

THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • JANUARY 2009

# Ensign



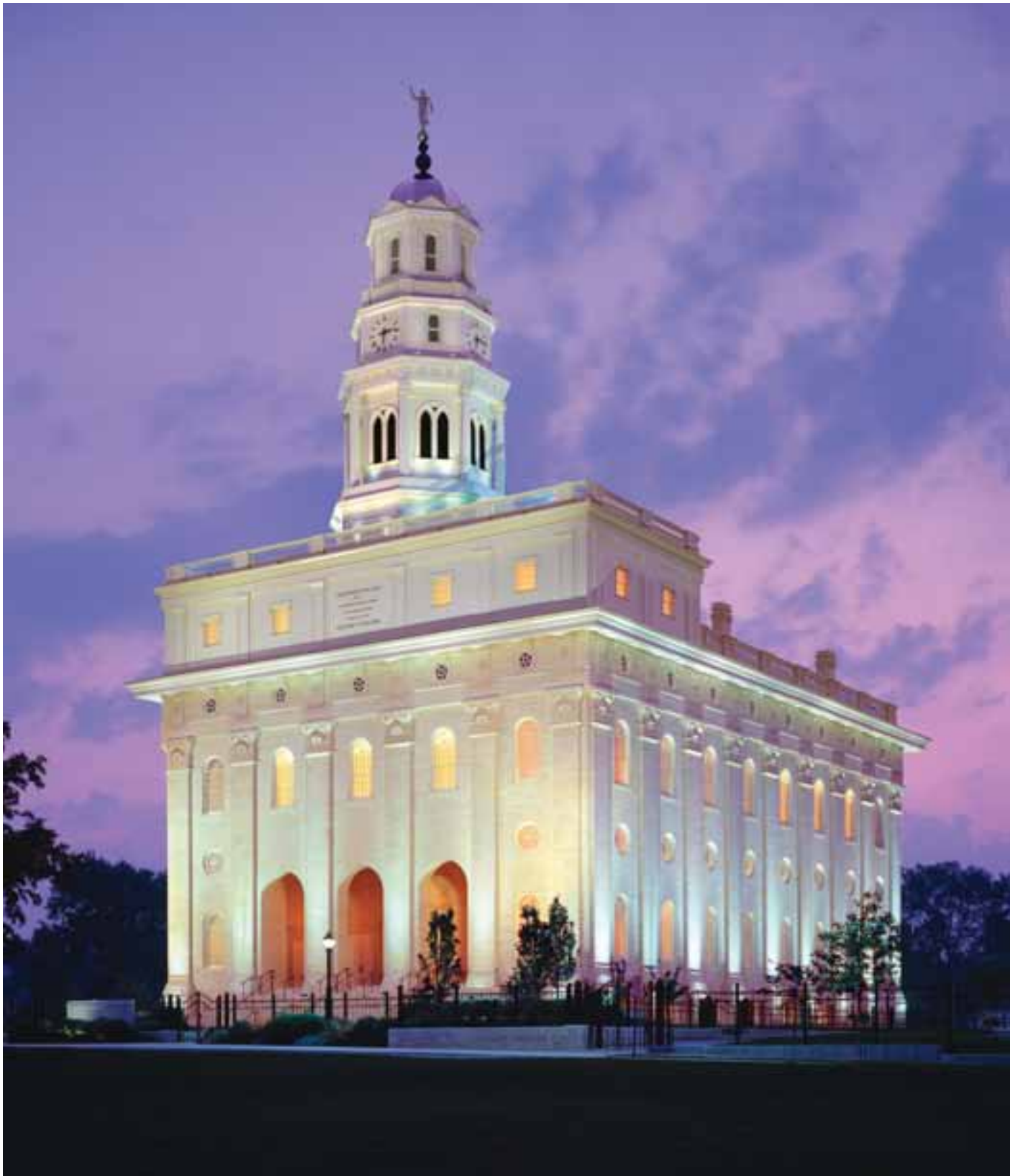
**COVER STORY**

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of the Prophet  
Joseph Smith, p. 10**

**Joseph Smith: An Apostle  
of Jesus Christ, p. 16**

**Places of Revelation, p. 40**





**Nauvoo Temple, by Martin J. van Hemert**

*Speaking of the Nauvoo Temple, the Lord says in Doctrine and Covenants 124, “And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people; “For I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times” (D&C 124:40–41).*



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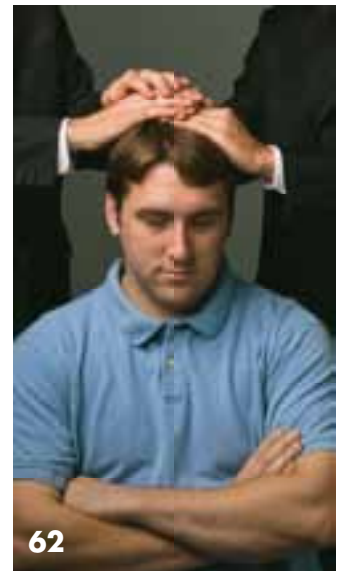
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How have you been blessed by effective home teachers? What about them made a difference in your life? Was it a lesson they taught? Service they performed? Concern they showed? Perhaps it was that they consistently visited you every month. How did their commitment to home teaching make a difference for you? Please share your story with us. Submissions should be between 500 and 2,000 words. Please label your manuscript "home teachers" and submit it by February 29, 2009.

You can find this and other calls for articles online at <http://ensign.lds.org>. *Ensign* Magazine Writers' Guidelines are posted on the same page under "Resources."

Send submissions to [ensign@ldschurch.org](mailto:ensign@ldschurch.org) or *Ensign* Editorial, 50 E. North Temple Street, Room 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA. Include your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, ward (or branch), and stake (or district). Because of the volume of submissions we receive, we cannot acknowledge receipt. Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified. If you would like your manuscript, photos, art, or other material returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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# Ensign

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## USING THIS ISSUE

**Enhance your study.** Pages 46–53 highlight the Doctrine and Covenants, the 2009 course of Gospel Doctrine study.

You can find additional guides online at [LDS.org](http://LDS.org). Select Gospel Library, then Lessons, then Sunday School.

**Share your testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith.**

Pages 10–22 include powerful witnesses of the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith. How is your life different from what it might otherwise be because of the work of the Prophet of the Restoration? Consider sharing the articles—and your testimony—with a friend.

**Sign up for institute.** Young adults from around the world share the blessings they've experienced because they have attended institute in "Nourishing the Soul through Institute" (page 54). To find a class near you, visit [www.ldsces.org](http://www.ldsces.org), or talk to your bishop or branch president.



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## COMING IN FEBRUARY

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- *Functional families*
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- *Helping new converts stay strong*



# Let Us Raise Our Voice of Warning

BY PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING

First Counselor in the First Presidency

**B**ecause the Lord is kind, He calls servants to warn people of danger. That call to warn is made harder and more important by the fact that the warnings of most worth are about dangers that people don't yet think are real. Think of Jonah. He fled at first from the Lord's call to warn the people of Nineveh who were blinded to the danger by sin. He knew that wicked people through the ages have rejected prophets and sometimes killed them. Yet when Jonah went forward with faith, the Lord blessed him with safety and success.

We can also learn from our experiences as parents and as children. Those of us who are parents have felt the anxiety of sensing danger our children cannot yet see. Few prayers are so fervent as those of a parent asking to know how to touch a child to move away from danger. Most of us have felt the blessing of hearing and heeding the warning voice of a parent.

I can still remember my mother speaking softly to me one Saturday afternoon when, as a little boy, I asked her for permission to do something I thought was perfectly reasonable and which she knew was dangerous. I still am amazed at the power she was granted, I believe from the Lord, to turn me around

with so few words. As I remember them, they were: "Oh, I suppose you *could* do that. But the *choice* is yours." The only warning was in the emphasis she put on the words *could* and *choice*. Yet that was enough for me.

Her power to warn with so few words sprang from three things I knew about her. First, I knew she loved me. Second, I knew she had faced similar situations and had been blessed by making the right choice. And third, she had conveyed to me her sure testimony that the choice I had to make was so important that the Lord would tell me what to do if I asked Him. Love, example, and testimony: those were keys that day, and they have been whenever I have been blessed to hear and then heed the warning of a servant of the Lord.

Our ability to touch others with our warning voice matters to all who are covenant disciples of Jesus Christ. Here is the charge given to each of the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: "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).

## Our Duty to Warn

The duty to warn our neighbor falls on all of us who have accepted the covenant



*The Lord's words are true for the missionaries and for all of us: "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!"*



**W**hen you invite others to choose to be taught by the missionaries, you will be able to bear testimony that they will teach the truth and that they offer the choices which lead to happiness.

of baptism. We are to talk with nonmember friends and relatives about the gospel. Our purpose is to invite them to be taught by the full-time missionaries, who are called and set apart to teach. When a person has chosen to accept our invitation to be taught, a “referral” of great promise has been created, one far more likely to enter the waters of baptism and then to remain faithful.

As a member of the Church, you can expect that the full-time or the ward or branch missionaries will ask for the opportunity to help you make a list of people with whom you could share the gospel. The missionaries may suggest you think of relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances. They may ask you to set a date by which you will try to have the person or family prepared to be taught by the missionaries. I’ve had that experience. Because we in our family accepted that invitation from the missionaries, I was blessed to perform the baptism of a widow in her 80s, taught by sister missionaries.

When I placed my hands on her head to confirm her a member of the Church, I felt impressed to say that her choice to be baptized would bless generations of her family, after and before her. Even after she passed away, I was able to be in the temple with her son as he was sealed to her.

You may have had such experiences with people you have invited to be taught, and so you know that few moments in life are sweeter. The Lord’s words are true for the missionaries and for all of us: “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!” (D&C 18:16).

The missionaries will help and encourage us, but whether such moments at the baptismal font and in the temple come more often will depend largely on how we see our charge and what we choose to do about it. The Lord would not use the word *warn* if there was no danger. Yet not many people we know sense it. They have learned to ignore the increasing evidence that society is unraveling and that their lives and family lack the peace they once thought was possible. That willingness to ignore the signs of danger can make it easy for you to think: “Why should I speak to anyone about the gospel who seems content? What danger is there to them or to me if I do or say nothing?”

Well, the danger may be hard to see, but it is real, both for them and for us. For instance, at some moment in the world to come, everyone you met in this life will know what you know now. They will know that the only way to live forever in association with our families and in the presence of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, is to choose to enter into the gate by baptism at the hands of those with authority from God. They will know that the only way families can be together forever is to accept and keep sacred covenants offered in the temples of God on this earth. They will know that you knew. And they will remember whether you offered them what someone had offered you.

It’s easy to say, “The time isn’t right.” But there is danger in procrastination. Years ago I worked for a man in California. He hired me; he was kind to me; he seemed to regard me highly. I may have been the only Latter-day Saint he ever knew well. I don’t know all the reasons I found to wait for a better moment to talk with him about the gospel. I





just remember my feeling of sorrow when I learned, after he had retired and I lived far away, that he and his wife had been killed in a late-night drive to their home in Carmel, California. He loved his wife. He loved his children. He had loved his parents. He loved his grandchildren, and he will love their children and will want to be with them forever.

Now, I don't know how the crowds will be handled in the world to come. But I suppose that I will meet him, that he will look into my eyes, and that I will see in them the question: "Hal, you knew. Why didn't you tell me?"

When I think of him and when I think of the widow I baptized and her family who will now be sealed to her and to each other, I want to do better. I want to increase my power to invite people to be taught. With that desire and with faith that God will help us, we will do better.

### **Love Comes First**

Love always comes first. A single act of kindness will seldom be enough. The Lord described the love we must feel, and that those we invite must recognize in us, with words like these: "Charity suffereth long," and it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7).

I've seen what "suffereth long" and "endureth all things" mean. A family moved into a house near us. The home was new, so I was part of the crew of Latter-day Saints

who spent a number of nights putting in landscaping. I remember the last night, standing next to the husband of the family as we finished. He surveyed our work and said to us standing nearby, "This is the third yard you Mormons have put in for us, and I think this is the best." And then he quietly but firmly told me of the great satisfaction he got from membership in his own church, a conversation we had often in the years he lived there.

In all that time, the acts of kindness extended to him and his family never ceased, because the neighbors really came to love them. One evening I came home to see a truck in their driveway. I had been told they were moving to another state. I approached to see if I could help. I didn't recognize the man I saw loading household things into the truck. He said quietly as I drew near, "Hello, Brother Eyring." I hadn't recognized him because he was the son, now grown older, who had lived there, married, and moved away. And because of the love of many for him, he was now a baptized member of the Church. I don't know the end of that story because it will have no end. But I know that it began with love.

Second, we will need to be better examples of what we invite others to do. In a darkening world, this command of the Savior will become more important: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Most of us are modest enough to think that our small candle of example might be too dim to be noticed. But you and your family are watched more than you may realize. Some time ago I had the chance to attend and speak at meetings with nearly 300 ministers and leaders of other churches. I visited alone with as many as I could. I asked them why they had been so attentive to my message, which was to recount the origins of the Church, to tell of the young Joseph Smith's First Vision and of living prophets. In every case, they gave essentially the same answer. They told a story of a person or a family—Church members they knew. Often I heard, "They were the finest family I have ever known." Often they spoke of some community effort or disaster response in which Church members worked in a remarkable way.

The people I met at those meetings could not yet recognize the truth in the doctrine, but they had seen its fruit in members' lives, and so they were ready to listen. They were ready to hear truths of the Restoration—that families can be sealed forever and that the gospel can change our very natures. They were ready because of your examples.

The third thing we must do better is to invite with testimony. Love and example will open the way, but we still have to open our mouths and bear testimony. We are helped by a simple fact: truth and choice are inseparably

connected. There are some choices all children of our Heavenly Father must make to qualify for a testimony of spiritual truths, and once we know a spiritual truth, we must choose whether we will conform our lives to it. When we bear testimony of truth to our loved ones or friends, we must convey to them the choices they must make once they know that truth for themselves. There are two important examples: inviting someone to read the Book of Mormon and inviting someone to agree to be taught by the missionaries.

For us to know that the Book of Mormon is true, we must read it and make the choice found in Moroni: pray to know if it is true (see Moroni 10:3–5). When we have done that, we can testify from personal experience to our friends that they can make that choice and know the same truth. When they know the Book of Mormon is the word of God, they will face another choice: whether to accept your invitation to be taught by the missionaries. To make that invitation with testimony, you will need to know that the missionaries are called as servants of God.

You can gain that testimony by choosing to invite the missionaries into your home to teach your family or friends. Missionaries will welcome the opportunity. When you sit with them as they teach, as I have, you will know they are inspired with power beyond their years and their

## IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

**A**fter prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. Following are some examples:

1. Create three keys made of paper, and label them "Love," "Example," and "Testimony." Tell President Eyring's story about his mother. Display the keys, and ask the family how these three keys worked in the story. Using examples from the article, explain the importance of warning our neighbors. Ask the family to comment on how the three keys can help us in warning our

neighbors. End by reading President Eyring's testimony in the final paragraph.

2. Consider bringing some sweets or cookies for the family you are visiting. Place them where all can see, but don't offer to share them. Tell the story of the man in California for whom President Eyring worked. Discuss how President Eyring felt after learning of his death. Ask the family how they would feel if you left without sharing the sweets with them. Discuss ways we can share the gospel with others.



education. Then, when you invite others to choose to be taught by the missionaries, you will be able to bear testimony that they will teach the truth and that they offer the choices which lead to happiness.

### **An Assurance**

Perhaps some of us may find it hard to believe that we love enough or that our lives are good enough or that our power to testify is sufficient for our invitations to our neighbors to be accepted. But the Lord knew we might feel that way. Listen to His encouraging words, which He directed to be placed at the first of the Doctrine and Covenants, when He gave us our charge: “And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days” (D&C 1:4).

And then listen to His description of the qualifications of those disciples—of us: “The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones” (D&C 1:19).

And then later: “That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world” (D&C 1:23).

And then again: “And inasmuch as they [are] humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high” (D&C 1:28).

That assurance was given to the first missionaries in the Church and to missionaries today. But it is given to all of us as well. We must have the faith that we can love enough and that the gospel has touched our lives enough that our invitation to choose can be heard as coming from the Master whose invitation it is.

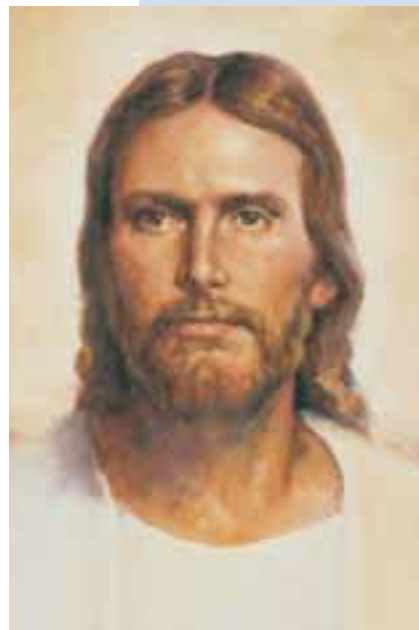
His is the perfect example for what we are to do. You have felt His love and His caring

even when you did not respond, as those you approach with the gospel may not respond. Time after time He has invited you to be taught by His servants. You may not have recognized that in the visits of home teachers and visiting teachers or in a bishop’s phone call, but those were His invitations to be helped and taught. And the Lord has always made consequences clear and then allowed us to choose for ourselves.

What the Lord’s servant Lehi taught his sons has always been true for all of us: “And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit” (2 Nephi 2:28).

And then from Jacob we receive this encouragement to meet our obligation to testify, as we must, that choosing to be taught by the missionaries is choosing to enter the way toward eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God: “Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life” (2 Nephi 10:23).

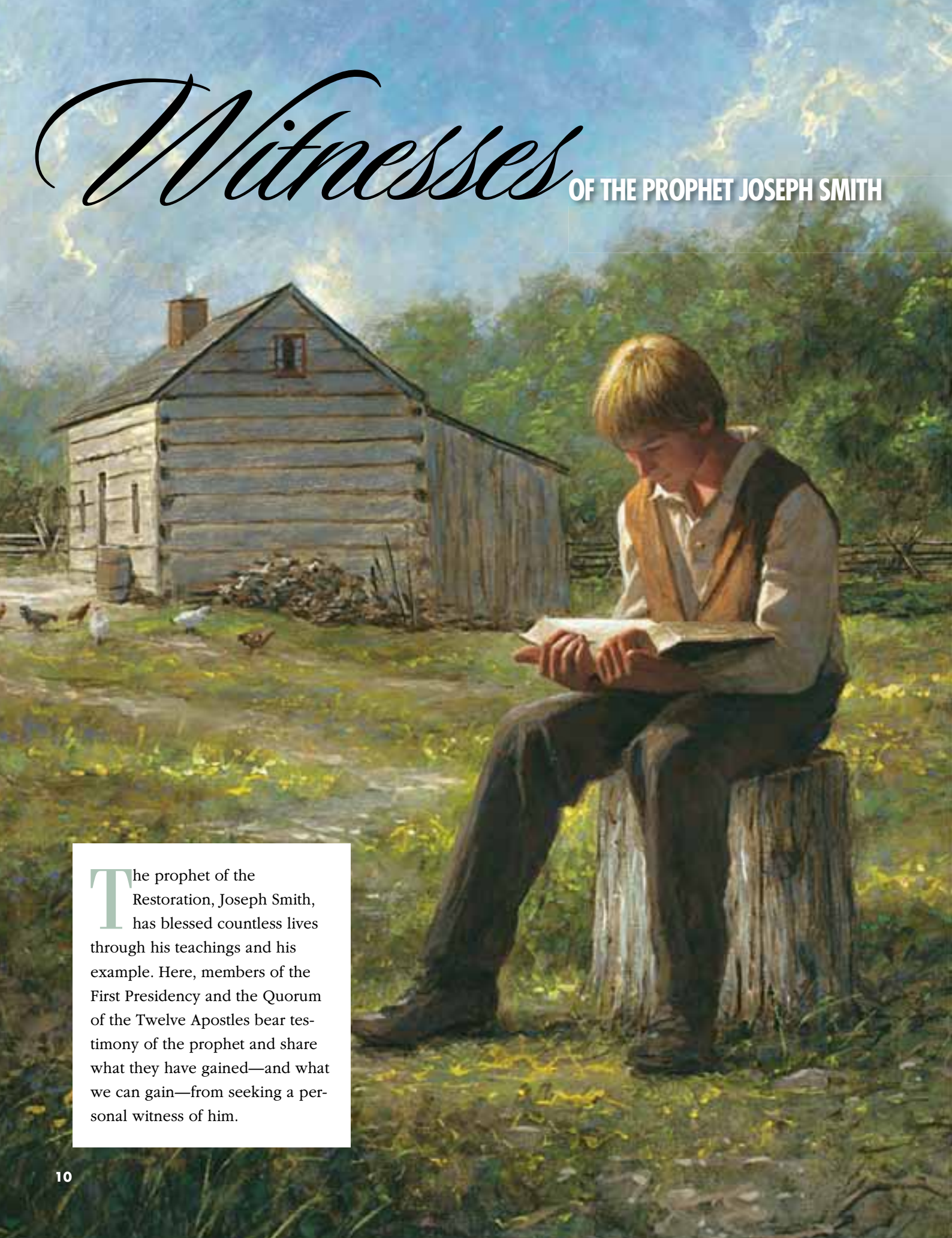
I testify that only accepting and living the restored gospel of Jesus Christ brings the peace the Lord promised in this life and the hope of eternal life in the world to come. I testify that we have been given the privilege and the obligation to offer the truth and the choices which lead to those blessings to our Heavenly Father’s children, who are our brothers and our sisters. Jesus is the Christ, He lives, and this is His work. ■



**W**e must have the faith that we can love enough and that the gospel has touched our lives enough that our invitation to choose can be heard as coming from the Master whose invitation it is.

# Witnesses

OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH



**T**he prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith, has blessed countless lives through his teachings and his example. Here, members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles bear testimony of the prophet and share what they have gained—and what we can gain—from seeking a personal witness of him.





**A Model of Obedience and Courage**

**President Thomas S. Monson**

“When but 14 years of age, this courageous young man [Joseph Smith] entered a grove of trees, which later would be called sacred, and received an answer to his sincere prayer.

“There followed for Joseph unrelenting persecution as he related to others the account of the glorious vision he received in that grove. Although he was ridiculed and scorned, he stood firm. Said he, ‘I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it’ (Joseph Smith—History 1:25).

“Step by step, facing opposition at nearly every turn and yet always guided by the hand of the Lord, Joseph organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He proved courageous in all that he did.

“Toward the end of his life, as he was led away with his brother Hyrum to Carthage Jail, he bravely faced what he undoubtedly knew lay ahead for him, and he sealed his testimony with his blood.

“As we face life’s tests, may we ever emulate that undaunted courage epitomized by the Prophet Joseph Smith” (“They Marked the Path to Follow,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2007, 7–8).



**Gratitude and Love**

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

“The Prophet Joseph Smith is an example and a teacher of enduring well in faith. I do not worship him, but I thank and love him as the Lord’s prophet of the Restoration. He has helped me pray with the intent to obey. I am better able to feast in the word and the love of God. Because of him I feel the Holy Ghost more often in the moments when I try to build the faith of a person in the Lord’s kingdom. And because of what I know of the Prophet Joseph and the scriptures which were revealed through him, I more often feel the love of God for His children and of His for me when I reach down to lift someone up” (“An Enduring Testimony of the Mission of the Prophet Joseph,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 92).



**An Example of Seeking and Receiving**

**President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency**

“The young Prophet Joseph Smith . . . was a teenager when he studied the scriptures. During this time a multitude of unanswered questions arose. He wondered, he pondered, he asked, and he received answers.

“Build your testimony the same way: Study the scriptures, increase your knowledge of the gospel, search for answers in the scriptures. If you have doubts or fears, invest the time and energy to find the answers in the scriptures and in the written words of our prophets. Contemplate, meditate, ponder, and pray.

“Go to our Heavenly Father in prayer; communicate with Him daily. Draw close to Him, and He will draw close to you. Ask about your studies of the scriptures, about your feelings and your questions, and He will answer. He is waiting, He is real, and He is there. Use the gift of the Holy Ghost. Believe in the power of prayer.

