

# Ensign

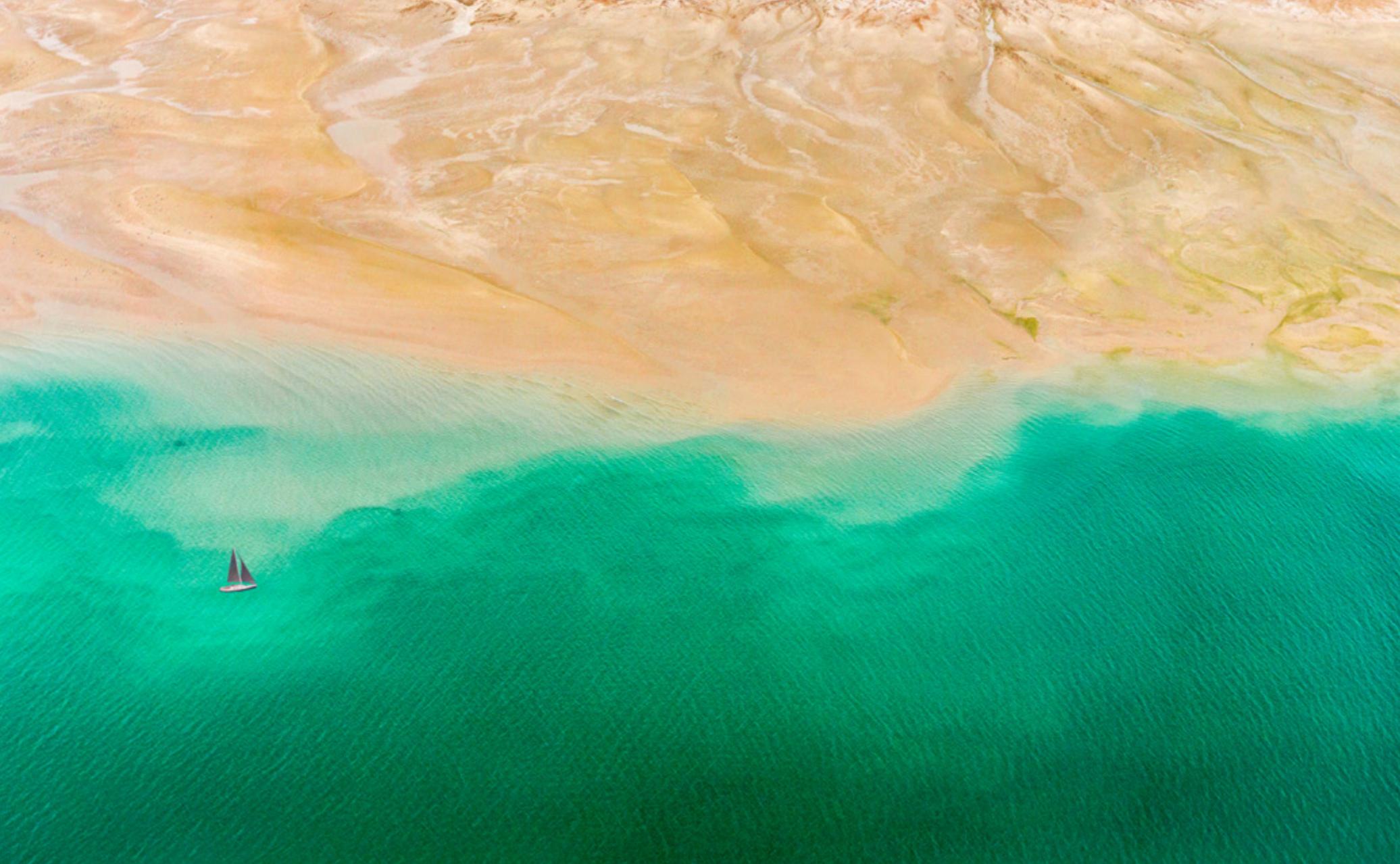


**Howard W. Hunter:  
Father, Lawyer,  
Musician, Prophet,  
p. 40**

**Gaining a Knowledge  
of the Godhead, p. 32**

**Using Sundays for  
Gospel Study, p. 50**

**The Power of the Book  
of Mormon to Change  
Your Life, pp. 52, 76**



*"I will prepare the way before you, if it so be that ye shall keep my commandments; wherefore, inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall be led towards the promised land; and ye shall know that it is by me that ye are led."*

**1 Nephi 17:13**

Coastline near Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on the eastern side of the Arabian Peninsula. Lehi and his family traveled south from Jerusalem on the western side of the peninsula.

# Contents January 2016

Volume 46 • Number 1



## MESSAGES

### FIRST PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

- 4** **Happiness for Those We Love**  
President Henry B. Eyring

### VISITING TEACHING MESSAGE

- 7** **The Family: A Proclamation to the World**

#### ON THE COVER

Front: Photograph of President Howard W. Hunter with granddaughters Kathleen and Anne. Inside front cover: Photograph by Abrar Mohsin. Inside back cover: Photograph by Robert Casey.



Howard W. Hunter:  
Father, Lawyer,  
Missionary, Prophet,  
p. 40  
Gaining a Knowledge  
of the Godhead, p. 32  
Using Sundays for  
General Study, p. 20  
The Power of the Book  
of Mormon to Change  
Your Life, pp. 52, 76

## YOUNG ADULT FEATURES

- 18** **Revealed Realities of Mortality**  
Elder Paul B. Pieper  
*We must reject Satan's lies in order to experience the fulness of mortality that leads to eternal happiness.*
- 24** **Standing Strong in Their Faith**  
*Learn how these young adult Latter-day Saints stayed close to the Lord while serving in the military.*
- 28** **By Small and Simple Blogs**  
Mindy Anne Selu  
*Have you ever thought of using a blog as a way to share your testimony? Here are some ideas you might try.*

## FEATURES

- 32** **Knowing the Godhead**  
Elder Jeffrey R. Holland  
*We ought to strive to be one with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as Jesus prayed we would be.*
- 40** **Howard W. Hunter: My Father, the Prophet**  
Richard A. Hunter  
*A son's perspective of a latter-day prophet.*
- 46** **Blessed to Be Sammy's Mother**  
Jeanette Green  
*When my daughter was born with disabilities, I learned to rely on the Lord and to trust in His plan for me.*
- 49** **Poem: Motherhood**  
Eliza Terry Roylance  
*Being a mother brings worries—and valuable growth.*
- 50** **Windows of Gospel Study**  
Julia Ventura  
*Try these study tips to strengthen your testimony and enrich your Sabbath day.*





52

## 52 The Converting Power of the Book of Mormon

Elder Kevin S. Hamilton

*There is one key to obtaining a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## 56 Come, Follow Me: Teaching the Basics at Home

Alicia Stanton and Natalie Campbell

*Ideas for learning about the monthly youth topics as a family.*

## 60 A Parable in My Windowsill

Name withheld

*Most of my family fell away from the Church. Would the same thing happen to me?*

## 62 I Thank Thee for This Body

Starla Awerkamp Butler

*Three young adult women learned to rely on the Lord to overcome eating disorders and the world's idea of perfection.*

## 66 Thankful for Fast Offerings

Debra LeBaron de St. Jeor

*After a serious financial setback, our family's situation reached a critical point.*

## 68 Supported in Our Trials

Denise Neish

*In my struggle with cancer, I took comfort in knowing that I wouldn't have to fight it alone.*

## 72 What's New in the Friend

*Learn about four exciting changes to the Church's magazine for children.*

## 74 The Cornerstone

*A building's first stone teaches us about the Savior's role in our lives.*



62



10

## DEPARTMENTS

3 Family Home Evening Ideas

8 October 2015 Conference Notebook

10 What We Believe:  
We Believe in Being Positive

12 Our Homes, Our Families:  
Our Best Defense against Pornography  
Kerry Hanson Jensen

14 Reflections:  
Not the Miracle We Wanted  
Brittany King

15 Serving in the Church:  
Pray about It  
Taryn Taylor

16 News of the Church

76 Latter-day Saint Voices

80 Until We Meet Again:  
The Parable of the Owl Express  
Elder James E. Talmage

A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS  
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## Family Home Evening Ideas

*This issue contains articles and activities that could be used for family home evening. The following are some examples.*



**“The Converting Power of the Book of Mormon,”** page 52: In this article Elder Hamilton compares the converting power

of the Book of Mormon to a game of dominoes. Consider using a set of dominoes or gathering items from around your home to use as dominoes. Have family members set them up in a line and then push the first one over. Discuss how the Book of Mormon is central to the message of the Church and how it is like the first domino: once we know for ourselves that the Book of Mormon is true, all of the other truths of the Restoration fall into place, just like the other dominoes. You might want to share one

of the stories from the article and then invite family members to share their testimonies of the Book of Mormon.

### FAMILY LOVE NOTES

One of the most memorable family home evenings from my teenage years was the time we wrote special notes for each other. The name of each family member was written on a separate piece of paper. As these papers were passed from person to person, we wrote what we loved most about the family member whose name was at the top of the paper. I kept mine. A few years later during my mission, I reread it, and it was a great blessing of comfort for me to know of the love my siblings and parents had for me.

Joseph Weiler, Georgia, USA

**“Come, Follow Me: Teaching the Basics at Home,”** page 56: This

article has teaching and learning ideas for six topics. You might use the idea for January's youth topic, the Godhead, in a family home evening. You could also review as a family the learning methods described in the article and discuss which ones have been particularly helpful for your family. You might invite family members to use these methods to prepare future family home evening lessons based on the gospel topics in this article.

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By President  
Henry B. Eyring

First Counselor in  
the First Presidency

# Happiness

FOR THOSE  
WE LOVE

All of us want happiness for those we love, and we want as little pain for them as possible. As we read the accounts of happiness—and of pain—in the Book of Mormon, our hearts are stirred as we think of our loved ones. Here is a true account of a time of happiness:

“And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

“And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.”

Then we read:

“And how blessed were they! For the Lord did bless them in all their doings; yea, even they were blessed and prospered until an hundred and ten years had passed away; and the first generation from Christ had passed away, and there was no contention in all the land” (4 Nephi 1:15–16, 18).

Loving disciples of Christ pray and work for such a blessing for others and for themselves. From accounts in the Book of Mormon and, for many of us, from our own experience, we know that the gift of happiness is attainable. We know that the path to happiness is well marked. We also know that maintaining happiness is not easy unless, as with the Nephites after the Savior’s visit, “the love of God” dwells in our hearts.

That love was in the hearts of the Nephites because they kept the law that made it possible. A summary of that law is found in the sacramental prayers, which begin with a heartfelt plea to our loving Heavenly Father. We pray with a heart full of faith in, and with a deep love for, our personal Savior. We commit with real intent to take upon us His name, to remember Him, and to keep all His commandments. Finally, we exercise faith that the Holy Ghost, the third member of the Godhead, may always be with us, testifying to our hearts of the Father and of His Beloved Son. (See D&C 20:77, 79.)

With the companionship of the Holy Ghost, our hearts can change so that we want and welcome the love of our Heavenly Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The way to get the love of God into our hearts is simple, as is the way to lose the feeling of that love in our hearts. For instance, someone may choose to pray less often to Heavenly Father or not to pay a full tithing or to stop feasting on the word of God or to ignore the poor and the needy.

Any choice not to keep the Lord’s commandments can cause the Spirit to withdraw from our hearts. With that loss, happiness diminishes.

The happiness we want for our loved ones depends on their choices. As much as we love a child, an investigator, or our friends, we cannot force them to keep the commandments so that they qualify for the Holy Ghost to touch and change their hearts.



So the best help we can give is whatever leads those we love to watch over their own choices. Alma did it with an invitation you might offer:

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye

may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering;

“Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life;

having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest” (Alma 13:28–29).

I pray that those you love may accept an inspired invitation to choose the path to lasting happiness. ■

#### TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

**P**resident Eyring teaches that the happiness we feel in life depends on the decisions we make. As you discuss this message, consider focusing on the things President Eyring mentions we can choose to do (such as

praying, working, exercising faith, and committing ourselves with real intent) to lead us to that path of happiness. You could invite those you teach to write down two or three actions they would like to take that can better direct them to “the path to lasting happiness.”



## Actions That Lead to Happiness

**P**resident Eyring teaches that “the happiness we want for our loved ones depends on their choices.”

You can read about the effect that choices can have from the examples of Nephi, Laman, and Lemuel. Laman and Lemuel murmured and didn’t want to keep the commandments (see 1 Nephi 2:12). As a result, they and their descendants were cursed and cut off from the Lord’s presence (see 2 Nephi 5:20–24). Nephi chose to obey the commandments (see 1 Nephi 3:7), and because of that, he and his people “lived after the manner of happiness” (2 Nephi 5:27).

You can choose to be righteous and be happy. But people around you will probably still make poor choices that lead to misery or discomfort. While those decisions are theirs to make, your example can influence their choices for good. How can your choices bring happiness to others? Discuss with your family different ways you can positively influence those around you and help them feel happiness.

## CHILDREN

### The Kindness Challenge

**W**hen Jesus visited the people in the Americas, He taught them to love each other and to be kind. What can you do to follow Jesus and love others? Here are some ideas. Check off each challenge as you go.

I can smile at someone who looks lonely.

I can \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_.

I can read or watch a conference talk about being kind.

I can hug someone who is sad.

I can \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_.

I can sing a Primary song for my family.

I can serve someone in secret.

Prayerfully study this material and seek to know what to share. How will understanding the doctrine of the family bless those you watch over through visiting teaching? For more information, go to [reliefsociety.lds.org](http://reliefsociety.lds.org).

## The Family: A Proclamation to the World

Of the general Relief Society meeting in 1995, when President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) first read “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Women general president, said: “We were grateful for and valued the clarity, simplicity, and truth of this revelatory document. . . . The proclamation on the family has become our benchmark for judging the philosophies of the world, and I testify that the principles set forth . . . are as true today as they were when they were given to us by a prophet of God nearly 20 years ago.”<sup>1</sup>

“From the family proclamation,” adds Carole M. Stephens, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, “we learn, ‘In the pre-mortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father.’<sup>2</sup> . . .

“ . . . We each belong to and are needed in the family of God.”<sup>3</sup>



We live in a time when parents must protect their homes and their families. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” can guide us.

### Additional Scriptures

Mosiah 8:16–17; Doctrine and Covenants 1:38

### NOTES

1. Bonnie L. Oscarson, “Defenders of the Family Proclamation,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 14–15.
2. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. Carole M. Stephens, “The Family Is of God,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 11.
4. Nicole Seymour, “‘The Family: A Proclamation to the World’ Reaches 10-Year Milestone,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 127.
5. Barbara Thompson, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 148.

### Consider This

How is “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” a document for our day?

Faith, Family, Relief



### Living Stories

“Lee Mei Chen Ho from the Tao Yuan Third Ward, Tao Yuan Taiwan Stake, said the proclamation has taught her that family relationships help develop divine characteristics such as faith, patience, and love. ‘When I try to improve myself according to the proclamation, I can experience real happiness,’ she said.”<sup>4</sup>

Barbara Thompson, who was present when the proclamation was read for the first time and later served as a counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, said: “I thought for a moment that [the family proclamation] really didn’t pertain too much to me since I wasn’t married and didn’t have any children. But almost as quickly I thought, ‘But it does pertain to me. I am a member of a family. I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a cousin, a niece, and a granddaughter. . . . Even if I were the only living member of my family, I am still a member of God’s family.’”<sup>5</sup>

# OCTOBER 2015 CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK

*“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken; . . . whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).*

*As you review the October 2015 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in future issues) to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.*

## DOCTRINAL HIGHLIGHT



PHOTOGRAPH OF MEMBERS WATCHING CONFERENCE IN KYIV, UKRAINE, BY MARINA LUKACH

## Faith Is a Choice

“Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is not something ethereal, floating loosely in the air. Faith does not fall upon us by chance or stay with us by birth-right. It is, as the scriptures say, ‘substance . . . , the evidence of things not seen’ [Hebrews 11:1]. Faith emits a spiritual light, and that light is discernible. Faith in Jesus Christ is a gift from heaven that comes as we choose to believe and as we seek

it and hold on to it. Your faith is either growing stronger or becoming weaker. Faith is a principle of power, important not only in this life but also in our progression beyond the veil. By the grace of Christ, we will one day be saved through faith on His name. The future of your faith is not by chance, but by choice.”

**Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Faith Is Not by Chance, but by Choice,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 65.**

## PROPHETIC PROMISE



## Let Your Light Shine

“As we follow the example of the Savior, ours will be the opportunity to be a light in the lives of others, whether they be our own family members and friends, our co-workers, mere acquaintances, or total strangers.

“To each of you, I say that you are a son or daughter of our Heavenly Father. You have come from His presence to live on this earth for a season, to reflect the Savior’s love and teachings, and to bravely let your light shine for all to see. When that season on earth has ended, if you have done your part, yours will be the glorious blessing of returning to live with Him forever.”

**President Thomas S. Monson, “Be an Example and a Light,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 88.**

## NEW SPECIAL WITNESSES



"I'm grateful for our Savior's Atonement and wish like Alma to shout it with the trump of God."  
—Elder Ronald A. Rasband, "I Stand All Amazed," 90.



"I received a distinct impression . . . to focus not on what I can't do but rather on what I can do. I can testify of the plain and precious truths of the gospel." —Elder Gary E. Stevenson, "Plain and Precious Truths," 92.



"With all my heart I want to be a true follower of Jesus Christ. I love Him. I adore Him. I witness of His living reality."  
—Elder Dale G. Renlund, "Through God's Eyes," 94.

### DRAWING PARALLELS

## The Sacrament

Multiple speakers sometimes address the same gospel topic. Here is what three speakers said about the sacrament:

- "If we partake of the sacrament in faith, the Holy Ghost will then be able to protect us and those we love from the temptations that come with increasing intensity and frequency." —President Henry B. Eyring, "The Holy Ghost as Your Companion," 104.
- "The Sabbath and the sacrament become much more enjoyable as we study the stories of Christ. In so doing, we create traditions that build our faith and testimony and also protect our family." —Elder Claudio R. M. Costa, "That They Do Always Remember Him," 101.
- "A perfect time to ask the Lord, 'What lack I yet?' is when we take the sacrament. . . . In this reverent atmosphere, as our thoughts are turned heavenward, the Lord can gently tell us what we need to work on next." —Elder Larry R. Lawrence, "What Lack I Yet?" 34.

## ANSWERS FOR YOU

Each conference, prophets and apostles give inspired answers to questions Church members may have. Use your November 2015 issue or visit [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org) to find answers to these questions:

- Why does the Church seem to work better for some people than for others? See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "It Works Wonderfully!" 20.
- What are some truths and doctrines that can keep us safely anchored to the Church? See M. Russell Ballard, "God Is at the Helm," 24.
- Why are the senior leadership positions in the Church filled by older men? See David A. Bednar, "Chosen to Bear Testimony of My Name," 128.
- Why do I need to participate in the Church if I already consider myself spiritual without it? See D. Todd Christofferson, "Why the Church," 108.

To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org).

## WE BELIEVE IN BEING POSITIVE

We often find counsel in the scriptures to “rejoice” and “be of good cheer.” The Lord tells us in 2 Nephi 2:25, “Men are, that they might have joy.” The purpose of this life is to lead us to the joy the Lord ultimately promises.

Being of good cheer does not mean being ignorant or naive to life’s challenges. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described cheerfulness as “a deep trust in God’s

unfolding purposes—not only for all of mankind, but for each of us as individuals.”<sup>1</sup> Challenges will certainly come, for they are a natural part of mortality, but we don’t have to be weighed down by discouragement and sadness. We can put our trust in the Lord and be positive.

Jesus Christ promised us we would experience tribulation, but He also urged, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). President Ezra Taft Benson

(1899–1994) taught that because we have the gospel, “we as Latter-day Saints should be the most optimistic and the least pessimistic.”<sup>2</sup>

We all feel sorrow and discouragement from time to time, but we can still be of good cheer. Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “I witness that with faith in the Savior and obedience to His teachings, happiness never ends, but sadness does.”<sup>3</sup> We can live with joy knowing that our “afflictions shall be but a small moment” (D&C 121:7).

As we put our trust in God’s plan for us and choose to live with a positive attitude, our ability to deal with life’s challenges will be strengthened. Our worries and fears will affect us less, and we will experience the joy He wants for us. ■

### NOTES

1. Neal A. Maxwell, “But a Few Days” (address given to CES Religious Educators, Sept. 10, 1982), 4.
2. Ezra Taft Benson, “Do Not Despair,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 65.
3. Richard G. Scott, “Finding Joy in Life,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 26.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Continuing Pursuit of Truth,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1986, 4.

### CHOOSE TO BE HAPPY



“So much in life depends on our attitude. The way we choose to see things and respond to others makes all the difference.

