

# Ensign

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*"Whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God."*

**Ether 12:4**

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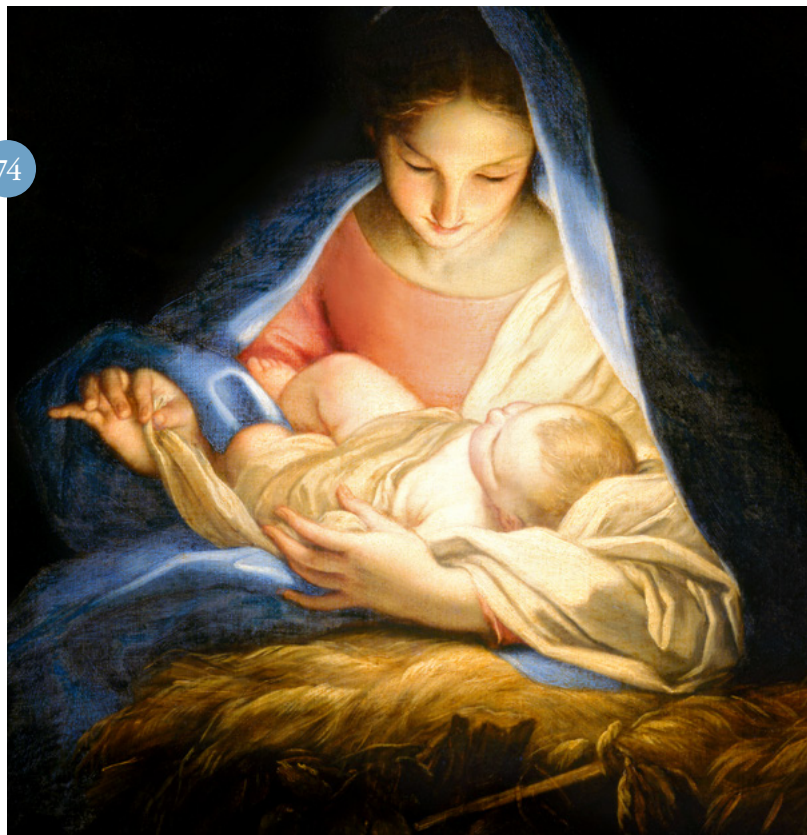
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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JERRY L. GARNIS

### “Preparing a Place for the Lord,”

page 34. Bishop Caussé reminds us of our responsibility to prepare for the Savior’s coming. One way to prepare a place for the Lord is by helping people who need a home. Consider volunteering at a homeless shelter, gathering supplies for refugees, raising funds to contribute to the Church’s humanitarian fund, or getting involved with service activities in your community. You might also discuss long-term ways that you can serve the displaced, such as by fostering friendships. Find additional ideas and inspiration using the videos in the *Give Back Series* ([lds.org/go/GiveBackE1216](http://lds.org/go/GiveBackE1216)).

### A SPEND-LESS CHRISTMAS

Hoping to direct more attention toward each other, and to keep our Christmas budget in check, we proposed to our family at home evening our plan for a “spend-less Christmas.” Each family member would make an inexpensive gift that expressed love for another family member (selected by drawing). Christmas morning we would take turns sharing our gifts and expressing our warmest feelings for the recipients. The rest of the Christmas budget would be divided among us and spent during the post-holiday sales on items each needed. We enjoyed our new tradition so much that we started drawing names each summer so we would have plenty of time to make our secret gifts for our family members.

Vaughn C. Emmet, Utah, USA

### “The 10th International Art

Competition: Tell Me the Stories of Jesus,” page 38. Jesus Christ certainly is the

reason for the season, but you might consider ways that you can remember the Savior’s example all year long. As you and your family explore the art featured in this article, you could brainstorm ways to create a more Christ-centered home, like displaying a picture of the Savior in your house, memorizing weekly scriptures about the Savior, or taking extra care to prepare for the Sabbath day. Create plans to implement your ideas and record in your journal how your efforts have helped you draw closer to Christ.

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### FROM OUR READERS



See what readers are saying about the Ensign at [ensign.lds.org](http://ensign.lds.org). How has the Ensign blessed your life? How might the magazine improve? To share your feelings, suggestions, or questions, use the “Submit an Article” link on our web page.



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

# Peace

## IN THIS LIFE

**T**o all of us who have come into mortality, the Savior said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). Yet He gave this wonderful promise to His disciples during His mortal ministry: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (John 14:27). It is a comfort to know that this promise of personal peace continues for all of His disciples today.

Some of us live in beautiful and peaceful surroundings, yet we are experiencing inner turmoil. Others feel peace and perfect serenity in the midst of great personal loss, tragedy, and continuing trials.

You may have seen the miracle of peace on the face of a disciple of Jesus Christ or heard it in his or her words. I have seen it many times. Sometimes it has been in a hospital room where a family is gathered around a servant of God who is near death.

I remember visiting a woman in the hospital a few days before she died of cancer. I had brought my two young daughters to accompany me because this sweet sister had once been their Primary teacher.

Her family members were gathered around her bed, wishing to be with her in her final moments on earth. I was surprised as she sat up in the bed. She reached out to my daughters and introduced them both, one by one, to each member of her family. She spoke as if my daughters

were royalty being presented at the court of a queen. She found a way to say something about the way each person in the room was a disciple of the Savior. I still remember the strength, the tenderness, and the love in her voice. And I recall being surprised at her cheerful smile even as she knew her time in life was short.

She had received priesthood blessings of comfort, yet she gave us all a living testimony that the Lord’s promise of peace is true: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

She had accepted His invitation, as we all can, whatever our trials and troubles:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29).

It is only through following the Savior that any of us can find peace and serenity in the trials that will come to all of us.

The sacramental prayers help us to know how to find that peace amidst the tribulations of life. As we partake of the sacrament, we can determine to be faithful to our covenants to follow Him.



We each promise to remember the Savior. You can choose to remember Him in the way that best draws your heart to Him. Sometimes for me, it is to see Him in my mind kneeling in the Garden of Gethsemane or to see Him calling Lazarus to come forth from the tomb. As I do, I feel a closeness to Him and a gratitude that brings peace to my heart.

You also promise to keep His commandments. You promise to take His name upon you and to be His witness. He promises that as you keep your covenants with Him, the Holy Spirit will be with you. (See D&C 20:77, 79.)

This brings peace in at least two ways. The Holy Ghost cleanses us from sin because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. And the Holy Ghost can give us the peace that comes from

having God's approval and the hope of eternal life.

The Apostle Paul spoke of this wonderful blessing: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Galatians 5:22).

When heavenly messengers heralded the birth of the Savior, they

declared, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace*" (Luke 2:14; emphasis added). I bear my testimony as a witness of Jesus Christ that the Father and His Beloved Son can send the Spirit to allow us to find peace in this life, whatever tests may come to us and to those we love. ■

#### TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

**P**resident Eyring teaches that the sacramental prayers can help us know how to find peace during our trials. They remind us that as we keep our covenants, we have God's promise that the Holy Ghost will be with us. Consider asking those you teach how having the Holy Ghost with us can help us have peace. You could also share your thoughts or an experience of how the Holy Ghost helped you feel peace in a trial. You might encourage those you teach to ponder this message during the sacrament this week.

## How Will You Remember the Savior This Week?

President Eyring encourages us to “choose to remember [the Savior] in the way that best draws your heart to Him.”

How do you “always remember Him” throughout the week (see D&C 20:77, 79)?

Do you have favorite scriptures about the Savior? You could mark a different scripture each day this week and share it with someone.

Do you sing a hymn or another uplifting song in your mind when you’re feeling down? Maybe choose one that is specifically about the Savior this week.

Do you ponder the Savior’s life and atoning sacrifice during the sacrament every week? You could prepare for the sacrament by recalling your choices throughout the week to always remember the Savior and repenting of the times when you struggled to.



Do you pray for chances to share the gospel each day? Try to have a gospel discussion this week that focuses on the Savior. You could bear your testimony of the Savior during family home evening or talk to a friend at school about an experience you had at church.

Make a goal to remember the Savior in a special way this week. Tell a parent, a sibling, a leader, or a friend about your goal. At the end of the week, tell them what happened. You will both feel the peace and happiness that President Eyring talked about.

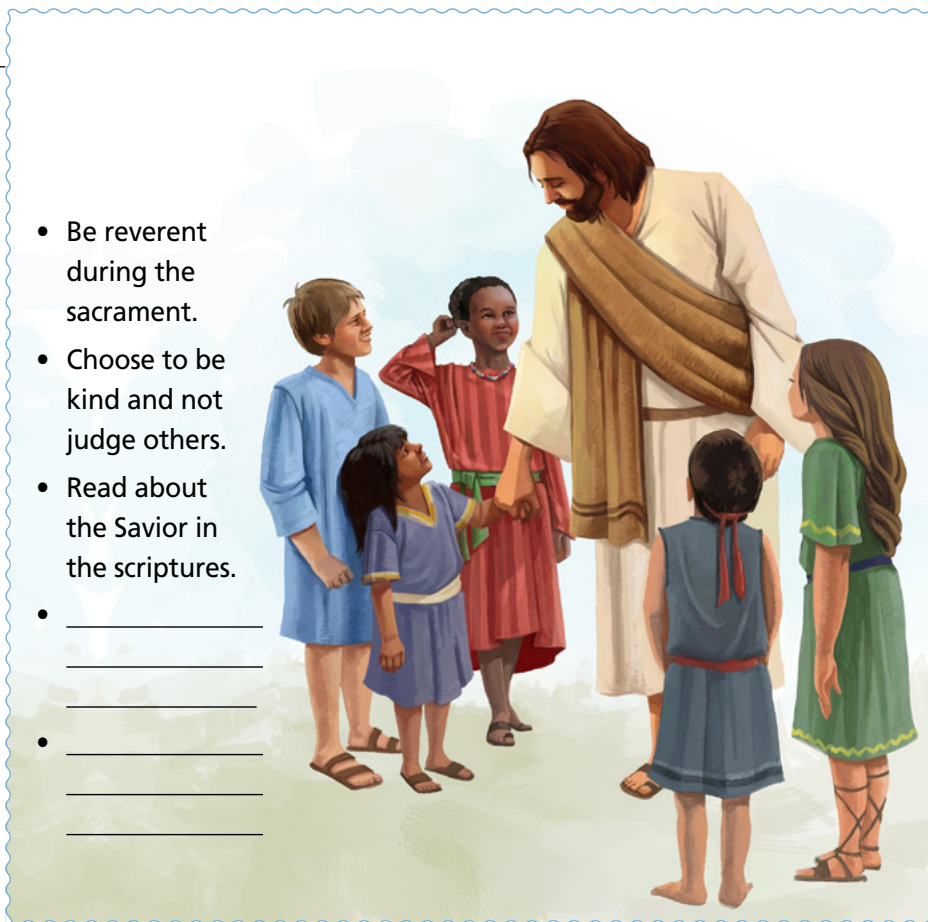
## CHILDREN

### Come unto Christ

The Savior has promised us peace when we “come unto [Him]” (Matthew 11:28). This means following His example and trying to stay close to Him. Cut out this card and hang it where you’ll see it often. What are other ways you can come unto Christ?

- Be reverent during the sacrament.
- Choose to be kind and not judge others.
- Read about the Savior in the scriptures.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_





Prayerfully study this material and seek for inspiration to know what to share. How will understanding “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” increase your faith in God and bless those you watch over through visiting teaching? For more information, go to [reliefsociety.lds.org](http://reliefsociety.lds.org).

## Family Joy Is Found in Righteousness

God “established families to bring us happiness, to help us learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and to prepare us for eternal life.”<sup>1</sup> Of God’s “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8), President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: “His plan declares that men and women are ‘that they might have joy’ [2 Nephi 2:25]. That joy comes when we choose to live in harmony with God’s eternal plan.”<sup>2</sup>

A Christ-centered home provides the greatest opportunities for success. Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles describes it as a place “where the gospel is taught, covenants are kept, and love abounds,” where families can live “an obedient life” and become “firmly rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said:



“We can decide that we will do all we can to bring down the powers of heaven into [our] family.” And we’re most likely to promote love, service, obedience, and happiness in our homes by “[our children’s] hearing the word of God and then trying it in faith. If they do, their natures will be changed in a way that produces the happiness they seek.”<sup>4</sup>

### Additional Scriptures

3 John 1:4; 1 Nephi 8:12; 2 Nephi 5:27

### Consider This

What could we do to live more righteously within our families?

### NOTES

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.1.4.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Celestial Marriage,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 92.
3. Richard G. Scott, “For Peace at Home,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 30, 31.
4. Henry B. Eyring, “The Teachings of ‘The Family: A Proclamation to the World,’” *New Era*, Sept. 2015, 5, 6.
5. Richard G. Scott, “For Peace at Home,” 31.

Faith, Family, Relief



### Christ-Centered Homes

We have role models of Christ-centered homes in the scriptures. After his father, Lehi, died, Nephi took his family and others who believed in the warnings and the revelations of God and who hearkened to Nephi’s words away from the land of the Lamanites. In this new place, the Nephites could keep the judgments, statutes, and commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses. (See 2 Nephi 5:6–10.) Yet even among the Nephites, some eventually became disobedient.

And while our family members can sometimes drift away from righteousness like the Nephites did, Elder Scott said that a Christ-centered home still “provides the greatest assurance for peace and refuge in our homes.” He acknowledged that “there will still be plenty of challenges or heartaches, but even in the midst of turmoil, we can enjoy inner peace and profound happiness.”<sup>5</sup>



By Devin G. Durrant

First Counselor,  
Sunday School  
General Presidency

## PREPARING TO MEET GOD

*Sunday School has an important role to play in helping all of us prepare to meet God. Are you making it a priority?*

In the Book of Mormon, Amulek preaches a powerful sermon about the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see Alma 34). Among the beautiful verses in this chapter, one verse that stands out for me is when Amulek states, “For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” (Alma 34:32).

Believing that the purpose of this life is “to prepare to meet God,” we might ask ourselves these questions: What am I doing each day, each week, and each month to prepare for that wonderful reunion with our Heavenly Father? How will I choose to spend the precious time allotted to me?

### How Will We Prepare?

There are many ways we could spend our time preparing to meet God. On a week-to-week basis, I believe we can agree that the most important hour of the week is the time spent partaking of the sacrament, renewing our covenants with Heavenly Father, reflecting on the love we feel from Him and the hope

we can all have as a result of the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ.

I also believe that the hour we spend in our Sunday School classes could have a greater effect on our preparation than we realize. But to take advantage of that opportunity, we may need to examine how we approach Sunday School.

The purpose of Sunday School is to “strengthen individuals’ and families’ faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ through teaching, learning, and fellowshiping.”<sup>1</sup> These essential elements of conversion are vital in our efforts to prepare to meet God. We are thrilled that teachers across the Church are working to improve their ability to teach using *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* and teacher council meetings.

But improved teaching alone is not enough. It must be matched by our efforts to learn in the Savior’s way. He said we are to learn “by study and also by faith” (D&C 109:7). Faith is a principle of action. We must *do* if we want to *know* (see John 7:17).

Our Sunday School classes can encourage this kind of teaching and learning when they are safe places to share the experiences we had and the inspiration we felt during the week while learning and applying the scriptures in preparation for class. As we “teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom . . . all may be edified of all” (D&C 88:77, 122).

### Call the Sabbath a Delight

Recently the First Presidency invited each of us to “call the sabbath a delight” (Isaiah 58:13) in our lives. The three-hour Sunday block experience helps us accomplish that goal.

In that spirit, let me ask another question: Why do we sometimes choose not to fully embrace the opportunity Sunday School offers?

In recent years, I have witnessed a lot of different Sunday School “alternatives” during Sunday School time, including visiting in the halls, ward leaders conducting interviews, stake leaders training their ward



counterparts, and youth leaders addressing program concerns.

With so many demands on their time, I understand why leaders may use Sunday School time to do other things. But what a blessing it is for all involved when ward leaders set aside an hour to participate in gospel discussions with the members of their flock!

I'm confident you have experienced other examples of "Sunday School neglect." For one reason or another, many of us have felt at times that we don't get as much out of Sunday School classes as we would like. I have learned that the richness of my Sunday School experience is determined as much by my preparation and participation as that of my teacher. Brother Tad R. Callister, Sunday School General President, has written, "Every

time we study the scriptures, come to class a little better prepared, participate in class discussions, ask questions, and record sacred impressions, we are becoming more like God, thus increasing our capacity to experience the joy He feels."<sup>2</sup>

### **Prepare for and Protect the Sunday School Hour**

I invite you to do your best to prepare for and protect the Sunday School hour. Each ward and branch member, including our leaders, should have the sweet blessing of preparing to meet God during this important hour each week. ■

#### **NOTES**

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 12.1.
2. Tad R. Callister, "The Joy of Learning," *Ensign*, Oct. 2016, 16.



Learn more about *Teaching in the Savior's Way* and teacher council meetings at [teaching.lds.org](http://teaching.lds.org).