“It takes effort and time. Be patient; it is worth it. You can do it. You are not alone in this; others went through this before” (“Making Choices for Eternity,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2002, 28–29).

LEFT: LET HIM ASK OF GOD, BY JON McNAUGHTON; RIGHT: THE DESIRES OF MY HEART, BY WALTER RANE



**A Walk with the Prophet Joseph Smith**  
**President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

“At times in my life, during some deliberate and all too brief moments of reverie, study, and research, I have walked with the Prophet Joseph Smith—starting with him in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, thence on to Palmyra, to Kirtland, to Far West, later to Liberty, and ultimately from Nauvoo to Carthage. It was thrilling to journey through the pages of early Church history, the remarkably well-documented biography of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

“I commend this practice to all who esteem and honor this great man and prophet. In this way we can see him in moments of despair, but also in moments of exaltation. We can stand with him in an hour of triumph and yet see him weeping when he was bereft of loved ones, or in times of deep sorrow when friends turned from him—even his brethren, his close counselors. We can catch moments when he was jumping, or wrestling, or pulling sticks in good-natured fun; or join him where, as the master of an elegant home, he was sought out by the great of the world; or see him in a general’s uniform as a public figure, even a presidential candidate.

“Looking a little deeper into his countenance and his activities, we can see him, for instance, step forth in steadfastness to rebuke and correct, and at times see him humbled and corrected by the Almighty in the work he was assigned to do” (*Things of the Soul* [1996], 34–35).



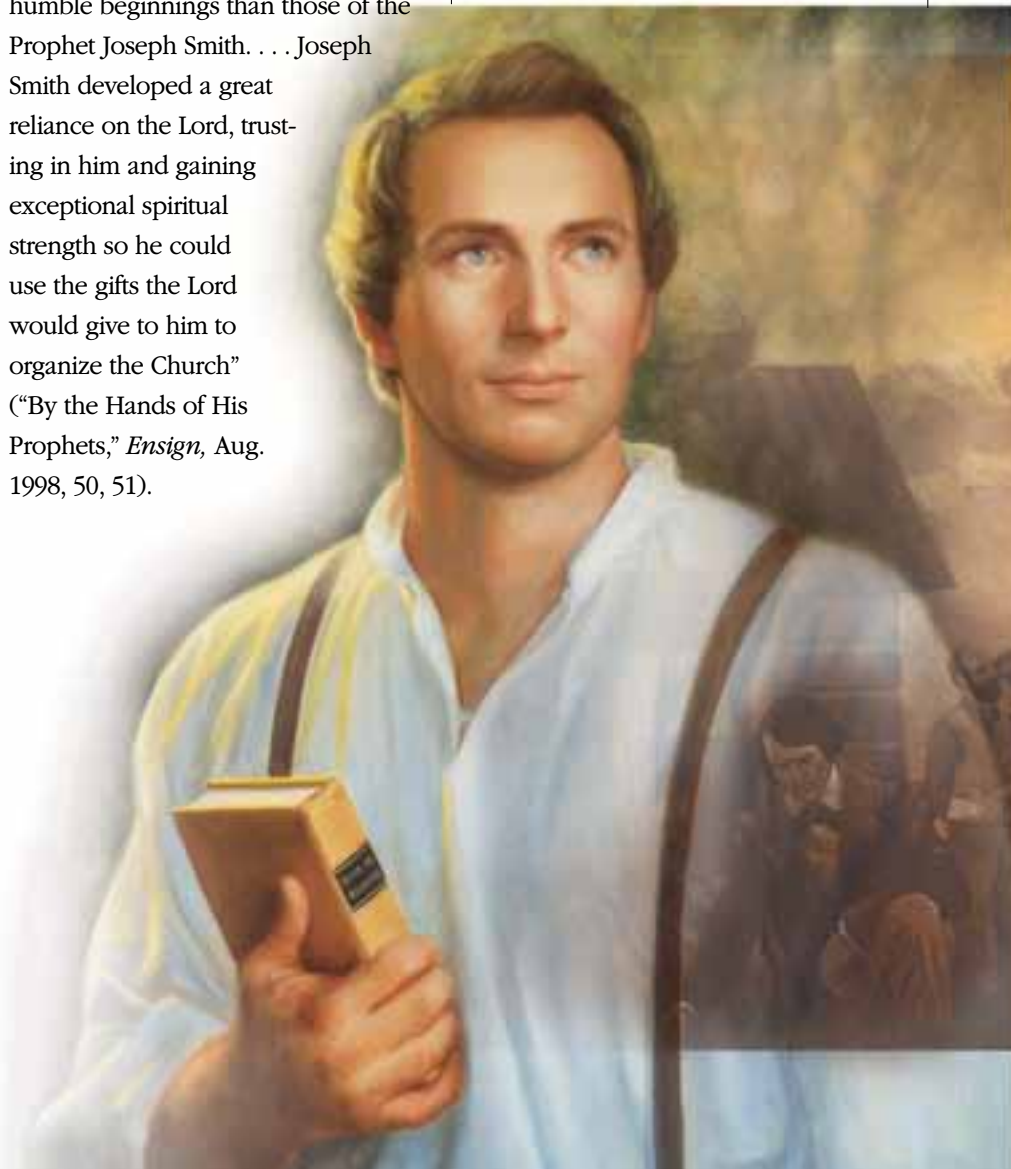
**Trust in the Lord**  
**Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

“The Lord needed a strong, vigorous young man who would be teachable. He needed someone he could mold into the leader who could bring forth the restoration of the gospel. The one foreordained for this great assignment was Joseph Smith. Out of weak things of the earth, the Lord created one with power and strength. Few prophets have come from more humble beginnings than those of the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . . Joseph Smith developed a great reliance on the Lord, trusting in him and gaining exceptional spiritual strength so he could use the gifts the Lord would give to him to organize the Church” (“By the Hands of His Prophets,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1998, 50, 51).



**The Reality of God’s Love**  
**Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

“God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, literally appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith in April 1820. While this may be relatively unknown in the annals of history, yet it constituted an epochal event in the history of humanity—a profound demonstration of the love of God for all of His children” (“Combating Spiritual Drift—Our Global Pandemic,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 104).







**A Reliance on Spiritual Gifts**

**Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

“Overarching the Prophet Joseph’s entire ministry was his comparative youth, his superficial formal education, and his incredibly rapid acquisition of knowledge and maturity. . . . The Prophet Joseph had no role models from whom he could learn how to be a prophet and leader of the Lord’s people. He learned from heavenly messengers and from the harvest of his unique spiritual gifts. He had to rely on associates who had no role models either. They struggled and learned together, and the Prophet’s growth was extremely rapid” (“Joseph, the Man and the Prophet,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 71, 72).



**Peace and Happiness in This Life**

**Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

“Those who have an unwavering testimony that Joseph Smith is a prophet of the living God know that he, in fact, received revelation from God. They know that those revelations contain all the instruction necessary for us to find peace and happiness in this life” (“What Came from Kirtland,” in *Brigham Young University 1994–95 Devotionals and Fireside Speeches* [1995], 50).

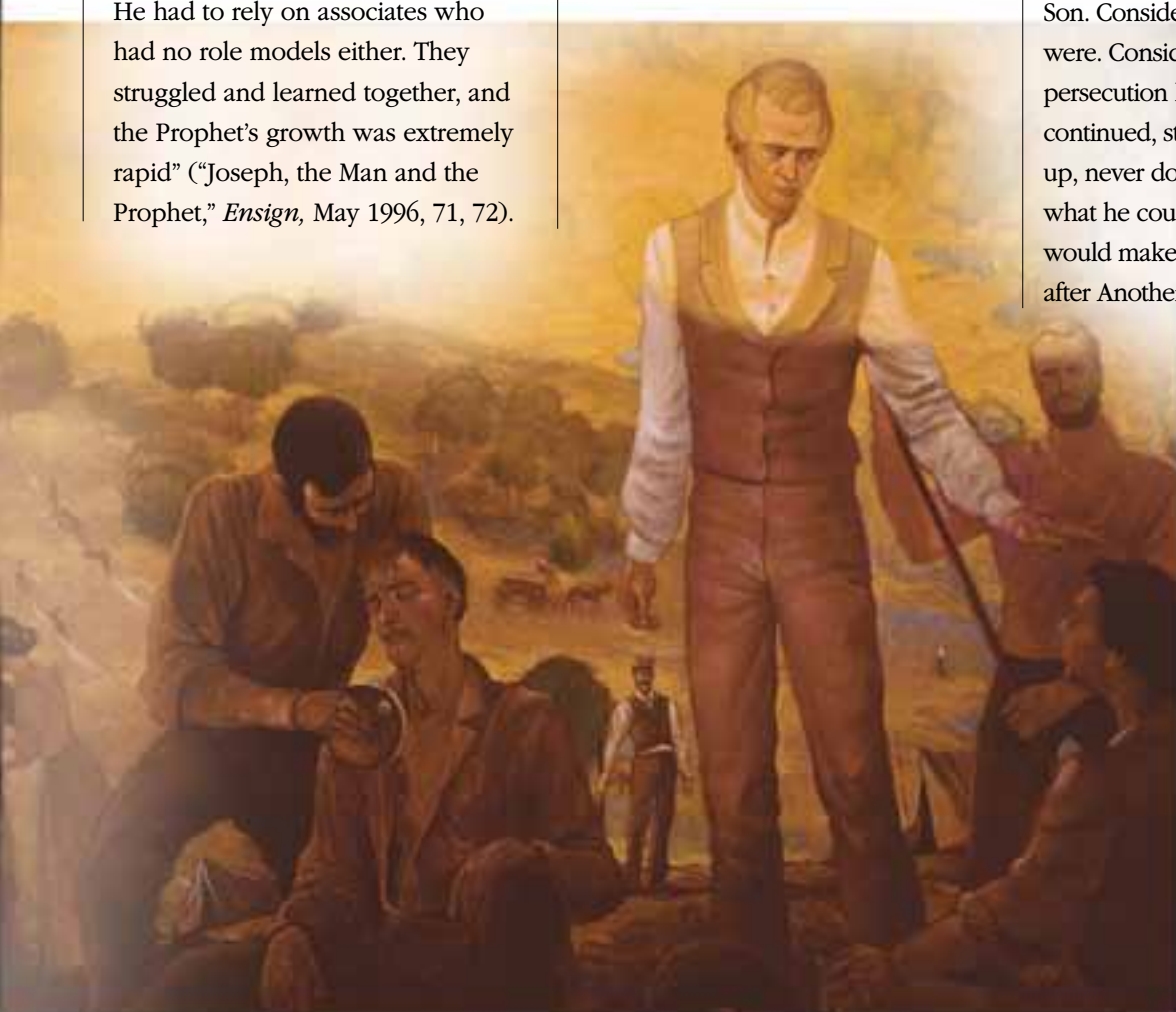


**Never Giving Up**

**Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

“The answer to [Joseph’s] prayer filled him with light and direction. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son appeared to him. Their direction swept away the thick darkness that had seized him and threatened to destroy him. It forever swept away his confusion.

“From that moment until his martyrdom nearly a quarter of a century later, Joseph Smith committed himself to the path shown him by the Father and the Son. Consider how painful his days were. Consider the suffering and the persecution he had to endure. Yet he continued, step by step, never giving up, never doubting that if he only did what he could, his Heavenly Father would make up the rest” (“One Step after Another,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 27).



LEFT: HEADING AT NAUVOO, BY GARY SMITH; FAR LEFT: PROPHET OF THE LORD, BY DAVID LINDSLEY



**A Book of Truths**  
**Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

“Try reading the Book of Mormon because you want to, not because you have to. Discover for yourself that it is true. As you read each page ask, ‘Could any man have written this book or did it come as Joseph Smith testified?’ Apply the teachings you learn. They will fortify you against the evil of Satan. Follow Moroni’s counsel. Sincerely ask God the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, with real intent, if the teachings of the Book of Mormon are true (see Moroni 10:3–5). Ask with a desire to receive a confirmation personally, nothing doubting. There has to be an explanation of that book you can hold in your hand. I know that you can receive a spiritual confirmation that it is true. You will then know that Jesus Christ lives, that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s Church. . . . You will confirm that the Savior guides His Church through a living prophet. These truths will become a foundation for your productive life” (“Realize Your Full Potential,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 42–43).



**A Pattern for Gaining Testimony**  
**Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

“Gaining a testimony and becoming converted begins with study and prayer, then living the gospel with patience and persistence and inviting and waiting upon the Spirit. The life of Joseph Smith and the pattern of the Restoration are excellent examples of this process. . . . Like Joseph, many of us find ourselves seeking the light of truth. Just as the world was prepared for the Restoration, each of us is prepared to receive the light of the gospel in our own lives” (“Receiving a Testimony of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 28–29).



**A Knowledge of Revelation**  
**Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

“Are the heavens open? Does God reveal His will to prophets and apostles as in days of old? That they are and that He does is the unflinching declaration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to all the world. And in that declaration lies the significance of Joseph Smith, the Prophet. . . .

“His life asked and answered the question ‘Do you believe God speaks to man?’ In all else that he accomplished in his brief 38 and a half years, Joseph left us above all else the resolute legacy of divine revelation—not a single, isolated revelation without evidence or consequence . . . but specific, documented, ongoing directions from God” (“Prophets, Seers, and Revelators,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 8).



RIGHT: MY SERVANT JOSEPH, BY LIZ LEMON SWINDIE; FAR RIGHT THIS PAGE: JOSEPH IN NAUVOO, 1840, BY THEODORE GORKA





**Lessons in Pondering the Scriptures**  
**Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

“The Prophet Joseph Smith provided an important guideline about pondering and reflecting upon the scriptures. He taught: ‘I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable?’ (*History of the Church*, 5:261). Thus, striving to understand the question that preceded a particular revelation, parable, or episode can assist us in obtaining a deeper understanding of the scriptures” (“Because We Have Them before Our Eyes,” *New Era*, Apr. 2006, 6).



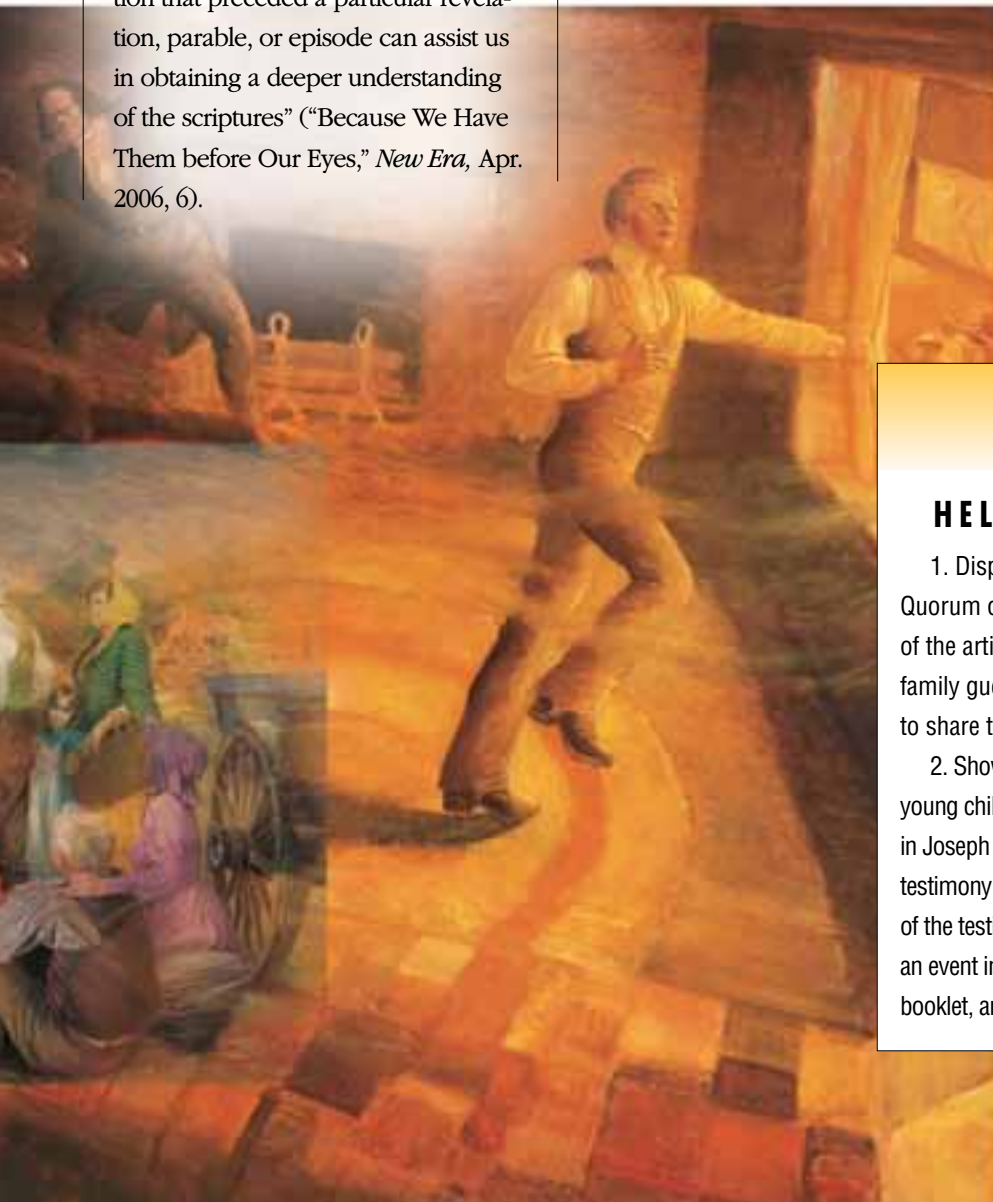
**A Foundation for Decisions**  
**Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

“The foundation for every important decision and choice you will make is your testimony of Jesus Christ and the restoration of His gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Book of Mormon is an essential element of that testimony” (“Strengthen Faith as You Seek Knowledge,” *New Era*, Sept. 2008, 2, 4).



**A Sure Knowledge of the Savior**  
**Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

“The Prophet Joseph could and did attest that Jesus lives, a resurrected, glorified person, because he saw Him and conversed with Him. He could and did attest that He is the very Son of God and that through His Atonement, we are redeemed, ‘begotten sons and daughters unto God’ (D&C 76:24) because God the Father personally declared it to Joseph. Joseph translated and published the most powerful and persuasive written testament of Jesus Christ in existence. And finally, the Prophet sealed this testimony with his own blood as a martyr” (BYU–Hawaii commencement address, June 18, 2005, available at [www.byuh.edu](http://www.byuh.edu) under “devotionals”). ■



MARTYRDOM OF JOSEPH AND HYRUM, BY GARY SMITH



## HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Display a picture of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Read the introduction of the article. As you read the testimonies, have your family guess who the author is. Invite family members to share their thoughts.
2. Show a picture of Joseph Smith. For families with young children, tell the story of the First Vision found in Joseph Smith—History 11–20. Conclude by bearing testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Summarize a few of the testimonies, and have your children draw a picture of an event in Joseph Smith’s life. Combine the pictures in a booklet, and have it available for family members to review.





# Joseph Smith

## An Apostle of Jesus Christ

BY ELDER DENNIS B. NEUENSCHWANDER  
Of the Seventy

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read that Joseph Smith was “called of God, and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:2). The call of an Apostle is first to witness or testify of Jesus Christ. Old Testament prophets testified of His coming. The New Testament Apostles bore personal witness of Christ’s being and of the absolute reality of His Resurrection. This apostolic witness was the basis of their teaching. “Ye shall be witnesses unto me” (Acts 1:8) was Jesus’s instruction to the original Twelve. Peter testified on the day of Pentecost to the Jews who had gathered “out of every nation” (Acts 2:5) that “this Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:32). Similarly, Paul wrote to the Corinthians that Jesus “was seen of me also” (1 Corinthians 15:8). The sure witness of Christ’s being and the reality of His Resurrection is the first pillar of apostolic testimony.

The second pillar is centered on the Savior’s redemptive and saving power. Peter teaches that to the Lord “give all the Prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

Without these twin pillars of testimony

concerning Christ, there could be no Apostle. Such testimonies are born of experience, divine command, and instruction. For example, Luke writes that Christ showed Himself to the Apostles “alive after his passion . . . being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

How does the Prophet Joseph Smith fit into these apostolic requirements? The answer is “Perfectly.”

### The First Vision

Joseph Smith’s apostolic instruction began in 1820. Pondering the questions of religion, he soon found that there was no way to reason or argue one’s opinion to an authoritative conclusion concerning the correctness of the various churches or their doctrines.



*The Prophet Joseph Smith was called of God as a witness of Christ’s reality and Resurrection and of His redemptive and saving power.*



**J**oseph's questions on religion were answered by the personal and physical manifestation of God the Father and His divine and living Son, Jesus Christ.

Short of a divine manifestation, young Joseph could add only one more opinion to the already existing “war of words and tumult of opinions” (Joseph Smith—History 1:10). But Joseph’s questions on religion were answered by the personal and physical manifestation of God the Father and His divine and living Son, Jesus Christ—an experience referred to as the First Vision.

Like that of the original Apostles, Joseph’s experience with Deity was direct and personal. There was no need for the opinion of others or the deliberations of a council to define what he saw or what it came to

mean to him. Joseph’s vision was at first an intensely personal experience—an answer to a specific question. Over time, however, illuminated by additional experience and instruction, it became the founding revelation of the Restoration.

As apostolic as this manifestation of Christ’s being, existence, and Resurrection was to Joseph Smith, it was not the only thing Jesus wanted to teach him. The boy Joseph’s first lesson arose from the manifestation of Christ’s absolute, omnipotent, and divine power. Joseph learned firsthand at least one meaning of the redeeming and saving power of Christ when he



prayed in the grove. As he began to pray, “Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction” (Joseph Smith—History 1:15). With every bit of energy Joseph had, he began to call upon God to deliver him from the grasp of this enemy.

“At the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction . . . , I saw a pillar of light. . . .

“It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

Joseph Smith’s confrontation with the adversary is reminiscent of an experience Moses had, about which the Prophet would learn some few years later. Unlike the boy Joseph, however, Moses saw God’s greatness first and then was confronted with the power of the adversary before being delivered from his influence. (See Moses 1.)

The difference in the order of events is significant. Moses was already far into maturity and had much knowledge and influence prior to this event. By displaying His magnificent power to Moses before he faced the adversary, the Lord helped Moses put his life into perspective. After experiencing God’s glory, Moses said, “Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed” (Moses 1:10). This incident enabled Moses to withstand the temptations of the adversary that followed.

Joseph Smith, on the other hand, was an inexperienced young man, who in his lifetime would repeatedly face adversarial power and the overwhelming problems it brings. By facing the adversary first, then being saved from his assault by the appearance of the Father and the Son, Joseph learned this indelible lesson: as great as the power of evil might be, it must always withdraw with the appearance of righteousness.

This lesson was critical in Joseph’s apostolic education. He needed this knowledge not only because of the personal trials that lay ahead of him but also because of the overwhelming opposition he would face in founding and directing the Church.

The boy Joseph went into the grove seeking wisdom, and wisdom he received. His apostolic instruction had begun. Among the great apostolic lessons of this First Vision were both the physical nature of the Savior and Heavenly Father and the initial and fundamental lessons relating to Their power—each a pillar of apostolic testimony.

### **The Book of Mormon**

Joseph Smith’s early apostolic instruction continued with his translation of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon gave Joseph access to “the fulness of the everlasting Gospel” (Joseph Smith—History 1:34), principles that were necessary to understand even prior to the organization of the Church. The Prophet was introduced to numerous “plain and most precious” (1 Nephi 13:26) prophetic and apostolic testimonies regarding the Savior, all of which served as models for him.

Indeed, the Book of Mormon prophets employ over 100 titles in their teachings of Christ, each of which helped Joseph understand the Savior’s divine role.<sup>1</sup> By virtue of these teachings, Joseph Smith became intimately acquainted with ancient prophets, giving him insight into the divine purpose of his responsibilities.

The Book of Mormon illuminates the universality of Christ’s Atonement. The Savior’s holy sacrifice is not confined to the borders of the Holy Land of His day or even restricted to the apostolic world of the original Twelve. The Atonement encompasses all of God’s creations—past, present, and future. What an impression Jacob’s teaching of the “infinite atonement” (2 Nephi 9:7) must have made on the mind of young Joseph, especially in contrast to Christian teachings at the time.

