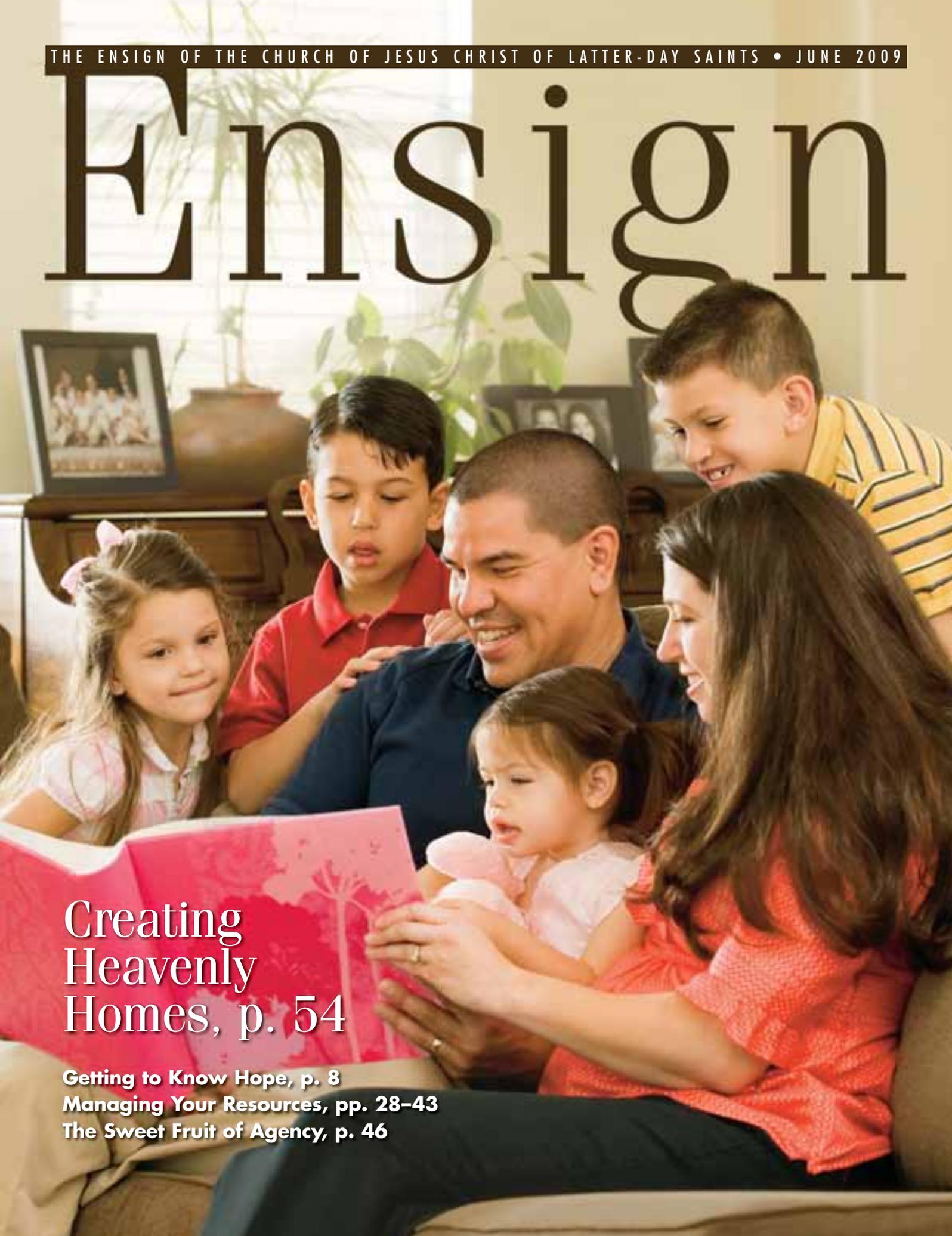


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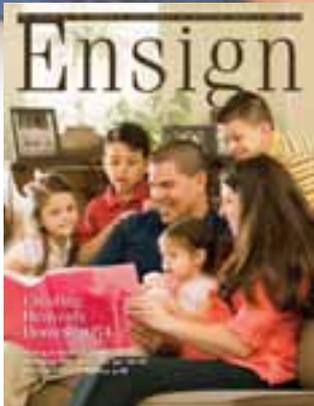
COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM, SIXTH ANNUAL ARTS COMPETITION, © BOYD JENSEN

Daybreak on the Smith Farm, by Boyd Jensen

The artist says of his photograph taken in Palmyra, New York: "Through the perfect devotion of a youth named Joseph Smith Jr. came the brilliant light of truth and the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Here, the rays of the sun burst through a tree in front of the restored home at the original site of the Smith farm on an early September morning. They remind us of that light of truth."



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ON THE COVER

Front: Photo illustration by Jerry Garns.
Back: Photograph of butterfly
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background © Nova Development.



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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

The *Ensign* will be celebrating its 40th anniversary in January 2011, and we'd like you to celebrate with us. What has been your favorite article during your years as a reader? Why did it make a difference? What memorable experiences have you had with the Church magazines? Please label your submission "My Favorite *Ensign* Article," tell us why you liked it, and send your selection by August 31, 2009.

We also welcome other submissions that show the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. You can find this and other calls for articles online at <http://ensign.lds.org>. *Ensign* Magazine Writers' Guidelines are posted on the same page under "Resources."

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

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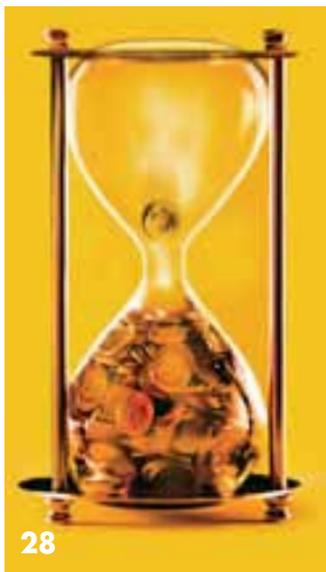
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USING THIS ISSUE

Put your house in order.

Pages 28–43 focus on the importance of provident living and show examples of members living within their means. What can you teach your family about provident living? Consider choosing an area that you want to improve on and discuss ways to implement your plan.

Understand the impact of decisions. Several articles in this issue focus on the long-reaching effects of decisions. (See pp. 10, 12, 26, 36, 46, 54, 60, 66, and 72.) Think about the decisions you have made in your life. Which ones have brought you long-term happiness? Consider sharing your testimony of agency with your family or a friend.

Make the gospel message accessible to all. If you have been asked to share your language skills through service as an interpreter, you can find helpful resources at LDS.org. Select *Serving in the Church*, then *Interpreter's Resources*.



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COMING IN JULY

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- *Modesty and other standards*
- *The Joseph Smith papers*
- *Parallels between scripture stories and modern-day life*

Prayer and the Blue Horizon

BY PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

One of the things I loved most about flying was departing from a dark and rainy airport, climbing through thick and threatening winter clouds, and then suddenly breaking through the dark mist and steeply gaining altitude into the bright sunshine and endless blue sky.

I often marveled at how this physical act parallels our personal lives. How often do we find ourselves surrounded by threatening clouds and stormy weather, wondering if the darkness will ever pass? If there were only a way for us to lift ourselves up from the turmoil of life and break through to a place of peace and calm.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints know that such a thing is possible; there is a way to rise above the turbulence of everyday life. The knowledge, understanding, and guidance we receive from the word of God and from prophetic guidance in our day show us how to do exactly that.

Lift

In order to get an airplane off the ground, you must create lift. In

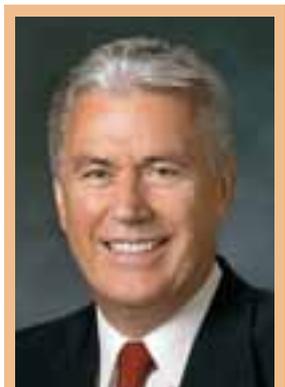
aerodynamics, lift happens when air passes over the wings of an airplane in such a way that the pressure underneath the wing is greater than the pressure above the wing. When the upward lift exceeds the downward pull of gravity, the plane rises from the ground and achieves flight.

In a similar way, we can create lift in our spiritual life. When the force that is pushing us heavenward is greater than the temptations and distress that drag us downward, we can ascend and soar into the realm of the Spirit.

Dictionaries describe lift as carrying or directing from a lower to a higher position; the power or force available for raising to a new level or altitude; a force acting in an upward direction, opposing the pull of gravity.¹

The Psalmist sets the goals even higher: “Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul” (Psalm 25:1) and “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord” (Psalm 121:1–2).

We lift our eyes toward the God of heaven by cultivating our own personal spirituality. We do it by living in harmony with the Father; the Son, our Savior; and



Prayer helps us transcend the stormy times. It reveals to us another vista—a glorious spiritual horizon filled with hope and the assurance of the bright blessings the Lord has promised to those who love and follow Him.

Prayer is a heavenly gift designed to help us achieve spiritual lift. It enhances and cultivates our relationship with God.



the Holy Ghost. We do it by striving to be truly “submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19).

The Sincere Prayer of the Righteous Heart

Though there are many gospel principles that help us to achieve lift, I would like to focus on one in particular. Prayer is one of the principles of the gospel that provides lift. Prayer has the power to elevate us from our worldly cares, to lift us up through clouds of despair and darkness into a bright and clear horizon.

One of the greatest blessings and privileges and opportunities we have as children of our Heavenly Father is that we can communicate with Him. We can speak to Him of our life experiences, trials, and blessings. We can listen for and receive celestial guidance from the Holy Spirit. We can offer our petitions to heaven and receive an assurance that our prayers have been heard and that He will answer them as a loving and wise Father.

Prayers that ascend beyond the ceiling are those that are heartfelt and avoid trite repetitions or words spoken with little thought. Our prayers should spring from our deepest yearning to be one with our Father in Heaven.

Prayer, if given in faith, is acceptable to God at all times. If you ever feel you cannot pray, that is the time you definitely need to pray,

exercising faith. Nephi taught in plainness: “If ye would hearken unto the Spirit [of God] which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit . . . teacheth him that he must not pray” (2 Nephi 32:8).

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) taught: “The sincere prayer of the righteous heart opens to any individual the door to divine wisdom and strength in that for which he righteously seeks.”²

Are prayers answered? I testify that they are. Can we receive divine help, wisdom, and support from heavenly realms? Again, I testify with certainty that such is the case.

Obedience assures us an answer to our prayers. We read in the New Testament that “whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 John 3:22).

The answers to our prayers come in the Lord’s due time. Sometimes we may become frustrated that the Lord has delayed answering our prayers. In such times we need to understand that He knows what we do not know. He sees what we do not see. Trust in Him. He knows what is best for His child, and being a perfect God, He will answer our prayers perfectly and in the perfect time.

In other times, answers to our prayers may come instantaneously. The Prophet Joseph Smith learned in a revelation given to him in Kirtland in 1831: “He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God; wherefore it is done *even as he asketh*” (D&C 46:30; emphasis added). What a remarkable promise!

A New Vista

Prayer is a heavenly gift designed to help us achieve spiritual lift. It enhances and

cultivates our relationship with God. Isn't it remarkable that we can converse with the supreme Source of wisdom and compassion in the universe at any time of our choosing, in any place?

Daily simple, sincere, and mighty prayers lift our lives to a higher spiritual altitude. In our prayers we praise God, give thanks to Him, confess weaknesses, petition needs, and express deep devotion to our Heavenly Father. As we make this spiritual effort in the name of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, we are endowed with increased inspiration, revelation, and righteousness, which bring the brightness of heaven into our lives.

I think back on my days as a pilot and those times when thick clouds and threatening thunderstorms made all appear dark and gloomy. In spite of how bleak things looked from my earthly vantage point, I knew that above the clouds the sun beamed brightly like a dazzling jewel in an ocean of blue skies. I did not have faith that such was the case—I *knew* it. I knew it because I had experienced it for myself. I did not need to rely on other people's theories or beliefs. I knew.

In the same way that aerodynamic lift can transport us above the outer storms of the world, I know that the principles of spiritual lift can take us above the inner storms of life.

And I know something else. Although it was a breathtaking experience to break through the clouds and fly to the bright blue horizon, that is nothing compared to the wonders of what we all can experience as we lift up our hearts in humble and earnest prayer.

Prayer helps us transcend the stormy times. It gives us a glimpse of that blue sky that we cannot see from our earthly vantage point, and it reveals to us another vista—a glorious spiritual horizon filled with hope and the assurance of the bright blessings the Lord has promised to those who love and follow Him. ■

NOTES

1. See, for example, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), "lift," 718–19.
2. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 318.

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

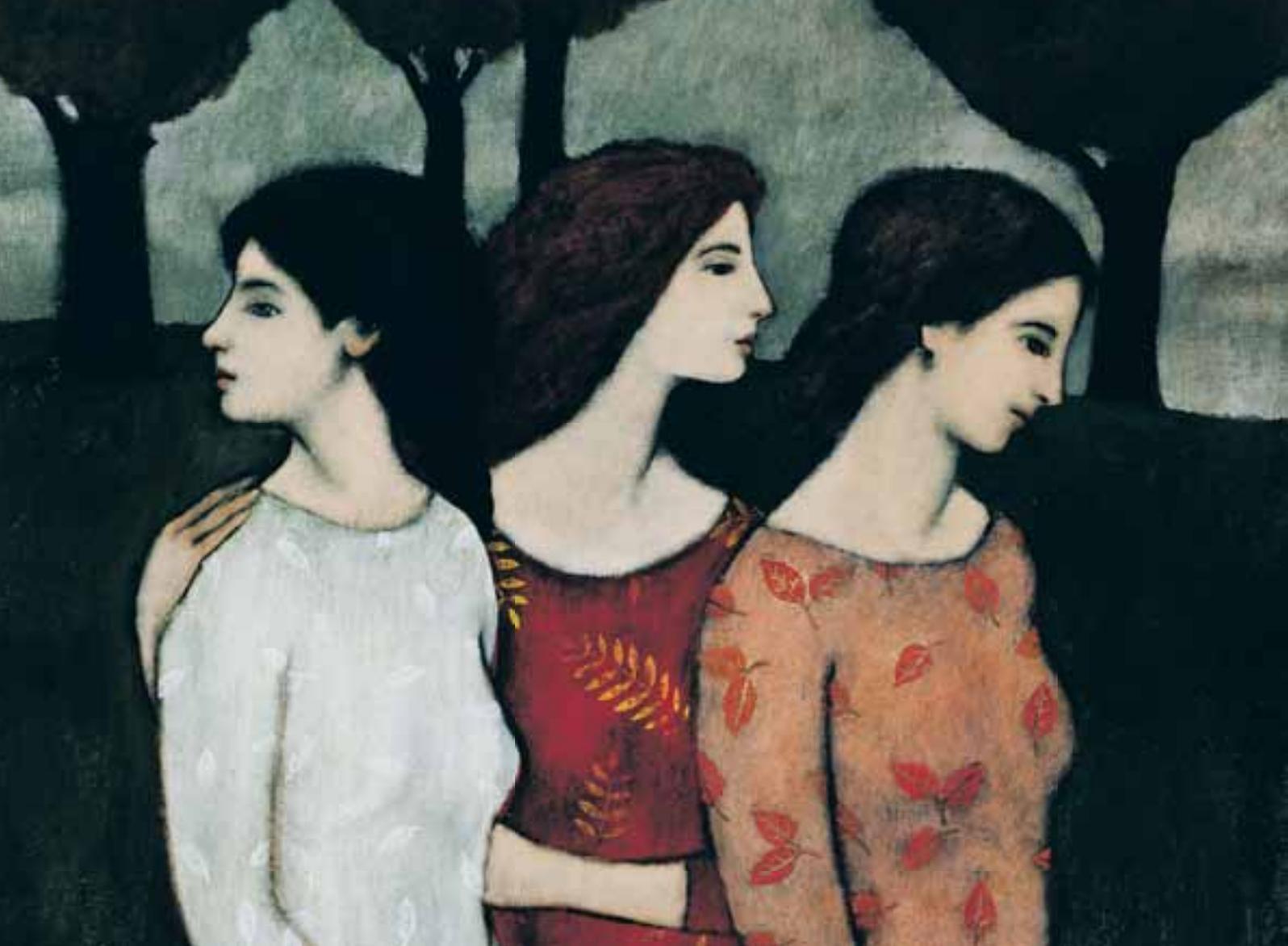
After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. The following are some examples:

1. Show a picture of an airplane, and explain the concept of lift. Read the first two paragraphs of the section "A New Vista." Share experiences when prayer has lifted you in difficult times, and invite family members to share experiences too.

2. Read the second paragraph of the section "A New Vista." For a family with young children, write "Increased inspiration," "Revelation," and "Righteousness" on a piece of paper, and place it on a shelf above the children's view (or use pictures representing these concepts). Have a parent or older sibling lift one of the smaller children so he or she can see the paper. Explain to the children what these concepts mean. Discuss how prayers "lift our lives to a higher spiritual altitude" so that we can receive these blessings.

3. Hold up a piece of paper, and let it fall to the floor. Then fold it into a paper airplane, and throw it softly so it flies. Read the last three paragraphs of the article. Explain how prayer can lift us above our trials. Share your testimony of prayer.





HOPE: The Misunderstood Sister

BY LARRY HILLER Church Magazines

I think of them as three famous sisters whose names are frequently linked, always in the same order: Faith, Hope, and Charity. They are mentioned several times in the New Testament and with remarkable frequency in the Book of Mormon.

Of the three, Faith may be the most well known and popular, the one whose companionship is sought most often. She's active and energetic, definitely the can-do type. Faith can move mountains, if necessary.

I picture Charity as being modest

and refined, beautiful and gracious. In her presence you feel genuinely loved and accepted. She's unfailingly kind and generous, patient, empathetic, aware of every need, and responsive without being asked. How could you not want the companionship of someone like Charity?

Then there's Hope, who seems to have a problem with the way people perceive her. It may be her name and the way it's commonly used: "I hope the car passes inspection." Or, "I hope the weather will be nice for

the wedding." Used this way, the word *hope* is the verbal equivalent of keeping your fingers crossed. Consequently, many seem to think Hope is unsure, even fickle—she may or may not grace you with her companionship. But surely that's not the kind of hope our Father in Heaven commands us to have. Nor would it be the kind of hope our Savior offers.

My desire to know Hope better was sparked when a high councilor speaking in our sacrament meeting quoted Romans 5:3–5:

*Hope is anything but wishful.
It is expectation based on experience.*

“We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

“And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

As I read and reread those verses and pondered and prayed about them, the one concept I could not seem to wrap my mind around was how experience fits in the equation. I could understand that tribulation “worketh” (or brings about) patience. Often that’s all we can do in tribulation—have faith and wait patiently upon the Lord. But what is the experience that patience brings about? And how does it result in hope? This seemed to be what I call a puzzle piece.

For me, things I don’t understand about the gospel are like pieces of a larger puzzle I’m working on. If I don’t see where they fit, I put them aside and work on other parts of the picture. From time to time I pick them up and look at them. If I still don’t see how they fit, I put them aside again. I have already received a witness that the whole picture—the restored gospel—is true and complete, so I don’t worry about the pieces that haven’t come together for me yet. They will.

And so one day, as I reexamined this particular puzzle piece, I saw a possible connection I hadn’t seen before. When we endure tribulation with faith and patience, what we *experience* is the Savior’s awareness of us and His love for us. We *experience* them through the ministrations of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. We receive this witness after the trial of our faith (see Ether 12:6).

In my own life, when I patiently endure trials, the Savior, who took upon Himself all of our ills and sorrows (see Alma 7:11–12), ministers to me through the Spirit. I *experience* the Savior’s tender mercies. My trials may continue, but having taken upon me the yoke of Christ, I find Him sharing *my* yoke, making *my* burdens bearable, and giving *me* hope. I then have strength to endure. I have assurance that all will be made right, not just *in* eternity but also *for* eternity. Hope is anything but wishful. It is expectation based on experience.

I see Hope more clearly now. She is serene. Her eyes have the deep, knowing look of someone well acquainted with sorrow, the luminosity of recently being wet with tears. Hope has the confidence of one who clearly sees a bright future even when the next hours seem fog shrouded. Hope is steady and strong, a friend I am glad to have beside me during my own trials. ■



WALKING WITH TWO SISTERS

BY LARRY HILLER

*Faith walks before me,
Holding up her lamp
As I try not to stumble in the ink-
dark hours before the dawn.
Her light illuminates
One step and then another.
Beside me, Hope, arm linked
with mine, encourages and
steadies.
Sometimes in the tedium,
Distracted by the pain,
My mind begins to wander, then
my feet. I hesitate.
Unsure, I look to Hope.
Her hand takes mine.
The touch reminds me of another
hand held out to me,
One pierced and scarred
Yet oh so tender
Lifting me and blessing me when
I had fallen and despaired.
Remembering,
I move ahead
Buoyed up by Hope, who sees
the end with perfect clarity.*

GRANOLA
CRUMBS

AND

PAINT
CANS

BY BARBARA JACOBSON

As an artist I can be very messy. Our children think it's normal to look into drinking glasses before filling them to make sure there's no paint, and we often have palettes and brushes beside the dishes in the drainer. Because I work on big projects that require a lot of materials, the mess can be really big. Through it all, my husband, Mark, is understanding and supportive. He helps me gather and move my materials, and he walks around them without complaining when they pile up.

Mark likes to get up early every day to watch the history

programs on television while he eats handfuls of dry, crunchy granola. A couple of months ago I realized I often find little pieces of granola on his chair. At first I thought, "That's mildly annoying." I even commented on it one day in passing. I felt a little silly mentioning such a small thing, but I did it anyway.

A few days later I spied another speck of granola on Mark's chair. I picked it up and, with a smile, thought, "He does so much for me, I can forgive this." All my thoughts of my munching, TV-watching husband were kind and sweet. I felt awash with benevolent, forgiving feelings.

I determined that I would never mention the daily granola problem. Yes, because I was a great wife, I would



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

Give each family member a pencil and paper. Have them write down things that bother them, without sharing their ideas aloud. Read the article as a family. Discuss Matthew 7:3–4. Have them decide which of their concerns have eternal significance and which are like a "speck of granola." Conclude by singing verse five of "Truth Reflects upon Our Senses" (*Hymns*, no. 273).



just pick it up and never say a thing. I congratulated myself for how good I was being. I was totally unaware of my own self-righteousness.

As I walked into the kitchen with my speck of granola, I found masking tape stuck to the floor. Also, plastic palettes and brushes were lying about. Distracted by what I was looking at, I bumped into the three large walls of scenery I'd been painting for the ward's upcoming dance. I stood there and thought about how, for the past three weeks, whenever we wanted to use the stove, get into the refrigerator, or wash dishes, we had had to move the scenery from one side of the kitchen to the other.

It wasn't only the tape and backdrops that contributed to the mess. We hadn't been able to use the kitchen table for those three weeks either. Gallons of house paint, sponges, paint pens, glaze, brushes, and tools covered the table,



STRIVING FOR UNDERSTANDING

"If we will strive to love with understanding, the Spirit will teach us 'all things what [we] should do' (2 Nephi 32:5) to

achieve an eternal marriage pleasing to the Lord. Under the influence of the Spirit, our sympathy and love for our eternal companions will deepen, and we will come to know a happiness and contentment in marriage that the world will never know."

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy, "A Union of Love and Understanding," *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 51.

which years ago comfortably seated our family of eight.

As I looked back with wonder at the speck of granola in my palm, I could almost hear the scripture from Matthew as though it were being read out loud in a Church video.

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but

considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

"Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?" (Matthew 7:3-4).

I wondered how, with a beam in each eye, I could have seen such a small mote of granola at all.

I called my husband at work and told him about my experience. As we laughed together I thanked him for his tolerance and patience with me. It might have been a little thing, but it taught me a great lesson. ■

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

I love and am grateful for my young children, but I sometimes get distracted or discouraged by the practical details of raising a family and I struggle to remember what an important work it is. How can I better align my day-to-day actions and attitudes with gospel truths about family?



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY

The following are responses from members describing their personal approaches to this challenge.

Life as a mother of young children has filled my days with some of the most beautiful adventures and discoveries—and some of the greatest exhaustion and discouragement. Though I still have much to learn, the following guidelines have helped me.

Focus on what you do well. With so much that we could do better, it's easy to lose sight of our strengths. At an exhausting and trying time just after my third baby was born, a friend complimented me on being patient. I had been counting only my weaknesses, and her words were a flicker of light on a dark road. I thought, "I *am* pretty patient." And with that positive thought, it became easier to

be more patient—as well as more cheerful and relaxed with my children. When we're focused only on what we're doing badly, it's hard to feel the Spirit and, consequently, to experience joy.