COVENANT OF THE FATHERS, FAITH OF THE SONS, BY SCOTT M. SNOW; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ZABELINI/STOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

# “Let’s Make That Our Motto”

By Christopher Lambe

“All right, Privates!” the drill sergeant boomed. “Today is Sunday. Who here wants to go to church?”

Ten of the 63 men in my platoon raised their hands.

“Privates, we have a lot of things to get done today,” brayed the sergeant in his best intimidating voice. “I’m not trying to discourage you from going to church, but if you go, you will fall behind everybody else. So who here wants to go to church?”

Now my hand was the only one in the air. I was 18 years old, and basic training was my first real experience away from home. I knew I would need the strength and comfort I could find in attending church, taking the sacrament, and worshipping my Heavenly Father.

“Private!” the drill sergeant screeched as he approached me. Standing directly in front of me, he

roared his former words with no variation.

I raised my hand for the third time. Screaming at the top of his lungs, he repeated his speech. I again put my hand high in the air and looked him in the eyes.

“Drill Sergeant, I have a right to go to church, and I want to go, Drill Sergeant.”

“*Fine*. What religion are you, Private?”

“Drill Sergeant, I’m LDS, Drill Sergeant,” I answered.

“You’re a Mormon boy! Yeah, you Mormons *love* to go to church. I’ll take you there myself.”

## A Long Ride, a Blessing Given

That ride to church was the longest 10 minutes of my life. The whole time the drill sergeant swore and belittled me, saying how stupid he thought Mormonism was. When he finally dropped me off at the meeting-house, I found happy and welcoming

**I shared the story of Helaman’s stripling warriors with my fellow soldiers, which inspired us to make obeying “with exactness” our motto.**

members—a stark contrast to what I'd been through that morning. Overwhelmed with relief—and by the Spirit—I began to cry.

Two senior missionaries approached me and asked how I was doing. I told them about my experience with the drill sergeant and requested a priesthood blessing. In the blessing I was admonished to increase my confidence and faith in Christ and was promised that as the Lord had done with Captain Moroni, He would raise me up to be an example in the lives of those around me.

### Increased Faith and Confidence in Christ

Basic training didn't get any easier. For the next nine weeks, the drill sergeant seemed to constantly find ways to make fun of me for my beliefs. Still, I sought opportunities to be at peace, find happiness, and, as I had been counseled, increase my confidence and faith in Christ. I found these things as I attended church and read my scriptures—I never missed a day of personal study. Helaman 5:12 especially bolstered my faith:

“And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall

beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”

This scripture gave me the courage and strength I needed to face my trials.

### Helaman's Stripling Warriors Became Our Heroes

As time moved forward, our platoon became discordant. It seemed we were constantly being punished because we weren't working together as a team. One day our platoon leader talked to us about the importance of being united and following orders and then invited us to make suggestions for improvement. The story of Helaman and his band of stripling warriors came to my mind.

“I know you guys are not part of my faith,” I said, “but if it's okay, I would like to share a story about a group of warriors in the Book of Mormon.”

The men agreed, so I told them about the 2,000 stripling warriors (see Alma 53, 56–57). I shared with them that the reason those soldiers were able to survive and accomplish the tasks they were given was because they had faith in God and because they obeyed every commandment “with exactness” (Alma 57:21).



### A CLEAR PATTERN

“The patterns and truths found in the Book of Mormon are clear and instructive, plain

and precious. When we begin with righteousness and obedience, we will end with blessings and joy.”

Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Safety and Peace of Keeping the Commandments,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2012, 65.

“Why can’t we be like them?” I asked. “If these individuals were able to fight and defend their country, their freedom, their lives, and their families, why can’t we? Let’s make that our motto. Let’s do what our leaders ask of us and see what type of men we can become.”

A fellow soldier stood up. “For my life, my liberty, and my family!” he said. “Isn’t that why we are here—to defend the U.S. Constitution and the

freedoms of others? I’ll put that upon myself. Let’s do it!”

From that point on, we called each other one of the 2,000 warriors. In real ways, that group from the Book of Mormon became our heroes. Later on, I was even able to read the story from the Book of Mormon to my platoon members.

We still had some challenges after that, but as we began to perform our tasks with exactness, things changed

for the better. My fellow soldiers also started to ask me questions about my faith, particularly wanting to know why it was so important to me to practice it. I invited them to attend church with me. Although I had been the only soldier attending that first Sunday, by the last week of basic training, 15 others were attending church.

### **Faith to Withstand Trials**

It has been several years since basic training. I have a wonderful family. I am retired from the active military and work with the Department of Veterans Affairs serving other veterans. My experiences during basic training continue to touch my heart and strengthen me—particularly the experience of learning to rely on my Father in Heaven, on the teachings and example of Jesus Christ, and on the Holy Ghost, who led me to the marvelous example of the stripling warriors in the Book of Mormon.

I know that building on “the rock of our Redeemer” and having immovable faith in Him can help us withstand even the most difficult temptations and difficulties. And I know that following the commandments with exactness, as the stripling warriors did, will bring us closer to our Father in Heaven and allow us to more fully feel His love, peace, and happiness in our lives. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*



# CREATING OUR HAPPY ENDING

**By Yuri Kutepov**

I had been a member of the Church for 10 years when I received a confirmation that I needed to begin looking for a companion. I understood the doctrine of celestial marriage, and I had prayed fervently to have such a marriage and to be able to create a family. I didn't know how I would find a Latter-day Saint woman in Samara, Russia, where I lived, but I trusted that the Lord would help me (see 1 Nephi 3:7).

In 2009 I was invited to participate in a series of single adult conferences to be held in 10 cities throughout the Russia Samara Mission. I hoped that these activities might be the means by which I could meet my eternal companion.

I was happy to attend the conferences, which were fulfilling in many ways, but months passed and I still had not developed any dating relationships.

I began to worry and asked the Lord to help me. In response, thoughts came into my mind warning me that I might be tempted to pursue relationships outside the Church.

I knew that the prophets had taught that we should strive to marry in the temple, and I knew that it would be impossible to have a fullness of joy if my spouse and I weren't united in striving to follow the Savior. I continued to pray to have the spiritual strength to withstand such temptations and to have the Lord's help in following His plan for me.

In the meantime, I began preparing for my regular trip to the Helsinki Finland Temple, where I would spend a week.

On the train I met three other travelers, including a woman named Mariya, who I learned was single. She was captivating both physically and spiritually, and I wondered why I hadn't met any women like her

**I'd been praying to find my eternal companion, but I didn't expect to find her sitting next to me on the train to the temple!**

before. I thought back to my earlier warning about being tempted to pursue a relationship outside the Church.

"Be strong," I thought. "Be true to your principles. You'll find a worthy and wonderful sister in the Church."

Thinking that I could at least be a good member missionary and perhaps share the gospel with her, and needing inspiration, I pulled out my



copy of the Book of Mormon to read, wondering if she would notice. To my surprise, Mariya exclaimed, “I think I know where you are going!”

I looked up to see her holding her own copy of the Book of Mormon. She was a member of the Church too and was also on her way to the temple.

The next morning we continued our trip to Helsinki by bus. I learned that Mariya was from Voronezh, a city in the Russia Moscow West Mission. I liked her immediately and prayed fervently for direction. In response, I experienced good feelings in my heart.

“Lord, we have only one week at the temple,” I prayed. “Please help us to get to know each other better during this time.”

And we did. Between sessions in the temple, we took walks, shared meals, went to the store, and talked. At the end of the week, we both went home—Mariya to Voronezh and I to Samara. But we traveled to each other’s cities to get to know each other better, and on September 14, 2010, we were married in the newly dedicated Kyiv Ukraine Temple.

Mariya and I now live in Voronezh and are happy. We understand that it is fairy tales that end with the phrase “and they lived happily ever after.” In real life we create our own happy endings through continually proving our faithfulness to the Lord by

keeping our temple covenants, continuing to work on strengthening our marriage, and striving to be like Jesus Christ.

We are grateful for our miraculous meeting and hope that our story will kindle hope and give strength to others who are searching for their eternal companions. Others’ stories may not turn out as ours did, but Mariya and I know that no matter what the challenges, the Lord hears our sincere prayers. He loves each of us and is concerned about each of us. If we let Him, He will guide our paths and let all things work together for our good (see D&C 90:24). ■

*The author lives in Voronezh, Russia.*



## **GOD’S MAP TO HAPPINESS**

“We all search for happiness, and we all try to find our own ‘happily ever after.’ The truth is,

God knows how to get there! And He has created a map for you; He knows the way. He is your beloved Heavenly Father, who seeks your good, your happiness. He desires with all the love of a perfect and pure Father that you reach your supernal destination. The map is available to all.”

**President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Your Happily Ever After,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 126–27.**





By Elder  
Chi Hong (Sam)  
Wong  
Of the Seventy

# Faith, Hope, and Charity: Interlacing Virtues

**T**hough the book of Moroni in the Book of Mormon is relatively short, with only 10 chapters, it provides a great deal of wonderful counsel. Moroni and Mormon both teach valuable principles of the gospel. As Moroni is completing his father's abridgment of the Book of Mormon, he repeatedly recalls his father's teachings about the links among faith, hope, and charity. Mormon and Moroni clearly wanted to emphasize the importance of these three principles.

In my earlier studies of the Book of Mormon, I usually considered these three principles to be like building blocks. Faith would come first, then hope, and then charity. It seemed a logical progression. As our faith grows, we increase our study and knowledge, and we begin to apply the principle of hope. Faith and hope together mold us and guide us in

the paths that the Savior walked, and we start to embrace the qualities of charity.

However, in more recent studies, I have come to understand faith, hope, and charity in a different way. I now think of them more as interlacing virtues, each playing a critical part in developing and defining our testimonies.

Our daughter, Joy, likes to create animals and objects by twisting balloons together. As I watched her do this one day, I thought of how a rope is formed by twisting several strands together. This helped me visualize my newfound understanding of faith, hope, and charity as strands combining with each other to form a sturdy rope.

## **Faith: "Ye Shall Have Power"**

Faith in Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ is foundational not

**As we weave together faith, hope, and charity into our daily lives, we become true followers of the Savior Jesus Christ.**

only to obtaining eternal life but also to our lives on earth. "And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me" (Moroni 7:33). I have applied this power through faith many times in my life. And I have relied on faith to carry me through some difficult moments.



While studying at Brigham Young University–Hawaii, I was in a new environment and English was my second language. It was challenging, and I knew I needed academic help if I was to retain my scholarship. Without it, I would not be able to stay in school. In addition, I had made the commitment that I would not study on Sundays.

One day while I was reading in the Doctrine and Covenants, a particular verse made a big impression on me. As I read in section 109, verse 7, I came across this line: “Seek learning even by study and also by faith.” That verse became the key to my academic success. With faith and diligent study six days out of the week, I was blessed in my studies. Some in my classes wondered how I could do so well without studying on Sunday, as they did. What I learned is that learning by faith can overcome many challenges.

A similar experience occurred as I was pursuing my career in business. I was offered an excellent job opportunity, but it would have likely required me to work on Sunday. I had committed not to work on the Sabbath day. Ultimately, I had to turn down the offer. I could not compromise my commitment to keep the Sabbath day holy. As with my college commitment, I was later blessed with many other business opportunities that did not require me to compromise and that allowed me to devote Sundays to the worship of the Lord.

As we create our imaginary rope that connects us to divine blessings, let’s start with a strong strand of faith.

### **Hope: “To Be Raised unto Life Eternal”**

We hope for many things: that we might advance in our careers; that our children will do well; that we will meet the expectations of our Church service;

that we will remain healthy; that we will have what we need to sustain life and provide for our families. But where does the highest form of hope come from, and where can it lead us?

Mormon said, “I would speak unto you that are of the church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ, and that have obtained a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord” (Moroni 7:3).

As Mormon continues his invitation to us to become true followers of Christ, he once again returns to the topic of hope when he asks, “And what is it that ye shall hope for?” Then he answers this all-important question: “Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise” (Moroni 7:41).

This kind of hope is different from ordinary hope. This divine hope comes through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It is eternal hope. Without such hope we would come to church each week not knowing that all these marvelous blessings are within our reach. Through Christ our hope can guide us back to our Heavenly Father and to eternal life.

In a recent general conference address, President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency,



stated, “[The Father] allowed His Son to provide, by His atoning sacrifice, the hope that comforts us no matter how hard the way home to Him may be.”<sup>1</sup> Through hope we can see the blessings and opportunities that await us as we stay true to the gospel of Jesus Christ and serve Him with all our heart, might, mind, and strength.

With that understanding, let’s add the next strand to our rope, which is hope.

### Charity: Bestowed upon True Followers

The third virtue to further strengthen our rope is charity. We begin to develop the gift of charity through our sincere efforts to emulate the Savior. However, the full measure of this gift is bestowed upon us by God as we earnestly seek it in prayer. As we follow Him who gave us life, we begin to learn the true meaning of charity, which is “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47).

As Mormon teaches, “Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God” (Moroni 7:48). As *peaceable* followers, we may have obtained sufficient hope, but in order to be bestowed with charity, we need to



become *true* followers. If we are *true* followers, we will become more like Him, which is the purpose of life.

By implanting in our hearts the pure love of Christ, we are more likely to embrace the godlike attribute of charity—to serve both our fellowman and God. “If a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity” (Moroni 7:44).

We now have three essential strands of our rope. Let’s see how they work together.

### All Three Work Together

“Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must

also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity.

“And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope” (Moroni 10:20–21).

When combined, faith, hope, and charity are not like building blocks for me anymore; instead they are intertwined with one another. We don’t finish building faith, and then have hope, or after having hope, finally develop charity. They all work together. And as they become interlaced, they collectively help form our characters and testimonies. ■

#### NOTE

1. Henry B. Eyring, “The Comforter,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 20.

# Finals Week Inspiration

By Megan Nelson

**O**n a chilly December morning during my second year of law school, I found myself at my university’s law library. I was scrambling to finish a 30-page paper that was due by midnight. This paper was the only obstacle standing between me and Christmas vacation.

My tired eyes stared at my computer as I struggled to translate confusing legal doctrine into coherent sentences. It would undoubtedly take all day—up until my midnight deadline—to complete this daunting task.

That semester had been particularly stressful. Besides the normal challenges of law school, I was a student editor for a legal periodical, and I also served as Relief Society president in my young single adult ward. I loved the sisters in my ward, but I often felt inadequate as I juggled activities at church, at school, and in my social life. I cried to the Lord often, pleading with Him to strengthen me where I felt weak.

I was surprised that I somehow finished the paper by about 4:00 p.m.—several hours earlier than expected. I left the library and drove toward my apartment, thinking about how nice it would be to leave for Christmas vacation the next day. Suddenly I had an impression that I should visit a girl in my ward named Rachel (name has been changed).

I didn’t know Rachel very well, but I had met her a few months earlier. She had never been active in the Church, even as a child. Although she made it clear that she was not interested in attending Church activities, she was always polite whenever I visited.

Since I could not reach her by phone and the feeling to visit her persisted, I decided to take a slight detour to stop by her home. When Rachel answered the door, I immediately sensed from her unusually subdued countenance that something was wrong. Despite

**I was surprised when I somehow finished my school assignment much sooner than expected—but then I had the impression to visit Rachel.**

her apparent sadness, she extended her arms to greet me with a hug and invited me to come inside.

With tears in her eyes, Rachel explained that her father had died exactly five years earlier—to the date. She had been estranged from her mother and sister for many years, but she had always been particularly close to her father. His loss was especially devastating for that reason. She found it particularly challenging to cope with her loneliness on this anniversary of his passing.

As Rachel and I talked, she told me that she often felt her father’s presence and hoped she would see him again

ILLUSTRATION BY ORIOLE VIDAL

someday. I bore testimony of eternal families and the plan of salvation, and I assured her that she would see him again.

Before long I could see Rachel's countenance brightening. When I left, Rachel said she felt that my visit was heaven sent, and she thanked me for the gift of friendship. I hugged her again and thanked her for letting me spend time with her.

As I drove home, I felt deep gratitude and reverence toward my Heavenly Father. In His infinite mercy, He had enabled me, one of His spirit daughters, to finish a daunting school

assignment several hours early, just so I could be available to help answer another daughter's unspoken prayer of loneliness.

Although I often felt inadequate in fulfilling various responsibilities that semester, I now know that Heavenly Father indeed strengthened me and blessed me to apply my feeble efforts when and where they were needed the most. No matter how busy or inadequate we may feel, the Lord will always enable us to do the things that matter most, if we trust in Him and follow His promptings. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*



### **TRUST THE LORD**

"All [the Lord] asks is that you give your best effort and your whole heart. Do it cheerfully and with the prayer of faith. The Father and His Beloved Son will send the Holy Ghost as your companion to guide you. Your efforts will be magnified."