The Book of Mormon also introduces the universality of the Resurrection and other doctrines relating to it. Discourses on this doctrine by Lehi, Jacob, King Benjamin, Abinadi, Alma, Amulek, Samuel the Lamanite, and Moroni are all rich sources of instruction.

During the translation of the Book of Mormon, the Prophet received additional valuable personal instruction



**T**he Book of Mormon is the “keystone of our religion” because it contains so many prophetic testimonies of Christ and stands as a tangible witness of the Restoration.

concerning the redemptive and saving power of Christ. In 1828 Martin Harris persuaded Joseph to lend him the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript. When Martin Harris lost those pages, the Prophet felt an enormous despair.<sup>2</sup> His mother, Lucy Mack Smith, recorded that Joseph exclaimed: “Oh, my God! . . . All is lost! all is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned—it is I who tempted the wrath of God. . . . How shall I appear before the Lord? Of what rebuke am I not worthy from the angel of the Most High?”<sup>3</sup>

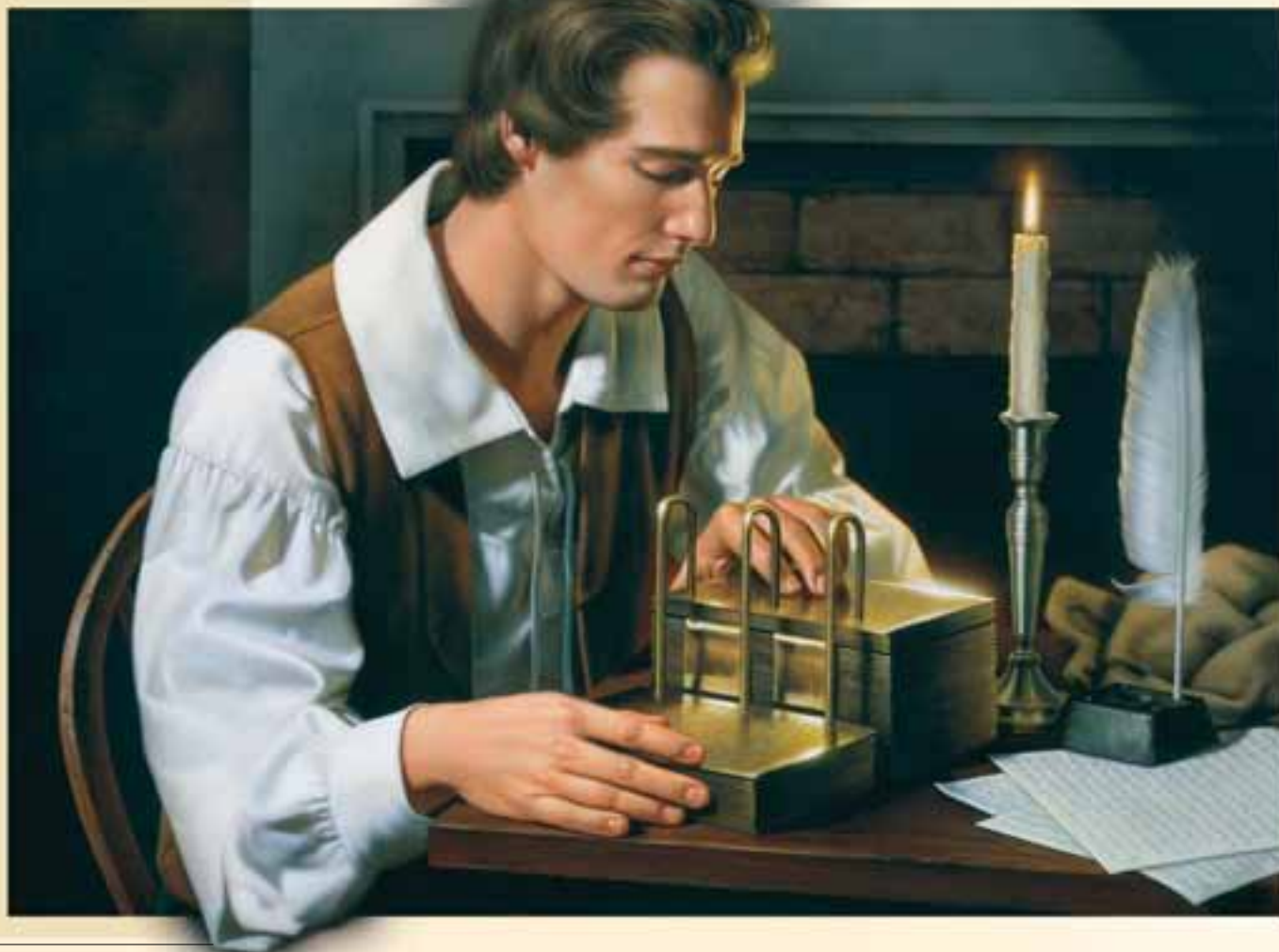
For well over a month the Lord left Joseph in this terrible condition of remorse.<sup>4</sup>

Then came relief and the apostolic lesson. The Lord told Joseph:

“The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught. . . .

“For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him” (D&C 3:1, 4).

These words carefully describe what Joseph Smith had been experiencing. He had learned the exacting nature of the apostolic



call and to whom the Apostle, at all cost, owes his loyalty. “Although men set at naught the counsels of God, and despise his words,” Joseph was told, “yet you should have been faithful” (D&C 3:7–8). Joseph Smith had lost access to the plates for a season and had been taught an invaluable lesson. Subsequently, the plates were returned, and his position as translator restored.

How critical were the lessons provided by the translation of the Book of Mormon as Joseph Smith grew in his apostolic calling! The Book of Mormon is the “keystone of our religion”<sup>5</sup> because it contains so many prophetic testimonies of Christ and stands as a tangible witness of the Restoration.

### **Continuing Revelation and Scripture**

After finishing the translation of the Book of Mormon in 1829 and organizing the Church in 1830, Joseph Smith had the opportunity to receive continuing apostolic education through the process of translating other scripture. This included three years of translating the Bible and, beginning in 1835, translating the book of Abraham. Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible expanded his understanding of the role of Old Testament prophets and New Testament Apostles. It also resulted in additional revelation, namely the book of Moses.

The book of Moses provided the Prophet with important knowledge about the Savior’s ministry, including His role in the Creation. “The Lord spake unto Moses, saying: . . . I am the Beginning and the End, the Almighty God; by mine Only Begotten I created these things” (Moses 2:1). Further, He said, “And worlds without number have I created; . . . and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten” (Moses 1:33).

The book of Moses clarified Christ’s relationship to the Father in the premortal existence and reinforced the Prophet’s understanding of the ascendant power of righteousness. One of the most beautiful of all the apostolic lessons that came to Joseph Smith in this revelation was the confirmation of God’s love. It was so different from the harsh, unforgiving, and judgmental personage

so many believed God to be; the book of Moses reveals a God of infinite compassion. Enoch saw that the “God of heaven . . . wept” (Moses 7:28) over those who would not receive Him. Wishing to know how it was possible, Enoch was given an answer that has a familiar biblical feel to it: “I [have] given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father. . . . Wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?” (Moses 7:33, 37; see also Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37–39).

Through the translation of the book of Moses, the Prophet also became more acquainted with the redeeming and saving power of the Savior. As the Lord said, this earth was created “by the word of my power” (Moses 1:32) for the purpose of bringing “to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Many long years before the Savior taught Thomas and the Twelve that “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6), He revealed to Moses that “this is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time” (Moses 6:62).

The First Vision in the grove, the translation of the Book of Mormon, the revision of the Bible, the revelation of the book of Moses, and the translation of the book of Abraham laid the basic foundation of the Church, largely through the rapidly expanding knowledge and testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith relating to Jesus Christ.

Revelations given to him and compiled in the Doctrine and Covenants contain a wealth of knowledge concerning the Savior. One could research the numerous topics and cross-references of the Topical Guide and Guide to the Scriptures referring to Jesus Christ and still not understand the breadth of information on the Savior that the Prophet Joseph Smith brought to the world. I am grateful to know that Jesus was “in the beginning with the Father” (D&C 93:21). I am grateful to know that He “suffered these things for [me], that [I] might not suffer if [I] would repent” (D&C 19:16).



**I** am so grateful for the revelations that teach me that the Savior's Atonement reaches to those who have lived, loved, served, and hoped for a better day yet never heard of Jesus or had the opportunity to embrace His gospel.

### **My Testimony of What the Prophet Revealed**

I am grateful for yet one other thing about the Savior's ministry that stirs my soul deeply. From studying the promises of Malachi, Moroni's initial visit with Joseph, the Savior's words to the Nephites, and the visit of Elijah in the Kirtland Temple, I learn that God loves His children and has provided a way for each to return to Him. I know of no doctrine more just, no teaching that gives more hope than that of redemption of the dead. I am so grateful for the revelations that teach me that the



Savior's Atonement reaches to those who have lived, loved, served, and hoped for a better day yet never heard of Jesus or had the opportunity to embrace His gospel. This knowledge alone would be sufficient to convert me to the gospel if I knew nothing else at all. Here, at least for me, is the ultimate testimony of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice.

What, then, can be said of the incomparable saving power of Christ? That which Joseph Smith learned in the Sacred Grove about the power of righteousness overcoming evil foreshadows the final scene. So reveals the Lord:

"I, having accomplished and finished the will of him whose I am, even the Father, concerning me—having done this that I might subdue all things unto myself—

"Retaining all power, even to the destroying of Satan and his works at the end of the

world, and the last great day of judgment" (D&C 19:2–3).

Our own testimonies of the Savior are framed by the testimony and teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Is it any wonder then that the Prophet taught that "the fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it."<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Smith's apostolic testimony of the divine reality and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as well as his knowledge of the redemptive and saving power of the Savior, can best be seen by the Prophet's own beautiful, powerful, and succinct witness:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:22–24).

How grateful I am for the apostolic call of Joseph Smith. ■

*Adapted from a presentation to the Seventy.*

### **NOTES**

1. See *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (2003), 457–58.
2. See Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley (1958), 128–29.
3. *History of Joseph Smith*, 128, 129.
4. The 116 pages were lost in June 1828. In July Joseph Smith received what is now section 3 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In September the plates were returned to the Prophet. See the historical introductions to D&C 3; 10.
5. *History of the Church*, 4:461.
6. *History of the Church*, 3:30.

# Drawn to the Temple

*When Aric Finucane learned that he could enter the Washington D.C. Temple by joining the Church, he embraced the gospel with a determination to receive his endowment.*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL R. MORRIS

**BY MICHAEL R. MORRIS**  
Church Magazines

**A**s a child, Aric Finucane couldn't help but notice the Washington D.C. Temple towering over the Capital Beltway. Its inviting luminescence above I-495, after all, is hard to ignore.

"I often wondered about the large castle-like building that seemed to rise up out of nowhere as I would ride with

my parents around the beltway," Aric says. "At some point I learned that in order to enter that beautiful building, I had to be a member of the LDS Church. I was under the impression that the only way to become a Latter-day Saint was to be born into the Church or to marry into the Church. I wasn't born into the Church, and I thought my chances of finding and marrying a Mormon girl were pretty unlikely. So I was fairly confident I would never enter the temple."



**W**hile waiting in the temple visitors' center before a fire-side, Aric experienced a prompting. "I saw a man across the room I knew I had to meet," he says.

Many people drawn to the temple are more optimistic about entering it, says William H. Child, director of the temple visitors' center. But they're disappointed when they learn that they can't just walk in. "We tell them they can enter, but first they have to get baptized and live temple standards."

Aric was one of those who chose to get baptized and prepare himself for the temple. A student of both Western and Eastern religious philosophies who enjoyed "spiritual conversation" as he grew older, Aric

accepted an invitation in December 2004 to attend the Festival of Lights program at the temple visitors' center. Upon entering the center, he approached two sister missionaries.

"They shared a message that made an impression on me," Aric recalls. When they asked him to fill out a referral card so they might teach him more about the Church and its doctrines, Aric hesitated.

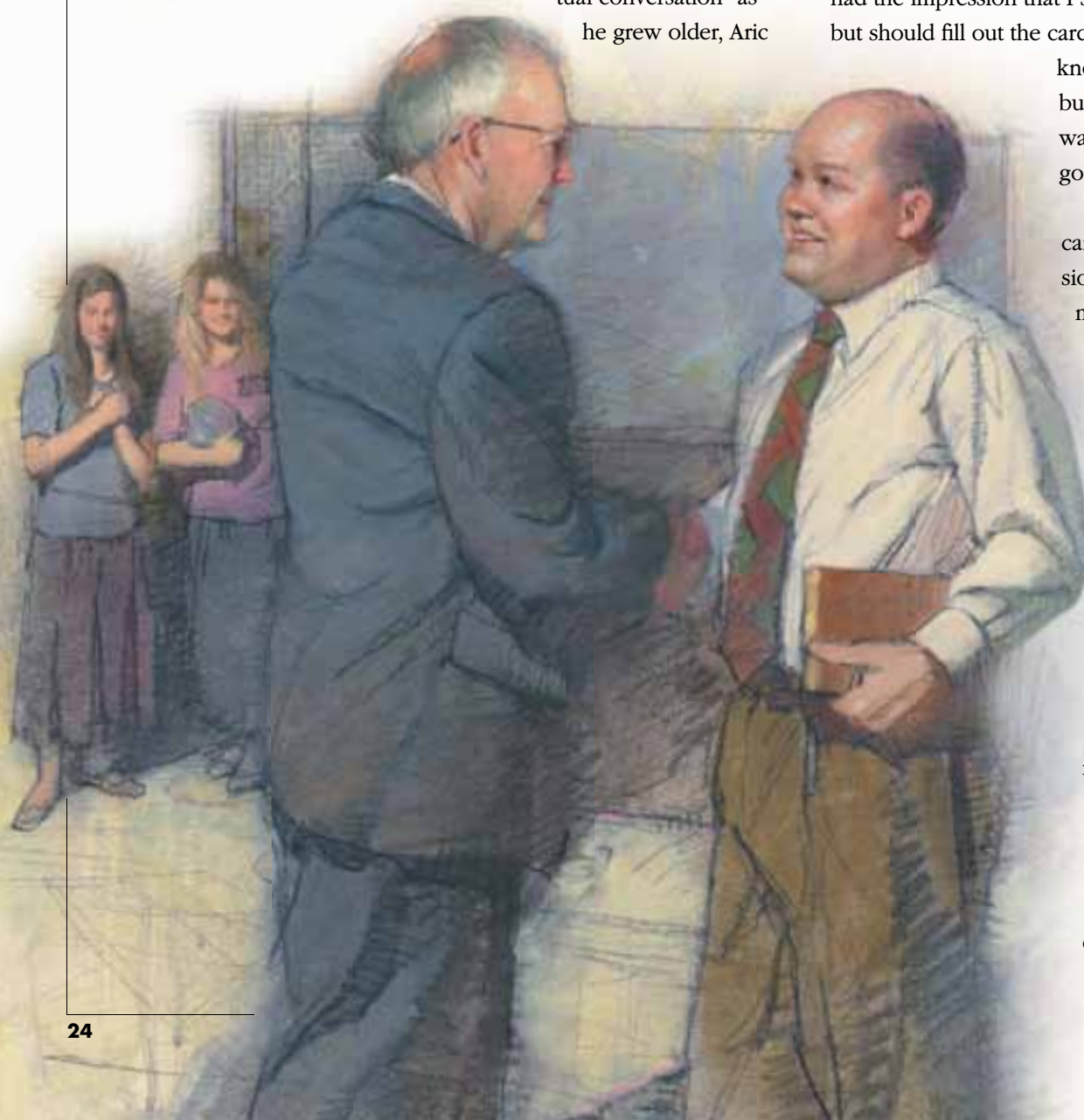
"I went outside, looked at the lights, and had the impression that I should not wait but should fill out the card," he says. "I didn't know it at the time, but the Holy Ghost was prompting me to go back in."

He turned in the card, and the missionaries soon began meeting him in the visitors' center.

During his first discussion, they asked him to read aloud from the Book of Mormon.

"As I read I found that my dyslexia did not bother me, which I found odd," he says. He experienced a bigger surprise during his second discussion.

"I learned that I



could become a member!” he says. “That was a big surprise because I believed that the missionaries were only teaching me about Latter-day Saint beliefs so that I might understand them better. I’m glad I was wrong.”

By embracing the gospel and joining the Church, Aric realized, he would be able to enter the temple. “All my life I had believed that was not an option,” he says. Learning that he could become a member “was an experience of joy and happiness. Once I learned that I could go to the temple, I was determined to do whatever I had to do to go.”

#### **“Why Aren’t You Baptized?”**

While taking the missionary discussions, Aric attended a “Why I Believe” fireside at the visitors’ center, where he experienced another prompting.

“While I was waiting in the lobby before the meeting, I saw a man across the room I knew I had to meet,” he says. “I crossed the room and was greeted by President William Price,” then serving as president of the Washington D.C. North Mission.

“Are you the new ward mission leader?” President Price asked him.

“No, I’m the investigator,” Aric said.

“Why aren’t you baptized?” President Price asked.

When Aric replied that he still had two missionary discussions to go, President Price encouraged him to have the sisters present both discussions one right after the other.

Five weeks after his first discussion, Aric was baptized. Six months later, he had an experience that strengthened his resolve to continue preparing himself to enter the temple.

“I was going to pick up a friend at the temple and was frustrated that she could

enter and I couldn’t,” he recalls. “I decided to go for a walk around the temple and wait for her, and as I got close to the temple I felt as if a fog had lifted off of me. My frustration and disappointment began to disappear. I had been influenced by Satan, but he was unable to disturb me as I got closer to the temple. I realized that I would always have the capacity to feel better by going to the temple.”

#### **Blessed By the Temple**

On June 6, 2006, a year and a day after his confirmation, Aric entered the temple and received his endowment. “It was one of the most enjoyable experiences I have ever had,” he says. “I was filled with peace and joy.”

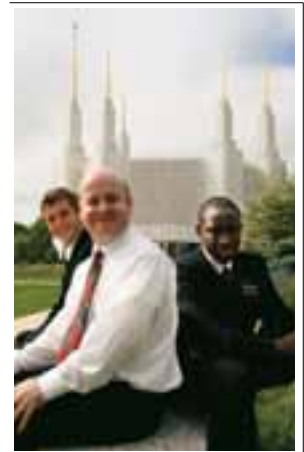
He felt so blessed by the experience that he has returned to the temple as often as possible, performing more than 100 endowments during his second year as a Latter-day Saint.

“When I come to the temple, my joy and happiness are renewed, and I have the opportunity and privilege to help those who can’t help themselves,” says Aric. “The temple regenerates my strength to do good.”

For Aric, doing good includes researching his family history and serving in his ward’s Primary, where he teaches children about the importance of the temple.

“There is an aura about the temple, and it isn’t just because of its beauty,” says Elder F. Melvin Hammond, formerly of the Seventy and recently released president of the Washington D.C. Temple. “A power generates from it, and it falls upon everyone in the area, members and nonmembers alike. The temple changes people and blesses their lives.”

Aric agrees. Joining the Church with the goal of entering the temple, he says, “has been the best decision of my life.” ■



**T***he temple regenerates my strength to do good,” says Aric, pictured with Elders Craig S. Holbrook and Theophile T. Hitimana, of the Washington D.C. North Mission.*



# Faith to Ford the

*“He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy” (Psalm 18:16–17).*

BY ADAM C. OLSON  
Church Magazines

Rafael Mateo and his son, Whalincon (known as “Whally”), paused in the darkness of a stormy afternoon and eyed the rushing waters of the rain-swollen river. Rafael, first counselor in the branch presidency, and Whally, the branch elders quorum president, were returning home after a Sunday full of meetings at their chapel in San José de Ocoa in the Dominican Republic.

They were already drenched from trudging through the downpour and crossing the flooded Río Ocoa that created a dangerous barrier between the chapel and their home. During the dry season, the 6-kilometer (4-mile) hike descending from the chapel on one side of the valley then up to their home on the heights of the other side usually takes an hour. But when the river floods during the rainy season, Rafael and his family have to take a three-hour, 15-kilometer (9-mile) detour to find a place where they can ford the river with some degree of safety.

Rafael had completed the journey countless times before. He had crossed the river every day for 12 years to get to work. Being called two months after his baptism to serve as branch president, a calling he held for six years, only increased the number of trips. After that it was a call as elders quorum president. Then he was called back into the branch presidency.

But familiarity with the river didn’t diminish its danger, and the swift water of the flooded rivers could be as deadly as the wide river they fed. Not long before, an overflowing river had swept a neighbor off his feet, killing him in a mad rush down its narrow course.

Father and son hesitated at the water’s edge; then Rafael stepped in. The river was not wide, but because it

channeled so much water, it was cut surprisingly deep. The cold, swift water first pulled at his knees, then his waist, and soon swirled about his chest.

Rafael knew he was in trouble. The streambed was slippery and uneven, and the powerful current threatened to steal his footing. Halfway across, he used all his strength to stay upright, and he found himself powerless to move forward or backward.

Just when he thought he was too weak to fight the flood any longer, he felt a push from behind that thrust him toward the opposite bank. It wasn’t until after he had reached the other side that he realized his savior hadn’t been Whally, who was still on the opposite side.

He attributes his rescue to the power of the same Savior who has helped him survive the threatening pull of other trials, both physical and spiritual.

“I’ve had to throw myself many times into the river up to my chest in the service of the Lord,” says Brother Mateo. “But I feel a great debt to the Lord. He has given me not only the opportunity to serve Him but the endurance.”

Like King David, Brother Mateo knows the Savior “took me, he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy” (Psalm 18:16–17).

That testimony has carried him through trials more subtle than, but just as real as, crossing the river that stormy afternoon with Whally.

Despite the cost of the trip, Brother Mateo; his wife, Altagracia; and three of their children were sealed in the temple in 2001. Since then they have sacrificed to save enough to visit the temple at least twice each year.

The work and the sacrifices, both physical and spiritual, are worth it to Brother Mateo.

