

By Kathleen H. Hughes

Served as first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency from 2002 to 2007



GROW UP UNTO THE LORD

While once again reading the Book of Mormon, I came to the chapter in Helaman where we first learn of Helaman's sons: "And it came to pass that he had two sons. He gave unto the eldest the name of Nephi, and unto the youngest, the name of Lehi. *And they began to grow up unto the Lord*" (Helaman 3:21; emphasis added).

These boys not only grew to adulthood knowing, loving, and serving the Lord, but they stayed in that same path throughout their lives. It is to this idea—this staying true and enduring—that I want to devote my words.

Even if you are the first generation in your family to have embraced the gospel, I imagine you grew up feeling spiritual yearnings. All of us, sooner or later, grow up and leave the places that have nurtured and cared for us. I lived at home while attending college, and it was only when I began

teaching school and my parents moved that I had to start being grown up and live on my own.

This transition time often is a defining experience in our commitment to the gospel. The world offers both blatant and subtle enticements. We need always to ask what we are doing to our spirit. Is the divine within us being nurtured, or do our actions prevent the Spirit from becoming the predominant force in our lives?

Living unrighteous lives doesn't take much effort or time, as we observe by what happened to the Book of Mormon people. In the early chapters of 3 Nephi, we see that the Nephites are, for the most part, corrupt; the Lamanites, who have become the more righteous group, are falling away as well. Mormon records:

"They had many children who did grow up and began to wax strong in years, that they became for themselves,

and were led away. . . .

"And thus were the Lamanites afflicted also, and began to decrease as to their faith and righteousness, because of the wickedness of the rising generation" (3 Nephi 1:29–30; emphasis added).

We must be on guard so that we do not "become for ourselves." That's an interesting phrase. It implies to me that they looked to themselves first and indulged desires that prophets had warned them to avoid. They yielded to Satan's enticements and allure. At some point in our lives, each of us must make the choice to embrace our faith or to "dwindle in unbelief" or to "wilfully rebel against the gospel of Christ" (4 Nephi 1:38).

I wish I could tell you that there was a one-time fix to make sure we do not fall prey to these enticements, but there isn't. However, there is a pattern which, if followed, can ensure that once we have chosen our Father's plan, we can stay safe; we can stay true.

In 4 Nephi we learn about those who stayed true and whose testimony grew. They were "continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord" (4 Nephi 1:12). So prayer and fasting are the first parts of this pattern. For me, one of

the most comforting and assuring parts of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the opportunity and blessing to pray. Frequently, we are not in a place where we can vocalize our prayers, but as Amulek teaches in Alma 34:27, we can let our hearts be “drawn out in prayer . . . continually.”

Coupled with mighty prayer, fasting has the power to move heaven in direct and significant ways. Sometimes fasting can bring a renewal of health and strength to bodies weakened by illness; sometimes it can open up minds and hearts to give assistance to individuals who are in need; sometimes it can cause droughts and famines to be broken. And always fasting can bring us peace—the peace to know that the Lord knows us and understands our needs and hearts.

The next part of the pattern is that they met together oft “both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord.” In many places just getting to church is very difficult and requires a great sacrifice of time and resources. And yet all around the world, millions of faithful Saints do it each Sabbath.

I want to add something else to this pattern—something I believe can do much toward keeping us within the embrace of the gospel. I’m speaking of the temple. Just



As we mature and grow physically, we need to ensure that the divine within us is being nurtured. Our actions should invite the Spirit to be the predominant force in our lives.

as we partake of the sacrament each week to renew our baptismal covenants with the Lord, participating in the ordinances of the temple reminds us of the importance of our covenants and strengthens us in our power to overcome the evils of this world.

Prayer and fasting, meeting together often to pray and hear the word of God, temple attendance, and (I hope it goes without saying) studying the scriptures—these are a pattern we can and should follow if we are to remain true and steadfast and grow up unto the Lord. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on April 29, 2008.