**President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Rise to Your Call," *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 75–76, 78.**





**By Elder M. Russell Ballard**

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# BY STUDY AND BY FAITH

*May you find the joy and the peace that come from knowing that through your teaching, you have touched a life and lifted one of Heavenly Father's children on the journey back to His presence.*

**I**n a General Authority training meeting, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said regarding the teaching of Church doctrine: “We cannot be too careful. We must watch that we do not get off [course]. In our efforts to be original and fresh and different, we may teach things which may not be entirely in harmony with the basic doctrines of this the restored Church of Jesus Christ. . . . We had better be more alert. . . . We must be watchmen on the tower.”<sup>1</sup>

As Church education moves forward in the 21st century, our educators need to consider any changes they should make in the way they prepare to teach, how they teach, and what they teach if they are to build unwavering faith in the lives of our precious youth.

Gone are the days when a student asked an honest question and a teacher responded, “Don’t worry about it!” Gone are the days when a student raised a sincere concern and a teacher bore his or her testimony as a response intended to avoid the issue. Gone are the days when students were protected from people who attacked the Church.

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*In these remarks to Church Educational System religious educators, Elder Ballard shares principles and counsel that apply to all who teach in the Church.*





Fortunately, the Lord has provided this timely and timeless counsel to teachers: “And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118).

This is especially applicable today because not all of our students have the faith necessary to face the challenges ahead and because many of them are already exposed through the internet to corrosive forces of an increasingly secular world that is hostile to faith, family, and gospel standards. The internet is expanding its reach across the world into almost every home and into the hands and minds of our students.

You can help students by teaching them what it means to combine study and faith as they learn. Teach them by modeling this skill and approach in class.

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) observed:

“We would remind you that the acquiring of knowledge by faith is no easy road to learning. It demands strenuous effort and a continual striving by faith. . . .

“Learning by faith is no task for a lazy man [or woman]. Someone has said, in effect, that such a process requires the bending of the whole soul, the calling up from the depths of the human mind and linking it with God—the right connection must be formed. Then only comes ‘knowledge by faith.’”<sup>2</sup>

Knowledge by faith will produce a pure testimony, and a pure testimony has the power to change lives, as illustrated in the following brief stories.

### Three Stories

Phoebe Carter left her home in Maine, USA, to gather with the Saints in Ohio in the 1830s. She recalled: “My friends marveled at my course, as did I, but something within impelled me on. My mother’s grief at my leaving home was almost more than I could bear; and had it not been for the spirit within I should have faltered at the last.”<sup>3</sup>

Phoebe followed the Prophet Joseph Smith and gathered with the Saints in Ohio and later in Utah, where she died a faithful Latter-day Saint and equally yoked as the wife of Church President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98).

As a college student, Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) had decided he could not serve a mission because of his family’s financial situation. On one occasion, however, he heard Elder Melvin J. Ballard (1873–1939) speak. A biography notes, “Little did [Marion] know that the course of his life, in one very short moment, was about to be completely changed.”

The story continues: “For the first time Marion . . . fully

understood what it was [like] to be under the influence of inspiration. A piercing, tingling sensation filled his soul. He . . . never had been so touched as he was now, listening to the words of this newest of the Apostles. . . .

“ . . . The glow of the Apostle’s countenance and the sincerity of [his] testimony filled him with an irresistible desire to go on a mission. . . . He knew that his plans for further

education must be postponed.”<sup>4</sup>

Soon, Marion was on his way to Australia, where he served faithfully. Later he became a mighty Apostle and a member of the First Presidency.

The final story comes from President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, about the impact of an aged teacher on William E. Berrett. The teacher, a convert from Norway, had imperfect English-language skills. Despite the teacher’s limitations, President Packer recalled, Brother Berrett testified of his

teacher, “We could warm our hands by the fire of his faith.”<sup>5</sup>

Later, William became the head of seminaries, institutes, and Church schools.

For Phoebe, Marion, and William, hearing a pure testimony became the catalyst that changed their lives forever. The same can be true for those you teach. However, given the realities of today’s world, pure testimony may not always be enough. Phoebe, Marion, and William were clean and pure and free from pornography and worldliness as they sat at the feet of inspired missionaries, teachers, and leaders. The Spirit easily penetrated their soft and pure hearts.

Today the story is much different. Some of your students are already infected by pornography and worldliness before they ever reach your classes.

It was only a generation ago that our young people’s access to information about our history, doctrine, and practices was basically limited to materials printed by the Church. Few students came in contact with alternative interpretations. Mostly, our young people lived a sheltered life.

Our curriculum at that time, though well-meaning, did not prepare students for today—a day when they have instant access to virtually everything about the Church from every possible point of view. Today what they see on their mobile devices is likely to be faith challenging as much as faith promoting. Many of our young people are more familiar with Google than with the gospel, more attuned to the internet than to inspiration, and more involved with Facebook than with faith.

### Doctrinal Mastery

In light of these challenges, the Church Board of Education recently approved an initiative in seminary called Doctrinal Mastery. Building on what already has been done in Scripture Mastery, this new initiative focuses on building and strengthening our students’ faith in Jesus Christ and fortifying them with increased ability to live and apply the gospel in their lives. Drawing on the scriptures and the words of the prophets, they will learn how to act with faith in Christ to acquire spiritual knowledge and



***Many of our young people are more familiar with Google than with the gospel, more attuned to the internet than to inspiration, and more involved with Facebook than with faith.***

SEEK LEARNING

# BY STUDY

understanding of His gospel. And they will have opportunities to learn how to apply the doctrine of Christ and gospel principles to the questions and challenges they hear and see every day among their peers and on social media.

This initiative is inspired and timely. It will have a wonderful influence on our young people. However, the success of Doctrinal Mastery, and of all the other programs of study in the Church Educational System, will depend to an important extent upon our teachers.

In the face of these challenges, what are the opportunities and responsibilities gospel teachers have in the 21st century? Obviously you teachers must love the Lord, His Church, and your students. You must also bear pure testimony sincerely and often. Additionally, more than at any time in our history, your students also need to be blessed by learning doctrinal and historical content and context by study and by faith accompanied by pure testimony so they can experience a mature and lasting conversion to the gospel and a lifelong commitment to Jesus Christ. Mature and lasting conversion means they will “stay in the boat and hold on” throughout their entire lives.<sup>6</sup>

For *you* to understand the doctrinal and historical content and context of the scriptures and our history, you will need to study from the “best books,” as the Lord has directed (D&C 88:118). The “best books” include the scriptures, the teachings of modern prophets and apostles, and the best LDS scholarship available. Through your diligent efforts to learn by study and by faith, you will be able to help your students learn the skills and attitudes necessary to distinguish between reliable information that will lift

them up and the half-truths and incorrect interpretations of doctrine, history, and practices that will bring them down.

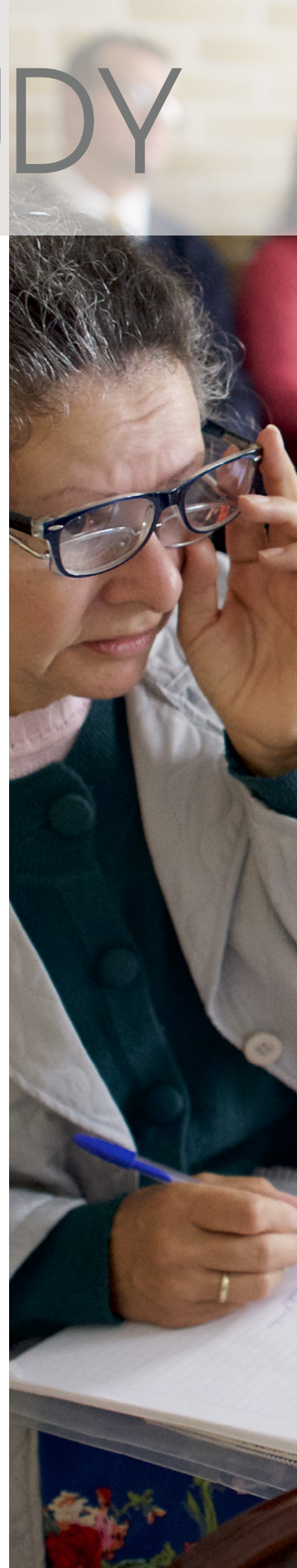
Teach them about the challenges they face when relying upon the internet to answer questions of eternal significance. Remind them that James did not say, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him Google!” (see James 1:5).

Wise people do not rely on the internet to diagnose and treat emotional, mental, and physical health challenges, especially life-threatening challenges. Instead, they seek out health experts, those trained and licensed by recognized medical and state boards. Even then, prudent people seek a second opinion.

If that is the sensible course to take in finding answers for emotional, mental, and physical health issues, it is even more so when eternal life is at stake. When something has the potential to threaten our spiritual life, our most precious family relationships, and our membership in the kingdom, we should find thoughtful and faithful Church leaders to help us. And, if necessary, we should ask those with appropriate academic training, experience, and expertise for help.

This is exactly what I do when I need an answer to my own questions that I cannot answer myself. I seek help from my Brethren in the Quorum of the Twelve and from others with expertise in fields of Church history and doctrine.

Gospel teachers should be among the first—outside students’ own families—to introduce authoritative sources on topics that may be less well-known or controversial so that students will measure whatever they hear or read later against what they have already been taught.



# BY FAITH



## Spiritual Inoculation

We give medical inoculations to our precious missionaries before sending them into the mission field so they will be protected against diseases that can harm them. In a similar fashion, before you send your students into the world, inoculate them by providing faithful, thoughtful, and accurate interpretation of gospel doctrine, the scriptures, our history, and those topics that are sometimes misunderstood.

To name a few such topics that are less known or controversial, I'm talking about plural marriage, seer stones, different accounts of the First Vision, the process of translation of the Book of Mormon or the book of Abraham, gender issues, race and the priesthood, and a Heavenly Mother.

The efforts to inoculate our young people will often fall to Church Educational System teachers. With those thoughts in mind, find time to think about your opportunities and your responsibilities.

Church leaders today are fully conscious of the unlimited access to information, and we are making extraordinary efforts to provide accurate context and understanding of the teachings of the Restoration. A prime example of this effort is the 11 Gospel Topics essays on [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org)<sup>7</sup> that provide balanced and reliable interpretations of the facts for controversial and unfamiliar Church-related subjects.

It is important that you know the content of these essays. If you have questions about them, please ask someone who has studied them and understands them. In other words, “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118) as you master the content of these essays.

You should also become familiar with the Joseph Smith Papers website,<sup>8</sup> the Church history section on [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org), and other resources by faithful LDS scholars.

The effort for gospel transparency and spiritual inoculation through a thoughtful study of doctrine and history, coupled with a burning testimony, is the best antidote we have to help students avoid and deal with questions, doubt, or faith crises they may face in this information age.

As you teachers pay the price to better understand our history, doctrine, and practices—better than you do now—you will be prepared to provide thoughtful, careful, and inspired answers to your students' questions.

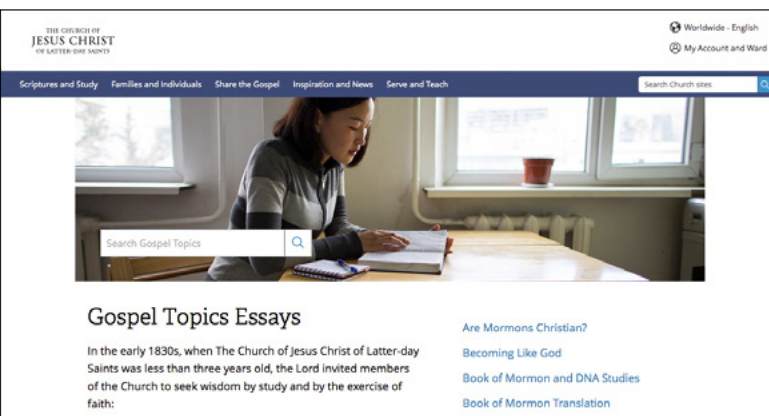
One way to know what questions your students have is to listen attentively to them. All good teachers must be good listeners. In addition to listening to your students, encourage them in class or in private to ask you questions about any topic. One of the most important questions your students may ask is “Why?” When asked with a sincere desire to understand, “Why?” is a great question. It is the question missionaries want their investigators to ask. Why are we here? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why should we pray? Why should we follow Christ? Often the “why” questions lead to inspiration and revelation. Knowing our Heavenly Father's plan of salvation will help you answer most of the “why” questions.

Here is one final note about answering questions. It is important to teach your students that although the gospel provides many, if not most, answers to life's most important questions, some questions cannot be answered in mortality because we lack

the information needed for a proper answer. As we learn in Jacob: “Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord. How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him” (Jacob 4:8; see also D&C 101:32–34).

### A Word of Caution

Now I offer a word of caution. Please recognize that you may come to believe, as many of your students do, that you are a scriptural, doctrinal, and history expert. A recent



**The 11 Gospel Topics essays on LDS.org provide balanced and reliable interpretations of the facts for controversial and unfamiliar Church-related subjects.**

study revealed that “the more people think they know about a topic, the more likely they are to allege understanding beyond what they know, even to the point of feigning knowledge . . . and fabricat[ing] information.”<sup>9</sup>

Identified as *overclaiming*, this temptation must be avoided by our gospel teachers. It is perfectly all right to say, “I do not know.” However, once that is said, you have a responsibility to find the best answers to thoughtful questions your students ask (see D&C 101:32–34).

As you teach your students and respond to their questions, let me warn you not to pass along faith-promoting or unsubstantiated rumors or outdated understandings and explanations of our doctrine and practices from the

past. It is always wise to make it a practice to study the words of the living prophets and apostles; keep updated on current Church issues, policies, and statements through [mormonnewsroom.org](http://mormonnewsroom.org) and [LDS.org](http://LDS.org); and consult the works of recognized, thoughtful, and faithful LDS scholars to ensure you do not teach things that are untrue, out of date, or odd and quirky.

The authors of the overclaiming study noted that “a tendency to overclaim, especially in self-perceived experts, . . . may discourage individuals from educating themselves in precisely those areas in which they consider themselves knowledgeable.”<sup>10</sup>

In addition to becoming lifelong learners, you must also be doing those things in your personal life that allow the Holy Spirit to work within you. Such things include sincere daily prayer, faithful fasting, regular study and pondering of the scriptures and the words of the living prophets, making the Sabbath day a delight, partaking of the sacrament with humility and always remembering the Savior, worshipping in the temple as often as possible, and, finally, reaching out to the needy, poor, and lonely—both those close by and across the world.

To properly fulfill your opportunities and responsibilities, you must practice what you preach!

Be courageous by seeking counsel and correction from those you trust: a spouse, priesthood leaders, or supervisors. Ask them where you can improve in your personal discipleship. Avoid anything that drives away the Spirit.

Additionally, may I suggest that you hold a personal interview with yourself on occasion and review 2 Nephi 26:29–32, Alma 5:14–30, and Doctrine and Covenants 121:33–46? Doing so will help you identify the kinds of temptations we all may face. If something needs to change in your life, then resolve to fix it.

Avoid the temptation to question the motives of your co-laborers. Instead, look deeply into your own heart and search your own desires and motives. Only then can the Savior change your heart and align your desires and motives with His.

The rising generation needs to know, understand, embrace, and participate in God's plan of salvation. Understanding the plan will give them the divine insight through which to view themselves as sons and daughters of God, which provides a lens to understand almost every doctrine, practice, and policy of the Church.

Teachers of the gospel today need to accept the opportunity and the responsibility to teach the 21st century's young people correct principles about the plan, including the divinely sanctioned doctrine of marriage and the role of the family as defined in the proclamation on the family.<sup>11</sup>



***Be courageous by seeking counsel and correction from those you trust: a spouse, priesthood leaders, or supervisors. Ask them where you can improve in your personal discipleship.***

created he them” and that He commanded Father Adam and Mother Eve to “multiply, and replenish the earth” (see Genesis 1:27–28).

It has been said that the plan of happiness begins and ends with family. Indeed, family began in the premortal world, where we lived as members of our Heavenly Parents' family. And in the end, familial commitments and loving relationships will not only continue to exist but also proliferate through the process of procreation (see D&C 131:1–4; 132:19).

### **The Doctrine of Eternal Marriage**

The doctrine of eternal marriage and family is a crucial part of God's plan of happiness. It includes our own temple-sealed families as part of Heavenly Father's own eternal family in the celestial kingdom. Because this doctrine relates directly to His own family and to His own spirit children, we are taught in Genesis that “male and female

The hinge point that connects it all—on which God's plan and our eternal destiny depend and on which all else pivots—is our Savior, Jesus Christ. His atoning sacrifice makes all things possible, including but not limited to a loving, caring, and eternal marriage and family.

The Lord teaches us that no single person, regardless of his or her righteousness, can obtain all our Heavenly Father has for His children. A single individual is half of the equation, unable to dwell in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom (see 1 Corinthians 11:11; D&C 131:1–4).

Your students need to understand that the purpose of mortality is to become more like God by gaining physical bodies, exercising agency, and assuming roles that previously belonged only to heavenly parents—roles of husband, wife, and parent.

The prophets have assured that all those who are worthy and who rely upon Jesus Christ but have not been able to be sealed to a companion or have children in this life will have those opportunities in the world to come.

Teach young people that in the Lord's Church there is room for all to worship, serve, and grow together as brothers and sisters in the gospel. Remind them what Lehi taught—that God's goal and hope for all of His children can be summed up as follows: “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25).