“It’s not hard when you know what the purpose is,” he says. “We’re fighting for something more sublime than wordly things.” ■

# River

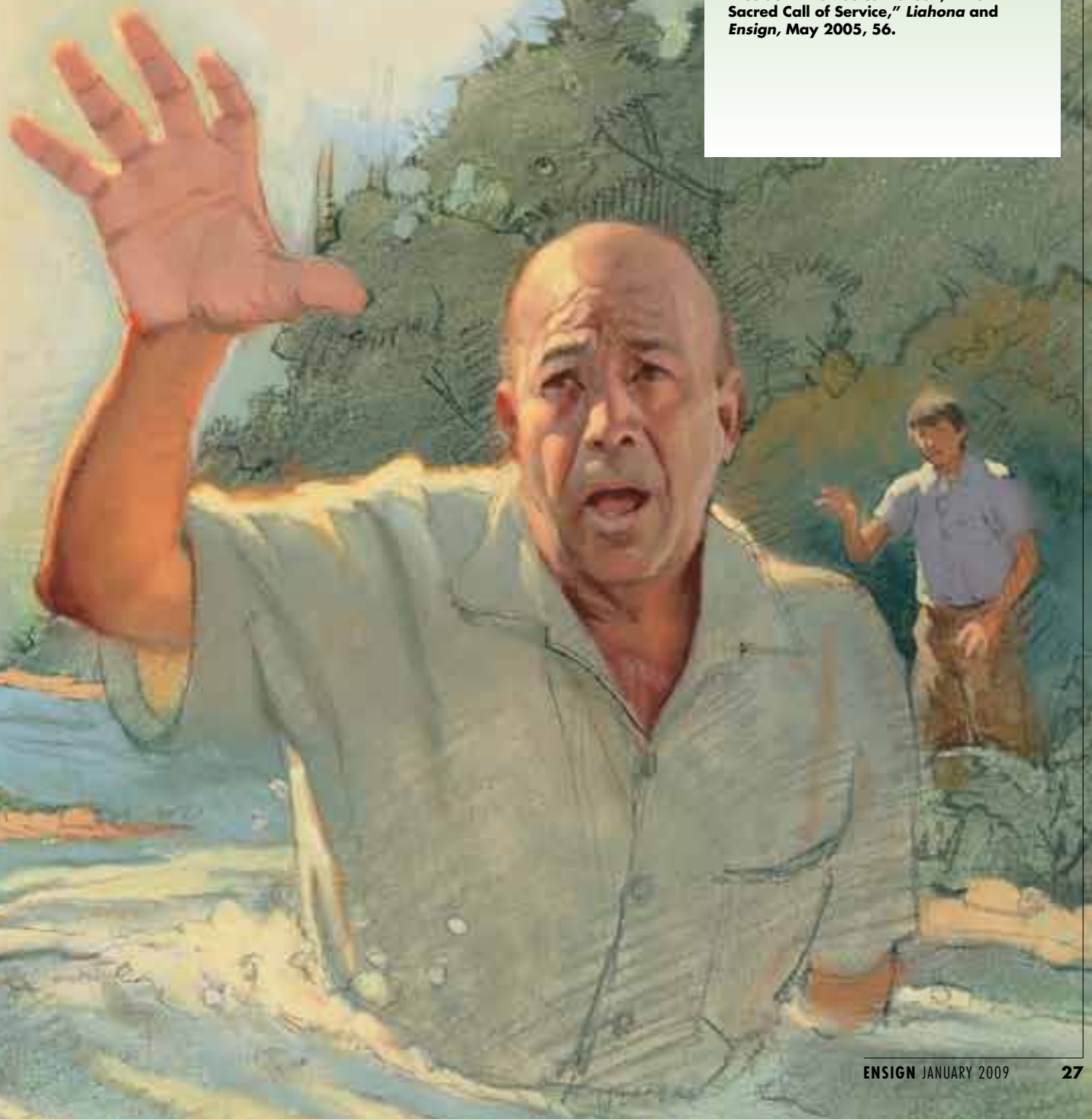


## ENTITLED TO THE LORD'S HELP

*"Remember that  
this work is not  
yours and mine  
alone. It is the*

*Lord's work, and when we are on the  
Lord's errand, . . . we are entitled to  
the Lord's help."*

**President Thomas S. Monson, "The  
Sacred Call of Service," *Liahona* and  
*Ensign*, May 2005, 56.**





# Confidence in the Presence of God

BY ELDER MICHAEL JOHN U. TEH

Of the Seventy



*As we increase our faith and commitment, we will draw nearer to our Father in Heaven.*

The story of the Prophet Joseph Smith seeking to know which church to join amid the “contests of . . . parties of religionists” (Joseph Smith—History 1:11) is a story of inspiration and hope for all honest seekers of truth. What a relief it must have been to Joseph—an obscure boy of 14 with a simple question and an honest desire—to read the following passage from the Bible: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

This passage provides a great insight into the kind of relationship each of us should have with our Father in Heaven. Indeed, this verse expresses the tender mercies and inclinations of our loving Father toward a son who came to Him with a question. The Father does not generally answer prayers with visions, as He did in the Sacred Grove, but He does provide answers that bring much comfort and peace. Such is His promise to us—to give liberally and not upbraid, or chastise.

As a young boy, I had several opportunities to put this promise to the test. I testify

that the promise is sure. Whether I lost a toy or a coin or any other precious possession that may seem of no consequence to adults, Heavenly Father answered my prayers and put my mind at ease. I recall distinctly the confidence I had that an answer would come. Such is the faith of a young boy. Such was the faith of the young Joseph Smith.

Such faith is consistent with the conditions under which prayers are answered, as the following passage outlines: “Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (James 1:6).

As I grew older, I found that unwavering faith became increasingly difficult to exercise. The world plants seeds of doubt and prejudice in our minds and hearts. Hence, the Savior’s admonition that we “become as little children” (Matthew 18:3) has for me become a lifelong quest. I find that faith “as a grain of mustard seed” (Matthew 17:20) is within my reach at times but far from my reach at other times.

How can we consistently exercise this kind of faith? The following counsel provides insight into this righteous pursuit: “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more





light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24).

This is the process that the Prophet Joseph Smith went through. Like others before him, he proved himself by consistently exercising faith and the righteous use of agency over time. He continued in God, received more light, and that light grew brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

One incident in the Prophet’s life had a powerful influence on me as a young man:

“At a late hour of the night Joseph was lying down and slumbering heavily from weariness. . . . A few moments later an infuriated mob burst the door open and . . . seized him and were dragging him from the house when Emma screamed. . . .

“ . . . A group gathered . . . to hold a council. . . . After the council was concluded, the leading mobocrats declared that they would not kill him but would strip him naked and whip and tear his flesh. . . . They thrust a reeking tar paddle into his face and attempted to force it down his throat. . . .

“After they left Joseph, he attempted to rise, but fell back again from pain and exhaustion. He succeeded, however, in tearing the tar away from his face so that he could breathe freely. . . .

“Securing some covering for his person, the Prophet entered the house, and spent the night in cleansing his body and dressing his wounds. . . .

“The next morning, being the Sabbath,

**T**he Savior’s admonition that we “become as little children” has for me become a life-long quest.



**B**ecause Joseph Smith sought wisdom in the Sacred Grove and exercised diligence afterward, we enjoy the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

the people assembled at the usual hour of worship. With them came some of the mobbers. . . .

“With his flesh all bruised and scarred, Joseph went to the meeting and stood before the congregation, facing his assailants of the previous night calmly and manfully. He preached a powerful sermon and on the same day baptized three believers into the Church.”<sup>1</sup>

I cannot begin to imagine the pain and discomfort the Prophet Joseph must have endured. He had ample excuse not to preach the following morning, but this and many other experiences of similar or worse consequence did not cause him to shrink from his responsibility. How, then, can we feel justified if we shrink from our duty because of a minor discomfort or inconvenience?

As we increase our faith and commitment, we will draw nearer to our Father in Heaven.

“Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall answer, Here I am” (Isaiah 58:9).

“Then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

“. . . And without compulsory means it

shall flow unto thee forever and ever” (D&C 121:45–46).

It is a privilege for me to testify that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. Because he sought wisdom in the Sacred Grove and exercised diligence afterward, we enjoy the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The following tribute by President John Taylor (1808–87), written when he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, eloquently describes what the Prophet Joseph Smith did for all of us: “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. . . . He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord’s anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood” (D&C 135:3).

May we consistently use our agency wisely and, like the Prophet Joseph Smith, exercise unwavering faith regardless of our circumstances so that our confidence may “wax strong in the presence of God.” ■

**NOTE**

1. George Q. Cannon, *Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (1986), 133–35; see also *History of the Church*, 1:261–64.



# Peaches, Pruning, and Spiritual Progress

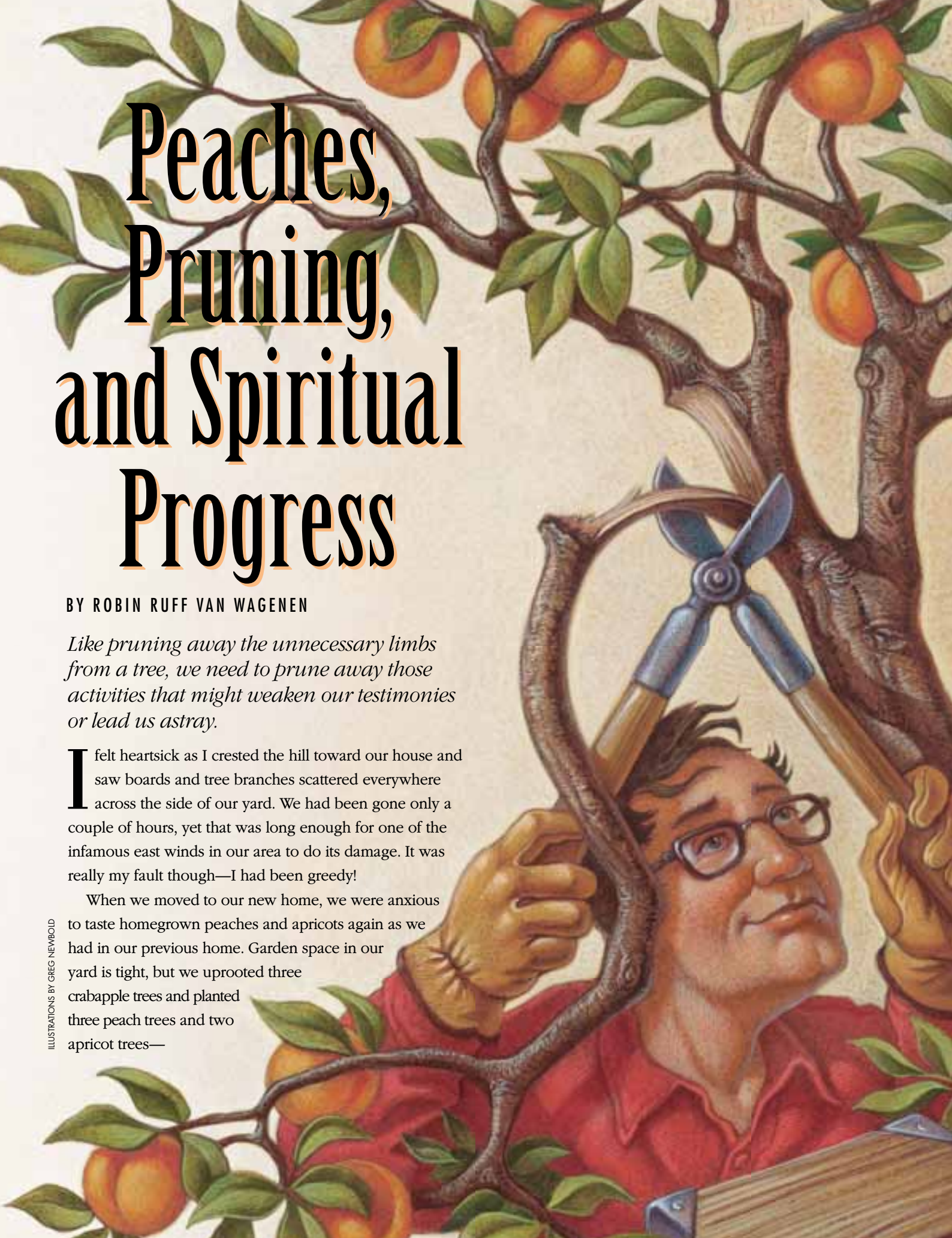
BY ROBIN RUFF VAN WAGENEN

*Like pruning away the unnecessary limbs from a tree, we need to prune away those activities that might weaken our testimonies or lead us astray.*

I felt heartsick as I crested the hill toward our house and saw boards and tree branches scattered everywhere across the side of our yard. We had been gone only a couple of hours, yet that was long enough for one of the infamous east winds in our area to do its damage. It was really my fault though—I had been greedy!

When we moved to our new home, we were anxious to taste homegrown peaches and apricots again as we had in our previous home. Garden space in our yard is tight, but we uprooted three crabapple trees and planted three peach trees and two apricot trees—

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GREG NEWBOLD







## HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

much too closely together. We waited anxiously for a couple of years for them to grow big enough to start bearing fruit.

This year was going to be our first bumper crop. The beautiful array of blossoms and warmer days boded well. In my mind I could already taste the cool juice of a sweet, fresh peach.

Earlier in the spring my husband, Bob, had asked if he should prune the trees. He said that it would be an advantage to both the trees and the fruit to be pruned. A couple of kindly neighbors even offered their

assistance if we needed any pruning help. But I said no to them all. I didn't want to give up any potential peach to pruning shears. I wanted plenty for canning and eating fresh.

As the branches grew bigger, Bob suggested we knock off some of the smaller peaches so the branches would have an easier time holding the fruit. Again I protested and persuaded him to leave them alone. Soon it was obvious the branches could not hold the bumper crop, so Bob put boards under the branches to hold up the sagging limbs. We crossed our fingers in hopes that we could harvest the fruit in time.

And then the winds came and did their devastating work in the space of just a few minutes. As I surveyed the damage, I found that several of the largest branches had been torn from the trunk and lay on the ground with greenish-orange peaches clinging to the broken limbs. The boards that had been propping the branches for several weeks were strewn across the yard like giant toothpicks.

It occurred to me that our own growth can be much like the growth of these trees. In order to be as healthy as possible and bear the best fruit they can, fruit trees have to be pruned by cutting out the unnecessary limbs. They have to be shaped and molded to withstand the wind and the weight of their own fruit. As I learned, not doing this can be disastrous.

The limbs of a tree are like all the possible actions we can accomplish in our lives. To gain a testimony and accomplish our eternal goals in this life, we have to prune away those

1. Draw a large picture of a tree with many branches. Have family members label the branches with activities in which the family participates. Read the story together. Discuss which family activities might weaken our testimonies or lead us astray. Use scissors to cut off the branches and discuss how pruning can make us stronger.

2. Share the story of Sister Van Wagenen. Have your family search the scriptures to see how many times pruning and trees are used. Ask how the idea of pruning is represented in the scriptures. Read paragraphs seven and eight, and discuss how they apply to you individually and as a family.

activities that might weaken our testimonies or lead us astray. Children, like these young trees, need parents' guidance and correction as they grow.

The challenge for parents is that when children are young we may tire of the constant need to gently correct them and help them keep on course. For whatever reason, we may hesitate to discipline them or we may not allow them to suffer the consequences of their actions when this is needed.

In Doctrine and Covenants 136:31, the Lord says, "My people must be

tried in all things, that they may be prepared to receive the glory that I have for them, even the glory of Zion; and he that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom."

I now wonder how the Lord is pruning me. Am I learning the lessons he wants me to learn? Am I bearing fruit worthy of Him? Do I see and appreciate the guidance of the Master's hand in my life? Do I let go of what is unnecessary or sinful in my life and keep only what is good?

Last spring I finally allowed Bob to prune our trees. I shed a tear as he lopped off many of the remaining branches. I bit my tongue later as he carefully went out and thinned some of the fruit off the tree. I didn't think there was enough wood left to even bear fruit. However, many peaches did start to grow on the few remaining limbs. They were not great in number, but they were the largest, sweetest peaches we have ever had.

As my children are leaving for missions and for school, I see how this analogy applies to their lives. Through gospel teachings in the home, examples of Church leaders, occasional "pruning" episodes, and learning through their own experiences, they have grown strong branches and are beginning to bear wonderful fruit, even in ways I never expected. How grateful I am for a loving Heavenly Father who prunes us and helps us tend our gardens, so we may literally see the "fruits" of our labors. ■







# My Guilt Was Swept Away

BY GEORGE D. DURRANT

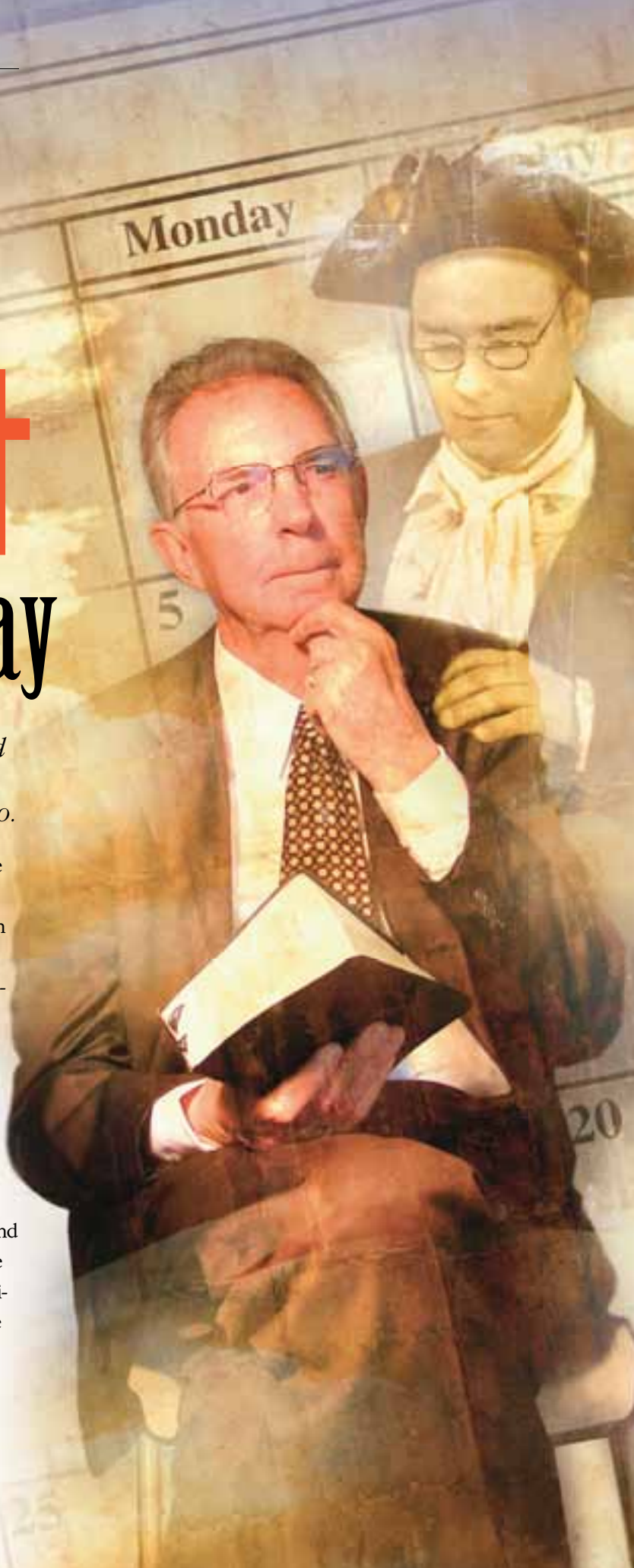
*I left the family history class upset. I felt I had done enough, yet a stirring within my soul told me there was something more I could do.*

A couple of years ago in a Sunday school class, the teacher encouraged us to do our family history research. He directed the message to everyone in the class, but I felt singled out. I felt I had done my duty and more. My family lines were traced back as far as possible; there was no more I could do.

I left the class upset. I felt I had books to write and pictures to paint and just did not want to give all my twilight years to family history work. I felt I had done enough, yet a stirring within my soul told me there was something more I could do.

I knew I could not rationalize away my guilt. I was not at peace. As my mind raced back and forth, I recalled a friend with whom I had served on a family history committee. She had told me to set aside a specific time each week and dedicate it to family history research and that I would become more effective in the other things I did. I liked this sister, but I didn't want to believe what she told me.

Then, as I sat there stewing, I had a quiet and simple revelation: To do family history research I did not need







to give up writing or painting. I just needed to spend each Monday morning from 8:00 a.m. until noon doing the work. That would still give me time to paint, write, perform my work as a temple sealer, and attend a temple endowment session each week.

I decided it was time to give in and rid myself of this lingering guilt. I looked across the room and saw Brother Ricks, one of our ward family history consultants. He had some experience in research and had offered to help me many times.

I told him my feelings and desires, and he agreed to help me every Monday morning. As I drove home that Sunday, I remembered that my mother once sent money to a researcher in England to work on her family line, the Mayne line, but he never could find her third great-grandfather's marriage or birthplace. So I decided to begin my research there, determined to give it my best.

At our first meeting I showed Brother Ricks the Mayne line. When we began searching, we knew my third great-grandfather, George, had lived many years in Wath, Yorkshire, England, but there was no record of his birth or marriage there. Parish records showed that William, my second great-grandfather, had a father named George, whose wife was named Mary, but we did not have her last name.

We approximated a marriage date around 1785. We entered a general search for George Mayne and found a

listing for a George Mayen married to a Mary Holdridge in 1781. Since *Mayen* is a common misspelling of *Mayne*, we pursued the lead. The record stated they had been married in Northallerton, Yorkshire. We looked at a map and found that Northallerton was within 20 miles of Wath. We were also intrigued because we knew George was married to a Mary.

We then found a Mary Holdridge in the International Genealogical Index who had been christened in Wath and realized we had likely found our George and Mary.

We learned that the Northallerton parish records had not yet been extracted, so the next Monday we went to the Church Family History Library in Salt Lake City and looked through the microfiche records, where I was thrilled to find the marriage of George Mayen to Mary Holdridge. Brother Ricks also searched christening records and found the births of George and four of his siblings to George Mayen and Catherine Aston. And then I found *their* marriage!

I think these people are the ones who made me feel guilty when I refused to get involved! Now that they are found, other ancestors will probably leave me feeling a bit restless as well. But I will continue to devote my Monday mornings to family history research. Somehow I just feel better about life and my self-worth. My guilt has been swept away, replaced by excitement and love. ■



BY DIANE TERRY WOOLF

*After my husband died suddenly, I looked at my five children and my future and asked the Lord one question: "How?"*

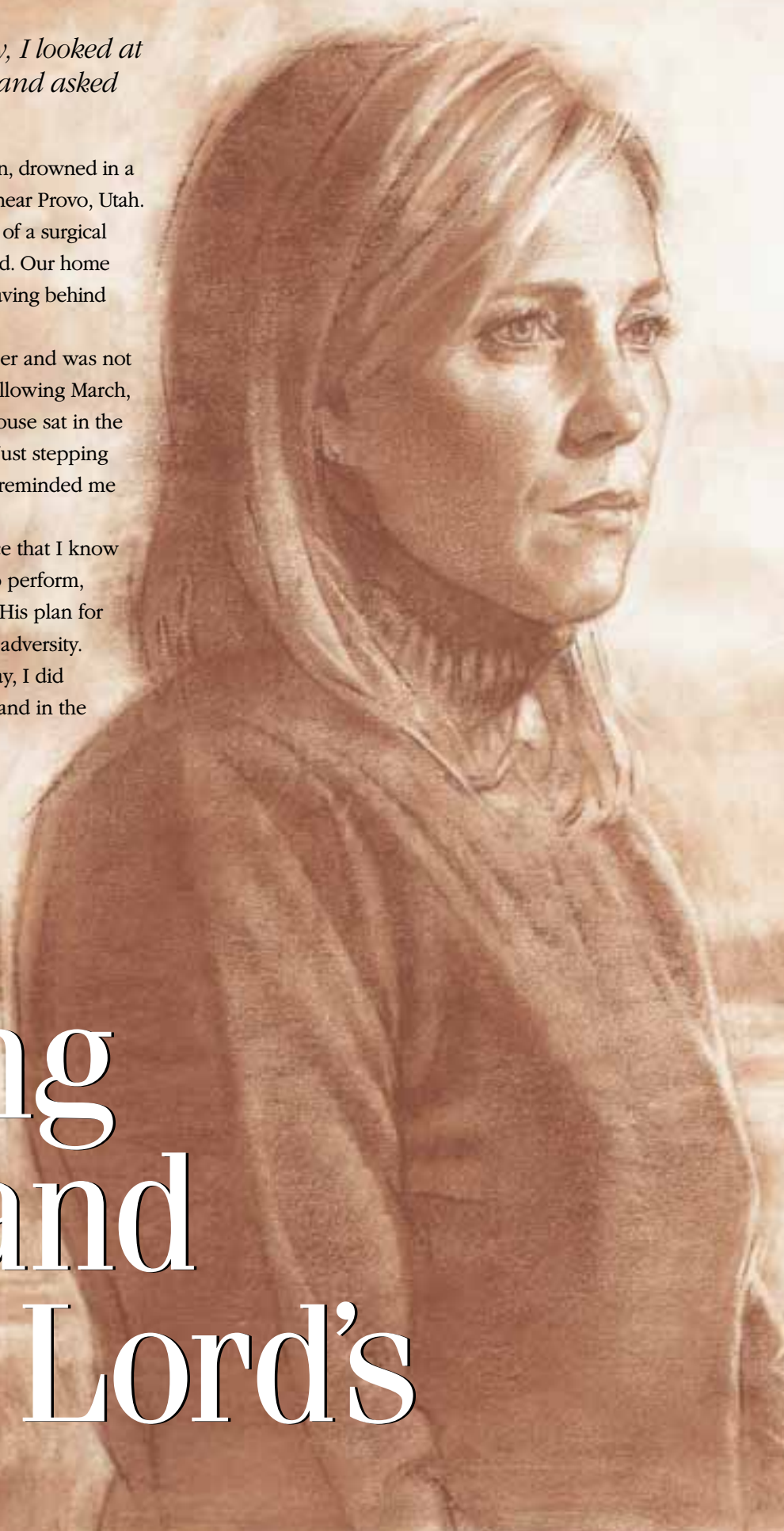
**W**hen I was 36, my husband, Bryan, drowned in a hunting accident on Utah Lake, near Provo, Utah. He was two and a half years out of a surgical residency. I was pregnant with our fifth child. Our home teacher drowned searching for his body, leaving behind a wife and four children.

