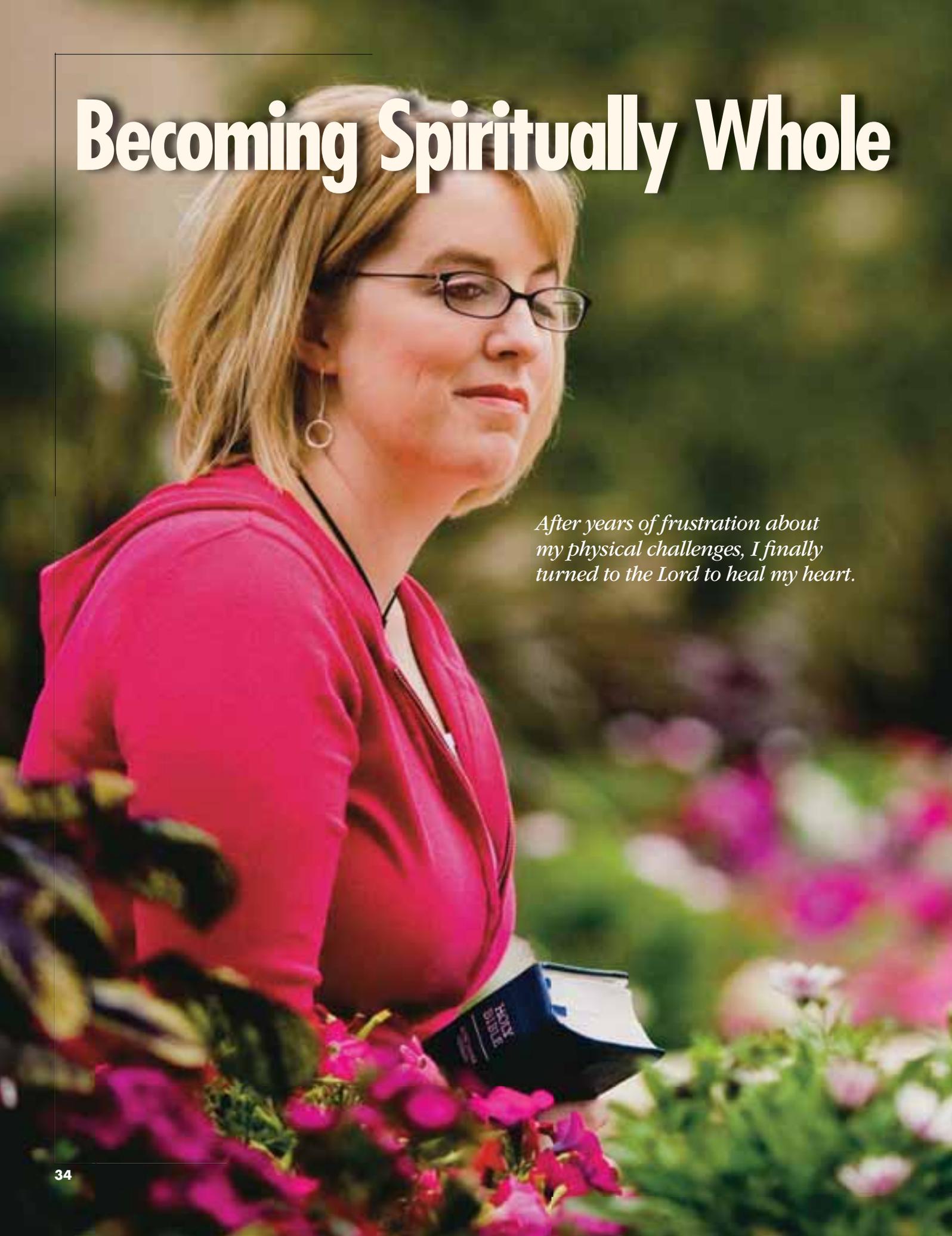


Becoming Spiritually Whole

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).

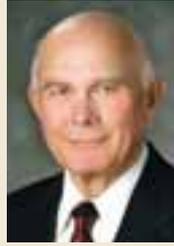
In a tender moment, the Spirit taught me about what it means to be made whole.

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.