

BY ELDER JOSEPH B. WIRTHLIN

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Some of the choicest blessings of my life have been the close friendships I have experienced over the years.

Often, these friendships have been forged in the fires of shared experience. I think back with fondness on the football teams I played on, the missionaries with whom I served in Austria and Switzerland, the bishoprics and stake presidencies with whom I served. I think about my family—the happiness and grief we have shared and how those moments of tenderness have amplified the love we have for each other. Most recently, I think about the indescribable bond of brotherhood I have felt within the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

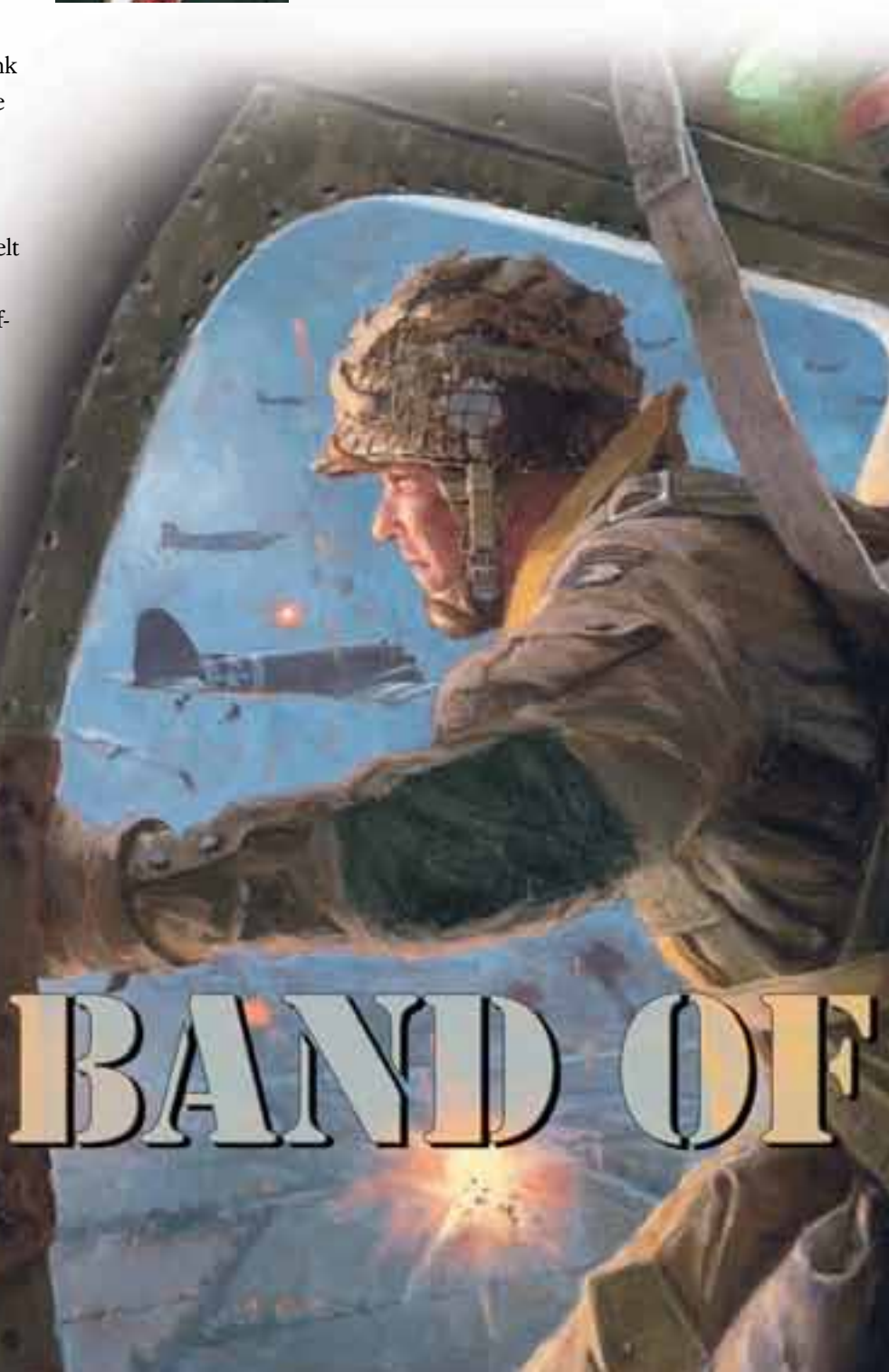
Though each of these groups was very different, each had common characteristics. Perhaps this is because we struggled so much together, or perhaps because we linked arms together in a common journey where we had to depend so completely on each other. These relationships are the foundation of many of the most precious and rewarding moments of my life.

It is my desire to discuss establishing a bond of brotherhood in your assignments. Please understand that when I speak of “brotherhood,” I include our wonderful and indispensable sisters in that definition.

Establishing a bond of brotherhood is critical. If those who serve with you feel this mutual love and trust, the work of the Lord will thrive and heaven will aid you in your efforts. Fail to establish this bond, however, and you may find your work tedious, toilsome, and unproductive.



Establishing a bond of brotherhood is critical. If those who serve with you feel mutual love and trust, the work of the Lord will thrive and heaven will aid you in your efforts.



A Lesson from World War II

Some years ago, Stephen Ambrose wrote a book describing the experience of a company of paratroopers during World War II.¹ The army was developing a new kind of warfare the world had not seen before. They were training men to parachute out of planes—often behind enemy lines and at immense personal peril—to attack, and to meet strategic objectives critical to the overall success of the war effort.

Easy Company of the 506th regiment, 101st Airborne Division, was one of those groups. Formed from volunteers,

the 140 men began their training in 1942. They had been told that their training would be harder than any other in the military. In fact, it was so challenging that two out of three men couldn't make it and either dropped out or were assigned to a regular army unit.

The night before D day, Easy Company parachuted behind enemy lines. Their assignment was to take out a battery of artillery guns. But in the chaos of the drop, only 12 of the 140 men were in position to carry out the mission. Nevertheless, they knew that if they didn't take out those



BROTHERS

The stripling warriors knew why they were fighting. They understood the nature of their sacrifice. Their leader, Helaman, wrote that “they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives.” They knew the value of a great cause.

guns, the Allied soldiers storming Utah Beach would suffer heavy casualties from the artillery.

To make matters worse, the guns were manned and defended by more than 50 elite enemy paratroopers who had dug a series of trenches about the battery, heavily fortifying it against any kind of assault.

In one of the most well-executed and heroic operations of the war, 12 men of Easy Company assaulted the position, routed the enemy, and destroyed the artillery guns.

In later action, Easy Company took part in the ill-fated Operation Market Garden, facing enemy forces in Holland and Belgium. Later they were among the forces that held Bastogne against encircling enemy panzer units during the Battle of the Bulge.

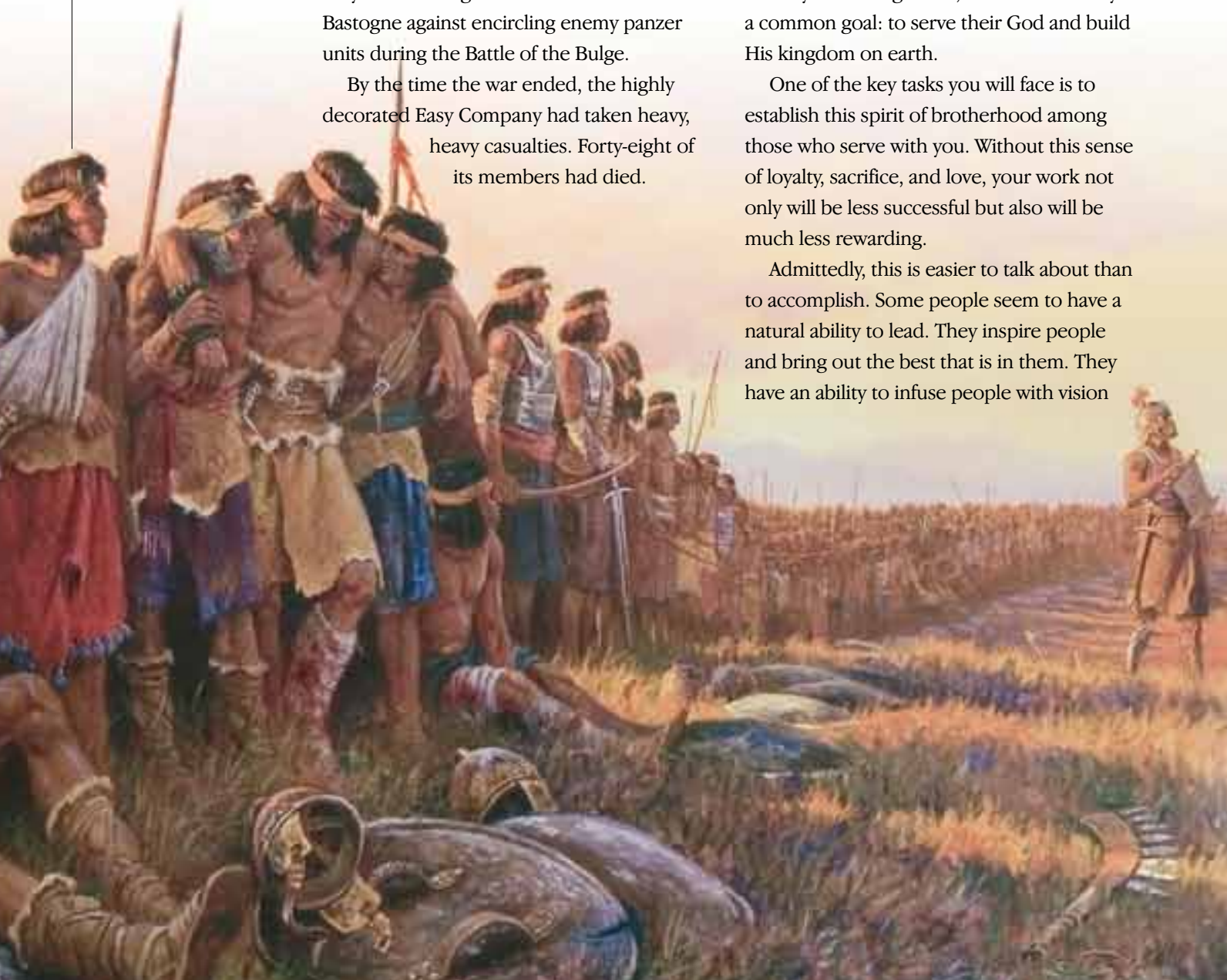
By the time the war ended, the highly decorated Easy Company had taken heavy, heavy casualties. Forty-eight of its members had died.

In the scriptures we learn of other groups with similar bonds. King Mosiah’s sons were heirs to the throne. They could have led lives of comfort and ease. But they abandoned their lives of privilege, walked into enemy territory, and preached the gospel to thousands of Lamanites, baptizing many. (See Alma 17–26.)

Think of the great souls who ushered in this last dispensation: Joseph, Hyrum, and Samuel Smith; Parley and Orson Pratt; Brigham Young; Heber C. Kimball; Wilford Woodruff. They also formed a great band of brothers who, though very different in personality and background, were all united by a common goal: to serve their God and build His kingdom on earth.

One of the key tasks you will face is to establish this spirit of brotherhood among those who serve with you. Without this sense of loyalty, sacrifice, and love, your work not only will be less successful but also will be much less rewarding.

Admittedly, this is easier to talk about than to accomplish. Some people seem to have a natural ability to lead. They inspire people and bring out the best that is in them. They have an ability to infuse people with vision





HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. To teach the principle of teamwork, pass out pieces of a picture cut into a puzzle. Ask everyone to assemble the picture alone, using only the pieces they have. Read the section “Never Forget the Value of a Great Cause.” Why was it necessary for Captain Moroni to have his people work together to fulfill their goal? Work together as a family to put the puzzle together. Discuss the need for teamwork to accomplish goals.

2. Tell the story of Easy Company. Discuss how we create bonds of brotherhood within our associations inside and outside the Church. Review how priorities, courage, and perseverance help the bond of brotherhood to grow stronger. Have family members identify groups to which they belong. Challenge them to help strengthen those groups.

These young men knew why they were fighting. They understood the nature of their sacrifice. Helaman wrote that “they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives” (Alma 56:47). They knew the value of a great cause.

Average leaders used the carrot and the stick to motivate those around them. Great leaders communicate a vision that captures the imagination and fires the hearts and minds of those around them. Average leaders inspire people to punch a time clock. Great leaders inspire industry and passion.

You can get people to work by using threats or by promising rewards. But if you want to create a band of brothers, you must inspire those who work with you and encourage them to give their all in a great cause.

Understand Your Priorities

If someone were to ask you who we are as a people, what would you say? Who are we as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

The answer, I believe, is a simple one given to us by the Savior Himself. We are a people who love the Lord with all our hearts, souls, and minds. And we are a people who love our neighbor as ourselves. (See Matthew 22:37–39.)

This answer satisfies many of the questions asked about why we do what we do. Why does the Church ask so much of its members? Because we love the Lord, and we love our neighbor. Why do we do temple work? Missionary work? Welfare work? Because we love the Lord, and we love our neighbor.

These are the roots of all that we do. We do not send our missionaries out into the world to collect statistics. We send them into the world because we love our Heavenly Father, and we love our fellowmen.

That is who we are as a people. That is why we do what we do.

that transcends their own lives and inspire greatness within them.

I’m not sure there is a recipe that can turn an ordinary administrator into a great leader. But I am certain that there are things these great leaders have in common. The following principles may assist you in creating a band of brothers.

Never Forget the Value of a Great Cause

Captain Moroni lived during a time when evil men were conspiring to destroy the liberty and lives of his countrymen. How did he rally the people of his day? He rent his coat and wrote upon it, “In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children” (Alma 46:12). Moroni knew the power of a great cause.

Helaman, the oldest son of the prophet Alma, led the stripling warriors. As you remember, Helaman was the one Alma entrusted with the sacred records. I suppose Helaman was more of a scholar than a warrior. But he lived in a time of conflict and war, and when the 2,000 sons of converted Lamanites took up their weapons of war, they asked that Helaman be their leader. Every student of the Book of Mormon knows their story. These young men had great faith. They were obedient. “They never had fought, yet they did not fear death” (Alma 56:47). Their confidence in the Lord was unshakeable:

“Behold our God is with us,” they said, “and he will not suffer that we should fall” (Alma 56:46).

After many battles, although every one of them had received wounds, not one soul of them perished (see Alma 57:21, 25).



DETAIL FROM IT'S TRUE, SIR, ALL PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR, BY CLARK KELLEY PRICE

Settle into the Harness

No great cause ever succeeded without great effort.

One of the reasons the men of Easy Company volunteered for hazardous duty was that when they went into combat, they wanted to be next to someone they could trust—someone who wouldn't do something foolish that could get them killed. They didn't want to be next to someone who was lazy or who hadn't paid attention during training or who wasn't physically capable of what was required. These men had worked to the limits of human capacity.

From the days of Adam and Eve until now, our Heavenly Father has commanded that we work. Work is the foundation of success and creation. It is the secret of every successful enterprise.

Even so, there are some who go to great lengths to avoid work. In fact, a few people I have known have worked exceptionally hard to get out of work. This is something I have never understood. My father was a hard worker, and he taught me to be the same. Some of the most fulfilling moments of our lives are when we establish worthwhile goals and work to achieve them.

I know that some stop listening when they hear about goal setting. I have found it exhilarating. Each night, I think about my goals and what I want to accomplish the next day. And then I write on a small card the key things I can do to bring me closer to my goals.

Give your best effort. Settle into the harness and work with all your might. As you do so, you will find joy in your service.