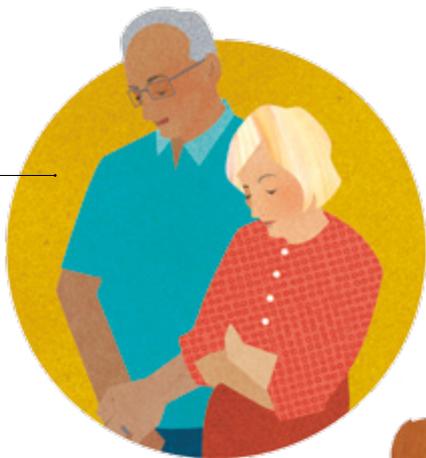
To do the best we can and then to choose to be happy about our

circumstances, whatever they may be, can bring peace and contentment. . . . We can’t direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails. For maximum happiness, peace, and contentment, may we choose a positive attitude.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Living the Abundant Life,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2012, 4.

The scriptures and the prophets teach us ways we can be positive:

A true fulness of joy comes only through God (see D&C 101:36). As we turn to Him, our hearts will change.



God blesses each of our lives (see Psalm 145:9). We can strive to be aware of His tender mercies in our lives.



Keeping our focus on God is not a one-time occurrence. We must make and consistently keep covenants, such as worthily partaking of the sacrament every week.



We, like Nephi, can delight in the scriptures (2 Nephi 4:15–16). Reading the words of God and His prophets will lift our hearts.



President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) encouraged us to “speak of one another’s virtues more than we speak of one another’s faults” and to “more generously compliment virtue and effort.”<sup>4</sup>



# OUR BEST DEFENSE AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY

By Kerry Hanson Jensen

*In one verse of scripture, I found my family's key to avoiding the explicit images that seemed to be everywhere.*

I was shopping for school clothes with my nine-year-old son when our conversation turned from lighthearted chitchat to a more serious question. “Mom, why do they have to put that stuff in all the store windows?”

“That stuff” he was referring to was immodest pictures displayed in the windows of just about every shop we passed. Although pictures like these had always been there, I hadn’t paid much attention to them before. But the fact that my oldest son was starting to take notice awakened a new awareness in me. Over the next weeks, I began to see these images everywhere: on television, at the grocery store, at restaurants, in advertisements that came in the mail. I couldn’t get away from them. Some images were so explicit that I began to feel perplexed, and a feeling of alarm began to grow in my heart. How was I supposed to protect my family from the traps of pornography?

Every general conference we hear warnings about its devastating

effects, and we have been acquainted with its victims. We had taken all of the precautions at home with our computer and the media we allowed there, but clearly, unless our children were quarantined, there seemed to be no way to completely avoid seeing unwanted images that might lead to further curiosity. Could my son’s innocent gaze at the grocery store turn into a lifetime struggle with pornography? My anxiety over this issue grew, and I began to feel a sense of helplessness and vulnerability in protecting my children.

Then one day while I was reading in the Book of Mormon, I unexpectedly

found reassurance in 1 Nephi 15. Nephi is explaining Lehi’s vision of the tree of life to Laman and Lemuel when they ask the meaning of the river of water. Nephi answers in verse 27: “And I said unto them that the water which my father saw was filthiness; *and so much was his mind swallowed up in other things that he beheld not the filthiness of the water*” (emphasis added). Lehi’s mind was focused on the tree of life and getting his family to it to partake of its fruit! He didn’t even see the filthiness because of this focus.

That was the answer! Keeping inappropriate media out of our home was a start, but a more direct and conscious effort to teach our children the gospel is what would ultimately be their best defense against anything that could lead them away.

Because of this experience with the scriptures, my husband and I decided to redouble our efforts in teaching our children and thus keep our eyes on the love of God instead of the filthiness in

**For those struggling with pornography, resources can be found on the Church’s website [overcomingpornography.org](http://overcomingpornography.org) and in a recent article by Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Recovering from the Trap of Pornography,” in the October 2015 *Ensign*.**



*Lehi's mind was focused on the tree of life and getting his family to it to partake of its fruit! He didn't even see the filthiness because of this focus.*

the world. We have felt impressed to focus on three different areas\*:

**1. Increasing our own personal scripture study and decreasing the “noise” around us.** Like Lehi, our minds must be filled with positive things in order to hear the promptings of the Spirit and to keep us focused on anchoring our family in the gospel. My husband and I try to regularly spend time talking about the spiritual needs of each individual in the family and how we can meet those needs and create a home where the Spirit can thrive.

**2. Making family scripture study more meaningful.** Although it takes a lot of effort just to gather the family

together daily to read scriptures, we are trying to have more discussion when we read the scriptures. We have a wide range of ages with our children, so we read scriptures with the younger kids later in the day and the oldest kids early in the morning when the little ones are asleep so there is less distraction and more opportunity for discussion. We have found that almost daily there is discussion of current events that relates to the scriptures we are reading.

Most mornings are far from idyllic, but with perseverance we are finding that the kids really are listening and participating, even though sometimes it takes a lot of effort to get everyone together.

### **3. Doing missionary work.**

When we bear testimony, the Spirit testifies that what we are saying is true, and our testimonies grow. We are trying to make missionary work a family affair. We talk about sharing the gospel, and we regularly invite friends to our home. We also take every opportunity to have the missionaries and investigators over for gospel discussion. We have had wonderful experiences with new members of the Church and investigators in our home, and it has made an impression on our children as they reflect on their own testimonies and hear those of the missionaries.

I am so grateful for the Book of Mormon and the miraculous way a single verse of scripture has given me reassurance and a clear direction for our family. The scriptures can truly replace fear and helplessness with power and peace. ■

*The author lives in Washington, USA.*

\* Other families might need different areas of focus, such as lessons to teach children about media, our bodies, and healthy sexuality.

# NOT THE MIRACLE WE WANTED

By Brittany King

*Sometimes we pray and pray until our knees are sore for the miracle we want, but then God gives us the miracle we need.*

In a few months I would graduate from college and, I hoped, have my first baby. My husband was as eager as I was to start having children.

One year, four months, dozens of negative pregnancy tests, five negative ovulation tests, two miserable months on medication, and thousands of tears later, we had no baby and little hope for natural conception. When the doctor's office called and offered to refer us to an infertility specialist, we declined. Too stressed to handle more, we needed a break. Before I hung up, the nurse said, "Call us if you have a miracle."

Miracles are, well, miraculous. They come big and small. They come when we least expect them and when we desperately need them. And sometimes we pray and pray until our knees are sore for the miracle we want, but then God gives us the miracle we need.

For a long time we prayed desperately for a child, but the heavens seemed silent. Eventually it occurred

to us that we were praying for the wrong thing. God knows what blessings we need and when we need them. He sees the big picture. We see *right now*. So we changed. We stopped praying for what we wanted and instead started saying "thank you."

*Heavenly Father, thank Thee for blessing us with each other.*

*Thank Thee for caring family and friends.*



*Thank Thee for the children around us whom we can enjoy until we have our own.*

*Thank Thee for doctors and science that help uncover what does and doesn't work in our bodies.*

*And (now the hardest thing to say) thank Thee for this trial.*

Being grateful for the very thing breaking our hearts was hard, but we knew that Heavenly Father loved us. So somewhere in this trial were blessings. We would never find the blessings if we let the trial overtake us. Instead, we chose to be grateful—and when we did, the blessings became clear:

We relied on each other more, shared our feelings more, loved each other more.

We relied on the Lord more and prayed more.

We grew closer to the Savior, felt His presence more, loved Him more.

We felt the love of family and friends who were praying for us.

And once we acknowledged all these blessings, we were overcome with the purest, sweetest peace imaginable.

That we weren't having a family right then didn't mean God didn't care. We just needed to trust in His timing, and we needed His peace to keep that trust alive. We needed His peace to bind up our breaking hearts and give us the faith to keep moving forward.

Peace was the miracle we needed—not the miracle we'd been begging for, but the one we needed most. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

# PRAY ABOUT IT

By Taryn Taylor

*I had been asking the Lord to show me how to be a better mother, and He gave me a calling that would teach me how.*



told the bishop he had the wrong person.

“I do not like other people’s children, I’ve never taught children, and I can’t sing,” I said.

“Sister Taylor,” he replied, “the Lord qualifies whomever He calls. You’ll be great.”

He asked me to think about the calling and let him know the next Sunday whether I would accept it.

“I’m trying to raise a six-year-old, a three-year-old, and a baby,” I said. “I can barely make it through the day with my own children, and now you want to put me with 40 more and have me teach them music?”

He responded, “Pray about it.”

That afternoon I tried to explain to my husband, Mark, why the calling was a bad idea. How could I work in Primary when I couldn’t even be the kind of mother to my own children I wanted to be? A fear had been plaguing me for months that I was failing as a mother.

The week went by in a blur, but my thoughts kept turning to the bishop’s parting words. Finally, Sunday morning in my bedroom, I fell to my knees in prayer. Tears started down my face, but a sweet peace filled my heart. Immediately I knew it was right to accept the calling. As I submitted to the Lord’s will, all the angst fled my heart.

When I entered the Primary room after sacrament meeting, the Primary president introduced me, and the children sang a welcome song. Looking into their hopeful eyes and seeing my six-year-old son beam, I resolved to be the best Primary chorister I could be.

From then on I spent a lot of time learning songs and preparing lessons. I played the Primary songs at home, in the car, and on walks. I researched different teaching methods and devoted hours each week to making posters and developing games.

As I prepared a lesson for singing time one afternoon at the kitchen table, I was humming the song “Scripture

Power.” My six-year-old was sitting at the counter eating a sandwich, and my three-year-old was cutting pieces of paper next to me. As I hummed the chorus, suddenly both children burst out:

*Scripture power keeps me safe  
from sin.*

*Scripture power is the power to win.  
Scripture power! Ev’ry day I need  
The power that I get each time  
I read.<sup>1</sup>*

That’s when I knew that the calling was an answer to my prayers. I had been asking the Lord to show me how to be a better mother, and He gave me a calling that would teach me how as I taught music to my children.

I am so grateful for my bishop’s inspiration and his loving words: “Pray about it.” ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

#### NOTE

1. Clive Romney, “Scripture Power,” [lds.org/callings/primary/sharing-time-music](https://www.lds.org/callings/primary/sharing-time-music).

# NEWS OF THE CHURCH

Visit [news.lds.org](http://news.lds.org) for more Church news and events.



**Above: Indianapolis Indiana Temple; right, from top: Suva Fiji Temple; Mexico City Mexico Temple; Córdoba Argentina Temple**

## Temples Progressing

In 2015, five temples were dedicated, two rededicated, and groundbreakings were held for four more.

### **Temples dedicated in 2015:**

Córdoba, Argentina; Payson, Utah, USA; Trujillo, Peru; Indianapolis, Indiana, USA; and Tijuana, Mexico.

### **Temples rededicated in 2015:**

Mexico City, Mexico; and Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The Fiji Suva Temple is scheduled to be rededicated in February 2016.

### **Groundbreakings held in 2015:**

Star Valley, Wyoming, USA; Cedar City, Utah, USA; Concepción, Chile; and Tucson, Arizona, USA.

The Frankfurt Germany Temple was closed for renovation in September 2015, and the Jordan River Utah Temple will be closed for renovation beginning in February 2016. The Provo City Center Temple in Provo, Utah, USA, will be dedicated in March 2016.

The Church has 148 operating temples around the world, with 11 more under construction and 14 announced but not yet begun. ■

## Defending Religious Freedom

Those who believe that God gave us the ability to choose between right and wrong must work together to strengthen the freedom to advocate and practice religious beliefs, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said in an address to the Argentine Council for International Relations.

“The preservation of religious freedom depends upon public understanding of and support for this vital freedom,” he said. “It depends upon the value the public attaches to the teachings of right and wrong in churches, synagogues, and mosques. Believers and nonbelievers must be helped to understand that it is faith in God—however defined—that translates religious teachings into the moral behavior that benefits the nation.” ■

***Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke to the Argentine Council for International Relations (CARI) in Argentina on April 23, 2015.***



## Anxiously Engaged

Latter-day Saints are “anxiously engaged” (see D&C 58:27) in doing good throughout the world. Here are some highlights from last year:

- In Honduras, 600 Latter-day Saint youth worked alongside community members and medical and military representatives to clean areas that attract mosquitoes.
- In India, Latter-day Saint youth painted hallways and cleaned classrooms in the Government Girls High School in Hyderabad.
- In Latvia, members—dressed in Mormon Helping Hands vests and T-shirts—cleaned a community area, gathering 70 bags of trash.
- In Tonga, Latter-day Saints gathered and sent cassava and breadfruit to Vanuatu, to assist victims of Cyclone Pam.
- In Malaysia, the Church worked with government agencies to provide cooking and refrigeration appliances to victims of flooding and taught women how to cook using an electric mixer and an oven.
- In the Solomon Islands, members helped install tanks to provide clean water for about 2,000 people.
- In Russia, Latter-day Saints joined in an Easter weekend community cleanup.
- In Turkey, Church members joined an interfaith choir that included Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims. ■



***From top: Volunteers serve in Latvia, the Solomon Islands, and Honduras.***



***Elder Neil L. Andersen with Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat***

## Elder Andersen in Jerusalem

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, while attending an international genealogical conference in Jerusalem, met with Nir Barkat, mayor of the city. They discussed the history and activities of the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies, which has operated in Jerusalem for 27 years, as well as the Church’s work to preserve family history.

The genealogy conference attracted hundreds of participants, including family history experts and researchers from Israel, North America, Europe, and other parts of the world. ■



By Elder  
Paul B. Pieper  
Of the Seventy

# Revealed Realities of MORTALITY

Each person is placed on the earth in unique circumstances. Despite our uniqueness, the Lord has revealed truths about the purposes of mortal life that apply to all of us. He taught these truths to our first parents, Adam and Eve, and has reconfirmed them in our day.

I refer to these truths as the “realities of mortality.” If we are to gain the fullest blessings and benefits from our mortal experience, we must understand and embrace these revealed realities. Failure to understand or, worse, knowingly ignoring them will result in our time on earth being misspent, underutilized, and perhaps utterly wasted.

It is not enough to merely arrive on earth, receive a mortal body, and live here for a lifetime. To make our time here meaningful, we must live and experience the God-ordained purposes of mortality—fully, completely, and wholeheartedly—rather than becoming distracted by things

that are interesting, comfortable, and convenient.

When Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden, they entered into a mortal world. The Lord prepared them for their mortal experience by teaching them the realities they would experience. I want to review three of those realities.

As I begin, remember that many premortal spirits did not receive mortal bodies because they did not keep their first estate.<sup>1</sup> They are intent on preventing us from experiencing the fullness of mortality. They seek to keep us from experiences that lead to our eternal happiness.

## **Reality Number 1: Work helps us develop the qualities and attributes essential for eternal life.**

God said to Adam, “By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou shalt return unto the ground” (Moses 4:25; see also Genesis 3:19). Some people characterize the

Lord’s words as a curse on Adam and his posterity for partaking of the forbidden fruit. However, I hear these words as coming from a loving Father explaining to a young and inexperienced son the conditions in the fallen, mortal world in which the son will soon live.

Like an earthly father preparing a son about to leave home, the Father was helping the first man prepare to live on his own away from home. He was explaining that work was a new reality—a reality of mortality.

Heavenly Father knew that Adam and Eve would soon have to struggle against the elements and the earth itself. In contrast to their experiences in the Garden of Eden, where everything was provided for them, mortal life would require physical and mental effort, sweat, patience, and persistence to survive.

Learning to work—training and disciplining our minds, bodies, and spirits to exert, produce, achieve, and

**Let us avoid the illusions of the precepts of men and cling to the revealed realities given by God so that our journey through mortality may be rich, full, and real.**



progress—is a foundation reality of every mortal life. It is one of the ways we become like God and accomplish His purposes on the earth. Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost all work. Their work and their glory is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). The reality is there can be no glory without work.

One of the principal reasons men need to work is to provide for their families. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” lists “provide” as one of the three roles given specifically to men.<sup>2</sup> A man who knows how to work and provide for himself has the confidence that he can marry and provide for a wife and children.

Bishop H. David Burton, former Presiding Bishop of the Church, said: “To work—honestly and productively—brings contentment and a sense of self-worth. Having done all we can to be self-reliant, to provide for our own needs and those of our family, we can turn to the Lord in confidence to ask for what we might yet lack.”<sup>3</sup>

Satan is ever alert to destroy the purposes of God and to subvert our mortal experience. To counter the emphasis the Father places on work, the adversary has convinced many in our day that a primary goal in life is to avoid work. In today’s societies, many people concentrate on finding jobs that pay well but require little

work, investments or schemes that pay high returns without effort, and programs that pay for what they want at no cost to them. Some seek to avoid work by borrowing and living on money they never intend to repay. They are unwilling to work, budget, and save before they spend. Church leaders have counseled that we should work for what we obtain and “avoid debt except for the most fundamental of needs.”<sup>4</sup>

Another insidious tactic the adversary employs in this generation is to channel men’s natural ambition to work and achieve into virtual dead ends. God placed in young men the desire to compete and achieve, with the intent that they use this ambition to become faithful providers for a family. In our youth, this ambition can be channeled into academic, athletic, or other pursuits that help to teach persistence, discipline, and work. Satan, however, would subtly intercept that ambition and channel it into a virtual world of video games that eat up time and ambition and lead to addiction.

No matter how hard you play a video game, virtual work can never bring you the satisfaction that accompanies real work. Real work is the effort, persistence, patience, and discipline to achieve worthwhile knowledge, perform a needed labor, or accomplish a challenging goal.

If we do not learn to work while in mortality, we will fail to achieve our full potential and happiness in this life, and we will not develop the qualities and attributes essential for eternal life.

## **Reality Number 2: Through eternal marriage we can obtain all of the blessings Heavenly Father wants to give us.**

The Lord has promised in the oath and covenant of the priesthood:

“Whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken . . . become . . . the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

“And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord; “. . . He that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

“And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be giveth unto him.

“And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood” (D&C 84:33–35, 37–39).

Our loving Father wants each of His children to receive everything—a fulness, His fulness. In order to receive this fulness, “a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]” (D&C 131:2).

Eternal marriage, and all that it is designed to help us learn and

experience, is the key to obtaining all of the blessings Heavenly Father wants to give His children. Only a family—a man and a woman who live worthy to enter the house of the Lord and are sealed to each other—can become eligible. The full blessings of the priesthood are received together as husband and wife or not at all.

It is interesting that in the oath and covenant of the priesthood, the Lord uses the verbs *obtain* and *receive*. He does not use the verb *ordain*. It is in the temple that men and women— together—obtain and receive the blessings and power of both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. After a couple has received these blessings in the house of the Lord, it is principally in their home life where they develop godly characteristics and attributes—sacrificing for and serving each other, loving each other with full fidelity, and being united in their love for each other and God.

*Fulness, priesthood, family*—these three related words are all encapsulated in the reality of eternal marriage. Doing all within our power to make eternal marriage a reality of our mortal life ensures that we will not waste our time on earth.

Satan, ever the deceiver, is abroad in our day twisting and distorting the realities of mortality. He is working overtime to destroy the very meaning

and importance of marriage in the minds of men and women. To some, he sells the lie that marriage is not necessary, that love is enough. To others, he attempts to use new legal definitions of marriage to legitimize immoral relationships. To those

who believe in marriage as God has defined it, he lowers its priority in relation to education and financial security. He engenders fear of the sacrifices and difficulties associated with marriage. Frozen by fear, many sit still as objects being acted upon rather than moving forward and acting in faith.

Some people, overwhelmed by the demands of building real relationships but feeling a desire for companionship and intimacy, are lured

**Eternal marriage  
is the key to  
obtaining all of the  
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Father wants to  
give His children.**



by false hope into the virtual world. Their attempts at virtual intimacy can bring nothing but greater emptiness, longing, and shame. Many are drawn into empty searching again and again until their pattern becomes an addiction that can never be satisfied.<sup>5</sup> They are caught in a cycle that gradually destroys their will to withstand. They still have their agency but not enough hope in their ability to resist. Caught in this web, they risk missing out on the fulness and joy of one of the most sublime realities of mortality—eternal marriage.

If you are caught in this web, get help. Do not wait. To do so will delay your growth and progress in mortality.

Examine your life. Be sure that your mind has not been darkened by false

ideas related to marriage. Remember that successful marriages are built on “faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.”<sup>6</sup>

Begin today to build those attributes in your personal life. As you do, the Lord will open the way for you to receive the fulness of the blessings He has prepared for His children—the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. Don’t let your mortality “be utterly wasted” (Joseph Smith—History 1:39).

**Adam and Eve understood that bearing children was an important reality of mortality.**

### **Reality Number 3: Bearing and raising children helps us develop our capacity to become like God.**

At the time He “blessed,” or sealed, Adam and Eve to create the first family on earth,<sup>7</sup> God gave them a commandment: be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth (see Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28). Marriage and children go together. The procreative powers that make mortal birth possible are to be used only between a man and a woman, legally and lawfully wedded.<sup>8</sup>

Adam and Eve understood that bearing children was an important reality of mortality. They obeyed God’s commandment, “and Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth” (Moses 5:2). Prophets in our day have declared that “God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.”<sup>9</sup>

In today’s world, however, many people no longer believe that “children are an heritage of the Lord” (Psalm 127:3).

