

Ensign



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**The Spiritual Gifts of the
Stake President, p. 48**

**Redemption for "the hosts
of the dead," p. 54**

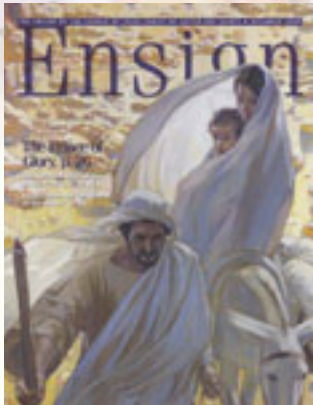


Christmas Eve Visit, by Rebecca Hartvigsen

On a snowy Christmas Eve, visitors come to enjoy the evening with President Brigham Young and his family at the Beehive House on the corner of South Temple and State streets in Salt Lake City, Utah.



*When Christmas
Changed My Heart*
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ON THE COVER
Front: *Flight*, by Rose Datoc Dall,
courtesy of Church History Museum.
Back: *The Nativity*, engraving by
Gustave Doré.



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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 ensign.lds.org. *Ensign* Magazine Writers' Guidelines are posted on the same page under "Resources."

Submit your story at ensign.lds.org or by mailing it to *Ensign* Editorial, 50 E. North Temple Street, Room 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0224, 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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Ensign

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USING THIS ISSUE

Teach the Importance of Reverence. When was the last time you felt or demonstrated true reverence? Consider spending time in your next family home evening discussing what it means to be reverent. You might use the articles found on p. 13 and p. 20 in your preparation.

Experience the Power of Compassionate Service. Several articles in this issue focus on compassionate service—the compassion that members have shown each other and the ultimate compassion shown all of us by the Savior Jesus Christ. (See pp. 24, 26, 31, and 62.) What service might you perform this season?

Celebrate Christmas with the First Presidency. Celebrate the season of the Savior's birth by watching the First Presidency Christmas Devotional, to be held December 6 at 6 p.m. MST. (See LDS.org or your local priesthood leader for broadcast information.)



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COMING IN JANUARY

Beginning in 2010, the ENSIGN will feature these changes:

- A new format for the First Presidency Message, including complementary content for youth and children.
- New, regular articles about the Savior Jesus Christ, what Latter-day Saints believe, family home evening ideas, and serving in the Church.
- Information about the ENSIGN online.
- Maintaining faith despite uncertainty on first-Sunday lessons, and on the new course of study in Sunday School and priesthood and Relief Society.



Home for Christmas

BY PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING
First Counselor in the First Presidency

There was a song I heard first when I was a little boy—a song about Christmas and home. Those were days of war when many people were away from their homes and family—a dark time for those who feared that they might not be reunited with loved ones in this life. I remember my feelings for home and family when I walked by one house on the way to school at Christmastime and saw a little flag with a gold star on it hung in the window. It was the home of a girl I knew in school. Her brother, not much older than I, had been killed in the war. I knew his parents and felt some of what they did. On the way home after school, I would feel grateful anticipation for the glad welcome I knew awaited me.

When I turned on the radio in our living room during the Christmas season, I would hear words and music that still echo in my

mind. A few lines of that song touched my heart with a yearning to be with family. I was living with my parents and my brothers in a happy home, so I knew somehow that the yearning I felt was for more than to be in a house or in the family life I then enjoyed. It was about some future place and life, even better than I knew or had yet imagined.

The line of the song that I remember best is “I’ll be home for Christmas / If only in my dreams.”¹ The house in which I decorated Christmas trees with my mother and father in those happy days of my childhood still stands, largely unchanged. A few years ago I went back and knocked on the door.

Strangers answered. They allowed me to step into the rooms where the radio had been and where our family had gathered around the Christmas tree.

I realized then that the desire of my heart was not about being in a house. It was about being with my family, and it was a desire to



Because of the Savior, you may have an assurance that you can go home not only at Christmastime but also to live forever with a family whom you love and who love each other.





feel enveloped in the love and the Light of Christ, even more than our little family had felt in the home of my childhood.

Longing for Eternal Love

What all of us long for in our hearts, at Christmastime and always, is to feel bound together in love with the sweet assurance that it can last forever. This is the promise of eternal life, which God has called His greatest gift to His children (see D&C 14:7). That is made possible by the gifts to us of His Beloved Son: the Savior's birth, Atonement, and Resurrection. It is through the Savior's life and mission that we have the assurance that we can be together in love and live forever in families.

The feeling of longing for home is born into us. That wonderful dream cannot become real without great faith—enough for the Holy Ghost to lead us to repentance, baptism, and the making and keeping of sacred covenants with God. This faith requires enduring bravely the trials of mortal life. Then, in the next life, we can be welcomed by our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son to that home of our dreams.

Even in this life we can have an assurance of the coming of that day and feel some of the joys we will know when at last we arrive home. The celebration of the Savior's birth at Christmas gives us special opportunities to experience those joys in this life.

Finding the Promised Joy

Many of us have lost loved ones to death. We may be surrounded by individuals who seek to destroy our faith in the gospel and the Lord's promises of eternal life. Some of us are troubled with illness and with poverty. Others may have contention in the family or no family at all. Yet we can invite the Light of Christ to shine on us and let us see and feel some of the promised joys that lie before us.

For instance, as we gather in that heavenly home, we will be surrounded by those who have been forgiven of all sin and who have forgiven each other. We can taste some of that joy now, especially as we remember and celebrate the Savior's gifts to us. He came into the world to be the Lamb of God, to pay the price of all of the sins of His Father's children in mortality so that all might be forgiven. In the Christmas season we feel a greater desire to remember and ponder the Savior's words. He warned us that we cannot be forgiven unless we forgive others (see Matthew 6:14–15). That is often hard to do, so you will need to pray for help. This help to forgive will come most often when you are allowed to see that you have given as much or more hurt than you have received.

When you act on that answer to your prayer for strength to forgive, you will feel a burden lifted from your shoulders. Carrying a grudge is a heavy burden. As you forgive, you will feel the joy of being forgiven. At this Christmastime you can give and receive the gift of forgiveness. The feeling of happiness that will come will be a glimpse of what we can feel at home together in the eternal home for which we yearn.

Feeling the Joy of Giving

There is another glimpse of that joyful future home that we can see more easily at Christmastime. It is the feeling of giving with a generous heart. This can come as we feel the

needs of others more than our own and when we sense how generous God has been to us.

It helps to see the kindness of others at Christmastime. How many times have you gone to leave a gift on a doorstep, hoping not to be noticed, only to find more than one unmarked gift already there? Have you felt, as I have, the impression to help someone only to find that what you were inspired to give was exactly what someone needed at that very moment? That is a wonderful assurance that God knows all of our needs and counts on us to fill the needs of others around us.

God sends those messages to us with more confidence at Christmastime, knowing that we will respond because our hearts are more sensitive to the Savior's example and to the words of His servants. At Christmastime, we are more likely to have read recently and been touched by the words of King Benjamin. He taught his people, and he teaches us, that the overwhelming gift of forgiveness that we receive should make us feel an overflowing generosity toward others:

“And behold, even at this time, ye have been calling on his name, and begging for a remission of your sins. And has he suffered that ye have begged in vain? Nay; he has poured out his Spirit upon you, and has caused that your hearts should be filled with joy, and has caused that your mouths should be stopped that ye could not find utterance, so exceedingly great was your joy.

“And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another.

“And if ye judge the man who putteth up his petition to you for your substance that he perish not, and condemn him, how much more just will be your condemnation for withholding your substance, which doth not belong to you but to God, to whom also your life belongeth; and yet ye put up no petition, nor repent of the thing which thou hast done.

“I say unto you, wo be unto that man, for his substance shall perish with him; and now, I say these things unto those who are rich as pertaining to the things of this world” (Mosiah 4:20–23).

You have already felt the joy of giving alms and receiving them. That joy in this life is a glimpse of what we will feel in the life to come if we are generous here out of faith in God. The Savior is our great exemplar. At the Christmas season we contemplate anew who He is and what generosity He extended to us by coming into the world to be our Savior.

As the Son of God, born to Mary, He had the power to resist all temptation to sin. He lived a perfect life so that He could be the infinite sacrifice, the unblemished Lamb promised from the foundation of the world (see Revelation 13:8). He suffered the agony of the guilt of our sins and all the sins of the children of Heavenly Father that we might be forgiven and go home clean.

He gave us that gift at a price we cannot fathom. It was a gift He did not need for Himself; He was without the need for forgiveness. The joy and gratitude we feel for His gift now will be magnified and will last forever as we honor and worship Him in our heavenly home.

The Christmas season gives us encouragement to remember Him and His infinite generosity. Remembering

The Savior
is our great
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ity He extended to
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We remember at Christmastime not only the light that announced the birth of Christ into the world but also the light that comes from Him. Many witnesses have confirmed that light.



His generosity will help us feel and respond to the inspiration that there is someone who needs our help, and it will let us see the hand of God reaching to us when He sends someone to succor us, as He so often does. There is joy in giving and in receiving the generosity that God inspires, especially at Christmas.

Blessed with His Light

There is another glimpse of heaven that becomes easier to see at Christmastime. It is of light. Heavenly Father used light to announce the birth of His Son, our Savior (see Matthew 2; 3 Nephi 1). A new star was visible in both the Eastern and the Western Hemispheres. It led the Wise Men to the child in Bethlehem. Even wicked King Herod recognized the sign; he feared it because he was wicked. The Wise Men rejoiced because of the birth of the Christ, who is the Light and the Life of the World. Three days of light without darkness was the sign God gave to the descendants of Lehi, heralding the birth of His Son.

We remember at Christmastime not only the light that announced the birth of Christ into the world but also the light that comes

from Him. Many witnesses have confirmed that light. Paul testified that he saw it on the road to Damascus:

“I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

“And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul,

why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

“And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest” (Acts 26:13–15).

The boy Joseph Smith testified that he saw a marvelous light in a grove of trees in Palmyra, New York, at the beginning of the Restoration:

“Just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

Such light will be visible in our heavenly home. It will bring us joy then. Yet even in this life you have been blessed with a part of that wonderful experience, through the Light of Christ. Every person born into the

world receives that light as a gift (see Moroni 7:16). Think of the times you have had an experience that makes you a witness that the Light of Christ is real and precious. You will recognize from this wonderfully assuring scripture that you have been guided by that light:

“And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.

“That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

“And . . . I say it that you may know the truth, that you may chase darkness from among you” (D&C 50:23–25).

In a world that is being darkened by evil images and dishonest messages, you have been blessed to recognize more easily the flashes of light and truth. You have learned for yourself that light grows brighter as you receive it gladly. It will become brighter and brighter until the perfect day when we will be in the presence of the Source of the light.

That light is easier to discern at Christmastime, when we are more likely to pray to know what God would have us do and more likely to read in the scriptures and so more apt to be on the Lord’s errand. When we forgive and feel forgiveness, when we are lifting the hands that hang down (see D&C 81:5), we are being lifted ourselves as we move toward the Source of the light.

You remember that the Book of Mormon describes a glorious time when the Savior’s faithful disciples reflected His light for others to see (see 3 Nephi 19:24–25). We use lights to celebrate the Christmas season. Our worship of the Savior and our service for Him brings light into our lives and into the lives of those around us.

We can with confidence set a goal to make this Christmas brighter than the last and each year that follows brighter still. The trials of mortality may increase in intensity, yet for us, darkness need not increase if we focus our eyes more singly on the light that streams down on us as we follow the Master. He will lead us and help us along the path that leads upward to the home for which we yearn.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

As you prepare to teach from this message, be sure to seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost to help you tailor your approach to the needs of those you teach. You might consider ideas such as these:

1. When you read the material under the heading “Longing for Eternal Love,” do you feel within yourself the longing for your eternal home? Discuss together what you are doing to prepare to return to that home.
2. Does the material under “Finding the Promised Joy” help you see how you can find joy in this life? Discuss what we can do to find joy now, day to day.
3. Under the heading “Feeling the Joy of Giving,” we learn of the Savior’s unmatched gifts that can allow us to have eternal life. Discuss what we could give to help others receive this gift as well.
4. How does President Eyring’s message help us see what we may do to be more open to the light offered by the Savior and to share it with our families and others?

There have been times, often at Christmas, when we have felt parts of what we will experience when we at last come home to the Father who loves us and answers our prayers and to the Savior who has lighted our lives and lifted us up.

I testify that because of Him, you may have an assurance that you can go home not only at Christmastime but also to live forever with a family whom you love and who love each other. ■

NOTE

1. James “Kim” Gannon, “I’ll Be Home for Christmas” (1943).



BY MARCIA L. AKES

When people first met my father-in-law, they would usually see a tough, retired construction worker who wasn't afraid to share what was on his mind. But those who knew him well remember him better for the way he treated his wife and for his tremendous devotion to her as she grew ill. He loved her dearly both "in sickness and in health."

Their commitment to each other began in 1942 when my father-in-law, Charles Akes, first spotted Elaine Spencer on a train. He was in the army and headed home on leave. They began dating, fell in love, and soon married, but they were forced apart as Charles was shipped overseas to the war in Europe. He hated leaving his new bride, and like many soldiers was afraid he wouldn't return. They wrote back and forth and missed each other terribly until he returned home.

Elaine and Charles, whom I grew to call Mom and Dad, began building their life together. Dad worked hard to support her and their four children, driving a truck, farming, and ranching—and when he couldn't find a job, he'd make one. He ended up in construction, running his own backhoe service.

Dad often gave thanks for Mom's constant encouragement, inspiration,



Dad's

ILLUSTRATION BY GREGG THORKELOSON



Those who knew him well remember him for the way he treated his wife and for his tremendous devotion to her as she grew ill.

Lesson in Love

and support. They relied on and loved each other tremendously. He often said he didn't know what he would do without her.

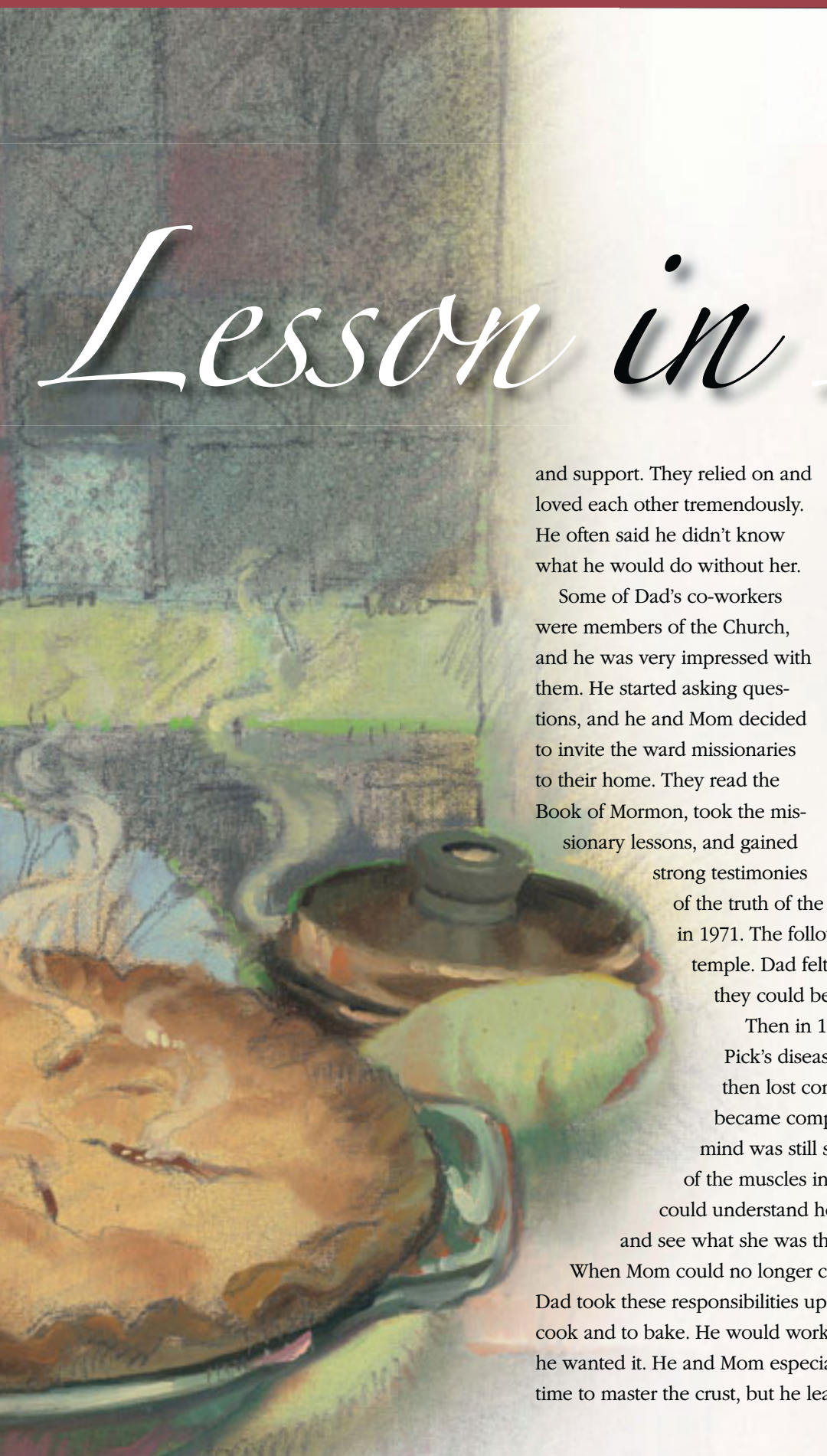
Some of Dad's co-workers were members of the Church, and he was very impressed with them. He started asking questions, and he and Mom decided to invite the ward missionaries to their home. They read the Book of Mormon, took the missionary lessons, and gained

strong testimonies

of the truth of the gospel. They joined the Church in 1971. The following year they were sealed in the temple. Dad felt incredibly blessed to know that they could be married for eternity.

Then in 1996, Mom was diagnosed with Pick's disease. She lost her balance first and then lost control of her muscles. She finally became completely bedridden. Though her mind was still sharp, she no longer had control of the muscles in her throat to speak, but Dad could understand her. He could look into her eyes and see what she was thinking and feeling.

When Mom could no longer cook or do the household chores, Dad took these responsibilities upon himself. He taught himself to cook and to bake. He would work on a recipe until he got it just like he wanted it. He and Mom especially loved pies. It took him a long time to master the crust, but he learned to make delicious pies, and



"I'm just a common man with common thoughts, and I feel I've lived a pretty common life; there will never be any monuments dedicated to me, and undoubtedly my name will soon be forgotten; but I've loved another with all my heart and soul, and to me, this has always been enough."



they became his specialty. Sometimes he would share his new recipes with the Relief Society sisters. He invited people to their home for dinner so that Mom could enjoy their company and wouldn't feel lonely.

One day Dad discovered Mom's sewing machine. He said it was a shame to let such a nice machine sit there, so he took sewing lessons. Because Mom was bedridden and

dressing her was difficult, Dad took all of her dresses, cut them up the back, and put in snaps or Velcro so they would be easier to get on and off without hurting her. For her birthday, he sewed her a beautiful wrap-around skirt to match the sweater he had bought her so she could wear a new outfit to her party.

Each night Dad would give Mom a facial with her favorite face cream because that was something she had always done and she had such soft skin. He took her to swim therapy every week to keep her muscles toned. He spent hours looking through books for any new ideas on how he could help her feel more comfortable.

But Mom was not the only one with health problems. Asthma had been an issue for Dad his whole life, and he also contracted emphysema. Pneumonia had afflicted him so many times that he had permanent difficulty breathing. Even a cold meant a visit to the hospital. Doctors often predicted that he would not survive, but each time they did he fought for life because he worried about what would happen to Mom if he wasn't there to take care of her.

On one particular hospital visit, doctors warned him that the circulation in his legs was so bad he would soon be confined to a wheelchair. Dad knew that if it came to that, his wife would have to go to a nursing home, so he did physical therapy, breathing treatments, and special exercises until his circulation improved. His intense effort enabled him to continue walking and keep Mom at home.

Some days, though, were harder than others. The hardest ones were when Dad could barely breathe and Mom was deeply worried about being a burden to him. He felt terrible that she was suffering in a body that could not move freely. Often he would say how incredibly grateful he was for the gospel and for a knowledge of Heavenly Father's divine plan. Because of the gospel, he knew the pain would only be temporary and that he and his wife could be together forever.

Dad fought a good fight and defied the odds for years, but in January of 2003 he knew he wouldn't win another one. He was admitted to the hospital with his lungs and body giving out. The doctors told him he would never leave his hospital bed, but he knew he had something left to do. Going on nothing but sheer determination, Dad left the hospital and checked himself and Mom into a local nursing home. For the next two days he trained the caregivers and staff on how to take care of her—how to feed her, how to tell when she was hurting, how to help her feel comfortable, and all about her diet and medicine. When he felt they understood and he was sure she would be in good hands, he passed away peacefully, by her side.

The things Dad did to take care of Mom touched the lives of family, friends, neighbors, caregivers, and even strangers. People often speak with me about the influence he had on them. I have seen more dedication in marriages and commitment to family from those who watched my father-in-law go to great lengths to care for his wife.

Although he could be pretty rough around the edges, Dad embraced the gospel and its teachings on love and devotion with all of his heart. I often heard him exclaim, "Oh, how I love that woman!" And he showed us, by the way he treated her, just how much he did. ■



THE Power AND Protection OF WORTHY MUSIC

BY ELDER RUSSELL M. NELSON
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Through music we raise our voices in powerful praise and prayer. Hymns provide a pattern of worship that is pleasing to God. He taught us through the Prophet Joseph Smith to “praise the Lord with singing, with music, . . . and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving” (D&C 136:28).