Don't run faster than you have strength. Too much of a good thing is, well, too much. It's hard for me to feel happy when I'm tired and overscheduled. And when we're not happy, it's hard to enjoy the quirky chaos children bring to our lives. Occasionally, it seems we're trying so hard to be good examples of diligence, hard work, and service that we forget to bless our children with an example of calm, happy peacefulness.

One thing that helps me is to limit my to-do list to three or four of the most important tasks. Of course, sometimes this means that things must wait until later in the week.

I also try not to do too much multitasking. In our family, I've found that spilled milk is a tragedy only if I have planned a million activities for the day and am trying to serve breakfast while also checking my e-mail and getting laundry started. Families with young children need space in the day to wiggle. Parents of young children need space in the day to breathe. Emptiness, anger, and exhaustion are

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

not what Heavenly Father expects from or desires for us.

Try to keep the big picture in sight.

As my children get older, I realize there are good and bad parts to each stage of our lives together. Many of the challenges pass with time. So do some of the joys. I try to take stock of the joys, to imprint them on my memory for the days when the long, sleepless nights have passed—and with them the sweet, soft smell of a baby's warm head against my neck.

Jean Knight Pace, Indiana

I always dreamed that I would one day be a stay-at-home mom. My dream entailed being a hands-on mother who homeschooled her children, cleaned and cooked, sewed all of the family's clothes, took care of the neighbors, and had lengthy gospel discussions with the children, all of which I accomplished while maintaining a perfect garden, of course.

This is a far cry from the reality in which I live. I am a working mother by necessity; in addition to the challenges of providing an income, it is up to me to take care of many day-to-day tasks while still making time for my one-year-old son.

Whether alone or with a spouse, it is easy to become distracted in today's world. On more days than not, I feel too tired and overwhelmed to go to church, serve in my calling, or pray, but I know that my son will not develop a love for the gospel unless he first sees it reflected in his mother.

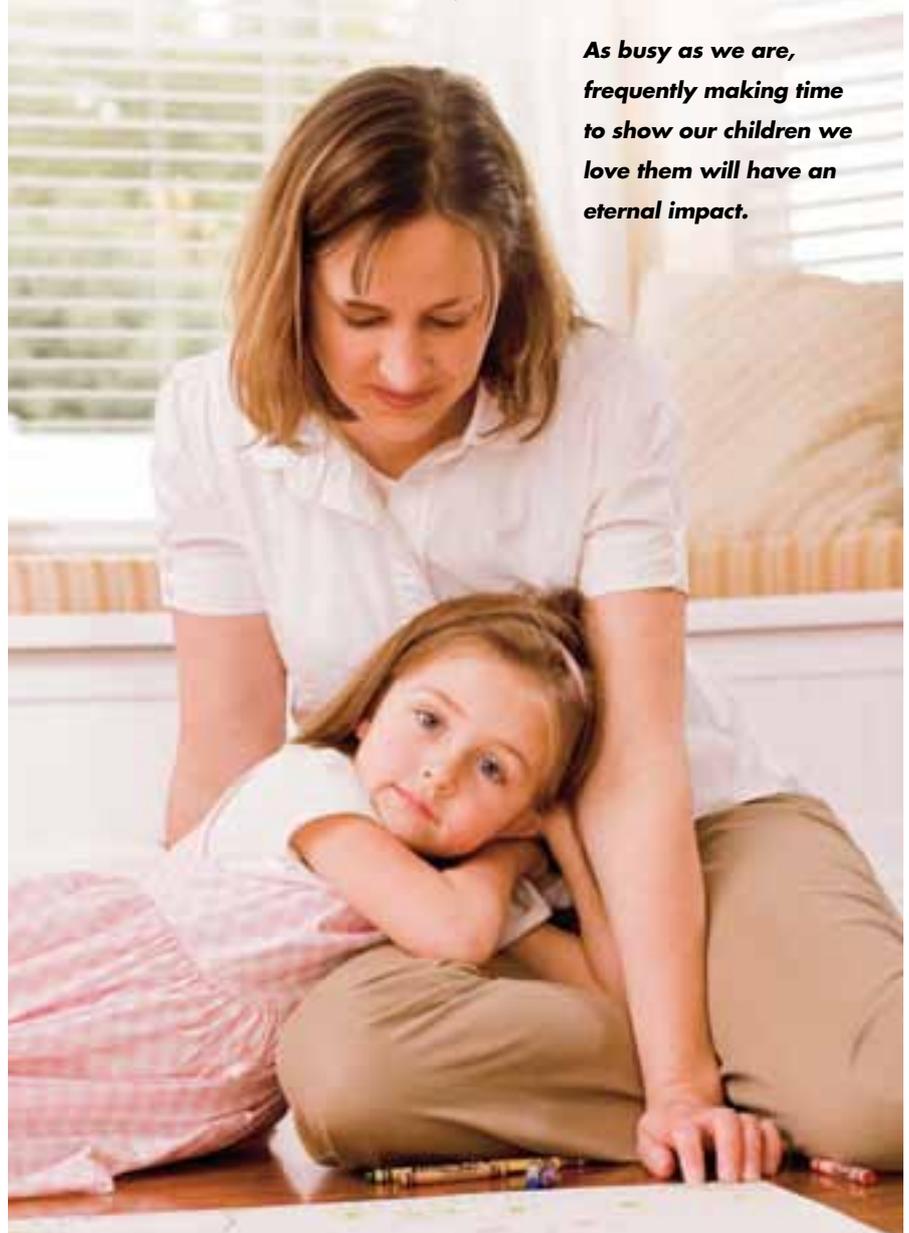
Here are some things I try to do that have helped me:

- Understand and accept my limitations.
- Focus on the basics, and keep things simple.
- Remember others in their struggles.
- Accept help and service from others.

• Seek blessings and counsel from priesthood leaders.

- Record blessings and impressions as soon as possible. Reading them provides comfort when I am feeling down or overwhelmed. It also reminds me that Heavenly Father is mindful of me, my situation, and my potential for eternal progression.

As busy as we are, frequently making time to show our children we love them will have an eternal impact.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT REIER

Regularly praying with my son, singing Primary songs to him, reading scriptures aloud, and having family home evening each week have helped me focus on gospel basics, strengthening me as a mother in Zion. The few minutes here and there that we spend in these activities add up. They bring the Spirit into our home and give me strength to press forward another day. I know that in the process I am teaching my son what is truly important.

Shannon Andrews, Arizona

I find that with four young children, it is easy for us to get caught up in the mundane trivialities of day-to-day tasks. Setting goals for scripture study, family home evening, and family prayer makes it easier to keep track of where we are on the “spiritual ladder.” Involving children in planning and coordinating family time can help them learn responsibility and will help them take pride in their accomplishments. It’s never too late to start setting goals as a family; the spiritual dividends that can be gained are too great to pass up.

Michael Smith, Utah

When my children were young, I made a habit of asking them two questions as I tucked them into bed at night:

- What was your favorite time today?
- Did you have any sad times today that you would like to tell me about?

Their answers helped me determine how well I was aligning my day-to-day actions and attitudes with gospel truths about family.

Andrea H. Sloop, Virginia

For me, the answer has been to go back to the basics, beginning with me personally. I make it a priority

When my children were young, I made a habit of asking them each night about their favorite time and if they had any sad times that day.

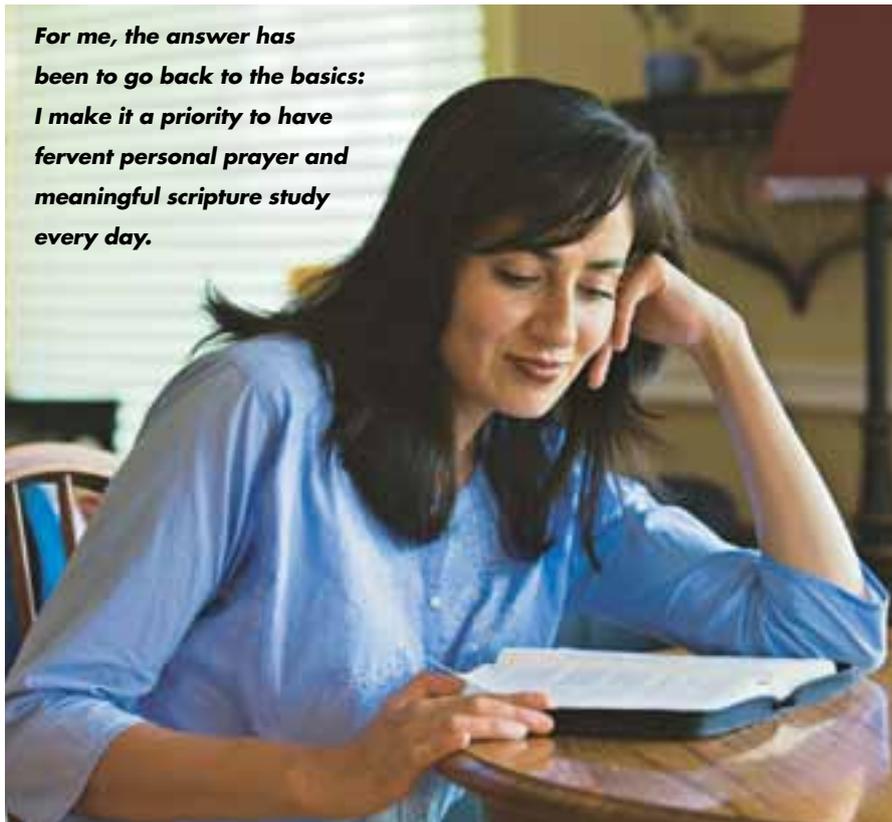


to have fervent personal prayer and meaningful scripture study every day. Even though my children are young, I pray for them to have spiritual experiences. And as I read the scriptures, I look for lessons about how to bless and teach my children. We also strive to hold family home evening and family scripture study using methods that are appropriate for our young family. For instance, we often use the Gospel Art Picture kit to explain scripture stories or gospel principles and then to bear testimony. I think of our children as “little investigators” who are learning the gospel.

I have found that as I have done these simple yet vitally important things, the spirit of love in our home has increased. I have gone about my tasks with an eternal perspective in mind, and I take pride and find joy in my role as a mother and homemaker.
Megan Broughton, North Dakota

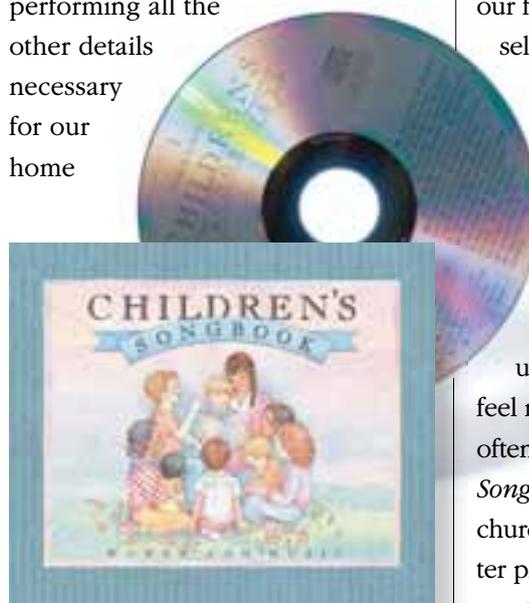
When I feel as though I’m spending most of my time cleaning up after our little family, it is usually because I am! Sometimes the practical details are not actually as important as they seem. I find that if I take a break from the routine—maybe visit a new park, try a new recipe, spend time with someone in the ward who also has a baby or young child, go on an unexpected walk, make a card, or surprise someone with a visit—with *my daughter*—my perspective is refreshed. I remember why I do all the things I do: because I love

For me, the answer has been to go back to the basics: I make it a priority to have fervent personal prayer and meaningful scripture study every day.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

her. She loves the change from our normal routine, and enjoying the time together helps us grow closer. It also reminds me that when I go back to cleaning and cooking and performing all the other details necessary for our home



Listening to hymns and Primary songs at home will foster a sense of peace and love.

to run smoothly, I am serving her and my husband. It’s easier to clean when I’m choosing to serve!
C. Mae Jansen, Texas

One thing that has really helped our family is following the counsel of Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy to “listen to the hymns more frequently in our homes, inviting the Spirit to prevail.”¹ Listening to the hymns, Primary songs, or the Mormon Tabernacle Choir at home helps us focus on gospel essentials and feel more peace in our home. We often play a CD from the *Children’s Songbook* in the car on the way to church, which not only seems to better prepare me to feel the Spirit in my meetings but also helps our children be more reverent. We also play these CDs for our children at night as they go to bed.



No matter how late or hurried we are, we have morning and evening family prayer to invite the Spirit into our lives.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT REIER

Another practice we have tried to adopt is adding more songs to our family home evenings, scripture study, and time before family prayer. The children enjoy choosing some of their favorite Primary songs to sing, and it brings a spirit of unity to our family. Singing or listening to Church music as I work around the house or tend my children helps put things into eternal perspective. I feel happier and am able to feel more of Heavenly Father's love for me in my life.

Rebekah Jakeman, Washington

My wife, Julie, and I know that as parents, we are responsible for providing our children with proper teachings and guidance beginning in their early years. As we see it, our responsibility is not only to provide the necessities of life but also to prepare them for the necessities of eternity.

One of the ways we try to do this

is through consistent family prayer. No matter how late or hurried we are, we have morning and evening family prayer to invite the Spirit into our lives. Then, at bedtime, Julie and I help each child with his or her individual prayers. This is often a great opportunity to talk briefly about the gospel. It gives our children a chance to ask questions. In answering them, we sometimes open the scriptures, but most of the time, these shared moments are informal chats.

Our hope is that by helping our children develop righteous patterns in their lives and by helping them understand gospel principles in their youth, we will help them build the foundation they need to navigate successfully through life's challenges and to ultimately return to live with their Heavenly Father.

Matthew J. Martinez, Arizona

When I am feeling overwhelmed with the meals to be cooked and clothes to be washed, I take comfort in knowing that when we do for others what they cannot do for themselves, we become more Christlike. Young children need a great deal of temporal care. When we recognize that nurturing our children is a spiritual endeavor, finding joy in our everyday labors becomes easier.

Miranda H. Lotz, Montana

I've found it challenging—even dizzying—to balance the diverse needs of my children, who range in age from 3 to 21. However, knowing that these feelings are normal eases potential feelings of inadequacy. When I do feel discouraged or distracted, several things have brought me greater peace:

Perspective. Remembering that God's work is to "bring to pass the

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39) reminds me that I am a partner in His great work. This thought adds value to even the most mundane of parenting tasks.

Study. Studying the scriptures, reading Church magazines, and reading uplifting, thought-provoking literature feeds my mind when I’m overwhelmed with the practical details of homemaking and childcare. Just one page can be enough to ponder while I fold a load of laundry or feed an infant late at night. Reading also helps me feel connected to other adults when I’m surrounded by children all day.

Writing. Writing in my journal or sending letters to family and friends helps me voice my thoughts and feelings even when there is no time or opportunity for personal visits. Likewise, I periodically write in journals for each of my children, hoping they may enjoy things I thought about them and wanted to share when they were young.

Time away from children. Making time for my husband and me by regularly arranging for child care has benefited our whole family for the past 23 years. Swapping or hiring babysitting for a few hours a week or delegating the care of younger children to our teenagers has helped my husband and me find time to talk and laugh together. Knowing those hours were on the horizon has kept me going when I’ve felt overwhelmed. My children

SHARE YOUR IDEAS

An upcoming Questions and Answers feature will focus on the following question:

My spouse and I are struggling to make ends meet in today’s economy. We dream of being able to own a home, but the cost of living seems to rise faster than salaries do. We’d also like to be able to have Mom stay at home with the children, but it seems that unless both parents work, we won’t be able to provide even the basic necessities for our family. What can we do?

If you would like to share your ideas, please label your submission “Family and Economy” and follow the guidelines under “Do You Have a Story to Tell?” in the contents pages at the beginning of the magazine. Please limit responses to 500 words and submit them by July 17, 2009.

Sometimes taking a break from our routines to do something unexpected, such as an unplanned walk with a child, helps us remember why we do all the things we do: because we love them.

have in turn benefited from learning to play with others and spend time away from me. We all come back refreshed. ■

Nanette Rasband Hilton, Nevada

NOTE

1. Jay E. Jensen, “The Nourishing Power of Hymns,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 13.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY

Breaking the Language Barrier



Members all over the world are turning to the Lord to find ways to communicate with their brothers and sisters in the gospel.

BY MELISSA MERRILL
Church Magazines

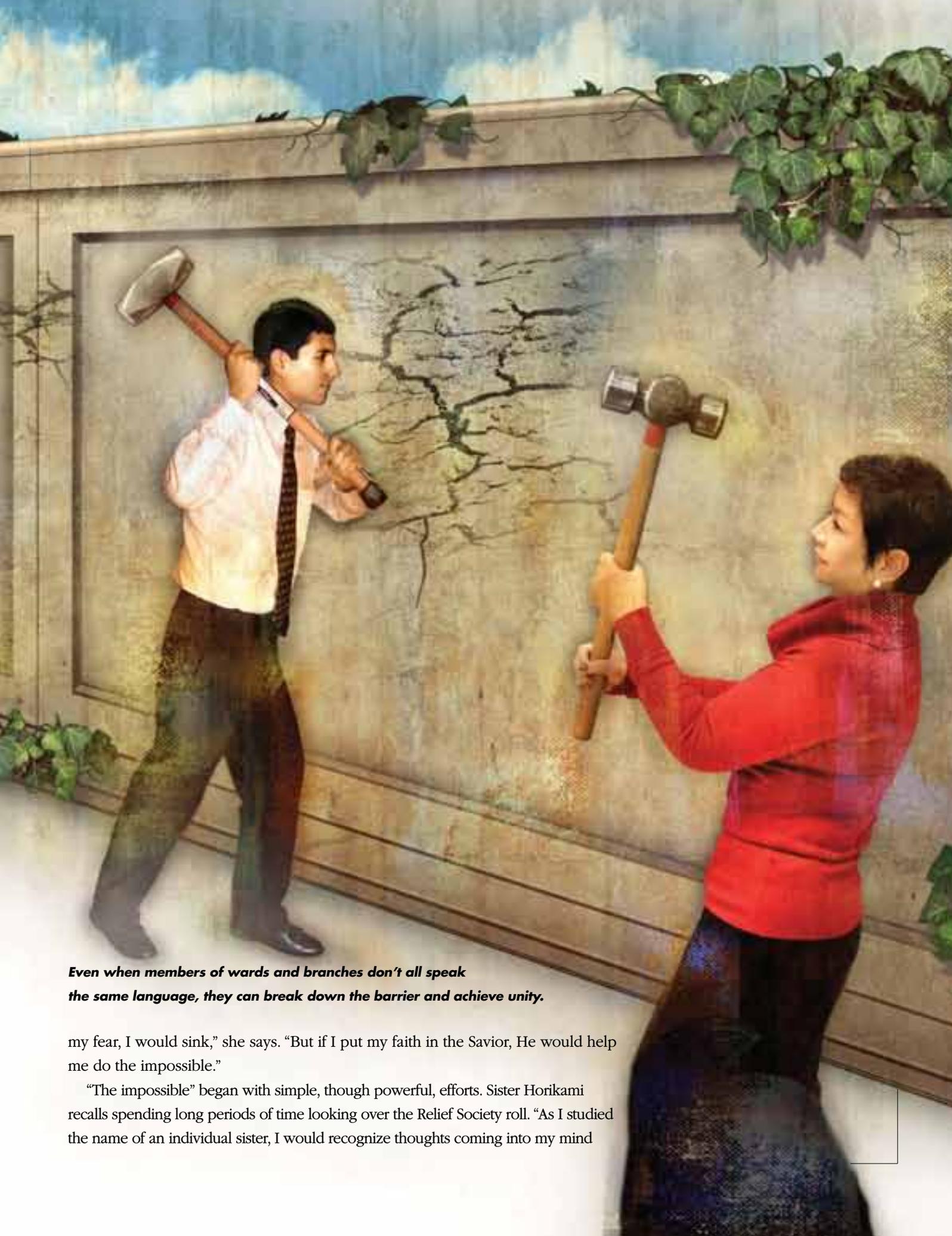
When Kazue Horikami moved from her native Japan to Hawaii as a young adult, she had little need to learn English. She spoke Japanese at home, did her shopping in areas where there was a high concentration of Japanese speakers, and later worked as a guide for Japanese tourists. The only place she sometimes encountered a language barrier was at church—a scenario common to many Latter-day Saints. But even at church she got along by building friendships with the three or four other sisters who spoke her native tongue.

Then, after more than 25 years of living in Hawaii, Sister Horikami was called to be the Relief Society president in her ward, a prospect that overwhelmed her. “Most of the sisters spoke only English, and others spoke only Samoan or Tagalog,” she remembers. “By that point I could *understand* other languages fairly well, but I was not confident

in *speaking* them. Even though I comprehended most of what my sisters said, I wondered how I could possibly serve them when I couldn’t even talk to them.”

Sister Horikami knew taking language classes wasn’t an option—she simply didn’t have the time. She expressed her concerns to her stake president during a temple-recommend interview. “I told him that I was afraid—not only of the responsibility but also of creating misunderstandings,” she says. The stake president paused thoughtfully and then told Sister Horikami not to worry about the language, at least not right away. “Just do your work the best you can,” he said. She promised she would.

Days later, when Sister Horikami was in the temple, the story of Peter walking on water came into her mind (see Matthew 14:22–33). “I realized that as long as I clung to



Even when members of wards and branches don't all speak the same language, they can break down the barrier and achieve unity.

my fear, I would sink," she says. "But if I put my faith in the Savior, He would help me do the impossible."

"The impossible" began with simple, though powerful, efforts. Sister Horikami recalls spending long periods of time looking over the Relief Society roll. "As I studied the name of an individual sister, I would recognize thoughts coming into my mind

MORE IDEAS

Looking for additional ideas for transcending language barriers? Try these:

- When possible, provide curriculum materials for members in their native language. Visit the nearest Distribution Services center, or in North America, visit www.ldscatalog.com for more information.
- Encourage members to subscribe to the *Liahona* in their native language or the language of the place where they live.
- In setting up home and visiting teaching assignments, consider members' native languages as well as languages they have learned on missions or at school.
- Teach members basic greetings or phrases in the language of members who don't speak the common language.
- Be patient and support each other in callings.
- Consider inviting members to teach things that don't center on language: cooking, gardening, or music, for instance.
- Consider providing interpretation services for those who need it. At www.lds.org, select **Serving in the Church** and then **Interpreter's Resources** for more information.

about that sister, and I would feel promptings about ways I could serve her. As I followed those promptings, I was amazed to discover how specific and personal they were.

"That's how I started," she continues. "Over several months those small acts turned into relationships of care and concern, not only of my caring for them but of their caring for me."

Sister Horikami did eventually learn English, but she's quick to assert that it was the Spirit—not proficiency in any language—that helped her serve. "I learned that the Spirit isn't limited by language," Sister Horikami notes. "He speaks to *all* of us in ways we can understand."

Like Sister Horikami, members of the Church throughout the world have experienced the frustration and loneliness that can accompany language barriers. But also like Sister Horikami, they and their leaders can turn to the Lord for help. The following ideas for transcending the language barrier come from members and leaders all over the world.

Realize That Language Is Secondary

Overcoming language barriers is a familiar challenge to the Frankfurt Germany Stake, where members come from more than 80 nations. But language, says stake president Axel Leimer, is of secondary importance.

President Leimer, whose own family didn't speak German when they first moved to Frankfurt, points out that his children and the children of other families are perhaps the best examples of this. "They were never slowed down by the fact that they didn't understand each other," he says. "They played with the other children anyway. To them, the language difference didn't matter at all. They had not yet learned to be prejudiced or afraid."

President Leimer notes that the many English-speaking missionary couples who serve in ward callings in the stake are not inhibited by language differences either. "Many of these couples do not speak German, but they bring a lot of experience to their assignments and make significant contributions," he says. "Sisters have served in the nursery, in Primary classes, and as librarians, including developing a library where none had before existed. Some of the brethren have served as high priests group leaders, finance clerks, and home teachers. They participate in classes (with someone translating their remarks) and sometimes even teach.

"The common foundation of the gospel is often all that people need," President Leimer continues. "I have observed conversations in the halls where neither party spoke the other's language, but somehow they still understood each other. You can communicate the important things regardless of language: 'I love the Lord. I care about my brothers and sisters. I am here to help.'"