Several years ago, a couple who was about to marry came to me. They asked for my advice regarding children. I reminded them of the commandment they would receive when they were sealed, and I counseled them that they could keep this



commandment in counsel with the Lord. I reminded them that it is a commandment like tithing, Sabbath observance, or other commandments. Once a covenant is made, the question is not whether to keep it but how to keep it in a way that is pleasing to and approved by the Lord.

I watched as they started their marriage. He had a year left of undergraduate studies, and she had another year in a master's program. They felt directed to have their family immediately—despite the schooling and uncertainty over future jobs. It was not easy or convenient to have a child so soon. He had to search for a job, they had to move, and she had to finish her degree. They faced stress and sacrifice. He had to rush home each day and watch the baby while she completed her thesis and practical training. She studied and wrote between nursing and changing diapers.

The Lord has blessed and prospered them. While many others lost jobs in the economic turndown of 2008, he was retained and promoted. Because they lived frugally, they are out of debt except for a mortgage, and they have since been able to completely pay for a master's program with no debt. All the while, they have continued to learn the valuable lessons that can come only with parenthood. Bearing children is neither easy

nor convenient, but it is a commandment that helps us realize the real blessings of mortality.

### A Great Gift

Mortality is one of the greatest gifts our Father has given us. He loves us and wants us to use this gift fully and completely. Only by embracing and focusing on the realities God has revealed can we fulfill the purposes for which we came to earth. Satan knows he can do nothing to stop us from obtaining bodies, so he tries to divert us from the purposes for which they were created—to work, to marry, and to bear children.

Let us not live aimlessly and without purpose, only to find in the end that we have spent our time on earth disconnected from the revealed realities of mortality essential to achieve our purposes here. Let us avoid the illusions of the precepts of men and cling to the revealed realities given by God so that our journey through mortality may be rich, full, and real. ■

*From a devotional address, "The Realities of Mortality," delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on February 19, 2013. For the full address, go to [web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches](http://web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches).*

#### NOTES

1. See Abraham 3:26, 28.
2. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. H. David Burton, "The Blessing of Work," *Ensign*, Dec. 2009, 43.
4. Neil L. Andersen, "Reverence for God Is the Beginning of Wisdom," *Ensign*, Jan. 2013, 38; see also Robert D. Hales, "Becoming



### THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL INCREASE

"Those who do not marry or those who cannot have children are not excluded from the eternal blessings they seek but which, for now, remain beyond their reach. We do not always know how or when blessings will present themselves, but the promise of eternal increase will not be denied any faithful individual who makes and keeps sacred covenants."

President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Witness," *Ensign*, May 2014, 95.

- Provident Providers Temporally and Spiritually," *Ensign*, May 2009, 7–10.
5. Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "Addiction is the craving of the natural man, and it can never be satisfied" ("Becoming Provident Providers Temporally and Spiritually," 10).
  6. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 129.
  7. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:115, 2:71.
  8. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 129.
  9. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 129.

# STANDING STRONG

## IN THEIR FAITH

Not long ago, Samantha Edrington, currently a full-time missionary in the Philippines, was an electrician's mate stationed on a naval vessel. She was introduced to the gospel by a Latter-day Saint shipmate during her first deployment and was soon baptized. She recalls, "Deployments were really hard. I was confined to a small space for nine months at a time and was the only member in my shop. The environment was at odds with what I believed and tried to live. I couldn't change it, but I could keep myself from becoming part of it.

"We were blessed to have a group leader who had the authority to administer the sacrament and hold meetings. He arranged church on Sundays, family home evenings, and institute for us seven to twelve Latter-day Saint sailors. This helped to keep spiritual thought patterns going and made it easier to get through the rest of the week."

Though being in the military was not easy, Samantha is grateful for her experience. "If it wasn't for the military, I wouldn't be a member."

Young adult Church members like Samantha who serve in the military

face daunting challenges, beginning with separation from home and family amid the rigors of intense physical and mental training. These courageous young men and women willingly undergo this training to prepare themselves to serve and sacrifice for their fellowmen. As they continue their military careers, they experience unpredictable and often dangerous work situations, frequent moves, and deployment. Following are more stories about young adults who have stood strong in their faith and reaped

**How do young adult Church members in the military stay close to the Lord?**

SAMANTHA EDRINGTON





*After two years as a West Point cadet, Austin took time out to serve as a missionary for the Church.*

the blessings of serving their God as well as their country.

### **Searching the Scriptures, Letting Others Help**

Michael Santana's "battle buddy" introduced him to the Church at army

basic training. Michael embraced the gospel wholeheartedly and was baptized, but he didn't tell his wife, Tori, until the night before his training was over. Tori was surprised because Michael had not been interested in religion, but it was immediately obvious to her that he was happy. In her words, "He fell in love with the Church and everything it stood for." Tori was able to attend Michael's priesthood ordination and was soon baptized by Michael.

Tori credits their nightly hour-long scripture study and gospel discussions, as well as the many friends she and Michael have in the Church, with keeping them growing in their faith. Tori is legally blind, so she cannot drive. Church members and military senior missionaries give her their love and their time, helping her with errands and always being willing to help find answers to gospel questions. The Santanas have two little girls and are excitedly preparing for their temple sealing.

Michael was due to be deployed in the fall of 2015, but after the birth of their second child in July, he decided to leave the army so he could be nearby to help Tori.

### **Seeking Out Good Examples**

Austin Wheeler enlisted in the army at age 17, intending to be an



AUSTIN WHEELER



MICHAEL SANTANA

## HOW CAN WE SUPPORT YOUNG ADULT MEMBERS IN THE MILITARY?

- Single members serving in the military are often far from home and can feel lonely and isolated. We can invite them into our homes and to activities, becoming like adopted families for them.
- Writing uplifting letters or communicating through email or social media are wonderful ways to help members in the military feel connected and appreciated. Try this for family home evening or a class activity.
- Families with a deployed parent carry an extra burden and appreciate help. We can help with chores, errands, children's activities, and babysitting and can offer a listening ear.
- Members in the military who are new to the Church need extra fellowshiping. Be aware of who these new members are and extend your love and support.
- Retired military couples can serve missions at military installations (see [lds.org/callings/military-relations](https://www.lds.org/callings/military-relations)).

BRITTNEY CLARK

infantryman. Instead he was offered entrance into the prep school at West Point, New York, that prepares qualified newly enlisted members for the United States Military Academy, also at West Point.

After completing basic training, Austin made the decision to be completely active in the Church. “It was a decision that changed the trajectory of my life,” he says. “At my first Church meeting at the West Point Branch, I met cadets who embodied the ideals of selfless service and showed me what it meant to dedicate their lives in the service of God and country. They were all either returned missionaries or planning to serve missions. The strong bonds of friendship we formed, as well as the constant support of the members in the area, gave me a determination to serve not only the nation but to delay my



military career and serve the Lord.”

Two years later, Austin and several classmates resigned from the academy to serve missions. They would return to West Point once their missions were completed.<sup>1</sup>

### Recognizing Blessings

Brittney Clark is training to be an air traffic controller for the United States Air Force. “The training is incredibly hard, and I am struggling through it,” she says. “I go to church every week, read my scriptures, pray twice a day, and pay my tithing, but I realize I haven’t really thought too much about the blessings I have received. Though I have some dyslexia, I have gotten better at my work, and I know this is a blessing. Some of the trainees have washed out of the program, and I was also on the verge of doing the same. But the trainers are willing to give me extra help—another blessing. I have learned that you can be friends with those who

BRIAN MORRILL





*Brittney with her proud father*

do not believe nor live as you do and that they will respect your beliefs—yet another blessing. And I do know that by paying my tithing first, I always have money to pay my bills.”

### **Establishing Priorities, Finding Balance**

Brian Morrill served his mission, graduated from college, was accepted into Navy Officer Candidate School, and then began pilot training. “Flight school is a fast-paced, high-pressure, and high-risk environment,” he says. “I have found, through painful experience, that when I forget the spiritual essentials, I can’t perform as I need to. When I do the essential things, prayer and scripture study being most important, I am calm and confident and feel good about my performance. I taught myself to establish these priorities by not leaving my home before morning personal prayer and scripture study. Sometimes this means I have to get up very early. Then, at night, I make sure to have meaningful prayer. The other thing is balance. Whenever possible I take time to go to church, play sports, and hang out with ward and work friends, all of which helps me unwind.”

**BRIAN SHIMASAKI**

### **Opening Our Hearts to Heavenly Father**

Brian and Nadia Shimasaki rediscovered the Church while stationed in Japan with the United States Navy after years “of not opening up our hearts to let our Heavenly Father in,” says Nadia. “We were brought halfway around the world to be taught how we can come closer to our Heavenly Father, how to bring the gospel back into our lives, and that no matter what, we are never alone.”



Brian and Nadia were surrounded with loving support from the military senior missionaries (whom Nadia calls their “adoptive family”) and their branch. Brian baptized their two daughters, and the family was recently sealed in the temple. Brian received a commission as an officer, and he and Nadia will both be able to complete college in Florida, where they now live. They know the Lord has blessed them with this opportunity.

Nadia testifies, “Our Heavenly Father loves us so much that He gave His Only Begotten Son, who sacrificed His life to give us the opportunity to choose—this was something we had to learn. We love the gospel of Jesus Christ and know that only through Him can we find happiness and eternal life.” ■

#### **NOTE**

1. See Kevin Riedler, “Missionary Service a Tradition at West Point Military Academy,” [lds.org/church/news/missionary-service-a-tradition-at-west-point-military-academy](https://www.lds.org/church/news/missionary-service-a-tradition-at-west-point-military-academy).



### **WE PRAY FOR YOU**

“To our brothers and sisters in harm’s way, we say that we pray for you. We pray that the Lord will watch over you. . . .  
“ . . . It was [Christ] who said to His beloved disciples: . . .  
“ ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid’ [John 14:27]. . . .

“Even when the armaments of war ring out in deathly serenade and darkness and hatred reign in the hearts of some, there stands immovable, reassuring, comforting, and with great outreaching love the quiet figure of the Son of God, the Redeemer of the World.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “War and Peace,” *Ensign*, May 2003, 80–81.



By **Mindy Anne Selu**  
Church Magazines

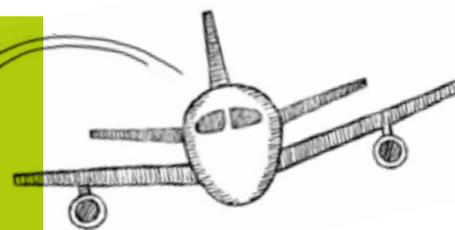
I reluctantly created a blog just before going to study abroad, figuring it would help my family and friends keep up with my activities—two months in West Africa ought to yield some interesting posts, right? Prior to that, I'd hesitated to join the blogosphere. I wasn't a mother or very "crafty" or good at cooking. What did I have to offer blog readers?

But as I diligently blogged my way through my study abroad, sharing funny stories and spiritual moments, I realized that blogging had given me the opportunity to share my testimony. I was able to draw from my life experiences and relate them to gospel principles. It became almost a game to see how I could link (literally!) personal stories to scriptures, Church magazine articles, or general conference talks.

When life felt out of my control, I blogged about how Ecclesiastes

## What started out as a way to keep a record of my travels turned into a way to share my testimony.

3:1 and 2 Nephi 9 helped me know that God is good and that I should trust in His timing. When I had been feeling burdened by sin, I blogged about how forgiveness feels like a sunny Sunday morning (see Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Sunday Will Come," *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 28–30). When my sister and I moved in together, I blogged about understanding how Peter, James, and John felt on the Mount of Transfiguration when Peter said, "It is good for us to be here" (Matthew 17:4). After I went to the emergency room with gallstones, I blogged about my increased understanding of and appreciation for personal revelation, priesthood blessings, and the Savior's Atonement (see Alma 7:11–13).



Our Church leaders have instructed us to use technology as a means to share the gospel with others.<sup>1</sup> And though it's sometimes scary to make myself vulnerable by sharing personal feelings, I know that my words can positively influence others. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled us to not give in to what the Apostle Paul calls the "spirit of fear" (2 Timothy 1:7): "Do not be afraid to share with others your experiences as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. We all have interesting stories that have influenced our identity. Sharing those stories is a nonthreatening way to talk to others. Telling those stories can help demystify the Church."<sup>2</sup>

Here are some ideas on how you can follow the Lord's directive to "open thy mouth at all times, declaring [His] gospel with the sound of rejoicing" (D&C 28:16) through a blog, Facebook, Instagram, or other social media:

- Share personal life experiences or insights from your scripture study.
- Share what you learned in general conference or in Sunday meetings; explain how you're applying these teachings to your life.
- Link to content from [LDS.org](#), [Mormon.org](#), Mormon Messages, [music.lds.org](#), [BYUtv.org](#), the Mormon newsroom, or your "I'm a Mormon" profile.
- Share what you're passionate about in the gospel—whether it's family history, general conference, family home evening, temples, food storage. You

never know what might catch someone's interest.

- Share your conversion story.
- Ask questions to spark a discussion.

- Be real. There's no need to pretend your life is perfect. Try to show how the gospel helps you in your daily life and especially how it brings you joy in spite of trials.

**"May I ask that you join [the online conversation about the Church] by participating on the Internet to share the gospel."**

— Elder M. Russell Ballard

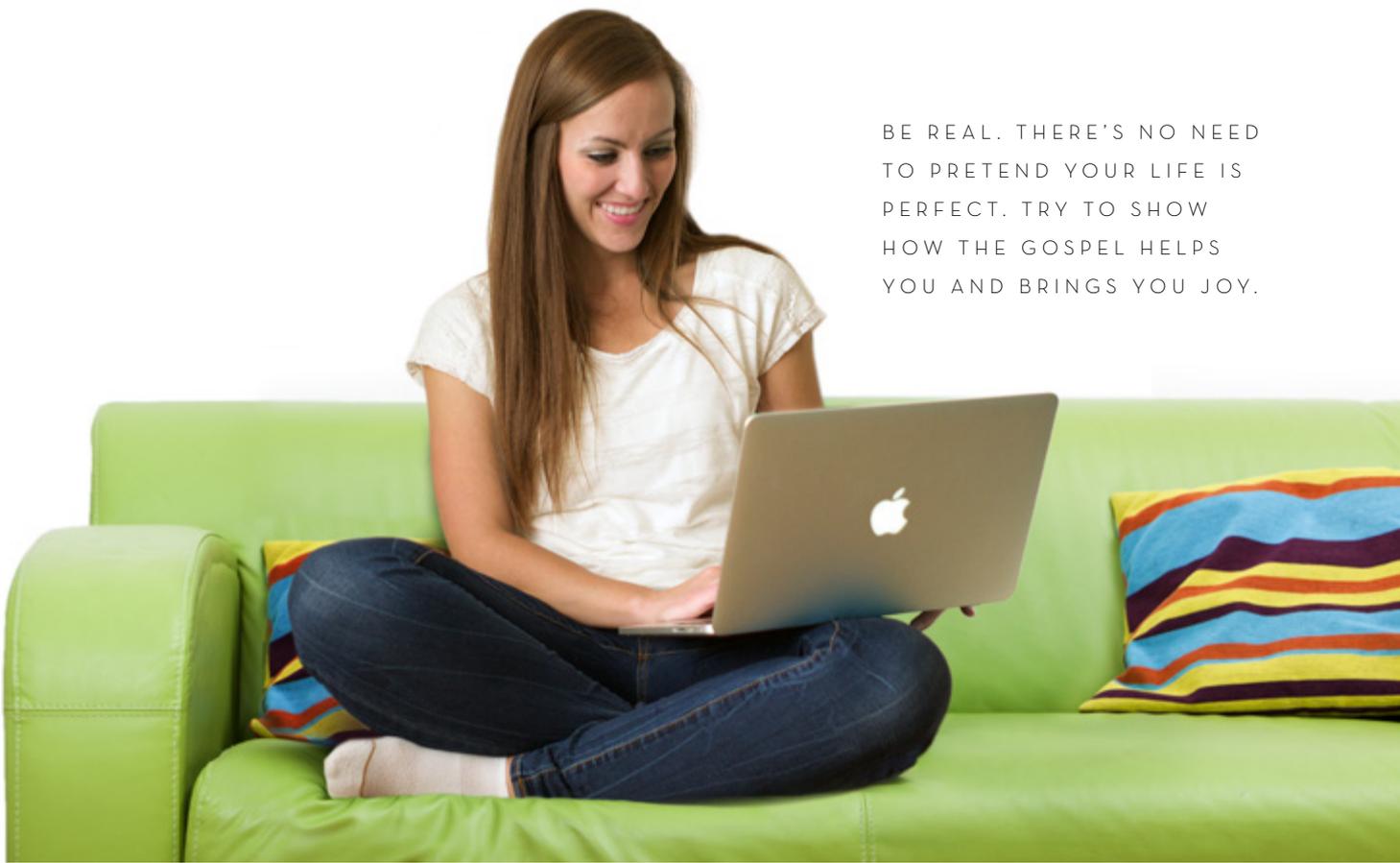
Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles doesn't just suggest that we share messages of truth and righteousness through social media—he *exhorts* us to.<sup>3</sup> You can find more great tips and ideas for sharing goodness through social media at [lds.org/church/share/goodness](https://lds.org/church/share/goodness).

No matter what you do, remember that the Lord relies on us to spread the good news of

SHARE PERSONAL  
LIFE EXPERIENCES



BE REAL. THERE'S NO NEED TO PRETEND YOUR LIFE IS PERFECT. TRY TO SHOW HOW THE GOSPEL HELPS YOU AND BRINGS YOU JOY.



the gospel in every way possible. Elder Ballard issued this directive: “May I ask that you join [the online conversation about the Church] by participating on the Internet to share the gospel and to explain in simple and clear terms the message of the Restoration.”<sup>4</sup>

Whether or not we ever convert anyone through blogging or other social media efforts, we may still be able to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees” of our brothers and sisters (D&C 81:5). We may promote a better understanding of the Church. We may simply be one of many voices proclaiming the joy

that comes through living the gospel of Jesus Christ. No matter your scope of influence, let us all follow the charge given by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to “make sharing our faith online more a part of our daily life.”<sup>5</sup> ■

#### NOTES

1. See David A. Bednar, “Flood the Earth through Social Media,” *New Era*, Aug. 2015, 30–35; M. Russell Ballard, “Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet,” *Ensign*, July 2008, 63; Neil L. Andersen, “It’s a Miracle,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 79; Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Waiting on the Road to Damascus,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 76–77.
2. M. Russell Ballard, “Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet,” 63.
3. See David A. Bednar, “Flood the Earth,” 35.
4. M. Russell Ballard, “Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet,” 62.
5. Neil L. Andersen, “It’s a Miracle,” 79.



#### SHARING TESTIMONY

“There are times when the Lord reveals to us things that are intended only for us. Nevertheless, in many, many cases He entrusts a testimony of the truth to those who will share it with others.”

**President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Waiting on the Road to Damascus,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 76.**





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

# KNOWING THE Godhead

*We are to know these Divine Beings  
in every way we can. We are to  
love Them, draw near to Them,  
obey Them, and try to be like Them.*

*From an address, “The Godhead,” delivered during the seminar for new mission presidents at the Provo Missionary Training Center on June 23, 2013.*

**T**he Prophet Joseph Smith said, “It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God.”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, he added, “I want you all to know Him, and to be familiar with Him.”<sup>2</sup> We must have “a *correct* idea of his . . . perfections, and attributes” and an admiration for “the excellency of [His] character.”<sup>3</sup>

I wish to expand the Prophet’s challenge to us and say that we and our missionaries, our members, and our investigators must know for a certainty the character of the members of the *Godhead*. We must have a correct idea of Their individual perfections and attributes and an admiration for the excellency of *Their* personal character.

It is not happenstance that the first article of our faith is “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost” (Articles of Faith 1:1). The message is clear for all who teach the gospel. There is no point in going on to the other truths we believe if we haven’t fixed in our minds and in the minds of those we teach the preeminent role of the Godhead in our doctrine and in our eternal destiny. We are to know these Divine Beings in every way we can. We are to love Them, draw near to Them, obey Them, and try to be like Them.

When we bring people into the Church, we are not baptizing them into the Church of a man, whether that man be Joseph Smith or Brigham Young or Thomas S. Monson—revere those prophets as we do. And we are not baptizing them into the Church of happy families or of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

When we bring people into the Church, we baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In doing so, we are leading them back to the presence of the Father through the ministry, Atonement, and grace of His Son, with the influence of the Holy Ghost guiding them to this goal. We must always keep uppermost in our minds this preeminence of the Godhead as both means and end as we undertake the work of salvation.

***The impact of King Benjamin's teachings upon his congregation is a perfect scriptural definition of the real growth in our converts we are emphasizing as we establish the Church in "all the world."***



If, as King Benjamin counseled, we *truly* know these Divine Beings whom we serve and make certain They are not strangers to us and are never far from the thoughts and intents of our heart (see Mosiah 5:13), then we might have the results King Benjamin had. And what were those? His people experienced “a mighty change,” had “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually,” and were “willing to enter into a covenant . . . to do [God’s] will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he [should] command [them], all the remainder of [their] days” (Mosiah 5:2, 5).