Heavenly Father wants us to accept His definition of marriage and obey His first commandment to “multiply, and replenish” (Genesis 1:28)—not only to fulfill His plan but also to find the joy that His plan was designed to give His sons and daughters.

As Church educators, help our youth to have a clear understanding of God's plan of happiness wherein real joy comes to His children. Help them to know it, embrace it, participate in it, and defend it. From my 40 years of experience as a General Authority, I am concerned about the large number of our Church members, younger and older, who simply do not understand the plan for their eternal and divine destiny.

So, my fellow teachers, we should look for and relish these opportunities to explain, doctrinally and spiritually,

# PURE TESTIMONY

HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE LIVES

why we believe that knowledge of God's great plan of happiness will answer most of the "why" questions we may be asked. Expressing our belief in a premortal life where we lived as the spirit children of a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother allows us to explain why this earth was created. One essential purpose of mortal life is that we can replicate that family experience ourselves, only this time as parents rather than just as children. Treasure your basic understanding of the doctrine and purpose of our Heavenly Father's plan for our eternal happiness. And continue to teach it.

## Conclusion

So, to conclude and to summarize, the points I have shared with you are:

- Teach students to combine learning by study and faith with pure testimony.
- Teach students to stay in the boat and hang on!
- Teach students to control their mobile devices and focus on being connected more to the Holy Spirit than to the internet.
- Inoculate students with the truths of the plan of salvation found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Remember that "Why?" can be a

great question that leads to gospel understanding.

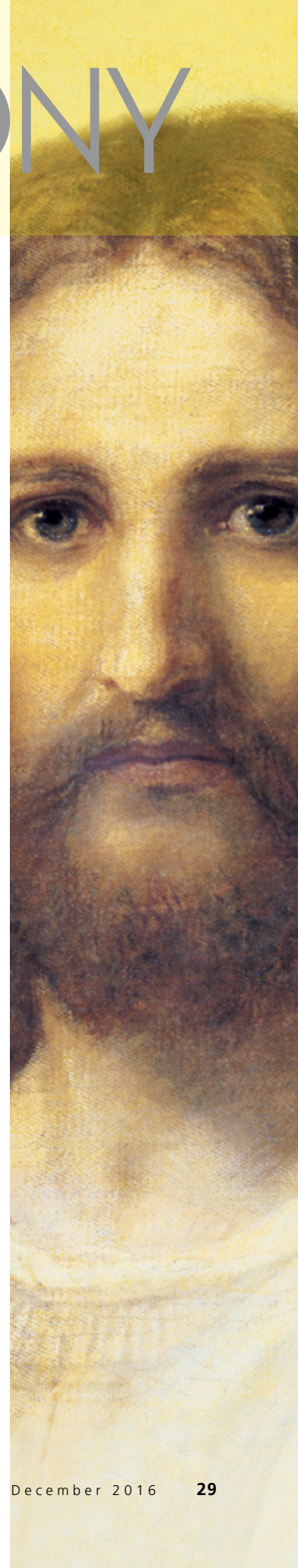
- Master the content of the Gospel Topics essays.
- Don't overclaim, and don't be afraid to say, "I don't know."
- Become lifelong learners.
- Seek counsel and correction from those you trust.
- Consider holding a personal interview occasionally to review your spiritual preparation, your diligence, and your effectiveness.
- Teach that the plan of happiness begins and ends with family. Keep the plan of salvation in mind at all times.
- Teach that marriage and family bring long-lasting joy.

Remember, combining learning by study, by faith, and by pure testimony brings about true and long and lasting conversion. Above all else, strong faith in the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ is essential for our spiritual strength and growth.

May you find the joy and the peace that come from knowing that through your teaching, you have touched a life and lifted one of Heavenly Father's children on the journey back to His presence. ■

## NOTES

1. General Authority training meeting, Salt Lake City, Sept. 29, 1992.
2. Harold B. Lee, in Clyde J. Williams, ed., *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee* (1996), 331.
3. See Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormonism* (1877), 411–14.
4. See F. Burton Howard, *Marion G. Romney: His Life and Faith* (1988), 62–64.
5. Boyd K. Packer, "A Tribute to the Rank and File of the Church," *Ensign*, May 1980, 62.
6. See M. Russell Ballard, "Stay in the Boat and Hold On!" *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 89–92.
7. See [lds.org/topics/essays](https://www.lds.org/topics/essays).
8. See [josephsmithpapers.org](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org).
9. Brent W. Webb, "Quest for Perfection and Eternal Life" (Brigham Young University annual university conference faculty session, Aug. 24, 2015), 10, [speeches.byu.edu](https://speeches.byu.edu); see also Stav Atir, Emily Rosenzweig, and David Dunning, "When Knowledge Knows No Bounds: Self-Perceived Expertise Predicts Claims of Impossible Knowledge," *Psychological Science*, Aug. 2015, 1295–303.
10. In Brent W. Webb, "Quest for Perfection and Eternal Life," 10.
11. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.



# FLEEING FOR Faith AND FREEDOM

By Eva Walburger

**M**y siblings and I grew up hearing stories of how our parents sacrificed to live the gospel, and we have been blessed for their efforts. I have developed a deep sense of gratitude for all that they and other early Czech Latter-day Saints did so that their posterity could receive the blessings of the gospel.

My mother was born in Poprad, Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia). Her father served in the Czech army during World War II, and his was one of many military families that fled into nearby woods for safety from German occupiers. For five days, my grandparents huddled under a blanket with my mother and her sister, ages one and five, eating a ration of sugar cubes.

My grandparents were not members of the Church at this time, nor did they pray often. However, during this ordeal, their hearts were softened. My grandmother wrote in her journal: “This very night I felt a longing for kneeling down to ask for help from someone who had a higher authority. So I went a little ways into the forest, knelt down, and prayed with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. I pleaded for help.”

Her prayer was answered. Some families in the woods were killed upon discovery, but my grandparents and their two daughters were miraculously protected. Through this exhausting and trying experience, the Lord planted a seed of faith and trust in my grandparents’ hearts.

*As they sought religious freedom, my parents were blessed by the kindness and acceptance of Latter-day Saints around them, from Czechoslovakia to Canada.*

## Faith and Persecution

After World War II ended a few years later, my grandparents were still living in Czechoslovakia when two young missionaries knocked on their door. After attending the small branch and taking the discussions, they received a witness of the truthfulness of the gospel and decided to be baptized. The evening of the baptismal interviews, however, the missionaries and Church leader did not arrive. At the next branch meeting, my grandparents learned that due to political upheaval, all of the missionaries had been required to leave the country. Any further religious practice would now also be prohibited. Nevertheless, the small group of Saints in the area kept their faith, now directed through local leadership and priesthood keys. My grandparents and my aunt were baptized in secrecy in 1950.

Over the next several years, members of the branch, including my grandma and my mother (now in her

***In August 1968, my family said good-bye to their home in Prague and quietly slipped away, headed for Austria.***





teens), were sometimes taken in by the secret police for questioning about their religious practices. One time my grandmother was questioned aggressively for five hours. Her questioners told her they would put her in prison for five years if they learned she was teaching religion to her children.

She recorded: “I stayed peaceful and said, ‘If you think that I do something wrong teaching my children religion, then you can lock me up.’ They didn’t answer. From that time on they called me in repeatedly. They talked against the Church, and they tried to get us off our faith. The more they tried the more I clung to the Church, [for] the true Church was always persecuted.”

My mother wrote in her journal: “In these most difficult years, members met on Sunday in our branch president’s apartment. We couldn’t sing loud so we whispered. We didn’t want our branch president in jail. For 18 years we were gathering like that and we were dreaming of the time when we all would be able to go to the Rocky Mountains and settle in [Salt Lake City].” They had hope, even though at the time families were seldom granted paperwork that would allow them to leave the country.

As my mother grew into her twenties, she prayed longingly to be able to marry a member of the Church and somehow be sealed in the temple.

### Finding a New Life

My father, who was raised in a farming village, was living in the city going to school when he met my mother. My mother was beginning her career as a professional opera singer. As they became acquainted, she introduced him to the Church. Although he had not been baptized yet, my parents married on February 18, 1967.

At the end of that year they were blessed with the arrival of my older brother. Eight months after his birth, the branch president received a revelation that the members should prepare to be led out of the country to a place where they could worship in freedom. In August 1968 the

Russians invaded Czechoslovakia, creating chaos at the borders and throughout the country. The branch members who had obediently prepared escaped to Vienna, Austria.

My grandmother, who left the country with my parents, wrote: “At night when everybody in the apartment house slept, we said good-bye to our home and quietly slipped away in fear that the baby might start crying. We had to do all this in secret because we had in our building three spies who worked for the secret police. We were blessed by the Lord. We escaped. When we left we knew we [would] never return, but we didn’t know where we would go from Vienna either. At this time we couldn’t worry about it. The



*My parents arrived in Calgary with only a suitcase, a baby buggy, and a few dollars. The Canadian members immediately started helping my family with transportation, shopping, and finding a home.*

Lord revealed to the branch president His promises to us if we stay faithful to Him.”

### Welcomed to a New Land

My grandmother, my parents, and two other families lived in the basement of the Böcklinstrasse church building in Vienna for over a month. During this month my father took the missionary discussions and was baptized. Many members of the three families found jobs, and they pooled their wages together until they were all able to immigrate to Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Due to bad weather in Calgary, their plane landed in Edmonton on November 5, 1968.

Leaving behind relatives, a culture, and a land they loved must have been a daunting sacrifice, but the hardships were in many ways just beginning. Arriving in Calgary with only a suitcase, a baby buggy, and CAD \$32, my parents were in great need.

The Canadian members immediately started serving my family, generously providing help with transportation, shopping, and finding a home to rent. Within a week my parents and my grandma had a home furnished with beds, a table and chairs, a couch, a crib, bedding, dishes, and even some food in the cupboards. My mother wrote in her journal how surprising and thrilling it was to see these unexpected furnishings and how grateful she was for the service given.

Along with deep feelings of gratitude, however, were other emotions. Culture shock was very real and difficult to deal with. The first year of living in Calgary was filled with English classes and frigid walks to work for Dad. They were doing everything possible to establish a sense of

home, but still this was a trying time with so much change. The Saints of their new ward in Calgary worked through the language barrier to become a support system to the newly arrived members. Each Sunday my family gained strength as they attended sacrament meeting to renew their covenants, relying on the Spirit to teach them English.

### The Blessings of Eternity

Our family of five was sealed together in the Cardston Alberta Temple in October 1976. My mother had set her sights on this day over 20 years earlier, and finally, in a country and language that she would have never imagined as a youth, her prayers were answered. I was then almost eight years old, and I have wonderful memories of my parents’ sparkling eyes and smiles as we children entered the sealing room.

My grandmother was also at the temple that day. I recall her excitement at seeing the temple lights as we had arrived in Cardston. Years later, after retiring from her job in Calgary, she moved to Cardston and gave many hours of service in the temple. She loved to play the organ and help inspire reverence there. Her testimony and love for the Savior were evidenced through her kindness to everyone around her. She is to me an example of a strong Latter-day Saint woman.

I feel overwhelming gratitude to my parents—the pioneers in my family—for their sacrifices of career, extended family, homeland, and possessions. It seems they gave up so much, but the Lord has so abundantly blessed them—and their posterity—for living the principles of the gospel. ■

*The author lives in Idaho, USA.*



### SERVE THE REFUGEES

“It is our hope that you will prayerfully determine what you can do—according to your own time and circumstance—to serve the refugees living in your neighborhoods and communities. This is an opportunity to serve one on one, in families, and by organization to offer friendship, mentoring, and other Christlike service.”

Linda K. Burton, Relief Society General President, “I Was a Stranger,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 14.



By Bishop  
Gérald Caussé  
Presiding Bishop

PREPARING  
A PLACE FOR THE  
**LORD**

*Each time I hear the  
story of the Savior's birth  
and earthly ministry,  
I think of our personal  
responsibility to prepare  
welcoming places for Him  
for the day He returns.*

Last year just before Christmas, I attended a dinner given in honor of a high-ranking French official who is not a member of the Church. The dinner was held in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Before sitting down to our meal, we took our guest to the observation window on the 10th floor, which offers visitors a beautiful view of Temple Square. The scene was almost magical, with the Salt Lake Temple standing tall amid myriad glittering lights. We stood there for several minutes, almost speechless.

Upon our return to the banquet room, the official asked us an unexpected question: “Do you believe in the end of the world?” This led to an inspiring discussion about the Lord’s Second Coming and the importance for all of us to be prepared to receive Him on the day of His return.

As I was thinking about the temple we had just admired, a wonderful thought came to my mind: “Upon His return, Jesus will *at last* have a beautiful place in which to dwell!”

The Guide to the Scriptures notes that a temple is “*literally* the house of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, it is not just a symbolic place. The temples of our dispensation are prepared and consecrated houses where He may physically come. The Lord said that His Church should be established so “that my covenant people may be gathered in one in that day *when I shall come to my temple*” (D&C 42:36; emphasis added).

What a striking contrast with the Savior’s humble beginnings in mortality. He, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, was born in a simple stable and laid in a manger “because there was no room . . . in the inn” (Luke 2:7). During His early childhood, Jesus did not always enjoy the comforts of a permanent home, such as when His family fled to Egypt to escape the cruelty of a tyrant (see Matthew 2:13–14).

We don’t know the details of His family’s sojourn in Egypt, but likely He and His parents lived the strenuous life of refugees—a life comparable to that of the many migrants in our time who have fled theaters of war and civil conflict in Africa and the Middle East.



Even during His adult life, Jesus indicated that He did not have a regular home. One day a man approached Him and said, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” The Savior answered, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:57, 58).

My brothers and sisters, each time I hear the story of the Savior’s birth and earthly ministry, I think of our personal responsibility to prepare welcoming places for Him for the day He returns. What can we do?

### **Go to the Temple**

First, let us be prepared to receive Him in His own house—the temple. Who among us has not dreamed of visiting the places where the Savior was born, lived, and carried out His earthly ministry? Many, with considerable sacrifice, have journeyed to the Holy Land. But how important it is that we visit the places to which He might one day return. One of the best ways we, as His disciples, can prepare for His Second Coming is to go regularly to His holy house and bind ourselves to Him through sacred covenants.

### **Prepare Your Home**

Second, we can make our homes places where the Lord would want to stay. In the scriptures, we read numerous accounts of kindly people who welcomed and hosted the Savior in their homes. So let us ask ourselves these questions: Is my home acceptable to the Lord? Is it a safe, peaceful, and Spirit-filled place where He would feel comfortable? Our homes need not be spacious or luxurious. A humble dwelling, centered on the gospel and filled with caring family and friends, would make Him happy.

### **Gather the Elect**

Third, we can help gather His elect from all over the world—even if that means leaving our homes for a time to help build His earthly kingdom. The history of the people of God is a history of Saints who were always ready and willing to go where the Lord wanted them to go. I think of

the prophets of old, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Lehi, and many others. I think of the Lord’s Apostles in the meridian of time who relentlessly spread the gospel across the Mediterranean.

Latter-day prophets and apostles, along with thousands of missionaries, have taken and are continuing to take the message of Christ to the four corners of the earth. They are willing to leave the comforts of their homes to offer their service in the Lord’s vineyard.

### **Help Those in Need**

Finally, a wonderful way to prepare a place for the Lord is to help our neighbors who don’t have a home. The early days of the Restoration included times when the Saints were without shelter. In their quest for Zion, the intolerance and wickedness of their enemies often forced them to leave their homes.

President Brigham Young (1801–77) used these touching words to describe their plight: “We have, time and again, and again, been driven from our peaceful homes, and our women and children been obliged to exist on the prairies, in the forests, on the roads, and in tents, in the dead of winter, suffering all manner of hardships, even to death itself.”<sup>2</sup>

One of the most moving episodes from this era highlights the small village of Quincy, Illinois, during the winter of 1839. At that time, this community of settlers and farmers, situated on the bank of the Mississippi River, included about 1,500 souls living in precarious conditions. In the middle of a harsh winter, they suddenly faced the arrival of approximately 5,000 Church members fleeing the extermination order issued by the governor of Missouri. The Saints were in a state of utter destitution and distress, having crossed the frozen waters of the Mississippi on foot. With incredible generosity, the citizens of Quincy welcomed them with open arms, opening their homes and sharing their meager provisions.

One resident of Quincy described the arrival of these refugees: “Many of the Saints were glad to find shelter in my house from the storms, until they could find a place



to live in. Very many nights the floors, upstairs and down, were covered with beds so closely it was impossible to set a foot anywhere without stepping on a bed.”<sup>3</sup>

For those of us who are blessed to live in more calm and prosperous circumstances, these accounts have great significance. They teach us to be a people always prepared to reach out to the homeless and the destitute. Regardless of whether we live in areas experiencing a great influx of refugees or in small, isolated communities, there are many ways we can serve those who struggle to have the bare necessities of life. We can contribute to the Church’s humanitarian fund. We can work with others in our communities who provide loving service to those in need. We can extend our friendship to those who have been displaced when they come into our communities. We can genuinely welcome the strangers who visit our wards and branches.