Help People Feel at Home

In many cases wards and branches are able to accommodate people in ways that help them feel at home. In the McCully Ward of the Honolulu Hawaii Stake, for instance, Sunday School is taught in eight languages (Chuukese, English, Japanese, Korean, Marshallese, Pohnpeian, Spanish, and Tagalog) so that most members can hear the gospel taught in their own tongue. Moreover, members who are called on to pray in sacrament meeting or classes do so in



their native language if they are not prepared to pray in the language of the majority of the members.

While the separate Sunday School classes serve an important role, the McCully Ward also makes efforts to plan activities that bring everyone together. Regular events such as an annual international food festival, cultural shows at Mutual, a Micronesian choir (in addition to the ward choir), and a quarterly “ohana night” (family night) with the entire ward celebrate members’ unique cultural heritages and highlight their common spiritual heritage.

“We are all children of our Heavenly Father,” says Marlo Lopez, bishop of the McCully Ward. “In His sight there is no distinction in race or language. The love of God is for everyone, and we are only instruments to teach this truth.”

Adopt the Culture of Where You Live

While many people wish to retain fluency in their native language and uplifting elements of their culture, members can also benefit from learning the language and culture of the area in which they now live. President Eric Malandain of the Paris France East Stake, which includes members from throughout the world, promotes this. “Leaders generally encourage members living here to learn French,” President Malandain says. “It can help them improve professionally, personally, and spiritually.”

Members of the San Francisco California West Stake are encouraged to develop additional language skills too. In addition to the English-speaking wards, the stake includes three language-specific units (Chinese, Samoan, and Tagalog) so that the members speaking these languages can be taught the gospel in their own tongue. But stake and ward leaders

PRACTICE, PREPARATION, AND PRAYER

Fabiola Simona, from Indonesia, is now a member of the Hyde Park Branch in Sydney, Australia. She relates her experience with learning not only a new language but also the gospel as a convert to the Church:



“When I first joined the Church, I didn’t speak or understand English very well. Additionally, I was very shy, so it was difficult for me to even offer a prayer. I remember being asked to give the opening prayer in Sunday School one time. I wrote a draft on a piece of paper and then fixed the grammar before I felt comfortable praying in front of others.

“Later, when I was called as a teacher, I had to prepare weeks in advance. I worked hard. I thought, ‘If people have to endure my strong accent and broken grammar, I should at least prepare myself the best I can.’

“I prayed a lot for the Spirit to help me as I taught those lessons. I prayed that I wouldn’t be nervous and that people would understand what I was saying.

“That preparation and those prayers helped me in overcoming language barriers. Now, after more than nine years as a member of the Church, I can easily accept assignments to pray or to give a lesson. Additionally, I find that the more assignments I accept, the more confident I become.”

also encourage members to participate in conversation learning groups. The small “huddles” meet twice a week to cover basic conversational English. The lessons focus on learning how to say phrases such as “How do I get to the hospital?” or “Where is the nearest bus stop?” And since many members of the stake are also first-generation Latter-day Saints, some of the English lessons also focus on gospel basics, such as praying or conducting family home evening.

“The language issue is a significant challenge for us, but we work at it, and we keep getting better at it,” Ronald Dillender, stake president, says. “We will continue to work, to teach, and to give members access to every stake conference, every stake talent show, every training meeting, every function. We want *everyone* to have access to all that the Church and the gospel offer. That is extremely important.”

Work Together

Differences in language present plenty of obstacles, says President Brent Olson of the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake, from performing temple-recommend interviews to translating talks and prayers in sacrament meeting. Adopting a welcoming, tolerant attitude has made all the difference for members of the stake.

President Olson says, “We have a theme we repeat often in our stake: whoever enters the doors of the chapel is sent from the Lord. When we adopt this attitude of acceptance, we realize that the extra effort we take in helping everyone participate isn’t a burden. It’s simply living the gospel.”

Although the Clendon Ward of the Auckland New Zealand Manurewa Stake is technically an English-speaking unit, members also speak Maori, Niuean, Samoan, Tongan, local dialects, and several languages spoken in the Cook Islands. Ward leaders are trying to become like the Good Shepherd, who knows every one of His flock—“regardless of what language they speak,” Bishop Hans Key says.

For instance, as home and visiting teaching assignments are prayerfully considered, companionships may be formed to include a brother who speaks only his native language and a brother who speaks that same language as well as English. As the two work together in home teaching, the first brother gains confidence in English. Later, he might be able to accept an assignment to speak in sacrament meeting.

Recognize That the Lord Qualifies Us for His Work

Francisco Ayres Hermenegildo joined the Church in his native Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, at age 21 and later served a mission in São Paulo. After he and his wife, Kallya, were married, they moved to Sydney, Australia, in 2002. In 2006 Francisco was called to be the president of the Hyde Park young single adult branch. President Hermenegildo felt overwhelmed not only because he was still learning English but also because members of the branch were natives of more than 10 countries, and many of them were also learning English.

“I confess that we felt inadequate when we were called to look after the Hyde Park Branch,” President Hermenegildo says. “The language barrier seemed enormous, and we prayed to the Lord for His help. But I am learning that the Lord inspires, qualifies, and fortifies those who are engaged in building His kingdom.”

In addition to recognizing the Lord’s direction in his own life, President Hermenegildo sees it in the lives of the members of the branch—many of whom, like him, are first-generation members.

“Each of us has been brought here at this time in our lives for a reason,” he says. He explains that each member has an opportunity to grow in testimony, serve in callings, and share the gospel message with friends and loved ones.

“We believe that the prophecies related to the gospel filling the earth are happening,” says President Hermenegildo. “The members of the branch are and will be leaders wherever they go in the world. It is a great privilege to help prepare those leaders, which we do every time we teach and nurture members of the branch.”

Be of One Heart and One Mind

“I believe it’s a blessing rather than a challenge to serve and work in a ward that is so diverse in its cultures and languages,” says Bishop Hans Key of the Clendon Ward. “God confounded the language of the people during the construction of the Tower of Babel, but we can strive for what the people in the City of Enoch achieved: to be of one heart and one mind and to dwell in righteousness.” (See Genesis 11:1–9; Moses 7:18.)

That unity was also emphasized by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008): “We have become a great worldwide Church, and it is now possible for the vast majority of our

members to participate . . . as one great family, speaking many languages, found in many lands, but all of one faith and one doctrine and one baptism.”¹ ■

NOTE

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Living in the Fulness of Times,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 4; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 4.

WELCOME IN ANY LANGUAGE

By Marianne Hansen Rencher

Are you in a branch or ward whose members don't all speak the same language? As the Church continues to grow worldwide, this experience is becoming more common. For two years my husband and I attended such a branch in New York. My background in teaching English to speakers of other languages was helpful, but even if you don't have this experience, there's much you can do to bridge the communication gap with others who don't speak your native language.

Smile and greet others. Make an effort to learn how to say hello to others in their native language. But even if you can't speak a word of their language, you can still make them feel welcome. Every Sunday, Marta welcomed me with a warm hug and a greeting in Spanish. Although I didn't understand what she was saying, I felt her love through her hug and the tone of her voice.

Answer with correct grammar. People learn a language, in part, by hearing it. It is better for someone to learn “I don't have my manual” than “No have manual.” Even if another's speech is choppy, answer with correct language. This shows respect for others and helps them to learn the language correctly.

Speak slowly, not loudly. Words often blend together when we hear them, particularly if someone is learning a new language. When you speak, slow

down to make sure you are easy to understand. There's no need to speak louder unless the other person has difficulty hearing. If you're a teacher, you include non-native speakers when they have a chance to understand a question and form a simple response. Encourage others to help, thus creating a sense of friendship and ease within the classroom.

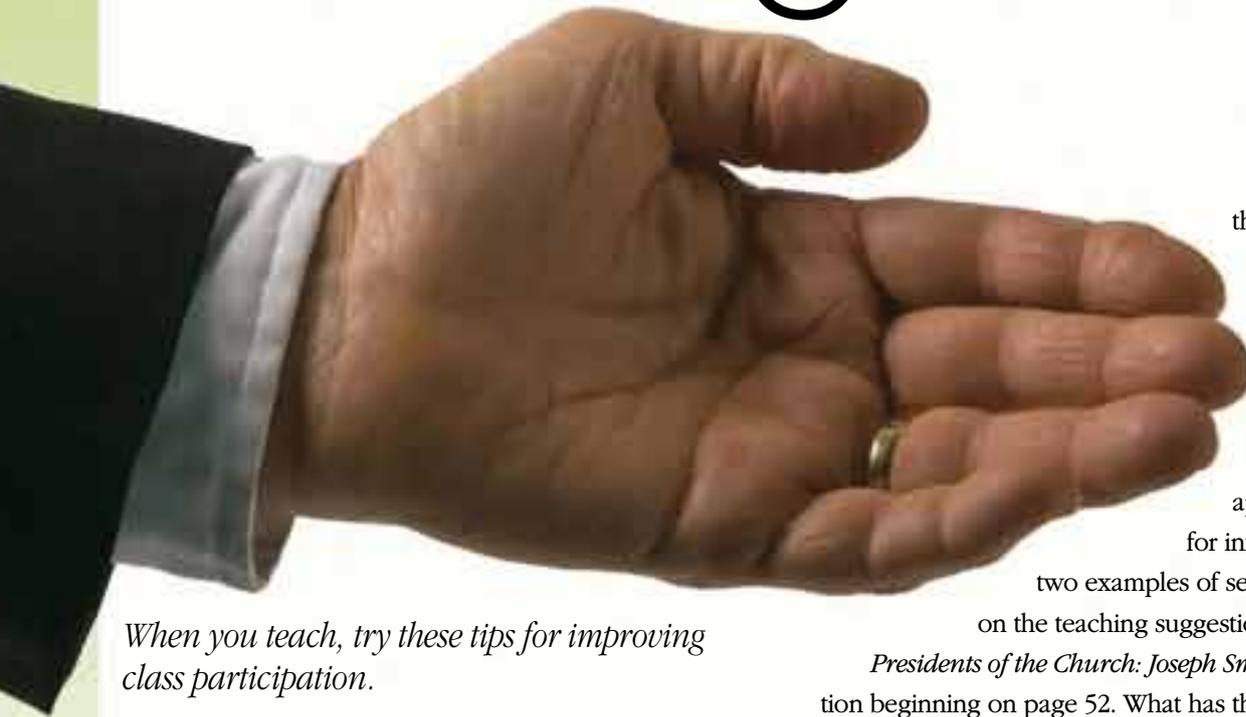
Use visual aids. Non-native speakers may not understand all the words in a lesson about the First Vision, for instance. But they will understand a picture of Joseph Smith kneeling in front of God and Jesus Christ. They will also be able to increase their vocabulary by associating the words you use with the account of the Restoration they already know.

Write scripture and lesson references on the chalkboard. This will make it easier for non-native speakers to locate the references. Fortunately, our lesson manuals and scriptures are available in a variety of languages. While someone reads them out loud, the other class members can follow along with materials in their own languages. Not only does this allow everyone to participate in class, but it also encourages class members to bring their scriptures and manuals.

Be a better visiting teacher or home teacher. Offer to assist those who are new to your country. For starters, you might help them shop, use the post office, or register for school.

Some of my most cherished friendships in New York were with those to whom I could barely speak five words in their language. I knew they needed my help, and that was enough to start a friendship. ■

Leading Class



When you teach, try these tips for improving class participation.

BY ROBB JONES
Curriculum Development

Brother Johnson asked the Gospel Doctrine class a question. There was a long silence that seemed to make him and the class members uncomfortable. As the stake Sunday School president observing the class, I noticed that just as some class members were about to comment, Brother Johnson answered the question and went on to another part of the lesson.

This can happen in Church classes as well as in the teaching in our homes. I have learned that two things are essential to encourage class discussions: (1) ask questions with more than one possible answer and (2) give class members adequate time to search for or think about an answer.

Ask Open-Ended Questions

Asking the right types of questions can lead to good class discussions. Church manuals are filled with carefully crafted questions designed to encourage class members to search the teachings for answers or to ponder and apply what

they have learned.

You can ask questions that will require students to search the scriptures or the words of the latter-day apostles and prophets for information. Here are two examples of search questions based

on the teaching suggestions in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*: “Study the section beginning on page 52. What has the Savior done so we can become joint heirs with Him?” and “Review the section beginning on page 211. What did Joseph Smith teach about the significance of having a physical body?”

Other questions ask class members to think about the meaning of what they have read or to apply to their lives what they have learned. These questions are usually asked after class members have become familiar with the lesson material. For example, after asking the search questions above, you could ask the following questions to help class members think about and apply what they have read: “What are ways we can show the Lord our gratitude for His atoning sacrifice?” or “How can understanding the significance of having a physical body affect the way we care for our bodies?”

Wait for Student Responses

Regardless of the questions you ask, give class members adequate time to search for or think about the answer. Students will learn to answer questions if they know that you will not answer the questions for them.

Discussions

After my experience in Brother Johnson's class, I decided to keep track of how long teachers waited for a response after they asked a question. I found that most teachers waited only two or three seconds, though when I asked them, they thought they had waited much longer. Students, on the other hand, told me they needed more time to think about their answers.

In an attempt to help teachers get more class participation, I encouraged them to count silently to 20 after asking a question, giving the class time to ponder. They learned to say things like "I'll give you time to think" or "Would you please ponder this question, and then I'll ask for responses." As teachers in my stake began to do this, class participation increased and class members felt the Spirit as they began to "teach one another" (D&C 88:77).

I attended a class in which the teacher gave class members over two minutes to ponder a question related to the application of a gospel doctrine. For me it was a time of quiet reflection. I felt the Spirit and gained some insights about the doctrine that I probably would not have learned without those moments to myself. This particular experience helped me understand that giving class members time to ponder a question gives them time to think more deeply and to listen to the Spirit. (See 3 Nephi 17:1–3.)

Your class or family can enjoy similar spiritual experiences during discussions if you use open-ended questions and then give everyone time to ponder before responding. ■

STUDENTS' RESPONSES INVITE THE SPIRIT



"Creating an atmosphere of participation enhances the probability that the Spirit will teach more important lessons than you can communicate.

"That participation will bring into their lives the direction of the Spirit. When you encourage

students to raise their hands to respond to a question, while they may not realize it, they signify to the Holy Ghost their willingness to learn. That use of moral agency will allow that Spirit to motivate and give them more powerful guidance during your time together. Participation allows individuals to experience being led by the Spirit. They learn to recognize and feel what spiritual guidance is."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "To Learn and to Teach More Effectively," *The Religious Educator*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2008, 6.





We need to be concerned and watchful in order to avoid the mists of darkness that can lead to personal apostasy.

BY ELDER CLAUDIO D. ZIVIC

Of the Seventy

Some years ago I presided over a disciplinary council in which a Melchizedek Priesthood holder was excommunicated from the Church. After some time had passed, I presided over another council, but this time it was a joyful experience because that brother's blessings were being restored. He had repented and for a year had prepared himself to receive authorization to be rebaptized and reconfirmed a member of the Church. After receiving these ordinances, this dear brother wrote me the following:

“Dear President:

“This is the first day of the rest of my life.

That is not a trite phrase; it is how I feel.

Yesterday I received the ordinance of baptism, and I can assure you that I feel like a new man. I feel that a miracle has occurred in me, that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ became effective in me. Today I can say I feel free from the oppression of sin. I know I would not have made it alone. Help from my leaders and from my wife kept me focused on the goal. Today I can say more strongly than ever that Christ is my Savior, that the miracle of forgiveness exists, that the priesthood is the power of God, and that His leaders are inspired.

“With much love, your brother.”

What a difference between this scenario and that of those who do not repent but rather follow the path of apostasy. The gospel reference guidebook *True to the Faith* defines “apostasy” as the act of individuals, the Church, or entire nations falling away from the truth.¹

We need not be concerned about the

AVOIDING PERSONAL APOSTASY





possibility of another apostasy of the Church of Jesus Christ. We have the privilege of living in the dispensation of the fulness of times. This gospel dispensation, which began with the Prophet Joseph Smith, is the last one before the Second Coming of the Savior. However, we need to be concerned and watchful that we do not fall into *personal* apostasy, which can result from several causes. I will mention only a few.

Apostasy frequently results when a person commits serious sin but does not repent. To silence his conscience or justify his sinful actions, the individual moves away from the truth, looking for imperfections in others or questioning Church doctrine with which he no longer agrees.

Conflicts between Church members can also lead to apostasy. Some individuals begin to think the Church is not true when they feel that a leader did not treat them well. They become offended and, without considering what they are losing, they stray from the Church.

A man I have known since childhood was offended by a certain procedure instituted by a Church leader. Afterward, the leader went to visit him several times to ask forgiveness for the offense. Though the procedure was neither ill-intentioned nor incorrect, the man became less active, along with his family. He said he would not return to Church until that leader was released from his calling. Unfortunately, the offended individual never returned, even after the leader was released.

Faultfinding can be another source of personal apostasy. When we look for faults in others or begin to think we could make better decisions than our leaders, we should remember the experience of Oliver Cowdery, the second elder of the Church.

In Doctrine and Covenants 28:2 Oliver Cowdery is told through revelation given to Joseph Smith, “No one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun.” In time, sadly, Oliver rebelled against Joseph, saying, “If I leave this church, it will fall.” Joseph responded, “Oliver, you try it.” Oliver did try it, and he fell. The kingdom of God, however, remained firm.²

We enter a state of apostasy when we assume authority we do not possess or when we seek revelation for a stewardship outside of our sphere of responsibility. Our duty, as revealed to Oliver Cowdery, is to “be obedient unto the things” (D&C 28:3) the Lord reveals to His prophet and to our other leaders called through priesthood authority.

When Lehi received the vision of the tree of life, he saw that “there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wan-

dered off and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:23).

I testify that we can avoid the mists of darkness that lead to personal apostasy by repenting of our sins, overcoming offense, eliminating faultfinding, and following our Church leaders. We can also avoid those mists by humbling ourselves, forgiving others, keeping our covenants, partaking of the sacrament worthily each week, and strengthening our testimonies through prayer, daily scripture study, temple attendance where possible, magnifying our Church callings, and serving our fellowmen. ■

NOTES

1. *True to the Faith* (2004), 13.
2. In Spencer W. Kimball, “To Bear the Priesthood Worthily,” *Ensign*, May 1975, 78.

LEHI'S DREAM OF THE TREE OF LIFE BY ADRIAN VON SUCHTELEN





Either we control our finances or they control us. Here's how to get the upper hand.

BY ALLIE SCHULTE

Welfare Services

Jason and Alanea Hanna faced many financial questions when Jason lost his job. Should they relocate and find another job? Should they try to find a job where they were currently living? After considering several options, they asked the most important question of all: “What would the Lord have us do?”

“We studied talks by prophets and apostles on topics

like debt, budgeting, and saving to try and figure out what the Lord wanted us to do,” Alanea explains. “We knew that the Lord’s plan was the best plan and that we would be blessed if we followed it.”

After prayer and contemplation, Jason and Alanea both decided to return to college and finish their bachelor’s degrees. They took out minimal student loans to pay for their education, and both worked full-time to provide for their other expenses. They coordinated their work schedules to ensure that one of them was home with their children. They budgeted carefully, spending their money on the essentials and eliminating fast food, cable

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT CASEY



TV, and new clothes. Jason even rode his bike to school and work to limit the costs of gasoline and car insurance.

Now Jason works as an engineer. Alanea also completed her degree and is currently fulfilling her responsibilities as a full-time mother of five children. They still live within their means, budget carefully, pay tithing, and live according to the financial counsel of Church leaders. “We’re grateful for the trial and the experience,” Alanea says. “It ended up being a great blessing in our lives and taught us that the Lord will always bless us if we are obedient.”

The Lord’s Financial Plan

The Lord has told His Church, “Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world” (John 15:19). Although members may be faced with financial trials, they can feel secure as they turn away from the philosophies of the world and rely on the gospel of Jesus Christ and the counsel of Church leaders.

In the pamphlet *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances*, the First Presidency asks all Church members to consider their finances and strive to become more spiritually and temporally self-reliant: “We encourage you wherever you may live in the world to prepare for adversity by looking to the condition of your finances. . . . If you have paid your debts and have a financial reserve . . . , you and your family will feel more secure and enjoy greater peace in your hearts.”¹

The pamphlet outlines five basic principles: pay tithes and offerings, avoid debt, use a budget, build a reserve, and teach family members. While living these principles

requires patience, temperance, and sacrifice, obedience to the Lord’s financial plan will bring greater peace and joy than individuals and families could ever experience by living the way of the world.

Pay Tithes and Offerings

When Richard Moyer lost his job, he and his family ate food from their home storage, paid bills using their savings, and continued to pay tithing faithfully. Despite his unemployment, Brother Moyer was amazed to see that he made exactly U.S. \$1.00 more income

that year than the previous one. “I have always attributed that miracle in our lives to paying tithing,” Brother Moyer explains. “The Lord always blesses you when you do the things He wants you to do.”

Blessings that come from sound family finances must be built on the foundation of paying an honest tithe and giving a generous fast offering. Church members have the opportunity of giving back to the Lord a portion of their income with the understanding that their contributions help to build the kingdom of God by building meeting-houses and temples, providing for those who are less

Although members may be faced with financial trials, they can feel secure as they turn away from the philosophies of the world and rely on the gospel of Jesus Christ and the counsel of Church leaders.

fortunate, and sharing the gospel throughout the world.

Members will gain a testimony of this principle by living it. By praying to understand its importance and learning more about how these contributions bless others, members will come to consider paying tithes and offerings a blessing. As members develop the habit of immediately setting aside tithes and offerings when they receive income, it will become a financial priority in their lives.

President N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982) of the First Presidency taught that tithing is a commandment with a promise: “As you discharge this obligation to your Maker, you will find great, great happiness, the like of which is known only by those who are faithful to this commandment.”² Obedience to this commandment brings peace and security. As Church members pay tithes and offerings they will experience miracles in their lives, as the Moyer family did.

Avoid Debt

Spending less money than you make is essential to financial security. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that consumer debt is a form of bondage that affects individuals, both temporally and spiritually. He said, “We think we own things, but the reality is, our things own us.”³ For this reason, the First Presidency encourages members to avoid debt with the exception of buying a modest home or paying for education.

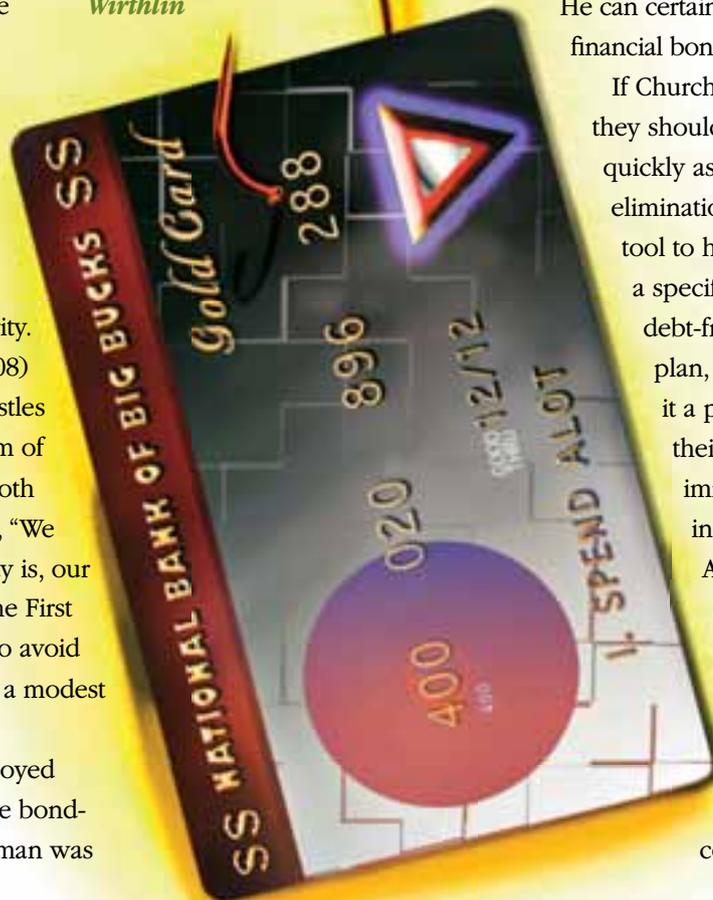
The Kloosterman family has enjoyed the blessings of being free from the bondage of debt. When Kevin Kloosterman was

We think
we own
things,
but the reality is,
our things own us.”
— Elder Joseph B.
Wirthlin

called as the bishop of his ward in Illinois, USA, his family had some consumer debt. His stake president reminded him of the First Presidency’s counsel, and Bishop Kloosterman left the interview determined to pay off the debt. “We had always . . . tried to put the Lord first,” he recalls. “In this one case, we hadn’t.”

