

# Ensign



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COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C., USA

*The Return of the Prodigal Son, by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo*

*When the prodigal son realized that he had sinned, he humbly returned to his father and said, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son”*

*(Luke 15:21). But his father welcomed him home and said with joy, “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (verse 24). Likewise, there is joy in heaven when we repent.*

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- A worldwide community of Saints
- Elder and Sister Holland on Relief Society

**The First Presidency:**

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**PERSONAL PROGRESS**

Young women can now do their Personal Progress online—link to scriptures, track progress, submit plans and report completion, and keep their journal securely online. When finished, they can print the entire book, including their journal. Their parents and leaders can approve and track their work. Start now at [personalprogress.lds.org](http://personalprogress.lds.org).

**GENERAL AUTHORITY BIOGRAPHIES**

The Church's new website includes biographical information about the general authorities. The chart contains links to biographies about each leader.

Visitors can learn about the careers, missions, families, and accomplishments of the members of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Quorums of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric. Visit [lds.org/church/leaders](http://lds.org/church/leaders).

**MY STUDY NOTEBOOK**

The previous version of [LDS.org](http://LDS.org) provided access to the scriptures and other Church materials, but the new site provides additional tools for online study.

By signing into the site using an LDS account, users can highlight and underline passages, take notes, keep a study journal, and organize materials into files for later use. These features are available for all content in the study area of the site, which includes the scriptures, general conference, lesson manuals, Church magazines, and more.



**DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?**

Effective missionaries need to be prepared mentally, physically, and spiritually, but they also need to learn to be effective teachers. The *Ensign* invites you to share how you learned to be an effective teacher on your mission. What can ward leaders and families do to help young men and young women learn how to be effective communicators and teachers as they share the gospel? Please label your submission "Effective Teachers as Missionaries" and submit by March 22.

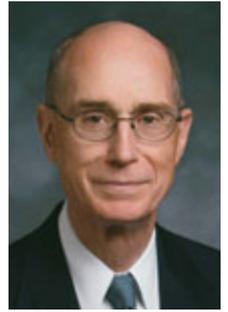
We also welcome other submissions on topics showing the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. On each submission, please include your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and the name of your ward and stake (or branch and district).

Please submit articles through [ensign.lds.org](http://ensign.lds.org), or send them to Ensign Editorial, 50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA. We regret that we cannot acknowledge receipt or return manuscripts. Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified.

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



# HOW GREAT SHALL BE YOUR Joy

**F**ew joys in life are sweeter and longer lasting than knowing that you have helped others take the restored gospel of Jesus Christ into their hearts. Having that joy is the opportunity of every member of the Church. When we were baptized, we made a promise that we would “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death, that [we] may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that [we] may have eternal life” (Mosiah 18:9).

All members accept part of the charge given to the Church to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world, wherever and as long as they live. The Lord said it clearly: “Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor” (D&C 88:81). Full-time missionaries are to have the power to teach those who are not yet members of the Church. Members of the Church are to have the power to find those the Lord has prepared for the missionaries to teach.

We need to exercise our faith that the Lord has prepared people around us to be taught. He knows who they are and when they are ready, and He can guide us to them by the power of the Holy Ghost and give us words to invite them to be taught. The promise the Lord gave to a missionary in 1832 is also the promise He gives to us in our charge to find people ready for teaching by the

missionaries: “I will send upon him the Comforter, which shall teach him the truth and the way whither he shall go; and inasmuch as he is faithful, I will crown him again with sheaves” (D&C 79:2–3).

And the promise of great joy for the faithful missionary is also ours as faithful members who give our hearts to missionary work:

“And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!

“Behold, you have my gospel before you, and my rock, and my salvation.

“Ask the Father in my name, in faith believing that you shall receive, and you shall have the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things which are expedient unto the children of men” (D&C 18:16–18).

In addition to the Holy Ghost to help us recognize and invite those ready to be taught, the Lord has called and trained leaders to guide us. In a letter dated February 28, 2002, the First Presidency placed increased responsibility for missionary work on bishops and wards.<sup>1</sup> With the help of the ward or branch council, the priesthood executive committee develops a missionary plan for the unit. In that plan are suggestions on how members can find those ready to be taught by the missionaries. There is a person called as the ward



or branch mission leader. That mission leader has close contact with the full-time missionaries and their investigators.

There are many ways you can better meet your personal obligation to help find people for the missionaries to teach. The simplest way will be the best.

Pray to be guided by the Holy Ghost. Talk with local leaders and missionaries, asking for their suggestions and promising them your help. Encourage those involved with you in this work. And be a witness at all times in what you say and do that Jesus is the Christ and that God answers prayers.

I testify that the Holy Ghost will direct you to those who seek truth as you pray and work for that guidance. And I know from experience that your joy will be lasting with those who choose to take the gospel into their hearts and then endure in faith. ■

**NOTE**

1. See “News of the Church: Ward and Branch Missionary Work Emphasized,” *Liahona*, Aug. 2002, 4; “Stake Missions Recently Dissolved,” *Ensign*, June 2002, 76.

**TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE**

- *Teaching, No Greater Call* instructs us to encourage those we teach to set goals to help them live the principles they have learned (see page 159). With the family, consider identifying the blessings of missionary work as mentioned by President Eyring and, if prompted, invite the family to set goals for sharing the gospel.
- Consider brainstorming with the family ways to share the gospel, remembering President Eyring’s counsel that “the simplest way will be the best.” To learn more about brainstorming, see *Teaching, No Greater Call*, page 160.

## YOUTH

### The Many Missionaries in My Life

By Elizabeth S. Stiles

The first Sunday I attended church with the missionaries, I recognized people I had grown up with and knew from the community. I saw one of my best friends from school, the elementary and high school secretaries, a girl I had not been exceptionally nice to in the past, and even a young man I once had a crush on.

Each of these individuals had a lasting impact on me. My best friend was a young woman of great integrity, and because of her I chose to continue investigating the Church. The secretaries who remembered me from school helped me know that I am important. I learned about godly love and charity from the young woman who embraced me despite my less-than-kind behavior toward her in the past. My early teenage crush set such a good example, I recognized his light and wanted to be around him.

These experiences helped me learn that, even before my first exposure to the missionaries, Heavenly Father had prepared me to receive the gospel through the people He placed around me. From them I learned that the small things we do can have great effect. Most important, I have learned that missionary work starts with me.



## CHILDREN

### The Gospel—a Gift to Share

The word *gospel* means all the teachings and ordinances given to us by Jesus Christ and His prophets. The gospel is like a basket filled with gifts from Heavenly Father. You can help give these gifts to other people. With whom could you share the gift of the gospel?

Match the scripture verses with the pictures of some of the gifts that are included in the gospel. Write on each picture the number of its matching scripture.

1. James 5:14–15
2. Mosiah 16:6–7
3. 3 Nephi 18:1–10
4. D&C 20:72–73
5. D&C 33:16
6. D&C 89:4, 18–21
7. D&C 132:46
8. D&C 137:10
9. D&C 138:32–34





Faith • Family • Relief

# A Restoration of All Things

Study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life.

**T**he Prophet Joseph Smith organized Relief Society as an essential part of the Church. As a presidency, we hope we can help you understand why Relief Society is essential in your life.

We know that New Testament women showed faith in Jesus Christ and participated in His work. Luke 10:39 tells of Mary, who “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word.” In John 11:27 Martha bears witness of Christ: “She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” Acts 9:36, 39 speaks of “a certain disciple named Tabitha, . . . full of good works. . . . And all the widows stood by . . . shewing the coats and garments which [she] made.” Phebe, in Romans 16:1–2, was “a servant of the church” and “a succourer of many.”

These patterns of faith, testimony, and service continued in the latter-day Church and were formalized with the organization of Relief Society. Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, taught: “Just as the Savior invited Mary and Martha of New Testament times to participate in His work, women of this dispensation have an official commission to participate in the Lord’s work. . . . The organization of Relief Society in 1842 mobilized the collective power of the women and their specific assignments to build the Lord’s kingdom.”<sup>1</sup>

We accomplish our work as we focus on Relief Society’s purposes: to increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and seek out and help those in need.

I testify that Relief Society was divinely organized to assist in the work of salvation. Each Relief Society sister has an essential role to play in accomplishing this sacred work.

*Silvia H. Allred, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency.*

## What Can I Do?

1. What help will I provide my sisters this month that exemplifies the faith of female disciples of Jesus Christ?
2. What teaching of the restored gospel will I study to strengthen my testimony this month?

For more information, go to [www.reliefsociety.lds.org](http://www.reliefsociety.lds.org).

## From Our History

**S**ister Julie B. Beck has taught that “we know through the Prophet Joseph Smith that Relief Society was a formal part of the Restoration.”<sup>2</sup> The process of restoration began with the First Vision in 1820 and continued “line upon line, precept upon precept” (D&C 98:12). When the Relief Society was formally organized on March 17, 1842, the Prophet taught the women about their essential place in the restored Church. He said, “The Church was never perfectly organized until the women were thus organized.”<sup>3</sup>

### NOTES

1. Julie B. Beck, “Fulfilling the Purpose of Relief Society,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 108.
2. Julie B. Beck, “Fulfilling the Purpose of Relief Society,” 108.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 451.

## From the Scriptures

Joel 2:28–29; Luke 10:38–42;  
Ephesians 1:10





# A Call for Missionaries

President Thomas S. Monson’s attention to missionary work is an extension of the Church’s emphasis on sharing the gospel, starting with the Prophet Joseph Smith. Following are the words of previous prophets on missionary work.

**M**ay I mention a matter close to my heart and which deserves our serious attention?” said President Thomas S. Monson in his opening remarks of the October 2010 general conference. “I speak of missionary work.” He then extended a call for more full-time missionaries:

“To young men of the Aaronic Priesthood and to you young men who are becoming elders: I repeat what prophets have long taught—that every worthy, able young man should prepare to serve a mission. Missionary service is a priesthood duty—an obligation the Lord expects of us who have been given so very much. Young men, I admonish you to prepare for service as a missionary. . . .

“A word to you young sisters: while you do not have the same priesthood responsibility as do the young men to serve as full-time missionaries, you also make a valuable contribution as missionaries, and we welcome your service.

“And now to you mature brothers and sisters: we need many, many more senior couples. . . . I urge you to prepare now for the day when you and your spouse might [serve a mission]. As your circumstances allow, as you are eligible for retirement, and as your health permits, make yourselves available to leave home and give full-time missionary service” (Thomas S. Monson, “As We Meet Together Again,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 5–6).



**Joseph Smith**  
(1805–1844)  
First President  
of the Church

“After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007], 330).



**Brigham Young**  
(1801–1877)  
Second President  
of the Church

“Our Father in Heaven, Jesus, our Elder Brother and the Savior of the world, and the whole heavens, are calling upon this people to prepare to save the nations of the earth, also the millions who have slept without the Gospel” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young [1997], 243).



**John Taylor**  
(1808–1887)  
Third President  
of the Church

“There are lots of able-bodied men who, if they could only have a little more faith in God, and could realize . . . the responsibilities of that priesthood that God has conferred upon them, they would be ready to break all barriers and say, Here I am, send me; I wish to benefit the human family” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor [2001], 73–74).



PHOTO BY RICHARD ROMNEY

## ELDERS



**Wilford Woodruff**  
(1807–1898)  
Fourth President  
of the Church

“There never was a set of men since God made the world under a stronger responsibility to warn this generation, to lift up our voices long and loud, day and night as far as we have the opportunity and declare the words of God unto this generation. We are required to do this. This is our calling. It is our duty. It is our business” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff [2004], 93).



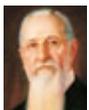
**Thomas S. Monson**  
President  
of the Church

Sister “make a valuable contribution as missionaries and we welcome your service.”

# SISTERS

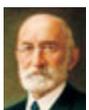


PHOTO BY ROBERT CASEY



**Joseph F. Smith**  
(1838–1918)  
Sixth President  
of the Church

“We want young men . . . who have kept themselves unspotted from the world, and can go into the nations of the earth and say to men, ‘Follow me, as I follow Christ.’” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith [2002], 78).



**Heber J. Grant**  
(1856–1945)  
Seventh President  
of the Church

“I want to emphasize that we as a people have one supreme thing to do, and that is to call upon the world to repent of sin, to come to God. And it is our duty above all others

to go forth and proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the restoration again to the earth of the plan of life and salvation” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant [2002], 84).



**Harold B. Lee**  
(1899–1973)  
Eleventh President  
of the Church

“We witness in our missionary work the magnificent spectacle of young men and young women [going]. . . to all the ends of the earth, that by their unselfish services they stand as witnesses at all times and in all places of the divine responsibility upon the Church to teach the gospel” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee [2000], 159).



**Spencer W. Kimball**  
(1895–1985)  
Twelfth President  
of the Church

“The question is frequently asked: Should every young man fill a mission? And the answer has been given by the Lord. It is ‘Yes.’ . . .

“We realize that while all men definitely should, all men are not prepared to teach the gospel abroad. . . . Yes, we would say, every able worthy man should shoulder the cross. What an army we should have teaching Christ and him crucified! Yes, they should be prepared, usually with saved funds for their missions, and always with a happy heart to serve” (Spencer W. Kimball, “When the World Will be Converted,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 8).



**Ezra Taft Benson**  
(1899–1994)  
Thirteenth President  
of the Church

“We urge you to seriously consider serving a full-time mission. . . .

“Many couples can attest that their missionary service was among their happiest times together because they were completely dedicated to one purpose—missionary work” (Ezra Taft Benson, “Our Responsibility to Share the Gospel,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 8).



PHOTO BY ROBERT CASEY

# COUPLES



**Gordon B. Hinckley**  
(1910–2008)  
Fifteenth President  
of the Church

“There is a constant need for more couple missionaries. They perform wonderful service throughout the world. You [leaders] need not wait for the couples to volunteer. The sacrifices associated with serving the Lord full time will abundantly bless the couples, their families, and the people they serve” (“To the Bishops of the Church,” Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, June 19, 2004, 27).

# THE ATONEMENT MAKES Repentance POSSIBLE

**W**e come to earth for the purpose of growing and progressing. We are slowed in our progress when we sin. Except for Jesus Christ, who lived a perfect life, everyone who has lived upon the earth has sinned (see Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8).

To sin is to break God's commandments. Sometimes we sin by doing something we know is wrong, but sometimes we sin by failing to do what we know is right (see James 4:17).

Every commandment from God blesses us if we obey it (see D&C 130:20–21). However, if we disobey it, there is a punishment attached (see Alma 42:22). This meting out of blessings or punishments is called justice.

Because our Heavenly Father loves us, He has made it possible for us to repent: to confess and forsake our sins and thus overcome their effects. He sent His Only Begotten Son,

Jesus Christ, to suffer for our sins. That is, Jesus paid the penalty required by the law of justice for our breaking of God's commandments. Because the Savior suffered for our sins, we will not have to suffer the full punishment for them if we repent (see D&C 19:16). His Atonement "satisfied the demands of justice" (Mosiah 15:9), allowing Heavenly Father to mercifully forgive us and withhold punishment.

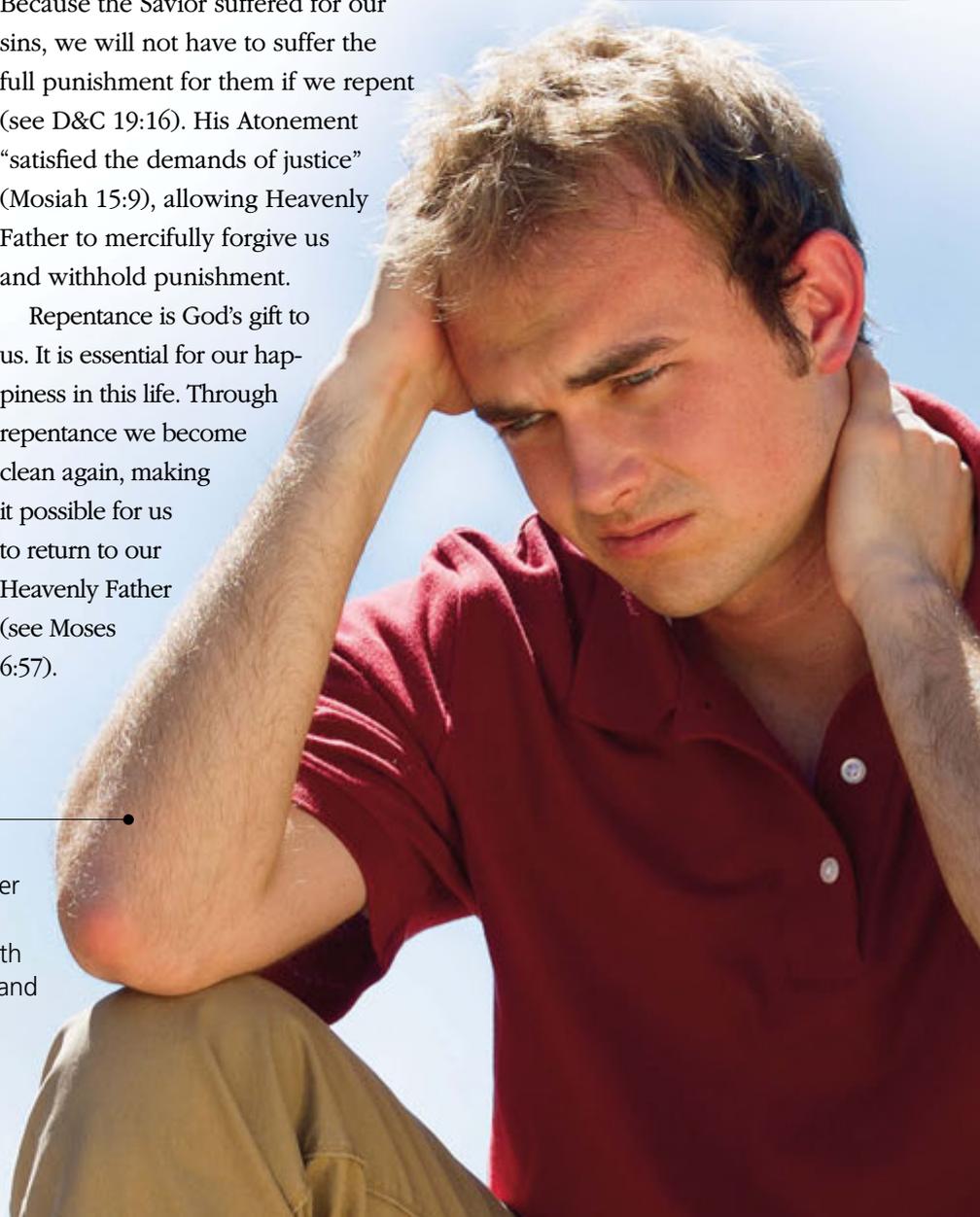
Repentance is God's gift to us. It is essential for our happiness in this life. Through repentance we become clean again, making it possible for us to return to our Heavenly Father (see Moses 6:57).

"He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

"By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them" (D&C 58:42–43).

**The repentance process includes the following:**

*Have faith in our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (see Alma 34:17).*



Recognize our sins and feel sorrow (see Luke 16:15; Alma 42:29–30).



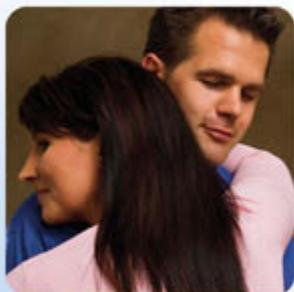
Confess our sins to Heavenly Father and, if needed, to our bishop or branch president (see D&C 61:2).



Abandon our sins (see D&C 58:43).



Make restitution when possible (see Ezekiel 33:15–16).



Forgive others who have sinned against us (see D&C 64:9; 3 Nephi 13:14–15).



Live righteously (see D&C 1:32). ■

*Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. He said of His suffering, “[It] caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit” (D&C 19:18).*

**For more information,** see *Gospel Principles* (2009), “Repentance,” 107–13; and *True to the Faith* (2004), “Atonement of Jesus Christ,” 14–21; “Justice,” 91–92; “Mercy,” 102–3; “Repentance,” 132–35; and “Sin,” 163–64.

# The Atonement

By Lisa Jan South

*My happiness and peace  
seemed forever gone,  
leaving only regret—  
until I saw the blackened earth.  
One bad decision and a forest  
was destroyed—  
or would have been  
except for the saving grace  
and promise of new life  
evidenced in small green shoots  
pushing through the ashes.*



# HIS GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

By Kimberlee B. Garrett

Like many people, I have struggled for much of my life to recognize my self-worth. I have fought weight problems for many years, which have contributed to my negative feelings. Even though I have lost weight and lead a healthy lifestyle now, occasionally I still find myself fighting off those negative thoughts and feelings.

One morning I felt particularly low and was wondering how to make the situation better. I began to pray and ask for Heavenly Father's help to overcome these feelings of inadequacy. As I prayed, the following scripture came to my mind: "If ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair; and despair cometh because of iniquity" (Moroni 10:22).

*Iniquity* seemed to be such a serious word, so much so that at first I discounted the thought because I could think of nothing that I had done seriously wrong. However, the thought persisted, so I prayed, as instructed also by Moroni, for Heavenly Father to show me my weakness that I might be made strong (see Ether 12:27).

I found myself remembering three incidents during the previous two days when I had not shown patience with my children. I had put my own moods and needs in front of theirs

and had not been sensitive to their feelings. I felt bad and resolved to do better. I apologized to my children and prayed for forgiveness. As soon as I prayed, my feelings of inadequacy were lifted and I was able to feel the peace that had eluded me.

As though a light switch turned on



*Like the Apostle Paul, I will do my best to repent and obey the commandments so the "power of Christ may rest upon me."*

in my mind, I finally understood a simple concept that somehow I had missed all these years. When I have unresolved sin in my life, even if it is small, I give Satan power to influence me. He knows my weaknesses, and he knows what words will "stir me up" and "lead me to destruction" (see D&C 10:22). When it comes right down to it, I don't hate myself, but Satan does hate me and will use every tactic available to turn me away from the light.

However, when I repent, I rely on the power of Jesus Christ. Because He knows perfectly how to succor me in my weakness (see Alma 7:11–12), His power lifts me up and makes me strong in ways that I can't be on my own.

Even the Apostle Paul, so valiant in proclaiming the gospel, suffered weakness and was plagued by its effects on him. Nevertheless, when he prayed to have the weakness removed, the Lord answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul then went on to exclaim, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Likewise, I will do my best to repent and obey the commandments so the "power of Christ may rest upon me" and I can be filled with peace and love. ■

# Helping Children Feel Safe

**By Shawn Evans**

Licensed Clinical Social Worker,  
LDS Family Services

**W**e live in an age in which difficult issues—such as divorce, illness, death, accidents, natural disasters, warfare, job loss—threaten the sense of security in the home. However, there are many things parents can do to help children feel a sense of stability, security, and safety in spite of these disrupting influences.

## How Children React

In order to help children cope with traumatic situations, first we must understand how they react to them. These reactions are affected by the stability of the family and the child's age and emotional maturity.

### **Birth to Six Years Old**

An infant may express discomfort from disturbing events by fussing, crying, and desiring to be held. Often, all babies need is for a parent to hold them or feed them.