One of our most beautiful hymns recounts the story of a stranger who found sanctuary with a man of great charity.

*’Twas night; the floods were out; it blew  
A winter hurricane aloof.  
I heard his voice abroad and flew  
To bid him welcome to my roof.*

*I warmed and clothed and cheered my guest  
And laid him on my couch to rest;  
Then made the earth my bed, and seemed  
In Eden’s garden while I dreamed. . . .*

*Then in a moment to my view  
The stranger started from disguise.  
The tokens in his hands I knew;  
The Savior stood before mine eyes.  
He spake, and my poor name he named,  
“Of me thou hast not been ashamed.  
These deeds shall thy memorial be;  
Fear not, thou didst them unto me.”<sup>4</sup>*

I am proud to belong to a Church that never ceases to reach out to the poor and needy of the earth. I am humbled by the countless acts of love and charity, small and great, performed each day by the Church and its members. These acts will always be an essential part of the mission of the Church because it is the Church of Jesus Christ and we strive to follow His example.

Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer. I testify that He was born in the meridian of time, that He lives, and that one day He will return in glory to rule and reign over His earthly kingdom.

By way of preparation, I invite you to go more often to His holy house; create a safe, loving, and peaceful environment in your home; and participate in gathering His elect from the four corners of the earth. I also pray that you will feel a special desire to reach out in love to those among us who are homeless and destitute. In doing so, you will prepare a place in your heart and home to welcome the Savior, and His return truly will be a great and marvelous day. ■

#### NOTES

1. Guide to the Scriptures, “Temple,” [scriptures.lds.org](https://scriptures.lds.org); emphasis added.
2. Brigham Young, in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 2:509.
3. Wandle Mace, in Ora H. Barlow, *The Israel Barlow Story and Mormon Mores* (1968), 156; see also 154–55.
4. “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief,” *Hymns*, no. 29.



Jorge Cocco Santangelo 15

*Jorge Orlando Cocco Santangelo,  
The Call (see Matthew 4:19–20),  
Argentina, Purchase Award Winner*

THE 10TH  
INTERNATIONAL  
ART COMPETITION:

TELL ME THE  
STORIES OF

Jesus



*Sabrina Jill Squires,  
The Last Supper  
(see John 13:1–35),  
United States*

Following is a sampling of art from the 10th International Art Competition that was recently on display at the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah. Ninety-eight pieces of art were selected from among the 944 entries from 40 countries around the world. Artists could choose any story from the life of our Savior Jesus Christ as the subject for their creation. Interpretations of these stories found their way into paintings, drawings, sculptures, ceramics, photography, collages, needlework, stained glass, and digital art.

You can view the exhibit online at [lds.org/go/10art](https://lds.org/go/10art).



*Meagan Ruth Getz,  
We Are Come to  
Worship Him (see  
Matthew 2:1–2),  
United States*



*Michael Malm,  
To Be with God  
(see Joseph Smith  
Translation, Matthew  
4:1 [in Matthew 4:1,  
footnote b]), United  
States, Purchase  
Award Winner*

*Robin Birrell, She Baked the  
Loaves and Dried the Fishes  
(see John 6:9–14), United States;  
Rob Adamson, Mount of  
Transfiguration (see Matthew  
17:2), United States*





*Elspeth Young, Other Sheep I Have (see John 10:16), United States*

*Caitlin Maxfield Connolly, A Believing Woman (see Matthew 9:22), United States, Purchase Award Winner*



*Matthew Hyrum Dell, The Plan of Salvation (see John 3:16), Australia*

*Erin Meads, Even All Her Living: The Widow's Mite (see Mark 12:44), United States*



Michal Diane  
Onyon, The Good  
Shepherd  
(see Luke 15:4),  
United States



Kathleen Peterson,  
Jesus and the  
Woman Taken  
(see John 8:11),  
United States



*Clark Kelley Price,  
Truly This Man Was  
the Son of God  
(see Mark 15:39),  
United States*

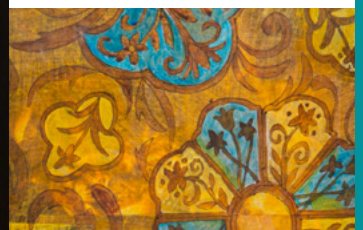
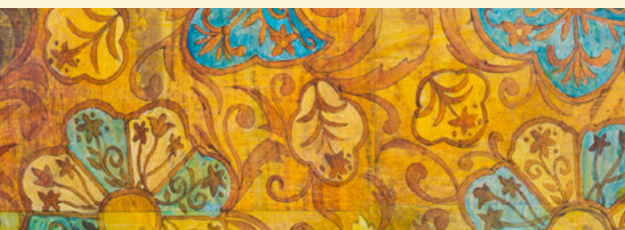


*Lester Lee Yocum,  
In the Garden (see  
Matthew 26:36-39),  
United States*



*Kazuko Covington,  
Worlds without  
End (see Moses 2),  
Japan*

*Daniel Alma Wilson,  
Light in the Darkness  
(see John 8:12),  
United States*



# Christmas Peace IN THE MIDST OF WAR

*I spent the holiday as a prisoner among strangers, but the message of Christ's birth reminded me that we are all God's children.*

By J Stanford Staheli

**D**uring the Christmas season of 1944, I was far from home, isolated in a tower room of a castle as a prisoner of war in Germany. I was distanced from the world and the usual celebrations of Christmas.

In spite of my surroundings, void of anything to suggest the season, my thoughts turned to home. What at first seemed to be a daydream of home and children's excited voices turned out to be more than a dream. Real laughter and squeals of excitement floated through my little open window from the outside world. I quickly stepped onto my stool and pulled myself up by the bars on the window so that I could look out on the source of merriment beyond the fortress walls.

Children were making their way up the cobblestone street below. The ground was covered with snow, and the children were dressed in warm, brightly colored clothing that added to the festive tone of the day. They were pulling sleighs as they left the outskirts of Frankfurt and started up the slope past the castle toward the forest beyond. This merry group of children reminded me of my own younger brothers and sisters at home, most likely engaged in the same activities in the snow halfway around the world.

I watched these children until they were out of my sight, but they reminded me of our kinship to each other. Their families lived in the homes of the city below. Their lives,

their thoughts, and their feelings were much the same as those of my family. My parents and siblings were thinking and praying with anxious hearts about my safety. The mothers and fathers in these homes below were thinking of and praying for their sons, brothers, and fathers who were fighting in battles in this same war. Some were missing in action, some were wounded, and some were prisoners of the opposing forces, just as I was.

It wasn't long before I saw the young people returning, their sleighs loaded with freshly cut evergreens from the forest. Their excitement was running high as they hurried to their homes, looking forward to decorating their trees. Again I was reminded of my family and our tradition of searching the nearby hills for a piñon tree, cutting it, carrying it home, and adorning its branches with green and red paper chains, strings of popcorn, a few ornaments, and the icicle decorations saved year to year.

The next day was Christmas, in Germany and all over the world. I knew in my heart that in spite of war and devastation, Christianity was still alive. The belief and hope of peace on earth and goodwill to men burned brightly in every Christian heart on this night in remembrance of the Christ child born in Bethlehem long ago. This I learned as a prisoner of war that Christmas in the castle. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*



# TUMBLEWEEDS & CHRISTMAS STARS

*Our Christmas as missionaries wasn't like the ones we were used to,  
but the light of the season was as bright as it had always been.*

By Andrew L. Sorenson

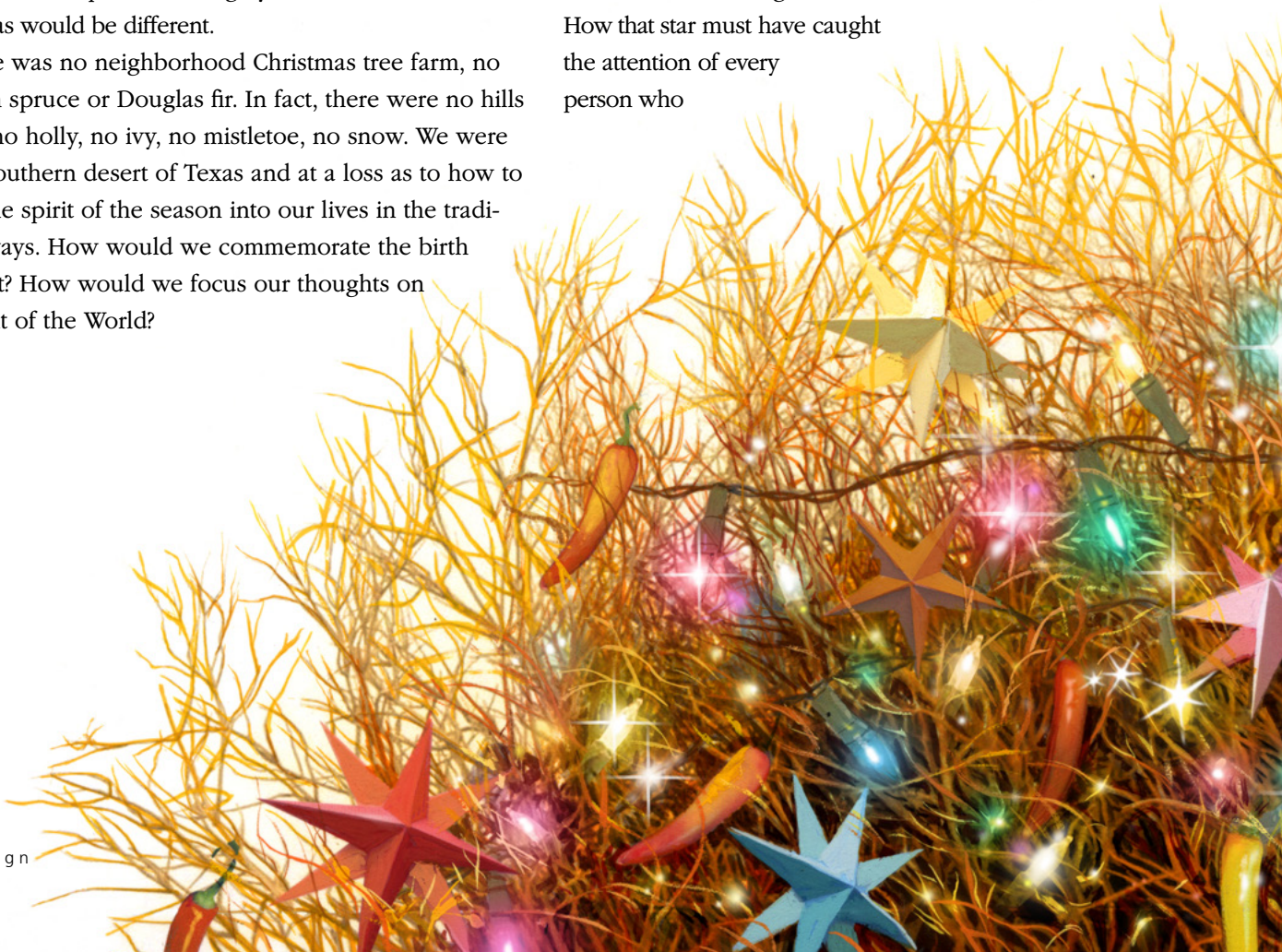
One of the most memorable Christmases of my early life occurred during my first December away from home while I lived in Eagle Pass, Texas, USA. This sleepy border town—flat, hot, featureless—was the spot where I was laboring with three other missionaries. As December arrived and we recognized a need for some Christmas cheer in our surroundings, we considered our options thoroughly and realized that this Christmas would be different.

There was no neighborhood Christmas tree farm, no hill with spruce or Douglas fir. In fact, there were no hills at all—no holly, no ivy, no mistletoe, no snow. We were in the southern desert of Texas and at a loss as to how to invite the spirit of the season into our lives in the traditional ways. How would we commemorate the birth of Christ? How would we focus our thoughts on the Light of the World?

## The Light of Christmas

No doubt Heavenly Father had many options for alerting the world to the birth of His Son, but in the end He chose a most impressive sign for those who would look: the star of Bethlehem—“a new star . . . , such an one as ye never have beheld,” said Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 14:5). God put in the darkness of night a physical and metaphorical declaration that the Light of the World had arrived. How that star must have caught the attention of every person who

ILLUSTRATION BY BILL MAYER





chanced to glance at the sky! And “when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy” (Matthew 2:10).

Today, with all the surrounding artificial light, many of us can hardly make out stars in the night sky, but in Jesus’s time, everyone would have looked with familiarity toward the heavens when darkness fell. Thus, God chose light, one of the most evocative symbols, to represent His Only Begotten Son. Christmas lights have become the modern and ubiquitous symbol of Christmas.

### **A Makeshift Christmas Tree**

Which brings me back to Eagle Pass, Texas, and our unadorned apartment. Without family and with limited funds, we would need to be creative. That’s when it hit us—we finally took notice of the one locally abundant timber and knew we had partially solved our problem. The tumbleweed did not require an axe or saw; we just picked it up, brought it inside, and began to decorate it.

With a few homemade ornaments and some red chili peppers, our tumbleweed became a nice burst of Christmas cheer. But it was still missing something—our little sapling needed lights! Without lights, it would not call

out from the darkness, light the room through the night, or capture our wandering gaze. With lights, our tumbleweed would remind us of the Light of the World, His birth, and His message of hope, confidence, and comfort. So we found a string of Christmas lights, wrapped them around the little “tree,” and propped up our creation in the corner window, where it would shine all through the night. Everyone in the neighborhood could see it, our welcoming wonder, with lights and all. We had our symbol of the season—the Christmas tumbleweed of Eagle Pass, Texas.

### **Remembering the Light**

Although that Christmas was many years ago, it still serves as a reminder to me of how Christ lights the darkness of our lives. As Christmas approaches and the nights are illuminated by so many Christmas lights, let us remember the new star that broke through the dark skies more than two millennia ago to announce the birth of the Son of God, even the Light of the World. And let us also remember that Heavenly Father still speaks! He may not use a star, but He communicates with us just as surely as He communicated with men and women who came before.

His message to all the world is that Jesus Christ is “the bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16), “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9), and that “he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24). It is this Light that brings us out of personal darkness into a brightness filled with hope. ■

*The author lives in California, USA.*





*The gospel creates a unity of faith  
with our Father, our Savior, and  
our fellow believers.*

# WHY IS UNITY IMPORTANT?

By Barbara A. Lewis

The story is told of a young boy who visited his uncle, a lumberjack. At the lumber camp, the boy saw a massive tree standing alone on the top of a hill. He enthusiastically pointed the tree out to his uncle, saying, “Look at that big tree! It will make a lot of good lumber, won’t it?”

His uncle looked down at the boy and shook his head. “No, son, that tree will not make a lot of good lumber. It might make a *lot* of lumber but not a lot of *good* lumber. When a tree grows off by itself, too many branches grow on it. Those branches produce knots when the tree is cut into lumber. The best lumber comes from trees that grow together in groves. The trees also grow taller and straighter when they grow together.”

Drawing a lesson from this story, Elder Henry D. Taylor (1903–87) of the Seventy said, “It is so with people. We become better individuals, more useful timber when we grow together rather than alone.”<sup>1</sup>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has members throughout the world. Just as different threads add beauty to a tapestry, Latter-day Saints of different ethnic groups, languages, and cultures unite in shared beliefs and covenants to form a harmonious pattern.<sup>2</sup> We seek to be unified at every level, both as a worldwide church and as individual families. After all, we are all part of God’s family.

## United in Our Wards, Branches, and Communities

The Savior prayed for unity among His disciples: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21). The gospel creates a unity of faith with our Father, our Savior, and our fellow believers (see Ephesians 4:13). The Lord said at another time, “If ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27).

We have myriad opportunities to unite with our brothers and sisters in the Church. Harmony builds when visiting teachers and home teachers keep in loving contact with the people for whom they have responsibility. Bishoprics and quorum and auxiliary presidencies do their part as they watch over their flocks and work to bind them together. Unity grows when we serve together in peace, teach each other, and encourage one another.

In significant ways, unity is as important outside the Church as it is within. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled us to include people of other faiths in our circles of friendship. “Perhaps there has never been a more important time for neighbors all around the world to stand together for the common good of one another,” he said.<sup>3</sup> As we unite with our neighbors, we create strong communities and help spread the Savior’s gospel throughout the world. We can work toward harmony in any community in which we find ourselves.

## United in Our Families

Contention can spread like poison through families or any relationship, dividing us from those with whom we should be closest. Because the Spirit departs when discord erupts (see 3 Nephi 11:29), arguments can leave us floundering without the Lord’s help and guidance.<sup>4</sup>

Family members should feel safe to share honestly how they feel, and they should speak these feelings with patience and understanding. The family should be a secure place for members to be themselves.