The Kloosterman family studied the scriptures and modern-day counsel related to finance and debt and took the steps necessary to achieve their goal. It became clear that they were being blessed by the Lord for heeding the counsel of His servants. “There is no affliction in mortality which the Savior cannot heal,” Bishop Kloosterman says. “If He can deliver us from the captivity of sin and death, He can certainly deliver us out of financial bondage.”

If Church members are in debt, they should pay the debt off as quickly as possible. A debt-elimination calendar is a great tool to help individuals create a specific plan to become debt-free. After creating a plan, members can make it a priority by making their necessary payments immediately after paying tithes and offerings. Above all, members should be patient with the time it may take to become debt-free by relying on the Lord for help and striving to follow His commandments.



Use a Budget

Another tool to help members live within their means is a budget. While individuals often think that financial security depends on the amount of money they make, President Tanner taught that controlling how money is spent—whether the amount is large or small—is the source of true financial peace and happiness. “Many people think a budget robs them of their freedom. On the contrary, successful people have learned that a budget makes real economic freedom possible,”⁴ he said.

The Jeffrey family, from Illinois, USA, recognizes the freedom that comes from managing their finances with a budget. When the Jeffrey children were very young, the family realized that three of them would be serving missions at the same time. Recognizing the financial strain this would place on the family, their mother, Olga, implemented a strict budget. Along with paying 10 percent of the family’s income to tithing, Sister Jeffrey set aside an additional 10 percent to save for her future missionaries. “I realized that finances could become a stumbling block and that we needed to be prepared to provide the means for our children to serve the Lord,” Sister Jeffrey says.

As the Jeffrey children began leaving on missions, their parents were financially prepared, and the Lord blessed them.

Like the Jeffrey family, Church members can manage their spending by creating a budget. Using a budget worksheet, members can look at their income and spending from the last week or month. By determining where they spend most of their money, they can also look for ways to cut back. Then they can create a budget by estimating income for the next week or month and planning where they want their earnings to be spent. After tracking their spending, members can evaluate whether they complied with the budget and make adjustments for the next week or month.

Many people think a budget robs them of their freedom. On the contrary, successful people have learned that a budget makes real economic freedom possible.”

— President N.
Eldon Tanner

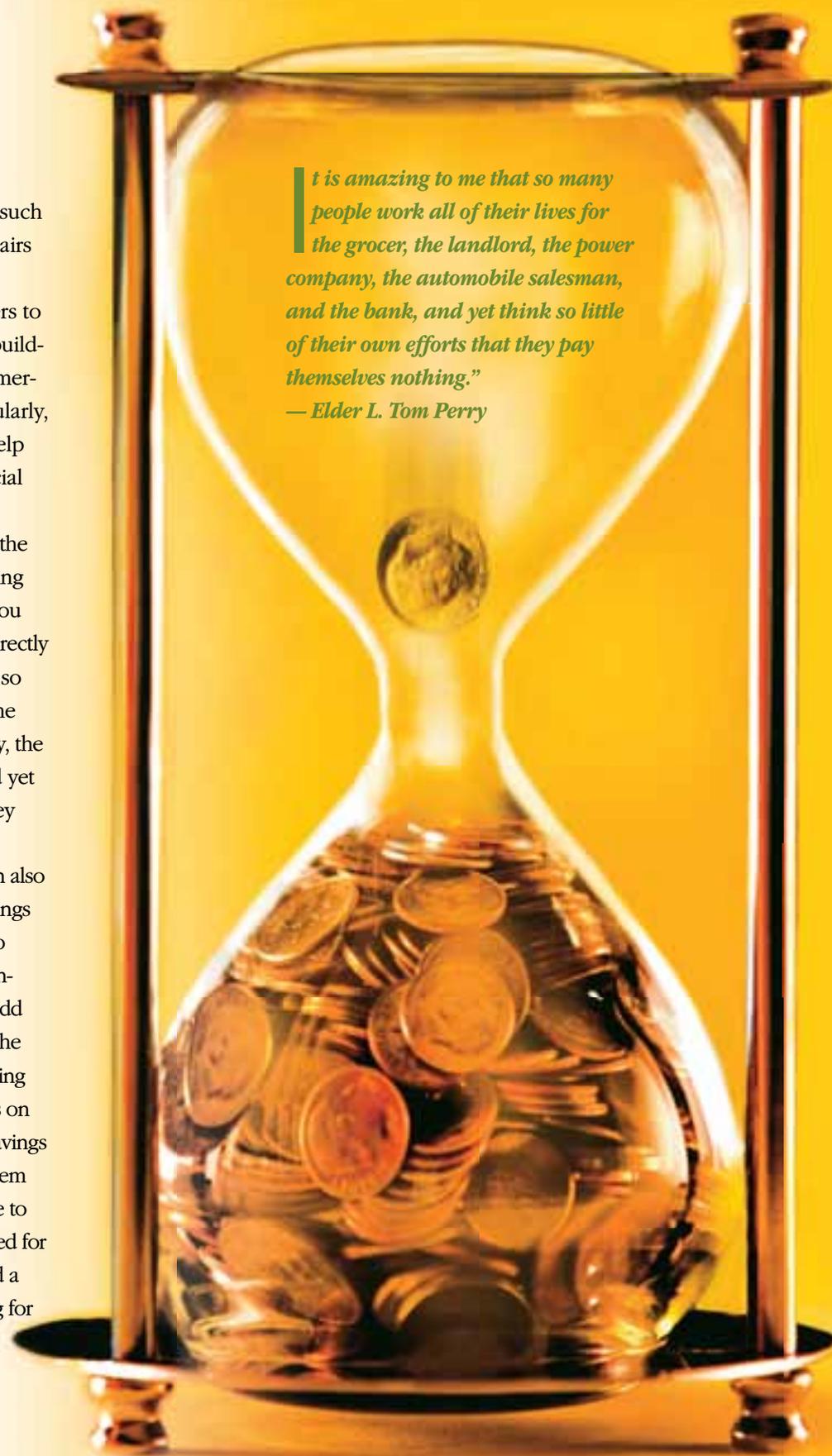


Build a Reserve

Even when individuals seem to be financially prepared, unexpected trials such as illness, unemployment, or major repairs can cause financial burdens. The First Presidency encourages Church members to prepare for these events by gradually building a financial reserve to be used for emergencies only. Saving a little money regularly, especially in times of prosperity, will help members to prepare for times of financial struggle or unforeseen emergencies.

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles suggests that “after paying your tithing of ten percent to the Lord, you pay yourself a predetermined amount directly into savings. . . . It is amazing to me that so many people work all of their lives for the grocer, the landlord, the power company, the automobile salesman, and the bank, and yet think so little of their own efforts that they pay themselves nothing.”⁵

While planning a budget, members can also determine a specific amount of their earnings to set aside for savings. It does not need to be a large amount. As long as they are consistent in setting aside that money, it will add up quickly. Develop the habit by putting the money into savings immediately after paying tithes and offerings and making payments on any debts. Do not be tempted to spend savings on unnecessary things. Instead, reserve them for emergencies. If Church members strive to discipline themselves, they will be prepared for financial trials. Once they have established a financial reserve, they can continue saving for future needs like missions, education, retirement, and other necessities.



It is amazing to me that so many people work all of their lives for the grocer, the landlord, the power company, the automobile salesman, and the bank, and yet think so little of their own efforts that they pay themselves nothing.”

— Elder L. Tom Perry

Teach Family Members

Often parents feel hesitant in involving their children in financial matters. However, when we teach family members the principles of financial management and involve them in creating a budget with financial goals, we prepare them for their futures. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled, “Parents need to teach children very early that a solid financial base is a very important element in a happy home.”⁶ As members prayerfully study and ponder the principles in the *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances* pamphlet, they should think of ways to teach family members and help them to live these principles.

Parents can involve family members in creating a budget and setting financial goals. They can teach them the importance of working for an income, prioritizing their spending, and preparing their own budget to track expenses. They can also provide a way for them to pay tithing and to save money for missions, education, or other expenses. Family home evenings can be great opportunities to discuss and teach about financial topics. Each family member can contribute to the family’s overall self-reliance, and the entire family will recognize the blessings that come from following the Lord’s counsel for financial planning.

Blessings of Family Finances

The message of financial preparedness is not new. In this dispensation, Church leaders have encouraged members to prepare themselves by wisely managing their finances

Parents need to teach children very early that a solid financial base is a very important element in a happy home.”

— Elder M. Russell Ballard

and have promised blessings to those who follow this counsel. The First Presidency said: “Latter-day Saints have been counseled for many years to prepare for adversity by having some money set aside. Doing so adds immeasurably to security and well-being.”⁷

Families and individuals, both past and present, have witnessed the blessings of peace that result from their obedience to this counsel. As Church members follow the specific guidelines in *All Is Safely Gathered In* and utilize the other financial counseling the Church offers, they too will experience these blessings in their lives. ■

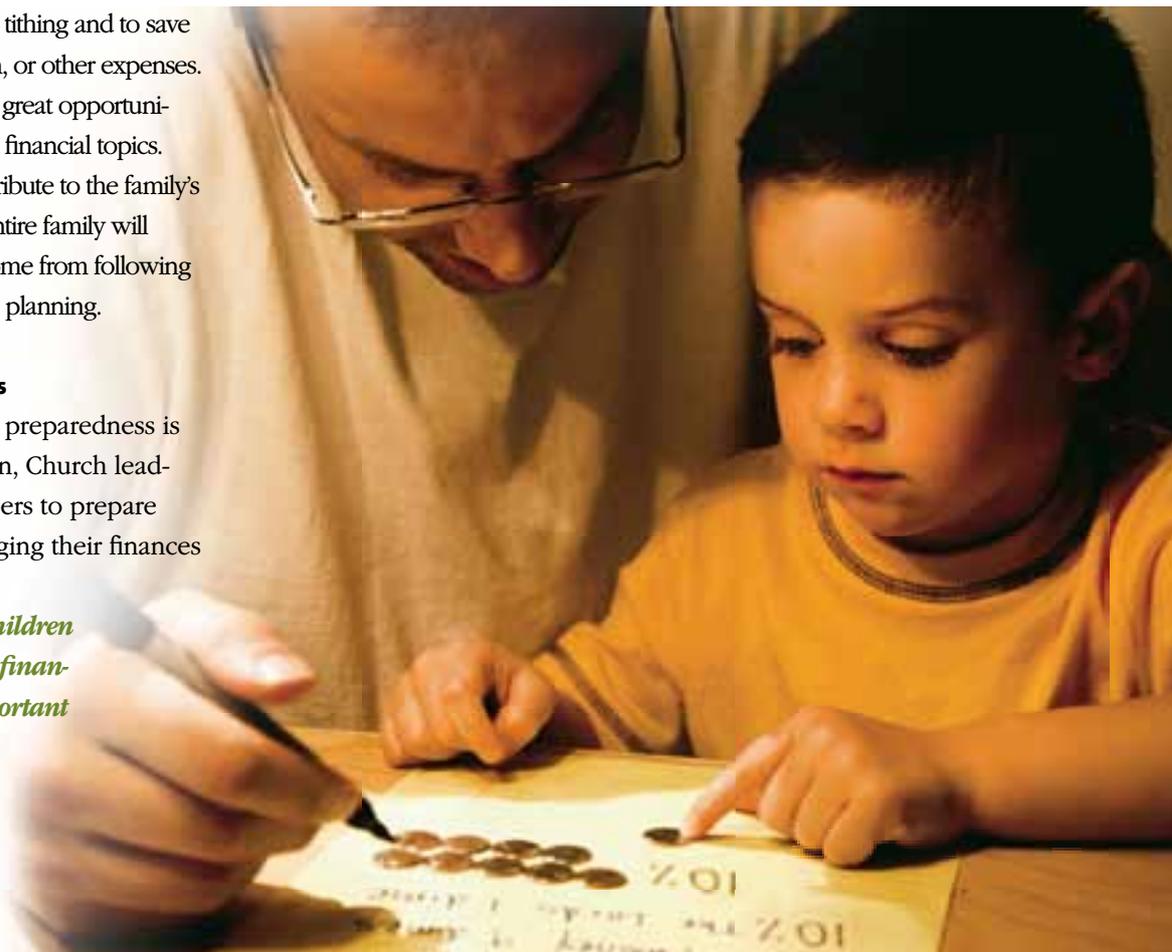
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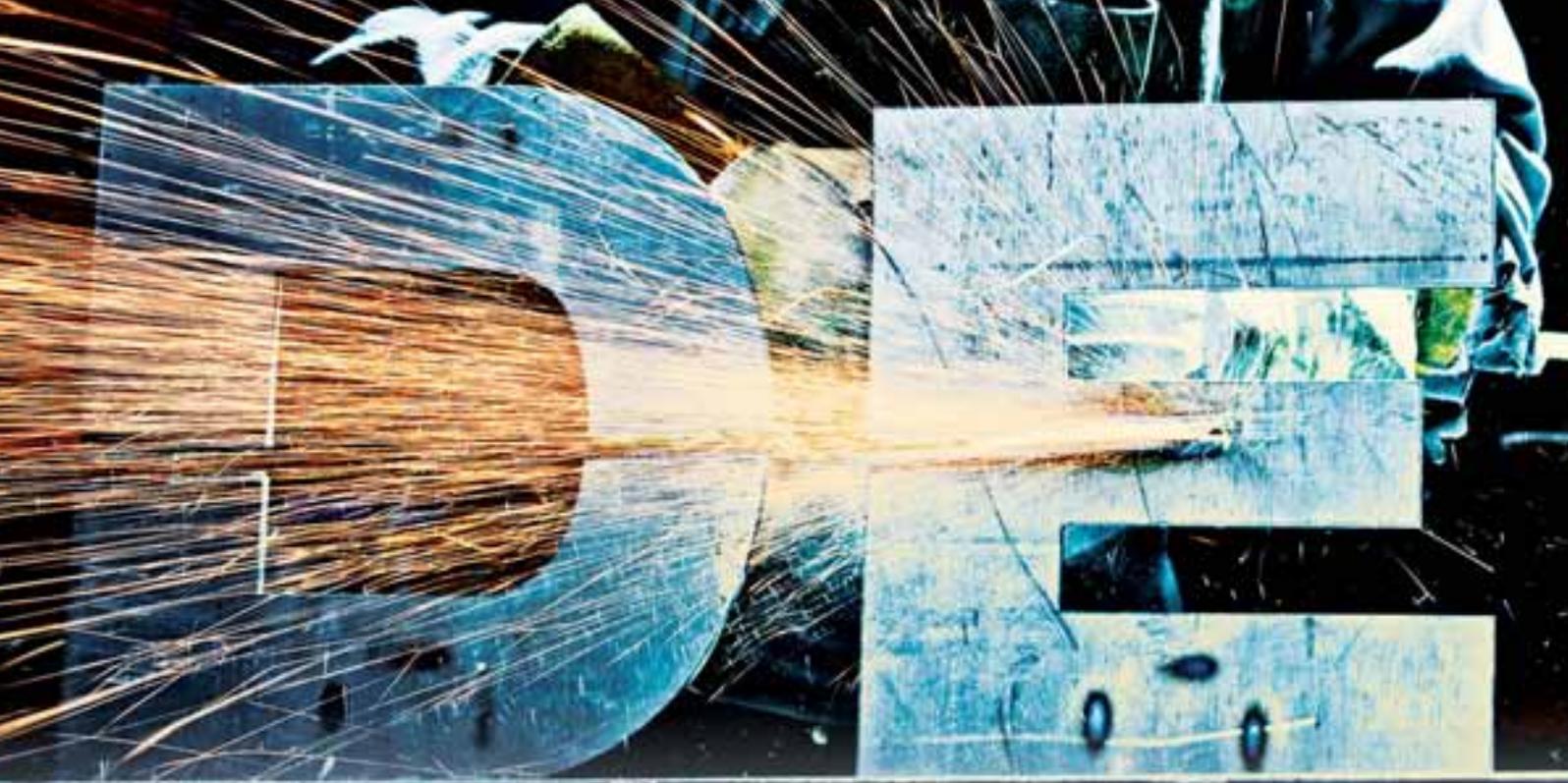
1. *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances* (pamphlet, 2007).
2. “Constancy amid Change,” *Tambuli*, Feb. 1982, 46.
3. “Earthly Debts, Heavenly Debts,” *Liahona*, May 2004, 40.
4. *Tambuli*, Feb. 1982, 46.
5. “Becoming Self-Reliant,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 64.
6. “Providing for Our Needs,” *Ensign*, May 1981, 85.
7. *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances*.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Church has provided online resources in English, German, Portuguese, and Spanish to help members manage their family finances. Resources include talks by Church leaders, financial calculators, materials for family home evening lessons, and even an online financial course. For more information, please visit providentliving.org.

The pamphlet *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances* is available online in 24 languages at providentliving.org/content/display/0,11666,7587-1-4087-1,00.html.





POWER TOOLS FOR FAMILY FINANCES

Use them to demolish debt and build a strong financial future.

The First Presidency has counseled: “Pay off debt as quickly as you can, and free yourselves from this bondage” (*All is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances*, 2). But how do you do that when your financial house is shaky and you seem to spend all your time and energy just trying to hold it together?

Here’s how one couple might tackle the challenge using some simple but powerful tools available to everyone. “Ruth” and “Elliot” are a composite of many real couples who have used these tools successfully. They have a mortgage

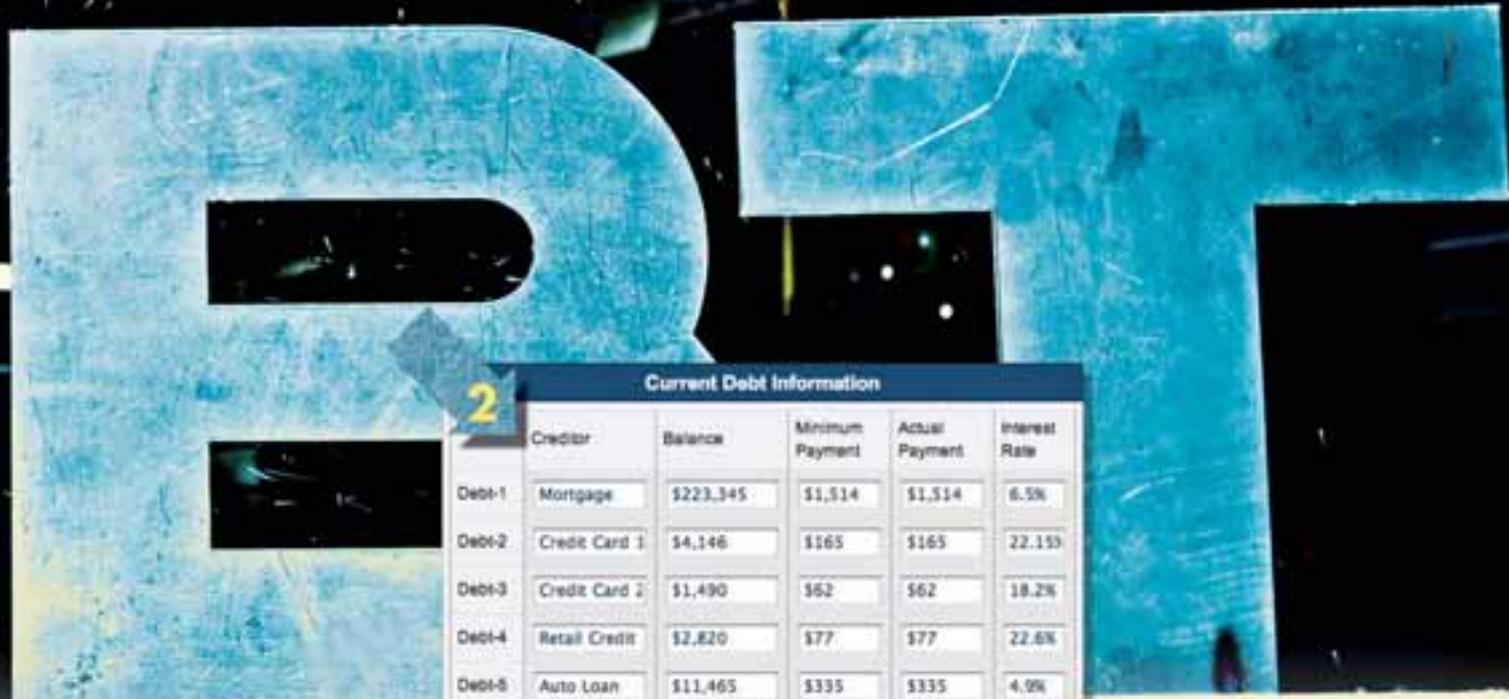
1 BUDGET FOR _____ (Month/Year)

INCOME	PLANNED	ACTUAL
Wages/Salaries (after taxes)		
Other income		
Total income		
EXPENSES		
Church donations		
Savings		
Food		
Mortgage or rent		
Utilities		
Transportation		
Debt payments		
Insurance		
Medical		
Clothing		
School expenses		
Other _____		

Total expenses		
Income less expenses		

balance of \$223,345, credit card and retail store debt totaling \$8,456, and an \$11,465 car loan. They currently spend \$25,836 per year on debt payments. Paying off their debts at the current rate will take 25 years. Tired of the strain of juggling bills and feeling no control over their situation, they turn to their bishop, who suggests they visit www.providentliving.org.

First, Ruth and Elliot use the chart on page 7 of *One for the Money* (see fig. 1) to create a family budget. In the process, they see expenses that could be eliminated, such as the money Elliot spends each day on soft drinks and snacks at work. They quickly identify \$100 per month that could be better spent.



2

Current Debt Information					
	Creditor	Balance	Minimum Payment	Actual Payment	Interest Rate
Debt-1	Mortgage	\$223,345	\$1,514	\$1,514	6.5%
Debt-2	Credit Card 1	\$4,146	\$165	\$165	22.15%
Debt-3	Credit Card 2	\$1,490	\$62	\$62	18.2%
Debt-4	Retail Credit	\$2,820	\$77	\$77	22.6%
Debt-5	Auto Loan	\$11,465	\$335	\$335	4.9%
Debt-6	Creditor 6	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Debt-7	Creditor 7	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%

Additional Debt Payments

Extra monthly payment:

One-time payment: 2009

Assumptions

Debt ordering:

Interest earned on new savings:

3

Savings and Assumptions	
Initial balance or deposit	<input type="text" value="\$0"/>
Annual savings amount	<input type="text" value="\$27,036"/>
Annual increase in contributions	<input type="text" value="0%"/>
Number of years for the analysis	<input type="text" value="11"/>
Before-tax return on savings: (%)	<input type="text" value="8.0%"/>
Marginal tax bracket: (%)	<input type="text" value="25.0%"/>

Next, they enter current debt information into the *How Soon Could I Pay off All My Debts?* calculator (see fig. 2). It shows how funds that are freed up when one debt is repaid can be used to pay down remaining debt. The results are dramatic. Without paying one dollar more per month, they could pay off all their debts in 15 years, 10 years sooner than they would have otherwise (assuming their income remains stable and they incur no additional debt).

Using the same calculator, they now add that \$100 per month of misspent money as an extra monthly payment. The result: they will be able to pay off all debt (mortgage included) in just under 14 years. This cuts an additional year off their payoff time. They would save 11 years of payments and \$209,392 in interest.

Now Ruth and Elliot wonder: When they no longer have debt payments to make, what would happen if they put the equivalent

into savings and added that \$1,200 per year of misspent money? To find out, they use the *How Much Could I Have If I Saved Regularly?* calculator (see fig. 3). Here they enter savings goals based on reasonable assumptions.

What they find both shocks and motivates them. They realize that they will not only save 11 years of debt repayment and \$209,392 in interest paid, but could have \$429,060 in the bank at the end of the originally scheduled 25-year repayment plan.

Ruth and Elliot may be fictitious, but their situation is reality for many. Details will differ. Some people earn more

money, some earn less. Some owe much more money, some people owe much less. No matter. These concepts and tools have universal application. ■

To access these financial tools online, go to providentliving.org or ensign.lds.org.



Stretching

We can stretch our dollars by eating home-cooked meals,

BY KAY PRZYBILLE

As a wife who was blessed to be able to stay home with our children, I felt it was my responsibility to make my husband's paycheck go as far as possible. In order to have the Spirit to guide us in making wise financial decisions, we always paid our tithing. In addition, we set aside money each paycheck so we could pay cash for emergencies, thus avoiding the extra cost of interest.