Who can help but be moved by the lyrics in a hymn such as “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” by English poet Isaac Watts? The message focuses on the Atonement of Jesus Christ:

*When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

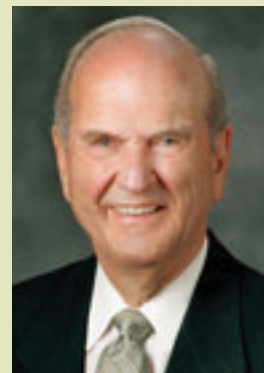
*Forbid it, Lord! that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God:*

*All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood. . . .*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.¹*

Indeed, Isaac Watts did demand much from himself. In his lifetime he wrote approximately 600 hymns. Two of his most productive years were between his graduation from school at age 20 and his taking a job teaching when he was 22. At that young age many great hymns flowed from him. Hymns by Isaac Watts in the LDS hymnbook include “Joy to the World,” “Sweet Is the Work,” and “He Died! The Great Redeemer Died.”² Even as a small boy Isaac Watts had poetic potential.

“Once, during family prayers, he began to laugh. His father asked him why. [Isaac] replied that he had heard a sound and opened his eyes to see a mouse climbing a rope in



Fill your minds with worthy sights and sounds. Cultivate your precious gift of the Holy Ghost.



Worthy music has the power to make us humble, prayerful, and grateful. Prophets through all generations have taught the importance of worthy music in our expressions of worship.

a corner, and had immediately thought,

'A little mouse for want of stairs ran up a rope to say its prayers.'

"His father thought this irreverent, and proceeded to administer [physical] punishment, in the midst of which Isaac called out,

*'Father, father, mercy take, and I will no more verses make.'*³

The text of another song in our hymnbook, "How Great Thou Art," was written by a young minister in Sweden named Carl Gustav Boberg when he was only 25 years old. After attending a church meeting, he walked two miles along the southeastern coast of Sweden in a thunderstorm. The experience inspired him to write the words, which were later translated into English by Stuart K. Hine:

*O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy pow'r thru-out the universe displayed;
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
How great thou art! How great thou art!⁴*

On one occasion I was in a mission conference when a missionary, with great compassion and tears in his eyes, asked me, "Why did the Savior have to suffer so much?" I reached for our hymnbook, turned to this song, and answered his question with this verse:

*And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin.⁵*

The Power of Music

Jesus suffered so much because of His love for you and me. What a message! Worthy music is powerful. It has the power to make us humble, prayerful, and grateful.

Prophets through all generations have taught the importance of worthy music in our expressions of worship. A few citations from the scriptures may serve to illustrate.

An Old Testament scripture bids us to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise" (Psalm 98:4). In the Hebrew language, the meaning of this verse is to literally *burst* forth into song and to *shout* for joy. Contrast that spirit of enthusiasm with scenes we may see at church when some sing only passively and without a spirit of joy.

A New Testament scripture counsels us to have a well of good music within, "speaking to [ourselves] in psalms

and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in [our] heart to the Lord;

“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:19–20).

Another New Testament verse says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you . . . ; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).

From the New Testament we also learn that the Lord and His Apostles sang a hymn at the Last Supper (see Matthew 26:30). That tradition continues in our day. Each time members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles meet in the temple, we sing a hymn. It sets a sweet, spiritual tone for our deliberations.

The Book of Mormon teaches that one’s desire to sing praises to the Lord comes with one’s complete conversion to Him. Alma asked this penetrating question: “I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?” (Alma 5:26).

Ammon later exclaimed, “Blessed be the name of our God; let us sing to his praise, yea, let us give thanks to his holy name, for he doth work righteousness forever” (Alma 26:8).

Complete conversion is the key to our experiencing God’s greatest blessings. In the Doctrine and Covenants, we read this expression from the Lord: “For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads” (D&C 25:12).

In the preface to our hymnbook, the First Presidency has provided this statement:

“Inspirational music is an essential part of our church meetings. The hymns invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord.

“Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns. Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build testimony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end.

Hymns invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord.

“We hope to see an increase of hymn singing in our congregations. We encourage all members, whether musically inclined or not, to join with us in singing the hymns. We hope leaders, teachers, and members who are called upon to speak will turn often to the hymnbook to find sermons presented powerfully and beautifully in verse. . . .

“ . . . Latter-day Saints should fill their homes with the sound of worthy music. . . .

“Hymns can also help us withstand the temptations of the adversary. We encourage you to memorize your favorite hymns and study the scriptures that relate to them. Then, if unworthy thoughts enter your mind, sing a hymn to yourself, crowding out the evil with the good.”⁶

Worthy music also has the power to persuade. We learn this lesson from the writings of John Jaques. He was born in England in 1827, a son of Wesleyan Methodist parents. In his youth John earnestly sought the true



religion. He studied intensively with Latter-day Saint missionaries and, at the age of 18, became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

John’s austere father, upset upon hearing this news, wrote:

“I wished you . . . to attend the Wesleyan Chapel. . . .

“They [the Mormons] do not teach you . . . [to] honor and obey your parents. . . .”

He later wrote, “I . . . hope you will give up the idea of belonging to such a party. . . . It is fiction.”

John’s reply, written March 14, 1847, when he was but 20 years of age, included these words:

“Dear Father:

“ . . . I would pray . . . that I may understand the things of the Kingdom of God, and carry my ideas to you. . . .

“Since I have [joined the Church] . . . my eyes have been opened, and I have been able to understand

the truth. I can bear testimony to the truth . . . of the doctrines . . . in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”⁷

Three years later, at age 23, John Jaques wrote the words to a hymn we know and love:

*Oh say, what is truth? 'Tis the fairest gem
That the riches of worlds can produce,
And priceless the value of truth will be when
The proud monarch's costliest diadem
Is counted but dross and refuse.*

*Yes, say, what is truth? 'Tis the brightest prize
To which mortals or Gods can aspire.
Go search in the depths where it glittering lies,
Or ascend in pursuit to the loftiest skies:
'Tis an aim for the noblest desire.*



*The sceptre may fall from the despot's grasp
When with winds of stern justice he copes.
But the pillar of truth will endure to the last,
And its firm-rooted bulwarks outstand the rude blast
And the wreck of the fell tyrant's hopes.*

*Then say, what is truth? 'Tis the last and the first,
For the limits of time it steps o'er.
Tho the heavens depart and the earth's fountains burst,
Truth, the sum of existence, will weather the worst,
Eternal, unchanged, evermore.*⁸

John stood firm in his conviction of the truth. He remained true and faithful and ultimately served as assistant to the Church historian from 1889 until his death on June 1, 1900.

Music has a sweet power to promote unity and love in the family. Not only is it an important component of family home evenings, but it can also exert a continuing

influence for good well beyond times when children are small. For my gift to our family for Christmas 2007, I prepared a compact-disc recording of musical memories. I sat at the piano and recorded a variety of music that I had sung or played to the children through the years. They liked it. Some of the grandchildren told me that the CD was “cool.”

Music has power to provide spiritual nourishment.⁹ It has healing power.¹⁰ It has the power to facilitate worship, allowing us to contemplate the Atonement and the Restoration of the gospel, with its saving principles and exalting ordinances. It provides power for us to express prayerful thoughts and bear testimony of sacred truths.

Music has power to overcome language barriers. In my experience some of the most moving congregational singing has been rendered in languages that are foreign to me. Yet it spoke strongly to my soul.

The purpose of music in our Church services is not for performance but for worship. Prayerfully selected compositions and excellent performances are appropriate in our worship services when and if members feel a spirit of worship and revelation. Church music should support the Lord and His work and not attract attention to itself.

It is important that as Latter-day Saints we seek the guidance of the Spirit in selecting the music with which we surround ourselves.

The Protection of Music

Worthy music is not only a source of power but also of protection. For many years President Boyd K. Packer, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has taught this concept. He has often quoted a statement issued by the First Presidency many years ago: “Music can be used to exalt and inspire or to carry messages of degradation and destruction. It is therefore important that as Latter-day Saints we at all times apply the principles of the gospel and seek the guidance of the Spirit in selecting the music with which we surround ourselves.”¹¹

Wherever we are we should carefully choose what we see and hear. We would not knowingly tolerate pornography in our homes, but if we are not careful, we may allow music into our lives that can be just as devastating.

Many youth listen to music that can be described as loud and fast, becoming louder and faster. It aims to



Music has the power to facilitate worship, allowing us to contemplate the Atonement and the Restoration of the gospel, with its saving principles and exalting ordinances.

agitate, not to pacify; to excite more than to calm. Beware of that kind of music.

As you know, continued exposure to loud sounds will, in time, damage delicate organs of hearing. In like manner, if you overindulge in loud music, you will more likely become spiritually deaf, unable to hear the still, small voice. A scripture states, “The Lord your God . . . hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words” (1 Nephi 17:45).

Do not degrade yourself with the numbing shabbiness and irreverence of music that is not worthy of you. Delete the rubbish from your minds and your MP3 players.

Protect your personal standards! Be selective! Be wise!

Do not allow unworthy, raucous music to enter your life. It is *not* harmless. It can weaken your defense and allow unworthy thoughts into your mind and pave the way to unworthy acts. Please remember:

“That which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness. That which is of God is light” (D&C 50:23–24).

Fill your minds with worthy sights and sounds. Cultivate your precious gift of the Holy Ghost.

Protect it as the priceless gift that it is. Carefully listen for its quiet communication. You will be spiritually stronger if you do.

You know the proverb, “As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). As you control your thoughts, you control your actions. Indeed, worthy music can provide power and protection for the soul. ■

From a Church Educational System fireside address given May 4, 2008, at Brigham Young University.

NOTES

1. B. B. McKinney, ed., *The Broadman Hymnal* (1940), no. 191.
2. See *Hymns*, nos. 201, 147, 192.
3. “Isaac Watts, hymn-writer,” <http://elvis.rowan.edu/~kilroy/JEK/11/25c.html>.
4. *Hymns*, no. 86; see footnote on author’s original words in the hymnbook.
5. *Hymns*, no. 86.
6. *Hymns*, ix–x.
7. Stella Jaques Bell, *Life History and Writings of John Jaques* (1978), 19–21; see also Russell M. Nelson, *The Power within Us* (1988), 90–91.
8. “Oh Say, What Is Truth?” *Hymns*, no. 272.
9. See Jay E. Jensen, “The Nourishing Power of Hymns,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 11–13.
10. See “The Healing Power of Hymns,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2008, 66–69.
11. Boyd K. Packer, “Inspiring Music—Worthy Thoughts,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 25; see also *Priesthood Bulletin*, Dec. 1970, 20; *Priesthood Bulletin*, Aug. 1973, 4.



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has taught that, “We need to make more use of our hymns to put us in tune with the Spirit of the Lord” (*Teaching, No Greater Call*, [1999] 172). In this article, Elder Nelson refers to “worthy music.” Discuss Elder Oaks’ statement and prayerfully decide the best way to determine for your family what is worthy music. You could play a few examples and discuss how worthy music can be a protection.

Using *Preach My Gospel* in Scripture Study

I use *Preach My Gospel* during my personal scripture study,” says Anne Tanner, a returned missionary from the Portugal Porto Mission. “It has helped me focus my efforts in becoming more like the Savior.”

HOW TO OBTAIN A COPY

Because *Preach My Gospel* is available in 56 languages, many members throughout the world can use it. You can order a copy from your nearest distribution center or access it online in 43 languages at <http://preachmygospel.lds.org>. It is also available in MP3 format on that page.

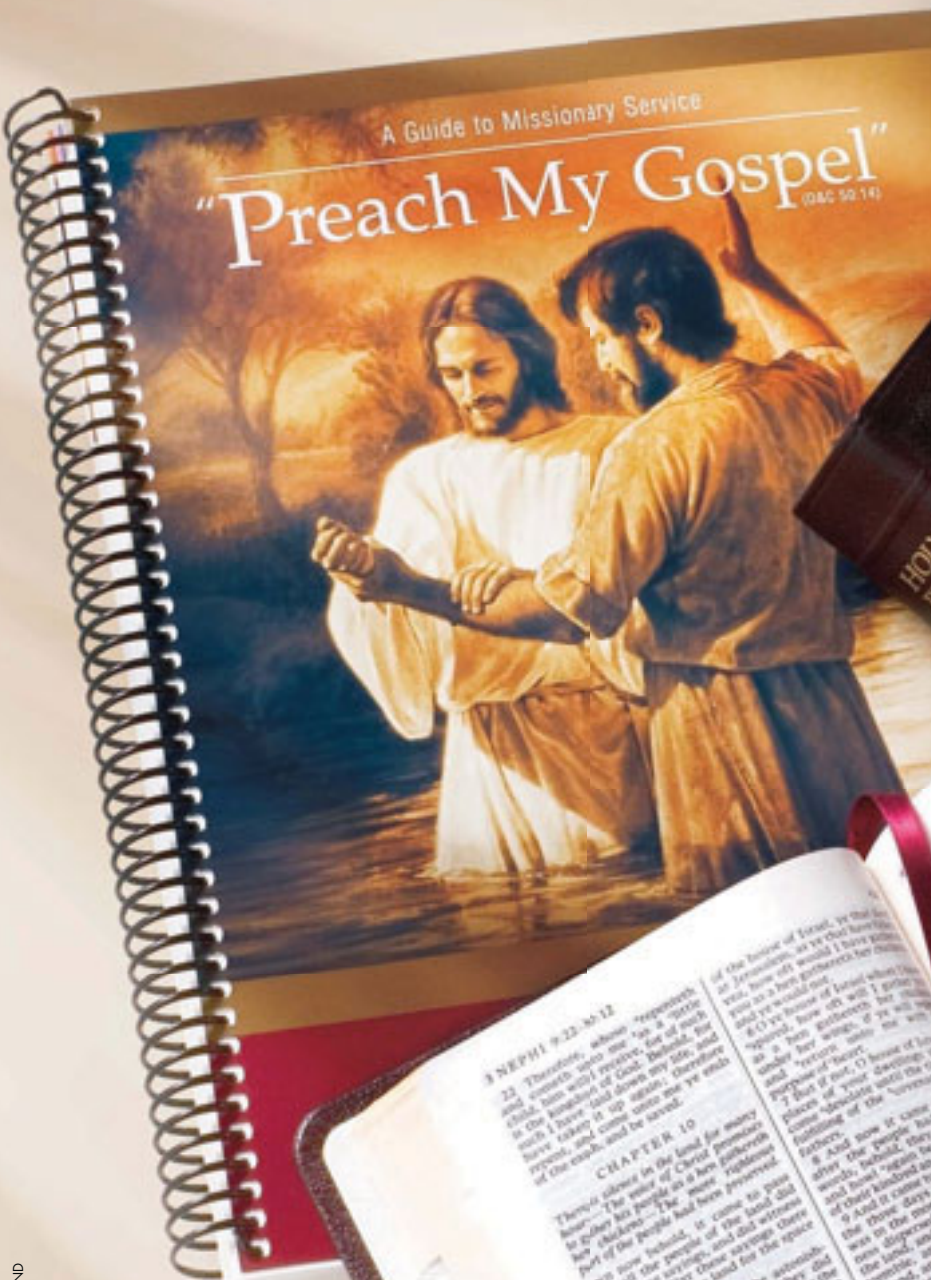


Anne is one of many who have discovered the power of using *Preach My Gospel* in their personal and family gospel study. Families and individuals, converts and life-long members can all find helpful ideas in this book.

For example, chapter 2—“How Do I Study Effectively and Prepare to Teach?”—is filled with study ideas. Among the many tools is a section that gives guidelines for marking the scriptures. Another section shares the benefits of pondering what you read. It suggests memorizing your favorite scripture passages and keeping a journal to record what you learn. Reading the scriptures listed on page 18 explains the role of the Holy Ghost in your study of the gospel.

Chapter 3—“What Do I Study and Teach?”—contains the missionary lessons. Parents can use these to help prepare their children for baptism. Youth can study these lessons as they prepare for a mission. Each lesson explains basic gospel concepts. Consider reading the definitions of the words found in “Key Definitions” on page 58.

Chapter 4—“How Do I Recognize and Understand the Spirit?”—can give you a deeper understanding of the Holy Ghost. The promptings of the Holy Ghost can give you insights and increase your testimony. ■



A MARVELOUS STUDY GUIDE

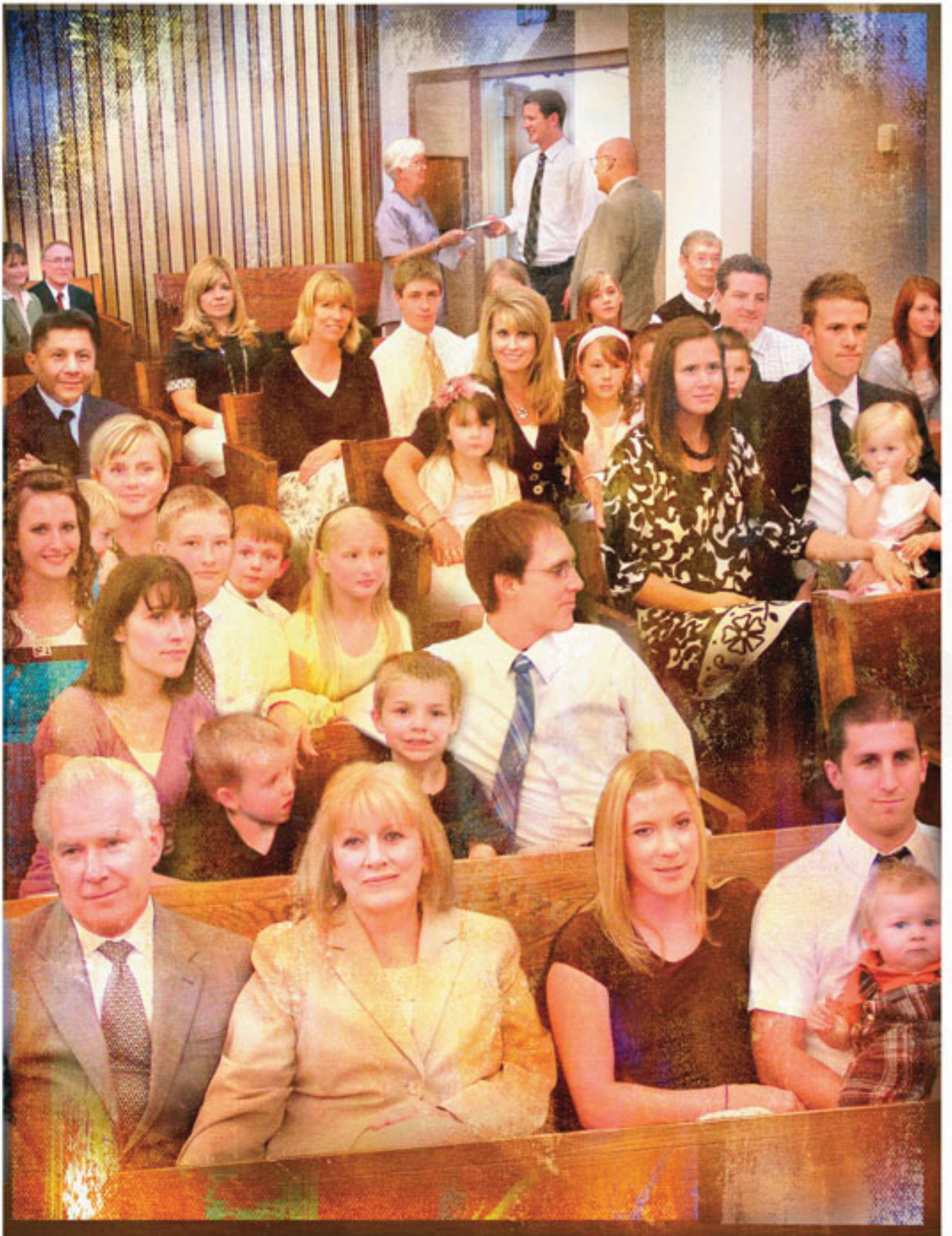
“Our own study of Preach My Gospel will not only help us to develop a greater understanding and appreciation for our

missionaries, but it will help us in our own day-to-day life.

Every member of our family owns a copy of Preach My Gospel. Studying this guide is a great support in developing a strong testimony. It helps us understand fundamental gospel principles.”

Elder Erich W. Kopischke of the Seventy, “Preach My Gospel—the Unifying Tool between Members and Missionaries,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 33–34.





Worship through REVERENCE

BY ELDER ROBERT C. OAKS

Served as a Member of the Seventy
from 2000 to 2009

The counsel of President David O. McKay (1873–1970) puts the topic of reverence in clear perspective: “Reverence is profound respect mingled with love.”¹ This perspective is further enriched by the words of a song from the *Children’s Songbook*:

*Rev’rence is more than just quietly sitting:
It’s thinking of Father above,
A feeling I get when I think of his blessings.
I’m rev’rent, for rev’rence is love.*²

The core words most often found in scriptures associated with reverence are *respect*, *love*, and *honor*. Using these standards, we can see that reverence reflects activity of the heart, not just inactivity of the mouth.

Reverence is an integral part of worship. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has instructed:

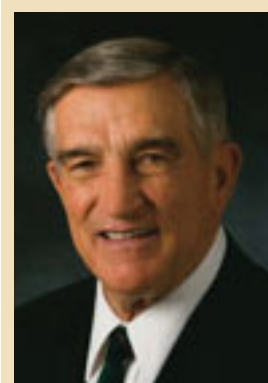
“Worship often includes actions, but true worship always involves a particular attitude of mind.