That was the impact of King Benjamin’s teachings upon his congregation, and it is a *perfect* scriptural definition of the *real growth* in our converts we are emphasizing as we establish the Church in “all the world” (Mark 16:15).

As the Savior Himself taught, missionary work—the work of salvation—is like a net that we are throwing to a wider and wider world of nations, cultures, and people. As such, we will gather, as the parable says, fish “of every kind” (Matthew 13:47). Many of those “fish” in our expanding frontier do not know who God is or what His Fatherhood is actually like; they do not know who Jesus Christ really is or why His is the only name given under heaven whereby we may be saved (see Acts 4:12); they do not know who the Holy Ghost is or why this member of the Godhead “was sent forth to teach the truth” (D&C 50:14).

### **Knowledge of the Godhead**

Of course, there are a lot of other things these fish gathered of every kind don’t know, but if they are to embrace the restored gospel and truly find salvation for their souls, it will have to begin with some knowledge and understanding of the members of the Godhead. Ultimately, “true and saving worship is found only among those who know the truth about . . . the Godhead and who understand the true relationship men should have with each member of [what one of the Brethren has called] that Eternal Presidency.”<sup>4</sup>

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminded us that Lucifer understands

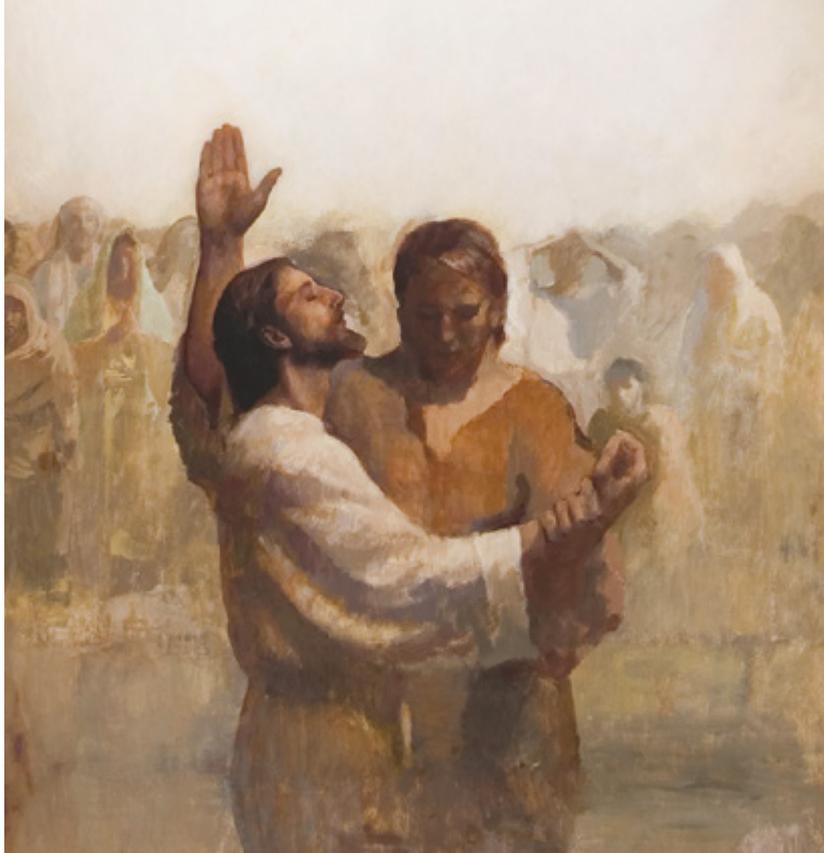
the significance of such doctrine, even if we don't. He said:

“There is no salvation in believing . . . false doctrine, particularly a false or unwise view about the Godhead or any of its members. . . .

“It follows that the devil would rather spread false doctrine about God and the Godhead, and induce false feelings with reference to any one of them, than almost any other thing he could do.”<sup>5</sup>

So no investigator can come into this Church with a *real* testimony, with *real* conversion, with what we are seeking for and calling real growth in each convert, unless he or she has had at least the beginning of some personal, spiritual, true experience with God. That kind of true experience can come only when there is the realization that He is a real being, an actual person, a literal Father of flesh and bone who speaks and sees and feels, who knows all His children's names and all their needs, who hears all their prayers, and who wants all His children in His Church. These investigators need to know He has a plan for their salvation and that He has given commandments as to how we find our way back to Him.

A God who cares about them as tenderly as a parent cares for a child cannot be an ethereal mist or a vague philosophical First Cause or a deistic absentee landlord. He must be recognized for what He truly is—a merciful, compassionate Father, in whose image every one of His children has been made and before Whom all of us will one day again stand—and then kneel! Few of our investigators will know *that* kind of God now, in or out of contemporary Christianity.



In that regard, it is most significant that lesson 1 in *Preach My Gospel* begins with the simple declaration that “God is our Heavenly Father.”<sup>6</sup> In that lesson the first determination missionaries are to make is what each person being taught understands regarding the true nature of God.

If missionaries can get a proper understanding of God in the minds and hearts of their investigators at the outset of their teaching, everything else will fall into place much more easily in all the instruction that follows.

### **The Mission and Message of Jesus Christ**

In like manner, elder, sister, and investigator alike must appreciate much more than they do the majesty of the mission and message of Jesus Christ, who came down from the Father and taught what the Father taught Him. All must come to realize that Jesus came into mortality to show us the way, the truth, and the life. Indeed, He *is* the *only* way, the *whole* truth, and the *perfect* life. As such, He is the only child in the human family of whom the Father can fully and completely

*All must come to realize that Jesus came into mortality to show us the way, the truth, and the life.*

*Through the power of the Holy Ghost, we can chase darkness from among us and be warned against danger and against untruth. I bear witness that the Holy Ghost is also the Holy Spirit of Promise, confirming and authenticating covenants and ordinances and ultimately sealing all saving blessings unto eternal life.*

say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 17:5).

We are to have faith in Christ, trust that He has redeemed us from death physically and hell spiritually, accept His Atonement as the *only* means of reconciling ourselves before God, and acknowledge that there is no other path to salvation. The world, if it is to be redeemed, must bend its knee and with tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ, the living Son of the living God. We need to teach with faith and fervor “the doctrine of Christ” (Hebrews 6:1; 2 John 1:9; 2 Nephi 31:2, 21; 32:6; Jacob 7:2, 6) as declared in the scriptures and as summarized in lesson 3 of *Preach My Gospel*.

Our fish of the far-flung net need to know that the Holy Ghost is the member of the Godhead with whom they will have their most frequent and most intimate relationship as they receive the missionaries and pray for heavenly guidance regarding their message. It is this member of the Godhead who will *lead* investigators to truth and will then *bear witness* of that truth when they encounter it. The investigators must be taught to recognize the Spirit when it manifests itself during the course of the lessons. Certainly the missionaries must understand the Holy Ghost’s divine role in the conversion process and must strive to carry the Spirit with them at all times.

“Unto what were ye ordained?” the Lord asks. “To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth. . . .

“Wherefore, he that preacheth [by the Spirit] and he that receiveth [by the Spirit], understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:13–14, 22).

We can be absolutely certain that it *will not* go well—for the missionaries or for their investigators—if we slide past our teaching of the Divine. We must not point toward mortal leaders before we have taught and testified of celestial ones. We must not try to teach ancillary truths before we have taught the fundamental ones. We must not rush toward baptism and the goal of a new convert before we have taught true faith in God, explained the need for true repentance in Christ, and made certain that those crucial first shoots of a convert’s growing testimony are kept strong and viable through the nourishing agency of the Holy Spirit.

### **Christian Confusion**

Regarding the distinct nature of these Divine Beings, our latter-day revelations teach that “the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit” (D&C 130:22).

You can’t get a baseline statement clearer than that! But unfortunately, nearly two millennia of Christian history have sown terrible confusion and near-fatal error in this regard. Many evolutions and iterations of religious creeds have greatly distorted the simple clarity of true doctrine, declaring the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be abstract, absolute, transcendent, immanent, consubstantial, coeternal, and unknowable; without body, parts, or passions; and dwelling outside space and time.

In such creeds, all three members are separate persons, but they are a single being, the oft-noted “mystery of the trinity.” They are

three distinct persons, yet not three Gods but one. All three persons are incomprehensible, yet it is one God who is incomprehensible.

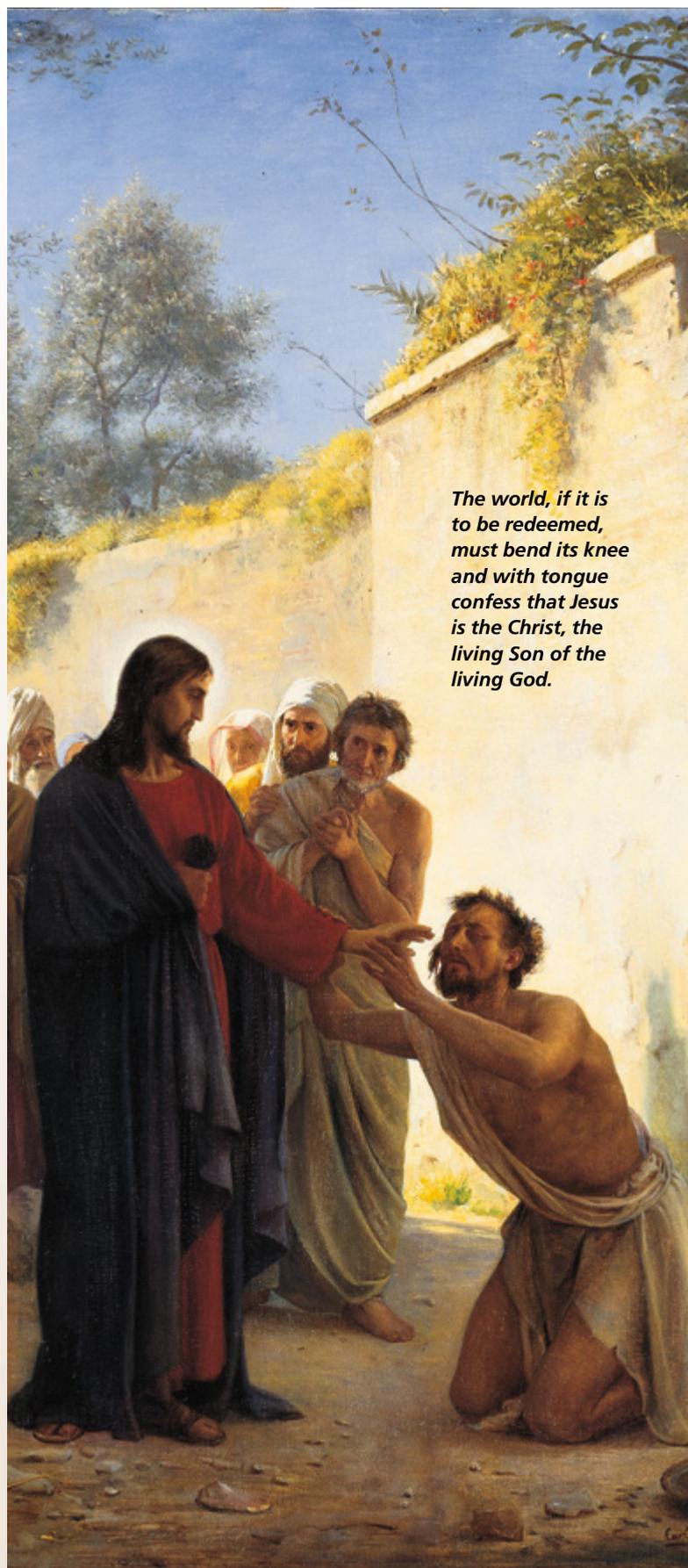
We agree with our critics on at least that point—that such a formulation for divinity is incomprehensible. With such a confusing definition of God being imposed upon the Church, little wonder that a fourth-century monk cried out, “Woe is me! They have taken my God away from me, . . . and I know not whom to adore or to address.”<sup>7</sup> How are we to trust, love, and worship, to say nothing of striving to be like, One who is incomprehensible and unknowable? What of Jesus’s prayer that it “is life eternal, that they might *know thee* the only true God, *and Jesus Christ*, whom *thou* hast sent”? (John 17:3; emphasis added).

It is not our purpose ever to demean any person’s belief or the doctrine of any religion. We extend to all the same respect for their doctrine that we ask for ours. (That too is an article of our faith.) But no less a source than the stalwart *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, the gold standard in that field, records that “the formal doctrine of the Trinity as it was defined by the great church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries is not to be found [anywhere] in the [New Testament].”<sup>8</sup>

So we are very comfortable, frankly, in letting it be known that we do not hold a fourth- or fifth-century, pagan-influenced view of the Godhead, and neither did those first Christian Saints who were eyewitnesses of the living Christ.<sup>9</sup> We are New Testament—*not* Nicene—Christians.

### The Unity of the Godhead

However, I now quickly stress that when we have made the point about the distinctiveness of Their persons, it is equally important to stress how unified They are and how truly *One* the Godhead is. I think I am safe in saying that part of the reason we are so misunderstood by others in the Christian tradition is because in stressing the individual personages of the Godhead, we have not followed that up often enough by both conceding and *insisting* upon Their unity in virtually every other imaginable way. For this we



*The world, if it is to be redeemed, must bend its knee and with tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ, the living Son of the living God.*

have reaped needless criticism, and we have made our LDS position harder to be understood than it needs to be.

Indeed, the great “doctrine of Christ” passage in 2 Nephi 31 ends with this declaration: “This is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end” (2 Nephi 31:21).

We have all read the Savior’s majestic Intercessory Prayer in John 17. We know it to be a declaration of unity between the Father and the Son and between Them and us, Their earthly disciples. Read it often, particularly inasmuch as President David O. McKay (1873–1970) once called it “the greatest prayer . . . ever uttered in this world.”<sup>10</sup> We ought to strive to be one with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as Jesus prayed we would be.

***We ought to strive to be one with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as Jesus prayed we would be.***



## **An Apostle’s Witness**

I close with my testimony of each of these Divine Beings, who constitute that “Eternal Presidency” spoken of. I bear witness of the Holy Ghost *by the spirit* of the Holy Ghost, witnessing and testifying being two of His great roles. I bear witness that the Holy Ghost is a teacher, a Comforter, and the agent of personal revelation. I bear witness that the Holy Ghost will bring all things to our remembrance—a particular blessing inasmuch as remembering is one of the great commandments given to us, including in the sacramental prayers (see D&C 20:77, 79).

I testify that through the power of the Holy Ghost, we can chase darkness from among us and be warned against danger and against untruth. I bear witness that the Holy Ghost is also the Holy Spirit of Promise, confirming and authenticating covenants and ordinances and ultimately sealing all saving blessings unto eternal life. I am in awe that we have such ready access to a member of the Godhead and have it so constantly and repeatedly if we live worthy of it. I express my near-inexpressible gratitude for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

I bear witness of Jesus Christ, the living Son of the living God, who paid the liberating ransom for your soul and my soul and the soul of every man, woman, and child from Adam to the end of the world. I testify that the first principle of the gospel is *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ and that it is the foundation of and the central message of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I testify that every human being born into this world is born with the Light of Christ in his or her soul. I bear witness that He is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and Omega of our salvation. I declare that He is the great Jehovah, the redemptive I Am, the Lamb of God slain from before the foundation of the world. I testify that in Him the fulness did dwell and that He was born, lived, and died a perfect, sinless Man, without blemish and without spot.

I am grateful that the authority of Jesus Christ, which regulates everything of eternal significance in this universe, bears His name—the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God. If I were to live to be a thousand years of age, I could never adequately express my wonder and inadequacy at being called to be one of His Apostles, a witness of His name in all the world.

*I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me,  
Confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me.*<sup>11</sup>

I bear witness of God the Eternal Father, the grand Elohim, my Father and your Father, who gave us spiritual life. I testify that He is the Man of Holiness, that mercy and goodness, love and compassion only begin to note His chief and eternal characteristics. I testify that Christ came to show us the Father and as such was rightly called the Son of Man (of Holiness).

I bear witness that God our Father is the author of the great plan of salvation and that what came to be known as the gospel of Jesus Christ is also known as “the gospel of God” (Romans 1:1; see also verses 2–3). I bear witness that the Father was and is the Creator of all things, working through Jehovah and other heavenly agents to accomplish that Creation and sharing the title of Creator with His Beloved Son. I testify that we are to *serve* the Father in the name of the Son just as we are to *pray* to the Father in the name of the Son.

I testify that Jesus Christ came to do the will of the Father, taught the doctrine of the Father, and worked out His own salvation through the Father. I bear most solemn witness that the



Father so loved the world, His children, that He gave His best child, His perfect child, His Only Begotten Child, that whosoever would believe in Him would have everlasting life (see John 3:36; 6:47; Helaman 14:8).

I am grateful for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in whose names the sacred and saving ordinances from baptism to temple sealings are performed in this Church. I invite each of you to know deeply these Divine Beings. ■

#### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 6:305.
2. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 6:305.
3. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38, 42.
4. Bruce R. McConkie, “Our Relationship with the Lord” (Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 2, 1982), 1, [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu).
5. Bruce R. McConkie, “Our Relationship with the Lord,” 1–2.
6. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 31.
7. In Owen Chadwick, ed., *Western Asceticism* (1958), 235.
8. Paul J. Achtemeier, ed., *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* (1985), 1099.
9. For a thorough discussion of this issue, see Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (1991), 71–89; see also Robert L. Millet, *Getting at the Truth: Responding to Difficult Questions about LDS Beliefs* (2004), 106–22.
10. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 5.
11. “I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193.

*Jesus Christ  
came to do  
the will of the  
Father, taught  
the doctrine of  
the Father, and  
worked out His  
own salvation  
through  
the Father.*



# Howard W. Hunter: My Father, the Prophet



By Richard A. Hunter

(shown at left)

I have come to believe that men and women are measured by what they value and by what they are willing to do about those values. Great people seem to consistently do whatever is required to live by their values, even at great sacrifice. My father was one of these great people. I had the privilege of learning remarkable things from him about the true meaning of greatness. The lessons did not come from what he told me but from what he did and who he was.

The following stories illustrate what it was like to grow up with my father: a lawyer, a musician, a caregiver, a prophet—above all, a man who exuded kindness and was willing to give anything for God and family.

## **Sacrificing for the Good of His Family**

When I was a teenager, I was rummaging in the attic one day and came across a pile of dusty boxes. I discovered a clarinet, a saxophone, a violin, and a trumpet. After asking my dad about them, I learned that these were some of the instruments he played. He had a band when he was in high school in Boise, Idaho, USA. He was a talented musician who deeply loved music and making music. His band played at major social events in Boise and even on a cruise ship that sailed to Asia. After he moved to Southern California, USA, in 1928, the band reorganized and became very popular.

In 1931 he married my mother, Clara Jeffs. They wanted to have children. He felt that for him the demands of the entertainment world were inconsistent with the meaningful family he wanted. So one day he put all the instruments in their cases and carried them to the attic. Save for rare family events, he never played them again.

*Friends often ask me two questions: “What was it like to be the son of a prophet and grow up with such a remarkable man?” and “Do you really think your father was a prophet of God?”*



would never play them again, he could not bear the thought of giving them up. It was only then that I realized what a great sacrifice he had made.

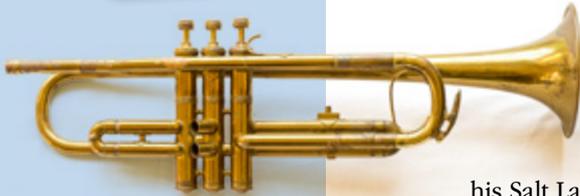
### Developing a Commitment to Family History

After my parents were married, one of Dad's first callings was to teach a family history class. During this time he became personally committed to doing family history work. His law office calendar had many afternoons blocked off to go to the Los Angeles public library to do genealogical research. He started preparing six-foot-long (1.8 m) family group sheets, which he bound in sturdy ledgers.