Here are some other ideas that have helped our family financially.

Cooking from Scratch

Food prepared from scratch costs about half the price of restaurant fast food—and much less than food from a nice restaurant. Buying basic foods in bulk; planting a garden and using vegetables from it; and avoiding snack foods, partially prepared foods, and instant foods can further increase your savings on meals prepared at home.

Frugal fare, however, doesn't mean that meals have to be boring. We often make special meals in our home. We have cooking contests, ethnic suppers, and Dad's dinners—prepared by, not for, Dad. Occasionally our children prepare "restaurant dinners" for my husband and me that include menus, fancy dishes, and personal service. We've eaten meals in nearly every room of the house, we've had meals sitting on the floor, and we've enjoyed picnics outside.

Cutting Back

Cutting back on activities outside the home saves money, gasoline, and time. Cutting back also gives the Spirit greater opportunity to bless our families. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "Be wise and do not involve children or yourselves in so many activities out of the home that you are so busy that the Spirit of the Lord cannot be recognized or felt in giving you the promised guidance for yourself and your family."¹

Organized sports, dance, and other programs are great, but consider waiting to involve your children until they are older, when they can help pay the costs and understand the financial sacrifices involved. Meanwhile, teach cooperation, sportsmanship, fair play, and teamwork at home—with Mom and Dad as coaches.

Instead of hiring professionals to teach your children skills and hobbies, consider doing so yourself or calling upon neighbors or extended family members. Teach your children skills that will help the family now—and help your children later—to save money and generate independence. My father taught our son carpentry one summer; another summer my mother helped me teach our daughters how to bottle and freeze vegetables.

Trade lessons with other families. Perhaps while you give your neighbor's children art lessons, your neighbor could give your children music lessons.

With time and dedication, a mother can give her



Your Dollars

looking for bargains, and establishing a budget.

children a rich preschool experience. Consult the Internet for ideas, and use your local library. Using the library is a great way to save money. Rather than buy books, CDs, and movies, check them out from the library.

I have found that I can forgo chocolate bars, restaurant food, acrylic fingernails, and costume jewelry if, instead, I am going to get a new dinner table that will delight our family for years to come. Sacrificing and saving for something ensures that it is worth having and caring for. Buying impulsively, however, clutters your life with things that don't mean anything after a short time—things you end up giving away or selling at a garage sale.

Children benefit from saving for what they want. It is easier for them to resist fads and fashions if they have to sacrifice.

Bargains and Budgets

You generally don't have to pay full price for most products if you are patient. Things go on sale all the time. Sometimes waiting as little as a week or two can mean as much as 50 percent off the retail price. Fight the temptation to buy the newest popular items that are selling too fast. Wait until the demand diminishes, the price drops, and the novelty wears off. By then you may not even want the item.

Use secondhand items. A little work on a good piece of old furniture will make it a delight for a lifetime. A secondhand outfit featuring a classic design can keep you looking nice for several years. My daughters started a

counterfashion in their high school by getting their friends enthused about secondhand outfits. That enthusiasm soon spread to a large group of students.

If you do buy new, consider lower-priced items. The quality of such items is often adequate, and you need not pay for frills that aren't worth the added price.

Fight the temptation to use your charge card. Resist salespeople trying to sell you items you don't need and can't afford. Avoid mulling over television programs and magazine and newspaper ads that tempt you to want a richer lifestyle. Set a budget and stay with it. Work and save for what you need, but be content with what you have—and share it if you can.

"Our pioneer forebears lived by the adage 'Fix it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without,'" said President Gordon B. Hinckley. "Reasonable debt for the purchase of an affordable home and perhaps for a few other necessary things is acceptable. But from where I sit, I see in a very vivid way the terrible tragedies of many who have unwisely borrowed for things they really do not need."²

May we put the kingdom of God first in our families (see Jacob 2:17–18; Matthew 6:33). And may we remember that the Lord, who multiplied the loaves and fishes, has promised that "all things shall work together for good to them that walk uprightly" (D&C 100:15). ■

NOTES

1. "What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest," *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 43.
2. "I Believe," *Ensign*, Aug. 1992, 2.



BY BETH A. WRIGHT

I had always wanted a garden, but with no yard I didn't think it would be possible.

My first real taste of gardening came at a young age, as I helped my grandparents with their gardens. I loved roaming outside and enjoyed what we planted. I knew that someday I would want a garden of my own.

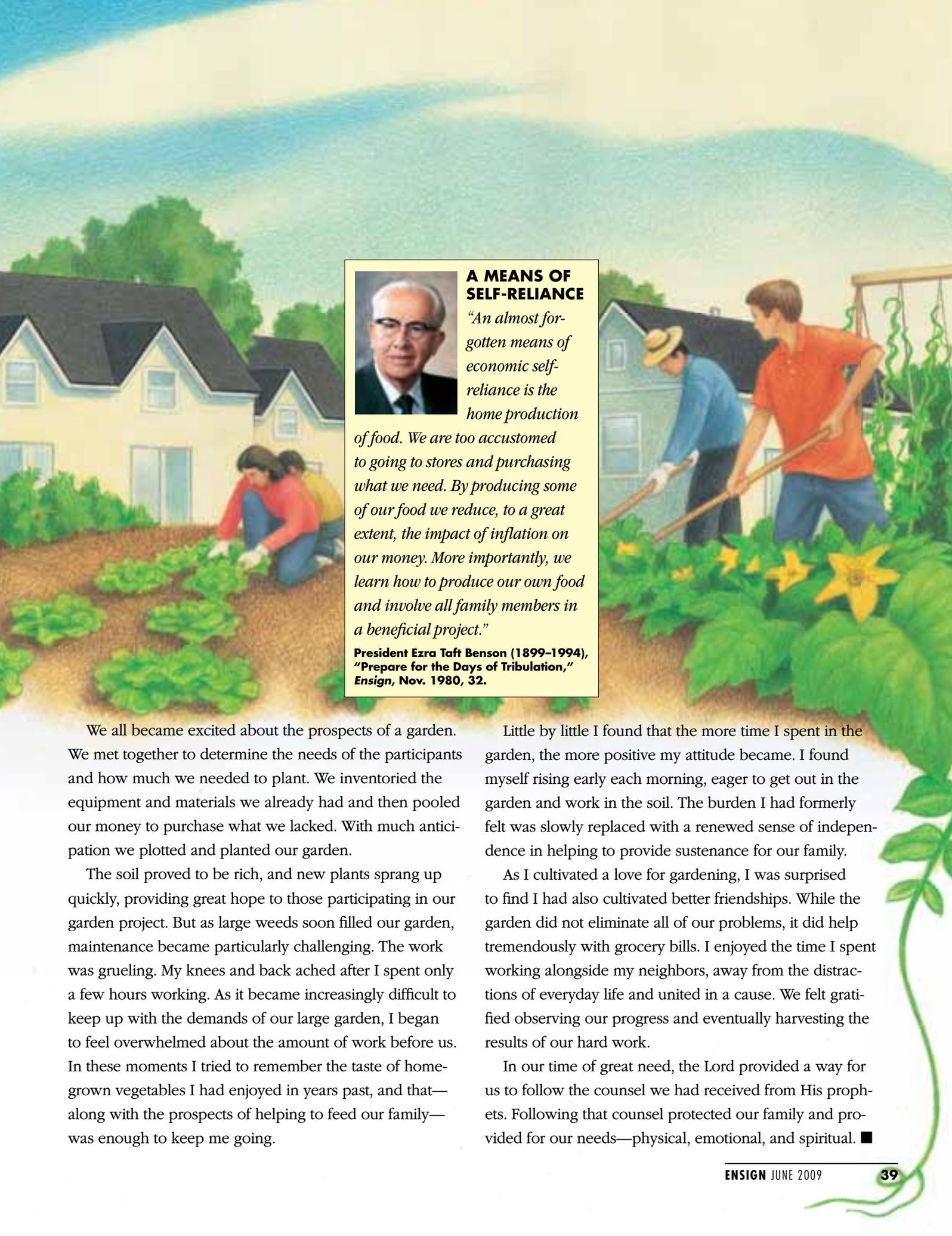
In time I married and began a family. I heard prophets and apostles counsel members to plant gardens, and I longed to do so. However, we lived in a small townhouse complex and had no room for a garden. I continued to learn about plants and to admire other people's gardens, usually with a wistful sigh in my heart.

About this time, our young family faced some serious financial strain. Neighboring families were facing similar

difficulties, although for varying reasons.

But in the midst of our struggles, the Lord provided a great opportunity for us to combat the challenges.

The man who owned the large open field behind our complex had tried to sell the property but had been unable to do so. Since it was vacant and not likely to sell in the near future, he gave our family and neighbors permission to use his field to plant a community garden. We did not have the equipment to till the land, but our Relief Society president's husband offered to till the ground for us with his equipment. The generosity of these men touched my heart.



A MEANS OF SELF-RELIANCE

“An almost forgotten means of economic self-reliance is the home production of food. We are too accustomed to going to stores and purchasing what we need. By producing some of our food we reduce, to a great extent, the impact of inflation on our money. More importantly, we learn how to produce our own food and involve all family members in a beneficial project.”

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), “Prepare for the Days of Tribulation,” Ensign, Nov. 1980, 32.

We all became excited about the prospects of a garden. We met together to determine the needs of the participants and how much we needed to plant. We inventoried the equipment and materials we already had and then pooled our money to purchase what we lacked. With much anticipation we plotted and planted our garden.

The soil proved to be rich, and new plants sprang up quickly, providing great hope to those participating in our garden project. But as large weeds soon filled our garden, maintenance became particularly challenging. The work was grueling. My knees and back ached after I spent only a few hours working. As it became increasingly difficult to keep up with the demands of our large garden, I began to feel overwhelmed about the amount of work before us. In these moments I tried to remember the taste of home-grown vegetables I had enjoyed in years past, and that—along with the prospects of helping to feed our family—was enough to keep me going.

Little by little I found that the more time I spent in the garden, the more positive my attitude became. I found myself rising early each morning, eager to get out in the garden and work in the soil. The burden I had formerly felt was slowly replaced with a renewed sense of independence in helping to provide sustenance for our family.

As I cultivated a love for gardening, I was surprised to find I had also cultivated better friendships. While the garden did not eliminate all of our problems, it did help tremendously with grocery bills. I enjoyed the time I spent working alongside my neighbors, away from the distractions of everyday life and united in a cause. We felt gratified observing our progress and eventually harvesting the results of our hard work.

In our time of great need, the Lord provided a way for us to follow the counsel we had received from His prophets. Following that counsel protected our family and provided for our needs—physical, emotional, and spiritual. ■



THE FURROW, BY MABEL PEARL FRAZER



In the Morning

SOW

(Ecclesiastes 11:6)

Thy Seed



THE SOWER, BY GREG OLSEN

The rich brown color of newly turned earth, the gentle placement of seeds in a straight garden furrow, then the act of faith as we cover the seeds with dirt. We water them and wait as nature does its job. As the seeds grow, we weed and work, and as we do so we are blessed with increased self-reliance and insight into the law of the harvest. Eventually, we enjoy the succulent fruits of our labors—food.

The Lord has said, “The fulness of the earth is yours, . . . Yea, all things which come of the earth . . . are made for the benefit and use of man” (D&C 59:16, 18).

President Thomas S. Monson added another dimension to gardening as part of the larger goal of provident living when he said, “Self-reliance is a product of our work and undergirds all other welfare practices. It is an essential element in our spiritual as well as our temporal well-being.”¹

Latter-day Saint artists have used their talents to remind us that growing a garden is filled with blessings. Following is some of their artwork accompanied by the words of President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985).²

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Guiding Principles of Personal and Family Welfare,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1986, 3.
2. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (1982), 376–77.

"Grow all the food that you possibly can on your own property, . . . [including] berry bushes, grapevines, and fruit trees. . . . Grow vegetables and eat those grown in your own yard."

President Spencer W. Kimball

SALAD, BY WALTER RANE



"The Lord . . . created for us this beautiful world and gave command to our father Adam to till the ground and to dress the land and to make it habitable. That command continues to us."

President Spencer W. Kimball

SEGO HARVEST, ROOTS OF INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION, BY JODI WARNER



MANGOES, BY DON O. THORPE



A BASKET TO EAT, A BASKET TO SHARE, © BY LINDA ETHERINGTON, COURTESY OF THE CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM 2006 INTERNATIONAL ART COMPETITION

“Another commendable thing about gardening is the exchange of products by neighbors and the fostering of fellowship and neighborliness.”

President Spencer W. Kimball



"[Gardening] will bring satisfaction . . . and remind us all of the law of the harvest, which is relentless in life. We do reap what we sow."

President Spencer W. Kimball



FLOWING FIELDS, BY GEORGE MIDGLEY, COURTESY OF THE CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM

SARAH'S GARDEN, BY ROBERT DUNICAN

"Even if the plot of soil you cultivate, plant, and harvest is a small one, it brings human nature closer to nature as was the case in the beginning with our first parents."

President Spencer W. Kimball



BECOMING SELF-RELIANT, BY ABU HASSAN CONITEH, COURTESY OF THE CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM



LIFE IS THE REWARD OF LOVE AND LABOR, BY LEO FAIRBANKS

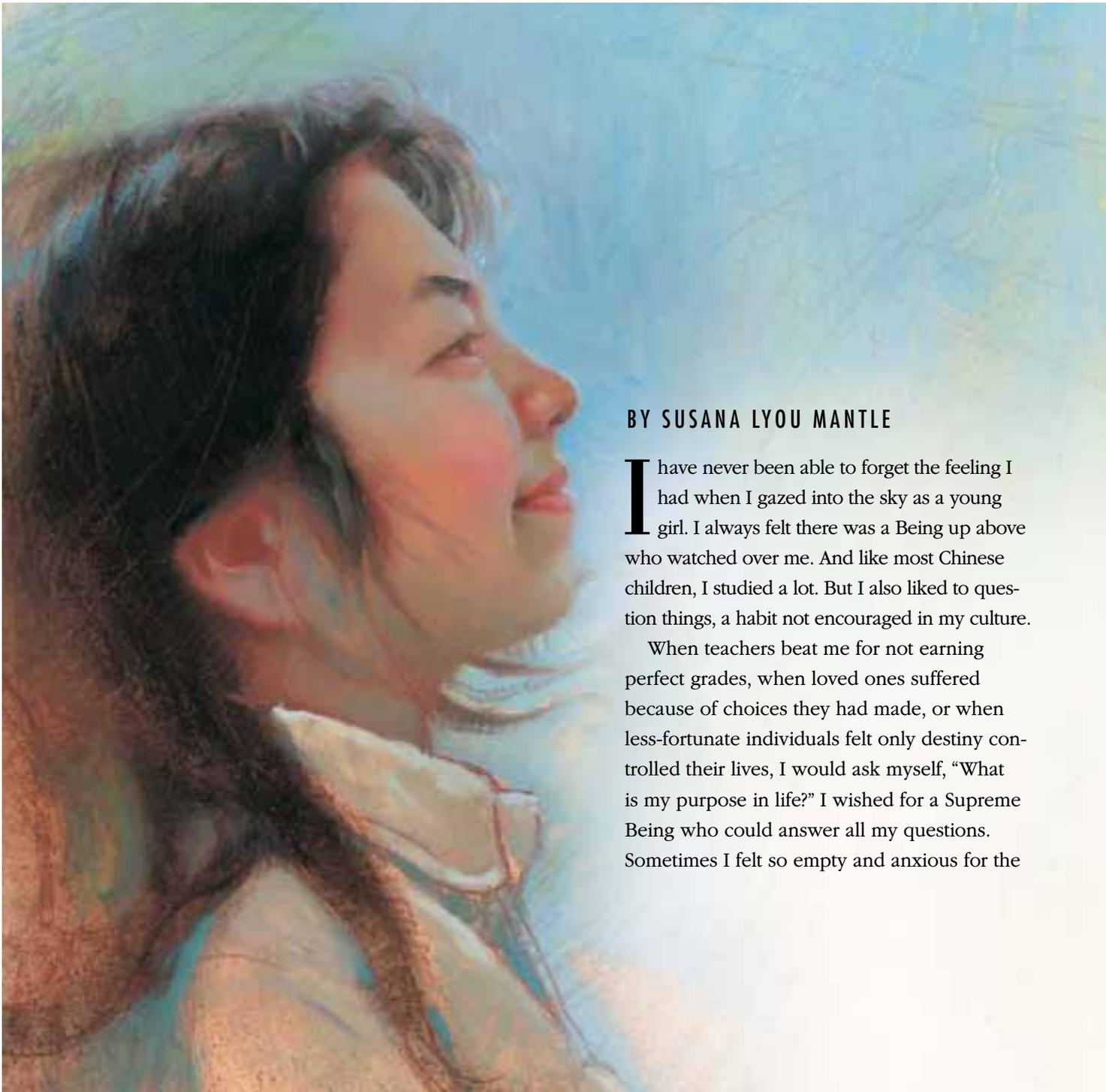


ILLUSTRATION BY GREGG THORKEISON

BY SUSANA LYOU MANTLE

I have never been able to forget the feeling I had when I gazed into the sky as a young girl. I always felt there was a Being up above who watched over me. And like most Chinese children, I studied a lot. But I also liked to question things, a habit not encouraged in my culture.

When teachers beat me for not earning perfect grades, when loved ones suffered because of choices they had made, or when less-fortunate individuals felt only destiny controlled their lives, I would ask myself, "What is my purpose in life?" I wished for a Supreme Being who could answer all my questions. Sometimes I felt so empty and anxious for the

FINDING MY

My family sought truth from many faiths, but I still felt empty.

PURPOSE

truth that I would look into the sky and say to that Being, “Please, tell me the reason for my life, and I will do everything I can to achieve that purpose.”

I was raised Buddhist and Taoist, but the teachings of those religions confused me and did not bring joy to my heart. My family later joined an Eastern religion that sought to take truths from all faiths. I was never satisfied. But when I was introduced to Christianity, I felt something I had never felt before. Jesus seemed so different from the founders of other religions. After spending many years as a Buddhist trying to forsake all relationships and cares of this world, I felt a warmth fill my heart as I learned that Christ taught of love and service, of believing in all things and hoping for all things.

T*he more I trusted in Him, the more my life was guided. . . . I learned to discern my Savior’s voice before I learned about His scriptures and Church.*



Focusing on Christ

At age 14 I met a preacher at a train station who taught me how to pray in a Christian way. From that time on, the name of Jesus Christ became part of my life. For three years I prayed almost every day in Jesus’s name. I would tell Him everything—how I felt, what I wanted, who I liked, and why I cried—everything. Without a tangible statue to worship, as I had been accustomed to do with Eastern gods, praying to Jesus felt as if I were talking to myself. But as I focused on the name of Jesus Christ, a clear communication channel was established. I constantly received promptings to solve my problems, courage to stand up for the right, and protection when I faced darkness. Many small miracles started to bless my life, and I began to know I was not talking to myself after all. The more I trusted in Him, the more

my life was guided. I was blessed with such peace and security that I started a habit of praying whenever there was empty space in my thoughts.

Learning to pray in the name of Jesus Christ was the best training I have had in this life, and it was the only way I could truly know my Savior. I learned to discern my Savior’s voice before I learned about His scriptures and Church. I knew of God’s existence and recognized His help in my life. My ability to communicate with my Heavenly Father prepared me over the next three years to receive the true gospel.

Listening to the Spirit

One summer I was having a great time serving on the staff of a children’s camp with several friends when a distinct voice, which I recognized to be from God, said to me in my mind, “It is time for you to join my Church.” It was totally unexpected, but I began acting on the prompting immediately. I went to many Christian churches and spent time listening and learning their teachings about Jesus, but I did not receive a confirmation as to which I should join—until I came to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

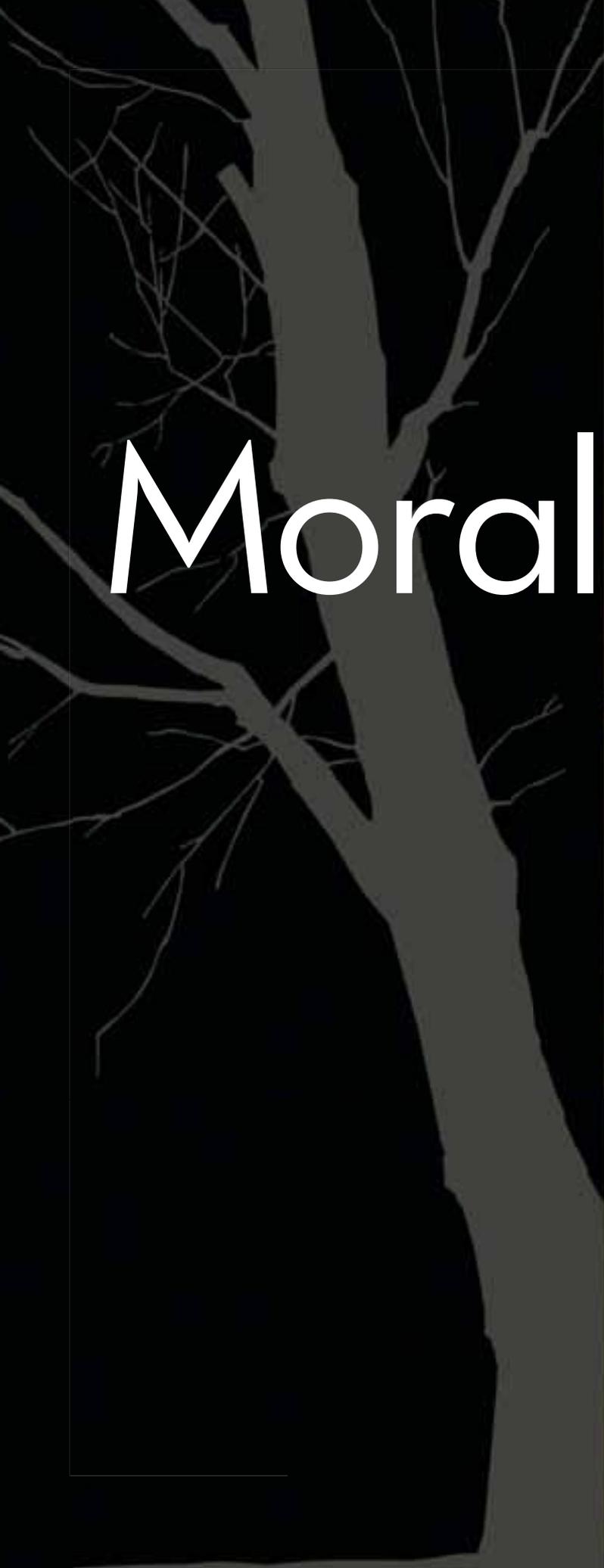
I still remember the first time I walked into a Latter-day Saint meetinghouse. A missionary greeted me, and I asked: “Why is your church’s name so long? What does

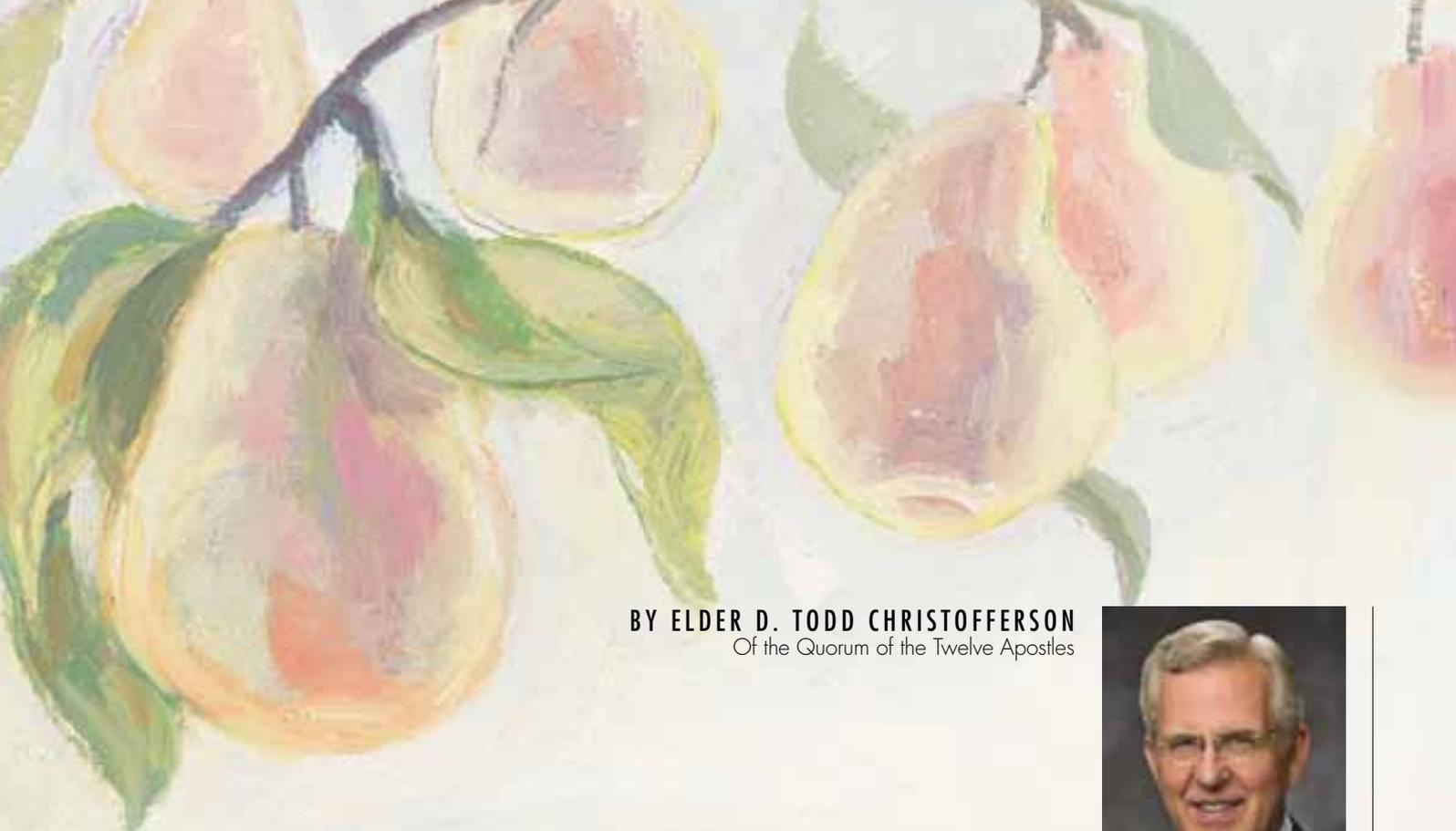
‘Latter-day Saints’ mean? I just want to learn about Jesus. Can you teach me?”

Unlike the native Christian preachers I had met in Taiwan, the sister missionaries were not able to speak enough Chinese to respond to everything I asked. But when I had questions about doctrine and teachings, the Spirit taught me and urged me to study the scriptures. Two months later I was baptized.

I once felt small and insignificant, but God has lifted me and led me to His true Church. My testimony of the restored gospel has been strengthened by a full-time mission and an eternal marriage. Now, as a mother of four precious children, I gratefully teach them to seek after the living God, who daily teaches me that through faith and sacrifice I may taste eternal joy. ■

Moral Agency





BY ELDER D. TODD CHRISTOFFERSON
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



In years past we generally used the term *free agency*. That is not incorrect. More recently we have taken note that *free agency* does not appear in the scriptures. They talk of our being “free to choose” and “free to act” for ourselves (2 Nephi 2:27; 10:23; see also Helaman 14:30) and of our obligation to do many things of our own “free will” (D&C 58:27). But the word *agency* appears either by itself or with the modifier *moral*: “That every man may act in doctrine and principle . . . according to the *moral agency* which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment” (D&C 101:78; emphasis added). When we use the term *moral agency*, we are appropriately emphasizing the accountability that is an essential part of the divine gift of agency. We are moral beings and agents unto ourselves, free to choose but also responsible for our choices.

The Elements of Moral Agency

What, then, are the elements of moral agency? To me there are three.

First, there must be alternatives among

which to choose. Lehi spoke of opposites, or “opposition”—righteousness and its opposite, wickedness; holiness versus misery; good versus bad. Without opposites, Lehi said, “All things must needs be a compound in one; . . . no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility” (2 Nephi 2:11).

He further explained that for these opposites or alternatives to exist, there must be law. Law provides us the options. It is by the operation of laws that things happen. By using or obeying a law, one can bring about a particular result—and by disobedience, the opposite result. Without law there could be no God, for He would be powerless to cause anything to happen (see 2 Nephi 2:13). Without law, neither He nor we would be able to predict or choose a particular outcome by a given action. Our existence and the creation around us are convincing evidence that God, the Creator, exists and that our mortal world consists of “both things to act and things to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:14)—or, in other words, choices.

With His gift of moral agency, our Heavenly Father has graciously provided us help to exercise that agency in a way that will yield precious, positive fruit in our life here and hereafter.



Many of God's children fall into unanticipated traps and unhappiness because they either lack or ignore gospel light. They are unaware of their options or are confused about the outcomes of their choices.

Second, for us to have agency, we must not only have alternatives, but we must also know what they are. If we are unaware of the choices available, the existence of those choices is meaningless to us. Lehi called this being “enticed by the one or the other” (2 Nephi 2:16). He recalled the situation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when they were presented with a choice, “even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter” (2 Nephi 2:15). Adam and Eve’s choice, of course, brought about the Fall, which brought with it a knowledge of good and evil, opening to their understanding a multitude of new choices. Had they remained in Eden, “they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin” (2 Nephi 2:23). But with the Fall, both they and we gain sufficient knowledge and understanding to be enticed by good and evil—we attain a state of

accountability and can recognize the alternatives before us.

The beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that it pours knowledge into our souls and shows things in their true light. With that enhanced perspective, we can discern more clearly the choices before us and their consequences. We can, therefore, make more intelligent use of our agency. Many of God’s children fall into unanticipated traps and unhappiness because they either lack or ignore gospel light. They are unaware of

their options or are confused about the outcomes of their choices. Ignorance effectively limits their agency.

Third is the next element of agency: the freedom to make choices (see 2 Nephi 10:23). This freedom to act for ourselves in choosing among alternatives is often referred to in the scriptures as agency itself. For this freedom we are indebted to God. It is His gift to us (see Moses 4:3).

“The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren;

they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency” (Moses 7:32).

King Benjamin reminded us that in addition to giving us the freedom to choose, God makes it possible for us to use the gift because He “is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another” (Mosiah 2:21).

Freedom of choice is the freedom to obey or disobey existing laws—not the freedom to alter their consequences. Law, as mentioned earlier, exists as a foundational element of moral agency with fixed outcomes that do not vary according to our opinions or preferences. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observed, “We are responsible to use our agency in a world of choices. It will not do to pretend that our agency has been taken away when we are not free to exercise it without unwelcome consequences.”¹

Satan’s Attack on Agency

We recognize the gift of agency as a central aspect of the plan of salvation proposed by the Father in the great premortal council, and that “there was war in heaven” (Revelation 12:7) to defend and preserve it. The Lord revealed to Moses:

“Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;

“And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice” (Moses 4:3–4).

Satan has not ceased his efforts “to destroy the agency of man.” He promotes conduct and choices that limit our freedom to choose by replacing the influence of the Holy Spirit with his own domination (see D&C 29:40; 93:38–39).

Yielding to his temptations leads to a narrower and narrower range of choices until none remains and to addictions that leave us powerless to resist. While Satan cannot actually destroy law and truth, he accomplishes the same result in the lives of those who heed him by convincing them that whatever they think is right *is* right and that there is no ultimate truth—every man is his own god, and there is no sin.

Of course Satan’s ongoing opposition is a useful and even necessary part of moral agency. The scripture states, “It must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet” (D&C 29:39).

Remember, though, that we retain the right and power of independent action.² God does not intend that we yield to temptation. Like Jesus, we can gain all we need in the way of a mortal experience without yielding.

The Central Role of Jesus Christ

We have reviewed the elements of moral agency and its divine origins, but we need to always remember that agency would have no meaning without the vital contribution of Jesus Christ. His central role began with His support of the Father’s plan and His willingness to become the essential Savior under that plan. The plan required a setting for its implementation, and Jesus was instrumental in the creation of this planet for that purpose. Most important, while the Fall of Adam was a critical element of the plan of salvation, the Fall would also have frustrated the plan if certain of its consequences were not mitigated by the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It was necessary in God’s plan for our future happiness and glory that we become morally free and responsible. For that to happen, we needed an experience apart from Him where our choices would determine our destiny. The Fall of Adam provided the spiritual death needed to separate us from God and place us in this mortal condition, as well as the physical death needed to provide an end to the mortal experience. As Alma put it:

“And now, ye see by this that our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord; and thus we see they became subjects to follow after their own will” (Alma 42:7).

Death had to be permitted, but it also had to be overcome or we could not return to the presence of God. Jacob, the brother of Nephi, explained:

“For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection. . . .

“ . . . For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more.

“And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself. . . .

“O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit” (2 Nephi 9:6, 8–10).

Thus, if our separation from God and our physical death were permanent, moral agency would mean nothing. Yes, we would be free to make choices, but what would be the point? The end result would always be the same no matter what our actions: death with no hope of resurrection and no hope of heaven. As good or as bad as we might choose to be, we would all end up “angels to a devil.”

With resurrection through Jesus Christ, the Fall can achieve its essential purpose without becoming a permanent death sentence. “Hell must deliver up its captive spirits,” “the grave must deliver up its captive bodies,” and “the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous” so that “the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh, save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect” (2 Nephi 9:12, 13).

But there was one more thing that Christ needed to accomplish so that moral agency could have a positive potential. Just as death would doom us and render our agency meaningless but for the redemption of Christ, even so, without His grace, our sins and bad choices would leave us forever lost. There would be no way of fully recovering from our mistakes, and being unclean, we could never live again in the presence of the “Man of Holiness” (Moses 6:57; see also 3 Nephi 27:19).

We cannot look to the law to save us when we have broken the law (see 2 Nephi 2:5). We need a Savior, a Mediator who can overcome the effects of our sins and errors so that they are not necessarily fatal. It is because of the Atonement of Christ that we can recover from bad choices and be justified under the law as if we had not sinned.

“Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

“Behold he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (2 Nephi 2:6–7; see also Alma 42:22–24).

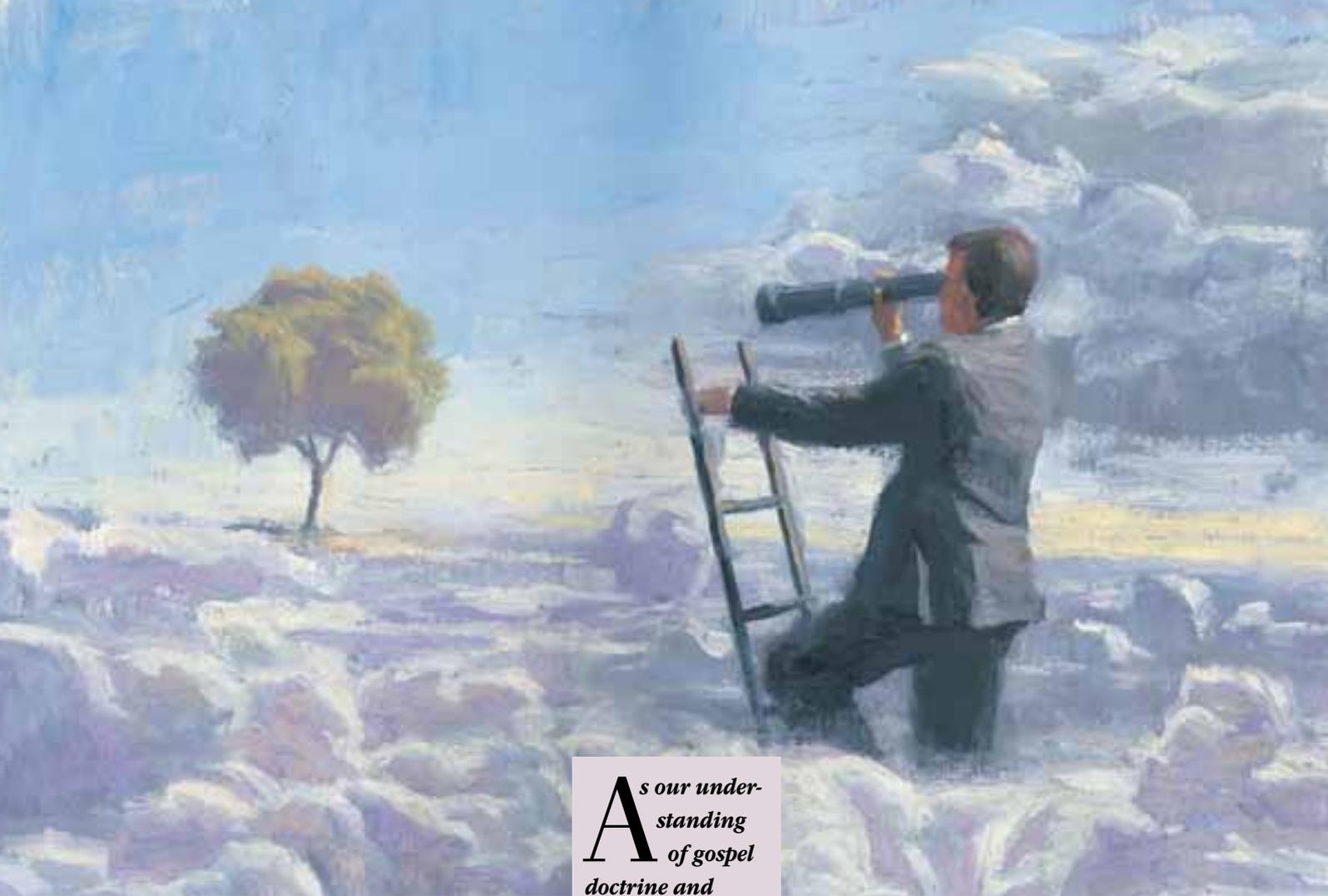
The Savior’s Exemplary Use of Moral Agency

The Savior’s use of moral agency during His lifetime is an instructive example for us. At one point in His teaching He revealed the principle that guided His choices: “He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29; see also 3 Nephi 11:11).

I believe that much of the Lord’s power is attributable to the fact that He never wavered in that determination. He had a clear, consistent direction. Whatever the Father desired, Jesus chose to do.

Being Jesus’s obedient disciple—just as He is the Father’s obedient disciple—leads to truth and freedom: “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

To the secular world it seems a paradox that greater submission to God yields greater freedom. The world



As our understanding of gospel doctrine and principles grows, our agency expands. Think of a ladder—each new law or commandment we learn is like one more rung on the ladder that enables us to climb higher.

looks at things through Korihor's lens, considering obedience to God's laws and ordinances to be "bondage" (Alma 30:24, 27). So how do obedience and truth make us free? We can easily think of some practical ways in which truth gives us the ability to do things we otherwise could not do or to avoid disasters we might otherwise suffer.

A young British girl learned in school about the characteristics of water along a shoreline that signal the approach of a tsunami. Two weeks later, on vacation with her family in Thailand, she observed those phenomena and insistently warned her parents and the people around her. They escaped to higher ground just in time when the December 26, 2004, tsunami hit south Asia. More than a hundred people owe their lives to that girl's knowledge of certain truths of the natural world.³

But the Lord's statement that the truth will make us free has broader significance. "Truth," He tells us, "is

knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" (D&C 93:24). Possession of this knowledge of things past, present, and future is a critical element of God's glory: "The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth" (D&C 93:36). Does anyone doubt that, as a consequence of possessing all light and truth, God possesses ultimate freedom to be and to do?

Likewise, as our understanding of gospel doctrine and principles grows, our agency expands. First, we have more choices and can achieve more and receive greater blessings because we have more laws that we can obey. Think of a ladder—each new law or commandment we learn is like one more rung on the ladder that enables us to climb higher. Second, with added understanding we can make more intelligent choices because we see more clearly not only the alternatives but also their potential outcomes. As Professor Daniel H. Ludlow once



The gift of agency is intended to give us experience. We “taste the bitter, that [we] may know to prize the good.”

expressed it, “The extent of our individual . . . agency . . . is in direct proportion to the number and kind of laws we know and keep.”⁴

The Lord promises that if, in the exercise of our agency, we follow His example and always do those things that please Him and the Father, then we will come to know and understand all things:

“And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things” (D&C 88:67).

“That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24).

“He that keepeth [God’s] commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things” (D&C 93:28).

“And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man

through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.

“And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father” (D&C 84:46–47).

These are magnificent promises: to be filled with light and truth, to comprehend all things, to be glorified in truth and know all things, and to come even unto the Father. I have no doubt regarding the literal fulfillment of these promises in those who exercise their agency to choose obedience, but along with you, I recognize that they are not realized in a day. Much obedience and experience are required before we enjoy a fulness. We should, however, be encouraged by what John said of the Savior:

“And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace;

“And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness” (D&C 93:12–13).



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. List and discuss the three elements of moral agency as described by Elder Christofferson. Consider doing the following activity: Present your family with two identical boxes with different items inside, for example, a rock and a cookie. Have them choose a box and open it. Ask if they would have made a different choice had they been aware of what was inside both boxes. Read the paragraphs associated with the second element of moral agency and discuss how knowledge helps us to make better choices. Conclude by reading the final paragraph of the article.

Testing as Part of the Essential Experience

A consistent effort will educate and refine our desires so that in time our desires will become aligned with the Father's. But we should expect to be tested. The gift of agency is intended to give us experience. We "taste the bitter, that [we] may know to prize the good" (Moses 6:55). And Jesus, "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8).

Joseph Smith was told to expect some severe opposition despite making good choices. Said the Lord, "Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7). We are in a mortal experience because we cannot become as God without that experience. We must prove to Him and to ourselves that we can consistently make the right choices and then stick to those choices, come what may.

Some think that they should be spared from any adversity if they keep God's commandments, but it is "in the furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48:10; 1 Nephi 20:10) that we are chosen. The Lord's promise is not to spare us the conflict but to preserve and console us in our afflictions and to consecrate them for our gain (see 2 Nephi 2:2; 4:19–26; Jacob 3:1).

Exercising agency in a setting that sometimes includes opposition and hardship is what makes life more than a simple multiple-choice test. God is interested in what we are becoming as a result of our choices. He is not satisfied if our exercise of moral agency is simply a robotic effort at keeping some rules. Our Savior wants us to become something, not just do some things.⁵ He is endeavoring to make us independently strong—more able to act for ourselves than perhaps those of any prior generation. We must be righteous, even when He withdraws His Spirit, or, as President Brigham Young said, even "in the dark."⁶

Using our agency to choose God's will, and not slackening even when the going gets hard, will not make us God's puppet; it will make us like Him. God gave us agency, and Jesus showed us how to use it so that we could eventually learn what They know, do what They do, and become what They are.

Remember that with His gift of moral agency, our Heavenly Father has graciously provided us help to exercise that agency in a way that will yield precious, positive fruit in our life here and hereafter. Among other resources, we have the scriptures that contain the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, mentors and parents who love us, the voice of prophets and apostles living among us, the covenants and ordinances of the priesthood and the temple, the gift of the Holy Ghost, prayer, and the Church. May we draw upon these resources constantly to guide our choices, always doing those things that please God. ■

From a devotional address delivered January 31, 2006, at Brigham Young University. For the full text, visit <http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=1515>.

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, "Weightier Matters," in *Brigham Young University 1998–99 Speeches* (1999), 148.
2. "If man is to be rewarded for righteousness and punished for evil, then common justice demands that he be given the power of independent action. . . . If he were coerced to do right at all times, or were helplessly enticed to commit sin, he would merit neither a blessing for the first nor punishment for the second" (David O. McKay, "Free Agency . . . A Divine Gift," *Improvement Era*, May 1950, 366).
3. See "Girl Honored for Saving Lives with Pre-Tsunami Warning," *Deseret Morning News*, Dec. 27, 2005, A2.
4. Daniel H. Ludlow, "Moral Free Agency," in *BYU Speeches of the Year 1974* (1975), 182.
5. "The Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become" (Dallin H. Oaks, "The Challenge to Become," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32; emphasis in original).
6. Brigham Young's Office Journal, Jan. 28, 1857, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; as quoted in James E. Faust, "The Light in Their Eyes," *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 22.



Our Refined Heavenly Home

BY ELDER DOUGLAS L. CALLISTER
Of the Seventy

If we could part the veil and observe our heavenly home, we would be impressed with the cultivated minds and hearts of those who so happily live there. I imagine that our heavenly parents are exquisitely refined. In this great gospel of emulation, one of the purposes of our earthly probation is to become like them in every conceivable way so that we may be comfortable in the presence of heavenly parentage and, in the language of Enos, see their faces “with pleasure” (Enos 1:27).

President Brigham Young (1801–77) said, “We are trying to be the image of those who live in heaven; we are trying to pat[t]ern after them, to look like them, to walk and talk like them.”¹ I would like to peek behind the veil that temporarily separates us from our heavenly home and paint a word picture of the virtuous, lovely, and refined circumstances that exist there. I will speak of the language, literature, music, and art of heaven, as well as the immaculate appearance of heavenly beings, for I believe that in heaven we will find each of these in pure and perfected form.

The nearer we get to God, the more easily our spirits are touched by refined and beautiful things.

Language

God speaks all languages, and He speaks them properly. He is restrained and modest of speech. When God described the grand creational process of this earth, He said in measured tones that “it was good” (Genesis 1:4). We would be disappointed if God had used “awesome” or other exaggerated phrases.

Britain’s Ben Jonson said: “Language most shows a man. Speak, that I may see thee.”² Our language reveals our thoughts, virtues, insecurities, doubts—even the homes from which we come. We will feel more comfortable in Heavenly Father’s presence if we have developed proper habits of speech.

I suppose that the language of heaven, properly spoken, may approach a form of music. Did C. S. Lewis have this in mind when he wrote, “Isn’t it funny the way some combinations of words can give you—almost apart from their meaning—a thrill like music?”³ At the birth of Jesus the angels appeared and spoke, not sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). We now try to capture that beauty in song, but the original angelic utterance was in spoken words.

In his biography on Ralph Waldo Emerson, Van Wyck Brooks relates that Emerson was



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invited to speak at the commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the great poet Shakespeare's birth. After proper introduction Emerson presented himself at the pulpit and then sat down. He had forgotten his notes. He preferred to say nothing rather than words not well measured. For some, it was Emerson in one of his most eloquent hours.⁴

Refinement in speech is more than polished elocution. It results from purity of thought and sincerity of expression. A child's prayer on occasion may reflect the language of heaven more nearly than a Shakespearean soliloquy.

Refinement in speech is reflected not only in our choice of words but also in the things we talk about. There are those who always speak of themselves; they are either insecure or proud. There are those who always speak of others; they are usually boring. There are those who speak of stirring ideas, compelling books, and inspiring doctrine; these are the few who make their mark in this world. The subjects discussed in heaven are not trifling or mundane; they are sublime beyond our most extended imagination. We will feel at home there if we are rehearsed on this earth in conversing about the refined and noble, clothing our expressions in well-measured words.

Literature

Is Friday evening a frenetic flight to see where the entertainment and action will be? Could our society today produce an Isaac Newton or a Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart? Can 85 channels and uncountable DVDs ever fill our insatiable appetite to be entertained? Do any unwisely become addicted to computer games or Internet surfing, thereby missing the richer experiences of great reading, conversations, and enjoyment of music?

I don't know whether our heavenly home has a television set or a DVD player, but in my mind's imagery it surely has a grand piano and a magnificent library. There was a fine library

in the home of President Gordon B. Hinckley's (1910–2008) youth. It was not an ostentatious home, but the library contained about 1,000 volumes of the rich literature of the world, and President Hinckley spent his early years immersed in these books. To be well-read, however, it is not necessary to possess expensive collections of literature, for they are available to rich and poor alike in the libraries of the world.

President David O. McKay (1873–1970) was inclined to awaken daily at 4:00 a.m., skim read up to two books, and then commence his labors at 6:00 a.m. He could quote 1,000 poems from memory. He referred to the grand masters of literature as the "minor prophets." He was a living embodiment of the scriptural admonition to "seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom" (D&C 88:118).

My wife and I recently spent four years on Church assignment in Eastern Europe. We often traveled on the Moscow underground subway, called the Metro. We noticed the bowed heads of the Russian passengers, for they were reading Tolstoy, Chekhov, Dostoyevsky, or Pushkin—and, sometimes, Mark Twain. The people were poor, but they were not obsessed with their poverty. They possessed the rich tradition of Russian literature, art, and music.

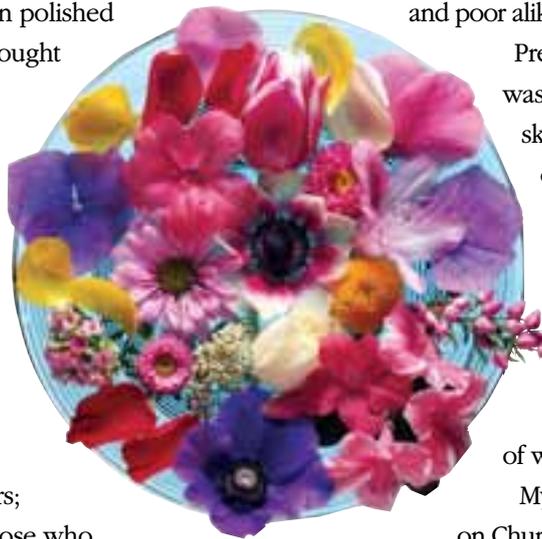
President McKay noted: "As with companions so with books. We may choose those which will make us better, more intelligent, more appreciative of the good and the beautiful in the world, or we may choose the trashy, the vulgar, the obscene, which will make us feel as though we've been 'wallowing in the mire.'"⁵

Of course, the scriptures stand paramount among good literature, for they are not founded on the opinions of men.

Music

If we could peek behind the heavenly veil, we would likely be inspired by the music of heaven, which is probably more glorious than any music we have heard on this earth.

When some music has passed the tests of time and been



cherished by the noble and refined, our failure to appreciate it is not a condemnation of grand music. The omission is within. If a young person grows up on a steady diet of hamburgers and french fries, he is not likely to become a gourmet. But the fault is not with fine food. He just grew up on something less. Some have grown up on a steady diet of musical french fries.

This would be a good time to sift through your music library and choose primarily that which uplifts and inspires. It is part of the maturing process of your eternal journey. This would also be a fine time to learn a musical instrument or improve musical skills now partially possessed.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “We . . . live in a world that is too prone to the tasteless and we need to provide an opportunity to cultivate a taste for the finest music. And likewise, we’re in a world that’s so attuned to the now. We need to permit people to be more attuned to the best music of all the ages.”⁶

Recognizing the penetrating influence of great music, Oscar Wilde had one of his characters say, “After playing Chopin, I feel as if I had been weeping over sins that I had never committed, and mourning over tragedies that were not my own.”⁷ After the first performance of *Messiah*, Handel, responding to a compliment, said, “My lord, I should be sorry if I only entertained them—I wish to make them better.”⁸ Haydn “dressed in his best clothes to compose because he said he was going before his maker.”⁹

Some events in life are so sublime that they cannot be imagined without the companionship of beautiful music. We could not have a Christmas without carols or a general conference without sacred anthems. And

there could not be a heaven without music of surpassing beauty. President Young said, “There is no music in hell, for all good music belongs to heaven.”¹⁰ It would be punishment enough to go to hell and not hear a note of music for all eternity.

Art, Appearance, and Attitude

What I have shared about bringing great language, literature, and music into the home may be said with equal truth of great art—perhaps tastefully displayed in our heavenly home. It may also be said of our physical appearance and manners, the order of our homes, how we offer our prayers, and how we read God’s word.

I once visited briefly with the great actress Audrey Hepburn while she was making the movie *My Fair Lady*. She spoke of the opening scene in the movie in which she depicted a modest, unpolished flower girl. Her face had been besmirched with charcoal to make her seem part of her surroundings. “But,” she said with a twinkle in her eye, “I was wearing my perfume. Inside I still knew I was a lady.” It doesn’t take expensive perfume to make a lady, but it does require cleanliness, modesty, self-respect, and pride in one’s appearance.

Many years ago an associate of mine decided he would please his wife by sharing with her a specific compliment each night as he arrived home. One night he praised her cooking. A second night he thanked her for excellence in housekeeping. A third night he acknowledged her fine influence on the children. The fourth night, before he could speak, she said, “I know what you are doing. I thank you for it. But don’t say any of those things. Just tell me you think I am beautiful.”

She expressed an important need she

The nearer we get to God, the more easily our spirits are touched by refined and beautiful things.

May we become worthy to enjoy the refined society of heavenly parentage, for we are of the race of the Gods, being “children of the most High.”

had. Women ought to be praised for all the gifts they possess—including their attentiveness to their personal appearance—that so unselfishly add to the richness of the lives of others. We must not let ourselves go and become so casual—even sloppy—in our appearance that we distance ourselves from the beauty heaven has given us.

Some flippantly say, “How I look has nothing to do with how God feels about me.” But it is possible for both earthly parents and heavenly parents to have unspoken disappointment in their offspring without diminished love.

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), sixth President of the Church, owned few things, but he took care of them. He was fastidious in his appearance. He pressed his dollar bills to remove the wrinkles. He allowed none but himself to pack his overnight bag. He knew where every article, nut, and bolt of the household was, and each had its place.

Would this be true of the environment in which you live? Is it a house of order? Need you dust, clean, and rearrange before you invite the Spirit of the Lord into your home? President Lorenzo Snow (1814–1901) said: “The Lord does not intend that the Saints shall live always in dens and caves of the earth, but that they shall build fine houses. When the Lord comes he will not expect to meet a dirty people, but a people of refinement.”¹¹

David Starr Jordan, former president of Stanford University, wrote: “To be vulgar is to do that which is not the best of its kind. It is to do poor things in poor ways, and to be satisfied with that. . . . It is vulgar to wear dirty linen when one is not engaged in dirty work. It is vulgar to like poor music, to read weak books, to feed on sensational newspapers, . . . to find amusement in trashy novels, to enjoy vulgar

theatres, to find pleasure in cheap jokes.”¹²

Your Father in Heaven has sent you away from His presence to have experiences you would not have had in your heavenly home—all in preparation for the conferral of a kingdom. He doesn’t want you to lose your vision. You are children of an exalted being. You are foreordained to preside as kings and queens. You will live in a home and environment of infinite refinement and beauty, as reflected in the language, literature, music, art, and order of heaven.

I close with the words of President Young: “Let us . . . show to the world that we have talent and taste, and prove to the heavens that our minds are set on beauty and true excellence, so that we can become worthy to enjoy the society of angels.”¹³

Even more, may we become worthy to enjoy the refined society of heavenly parentage, for we are of the race of the Gods, being “children of the most High” (Psalm 82:6). ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on September 19, 2006. For the full text in English, visit <http://speeches.byu.edu>.

NOTES

1. Brigham Young, “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, Mar. 5, 1862, 1.
2. In Algernon Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, ed. Sir Edmund Gosse and others (1926), 120.
3. C. S. Lewis, *They Stand Together: The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves (1914–1963)* (1979), 96.
4. See Wendell J. Ashton, *In Your Own Image* (1959), 113.
5. David O. McKay, *Pathways to Happiness*, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay (1957), 15.
6. Neal A. Maxwell, in LaMar Barrus, “The Joy of Music,” *New Perspectives*, Apr. 1997, 10.
7. *The Works of Oscar Wilde* (1909), 112.
8. In “A Tribute to Handel,” *Improvement Era*, May 1929, 574.
9. In Hal Williams, “Dr. Reid Nibley on Acquiring a Taste for Classical Music,” *BYU Today*, Apr. 1980, 14.
10. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 242.
11. Lorenzo Snow, in *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors*, ed. Matthias F. Cowley (1964), 468.
12. David Starr Jordan, “The Strength of Being Clean,” in *Inspirational Classics for Latter-day Saints*, comp. Jack M. Lyon (2000), 191.
13. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 424.

PARTICIPATE IN SINCERE PRAYER



Prayerfully teach these scriptures and quotations or, if needed, another principle that will bless the sisters you visit. Bear testimony of the doctrine. Invite those you visit to share what they have felt and learned.



Sincere Prayer Has Strengthening Power

Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president: “Think of our combined strength if every sister had sincere prayer every morning and night or, better yet, prayed unceasingly as the Lord has commanded. If every family had family prayer daily . . . , we would be stronger” (“What Latter-day Saint Women Do Best: Stand Strong and Immovable,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 110).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Prayer changes our lives. Through it we draw near to the Lord, and he

reaches out his finger and touches us, so we never again are the same.

“Prayer is a great tower of strength, a pillar of unending righteousness, a mighty force that moves mountains and saves souls” (“Patterns of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 1984, 32).

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

“Every honest and sincere prayer adds another piece to chain-mail armor. . . . One of the most important ways to clothe yourselves in the armor of God is to make sure that prayer—earnest, sincere, consistent prayer—is part of your daily lives” (“Be Strong in the Lord,” *Ensign*, July 2004, 10).

D&C 112:10: “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.”

Sincere Prayer Is Holy Communication

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency: “First, prayer is a humble acknowledgment that God is our Father and that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. Second, it is a sincere confession of sin and transgression and a request for forgiveness. Third, it is recognition that we need help beyond our own ability. Fourth, it is an opportunity to express thanksgiving and gratitude to our Creator. It is

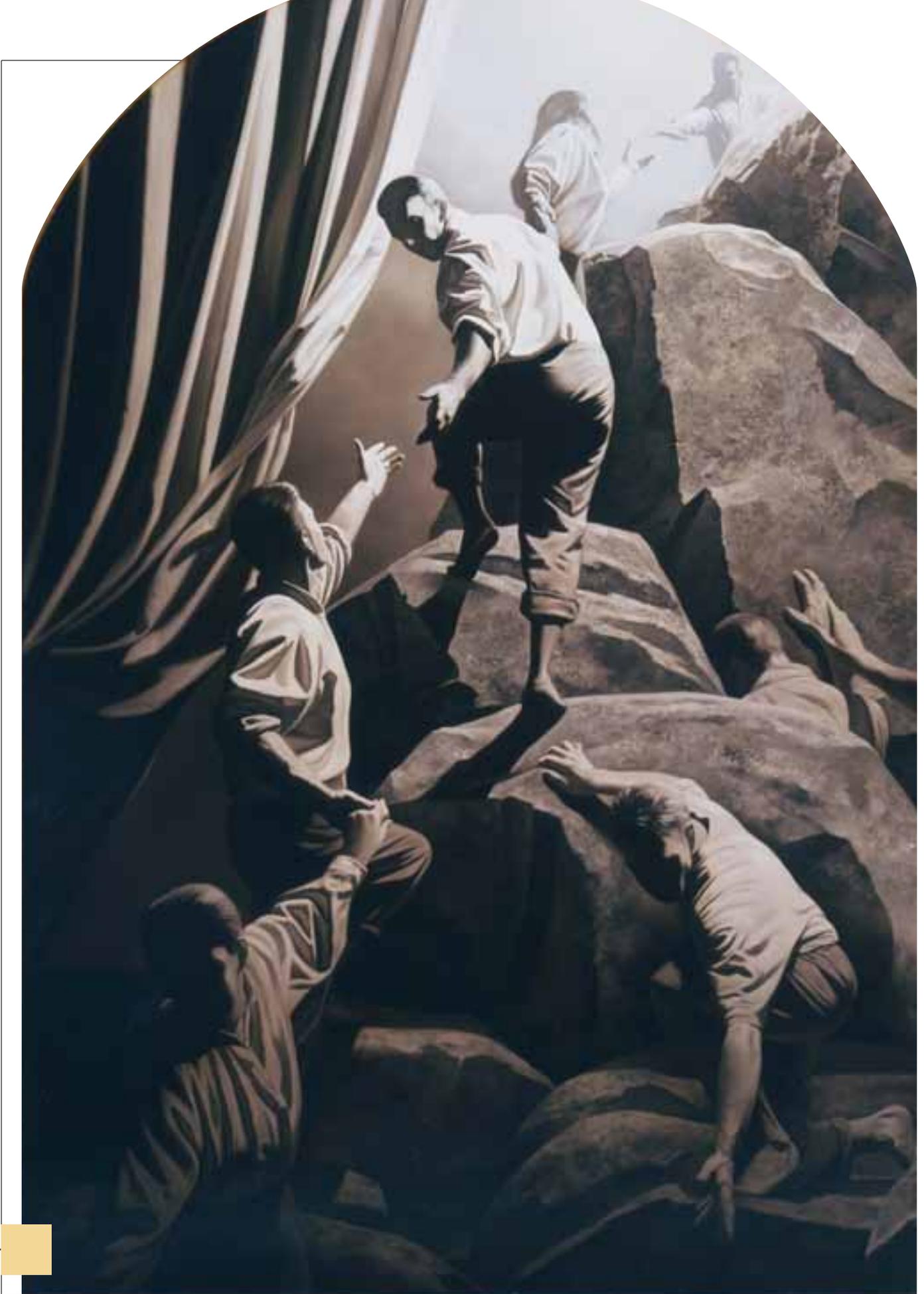
important that we frequently say: ‘We thank Thee . . .,’ ‘We acknowledge before Thee . . .,’ ‘We are grateful unto Thee . . .’ Fifth, it is a privilege to ask Deity for specific blessings.

“ . . . Sincere prayers come from the heart. Indeed, sincerity requires that we draw from the earnest feelings of our hearts” (“The Lifeline of Prayer,” *Liahona*, July 2002, 62; *Ensign*, May 2002, 59–60).

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Meaningful prayer requires both holy communication and consecrated work. Blessings require some effort on our part before we can obtain them, and prayer, as ‘a form of work, . . . is an appointed means for obtaining the highest of all blessings’ (Bible Dictionary, ‘Prayer,’ 753). We press forward and persevere in the consecrated work of prayer, after we say ‘amen,’ by acting upon the things we have expressed to Heavenly Father” (“Ask in Faith,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2008, 95).

President Thomas S. Monson: “As we offer unto the Lord our family and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in Him. Let us remember the injunction of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews: ‘For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.’ If any of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now” (“A Royal Priesthood,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 61). ■



THE ASCENT, BY DAVID EDWARD LINN, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM

Addiction Recovery

Healing One Step at a Time

BY LIA McCLANAHAN
Church Magazines

About a year ago, I woke up in a trailer someplace in Illinois, full of drugs and alcohol, and I didn't remember anything I'd done. I remembered only that on my business trip, as soon as the plane landed, it took me all of about 10 minutes to ditch my colleague, go straight to the bar, and disappear for three days. The second day—the day I was supposed to fly home—was my daughter's birthday. Just a year ago.

A year ago Mark (names have been changed) didn't know how he would overcome his addiction to drugs and alcohol. He had already tried to quit. He had visited with his bishop, been to professional counselors, gone through rehabilitation centers, and exerted all the willpower he could, but nothing brought permanent change. Soon after that critical moment in Illinois, he found the Church's 12-step addiction recovery program, sponsored by LDS Family Services. In the program, he found the principles and direction that would change his life.

The change occurred as he studied and applied the principles taught in the program workbook and weekly recovery meetings. The workbook guides readers toward recovery using 12 steps, each of which addresses an essential principle

In the Church's addiction recovery program, those who suffer from addiction learn through the Atonement of Jesus Christ how to experience the miracle of living in recovery.

of recovery such as honesty, hope, or trust in God. At the weekly meetings, participants are able to gain strength from others and share their own experiences of applying the principles.

Mark learned that the journey from addiction to recovery is a difficult one, but knowing people who have

already made that journey can give hope to those who struggle. At each meeting a facilitator—someone who has experienced recovery—encourages others by sharing insights based on his or her own recovery. Mark is now a facilitator. Each week he shares his experiences (included in this article in italics) to help others understand that they are not alone and that addiction can be overcome.

The Trap of Addiction

After each time I gave in, I would say, "This time is going to be different. Please, Lord, help me. I don't want this to be a part of my life." Yet it continued to be.

Mark was an active member of the Church. He never thought he could get trapped in an addiction. Living the standards of the Church, such as the Word of Wisdom, keeps members safe from many addictive behaviors, but in a world where harmful influences are increasingly

Grace, a power that comes through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, makes recovery possible. Through grace, participants in the recovery program regain the hope they have lost.



pervasive, addiction is a growing problem, even among Latter-day Saints. Although Mark struggled with alcohol and drugs, addictions aren't limited to substance abuse. They can include gambling, pornography, eating disorders, inappropriate sexual behavior, and overdependence on another person.

At any given recovery meeting, a variety of addictions may be represented. Steve, for example, was addicted to prescription drugs. He initially took medication for a back injury, but after his injury had healed, he lied and eventually stole in order to get more prescription drugs. Steve, who served as a counselor in a bishopric, ended up in jail wearing his suit one Sunday when he was supposed to be conducting sacrament meeting. It was at that point he knew he needed help.

In some locations, groups created specifically for pornography problems are available. Garrett, who regularly attends such a group, says at first he didn't realize his habit was an addiction. "There's no way I would have bought a pornographic magazine, but it was so easy to get on the Internet," he says. He realized he had to change when his marriage was on the verge of falling apart.

Coming to the Program

My inability to reconcile my testimony with my behavior, along with my inability to forsake my addiction, put me in a place where the shame was unbearable. Finally I was willing to try something different.

An oft-repeated phrase among program participants is that an individual seeks recovery "when the pain of the problem becomes greater than the pain of the solution." When Mark reached that point, he took a friend's suggestion and came to a Latter-day Saint addiction-recovery meeting. Some people decide on their own to come. Others are encouraged to attend by friends or priesthood leaders. Some have been ordered by a court of law to attend 12-step recovery meetings.

Many are reluctant to attend a meeting because they feel ashamed of their struggle. In her work as a Church-service missionary, Suzanne marvels to see the change that comes over the participants. "When they first start coming to the meetings," she says, "their heads are often down. They are embarrassed and filled with guilt and fear. After a few weeks their heads lift up with newfound hope. They realize they're not alone in their struggle."

Church-service missionaries are ready to welcome participants and offer them hope and encouragement. Participants focus on a different step from the workbook each week, and the facilitator shares his or her own experience with that step. Those who wish to share their thoughts on recovery introduce themselves by their first names only. A meeting always includes a reminder of the principles of anonymity and confidentiality, which are critical to fostering a safe atmosphere.

An important aspect of the meetings is that participants

are in a setting where they can feel the Spirit again. They can say a prayer and bear testimony, even if their choices have led to their being disfellowshipped or excommunicated. This spiritual environment is a source of great strength to participants as they focus on the 12 steps.

Steps to Recovery

Working the steps of this program simplified the gospel in a way that I could apply the testimony I had always had.

As Mark discovered, the steps of the addiction recovery program are a systematic way of implementing gospel principles. The 12 steps are adapted from the original Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, but the Church's program is unique because it puts the steps into "a framework of the doctrines and beliefs of the Church."¹ In the addiction recovery program, the 12 steps are actually steps to accessing the power of the Atonement.

The workbook, *Addiction Recovery Program: A Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing* (item no. 36764), outlines the 12 steps and the principles associated with them. Each step has a scripture study section with questions to ponder and space for writing. One participant says that the straightforward approach of the 12 steps gave him hope. By the time Clifford awoke from a coma caused by a drug overdose, his marriage and career had ended. He wondered how he could ever put his life back together. "To have the gospel in little bite-sized steps, 12 of them—I could do that," he says.

Many say that steps four and five, which focus on personal inventory and confession, are the most challenging. But it depends on the individual. Paula, who struggled with compulsive eating and overdependence in her relationships, worked hardest on step eight—forgiving and restoring relationships—as she tried to forgive her abusive father. She says now, "I can't tell you how grateful I am for this miracle in my life: to love and forgive."

Hope in the Atonement

The change that has happened to me is I'm not miserable all the time. Sometimes it's not easy. Perhaps the Lord



RECEIVING THE POWER TO CHANGE

"If we will turn to the Lord and believe on His name, we can change. He will give us the power to change our lives, the power to put away bad thoughts and feelings from our hearts. We can be taken from 'the darkest abyss' to 'behold the marvelous light of God' (Mosiah 27:29). We can be forgiven. We can find peace."

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "The Power to Change," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 123.

doesn't see fit to take it all from me right now, but He strengthens me so I can bear it patiently and cheerfully, and I can progress. He lightens it just enough that I learn the most that I can.

The gospel teaches that grace comes through the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see Ether 12:27). Grace is an enabling power that makes recovery possible. It is "divine means of help or strength" that helps us do good works we wouldn't be able to do or maintain by ourselves.²

Suzanne, who went through the program herself before becoming a Church-service missionary, says, "I knew that God could tell me what to do, but I never knew He had the power to help me do it. Now I understand the grace that comes through the Atonement of Jesus Christ."

Through grace, participants regain the hope they have lost. One participant, Edward, grew up in the Church, but his childhood insecurities left him feeling that he wasn't as good as other people. He says, "I didn't understand the Atonement, and I didn't love myself, so nothing really mattered." When he was in his 20s, he started drinking and using drugs in an attempt to dull his negative feelings—a pattern that continued for 20 years.

When he was arrested a second time for drunk driving, he was ordered to get treatment. In the Church's program, he learned that receiving forgiveness and regaining



HOW TO FIND AN ADDICTION RECOVERY GROUP

Go to www.ldsfamilyservices.org, and click on **Addiction Recovery Support Groups**. The workbook is available in Chinese, Danish, English, Finnish, German, Japanese, Mongolian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Ukrainian. Although using the workbook while attending group meetings is ideal, members in areas where a group has not been established will benefit from using the workbook while working with their priesthood leader or a professional therapist who is supportive of gospel principles and 12-step recovery.

If you are a priesthood leader interested in establishing the addiction recovery program in your area, contact your Area Presidency through ecclesiastical lines.



a sense of self-worth were possible. He attended church every Sunday, studied the 12 steps, and applied these gospel principles and actions to his life. He became willing to turn his life over to Heavenly Father and, in the process, learned how to love himself and how to let the Atonement work in his life. “I couldn’t overcome all these things by myself,” he says. “The Savior can do for me what I can’t do for myself.”

Those who struggle with addiction aren’t the only ones who can experience a mighty change: loved ones find that as they apply the 12 steps to their own lives and attend recovery meetings, they can experience the blessings of the Atonement in regard to their own grief. In some areas the addiction recovery program provides support groups for family and friends, who discover that the Savior can heal them of the pain, anger, and guilt that loved ones sometimes feel.

When Deborah learned of her son’s drug addiction, she was plagued by feelings of guilt as she thought about how she could have been a better mother. Then she discovered that she could apply the steps to herself. She says, “What I learned in the program is that no matter how my son is doing, I can still be happy and have Heavenly Father in my life.” She adds, “On the outside I look the same, but my life has completely changed on the inside.”

Shannon, whose husband faced a pornography addiction, attended the support group for spouses. As she participated, she noticed a change in herself as well. At first she focused on the pain she felt over her husband’s addiction. But then, as she started learning and applying the steps, a miraculous change occurred. She says, “I began talking less and less about my husband and more about what I had learned from each step. I began to see how the Lord was working in *my* life.”

The End Goal

In the past I was able to abstain for periods of time. I’d get myself back in good standing with the Church and serve in callings, and everyone would tell me how great I was. But I didn’t feel great on the inside at all. And that’s why

abstaining is just one part of it. True recovery is not doing it and not wanting to do it because our nature is changed.

Mark learned that through the Atonement, individuals can not only stop their addictive behaviors but also heal the underlying causes of their addiction. And with the help of their priesthood leaders, they can repent and bring the blessings of the gospel back into their lives. Doug LeCheminant of LDS Family Services clarifies the objective of the program: “Our end goal for those in the program is that they will be able to make and keep temple covenants—not just stay sober.” The sweetest fruits are activation, baptism or rebaptism, priesthood advancement, temple ordinances, and restoration of blessings.

Steve, who found himself in jail wearing his church suit, says, “Today I’m clean and sober because of my Heavenly Father and the 12 steps.” His activity in the Church is especially meaningful to him. “I am a father. I am a priests quorum adviser. I am also a facilitator because I want to give back to a program that gave so freely to me.”

Maintaining Recovery Day to Day

Every day I seek my Heavenly Father in prayer and through the scriptures. In the morning I read books about recovery, and I write my feelings and my impressions. I call a support person in the program to help clarify my thinking. I go to the meetings. I try to serve. And I have never relapsed on a day that I have done those things.

Those daily tasks keep Mark spiritually well. Others who have been through the program have discovered the same truth: maintaining spiritual strength requires continuous effort. No one is completely safe from relapse, but through daily gospel living, those who struggle with addiction come unto Christ and receive strength and hope.

“I’m learning bit by bit, precept upon precept,” says Mark. “My nature is changing, and it’s the first time since this started that I can say I have hope. I truly believe that I never have to relapse again.” ■

NOTES

1. James E. Faust, “The Power to Change,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 124.
2. See Bible Dictionary, “Grace,” 697; Guide to the Scriptures, “Grace,” 103.