My husband's body was lost in November and was not recovered from the frozen lake until the following March, about two weeks after Anne's birth. Our house sat in the foothills of Provo with a view of the lake. Just stepping out the front door and looking at the lake reminded me of his death.

Ironically, it is because of this experience that I know that God loves me, that I have a mission to perform, and that I can trust in God's power and in His plan for me. That is the power that can come from adversity.

When something dear was stripped away, I did what many of you have done—I put my hand in the hand of the Lord. This is what I learned.

# Putting My Hand in the Lord's



### Ask How, Not Why

I cannot deal with the *why* of adversity because I have no concrete answers for the *whys*. But I can speak of *how* one continues a life that has taken a detour from a self-plotted course.

Asking why is an exercise in frustration because Heavenly Father generally does not answer the *whys* of our lives here in mortality. Faith in God is not developed by having all the answers. Immediately after Bryan died, my prayers were desperate and pleading. I had always lived a good life, and I felt that I had lived to be blessed, not punished.

When my specific “instructions-to-God” prayers were not answered, I learned the supreme importance of making myself available to listen, be instructed, and receive comfort. Instead of instructing God, I began to prayerfully say: “I don’t understand, but I know that You do. I love You and I trust You. Please guide me to know how to do what I must do.”

I remember reading my scriptures with a hunger I had never experienced before. In Doctrine and Covenants 78, I found these words: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you. And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom

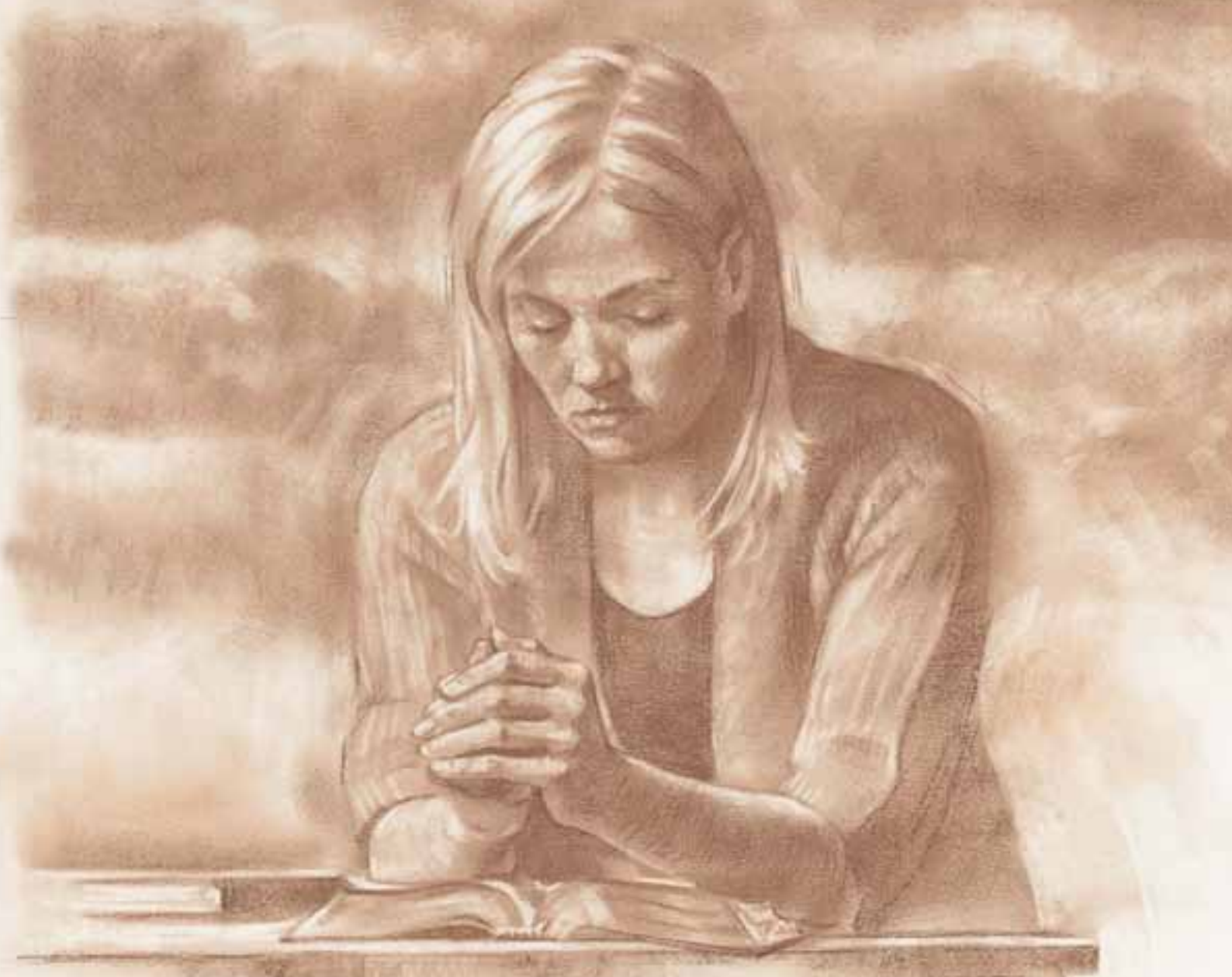
is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours” (vv. 17–18). I knew the Lord was leading me along in ways I had never anticipated.

Sixteen years later, after my son came home ill from his mission, he and I had the opportunity to visit with Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1926–2004) about my son’s situation. Our meeting occurred early in the morning after one of Elder Maxwell’s chemotherapy treatments. He shared a scripture that had helped him personally: “And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things” (1 Nephi 11:17).

Faith has to be sufficient when we do not know why. We must simply remember “that he loveth his children” and that we cannot—right now—know the meaning of all things. We must say, “I love You and I trust You.”

The scripture Elder Maxwell shared with us applied to my feelings after Bryan’s death, as well as my son’s situation. Everything in life can shift, change, or leave, but our Heavenly Father, our Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost never change. They are the one great constant to lead us along. We do not know the meaning of all things, but we can be sure “that he loveth his children.” Because we are so loved, God may not answer why, but He will tell us how we can do whatever we must do.





### **Live Worthy of Help**

Each of us can strive for the Spirit, which we need to direct our lives. After losing Bryan, I tried harder to keep the commandments and make myself available, as the head of my home, for personal revelation. My children and I continue to read our scriptures daily and to have regular family prayer. One of the blessings I most appreciated was that it felt like the Holy Ghost was present in our home. I felt a great sense of peace amid the grief of loss and change. As Doctrine and Covenants 6:20 says, “Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love.”

Through reading my scriptures, I found

***Everything in life can shift, change, or leave, but our Heavenly Father, our Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost never change. We do not know the meaning of all things, but we can be sure “that he loveth his children.”***

answers directed specifically to me. I remember struggling with one of the natural human reactions to death: anger. I was mad that Bryan had died and left me. But I was tired of being angry, so I began praying for relief. One day I read Alma 5:12: “And according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart.” From that moment, peace flowed into my heart and anger left; I had a direct answer to my pleading. There is power in the scriptures to answer prayers.

### **Seek Personal Revelation**

The temple is one of the places where we can receive personal revelation. Truman G. Madsen wrote, “The temple is the catalyst whereby the self is revealed to the self.”<sup>1</sup>

If we come prepared, we are entitled to revelation that pertains to our physical and spiritual welfare. We find out who we are and what the Lord would have us do.

I am not saying that we can snap our fingers, attend the temple once, and all our questions will be answered. We must work to receive answers.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “The Lord will speak to us through the Spirit in his own time and in his own way. Many people do not understand this principle. They believe that when they are ready and when it suits their convenience, they can call upon the Lord and he will immediately respond, even in the precise way they have prescribed. Revelation does not come that way. . . . We cannot force spiritual things.”<sup>2</sup>

I have sought answers for my life and have received personal revelation, but it has been in His own time and in His own way.

### **Submit Your Will and Be Strengthened by Christ**

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). But in order to be strengthened by Christ, we must become as children, “submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19).

We are here to learn to submit to our Father’s will.

### **Appreciate Growth in Adversity**

My experiences have made me more thankful for the Atonement than I would be if I were still that 36-year-old woman who knew so little about how “all these things shall



***But in order to be strengthened by Christ, we must become as children, “submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”***

give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7).

Later I was blessed to marry a wonderful man. Bill’s wife had died, leaving him with five children. I watched my husband draw my five children under his wing also.

I would not go back a day because of what I have learned. Though pain and loss bite deep, it is comforting to know that painful experiences are not wasted. Elder B. H. Roberts of the Seventy (1857–1933) said that “those who have to contend with difficulties, brave

dangers, endure disappointments, struggle with sorrows, eat the bread of adversity and drink the water of affliction, develop a moral and spiritual strength, together with a purity of life and character, unknown to the heirs of ease, and wealth and pleasure.”<sup>3</sup>

The challenge is to love God, keep our covenants, and live the great plan of happiness even when loved ones die and other trials and disappointments occur. It is not just the attractive, smart, and wealthy who are expected to endure in faith to the end. That is expected of all of us. The challenge is to remember why

we are here: to work out our salvation, alone or married, childless or with a quiver full of children; to shout for joy and then to work at being joyful; to remember that the Lord stands ready to succor us through the Holy Ghost. He will go before us and be on our right hand and on our left (see D&C 84:88). I have faith in these things because I have experienced the tutoring love of God. ■

### **NOTES**

1. *The Highest in Us* (1978), 98.
2. “Teaching and Learning by the Spirit,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1997, 10–11.
3. *The Gospel: An Exposition of Its First Principles* (1965), 278.



# New York

Twenty-five sections of the Doctrine and Covenants were given in Manchester, Fayette, and Perrysburg, New York, from 1823 through 1833.

Below: A rainbow glows in the sky near the Joseph Knight Sr. farm in Colesville (present day Nineveh), New York (D&C 23:6). Emma Smith was baptized on the Knight farm. Below, right: The Peter Whitmer home in Fayette, New York, where the Church was organized in 1830 (D&C 21).



# Pennsylvania

Fifteen sections of the Doctrine and Covenants were given in Harmony, Pennsylvania, from 1828 through 1830.

Background: This section of the Susquehanna River runs past Harmony, where the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods were restored (D&C 13).







# DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS REVEALED

BY KENNETH R. MAYS

*Most of the sacred revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants were received through the Prophet Joseph Smith and came in answer to prayer. Following are a few of the sites where sections of the Doctrine and Covenants were revealed or where related events took place.*









# Ohio

*Sixty-six sections of the Doctrine and Covenants were given in Kirtland, Hiram, Thompson, Amherst, and Orange, Ohio, from 1831 through 1837.*

*Left, top: The John Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, was the site where 16 sections of the Doctrine and Covenants were revealed. Among them was section 76, which describes the telestial, terrestrial, and celestial kingdoms of heaven.*

*Left, center: Forty-six revelations were received in Kirtland, Ohio, more than any other location. The School of the Prophets met in this upstairs room of the Newell K. Whitney store. As result of the common use of tobacco at the time and in this room, the Lord revealed D&C 89.*

*Left, bottom: Several revelations revolve around the Kirtland Temple but the most powerful is found in D&C 110. On April 3, 1836, Jesus Christ appeared. Moses, Elias, and Elijah also appeared to commit their keys to the Prophet Joseph Smith.*

*Background: Local tradition identifies this site, two miles west of the Kirtland Temple, as the quarry from which the stones for the temple were taken. The quarry eventually filled with groundwater and became known as the square lake.*







# Missouri

*Twenty-one sections of the Doctrine and Covenants were given in Jackson County, Caldwell County, Daviess County, and Clay County, Ohio, from 1831 through 1839.*

*Background: Section 116 of the Doctrine and Covenants was given at Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri, an area the Lord named Adam-ondi-Ahman. The Prophet Joseph laid out a city, but the Saints were driven away before they could build it. Far left: Seven revelations were given in Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri. Here the Lord named his church (D&C 115) and taught the Saints about the law of tithing (D&C 119).*

# Illinois

*The majority of Saints lived in either Ohio or Missouri before gathering to Illinois. Ten sections of the Doctrine and Covenants were given in Nauvoo and Ramus from 1841 through 1844.*

*Left: The weathered wood identifies the original Nauvoo home of Joseph Smith. Eight revelations were received in Nauvoo, including D&C 124 wherein the Saints were commanded to build a temple. Left, bottom: In this upstairs room of the Carthage Jail, a mob killed Joseph and Hyrum Smith. In D&C 135, John Taylor records the events of the martyrdom and pays tribute to Joseph and Hyrum. ■*

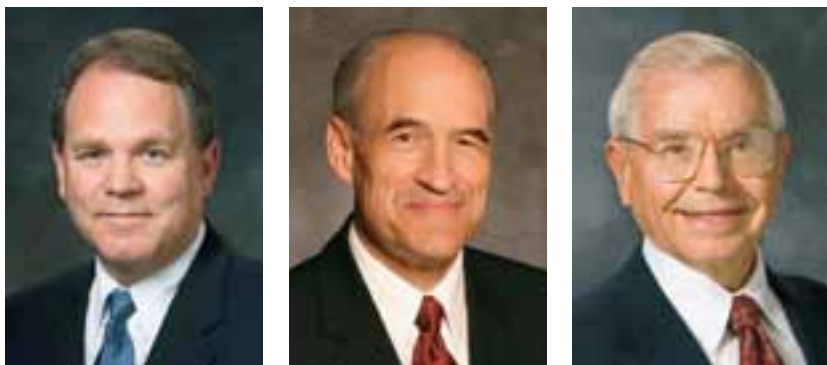
For more information see: [lds.org](http://lds.org)>[GospelLibrary](http://GospelLibrary)>[ImageLibraries](http://ImageLibraries)>[BYU'sReligiousEducationArchive](http://BYU'sReligiousEducationArchive)>[SearchAll](http://SearchAll), or [lds.org](http://lds.org)>[AbouttheChurch](http://AbouttheChurch)>[ChurchHistory](http://ChurchHistory)>[HistoricSites](http://HistoricSites)







# Enriching Your Study of the Doctrine and Covenants



**A. Roger Merrill (center), president; Daniel K Judd (left), first counselor; and William D. Oswald, second counselor.**

*This year presents the wonderful opportunity for each of us to receive great blessings by studying the Doctrine and Covenants—a marvelous book of revelation that was written in our day and for our day.*

## BY THE SUNDAY SCHOOL GENERAL PRESIDENCY

Sometimes referred to as the Lord's handbook of the Restoration, the Doctrine and Covenants contains "the tender but firm voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking anew in the dispensation of the fulness of times."<sup>1</sup>

Many members have already discovered a great love for this book. One sister said, "The specific revelations to individuals in the Doctrine and Covenants are helpful. I feel I can relate to them." Another commented, "The Doctrine

and Covenants helps me relate to situations I'm facing because it is not so ancient." One brother said, "I like the Doctrine and Covenants because it helps me understand the priesthood."

We testify that the Doctrine and Covenants is truly the Lord's voice in our time to each child of God and that great blessings come to those who study it. We also offer four suggestions to make your study this year a rewarding experience and suggest some ways in which Sunday School can help.

### **Read the Book from Cover to Cover**

The *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Class Member Study Guide* encourages members to "read the Doctrine and Covenants from beginning to end"<sup>2</sup> during 2009, as well as to complete each Sunday's reading assignments, which are arranged by topic.

Studying in this manner helps us understand the context of the sections studied as well as the sections themselves. It also prepares us to participate in a rich discussion in Sunday School class—which, in turn, will provide added insight and inspiration for us to use in our personal and family lives.

In your daily scripture study, you may find it helpful to set aside one or two days each week to preview specifically what will be discussed in class and then continue your reading of the Doctrine and Covenants from beginning to end.

### **Read with Questions in Mind**

Brother Renzo Molly Barrios Matias, of Guatemala, learned the power of using scripture study to receive personal revelation for his own life.





**P**owerful gospel teaching and inspired learning occur when teachers and learners understand that the real teacher in any Church class is the Holy Ghost and that classroom participation invites the Spirit to bear witness.

“After Hurricane Mitch passed through Central America in 2001 and left everything in desolation, I had many questions,” he says. “Seeking answers, I went to a friend I greatly respect. He said, ‘Read the scriptures. You will find the best answers to your questions in them.’”

“This revolutionized my life,” says Brother Matias. “After studying the scriptures for quite a long time, I began to find answers to my questions. I was able to see that my life did have meaning. It was then that I decided to serve a full-time mission.”

Soon Elder Matias was serving in the Honduras Tegucigalpa Mission, helping others discover the power of scripture study.

Reading with specific questions

in mind invites the Lord to inspire and direct us in our challenges and opportunities. You may want to write down questions to prayerfully include in your scripture study. As you receive answers, you may feel inspired to share that insight in Sunday School. Class members are edified as they hear one another appropriately bear witness of how the Lord uses the scriptures to provide personal guidance and inspiration.

#### **Search for Connections, Patterns, and Themes**

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has suggested that in all our scripture study, we seek for *connections*, *patterns*, and *themes*.<sup>3</sup>

An example of a *connection* in the Doctrine and Covenants is the link between our obedience and promised blessings. “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10). Our scripture study becomes more meaningful as we recognize this connection and resolve to act on what the Lord has commanded us to do.

One *pattern* in the Doctrine and Covenants is woven into the very nature of the book itself. As the introduction indicates, “These sacred revelations were received in answer to prayer, in times of need, and came out of real-life situations involving real people.”<sup>4</sup> The revelations were personal and answer specific questions concerning things that Heavenly Father knew would “be of the most worth” (D&C 15:6; 16:6) to each individual.<sup>5</sup> This pattern of seeking and receiving personal revelation is one that we can follow in our own lives.

One of the most common *themes* in all of scripture is “Seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (D&C 88:63). Themes such as this encourage us to accept greater responsibility for our own learning as we read and ponder God’s words.

While the Doctrine and Covenants doesn’t always read as a story, it is woven together with connections, patterns, and themes. One of the blessings of discussing scripture together in Sunday School is that we

become more aware of these insights as we share our own and listen to the insights of others.

### Seek to Be Edified and Rejoice Together

The Lord has said that when Church members both learn and teach one another by the Spirit, “both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:22). Powerful gospel teaching and inspired learning occur when teachers and learners understand that the real teacher in any Church class is the Holy Ghost and that classroom participation invites the Spirit to bear witness.

In the February 2007 worldwide leadership training on teaching and learning, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles invited us to assume greater responsibility for learning the gospel. He then demonstrated how inspired teachers can invite class members to become active rather than passive participants in class discussions.

Elder Holland said, “If we will help the learner assume responsibility for learning, and if we will testify of the truths that we have taught, God will confirm to our hearts and to the hearts of our students the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

As class members prayerfully study during the week and then together read from the scriptures and share insights, the Holy Ghost will bear witness and carry “unto the hearts” (2 Nephi 33:1) of each class member specifically what he or she needs to know and do (see 2 Nephi 32:3–5).

### A Personal Invitation

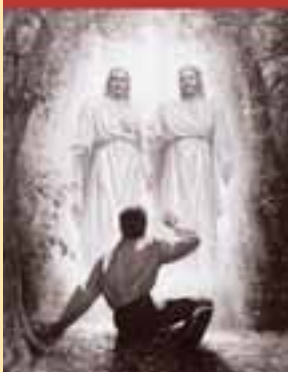
As we study and learn from the Doctrine and Covenants this year, our faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will be strengthened and our testimony of Joseph Smith as God’s prophet of the Restoration will increase. The Lord will open our understanding, and the scriptures will become an even more integral part of our lives.<sup>7</sup>

At the beginning of this new year, we invite you to join with us as we joyfully “search these commandments [in the Doctrine and Covenants], for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled” (D&C 1:37). ■

### NOTES

1. Explanatory Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants.
2. *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Class Member Study Guide* (1999), Introduction, 3.
3. See David A. Bednar, “A Reservoir of Living Water” (Church Educational System fireside for young adults, Feb. 4, 2007), [www.ldsces.org](http://www.ldsces.org).
4. Explanatory Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants.
5. For other examples of specific personal revelation, see D&C 7–9; 11–12; 14–17.
6. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Teaching and Learning in the Church,” *Liahona*, June 2007, 73; *Ensign*, June 2007, 105. The broadcast is available in several languages at [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org). Click on “Gospel Library,” “Additional Addresses,” then “Worldwide Leadership Training: Teaching and Learning.”
7. See Joseph Smith—History 1:73–74. After being baptized, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were “filled with the Holy Ghost.” Their minds were then “enlightened, [and they] began to have the scriptures laid open to [their] understandings.”

Doctrine and Covenants  
and Church History  
Class Member Study Guide



## STUDYING THE STUDY GUIDE

As we use the *Class Member Study Guide* in our studies before coming to Sunday School, it will help us be better prepared to “teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom” (D&C 88:77). The study guide contains a variety of study resources:

- An introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants.
- The weekly scripture reading assignments and scripture study chains.
- A brief Church history chronology.
- Maps showing the location of important places in Church history.
- Faith-promoting questions to encourage gospel discussions.
- A copy of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”





*This latter-day scripture is a rich source for personal revelation and inspiration. It unlocks spiritual insights for those who earnestly study and ponder its teachings.*

# TREASURING

## the Doctrine and Covenants

BY ELDER STEVEN E. SNOW  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

After moving with their mother to Independence, Missouri, in the fall of 1831, young sisters Mary Elizabeth and Caroline Rollins soon learned of the hardship and persecution the Saints faced there. One night an angry mob attacked their home; on another occasion, they witnessed an attack on the newly constructed printing office located on the upper floor of the William W. Phelps residence.

During the attack on the printing office, the mob forced the Phelps family from their home and threw their belongings into the street. Mobsters then went to work destroying the printing equipment upstairs and throwing unbound manuscripts from the building. Some brought out large sheets of paper and declared, “Here are the Mormon Commandments!”<sup>1</sup> By this time, the Prophet

Joseph Smith had received many sacred revelations, some as early as 1823, when the angel Moroni appeared to the boy prophet. Joseph had recorded numerous revelations in his own handwriting, but no text had been prepared and distributed

**A photograph of Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, along with some of the manuscript pages she and her sister rescued from the mob as young girls.**



for the benefit of members of the Church. With much excitement, the Saints in Missouri anticipated the publication of these revelations as a “Book of Commandments.” This work was under way at the printing office when the mob struck. Mary Elizabeth, then 15, described what happened:

“My sister Caroline [age 13] and myself were in a corner of a fence watching them; when they spoke of the commandments I was determined to have some of them. Sister said if I went to get any of them she would go too, but said ‘they will kill us.’”<sup>2</sup>

While the mob was busy at one end of the house, the two girls ran and filled their arms with the precious sheets. The mob saw them and ordered the girls to stop. Mary Elizabeth recalled: “We ran as fast as we could. Two of them started after us. Seeing a gap in a fence, we entered into a large cornfield, laid the papers on the ground, and hid them with our persons. The corn was from five to six feet high, and very thick; they hunted around considerable, and came very near us but did not find us.”<sup>3</sup>

This courageous act by two young girls helped preserve the printed text of the Prophet Joseph’s early revelations, paving the way for the subsequent completion of the Book of Commandments, which later became the Doctrine and Covenants.

### The Capstone of Our Religion

How important is this great legacy of scripture? President Gordon B. Hinckley







***With much excitement, the Saints in Missouri anticipated the publication of the Prophet's revelations as a "Book of Commandments."***

(1910–2008) said, “The Doctrine and Covenants is unique among our books of scripture. It is the constitution of the Church.