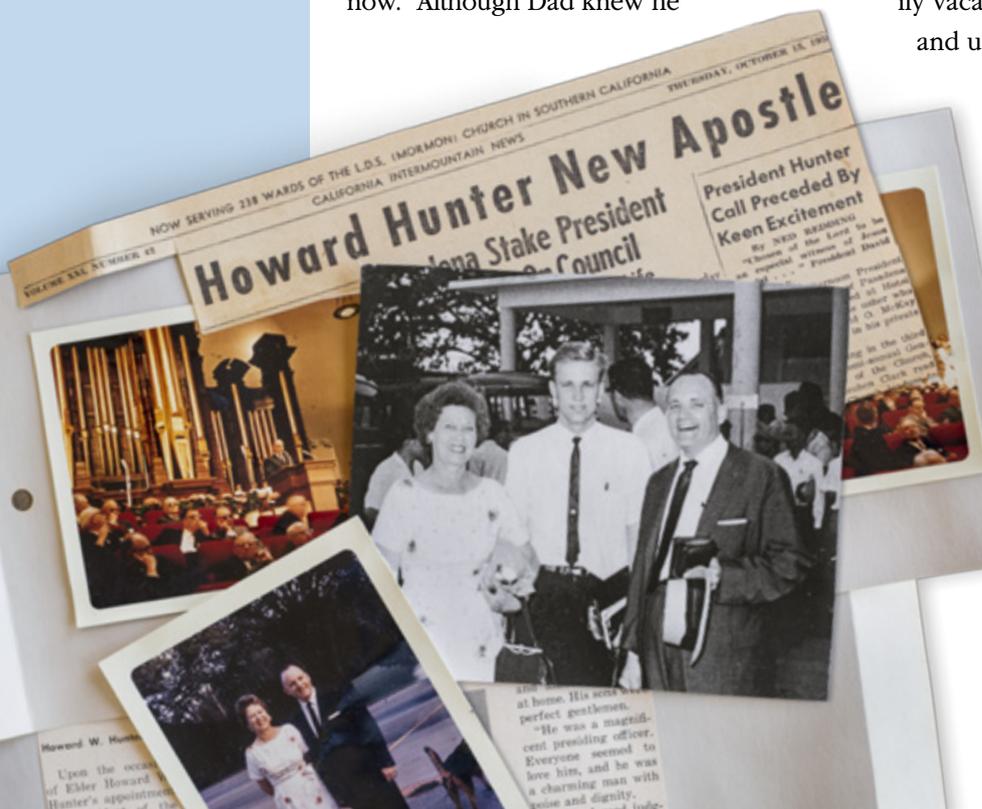
Dad would also gather data and connect with our relatives. He sent hundreds of letters to his relatives as he discovered who they were. He peppered our family vacations with visits to cousins, aunts, and uncles. From this I learned of the good that can be done when you sacrifice a pleasant day of vacationing.

### Showing His Grit in Law School

When I was born, my father was reading a textbook on wills and testaments in the hospital waiting room. He had decided to become a law student when he worked with lawyers at the



I never realized what a sacrifice he had made until later. In 1993 he moved from his Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, home to an apartment in downtown Salt Lake City, near his office. During the move we came across the instruments again. I asked him if he would like to give them to the Church because of the important part they played in his young life. His answer took me by surprise: "Not yet. I can't part with them now." Although Dad knew he





*“The family is the most important unit in time and in eternity and, as such, transcends every other interest in life.”<sup>1</sup>*

Los Angeles Flood Control District in Southern California. Always a family man, my dad felt he could support the family better if he were a lawyer himself. With a wife, two children, and a full-time job, however, he knew school and studying would have to be at night.

Later, when I was in law school myself, I wondered how my dad had managed. I asked, “When did you sleep?” He said he studied as much as he could, and when he was so tired that he couldn’t study anymore, he would sleep for three to four hours. That went on for five years. I marveled at his grit.

### **Spending Time with His Sons**

Dad had a busy life, but he still made time for his family. When I was a Boy Scout, our troop planned to go down the Rogue River in Oregon, USA, in kayaks we had built ourselves. Dad volunteered to go with us even though he was not the camping, sleeping-on-the-ground kind. We spent hours in the garage working together building our two-man kayak.

Before long, we were on the river. I took the pivot position in front, and Dad took the back. As we progressed down the river, we soon headed into particularly dangerous falls.

The nose of our kayak went deep into the water at the bottom of the falls and turned over, tossing us both through the splashguard into the river. I came up and looked for Dad but couldn’t see him. He eventually bobbed up, sputtering, and we managed to right the kayak and get back in. Before we could make it to shore to assess what happened, the river swept us into the next set of rapids. We didn’t have time to get the kayak lined up again when an eddy spun us around, and we shot through a long set of rapids backwards and out of control.

We eventually made it back to camp that evening along with the other Scouts. Dad told us in some detail the story of Job. From the day’s events and the account of Job, we learned that life is not always easy. The next morning, rather than return home, Dad climbed back into our little boat and off we went. This experience taught me what a great man does when he values his family.

### **Caring for His Wife**

In 1970 my mother was diagnosed with a chronic illness that was shutting down the arteries that fed her brain. She was a particularly bright, elegant, and engaging woman with sparkling eyes. But over the next 13 years, her condition declined. It was like losing a good friend piece by piece.

Dad stepped in to become her primary caregiver. At first he made small sacrifices to make her comfortable and cheerful. He prepared her meals, sang her songs, and held her hand. As time went on, however, caring for my mother became more difficult and more physical. It must have been trying for Dad.

As Mother’s condition worsened, my dad’s own health became a concern. I was there when his doctor told him that Mother needed full-time care in a skilled nursing facility. He would likely die if he continued to give the level of care she required, and then she would have no one to take care of her.

For the last 13 months of my mother’s life, Dad visited her in the nursing facility every day that he was not away on a Church assignment. She didn’t recognize him, but that made no difference to him. He spoke with her as though everything was all right. I would see him return from visiting a stake conference in some far-off place. He would be exhausted. But the first thing he would do when he arrived was go see Mother, to bring what cheer he could.

*"I accept, without reservation, the call . . . made of me, and I am willing to devote my life and all that I have to this service."<sup>2</sup>*

My father could not have taken better care of my mother. I learned much about sacrifice from watching him take care of her.

### **Making Sacrifices for His Calling**

Dad felt his calling as an Apostle was an absolute priority—and for good reason. There is only a small group of men called as special witnesses to lead God's work on the earth, and they can't take a day off, let alone a year.

Fulfilling his assignments was more important to my father than even his health. Dad left it to the Lord to renew his body (see D&C 84:33). He once asked me to go with him to a regional conference in Paris, France. His doctor thought he should take several days to make the trip because of the toll traveling would take on Dad's body,



but we flew directly to Paris. I could hardly keep my eyes open, and Dad was off energetically conducting meet-

ings, interviewing, and lifting others.

Toward the end of his life, he was often in terrible pain. I didn't know the human body could endure such pain. "Dad," I asked, "do you think we really shouted for joy to have a body like this?" With conviction he answered, "Yes." Then he added with a bit of humor, "I'm not sure we knew the whole story."

### **Showing Kindness**

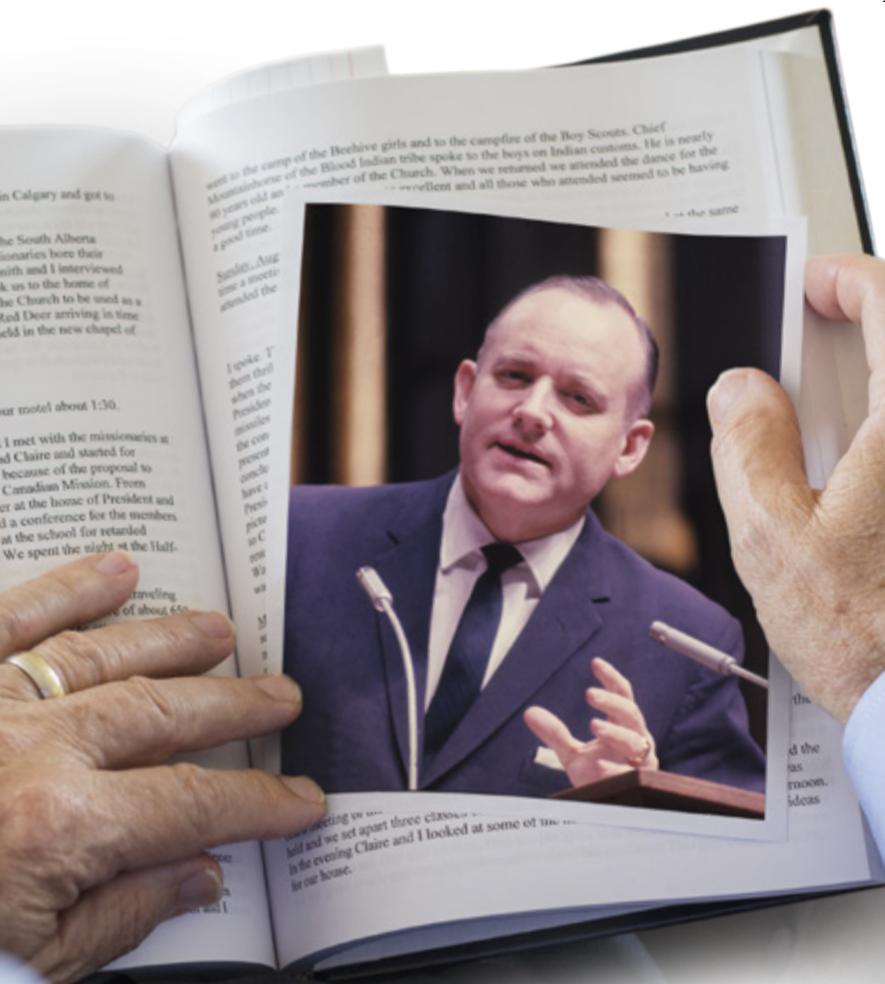
Dad valued kindness. He spoke with the moral authority of a kind man. He was known and respected by neighbors, family, friends, clients, co-workers, and Church members as a kind man.

I can't remember a time growing up when he treated me severely or unkindly. Even when I may have deserved a harsh response, he handled each situation by teaching rather than punishing. We would discuss why what I had done was wrong and what I should do about it. For me, that worked—or at least as well as could be expected.

My father served as a bishop of the El Sereno Ward when the Church was just getting started in the Los Angeles, California, area. The ward members still talk about his kindness to them and to their families.

One Sunday Dad was not at priesthood meeting.

Everyone wondered what had happened to



him. Later they discovered that one of the priests was having trouble getting up on time to go to the meeting. So in kindness he held the quorum meeting in the priest's bedroom.

One of my high school friends was an extraordinary person with great potential, but she worried about returning to college after her freshman year because of the cost. Dad found out about her concern and invited her to his office. At the end of the visit, he gave her a check he had already made out that enabled her to return to school.

I had another high school friend in the Pasadena Stake while Dad was the stake president. She went to Brigham Young University. While on a trip representing the school, she was involved in a terrible automobile accident and was stabilized in a hospital in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA. When Dad found out about her condition, he drove 270 miles (435 km) from Los Angeles to Las Vegas to see her and bring her love and encouragement.

I don't know how many acts of kindness like this Dad did. He never spoke of them to us or to anyone. Kind people usually don't.

I learned about some of these acts of kindness through letters that he kept from people who wrote to him in gratitude. This letter is typical of the kind he received: "Out of desperation I wrote concerning our oldest daughter. . . . You took the time and gentle caring to call her in for a visit, giving her your personal telephone number. She was surprised and amazed that you found her of worth. That call and personal visit was a genuine turning point in her life." The letter

then tells of her return to the Church, her sealing in the temple, and her happy and productive life. "After reading your statement [about kindness in the October 1994 general conference] it brought tears to my eyes to realize that you have been practicing for years what you are now encouraging all of us to do."

### **My Father, a Prophet of God**

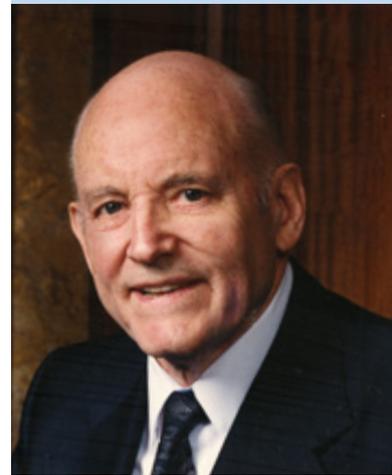
Dad believed in Jesus Christ. He made it easy for me to believe in Christ as well. I saw what someone does who believes in Christ and is like Him. I felt the peace and hope and joy that result from that kind of living.

Now for the last question: "Do you think your father was really a prophet of God?" This question has always been easy for me to answer. I can never remember a time in my father's personal, family, career, or Church life that would lead me to think that he was not qualified. But that is different than believing he was actually called as God's representative to all of His children on the earth. I have come to know that he was a prophet of God, but that knowledge didn't come from knowing him, watching his example, or being touched by what I saw him do and say. Those things help. But that knowledge was given to me as a merciful gift by the same God who called him. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

#### **NOTES**

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter* (2015), 221.
2. *Teachings: Howard W. Hunter*, 243.
3. *Teachings: Howard W. Hunter*, 1.



*"I would invite all members of the Church to live with ever more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed. I pray that we might treat each other with more kindness."<sup>3</sup>*



BLESSED TO BE  
*Sammy's Mother*

By Jeanette Green

Life couldn't have been better. I was happily married, teaching high school, and now pregnant. I felt on top of the world. Halfway through my pregnancy, though, my life took a drastic turn. I was told that my baby's head wasn't growing properly—she had microcephaly, which literally means “small head.” What would this mean for my daughter's future? my family's future?

Our doctor sent us to a prenatal specialist, and I dreaded the coming appointment. My plans for an abundant life had always involved a houseful of healthy children. Before our daughter's diagnosis, I had found peace as I tried to align my plans with the Lord's, but now my plan wasn't turning out quite how I had imagined. During my pregnancy I had been excited when we heard our daughter's heartbeat, when I felt her move, when we saw her face through an ultrasound. Now we were told she might not live longer than a few minutes after birth.

### Waves of Divine Strength

I was uncertain and fearful—as if the Lord had thrown me a curveball that was impossible to hit.

I prayed. I cried. I prayed and cried some more. Day after day I poured my heart out to the Lord. My problem didn't go away, but in waves I felt divine strength soften my heart and replace my sorrow with hope and optimism.

Whatever trial we were given, I somehow knew we could handle it. We would be taught and we would learn how to hit that curveball.

### The Light of God's Grace

After a quick labor, on the morning of June 23, 2006, our sweet Samantha was born. Ready to sweep her away for emergency care, a team from the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) was present during the birth. Despite her small head—about half the size it should have been—our doctor said she looked healthy and beautiful. The NICU team was baffled—our doctor couldn't have been more right.

*When my daughter was born with disabilities, I had to learn to rely on the Lord's strength and to trust in His plan for me.*

The doctors and nurses left, and I was able to hold her close, stroke her small face, feel her long, dark hair, touch her tiny fingers, and allow myself to experience those precious first moments of her life. I didn't know how long we would have her, but for the moment she was here with us and she seemed perfect, despite her imperfection. I fell in love with our little angel.

About five hours later, a different specialist came into our room. He told us that Samantha's head was small because her brain wasn't growing. She would have a significant intellectual disability. She would never roll over, walk, or talk.





## THE PEACE THAT PASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING

“Trust and confidence in Christ and a ready reliance on His merits, mercy, and grace lead to hope, through His Atonement, in the Resurrection and eternal life (see Moroni 7:41). Such faith and hope invite into our lives the sweet peace of conscience for which we all yearn. The power of the Atonement . . . strengthens us to see, do, and become good in ways that we could never recognize or accomplish with our limited mortal capacity. Truly, one of the great blessings of devoted discipleship is ‘the peace of God, which passeth all understanding’ (Philippians 4:7).”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Therefore They Hushed Their Fears,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 47.



*Eight-month-old Samantha with her grateful mother, and a happy Samantha at age five.*

I tried to be optimistic, to ignore his professional opinion—though he stated it as fact—and to tap into the transcendent strength I had felt earlier on. But the tears poured down my face onto Samantha, her little cap absorbing each drop of my pain.

Then I felt it—the saving strength that foretold peace, the same tender touch I had felt months before. The dark cloud that hung over me was replaced by a refreshing light, and I felt a sincere desire to be the best mother I could be for Samantha, even if I would have only a few days, weeks, or—God willing—years with her. I felt blessed, and sincerely joyful, that I was her mother. *This* was the plan that Heavenly Father had for me. *This* became my new plan.

### A Life of Abundant Blessings

Samantha is now nine years old, and her life continues to be one of abundant blessings. True, she is developmentally delayed. She is different from her peers in many ways. She has had and will have trials simply due to her condition. But there is no doubt that Samantha is an amazing little girl on a special errand from the Lord. Perhaps that errand is only to change the hearts of her mother and father, though I believe she has more work to do than just that.

Sammy continues to progress physically and cognitively, and her seizures are under control. She now has a brother and a sister whom we adopted some years ago, and she will hopefully be a big sister for a third time as we wait to be matched for adoption again. Among the greatest blessings Samantha has brought into our lives, however, is her energetic and loving spirit.

### Hearts Knit as One

The joy that Samantha has brought to my life has surpassed any expectations I ever had. Because of her, my family members and I have been molded into better people. Our faith has been solidified and our hope made secure. We have learned greater patience, humility, and charity. Most important, we have grown closer to our Savior as we have pleaded for understanding and guidance. I have repeatedly felt the Lord’s hand giving me strength and support to do the things that are required of me and His grace supplying additional patience when I felt I could go on no more.

Though we still have a long way to go, I’m convinced that Samantha’s daily influence has knit our family’s hearts as one on a path toward eternal joy (see Mosiah 18:21). We are far better people because she is in our lives. ■

*The author lives in California, USA.*





FALLING, BY BEN SOWARDS, MAY NOT BE COPIED

MOTHERHOOD

By Eliza Terry Roylance

*Sleeping soundly, so unaware,  
So peaceful, soft, without a care.  
I pray each night you're safe and warm  
From every day's encircling storm.  
Some say this is no place to raise a child,  
So small, so pure, so meek, so mild.  
But me, I tend to disagree . . .  
This child, it seems, is raising me.  
The author lives in Arizona, USA.*

# WINDOWS OF Gospel Study

*Using a variety of ways to study the gospel—especially on the Sabbath day—enriches our testimony.*

By Julia Ventura

Imagine a stained-glass window. It contains many pieces of glass, each beautifully unique in its shape and hue. Sunlight passes through the window, creating a beautiful mosaic of color.

Just like the variety of stained-glass pieces in the window, there are many ways to study the gospel, yet it is the same Spirit that shines through all of them to enlighten our souls. If you are searching for more in your gospel study or Sabbath day observance, prayerfully consider ways to invite the Spirit into your learning by using the suggestions below.

## Liken the Word

One way to enrich our gospel study is to liken the word of God to ourselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23). Ask yourself, “What will I change in my life today because of this scripture?”

Jonathan Ventura of Georgia, USA, shares the insights he gained as he likened Nephi to himself:

“As a young single adult, I never had much success in dating relationships. I felt tempted to simply postpone dating until after I graduated college.

“Then I read how Nephi and his brothers married the daughters of Ishmael, thus fulfilling all the commandments that the Lord had given to Lehi [see 1 Nephi 16:7–8]. Likening this scripture gave me the resolve to continue seeking for a relationship that would ultimately lead to marriage.”

## Memorize

Consider adding memorizing scriptures to your Sabbath day observance. “Great power can come from memorizing scriptures,” taught Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “To memorize a scripture is to forge a new friendship. It is like discovering a new individual who can help in time of need, give inspiration and comfort, and be a source of motivation for needed change.”<sup>1</sup>

Identify one or two scriptures that bring you peace, strength, and comfort. Post them in multiple places. Memorize them by repeating them to yourself often.

As a family, you can choose a scripture to memorize together. Selections from the proclamation on the family<sup>2</sup> and “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles”<sup>3</sup> are also great resources to memorize and discuss as part of your Sabbath day activities.

### Keep a Journal

To help with studying the gospel, try keeping a study journal. Write down questions and connections that come to mind. You can begin by simply copying passages that stand out to you. Why do they seem significant?

Another great idea for a family activity on Sundays is to give a notebook to each child. Encourage them to write or draw their impressions during family scripture study, general conference, and personal study.

“The more I engaged in what I was reading, the more inspiration I received,” says Rebecca Hunt of Kansas, USA. “The greatest lesson I’ve learned is how I think and feel when the Spirit is with me. It’s easier to recognize promptings of the Spirit when I regularly invite Him into my life.”

### Use Technology

With access to a computer or mobile device, you can use the Church’s online

resources at [LDS.org](http://LDS.org) or mobile apps such as Gospel Library. Items for download include scriptures, conference talks, curriculum, videos, and images. Families with young children can use Lesson Helps for Teaching Children at [lessonhelps.lds.org](http://lessonhelps.lds.org) for Sunday activities or for family home evening.

As an individual, you can use technology to set reminders for your own scripture reading. You can also subscribe to gospel messages.

As a family, you can share thoughts and gospel questions digitally. Later you can discuss how your digital messages helped.

Sarah Latchaw of Georgia uses her mobile device to share a scripture with her children before they go to bed. “I grew up seeing my mother study with her scriptures open on her lap,” she explains, “but my children often only see me study on my device. So I make a point to say, ‘Look, I am studying my scriptures; would you like to hear what I am studying about?’”

These and other methods can bless our lives and our Sabbath day as we invite the Spirit to shine through our own windows of gospel study. ■

*The author lives in Georgia, USA.*

#### NOTES

1. Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 6.
2. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. See “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2.