“The attitude of worship evokes the deepest feelings of allegiance, adoration, and awe. Worship combines love and reverence in a state of devotion that draws our spirits closer to God.”³

Certainly the prime purpose for entering a place of worship is to be drawn closer to God.

As we study the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and gain an appreciation of the remarkable impact—both mortal and eternal—of His Atonement on our lives, we naturally experience the emotional responses of respect, love, and honor. Gospel obedience and Christian service then flow as appropriate expressions of these emotions. But without reverence, the expressions of respect, love, and honor are incomplete.

As we develop reverence for Jesus Christ, we are better able to pattern our lives after His perfect example. There are many facets to such reverence: faith that He lives, trust in His promised blessings, and obedience to gospel standards. But one of the most important facets is the feeling of our heart—the



Reverence includes much more than the absence of noise. Heartfelt reverence includes listening, thinking on the things of God, and feeling respect, love, and honor toward our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

respect, love, and honor we feel toward Deity. We who respect, love, and honor the Lord will never take His name in vain and will be uncomfortable with demeaning or trivializing jokes about Him. Rather, we praise and revere



(see verses 14, 15, 21, 22, 34). Truly, the wages of reverence are great!

Much of what we say in the Church about reverence usually focuses on being quiet in places of worship, with special emphasis on children being quiet. Certainly, quiet is a key part of reverence, but the full, rich meaning of the concept of reverence includes much more than the absence of noise and commotion. Quiet does not necessarily equal reverence.

A *n important facet of reverence is the feeling of our heart—the respect, love, and honor we feel toward Deity.*

our Heavenly Father and Him whom we worship as our Lord and our Savior.

The Lord gives clear direction regarding His expectation for reverence in Leviticus 19:30, where He states, “Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.” The respect we show for His temples and chapels is a reflection of the reverence for Him we feel in our hearts. Our degree of respect, love, and honor for the Lord is directly reflected in our reverence, as shown by our attitudes as well as by our decorum.

Blessings of Reverence

The Prophet Joseph Smith provided an interesting insight into reverence in his prayer at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836. Joseph prayed that the repentant might return and “be restored to the blessings which thou hast ordained to be poured out upon those who shall reverence thee in thy house” (D&C 109:21). The Prophet’s prayer highlights what these blessings of reverence might be: words of wisdom, a fulness of the Holy Ghost, favor in the sight of the Lord, the power of God, and forgiveness

Our chapels are first and foremost houses of worship where we should be able to sit quietly during prelude music and meditate on the beauty of the restored gospel, prepare our hearts and minds for the sacrament, and ponder the majesty of our Heavenly Father and the splendor of the Savior’s Atonement. Where better to consider such sacred and weighty matters? These manifestations of our worship will naturally be accompanied by an attitude of reverence.

Such worship opportunities are fundamental to the strengthening of our faith and can provide a conduit whereby the spirit of testimony and revelation can flow into our souls. This reality was dramatically demonstrated to me one Sabbath day as I sat during the prelude music for sacrament meeting. My wife and I had been seeking spiritual instruction on a particular question in our lives. Thankfully, the answer came through the particular prelude hymn selected. In response to the sweet melody, the Spirit clearly indicated the appropriate course for us. Unfortunately, before the hymn had ended, someone sitting near me leaned over and started talking to me, and

the Spirit immediately left. A treasure of sweet revelation was cut short by a lack of reverence.

From this experience I gained a special appreciation for the sanctity of a quiet prelude moment. President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, highlighted this truth when he stated, “Irreverence suits the purposes of the adversary by obstructing the delicate channels of revelation in both mind and spirit.”⁴

Measures of Reverence

The measures of reverence are not complicated. Rather than letting our minds wander to the mundane things of the world, we should school our thoughts in places and times of reverence to think on the things of God: the majesty of the Atonement, eternal families, the Restoration of the gospel in its fulness. These measures of reverence would include schooling our behavior to reflect the attitudes of respect, love, and honor. They would include dressing modestly in our nicest clothes, avoiding the ultra-casual fashions of the day, and avoiding loud talking and disruptive behavior in the Church building. And when in the chapel, we should seek to take “quiet” down another level, especially during the administration of the sacrament.

A desire for reverent behavior would prompt us to plan ahead if we anticipate the need to leave the meeting for any reason and to sit in the rear near an exit so we can leave quietly. Leaving in the middle of a service, especially during a talk or other presentation, is distracting to the speaker and to those sitting near you. Out of respect



We should school our thoughts in places and times of reverence to think on the things of God.

for others as well as for the Lord, we should avoid such untimely movements.

Often we equate the reverence of a congregation with the behavior of the children present. True, young children can provide a special challenge to reverence. But the

first rule with respect to children is to bring them! They can be taught, they can be taken out, and they can be brought back into the meeting. And in the teaching it is better to minimize the number of training tools that are brought to church, such as toys and food. Latter-day Saint congregations are generally blessed with large numbers of children and youth, and we should be thankful for this. They are the future of the Church.

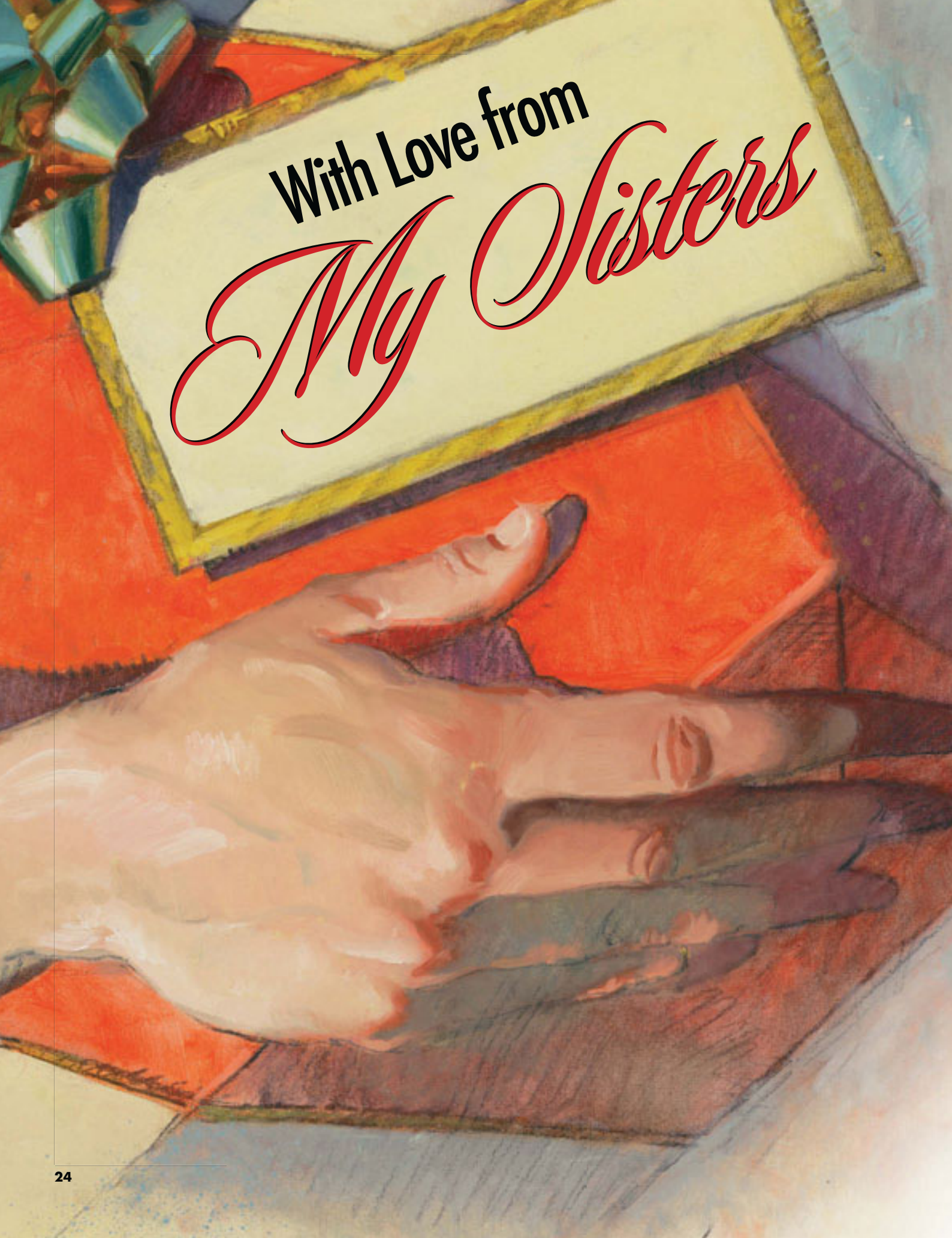
Heartfelt reverence is an important part of our worship of our Heavenly Father and of the Lord. In all of the activities and thoughts of our lives each day, may we avoid that which reflects a lack of reverence toward Them. In all of our worship activities, may we seek to expand and enrich our feelings of respect, love, and honor toward our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. These feelings are tokens of a true Christian character. ■

NOTES

1. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 86.
2. “Reverence Is Love,” *Children’s Songbook*, 31.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, *Pure in Heart* (1988), 125.
4. Boyd K. Packer, “Reverence Invites Revelation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 22.

With Love from

My Sisters



"We are fine," I assured my visiting teachers. Still, their service that Christmas made all the difference.

BY MARINA PETROVA

The closer Christmas got, the heavier my heart became. In November, neither my husband nor I had regular work. I paid for rent, electricity, and the telephone out of my decreased earnings, and my husband paid the car payment from his diminished wages. The remaining money was barely enough to get us by. December brought more work and a return to normal, but we wouldn't be paid until January.

Under these circumstances, even a holiday dinner was out of the question.

"Everything will be all right," I told myself. That summer my husband had picked a lot of raspberries, and we had made jam. We would have pancakes and jam and would make our own gifts. But when our three daughters (ages 6, 8, and 14) began happily decorating with garlands they had made, all the while talking about what their parents might give them for Christmas, I was sick at heart.

One evening my visiting teachers came by for an unexpected visit. I have no brothers and sisters of my own, so the Relief Society sisters in my

branch—particularly my visiting teachers—have truly become my sisters. That night they shared an interesting lesson, then began to visit about the upcoming holiday. I assured them that everything was fine but said that it would be a rather "poor" Christmas for us. They assured me that they would be praying for our family.

One day when my husband came to pick me up from work, he said that everyone at home was impatiently awaiting my arrival. A sister from our branch had dropped off some boxes. When we opened them, they contained all the delicacies of the season: fruit, cookies, candy, other groceries, decorations, and lovingly wrapped gifts. My eyes filled with tears of gratitude. And that wasn't the end. The family of one of my visiting teachers surprised us on Christmas morning with a box of gifts.

In the end our "poor" Christmas was a particularly joyful one. Our home was filled with not only the spirit of Christmas but also the warmth and love of my visiting teachers and other members of our branch. I came to understand that the Lord truly does meet our needs most often through other people—particularly those He has assigned and inspired to watch over and care for us. ■



"God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other in the kingdom."
President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985),
"The Abundant Life," *Tambuli*, June 1979, 3;
Ensign, July 1978, 2.

The Prince of Glory



BY ELDER BRUCE D. PORTER
Of the Seventy

Christ literally overcame the world and stands as our friend—a Prince who has lived among us and knows how to make us strong.

At this season, when we commemorate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, I often think of the angel's words to Nephi regarding that sacred event: "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" (1 Nephi 11:16). A Latter-day Saint hymn speaks of His condescension in these words:

*The King of Kings left worlds of light,
Became the meek and lowly One.¹*

Why did the Lord Jesus Christ leave that world of light, where He dwelt with the Father in everlasting glory? Why did He come to earth in such humble circumstances?

A Story of a Prince

An important lesson about condescension is found in Mark Twain's classic novel *The Prince and the Pauper*. Twain tells of two boys: Tom Canty, a poor boy who lives

in a hovel in London; and Prince Edward of Wales, heir to the throne of England.

Tom has always dreamed what it would be like to be a prince. One day he decides to go to Westminster Palace in hopes of getting a glimpse of Prince Edward. Edward comes out of the gates of the palace and greets the waiting throngs. Tom is so excited that he presses up against the gates and tries to call the prince. The soldiers at the palace roughly push Tom away.

Seeing this, Prince Edward becomes angry with his guard. He tells the soldiers to leave the boy alone and then invites Tom into the palace as his guest. Prince Edward gives Tom a tour of the palace, and then, on a whim, the boys decide to exchange clothing. As they look at each other in the mirror, they realize that they are practically twins. While dressed in each other's clothing, they step outside. The soldiers grab the pauper (who is really the prince) and throw him outside the gates. Prince Edward



yells that he is the prince, but all the gathered people only laugh at him. The soldiers then close the gates. Suddenly the poor boy is the prince in the palace, while the prince is the poor boy in the street. Neither one can convince anyone to believe in the mix-up.

During the months that Prince Edward is outside the palace, he endures many trials. Tom Canty's father finds him, thinks the prince is his son, takes him home, and beats him. Edward experiences hunger that he's never known in his palace comfort. He travels throughout England, trying to determine how he can be restored to the throne. As he does so, he witnesses the poverty and oppression of his people, and he sees firsthand the grave injustices of the law. He suffers for months as a homeless pauper, and on one occasion he's nearly killed.

Through a remarkable series of events, the mix-up is finally resolved, and Prince Edward is restored to the palace. In the meantime he has inherited the throne and become the king of England. King Edward honors Tom Canty for his service as an accidental "prince," and ever after Edward serves as a merciful, good, and compassionate king, having learned to love his people by his suffering.

A Perfect Compassion

We too have a prince who became a pauper. The Prince of Peace, the Prince of Glory, the Lord Jesus Christ came down to live among His people and share in their poverty and suffering so that He might be a more compassionate king. As the Apostle Paul said, "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

In another letter Paul wrote: "In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest. . . .

"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18).

In other words, one of the reasons Christ came to earth was to experience temptation, pain, sorrow, and suffering so that He might be a more compassionate and perfect King. Alma spoke of this in a beautiful sermon to the people of Gideon: "And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people

... and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy . . . that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11–12).

Alma adds that “the Spirit knoweth all things; *nevertheless* the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people” (Alma 7:13; emphasis added). Although Christ had perfect compassion in his premortal role as Jehovah, His coming to earth and suffering personally in the flesh was essential to his atoning sacrifice.

By that suffering—not just in Gethsemane or on the cross but also throughout the whole 33 years of His life—the Lord Jesus Christ acquired perfect love and an all-encompassing understanding of mortal life. We may experience loneliness, betrayal, prejudice, scorn, and abuse. The Savior faced these things daily during His ministry. We may feel that our life is obscure, our days dull, and our talents and accomplishments meager in the eyes of the world. Christ made Himself of no reputation, having “no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2). He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows (see Isaiah 53:4). Whatever depth of anguish, misery, or temptation we may experience, His understanding of our trials is perfect because He experienced them firsthand during His mortal life. Our Savior has walked with us. Immanuel, or “God with us” (Matthew 1:23), is one of His names.



The Savior is there not only when we cry out from the burden of sin but also when we cry out for any other reason.

An All-Encompassing Power

Having overcome the world, Christ possesses a redeeming power that is all-embracing and all-encompassing in its scope. There are many dimensions to that power. Most important is the redeeming power of the great Atonement

that paid the price for our sins—our individual sins as well as the sins of all mankind. Even the smallest sin we commit opens an infinite gulf between God and us, and it takes an infinite Atonement to overcome that. Only one who is “infinite and eternal” (Alma 34:14), as Amulek said, could pay that price.

In a most personal way, the Savior pleads for us before the Father’s throne. The Doctrine and Covenants says He is our advocate with the Father, standing before the Father and saying, “Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son. . . .

“Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name” (D&C 45:4–5).

When Christ pleads for us before the throne of the Father, He does not plead on the basis of our merit; He pleads on the basis of *His* merit and *His* suffering. Therefore, we must rely, as Nephi said, “wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save” (2 Nephi 31:19).

Further, the power of Christ is not limited to payment for our sins. Through that power, He also took upon Himself the pains and sicknesses of His people, and He took upon Himself every negative consequence of a fallen world. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the

Twelve Apostles said, “Since not all human sorrow and pain is connected to sin, the full intensiveness of the Atonement involved [Christ’s] bearing our pains, infirmities, and sicknesses, as well as our sins.”²

Serious illnesses, family tragedies, and emotional struggles do not happen necessarily because we have sinned. Adversity and heartbreak happen to good people; such is the fruit of a fallen world. But having experienced tragedy, sickness, and disappointment in His own life, the Savior knows how to strengthen us in such trials as well. He is there not only when we cry out from the burden of sin but also when we cry out for any other reason.

The power of the Atonement also covers the consequences of sin in the lives of innocent people. We pay no eternal price for things over which we have no control, including harm done to us by others. The Atonement can heal us. The only thing for which we pay a spiritual price is misuse of our own agency, and for that the Savior has given us the Atonement.

Sometimes we think of the power of the Atonement as something that works after this life, as though it were something that applied only at the Judgment Day. But that is not true doctrine. The redeeming power of Jesus Christ works *during* our lives, day by day, moment by moment, as He gives us strength to overcome, as He forgives us of sin, and as He brings us, through the Holy Ghost, comfort, peace, and joy.

My prayer and hope is that we will discover the power of the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives, that we will understand that the Atonement is not something abstract. Christ literally

overcame the world and stands as our friend, a Prince who has lived among us and knows how to make us strong.

A Lesson at Christmas

In 1987 I was working for the United States government. About the middle of December I received a last-minute assignment to go to Israel. It was the Christmas season, when many tourists come to celebrate the birth of Christ. Violence in and around Israel, however, had kept them away.

On my last day in the Holy Land I was able to go to Jerusalem. I had been there before but never at Christmastime. I walked through the streets of the Old City on that cold, dreary, rainy day. Most of the Arab shopkeepers in the old city had closed their shops and everyone seemed unhappy.

Yet as I walked, umbrella in hand, I thought of the Savior of the world. Despite the cold, the rain, and the tense political atmosphere, I was filled with joy and peace to know that I was in the city where the Savior of the world had lived and taught.

I departed the next day for Washington, D.C., arriving a few days before Christmas. I landed at

Dulles International Airport and hailed a taxi. As we pulled out on the Capital Beltway, the traffic was awful. Everyone



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

“Relating personal experiences can have a powerful influence in helping others live gospel principles. When you tell about what you have experienced yourself, you act as a living witness of gospel truths. If you speak truthfully and with pure intent, the Spirit will confirm the truth of your message in the hearts of those you teach” (*Teaching, No Greater Call*, [1999] 180). In this article, Elder Porter teaches gospel truths by relating personal experiences. Consider inviting family members to share personal experiences in which their testimony of the Savior has been strengthened.

was trying to get home for Christmas. I started to lose patience and began fuming and fidgeting. The spirit of peace I had felt in Jerusalem drained away.

As we drove along, I kept saying to the taxi driver, “Try that lane. Move over there—no, go over there. Try that.” It took us well over an hour to get to my exit in Virginia. When we finally exited, we ran into the worst local traffic jam I had ever seen. I again started fuming and fidgeting and making suggestions to the driver. Suddenly he turned around, looked me in the eye, and said in a tone of mild rebuke, “Sir, there is no reason to be upset about a traffic jam.” Then he turned back around.

Sensing perhaps that I was a bit miffed, he looked at me again and said, “Pardon me. But you see, I am from another planet.”

“Very well,” I replied, “just what planet do you come from?”

I will never forget his reply. He turned around again and said in a calm voice, “I am from Afghanistan, a country devastated by war, and if you had seen the things I have seen—villages bombed, people starving, men and women and children fleeing for their lives, and war and destruction and chaos on every side—you would not worry so much about a mere traffic jam.” Then he turned around again and drove on silently.

His words pierced me. Suddenly I saw everything in perspective. I lived in a free country in the midst of prosperity and peace. I was going home to a wonderful family in a home of our own, and we were going to celebrate Christmas together. I realized that I had everything in the world a person could

possibly want, including the gospel of Jesus Christ. And there I was, getting upset at a simple traffic jam, which meant nothing at all.

Two days later my alarm clock sounded on the Sabbath before Christmas, and the radio played these words from “O Holy Night”:

*The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our friend.*³



GREY DAY GOLGOTHA, BY J. KIRK RICHARDS

I thought of my visit to Jerusalem. I thought of a humble taxi driver who had taught me an important lesson. Then I thought of Jesus Christ, who was born to be the friend of the lowly and the hope of the meek. My heart brimmed with love, and tears flowed freely as I thought that He might regard me as a friend.

This is my testimony—that each of us has a friend in our Redeemer. The Prince of Peace lived on earth as a poor, simple, and humble

man, but He was in fact the Son of God. He knows our trials and our pains, our temptations and our suffering of every kind. I pray that no matter what your personal trial, challenge, temptation, difficulty, or sin may be, you will come unto Him who was born in Bethlehem and resurrected on the third day in Jerusalem. ■

From a devotional address given at LDS Business College on March 12, 2002. For the full text, see www.ldsbc.edu/speeches/devotionals/display.php?id=13032002.

By His suffering—not just in Gethsemane or on the cross but also throughout the whole 33 years of His life—the Lord Jesus Christ acquired perfect love and an all-encompassing understanding of mortal life.