While the Doctrine and Covenants includes writings and statements of various origins, it is primarily a book of revelation given through the Prophet of this dispensation.”<sup>4</sup>

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught, “The Doctrine and Covenants is the binding link between the Book of Mormon and the continuing work of the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors.” He testified, “The Book of Mormon brings men to Christ. The Doctrine and Covenants brings men to Christ’s kingdom, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . The Book of Mormon is the ‘keystone’ of our religion, and the Doctrine and Covenants is the capstone, with continuing latter-day revelation.”<sup>5</sup>

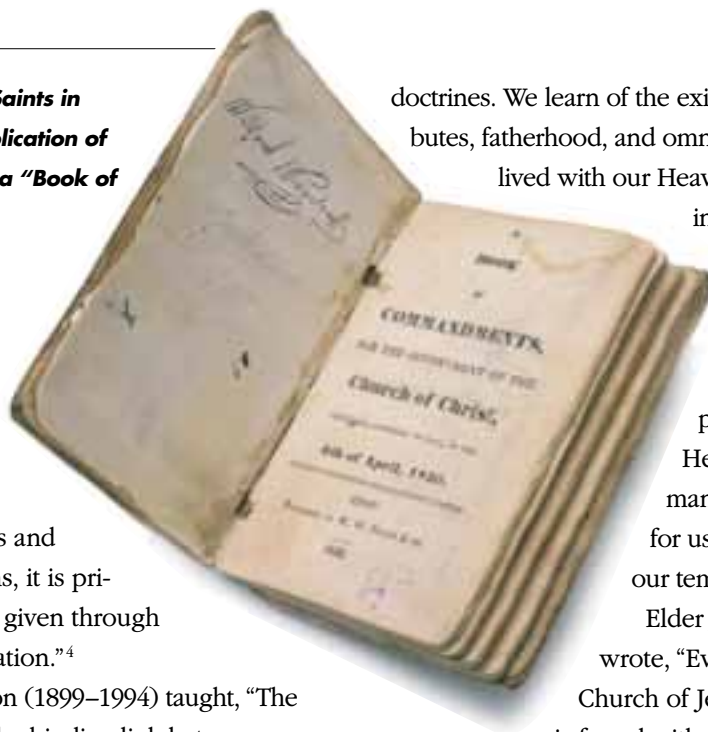
The Lord introduces the revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants with a thundering declaration concerning the purposes of God in the latter-day Restoration:

“Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together.

“For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated” (D&C 1:1–2).

Marvelous truths—many in the words of the Lord Himself—then follow. Nowhere in the scriptures does the Lord speak so directly to His people through His prophets. Many of the revelations are personally directed, some unfold the organization of the restored Church, and others offer pragmatic counsel.

Through these inspirational and edifying revelations, the Doctrine and Covenants teaches and reiterates important



doctrines. We learn of the existence of God and His attributes, fatherhood, and omniscience. We learn that we lived with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ

in a pre-earth existence, that the

Son is separate and distinct

from the Father, that Jesus

Christ played a major role

in the early councils that

planned our universe, and that

He was chosen as the Savior of

mankind. We learn of God’s love

for us and of His preparations for

our temporal and spiritual salvation.

Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952)

wrote, “Every doctrine taught by The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

is found, either outlined or shadowed forth,

in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. As far as I know,

there is no doctrine taught by the Church which is not

found in some way or form in this book.” He added that

the Doctrine and Covenants is essential because “no other

one of our sacred books can lay the same claim to a full

survey of all the doctrines of the Church.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Organization and Administration**

Throughout the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord carefully revealed how His Church was to be organized. In section 20 we learn of the requirements for baptism (see v. 37) and of the command to bless children (see v. 70). This section also sets forth the duties of holders of the priesthood. Ordained elders receive instruction in their duties, including the importance of following the Spirit:

“The elders are to conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God” (v. 45). Priests learn that they are to “preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament” (v. 46). Teachers are to “watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them” (v. 53). Deacons are instructed to assist the priests and teachers in their duties (see v. 57).

Section 20 reminds us that “it is expedient that the church meet together often to partake” of the sacrament “in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus” (v. 75). It then sets forth the sacramental prayers and instructs how the sacrament is to be administered (see vv. 76–79).

Section 107 defines the presiding quorums of the Church, including the First Presidency (see v. 22), the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (see vv. 23, 33, 35), and the Quorums of the Seventy (see vv. 25, 34, 38).

Because the Doctrine and Covenants teaches important principles and procedures concerning the governance of the Church, it acts as the constitutional foundation of the latter-day Church.

The Doctrine and Covenants is also a rich source for personal revelation and inspiration. Like all scripture, it unlocks spiritual insights for those who earnestly study and ponder its teachings. While the original revelation may have been intended for someone in an earlier time, the words are no less powerful for us today. Ponder, for example, the instruction given through the Prophet Joseph Smith to his father regarding missionary service. These words have provided inspiration to subsequent generations of missionaries departing for their fields of labor:

“Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day” (D&C 4:2).

Verse 8 of section 109, part of the dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple, refers to an earlier revelation commanding the Saints to build a temple. The beautiful words of this verse provide inspiration to families throughout the Church who are striving to establish righteous and loving homes:

“Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God.”

### Getting the Most from Our Study

We get more out of the Doctrine and Covenants when we understand the historical context of each revelation. The Lord directed the revelation in section 11, for example, to the Prophet’s brother Hyrum, who had traveled from Palmyra to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to inquire

regarding the will of the Lord. Hyrum was eager to engage in missionary work, but the Lord counseled him to be patient and wait for the coming forth of the Book of Mormon:

“Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men” (v. 21).

This verse not only underscores the importance of the Book of Mormon in missionary work but also has served as a source of inspiration to countless missionaries preparing to teach the gospel.

The Doctrine and Covenants contains a remarkable variety of teachings. Section 76 reveals the degrees of glory

in the hereafter. Section 84 reveals the covenant of the priesthood in a way not found in other scripture. Section 89 reveals rules of health and related promises of obedience. Section 132 reveals eternal marriage. Sections 110, 127, 128, and 138 describe the importance of work for the dead. The magnitude and depth of the teachings in this great book offer a treasure trove of inspiration and instruction for all members of the Church.

Even young Mary Elizabeth and Caroline Rollins recognized the importance of the revelations

contained in the Doctrine and Covenants. Following their courageous rescue of the original manuscripts, the Church eventually published the Book of Commandments. In appreciation, leaders gave a copy to Mary Elizabeth. Later in her life she modestly wrote, “They got them bound in small books and sent me one, which *I prized very highly.*”<sup>7</sup>

This great book of scripture is indeed a gift. May we all prize it highly. ■



ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT T. BARRETT

***Through the Doctrine and Covenants we learn that Jesus Christ played a major role in the early councils that planned our universe, and that He was chosen as the Savior of mankind.***

### NOTES

1. “Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner,” *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, vol. 17 (July 1926): 196.
2. “Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner,” 196.
3. “Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner,” 196.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Order and Will of God,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1989, 2.
5. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 83.
6. John A. Widtsoe, *The Message of the Doctrine and Covenants* (1969), 117.
7. “Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner,” 196; emphasis added.



# Nourishing the Soul through Institute

*By helping students draw closer to Heavenly Father, make friends, and set priorities, institute strengthens testimonies and changes lives.*

## STRENGTHENING MY TESTIMONY

I am frequently surprised at what I can learn at institute. I don't remember ever attending class without coming away having learned something new or understanding some

***Institute is a great place to learn the gospel and build friendships with other Latter-day Saints.***

gospel principle better. As a result, my life has changed.

Among the many blessings I have received by attending institute are improved family relationships and an increased interest in the scriptures. It has also increased my testimony. Before attending institute, I wasn't sure that I wanted to serve a mission. Now I know that serving a mission is what I need to do.

Institute has been a wonderful experience for me. It has helped me understand and obey the Church's standards. The doctrines of the Church are the means of salvation and exaltation, and I am grateful to be able to be learning about them at institute.

**Alberto Avilez Rodríguez, Mexico**





## CHANGING MY GOALS

In sacrament meeting one Sunday, I listened intently to a speaker talk about institute. He shared the words of Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, saying, “[Institute] has enriched my life, and I know it will do the same for you. It will put a shield of protection around you to keep you free from the temptations and trials of the world.”<sup>1</sup> It was then I realized that the truth of Elder Perry’s words had manifested itself to me already. How grateful I was for the blessings that had come to me because I attended institute.

Not long before, I had begun an institute class on the teachings of Isaiah. To this day it remains the most life-altering class I have ever taken. That semester had been a confusing time for me; not all of my goals and priorities were in line with the principles of the gospel. However, I attended institute regularly and participated in numerous one-on-one discussions about Church doctrine with the institute instructor. Over time, as my ideas changed, I slowly and carefully altered my goals to fit the Lord’s plan for me.

It wasn’t until hearing Elder Perry’s quote in sacrament meeting that Sunday that I realized exactly how these new goals were blessing me. My entire life was significantly better when I attended institute. I was much more receptive to the Spirit and succumbed to temptations far less frequently. My attitude and my outlook had improved because of my attendance.

**Krista Wren, Arizona, USA**

### NOTE

1. L. Tom Perry, “Receive Truth,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 61–62.



### A PROPHETIC PROMISE

*“Don’t neglect the opportunity of attending seminary and institute classes.*

*Participate and gain all you can from the scriptures taught in these great religious-education settings. They will*

*prepare you to present the message of the restored gospel to those you have opportunity to meet.”*

**Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Raising the Bar,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 48.**

## SHOWING FAITH

My love for institute started back in seminary. I joined the Church at age 14, and I had a thirst for knowledge. I enjoyed learning about the gospel and loved the admirable friends and teachers I met along the way.

At times attending seminary was difficult. My family, who are not members of the Church, weren’t supportive of my attendance. But with help from other Latter-day Saints, I was able to go to early-morning seminary. My family could see that I was serious about my membership in the Church. It was my way of going the extra mile.

Just as seminary enriched my life when I was a teenager, institute has enriched my life during my





***Institute is for single and married students, generally ages 18 to 30.***

## FINDING NEW FRIENDS

A few years after my mission, I moved to a city where I didn't know anybody. I went to institute expecting to make new friends and begin socializing with other young single adults in the area, as I had previously done.

Initially, however, I found this difficult. No one was unkind, but there seemed to be little going on, and I sometimes felt lonely and distanced from those who already knew each other well. In contrast, I quickly made good friends outside of the Church.

It sometimes seemed that not going to institute would be easier than going. I didn't have a ride, so I would have to walk or cycle each week to get there. I had found good friends with similar interests elsewhere. Besides, I had already graduated from institute.

However, as I thought about all of these reasons not to go, I remembered how much I had grown in the past because of the lessons I learned and friends I made at institute. Institute had nurtured my testimony and helped me better understand the Lord's plan for me. I decided to keep attending, and I am glad I did. Gradually during that year I did make good friends at institute. I received invitations to social events and over time became much more involved.

young adult years. I have treasured up the words of Christ in my heart and in my mind (see D&C 6:20; 84:85). These teachings helped me serve the Lord more effectively as a missionary.

I am grateful for institute and know that it is an inspired program because I have seen its blessings in my life and in the lives of others.

***Malinda Morrison, Western Australia, Australia***

## GROWING CLOSER TO THE LORD

Ever since I began to attend institute regularly, tremendous spiritual blessings have entered my life. I have developed Christlike love for my fellow institute students, my faith in the Lord is growing stronger, and I have drawn closer to Jesus Christ through scripture study.

The lessons give me direction by helping me understand better how to use my agency. They help me face challenges with a positive viewpoint, and I have learned that God is always near to help me overcome my struggles. When I attend institute, I find answers to my questions. Each time I put into practice the teachings from my classes, other things in my life seem to fall into their proper places a little more easily.

I feel that participating in institute is one of the best ways I can use my time while I am young.

***Ngozichi Okwandu, Abia, Nigeria***



It was hard to attend institute in a new area at first, but because I kept going anyway, I have received many spiritual and social blessings that I could not have received otherwise.

**Dave J. Green, England, United Kingdom**

## COMING HOME

I was living away from home for the first time when my parents separated. It was only my first month of college, and as my family life shifted, I struggled to understand the meaning of the word *home*. When my parents divorced and my family moved out of the home I had lived in for the last 18 years, I was especially confused. I knew I wasn't homeless, but I certainly felt that way.

I have often heard the Church described as a "refuge from the storm" (D&C 115:6). Institute became that refuge for me as I battled this new storm in my life. I enrolled in institute, and while I don't recall the exact words spoken in the lessons, I will never forget the feelings of peace and comfort that came to me as I listened. I began to discover the love my Heavenly Father has for me, and I became much more closely acquainted with the best counselor I have ever found: Jesus Christ.

I have to pay for my college education, yet I learn the most valuable lessons from institute classes, which are available to me for free. I see now that the definition of *home* isn't necessarily the house in which you grow up but a place where life's lessons are taught and love abounds. Because of what I learned and the Spirit I felt, institute has become a new home for me. It is wonderful having a place where I feel loved and welcome. ■

**Suzanne Goble, Utah, USA**



**Alberto**



**Krista**



**Malinda**



**Ngozichi**



**Dave**



**Suzanne**

### HOW DO I FIND AN INSTITUTE PROGRAM NEAR ME?

Visit <http://institute.lds.org> for information about any of the more than 500 institute locations worldwide. In many cases, you can register for classes online.

Don't have Internet access? Your bishop or branch president has a list of institute locations.





# LEFT WITH A VIOLIN AND A HYMNBOOK

*When our van burst into flames, we thought we had lost everything.*

BY LINDA REHART

As night descended, our family set out on a long-awaited vacation to Utah, a trip that would include taking two of our daughters to college. Our minivan was filled with suitcases, boxes, dishes, a violin, a computer, and more—vacation needs for seven family members and college necessities for our daughters.

As we crossed the California-Nevada border, all of us were asleep except for one of our daughters who was driving. Thirty miles east of Las Vegas the van jerked suddenly, so my daughter quickly pulled over to the side of the road. Steam emerged from under the hood. My husband jumped out of the car to inspect it and immediately returned, yelling for the fire extinguisher. We were so dazed from sleeping that he had to alert us to the problem. As soon as we saw the flames darting from under the hood, we jumped out of the van, grabbing everything we could. Then we watched in horror as the fire spread to the grass, and then to our cargo resting on the ground nearby. Helplessly, we watched as the fire consumed most of our things.

My immediate concerns were transportation logistics and the loss of needed vacation money. But my children felt anxious over the loss of clothing, pictures, and precious possessions, particularly the loss of one daughter's needed medication.

By the time the firemen arrived and finally extinguished the fire, nothing was left of the van but a burned-out shell. It took some time for the remains of our belongings to cool so that I could sort through the rubble to see what we could salvage. I found my purse partially burned. Reaching for my wallet, I saw that all the contents were singed or moderately

burned, except for one pristine, undamaged item—my temple recommend. At that moment I suddenly realized I had been focusing on the wrong things. The most important things—our testimonies of the gospel and our personal safety—were intact.

We called a tow truck as well as a friend in the area who agreed to pick us up. While we waited, I continued sifting through our things. In one box I discovered a daughter's music, including a hymnbook. Seeing this, another daughter said, "Oh, Alison, play some hymns!" During all the commotion Alison had somehow kept her small case and violin with her.

Our family sat in a circle on the ground while Alison started playing hymns. Gradually the rest of us began to sing. As the music filled the air in the early morning light, the most incredible feeling of peace came over us. The highway patrolman who had been standing nearby was amazed that we could be so calm. When the tow-truck driver arrived, he surveyed the scene in disbelief and, to our astonishment, said, "How can you be happy? Are you Mormons?"

Shortly thereafter our friend arrived and took us to her home. Throughout the days that followed, we were able to continue our trip to Utah and home again because of generous Church leaders and friends who provided transportation and other needed supplies. We even received donations from complete strangers to replace items we had lost in the fire.

This family experience, though challenging, strengthened our testimonies of our Heavenly Father's love for His children. Whenever I think of that trip, I recall the peace of the Spirit we felt that early morning, and I picture our family sitting in a circle on the ground singing the hymns of Zion as a new day dawned. I am grateful for what our experience taught me about keeping an eternal perspective. ■





# Gardenias in January

BY WENDY FOUTZ MCKINNEY

A few years ago I purchased a lovely gardenia plant. I kept it in a large pot and tended it with care, enjoying the fragrant blossoms that came once a year. Gardenias typically bloom mid-spring and lie dormant the rest of the year.

One year the plant did not produce many blossoms. I wondered what was wrong. I took it inside for the winter and placed it in a sunlit spot, as I normally did.

To my surprise, the plant began budding right after Christmas. In January it produced fragrant blossoms. While admiring the beautiful plant, I thought of my friend Anita, who was at home enduring the end of a long battle with cancer. Despite treatments, the cancer had returned three times. Though Anita was only in her 30s, doctors predicted she did not have much time left. It struck me that she might like this hint of spring in her home.

I took the gardenia to Anita. When I arrived, she said, "How did you know gardenias are my favorite flowers?"

"I didn't," I replied, "but Heavenly Father knew. These gardenias bloomed in January just for you."

We were silent for a while marveling at the little miracle. Then she said, "I needed this reminder of spring. Thank you."

Anita passed away in February, but during the last weeks of her life, she enjoyed the sweet fragrance of her favorite flower. Her husband even pinned one of the gardenias on the inside of her casket.

I'm thankful that I was able to witness how the Lord can bless those He loves during their most difficult hours. He gave Anita joy during her pain. He gave her gardenias in January. ■



## THE SWEETNESS OF TENDER MERCIES

"When words cannot provide the solace we need or express the joy we feel, when it is simply futile to attempt to explain that which is unexplainable, when logic and reason cannot yield adequate understanding about the injustices and inequities of life, when mortal experience and evaluation are insufficient to produce a desired outcome, and when it seems that perhaps we are so totally alone, truly we are blessed by the tender mercies of the Lord and made mighty even unto the power of deliverance (see 1 Nephi 1:20)."

**Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Tender Mercies of the Lord," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2005, 100.**

# STAND STRONG AND IMMOVABLE IN FAITH



*Teach the scriptures and quotations that meet the needs of the sisters you visit. Bear testimony of the doctrine. Invite those you teach to share what they have felt and learned.*



**Mosiah 5:15:** “Be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life.”

## How Can I Stand Strong and Immovable in Faith?

**3 Nephi 6:14:** “The church was broken up in all the land save it were among a few of the Lamanites who were converted unto the true faith; and they would not depart from it, for they were firm, and steadfast, and immovable, willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord.”

**Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president:** “Latter-day Saint women must be strong and immovable in their faith. They can and should excel in living and sharing their testimonies of the Lord Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. We do this as we:

- “1. Make and keep covenants with Him.
- “2. Are worthy and worship in His temples.
- “3. Study His doctrine in the scriptures and the words of prophets.
- “4. Qualify for, recognize, and follow the Holy Ghost.
- “5. Share and defend His gospel.
- “6. Participate in sincere personal and family prayer.
- “7. Have family home evening.
- “8. Live principles of self-reliance and provident living.

“These are *essential* things which must be done before *nonessential* things. These are simple, indispensable practices that almost seem mundane. . . . No one can do these things for us—these are *personal* practices and habits that set us apart as strong and immovable for that which is correct” (“What Latter-day Saint Women Do Best: Stand Strong and Immovable,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 109–10).

**Cheryl C. Lant, Primary general president:** “Our personal conversion comes as we begin to live the way

the Lord wants us to live—steadfast and immovable in keeping all of the commandments, not just those that are convenient. This then becomes a process of refinement as we strive to make each day a little better than the last” (“Righteous Traditions,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2008, 14).

## Why Should I Be Strong and Immovable in Faith?

**Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:** “Your faith and your knowledge of the restoration of the gospel will give you the strength to be faithful and true to the covenants you have made with the Lord, and to share your strengths and talents gladly to build up the kingdom of God here on the earth! Your testimony of Jesus Christ is the most important anchor that you can have to help hold you, steadfast and immovable, to principles of righteousness, regardless of the challenges and temptations that may come in the future” (“Steadfast in Christ,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1993, 52).

**Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:** “You cannot today remotely imagine what that decision to be unwaveringly obedient to the Lord will allow you to accomplish in life. Your quiet, uncompromising determination to live a righteous life will couple you to *inspiration* and *power* beyond your capacity now to understand” (“Making the Right Decisions,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 34). ■



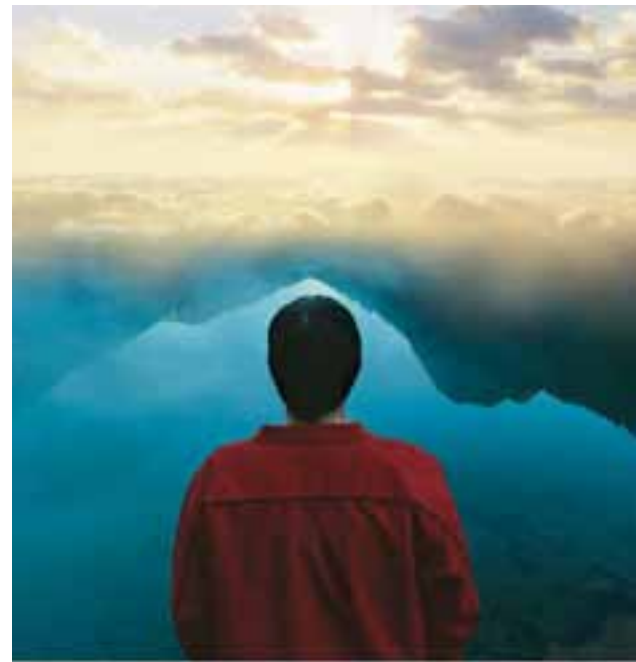
# **LOVE, HOPE, AND PEACE**

*Receiving the diagnosis was devastating. What kind of future would I have?*

## **NAME WITHHELD**

**I** was diagnosed with bipolar disorder as a college student, shortly after returning from my mission. Receiving the diagnosis of mood highs and lows was devastating. I was already in a deep depression, and the news sent me reeling. I reevaluated my sense of self-worth and wondered how I was going to reconcile my expectations for my future with this illness. As I learned more about bipolar disorder, I began to question everything in my life. Fortunately, with the passage of time and through the grace of Heavenly Father, I came through this difficult time a stronger person. My faith was renewed and strengthened.

I wish to share some of my experiences with this illness and the lessons I have learned through them. In doing so, I hope to help those with similar challenges and give insight to those with loved ones who struggle with mental illness. I also hope to dispel some misconceptions and increase understanding about people who are mentally ill.



**I** struggled with the large gap between perfection and where I perceived I stood, made even more obvious by my illness. I regained hope when I realized that although sin is an imperfection, not all imperfection is sin.

### Perfection and Humility

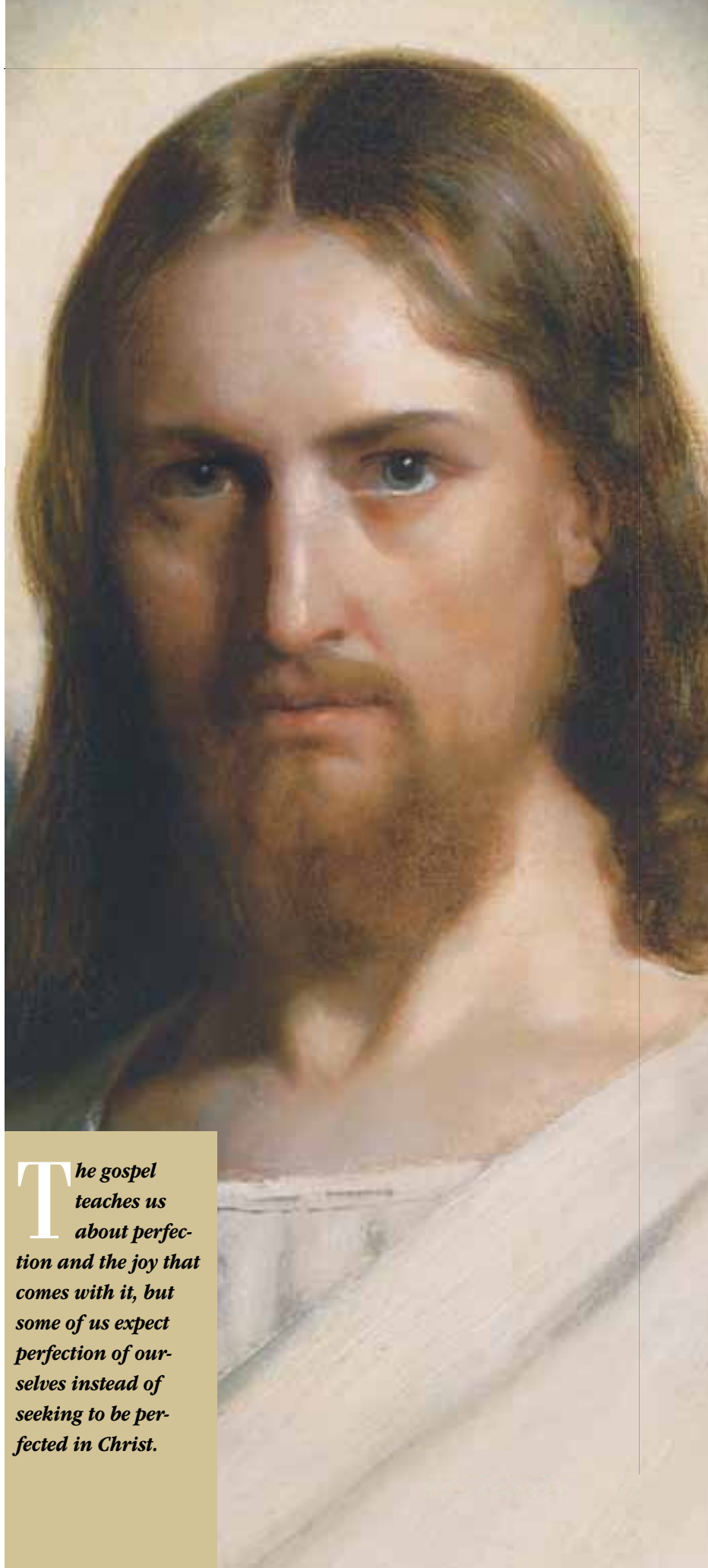
The gospel teaches us about perfection and the joy that comes with it, but some of us expect perfection of ourselves instead of seeking to be perfected in Christ. I struggled with the large gap between perfection and where I perceived I stood, made even more obvious by my illness. I regained hope when I realized that although sin is an imperfection, not all imperfection is sin.