By Elder  
Kevin S. Hamilton  
Of the Seventy

# THE Converting Power OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

*All the truths of the gospel fall into place as we come to know that the keystone of our testimony—the Book of Mormon—is true.*

As a young boy, I loved to set up dominoes in long lines with intricate designs and then push the first domino over. The resulting chain reaction would cause each of the successive dominoes to topple over, one after another to the end of the line. I would spend hours carefully setting the dominoes in place in order to have the thrill of seeing them fall.

A testimony of the Book of Mormon is one of the first steps in obtaining a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Much as the first domino causes the other dominoes to tumble in succession, if we first come to know that the Book of Mormon is true, then we can also come to know that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer, that Joseph Smith was His prophet through whom the Restoration took place, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true Church of Jesus Christ restored with power and authority to the earth today.

## **The Book of Mormon Is Central to Our Message**

Concerning the Book of Mormon, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”<sup>1</sup>



Joseph further taught that it is central to our faith, beliefs, and testimony. “Take away the Book of Mormon and the revelations, and where is our religion?” he asked. “We have none.”<sup>2</sup>

The beauty of the gospel’s message is that each of us can come to know for ourselves that the Book of Mormon is true.

As a mission president in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands some years ago, I had the privilege and blessing of interviewing individuals for worthiness to be baptized. I will never forget the interview I had with one sister.

During our interview I asked her how she came to know that the Church was true. She reached in her handbag and brought out a worn and well-read paperback copy of the Book of Mormon. She opened the book to 3 Nephi 27 and explained that this was the first chapter the missionaries had invited her to read. She said that as she began to read, she was profoundly moved by what she read and the Spirit she felt. She was so overcome with the spirit of the Book of

Mormon that she took a red pencil and began to underline the words that impressed her the most.

Then she showed me her copy of the Book of Mormon, open to 3 Nephi 27. Almost every word in that chapter was underlined in red.

“That is why I believe,” she said. “This book speaks to me in a way that I cannot deny. I know that it is true, and I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true.”

She was baptized and became a faithful member of the Church.

### **The Introduction to the Book of Mormon**

The introduction to the Book of Mormon gives us a pattern by which we can know for ourselves that the gospel message is true. The introduction “was first published in the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon. It introduces the Book of Mormon to the modern reader by providing background information and a description of the book.”<sup>3</sup>

***When we gain a divine witness from the Holy Spirit that the Book of Mormon is true, we can actually know for ourselves that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world.***

The introduction starts by telling us precisely what the Book of Mormon is: “A volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible. It is a record of God’s dealings with ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel.” We learn that it “was written by many ancient prophets by the spirit of prophecy and revelation” on golden plates and was abridged “by a prophet-historian named Mormon.”

We also learn that “the crowning event recorded in the Book of Mormon is the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ among the Nephites soon after His resurrection. It puts forth the doctrines of the gospel, outlines the plan of salvation, and tells men what they must do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the life to come.”

One of the most important things we can learn from the Book of Mormon is that the Church restored by Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith is true.

The introduction invites us “to read the Book of Mormon, to ponder in [our] hearts the message it contains, and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ if the book is true.” We are promised that “those who pursue this course and ask in faith will gain a testimony of its truth and divinity by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See Moroni 10:3–5.)”

This additional promise follows: “Those who gain this divine witness from the Holy Spirit will also come to know by the same power that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is His revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s kingdom once again established on the earth, preparatory to the Second Coming of the Messiah.”

Think about it! We can actually know for ourselves that:

- Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world, and the Redeemer of all mankind.
- Joseph Smith is a true prophet. He told the truth. He saw the things he said he saw and heard the words he said he heard.
- The Church that was restored by Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30). It is the Church of Jesus Christ. It has truth, power, authority, and ordinances. It is personally directed by the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through living prophets.

All this we can know as we come to know that the Book of Mormon is true. It has converting and convincing power.

### **My Testimony of the Book of Mormon**

As a young missionary serving in France, I wanted to know for myself that the Book of Mormon was true. I believed it was true. I hoped it was true. I had even gone on a mission with faith that it was true. However, as I worked day after day as a missionary and told people the best I could in my limited French that I had a testimony of the book, I still did not actually *know* for myself.

Our little apartment in southern France was cold and damp throughout that first winter. Every morning and evening, before and after the work of the day, I would huddle with a blanket and an overcoat to read and study my Book of Mormon. I knew of the promise of Moroni, that if I were to read, ponder, and pray, I too could know. For days and weeks I read,



***One of the most important things we can learn from the Book of Mormon is that the Church restored by Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith is true.***



but nothing happened. No light, no angel, no voice—nothing except a feeling of peace as I read.

I continued to read and underline meaningful passages and pray to know that the Book of Mormon was true. The miracle eventually came. As Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has described, it was more like the rising of the sun than the sudden turning on of a light switch.<sup>4</sup> A light began to illuminate my mind and my heart. I began to see the Book of Mormon in a different way. Passages that I had read before began to mean something new. The best way I can describe the experience was that my mind began to be enlightened.

Over a period of weeks and months, I can say that I came to know more surely than anything I had ever known that the Book of Mormon was the word of God. I came to know that it was written and preserved for our day and was brought forth as a powerful

witness of Jesus Christ and His Church. The impression that came to me again and again through the voice of the Spirit was, “It’s true, it’s true, it’s all true.”

Forty years later, that same witness continues with me. I have now read the Book of Mormon many times, and each time—every time—I again hear the words “It’s true.” This has given me the assurance that Jesus Christ is my Savior and that this is His great work of salvation.

Just as the dominoes I loved to play with as a boy all fell down when I pushed over the first one, so do all the truths of the gospel fall into place as we come to know that the keystone of our testimony—the Book of Mormon—is true. ■

#### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in introduction to the Book of Mormon; see also *History of the Church*, 4:461.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 196.
3. *Book of Mormon Teacher Resource Manual* (2004), 19.
4. See David A. Bednar, “The Spirit of Revelation,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 87–90.



#### THE CENTERPIECE OF THE RESTORATION

“The Book of Mormon is the centerpiece of the Restoration. It was written, preserved, and transmitted under the Lord’s direction. It was translated ‘by the gift and power of God.’”

President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Catch the Wave,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 47.

# COME, FOLLOW ME: Teaching the Basics at Home

By Alicia Stanton and  
Natalie Campbell

Sitting down to family home evening, a mother begins by asking her two children, “When have you felt guided by the Spirit?”

Her 17-year-old daughter complains, “I’ve already had three lessons on the Spirit this month.”

“Good, then you’ll have a lot to contribute,” her dad responds. It’s silent as Mom and Dad wait patiently while their children think about the question.

Eventually, their 14-year-old son shares an experience from school that day.

“Yeah,” replies his mother, “that reminds me of Nephi following the Spirit when he didn’t know how to get the plates from Laban.”

Her daughter speaks up, sharing how she followed a prompting to talk to a lonely girl on the bus. Her dad praises her decision and relates an experience he had at work.

They end the discussion by singing “Let the Holy Spirit Guide” (*Hymns*, no. 143).

A simple teaching method—sharing experiences about this doctrine—made this family home evening successful.

This article gives real-life examples of how people learned the principles in the Sunday youth curriculum, organized by month. Of course, these examples are not the only ways to learn about these doctrines. You can seek inspiration for the needs of your family.

The Sunday curriculum for youth—*Come, Follow Me*—teaches one fundamental gospel doctrine each month. Here are some ways to learn those doctrinal principles with your family.





# JANUARY

## The Godhead

The members of the Godhead—Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost—are three distinct personages but are unified in purpose and glory.

One young woman tells of learning about the Godhead: “It is important to me that my Heavenly Father, my Savior, and the Holy Ghost are separate Beings I can come to know individually but follow in unity. I’ve come to recognize with gratitude that I can become like God because the Godhead is not an undefined and incomprehensible substance but rather divine Beings who love, bless, guide, and know me.”

To teach this doctrine, you might try discussing questions such as, “What can we learn from the Godhead about working together in unity?” or “How can we strengthen our relationship with the members of the Godhead?”

Comparing John 10:30 and Doctrine and Covenants 50:43 may prompt good discussion and give insights about unity.

## RESOURCES FOR TEACHING

The Church provides many resources to help you learn and teach these doctrinal principles. In addition to the scriptures and general conference talks, consider these options:

**Teachings of Presidents of the Church.** Visit [lds.org/manual/teachings-of-presidents](https://www.lds.org/manual/teachings-of-presidents).

**True to the Faith.** Visit [lds.org/manual/home-and-family](https://www.lds.org/manual/home-and-family).

**Preach My Gospel** and accompanying pamphlets. Visit [lds.org/manual/missionary](https://www.lds.org/manual/missionary).

**Music.** The music in the hymnbook and *Children’s Songbook* reinforces principles of the gospel. Visit [lds.org/music](https://www.lds.org/music).

**Videos.** Church videos are engaging and can help start gospel conversations at home. Visit [lds.org/media-library](https://www.lds.org/media-library).

**Artwork.** Using art like that found in the *Gospel Art Book* can spark insights about the scriptures. Visit [lds.org/media-library](https://www.lds.org/media-library).

# FEBRUARY

## The Plan of Salvation

The plan of salvation answers the most basic of human questions, like, “Who am I?” and “What is the purpose of life?” Asking our own questions and searching for answers can be a powerful way to learn about the Father’s plan of happiness.

For example, one young man began his scripture study by asking, “How do God’s attributes compare to the characteristics that I possessed in the pre-mortal life? that I possess now? that I hope to possess in the next life?” He wrote down the answers to these questions as he found them in the scriptures and used them to teach others about the plan of salvation.

What questions do your children have about the plan of salvation?





## MARCH

### The Atonement of Jesus Christ

How do we learn not only of the Atonement of Jesus Christ but also of our Savior's sincere hope that we will use His Atonement in our lives?

Because we have all been lonely, made mistakes, and required strength, all of us have needed to better understand and use the Atonement. A Young Women adviser used a video to help her class better understand the Savior's Atonement.

Here is one young woman's experience:

"We were watching 'None Were with Him' (video, [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org)). As a single flute played a mournful tune, the voice of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, 'One of the great consolations of this Easter season is that because Jesus walked such a long, lonely path utterly alone, *we* do not have to do so.'

"I had felt ashamed at requiring the Savior's Atonement, but immersed in the Spirit, I felt the hope of His Atonement sweep away my feelings of guilt. The Lord gave His life for me; He did not regret it, and neither would I."

Because the Atonement is the crowning event of our salvation, we must teach and learn about it with the direction of the Holy Ghost. Perhaps you will be led to discuss scriptures or apostolic testimonies such as "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles" (*Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2). Consider discussing a question such as, "When have you felt the healing, strengthening, or redeeming power of the Atonement?"

## APRIL

### The Apostasy and the Restoration

Understanding apostasy—a falling away from the true gospel—helps us understand the need for a restoration of the gospel, the priesthood, and the Church of Jesus Christ.

The following object lesson helped some missionaries teach an investigator about the Apostasy and the Restoration.

"My companion and I used plastic cups labeled with parts of the true Church, building a pyramid with them while explaining how Jesus Christ established His Church.

"Then we explained the Apostasy as we removed cups representing the Apostles and watched the whole structure topple over. As we explained the Restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, we rebuilt the tower, showing that the Church today is organized in the same way that Christ originally organized it.

"For the first time, this man understood. The Restoration finally gained meaning for him when he understood why it was needed."

There are many other ways to represent the cycle of dispensation, apostasy, and restoration. You might read scripture passages about these topics and follow the promptings of the Spirit to create your own representation of what you learn (see, for example, Amos 8:11–12; 1 Nephi 13; D&C 136:36–38; Moses 5:55–59).



MAY

## Prophets and Revelation



The Lord cares deeply about communicating with us. We receive His guidance in our lives through revelation that He gives to His prophets and to us personally.

We can often better understand gospel principles if we compare them to objects and experiences in everyday life. A young woman relates how a comparison helped her recognize revelation:

“I learned about revelation through a modern-day prophet. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke on the spirit of revelation and explained it through a metaphor of light. Occasionally, revelation is sudden and clear like turning on a light in a dark room. More commonly, it comes gradually like the rising sun getting steadily brighter. Most often, Elder Bednar says, revelation is like light on a foggy day. “There is enough light that you . . . can see just enough to take a few steps ahead into the cloudiness’ (in “Patterns of Light: Spirit of Revelation” [video], [LDS.org](https://www.llds.org)). This metaphor, while simple, deeply impacted me because I realized that revelation was available if I took time to perceive it.”

As we take time to study metaphors, parables, and symbols, our understanding of doctrines can continue to grow. These teaching methods help us learn even more when we allow the Spirit to reveal new perspectives to us.



*The authors live in Utah, USA.*

*Part 2 of this article, sharing ideas for July–December, will be published later this year.*

JUNE

## Priesthood and Priesthood Keys

The priesthood is an important topic for everyone. It is the power of God and can bless all of us. We each have an important role to play in priesthood work.

Some people are unfamiliar with the duties, offices, and history of the priesthood. A quiz can be a fun way to learn these ideas.

Depending on what you want to learn, you can use some of the following questions and invite your children to search for answers in the scriptures and teachings of modern prophets.

- What are the offices and duties of the Aaronic Priesthood? of the Melchizedek Priesthood?
- What are priesthood keys? Who holds them? Why are keys necessary?
- What is the difference between priesthood office, authority, and power?
- How does the priesthood bless both men and women?

Answers can be found in reference books such as *Gospel Principles* (2009) and *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004) and in scriptures such as Doctrine and Covenants 13, 20, and 107.

The answer to the last question, “How does the priesthood bless both men and women?” can be found in the scriptures but most importantly in reflecting on how this doctrine affects us personally. ■

*After many of my family members lost their faith, I wondered what it meant for me to have a spiritual heritage full of withered plants.*

**Name withheld**

**M**y son pulled a tangle of long green vines out of his school-bag. “I almost forgot about these,” he told me.

I recognized the battered, young green bean plants as a familiar elementary school science project. They sprang from two clear plastic cups. One plant grew in black potting soil specially formulated for germinating seeds in small containers indoors. The plant’s stalk was stout but short and crowned by only a few large, fleshy leaves.

The second plant was different. The seed had been pressed into a damp, crumpled paper towel. Through the wall of the cup we could see a few white, soggy roots growing downward. A long, pale-green vine grew upward, tapering into thinner stems and small, papery leaves.

“It’s an experiment,” my son explained. “And it’s not working like it’s supposed to.”

“You mean the seed in the paper towel shouldn’t have grown bigger than the seed in the soil?” I suggested.

He fingered the longer vine. “Yeah,” he admitted. I could tell he was a little embarrassed that the simple lesson his teacher had tried to show her class hadn’t





## A PARABLE *in*

# *My Windowsill*

been supported by the results of the bean plant experiment.

“Well,” I said, “maybe the experiment’s not over yet. Let’s set the beans here in the window and let them keep growing. Then we can tell Mrs. Rice how it really ended.”

He agreed, and the experiment continued in our kitchen window. Of course, Mrs. Rice, my son’s fourth-grade teacher, wasn’t the only teacher in his life who taught about the importance of good soil. We had read the Savior’s parable of the sower (see Matthew 13:3–8) during our family scripture study and knew that the Lord also taught that plants without good ground do not prosper long.

The parable of the sower strikes me personally. When I was a young mother, my parents and four of my seven siblings left the Church. They had once been paragons of spiritual strength to me and to the hundreds of people they touched during their decades of Church service and leadership.

For years the lapse of faith among so many of my family members left me with ambivalent feelings toward the parable of the sower. Sometimes I

was tempted to wonder what it meant for my own testimony if my parents’ spiritual roots—the roots by which my testimony had once been nurtured—were ultimately without good ground. What did it mean for me to have a spiritual heritage full of withered, rootless plants? I’d usually reassure myself with the reminder not to wrest the scriptures (see Alma 41:1) and resisted the temptation to force the parable to apply to issues it may not have been intended to address.

Still, it was with a bit of a grimace that I set the bean plants—reminders of the parable of the sower and all the conflicts it awakened in my mind—in my kitchen window.

As the weeks went by, each developed delicate blossoms. Soon the blossoms fell away, leaving little green pods in their places. The pods didn’t appear exclusively on the plant grown in the good soil. The plant in the wet paper towel bore them too. My son eyed the plants nervously. As long as the plant in the paper towel thrived, Mrs. Rice’s hypothesis was still unproven. We let the experiment go on.

Not long after the bean plants produced their pods, the long, impressive

plant growing from the wad of paper towel finally died. The plant in the good soil still lived.

“There,” I said. “Now it’s happened just like Mrs. Rice said it would.”

My son sighed, relieved that his teacher was right at last but a little sad for the loss of the plant. I was about to drop the wilted plant into the trash when one of the wrinkly yellow pods caught my attention. I pulled it off the stalk and cracked the pod open. Inside was a little seed, brown and hard like a nut. Despite its origins in the paper towel and the withering of its parent plant, the seed could now be taken and buried in good soil, where it could send its roots deep into the earth and bear fruit “an hundredfold” (Matthew 13:8).

I stood holding the seed in one hand and the withered bean plant in the other. I closed my eyes and thanked my Heavenly Father for the lesson He and my son had unfolded for me on my kitchen windowsill. Although my parents’ testimonies had withered away, I could still choose to plant my testimony in a rich, fertile place of its own. ■



*Three young adults learned to treat their mortal bodies as a gift from God. They found that it is more important to be healthy than to try to match some unhealthy worldly standard.*

# I THANK THEE FOR THIS BODY

By Starla Averkamp Butler

Heavenly Father loves us and has given us the gift of our bodies. The scriptures teach us that our bodies are “the temple of the Holy Ghost” and that we should “glorify God” in our bodies and spirits, “which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Our bodies and abilities are gifts from God, even if we don’t think they’re everything they should be. By twisting our understanding of what is good and true, Satan convinces us to disrespect or disregard our gifts from God—not only our bodies but also such gifts as our ability to see ourselves as worthy of God’s love. It can begin with a simple, repeated negative behavior, even a thought pattern that makes us forget our eternal nature as children of God. What may start out as an effort to improve ourselves can become a trial of both body and spirit.

One way this happens is through eating disorders—including anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder—and disordered eating (*disordered eating* is any abnormal eating behavior that, “if left unaddressed, may develop into a full-blown eating disorder”<sup>1</sup>). Here, three young adult women share their stories of learning to rely on the Lord as they overcame eating disorders and the world’s idea of perfection.



### The Pains of Perfectionism

“Walking into any social gathering used to be torture,” says Heidi. “I compared myself with those I felt were progressing as wives and mothers, excelling in their glamorous careers, or expanding their great talents. I later learned that I was comparing their greatest strengths with my own weaknesses.

“I often thought, ‘What have I done wrong?’ No amount of personal effort seemed to be good enough to fulfill the expectations of others and especially myself. To gain any semblance of self-esteem, I began using eating disorder behaviors to lose weight. I accepted the worldly view that if I looked a certain way, I would feel better about myself. Finally, I realized that the only true source of happiness comes through the gospel of Jesus Christ. I had to accept Heavenly Father’s love for all of His children, myself included.

“From a worldly perspective, accepting help is weak—showing you are incapable

of doing something yourself. I had to learn that accepting God’s help willingly is a sign of strength. Admitting areas of weakness and humbly submitting myself to learn and improve changed how I felt.

“As I struggled to recover, I often felt frustrated that I was not able to overcome the eating disorder quickly. Several counselors advised that I try to find a sense of accomplishment in the little steps that I was making.

“As I followed their counsel, I learned that when I prayed each night, I could ponder what had happened that day and express gratitude for what I had accomplished, no matter how large or small the step, instead of being miserable over the mistakes I may have made. In time, I found that the chains of the eating disorder were loosening and that I could again feel joy, despite the setbacks of everyday living.

“The idea of having the perfect body is instilled in society through every form of



### HIS GREATEST HANDIWORK

“Fully accepting our Savior’s Atonement can increase our faith and give us courage to let go of constraining expectations that we are somehow required to be or to make things perfect. . . . We can gratefully accept, as God’s sons and daughters, that we are His greatest handiwork (see Psalm 8:3–6; Hebrews 2:7), even though we are still a work in progress.”

**Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Presidency of the Seventy, “Becoming Perfect in Christ,” *Ensign*, July 2014, 17.**

## WARNING SIGNS

Here are some warning signs to watch for in yourself or loved ones:

- A change in weight not related to a medical condition
- Severe dieting, binge eating, or preoccupation with food
- Intense fear of being “fat”
- Evidence of forced vomiting
- Abuse of laxatives, diuretics, enemas, diet pills, or other related medications
- Distorted body image; preoccupation with body shape and size
- Obsessive or excessive exercise
- Depressed mood or anxiety

If you or a loved one struggles with an eating disorder or disordered eating, it would likely be very helpful to work with professionals such as qualified therapists, registered dietitians, and medical doctors. Seek out professionals who have experience working with eating disorders and who will work well with you or your loved one as an individual. For more information, visit [providentliving.org/lds-family-services](https://providentliving.org/lds-family-services).

media. However, I have realized that many people I come across are not perfect according to worldly standards, yet they radiate inner beauty and confidence because they love and accept who they are—children of God.”