NOTES

1. “Thy Will, O Lord, Be Done,” *Hymns*, no. 188.
2. Neal A. Maxwell, *Not My Will, But Thine* (1988), 51.
3. “Cantique de Noël” (“O Holy Night”), *Recreational Songs* (1949), 142–44.



Charley came over to Tom and me and dared us: “If I switch toys, will you?” Charley was a star athlete and the most popular guy in school, so foolishly we accepted his dare.

Four large boxes, one for each of the classes, had been placed in the middle of our large California high school campus. The boxes were for the toys each class had been challenged to collect for our annual Christmas toy drive for needy children. The winning class earned points toward the “Class of the Year” competition. Anyone caught switching toys—taking a toy from one box and putting it in another—would cause his or her entire class to be disqualified from earning points.

Charley led the way, taking a toy from one box and blatantly tossing it in the senior class’s box. Tom and I tried to make our switches inconspicuously, but someone saw us and reported us to the principal. The next

morning we were summoned before the student council and confronted by the principal. Shamefaced, we slowly nodded when he asked if we had switched the toys.

Later that morning, an announcement went out over the public address system to the entire campus: “Due to the switching of toys by two members of the senior class, seniors are no longer eligible to earn points in the toy competition.” We had not been named, and we had hoped to remain anonymous. But news traveled fast among the 3,500 students. The students from other grades sarcastically complimented and thanked us, but we had definitely become unpopular with our fellow seniors.

After school, we dejectedly sat on Tom’s couch and discussed what we should do to try to turn the situation around. We put on our critical thinking caps for probably the first time in our lives. Finally we came up with

When Christmas Changed My Heart

BY WILLIAM J. CTIBOR
*Our efforts to save face
blessed us and others.*

We watched in amazement as the fire truck parked and children gathered from all directions.



a brilliant idea. Since the principal had invited the seniors to continue to bring toys to school, that was what we would do.

The last day of the toy drive coincided with the last day of school before Christmas break, which was three days away. Tom and I would go into the neighborhoods around our school and spend the next three nights collecting toys.

Going door to door for hours on end was very hard work. Families with children usually had a toy to give us. Elderly people usually had nothing for us. But two events caught us off guard.

One elderly gentleman, who said that his only son had been killed in the Korean War, asked us to wait a moment and left us standing at his front door. He soon came back and handed us \$100. "I've never seen you boys before," he said, "and for all I know you'll spend this money on yourselves, but my contribution is intended to be used as a memorial to my son."

We were speechless, which was unusual for us. We immediately headed for the Whittier Downs Mall, and 15 minutes later we were talking to the manager of a toy store, explaining what we were doing. Before we knew it, we had three very large bags of toys he sold us at a discount. Excited, we headed right back to the elderly man's house to show him we had done as he wished. He cried as he shook our hands.

The next evening, at another home, Tom and I were greeted by a much younger man who seemed taken aback when we explained what we were doing. He invited us in and then excused himself to go get his wife. After what seemed like a very long time, he came back with his wife and a large box of toys. His wife was crying.

The man introduced his wife to us and with great difficulty he softly said, "Thanks for being patient with us. I know you must feel ill at ease with the way we are behaving, so let me explain. A year and a half ago our three-year-old son passed away from leukemia. We would like to give you his toys. It's hard, but we feel it's the right thing to do."

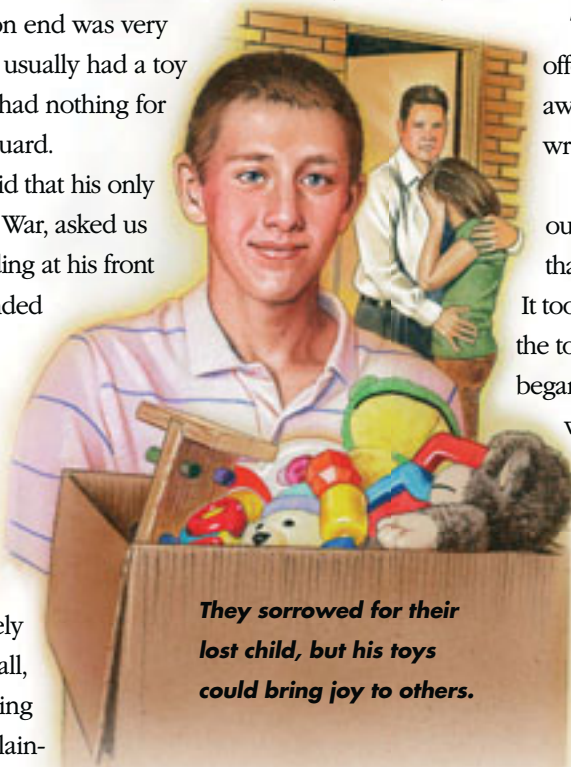
Tom and I were inclined to refuse their offer, but they were insistent. As we drove away, they stood on their porch, arms wrapped around each other, watching us.

On the third and final night, we found ourselves standing before a pile of toys that almost filled Tom's single-car garage. It took two trips with two cars to get all of the toys to school the next morning. We began long before dawn, and when we were through, the senior class toy collection box was perched atop a pile of toys that dwarfed the other classes' contributions. It still didn't qualify for points, but the senior class honor had been restored.

After all the excitement, by the time Christmas Eve arrived, Tom and I were once again sitting on his couch, intensely bored. I was about

to go home when Tom's father appeared wearing the most spectacular Santa costume I had ever seen. "How do I look, fellas?" he asked. Before we could overcome our astonishment and reply, we heard the deep rumble of a powerful diesel engine, and a brand new fire truck pulled up in front of the house. Covered with a net, a pile of beautifully wrapped presents filled the truck.

Tom's dad jumped in, climbed up to roost high above the mammoth vehicle, and the truck lurched forward. Suddenly, our day was no longer empty. I yelled at Tom,



They sorrowed for their lost child, but his toys could bring joy to others.



“Quick, let’s follow them.”

At first I thought they must be headed to the Whittier Downs Mall to play Santa for the lucky, privileged kids there. But with lights blazing and siren wailing, the fire truck turned off the main highway and into Old Pico, a four-block square of leaky wood-slat shacks occupied by migrant farm workers and their families. With a whoosh of air brakes the truck stopped and Tom’s dad climbed down. A host of excited children gathered from all directions, their parents watching from a distance as their little ones rejoiced over their gifts.

As the scene played out, many thoughts ran through my mind. My perception of Tom’s father took on a new aspect. Here was a man who possessed little himself yet was giving what he could. I saw thankful parents who must have been agonizing over providing basic necessities, much less Christmas presents, shedding tears of joy for their children. I considered for the first time how children must feel when Santa forgets them.

Frankly, until then I had been pretty full of myself. Our whole effort to gather the toys had been focused on restoring our social standing. But those experiences with the generosity of grieving parents, along with what I saw in Old Pico, began to soften my heart and turn my view outward. I realize now that it all helped prepare me to seriously consider and accept the gospel when I heard its message a few years later.

That evening when I asked Tom’s dad where the presents came from, he was puzzled. “You mean you don’t know?” he said. “They came from the toy drive at your school.” ■

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



The Christmas season can seem hectic, but the angels sang of “peace on earth.” In what ways do you find peace in your celebration of Christmas?



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTINA SMITH

For many years I tried to keep up with the tradition of exchanging gifts with my large extended family, many of whom live in other states. It was time-consuming, expensive, and stressful. One December my neighbor popped in for a visit. The entire living room floor was covered with boxes and half-wrapped presents, including homemade fudge and caramel corn. “What *is* this?” she asked. I explained that I was mailing presents to family.

Her reply was just what I needed

to hear. In her warm Southern accent she exclaimed, “Honey, why don’t you do what we do? We send cards and say, ‘I love you!’ ”

That was my last year of sending presents. Since then I have sent cards and sincerely told my family how much I love them. Peace replaced stress, and presents are no longer the focus of my Christmas. Instead, I can focus on the Savior and service.

Corinne Brown Walker, Massachusetts, USA

Several years ago, during a period of financial hardship, our family began one of our favorite Christmas traditions. On Thanksgiving Day, the fourth Thursday in November in the United States, we placed a decorated box on a small table as the first Christmas decoration of the season. Each day, or as often as one of us thought of something for which we were grateful, we wrote it on a small piece of paper, folded it in half, and slipped it through an opening in the top of the box.

On Christmas morning, before opening any gifts, we read the Christmas story as told in Luke 2. Then we opened our little “Thankful Box” and took turns reading its contents aloud. Doing so filled our hearts with love, joy, and gratitude. We were so happy that we almost forgot to open the meager gifts we had purchased for each other.

That was the best Christmas we had ever shared, and we have kept the “Thankful Box” tradition alive every year since.

Timothy R. Nipko, California, USA

Since joining the Church in 2003, I have felt a lot more peace and joy during the holiday season. In the past I felt alone, but now I find happiness and comfort during the holidays because of things I have learned



through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

First, I attend Church social gatherings during this time of year. Usually there is a ward activity and dinner. I enjoy visiting with Church members, sharing a delicious meal, and listening to the music presented. Staying until the end and helping clean up provides me with the opportunity to serve others, and I leave feeling uplifted and edified.

Next, I offer to babysit for friends with young children so they can go Christmas shopping with their spouses. Playing with the children always helps me feel good. I often feel the pure love of Christ when I am around them.

Another thing that brings me comfort when I am feeling stressed and overwhelmed during the busy holiday season is attending the temple. Going to the family history center, gathering names of my family members, and taking them with me makes my temple trips even more special. Performing services for my

Something that comforts me when I feel overwhelmed during the busy Christmas season is attending the temple.

deceased relatives gives me a feeling of satisfaction.

Finally, I try to share with others who are alone. For instance, in years past, I visited an elderly friend in a retirement center. We visited, played games, and shared our testimonies with each other. I enjoyed our time together, and it gave her the opportunity to interact with someone besides her regular visitors.

I feel blessed to understand that when I am giving to others I don't have time to feel sorry for myself. By doing things for others at Christmastime my love for the Savior has intensified.

Anne Wendt, Washington, USA

The following simple ideas have brought peace and the Spirit into our home as we enjoy and look forward to—rather than just survive—the holiday season.

- **We limit travel.** Four years ago, my wife and I decided not to travel to far-away relatives' homes during December



PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

while we have young children. Our three children are all under the age of seven, and not having to travel has eased a tremendous burden on our whole family. We have gently explained our reasoning—the high cost of holiday travel, the difficulty of traveling with small children, and our desire to start our own traditions, among other things—to our families, who have supported our decision. It has been wonderful to experience peace in our home without having to worry about travel.

- **We shop early.** My wife starts shopping for Christmas gifts in the middle of the summer and finishes by October. Casual shopping here and there eliminates the stress of last-minute shopping. In many cases, she is able to order items online and get free shipping.

The "Thankful Box" emerged because of financial hardship, but it turned into a part of the best Christmas our family has ever shared. We've kept the tradition alive ever since.



• **We decorate on a set day.**

Our family usually decorates for Christmas the day after our American Thanksgiving. Having it scheduled means no procrastination. Plus, we have an entire month to enjoy the decorations.

December is a quiet time in our home. We make it a priority to hold meaningful family home evenings, offer service to others, and read uplifting stories. We are grateful to find peace amid the often-chaotic rush of the holiday season by preparing in advance. Avoiding this rush has allowed for a peaceful, slower December focused on the Savior, family, and service.

Nathan George, Indiana, USA

As the Christmas season approaches, I have reflected on a goal I set at the beginning of one year: in addition to my regular scripture study, I would read the *Ensign* cover to cover each month for the entire year. As I did so, I came to love the magazine. I found that my prayers were often answered through messages I was reading. I also kept a journal as I read, which helped me reflect on important insights I gained through my reading. As a result, my testimony of Jesus Christ has increased significantly.

Setting and keeping this goal has prepared me for the Christmas season because it has helped me feel the Spirit more regularly throughout the year. I now better appreciate why we celebrate His birth because in my study, I feel I have come to *know* Him.

Mari Black, Washington, USA



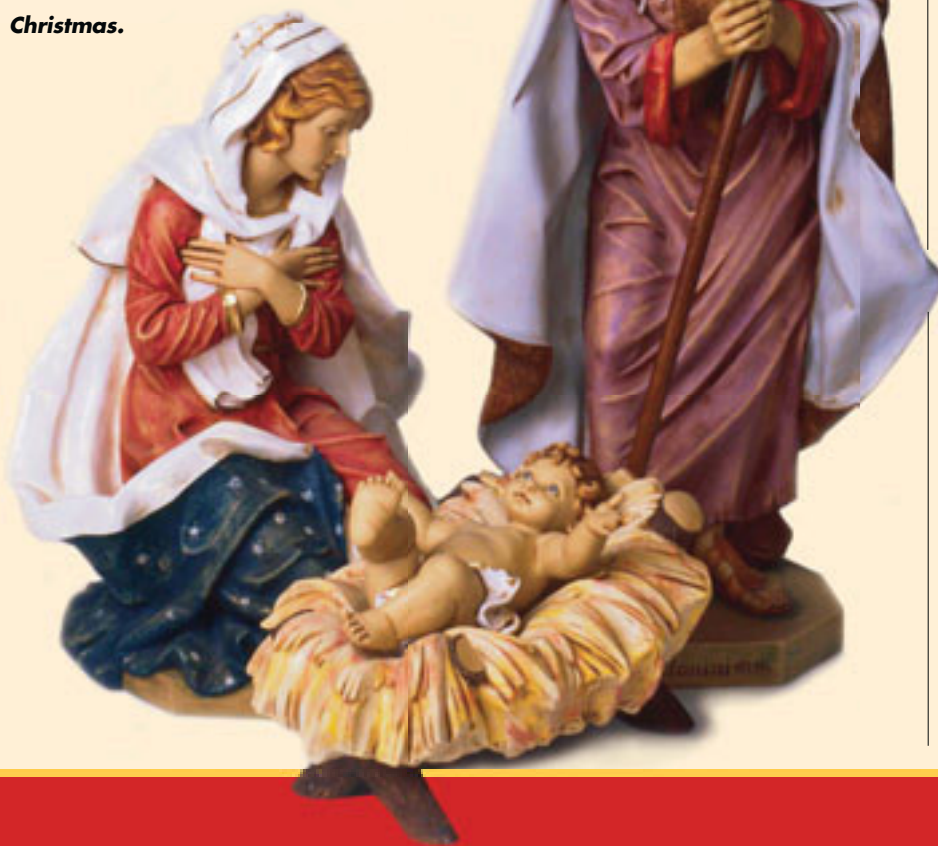
THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

“The Christmases we remember best usually have little to do with worldly goods but a lot to do with the spirit of caring, the spirit of love, and the spirit of compassion.”

President Thomas S. Monson, First Presidency Christmas Devotional, Dec. 3, 2006.

During the first part of December, I prioritize the various holiday events that our family is invited to attend. I like to ensure that we can still spend plenty of time together. In instances when we are the ones hosting a holiday party, we like to schedule it at the beginning of December to kick

Keeping family traditions (like adding a piece to my Nativity set) helped me feel close to my family when I couldn't be with them for Christmas.



off the Christmas season. Doing this early helps us enjoy the time we have with family and friends and prevents stress from building up later in the season. In doing this, I feel more receptive to the Spirit, and our family can focus on Christ and His birth, the true meaning of Christmas.

Tasha Slade, Arizona, USA

I often find peace during the holidays by reflecting on the blessings, trials, and accomplishments of the past year. In thinking about my trials, I identify the ways in which I have





QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

grown. Reflecting on accomplishments helps me consider goals for the coming year and helps me find ways that I can better become the husband and father that my Savior wants me to be.

Brian Steffen, New York, USA

Several years ago a sister in our ward shared her formula for getting and keeping the Christmas spirit during the holiday season. Her simple suggestions have sweetened my holiday experience:

- Faithfully attend all of your Church meetings.
- Have regular scripture study focusing on the Savior's birth and mission.
- Read uplifting Christmas stories from Church magazines and other sources.
- Listen to peaceful Christmas music.
- Set aside a quiet time to read Christmas cards from family and friends.
- Set up a Nativity display as a visual reminder of the reason we rejoice.

Over the years, I have added two more items to the list:

- Pray often with gratitude and praise for the gift of our Savior.
- Seek the guidance of the Spirit in reaching out to others in small acts of service.

Cindy Galbraith, Missouri, USA

After finishing graduate school I moved from my hometown to a bigger city to work. Because my new job started December 1 and because I did not yet have vacation time, I was not able to go back home for Christmas. A few things made it easier for me to make it through the holiday season

away from family for the first time and in a new city. One of these was to carry out family traditions. For instance, my grandmother had a large Nativity set which she added to each year. I also had my own Nativity set, and I made a point of adding pieces to it the way my grandmother had done. Additionally, on Christmas Eve, I read the Christmas story in Luke 2, just as I knew my family would be doing. In keeping up family traditions—even when I wasn't with family—I felt a connection to them.

I also attended ward- and stake-sponsored holiday activities. I met people in my ward who made me feel welcome. In addition, I kept in touch with my family through phone and mail. These things helped me feel the spirit, love, and peace of the holidays, and I was able to enjoy them.

Tania Charette, Utah, USA

For my family and me, attending or viewing the First Presidency Christmas Devotional has been a wonderful tradition that sets the proper tone for our holiday season. The music from the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the inspirational messages from the First Presidency set the proper tone for our holiday season and remind us to focus on the Savior's birth.

One of the most memorable broadcasts for me was in 1994, when President Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995) was the President of the Church. He was the concluding speaker. The focus of his comments

was Luke 2. At first, I thought this would be just another reading of already familiar verses. But I realized there was something special about having a prophet of God reading the Christmas story from the scriptures. It is the confirming witness of more than one person that the words are true which strengthens my testimony and reaches into my heart. I appreciated President Hunter's confirming testimony. It still touches me these many years later. ■

Robert J. Crossett, Vermont, USA

*Editors' note: For information about this year's First Presidency Devotional, taking place December 6, please visit LDS.org. Click on **News and Events**, then **Calendar**. Click on the **First Presidency Christmas Devotional** link (listed on December 6) for broadcast details.*

SHARE YOUR IDEAS

An upcoming Q&A feature will focus on the following topic:

Prophets and apostles have taught us to be frugal in our spending, meeting real needs instead of wants. But in today's world, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between legitimate needs and desires. How can I teach my children about using temporal resources according to spiritual priorities?

If you would like to share your ideas, please label your submission "temporal resources" and follow the 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 15.

SIX DAYS
SHALT
THOU
LABOUR

Exodus 20:9



Above: *Who Can Find a Virtuous Woman? II*, by Louise Parker

“There is no substitute under the heavens for productive labor. It is the process by which dreams become realities. It is the process by which idle visions become dynamic achievements.”

Gordon B. Hinckley,

“I Believe,” Ensign, Aug. 1992, 4



Left: *The Pavers*,
by Mahonri M. Young, 1877–1957
Brigham Young University
Museum of Art



Left: **A Late Feeding**,
by Robert Duncan

Below: **Melon Patch**,
by Gary Smith



Above: **Gardening in the Rain**,
by Brian Kershisnik



Above: **To Work**,
by Julie Rogers





Above: *The Calf*, by Edwin Evans, Brigham Young University Museum of Art



Above: *Apple Pie*, by Walter Rane



Above: *Eve's Daughter*, by Lee Udall Bennion



Above: **A Day of Work**,
by Greg Newbold



Above: **Sweat of the Brow**,
by Gary Smith



Above: **The Face of New England**, by Robert Duncan Below: **Spring Plowing**, by Greg Newbold



*“Self-reliance
is a product
of our work
and undergirds all other welfare practices. It is an essential
element in our spiritual as well as our temporal well-being.”*

Thomas S. Monson,

“Guiding Principles of Personal and Family Welfare,” Ensign, Sept. 1986, 3



No one needs to sail alone in today's troubled employment waters. In addition to local Church leaders, specialists like these at the Mexico City Employment Resource Center can provide valuable guidance.



The Blessing of Work

BY BISHOP H. DAVID BURTON
Presiding Bishop

Those who have spent time on or around the ocean know how changeable it is. Waves, tides, currents, and winds are constantly shifting and interacting. Successful sailors and fishers learn to ride the waves and tides and to use the winds and currents in order to safely go where they need to go.

The world is also changeable, and the rate of change seems to be accelerating. Part of the great ebb and flow of our variable world occurs in the changing employment market. Fortunately, just as sailors use acquired skills, charts, and other aids to navigate successfully, there are resources and learnable skills that can help us navigate changing employment conditions. Those who are skilled not only at working but at finding work can best navigate these changing times.

A Commandment and a Blessing

Today, many have forgotten the value of work. Some falsely believe that the highest goal in life is to achieve a condition in which one no longer needs to work. President David O. McKay (1873–1970) was fond of saying, “Let us realize that the privilege to work is a gift, that power to work is a blessing, that love of work is success.”¹

Work is not a matter of economic need alone; it is a spiritual necessity. Our Father in

Heaven works to bring about our salvation and exaltation (see Moses 1:39). And, beginning with Adam, He has commanded us to work. Even in the Garden of Eden, Adam was instructed to “dress [till] it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). After the Fall, Adam was told, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:19). As with any other commandment, there is joy in its keeping. To work—honestly and productively—brings contentment and a sense of self-worth. Having done all we can to be self-reliant, to provide for our own needs and those of our family, we can turn to the Lord in confidence to ask for what we might yet lack.

Gifts, Talents, Interests

Heavenly Father has given us all talents and gifts that can help us provide for ourselves and our families. Learning to recognize our talents and gifts—and interests—is an important first step in career preparation. President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, learned from his father, Henry Eyring, to choose a career that complemented his interests.