Young children are more mature than babies. Nevertheless, a disruption in the child's normal routine may cause a six-year-old to feel powerless. For instance, he or she may feel great



*By understanding how children react to traumatic situations, parents can help their children cope during difficult times.*

anxiety over being separated from parents during a natural disaster or in the months following a divorce. Parents can help young children in such circumstances by keeping as many routines in place as possible. They can continue to have family prayers, family meals, and other routines they had before the major change. This continuity helps provide children a feeling of comfort, confidence, and stability.

### **Seven to Ten Years Old**

Older children can understand when something or someone is taken away permanently, whether it be moving from a home or coping with a parent's death. As a result, they may become preoccupied by the troubling event. Their understanding of life has been badly shaken. They might discuss the traumatic event repeatedly as they try to understand how to deal with the problem. They might need help making sense of or expressing their feelings about the experience. Remember, their reasoning abilities are not those of an adult. For example, it is not uncommon for children to think they are to blame for their parents'

*“There have been a lot of changes in my life. Some things that didn’t change were family scripture study and prayer. I love the scriptures and am now trying to read them on my own every day. I like the peaceful feeling I get when I read them.”*

Michael H., whose parents divorced and whose mother later remarried.



divorce. Parents can help by learning what their children are thinking and feeling and then correcting misconceptions their children may have.

### ***Eleven to Eighteen Years Old***

Children ages 11 to 18 may be concerned about events occurring locally, nationally, or internationally. Older teenagers start to realize they are going to transition from living at home to facing the turbulent world on their own. They may become overwhelmed with intense emotions and not know how to talk about them.

Parents can help their adolescent children by doing activities with them that their children like, such as making dinner, playing board games, or playing sports. Parents can also discuss challenging experiences they had when they were adolescents. As parents share their thoughts and feelings, children will feel more comfortable in sharing what they are thinking or feeling. This is how emotional intimacy is developed. Even if adolescents don’t show overt interest, they will be listening.

### **What Parents Can Do**

Parents must first recognize that their children are distressed.<sup>1</sup> Children might exhibit unusual behavioral problems such as prolonged sadness or irritability, increased or decreased appetite, disrupted sleep patterns, an inability to concentrate, or abnormal performance in school. Older children may start to engage in high-risk behaviors such as acting recklessly, using harmful substances, becoming sexually active, or withdrawing from family, friends, and social situations.

You can help by knowing how to nurture your individual children. For



PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM C. OLSON

*“My mom taught me from the scriptures that I can trust Heavenly Father even though I can’t see Him. After the earthquake, when I couldn’t find my mom, I knew that God would guide me, and He did. And though my sister died, I knew that I would see her again.”*

Anny A., a few months after the 8.0 magnitude earthquake in Peru in 2007.

*“I know that adults talk about bad things in life to warn me and help me understand things. But it helps if I also hear about the good things in the world and in their lives. It helps me remember how good life can be.”*

Erica M., who had five family members and friends die within the past 18 months.



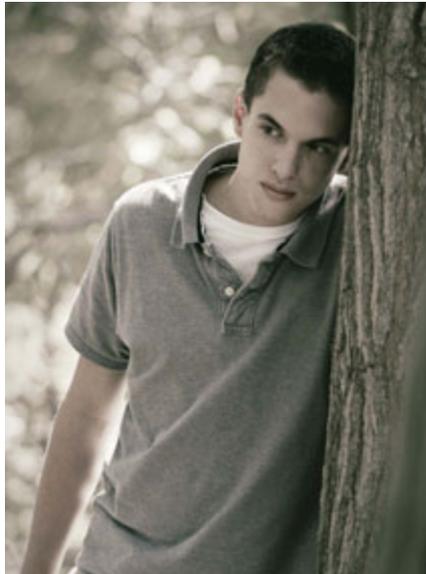
example, you can teach your children, especially when they are young, descriptive words to identify the emotion they are feeling. Some of these words include *sad, angry, frustrated, afraid, worried, and tense*.

If your teenager begins to act recklessly after a traumatic situation, listen carefully to his or her words *and* emotions. As with younger children, help your teenager correctly identify his or her feelings. And be understanding, knowing that the traumatic event may have triggered the reckless behavior.

As you begin these conversations with your children, try to avoid moralizing and expressing anger, criticism, or sarcasm. Identify the hurt or pain your child is feeling and show empathy. You could start by saying, “I know you’re sad that your friend died. I can only imagine how difficult that would be. I’m concerned that you are starting to drink alcohol as a reaction to your pain.” Starting a conversation in a harsh manner rarely leads to good outcomes.

### **Listen with Empathy**

Sometimes you may be tempted to avoid conversation with an upset



*“My dad finds time for us to be together, often when we are doing service for someone else. He takes the time to talk about life in general. And when you talk, you can feel inner peace.”*

Ryan P., whose father was unemployed for almost a year.

child. However, in many cases a child will not be able to deal with his or her troubling emotions without help. As you listen with empathy while your children discuss their concerns, they will feel loved and comforted.

One successful method of listening with empathy involves restating the child’s feelings to be certain you understand them. You may need to help them identify what they are feeling. You might say, “You seem sad and tense when I ask you about your friend whose parents divorced.” Wait for the answer; then allow your child to continue the conversation. Children tend to talk when they feel in control of the conversation.

### **Help Children Process Feelings**

A child’s sense of control can be increased by helping the child to process unpleasant feelings. Often, as you listen with empathy, you and your child will be able to identify the cause of those feelings. You might ask, “Why do you think you are feeling this way?” Wait for responses and listen carefully to the answers. They may not come right away.

*“There are scary, bad people in the world. But my daddy helps me feel OK. He calls me during the day and tells me he loves me.”*

Ally V., whose father is a police officer.



Sometimes you may need to brainstorm alternative solutions. You could ask how the solution your child is considering would affect others involved. Is the potential solution respectful of your family or friends? Is it realistic? How does it make the child feel? He or she may not figure out a solution immediately. Reassure your child that you love him or her and that it is OK not to have a solution right now.

### **Respond with Faith**

As you identify unusual patterns of behavior in your children and then help them express and understand their thoughts and emotions in an environment of love, your children will gain a sense of security and safety.

The most important thing you can do to foster this feeling of security and safety in the home is to build on the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can seek inspiration about how to help your children by fasting, praying, searching the scriptures, and attending the temple. You can talk to your priesthood leaders. You might also consider getting professional help, depending on how severe the problems are.

As you act with faith in Heavenly Father and His Son, you will receive blessings of comfort and support. Children will receive an added measure of comfort and stability as you and they live by the words of the prophets and continue the practices that bring peace into the home, such as family and personal prayer, scripture study, and temple worship. ■

#### **NOTE**

1. See John Gottmann and Joan DeClaire, *The Heart of Parenting: Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child* (1997).



### **THE FOUNDATION OF PEACE**

“How do we bring that peace into the lives of children who are

growing up in trying, troubling times? . . . The best and most meaningful resources are found within the home where faithful, devoted parents and supportive brothers and sisters love one another and teach one another of their divine nature.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1994, 60.



# THE POWER OF Early Preparation

*As the world continues to grow more wicked, we must grow more faithful.  
Our success will depend on how soon and how carefully we prepare.*

**By Ronald Errol Bartholomew**

**I**n my home growing up, my parents decided our family should hold family scripture study every day from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. By the time I was in high school, I had become increasingly unhappy about this “early morning family tradition” and did all I could to show my lack of appreciation for it. I’d put my blanket over my head, lie on my pillow, and snore out loud in protest. But my parents persevered. We read and re-read the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and even the Bible using an audio recording.

When I left home for college I was disappointed to discover that I had lost the ability to sleep in. I woke up every day at 5:00 a.m., no matter what, and without trying. As a full-time missionary I realized how valuable my parents’ insistence on consistent early morning prayer and scripture study was. It happened when I was asked to speak in Church my first Sunday in Korea.

I was concerned that I had no idea about what I was going to say, especially given the difficulties of a new language. But I had agreed to speak, so I prepared as well—or as feebly—as I could. Then it was time, and there I was, looking out on the audience of Korean Saints and investigators. I was suddenly struck with the realization

that, although I didn’t know much Korean, I knew many lessons from the scriptures. That thought imbued me with confidence. My parents’ discipline was now paying off—I could talk about the scriptures. So I shared a few stories from the Old Testament using the best Korean I could, then sat down, filled with gratitude for those many long years of early morning scripture study.

Over the years, I’ve learned that the example my parents set for me as they prepared me for my mission and adulthood was something I could implement in the lives of my own children. In fact, preparing our children is something we as parents must do. President Henry B. Eyring pointed out why:

“We will need to have developed and nurtured faith in Jesus Christ long before Satan hits us, as he will, with doubts and appeals to our carnal desires and with lying voices saying that good is bad and that there is no sin. Those spiritual storms are already raging. We can expect that they will worsen until the Savior returns.

“However much faith to obey God we now have, we will need to strengthen it continually and keep it refreshed constantly. We can do that by deciding now to be more quick to obey and more determined to endure. Learning to start

early and to be steady are the keys to spiritual preparation. Procrastination and inconsistency are its mortal enemies.”<sup>1</sup>

As President Eyring explained, because the current storms will only increase, our current level of preparation also needs to increase. The secret to our success is to be consistent and to start early.

### Focus on Eternal Priorities

Sometimes it is difficult to incorporate the practices of personal and family prayer, scripture study, and temple attendance into our busy daily lives. That is why it is important to plan frequently how we are going to accomplish these goals. As a friend of mine once mused, “If I were the devil, I don’t think I could get to Latter-day Saints with any of the big sins. I think I would just keep them busy.”

We need to make sure we don’t allow anything to interfere with our divine duties to prepare ourselves and our children early and consistently. This can involve a lot more than just busy schedules.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said that “some parents become so expert at filling every physical desire for their children that they begin to suppose that all is well in this life and that their eternal stewardship is progressing right on schedule. . . . I believe that we must pause and take a careful inventory to determine how well our families are doing spiritually. We could ask how well are we feeding, nurturing, training, and exercising the spirits of our children; or how well have we taught, trained, loved, and inspired our children to build their spiritual muscles and strength? . . . Remember, eternity is now, not a vague, distant future. We prepare each day, right now, for eternal life. If we are not preparing for eternal life, we are preparing for something else, perhaps something far less.”<sup>2</sup>

Though we may be necessarily preparing our youth for short-term goals, we cannot allow those things to distract us from our larger eternal goals. We need to start early to establish regular patterns of gospel living.

### Develop a Love for Gospel Truths

One important part of preparing our children for eternity is helping them learn and develop a love for gospel



*We also need to focus on eternal truths through family prayer, family home evening, and family gospel study—especially the Book of Mormon.*

truths. The Lord once reminded the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon that Satan would try to take away light and truth from their families “through disobedience . . . and because of the tradition of their fathers” (D&C 93:39). He reminded them that “truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.” He said that “whatsoever was *more or less than this [truth]* is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning” (D&C 93:24–25; emphasis added).

One of the challenges Satan places in our paths is to distract us from gospel truths by causing us to focus on things that may be true but not important. That can lead to a myriad of problems, including frustration with oneself, family, friends, and even the gospel.

Here’s an example: The doctrine or “truth” about having babies is simple and wonderful. Babies are Heavenly Father’s spirit children who need to come to the earth and receive bodies as part of His eternal plan of bringing to pass their immortality and eternal life. We get to participate in this wondrous plan as parents, advisors, friends, and mentors.

But there are a lot of things that are true about having babies that, from a certain point of view, are not so nice.

These ideas can even distract us from the heavenly plan. For example, babies are cute but inconvenient, adorable but expensive. Babies often smell bad and keep one awake in the night. And the more babies you have, the more stretched your financial and physical resources may become. Besides, babies can cause stretch marks and weight gain. Having babies may disrupt a woman's long-term career aspirations.

Each of these observations about babies is true—and the emotional distress such issues can cause are certainly real. However, none of them encourages us to embrace the saving *truth* about babies and their role in the plan of salvation. In fact, if we place too much of our focus on these true facts about having babies, we may find ourselves at odds with Heavenly Father's plan for us as individuals and as members of a family. As we raise a family, we learn to be unselfish, to love others more than ourselves, to serve, to sacrifice, and to teach. Learning these traits helps us to become more like our Heavenly Father, who has said that His work is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life" of His children (Moses 1:39).

As we do everything we can to prepare ourselves and our children spiritually now and for future storms, we must learn and emphasize gospel *truths* over things that are distracting, even if they are factually true.

### Read The Book of Mormon

President Marion G. Romney said if we prayerfully and regularly read the Book of Mormon in our homes and with our children, "the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. . . . Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives."<sup>3</sup> I have seen these changes occur slowly and incrementally over many years of serious and consistent personal and family study. These blessings are not always realized in their fulness immediately.

When I was serving as a stake Young Men president, the decision was made to reenact scenes from the Book of Mormon for youth conference. When we experienced

unusual difficulty in finding a mature couple who were available to play the parts of Lehi and Sariah, a thought came to me: "Ask your parents." I inquired and they agreed to do it.

The first evening of the three-day youth conference culminated with a reenactment of Lehi's dream. It was dark, so the leaders were all busy helping the youth find and hold onto an iron rod that led them to a tree representing the tree of life, which was illuminated in a clearing on the top of a large hill. As the youth approached the tree, my parents, acting as Lehi and Sariah, picked glowing "fruit" hanging from this tree and distributed it to them. It just so happened that I was the last person to arrive at the tree. As I approached the tree after a long and exhausting day, I had a sudden epiphany when I considered that the two people representing Lehi and Sariah were in fact my own parents. The scene took on special significance when my father reached up and pulled some of the fruit from the tree and handed it to me. Then I understood something clearly: as a young man I hadn't received my knowledge of the gospel from someone else—I had received it from my father and mother—one day at a time, one morning at a time, amidst my grumbling and moaning and complaining. It occurred to me that in Lehi's dream, the Lord hadn't come down and personally called Nephi to the tree—He did so through Nephi's father, Lehi—and for me, it was my parents.

As we strive to prepare ourselves and our youth spiritually, we can have a tremendous impact—even though we may not readily be aware of it. Thus, we must be patient. Rearing children in the gospel is a process, not an event. The secret is to start early, be consistent, plan for life's demands, focus on eternal truths, and study the gospel—especially the Book of Mormon. Through our efforts, trusting in the Savior's grace to compensate for our weaknesses, we can succeed. And through these efforts, we can find peace in our lives and joy with our children. ■

#### NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, "Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 38.
2. M. Russell Ballard, "Spiritual Development," *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 66.
3. Marion G. Romney, "The Book of Mormon," *Ensign*, May 1980, 67.

# Young Adults and Family Home Evening

Members of the Church across the world reserve Monday nights for family home evening. As taught by modern prophets, family home evening is a time “for group activity, for organizing, for the expressions of love, for the bearing of testimony, for learning gospel principles, for family fun and recreation, and of all things, for family unity and solidarity.”<sup>1</sup>

For the following young adults, family home evening is a priority. Not all of them live with parents or siblings. Some participate in family home evening with roommates or ward members or friends from institute. Still others set aside time for private devotion. But all of them recognize the immediate and future blessings in their lives from following the admonition of prophets to participate in family home evening.

## A Blessing in All Aspects of Life

As a convert and the only member of the Church in my family, I attend family home evening at the young adult center in my city. Participating in family home evening has been important to me because I



have learned how to teach in a small group, I have come to better understand the gospel principles I was taught while investigating the Church, and I have seen others grow when they teach or share their testimonies.

I know that these are important skills for my future. When I have my own family, I will know how to organize a powerful and fun family home evening because of the good examples I've seen.

But family home evening is also an important part of my current stage of life. Sometimes it's easier to stay home on a Monday night, especially if the weather is bad or if I have lots of studying to do. But nearly every time I have this dilemma, I go to family home evening anyway because I know it's important to be around other young single adults to talk about the gospel and have fun together. Even when only a few others attend, it is still a great experience.



The nice thing about having family home evening at the young adult center is that we can come early or stay late to study, practice the piano, play games, or just relax—there is always something to do.

I know when I'm obedient and follow the prophetic admonition to participate in family home evening, I am blessed. I have seen evidence of this in my studies, in my work, in being blessed with energy for the week ahead, and in feeling generally uplifted.

Lenneke Rodermond, Netherlands

### A Foundation upon Which to Build

I was raised in a family in which we regularly had family home evenings. I remember that when I was a child, family home evenings were one of the most important events in my life, and I would wake up excitedly each Monday morning and remind my parents that family home evening was that night. Today as a young adult, I live with my parents and continue to spend this special time with my family each week.

Because our family consistently had family home evening from the time I was very young, I have always understood its importance. In Korea, where many parents and children

are very busy and family time is rare, home evening is a wonderful opportunity to be together and strengthen each other.



Another blessing that has come from my parents' efforts is that I've been given a firm foundation upon which to build my testimony of Jesus Christ. Though I learned the gospel in church, it was through family home evening lessons that I really came to understand its principles. As a result, I've been able to go to church and grow in the gospel based on my own faith and not on that of my parents.

Hye Ri Lee, Korea



### An Opportunity to Share My Faith

I am a 24-year-old young man who has gained a strong testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ by following the prophetic admonition to hold family home evening. Although I am the only member of the Church in my family, after I was baptized, I realized that family home evening could strengthen us, and I decided to introduce it at home.

The whole family now knows that Mondays are special days when we gather as a family to learn gospel truths. Sometimes we resolve problems in the family or discuss challenges, needs, or interests of individual family members. I have learned how to really commune with my Heavenly Father and to counsel with my family members in love. As a result, we have been more united, which is a great blessing.

In addition, family home evening has laid a strong foundation for my family in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and they are now investigating the Church. In fact, the full-time missionaries join us for family home evening once in a while.



## FAMILY HOME EVENING IS FOR EVERYONE

“It is for families with parents and children, for families with just one parent, and for parents who have no children at home. It is for home evening groups of single adults and for those who live alone or with roommates. . . . Regular participation in family home evening will develop increased personal worth, family unity, love for our fellowmen, and trust in our Father in heaven.”

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), President N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982), and President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), *Family Home Evening: Happiness through Faith in Jesus Christ* (1976), 3.

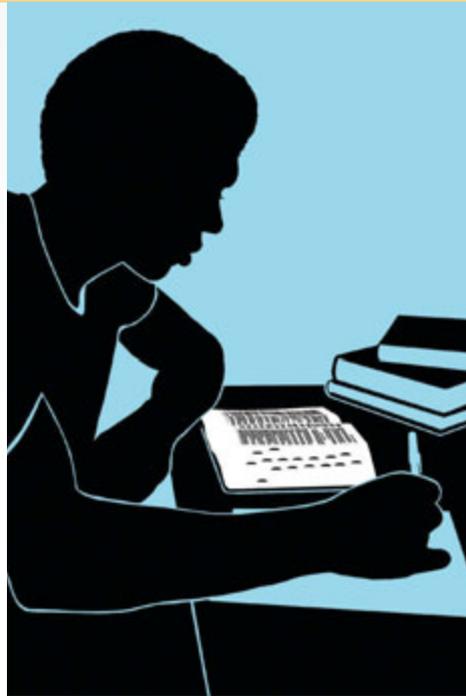
I know that when I get married, my family will be blessed through family home evening, but I am also grateful that I've been able to make family home evening an important part of my life now. I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true and that the family home evening program is inspired of God.

Lebani Butawo, Zimbabwe

### An Established Priority

I was raised in a family that made family home evening a priority. In order to make it home in time on Mondays, we would go straight home from school without making plans to be with friends. Personal tasks, such as homework, were completed following family home evening. There really was nothing that took precedence over this special time for our family to be together.

Family home evening made an impact on us growing up not only because of the priority we placed on it but also because we worked together to make it happen. We



rotated who would give the lesson, who would prepare the refreshments, and who would say the opening and closing prayers. We didn't just listen to lessons but also had opportunities to be instructors. As a result, I was blessed to obtain a knowledge and testimony of the gospel and to have strengthened family ties.

Because family home evening has become a habit in my life, I look

forward to the blessings it will bring when I have a family of my own.

Chieko Kobe, Japan

### A Remedy for Homesickness

I grew up in a family in which my parents have been a glowing example to my two brothers, my sister, and me, and our family has received many blessings because of their efforts. For instance, we have grown together to become a close family, turning to each other in times of need or trials. And although some of my family members are less active, they still join in family home evening.

I spent some time living in Sydney, Australia, and was very homesick living so far from Ireland. Luckily, I lived near a Church meetinghouse where I attended family home evening with other young adults. This was a great blessing to me, and when I attended, I no longer felt homesick. It was great to mingle with fellow members in a relaxed setting and where the Spirit was present.

Linda Ryan, Ireland

### Something I Never Regret

I joined the Church in May 2009. Since then I have quickly come to value the blessings that come

from consistently attending family home evening. One memorable experience occurred when our young single adult ward played “chair soccer,” a variation of indoor soccer, in the cultural hall of a local meetinghouse. The point was to defend your chair while attacking other people’s with a rubber ball. I formed an alliance with two other players; by the end we were the only three still in the game, and we promptly turned on each other. Instead of getting upset about it, we couldn’t stop laughing! It was the most fun I have had in ages, and I know that I would be hard pressed to find an experience like that anywhere outside of the Church.

Everyone was having a great time, even if he or she didn’t win, but that’s not what made the experience special to me. What really made it



### A Priority for All of Us

There are many ways that I could spend Monday nights, from participating in university societies to other sporting and recreational activities. But those who live in our student house—all Latter-day Saints—have decided that it is important to hold family home evening, and we make it a priority. We have chosen this priority to strengthen one another during a time of life when living the gospel could be seen as difficult. Sharing testimonies and experiences with one another has brought us closer together as young adults and friends.

Family home evening is a time in the week when I can count on receiving spiritual nourishment. On numerous occasions I have come to family home evening with questions in my mind only to find the answers in lessons or spiritual thoughts that are shared. It is also a time to set and reflect on goals that help me develop personally.

Having made the decision to consistently hold family home evening, I don’t consider it a sacrifice. I know it is where I should be; it is also where I *want* to be. ■

Luc Rasmussen, Wales

#### NOTE

1. Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, and N. Eldon Tanner, *Family Home Evenings, 1970–71* (1970), v.

memorable was the spirit of friendship I felt at the activity.

Moments like this help me lighten the overwhelming stress of graduate school. No matter how the week has gone, I know that I will always feel better if I go to family home evening. I may not always be thrilled about the activity and I may not always want to take the time, but I never regret going.

Matt Adams, Nebraska, USA



# Similarities **AND**

By Heather McOmber

*That Relief Society lesson helped me see myself, and others, in a way I never had before.*

I will never forget a particular Relief Society lesson I heard in a young single adult ward. At the start of the lesson there was a blank chart on a white board with two columns. The first column was labeled “Similarities” and the second

“Differences.” The teacher began by asking us to list the similarities between a married Relief Society sister and a single Relief Society sister. There was an almost audible groan and a collective mind freeze. One sister started with a hint of sarcasm, stating: “Well, we are all



# Differences

female.” And that seemed to neatly summarize how we all felt on the subject.

But the teacher persisted. Gradually hearts opened and the list of similarities began to grow: hopes, fears, strengths, weaknesses, responsibilities, talents, the gospel, covenants, faith, courage, potential, pain, sorrows, fatigue, and personal need of the Atonement.

The list continued until the teacher had to ask us to move onto listing our differences. Of course, everyone immediately called out: “husband!”