Believing that we should achieve perfection on our own, some of us fill our lives with crippling guilt and an unforgiving attitude toward our inevitable human weakness. We limit our potential for growth through a faithless, unreasonable approach to life. A better approach is to channel our weakness so that instead of filling us with self-loathing, it helps us find humility and strengthen our faith in the Savior. In partnership with Him, we can overcome our weakness as well as our sins. True humility will help us understand our worth despite mental illness—or any other human frailty. It engenders confidence and a realization of the potential each of us has for good.

### Hope and Depression

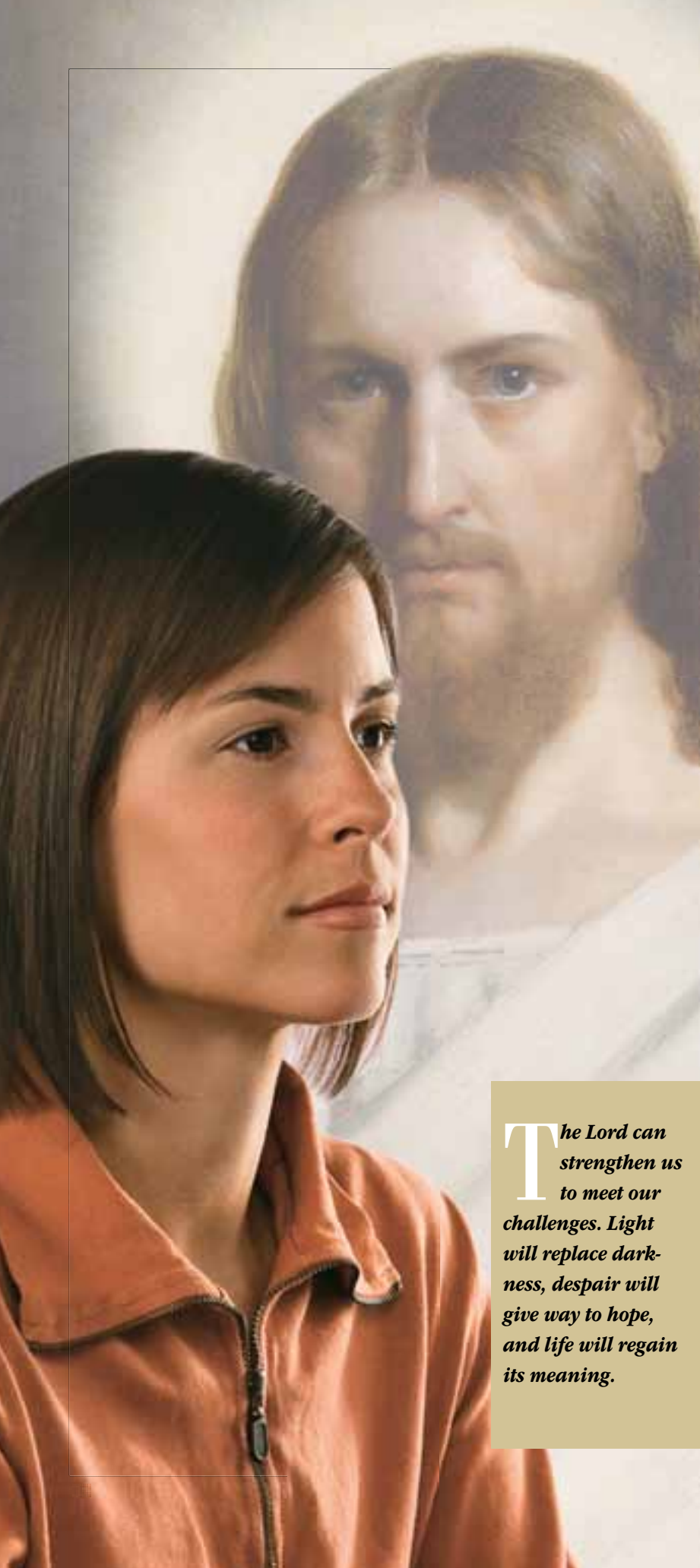
Many people suffer from depression at some time in their lives and know its crippling effects. Undirected guilt, loneliness, despair, and feelings of worthlessness are all distressing symptoms. One can lose the ability to perform daily tasks and cope with life's various obligations.

It is common to hear a talk in which sin is identified as the cause of depression. Sin certainly can cause us to sink into a deep abyss, but it is not the cause of all feelings of depression. When we are depressed, we



**T**he gospel teaches us about perfection and the joy that comes with it, but some of us expect perfection of ourselves instead of seeking to be perfected in Christ.





**T**he Lord can strengthen us to meet our challenges. Light will replace darkness, despair will give way to hope, and life will regain its meaning.

must be willing to honestly look at our lives to try to determine the trigger.

If sin is weighing us down, then we must show, as Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “the faith to try again,” knowing that “spirit sons and daughters of God need not be permanently put down.”<sup>1</sup> The Savior’s Atonement can rescue us from the pains of sin and make us clean again. Depression may not be immediately lifted upon complete repentance, but we can still move forward. We can forgive ourselves for the sins for which we have repented rather than allowing sin to harrow our minds and needlessly prolong our suffering. Through Christ we can overcome our sins and look forward in hope and have our happiness restored in the Lord’s time.

In instances when sin is *not* the cause of depression, it is crucial that we not second-guess ourselves. Feelings of profound guilt are common in people who are depressed. In such circumstances, the guilt is usually not proportional to the trivial mistakes they may have made. Realizing that guilt is unsubstantiated may not eliminate it, but this knowledge can temper the severity of these feelings.

I have learned firsthand that feelings of guilt are difficult and require patience, but I have also learned that in such times, the Lord can strengthen us to enable us to meet the challenge. Happiness will return, and former capacity will be restored. Light will replace darkness, despair will give way to hope, and life will regain its meaning.

#### **Peace and Support**

People dealing with any kind of mental illness will need help weathering the storm;

this help might come in the form of a professional counselor, a caring friend, or a loving family member. Seeking professional help can be difficult, but when it is necessary, it can help us cope and find fulfillment. Embarrassment and fear should not prevent our seeking help, robbing us of the good in life. We have a responsibility to ourselves, to the people who love us, and to Heavenly Father to do all we can to overcome our weaknesses and make the most of our lives.

Good friends and loving family members can give support and withhold judgment. I am grateful for the people in my life who know my limitations but still accept and love me. I try to serve them as well; it is important that these relationships do not become unbalanced. Each of us has a responsibility to be a good friend and family member. Everyone needs to serve and be served.

Wherever else we find help, we will need it most from our loving Savior. He has suffered all of our pains and understands us completely (see Alma 7:11; see also Isaiah 53). Through Him we can find peace, be cleansed from sin, and find the strength to endure our trials. The Savior's loving embrace provides shelter through any trial and love in any circumstance. Likewise, approaching our Heavenly Father in prayer allows us to plead with Him and receive His loving guidance and comfort.

### **The Priesthood**

In times of deep depression I have felt lonely and have been unable to feel the peace and love that often accompany prayer. In these dark times I have wondered if I have offended God and consequently been cut off from His presence completely. These times are especially trying since the reassurance we need feels impossible to receive.

During an especially severe period, I prayed constantly for an answer to a particular problem that was very important to me. After weeks of frustration I was finally humble enough to ask a good friend who was aware of my illness for a priesthood blessing. I did not mention my specific question, only that I was having a difficult time. In the blessing I was given my answer in direct, clear language,



**I** *have developed a great appreciation for the power of the priesthood. I have learned the humility to ask for and accept help. I also have an increased desire to honor my priesthood so that I might be able to bless others in their time of need.*





and I was filled with a peace that soothed my troubled soul. My friend did not realize he had facilitated the answer to my prayer, but I knew that I was not alone. God knew my needs, and although my depression was not immediately healed, He had given me the gifts I needed most: an answer, peace, and hope.

Since that experience I have developed a great appreciation for the power of the priesthood. I have learned the humility to ask for and accept help. I also have an increased desire to honor my priesthood so I might be able to bless others in their time of need. I am extremely grateful for worthy priesthood holders who can provide blessings when I need them most.

### **A Search for Truth**

Mental illness is unique from other human frailties since it can impair our ability to think, reason, and feel the Spirit. I believe it is for this reason that mental illness is often feared and misunderstood. We live in a wonderful time when the Lord has blessed us with all the marvels of modern science, including improved medication. Where mental illness might once have destroyed lives, many of those who deal with it can now control their illness and live relatively normal lives.

I am extremely grateful for my testimony. As time has passed, it has become clear to me that those precious experiences that formed the foundation of my testimony were not valuable only for the time they were given; they have continued to give me strength later in life when I've needed to rely on the reservoir of faith granted to me by Heavenly Father. Despite the additional

**W**herever else we find help, we will need it most from our loving Savior. He has suffered all of our pains and understands us completely. Through Him we can find peace, be cleansed from sin, and find the strength to endure our trials.



### **NOTHING BEYOND HIS HEALING TOUCH**

*“No grief is so great, no pain so profound, no burden so unbearable*

*that it is beyond His healing touch.”*

**Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Special Witnesses of Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2001, 9.**

confusion that mental illness can cause in the search for truth, the Lord will visit us with His tender mercies, blessing us in

the hour of our need (see 1 Nephi 1:20).

No matter what our circumstances are, God understands what we need and how best to give it to us. He is “no respecter of persons” (D&C 38:16) and loves mankind (see John 3:16). He will bless each of us how and when we need it. Regardless of our challenges in life, He loves and guides us individually. Our faith in Him is the anchor for our lives. The grace of Christ is sufficient for all (see 2 Corinthians 12:9), and His love can reach us in any trial. We will struggle from time to time, but we can be sustained by faith in the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

When the Savior was asked, “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” He answered, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:2–3). Mental illness is not a punishment from God,<sup>2</sup> but His works are manifest in each of us when we allow the Atonement to work in our lives. We may not be healed immediately as the blind man was, but no matter what pain we bear, the Savior will heal us. Through His love and sacrifice we can find strength to overcome our trials, since He has already “overcome the world” (D&C 50:41). ■

#### **NOTES**

1. “The Tugs and Pulls of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 37.
2. See Alexander B. Morrison, “Myths about Mental Illness,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2005, 33.

### **Helps for Those Suffering from Mental Illness**

If you or a loved one is suffering from mental illness, you can find helpful information online at [www.ldsfamilyservices.org](http://www.ldsfamilyservices.org). Additional information is available at the Disability Resources section of LDS.org under “Home and Family.”



**P***eople dealing with any kind of mental illness will need help weathering the storm. This may come from a professional counselor, a caring friend, or a loving family member.*



## NEW YEAR, NEW PROGRESS

When it comes to implementing a successful home storage program, the most important step is to start. With the beginning of a new year, now is the perfect time for individuals and families to review the First Presidency's guidelines on home storage in the pamphlet *All Is Safely Gathered In*. The First Presidency encourages all Church members to gradually establish a three-month supply of food, store drinking water, set aside a

financial reserve, and when possible, eventually increase home storage to a longer-term supply.

By following these simple guidelines, Church members can prayerfully consider their circumstances and set one goal to begin or continue their own home storage program. As we prepare ourselves and our families for trials and adversity, we will receive temporal security and be able to "provide for our needs as we walk in faith and obedience."<sup>1</sup> Here are a few ideas that you and your family can begin in 2009.

### Three-Month Supply

- Consider your normal daily diet and make a list of foods that you can purchase, store, and rotate.
- Choose a few items on your regular shopping list every week to add to your home storage, and purchase double amounts of those items as finances allow.

### Drinking Water

- Begin to save and clean durable bottles that have been used for soda or juice. Rather than purchasing new bottles, save the clean and sanitized bottles and use them for water storage.
- Purchase a few water bottles every week to add to your home storage water supply. Be sure to rotate your water supply regularly.

### Financial Reserve

- Add a certain amount of your income to your financial reserve each month. Set the money aside immediately after paying your tithes and offerings.
- Create a budget based on your spending last month. After looking at your spending habits, consider limiting the money you use on nonessential items and adding it to your financial reserve instead.





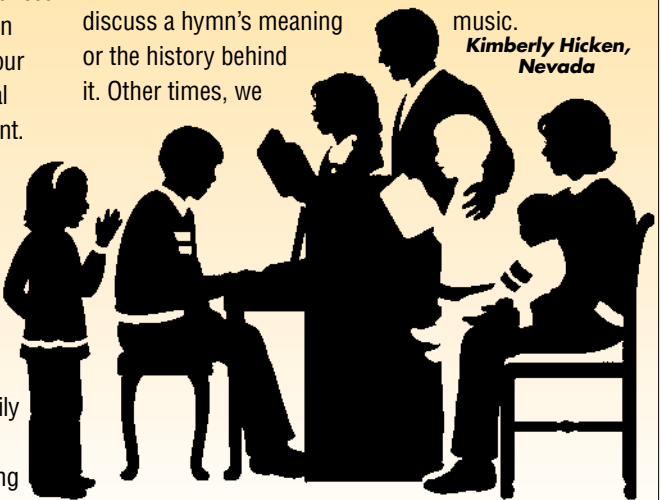
**Family Singing Time**

The importance of good music in the home was the focus of a sacrament meeting that prompted my husband to encourage a change in our home. Though “musically challenged,” we decided to sing a hymn to start each evening’s scripture study. As we passed out the hymnbooks and announced we were going to begin with a song, most of our children were skeptical and somewhat resistant. We pressed forward, however, and decided to begin with the first hymn in the book. We practiced it that week and then introduced the next hymn the following week in family home evening. Since then, our singing

time has evolved to fit our family’s needs. Because none of us is particularly proficient in music, we often skip hymns that are unfamiliar or seem too daunting for us. For the hymns we attempt to sing, my daughter or I sometimes try to plunk out the tune on the piano. Other times we sing along with the hymns on CD. Most of the time we sing a capella. The children take turns leading our singing, which helps them to learn basic music skills. Sometimes we also discuss a hymn’s meaning or the history behind it. Other times, we

talk about the feelings a particular hymn evokes in us. Although we try our best to sing, we often hit wrong notes, our voices don’t always blend, and our timing is sometimes off. Most of the time, I’m glad no one can hear us. Still, when I hear the children humming or singing a hymn we’ve practiced or see their faces light up when a familiar hymn is sung at Church, I’m grateful we chose to enhance our family’s scripture study with music.

*Kimberly Hicken, Nevada*



**Longer-Term Supply**

- If you have succeeded in gathering a three-month supply, increase your home storage to meet longer-term needs based on your individual circumstances.
- Learn how to properly package and store longer-term food storage items, such as wheat, white rice, and beans.

For more information on setting home storage goals, visit [www.providentliving.org](http://www.providentliving.org). You can also access information printed in the Church magazines by going to the Gospel Library on [LDS.org](http://LDS.org) and visiting the “Food Storage” entry in the Gospel Topics list.

**NOTE**

1. *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage* (pamphlet, 2007), 1.

**MY “LET IT RAIN” JOURNAL**

Our stake president encouraged us to start a “Let It Rain” journal. He said that personal revelation is like rain. It comes drop by drop, and if we would create a reservoir for it, so to speak, in our journal, we’d be surprised at how much the Holy Ghost prompts us every day. He advised us to write in our journal any questions we might have and pray about them. When I tried this, I was astounded at how much personal revelation I had been overlooking.

I discovered answers to many of my parenting concerns. I also wrote down my desires for a deeper understanding of gospel principles. While studying scriptures or

listening to conference and Church talks, I took notes in my journal. I even recorded seemingly stray thoughts on the right side of the paper. I soon discovered that these thoughts were often answers to my struggles or promptings to do something for my family or my calling. Once while watching general conference, I kept having an unrelated thought that I should do something for a certain woman in my ward. The next Sunday I discovered that

I’d been assigned as her visiting teacher.

Keeping a “Let It Rain” journal has deepened my gospel understanding, strengthened my testimony, and helped me to be a more effective parent, member missionary, Primary teacher, and daughter of God. I am thankful for a wise stake president whose forecast for rain turned out to be a beautiful, life-changing experience for me.

*Kersten Campbell, Washington*



## NEVER FORGET THAT YOU ARE A MORMON

By Hildo Rosillo Flores

“Whenever we fall, whenever we do less than we ought, in a very real way we forget mother,” declared President Thomas S. Monson. He added, “Men turn from evil and yield to their better natures when mother is remembered.”<sup>1</sup>

President Monson’s message has been a strength to me, so much so that when I first read his words, they brought to mind my mother and the wise counsel she gave

me years ago, shortly after I joined the Church.

My mother was a member of another Christian church, but she was kind to the missionaries who taught me the gospel. Once I decided to become

a Latter-day

**I decided to quit attending church. A week later my mother looked me straight in the eye and told me something I have always tried to remember.**

Saint, she always supported me.

Everything had been going well in my new life as a member of the Church until I joined in Journalism Day observances in my home country of Peru. At a party I attended, talks and complimentary words filled the

air. Toasts then followed. As the party grew, so did the temptation to drink with my friends.

The change that converts to the Church make when they accept the gospel often means that they must make new friends. In some circumstances, as I learned, former friends can be instruments of the adversary to tempt us to break the commandments and resume our old ways.



When my co-workers offered me a glass of beer, I took it, drank it, and kept on drinking. At the end of the party, my conscience convicted me. I had fallen. What would my mother say?

When I arrived home, I entered quietly and immediately went to bed.

My mother said nothing, but I felt ashamed and decided to quit attending church.

A week later, as we sat at the table eating lunch, she looked me straight in the eye and said, "Son, never forget that you are a Mormon."

To go to and from work, I rode my bicycle by the Church meetinghouse. Every time I did so, my conscience bothered me. One evening I decided I could no longer live with my guilt. I parked my bicycle directly in front of the branch president's office, went in, and requested an interview.

I told the branch president what I had done and asked for forgiveness, after which he counseled with me. From that moment on, I have never broken the Word of Wisdom.

My mother died more than 20 years ago, but I have always tried to remember what she told me never to forget: I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. ■

**NOTE**

1. "Behold Thy Mother," *Liahona*, Apr. 1998, 4; *Ensign*, Apr. 1998, 2, 4.

**I** didn't know if our babies would live or die, but I knew if I turned to the Lord, He would help carry my burden.

## TWICE BLESSED

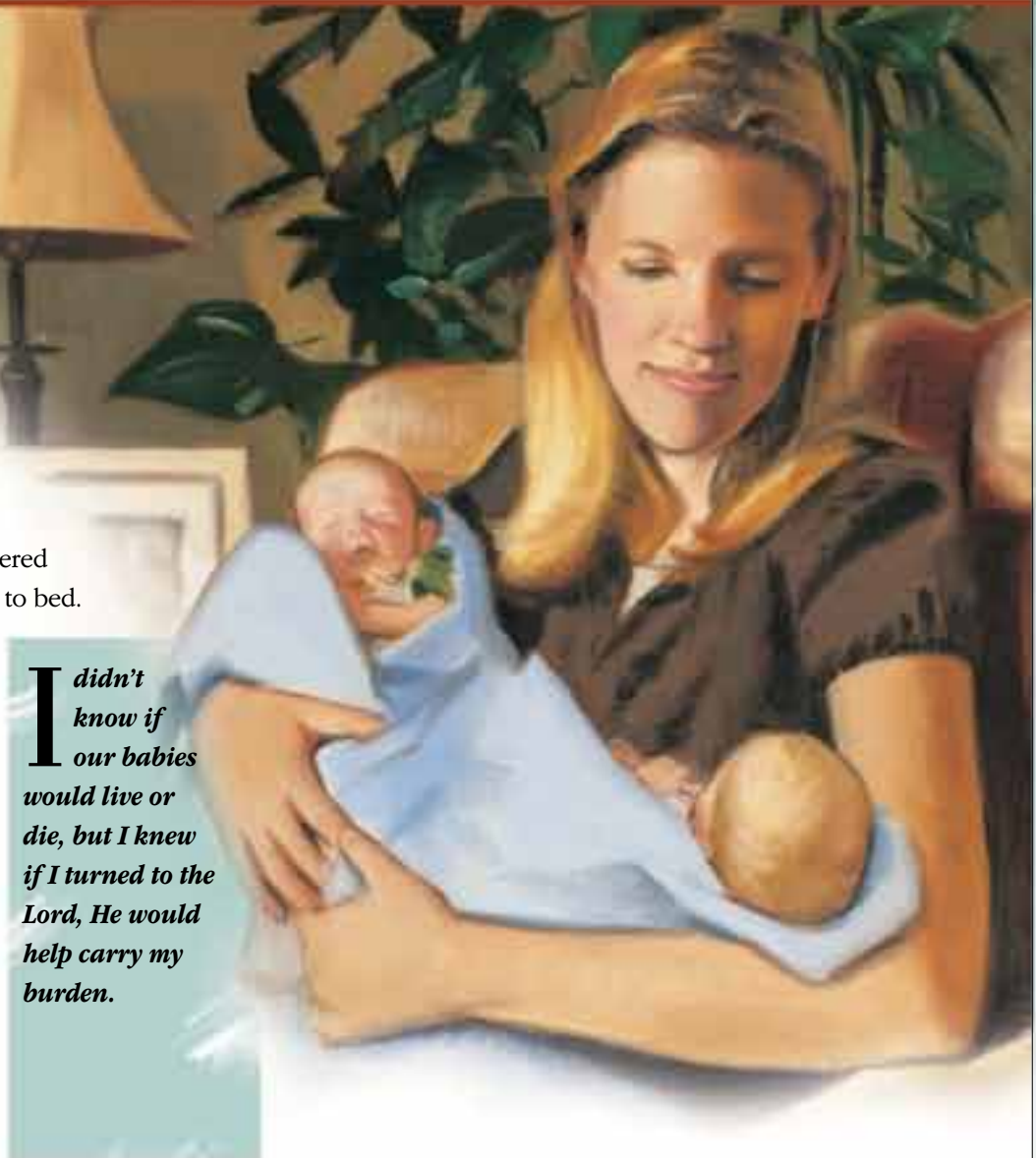
By Angela Lee

**M**y life changed forever when my husband and I went to the doctor to check the gender and development of our unborn baby. I cried with joy when we discovered that I was expecting twins. But my tears turned to ones of despair as the doctor explained that a series of complications made it unlikely that the twins would survive until birth. The doctor suggested

terminating the pregnancy. She said proceeding would be risky and that I would have to be hospitalized at some point.

Despite the dangers, we decided to continue the pregnancy.

On the drive home I realized the severity of the situation. I wondered how I could leave my husband and our three children and stay for an extended period in the hospital. Knowing that our babies would likely be delivered prematurely—and might not live—became overwhelming for me. I wasn't sure I could endure this trial.