“Fear Not”

Fear can make us run away from things—things like setting and achieving goals, developing relationships, or becoming the people we know we should become. Sometimes fear can even paralyze us to the point that we don't even try.

Fear can be a thick fog that smothers our dreams. It can be a cage that restrains us from reaching our destiny. It can be a weight that restrains our every step.

Time after time, the men of Easy Company knew fear. A few days after D day, they were walking down a road toward



a French village when an enemy machine gun opened fire on them. In spite of their training, the men ducked for cover and froze. The company commander, Lieutenant Dick Winters, knew if they stayed there, his men would be cut down. So he stood in the middle of the road, away from cover, bullets whistling all around him, and ordered his men to move out.

His men stared at him, not believing what they were seeing—but only for an instant. The courage of their commanding officer inspired them. Then they moved out. Because of Lieutenant Winters's bravery, the men survived.

We may not be immune to being afraid, but we do not have to succumb to it. My friend Harold Brown once said, “It is better to face fear once than to live in its shadow.” I believe he is right.

We are surrounded and uplifted by the faith of our members and by the hand of heaven. If only we could see that, our fears would have far less influence over us. Move forward with faith, believing you will succeed! Don't let fear of failure stop you from greatness. Let your example of courage inspire those around you to “fear not” (D&C 6:34).

Press on in Faith

Louis Pasteur, the famous microbiologist and chemist, once said, “Let me tell you the secret that has led me to my goal: my strength lies solely in my tenacity.”² May we understand the wisdom of his words.

Joseph Smith has always been a great example of perseverance to me. From the time he was a young man, he was persecuted, mocked, and reviled. And yet he pressed on. He watched as loved ones died. He was cursed and threatened by enemies. He was betrayed by friends. In spite of innumerable hardships, he pressed on.

One night a mob of 40 men stormed the Prophet's house and pulled him and Sidney Rigdon outside. Emma, Joseph's wife, screamed and pleaded with the men to stop, but they did not listen. The mob tried to force nitric acid down the Prophet's throat. They stripped him and covered his body with tar and feathers.

He survived and managed to stumble back to his house, where a terrified Emma was waiting. It took his friends the

entire night to scrape the tar from his skin.

The following day this heroic prophet rose and spoke to those who had assembled for the Sunday meeting. Among those present in the congregation were members of the mob who had assaulted him the night before.³

Joseph never looked back. From the day he was called of the Father, he pressed on. Through sickness, suffering, ridicule, and betrayal, he pressed on. He pressed on until the day he gave his life as a testimony of the restored gospel.

A Band of Brothers

Stephen Ambrose titled his history of Easy Company *Band of Brothers* because of the bond of fellowship these men felt for each other. This sort of brotherhood happens when people give their hearts, might, minds, and strength to a cause greater than themselves. When we work together in a bond of brotherhood, when we love each other and are loyal and faithful to the great cause to which we have been called, the impossible becomes possible.

It is our opportunity to foster this brotherhood. Teach those who serve with you that we

are not competing with one another. The men of Easy Company weren't great because they were trying to stand out as individuals. They were great because they worked together.

One of the men of Easy Company remembered a conversation he had with his grandson.

"Grandpa," the little boy asked, "were you a hero in the war?"

The old soldier thought about the question for a moment and then replied, "No, but I served in a company of heroes."⁴

Those who will work with you all have within them the potential to be heroes. As you inspire those who serve with you and give them a vision of the great cause, help them set their priorities, and encourage them to settle into the harness, overcome their fears, and press on in faith, you may create your own company of heroes. ■

From an address given at a seminar for new mission presidents on June 26, 2006.

NOTES

1. See *Band of Brothers* (1992).
2. Quoted in Kerry Gleeson, *The Personal Efficiency Program: How to Get Organized to Do More Work in Less Time*, 3rd ed. (2004), 125.
3. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2007), 227–29.
4. *Band of Brothers*, 316.

When we work together in a bond of brotherhood, when we love each other and are loyal and faithful to the great cause to which we have been called, the impossible becomes possible. It is our opportunity to foster this brotherhood.