But then there was a stunned silence. Surely there *had* to be more than that. The list included a few feeble attempts at finding differences—things like “we may or may not have children” or “we have different responsibilities.” Most of us, though, were simply stunned by the fact that what we thought would be the short list ended up being the long list, and what we thought would be the long list was actually the short list.

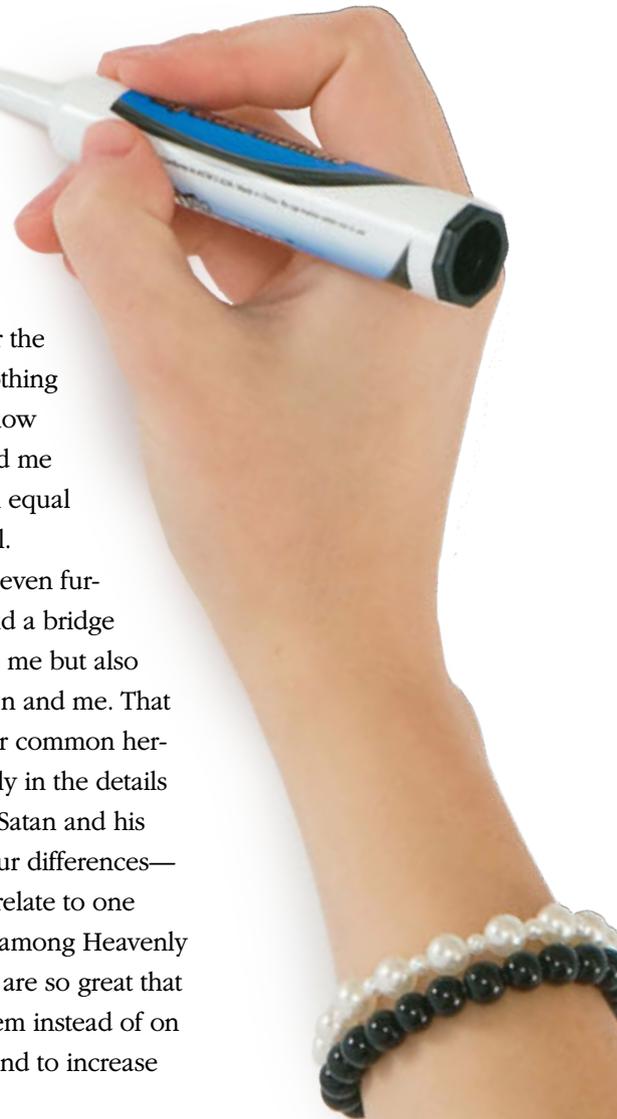
Until that lesson, I had not realized how different I had let myself believe I was from other sisters in the gospel simply because they are married and I am not. This simple activity instilled in me a bond of unity with my sisters. I saw with new eyes. I realized that even in a world where people are often

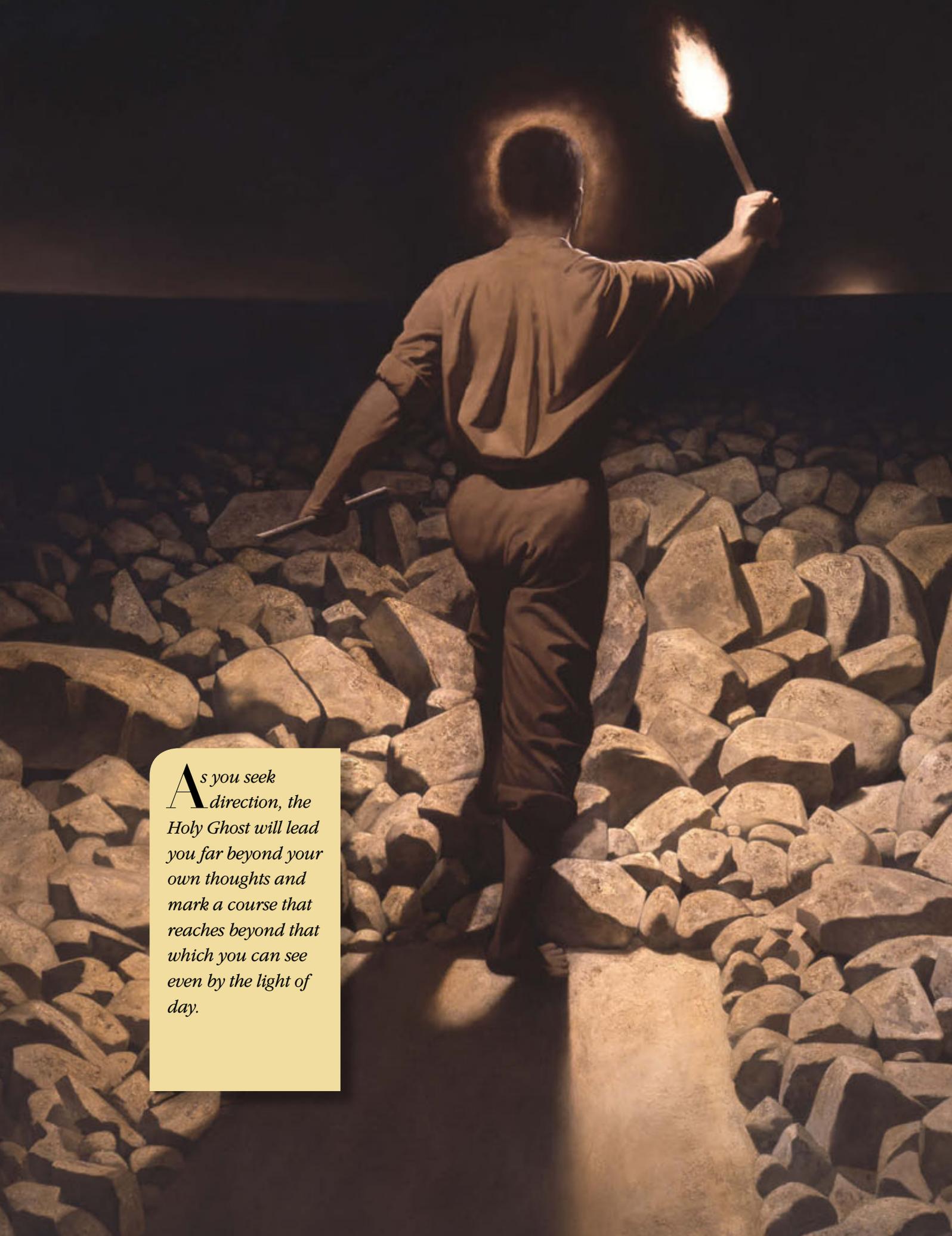
prone to focus on what makes us different from each other, sisters in the gospel *do* have a lot in common. We need not act based on fear of rejection or the assumption that we have nothing to offer each other. Seeing how alike we truly are has helped me feel confident to stand as an equal with my sisters in the gospel.

But the exercise reached even further still. Not only did it build a bridge between married sisters and me but also between all of God’s children and me. That we are all His children is our common heritage. Our differences lie only in the details and packaging of our lives. Satan and his work thrive by enhancing our differences—teaching us that we cannot relate to one another. But the similarities among Heavenly Father’s sons and daughters are so great that if we choose to focus on them instead of on our differences, unity is bound to increase (see Moses 7:18).

I will always be grateful for that lesson that helped me see others with new eyes, focused my vision on similarities, and brought me to a more understanding state of mind and heart. ■

*For additional reading, see Jan Underwood, “Seeing Beyond the Category: Reflections on A Single Life,” Ensign, Mar. 1984, 27.*





*As you seek  
direction, the  
Holy Ghost will lead  
you far beyond your  
own thoughts and  
mark a course that  
reaches beyond that  
which you can see  
even by the light of  
day.*

# FINDING Answers

*It is not the design of heaven that we be rescued from all difficult situations.  
Rather, it is the Lord's will that we learn to handle them.*

**By Joseph Fielding McConkie**

BYU Emeritus Professor of Ancient Scripture

**N**ot long after I graduated from college I found myself in Vietnam. I had been commissioned an officer in the United States army and was serving as a Latter-day Saint chaplain. Throughout the country, LDS servicemen were organized into mobile groups that functioned like quorums and moved with their military units. Every mobile group acted under the direction of one of three districts, each of which covered about a third of the country.

Our district president was an air force chaplain by the name of Farrell Smith. I served as his first counselor. As chaplains we were responsible for meeting the spiritual needs of the military units to which we were assigned—including 25 of these mobile quorums. As the units deployed, the soldiers often found themselves in a different place each Sunday, but thanks to LDS helicopter pilots who found a way to get us to wherever we needed to be, the system worked well. Even so, the problems we faced reached far beyond our experience.

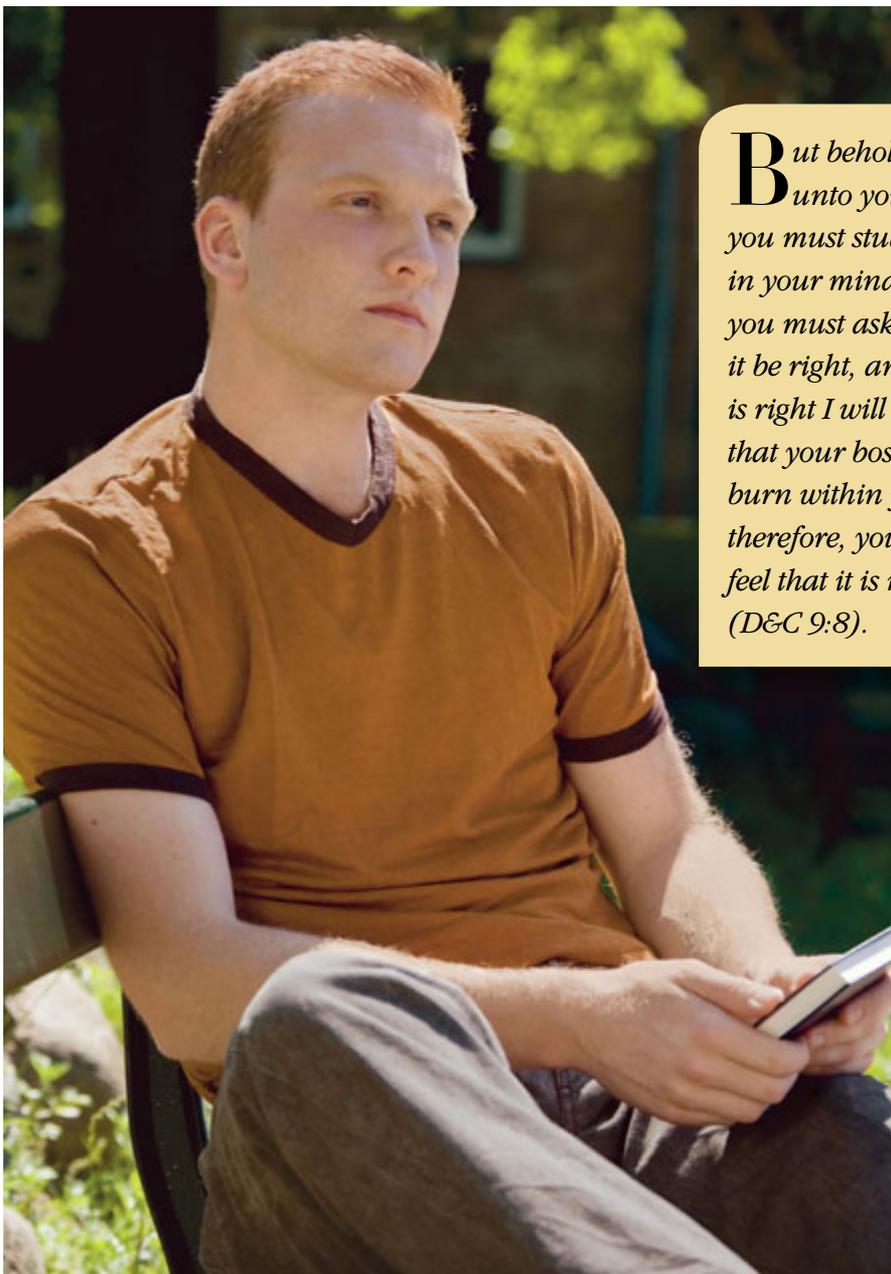
We were extremely pleased when we received word that Bishop Victor L. Brown (1914–1996) of the Presiding Bishopric was coming to visit. We were to travel with him from one end of Vietnam to the other, meeting with as many LDS servicemen as possible. Prior to Bishop Brown's visit, Chaplain Smith and I made a list of the questions we wanted to ask him relating to our specific challenges and committed them to memory.

Servicemen came from all over the country to meet with Bishop Brown. We held meetings on the sides of runways, in bunkers, and in ditches. We sometimes held meetings with the ground rumbling beneath our feet and guns thundering around us. In some instances we met in small military chapels.

Between meetings, Chaplain Smith and I took turns asking Bishop Brown questions. His counsel was wise, but what we were doing became evident, and he halted our questioning.

"Brethren," he said, "I am going to tell you a story. You won't like it, but it is a great story."

It centered on a young man with a difficult



**B**ut behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right" (D&C 9:8).

Twelve Apostles. I will present the matter to him."

The next day, as he met with the Apostle, the stake president raised the matter. The Apostle listened attentively and asked a few questions to ensure that he fully understood what was involved. He then said, "President, I have no idea what to tell you, but this afternoon I will be meeting with

President McKay. I will ask him."

That afternoon he met with President David O. McKay (1873–1970) and carefully explained the problem. President McKay listened attentively and asked a few questions to ensure that he understood all that was involved. He said, "Well, that's his problem, isn't it?"

As Bishop Brown had predicted, we did not like the story. It brought an end to our question session and led to the realization that our problems were ours to solve. That is why the Lord had placed us there.

### Learning to Solve Our Own Problems

That lesson is one that we are generally reluctant to learn. My father and grandfathers had a great love of the gospel and were marvelous sources of understanding. I have, however, a distinct memory of the occasion when I went to my father with some gospel questions only to receive the following response: "Look, Junior, you have the same sources available to you as I have to me." More important than any answers these men gave to my questions was their teaching me how to get answers for myself. They are now gone. Questions continue, as does the confidence that the same sources that were available to them are available to me.

In Doctrine and Covenants 9:8 we find the process of revelation: "But behold, I say unto you, that you must

problem. He did not know what to do, so he visited with his bishop for counsel.

The bishop listened carefully and thoughtfully. He asked a few questions to ensure that he understood all that was involved. He then confessed that he had no idea what counsel to give but told the young man that he would present the matter to the stake president when they met the following evening.

The next evening the bishop met with the stake president. He explained the young man's problem. The stake president listened attentively and asked a few questions to ensure he understood all that was involved. He then said, "Bishop, I have no idea what to tell you, but tomorrow I will be meeting with a member of the Quorum of the

study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.” This process is designed to balance our experience and agency with the wisdom of heaven.

### Seeking the Companionship of the Holy Ghost

We frequently speak of our right to the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. Perhaps an analogy, one my father taught me, will help in distinguishing between receiving a revelation from the Holy Ghost and having the *gift* of the Holy Ghost.

Imagine yourself traveling in the dark of night through rugged and difficult terrain, seeking a place of safety where you will be reunited with your family. Let us also suppose that a flash of lightning momentarily marks the path of safety before you. This brief flash of light represents a manifestation through the Holy Ghost.

If you then follow the path it marked out, it will lead you to the waters of baptism and to confirmation as a member of the Church. The authority who confirms you will say, “Receive the Holy Ghost,” meaning the gift of the Holy Ghost. The light by which you now walk is the companionship of the Holy Ghost. It is the light of the gospel—or, for some, the gospel in a new light. In either case, it enables you to see that which you could not see before. It now becomes your privilege to walk, as it were, by the light of day. The light is constant, and, in most instances, the path you are called on to travel is clearly marked. When it is not, you are entitled to the visions, impressions, or prodding necessary to assure your arrival at the place of safety.

The fact that every member of the Church is given the gift of the Holy Ghost is evidence that the Lord wants to reveal things to you and through you. Joseph Smith said, “No man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations. The Holy Ghost is a revelator.”<sup>1</sup>

As you serve in Church callings and seek direction, that same Spirit will lead you far beyond your own thoughts and mark a course that reaches beyond that which you can see even by the light of day.

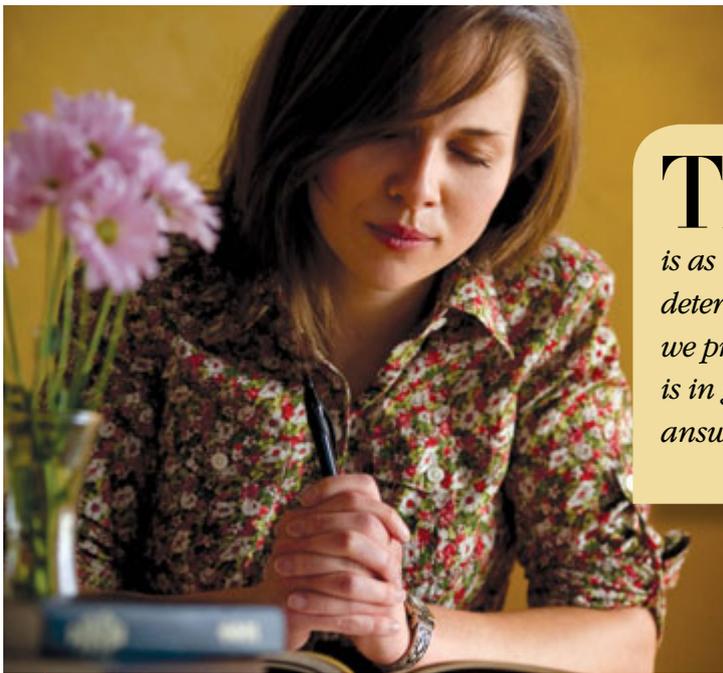
### Acting When No Sure Answer Comes

There will be some instances when no sure answer comes. We have a series of revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants in which the Lord tells the early missionaries of this dispensation that some matters were to be left to their discretion. The phrase that is often repeated is “it mattereth not unto me” (D&C 60:5; 61:22; 62:5).

President Brigham Young explained this doctrine: “If I do not know the will of my Father, and what he requires of me in a certain transaction, if I ask him to give me wisdom concerning any requirement in life or in regard to my own course, or that of my friends, my family, my children,



or those that I preside over, and get no answer from him, and then do the very best that my judgment will teach me, he is bound to own and honor that transaction, and he will do so to all intents and purposes.”<sup>2</sup>



**T**he role of the Holy Ghost is as important in determining what we pray about as it is in giving us the answers we seek.

### Asking the Right Question

In finding answers we must seek the balance between agency and inspiration. Let me share a fundamental but often overlooked principle relative to getting answers to prayers and questions that trouble us.

Few things facilitate getting the right answer like asking the right question. A mother told me a story about the disappointing behavior of a man after he had been called as a priesthood leader. “How,” she asked, “can I explain to my children that callings in this Church are inspired and at the same time explain the behavior of this man?”

While I share her concern over what took place, her question infers that if a leader makes a mistake then their calling was not inspired. Perhaps a better question would be: should my faith rest in the infallibility of priesthood leaders or in the assurance that if I keep my covenants, the Spirit of the Lord will always be my companion?

Often what stands between us and answers to our prayers is our failure to ask the right questions. Thus the role of the Holy Ghost is as important in determining what we pray about as it is in giving us the answers we seek.

Perhaps the greatest revelation of this dispensation was the one Joseph Smith received prompting him to go into the woods to find a place to pray. Having read the injunction in James, he said:

“Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that

if any person needed wisdom from God, I did” (Joseph Smith—History 1:12).

Do you see what is taking place? Joseph was getting a revelation telling him to go get a revelation. The Spirit was directing him in what he prayed for, and because the Spirit was his com-

panion in the asking of the question, he could ask with complete faith.

In 3 Nephi, the Savior says, “And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you” (3 Nephi 18:20).

Think of that! We have the sure promise that if we pray in the manner prescribed by Jesus Christ and ask for that “which is right,” it shall be given unto us.

### Learning to Handle Difficult Situations

I return to where we began, with two young chaplains in Vietnam. My story is a nearly universal one. Each of us must grow up and leave the security of home and the protective care of parents to enter a world full of problems and challenges that reach far beyond our experience. As we venture out, we would like a ready source to tell us how to handle every difficult situation. But that is not the Lord’s system.

It is not the design of heaven that we be rescued from all difficult situations. Rather, it is the Lord’s will that we learn to handle them.

The sense of being overwhelmed is very much a part of the journey. The power with which God clothes us in His holy temples does not imply that our journey will be an easy one.

As we accept our lot and move forward with what the Lord has asked of us, we discover that we enjoy the company of the Holy Ghost, angels feel constrained to join us, and the heavens open to our vision. ■

*From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University, December 12, 2006. For the full text, visit [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu).*

#### NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 6:58.
2. *Deseret News*, Feb. 27, 1856, 402.

# Did I Still Love Him?

*When faced with the idea of breaking off my engagement, I realized that doubts about my worth were getting in the way of my happiness.*

## **Name withheld**

Leaning against the front door, I gazed into the hall and couldn't believe what I was feeling. I had just said good-bye to Thomas, my fiancé, and sent him out into the evening snow to drive home. We had been engaged for only a couple of weeks and everything had gone so smoothly. Both of us had felt prompted that the Lord prepared us to meet and marry each other if we chose. So why was I feeling so confused?

My love for Thomas had suddenly and unexpectedly gone cold. When I looked at or thought of him, the romantic feelings that had been growing in me turned to those of a simple, cordial friendship. This change made no sense to me, but how could I marry someone I thought of as "just a friend"? That night I prayed earnestly for the Lord's help in knowing what I should do.



The next day as I read my scriptures, I continued to ponder my predicament. A memory came to mind of a time when Thomas told me I was beautiful. I had turned my head away and changed the subject. Later Thomas asked why I hadn't believed him. What I realized then was that over the years, I had somehow convinced myself that I wasn't attractive. After Thomas expressed his concern, I began trying to trust his sincerity; eventually I didn't have any trouble accepting his compliments.

As I considered my present circumstance, I realized that I was doing the same thing with Thomas's love for me. I didn't believe he could love me enough to marry me, so I was letting go of my feelings for him.

I puzzled over why I felt this way. I thought back to my life before I met Thomas. I had graduated from college and served a mission. I was never one of the girls who got asked out on dates much. In fact, most of my dating experiences had been group girl-ask-guy activities. It seemed that all my efforts to be the best person I could be spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially had brought me many friends and great career opportunities but hadn't brought me any closer to marriage. I felt discouraged and overlooked, even when I was trying to be grateful for everything that was so good in my life.

So, in social relationships my defense mechanisms kicked in. I taught myself to believe that I just wasn't lovable romantically. Romance was something I could never expect in life,



something impossible for me to have. I stopped hoping for it. I didn't feel that I was unsuited for marriage, but I was trying to save myself from the pain of failed hopes. I decided I would just develop and share my talents and get on with life as a single member of society. And then I met Thomas. He and I were instant best friends. But when romance came along with sincere friendship, I automatically



### **CAST NOT AWAY THEREFORE YOUR CONFIDENCE**

“Opposition turns up almost anyplace something good has happened. It can

happen when you are trying to get an education. It can hit you after your first month in your new mission field. It certainly happens in matters of love and marriage. . . . There are cautions and considerations to make, but once there has been genuine illumination, beware the temptation to retreat from a good thing. If it was right when you prayed about it and trusted it and lived for it, it is right now. Don't give up when the pressure mounts. . . . Face your doubts. Master your fears. 'Cast not away therefore your confidence.' Stay the course and see the beauty of life unfold for you.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence,” Brigham Young University devotional address, March 2, 1999.

went back into “just friends” mode—my usual wall of protection against potential failed hopes. It was a wall that, apparently, had done more harm than good. Because I had difficulty believing Thomas could love me as he said he did, I couldn't risk hurting myself by loving him.