### More Than a Number

“I struggle with an eating disorder that came from becoming obsessed with food and addicted to exercise,” says Hailey. “I would often forget that my body is a gift from God, something that I should never disrespect in any way. I would compare myself with others and constantly put myself down for not fitting the ideal ‘beautiful’ image. After I weighed myself—whether I liked what I saw or not—I would label myself as a number instead of the daughter of God that I am. There were days when I felt happy, but most days I felt like I was drowning in a sea of self-doubt and I couldn’t seem to find the shore.

“It wasn’t until I prayed for help that I knew of a surety that Heavenly Father was aware of my struggles and attempts to be better—no matter how small those attempts were. As I kept praying for strength to overcome my challenge, I came to trust that Jesus Christ, through the enabling power of the Atonement, could truly help me become better. It gives me comfort to know that my Savior knows exactly

how I feel, and it gives me courage to know that each trial can bring me closer to my Savior.

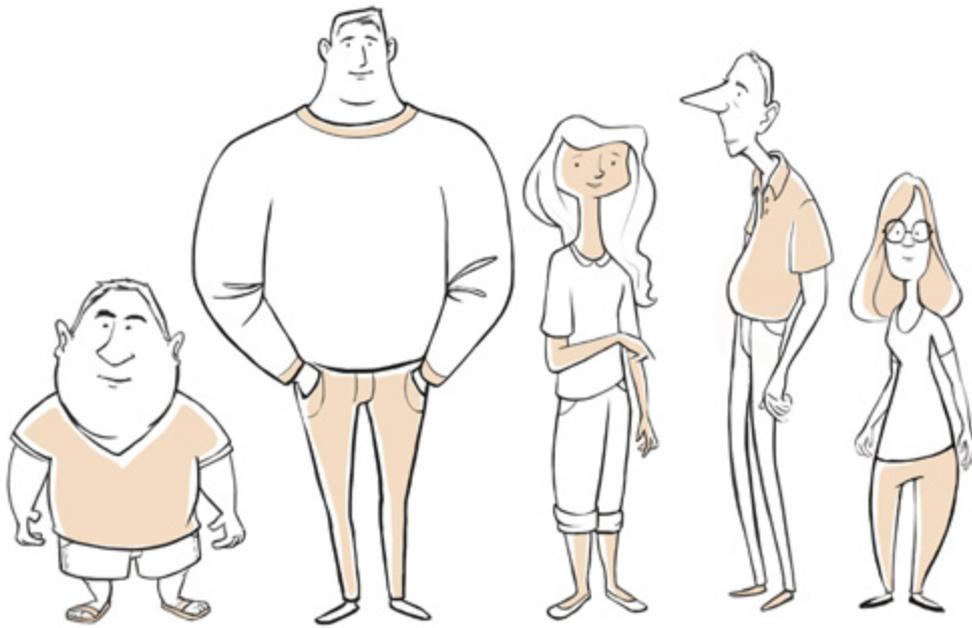
“Like Peter when he walked on water (see Matthew 14:25–31), there are days the ‘wind [is] boisterous’ and I must call upon God to save me from my doubts. But as I have faith that the Savior can transform me to become like Him, I no longer feel like I am drowning.”

### Becoming Who He Wants Me to Be

There is one person who knows us better than any other—our Heavenly Father. Heavenly Father loves us, and He can help us learn to love ourselves as we work to overcome our weaknesses and challenges.

Megan recalls, “When I started college I pushed myself to the point of breaking to maintain the same high grades that I had in high school. By my sophomore year of college, anorexia had started to devour me. I was destroying the body Heavenly Father gave to me, but at that point I was proud I could control my weight when I couldn’t control anything else.”

Megan realized that her anorexia and perfectionism weren’t what Heavenly Father wanted for her and knew that something needed to change. “Before my smile and strength could return, I had to tell myself I was worth something. I



## HELP FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY OF THOSE WHO STRUGGLE

- Eating disorders affect both men and women of various age-groups.
- Eating disorders are typically based on feelings such as powerlessness, anxiety, and shame.
- Don't be afraid to discuss worries early on, but realize that a loved one may display warning signs such as preoccupation with body image and yet not be developing an eating disorder.
- Try using "I" statements instead of "you" statements that may reinforce feelings of shame. For example, instead of saying, "You can't keep forcing yourself to vomit after meals," say, "I am concerned that you are forcing yourself to vomit after meals."
- Be caring but firm. For example, don't promise never to tell anyone.
- Encourage your loved one to seek help, including from therapists and doctors.
- Let the person see that although at times you may feel frustration, anger, fear, or helplessness, these feelings don't stop you from loving that person.
- Remember that recovery takes time and that the decision to heal ultimately has to come from the one with the disorder.

could do hard things. I had to convince myself I was smart, lovable, and a whole heap of other things I had come to believe were lies over the last few years.

"I started attending an emotional-eating group. It was hard for me. I felt like by attending the meetings I was saying that I was sinning by the way I ate, and I didn't want to be a sinner. However, I've learned not to be so ashamed, because it helps me become the daughter of God I want to be.

"People have told me to tell myself I am beautiful every day, thinking that will help me through my anorexia. That has never worked for me. I chose something my brain doesn't automatically dismiss: 'I thank Thee, Heavenly Father, for giving me this wonderful body.' I truly am grateful that God has given me such a precious gift, and

I plan on doing everything I can to hold on to it."

God loves each of us. We don't have to attain our idea of perfection, whether it be physical perfection or any other kind, to earn that love. It's true that the Lord wants us to keep trying to be better, but not alone. Moroni 10:32 promises that if we "love God with all [our] might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for [us], that by his grace [we] may be perfect in Christ." It is by relying on Jesus Christ and His Atonement that we can hope to come closer, little by little, to what He wants us to be and avoid the false expectations of what the world tells us to be. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

### NOTE

1. Marcia Herrin and Nancy Matsumoto, *The Parent's Guide to Eating Disorders*, 2nd ed. (2007), 50.



# Thankful FOR FAST OFFERINGS

*Our lifestyle changed dramatically  
after my husband lost his job.*



By Debra LeBaron de St. Jeor

It was a shock the day my husband, Keri, lost his job. He went to work one morning to learn that the company had shut down overnight. This came shortly after an accident I'd had that resulted in extensive surgery and intense physical therapy. We found ourselves with no job, mountains of medical bills, and a young family to provide for.

Keri returned to school so he could get his teaching credential. When he finished, he accepted a teaching job in a small Idaho town, and we moved to a remote farm 45 miles from his work—it was the only place we could find to rent. In many ways, it was an isolated and difficult time. Keri left for work early in the morning, and because he had coaching responsibilities as well as lesson plans to create, he would not return home until late at night. He drove our only vehicle to work each day, which left me without transportation.

We had four children and lived in a clean but cramped trailer with three tiny bedrooms. The girls' room could fit only a single bed. In the boys' room, we were able to fit both a bed and a crib, but the aisle between them was so narrow that you couldn't turn around in it.

Our living conditions were adequate but lacking in some basic amenities. We had no telephone, no washer or dryer, and no money. In spite of this, we were happy. The children had no idea that we were considered poor; they spent their days playing outside with the carefree abandon of

childhood. They unearthed treasures in the dirt, picked wildflowers, discovered new hideaways, and created masterpieces out of straw and twine.

I had a daily routine that I followed. At the end of the day, I would bathe the children and then leave the water in the tub, throwing their clothes in to soak overnight. In the morning, after our oldest son was off to kindergarten, I made the day's bread. While it was rising, I scrubbed all the clothes by hand in the bathtub and hung them outside on the clothesline to dry. My hands became so chapped and raw from this daily ritual of scrubbing clothes in harsh detergent that they cracked and bled almost constantly. But we had no money to buy lotion.

We worked hard to provide for our family—my husband teaching school and coaching, me taking care of our children. Because of the way the pay schedule was set up with the school district, my husband worked for almost two months before we received his first paycheck.

I was able to handle our new lifestyle and the extra challenges we were facing—the isolation, the lack of

amenities, and chronically chapped hands—until the day we ran out of milk and had no way of buying more. I was worried about our children's nutrition and about the lack of calcium for their growing bodies. That was the night I cried about our situation.

When my husband got home that night I said, "We can't do this by ourselves any longer." He drove into town and phoned the bishop. The next day, we received food and other necessities from the Church—including lotion. We said many prayers of thanks to the Lord, asking Him to bless those who had contributed fast offerings so that our family could eat.

Now, more than 20 years later, our children still remember the day we went "shopping" with the Relief Society president, and they got to choose their favorite kind of cereal. We have all developed a strong testimony of the Church welfare program—especially fast offerings. We feel very blessed every time we pay into it. The fast-offering program is truly an inspired program from a loving Heavenly Father to help those in need. ■

*The author lives in California, USA.*



#### HELPING THE SAVIOR CARE FOR THE POOR

"Your fast offering will do more than help feed and clothe bodies. It will heal and change hearts. . . .

"I bear my witness that Jesus is the Christ, that in His Church we are invited to help Him as He cares for the poor in His way, and that He promises everlasting blessings will come from our helping Him."

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Is Not This the Fast That I Have Chosen?" *Ensign*, May 2015, 24, 25.

SUPPORTED  
IN OUR **Trials**

*During my struggle with cancer, I found strength and comfort in the promise that those who trust in God will be supported in their afflictions.*

By Denise Neish

**I**ncurable.” My mind raced to make sense of the word. Three weeks before, I had been diagnosed with breast cancer. During the surgery that followed, doctors discovered 24 malignant lymph nodes. Now my doctor called to tell me that the cancer had spread to my bones.

He asked if I wanted to go forward with chemotherapy, to which I responded, “Of course I’m going to fight it!” With four children to care for, I felt that was my only option.

Fortunately I didn’t have to do it alone. In the Book of Mormon, Alma promises his son Helaman that “whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions” (Alma 36:3; see also verse 27). I have found this promise to be true. I was supported in my trials with cancer through faith, priesthood blessings, service from others, prayer, and the word of God.

### Faith and Optimism

My husband and I broke the news to family and friends that my cancer was worse than we initially thought. We

detailed exactly what we knew about my prognosis, a one- to three-percent chance for cure, but we also outlined our plan for treatment and our belief that if God was willing, I might live.

Our three-year-old twins, Max and Lily, and baby, Macy, were too young to understand the situation, but we tried to prepare Alec, who was eight, for what might lie ahead. When I was first diagnosed, we told him that I would lose my hair and be tired sometimes but that in the end I would be fine. We decided to leave it at that for the time being. We spoke optimistically at home, but at night when I tried to sleep, I was overcome with worry, fear, and sadness. Nevertheless, I knew that Heavenly Father was in charge. I believed that if He wanted me to survive, I would.

### Priesthood Blessings

My husband, Branden, gave me a priesthood blessing in which he felt inspired to bless me with “many healthy years.” I desperately wanted to know exactly what those



words meant, but even without all the information, I believed in the blessing and held on to the phrase “many healthy years.”

I asked for blessings frequently during this time and always received inspired and personal guidance. I even received comfort from a blessing I had been given years before my diagnosis. In that blessing I had been advised to continue practicing the piano. I followed that advice, and by the time I was in treatment for cancer, I could play some of the hymns. During my sickness I spent a lot of time practicing the piano because I loved how I felt when I played the hymns and other beautiful music. I marveled that Heavenly Father prepared me in advance so that music could bless and comfort me during my darkest hour.

In another priesthood blessing I was told that I would receive more energy if I would think more about the Savior

and all He had done for me. Believing the blessing, I earnestly tried to think of Him more, and was noticeably strengthened physically as a result.

### Service from Others

During my illness I was helped many times by selfless neighbors, friends, and fellow ward members. Two days before our family’s move to Utah from California, a woman from my ward called unexpectedly and offered to help with the children while I did some packing. It was shortly after she arrived that I received the call from my doctor with the devastating news that my cancer had spread. My friend tearfully told me later that she had been prompted to call and offer help that evening. I don’t know what I would have done without her there, when my husband was not home at that time.

When we arrived in Utah, our new home was flooded with neighbors who helped us unload our truck. My kitchen was completely organized, books were placed on



*Sometimes prayer led us to do things differently, but we felt peace about our course.*

bookshelves, and milk and bread appeared in my fridge. There were so many people in our house that there was not enough room for everyone who came to help.

The next few months were filled with aggressive chemotherapy. My mother-in-law was always willing to take care of my children every chemo day, despite the high energy required for watching them. I got painful sores in my mouth and throat that made eating and drinking nearly impossible. My oldest niece, who lived a few hours away, came to help with the children for a few days and then, seeing my condition, moved in with us for the rest of the summer. Her appearance in our lives right when our family was floundering was an obvious witness to me that Heavenly Father knew our needs and was not going to abandon us.

During chemotherapy, however, my condition continued to worsen. Unable to eat and drink, I lay in bed, sometimes shivering and sometimes burning with fever. Branden was worried and took me to the hospital twice in one week, but both times the nurses told me my symptoms were normal during chemotherapy. They gave me an IV bag for an hour or two and then sent me home. I was getting weaker every day and knew that I should be in the hospital, but I didn't go back because I doubted that I would receive the help I needed. I did not know what to do.

Then on a Friday afternoon my phone rang. It was the head nurse at the hospital. She said she had been thinking of me all day and knew that she needed to call me before her shift was over. When she learned of my condition, she had me admitted to the hospital immediately. I later learned from my doctor that her intervention at that time likely saved my life.

During the chaos of my month-long hospitalization, the members of our ward brought meals to our family, helped watch the children, visited me, cleaned our house, planted flowers, pulled weeds, did laundry, and sent encouraging cards and messages. They fasted and prayed for me, and when I was home, the young men brought the sacrament to our house.

Family and friends, many of whom lived far away, reached out to show support in various ways. Through their service, I was able to feel not only their love but also the love of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

### Prayer

Throughout my treatment, which included chemotherapy, radiation, a hysterectomy, and other surgeries and drugs, I prayed more than ever before. My prayers were more often for peace of mind than for anything else.

Turning off the radio and praying during the hour-long drives to the hospital for chemotherapy became a habit. By the time I reached the hospital, I always felt Heavenly Father's love for me and could optimistically go about my day.

I also prayed often to know what I should do. Branden and I applied the scriptural advice, "Study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right" (D&C 9:8). Sometimes those prayers led us to do things differently than prescribed by the normal protocol, but we felt peace about our course.

When a scan revealed that the tumors in my spine and hip were almost completely gone, a doctor cautioned me that even though the results were positive, we should not expect too much. Despite his pessimism, I continued to believe with all my heart in my priesthood blessing promising "many healthy years." I continued chemotherapy for three more months and then moved on to radiation.

At that point I needed to choose a radiation doctor. When I met with a certain doctor for the first time, he cautiously told me that he felt we could apply radiation to the areas on my spine and hip without doing too much damage to my heart and that we might have hope for remission. This was the first doctor who had been so positive. I felt good after I spoke with him, but I still prayed for a confirmation to know if he should be my radiation doctor. The answer came immediately in the form of a beautiful, happy feeling that enveloped me.

### Feasting on the Words of Christ

I found it crucial to "feast upon the words of Christ" (2 Nephi 32:3) by reading the scriptures daily and listening to talks from recent and

past general conferences. Many times the message I listened to was exactly what I needed to hear that day. A talk given by Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shortly after a battle with cancer was especially meaningful to me. In that talk he observed that "not shrinking is much more important than surviving!" ("Apply the Atoning Blood of Christ," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 22). Because of his words, I decided that no matter what happened, I would not shrink.

### Moving Forward

A little over a year after my diagnosis I had a scan that showed no trace of cancer in my body. I was declared to be in remission, something I was originally told would not happen. After two years of remission, I had a small recurrence of the cancer in my bones, but I continue to feel well, take care of my family, run, and enjoy good health, even as I take drugs to fight the cancer. I have even been able to run a marathon and several half marathons recently. I know that my blessing promising "many healthy years" is being fulfilled, and my faith in those words gives me peace.

I have learned multiple life lessons from cancer, but most significantly, I could never deny that Heavenly Father has been with me. I have felt Him beside me, and I know that He has sent several of my brothers and sisters to help me at critical times. I know that in God's wisdom, not every righteous son or daughter is healed. And I also know that whatever answer comes from God is the right answer and is for our eternal good. I am grateful to be well, but more than anything, I am grateful for God's love and mercy for His children. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*



### GOD NEVER LEAVES US ALONE

"I testify of angels, both the heavenly and the mortal kind. In doing so I am testifying that God never leaves us alone, never leaves us unaided in the challenges that we face. . . . Always there are those angels who come and go all around us, seen and unseen, known and unknown, mortal and immortal."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Ministry of Angels," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 31.

# WHAT'S NEW IN THE *Friend*



**FAMILY NIGHT FUN**

**TREATS LIST**

*Friend*

*Friend*  
JUNIOR!

CRAYONS  
12



Are you looking for ways to help children feel the Spirit and grow in the gospel? The *Friend* (the Church's magazine for children) just got even more helpful!

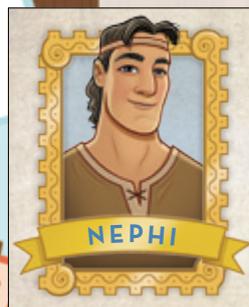
### 1. More for Young Children

Flip the *Friend* upside down to read the *Friend Junior*, beginning from the back cover. It's a brand-new section just for pre- and early readers. Check out "For Parents of Little Ones," a page of teaching tips on a variety of topics.



### 2. The Power of the Book of Mormon

Make this life-changing book a part of your children's lives. To help with that, you'll find a new Book of Mormon hero card, reading chart coloring page, and simplified Book of Mormon story each month in the magazine.



### 3. Easy Family Home Evening Ideas

Children can help plan family night! Each month, look for "Family Night Fun" to find an activity, recipe, and other easy family home evening ideas based on stories out of "their" magazine.



### 4. Primary Connection

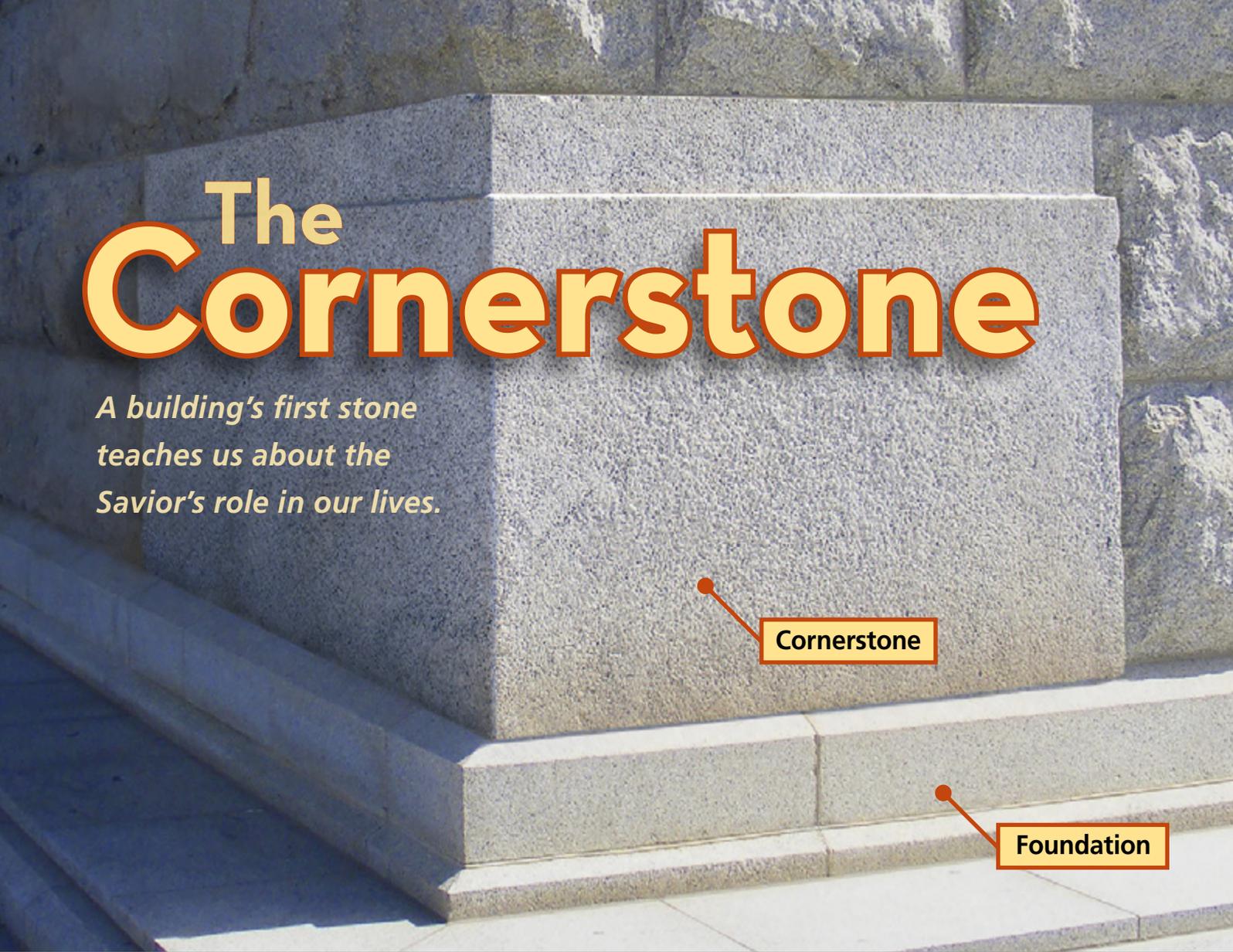
Every issue of the *Friend* has support for the monthly sharing time theme and Primary lessons. Just look in the table of contents for the diamond-shaped "Primary Connection" icon. ■

You can order copies at [store.lds.org](http://store.lds.org). Click on "Magazines." Subscriptions are only \$8 a year.