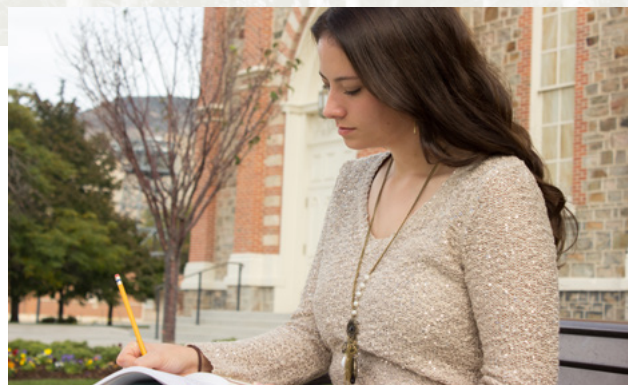
“Unity, harmony, goodwill are virtues to be fostered and cherished in every home,” taught President David O. McKay (1873–1970).<sup>5</sup> He also observed, “Slander is poison to the soul.”<sup>6</sup> The home should be a place where family members

are confident that they will not be gossiped about or disparaged. In a united family, everyone respects each other.

We can strengthen family unity by living the simple principles of the gospel. Reading the scriptures together helps family members focus on the gospel and grow together. Praying together as a family creates within each individual a feeling of personal worth and power.

A family in Lodz, Poland, was investigating the gospel. The father did not share his family’s interest in the Church and remained resistant and hostile. One evening one of the missionaries explained the power of family prayer. He also taught that the father was to be honored as the head of the family. The missionaries invited the man to lead them in prayer. He had never prayed aloud before. All the family members bowed their heads and held their breath.

Two or three minutes passed in silence, and all the heads remained bowed. Finally, the father began to pray in halting words. His voice caught in his throat as he prayed



### LOOKING INSIDE: CREATE HARMONY AND PEACE WITHIN

- Read and study the scriptures.
- Pray for inner peace.
- Write your feelings in your journal.
- Read inspiring books.
- Pick a positive character trait to develop. Practice it for a period of time until you think you have improved, and then pick another.
- Repent of any wrongdoings and forgive yourself.

for blessings upon each family member. All eyes became wet, and a spirit of peace filled the room. At the end of the prayer, the father wept. He had felt the confirming warmth of the Spirit. As a result of sincere prayer—and of each family member desiring the welfare of the others—the father became more united with his wife and children. He wanted to hear about the restored gospel.

### Harmony within Ourselves

To be at peace with others, it is important to be at peace with ourselves. When we are at war with ourselves—when, for example, we know to do right but don't do it—we experience an internal disunity (see Romans 7:22–24; Mosiah 3:19). Such internal strife disrupts not only our personal well-being but also our feelings of harmony with others.

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that inner peace is restored through facing our problems and repenting. “A tranquil



### LOOKING OUTSIDE: SEEK HARMONY IN INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS

- Look for the good in each person.
- Imagine how you would feel in another's place.
- Think of your family (or group) as a team in which all of you contribute to the whole.
- Ask for forgiveness from anyone you have offended, and freely forgive others.
- Write kind, anonymous notes to family and friends.
- Recognize and thank others for their good efforts.
- Perform service for others.

conscience invites freedom from anguish, sorrow, guilt, shame, and self-condemnation,” he said. “It provides a foundation for happiness.”<sup>7</sup>

Satan would have us believe that when we make a mistake, it is too late to change things. However, we know that that is not the case. The Savior, who resolves estrangement from the Father, can resolve our estrangement from each other. We can pray and ask for forgiveness and repent. The Spirit will return. It is never too late; there is always a pathway home.

### United by Forgiveness

When arguments occur and walls are erected that divide us, forgiveness can restore harmony. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught that “somehow forgiveness, with love and tolerance, accomplishes miracles that can happen in no other way.”<sup>8</sup>

Our Savior demonstrated the power of forgiveness throughout His sacred life. In the midst of the agony of the cross, He cried out, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Because of His Atonement and the forgiveness it makes available, we can be made clean, through sincere repentance and obedience, and someday become fully united with Him.

Unity is a commandment of God. It is a law of the celestial kingdom (see D&C 105:3–5). As we live the gospel and love and serve others, we feel at one with our brothers and sisters and more in tune with the divine. In united harmony, we become “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). We become a many-hued fabric, divinely knit together—the family of our Eternal Father. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

#### NOTES

1. See Henry D. Taylor, in Conference Report, Apr. 1965, 54–55.
2. See “Diversity and Unity in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” Gospel Topics, [topics.lds.org](https://www.lds.org/topics).
3. See M. Russell Ballard, “Doctrine of Inclusion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 36–38.
4. See James E. Faust, “What I Want My Son to Know before He Leaves on His Mission,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 41.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), 44.
6. *Teachings: David O. McKay*, 43.
7. See Richard G. Scott, “Peace of Conscience and Peace of Mind,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 15–18.
8. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 84.





**By Elder  
James J. Hamula**  
Of the Seventy

# THE DIVINE POWER OF Grace

*Grace is intended to enable us to more perfectly keep the commandments and pursue a godlier walk, until we attain the full stature of Christ.*

**O**f all the attributes of Jesus Christ, perhaps the most significant is that He is “full of grace” (John 1:14). In the scriptures the term *grace* most often refers to the divine disposition and power to bless, bestow gifts, or otherwise act favorably toward man. The Bible Dictionary puts it this way: “The main idea of the word [*grace*] is divine means of help or strength. . . . Grace is an enabling power” (“Grace”). It enables the recipient to do and to be what he or she cannot do and cannot be if left to his or her own means.

All of us need such an enabling power. We are the sons and daughters of God. As such, we have the potential to become like Him.

## Our Incapacity in Spirit and Body

While it may be expected that we achieve the “fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13), we simply cannot do so on our own. Each of us is made up of two things—an eternal spirit and a mortal body (see Abraham 3:18). Our eternal spirit comes into the world a product of choices made in the premortal world. These premortal choices are part of our personality, character, and spiritual intelligence. Significantly, no two spirits are the same (see Abraham 3:19). Each spirit possesses a different degree of spiritual intelligence, or light and truth (see D&C 93:36), according to his or her premortal choices. While each of our spirits may arrive in its mortal body at birth clean and pure, and even noble and great, no one of our spirits is yet perfectly developed unto the fulness of Christ. Perfection of spirit may be pursued

*When Peter fixed his eyes on the Lord and acted in faith, he had power to do what he could not do on his own—walk on the water. Such is the availability of the Lord’s grace in our time of need.*

during the schooling of mortality and the additional experience of the spirit world, but perfection of spirit is not finally accomplished until the Resurrection.

In addition to the current imperfection of our spirits, our mortal bodies are also imperfect. As wondrous as they are, our mortal bodies are subject to decay, deterioration, and

death and to desires, appetites, and passions previously unknown to us. Under such conditions it is enormously difficult to fully subject the body to the will of the spirit. Too often the spirit succumbs to the dictates of the body. Some of the greatest spirits who have come to earth have struggled to subdue their physical bodies. “My heart sorroweth because of my flesh,” cried Nephi. “I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me” (2 Nephi 4:17, 18; see also verse 27).

The war between spirit and body is made all the more difficult by another fact of mortality. Our physical bodies are constructed of the materials of a “fallen” world, which gives Satan a particular “power to captivate” (2 Nephi 2:29). President Brigham Young (1801–77) made the following observation: “Do not suppose that we shall ever in the flesh be free from temptations to sin,” he said. “Some suppose that they can in the flesh be sanctified body and spirit and become so pure that they will never again feel the effects of the power of the adversary of truth. Were it possible for a person to attain to this degree of perfection in the flesh he could not die, neither remain in a world where sin predominates. . . . I think we shall more or less feel the effects of sin so long as we live, and finally have to pass the ordeals of death.”<sup>1</sup>

## The Divine Power of Grace

We need a divine power that can transform our souls with all of our current weaknesses and deficiencies into gods with all of the accompanying strengths, virtues, and capacities. Gratefully, such a divine power exists; it is God’s grace. Only through the endowment of God’s grace are we “added upon” (Abraham 3:26) such that, in time, we attain the fulness of Christ. Indeed, this is exactly how Christ attained His fulness.

As the Lord told Joseph Smith, “He that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24). But if we treat casually, set aside, or even ignore the gracious blessings we receive from the Lord, then “greater





things [are] withheld” from us (3 Nephi 26:10). In such circumstances, we receive the “grace of God in vain” (2 Corinthians 6:1) and eventually “fall from grace” (D&C 20:32) altogether.

All this suggests that we must learn patience with ourselves and others in our current weaknesses and imperfections, and we must learn perseverance in the unavoidably gradual process of growth unto perfection.

### ***Faith in Jesus Christ***

Understanding how grace is granted helps us understand how some principles fully enable grace to fill us. Faith in Jesus Christ is the first principle that welcomes grace (see Romans 5:1–2). Truth, hope, action, and confirming witness are the essential elements of faith and are the pathway to receiving the Lord’s grace.

Consider, for example, Peter’s experience of walking on the water to the Lord. Like

us at times, Peter and the disciples were in the midst of a tempestuous sea. Jesus came to them, walking on the water and bidding them to come to Him. With hope, Peter came down out of the boat into the boisterous sea and walked toward the Lord. His hope in Christ, coupled with determined action, permitted him to receive the power of walking on the water. But, looking at the storm around him, Peter doubted and began to sink. “Lord, save me,” he cried. In response, the scripture records that “immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him” (Matthew 14:30–31). When Peter fixed his eyes on the Lord and acted in faith, he had power to do what he could not do on his own—walk on the water.

When Peter took his eyes off of the Lord and doubted, Peter severed himself from that power, was left to his own, and began to

sink. Note well the response of the Lord to Peter's cry for help. "Immediately" did the Lord extend His hand to save him. Such is the availability of the Lord's grace in our time of need.

### **Repentance**

Repentance is the second principle that enables grace to fill us. Mormon taught: "Blessed are they who will repent and hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; for these are they that shall be saved. And may God grant . . . that men might be brought unto repentance and good works, that they might be restored unto grace for grace, according to their works" (Helaman 12:23–24). From this

sins and iniquities of his life. In that moment he became "racked with eternal torment" (Alma 36:12). "The very thought of coming into the presence of my God," he said, "did rack my soul with inexpressible horror" (Alma 36:14). But Alma remembered that his father had spoken concerning the coming of Jesus Christ to atone for the sins of the world. This recollection moved him to cry out in his heart, "O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me" (Alma 36:18). Immediately, he "could remember [his] pains no more" and "was harrowed up by the memory of [his] sins no more" (Alma 36:19).

Alma's soul-wrenching repentance welcomed a power that cleansed and transformed him into a new creature. No longer did he seek to destroy the Church of God. Rather, for the balance of his life, Alma labored to build up the Church by working to help others repent and receive the Holy Ghost. Alma the Younger's conversion from the vilest of sinners to prophet of God is a dramatic example of the power of the Lord's grace to both justify and sanctify every one of us.

### **Humility**

The third principle is humility. The Lord taught Moroni, "My grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27). Making weak things become strong is the work of grace.

If humility is necessary, we might well ask what humility is. Briefly stated, humility is the submission of one's own will to the will of God and giving Him the honor for what is accomplished. In this regard, Jesus Christ

*Faith in Jesus Christ is the first principle that welcomes grace. Repentance is the second principle that enables grace to fill us.*

scripture, it is clear that a repentant heart and good works are in harmony with grace.

Consider the example of Alma the Younger. He, along with the sons of Mosiah, "were the very vilest of sinners" (Mosiah 28:4). When the angel of the Lord appeared unto Alma, he was confronted with all the

is our greatest example. His humility and submissiveness were perfectly manifested during His atoning sacrifice. “O my Father,” Jesus prayed, “if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). The fulness of God’s grace flooded Christ on this occasion.

### **Diligence**

The fourth principle is diligence. As Nephi taught his people, “It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). Some may read this scripture to mean that God’s grace is withheld until we have given our best efforts. I do not read it this way. There are simply too many examples of God’s grace being extended to man without him doing anything. The power of the Resurrection, for example, is given to all by the grace of God, irrespective of individual effort. I understand Nephi’s “all we can do” language to mean that God’s grace is extended to us when we are diligent. As Elder Bruce C. Hafen, former member of the Seventy, has written: “The Savior’s gift of grace to us is not necessarily limited in time to ‘after’ all we can do. We may receive his grace before, during, and after the time when we expend our own efforts.”<sup>2</sup>

Consider the example of the brother of Jared. He was instructed to build barges and use them to cross the ocean. Step by step, the brother of Jared was diligent in following the Lord’s instructions. As he completed the barges, the brother of Jared became concerned about the darkness in the barges and asked the Lord to provide light. While the Lord could have readily provided the brother of Jared with a solution, He asked instead, “What will ye that I should do that



DETAIL FROM ALMA, ARISE, BY WALTER RANE



ye may have light in your vessels?” (Ether 2:23). In response, the brother of Jared diligently prepared 16 stones, presented them to the Lord, and asked that He touch them so “that they may shine forth in darkness” (see Ether 3:1–4).

The brother of Jared had not completed all that the Lord had given him to do, but the Lord extended His power nonetheless in behalf of the brother of Jared, touching each of the stones and causing them to produce the light needed for the anticipated voyage. In so doing, the Lord showed His willingness and readiness to extend His divine powers to us as we diligently do the best we can.

#### **Obedience**

The fifth principle is obedience. “If you keep my commandments,” said the Lord, “you shall receive grace for grace” (D&C 93:20).

Moroni puts it this way: “If ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” (Moroni 10:32).

Without diminishing the Lord’s injunction to keep the commandments or Moroni’s injunction to deny ourselves of all ungodliness, we should understand that grace is not dependent on our perfect compliance. If grace were dependent on our perfectly keeping the commandments or perfectly denying ourselves of all ungodliness, our persistent imperfection in mortality would forever preclude us from acquiring grace. Grace is intended, after all, to enable us to more perfectly keep the commandments and pursue a godlier walk, until we attain the full stature of Christ.

The Lord's injunction to keep the commandments and Moroni's injunction to deny ourselves of all ungodliness must be understood as doing these things the best we can. While our actions are important, more important are the intentions of our hearts.

### ***Receiving the Holy Ghost and Seeking the Gifts of the Spirit***

The final principle is to receive the Holy Ghost and seek the gifts of the Spirit (see Mosiah 18:16). Indeed, we are filled with the grace of God when we receive the Holy Ghost, for it is the Holy Ghost who distributes and delivers to us God's sanctifying, enabling, and perfecting powers.

In this regard, Elder Parley P. Pratt (1807–57) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught the following: “The gift of the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands, and purifies all the natural passions and affections, and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates, and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings, and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness, and charity. It develops beauty of person, form, and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation, and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being.”<sup>3</sup>

Such blessings come to us as we receive the Holy Ghost following our baptism and confirmation. Elder Orson Pratt (1811–81) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that “whenever the Holy Ghost takes up its residence in a person, it not only cleanses, sanctifies, and purifies him, in proportion as he yields himself to its influence, but also imparts to him some gift, intended for the benefit of himself and others. . . . These spiritual gifts are distributed among the members of the Church, according to their faithfulness, circumstances, natural abilities, duties, and callings; that the whole may be properly instructed, confirmed, perfected, and saved.”<sup>4</sup>

### **The Sufficiency of God's Grace**

Jesus Christ is full of grace. Christ acquired the riches of His grace from His Father and did so “grace for grace” (D&C 93:12). In like manner we receive grace for grace. We will be endowed with every attribute and characteristic of God. Finally, this enabling and perfecting power of grace is available through the principles of faith, repentance, humility, diligence, obedience, and seeking the Spirit and its gifts.

The Lord's grace is sufficient to lift you from death and sin and to endow you with eternal life. It is sufficient to change you, transform you, and perfect you. It is sufficient to enable you to fully realize your divine potential as a son or daughter of God. ■

*From a devotional address, “His Grace Is Sufficient for You,” delivered at Brigham Young University–Hawaii on June 3, 2014. For the full address, visit [devotional.byuh.edu/archive](http://devotional.byuh.edu/archive).*

*The Lord's grace is sufficient  
to lift you from death and sin and  
to endow you with eternal life.  
It is sufficient to change you,  
transform you, and perfect you.*

#### **NOTES**

1. Brigham Young, in *Deseret News*, June 3, 1863.
2. Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life's Experiences* (1989), 155–56.
3. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology: A Voice of Warning* (1978), 61.
4. Orson Pratt, in *Masterful Discourses and Writings of Orson Pratt*, comp. N. Lundwall (1962), 570, 571.



# HEAVY TRIALS, *Tender Mercies*

*As one who has had to endure tribulation,  
I have learned that Heavenly Father  
can turn our suffering for our good.*

By Alice Warner Johnson

**A**fter I became partially bedridden with multiple sclerosis (MS), I was asked to speak at a Relief Society meeting on the topic “When Life Gives You Lemons, Make Lemonade.” At that point I was no longer able to sing, play the piano or cello, conduct a choir, or even walk—activities that had brought me much joy in the past. However, along with these trials, I have experienced many unexpected blessings. So I altered the title of my talk to reflect what I have learned: “Trust in God That When Life Gives You Sour Lemons, He Will Make for You a Sweet Lemonade.”

## **The Turning Point in My Life**

My nine siblings and I were raised by faithful parents. My years of growing up, attending college, serving a full-time mission in Taiwan, working in Boston, and preparing for marriage to my husband, Paul, were very happy. By early 1999, we had two children, and Paul was serving as the bishop of our ward.

One morning I awoke with my left eye throbbing. An eye doctor sent me to the local hospital for a scan, which revealed that I had at least 12 cerebral and spinal lesions affecting my nerves. The multiple sclerosis was already widespread.

My husband, my father, and my brother gave me a priesthood blessing, which taught me two significant and unforgettable things. First, Heavenly Father had not inflicted me with this terrible disease. It was simply a consequence of coming to earth in a mortal body to have experiences that would help me grow. Second, I was told that Heavenly Father would not allow anything to happen to me that could not be turned for my good.

Later, in another blessing, I learned that there would be a significant period of time before I would experience the extreme difficulties that accompany my disease. During this period, and against strong medical advice, I gave birth to two more children. When Paul was released as bishop, we sold our home and moved to the Boise area in Idaho.

## **After Much Tribulation Come the Blessings**

It was during this period that the crippling effects of MS increased dramatically and, step by step, left me unable to do most things for myself. I had to decide how I was going to meet these challenges.

I began to see that Heavenly Father knew and appreciated our efforts to bring children into the world with a timing that would make it possible for them to know and learn from their mother before

she became too infirm. This was just one of the tender mercies of the Lord that were given to me (see Psalm 69:16).

I also came to realize that I was being more than compensated for the loss of my musical abilities. Music—singing, playing, composing, and conducting—had been a joyful cornerstone of my earthly existence that I assumed would continue with me all my life. Instead, my delight in music found expression in my children. They all sing beautifully. Among them there is a flutist, a violinist, a cellist, and a composer and arranger. Several of them play the guitar and the piano. They not only honor and enjoy their musical gifts but also love using them to serve others. Often I have asked myself, “Given the choice between keeping my musical talents and having such talents blossom in my children, which would I choose?” The answer to that question has been made plain to me as my mother-heart has recognized what a sweet gift my children’s musical talents have been to us all.

Beyond the blessings of my children and their music, I have discovered the power—even the glory—of the loving-kindness of others. I have to be lifted, washed, dressed, and fed throughout the day, and many are the precious souls who have come to help me



day after day. Family and friends from my past write, call, and travel long distances to visit and assist me. Many of those who have served me are burdened with their own hardships and trials, and yet they have not forgotten me. In their kindness I have seen the Lord’s outstretched hand as He provides to me an overflowing bounty in my seemingly hopeless situation. This reminds me that “after much tribulation come the blessings” (D&C 58:4).

### All Have Challenges

I believe that it is my Heavenly Father who has turned my trials into learning opportunities. I think of those I know and realize that they, too, face difficult challenges. For most of us, life does not unfold as we once imagined that it would. Nevertheless, for those who strive to remain faithful, the challenges that at first appear as sour lemons in our lives will ultimately be turned into the sweetest lemonade—through the loving-kindness of our God. ■

*The author lives in Idaho, USA.*



# IN HIS HANDS

By Heather Kyle

*Clay,  
limp,  
shapeless,  
yet with potential.*

*The Master's  
kind heart,  
loving eyes  
see what I can become.*

*Slowly He works,  
sculpting,  
molding  
patiently, so painfully.*

*At first  
I resist—  
I cannot see  
why or how.*

*He persists.  
He shapes and molds  
firmly,  
yet somehow gently.*

*A shapeless lump of  
clay  
becomes  
a masterpiece.*

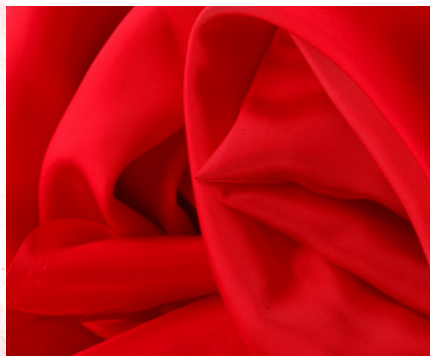


# Scarlet, Crimson, Snow, and Wool

Through the prophet Isaiah, we learn of the power of the Savior's Atonement.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Isaiah 1:18



## Scarlet, Crimson

In Isaiah 1:18, the words *scarlet* and *crimson* refer to red colors that come from certain dyes. Ancient cultures placed great importance on dyes, especially those used for sacred or ceremonial purposes, such as burial clothing or purification rituals (see Leviticus 14:6). The point of a dye is that it is not only colorful but also *colorfast*, meaning that its rich color will stick to the cloth and not fade or wash away.

## Scarlet and crimson are:

**Bright red.** Because of the vibrancy of their redness, they are emblems of standing out. Red has a strong psychological effect on people, and it can be reminiscent of blood, which is sometimes a symbol of guilt. Our sins can be grievous and obvious.

**Permanent.** The colorfast nature of scarlet and crimson dyes is similar to our sins, and "the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance" (Alma 45:16). "According to the great plan of the Eternal God there must be an atonement made, or else all mankind must unavoidably perish" (Alma 34:9).



### ONE OF THE SWEETEST FRUITS OF THE GOSPEL

“I testify that the Savior is able and eager to forgive our sins. Except for the sins of those few who choose perdition after having known a fulness, there is no sin that cannot be forgiven. What a marvelous privilege for each of us to turn away from our sins and to come unto Christ. Divine forgiveness is one of the sweetest fruits of the gospel, removing guilt and pain from our hearts and replacing them with joy and peace of conscience.”

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Repent . . . That I May Heal You,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 40–41.

### BIBLE FACT

The Hebrew words for scarlet (*shani*) and crimson (*tola*) signify where the colors were derived from—a worm (most likely *Kermes echinatus*).

The scarlet or crimson worm is of a family of insects that live on oak trees. Its lifespan is about 4–14 weeks. For about the last four weeks of its life, the female is ready to be fertilized and lay eggs. She then attaches firmly to the oak tree and produces a red dye, which stains her body as well as her eggs.

Just before the eggs were to hatch, these female insects were gathered, dried, and boiled. Alum was added as a mordant (a chemical that helps the dye stick to the cloth by combining to form an insoluble compound), and the resulting dye was used to make red-colored cloth.

### ANOTHER BIBLE FACT

On the cross, the Savior quoted Psalm 22:1: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). A later verse of this messianic psalm states, “I am a worm, and no man” (Psalm 22:6). The Hebrew word used here for “worm” (*tola’at*) refers specifically to the crimson worm.



### Snow and wool are:

**Pure, bright white.** White represents purity. When Isaiah says that the Lord can change our sins from scarlet or crimson to snow or wool, he is saying that the Lord can do something that is impossible for us to do on our own. A cloth dyed red stays red. But regardless of the stain of our sins, the Atonement of Jesus Christ can make us pure again if we repent. “All are within the reach of pardoning mercy, who have not committed the unpardonable sin” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 76).



### Snow, Wool

Snow is rare but not unheard-of in most areas of Israel. But, for instance, in the northern part of the country, Mount Hermon is covered in snow every winter (there’s even a ski resort there today). Wool was one of the most common fabrics in ancient Israel, and raising sheep was a common occupation. To make it a purer and brighter white in preparation for dyeing, wool was commonly soaked and washed in a strong soap.

LEFT: DETAIL FROM CHRIST IN GETHSEMANE BY HARRY ANDERSON; PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREENBELKA/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK AND NEOSIAM/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH OF MOUNT HERMON BY WINRU/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK; OF LAMB BY ERIKLAM/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK

COMING HOME  
**TO** YOUR MISSION



By Wendy Ulrich and Dave Ulrich

“The testimony which ye have borne is recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon; and they rejoice over you. . . . And now continue your journey” (D&C 62:3–4).

Although the angels rejoice over the testimony you bore as a missionary, continuing your post-mission journey toward your *life’s mission* can involve unexpected challenges. For example:

1. Ryan loved his mission. He grew a lot, found deep satisfaction and meaning in his service, and was sad to take off his name badge. Now, driving a pizza delivery truck and studying chemistry feel pretty pointless, and he feels selfish having to think so much about himself and his future. He wonders, “How can ordinary life measure up to saving souls as a leader in the mission field?”

2. Ashley’s mission wasn’t entirely what she’d expected, and she came home with some regrets. There were many good moments but also lots of challenges and disappointments. She thought she’d be a spiritual giant by the end of her mission, but she feels like she’s still just Ashley, with no idea what to do next. She wonders, “How can I find answers about my future when I still don’t have answers about my past?”

3. When Brandon returned home, it just wasn’t the same. His family seemed lax about the gospel, and his former friends were into partying and drugs. The blessings he expected for himself and those he loved didn’t all come about. He felt alone. He wonders, “How can I go forward in faith when my faith feels shaky and God feels far away?”

When you come home, you face a major transition that not everyone feels prepared for. But as a missionary you learned more than you may realize about your *next* mission—to become a contributing, focused, spiritually committed young adult.<sup>1</sup>

Resources for this transition include:

- Scriptures.
- Prayer.
- Temple worship.
- Patriarchal blessings.
- Priesthood blessings.
- Church callings.
- *Adjusting to Missionary Life*, the booklet with the toolkit you used on your mission; it can also help in post-mission life.
- *The Gospel and the Productive Life*, an institute manual about skills for young adulthood.
- People who care about you: family members, priesthood leaders, priesthood quorums, Relief Society, good friends.
- Books about returning from a mission, choosing a career, enhancing personal happiness, developing relationships skills, becoming self-reliant, or creating a life mission.

**EVERY RETURNING  
MISSIONARY  
NEEDS A FRIEND**

## A Mission Is Preparation for the Rest of Your Life

Just as the missionary training center helped prepare you for your mission, your mission helped you prepare for the rest of your life. Think about all the skills you learned!

You learned to plan while adapting to change. You learned to talk to strangers, teach gospel lessons, bounce back from rejection, and build positive relationships. You learned to set goals, exercise discipline, be accountable, and start again after setbacks. You learned to get along with different people—companions, members, and investigators. You learned to study and pray consistently and rely on the Lord. During periods when you were uncomfortable in your role, you learned one of the greatest skills of adulthood: to be more comfortable being uncomfortable.

Your experiences as a missionary apply to challenges you face now as a young adult. For example, on your mission you learned that every new convert needs (1) a friend, (2) a responsibility, and (3) to be nourished by the good word of God.<sup>2</sup> Now you're the one who needs these things, and it's up to you to get them. And you can!

## 1 A FRIEND

- How could you extend yourself to befriend others, especially other LDS young adults? What's a good first step?
- How might it help you to visualize God as a loving Father sitting nearby, eager to hear your prayers?
- What are you learning about love, from both positive and challenging experiences, that you want to practice and take forward into the future?
- Whom could you ask for counsel and support?
- Whom in the next generation can you help?

Brandon (from the earlier example) needs new friends and a closer relationship with Heavenly Father. Maybe you do too. How did you get to know new people as a missionary? How did you deepen friendships with new companions or investigators? Even without a companion by your side, use those same skills now.

As a missionary you learned to be friendly and interested in others, even if you were shy. Keep it up! Respond kindly and generously when others try to get to know you. Once each Sunday, sit by someone you don't know and ask them questions. If you're naturally outgoing, help those who aren't. You don't always have to be the social risk-taker, but practice being curious about others, and

push yourself sometimes. Get a friend to help you invite people over for games and popcorn. Welcome home and visiting teachers warmly. If social events are hard for you, give yourself permission to leave after 30 minutes or only help with cleanup or setup—but go.

We can all learn to both give and receive love better. Like faith, love is a choice we make in an uncertain and sometimes hurtful world. You can choose to believe even when faith requires patience, and you can choose love even though you might get hurt. Let your relationship with Heavenly Father deepen by inviting Him to be near you while you humbly express the thoughts and feelings of your heart, open yourself to receive His compassion and support, and allow His Spirit to help you heal.

Friends are also essential in figuring out where to go next and how to get there. Becoming a spiritually mature adult is not just something you learn from a book. It is something you learn from and with other people. Peers and other adults will happily share their experiences with you if you ask—so ask! Then reach out to the next generation of children, youth, returning missionaries, and young adults. Your empathy and experience can help others right now.





EVERY RETURNING  
MISSIONARY  
NEEDS A  
RESPONSIBILITY

## 2 A RESPONSIBILITY

- What is a meaningful assignment or project you could give yourself now?
- How could you better fulfill your Church calling in a meaningful way?
- What problems would you like to help the world solve? How might these relate to a future career?
- What is one small thing you could do to move in a meaningful direction now?

Like Ryan, you need meaningful opportunities to grow and to serve others. Tell your bishop you want to serve, and do your best to magnify your callings.

In some places, you may get swamped (and blessed!) with many meaningful opportunities. In other areas, there may not be enough formal callings for everyone. You can still serve the Lord. Assign yourself to befriend someone new, serve in the temple, do family history research, support missionaries, serve family members, or volunteer locally. In your schooling or work, seek opportunities to strengthen and bless others every day. Remind yourself of the higher purposes of what you're preparing to do: helping God's children, solving the world's problems, and lifting people's spirits.

Your strengths are desperately needed. You will be blessed for both serving now and developing skills that will allow you to support your family and serve more in the future. Heavenly Father may not tell you exactly what job to take, where to live, what to study, or even whom to marry. And even when He confirms your decisions, that doesn't guarantee they'll turn out as you anticipate. Continuous seeking is

necessary to follow the lead of the Spirit.

What God does care about is your character, your reasons for what you choose, and your willingness to learn and serve. Those Christlike attributes can be developed in many places and careers.<sup>3</sup>

Heavenly Father wants you to find work you can do well and enjoy, but what that is may not be obvious at first. Ask yourself what types of problems you want to solve, what work excites you, and how you can use your strengths in your career. Be humble about all you need to learn. Recognize that even the most wonderful job will have things about it you'll dislike, so be willing to learn and work hard rather than relying on talent alone.

But what if you don't know what to do next or it all feels too overwhelming? Do what you did in the mission field: get out and do *something*, however small. Ask your parents or mentors how they chose a career. Sign up for a class, or just ask three people who their favorite professor was last semester. Apply for 10 jobs, or start with just one. *Both revelation and motivation follow action.* If you wait to feel like doing something or to know exactly what to do next, you may wait a very long time.

**EVERY RETURNING  
MISSIONARY NEEDS  
TO BE NOURISHED  
BY THE GOOD WORD  
OF GOD**

- When is the best time for you to study scriptures and pray?
- How else can you enjoy being nourished by the word of God?
- How can you better recognize, access, and acknowledge God's support in your life choices?
- What institute classes are available in your area?

### 3 NOURISHED BY GOD'S WORD

Like Ashley, as a missionary you chose to serve the Lord full-time. You were able to have lengthy daily scripture study, prayer, and service. Now the setting has changed. Though you weren't a perfect missionary (nobody is), the Lord is grateful for your service, and He stands ready to bless you. He wants you to learn from the past, including from your mistakes, and move into the future with confidence. He stands ready to nurture you with His Spirit and His love. Trust Him to join you in your journey and to have your best interests at heart.

As a missionary, you studied when mission rules said to. Now you can invite the Lord to help you figure out a realistic plan that fits your current life—one that requires balance, flexibility, and tolerance for ambiguity and change. It may not be realistic to study the scriptures for an hour straight every day, but you need the scriptures now as much as you did in the mission field. If you have only 10 minutes at a time or you miss a few days, strive for an overall pattern of studying regularly even if you aren't perfect. Get really good at starting again, no matter how often life gets in the way of your goals.

Other ways to be nourished by God's word include taking institute classes, enjoying informal discussions of the gospel with friends, taking notes on general conference, listening to past conferences while driving, finding God in nature, writing spiritual experiences in your journal, seeing Heavenly Father's companionship in your choices, turning on spiritually uplifting music at home,



taking notes on inspiration received during prayer, or participating in the ward choir. Tune in to the joy you can feel as you savor God's words and Spirit.

Among the most important of God's words are those of hope, mercy, and trust in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. They can encourage you to make needed changes. Don't sit too long on the fence, wondering whether or not to let go of past mistakes or regrets. If you have repented of your sins and are humbly working on your weaknesses (and there *is* a difference<sup>4</sup>), learn from them and then let go of regret. When you are tempted to feel shame or self-pity for past setbacks, treat that temptation as you would any other—walk away.



## “And Now Continue Your Journey”

It took patience and effort to become a skilled missionary. It will also take patience and effort to apply those skills to your new mission of young adulthood. In some ways you are starting over, but now you know how to get out of your comfort zone, and you can do it again.

Generally, the most successful people aren’t necessarily the smartest but rather the most resilient—the most willing to learn from both running strong and falling down. And fall you will! Resilience means bouncing back from failure, taking risks to grow, persisting in the face of obstacles, and working hard on skills and solutions that don’t come easily. No one likes to have their mistakes pointed out, but resilience, coupled with faith, makes us more interested in learning than in impressing others. Resilience means not telling ourselves that we’re failing but that we’re learning.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the closest thing to a “returned missionary” transition in the scriptures is the story of Helaman’s 2,060 stripling warriors. United in a meaningful assignment and fortified by God’s word as taught by their mothers, they succeeded in a difficult and dangerous mission (see Alma 56:46–48, 56; 57:20–22, 26–27; 58:39–40). When the battles ended, Helaman went forth with his brethren, declaring God’s word with power and establishing the Church again. The law and the government were reformed, and the people saw a period of great peace and prosperity. (See Alma 62:45–51.) Undoubtedly the faithful young warriors Helaman had led contributed mightily to this great reform, changing their world for the better.

The principles you learned and the skills you developed as a missionary will also serve you, the Church, and the world as you work to make the next two years the *next* “best two years” of your life. You may have finished your service as a full-time missionary, but you have a crucial mission ahead. “And now continue your journey.” ■

*Wendy Ulrich, PhD, is a counselor and author. Dave Ulrich, PhD, is a professor, management consultant, and author. He is also a former president of the Canada Montreal Mission, where he and Wendy served from 2002 to 2005. They live in Utah, USA.*

### NOTES

1. See Clark B. Hinckley and Kathleen H. Hinckley, *Taking Off the Tag: A Transition Guide for Returned Missionaries* (2015).
2. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 108.
3. See Virginia H. Pearce, “Diverging Roads,” in Jacob Werrett and David Read, eds., *A Twenty-Something’s Guide to Spirituality: Questions You Hesitate to Ask, Answers You Rarely Hear* (2007), 119–31.
4. See Wendy Ulrich, “It Isn’t a Sin to Be Weak,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2015, 30–35.
5. See Carol S. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2006), 4.

### LESSONS FROM THE SONS OF HELAMAN AS THEY RETURNED HOME

How they lived	Impact on them and the Church	Implications for me
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declared the word of God (Alma 62:45)</li> <li>• Established the Church (Alma 62:46)</li> <li>• Not lifted up in pride (Alma 62:49; Helaman 3:35)</li> <li>• Prayed continually (Alma 62:51)</li> <li>• Observed statutes of God (Helaman 3:20)</li> <li>• Firm in their faith (Helaman 3:35)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waxed strong and prospered (Alma 62:51; Helaman 3:24–26)</li> <li>• Peace (Helaman 3:2, 23)</li> <li>• No contention in the land (Helaman 3:2, 23)</li> <li>• Justice and fairness (Helaman 3:20)</li> <li>• Many blessings (Helaman 3:25)</li> <li>• Great joy (Helaman 3:32, 35)</li> </ul>	<p>How do I want to live?</p> <p>What impact might my life have on others?</p>



- What hard things have you persisted with, even when it wasn’t easy?
- How did you get yourself to keep going?
- What would you do with your life if you were guaranteed success?
- When things get hard, do you tell yourself that you’re failing or that you’re learning? Which approach helps more?
- What have been your biggest failures, and what can you learn from them that can make you a better person?

# Visions of CHRISTMAS

With wonder ♩ = 104

Words by Don Staheli  
Music by Jim Kasen



1. Vi-sions of Christ-mas fill \_\_\_\_\_ my mind And dance be - fore \_\_\_\_\_ my  
2. Vi-sions of Christ-mas shine \_\_\_\_\_ so bright. They speak of long \_\_\_\_\_ a -  
3. Vi-sions of Christ-mas in \_\_\_\_\_ my heart, I un - der - stand \_\_\_\_\_ them  
4. Vi-sions of Christ-mas filled \_\_\_\_\_ with love For God and for \_\_\_\_\_ all



eyes. \_\_\_\_\_ I see a world of joy For ev' - ry girl and boy  
go. \_\_\_\_\_ When Je - sus came to earth, And an - gels sang His birth,  
now. \_\_\_\_\_ All men will live a - gain, And Christ will come to reign,  
men. \_\_\_\_\_ Gone will be hurt and fear; I'll feel my Sav - ior near,



And feel the love of God, \_\_\_\_\_ And feel the love \_\_\_\_\_ of God.  
And Wise Men brought Him gifts, \_\_\_\_\_ And Wise Men brought \_\_\_\_\_ Him gifts.  
And He will bring us peace, \_\_\_\_\_ And He will bring \_\_\_\_\_ us peace.  
And He will hold me close, \_\_\_\_\_ And He will hold \_\_\_\_\_ me close.

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**By Elder  
David A. Bednar**  
Of the Quorum  
of the Twelve  
Apostles

**M**any of our memorable and enduring Christmas traditions include different kinds of lights—lights on trees, lights in and on our homes, candles on our tables. Indeed, light has significant meaning as we commemorate the humble birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament account, a new star arose and wise men followed the light “till it came and stood over where the young child was.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Book of Mormon account, the signs of Christ’s birth foretold by Samuel included “great lights in heaven” and a “night before he cometh [with] no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear . . . as if it was day.”<sup>2</sup> “And behold, there shall a new star arise.”<sup>3</sup>

In the Old World, Jesus taught, “I am the light of the world.”<sup>4</sup> And in the New World, the Savior descended from the heavens and declared, “I am the light and the life of the world.”<sup>5</sup> In both of these settings, the words used by the Lord to describe Himself were “the light.”

May we increasingly learn and more fully understand that Jesus Christ is the “light which shineth in darkness.”<sup>6</sup> In every season of our lives, in all of the circumstances we may

encounter, and in each challenge we may face, the Savior is the light that dispels fear, provides assurance and direction, and engenders enduring peace and joy. May the beautiful lights of every Christmas season remind us of Him who is the source of all light.

As our Great Exemplar, the Lord lived a perfect life, ministering one by one in love and service. Like Him, we can exemplify and share His light and love with those around us.

This Christmas season I invite you to seek opportunities to “Light the World.” Beginning December 1 and continuing through Christmas Day, you can learn how to “light the way for others” by visiting [mormon.org](http://mormon.org). Feel free to share appropriately your experiences on social media using the hashtag #LIGHTtheWORLD so that others can learn about the “good news”<sup>7</sup> of the Savior’s birth, His life, and His perfect Atonement for all mankind. ■

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 2:9.
2. Helaman 14:3.
3. Helaman 14:5.
4. John 8:12; see also John 9:5; Mosiah 16:9; Alma 38:9; 3 Nephi 9:18; 18:16; Doctrine and Covenants 10:70.
5. 3 Nephi 11:11.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 10:58; see verses 57–61.
7. See Bible Dictionary, “Gospels.”

# LIGHT *the* WORLD



## ONE BLUE BULB

**M**y mom and dad disagreed on how to decorate their home at Christmastime. My dad was color-blind, so to him red, green, and brown all looked similar and dull. However, the color blue looked bright and beautiful. He was also a big fan of Brigham Young University football, whose school colors include blue.

Since blue was his favorite color, he wanted to put up blue lights. But my mom said blue was not a Christmas color, so every year Dad neatly hung strings of red, green, and white Christmas lights along their roof. To tease Mom, he replaced one of the bulbs with a bright blue one. If you looked closely, you would see one

blue bulb among the red, green, and white lights.

Every year the blue bulb shone from a different location. Sometimes it hid around the corner where no one would notice it, but sometimes he put it over the garage or the front porch. It was a fun game between Mom and Dad.

One year, Dad unexpectedly passed away two days before Christmas. At his funeral, the story was told of the one blue bulb he would hang every year. The following night, my mom looked out the window. Across the street, shining among the white lights above her neighbor's porch, was one blue light. Within a few days, many neighbors and friends added blue bulbs to

their strings of Christmas lights. Some even decorated whole trees in blue.

I'm grateful that my mom's friends and neighbors showed their love for her by decorating with blue lights. They helped me know what it means to "mourn with those that mourn; . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:9). I'm grateful that Heavenly Father gave us the gift of His Son. Because of Jesus Christ, I will see my dad again. ■

Amy Brown, Utah, USA

If you looked closely, you would see one blue bulb among the red, green, and white lights.



As she walked away, we saw her hold the book against her heart.



ILLUSTRATION BY STAN FELLOWS

## GIVING AWAY JOY

My husband and I were missionaries serving in Tarbes, France, in the Pyrenees Mountains. It was Christmas Eve, and we decided to go down to the city at Verdun Plaza to give away copies of the Book of Mormon. The street was deserted, and we started to ask ourselves what we were going to do with so many books. Suddenly, we saw a young man who seemed to not know where to go.

We approached him and offered him a Book of Mormon. He became joyful as he listened to us talk about

the gospel. He explained that he was alone that Christmas night and that he would read the Book of Mormon and not feel alone.

After he left, we looked around the street again and saw a woman walking slowly toward us in the cold night. A glimmer of happiness shone in her eyes when we presented her with a Book of Mormon. She told us that she had become a widow recently and was happy that we were concerned about her. She said she was extremely grateful to us. As she

walked away, we saw her hold the book against her heart.

That night we distributed every copy of the Book of Mormon that we had brought with us. Most of the people whom we gave them to were alone, distressed, and very much in need of love. We went back home that night with the impression that we had received the greatest Christmas gift because of the joy that we were able to give to others. ■

Jeannine Denise Fabre,  
Saint-André-les-Vergers, France

## GREETING JESUS

After weeks of anticipation, it was finally Christmas Eve. Almost our whole family was with us—Grandma and Grandpa Fletcher, our three daughters and their husbands and children. It was getting dark and the streets were lighting up. Houses sparkled with beautiful decorations while Christmas trees twinkled happily in the windows.

We were getting ready to go to the Nativity Pageant, which the Church had presented for many years in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Every Christmas Eve we looked forward to going to the outdoor pageant that was complete with donkeys, sheep, Wise Men, shepherds, Roman soldiers,

angels, and a powerful sound system. It brought the spirit of peace, love, and the real meaning of Christmas to our hectic celebrations.

We arrived at Heritage Park, where the pageant took place, and were soon enjoying the beautiful music of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the story of the Savior's birth. Lauren, our oldest grandchild, was three at the time. She was captivated by the sights, the sounds, and the story unfolding before us. Our breath clouded the chilly air under clear, starlit skies. We watched as the people playing Joseph and Mary obeyed the decree of Caesar Augustus to go to Bethlehem to be taxed. The woman playing Mary was

“great with child” (see Luke 2:5), and the only place they could find to stay was a lowly stable. There, “she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger” (see Luke 2:7). The spotlights swept over the hill where we could see people as shepherds watching “over their flock by night” (see Luke 2:8). Suddenly, an actor dressed as an angel appeared dramatically in the air, a bright light shining on him. Lauren spontaneously cried out in love, “Jesus, it’s me, Lauren!”

Everyone around us heard her greeting and laughed softly, enjoying the surprise. It was an innocent case of mistaken identity, but for us it





memorably enhanced the pageant that year. Lauren knew that Jesus knew her, and we were reminded of our knowledge that He does know each one of us. We wondered if Lauren had some memory of her Savior whom she had left three short years earlier. Lauren's spontaneous greeting gave us hope that we too will recognize Him when we meet Him. Her love for the Savior and His love for Lauren warmed our hearts on that icy Christmas Eve. ■

Greg Prince, Alberta, Canada

Suddenly, an actor dressed as an angel appeared dramatically in the air, a bright light shining on him.



## A SACRAMENT MEETING OF ANGELS

A few days after Thanksgiving, my three-year-old son, Drew, started to get sick. He woke up every morning, ate breakfast, got dressed for the day and seemed fine, but as the day progressed, he became lethargic and wouldn't eat.

This continued for several weeks. Finally, on Friday, December 18, I carried Drew into the doctor's office around 3:00 in the afternoon. Drew couldn't stand or walk and his skin was ashen.

I looked at the doctor and said, "This is how he has been every afternoon and evening for the past three weeks." The doctor took one look at Drew and immediately admitted him to the hospital. They ran tests but could not figure out what was wrong with him.

The next day, Drew was transferred to another hospital. That Sunday morning, I was feeling crestfallen. After two days of numerous tests from two different hospitals, no one knew what was wrong with my son. To top it all off, it was the Sunday before Christmas. My favorite sacrament meeting of the whole year is the Christmas program, and I was going to miss all the beautiful songs and talks in our ward.

As my husband and I were walking with Drew toward the room in the hospital where a sacrament meeting was to be held, I was miserable. I approached the table where the programs were, picked one up, and was still walking forward and looking down when I bumped into someone.

I looked up and said, "I'm sorry," but no one was there. As I looked into the room where sacrament meeting was to be held, it looked like an auditorium. On the stage there were chairs for the speakers, a piano, and a table set for the sacrament with a few chairs behind it. The room was sparsely filled with sick children and their parents, many hooked up to their portable IVs.

As I scanned the room, I felt the presence of angels. We took our seats and tears flowed down my face as I felt God's love for His children who were sick and suffering, stuck in a hospital with all manner of illnesses at the most wonderful time of the year.

It turned out to be the most beautiful sacrament meeting of my life.

The doctors never did find out what was wrong with Drew. He was given medicine to treat his symptoms and then released from the hospital the next day. He has had no repercussions since, but that Christmas sacrament meeting will stay with me forever. ■

Carrie Ketchum, Nevada, USA



**By Elder  
Jeffrey R. Holland**  
Of the Quorum of the  
Twelve Apostles

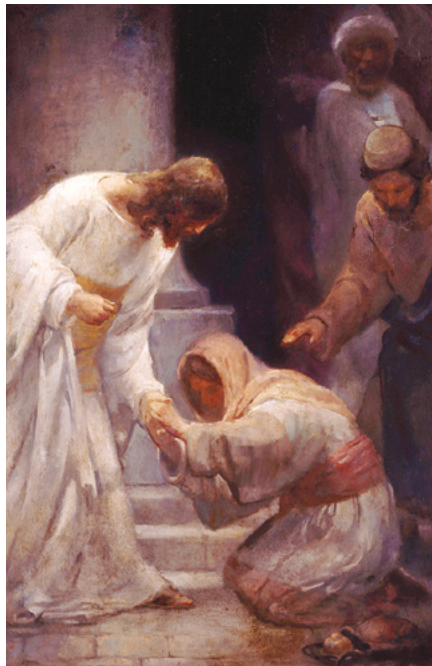
## THE TRUE NATURE OF GOD

*Jesus Christ was the perfect manifestation of the perfect Father's care.*

After generations of prophets had tried to teach the family of man the will and the way of the Father, usually with little success, God in His ultimate effort to have us know Him, sent to earth His Only Begotten and perfect Son, created in His very likeness and image, to live and serve among mortals in the everyday rigors of life.

To come to earth with such a responsibility, to stand in place of Elohim—speaking as He would speak, judging and serving, loving and warning, forbearing and forgiving as He would do—this is a duty of such staggering proportions that you and I cannot comprehend such a thing. But in the loyalty and determination that would be characteristic of a divine child, Jesus could comprehend it and He did it. Then, when the praise and honor began to come, He humbly directed all adulation to the Father.

“The Father . . . doeth the works,” He said in earnest. “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth



the Father do: for what things soever [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” [John 14:10; John 5:19]. On another occasion He said: “I speak that which I have seen with my Father” [John 8:38]. . . .

. . . Some in the contemporary world suffer from a distressing misconception of [God our Eternal Father]. Among these there is a tendency to feel distant from the Father, even estranged from Him, if they believe in Him at all. . . . Through a misreading (and surely, in some cases, a mistranslation) of the Bible, these see God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son as operating very differently,

this in spite of the fact that in both the Old Testament and the New, the Son of God is one and the same, acting as He always does under the direction of the Father, who is Himself the same “yesterday, today, and forever.”<sup>1</sup> . . .

So feeding the hungry, healing the sick, rebuking hypocrisy, pleading for faith—this was Christ showing us the way of the Father, He who is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness.”<sup>2</sup> In His life and especially in His death, Christ was declaring, “This is *God’s* compassion I am showing you, as well as that of my own.” In the perfect Son’s manifestation of the perfect Father’s care, in Their mutual suffering and shared sorrow for the sins and heartaches of the rest of us, we see ultimate meaning in the declaration: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” [John 3:16–17]. ■

From “*The Grandeur of God*,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 70–73.

### NOTES

1. For example, 1 Nephi 10:18; 2 Nephi 27:23; Moroni 10:19; Doctrine and Covenants 20:12.
2. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 42.

# INSIGHTS



## **Families: A Celestial Pattern**

"Families are not just meant to make things run more smoothly here on earth and to be cast off when we get to heaven. Rather, they are the *order* of heaven. They are an echo of a celestial pattern and an emulation of God's eternal family."

**President Dieter F. Uchtdorf**, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "In Praise of Those Who Save," *Ensign*, May 2016, 77.



## In Church Magazines

**Ensign:** We don't stack faith on top of hope on top of charity as we would building blocks—these important virtues must be interlaced in our lives to help us become true followers of the Savior. See "Faith, Hope, and Charity: Interlacing Virtues" (page 16).

**New Era:** President Thomas S. Monson shares four gifts that endure (page 2). Also, youth can take a quiz to find out what kind of givers they are (page 26). They can also get to know youth in Micronesia (page 14) and learn how to be real action heroes (page 34).

**Friend:** How will you celebrate Christmas this year? You could read a scripture each night from the "Watching for Jesus" advent calendar (page 23). In next year's *Friend*, look for monthly CTR challenge cards and new coloring-friendly paper!



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