Once I understood this, I came to realize that I had to retrain myself to believe I was physically attractive, as my fiancé assured me I was. I also had to teach myself that I *could* have a sincere, loving relationship with a man and be married to him forever. I could quite naturally accept love from this man and give it in return.

I am grateful that Heavenly Father responded to my prayers by helping me understand what was keeping me from fuller happiness. I know that although we each may have different challenges, He will answer all of our prayers.

I also testify that He knows us each perfectly and individually. He knows all that is lovable and beautiful in us. The world teaches us to think we are unattractive, unacceptable, and unworthy of love if we don't meet the arbitrary standards it sets for us. Sometimes it's hard to turn away from such loud and convincing lies, but our Father in Heaven will always be there to remind us of our worth and of the value He sees in us. His standard, not the world's, is the true measure of our worth. The more we believe and accept the Lord's love, the more we will love Him and trust in Him.

Now Thomas and I are happily married. Since our engagement I have learned not to sacrifice hope in order to bury pain. The Lord is the one who can heal all pain, and as we trust Him, He reminds us that we have *everything* to hope for. ■

**H**eavenly Father responded to my prayers by helping me understand what was keeping me from fuller happiness.

# Questions & Answers

*I often feel overwhelmed because I don't feel I measure up to all that's expected of me in living the gospel. How can I learn to rejoice in the gospel when I feel like I may never be able to become or do all the Lord requires of me?*

**W**hen I was on my mission in Brazil, I often struggled to feel my offerings were adequate. I would look at other missionaries and agonize over why I was not as valiant as they were. Then one day I remembered some advice my father had given me while I was in the MTC. “The only way you’ll ever be able to eat an entire elephant is one bite at a time.” Throughout the rest of my mission, my mom would send me paper elephants with more and more “bites” taken out of them, symbolizing what I was able to accomplish one day at a time. I finally learned to be patient with myself and love what I was doing instead of constantly criticizing myself for everything I wasn’t doing. Often, we feel like we can’t possibly do all that is asked of us, but if we remember that Christ teaches us “line upon line, precept upon precept,” (2 Nephi 28:30) we can accomplish great things and enjoy ourselves along the way.

**Katie Houston, Utah, USA**

**L**ike many, I have had a difficult time combining spiritual priorities with the other demands of life. Being the mother of six children keeps me very busy, and it can be difficult to accomplish all the things I am supposed to do. One day, I finally took the matter to the Lord in prayer.

A few days later I was reading the story in Luke 10 about when the Savior came to visit Mary and Martha. Mary sat at the feet of the Savior listening to His words while Martha was busy getting the house ready for visitors. Martha asked the Savior to “bid [Mary] therefore that she help me” (verse 40). I imagine that she also wanted to hear what the Savior was teaching and thought that with Mary’s help, she might be able to sit

down at the Savior’s feet more quickly. In verse 41 and 42, Jesus said, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

“But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

I felt the Spirit whisper to me that like Martha, I was careful and troubled about many things, and because of that, I was not doing the needful things.

I have since adjusted my priorities. Instead of saying, “If I have time I will read my scriptures,” I now say, “I will read my scriptures and then accomplish what I can.” In time, peace returned to my life because I knew I was doing the things that Heavenly Father wanted me to do first.

It is easy to be like Martha when there are many things—often good things—that need our time, but I now find I am able to accomplish so much more because my mind is focused on Heavenly Father’s will and His purposes for me. I know that if I continue to put the Lord first, He will bless me with strength, peace, and joy.

**Kristine Nelson, Arizona, USA**

**A**s a Scoutmaster of many years, I’ve learned a few guiding principles from the Scout Oath. The first few words state, “On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country.” These few lines parallel one of Christ’s powerful teachings in the New Testament.

In Matthew 22, a lawyer asked Jesus, “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (verses 36–39). Both the Scout Oath and this scripture indicate that our first duty is to God and our second is to our neighbor.

It takes a lot to love the Lord and our neighbor, but if we can remember what the Savior said next in verse 40, we gain better understanding: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Loving the Lord and loving our neighbor is as simple as it gets. If we can live by these two rules, our light will shine so brightly that our goodness will far outshine our greatness.

**George Hansen,  
Utah, USA**

*It is easy to be like Martha when there are many things that need our time, but I now find that if I put the Lord first, He will bless me with strength, peace, and joy.*

Sometimes it may seem that if we get out of bed in the morning and by bedtime have not managed to feed and tend the children, bake homemade bread, finish all the housework, study the scriptures, do our home or visiting teaching, attend the temple, do family history, go to choir practice, prepare a lesson or talk for Sunday, and finish cross-stitching the Ten Commandments, we have failed.

Don't worry—there is always tomorrow. The key is faith. When we stay close to the Lord and obey His commandments, we can be prompted by the Holy Spirit to know what our priorities are each day. We can also take comfort in the fact that Heavenly Father knows us. He knows our hearts, our trials, our strengths, and our weaknesses. We can start moving toward peace by accepting that He loves us, despite our imperfections and limitations.

We wouldn't ask our own children to do everything in one day while we sit back and watch and then chastise them for the



jobs left undone. Heavenly Father won't either. I know that He loves us and will help us.

**Elaine Chamberlain, England**

**A**s a divorced woman in the Church, I often feel overwhelmed and worry that I do not measure up. However, while reading the Book of Mormon, I learned about the marvelous hope and joy that a loving Heavenly Father provides even when the trials we face seem to overwhelm us. "And thus the Lord caused stones to shine in darkness, to give light unto men, women, and children, that they might not cross the great waters in darkness. . . .

"And . . . the Lord God caused that there should be a furious wind blow upon the face of the waters, towards the promised land; and thus they were tossed upon the waves of the sea before the wind. . . .

"And it came to pass that the wind did never cease to blow towards the promised land while they were upon the waters; and thus they were driven forth before the wind" (Ether 6:3, 5, 8).

As I thought about the furious wind tossing the Jaredites upon the waves, it seemed the wind was more of a curse than a blessing. But I felt impressed that without the wind, their journey would have been even more arduous and long. How long might it have taken to reach the promised land without those fierce winds? The wind, which appeared to be a trial—something to beset their journey—was a blessing from a loving Father.



### STEP BY STEP

"Let me cite a hypothetical example of a dear sister in any ward, the one who has perfect children who never cause a distur-

bance in church. She is the one working on her 20th generation in her family history, keeps an immaculate home, has memorized the book of Mark, and makes wool sweaters for the orphaned children in Romania. No disrespect, of course, intended for any of these worthy goals. Now, when you get tempted to throw your hands in the air and give up because of this dear sister, please remember you're not competing with her any more than I'm competing with the members of the Quorum of the Twelve in winning a 50-yard dash.

"The only thing you need to worry about is striving to be the best you can be. And how do you do that? You keep your eye on the goals that matter most in life, and you move towards them step by step."

**Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "One Step after Another," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 26.**

That same loving Father would never leave me alone to endure the darkness of my trials. He is there. His light will guide me. As the fierce winds of adversity blow, I will remember His hand in all things.

Though I will certainly face other trials and adversity in my life, I realize I can find joy through faith in a loving Heavenly Father.

**Jana Blackman, Utah, USA**

**A**lthough most of us understand that we do not need to become perfect overnight, we sometimes hear messages about things that are important for us to do and then feel like we have to do them all at once. I've often felt reassurance that this isn't what the Lord wants. Although all of these things might be significant at some time in our lives, there will always be particular things that are the most essential for us to do now. In the April 2007 General Conference, President Henry B. Eyring suggested that we pray daily to find out from the Lord what He would have us do that day. He promised that such a prayer would always be answered.<sup>1</sup>

I have found his promise to be true. If I make an effort to prayerfully consider my responsibilities, my priorities, and the time I have available on a given day, it soon becomes clear to me what the Lord would have me do. I have found He never asks more of me than I can manage.

Letting the Lord help me determine what is most important each day gives me confidence in my decisions and assurance that He is pleased with me.

**Michael Green, Scotland**

**M**any years ago I attended a stake Relief Society conference in Colorado. A speaker used an analogy that really impressed me. She asked us to think about how children learn to walk. We as adults give encouragement and praise. We stretch out our arms and invite them to come to us. When just learning, children are often a bit fearful and hesitant, but with our continued encouragement, they continue to try. They may only get one step taken before they fall, but we don't berate them or scold them or give up on them. We pick them up and help them because we know that they can successfully learn to walk. We do not love them less because of their stumbling.

She likened that to our relationship with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. God sent us down here to learn His ways and to

walk in His path. At times we may hesitate and fear, but our Heavenly Father and our Savior will always encourage us and help us because They know we can succeed. When we stumble or fall down, They do not berate us or scold us or give up on us. They continue to stretch out Their arms and beckon us to "come." They know we can succeed, and They do not love us less because of our stumbling.

Keeping in mind the image of our Heavenly Father with outstretched arms, as mortal parents do to their learning child, can help us through our trials. Accepting His encouragement and love can give us the faith we need to strive to do better.

**Jan Payne, Iowa, USA ■**

**NOTE**

1. Henry B. Eyring, "This Day," *Ensign*, May 2007, 89.

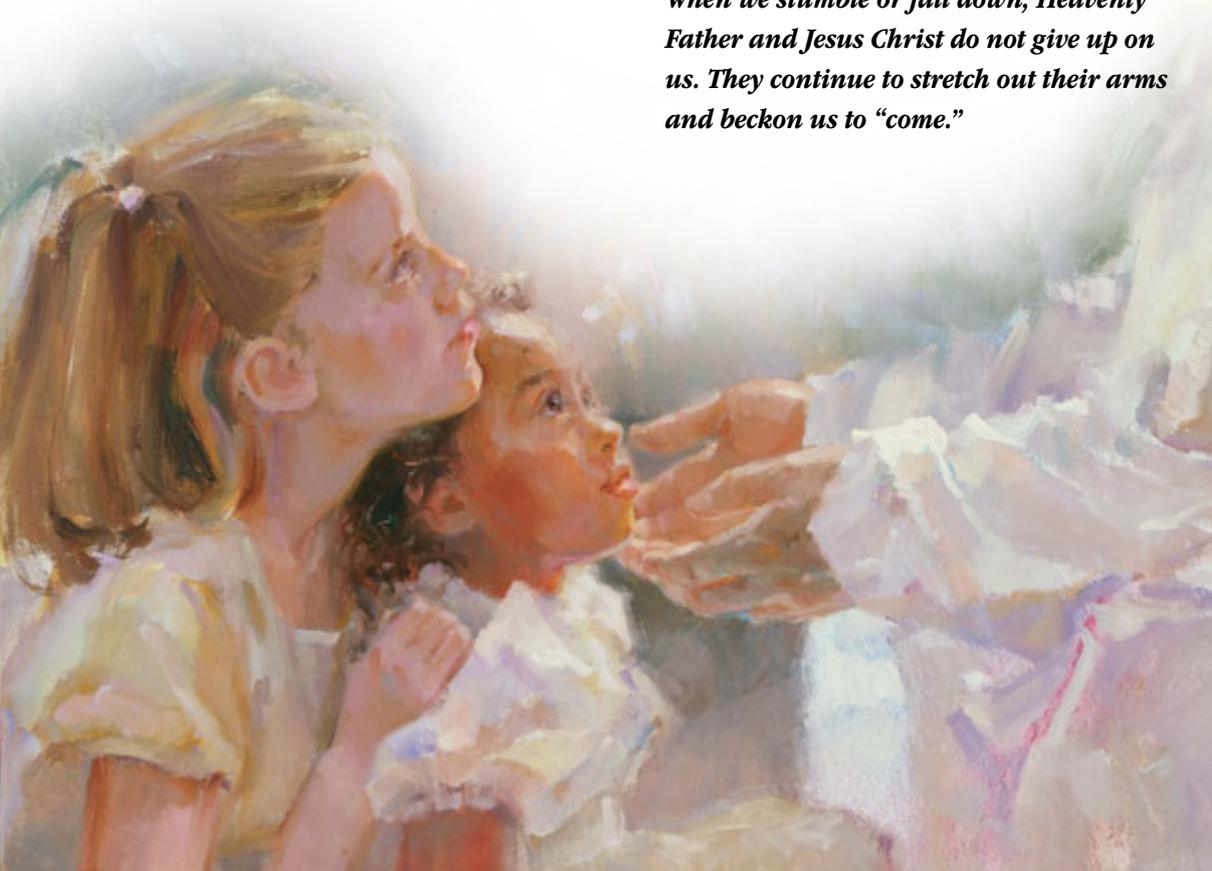
***When we stumble or fall down, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ do not give up on us. They continue to stretch out their arms and beckon us to "come."***

**SHARE YOUR IDEAS**

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

I have heard Church leaders say that those of us who come from dysfunctional homes can be "cycle breakers." I want to build a life founded on righteous traditions, but I'm not sure how I can be and do something different than what I've been shown and taught my whole life. Where do I start?

If you would like to share your ideas, please label your submission "Cycle Breaker" and follow the guidelines under "Do You Have a Story to Tell" on page 2. Please limit submissions to 500 words and submit them by March 18.





**By David M. McConkie**  
First Counselor in the Sunday  
School General Presidency

# Learning to Hear and Understand the SPIRIT

*One of the most important things we can do is learn to hear and follow the promptings of the Spirit.*

**M**y father grew up in the small town of Monticello, Utah. When he was seven, one of his daily chores was to bring the family's cows in from their pasture. His prized possession was his pocketknife, which he always kept with him. One day as he was riding his horse to fetch the cows, he reached into his pocket for his knife. To his dismay he realized he had lost it somewhere along the trail. He was heartbroken, but he believed what he had been taught by his father and mother: God hears and answers prayers.

He stopped his horse and slid off its bare back to the ground. There

he knelt and asked Heavenly Father to help him find his pocketknife. He climbed back on his horse, turned around, and rode back down the trail. After some distance his horse stopped. Dad climbed off the horse and put his hand into the deep dust on the trail. There, buried in the dust, he found his prized pocketknife. He knew that the Lord had heard and answered his prayer.

Because he had learned to listen to and act upon the whisperings of the Spirit, my father was blessed to see the hand of the Lord on many occasions throughout his life. He witnessed many miracles. Yet when he gathered his family to teach us the

gospel, he often spoke of his experience on the dusty trail in Monticello when the Lord heard and answered the prayer of a "freckle-faced seven-year-old boy."

In his later years he told us that he had learned something else from this childhood experience. With a twinkle in his eye, he said, "I learned that God can speak to horses!"

My father's experience as a young boy left a lasting impression on him because it was the beginning of his personal spiritual education. This was when he learned for himself that God hears prayers. This was when he began, as the Prophet Joseph Smith termed it, to *learn* the Spirit of God.<sup>1</sup>



### The Gift of the Holy Ghost

The Savior promised His Apostles that after He left them, they would enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost. He said, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are entitled to this same gift. After we are baptized, the gift of the Holy Ghost is conferred upon us by the laying on of hands by one who is authorized to administer the ordinances of the gospel. This gift

is the right, when we are worthy of it, to the constant companionship of the third member of the Godhead.

The companionship of the Holy Ghost is one of the greatest blessings we can enjoy in mortality. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said:

“Men ought—above all things in this world—to seek for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing as important as having the companionship of the Holy Ghost. . . .

“There is no price too high, no labor too onerous, no struggle too severe, no sacrifice too great, if out of it all we receive and enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>2</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the Spirit of God can be learned and that “by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus.”<sup>3</sup>

One of the most important things we can do is *learn* the Spirit of God—learn to hear and follow the promptings of the Spirit. If we so desire and are worthy, the Lord will school us in the principle of revelation.

### Learning to Listen and to Act

To learn the Spirit of God, we must learn to listen with our hearts. President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,



## CHECK THE TIRE

By Andrew M. Wright

When I was 15, my family and I took a vacation from our home in Arizona to the central United States. We drove through many states, including Kansas, Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, and Illinois.

Our vacation went well. We learned to enjoy each other's company during the long van rides from place to place.

As we pulled into a restaurant one evening, we were all anxious to grab a bite to eat. As we got out of our van, I suddenly had a silent but powerful impression that told me to look at the back tire on our van. I started to walk toward the restaurant, but I

couldn't shake the feeling. I looked back over my shoulder and then stopped. The impression came to my mind: "Check the back tire." It was so forceful I couldn't ignore it.

I approached the rear of the van and heard a hissing sound. Sure enough, our right rear tire had a leak and was quickly going flat. I ran to get my dad, who had already gone into the restaurant with the rest of the family.

My father took the van down the road to a gas station before the tire went completely flat. Since the tire wasn't damaged, the repair was inexpensive and quick. And we were

able to fix the flat just minutes before the service station closed for the night. I don't know what would have happened if I had ignored the prompting. But I do know that because I responded, we were able to continue our trip safely and conveniently.

Since that incident, I'm always reassured of the power of the Holy Ghost and how truly blessed we are as members of the Church to have that special line of communication. I am grateful for that experience, for it will stay with me, forever reminding me that our Father in Heaven loves, cares, and watches out for all of His children.

said: "The Spirit is a still, small voice—a voice that is *felt* rather than heard. It is a spiritual voice that comes into the mind as a thought put into your heart."<sup>4</sup>

President Packer also taught: "Inspiration comes more easily in peaceful settings. Such words as *quiet, still, peaceable, Comforter* abound in the scriptures: 'Be *still*, and know that I am God.' (Ps. 46:10; italics added.) And the promise, 'You shall receive my Spirit, the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which shall teach you the *peaceable* things of the kingdom.' (D&C 36:2; italics added)."

President Packer added: "While we may invite this communication, it can *never* be forced! If we try to force it, we may be deceived."<sup>5</sup>

Of utmost importance in our schooling process is our responsibility to act, without delay, in accordance with the spiritual promptings we receive.

President Thomas S. Monson stated: "We watch. We wait. We listen for that still, small voice. When it speaks, wise men and women obey. Promptings of the Spirit are not to be postponed."<sup>6</sup>

Learning to hear and understand the Spirit is a gradual and continuous process. The Savior said, "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). "For unto him that receiveth I will give more" (2 Nephi 28:30).

Just as Christ "received not of the

fulness at the first, but received grace for grace" (D&C 93:12), so also, as we keep His commandments, we will "receive grace for grace" (D&C 93:20; see also John 1:16) and "line upon line, precept upon precept" (2 Nephi 28:30). Our schooling process is often as gradual as the descent of the dew from heaven (see D&C 121:45; 128:19).

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that "there is no simple formula or technique that would immediately allow [us] to master the ability to be guided by the voice of the Spirit." Rather, "our Father expects [us] to learn how to obtain that divine help by exercising faith in Him and His Holy Son, Jesus Christ."



Elder Scott continued: “What may appear initially to be a daunting task will be much easier to manage over time as you consistently strive to recognize and follow feelings prompted by the Spirit. Your confidence in the direction you receive from the Holy Ghost will also become stronger,” and “your confidence in the impressions you feel can become more certain than your dependence on what you see or hear.”<sup>7</sup>

As part of our schooling process, the Lord will help us to see the results, in our own life and in the lives of others, of our acting upon the promptings we receive from the Spirit. These experiences will strengthen our faith and give us greater courage to act in the future.

Learning to hear and understand the Spirit takes considerable effort. But the Lord has promised that the faithful will “receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that [they may] know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal” (D&C 42:61). ■

#### NOTES

1. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 132.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (1985), 253.
3. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 132.
4. Boyd K. Packer, “The Cloven Tongues of Fire,” *Liahona*, July 2000, 10; *Ensign*, May 2000, 8.
5. Boyd K. Packer, “Reverence Invites Revelation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 21.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “The Spirit Giveth Life,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, June 1997, 4.
7. Richard G. Scott, “To Acquire Spiritual Guidance,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 6–7.



#### A PRIVILEGE AND DUTY

“If you want the mind and will of God . . . , get it, it is just as much your privilege as of any other member of the Church and Kingdom of God. It is your privilege and duty to live so that you know when the word of the Lord is spoken to you and when the mind of the Lord is revealed to you. I say it is your duty to live so as to know and understand all these things.”

**President Brigham Young (1801–77), *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 68.**



# Revelation

## POURING DOWN FROM HEAVEN

By Adam Olson

Church Magazines

A heavy spray soaks those who get too close to Pulhapanzak Falls in Honduras. But José Santiago Castillo doesn't mind. To José, the pouring water represents a promise that has been meaningful to him since Heavenly Father first answered his prayers about the gospel.

"If we want wisdom, we can ask," José says (see James 1:5). "Just as a man couldn't stop this water, the Lord promises He will pour down knowledge upon the Saints." (See D&C 121:33.)

José's experience in the Church has taught him that a testimony grows line upon line, but that it doesn't have to be a slow process. There is a flood of revelation available.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the

least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them."<sup>1</sup>

"Before being baptized, I asked Heavenly Father to confirm that what He had revealed to me was true: the Book of Mormon, the Word of Wisdom, tithing," says José, now serving as elders quorum president. "Asking Him is how we get answers." (See Moses 1:18.)

However, we must prepare ourselves to receive revelation. "If we want to get wet, we have to get in the water," José says. "If we want revelation, we must go where revelation will fall. We must be where we should be, doing what we should be doing. We learn many things if we are diligent." (See 1 Nephi 15:8–11.) ■

#### NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 268.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM C. OLSON



*“As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints” (D&C 121:33).*

*As the Savior's undershepherds,  
we have the responsibility to "reach  
out and rescue those who have  
fallen by the wayside."*

# Parables

## OF THE LOST AND FOUND

**I**n chapter 15 of the Gospel of Luke, the Savior uses three parables to teach the worth of a soul, showing us how to find and *return* that which is lost to the fold of faith and family.