Only after I received a priesthood blessing from my husband and father-in-law did I feel peace. I realized that no matter what the outcome was, my family and I would be all right. I felt my Savior's love and knew that He would be with us in joy or in sorrow.

Some time later, I said good-bye to my family and entered the hospital for an indefinite stay. The babies' heart rates were monitored constantly to make sure the babies were safe. It was difficult for me to see their heart rates drop, and I wondered if they would make it to the delivery goal of 34 weeks. At 25½ weeks, one baby's heart rate dropped to a critical level, nearly stopping. The doctors decided that if his heart didn't start beating normally, both babies would be delivered by emergency cesarean section within minutes. I panicked when I heard the nurse call my husband and tell him that I was being prepared for surgery and that the neonatal team was standing by.

I knew that to get through this trial, I needed Heavenly Father's help.

I prayed silently, pleading that our baby would recover, thus allowing both twins the much-needed time to develop in utero. I also prayed for comfort. Once again I felt peace, just as I had when I received the priesthood blessing. I didn't know if our babies would live or die, but I knew that no matter what, if I turned to the Lord, He would help carry my burden. As it turned out, the baby's heartbeat returned to normal, and surgery was no longer necessary.

My stay at the hospital continued for the next two months, and there were many times we worried about our babies' fluctuating heart rates. But fortunately, neither of the twins' heart rates dropped as low as before. Our sons, John and Jacob, were born at 33 weeks. Their cords were intertwined with eight knots, and John—the son whose heart rate had dropped so low—had his cord wrapped around his neck twice. Our twins stayed in the hospital's intensive care unit so their body temperatures and breathing could be regulated. Despite the potential problems associated with premature births, John

and Jacob were able to come home after only 19 days.

Our twins are now toddlers, and they have no negative effects from being born prematurely. I am grateful that what began as a trial became one of the greatest blessings of my life. I was given two healthy sons, and my testimony of the power of priesthood blessings and prayer was strengthened. I am also grateful to be able to recall the peace and love I felt in knowing that the Lord was aware of my situation. I learned then that, with the Lord's help, we will have the strength to endure our trials. ■

## COULD I LET GO OF MY PAST?

By Marcos A. Walker

A positive and happy attitude is indispensable for people working in sales, as I do. Yet several years ago I was feeling discouraged and had no desire to talk to anyone. This was especially true one afternoon.

My countenance must have betrayed my poor spirits because one of my co-workers, with whom I had talked on many occasions, inquired about my situation. I explained that after being married for six years, my wife and I had divorced. This month marked the six-year anniversary of the divorce, so I had now been divorced for the same amount of time I had been married. My mind and heart were troubled, and my soul was filled with pain and sorrow. I





knew I was missing many of my children's experiences, and that realization was constant torture. Loneliness consumed me, and I saw no solution—or even hope—on the horizon. This, I told my co-worker, was the price I had to pay for my mistakes.

My colleague, who was a member of another Christian church, then responded. "What price are you talking about?" he asked. "Jesus Christ has paid the price, if you have truly repented of your sins. Or do you not remember why He came to earth?"

I was astonished by his reply, and his words left me speechless. They resonated inside me all afternoon.

**M**y soul was filled with pain and sorrow. This, I told my co-worker, was the price I had to pay for my mistakes.

Yes—even though I lived with the consequences of my mistakes, Jesus Christ had paid the price. Why had I not realized this? I knew the doctrine, and I knew that it was true. Recognizing that the Atonement had power in my life filled me with a feeling of peace and comfort that I still remember today.

Years have passed since this experience at work. I have learned that some consequences of our actions remain with us all of our lives. Many of them affect the lives of our loved ones. The loneliness has not been

easy, but it has helped me recognize my weaknesses and ask forgiveness of my Heavenly Father and the people who were most affected—my children and their mother.

In contrast with how I felt that afternoon, I can say that I now have peace and hope. I know that Jesus Christ has paid the price, and I have no doubt of this because I have repented. He has sustained me during these years of trials. Although my trials continue, I know that as I repent, turn to the Lord, and keep the commandments, He will continue to sustain me. ■



## Mormon Helping Hands Completes First Decade of Service

Service rendered by members of the Church around the world comes in many forms, but over the past 10 years that service has usually come in one color: yellow.

Whether rendering emergency aid after a natural disaster or cleaning up the local park, the Mormon Helping Hands program, with its bright yellow vests or T-shirts, has become a welcome sign of hope for those in need during the past decade.

Mormon Helping Hands is a priesthood-directed Church program that, teamed up with the welfare program of the Church, contributes to relief efforts and facilitates other service projects around the world.

### In the Beginning

Officially established in 1998, the Mormon Helping Hands program was created as a way for Church members in South America to reach out and serve their communities. Starting in Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Chile, Church leaders designated an annual day of service for members to give of their time and efforts in a prepared service project.

During this first official organized effort, tens of thousands of Church members of all ages in South America collaborated to participate in a multinational service project. In an effort to strengthen and beautify their



**Young women in Hong Kong assemble hygiene kits for those in need.**

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

communities, members spent time repairing and painting schools and hospitals and cleaning parks, streets, and other public spaces.

Not long after the first service day, the idea spread to Brazil, where service continued and the program began to grow. By 2002 the organization had been named one of the most important volunteer organizations in Brazil because of the good it brought to the people.

Today, millions of hours of service have been donated by hundreds of thousands of volunteers in all areas of the world. What began as a multinational service project in a few countries of South America turned into a worldwide relief effort for people in need. The program currently operates in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America,

North America, and the Pacific.

### Providing Relief

After Hurricane Ike stormed through the southern United States in 2008, work crews were organized to help with cleanup. Members in southeast Texas joined together to clean up debris left in yards and to distribute hygiene kits, cleaning kits, and food boxes in areas devastated by the storm. Local bishops' storehouses stocked with food, water, tools, and other necessary supplies provided resources for those in need.

When flooding killed some 20 people in the midwestern United States and left thousands homeless in 2008, Church members and missionaries donned yellow Mormon Helping Hands

T-shirts and helped with sandbagging and other relief efforts. The Cedar Rapids Iowa Stake set up a relief warehouse filled with the wheelbarrows, shovels, and work clothes the Church sent. As part of the area most heavily affected by the flooding, the stake also received funds to purchase power washers and generators. The community accepted the relief efforts with gratitude.

### Improving Communities

While disasters provide opportunities to serve, no disaster is necessary to involve members in reaching out to their communities. Working to improve communities gives Church members the opportunity to give their time and talents to bless others in need and to show that their community is important to them.

In November 2007 more than 100,000 members in Africa participated in a continent-wide service project cleaning up communities. Their efforts included cleaning and landscaping the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Cape Town, South Africa; planting more than 50 trees in Olivenhoutbosch, South Africa; filling potholes and clearing glass and rubble along roads in Kitale, Kenya; and repairing playground equipment.

At the conclusion of the project, Nikki Bishop, CEO of the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, commented that "the difference this is going to make to the children, parents, staff, and visitors will be enormous. We

are deeply grateful. The project has gone tremendously well, transforming the hospital. I am delighted and thrilled.”

### Strengthening Members

One of the important principles taught by Jesus Christ and lived by His followers is that of service: “And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom, that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

Not only do Mormon Helping Hands projects accomplish much good for those in need by making use of the time and talents of members, but they also bless those rendering the service. They help members become more sensitive to the challenges others face. As members follow the example of the Savior, their testimonies are strengthened, and by serving together, members become more united.

“First of all, it helps us internally,” said Mike Martin, then president of the Pretoria South Africa Stake, after the 2007 All-Africa Helping Hands Day. “We are better able to bond with each other, and it develops unity; but really it is great just to be out there in the community, see some of the issues that people face, and try in a small way to make a little bit of a difference.”

### Building Bridges

In partnership with government leaders, education



**Mormon Helping Hands volunteers in Louisiana, USA, help clear debris following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.**

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

officials, and private businesses, some 50,000 Church members and friends worked together in April 2005 to improve the conditions of 200 schools in São Paulo, Brazil. Painting doors, cleaning classrooms, and repairing desks were some of the ways volunteers served in the schools.

Such service events bring many different groups of people together; these people improve the areas and form friendships. Relationships developed while giving service can build bridges of understanding and strengthen relationships with officials and the community.

Mormon Helping Hands projects are not meant to be proselytizing activities. Rather they are meant to be opportunities to promote Christian service that might not otherwise occur.

In September 2006 members in the Bristol England Stake worked within their community to improve a struggling community farm. In one day members were able to work on a wheelchair access path; paint; dig; clean; and build educational toys, bird boxes, and feeders for the farm. More than 2,500 hours of service were given, and the improvement was noticeable. The local mayor visited the farm, expressed his gratitude, and said how impressed he was with what had been accomplished.

Through the Mormon Helping Hands organization, Church members worldwide have rendered service, improved communities, and formed friendships. The service projects have not only touched lives but also have deepened the faith of those involved and built

bridges in communities and organizations. ■

## Web Extends Distribution Services' Reach

For many members of the Church who need Church materials and supplies, such as pictures, temple clothing, scriptures, or other distribution items, getting to a distribution center can be costly and time consuming, even with many such centers around the world.

“We still have many, many members of the Church who are hours away [from a center] who can have products right at their fingertips—shipped directly to their door



so they don't have to travel to a distribution center," said Jim Christensen, manager of product development for Church Distribution Services.

#### **LDSCatalog.com**

Distribution Services uses the Internet to expand the shopping options available to members of the Church. Country Web sites have been created to serve specific areas throughout the world.

Included in those areas is a site based in Argentina, a site based in Australia, and a site for members in the United States and Canada. A Web site based in Germany

and designed to serve most of Europe is currently being developed.

Members can access all of the sites by going to LDSCatalog.com and clicking on **Country Sites** at the top of the page.

The materials offered online are available for the same price as at distribution centers, and items ordered in the U.S. and Canada are sent without shipping fees.

The site often gives purchasers more options than a distribution center. "There is a greater selection," said Steve Argyle, presentations

coordinator for Distribution Services. "At local distribution centers there are often space restrictions. Online you can get everything that we offer."

#### **From Clothing to Curriculum**

The Web site allows buyers to purchase items or leads them to where they can find more information on what they are looking for.

The Web site has a section entitled "New Items," which identifies products recently made available, such as pictures of newly dedicated temples, current issues of the Church

magazines, and other new products.

Curriculum items are currently available through the Web site in English, Spanish, and French. Gospel study materials, manuals, catalogs, and other resources are available to benefit homes, wards, and branches. Church units can order curriculum material for all auxiliaries for the year from the site, along with specific materials catering to the needs of members with limited sight and hearing and other disabilities.

Information regarding family history work, including supplies for family history centers, census information, hints on how to begin, and other useful resources, are available to help those who would like to get started in family history work. Software downloads are also available through Distribution Services.

For artwork prints seen in the Church Materials Catalog, visitors to the Web site can search for artwork by title or by artist, making prints more readily available to members around the world.

#### **Finding the Right Way**

Brother Argyle said that Distribution Services makes materials available to members in a variety of ways, including telephone, FAX, and mail orders. The Web sites are one more way to achieve that goal.

"The Web site is just one part of a plan that makes Church materials available to all Church members," said Brother Argyle. ■



**LDSCatalog.com makes Church materials available to many members worldwide.**

## Book of Mormon Reaches 140 Million Milestone

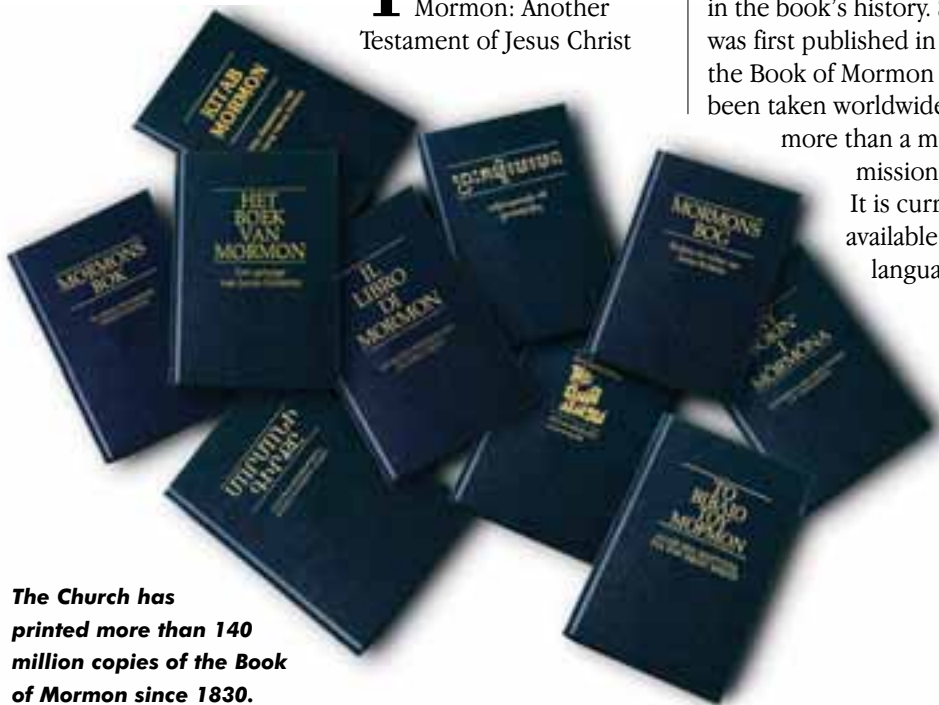
The 140 millionth copy of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ

was recently distributed, passing another milestone in the book's history. Since it was first published in 1830, the Book of Mormon has been taken worldwide by

more than a million

missionaries.

It is currently available in 107 languages.



**The Church has printed more than 140 million copies of the Book of Mormon since 1830.**

In 2003, *Book* magazine named the Book of Mormon one of the “20 Books That Changed America” (July/August issue, 59). In October 2007 President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) described its modern influence: “Through all of these years critics have tried to explain it. They have spoken against it. They have ridiculed it. But it has outlived them all, and its influence today is greater than at any time in its history” (“The Stone Cut Out of the Mountain,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 83).

The Book of Mormon has been described as the “keystone” of the Church (see Introduction to the Book of Mormon) and is used side by side with the Bible in members’ teaching and personal study. ■

### WORLD BRIEFS

#### Church Museum Gets Name Change

To align itself with other Church entities, including the new Church History Library now under construction, the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City is now the Church History Museum. The museum showcases the Mormon experience, with permanent galleries as well as temporary exhibits on specific themes. There are guided as well as self-guided tours. The museum is open Monday through Saturday. Admission is free.

#### Family History Consultants Supported Online

To help support family history consultants, the Family History Department is developing new online tools and services. These will include access to up-to-date training and new systems, services, and products. Information, updates, and helpful hints will be e-mailed periodically to registered participants. Consultants can register at <http://consultant.familysearch.org> with their unit number and Church membership number.

#### British Genealogist Lectures in Salt Lake City

Distinguished British genealogist Colin R. Chapman lectured at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City in October 2008 on the topics “Was Your Ancestor Really Married?” and “Genealogy in Early British Censuses, 1086 to 1841.” Mr. Chapman helped establish six British county genealogical societies and is the author of 14 books on family history. He was involved in developing the three-letter Chapman County Code, which has become the international standard in family history work.

#### Hawaiian Book of Mormon on Display

An original copy of the 1855 edition of *Ka Buke a Moramona*—the Hawaiian translation of the Book of Mormon—went on display at the Laie Hawaii Temple Visitors’ Center in November 2008. Only 3,000 copies of the 1855 edition were printed, and only some 200 of them were bound. Due to a fire a few years after printing, only 15 to 30 copies of the rare edition are believed to exist today. ■



## Water Project Provides More than Just Water

As water sprayed from a new well drilled into the Kenyan countryside, villagers from the Makueni region shouted for joy. Some danced. Some cried. It meant no more 30-kilometer walks to fetch water in lieu of drinking from contaminated rivers.

The Church's clean water initiative is providing remote communities like Makueni with hand-pump wells to reduce water-borne diseases. But by

allowing villagers to spend less time fetching water, the wells also enable families to spend more time together and children to attend school more frequently.

In July 2008 in the neighboring district of Mwingi, the Church, with help from the local residents, built 30 wells that serve 56,000 people. Around the same time, 20 wells in Masinga, Kenya, were also completed, serving 32,000 people. Seven other projects in the country are in process.

As with other major humanitarian initiatives, the clean water projects incorporate principles of self-reliance and sustainability. A community water committee becomes responsible for maintaining the system. The Church supplies the committee with the necessary tools and trains them on hygiene so they can use the water safely and properly.

While local contractors take care of major construction elements like drilling, community members are expected to help, digging trenches, moving pipe, and mixing cement, among other things.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, more than 400 people are digging a 30-kilometer trench and laying pipe to create a gravity-fed water system. The four-year project will benefit an estimated 160,000 people, making it the largest clean water project the Church has funded.

With an estimated 23 projects in progress for 2008, the clean water initiative continues to touch hundreds of thousands of lives. Since 2002 the projects have provided more than four million people in 50 countries with access to clean water. ■



*Kenyans in the Makueni region celebrate as water sprays from a new borehole.*

## Church Sends Atmit to Ethiopia

The Church sent more than 1.4 million pounds (635 tonnes) of Atmit—special food for the severely malnourished—to drought-stricken Ethiopia in late 2008.

At least 14 million Ethiopians were in need of assistance. While the crisis stemmed from a drought that destroyed the entire spring crop in some places,

the country has also dealt with high food prices, a number of disasters, and a rebellion in the Somali region that disrupted food delivery.

Remembering the aid the Church provided during the 2003 famine, government officials in Ethiopia requested help. The Church sent more than 30 containers of Atmit, beginning in late August and

ending in October.

As in 2003, the Church worked closely with Project Mercy, a nongovernmental relief agency with experience in Ethiopia. In close coordination with the Ethiopian government, Project Mercy oversaw the distribution of the Atmit.

Atmit is a mixture of oat flour, powdered milk, sugar, salt, vitamins, and minerals that is mixed with water and cooking oil and has proven to be a successful resource for feeding the severely malnourished. ■

leading into the isolated village and restrictions placed on missionary travel, baptism remained something the nonmembers only read and dreamed about.

Realizing the people's sincere desire, Brother Souza traveled six hours to Iquitos, the capital city in the region, and spoke to the stake president of the area about the situation. The stake president, along with the nearest missionaries, planned a way to provide the loyal followers from San Regis the opportunity to be baptized.

Nauta, a town situated on the edge of the Amazon and 58 miles (93 km) from Iquitos, served as the meeting point since it was the closest the missionaries could get to San Regis. This meant a perilous boat ride through dense jungle and predator-infested waters for the San Regis believers. However, upon hearing the news of the missionary meeting, many in San Regis desired to make the trip despite the danger. With room in the boat for only 15, Brother Souza and his son went with 13 selected

## Aid Brings Hope to City in Iraq

After a hot Iraqi summer filled with drought, dust storms, and devastating suicide bombings in Tal Afar, Iraq, a timely donation to local elementary schools gave students new school supplies

and hope for the future.

The effort was the result of a large donation by the Church. More than 3,000 boxes of school supplies, baby clothes, hygiene kits, and toys were donated, helping the

local children prepare for the new school year and aiding many of their families as well. The school supplies included notebooks, pencils, scissors, and a bag for the children's schoolbooks. ■

## Young Adults Travel the Amazon for the Gospel

Wading in a murky river, home to piranhas and anacondas, 15 travelers acted quickly to remove the water from their sinking handcrafted wooden boat. When it was empty, they reboarded and continued to navigate on faith and hope through the rough Amazon River waters.

The dangerous boat ride from San Regis, a village tucked in the densely packed Amazon rainforest of northeastern Peru, to the closest city missionaries could reach was a four-hour voyage toward salvation—

the travelers had come to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and be baptized.

Reaching their destination wet, but hungry to hear about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ from the full-time missionaries, seven youth and young adults received the saving ordinances for which they had waited for years.

Each week for the previous three years, 30 people attended the Church meetings held at Miguel Souza's house in San Regis. Other than Brother Souza and his son, David, none of the

villagers at the Sunday services were baptized members of the Church. With no roads



**Thirteen investigators traveled four hours by boat on the Amazon River in Peru to hear the missionaries. Seven were baptized; the others returned home with the goal to continue preparing.**

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAKE BRANDENBURG



youth and young adults to Nauta.

Obstacles immediately sprang up for those making the journey. People of other faiths in the village tried to persuade them to give up their dreams, telling them they were being duped and that they were already baptized and did not need baptism again.

Undaunted, they made the voyage, surviving the Amazon and a nearly capsized boat.

After learning from the missionaries over two days, the group went to a remote lagoon in the Peruvian jungle, where the seven who were ready received the ordinances of baptism and confirmation.

A day later the travelers made the long journey back to their remote village, where others would prepare for a future opportunity to make the same voyage toward salvation. ■

## Mexico City Temple Rededicated

President Thomas S. Monson formally rededicated the Mexico City Mexico Temple on November 16, 2008, after 19 months of renovation. President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, also attended the rededication.

After functioning without interruption for 25 years, the

temple closed its doors on March 31, 2007, for remodeling. In October the temple opened for a public open house. Guided tours were offered from October 20 through November 8, 2008, excluding Sundays. Latter-day Saints from the region then attended two dedicatory sessions.



**Mexico City Mexico Temple.**

The temple serves approximately 264,000 members of the Church who live in Mexico City and the states of Mexico, Guerrero, Guanajuato, Morelos, Baja California Sur, Michoacán, Hidalgo, Puebla, Querétaro, and San Luis Potosí.

The Mexico City Temple was the first of 12 temples constructed in Mexico and was originally dedicated on December 2, 1983.

The history of the Church in Mexico City traces back to 1875, when President Brigham Young sent Daniel

Jones along with a small group of missionaries to Mexico City, where they distributed brochures to several Mexican leaders. One of these brochures fell into the hands of Plotino Rhodacanaty, who later became the first member of the Church in Mexico. In November 1879 the Church's first branch in Mexico City was organized with Brother Rhodacanaty as branch president.

Currently, the Church has 212 stakes and approximately 1,120,000 members throughout the country. ■

## Comment

### Hopeful Help

Even though I am not single, I enjoyed reading the article "Single and Steadfast: Lessons in Hope" in the August 2008 *Ensign* (p. 20). Not only did the principles taught there help me in my own life, but they helped me better understand what my 16-year-old daughter was going through. As she had not been asked out to an upcoming dance, I was able to help her maintain a more positive outlook about herself and the situation. We discussed that even though she wasn't going to the dance, she was still a righteous, lovable person and the opportunity may present itself in the future. I am thankful the article was published at just the right time to help me better counsel my daughter. I am sure it will be beneficial in the years to come as my other children grow up and experience similar issues. Thank you.

Dana Randall  
Utah, USA

### Something for Everyone

I'm a little behind on my reading (just finished the July 2008 issue). I found the article "Making Church Magazines" (p. 64) very informative. I would like you to know that I read every issue of the *Ensign* from cover to cover—even the articles that do not fit me personally—or so I thought. I have found something of value that I can use in my life in every article—even if at first glance the article did not seem intended for me. So don't worry about hitting everyone and all interests. You do that very well.

Also, the article by Elder M. Russell Ballard, "Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet" (p. 58), was very helpful. What a wonderful way to share the gospel for those who are shy and fear face-to-face discussions. I feel enlightened! ■

Lynda Sessions  
Oregon, USA



***“By Small and Simple Things Are Great Things Brought to Pass” (Alma 37:6), by David Koch***

*Young Lucy Mack Smith reads the Bible to her sons Joseph and Hyrum in the log home near the Sacred Grove, in Palmyra Township, New York. From this humble beginning, Joseph grew to become prophet of the last dispensation, through whom the fulness of the gospel was restored to the earth. On June 27, 1844, these two boys—then grown men—died as martyrs and witnesses to the truthfulness of the Restoration.*





*“When but 14 years of age, this courageous young man [Joseph Smith] entered a grove of trees, which later would be called sacred, and received an answer to his sincere prayer. “There followed for Joseph unrelenting persecution as he related to others the account of the glorious vision he received in that grove. Although he was ridiculed and scorned, he stood firm. Said he, ‘I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it’” (Joseph Smith—History 1:25). So writes President Thomas S. Monson as one of the present-day witnesses of the Prophet Joseph Smith. See page 10.*