Because of his love for science, Professor Henry Eyring encouraged his sons to major in physics as preparation for a career in science. While President Eyring was studying physics at the University of Utah, he had an exchange with his father that changed his career direction. He asked his father for help



Work is not a matter of economic need alone; it is a spiritual necessity. In these stormy economic times, surely the commandment to work is among the commandments the Lord is prepared to help us keep.

with a complex mathematical problem. “My father was at a blackboard we kept in the basement,” President Eyring recalls. “Suddenly he stopped. ‘Hal,’ he said, ‘we were working this same kind of problem a week ago. You don’t seem to understand it any better now than you did then. Haven’t you been working on it?’”

A little chagrined, President Eyring admitted he had not. President Eyring recalls his father’s response: “When I told him no, my father paused. It was really a very tender and poignant moment, because I knew how much he loved me and how much he wanted me to be a scientist. Then he said, ‘Hal, I think you’d better get out of physics. You ought to find something that you love so much that when you don’t have to think about anything, that’s what you think about.’”²

Training and Education

When we have examined our own interests and abilities and when we have taken counsel from those who know and love us—especially the Lord—we need to seek both education and experience in our chosen career field. Education and training are among the most worthwhile investments anyone can make.

Learn to love learning. Just as it is important to continue making deposits to a savings account, it is important to continue educating yourself in your chosen profession

or career so that your skills will always be marketable. Just as a sailor keeps an eye on the horizon for changing weather, keeping up-to-date in your career will help you spot changing conditions in your field and make necessary course corrections.

Giving and Accepting Help

None of us is alone on the ocean; we are part of a great fleet. And just as a naval fleet has numerous support vessels, the Church has bishops and branch presidents, Relief Society presidents, quorum presidents, employment specialists, and others who stand ready to help us get underway. Such help often includes directing us to resources and training that fit our specific situations—such as writing a résumé, conducting an effective job search, and learning to present ourselves well in interviews.

Long before the term *networking* came into use, sailors exchanged information about such things as dangerous shoals, new routes, and sources of supply. A sailor about to enter unfamiliar waters would talk to everyone who might have useful information and experience to share. In today’s employment environment, establishing and maintaining contact with those who have useful information or experience is equally vital. Local ward or branch leaders and extended family are good starting points.

Teaching Children to Work

One of parents’ most important responsibilities is to teach their children to work. Even young children can begin to experience the benefits of working when they are involved in household chores and in service to others. Wise parents will work alongside their children, will provide frequent praise, and will make sure no task is overwhelming.

When President Thomas S. Monson was young, his parents taught him the principle of work by their examples. His father, a printer, worked long and hard practically every day of his life. When he was home, he did not stop working in order to take a well-deserved rest. He continued to work by providing service to family and neighbors





Just as a sailor keeps an eye on the horizon for changing weather, keeping up-to-date in your career will help you spot changing conditions in your field and make necessary course corrections.

alike.³ His mother was always working to provide some needed service to a family member or friend. President Monson's parents often asked him to accompany them or to do some service for them, allowing him to learn firsthand about working to serve others.

President Monson learned from his father how to work in business and began his first part-time job when he was 14, working in the printing shop that his father managed. President Monson relates that after age 14, there have not been many days in his life—other than Sundays—when he didn't work. "When you learn to work while you're young, the habit stays with you," he says.⁴

Blessings of Persistence

In matters of employment, as with most everything else we are called upon to do in life, it is vital that we move forward. When we do our best, seeking both human and divine guidance and trusting in our loving Heavenly Father, He will bless the outcome.

As a young man, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First



Presidency, wanted a different work experience than that of a laundry delivery boy for his family. He did not overly enjoy the cart, the heavy bike, or the work; nevertheless, he worked hard to help his family.

He relates the following regarding a blessing that came from that challenging work experience:

"Many years later, when I was about to be drafted into the military, I decided to

Like sailors about to enter unfamiliar waters, those who are entering the job market are wise to take counsel from those who have been there before them.

CHURCH EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

- Talk to your **ward or branch employment specialist**, who can refer you to job openings, train you in job search techniques, give you career guidance, or recommend some community resources.
- The Church has **Employment Resource Service Centers** around the world. To find if one is near you, talk to your priesthood leaders or visit www.providentliving.org.
- Visit www.providentliving.org for **job search tips and training** on skills such as interviewing, résumé writing, and networking (only in English).

volunteer instead and join the Air Force to become a pilot. I loved flying and thought being a pilot would be my thing.

“To be accepted for the program I had to pass a number of tests, including a strict physical exam. The doctors were slightly concerned by the results and did some additional medical tests. Then they announced, ‘You have scars on your lung which are an indication of a lung disease in your early teenage years, but obviously you are fine now.’ The doctors wondered what kind of treatment I had gone through to heal the disease. Until the day of that examination I had never known that I had any kind of lung disease. Then it became clear to me that my regular exercise in fresh air as a laundry boy had been a key factor in my healing from this illness. Without the extra effort of pedaling that heavy bicycle day in and day out, pulling the laundry cart up and down the streets of our town, I might never have become a jet fighter pilot and later a 747 airline captain. . . .

“If I had only known back then what I learned many years later—if I had only been able to *see the end from the beginning*—I would have had a better appreciation of these experiences, and it would have made my job so much easier.”⁵

Setting Sail

In these stormy economic times, when the tide of opportunity seems to be ebbing, when the winds and currents seem to oppose our progress, it is vital to remember that the Lord gives no commandments unto the children of men “save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7). Surely the commandment to work to sustain self and family is among the commandments the Lord is prepared to help us keep.

For some, the challenge may seem daunting, as Nephi’s challenge surely was when he gazed upon an ocean that stretched beyond the horizon. A young man of the desert was to become a shipbuilder and a sailor. That is a career change. Nephi sought instruction and went to work (see 1 Nephi 17:8–11). Even so today, the Lord will bless us as we continue to sacrifice and serve in the kingdom and as we embark with faith, knowing that we do not sail alone. ■

NOTES

1. David O. McKay, *Pathways to Happiness* (1957), 381.
2. See Gerald N. Lund, “Elder Henry B. Eyring: Molded by ‘Defining Influences,’” *Liahona*, Apr. 1996, 28; *Ensign*, Sept. 1995, 10, 12.
3. See Thomas S. Monson, “Hallmarks of a Happy Home,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2001, 7; *Ensign*, Oct. 2001, 6.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Friend to Friend,” *Friend*, Oct. 1981, 7.
5. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “See the End from the Beginning,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 43.

KENNETH L. DUVALL

This annual conversation with your bishop is both an opportunity and a blessing.

After commanding His people to pay their tithes, the Lord promised to “open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10; see verses 8–12). Those who have seen the fulfillment of this promise can testify that the blessings are often more spiritual than financial, but the Lord also promises, “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field” (Malachi 3:10).

Tithing is an important test of our personal righteousness. President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) said: “By this principle it shall be known who is for the kingdom of God and who is against it. . . . By it shall be known whether we are faithful or unfaithful.”¹

If we are satisfied in our hearts that we have paid an honest tithing, why is it necessary to declare it to the bishop? There are several important reasons.

Declaration of tithing status.

We are accountable for what we have been given by God. And we shall be judged “out of those things which [are] written in the books, according to [our] works” (Revelation 20:12; see also 3 Nephi 27:26). President James E. Faust said, “One of the great blessings the people of this Church have is to meet with the bishop once each year, settle their tithing, and report that what they had paid in

Why?

contributions constitutes a tithe. It is also a great blessing for the bishops to have this experience.”²

At the end of the year, the bishop or branch president is asked to record on the records of the Church the tithing status of each member in his unit. It is our privilege to exercise our accountability by declaring to him our own tithing status.

A time to show our commitment. Tithing settlement allows all members the chance to demonstrate their obedience to the principle of tithing. Parents can use it as a teaching time. Children who hear their parents’ declaration learn that paying

tithing and fast offerings is important to their parents and to the Lord.

An audit of personal and Church records. Reviewing your records of contributions helps you ensure they are correct. An important part of the Church’s audit procedures is to have individuals check whether their personal records match the

Church’s and whether contributions were properly distributed in the categories selected on the donation slips.

A time for commitment. If you are not a full-tithe payer or if you haven’t paid *any* tithes or offerings, the interview with the bishop can be the beginning of repentance, a time to commit to begin or to do better.

Great blessings come to those who faithfully pay tithing and to those who faithfully attend tithing settlement. ■

NOTES

1. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 225.
2. James E. Faust, “Opening the Windows of Heaven,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 59.



MEETING WITH THE BISHOP FOR TITHING SETTLEMENT

Tithing is a principle that is fundamental to the personal happiness and well-being of the Church members worldwide, both rich and poor. Tithing is a principle of sacrifice and a key to the opening of the windows of heaven.”

President James E. Faust, (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Opening the Windows of Heaven,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 59.

Tithing Settlement



BY ELDER NEIL L. ANDERSEN
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The calling of a stake president is a sacred and spiritual experience. Under the direction of the First Presidency, General Authorities and Area Seventies are charged with this responsibility. During the 16 years I have served as a General Authority, I have extended calls in many cultures and continents—from North America to South America, from Europe to Asia.

In each experience, I have treasured two teachings I received in my first few weeks as a General Authority. From President Thomas S. Monson: “When you are on the Lord’s errand, you are entitled to the Lord’s help.” From President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “You will have experiences in your ministry when you put a question to the Lord through the veil

The Spiritual Gifts



I have met hundreds of stake presidents. They are men of accomplishment and integrity. They are full of faith, with an uncompromising desire to please the Lord.



and receive an immediate response.” In every case these two promises have been realized.

The experience of calling a stake president is always the same, and it is always different. It is the *same* in that the two General Authorities or Area Seventies who are sent feel an overwhelming dependence upon the Lord, and each must receive the same inspiration before callings are extended. The Spirit of the Lord always powerfully accompanies and confirms the selection process. It is *different* in that the man called varies greatly from stake to stake. Sometimes new stake presidents are men of great experience and years of service; sometimes they are younger and full of faith; their occupations follow no pattern.

positions. As we met with a Gospel Doctrine teacher at 10:00 p.m., the Lord powerfully confirmed this was His selection. Only after extending the call did we learn that he had been at his home, awaiting our phone call. Several months earlier, before any announcement of a change in the stake presidency,

We who are sent place our hands on the head of the new stake president and bestow upon him the keys of the priesthood necessary to preside over and direct the affairs of the stake.



Given the Stake President

The Bestowal of the Keys

While a stake president is normally found among the current leadership of the stake, there are exceptions. On one occasion we interviewed brethren into the late evening, unable to feel the confirming Spirit among the outstanding men we were meeting. Finally, after exhausting the prepared list of those to interview, we turned to respected men not currently serving in leadership

he and his wife were awakened in the night knowing that the calling would come to him.

Those who serve as stake presidents do not seek the office they hold. All are humbled and some are overwhelmed when they are called. As I called a stake president in Europe who had been a member of the Church only about 10 years, he gasped, “Oh no, no, not me. I cannot do it.” Fortunately, his wonderful wife, who was at his side, put her arms

around him and said, “Honey, you can do it. I know you can.” She was right, and he served very well.

In the Philippines, a man who had seen the Church grow quickly with very young leadership, responded when called, “Oh no, not me. I am too old.” When it was pointed out that some members of the Twelve were three decades older than he, he accepted and served very well.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you” (John 15:16), said the Savior. We neither seek nor refuse the calls that come to us.

Sometime, either before, during, or after the call, the Lord confirms to the man being called that his call is of God. One young stake president reported his confirmation this way:

“When I was interviewed, I was 32 years old and had served about four years as bishop. One of those conducting the interviews asked two poignant questions: (1) How did you gain your testimony? and (2) Would you share with us your testimony of the Savior? I shared my experience as a teenager, shortly after my mother passed away, when I learned for myself the truthfulness of the restored gospel, specifically with regard to the Book of Mormon.

“As I shared my testimony of the Savior, I received a witness that I would be called as the next stake president. I drove home and told my wife about my experience. When I told her that I thought I could be called as the next stake president, she responded, ‘You’re good, but you’re not that good.’ The phone rang two hours later, and I was invited to return with my wife, and the call was extended.”

Following the sustaining vote in a general session of stake conference, we who are sent place our hands on the head of the new stake president and bestow upon him the keys of the priesthood necessary to preside over and direct the affairs of the stake. These keys to preside over the stake come by delegation from the President of the Church and the other 14 Apostles who hold all the keys upon the earth. Within these keys are spiritual authority and power.

The Lord has always given keys to His chosen Apostles. Unto Peter He declared, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou

shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). Some of these keys are then shared with local leaders. In Zarahemla, Alma “ordained priests and elders, by laying on his hands according to the order of God, to preside and watch over the church” (Alma 6:1).

Outward Manifestation of the Keys

Interestingly, there was a time when obtaining a temple recommend required the signature of the President of the Church. Now this authority is held in the keys delegated to the stake president. With his counselors, he also recommends bishops to the First Presidency and ordains them once they are approved; he approves those to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood; he recommends and sets apart full-time missionaries; and he serves as a judge in Israel in helping those with serious sins to gain full forgiveness. He guides the workings and decisions of the stake’s bishops and branch presidents.

In these capacities, the Lord pours out revelation upon His stake presidents. A stake president living in the southern United States shared the following experience with me:

“In October 2007, a sister came to visit with me to obtain her temple recommend. During the interview, I asked her if her husband was going to visit with me for his recommend after she finished her interview. She told me that her husband had not been to the temple in over 20 years and that they had never been sealed in the temple in their 40 years of marriage. I felt a strong prompting to visit with this brother immediately. So strong was the prompting that I left my office, found him on the other side of the building, and brought him back to my office for an interview. After an interview, during which time we were joined by his bishop, he was given a temple recommend. This was a very emotional experience for all of us, especially his wife. I received an invitation later that week to attend their sealing in the temple.

“In early 2008, about four months after this couple was sealed, this brother got up in the morning to go to work and collapsed and died in their home. I am forever grateful that I listened to the promptings of the Spirit and encouraged this brother to do what he so needed to do in his life.”



The stake president approves those to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, interviews members for temple recommends, and serves as a judge in Israel.

Spiritual Gifts and Spiritual Promises

The Lord has declared that a stake is to be “for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm” (D&C 115:6). A stake president is the Lord’s shepherd who must help ensure that the spirit of safety and spiritual security are felt within the fellowship of the Church. He must carefully assure that the doctrine taught is true and pure. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) once said:

“The duties of a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood might be applied to the president of the stake. He ‘is to watch over the [entire stake], and be with and strengthen [the members],



“And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

“And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty’ (D&C 20:53–55).”¹

His work includes inspiration in how to strengthen families, fortify the rising generation, invite more of Heavenly Father’s children into the cleansing waters of

A stake president is the Lord's shepherd who must help ensure that the spirit of safety and spiritual security are felt within the fellowship of the Church.

baptism, reach out to those who have drifted from the Church, and bring the ordinances of the temple to living members and to those who have come before us.

In all of these important responsibilities, the Lord blesses the stake president with an enhancement of spiritual gifts. In the 46th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord speaks of the many spiritual gifts and declares:

“For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God.

“To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby” (D&C 46:11–12).

The Lord then adds, “Unto such as God shall appoint and ordain to watch over the church . . . are to have it given unto them to discern all those gifts . . . that there may be

a head, in order that every member may be profited thereby” (D&C 46:27, 29).

At times these gifts are associated with spiritual promises the Lord will fulfill. A former stake president from Brazil shared with me this experience:

“A faithful single mother with four teenage children was struggling economically. I asked her, ‘Sister, are your children attending seminary regularly?’ She replied, ‘I have many challenges and live far away from the chapel. It is dangerous.’ At that moment, I felt a strong prompting to counsel and promise her. I said, ‘If you don’t have the money, you need to walk the kilometers with them. Go with them; sit in class with them. If you will do that, you will save your children, and all will marry in the temple.’ I was startled by what I had said but could not deny the powerful inspiration.

“She accepted the counsel and for many years walked with her children to seminary. Her promise has now been fulfilled. All are



married in the temple, and her son is serving as bishop in his ward.”

Perhaps one of the greatest gifts given a stake president is a deeper and expanding love for the people he has been called to serve. When I was called as a stake president, I found myself awed by the powerful sense of concern and love I felt for those of the stake. Even for those involved in serious sin, I felt a great sense of empathy and desire to help. These feelings of love are always combined with the desire to help members become truly converted to the Savior and His restored gospel. I had served many years as a counselor, but when I had the keys of presidency, the feelings were more potent and motivating. I felt that perhaps I was receiving in part the gift of charity spoken of by Mormon when he admonished, “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” (Moroni 7:48).

These feelings bring a stake president to reach out, and miracles follow. A stake president from South America recounted an example of how this love moved him to seek after one who was lost:

“I had a strong impression that I needed to try to find a brother who had served many years before as my missionary companion. He was married and less active in the Church. His membership record was in a small unit 150 kilometers [93 miles] from the stake center. I traveled there and spoke with the branch president, who told me that my former missionary companion was living far out in the country. The president gave me directions to the small village. After a while the asphalt road turned into a dirt road. After many more kilometers, I realized I was lost. I stopped the car and was about to give up. It was a very hot day, and the car had no air conditioner. The dust from the road was difficult for my wife and children. I knelt on the road and asked for help from the Lord.

“Some hours later, we arrived in the small village and found my missionary companion. I invited him to come back. He became active in the Church and served in many leadership positions. His son served an honorable mission,

and today my friend and former companion is a counselor in the bishopric.”

There is power in the office. The Lord stands with His stake presidents. This is from a stake president in Ecuador: “I observed a man in the stake who often appeared unhappy. One day I received a strong impression that I needed to visit this man. I drove immediately to his home. He told me that he was very sad because for many years he hadn’t exchanged a single word with his father. He explained that his father was a hard man and had cut off their relationship. I asked him if he would like to fix the situation. After driving to his father’s house, I stopped the car in front. I knocked on the door and heard a voice ask, ‘Who is it?’ I recognized the voice of his father and answered, ‘Your stake president, Brother.’ He opened the door and saw me standing side by side with his son. Without a single word, they embraced each other and began to cry. The situation was fixed.”

In the world there are more than 2,800 stake presidents. In many ways, they are ordinary people—like you and me. They are working on their salvation just as we are working on ours. Yet they have received an extraordinary calling. Hands have been placed on their heads, and they have received priesthood keys.

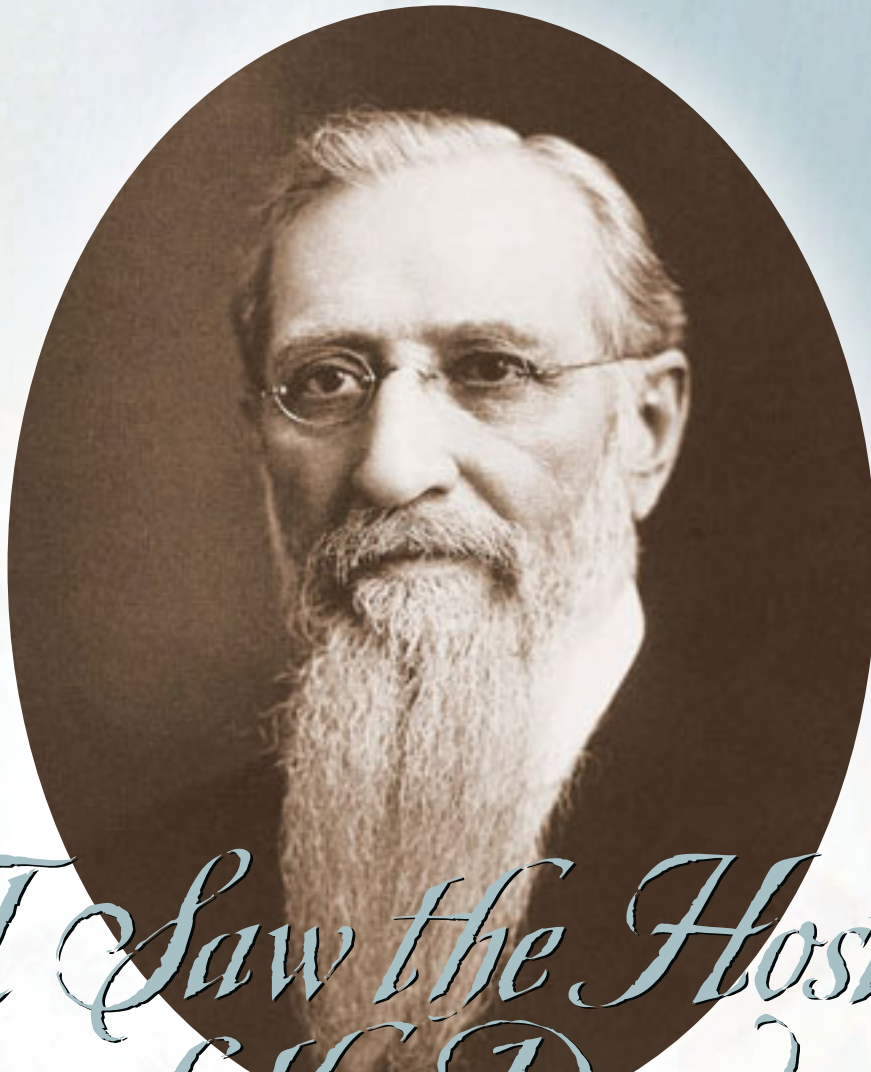
I have met hundreds of stake presidents. They are men of accomplishment and integrity in their personal and professional lives. They are full of faith, with an uncompromising desire to please the Lord.

I have stayed in their homes, knelt with them in prayer, and heard their sincere supplications to Heavenly Father. I have felt the power of the Lord upon them. The Lord loves them and bestows upon them spiritual gifts.

Let each of us pray for our stake president. Let us stand by his side and help him. Let us listen to him and trust him. “And Israel shall be saved . . . ; and by the keys which I have given shall they be led, and no more be confounded at all” (D&C 35:25). ■

NOTE

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Stake President,” *Liahona*, July 2000, 61; *Ensign*, May 2000, 51.



I Saw the Hosts of the Dead

BY GEORGE S. TATE

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*President Joseph F. Smith's vision in 1918
offered comfort to a grieving world and gives us
greater understanding of the plan of salvation.*

My soul is rent asunder. My heart is broken, and
flutters for life! O my sweet son, my joy, my
hope! . . . O God, help me!"¹

So President Joseph F. Smith wrote in his journal upon the death of his eldest son, Hyrum Mack Smith, the 45-year-old Apostle who succumbed in January 1918 to a ruptured appendix. Eight months later, on September 24, Hyrum's widow, Ida Bowman Smith, died of heart failure just a week after giving birth to a baby boy. The couple left behind five children. At the time, the First World War,

which began in 1914 while Hyrum was presiding over the European Mission, was still raging. It ended with the Armistice on November 11, 1918.

Death and the war were certainly on President Smith's mind that year. On October 3, 1918, less than two weeks after the death of his daughter-in-law, he sat in his room "pondering over the scriptures; and reflecting upon the great atoning sacrifice that was made by the Son of God, for the redemption of the world; and the great and wonderful love made manifest by the Father and the Son" (D&C 138:1-3). His mind turned to the account in 1 Peter 3-4 of Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison between the time of His Crucifixion and Resurrection. These chapters impressed President Smith as never before (see D&C 138:6). He said, "As I pondered over these things which are written, the eyes of my understanding were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I saw the hosts of

PHOTOGRAPH OF JOSEPH F. SMITH, COURTESY OF THE CHURCH HISTORY ARCHIVES; PAINTING, 3RD NEPHI, BY JERRY THOMPSON; PHOTOGRAPH OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS ON THE WESTERN FRONT, COURTESY OF BETTMAN/CORBIS; PAINTING, HYRUM MACK SMITH, BY JOHN HAYEN; FRONT PAGE, OCTOBER 4, 1918, OF THE DISCREET NEWS, COURTESY OF HAROLD B. LEE LIBRARY.



Insets below: A painting of Hyrum Mack Smith, by John Hafen. American soldiers fighting in Europe during World War I. The front page of the Deseret News from October 4, 1918. This page headlines activities in World War I but also highlights President Joseph F. Smith's general conference address on October 3, 1918, as well as reports of the flu pandemic in the United States.

the dead, both small and great” (D&C 138:11).

The vision that opened before him, which now comprises section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants, was one of consolation. Coming at a time of great worldwide and personal suffering, it testifies of Heavenly Father's love and of the incomparable compassion and comfort offered by the Atonement for the living and the dead.

No Stranger to Loss

As heartbreaking as his son Hyrum's death was, it was not President Smith's first experience with the death of loved ones. He was just five when his father, the Patriarch Hyrum Smith, was slain with the Prophet Joseph Smith in Carthage Jail. His mother, Mary, died when he was 13. In 1915 his wife Sarah Richards Smith died, followed later that year by his 25-year-old daughter, Zina Smith Greenwell. By 1918 only one of his siblings had survived. Of his 44 children, 13 had died, many in their childhood. President Joseph F. Smith's expressions of grief over the death of each in his journal, letters, and commemorative poems are touching from first to last.

When his first child, Mercy Josephine, died before her third birthday, he wrote: “My heart is bruised and wrenched almost asunder. I am desolate, my home seems desolate.

. . . I look in vain, I listen, no sound, I wander through the rooms, all are vacant, lonely, desolate, deserted.

. . . No beaming little black eyes sparkling with love for papa; . . . but a vacant little chair.

. . . and only the one desolate thought forcing



In Flanders Fields

By John McCrae

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.
Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*



its crushing leaden weight upon my heart—she is not here, she is gone!”² Death had surrounded him throughout his life, and the longings these deaths awakened could not be fully soothed in mortality.

With respect to Hyrum Mack’s death, how comforting it must have been to the prophet to behold “that the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance . . . in the great world of the spirits of the dead” (D&C 138:57). Among the noble and great ones President Smith also saw his father, Hyrum (see D&C 138:53), after whom he had named his son and after whom his newly orphaned grandson was also named.

The First World War and Pervasive Grief

President Smith received the vision that is section 138 the day before October 1918 general conference, and his son Joseph Fielding Smith took it in dictation shortly thereafter. It was approved by President Smith’s counselors, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Church Patriarch on October 31. (It was added to the scriptures in 1976 and became section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1979.) Because President Smith had been ill for some time, he was not expected to attend the conference. In the opening session, he spoke only

briefly. He referred to his illness and said, “I have not lived alone these five months. I have dwelt in the spirit of prayer, of supplication, of faith and of determination; and I have had my communications with the Spirit of the Lord continuously.”³ The front page of the *Deseret News* for October 4 reported this session, but it is the First World War that dominated the rest of the page.

From its beginning in 1914, President Smith had watched the war from afar with concern and sadness. In a Christmas message in December 1914, the First Presidency wrote, “While rejoicing over the birth of the Incomparable One, the light of our gladness is overshadowed with the war clouds that have darkened the skies of Europe, and our songs and salutations of joy and good will are rendered sadly discordant by the thunders of artillery and the groans of the wounded and dying, echoing from afar, but harrowing to our souls as the awful tidings come sounding o’er the sea.”⁴

What many thought would be a short war, over by Christmas, soon settled into a long slaughter, facilitated by new technology: the machine gun, long-range high-explosive artillery, airplanes, tanks, submarines, and gas. The loss of life was unparalleled. At Verdun, France, for example, there were nearly a million casualties between February and December 1916. To take

pressure off Verdun, the French appealed to the British to launch an offensive on the river Somme. By the time that battle ended in November 1916, it had claimed almost a million casualties as well. Seeing what lay about them, and imagining their own fate, soldier poets sometimes adopted

the perspective of the dead, speaking from graves. Perhaps the best-known example is Canadian John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields."⁵

In the end, 70 million men from all over the world took up arms. There were over 30 million military casualties, including 9 million dead, half of whom have no known graves. These latter are often commemorated on memorials to the missing, such as the one at Thiepval on the Somme, on which are inscribed the names of over 73,000 British soldiers whose graves are not known. Such memorials are related to a theme of the period—that of absence. This idea governs, for example, the most famous British memorial of all, the Cenotaph, or empty tomb, in London's Whitehall, which has been the focal point of mourning and remembrance since it was erected.

Death itself was an absorbing absence for the bereaved. Some were mourning loved ones who were among the missing or were buried in distant graves in foreign fields. In most cases families were denied the usual rituals of closure. And the sheer, overwhelming quantity of death awakened individual and communal grief on an unprecedented scale. With loss came questions: What is the fate of the dead? Do they continue to exist? Is there life after death? Will I see my loved ones again? The world was dense with loss and, as soldier journalist Stephen Graham wrote, "There is a pull from the other world, a drag on the heart and spirit."⁶

The Flu Pandemic of 1918

Many more deaths were soon to follow, unrelated to battle. There were so many, in fact, that the horrific losses of the previous four years of war would be multiplied several times within a short period by the pandemic of 1918.

The new killer was a flu virus more virulent than any ever known, the cause of the pandemic of 1918. In the United States alone, the month of October 1918—the period between the vision of October 3 and its formal acceptance on October 31—was the deadliest month in the nation's history.

The same front page of the *Deseret News* that had reported on President Smith's conference remarks and was dominated by news of the war devoted a column to the burgeoning flu epidemic. Hardest hit were large eastern U.S. cities like Philadelphia and New York. Surprisingly, the most vulnerable age group was 21–34. In military camps and on troop ships they perished at an astonishing rate. Of the American soldiers who died during this period, more than half were casualties of the flu pandemic.⁷ Although Utah was less devastated than were the larger urban areas, by October 9 cases of the flu had grown so alarmingly that the order was given to cease all public gatherings.

The Armistice was declared on November 11. A few days later, on November 19, just after his 80th birthday, President Smith died. Because of the pandemic, no public funeral services were held. A month later, with the flu still raging, Church leaders designated December 22 as a day of fasting "for the arrest and speedy suppression by Divine Power of the desolating scourge that is passing over the earth."⁸ Shortly thereafter the pandemic seemed to have passed its crest, and the decision was

Left: The Cenotaph, or empty tomb, a British memorial to soldiers who died during World War I and whose graves are not known.

The image depicts the day it was dedicated in 1920, when millions of people visited the site. Below: A depiction of Jesus Christ visiting the spirits in prison.



JAN 23: HYRUM MACK SMITH DIES.

SEPT 18: HYRUM MACK SMITH JR. IS BORN.

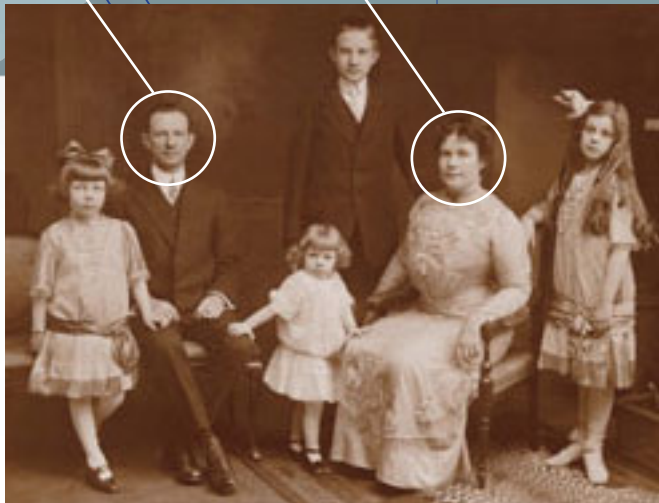
SEPT 24: HYRUM MACK SMITH'S WIFE, IDA BOWMAN SMITH, DIES.

OCT 3: JOSEPH F. SMITH RECEIVES THE REVELATION NOW KNOWN AS D&C 138.

OCT 4: AFTER MONTHS OF ILLNESS, JOSEPH F. SMITH SURPRISES THE CHURCH BY ATTENDING CONFERENCE.

OCT 9: CHURCHES AND OTHER PUBLIC PLACES ARE CLOSED IN UTAH.

NOV 11: THE ARMISTICE ENDS THE FIGHTING IN WWI.



The Hyrum Mack Smith family: Geraldine, Hyrum Mack Smith, Margaret, Joseph F. Smith, Ida Bowman Smith, and Maxine Smith.



An emergency Army hospital in Kansas for soldiers stricken by the flu pandemic.



American soldiers in 1918.

made to resume church services on January 5. But a further wave of the epidemic in the spring caused the April general conference to be postponed until June.

In the United States, the average life expectancy dropped by 12 years between 1917 and 1918. Worldwide, the death toll was staggering: at least 50 million.⁹ According to historian Alfred Crosby, “Nothing else—no infection, no war, no famine—has ever killed so many in as short a period.”¹⁰

Timely and Timeless: “A Document without Parallel”

The vision given to President Joseph F. Smith on October 3, 1918, came at the very point where these two great death-making events—the war and the flu pandemic—intersect. The war was not yet over; nor had the developing epidemic reached its full, pandemic power. But the more I have studied events surrounding this extraordinary vision, the more my appreciation for its timeliness has grown. A few days after President Smith’s death, the revelation was published in the pages of a general circulation newspaper, the *Deseret News*, making its transcendent truths available to comfort not only Latter-day Saints who mourned but also all those whose suffering might open their hearts to the Holy Ghost.

The vision proceeds from and affirms the great and wonderful love of God, as it is expressed through the Atonement of Christ. This Atonement is universal and is proffered to all who have ever lived or died. The vision is

rich in consolation, renewing for the modern world Isaiah’s prophecy of binding up the brokenhearted and declaring liberty to the captives (see D&C 138:42; see also Isaiah 61:1).

The vision brings hope and affirms the foundations of faith in a world where the faith of so many was shattered by the great calamities they had witnessed and experienced. It declares to all the world through the mouth of the Lord’s anointed that the Father and the Son live and are still earnestly engaged in the ongoing work of salvation for all God’s children.

Section 138 shows that death is not oblivion, as so many feared, but that each individual spirit continues in the next life. And in an age so painfully preoccupied with absence, especially where the bodies of loved ones had irretrievably vanished, the vision, with its promise of resurrection, affirms the central and eternal importance of the body in vivid terms: “For the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (D&C 138:50). The revelation affirms that “their sleeping dust was to be restored unto its perfect frame, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh upon them, the spirit and the body to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive a fulness of joy” (D&C 138:17).

The vision shows how the work of redemption was and is organized among the dead, how the Lord’s servants “carry the message of redemption unto all the dead”

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE HYRUM MACK SMITH FAMILY, JOSEPH F. SMITH, AND THE 1918 FIRST PRESIDENCY, COURTESY THE CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY; PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ARMISTICE AND MARCHING SOLDIERS, COURTESY OF BETTMANN/CORBIS; THE DECEMBER 20, 1918, DESERET NEWS NOTICE FROM THE FIRST PRESIDENCY, COURTESY OF HAROLD B. LEE LIBRARY ARCHIVE; PHOTOGRAPH OF THE KANSAS ARMY HOSPITAL, COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HEALTH AND MEDICINE.

DEC

NOV 19:
PRESIDENT
JOSEPH F.
SMITH DIES
SURROUNDED
BY HIS FAMILY.

NOV 30: THE
REVELATION
IS PUBLISHED
IN THE
DESERET
NEWS.



President Joseph F. Smith died on November 19, 1918. A public funeral was not held due to the flu pandemic.

DEC 22:
THE ENTIRE
CHURCH
FASTS TO
END THE
"SCOURGE
OF DEATH."

JAN

JAN 5:
CHURCH
SERVICES
ARE HELD
AGAIN.

JAN 6:
TEMPLE
SERVICES
RESUME.

JAN:
THE REVELATION
WE CALL
D&C 138 IS
PUBLISHED.

APR

GENERAL
CONFERENCE
POSTPONED
DUE TO
ANOTHER BUT
MILDER FLU
OUTBREAK.



A celebration on November 11, 1918, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to celebrate the Armistice.



President Heber J. Grant and his counselors Charles W. Penrose and Anthon H. Lund announced a churchwide fast on December 22, 1918, to ask God to stop the scourge of death raging over the earth. The Great Flu Pandemic seemed to have crested shortly thereafter. Left: Notice in the Deseret News announcing the fast.

(D&C 138:37). It shows that a way has been provided for all to receive the saving ordinances, reconfirming the connection of temple work to the redemption of the dead (see D&C 138:48, 54). And it invites us, the living, to actively participate, through seeking after the dead by performing vicarious ordinances (see D&C 138:33), and in so doing drawing the two worlds together.

This remarkable vision of the redemption of the dead is more than a doctrinal clarification that when Christ visited the spirits in prison (see 1 Peter 3–4), He did not go Himself among the wicked but “organized his forces” and “commissioned them” (D&C 138:30) to go forth on His behalf. Nor is its audience limited only to members of the Church. It is, as President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said, “a document without parallel. . . . There is nothing quite like it in all our sacred literature.”¹¹ In its grandeur and scope, it is the capstone of all teachings on the work of salvation among the dead.

But it is more than this. Addressed to the entire world through the living prophet in the last weeks of his life, the vision came at a time of great worldwide need. Such widespread death; such universal and unresolved grief, particularly where loved ones had vanished without a trace; such pervasive hunger to know the fate of the dead—all these things give a special resonance to Doctrine and Covenants 138, the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead, with its

great concourses of the dead, its assurance of divine love and of the unparalleled comfort of the Atonement, the blessings of which extend to all mankind, both the living and the dead. Timely and timeless, the vision spoke directly and compassionately to an agonized world in 1918, as it still speaks to us today and will continue to speak in future ages. ■

This article was prepared based on material by the author published in BYU Studies Vol. 46 Number 1 (2007).

NOTES

1. *The Life of Joseph F. Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (1938), 474. For fuller treatment and documentation of the materials discussed in this article, see George S. Tate, “The Great World of the Spirits of the Dead: Death, the Great War, and the 1918 Influenza Pandemic as Context for Doctrine and Covenants 138,” *BYU Studies* 46, no. 1 (2007): 4–40.
2. *The Life of Joseph F. Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (1938), 455–56.
3. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1918, 2.
4. *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, comp. James R. Clark, 6 vols. (1965–75), 4:319.
5. John McCrae, “In Flanders Fields,” in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed. Jon Silkin (1996), 85.
6. Stephen Graham, *The Challenge of the Dead* (1921), 36.
7. One such flu casualty was Stanford Hinckley, Gordon B. Hinckley’s older brother, who died on October 19, 1918, at a training camp near Bordeaux, France, attended by his chaplain, B. H. Roberts. Stanford Hinckley left behind a widow and a six-month-old son and now lies buried at Suresnes, overlooking Paris.
8. *Deseret Evening News*, Dec. 20, 1918, 4.
9. Niall P. A. S. Johnson and Juergen Mueller, “Updating the Accounts: Global Mortality of the 1918–1920 ‘Spanish’ Influenza Pandemic,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 76, no. 1 (2002): 105–15; the authors caution that “even this vast figure [of 50 million] may be substantially lower than the real toll, perhaps as much as 100 percent understated” (115).
10. Alfred W. Crosby, *America’s Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918* (1989), 311.
11. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Remarks at the Dedication of the Joseph F. Smith Building at Brigham Young University,” Sept. 20, 2005, 4; available at speeches.byu.edu.

TREASURED LETTERS

One of the best Christmas gifts I have ever given was for my in-laws. A few months before Christmas, I contacted each of their grandchildren, most of whom were teenagers or young adults. I asked them to write down favorite memories of Grandma and Grandpa and suggested they do a page for each grandparent.

It was a good thing I started making this gift early, because some of the letters were long in coming. As I received each one, I copied it onto some festive Christmas stationery, rolled it like a scroll, and tied it with red ribbon. I then found a small treasure chest to put them in and added some fun jewelry

“treasure” I bought at a thrift store.

On Christmas Day, the grandparents came to our house for the usual family party. When I gave them their present, I asked them to open it that night at their home. I knew they might be feeling lonely later on, and I knew that’s when their gift would be most appreciated.

The next day they called to say how wonderful their evening had been as they read each cherished letter. Through tears, they expressed how thankful and happy

they were to have these “treasures” to read again and again. It was a special Christmas memory for all of us.

Jane Hogan, Utah, USA

SERVICE TO SENIORS

As I hugged an elderly friend goodbye, she said, “Thanks for coming. You’re the only one in the ward who cares about me.” I hid my shock and responded, “No. That’s not true,” followed by the oft-used excuse, “Everyone is just so busy.” Our lives are busy, but are we busy doing the most important things? To be truly happy, we must include opportunities to serve others, especially those who are lonely and homebound. They have much to offer, but we often forget or overlook them. How can we help? There is ample opportunity—even with our busy schedules.



FAMILY HOME EVENING HELPS



Helping Children Find Joy in the Gospel

Each month, our family chooses a “joy” in our lives to focus on in family home evening. For instance, we have taught about the joys of preparation, kindness, and missionary work. One April, to coincide with general conference, we decided to teach about the joy of revelation.

I was wondering how I would teach this when I received some simple inspiration. Why not just talk about the joy I have experienced as

I have received personal revelation? My husband and I gathered items that represented personal revelation we have received and put the items in a bag. During our lesson, each child took a turn taking something from the bag. My husband and I would then briefly share what the item represented and how we felt when we received direction from heaven. For example, I put in my engagement ring and told the children how I felt when I knew marrying their father was the right

thing to do. I also put in a Book of Mormon and I told of when I prayed to receive the Lord’s guidance to know if it was true.

Our children loved the surprise of pulling something out of the bag, but it was also a powerful opportunity for my husband and me to share experiences from our own lives. It has been lovely to share the joys of the gospel with our four young children in a family home evening setting.

Rachel Harrison, New Zealand



- **Get acquainted.** Make treats or take a basket of fruit. Food often provides opportunities to visit with others and to show that you’re thinking of them.
- **Visit ward members.** Ask your bishop or Relief Society president who needs a visit in your ward. Beyond those we home or visit teach, we might also reach out to others who need an extra boost.
- **Visit a nearby nursing or retirement home.** When a child is in music lessons or sports practices, you might use “waiting time” to visit a nearby nursing home. Look for opportunities in your schedule to pay a visit.
- **Volunteer.** Call a nursing or retirement home and inquire about their volunteer opportunities. Our oldest son and I used to distribute newspapers one morning a week at a local nursing home. It was a great way to meet the residents and teach my son about responsibility and the blessings of service.
- **Share your talents.** If you’re musically inclined, share a song or play an instrument to brighten someone’s day. Quilting, baking, or scrapbooking—whatever your talents, you can share them. Who knows? Your newfound friends might share their talents too.
- **Schedule service.** Once a week is best to develop a friendship, but once a month is better than nothing. Once you’ve established a friendship, you can make your visits more meaningful by adding a few thoughtful touches.

- **Share a meal.** I prepare an extra dinner plate to take to a neighborhood friend. She is thrilled with the food, and it really doesn’t make extra work for me.
- **Ask about them.** What was their childhood like? How did they meet their spouse? What was their career? Their education? Hobbies? They’ll enjoy telling you about themselves, and you and your children will learn some interesting history.
- **Share pictures and scrapbooks.** Bring your pictures or scrapbooks and ask to look at theirs. Sharing

pictures and stories is one of the best ways to truly get to know someone.

- **Share the holidays.** If your elderly friends don’t have family nearby, invite them to share the holidays with you. Even if they do have holiday plans, they’ll still appreciate your company on the days in between. Our family has benefited so much from serving our “adopted grandparents.” You can never have too many friends who love you and your children.

Camille Checketts, Utah, USA

Nurture through Compassionate Service



Teach these scriptures and quotations or, if needed, another principle that will bless the sisters you visit. Bear testimony of the doctrine. Invite those you visit to share what they have felt and learned.

How Can I Develop and Increase in Compassion?

Moroni 7:48: “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.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency: “Disciples of Christ throughout all ages of the world have been distinguished by their compassion. . . . In the end, the number of prayers we say may contribute to our happiness, but the number of prayers we answer may be of even greater importance. Let us open our eyes and see the heavy hearts, notice the loneliness and despair; let us feel the silent prayers of others around us, and let us be an instrument in the hands of the Lord to answer those prayers” (“Happiness, Your Heritage,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 119, 120).

Barbara Thompson, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency: “We need to rescue ‘all

that is finest down deep inside of [us]’ so that as daughters of God we can do our part to build the kingdom of God. We will have help to do this. As Joseph declared, ‘If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates.’

“Let us bear one another’s burdens, mourn with those who mourn, comfort those who stand in need of comfort, and thus keep the covenants we have made [see Mosiah 18:8–10]” (“Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 116).

How Can I Nurture through Compassionate Service?

D&C 81:5: “Succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “The Good Shepherd said, ‘Feed my lambs.’ (John 21:15.) So a woman feeds her loved ones, providing succor and sustenance just as the Savior would do. Her divine gift is to nurture, to help the young, to care for the poor, to lift the brokenhearted.

“The Lord said, ‘My work and my glory [is] to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.’ (Moses 1:39.) So His devoted daughter-disciple may truly say, ‘My work and my



glory is to help my loved ones reach that heavenly goal.’

“To help another human being reach one’s celestial potential is part of the divine mission of woman. As mother, teacher, or nurturing saint, she molds living clay to the shape of her hopes. In partnership with God, her divine mission is to help spirits live and souls be lifted. This is the measure of her creation. It is ennobling, edifying, and exalting” (“Woman—Of Infinite Worth,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 22).

Silvia H. Allred, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency: “The Lord has blessed women with divine attributes of love, compassion, kindness, and charity. Through our monthly visits as visiting teachers, we have the power to bless each sister as we extend our arms of love and kindness and give the gifts of compassion and charity. . . . It is my prayer that we will pledge an increased commitment to extend our arms of love and compassion to bless, help, and strengthen each other as we go about doing our visiting teaching with a willing and joyful heart” (“Feed My Sheep,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 113, 115). ■

When Saw We Thee Sick?

From 2003 to 2005 I served as Young Women president in the Gutiérrez Zamora Ward, in Veracruz, Mexico. Each Christmas the young women and their leaders baked treats to take to the older members of our ward.

As Christmas 2005 approached, we practiced singing Christmas carols and donned red hats and scarves. In the winter our village receives a steady drizzle of rain and a lot of cold wind from the north. But that did not prevent about a dozen of our young men and young women from going out with our load of pineapple pies.

When we arrived at the homes of our elderly brothers and sisters, we sang with great joy. We left each home feeling pleased because, even if for only a moment, we had brought happiness with our carols and pies.

The last sister we visited had been less active for many years. Though none of the youth had met Juanita, my husband and I had known her for a long time. She was now bedridden, terminally ill, and very poor. A few days prior, the elders quorum had visited her home to make some repairs.

When we arrived at her home, I called out her name. No one answered, so I kept calling. Soon I heard a soft voice say, “Come on in, Sister Araceli.” We entered and sang with joy and enthusiasm, even though her condition saddened us. Not long before, Juanita had been full of life. Now when she sat up, the youth couldn’t restrain their tears. She

was deeply moved and thanked us for visiting her and helping her feel, through our carols, that our Heavenly Father remembered her and loved her.

After we left her humble

dwelling, the youth expressed gratitude for having been able to sing for her. They didn’t care that they ended up wet and cold; their hearts were filled with joy for having shared a small portion of the happiness they felt. It was then that I understood

Not long before, Juanita had been full of life. Now when she sat up, the youth couldn’t restrain their tears.



more fully the verses that read:

“I was sick, and ye visited me. . . .

“ . . . When saw we thee sick . . . and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:36, 39–40).

I was saddened when Juanita passed away a few days later, but I know without a doubt that Heavenly Father loves His children. I also know that if we follow the Spirit, we can be instruments in His hands in blessing each other. ■

Araceli López Reséndiz, Veracruz, Mexico

Dressed in Love

It was December, the season when people’s feelings are tender as they remember the birth of Jesus Christ and what He did for us through His infinite Atonement.

When I arrived home from work, my three children and my beautiful wife shared with me a decision they had made about Christmas: “There won’t be any need to buy presents this year,” they declared.

Surprised, I asked, “And what brought about this decision?” After all, my children would be sacrificing something they

had looked forward to all year.

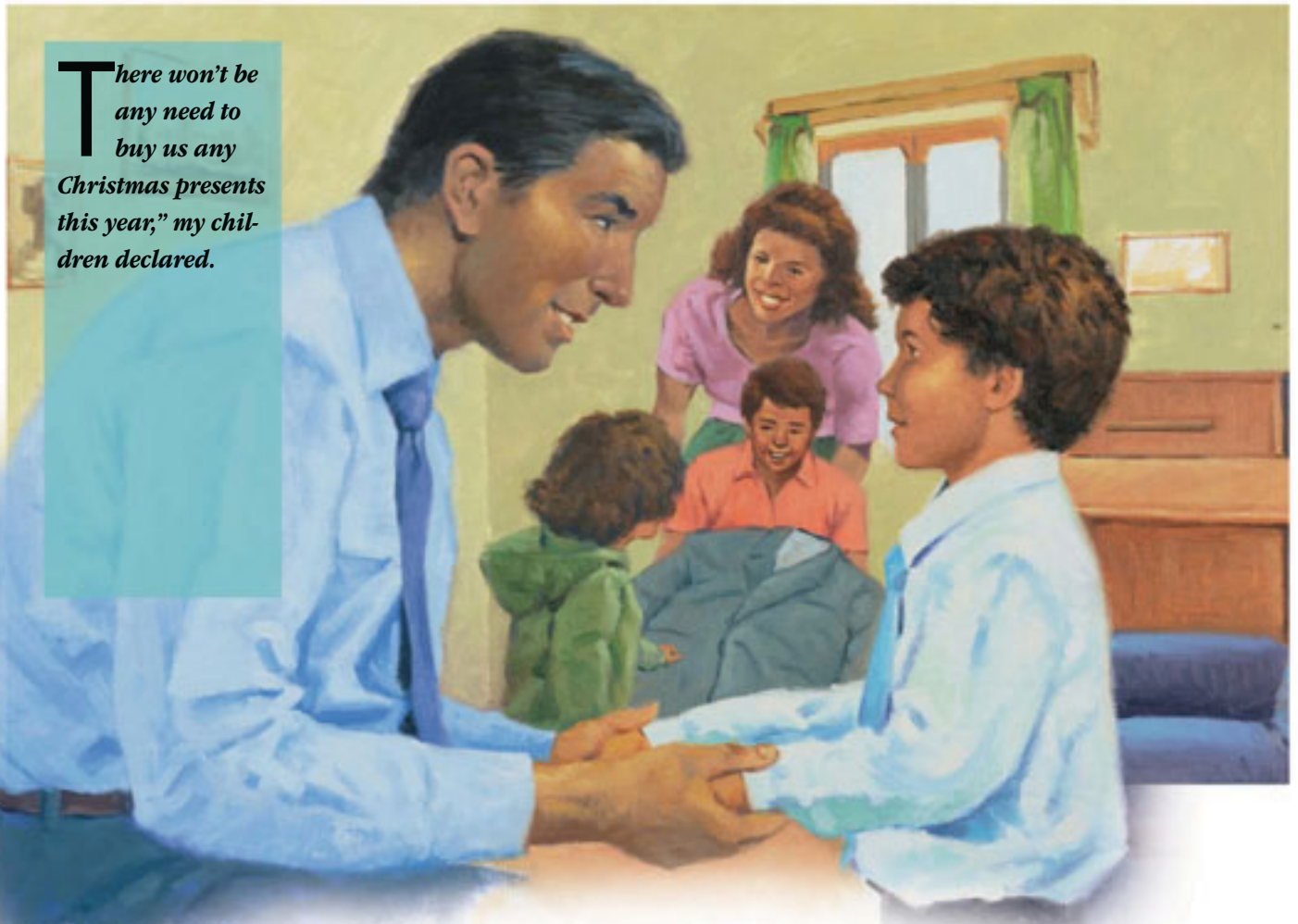
They immediately went and retrieved my two old, frayed suits. “Daddy,” they said, “with the money we were going to use for Christmas presents, we want you to replace these old suits with a new one. We would like to see you go to work in a new suit!”

I realized that this was the true spirit of Christmas. When we sacrifice something for someone else, we come to understand the meaning of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Later, when I put on the new suit I received for Christmas, I felt that I was dressed in love. ■

Walter Ciro Calderón R., Bogotá, Colombia

There won't be any need to buy us any Christmas presents this year," my children declared.



Teaching My Teacher

One autumn many years ago I was a new graduate student at Columbia University in New York City. In a large classroom full of students, our professor was discussing modern imitations of ancient texts. As he cited a list of forgeries, I was startled to hear him add the Book of Mormon to his list.

Instantly I knew I could not leave the classroom without doing something. I could not disappoint my ancestors, whose testimonies of the Book of Mormon had led them to sacrifice everything.

After class I approached the professor, who held the Charles Anthon chair at Columbia. More than 100 years before, Martin Harris had come to visit Professor Anthon at Columbia. Martin carried a paper with engravings copied from the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated.

I remembered my father sharing with me a letter his father wrote about Martin Harris. My grandfather told of seeing Martin shortly before Brother Harris died. When grandfather asked him about the Book of Mormon, Martin raised himself up from his bed and bore a strong testimony. He did see an angel, he did hear his voice, and he did view the plates of gold.

"My name is Diana, and I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," I said shakily to my professor. "The Book of Mormon,

for me, is a book of scripture. I would like to hear your reasons for calling it a forgery."

As we walked across the campus, the professor, who had read the Book of Mormon, listed several objections to its authenticity. I hurriedly wrote them down, and when he had finished, I asked him, "May I write what I learn from sources on the subject in response to these objections?" He agreed.

I walked back to the dorm, closed the door of my room, knelt in prayer, and began weeping. I felt weak and inadequate. Fortunately, that evening we had a Church activity. Following a discussion that lifted my spirit, I asked for help from the full-time missionaries, who had attended. They shared some sources of information that covered most of the points raised by my professor. Then I searched the vast library of Columbia. In my paper I addressed the professor's questions and offered my testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Then I gave it to him.

I waited several weeks for his response. Finally I asked him if he had read it.

The Book of Mormon, for me, is a book of scripture," I told my professor. "I would like to hear your reasons for calling it a forgery."

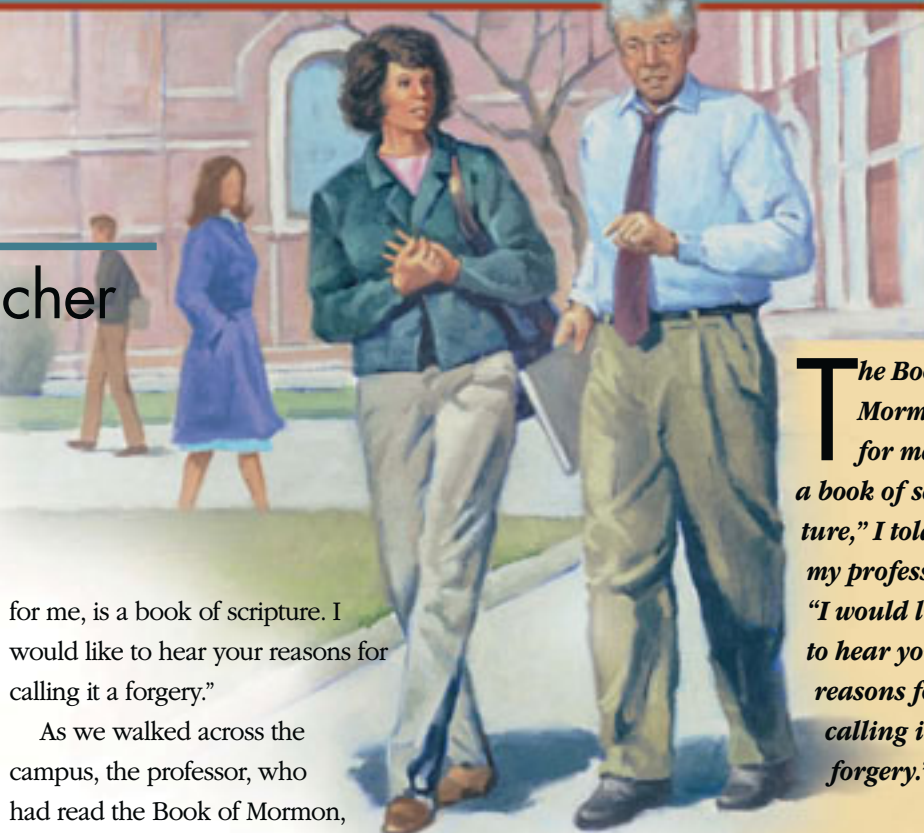
"Yes, and I gave it to my wife to read.

She told me, 'Whatever you do, don't destroy that student's faith.'" He then turned and walked away.

As Christmas drew near, I was strongly impressed to give him a copy of the Book of Mormon. I found a copy, added my testimony, and thanked him for reading my paper. I then wrapped the book in Christmas paper and gave it to him. Shortly afterward, I received a handwritten note from him in which he expressed gratitude for receiving a copy of "this remarkable book."

When I read his words, my eyes filled with tears. The Spirit whispered that this professor would no longer hold up the Book of Mormon to ridicule. I was grateful the Spirit had softened hearts and helped me know how to teach my teacher. ■

Diana Summerhays Graham, Utah, USA



The Greater Gift

One morning as I finished reading from and pondering the Book of Mormon, I realized that I would again finish it by the end of the year. This realization brought back the memory of my brother, whom I cared for in my home during his final weeks with terminal cancer in 2005.

Oliver was determined to fulfill a promise to himself to follow the counsel of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) and read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year.¹ But by that fall, Oliver still had many pages

to go. Eventually he became so weak that he could no longer read to himself.

Determined to keep his commitment, Oliver asked me if I would read the Book of Mormon to him.

Determined to keep his commitment, Oliver asked me if I would read the Book of Mormon to him. I was much further along in my own reading, but I was glad to begin where he had left off.

By reading to Oliver every day, I was able to help him reach his goal to finish the book by year's end, just days before he died. By that time he could hardly speak audibly, but his mind was clear and active. With much effort, he often expressed his appreciation to me for the gift I had given him, saying he could now die in peace because he had fulfilled his promise.

I had read the Book of Mormon many times before, but I had never felt its spirit so powerfully or understood its precepts so clearly as I did during those waning months of my brother's life. Truly, Oliver had given me the greater gift. ■

Lois N. Pope, Utah, USA

NOTE

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Liahona and Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6.

Why Do I Need to Be Here?

A week before Christmas in 2007 two of my children were diagnosed with strep throat and ear infections. Jacob, age 5, whined all the way to the pharmacy for his medicine, and Beth, 19 months, was especially clingy.

When we arrived, we were greeted by a long line at the prescription counter. While Jacob tugged at my leg and complained about his ear, Beth wiggled out of my arms. I thought she would stay beside me, but as soon as she was free, she ran straight to an elderly gentleman sitting on a bench near the line.

The man was looking at the floor, his face resting in his hands. I called after Beth, not wanting to leave the line, but she approached the man anyway and bent down to look up



called after Beth, but she approached the man anyway and bent down to look up at his face as she grinned and giggled.

at his face as she grinned and giggled.

I then sent Jacob to get her. He grabbed her hand and tried to pull her away from the man, but she refused to come. Then she started pushing on the man's forehead in order to get him to raise his head. As I grew agitated, Beth took off her untied shoes and shoved them into the man's lap. He sat up and smiled.

"Beth!" I called.

"It's all right," the man said in a tired voice. "I'll tie her shoes for her."

I grew a little nervous as he began putting Beth's shoes on her. When he finished, he wrapped his arms around her and kissed her on the head. He was slow to let her go, so I quickly left the line to rescue my daughter from this stranger.

As I approached, I noticed that he had tears in his eyes. Concerned, I sat down next to him.

"I have to tell you something," he said, staring straight ahead. "Not more than a month ago my wife died, and about an hour ago I found out that I have terminal cancer. I came here to get medicine, and I have been contemplating my life and thinking that I might move along the inevitable. I didn't think I could bear going through Christmas and the pains of cancer without my sweet wife."

He said he had been praying, asking God, "If I need to be here for

something,
You better
speak now,
or I'm
going
home to
end

things."
Before he
had even said "amen," Beth began pestering him and calling him "Grandpa."

"Now I know why I need to be here longer," he said. "I need to stick around for my grandkids. They need me."

I threw my arms around him and could not help but weep. I then got

our medicine.

Beth, who had seemed so ill only moments earlier, kissed the man on the cheek and bounded away with Jacob and me, waving and saying, "Bye-bye, Grandpa."

I didn't ask his name, but I will never forget that even a young girl who pesters an old man can be an answer to prayer. ■

Megan Robinson, Utah, USA

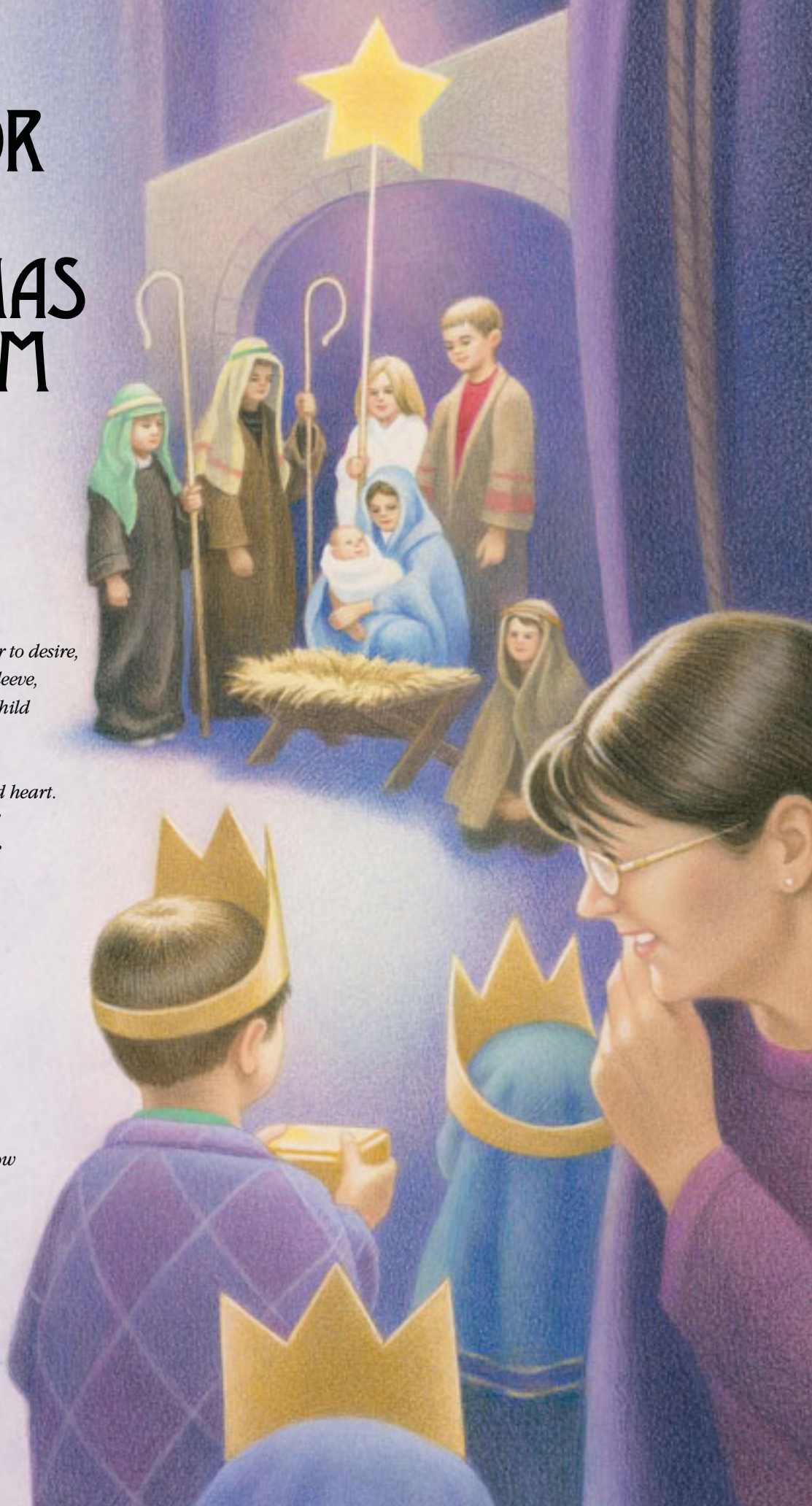


DIRECTOR OF THE CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

BY VAL CAMENISH WILCOX

*Final rehearsal
and still I ask how,
from present chaos,
can we possibly create
a heavenly choir?
But I pray that we may.
Then, on Sabbath day in answer to desire,
Past sticky smear on best-dress sleeve,
Past crying babe and petulant child
Comes elusive feeling creeping,
Magically distilled and seeping
Into hidden places of my harried heart.
"Glory to God in the highest . . ."
Like a shawl, wonder warms me
At the wisdom of my choosing
To take part at all.
"Peace on earth,
Goodwill to men . . ."
Fellowship slips
Into hollow soul-spaces
With mellowness and ease.
"How silently . . .
the wondrous gift is given . . ."
Hard to believe, but without
Wrapping, ribbon, or bow, I know
The nebulous gift is received.
"Where meek souls will
receive Him, still . . ."
Indeed, our herald angels sing
Right now, this holy day!
Indeed, right here
". . . in this world of sin . . .
the dear Christ enters in."*

ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE KROPP



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for

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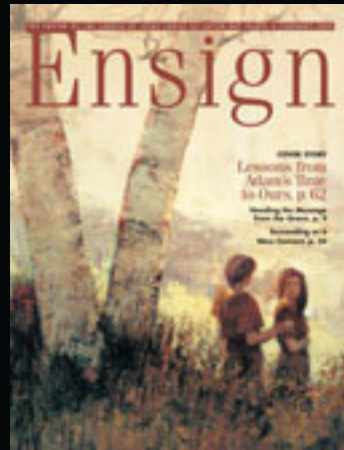
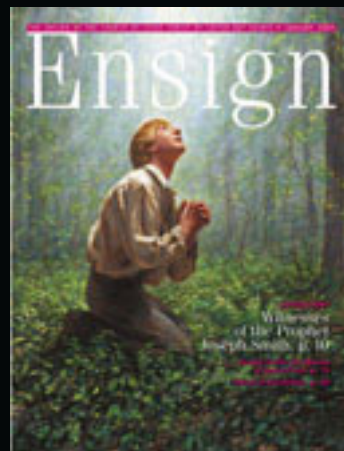
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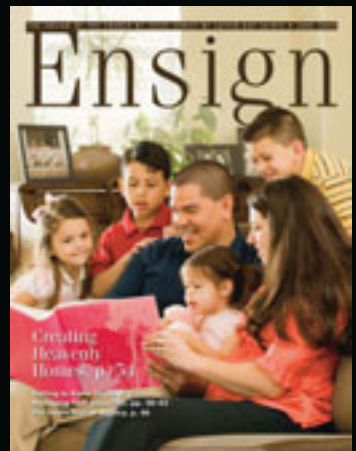
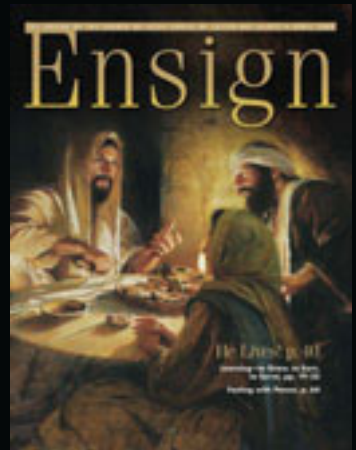
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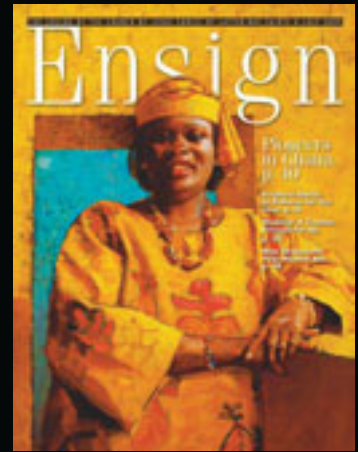
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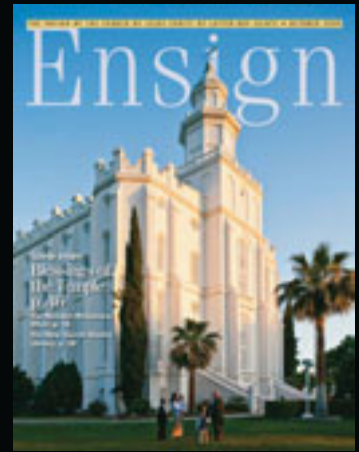
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Technology Helps FamilySearch Volunteers Hit Major Milestone

By Heather Whittle Wrigley, Church Magazines

FamilySearch volunteers expect to have transcribed more than 325 million names by the end of 2009, just three years after the organization began its online indexing program.

The milestone was a number once thought impossible to reach in such a short period of time. In 2006, a few thousand volunteers indexed only 11 million names. But thanks to continuing advances in technology and a growing number of volunteers—more than 100,000 across five

continents—an estimated half million individual names are indexed each day.

At that rate, Paul Nauta, FamilySearch public affairs manager, expects that 500 million names will have been indexed by the end of 2010.

And yet all this work barely makes a dent in the vast stores of historical records throughout the world, which grow by more than 100 million records (each with multiple names) every year.

“We are not catching up,” Brother Nauta said. “In preserving records alone, there are more records created in one year than we could ever film in decades with

current technology.”

To hasten the work of making important historical records available online, the Church’s Family History Department is continually working to develop new ways to preserve records not only as quickly as possible but at the highest quality possible. This has resulted in specially designed digital cameras, innovative scanning technology, and new software and applications.

“It is not necessarily that we want to be pioneers in this field and this technology,” Brother Nauta said. “But we are compelled to do it.”

Capturing the Records

Representatives of the Church’s Family History Department oversee the effort

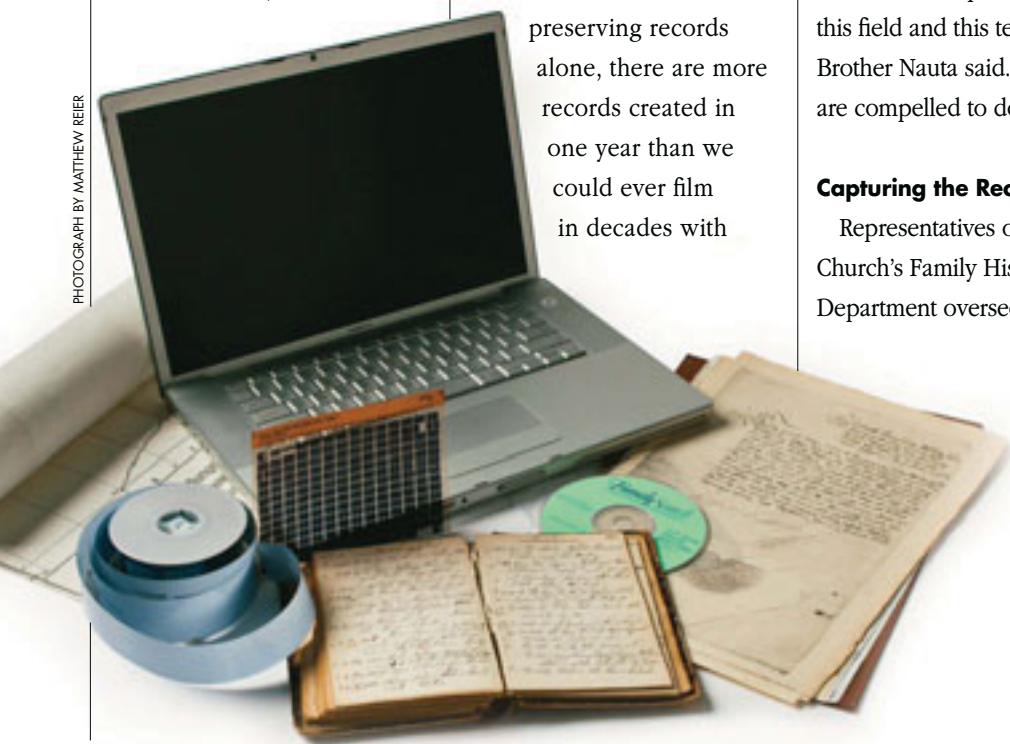
to acquire records, beginning with prioritizing what records would be most valuable to the public and matching limited human resources to gather them.

Employees of the Family History Department then work with various churches, municipalities, archives, and governments to acquire or create copies of those records. Most institutions welcome the Church’s efforts. “We have a good reputation as an organization that cares about the records as much as the archivists do,” said Steven L. Waters, strategic relations manager for Europe. “In general, they are thankful to have an organization like ours that puts so many resources into preserving history.”

In capturing records, an area is set up on-site where special cameras are used to create digital images of the historical documents. The process can take from a few weeks to several years depending on the size of the collection, the type of

FamilySearch is using technology in new ways to both preserve family history and make it available to others.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW REIER



documents being copied, and the workers' experience levels.

With cameras similar to those used by NASA and in other industrial settings, workers produce an image at a high resolution of 50 megapixels, using special software designed by FamilySearch engineers. Adjustments to the cameras, made by Church camera specialists, increase their lifespan from about 300,000 pictures to 500,000 per year for four years or more.

Once a project is complete, up to a terabyte (1,000 gigabytes) of images and information is sent to Salt Lake City, where the images will be processed, preserved, copied, and distributed based on the contract specifications. Many images are published on FamilySearch.org; some are published on commercial genealogical Web sites; sometimes the archive itself publishes the work.

"In the end, we may or may not get to personally publish the records," Brother Waters said. "But it's about making as many records as possible available to as many people as possible."

A Different Kind of Conversion

One of the most significant advancements for

FamilySearch in recent years was put into place in 2005, when 15 high-speed scanners were developed to convert images previously contained on microfilm into digital images. These scanners are converting 2.5 million rolls of microfilm from the Church's Granite Mountain Records Vault into tens of millions of ready-to-index digital images.

The scanners are like a camera: as the microfilm unwinds, the images on the microfilm are converted into a long ribbon of high-quality digital images. A computer program quality-checks the ribbon and uses special algorithms to break it up into individual images.

These rolls of microfilm include images of important historical documents gathered from all over the world—birth and death records, hospital records, family histories, immigration forms, historical books, and more.

"To our knowledge, there is no company that does the level of vital records preservation that FamilySearch does," said Brother Nauta. "The records FamilySearch contains currently, when digitized, would equal 132 Libraries of Congress or 18 petabytes

(1,000 terabytes) of data—and that doesn't include our ongoing acquisition efforts."

Taking It to the World

To make all of these digitized records available to the public, the Family History Department developed FamilySearchIndexing.org. There, anyone can download

in 2009—Italian, Portuguese, Russian, and Swedish.

"We've come from transcribing by hand to delivering digital images on CDs through the mail to Web-based applications where virtually anyone can be involved," Brother Nauta said. "We are quantum leaps from where we began. It's faster, more reliable, and

"We've come from transcribing by hand to . . . [using] Web-based applications. . . . We are quantum leaps from where we began."

images of historical documents to a computer and transcribe the information to help create a database of names, dates, locations, and other information—free for all to search online at FamilySearch.org.

Anyone can participate in indexing. If a home computer doesn't meet the requirements to run the indexing application (available for download at FamilySearchIndexing.org), the application can be found on computers at any one of the 4,600 family history centers around the world.

Already available in English, French, German, and Spanish, FamilySearch.org indexing added four more languages

more efficient."

With the technological advances and the ever-increasing number of indexing volunteers, the Ellis Island historical records—which a decade ago took 12,000 volunteers 12 years to complete—would take three weeks to index today.

"That evolution of technology has been remarkable in getting everyone involved everywhere," said Paul D. Starkey, digital information process manager in the Family History Department. "The Internet has been an amazing technology to help this kind of work."

Beyond the Technology

Beyond the innovations in technology, at the heart of

the hastening of the work are people.

At any given moment, thousands of volunteers from around the world are working with FamilySearch Indexing. A growing number of them are not members of the Church.

For some, preserving historical records is a commission to preserve the identity and heritage of a nation, organization, or community. For others, it lends a deepened sense of personal identity.

“They confirm that they are part of a larger family fabric that has a rich history,” Brother Nauta said. “We quickly learn

that life as we know it isn’t just about us in the here and now. Knowing the richer context of our family history gives us and our posterity something more to live up to—a legacy to fulfill and pass on after doing our part.”

For Church members, there is added value in being able to perform saving ordinances for ancestors in the temple. But for all, this growing interest in family history work was foretold.

“It’s in the scriptures,” Brother Nauta said. “The hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers” (see D&C 2:1–2). ■

More Than Just Indexing

FamilySearchIndexing.org is just one of a number of Web-based programs that have been developed to advance family history work.

FamilySearch Labs (labs.FamilySearch.org) showcases developing family history technologies. Users test them, and their feedback allows developers to refine the technology.

The Research Wiki (wiki.familysearch.org) is an open, online community where research experts and genealogists share information on how to research sources for family history work.

Record Search gives access to millions of historical records—a culmination of all the digitizing of records that is being done. (Visit FamilySearch.org, click **Search Records**, then **Record Search pilot**.)

At forums.FamilySearch.org, thousands of users of varying levels of expertise can discuss products, research techniques, hints and tips, and even families in specific locations. ■



New Temple Presidents Begin Service

The following new temple presidents and their wives began serving on November 1, 2009, as assigned by the First Presidency.

Temple

Aba Nigeria
Accra Ghana
Albuquerque New Mexico
Boston Massachusetts
Bountiful Utah
Brisbane Australia
Cardston Alberta
Colonia Juárez Chihuahua Mexico
Denver Colorado
Frankfurt Germany
Fukuoka Japan
Guatemala City Guatemala
Helsinki Finland
Hermosillo Sonora Mexico
Houston Texas
Las Vegas Nevada
Manila Philippines
Manti Utah
Mesa Arizona
Mexico City Mexico
Montevideo Uruguay
Monticello Utah
Montreal Quebec
Oaxaca Mexico
Oklahoma City Oklahoma

Temple President and Matron

Douglas M. and Carol Ann Robinson
Julian P. and Gaye S. Breillatt
W. Douglas and Dixie J. Shumway
Robert S. and Dixie Jones Wood
Douglas L. and Jeannette M. Callister
John R. and Kathryn E. Gibson
Brent L. and Barbara Nielson
Robert J. and Raquel L. Whetten
Mark A. and Jane W. Baer
Peter J. G. and Ilona L. Berkahn
Asao and Kumiko Y. Miyashita
Clate W. and Paula G. Mask
Kari J. A. and Auli A. Haikkola
G. Farrell and Doratha R. Young
D. Channing and Charlotte M. Bradshaw
Bruce M. and Barbara J. Ballard
Moises M. and Amparo A. Mabunga
Ed J. and Patricia P. Pinegar
Daryl H. and Irene H. Garn
Santiago and Rosa G. Mejía Mora
Lynn R. and Alma Don M. Shurtleff
Vaughn A. and Karen C. Johnson
David B. and Frieda K. Galbraith
Adolfo and Josefina H. Ávalos Rico
Michael L. and Victoria M. Southward ■

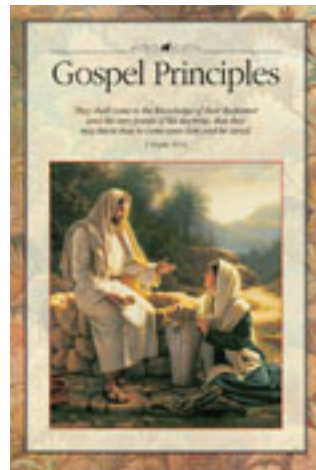
Revised *Gospel Principles* is Curriculum for 2010

Beginning in January 2010, adult members of the Church will spend two years studying the newly revised *Gospel Principles* manual on the second and third Sundays of each month.

Since 1998 most adult members have studied the *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* series in their priesthood quorums and Relief Society classes. During that time, millions have joined the Church. A return to studying the fundamental principles and doctrines of the gospel will bless not only those new members but longtime members as well, according to Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The new edition of *Gospel Principles* is larger, and the design has changed to match the *Teachings* volumes and to make it easier to read. All of the visuals, one per chapter, are in color.

Instructions for teaching from the manual in class or at home are included in the updated and simplified introduction to *Gospel Principles*.



The revised *Gospel Principles* manual will be studied in Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society classes beginning in January 2010.

Additional instructions are found in footnotes throughout the manual.

Questions at the beginning of most sections of the chapters help focus readers on important content in the chapter. Questions at the end of each section prompt members to reflect upon and apply what they have read. Teachers may use the questions to promote class discussion during the lesson.

“The more we reflect on the principles and doctrines, the greater our understanding becomes,” said Elder Kenneth

Johnson of the Seventy, who oversaw the revision of the manual. “They never grow old, and our understanding of them is increased and enhanced. The truth is not just an intellectual truth, but more of an understanding as the Spirit is present.”

Teachers of the Gospel Principles class for new members, investigators, and members returning to activity will also use the new manual.

In addition to studying the manual on Sunday, members can use the book in their personal study to better understand core principles and doctrines of the gospel. Parents can use the new introduction, questions, pictures, and notes to help teach their children these doctrines in the home.

In 2012 Church members will resume studying *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*. ■

New DVD Set Brings Old Testament to Life

The Old Testament just became a lot more accessible.

In October, the Church released the Old Testament Visual Resource DVDs—a set of three DVDs containing more than 300 visual resources to assist members as they study the Old Testament.

The first two discs contain videos, interactive charts, quotations from latter-day apostles and prophets, and paintings that supplement the doctrines and events found in the Old Testament.

A scripture-study activity accompanies each visual resource and can be used for personal, family, or classroom

study to help unlock understanding of the Old Testament.

The third DVD contains stories for children, based on the book, *Old Testament Stories*. People such as Joseph, Ruth, Elijah, Jonah, and Esther will come to life for children as they listen to the simple narrations and view the illustrations for each story.

Now available in English, Portuguese, and Spanish, the DVDs will become available in 25 other languages over the next year.

The set of Old Testament Visual Resource DVDs is \$6.25 USD and is available through Church distribution centers and ldscatalog.com. ■

First Conference Held in Ethiopia

During July 2009 some 160 youth and young adults gathered for a day of friendship, workshops, dancing, and testimonies at the first youth conference held in Ethiopia.

Because the four branches are widely separated many members were not aware of other branches and Church members in Ethiopia. The conference allowed them to interact with their peers while being spiritually uplifted.

Wondwossen Amanuel, 23, who was submitting his papers to become the first missionary from the Awasa Branch, said: "Our branch is small, but [at the conference] we felt like family."

The participants traveled by bus for up to five hours to attend the conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. More than half were nonmembers and investigators.

Romanian Young Women Hold First Camp

Six young women and their leaders from the Bucharest Romania District took part in the first Young Women camp in Romania from August 24 to 26. District Young Women president Dina Cojocaru led the camp with the help of senior missionaries Elder Don and Sister Edie Van Noy.

The young women and leaders held morning and evening devotionals, and Elder and Sister Van Noy taught workshops on virtue and how to give effective talks in church.

Alina Mateescu, one of the young women, said she felt assured she could become the exemplary woman God wanted her to become.

Romania, a country in southeastern Europe, has about 2,736 members in 17 branches. ■

Correction

An article in the June *Ensign* on the Church History Library reported that the library holds 13,000 photos. It should have stated that the library holds 13,000 collections of photos, likely totaling more than one million photographs. In addition, the number of vaults in the building is 12 rather than 14. ■

Giving Up the Game

"Just A Game" (August 2009, 46) really spoke to me. Before the Internet there were role-playing games, and I played. It negatively affected my schoolwork, my friendships, and my self-esteem. If I have any advice to give, it's that there's a whole world out there of much better entertainment.

*Joy Meyer
California USA*

Up For Discussion

"Leading Class Discussions" (June 2009, 24) has made a

huge difference in my Gospel Doctrine class.

I was guilty of answering the questions I asked after an "awkward silence" of only a few seconds, so class participation was subdued and I spent a lot of time lecturing. After I followed Brother Jones's suggestions, class participation soared and the influence of the Spirit was tangible.

This article should be required reading for all teachers!

*Richard Rodney
Virginia, USA*

Members in Turkey Aid Flood Victims

Local priesthood and auxiliary leaders near Istanbul, Turkey, coordinated with civil authorities to give aid to those affected by flash floods in September 2009. Local leaders provided blankets, hygiene kits, school kits, shoes, and other supplies. At least 32 people died when the heaviest rainfall in 80 years triggered flash floods. More than 35,000 people were affected by the flooding. No members or missionaries were hurt.

Members Escape Wildfires

More than 70 Church members evacuated their homes because of wildfires in California and Utah, USA, in September 2009. Many of the evacuees stayed with other member families. Fires burned more than 123,000 acres in the Sacramento and Los Angeles, California, areas, killing two firefighters and destroying more than 100 buildings. In the area of New Harmony, Utah, fires consumed more than 10,000 acres and several buildings. In both states, local leaders assisted those affected. ■



Mary Kept These Things and Pondered Them in Her Heart, by Lonni Clarke

*“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.
“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.
“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1:30–32).*



“What all of us long for in our hearts, at Christmastime and always, is to feel bound together in love with the sweet assurance that it can last forever,” writes President Henry B. Eyring. “This is the promise of eternal life, which God has called His greatest gift to His children (see D&C 14:7). That is made possible by the gifts to us of His Beloved Son: the Savior’s birth, Atonement, and Resurrection.” See “Home for Christmas,” page 4.