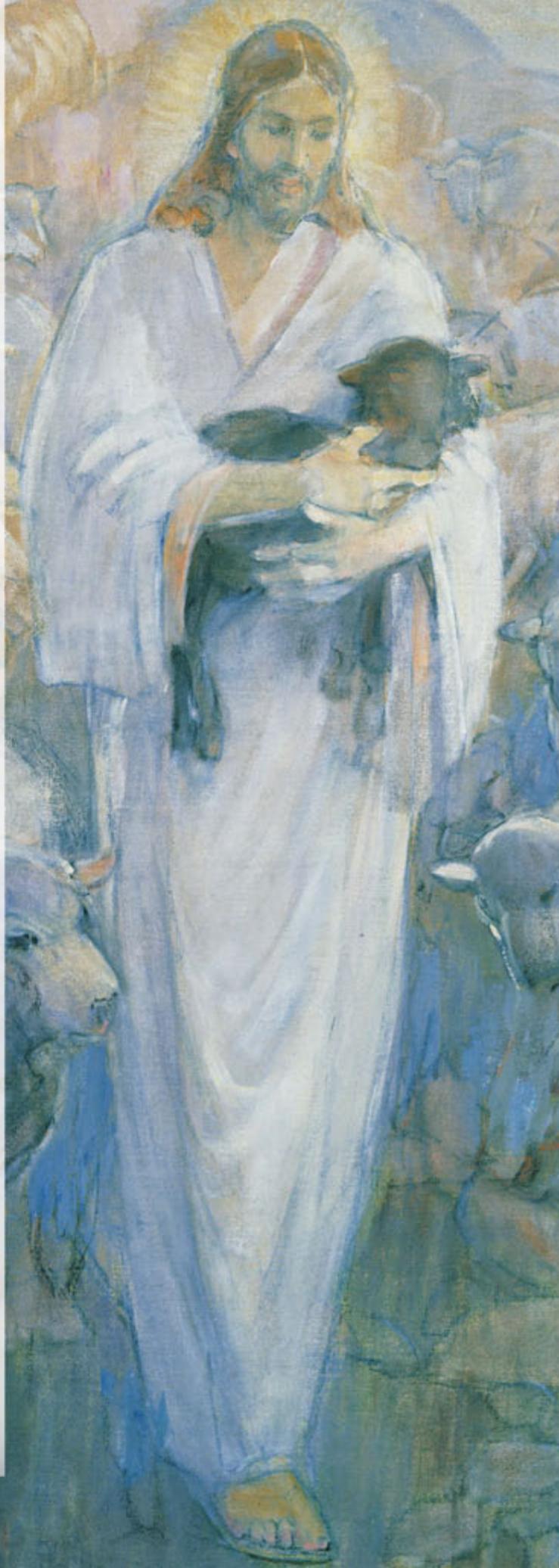
In the parables, the sheep wanders, the piece of silver is lost, and the prodigal son wastes his inheritance in riotous living. But the shepherd searches the wilderness, the woman sweeps the house, and the forgiving father watches for his son's return, ever ready with an embrace and a warm welcome home.

The Savior's parables—and the three vignettes by Church leaders that follow—remind us that as His undershepherds, we have the responsibility to “reach out and rescue those who have fallen by the wayside, that not one precious soul will be lost.”<sup>1</sup>

#### NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Stand in Your Appointed Place,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2003, 57.

RESCUE OF THE LOST LAMB, BY MINERVA K. TEICHERT; ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROBERT A. MICKAY



## Rescuing Lost Lambs

By Elder Donald J. Keyes

Area Seventy, Utah North Area



Years ago in the early spring, my wife and I had occasion to drive through beautiful Star Valley, Wyoming, USA. It

was a wonderful spring morning, and the landscapes and scenery were inspiring.

As Jackie and I drove into Star Valley, we enjoyed seeing an occasional flock of sheep sprinkled with dozens of baby lambs. Few things are more endearing than a baby lamb. As we drove down the busy road, we saw a small lamb outside the fence near the roadside. It was frantically running back and forth against the fence, trying to get back to the flock. I surmised that this little lamb was small enough to have pressed through an opening in the fence but was now unable to return.

I was confident that if we didn't stop to rescue the lamb, it would eventually wander into the nearby road and be injured or killed. I stopped the car and said to Jackie and our traveling companions in the backseat, "Wait here; this will take just a moment."

I naturally assumed with my total

lack of lamb-herding experience that the frightened lamb would be glad to see me; after all, I had the best of intentions. I was there to save its life!

But to my disappointment, the lamb was afraid and totally unappreciative of my efforts to save it. As I approached it, the little soul ran away from me as fast as it could along the fence. Seeing my plight, Jackie got out of the car to help. But even together we could not outmaneuver the quick little lamb.

At this point the couple in the backseat, who had been thoroughly enjoying the rodeo, piled out of the car and joined in the rescue attempt. With all of our efforts we finally corralled the frightened little lamb against the fence. As I reached down to pick him up in my clean traveling clothes, I quickly noticed that he had the distinct aroma of the barnyard. It was then that I began to wonder, is this effort really worth it?

As we picked up the lamb and lifted him over the fence to safety, he fought and kicked with all his might. But within moments he had found his mother and was pressed tightly and safely against her side. With our clothing a little disheveled but with great satisfaction and peace that we had made the right choice, we went on our way.

I have reflected on that experience several times since. I wonder if we would give that kind of effort to save



an unappreciative, less-active neighbor. I hope so! "How much then is a man better than a sheep?" the Savior asked (Matthew 12:12). In every branch, ward, and stake are lost and endangered lambs.

Replacing the word *work* with *rescue* in the hymn "Have I Done Any Good?" I invite you to consider its application in saving lost lambs:

*There are chances for rescue all  
around just now,  
Opportunities right in our way.  
Do not let them pass by, saying,  
"Sometime I'll try,"  
But go and do something today.<sup>1</sup>*

Our neighbors may seem unappreciative, frightened, or uninterested in being rescued. And our efforts to rescue them may take time, effort, energy, and the support and help of others. But this effort will be rewarded with eternal blessings. As the Lord has promised, if we bring "save it be one soul unto [Him], how great shall be [our] joy with him in the kingdom of [our] Father" (D&C 18:15).

#### NOTE

1. See "Have I Done Any Good?" *Hymns*, no. 223.



## SHE WOULDN'T GIVE UP ON ME

By Sonya Konstans

**W**hen I joined the Church in 1990, I was friendshipped by great families, was given a calling, and felt that I belonged. But a year later, after moving to a new ward, I began to drift away. I stopped attending meetings and started dating a man who was not a member of the Church.

I still believed the Church was true. I just didn't think I was good enough for it anymore. Then Kathy was assigned as my visiting teacher.

Kathy called every month for the first few months to try to schedule an appointment. Because I always dodged her visits, she started mailing me the Visiting Teaching Message instead. Every month the message would arrive like clockwork. This went on for four years, even after I married my boyfriend and we had two children.

## Exercising Compassion

By Elder Robert D. Hales

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



**I**n the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd went after the lost sheep and searched until he found it. He then returned, rejoicing

(see Luke 15:4–7).

In the parable of the lost coin, the widow lit a candle, which gave light,

Some months I would throw the message away unread; other months I would read it and then throw it away. When my marriage failed, I found myself with a toddler and an infant to raise alone. I suddenly needed answers. When my monthly Visiting Teaching Message arrived again, I decided to attend church for the first time in ages.

I felt so awkward, as if all my sins were written upon my sleeve. A sister I had known in the young single adult program welcomed me, and we sat down together. Suddenly here came Kathy. I looked away, embarrassed that I had not answered any of her kind notes. She smiled at me, chatted with my neighbor for a moment, and then sat with her husband.

When I got home from work the next day, there was a message from Kathy on the answering machine. I couldn't call her back. I just knew she wanted to tell me that I wasn't allowed

to come to church anymore, that my sins had been too great. I felt bad that Kathy had to convey this message to me, but I knew it was true. I had no place among the righteous. I couldn't call her back, but the next evening she called me again.

"I want to apologize," she said.

Why would Kathy possibly need to apologize to me?

"I didn't recognize you when I saw you at church on Sunday," she said.

"After sacrament meeting, I asked the sister you were sitting by who you were. By then you had already left. It was so good to see you."

I was dumbfounded.

"I hope we can sit together the next time you come to church," Kathy added.

"I'd like that," I said, suddenly feeling overcome with emotion.

We did sit together the next Sunday—and for many Sundays after that. She served as my inspiration to be



a better mother, a better member of the Church, and a better visiting teacher. She always listened patiently, without judging, just as I feel the Savior would.

Kathy sat beside me the day I received my endowment and the day I married my new husband in the temple. She remained my visiting teacher until we moved from the area. Her service blessed my family in ways I'm sure she never could have imagined—all because she wouldn't give up on me.

and swept every corner to find the coin. She rejoiced upon finding it (see Luke 15:8–10).

Both of these parables are examples of action taken to search, light up the darkness, and sweep until a treasured possession or lost soul is found and returned to a rejoicing home.

A good example of compassion and service making a difference is the example of Don and Marian Summers. While serving in England, they were asked to serve the last six months of their mission in the Swindon Branch to teach and assist

in activating members. For 80 years Swindon had been a branch with a faithful few and with many good members becoming less active.

Don and Marian wrote: "Our first visit to Swindon Branch was a bit disheartening as we met with the Saints in a cold, rented hall. The congregation numbered 17, including President and Sister Hales and 4 missionaries. Still wearing our winter coats, we all huddled around a small, inadequate heater while we listened to a Sunday School lesson."

The letter continued: "A branch



## SOULS TO SAVE

"Along your pathway of life you will observe that you are not the only traveler.

There are others who need your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save."

President Thomas S. Monson, "How Firm a Foundation," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 68.



member approached me one day: ‘Elder Summers, can I give you a bit of advice? Never mention the word *tithing* to the Swindon members; they really don’t believe in it, and all you will do is upset them.’”

Brother Summers said: “We did teach tithing and all the other gospel principles. With example and the encouragement of a branch president, there was a change of heart, and faith and activity started to increase. The membership records were completely updated as we visited every member’s home. When the leaders started caring, the members began to respond, and a whole new spirit pervaded the branch. The members became excited again about the gospel and helping one another. . . .

“One young couple had a difficult adjustment to make as their customs, manners, and dress were different. They became offended at suggestions for changes. The couple twice wrote to the bishop [since by then it was a ward] and asked to have their names removed from the Church records. In the last letter they forbade any of the members to visit them, so [we] went to the florist and purchased a

beautiful plant of chrysanthemums and had it delivered to the young couple. It was a simple note: *‘We love you; we miss you; we need you. Please come back.’* Signed, Swindon Ward.

“The next Sunday was fast and testimony meeting and our last Sunday in Swindon. There were 103 members in attendance, compared to 17 six months before. The young couple was there, and in bearing his testimony, the husband thanked the Swindon Ward for not giving up on them.”

Each of us can have similar experiences in our local wards and branches by working with and loving those who are less active. What a joy it is to give “compassion, making a difference” (Jude 1:22) to those who may be ready to find themselves and then want to come back.

*From “Some Have Compassion, Making a Difference,” Ensign, May 1987, 77; spelling standardized.*

## Welcoming the Prodigal



**By Elder Spencer J. Condie**

Served as a member of the Seventy from 1989 to 2010

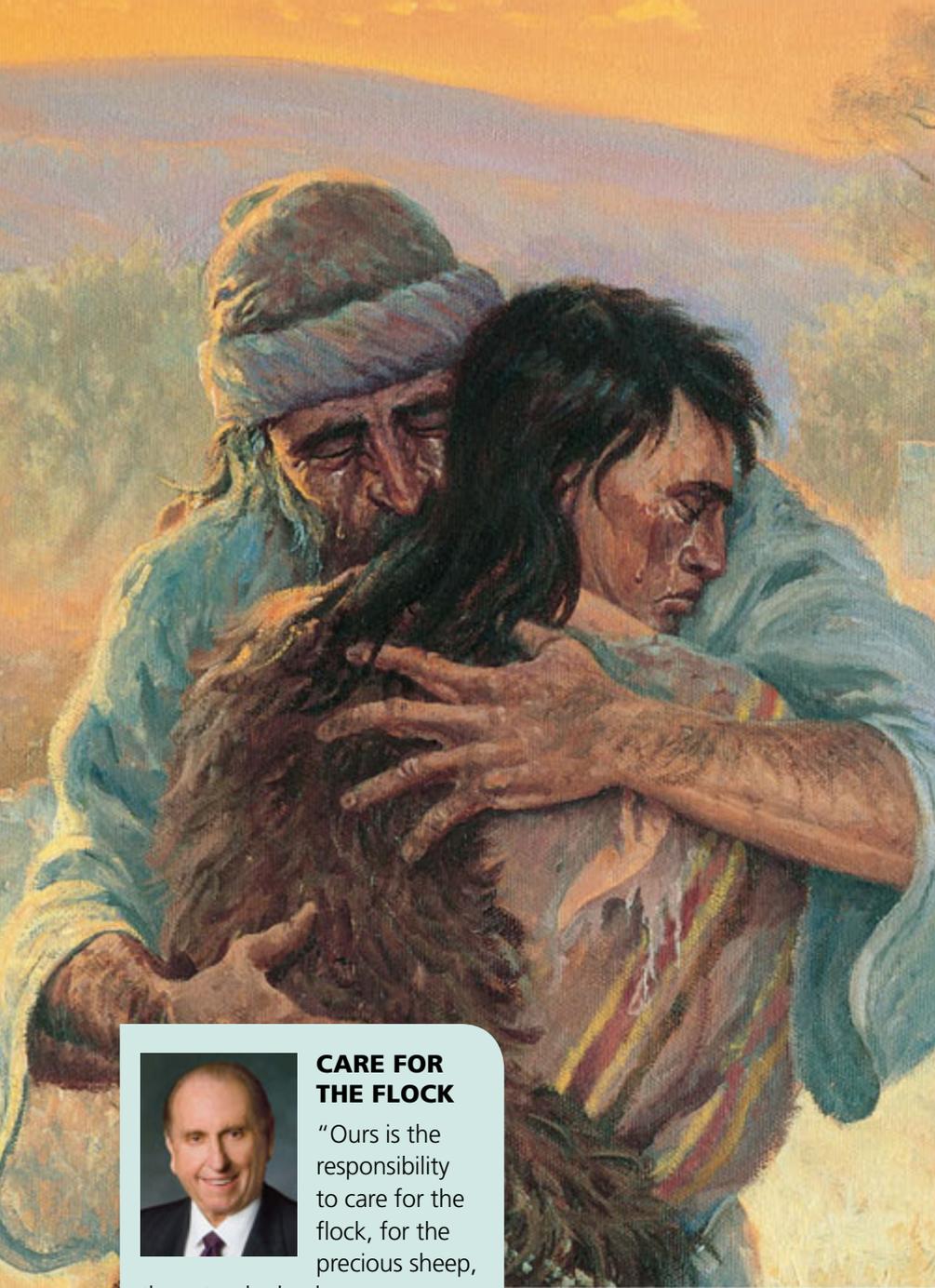
**T**he parable of the prodigal son illustrates in bold relief a wide variety of human dispositions. First, there is the self-centered prodigal son unconcerned with anyone or anything but himself. But, alas, after riotous living he discovered for himself

that “wickedness never was happiness” [Alma 41:10], and he “came to himself” (Luke 15:17). He eventually realized whose son he was, and he yearned to be reunited with his father.

His arrogant, selfish disposition gave way to humility and a broken heart and contrite spirit as he confessed to his father: “I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son” (Luke 15:21). Gone were the adolescent rebellion, immature selfishness, and relentless pleasure seeking, and in their place was an embryonic disposition to do good continually. Now, if we are completely honest with ourselves, we will each confess that there is or has been a bit of the prodigal son in every one of us.

Then there is the father. Some may criticize him for having been overly indulgent in granting the younger son’s request to “give me the portion of goods that falleth to me” (Luke 15:12). The father in the parable was undoubtedly sensitive to the divine principle of moral agency and freedom of choice, a principle over which the premortal War in Heaven had been waged. He was not inclined to compel his son to be obedient.

But this loving father never gave up on his wayward son, and his unrelenting vigilance is confirmed in the poignant narration that when the son “was yet a great way off, his father . . . had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). Not only was there an open display of



### CARE FOR THE FLOCK

“Ours is the responsibility to care for the flock, for the precious sheep,

these tender lambs, are everywhere to be found—at home in our families, in the homes of our extended families, and waiting for us in our Church callings. Jesus is our Exemplar. Said He, ‘I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep’ (John 10:14). We have a shepherding responsibility. May we each step up to serve.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Heavenly Homes, Forever Families,” *Liahona*, June 2006, 70; *Ensign*, June 2006, 102.

physical affection toward his son, but the father requested his servants to give him a robe, shoes for his feet, and a ring for his hand and instructed them to kill the fatted calf, joyfully declaring, “He was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:24).

Throughout the years, this father had developed such a compassionate, forgiving, loving disposition that he could do nothing else but love and forgive. This parable is a universal favorite for all of us because it holds

out the hope to each one of us that a loving Father in Heaven stands in the roadway, as it were, anxiously awaiting the arrival of each of His prodigal children back home.

And now to the older, obedient son who protested to his forgiving father: “Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

“But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf” (Luke 15:29–30).

Just as there may be an element of the prodigal son in each of us, it may also be the case that every one of us is tainted with traits of the older son. The Apostle Paul described the fruit of the Spirit as “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23). While it may well be that the older son had, indeed, been obedient to his father, beneath the obedient surface was seething subterranean self-righteousness and a disposition to be judgmental, covetous, and totally lacking in compassion. His life did *not* reflect the fruit of the Spirit, for he was not at peace but rather greatly distressed at what he perceived to be a gross inequity of treatment. ■

*From a Brigham Young University devotional address given on February 9, 2010; punctuation standardized. For the full text of the address in English, visit [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu).*



# LOST

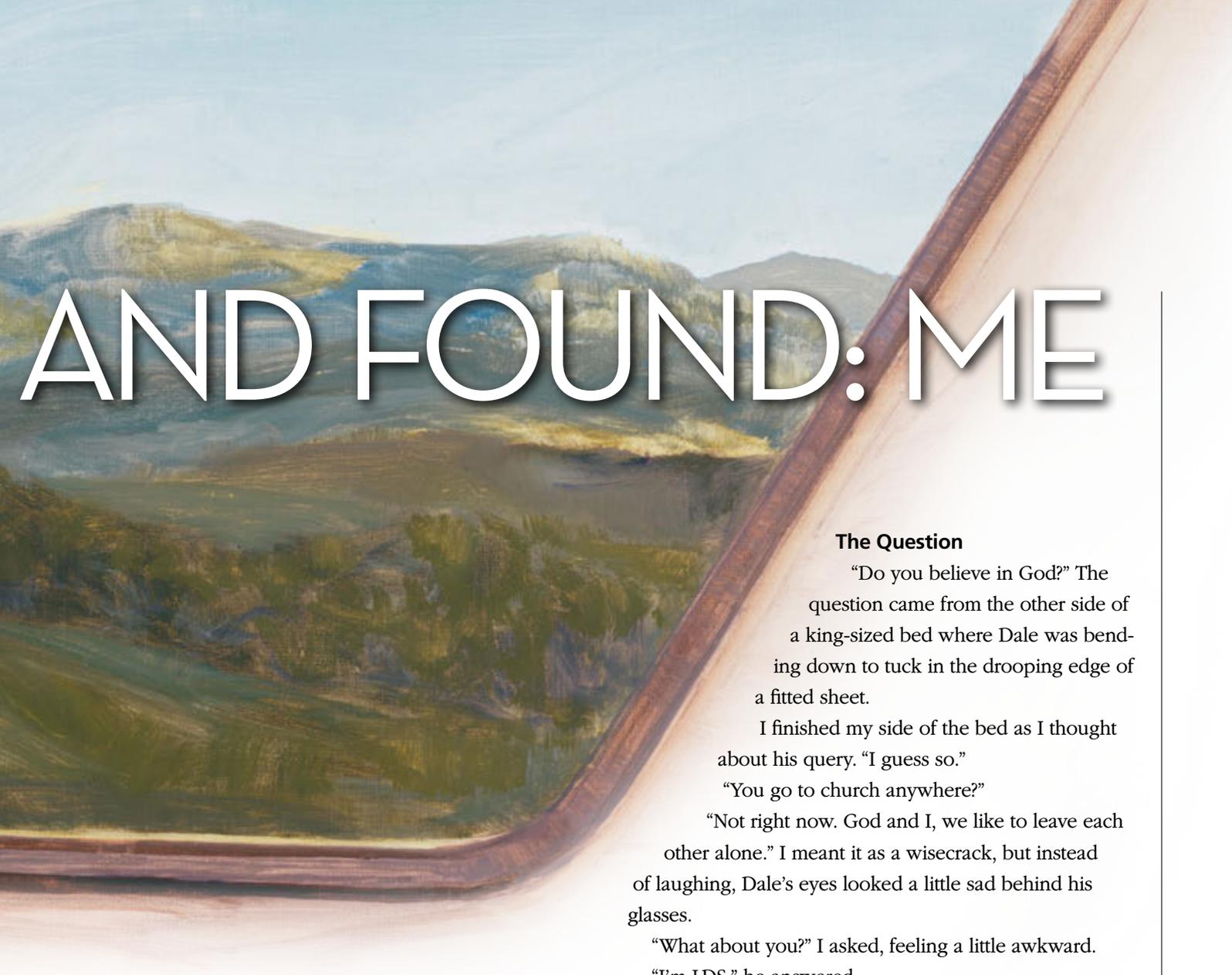
By Matthew Allen Bland

*I was young and adrift until a Latter-day Saint family provided me with an anchor.*

As the rising sun gradually brightened the passing landscape, it faded my own reflection in the bus window—a rough character looking back at me. I was glad to see it go.

I'd spent another long night trying to sleep while yet another bus carried me to another unknown place. For months this had been my life, stopping whenever my money ran out, continuing on as soon as I'd pulled together enough cash for a few burgers and a bus ticket. I had been drifting across the country like a lost soul.

When I stepped off the bus in West Yellowstone, Montana, USA, I had \$12 and an empty stomach. I hadn't seen a bar of soap or a razor for days, and every stitch of clothing I owned was as filthy as I was. Wishing for a hot shower, I tipped the brim of my hat against the wind and lit a cigarette. I must have looked distinctly disreputable.



# AND FOUND: ME

## The Question

“Do you believe in God?” The question came from the other side of a king-sized bed where Dale was bending down to tuck in the drooping edge of a fitted sheet.

I finished my side of the bed as I thought about his query. “I guess so.”

“You go to church anywhere?”

“Not right now. God and I, we like to leave each other alone.” I meant it as a wisecrack, but instead of laughing, Dale’s eyes looked a little sad behind his glasses.

“What about you?” I asked, feeling a little awkward.

“I’m LDS,” he answered.

We were moving slowly around the room, cleaning as we spoke. “Never heard of it,” I said. “What’s ‘LDS’ stand for?”

“Latter-day Saints,” he answered. “The full name of the church is actually The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You know, the Mormons.”

“Isn’t that a kind of horse?” I asked.

“No,” he laughed, “you’re thinking of ‘Morgans.’”

“Sorry,” I said, a little embarrassed.

“No problem.” He smiled. “You believe in God. Mind if I ask what you believe, exactly?”

## A New Frame of Reference

That’s how it began. Before the month was over, I had taken the missionary discussions and was baptized. I remember standing waist-deep in the warm waters of the

Somehow, by the end of my second day in town, I found a place to live and a job cleaning rooms at the Branding Iron Motel. I was assigned to “shadow” another housekeeper for a couple of days while I learned the ropes. He was a clean-shaven, unassuming young man, small in stature, with a kind heart and quiet nature. His name was Dale Belnap. We seemed to have little in common besides our age, but we quickly became friends regardless.

Once I learned the ropes, housekeeping tasks became routine, so as we changed sheets and vacuumed floors, we talked to pass the time. I’m not sure how the conversation found its way to the topic of religion, but about halfway through our first day, Dale found courage to ask me what turned out to be the most important question of my life.



*I sat on a fallen tree near the river's bank as I was confirmed a member of the Church. All around me were the smiling faces of the members of the local branch.*

Fire Hole River, dressed all in white and nervously eyeing the small herd of buffalo grazing on the far bank. Dale lowered me

into the water's liquid embrace and raised me back into the living world.

A few minutes later, dried and dressed in my best clothes, I sat on a weathered fallen tree near the river's bank as I was confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All around me were the smiling faces of the members of the local branch. I'd only known them for a little while, but already they'd given me acceptance, fellowship, and friendship.

Also in attendance were several members of Dale's family, including his mother, Ellen. My own mother abandoned me as a young child, and I possessed no frame of reference for Ellen's selfless compassion. I found it confusing. Had Dale led her to believe I was someone who deserved such kindness? After that first awkward hug, I decided I would tolerate my discomfort until she chose to have nothing more to do with me. I knew it wouldn't take long.

I was wrong.

Ellen already had a more accurate notion of who I was than I did. She understood I was a child of our Father in Heaven. The missionaries had taught me this truth, but childhood experience had obscured the full beauty of this principle, keeping it from my realization until years later.

Time passed, and even though Dale had left for his mission, I became friends with several other members of Ellen's family. Quick to love, they treated me more like a brother than a friend. They seemed genuinely interested in who I was. During the holidays, when I was most accustomed to feeling the poignant absence of family, Ellen and her children took care to help me feel as though I was part of theirs. They actually seemed rather fond of me, and at some point an odd notion occurred to me. Maybe—just maybe—I wasn't quite as worthless as I supposed.

### **Ellen**

More time passed, and Ellen became a powerful source of wisdom and love. When I found myself in need of counsel or a kind word, I could always find a stool in her kitchen, where she patiently listened while I poured out the sadness and fear I carried. She washed dishes or rolled



bread dough, and I sat on a stool, forearms resting on the counter.

“Are you excited?” she asked speaking of my mission call as she washed another plate and deposited it in the drainer beside the sink.

“I guess so,” I responded a little doubtfully.

She turned to look over her right shoulder at me. “You don’t sound very excited.”

“It’s not that I’m not excited, because I really am. I’m not worried at all about my mission. God will take care of things. It’s just—”

Ellen waited patiently, and I continued: “I’ve told you how I drifted around for awhile before I met Dale. Well, I don’t really want to return to that. When I come back from my mission, I won’t have a job or any money. Even if I had the cab fare to leave the airport, I wouldn’t have anywhere to go. There’s no home to return to. No family. Nothing.” I shook my head in frustration. “I want to go, Ellen. I think I’d be a good missionary. But if I just walk away from my job and my apartment, then what am I going to do when I get back? I’ll just end up homeless until I find something, and I don’t want that.” I looked up at her, hoping she’d understand.

I was apparently the one who didn’t get it.

She turned off the water and began to dry her hands as she turned to face me. “Matthew, that’s just silly.” There was something sad and a little incredulous in her expression. “You have to know by now that we would never let that happen. We will be here.”

“You will?” I felt a little foolish. I was trying to figure out how this whole family thing worked. “Um, thanks,” I managed a little sheepishly. Ellen laughed and turned back to the sink.

In retrospect, I probably should have offered to finish the dishes.

### Harvest

When I received my mission call to San Antonio, Texas, USA, Ellen Belnap took me shopping and even bought me the shoes I would wear out over the course of the next two years. Once I left, she wrote me consistently, offering insight and encouragement that contributed a great deal to the wonderful experience that my mission became.

Because of the Belnaps, I had a place to return to and a family who welcomed me home. Their love gave me permission to stop punishing myself with loneliness. It no longer seemed necessary to keep running from place to place. My eyes were open to a dizzying array of possibilities.

Our Savior’s love blessed the Belnaps, and rather than keep that love to themselves, they chose to share it with me. Because of their love, strange ideas like college, marriage, and happiness began to creep into my mind. Before, such notions had only existed as dreamy elements of other people’s lives, but now they actually seemed possible. Their love carried me into the Church, encouraged me as a missionary, and taught me to believe in what I could be. Without their encouragement, I may never have served a mission. Because I did, 40 other families were welcomed into the warm embrace of the Savior’s Church, including the family that my wife and I are now raising in the gospel. ■

# STRENGTHENING THE LESS ACTIVE

*All of us who lead in the wards and stakes must open the door to the lost sheep; stand aside to let them through.*

**By President Boyd K. Packer**

President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



Activity—the opportunity to serve and bear testimony—is like medicine. It will heal the spiritually sick. It will strengthen the spiritually weak. It is a most necessary ingredient in the redemption of the lost sheep. Yet there is a tendency, almost a programmed tendency, to give opportunities for growth to those who are already over-surfited with activity. This kind of pattern, evident in our stakes and wards, may keep the lost sheep out.

When a home teacher brings a lost sheep to meetings, it is only a beginning of his being found. Where can he be used for his spiritual benefit? Actually, there aren't many places in which a leader can use a person who is struggling for worthiness. Unfortunately, it seems that those few situations in which we could use them—to offer prayers, to make brief responses, to bear testimony—are almost invariably reserved for the active: for the stake

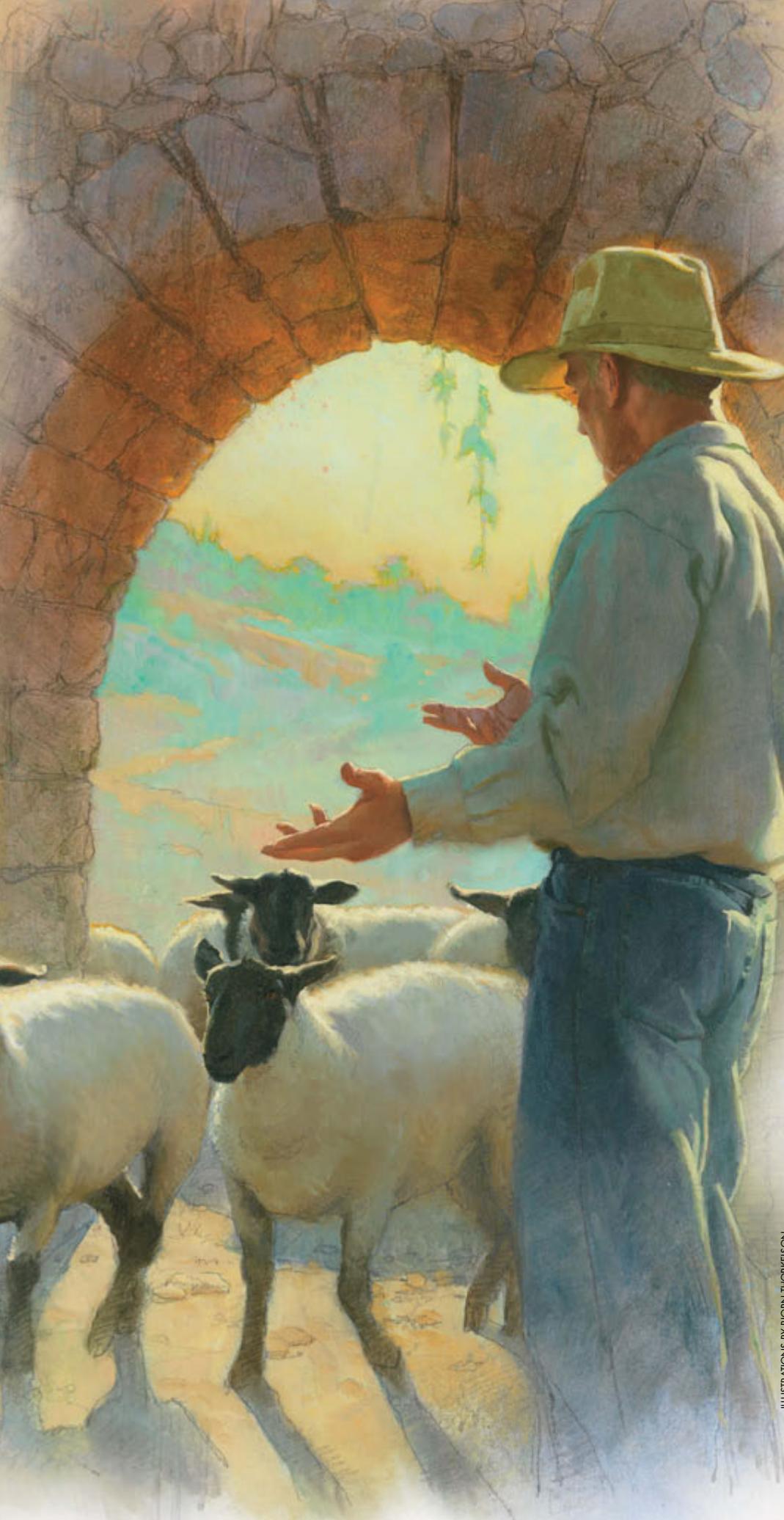
presidency, for the high council, for the bishopric, for the patriarch, for the auxiliary leaders. Indeed, we sometimes go to great lengths to import speakers and participants—to the loss of our hungry ones.

At a ward sacrament meeting I attended recently, a sister had been invited to sing whose husband was not active in the Church. He was, however, at the meeting. The bishop wanted a very special program for this occasion. His first announcement was: "Brother X, my first counselor, will give the opening prayer." His second counselor gave the closing prayer.

How unfortunate, I thought. The three men in the bishopric struggle with such concern over the spiritually sick, then take the very medicine that would make those people well—activity, participation—and consume it themselves in front of the needy!

Some will say: "We must be careful with the weak among us. It is better not to call on them to pray or to bear testimony, for they will be frightened and repelled and will leave us." That is a myth! A commonly accepted one, but a myth nevertheless! I have asked bishops—hundreds of them—whether they could certify to such a happening in their personal experience. I have had very few affirmative responses—in fact, all those bishops produced only one or two instances. So the risk is very small, whereas





such an invitation may result in a lost sheep being reclaimed.

Several years ago I visited a stake presided over by a man of unusual efficiency and ability. Every detail of the stake conference had been scheduled. He had done the usual thing in assigning prayers from the selected circle of the stake presidency, the high council, the bishops, and the stake patriarch. Those brethren had not been notified, so we changed the assignment from those who deserved the honor to those who needed—desperately needed—the experience.

The president had a detailed agenda for the general sessions, and he mentioned that there were 20 minutes in one session that were not scheduled. I told him that we could call on some to respond who otherwise would not have the opportunity and needed the strengthening experience. He countered with the suggestion that he alert several able, prominent leaders to prepare for possible speaking assignments. “There will be many nonmembers present,” he said. “We are used to having an organized and very polished conference performance. We have very able people in the stake. They will leave an excellent impression.”

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BJORN THORKEISON

Twice again during our meeting he mentioned the schedule and pressed to have the stake's "best performers" called. "Why don't we save this time for those who need it most?" I said. His reaction was a disappointed, "Well, you are the General Authority."

Early Sunday morning he reminded me that there was still time to alert someone and thus leave the best impression.

The morning session was opened by the president with a polished and stirring address. Next we called on his second counselor. He was obviously flustered. . . . (We had previously indicated that both counselors would probably speak in the afternoon session. We were to go to his home for the noon meal. He had known there would be time to go over his notes, so he had left them at home.)

For want of his notes, he turned to testimony, giving an inspiring account of an administration he had performed during the week. A brother, given up by his doctors, had been called from the very shadows of death by the power of the priesthood. I do not know what was on his notes, but surely it could not have compared in inspiration to the testimony he bore.

An elderly woman sat on the front row, holding hands with a weathered-looking man. She looked a bit out of place in the fashionably dressed congregation—rather homespun by comparison. She looked as if she ought to talk in conference, and given the privilege, she reported her mission. Fifty-two years before, she had returned from the mission field, and since then she had never been invited to speak in church. It was a touching and moving witness that she bore.

Others were called upon to speak, and near the close of the meeting, the president suggested that I take the remainder of the time.

"Have you had any inspiration?" I asked. He said that he kept thinking of the mayor. (The voters in that large city had elected a member of the Church to be mayor, and he was in attendance.) When I told him we could have a greeting from the mayor, he whispered that the man was not active in the Church. When I suggested that he call upon him anyway, he resisted, saying flatly that he was not worthy to speak in that meeting. At my insistence, however, he called the man to the stand.

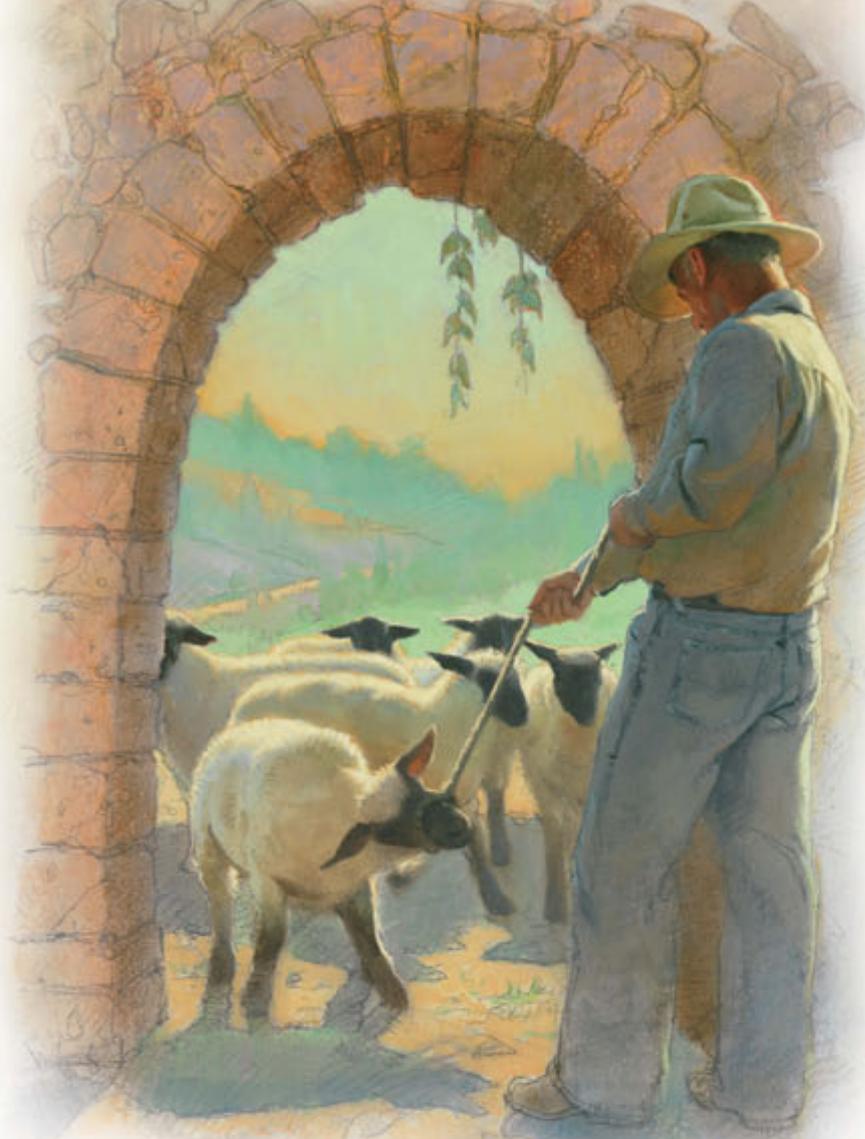
The mayor's father had been a pioneer of the Church in that region. He had served as bishop of one of the wards and had been succeeded by one of his sons—a twin to the mayor, as I recall. The mayor was the lost sheep. He came to the pulpit and spoke, to my surprise, with bitterness and with hostility. His talk began something like this: "I don't know why you called on me. I don't know why I am in church today. I don't belong in church. I have never fit in. I don't agree with the way the Church does things."

I confess that I began to worry, but he then paused and lowered his eyes to the pulpit. From then until his talk was over, he did not look up. After hesitating, he continued: "I guess I just as well tell you. I quit smoking six weeks ago." Then, shaking his fist in a gesture over his head towards the congregation, he said, "If any of you think that's easy, you have never suffered the hell I have suffered in the last few weeks."

Then he just melted. "I know the gospel is true," he said. "I've always known it was true. I learned that from my mother as a boy.

"I know the Church isn't out of order," he confessed. "It's me that's out of order, and I've always known that too."

Then he spoke perhaps for all of the lost sheep when he pleaded: "I know it's me that is



*We must learn not to block the entrance. It is a narrow way. Sometimes we assume the clumsy posture of trying to pull them through the gate that we ourselves are blocking.*

wrong, and I want to come back. I have been trying to come back, but you won't let me!"

Of course we would let him come back, but somehow we hadn't let him know that. After the meeting the congregation flooded up—not to us but to him to say, "Welcome home!"

On the way to the airport after conference, the stake president said to me, "I've learned a lesson today."

Hoping to confirm it, I said, "If we had done what you wanted to do, you would have called on this man's father, wouldn't you, or perhaps his brother, the bishop?"

He nodded in affirmation and said: "Either of them, given 5 minutes, would have presented a stirring 15- or 20-minute sermon to the approval of all in attendance. But no lost sheep would have been reclaimed."

All of us who lead in the wards and stakes must open the door to the lost sheep; stand aside to let them through. We must learn not to block the entrance. It is a narrow way. Sometimes we assume the clumsy posture of trying to pull them through the gate that we ourselves are blocking. Only when we have the spirit of lifting them, pushing them before us, seeing them elevated above us, do we have that spirit that will engender testimony.

I wonder if that is what the Lord meant when He said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Matthew 9:12).

I do not appeal for the lowering of standards. Just the opposite. More lost sheep will respond quicker to high standards than they will to low ones. There is therapeutic value in spiritual discipline.

Discipline is a form of love, an expression of it. It is necessary and powerful in people's lives.

When a toddler is playing near the road, we steer carefully around him. Few will stop and see him to safety [and,] if necessary, discipline him. That is, unless it is our own child or grandchild. If we love them enough, we will do it. To withhold discipline when it would contribute to spiritual growth is evidence of lack of love and concern.

Spiritual discipline framed in love and confirmed with testimony will help redeem souls. ■

*Excerpt from an address given at a meeting for priesthood leaders on February 19, 1969. The full text can be found in Boyd K. Packer, Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled (1991), 12–21. Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization standardized.*



# FROM Rescued TO Rescuer

*My life was a downward spiral until I met a man who claimed to have the solution to my troubles.*

By Betsy Doane

One evening in 1978, I was at the Logan Airport in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, waiting for some friends to arrive. A man struck up a conversation with me, and we talked a little about our lives. I told him I had returned three months earlier from a trip to Central America.

I had gone to escape the painful realities of my life, I told him. Nine years earlier my brother had died. The following year my parents were killed in a car accident. A year later to the day, my grandmother died. Within a short time, I had lost several of the most important people in my life. I was devastated.

I inherited a large sum of money upon my parents' death, and I used it to try to escape my grief. I spent it on expensive clothes, cars, drugs, and trips to faraway places.

On my most recent trip I climbed a pyramid in Tikal, Guatemala. There, even though I was physically on a high place, I remember feeling the lowest I'd felt in a long time. I couldn't live the way I'd been living anymore. "God," I said, "if You're there, I need You to change my life." I stood there for several minutes, silently pleading for help from a being I wasn't sure was real. When I climbed back down the pyramid, I felt at peace. Nothing had changed in my life, but somehow I felt that things were going to be all right.

And so it was that three months later I found myself telling all of this to the man at the airport. He listened patiently and then asked if I knew that Jesus Christ had appeared in the Americas.

At that time I still didn't think much of God. What kind of God would

take away my family? I told the man as much, and he responded that the God he believed in had made a way for me to be with my family again. *Now* he had my attention.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Have you heard of the Mormons?" I didn't know much about them, but the man proceeded to explain the plan of salvation to me. And despite my initial disbelief, something about what he was sharing rang true.

My new acquaintance and I exchanged phone numbers, and over the next several months, we dated a bit. We also talked about the gospel. He gave me a copy of the Book of Mormon, and we discussed it and other scriptures for hours over the phone. He told me about Joseph Smith restoring the Church of Jesus Christ. It was an



amazing time of hope and growth.

Our friendship waned a little bit, but after several more weeks, my friend told me he'd like to send some friends to talk with me. The friends he sent were, of course, the missionaries. And with the full-time elders came Bruce Doane, a stake missionary who would later become my husband.

After several weeks of formal discussions, the missionaries asked if I would be willing to be baptized. I told them sure. Then they told me that before I could be baptized, I needed to be living the Word of Wisdom.

I hadn't been drinking or abusing drugs as much as in the past. Things were changing in my life; I felt more hopeful than I had in ages—but surely those habits would be impossible to break *completely*. Besides, I had already

given up so much in embracing the gospel—including several friends who thought I was crazy for showing interest in the Mormon Church. I had persisted because I felt that the gospel was true. But could I completely abandon long-standing addictions?

The missionaries offered to give me a priesthood blessing to help me. Immediately afterward, I threw away all the drugs and alcohol I had. And that night the desire to partake of anything that was against the Word of Wisdom left me. It was a true miracle.

I was baptized in June 1978. A little more than a year later, Bruce and I were married in the Washington D.C. Temple.

The gospel literally rescued me from despair. Before, I was lost in every sense of the word. My parents and brother and grandmother were gone,

but I felt as though I were gone too. After their deaths I no longer knew who I was. Now I have found my identity. I know that I am a child of God and that He knows me and loves me. As I was sealed to my parents, grandmother, and brother, my grief turned to joy with the assurance that we can be together forever.

The gospel of Jesus Christ also rescued me from my addictions. For the past few years my husband and I have served as LDS Family Services addiction-recovery missionaries, working with members of our stake who are struggling with different types of addictions. I am so grateful to be able to help these brothers and sisters. I feel blessed that I can share my story with them to help them understand how we can all be rescued by the gospel. ■

By Breanna Sampson

Satan is not to be underestimated. He can make a rich man miserable and a poor man proud. Money and material possessions should have little bearing on our happiness and attitudes, yet Satan can often convince us otherwise. I realized this was a problem for me after my husband and I purchased our first home.

A short time after we moved in, the initial excitement faded from my perspective as I began to see the flaws of our home and feel discontented. Many of my friends had much larger homes decorated in such appealing styles as to make our home seem small, plain, and wanting. I found myself making comparisons and feeling that I came up short.

During one of my more intense periods of disgruntlement, a couple in our ward invited us to join them for family home evening. When we arrived at their home I felt the anticipated pang of jealousy at the sight of their large, new home in which little had been forgone. What I had *not* anticipated was the conversation I had with the wife that evening. She mentioned their unhappiness with their home and their desire to find something a little bigger to better suit their needs. I was astounded! How could someone who had so much not realize how lucky she was? I would give anything to live in this gorgeous home—and she was unhappy! How could she not appreciate what she had?



## LEARNING TO BE CONTENT

As I later reflected on her comments and my reaction in turn, the Spirit gave me a very profound insight: I was no different from my friend whom I so strongly envied. We had been blessed to purchase a beautiful house that many, many people would be overjoyed to live in. The problem was not with the house—it was with me.

Instead of focusing on what I had, I could only see what I lacked. Instead of gratitude for blessings, I chose jealousy and greed. From the moment that I realized whose influence had been tainting my perspective, I made the *choice* to never let Satan sway me in such a worldly direction again. I realized then, as I do

now, that if we cannot be contented with our current lives and possessions, then we are feeding an appetite that no amount of money will ever satiate. Jacob addressed this desire for wealth in his day by counseling us to seek first the kingdom of God and a hope in Christ; then if we are blessed with riches we will use them to “do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted” (Jacob 2:18–19). I know that as we keep our hearts full of gratitude and our desires turned to God, we will be blessed with a sense of peace and contentment unknown to those of the world.

And that is something money can never buy. ■

# HOW WE BROKE THE CHAINS OF DEBT

By Kate Strongin

**W**e rejoiced the day my husband finished graduate school. Student life was all we had known for eight years of marriage, and we couldn't wait to move on to the next chapter of our lives. One of the most exciting things was that we could stop taking out student loans and start paying them back. We prayed and worked daily for my husband to obtain a wonderful career that would help us get out of debt. We were confident the Lord would quickly bless us with a job because of our efforts and righteous desires.

But the Lord had a different plan. My husband struggled for 18 months to find a job. During that time, we were schooled intensely in financial and spiritual matters. Our hearts were being prepared to truly follow the Lord's counsel to stay out of debt. Three important principles were ingrained into us at this time: avoid credit card debt, live by a budget, and tithe and trust in the Lord.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY NICK WIGGINS



### Avoid Credit Card Debt

When we sat down and calculated the minimum income we could accept, I was shocked to discover that our debt payments almost doubled the amount of income we needed. This spurred us to calculate all our debt. I felt sick as I looked at the figures. We knew we would have some student debt, but this was unreal.

What had happened? We had thought we were following prophetic counsel to avoid unnecessary debt. We worked part-time while attending college, applied for grants, and used student loans as a last resort. Our mistake was in using our credit cards for emergencies as defined by a materialistic world. Those “emergencies” added up to thousands of dollars.

When we saw the consequences of our mistakes, we spent much time in prayer asking for the Lord’s help to do better. One thing we realized was that without an income, we couldn’t pay off debt, but we could stop using credit cards. It was an easy decision as we looked at the debt and interest we owed. Our financial reserves would last a few more months, and we were confident that my husband would have a well-paying job by then.

### Live by a Budget

Another startling realization was that much of our debt could have been avoided if we had lived

by a budget. Previously, when my husband had pressed for a budget, I refused. I was overwhelmed with school and work and thought budgeting would just be one more burden. I thought simply trying to live frugally was enough. Now I saw how wrong I was and we immediately set up a budget to identify needs and track our spending. I was surprised at how much freedom and peace of mind it gave me. My stress level actually decreased! It was easier to live within our means when I knew exactly how much was coming in and how much was going out.

### Tithe and Trust in the Lord

A huge test came eight months later when our financial reserves ran out. My husband had obtained temporary employment, but our expenses were not completely covered. We were already in survival mode and could not lower our expenses any further. We had two small children to nurture, clothe, and feed. We spent many more hours praying and working to find other sources of income.



Finally, we decided to use our credit cards to buy groceries and asked the Lord to intervene if we were not doing His will. A short time later, my parents told us of a time when my dad had been unemployed and they had also decided to supplement with credit cards, rationalizing that employment would come soon and they would pay off the credit cards. They soon realized they were not putting their trust in the Lord, but rather putting their trust in plastic. They had stopped using their credit cards.

My parents' counsel felt right for us in our situation. There may be appropriate uses for credit cards, but this was not one. The thought of giving up my credit cards brought worries: What if the car breaks down and my husband can't get to an interview? What if one of the kids has to go to the emergency room? What would we do? However, when we acted on the promptings to stop using our credit cards, I felt happier than I had in months. Our financial situation had not changed and yet I felt strangely peaceful. I had put my trust in the Lord, not knowing what would happen, and He had assured me that all would be well. Additional comfort came from knowing we paid our tithing faithfully and the Lord would open the windows of heaven for us (see Malachi 3:10).

During the following months there were still moments of frustration and worry, but as I turned my heart to the Lord, the overwhelming feeling was one of peace and security. Miracles abounded. My husband was offered overtime work. Family, friends, and neighbors would drop off food or leave envelopes with money or gift cards on our doorstep.

A year and a half after graduating, my husband accepted a job offer. The pay was lower than we had anticipated, but we were thrilled to pay all our bills and still have money for groceries. There would even be a small amount for paying down credit card debt. We made a new budget with a plan to do just that. I remembered reading in the *Ensign* about financial calculators that were available on [providentliving.org](http://providentliving.org). I used those and determined that we could be free of credit card

debt in about a year and a half. If we had continued to rely on credit cards, we would have been thousands more dollars in debt.

We used the debt payoff methods in the pamphlet, *One for the Money* by Elder Marvin J. Ashton. We paid off the highest interest debt first, making minimum payments on all other debts. After the highest interest debt was paid off, that payment money went



**Credit Cards:** We stopped using them so that we wouldn't incur more debt.

**A Budget:** It was easier to live within our means when we knew exactly how much was coming in and going out.

**Trust in the Lord:** We trusted in the Lord, not knowing what would happen, but feeling His assurance that all would be well. We found comfort in knowing we paid our tithing faithfully.

towards the debt with the next highest interest rate. And so on.

Each month, the Lord provided miracles, and we were able to set aside more money than anticipated to pay off debt. Eight months later we were free of credit card debt. It was truly liberating.

We are still on our journey to becoming completely debt free. But we know that by following correct principles and being patient it is possible to succeed and meet our goal. As we have prayerfully followed

His servants' counsel regarding debt, the Lord has guided us. We can testify with Nephi that through obedience, the Lord prepares a way for us to accomplish the things He has commanded us to do (see 1 Nephi 3:7). ■

## PLEASE SEND SOMEONE

**D**uring a difficult pregnancy with my second child, I needed to take medicine to keep me from miscarrying. The medicine amplified my feelings of fatigue and nausea.

To make matters worse, my husband was working 15-hour days, trying to keep up with his successful new business; we had recently moved to a new town; and my parents lived 400 miles (640 km) away. I knew no

one, was bedridden, and had to care for a toddler. I felt scared and alone.

In this state I turned to the One I knew wouldn't let me down—my Heavenly Father. I knelt by my bed and prayed, “Heavenly Father, I know that I have been promising for years that I would go back to church, and I think I'm ready now. But I don't have the courage to do it alone. Could Thou please send

someone to invite me to church.”

The next day the doorbell rang. I was lying on the couch in my pajamas in a messy living room and feeling nauseated, so I didn't get up to answer the door. A few minutes later it hit me: what if that doorbell was the answer to my prayers and someone had come over to invite me to church?

I went back to my room, knelt again, and prayed, “Heavenly Father, I am really sorry for not answering the door. If Thou sent someone to



**M**y husband was working 15-hour days, and my parents lived far away. I knew no one, was bedridden, and had to care for a toddler. I felt scared and alone.

talk to me, I promise I will be ready for them tomorrow if Thou will send them again.”

The next day I got up, showered, dressed for company, and spent the day cleaning my house. Then I waited patiently for the doorbell to ring again. It did. When I opened it, I saw two women standing on my doorstep.

“We’re your visiting teachers,” they said. “Do you know what visiting teaching is?”

“Yes, I do,” I replied, excited that they had returned. “Come on in.”

One of those visiting teachers, the Primary president, began stopping by regularly to make sure I was all right. She even offered to take my toddler to church and to arrange for visits from the full-time missionaries. The visits strengthened my testimony and gave me the courage to return to church.

I can’t believe I lived so many years without praying to Heavenly Father and receiving His security and guidance. It is such a blessing to have the Savior help bear my burdens with His love and mercy. I am a better person because of His love, and I feel more and more like the person I was when I attended church in my youth.

Heavenly Father has proven to me that all things are possible in Him. All He asks of us is that we have faith in His ability to answer our prayers. ■

Wendy Walkowiak, Utah, USA

## OFFENDED BY MY FRIEND

I had a friend in my branch of the Church in Russia with whom I socialized at all Church activities. We had a lot in common, I had a lot of fun with him, and I was glad to have such a good friend.

But then something strange happened. For no reason that I could determine, he offended me badly. He did not ask for forgiveness, and I stopped associating with him. I did not even greet him on Sundays. That went on for two months. I was hurt and unhappy, but he said nothing.

Then I found out he was leaving our city. I didn’t think our relationship should stay the way it was; I thought we should reconcile. About then I remembered a scripture from the Book of Mormon: “Go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you” (3 Nephi 12:24).

It was difficult for me to humble myself and take the first step, but I prayed and then called him. I didn’t know what his reaction would be, and I was ready for the worst. What I heard shocked me.

He sincerely asked me for forgiveness, and I could tell by his voice that he had suffered a lot because of his action—just as I had. Most of

all, I remember one sentence that he repeated three times: “Natal’ya, thanks for calling!”

I was so happy! He moved a short time later, but we separated the best of friends.

Learning to love and forgive each other is one of our most difficult tasks. Forgiveness—especially when we are not at fault—requires that we be humble and overcome our pride. I learned that taking the first step to forgive and reconcile is worth it. ■

Natal’ya Fyodorovna Frolova,  
Netherlands



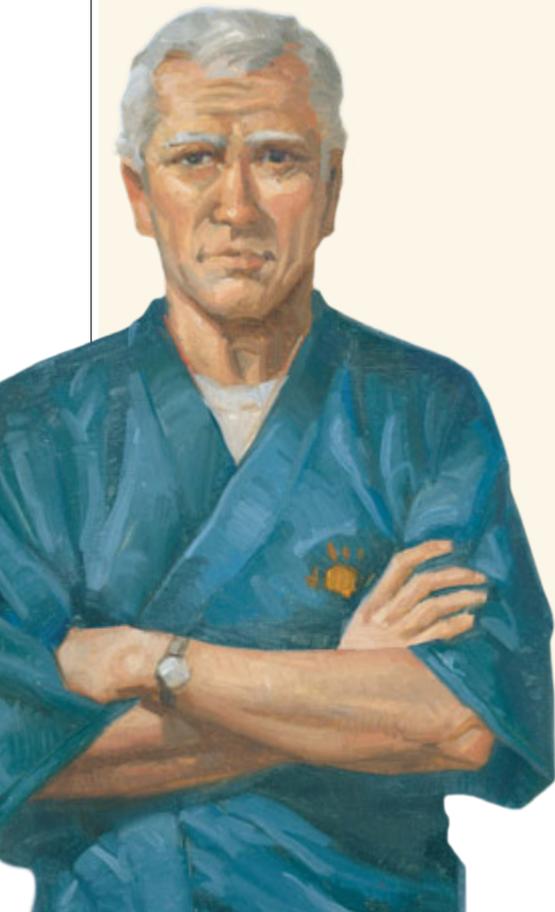
## I DON'T WANT TO KNOW YOU!

With a sincere prayer in my heart and my 14-year-old companion at my side, I knocked on Andy's door. This was our first visit to his home as his new home teachers. We had recently accepted the responsibility to visit him despite his reputation for being difficult. The door opened, and there he stood, dressed in a Japanese kimono.

"Yes?"

"Hi, I'm Irvin, and this is my companion. We are your home teachers and would like to visit with you."

His wife was sitting at a table behind him, dressed in the same fashion. They were having a Japanese-style dinner.



"I think you can see that we're having dinner and don't have time for you," he said.

"Perhaps we could come back some other time?" I asked.

"Why?"

"So we can get to know you," I responded.

"Why do you want to get to know me?" he asked. "I don't want to get to know you!"

I suppose we could have resigned as their home teachers right then, but we didn't. When we returned the next month, Andy actually let us in. We sat facing a wall lined with empty beer bottles that were arranged in the shape of antique cars. Our meeting with Andy was short, but we learned that he was a retired air force colonel. Our subsequent visits were also short and yielded little results.

One night as I was leaving a Church meeting, I heard a voice within me telling me to visit Andy. "No, thank you," I thought. "Not tonight."

When I stopped at a red light, the prompting to visit Andy came again. I thought, "Please, I'm in no mood for Andy tonight."

As I made my last turn for home, however, the same prompting came a third time, leaving me sure of what I needed to do.

I drove to his home and parked, praying for guidance. Then I approached his door and knocked. When Andy let me in, I saw a Book

of Mormon and a book of genealogy on the table. I felt a different spirit in his home; something was different about Andy too. He spoke softly of his love for his mother and his sister, who had compiled the genealogy.

For the first time, he talked openly with me. He told me about pain he'd been feeling in his back, adding that he was going to the March Air Force Base hospital in nearby Riverside, California, the next day. I asked him if he would like a priesthood blessing. Without hesitation he answered in a quiet voice, "I'll take it." I called our elders quorum president, who came to help give the blessing.

The next day doctors told Andy he had inoperable lung cancer. After receiving the news, he went to see the bishop. Within a few months, he was confined to his bed.

One evening when I arrived at his home for another visit, his wife ushered me to his room, where he lay in a frail condition. I knelt beside his bed and cradled him in my arms. I whispered, "I love you, Andy." With all of his strength, he put his arm on my shoulder and, with great effort, told me that he loved me too. Two days later he died.

His wife invited me to the funeral. Besides the four members of his family, I was the only one in attendance.

I'm so grateful I listened to the Spirit's promptings to visit Andy. ■  
Irvin Fager, Utah, USA

## MY TITHING COULDN'T WAIT

In my late teens, as I started spending time with the full-time missionaries, I realized how crucial it was to have a testimony of the principles I would soon be teaching as a missionary. I decided that one of the principles I wanted to understand better was tithing.

Many people gain a testimony of tithing during times of financial hardship. But growing up, I always had more than enough. If I ever had a financial need, my parents took care of it. I was grateful for that, but while I knew that they would pay for my mission, I decided that I wanted to finance half of my mission myself through my work as a part-time teacher.

About the same time, I realized that I hadn't paid a full 10 percent tithing from my last paycheck. I decided that with my next paycheck, I would make up the difference so that I could be a full-tithe payer.

When I was paid for the month, however, the amount was less than I had expected. The work I did was somewhat irregular, so my salary varied from month to month. I quickly realized that the paycheck would not cover my expenses *and* allow me to pay the balance of what I owed the Lord in tithing from my previous paycheck.

I considered my options and then

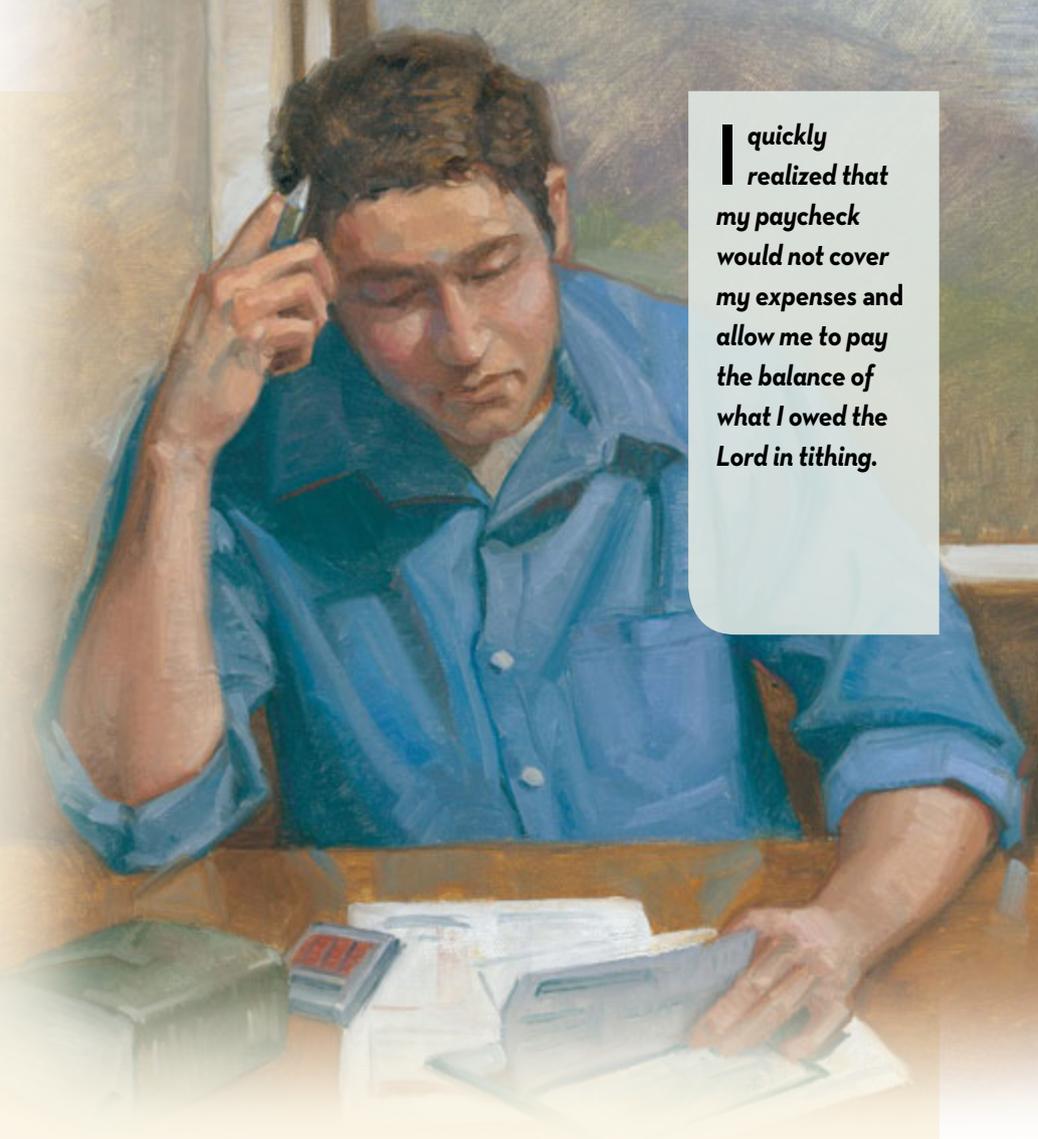
thought, "I'll just have to catch up on tithing next month." But then I remembered an institute of religion lesson on tithing. I particularly remembered what the Lord says in the Old Testament: "Prove me now herewith" (Malachi 3:10). This was an opportunity for me to put the principle to the test and to gain a stronger testimony of what I would soon be teaching others.

When I paid my tithing, I felt good about being caught up. But the opportunity to "prove" the Lord came the very next day—much sooner and in a greater way than I could have ever expected—when I was offered a full-time job as a kindergarten

teacher. I would be able to work right up until I left for my mission, and the money I would earn would be more than I needed to pay half of my mission expenses. This blessing dramatically increased my testimony of tithing. That testimony was bolstered again and again as I shared it with the people I served in the Germany Munich/Austria Mission over the next two years.

I know that the principle of tithing is true and that the Lord does "open [us] the windows of heaven" and pour out a blessing so great "that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). ■

David Erland Isaksen, Norway



**I quickly realized that my paycheck would not cover my expenses and allow me to pay the balance of what I owed the Lord in tithing.**

# Small & Simple Things

*“By small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6).*

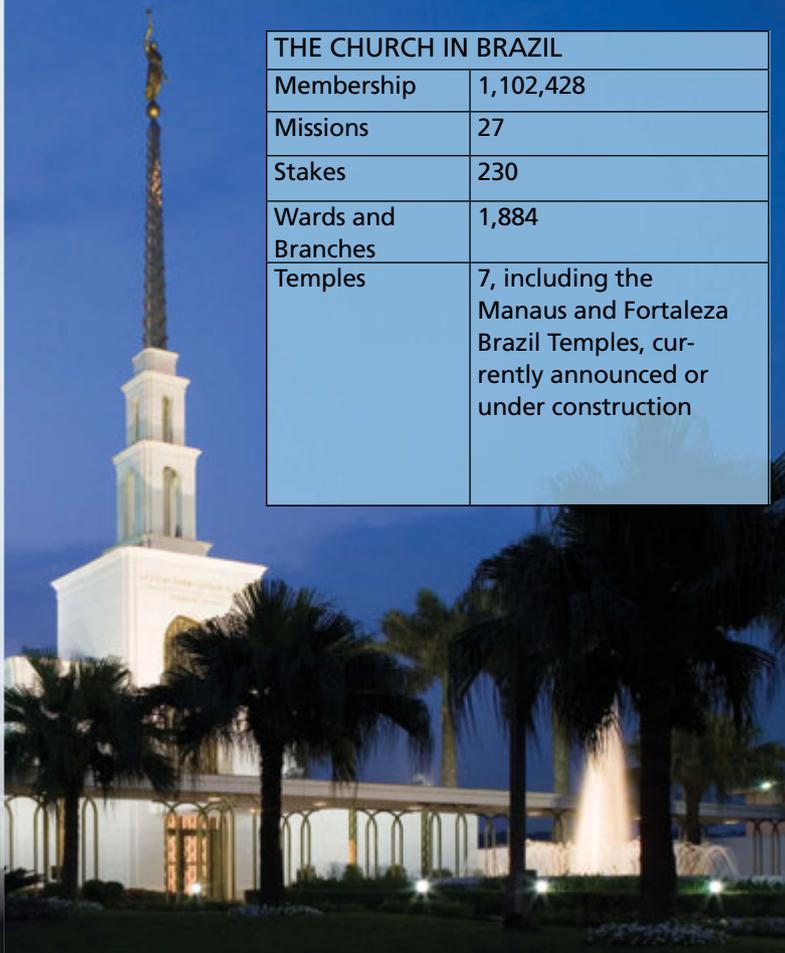
## CHURCH HISTORY AROUND THE WORLD

### Brazil

When Max Richard Zapf emigrated from Germany to Brazil in 1913, he had been a member for five years and became the first known Church member in Brazil. After a Brazilian family requested materials from Church headquarters, the mission president of the South American Mission visited Brazil in 1927 and sent missionaries in 1928. The first mission was created in São Paulo in 1935, and by 1939 the Book of Mormon had been published in Portuguese.

The first temple in South America was dedicated in São Paulo in 1978, shortly after the revelation on the priesthood extended the priesthood to all worthy males. The Church’s second-largest missionary training center, located in São Paulo, was dedicated in 1997.

Brazil was the third country (following the United States and Mexico) to reach one million members.



| THE CHURCH IN BRAZIL |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Membership           | 1,102,428   |
| Missions             | 27  |
| Stakes               | 230   |
| Wards and Branches   | 1,884   |
| Temples              | 7, including the Manaus and Fortaleza Brazil Temples, currently announced or under construction |

### Why Sing?

Singing hymns can invite the Spirit into our Church meetings, our homes, and our everyday lives. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. (1871–1961) of the First Presidency taught, “We get nearer to the Lord through music than perhaps through any other thing except prayer.”<sup>1</sup>

The Church has provided a Web site for accessing the hymns (available in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish). Music.lds.org includes instructions for leading music and for playing hymns using keyboards and also suggestions for choosing appropriate hymns for sacrament meeting.

Music and lyrics can be read, downloaded, or played

directly on the Web site, which could be especially useful for members who do not have a piano or keyboard.

Music can be used at home as well as at church. The First Presidency has counseled: “Teach your children to love the hymns. Sing them on the Sabbath, in [family] home evening, during scripture study, at prayer time. Sing as you work, as you play, and as you travel together.”<sup>2</sup> Hymns can bring a spirit of love and unity into the home.

#### NOTES

1. J. Reuben Clark Jr., in Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 111.
2. *Hymns*, x.

## Strengthened by a Hymn



I decided to compete in a marathon with work colleagues in Western Cape, South Africa. I trained and worked very hard in preparation for the race.

On the day of the race, I woke up, read my scriptures, and prayed. I was nervous, but I also felt that I needed to trust in the Lord. I knew that if I did, He would provide sustenance and support.

We were required to walk or run 40 kilometers (25 miles). We started at 8:00 a.m. The weather was cool and slightly rainy, so at first I enjoyed the walk and was

doing well. But when I was about 10 kilometers from the finish line, the race became very hard for me. I had muscle pulls in one leg, and I had some blisters. I wanted to quit. Then I began singing a hymn:

*Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,  
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.  
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, . . .  
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.  
("How Firm a Foundation," Hymns, no. 85)*

Over and over the words of the hymn flooded my mind and lifted my feet, and I finished the race in the strength of the Lord's hymn.

This experience taught me that the gospel of Jesus Christ is about endurance. It is like walking or running in a race. We get tired sometimes, rest, and walk again. Heavenly Father does not give up on us no matter how many times we fall; to Him what counts is how many times we stand up and walk again. His gospel is about finishing the race.

**Khetiwe Ratsoma, South Africa**

### IN THE WORDS OF CHURCH LEADERS

## Care for the Poor



Throughout history, the Lord has measured societies and individuals by how well they cared for the poor. He has said:

"For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the

children of men to be agents unto themselves.

"Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment' (D&C 104:17–18; see also D&C 56:16–17).

"Furthermore, He declares, 'In your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld' (D&C 70:14; see also D&C 49:20; 78:5–7).

"We control the disposition of our means and resources, but we account to God for this stewardship over earthly things. It is gratifying to witness your generosity as you contribute to fast offerings and humanitarian projects. Over the



years, the suffering of millions has been alleviated, and countless others have been enabled to help themselves through the generosity of the Saints. Nevertheless, as we pursue the cause of Zion, each of us should prayerfully consider whether we are doing what we should and all that we should in the Lord's eyes with respect to the poor and the needy."

**Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Come to Zion," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 39.**

## MILESTONES IN CHURCH WELFARE SERVICES

The humanitarian outreach program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints strives to improve the lives of those in need by providing food, clean water, vision care, wheelchairs, immunizations, and emergency response. From simple beginnings, the program has expanded through the years to help millions throughout the world.

**Late 1920s:** Welfare farms are established. Harvests are stored in storehouses.



**1932:** First cannery is established.

**1936:** General Church Welfare Committee is formed. Fourteen welfare regions are created to manage welfare activities around the world.



**1936:** First official employment center is established.

**1936–40:** Production projects begin, including a sawmill, a tannery, a pasta plant, salmon canning, peanut butter canning, soap production, and milk bottling.

**1937:** First regional storehouse is erected in Salt Lake City.

**1938:** Construction begins on Welfare Square, including a grain elevator and a central storehouse.



**1938:** The first Deseret Industries thrift store opens in Salt Lake City.

**1940:** Construction on Welfare Square is completed.



**1945:** Church ships large amounts of food, clothing, and other supplies to struggling members in Europe at the end of World War II.

**1960:** New cannery and milk processing plant is completed at Welfare Square.

**1970s:** Church expands welfare projects and production to Mexico, England, and the Pacific islands.

**1973:** LDS Social Services (now LDS Family Services) is created as an official Church corporation.

**1976:** Church begins expansion of storehouses into all parts of Canada and the United States. Expansions of canneries and production facilities are also announced.

**1982:** U.S. president Ronald Reagan visits Welfare Square.



**1985:** Church begins to provide clean water wells in Africa, marking the beginning of a worldwide expansion of Church humanitarian efforts.



**1990s:** Latter-day Saint Humanitarian Center is established to sort surplus clothing and other goods, including medical supplies, for shipment throughout the world in response to poverty and disasters.

**2002:** LDS Charities begins wheelchair, clean water, and neonatal resuscitation initiatives.



**2003:** LDS Charities joins worldwide measles initiative and commits one million U.S. dollars each year in support of the campaign. Also, a worldwide vision treatment initiative begins.

**2010:** LDS Charities starts a food initiative to increase food production and nutrition in some of the poorest nations of the world. Ground is broken for a new 600,000-square-foot (56,000 m<sup>2</sup>) Bishop's Central Storehouse in Salt Lake City.



## Growing Testimonies—and Mission Funds

After hearing Church leaders encourage youth to save money for full-time missions, we held a special family home evening with our two children, 10-year-old Allana, and 7-year-old Ulric. We discussed the importance of saving for a full-time mission, then presented them with piggy banks to help them begin saving.

After that evening it was incredible how the money has accumulated. Ulric collects and saves

every coin he can find; both children save any money they receive from relatives. In three months Ulric has saved enough to pay for the first month of his mission, and Allana is almost there. The children also make sure to pay tithing on the money they receive, and our family has seen great blessings as their testimonies of serving and sacrificing have taken root and grown.

Luiz and Andreia Pereira,  
São Paulo, Brazil



ILLUSTRATION BY BETH WHITAKER

### HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

**“The Power of Preparing Early,” page 18:** After sharing the article with your family, reread the statement: “The secret [to success] is to start early, be consistent, plan for life’s demands, focus on eternal truths, and study the gospel—especially the Book of Mormon.” Discuss how these principles might benefit your family and how you can implement them. Consider setting a goal to regularly read the Book of Mormon together.

**“Successful Family Home Evenings with Teens,” page 22:** After sharing the ideas in this article, read either the quote from Elder Bednar or President Uchtdorf. If your family does not already have a family home evening chart, consider creating one. Assign each member of your family the responsibility of teaching a lesson during the coming months. You could display different available resources and suggestions from this article to help with future lessons.



**“Finding Answers,” page 28:** After reading the article discuss how, with the help of the Lord, we should try and solve our own

problems. Ask the following questions: How does the Holy Ghost “reveal things to and through” us? How can we feel more confident that we are asking the right questions? Share additional insights from the article as needed.

**Questions & Answers, page 36:** Share excerpts from this article that you feel apply to your family. Then consider making a list of what the “Lord requires of us,” and set a goal as a family to focus on the needful things first.

## Training Emphasizes Importance of Councils

By Adam C. Olson  
Church Magazines

During the November 2010 worldwide leadership training meeting, in which the Church's new handbooks were introduced, Church leaders emphasized the importance of effective ward<sup>1</sup> councils in supporting overburdened bishops and in carrying out the work of salvation.

"*Handbook 2* seeks to reduce the workload of the bishop by enhancing the role of the ward council and its members," said Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. This includes assisting the bishop "on matters of importance to the whole ward" and "helping in the rescue role of activation and retention."

### The Importance of Councils

During the November training, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that "the Church is governed through councils at the general, area, stake, and ward levels" and that "the new handbooks significantly

*"The primary effort of the ward council is the work of salvation in the ward."*

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

enhance the role of councils in the Church."

Elder Cook discussed three fundamental councils at the ward level essential for the bishop to conduct the affairs of the Church and how these councils are affected by the new handbooks. These include the bishopric, the priesthood executive committee, and the ward council.

The bishopric will function mostly as it has in the past. While the PEC will continue to meet regularly and will handle some of the items previously handled by the ward welfare committee, Elder Cook suggested that PEC meetings will probably decrease in length because of a likely increase in the meeting frequency of the ward council.

The new handbook "elevates the role of the ward council in administering the ward under the keys of the bishop," said Elder Cook.

### Elevating the Ward Council

The handbooks elevate the ward council by suggesting what the bishop can delegate and expanding the roles of council members to assist him.

"The primary effort of the ward council is the work of salvation in the ward," Elder Cook said. "Many issues now come directly to the bishop. Hopefully this will change as bishops delegate more matters in ward council meetings and/or privately to individuals, including such items as welfare, retention, activation" and so forth.

Elder Cook explained that while the bishop will continue to handle "problems that require a common judge in Israel," he can, with the consent of the member seeking repentance, delegate to others "the extensive counseling that may be necessary" to assist members recovering from addictions or who need help with financial issues, family matters, or other problems.

"Members of the ward council do most of their



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTINA SMITH, © IRI

work outside of ward council meetings,” Elder Cook said. “They work with their counselors and with home teachers, visiting teachers, and others in reaching out and ministering to those . . . who need assistance.”

He urged priesthood and auxiliary leaders to identify and resolve concerns that can be appropriately handled within the quorum or organization to alleviate the burden on the bishop and ward council.

### Every Member Counts

During the broadcast, the importance of contributions from every member on the council was emphasized by a panel consisting of Elder M. Russell Ballard, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, and Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Elder Walter F. González of the Presidency of the Seventy; and Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president.

“I think we have the mistaken notion that every element of revelation coming to the ward has to come through the bishop,” said Elder Bednar. “By virtue of his keys, he has to acknowledge it and affirm it, but he doesn’t necessarily have to be the only vehicle through whom it comes.”

Elder Bednar emphasized the importance of unity once the presiding authority has made a decision in order for the council to operate under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

A second worldwide leadership training meeting will be held on February 12, 2011, to focus on the responsibilities of stake presidents and bishops, the work of quorums and auxiliaries, and the special challenges of units that lack sufficient members and leaders to carry out the full programs of the Church.

### EFFECTIVE WARD COUNCILS

The following is specific counsel for running effective councils given during the worldwide leadership training meeting.

#### Effective councils:

- Spend minimal time during meetings on calendaring, activity planning, and other administrative business.
- Focus on matters that will strengthen individuals and families.
- Invite full expression from all council members, who then unite behind the bishop’s decision.
- Unify organizational efforts to respond to individual, family, and organizational needs.
- Meet regularly, more often than under the previous handbooks, but typically no longer than 60 to 90 minutes.
- Protect confidentiality.

Elder Holland warned against a cultural disregard for the value of women in councils. “We sometimes have not been as inviting or as encouraging . . . to the women sitting in the council as we should be,” he said. “We’ve got to have the help of the women.”

The panel emphasized that wise leaders listen.

“The gift of discernment operates more effectively when we’re listening as opposed to when we’re talking,” said Elder Bednar.

Elder Ballard added that the principle of listening applies to every member of the council and that no one member should dominate the conversation.

“When [the] Spirit operates within the council system of the Church, the work will go forward, and we will rescue many more of our Father’s children,” Elder Ballard said. “It’s one grand work that we all put our shoulder to.” ■

#### NOTE

1. The terms *ward*, *bishop*, and *bishopric* also apply to *branch*, *branch president*, and *branch presidency*. The terms *stake*, *stake president*, and *stake presidency* also apply to *district*, *district president*, and *district presidency*.

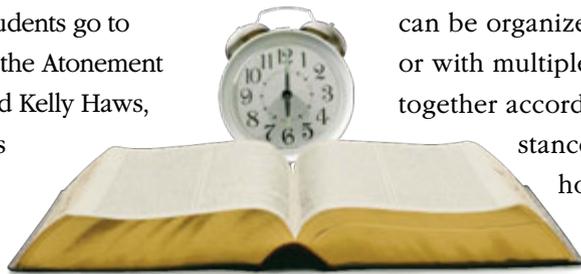
# Early-Morning Seminary Celebrates 60 Years

By Breanna Olaveson

Church Magazines

**E**arly-morning seminary can be challenging, but over the past 60 years more than a million teenage members of the Church have learned that rising before the sun and trying to focus not just their eyes but their minds on the scriptures is worth the effort.

“Spending a few minutes in the scriptures each day, bearing testimony, and feeling the Spirit has not only a strengthening effect as students go to school, but it has a healing effect as the Atonement of Jesus Christ acts in their lives,” said Kelly Haws, assistant administrator for seminaries and institutes of religion. “It’s a great opportunity for youth.”



## The Birth of Early-Morning Seminary

The first seminary classes were held during regular school hours in 1912 in a seminary adjacent to Granite High School in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. However, as years passed, more and more Church youth were enrolled in the growing public school system that did not provide the opportunity to study the scriptures on a daily basis.

As Church membership grew rapidly in Southern California in the late 1940s, the need to educate young people in the gospel inspired a group of stake presidents to request the establishment of the Church’s seminary program in the Southern California area.

During the 1948–49 school year, Marion D. Hanks, who later served in the Presidency of the Seventy, had success teaching an early-morning seminary class at West High School in Salt Lake City. Holding similar classes seemed a logical solution

for the Saints in California, and the 11 stakes were approved to form 13 early-morning classes.

## Meeting Diverse Needs

From the program’s official start during the 1950–51 school year, early-morning seminary spread across the United States and throughout the world, helping youth everywhere to learn the scriptures and apply gospel principles. Its official name was recently changed to “daily seminary,” because not all such classes are held in the early morning.

Part of what makes daily seminary so successful is its flexibility. Programs are organized at the stake and district level, and classes can be organized in a single ward or branch or with multiple wards or branches meeting together according to the needs and circumstances of youth, parents, and priesthood leaders.

While approximately 115,000 students still benefit each year

from released-time seminary held during school hours in areas with a large concentration of Church members, nearly 217,000 seminary students throughout the world participate in daily seminary.

Because some youth in the Church live too far from other Church members to attend either released-time or daily seminary classes, the home-study seminary program was established. Home-study students spend four days each week studying assigned material independently, then gather with other home-study students once a week to discuss what they’ve learned.

## A Stone Cut without Hands

Today, seminary classes are held in every state in the United States and in 140 countries around the world. In 1948 Canada became the first country outside the United States to hold seminary. With the spread of early-morning seminary,

*More than a million young Latter-day Saints have benefited from early-morning seminary since its beginnings 60 years ago.*

Mexico followed in 1958, Finland and Germany in 1962, Japan in 1963, Panama in 1964, and more countries over the years. Most recently, seminary classes were established in 2008 in the countries of Benin, Georgia, and Morocco.

As seminary spreads around the world, a worldwide community of seminary students is developing. No matter where seminary students live, they memorize the same scripture-mastery verses, study the same passages of scripture, feel the same Spirit as their testimonies grow, and work to build the same kingdom.

The blessings they receive are as real today as they were 60 years ago, and seminary in all its forms continues to bless the lives of youth all over the world. ■

## Bells Choir's Testimonies Ring Clear

By Natasia Garrett

Church Magazines

**T**wenty-eight pairs of eyes focus on the leader. Muscles tense; fingers flex; attention sharpens. At the signal, the group springs into a well-designed blur of color and sound. Their work requires total concentration—the uniting of many minds to a single effort. Their goal is lofty: to invite the Spirit of the Lord through the use of their talents. For these performers, bells give voice to the skills they've worked hard to develop.

Every Wednesday night, the members of the Bells on Temple Square rehearse in the Tabernacle on Temple Square. Their music represents a wide range of genres, and all of the pieces are demanding. The visually thrilling “Holiday for Strings” requires complex high-speed maneuvers, while the slower, more contemplative notes of “Amazing Grace” need perfect timing.

There's a lot of work involved in bringing the

*Jennifer Probert rehearses with the Bells on Temple Square. Bell ringing can be similar to an intricate dance.*



PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM C. OLSON

individual bells into harmony, especially with a group this big. Rehearsing can be difficult and even frustrating, but, like living the gospel, the result is worth the effort.

### Trusting the Leader

During one rehearsal, within only a few measures, conductor Tom Waldron stops to coax more volume from the B notes. He has plenty of technical experience, both from his 28 years as a high school bell choir director and as the original conductor of the five-year-old Bells on Temple Square, but he also recognizes the spiritual aspect of what the bell choir does.

Bell ringer Scott Hixson says that rehearsals led by Brother Waldron are similar to devotionals. “Tom stops and shares his testimony, he shares stories from the scriptures . . . He really knows the mission of this organization.”

The ringers respect their conductor and admire him for what he helps them accomplish.

Bell ringer Jennifer Probert says, “We rely heavily on following our conductor . . . because the moment that clapper strikes, we get the sound of the bell.” The conductor has to coordinate the ringers so that the bells

sound at exactly the right time. The ringers trust Brother Waldron to let them know what they need to do.

### Maintaining Good Relationships

The bell choir has a strong feeling of camaraderie. Sister Probert describes the group as a family. In some cases the sentiment is literal. The bell choir boasts two married couples, an engaged couple (they met in the bell choir), a set of fraternal twins, and a pair of sisters.

The good relationships are necessary because the ringers, all volunteers, have a difficult job to perform. They have to watch their conductor, the music, and their bells at the same time, while switching between bells. The music requires a variety of playing techniques, such as plucking or malleting.

Occasionally the ringers even have to ring a neighbor's bell on a difficult part. Trust has to exist between the ringers in order for them to perform well.

### Focusing on the Savior

In spite of the challenges, the ringers are able to blend their individual parts into a whole that is not only cohesive, but beautiful.

Creating this harmony is only one part of the bell choir's purpose, but it is important to achieving their main purpose—bearing testimony of Jesus Christ and serving Him through their music.

Just as members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir are set apart as musical missionaries, so are members of the bell choir.

Brother Hixson calls performances opportunities to “bear our testimonies through the use of our talents,” explaining that performances are “all about the Savior.” ■

## WORLD BRIEFS

### Elder Perry Creates First Stake in Guam

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles visited Guam in December 2010 to create the Barrigada Guam Stake, the first stake in the Territory of Guam.

While there, Elder Perry, who served in the United States Marine Corps in the area during World War II, also visited the Pacific War Museum and the neighboring island of Saipan.

There are 1,971 members of the Church living in Guam. The Territory of Guam is part of the Asia North Area of the Church.

### Triple Combinations Now Available

Editions of the triple combination in Indonesian and Thai are now available for the first time in print and online. New editions of the Book of Mormon are also available. The scriptures site includes footnotes, maps, and photographs, and allows readers to mark the scriptures and perform key word searches. The Japanese triple combination is also now online at scriptures.lds.org. The scriptures site now includes 21 languages.

### First YSA Conference Held in Cyprus

A first-ever young single adult conference for the Nicosia Cyprus District was held in the Troodos Mountains on October 16, 2010. Attending the conference were 20 young adults and 15 leaders, representing seven different countries. Workshops taught tactics for conquering opposition, successful job interview techniques, and how to conquer fear through faith. Other activities included games, service projects, and a devotional and testimony meeting.

### Young Men in Bangalore Commit to Duty to God

More than 30 young men from the Bangalore India District gathered in the hills of Kanakapura to learn about the new Duty to God program and to learn spiritual lessons from challenging physical activities. The young men used a rope and pulley system to cross a pond. They went for a morning run, climbed a mountain, and learned to rappel. The activity was concluded with a testimony meeting. ■

# In Other Church Magazines

## THE NEW ERA

### Mourning

How should a young person treat a friend who has had a death in the family? The article entitled “When I Became Invisible,” on page 8 tells of one young girl’s experiences both as the one in need of comfort when her baby sister dies and then being in the position to comfort a friend when her friend loses her mother.

### Ballroom Dancing

“Dancing Ballroom” on page 24 is an uplifting report of a young lady involved in teaching special needs teens to ballroom dance with the help of volunteer dancers. Her concern expanded from her handicapped twin sisters to those who never had a chance to dance.



### Plague of Pornography

“The Secret Enemy” on page 28 warns of the addictive nature of pornography and the continuing problem young people face with the pervasiveness of this modern-day plague.

## THE FRIEND

### Absent Parent

Children everywhere must deal with the extended absence of a parent from time to time, due to responsibilities such as military service or business trips. Read “Sharing Love with Families Far Away” on page 24 to read about what families do to stay close to one another, even when a parent is far away.

Million” on page 7. Then go online to [friend.lds.org](http://friend.lds.org) to download the music and check out the *Friend's* new “One in a Million” feature, which allows children to learn about other Primary children across the world.

### One in a Million

Did you know there are about one million Primary children spread across the world? Get the text and music for the song “One in a



## COMMENTS

### Remember Single Fathers

As I read the *Ensign* recently, I was enjoying the comments and articles about marriage and family since I am eagerly awaiting remarriage. That is until I came across the April 2010 article with helpful hints for the single mother.

Single mothers are not the only ones who struggle. As a newly divorced father, I have many struggles of my own and I am sure I am not alone as it pertains to active, worthy members of the Church. I was not an abusive husband, and I did not commit adultery. I am a loving father who enjoys his time with his children.

I struggle to find any answers that will help me in my search to foster a loving home with just my kids and me as well as attempting to integrate my future wife into their lives.

When a divorce happens it affects at least two people: the husband and wife. If there are children, they suffer as well. The men who go through a divorce struggle too. We hurt, we cry, we long for the days when the marriage was happy before the divorce became final. We want our kids to be happy. We do our best to meet all of our financial obligations.

I am an active, temple worthy, divorced father searching desperately for answers, guidance, and resources to help my family heal. Please be mindful of the men in the Church who need help.

Name withheld

# A SEAT AT THE BRIDEGROOM'S FEAST

By Melissa Merrill

Church Magazines

Going to a wedding reception alone isn't always comfortable. But when an old friend invited me to his wedding dinner, I knew I couldn't miss the opportunity to celebrate with him and his new bride.

The day of the wedding, I arrived just before dinner started. I spotted an empty seat and asked one of the women at the table if it were taken.

"Are you *supposed* to be here?" she questioned, eyeing me suspiciously.

I had no idea what prompted the question—or the manner in which she asked it. There wasn't someone checking a guest list. The seating wasn't prearranged. I was on time and dressed appropriately. What could be the problem?

I smiled nervously. "I'm a friend of the groom," I assured her. She nodded, so I sat down and tried to strike up friendly conversation with the six couples at the table. Whatever discomfort I had felt before was magnified given the "welcome" I'd received. I desperately scanned the room for someone—anyone—I knew, but aside from the groom, there wasn't a familiar face anywhere.

But then it happened. My friend, seated next to his bride at the front of the crowded hall, stood. As he did so, he saw me on the opposite side of the room. He paused, smiled, and placed his hand over his heart as if to say, "Thank you for coming. I know you sacrificed to be here. It means so much that you're with us."



*A feeling of relief and happiness washed over me. Whatever anyone else thought, in the groom's estimation, I belonged.*

A feeling of relief and happiness washed over me. Whatever anyone else thought, in the groom's estimation, I belonged. I smiled as I mirrored his gesture. I hoped my friend knew how much I wanted to celebrate and share in his and his wife's joy. Whatever social awkwardness I had felt was gone in that 10-second exchange, and I spent the rest of the evening infused with confidence.

Days later, in preparing to teach a Relief Society lesson, I studied Matthew 22 and read of a king preparing a marriage feast for his son, who represents the Savior. About these verses of scripture, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "Those who keep the commandments of the Lord and walk in His statutes to the end, are the only individuals

permitted to sit at this glorious feast. . . . Those who have kept the faith will be crowned with a crown of righteousness; be clothed in white raiment; be admitted to the marriage feast; be free from every affliction, and reign with Christ on the earth."<sup>1</sup> That promise is powerful anytime, but it was especially so because of my experience earlier that week.

As I taught the lesson, I realized that obedience is the only requirement for accepting an invitation from Jesus Christ to rejoice with Him, to have a place at His feast. And that feast is one at which guests need never feel insecure because they *do* belong. Although I am as yet far from perfect in my obedience, I hope one day to qualify to meet the Bridegroom and with hand over heart—a heart submitted to His will—say, "I'm so happy to be here." ■

#### NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 165, 166.



WORDS OF CHRIST

*Children Playing by a Wooden Fence,*  
by Anne Marie Oborn

*“And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:*

*“And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in*

*all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

*“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you?” (Matthew 6:28–30).*



**I**n the parables in Luke 15, the sheep wanders, the piece of silver is lost, and the prodigal son wastes his inheritance. But the shepherd searches the wilderness, the woman sweeps the house, and the forgiving father watches for his son's return. We, likewise, can heed the call from President Thomas S. Monson to "reach out and rescue those who have fallen by the wayside, that not one precious soul will be lost." Read four stories of rescue in "Parables of the Lost and Found," page 46.