STORIES AND FEATURES	
2	Follow the Prophet: Following in President Thomas S. Monson
4	Lots to Like
6	Family Night Fun
8	The Cleanup Crew
10	Question Corner
11	Heavenly Father Loves Me
12	Answers from an Apostle: Elder
14	Friends Who Stand Tall: Standin
16	Bright Idea
17	Bulletin Board
18	Windows before Winter
20	A Year with the Book of Mormon
22	Book of Mormon Hero: Nephi
23	I Can Read the Book of Mormon
24	The Book of Mormon Teaches ab
26	Behind the Scenes
28	Show and Tell
30	Friend to Friend: Elder Chi Hong

# The Cornerstone

*A building's first stone teaches us about the Savior's role in our lives.*



Cornerstone

Foundation

## Facts about the Cornerstone

**What it is.** A cornerstone is the first stone placed upon a building's foundation, in a corner of the structure.

**What it does.** A cornerstone bears much of the weight of a building's outer structure, and it connects and unites two of the walls. After it is placed, all other stones and their angles are measured out from it.

**What its characteristics are.** Anciently, a cornerstone would normally be one of the largest, most solid stones a builder had to work with. The builder would examine his stones carefully and select the best one as a cornerstone, rejecting any stones that didn't appear suitable.

## What We Can Learn

### A cornerstone:

**Is the first.** Jesus Christ is the Firstborn of all the Father's children (see Colossians 1:15–17; Hebrews 1:6; D&C 93:21), the first to be resurrected (see 1 Corinthians 15:20), the one who was to “go to prepare a place for [us]” in His Father's house (John 14:2), the “Beloved and Chosen from the beginning” (Moses 4:2), and “the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

**Unites.** Jesus Christ “inviteth . . . all to come unto him” (2 Nephi 26:33). The Atonement of Jesus Christ allows us to repent, become sanctified through the Holy Ghost, and be reunited with Heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul showed that Jesus Christ, as the cornerstone, was the connecting point for the two “walls” of the Church in

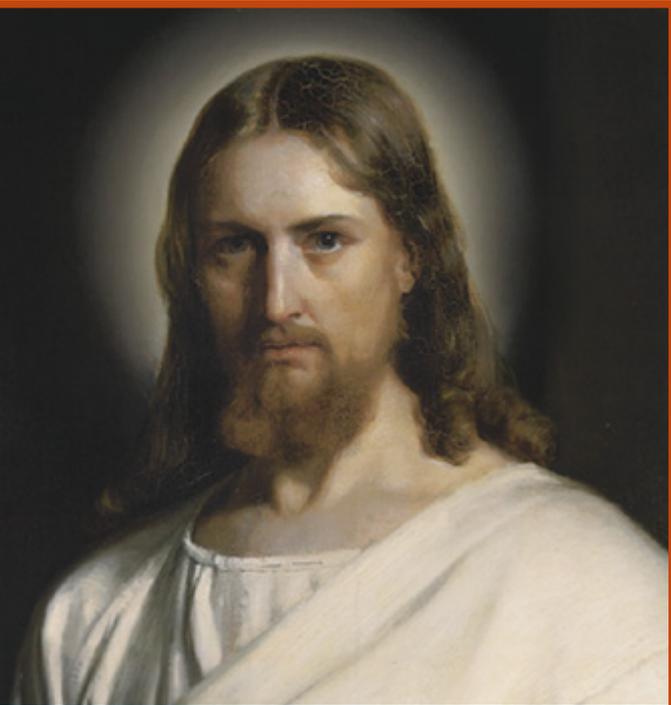
“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

“In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

“In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

Ephesians 2:19–22



Walls

### BIBLE FACTS

Psalm 118:22 refers to the Messiah, saying, “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” Jesus quoted this scripture in reference to Himself (see Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17), suggesting that although He would be “despised and rejected of men” in His day (Isaiah 53:3), He was in fact

the Messiah and would bring salvation.

After the Savior’s Resurrection, Peter quoted this psalm when testifying of Jesus Christ to the people of Jerusalem (see Acts 4:11–12). He quoted it again in his first epistle, where he also mentioned another Old Testament verse that compares the Messiah to a cornerstone (see 1 Peter 2:6–7; Isaiah 28:16).

that day: the Apostles of the New Testament and the prophets of the Old Testament, perhaps illustrating the mix of Gentile and Jewish converts (see Ephesians 2:20). The prophets and apostles of today, along with those of old, help unite us in Christ—in His doctrine, His service, and His Church.

**Aligns.** Jesus Christ “marked the path and led the way, and ev’ry point defines” (“How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195). He is our guide and our lawgiver, the one

whose commandments we obey and whose words we heed.

**Strengthens.** Jesus Christ has taken upon Himself our sins so that we can be forgiven if we will repent. In this way, He strengthens us by removing the ill effects of sin. In addition, “the enabling power of the Atonement strengthens us to do and be good and to serve beyond our own individual desire and natural capacity” (David A. Bednar, “The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 42–43). ■



### OPEN TO ALL

“Our community of Saints is not one of exclusion but one of inclusion, built upon a foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. It is open to all of us who love, appreciate, and have compassion for our Father in Heaven’s children.”

Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Building a Community of Saints,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 37.

## I RECOGNIZED THE WORD OF GOD

While in an airport several years ago in São Paulo, Brazil, I saw in a bookstore showcase a book titled “The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.” I doubted that our decaying and directionless world would accept another testament of Jesus Christ, and I spent the week-end thinking about the book.

Finally, I could no longer endure my curiosity, and I returned to the bookstore to buy it. When I arrived, however, I couldn’t find it. I described the book to the store attendant, but he said he had never seen it. Nor could he find a record of it, even though all books displayed in the showcase were cataloged.

Sometime later while in a pharmacy, I noticed an open book on a counter. As I began to read it, I learned about a man named Korihor who insisted on doubting the power of God and was eventually struck dumb. When I reflected on the words I read, I recognized them as being from God.

During this time I had been looking for divine direction. One day I knelt and fervently prayed asking God to show me the true path that would bring me to Him. A few days later our son became ill, so I returned to the pharmacy. When I was about to leave, three young Americans wearing name tags entered. I immediately felt a warmth in my breast, which prompted me to speak with them.

They told me they were in Brazil to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. I asked if they could teach me, and we scheduled an appointment.

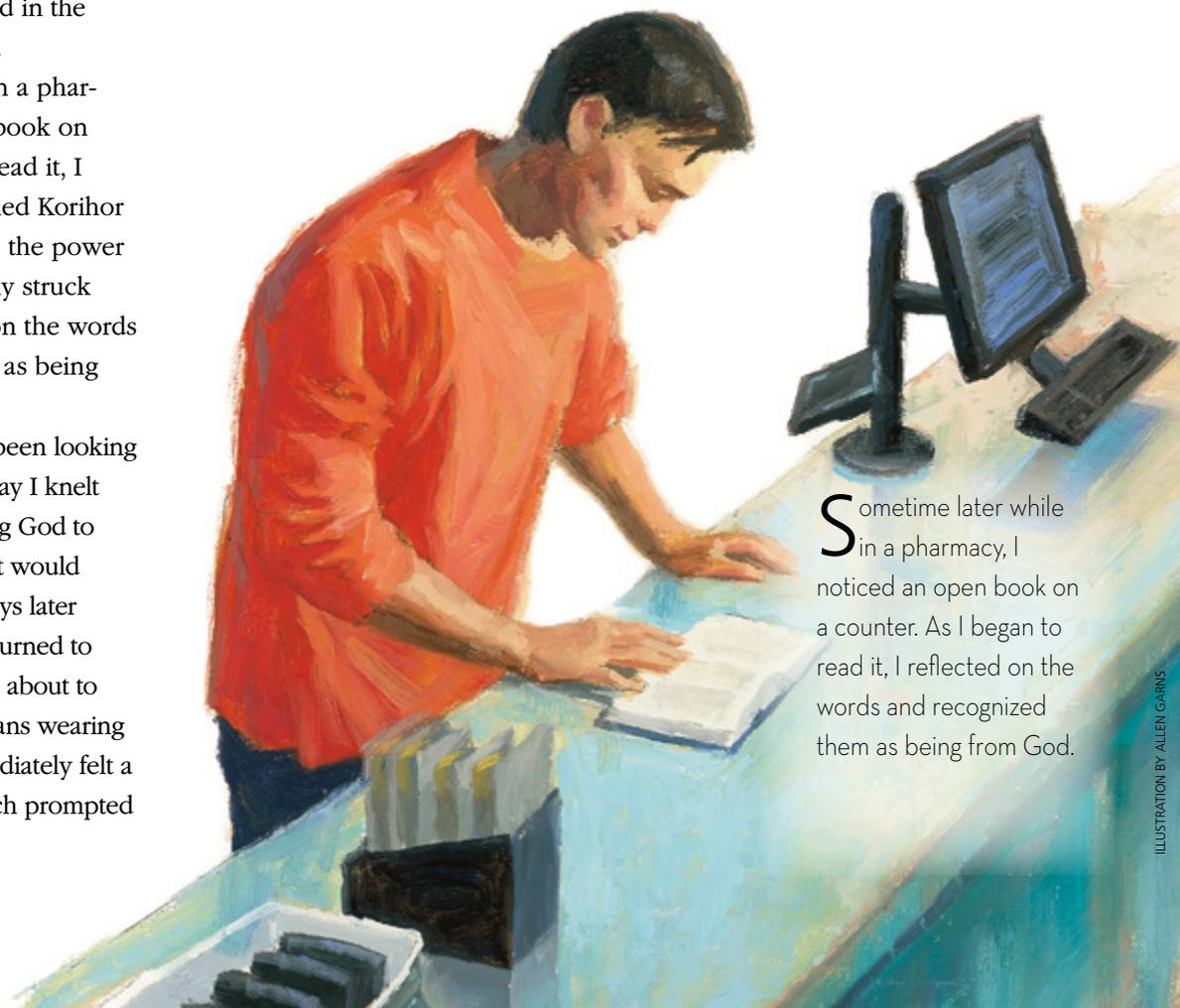
When I heard about the Prophet Joseph Smith for the first time, I knew my prayer had been answered. Then the missionaries gave me a book. To my astonishment, it was a Book of Mormon—just like the one I had seen in the showcase. I again felt a sweet warmth and became so happy that I was barely able to speak.

The missionaries explained the origin of the book and then asked me

to pray and ask God if it was true. I already had an absolute certainty of the divinity of the book, for the Lord had shown it to me—twice. Nevertheless, I examined it in great detail. Upon reading chapter 17 in 3 Nephi, I knew it contained a divine story because it contained the words of Jesus Christ.

The foundation of my testimony is in knowing that the Book of Mormon contains the word of God. It has changed me and continues to change me. ■

José Evanildo Matias Fernandes,  
São Paulo, Brazil



Sometime later while in a pharmacy, I noticed an open book on a counter. As I began to read it, I reflected on the words and recognized them as being from God.

I'm not sure how long it took, but one day I could at last taste of God's love again. It was like warm sunshine after a long winter.

## FINDING MY WAY THROUGH MISTS OF DARKNESS

A few years back I went through an especially dark season of my life. I faced many difficult challenges, and I felt depressed and overwhelmed by heavy burdens.

At church one Sunday, I looked around at all the happy families singing hymns and tasting of the love of God. I wanted to feel the same way, but something felt physically wrong with me.

I had felt the Spirit in the past, but I had been unable to for some time. As in Lehi's vision of the tree of life, I felt as if I were completely surrounded by mists of darkness—I couldn't even see the tree (see 1 Nephi 8:2–24).

When the sacrament prayers began, I closed my eyes and reached out to Heavenly Father, pleading for assurance of His love. I asked Him

why I couldn't taste of the fruit of the tree of life.

As I pondered Lehi's dream, I had a piercing realization. "Why haven't I remembered this before?" I thought. Traveling through mists of darkness is a completely normal part of God's plan. He allows us to experience difficulties from time to time so that we can completely depend on Him and His Son. The key is to cling to the iron rod. I still saw myself in mists of darkness, but I had hope.

As this impression left my mind, I felt a sweet reassurance from the Holy Ghost that my trials would pass. The Spirit testified that Heavenly Father was there. I wiped the tears from my eyes, grateful that I had been able to feel the Spirit again.

I began to immerse myself in the scriptures. I still had many dark days, but I had faith that if I clung to the iron rod—the word of God (see 1 Nephi 11:25)—I would be freed from the mists of darkness. I'm not sure how long it took, but one day I could at last taste of God's love again. It was like warm sunshine after a long winter.

As I have struggled off and on with life's challenges, I have remembered my promise to cling tightly to the iron rod by studying the scriptures and the words of the prophets. I know that when the mists of darkness come, I have the tools necessary to see my way through them and the promise of a warm reception on the other side. ■  
Juventa Vezzani, California, USA



## YOU KNOW IT'S TRUE!

One day while I was working in a department store in Oakland, California, USA, a friend stopped by and invited me to dinner. She said she would have two Mormon missionaries join us.

After dinner the missionaries set up a little flannel board and began asking me questions. I became somewhat irritated. I just wanted to listen to them and leave.

At the end of the discussion, however, a young missionary from Utah pulled up his chair, looked me in the eye, handed me a Book of Mormon,

and bore his testimony. He said he knew the Church was true and that I could also know by reading the book. Then he quoted Moroni 10:4 and said that if I would ask God with a sincere heart and with real intent, He would manifest the truth of the book to me by the power of the Holy Ghost.

During the following week I read several chapters, and we met again at my friend's house. After our third discussion, the missionary from Utah finished his mission and headed home.

I continued to read and pray each night, asking if the book was true.

After praying one night, I got into bed and read several more chapters. Suddenly I heard a voice say four simple words: "You know it's true!"

I had never heard the Spirit speak to me before. But I knew then that God knew me and loved me. I was so overcome that I could not control my tears. I knew I needed to join the true Church of Jesus Christ. I also understood how the young missionary from Utah could say he knew the Church was true.

I joined the Church and later married a beautiful young woman in the Oakland California Temple. We had

I took the book, looked him in the eye, handed it back to him, and said, "I know this book is true!"



eight children and lived in California for 33 years before moving to Utah.

A few years ago as our youngest daughter was preparing to leave for her mission, she asked if I had ever tried to contact the young missionary who had taught me.

“I have thought about him over these many years,” I replied, “but I don’t know how to contact him.”

Within 10 minutes she came back and said, “Here’s his phone number.”

When I got ahold of him, we had a long conversation. He asked for my email address so he could “bring me up-to-date on his life.” In his email the next day, he told me he hadn’t been a member of the Church for more than 40 years and hoped I wasn’t disappointed.

“How could I be disappointed?” I immediately emailed him back. “You changed my life!”

We exchanged more emails and agreed to meet. Soon I drove to his home, where he invited me in and introduced me to his wife. As we talked about our past, I asked him if he had a Book of Mormon. He went upstairs and returned with a copy. I took the book, looked him in the eye, handed the book back to him, and said: “I know this book is true! If you read Moroni 10:4 and pray about it, you can also gain a testimony of its truthfulness.”

Over the next several months, he read, prayed, and repented. Soon his 18-year-old son rebaptized him, and I

had the blessing of confirming him.

I know that my daughter was inspired to ask her question, and I know that Heavenly Father prepared the two of us for a 45-year reunion. I have learned the power of the Book of Mormon. I have also learned to never give up on someone who has wandered from the Church. ■

Henry (Hank) Brown, Utah, USA

## WAS MY STUDY SUFFICIENT?

I had faithfully read the Book of Mormon daily since I was a teenager. Even on nights when I’d fall into bed exhausted and realize I hadn’t read for the day, I would pick it up and read at least a few verses.

Two years ago I was asked to teach the Old Testament in early-morning seminary. I was more unfamiliar with the Old Testament than any other book of scripture, so some days I would spend three to four hours studying and preparing my lessons. Because I spent so much time studying the Bible and latter-day revelation, I stopped reading the Book of Mormon every day. We were reading it as a family at night, and I would use it for an occasional cross-reference, so I felt that I was getting sufficient daily gospel study.

In the middle of the school year in January, my stake president challenged the entire stake to read a

chapter in the Book of Mormon each day. Though I wondered how I would find time, given my heavy seminary studies, I decided I should accept the challenge. I needed to do it not only to strengthen myself but also to set an example for my children and students.

From that moment on I read a chapter from the Book of Mormon each day as I started preparing my seminary lesson or as I got ready for bed. A spirit and a power I didn’t know was missing returned to my life. My seminary lessons, which had been going well, became even better. Parts of the Old Testament that were difficult to understand became clearer. I also realized that I better understood the Book of Mormon as a result of the intense study I had been doing of the prophets and the law of Moses.

The introduction to the Book of Mormon includes this quote from the Prophet Joseph Smith: “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”

The Book of Mormon holds together all the parts of the gospel and contains a powerful testimony of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation. It helps everything else in my life make sense. I am grateful to have the Book of Mormon as part of my daily life. ■

Angie Nicholas, Texas, USA



**By Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933)**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## THE PARABLE OF THE OWL EXPRESS

*I thought deeply of the words of the grimy, oil-stained engineer.*

During my college days, I was one of a class of students appointed to fieldwork as a part of our prescribed courses in geology. . . .

A certain assignment had kept us in the field many days. . . . As the time allotted to the investigation drew near its close, we were overtaken by a violent windstorm, followed by a heavy snow—unseasonable and unexpected, but which, nevertheless, increased in intensity so that we were in danger of being snowbound in the hills. The storm reached its height while we were descending a long and steep mountainside several miles from the little railway station at which we had hoped to take [a] train that night for home. With great effort we reached the station late at night while the storm was yet raging. . . .



. . . The train for which we so expectantly and hopefully waited was the Owl Express—a fast night train connecting large cities. . . .

Long after midnight the train arrived in a terrific whirl of wind and snow. I lingered behind my companions as they hurriedly clambered aboard, for I was attracted by the engineer, who during the brief stop, while his assistant was attending to the water replenishment, bustled about the engine, oiling some parts, adjusting others, and generally overhauling the panting locomotive. I ventured to speak to him, busy though he was. I asked how he felt on such a night—wild, weird, and furious, when the powers of destruction seemed to be let loose, abroad and uncontrolled, when the storm was howling and

when danger threatened from every side. . . .

His answer was a lesson not yet forgotten. In effect he said, though in jerky and disjointed sentences: “Look at the engine headlight. Doesn’t that light up the track for a hundred yards [90 m] or more? Well, all I try to do is to cover that hundred yards of lighted track. That I can see, and for that distance I know the roadbed is open and safe. . . . The light of the engine is always ahead of me!”

As he climbed to his place in the cab, I hastened to board the first passenger coach; and as I sank into the cushioned seat, in blissful enjoyment of the warmth and general comfort, offering strong contrast to the wildness of the night without, I thought deeply of the words of the grimy, oil-stained engineer. They were full of faith—the faith that accomplishes great things, the faith that gives courage and determination. . . .

We may not know what lies ahead of us in the future years, nor even in the days or hours immediately beyond. But for a few yards, or possibly only a few feet, the track is clear, our duty is plain, our course is illumined. For that short distance, for the next step, lighted by the inspiration of God, go on! ■

*From “Three Parables—The Unwise Bee, the Owl Express, and Two Lamps,” Ensign, Feb. 2003, 8–13.*

# INSIGHTS



RECENTLY REDEDICATED OGDEN UTAH TEMPLE

## **How do we become a temple-attending people?**

“Let us be a temple-attending people. Attend the temple as frequently as personal circumstances allow. Keep a picture of the temple in your home that your children may see it. Teach them about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Have them plan from their earliest years to go there and to remain worthy of that blessing.”

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**President Howard W. Hunter** (1907–95), “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 8.



## In Church Magazines

**Ensign:** Satan, who does not have a mortal body, wants us to be unhappy with our bodies. Don't listen to him. See "I Thank Thee for This Body" (page 62).

**New Era:** This month, readers can find out about the 2016 Mutual theme and see how it can change lives (pages 9–17). Also, Elder Quentin L. Cook talks to youth about how to find the abundant joy that is within their reach (page 2).

**Friend:** There are lots of great new things in the *Friend* this year! Read about some of them on page 72 of the *Ensign*. One new thing is the series "Happy Sabbath." You can use this page each month to focus on making the Sabbath a delight. Look for this month's activity on page 32.

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ENGLISH

THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS