holes and planting the trees. ■

TEMPLE NEWS

Draper Utah Temple Dates Announced

The First Presidency has announced open house and dedication dates for the Draper Utah Temple. This will be the 12th operating temple in Utah and the 129th worldwide.

"We, with you, look forward to the dedication of this house of the Lord and the blessing it will be to the Saints," the First Presidency said in a letter to members

dated September 15, 2008.

The open house is set to begin on Thursday, January 15, 2009, and is scheduled to continue until Saturday, March 14, 2009, excluding Sundays. The dedication will be held from Friday, March 20, through Sunday, March 22, 2009, with four dedicatory sessions held on each of the three days.

The Draper temple

was first announced on October 2, 2004, and the groundbreaking occurred on August 5, 2006. The temple will officially open on Monday, March 23, 2009. ■

Temple Open in Twin Falls

The Twin Falls Idaho Temple is open and operating after its dedication on August 24, 2008, by President Thomas S. Monson. This marks the

128th operating temple in the world and the fourth in Idaho.

"We are grateful for this long-awaited day of dedication, when this, Thy holy house, has been completed," said President Monson in the dedicatory prayer. "Bless, we pray Thee, those faithful members here and throughout the world who have contributed their tithes, which have made possible this magnificent edifice for Thy name's honor and glory and for the blessing of all who enter herein."

The new temple district includes 14 stakes serving

PHOTOGRAPH BY NETTIE ATKISSON



Members of the San Francisco California Stake cleaned up Pratt Place, a street named after Mormon emigrants who settled there in 1846.

San Francisco Stake Remembers the Past

For the San Francisco California Stake's 80th anniversary, members cleaned three inner-city streets—two named after Mormon pioneers and one after a New York ship that carried hundreds of Saints to the Bay Area before the Gold Rush. Residents on

Joice Street, Pratt Place, and Brooklyn Place appreciated members removing trash and weeds in July 2008. Some 250 Saints first arrived at Yerba Buena on the ship *Brooklyn* in 1846. They helped build the tiny village into a town, which was renamed San Francisco six months later. ■

Service by Nigerian Saints Affects Community

On July 19, 2008, Church members from the Ile-Ife Nigeria District removed garbage and sludge from a plugged drainage system that was overflowing and disrupting many businesses. Distinguished by

their yellow Mormon Helping Hands vests, the members spent 10 hours clearing a trench that runs alongside a road in the town's commercial quarter. People from other faiths joined in as they could. ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY FAMILUYIWA OLUWASEUN

Members of the Ile-Ife Nigeria District clear a clogged drainage trench.



The Twin Falls Idaho Temple was dedicated in August 2008.

approximately 42,000 members in the south-central Idaho area. Temple visitors can see the beautiful Idaho scenery of waterfalls and the syringa flower (Idaho state flower) represented within the 31,500-square-foot (2,900-square-meter) temple's walls, stained glass, and landscaping.

More than 150,000 visitors toured the temple during an open house held the month before the dedication. The temple was first announced in October 2004, and ground was broken in April 2006. ■

Laie Hawaii Temple Closes for Renovations

To return the temple to its original beauty and bring it up to date with current temple standards, the Laie Hawaii Temple will close on Monday, December 29, 2008, for renovations to begin early next year. The renovation is expected to be finished in approximately 18 months, and the temple will be rededicated after the project is complete.

Members in the Laie

Hawaii Temple district will have access to the Kona Hawaii Temple, giving all members the opportunity to attend the temple, including those receiving their own ordinances.

The Laie Hawaii Temple was first dedicated by President Heber J. Grant in 1919 and was later rededicated after renovation and expansion in 1978. ■

New Era Special Issue Still Available

A special issue of the *New Era* published in October 2008 was written to encourage youth to be firm in their faith and make good decisions. The issue includes counsel from Church leaders and others on everyday challenges such as integrity, mental and physical health, entertainment and media, relationships, and personal testimony. A section on the 18 topics in *For the Strength of Youth* features stories, explanations, and examples of living the principles taught in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Two wallet-sized *For the Strength of Youth* booklets are included, along with “standards” cards, a resource to help answer questions about dating, the Word of Wisdom, and whether Mormons are Christian.

The *New Era* is available in distribution centers and online at LDSCatalog.org.

Scripture Stories Available Online and on DVD

The illustrated *Scripture Stories* series is now available online and on DVD. The storybooks have been a great resource for many years, helping young children understand the scriptures through easy-to-understand text and pictures. The books also include maps, glossaries, and timelines for additional information.

The series includes stories from the Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants and can now be downloaded

from LDS.org in multiple media formats including text, audio, and video versions. The new DVD set is available through distribution centers.

Triple Released in Chinese (Simplified Characters)

A new edition of the triple combination in Chinese (simplified characters) was made available through Church distribution centers in October 2008. The edition includes the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and a study aid titled Guide to the Scriptures. The Book of Mormon in Chinese (simplified characters) was published in 2001. The Book of Mormon in Chinese (traditional characters) was published in 1965, and the triple in 2007.

Book of Mormon Printed in Sinhala

Translation and production of the Book of Mormon in Sinhala, one of Sri Lanka’s official languages, was finished in August 2008. Distribution of the Sinhala version of the Book of Mormon began in September. Since 1983 Sinhala-speaking members have had only portions of the Book of Mormon. There are more than 16 million Sinhala speakers.

Sri Lanka, located just off the southeast coast of India, is home to more than 20 million people and is part of the Singapore Mission. The Church was officially recognized in Sri Lanka on March 2, 1979. The other official language in Sri Lanka is Tamil. ■

Power of the Word

Thank you for “Finding Comfort in King Benjamin’s Counsel” (*Ensign*, Aug. 2008, 25). I was reminded again of the power of the word of God. As a mother, I try to relate the experiences my children are having to the scriptures, but I don’t always take the time to actually read the specific scripture. I was inspired to do that more often. I also felt the confirmation of the Spirit as I read this experience. The scriptures really can make such a difference in how we understand our purposes here and the love our Heavenly Father has for us. Thanks!

*Johanna Wood
Colorado, USA*

No Travel Necessary

I was very excited to see that the September Latter-day Saint Voices stories (p. 68) focused on family history. I was disappointed, however, that two of the four stories discussed expensive family history-related trips. Many people do not get involved with family history because it can seem very daunting to get started. I worry that after seeing these stories people who are hesitant to get started will now also think that they need to become world travelers if they want to begin their own family history. Opportunities for powerful personal experiences involving family history rarely require any travel at all.

*Sherry Lindsay
New Zealand*

Editor’s note: The Web

site www.familysearch.org provides numerous resources for those wishing to start or continue family history work, including a locator for local family history centers.

Touching the Heart

During my husband’s stay in the cardiac care unit, I sat reading the August 2008 *Ensign*. It gave me comfort, strength, and hope. I highlighted many phrases. The magazine spoke to my heart.

I continued to read, and realized upon turning one last page that I had read the whole magazine. I had such a feeling of anxiousness, of needing to read more, of being sorry it was over.

I have a week until the September issue comes. I’m excited to get my hands on it. Thank you for all the time, wisdom, and love that go into these publications.

*Cathy Gage
Washington State, USA*

Healing from Abuse

Thank you so much for the article “Hope and Healing in Recovering from Abuse” (*Ensign*, Sept. 2008, 36). It is what I went through. I loved the choice of words and the understanding. I felt that the author really knew what she was talking about, like she was right there with me.

I have a testimony of the Atonement of our Savior Jesus Christ. I know He knows me and what I have been through. Thanks so much for reminding me. I know it will be OK!

Name Withheld



The Baby Jesus, by Jeremy Winborg

Jesus Christ "shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God" (Alma 7:10).



“Concern and disappointment showed on the faces of our younger children. Would they not be home for Christmas Eve? . . . After they had brought happiness and cheer to missionaries far from home, would their Christmas come alongside a forgotten French country road far from their own home? [Ten-year-old] Kristen knew to whom we could appeal, and she immediately suggested a prayer.” (See “Room in the Inn,” by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Presidency of the Seventy, and other Christmas stories beginning on page 12. For a prophet’s perspective on the real meaning of Christmas, see President Thomas S. Monson’s message, “The Best Christmas Ever,” on page 4.)