THE 12 STEPS OF THE ADDICTION RECOVERY PROGRAM

1. Admit that you, of yourself, are powerless to overcome your addictions and that your life has become unmanageable.
2. Come to believe that the power of God can restore you to complete spiritual health.
3. Decide to turn your will and your life over to the care of God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.
4. Make a searching and fearless written moral inventory of yourself.
5. Admit to yourself, to your Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ, to proper priesthood authority, and to another person the exact nature of your wrongs.
6. Become entirely ready to have God remove all your character weaknesses.
7. Humbly ask Heavenly Father to remove your shortcomings.
8. Make a written list of all persons you have harmed and become willing to make restitution to them.
9. Wherever possible, make direct restitution to all persons you have harmed.
10. Continue to take personal inventory, and when you are wrong, promptly admit it.
11. Seek through prayer and meditation to know the Lord’s will and to have the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, share this message with others and practice these principles in all you do.

Run and Not Be Weary

One of the greatest blessings we received when we came to earth is a physical body. The Word of Wisdom, found in Doctrine and Covenants section 89, teaches us “the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days” (v. 2). Following are testimonies of the Word of Wisdom from Latter-day Saints around the world.

Never Too Young

I’m 13 years old, and I know that when we take care of our bodies, we will receive the blessings promised in the Word of Wisdom that we can “run and not be weary” (D&C 89:20). When I play sports, eat healthy food, and get enough sleep, I grow stronger. When I keep this commandment, I am free of addictive substances, and I am not under their control.

I know that Heavenly Father gave us the Word of Wisdom not to limit our lives but to help us live healthy and happy lives. Satan tries to tempt us into believing that smoking and drinking will make us popular, free, and happy. But that is not true. Sometimes it is hard to keep high standards, especially at school, but when I try to be a good example, I help my friends understand the importance of choosing the right.

The biggest blessing I have received from keeping the Word of Wisdom is the opportunity to have the Spirit as my constant guide. My goal is to be worthy to go to the temple one day.

Sevil V., Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Help with Diabetes

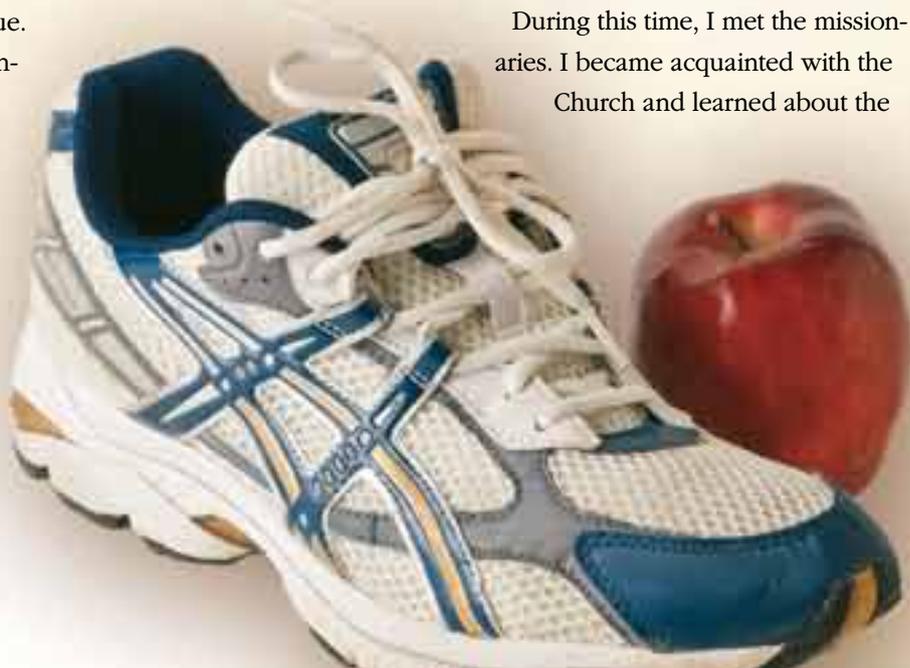
I am a 57-year-old grandmother who was diagnosed with diabetes in June 2006. In addition to using medication, I turned to the Word of Wisdom for help. I learned the value of regular exercise and a healthy diet. I lost 88 pounds (40 kg) and have kept the weight off. I felt very blessed for my obedience to the Word of Wisdom the day my doctor discontinued my medications for diabetes and high blood pressure. I have a testimony of the Word of Wisdom because the spiritual and physical blessings I have received through obedience to it continue to bless my life.

Beverly Rutherford, Washington, USA

Running Marathons at 73

I was born in Brazil with rickets—a disease characterized by distorted bones. At 19 I weighed 50 kilos (111 lbs) and was 1.64 meters (5'5") tall. As a result, I was not accepted into the military, so I began looking for ways to improve my physical condition. I began a series of exercises and ate a balanced diet.

During this time, I met the missionaries. I became acquainted with the Church and learned about the





commandments, including the Word of Wisdom. It was just what I needed. It gave me guidelines of foods to eat and a list of impure items to avoid, namely tobacco and strong drinks. By reading the Doctrine and Covenants, I learned about the need for rest and sleep (see D&C 88:124).

I gained strength and weighed 78 kilos (172 lbs). I became a champion weight lifter. I also did judo and swam. Today at age 73 I am a marathon runner and have finished 30 marathons. In 2005 and 2006, I was second in my age class in Brazil. I have excellent health, and I am very happy.

I am grateful to our Heavenly Father for giving us laws that, if obeyed, will bring us blessings of health.

Antonio Olívio de Oliveira, São Paulo, Brazil

A Jug of Wine

As I cleaned the beauty shop after school, I found a half-full jug of wine left over from a party. I asked my boss what I should do with it. “Dump it out, and throw away the bottle,” he said as he left. He locked the door on his way out, and I was alone. I continued my usual cleaning routine, but that bottle of wine was on my mind. I was 14 and had never tasted wine. I was tempted.

I cleaned the restroom, sanitized the hairbrushes, and mopped the floor, thinking the entire time about that jug of wine in the back workroom. I knew one taste would not make me drunk. I knew that nobody else would ever know. With that thought I realized that I would know and so would my Heavenly Father. My struggle was over. I knew I would be sorry if I gave in to this temptation, and I wanted to be strong enough to resist all temptations. I poured the wine down the drain,

rinsed the bottle, and dropped it into the trash.

This experience might seem unimportant except for the difference it made in me. I had made a decision that I would keep the commandments even when nobody was looking. I wanted to do the right thing for the right reason. I now know that I have the strength to resist temptation, and I feel more confident that I can walk the path back to my Heavenly Father.

Beth M. Stephenson, Oklahoma, USA

Strength to Endure

The year after I was baptized, I became a volunteer firefighter. I kept the Word of Wisdom even though my friends offered me tobacco, alcohol, tea, and coffee. When they asked me why I refused these things, I told them it was because I was a Mormon. Most of them mocked me and laughed.

One day we were required to take a three-hour physical exercise test to determine who could stay on as firefighters. We each wore a heavy uniform and boots and carried breathing equipment. Before the test I saw the others smoking and laughing at me because I was only a teenager and they thought I wouldn't be able to pass the rigorous test.

First, we had to run laps around a field, carrying extremely heavy hoses. After the first lap my legs and body ached, and my co-workers laughed at me. It was then that I remembered what it says in Doctrine and Covenants 89: “All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in the navel and marrow to their

bones; . . . and shall run and not be weary” (vv. 18, 20).

I knelt down and prayed to the Lord, asking Him for faith to see the promise fulfilled. Several men came over to see if I was OK, and I told them I was fine. Then we started running again. Right away the pain left my legs. I ran and ran and realized that the others had fallen to the ground with fatigue, but I didn’t even feel like stopping. I passed the test, while my co-workers had to repeat the exercise.

I know that thanks to my obedience to the Word of Wisdom, I was able to get through that test. I know that God was with me that day and that if we obey His commandments, He will bless us with His infinite mercy.

Cristian Castro Marin, Santiago, Chile

A Daily Commitment

Two days after my mother’s funeral, I looked in the mirror. I didn’t like what I saw: dark circles under my eyes, pale skin, bad posture, and 10 to 15 excess pounds. The last three years of caring for my parents had taken a toll on me. With the stress of having both of my parents fall ill and pass away within two years of each other, it was no wonder that I looked like I hadn’t slept well or eaten a balanced meal in weeks.

At 26 years of age I was at a crossroads. I could carry on as I was and risk succumbing to diabetes, heart disease, or cancer, which ran in my family, or I could take control and make my health a priority. This was a commitment I needed to make for life—not just for a few weeks. As I stared at my unhealthy reflection, I made myself a promise. I was going to live the Word of Wisdom in a way I never had before.

My husband and I started working out two

to three times a week. I became more aware of how many calories I ate. I added more fruits and vegetables to my meals. It took effort, but I learned how to read nutrition labels and make healthier food choices.

The real key to my success was setting realistic goals. I wanted to lose some weight, increase my energy level, and look healthier. With the help of Heavenly Father and a wonderfully supportive husband, I accomplished all three.

Six years later I’m still exercising regularly and watching what I eat. I continue to set fitness and dietary goals and work to reach them day-by-day. If someone had told me back then that one day I’d be this passionate about exercising, I honestly wouldn’t have believed it. I’m living proof that you can change your lifestyle if you really want to. If you will put your faith in Heavenly Father, He will support you in your efforts.

I feel good about myself as I strive to reach my optimum health. Since I made this commitment, my mind is clearer and quicker, and my body is stronger and more energized. Because of this, I’m able to enjoy the wonderful blessings Heavenly Father has promised to those who follow the Word of Wisdom. He says that all obedient Saints will “receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones; and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89:18–19).

Meagan Sandor, Ontario, Canada

Outlining a Plan

Shortly after my mother and I were baptized, she began working as a registered nurse. As a single parent, she didn't have time to cook, so we began eating more processed and fast foods. Although I was only 12, my health began to decline. I didn't have the energy I once had. I felt tired and anxious. I gained weight.

I asked my mom how I could get into better shape. Hoping for a medical response, I was a little surprised when she simply said, "Live the principles of the Word of Wisdom." I thought she would give me advice on calories and carbohydrates and fats, but her answer was exactly what I needed.

For family home evening the following Monday, we reviewed Doctrine and Covenants 89 and outlined an eating and activity plan. Our lifestyle change was dramatic. We both began to feel healthier and happier. I noticed more peace in my life and more quiet promptings from the Holy Ghost.

I am grateful to a loving Heavenly Father, who wants to communicate with us. I know now that we must be prepared physically and spiritually to receive sacred, personal revelations.

Eric D. Richards, Utah, USA

Arise Early

Arising early is not in Doctrine and Covenants 89, but rather in section 88: "Retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated" (v. 124).

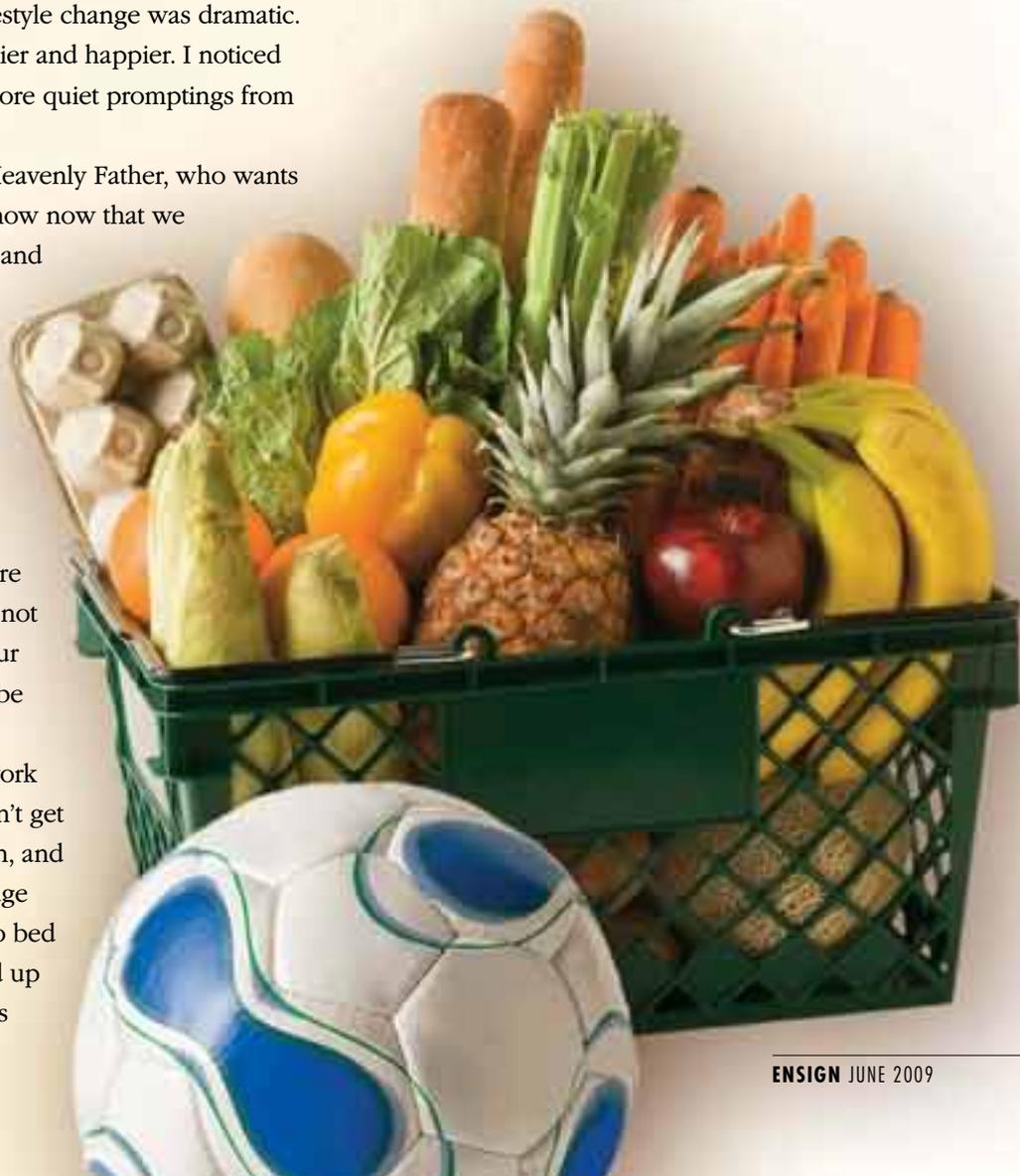
My husband gets up for work at 5:00 a.m. In the past, I didn't get up with him. I would sleep in, and I didn't get up with my teenage sons either. At night I went to bed early, but my husband stayed up until 11:00 p.m. or later. I was

worried about him because he would get sleepy when driving. We needed a change.

I decided to get up with my husband and have breakfast with him. Now we spend time together talking over breakfast. As a result, I am up now with my children before they go to school, and I send them off with prayers and hugs.

My husband is now going to bed early too. I find that my sleep, which had always been poor, has become much sounder, so I don't need as much. It seems that many things are working better in my life because I strive to heed the counsel to "arise early." ■

Linda Davis, Utah, USA



BY SMALL AND SIMPLE THINGS

Years ago a severe car accident left me with chronic back pain. Because of a bad reaction to a cortisone treatment, I'm unable to sit for more than 45 minutes at a time or lie down for more than two hours unless I am connected to an electronic device to ease the pain. But I have learned to use these precious snippets of time when I feel well to be of service to the Lord. There is much that I and others in similar situations can do even when we are homebound.



Callings. As a visiting teacher, I contact the sisters who have requested only phone calls or written correspondence. I'm also a visiting teacher supervisor, and I enjoy sending out birthday cards from the Relief Society.

Family history. I began by entering information on Personal Ancestral File. My daily goal then was to increase my time sitting at the computer by one minute. I would do this several times a day. When I finally gained Internet access, I had over 700 names in my computer files that I had entered in just three months. About a year after that, I submitted more than 40,000 names—and I'm still going strong. There are also volunteer opportunities to

index names from home. Just log on to FamilySearchIndexing.org to get started.

Friends. I have a list of friends who are homebound like me, and I call them regularly to visit and make sure they're doing well.

Overlooked projects. The baptismal clothing for our ward was not sorted well. I asked to have it delivered to my home, where I organized it into boxes labeled by size and type of clothing.

Though I'm limited in what I can do, I feel immense joy and inner peace as I serve Heavenly Father and those around me in small and simple ways.

Jessica Edwards-Englestead, Virginia



WE CAN ALL LEARN

Since being diagnosed with dyslexia as a first-grader, I have come to understand that my disability doesn't prevent me from learning. It just means that I learn differently than many of my peers. Here are a few things that teachers have done to create an ideal learning environment for me; the ideas may also be helpful for those teaching other people who struggle with learning disabilities.

Visual aids. Because it helps me to both see and hear a subject, I appreciate it when teachers provide pictures or other visual aids relating to the lesson. However, an excessive amount of text, illustrations, or photos (for me, more than three or four visual aids) can prove distracting from what the teacher or other class members are saying.

Focused material. Rather than presenting all pictures, notes, or quotes at the beginning of a lesson, place them on the board as they are discussed. This can help all learners—including those who do not have learning disabilities—focus on the current discussion.

Short quotes. Long quotes posted on the board can be overwhelming and difficult to comprehend for people with dyslexia. For me, keyword summaries work better. Similarly, it's difficult for most class members to read and comprehend long scriptures or



Family Night Notebook

You're thumbing through a Church magazine and see a great lesson idea. But by Monday night you've either forgotten about it or can't find it without a lot of searching. It's a good thing there's an easy solution: simply cut out or copy the article or picture and slip it into a binder or notebook kept specifically for lesson ideas. Using a few tab markers, you can easily organize a growing collection of lesson material by basic gospel topics.

Early in our marriage, my husband had an erratic work schedule that left him little time to prepare family home evening lessons. But with the binder, he could quickly select a topic he felt we needed to study. As a result, we enjoyed consistent lessons and established a good Monday-night habit. Now that our children are old

enough to take turns leading family home evening, we still have plenty of lesson ideas in the binder if they choose to use it.

It's easy to update our lesson notebook whenever we read the Church magazines. We cut, copy, and save as we go so we are always prepared for family night.

Sarah John, Utah



passages of text without a discussion. I feel grateful when teachers pause during or after the reading of passages to provide opportunities for questions, explanations, and clarification.

Sensitivity to readers. As a child, I dreaded reading aloud because I was self-conscious about my ability to do so. When a teacher asked us to "go around the room" and each take a turn reading, I would cringe. Although I don't mind reading aloud now, I appreciate teachers who are sensitive to class members' preferences and abilities.

These suggestions are based on my experience. Some people may like more visual aids than what I am comfortable with, for instance. The best way to find out the particular needs of those you teach is to ask them.

I am thankful for leaders and teachers who have taken the time to find out about my specific learning needs. The compassion they have shown in doing so has made a tremendous difference in my gospel learning experience.

Amanda Merrill, Texas

Do you have ideas for Random Sampler? We invite you to send short (less than 500-word) articles on any of these topics related to practical gospel living:

- Teaching ideas for home or church, especially for family home evening
- Personal or family financial management tips
- General health and physical fitness tips
- Home production and storage ideas
- Gospel-related holiday traditions that build testimony.

Please see the "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" box on p. 2 for submission instructions.

NO SWEARING ALLOWED

By Keith Porter

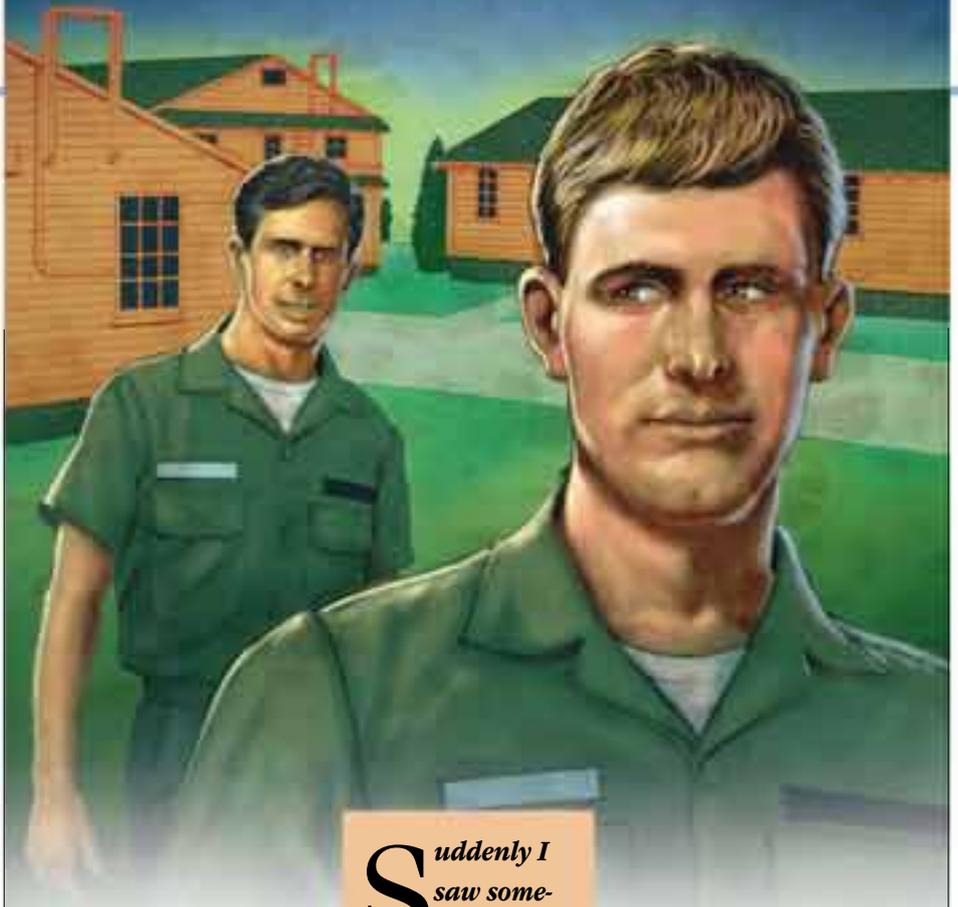
In 1962, 11 of my high school classmates from Preston, Idaho, and I joined the National Guard. Basic training was like a vacation until we got to Fort Ord, in California.

We needed one another in order to survive our new military surroundings and the onslaught of the other recruits, many of whom used reprehensible language and seemed to have no morals. I sought every opportunity to be with my Latter-day Saint buddies for support from the harassment of our fellow recruits.

After basic training, a couple of my school classmates and I stayed on at Fort Ord to continue training in field communications. Soon, two of the tough, stout recruits in our training class began having a contest to see which one could say the most detestable and vulgar things. Each morning when they arose, they would shout vulgarities so everyone in the barracks could hear their filthy language.

One morning I found myself in front of them and, longing for relief, demanded that they stop. Embarrassed, they turned their ugliness on me, calling me several names. Then they warned me that they had better not catch me alone.

Later that morning, as I was picking up trash, I found myself



Suddenly I saw someone coming my way. It was one of the recruits who had threatened me.

alone between barracks. Suddenly I saw someone coming my way. It was one of the recruits who had threatened me.

I prepared for the worst as he approached me. But he began telling me how much he respected me and wished that he had the courage to live as I lived. He admitted that his parents would be disappointed if they knew how he was living. He said he would never again use vulgar language in my presence. Then he turned and left.

As I passed the next barracks, I saw the second fellow coming my way. He approached me and apologized for the way he had been acting. He also told me how much he respected me, saying he hoped that someday he could live as he had been taught.

One weekend when my Latter-day

Saint buddies were on leave, these two young men invited me to go to a movie with them and their group. As we walked together, someone swore. The two stout recruits

told the group that there would be no swearing while I was with them.

After the movie, when the group decided to go to a club for some drinking, my friends excused themselves, explaining that they were going to spend the evening with me. Once we were alone, they asked me about my family and the kind of church I belonged to that would help young men develop the standards by which our Latter-day Saint group lived. I answered their questions and told them about the Church.

I learned that heaven sustains courage and blesses those who stand up for what is right. ■

STAY HERE!

By Dennis Salazar, as told to Sedley Parkinson

Spending time with my family is always a cherished experience for me. Because I work as a railroad engineer, my schedule is unpredictable. Occasionally I am transferred to distant locations and become temporarily separated from my wife and children. During these times, I see them only a few days each week—and only after a lengthy drive home.

Once, my wife, Scarlett, and our sons traveled to visit me during one of my breaks. Our sons enjoyed sleeping in a motel room and eating at restaurants. This trip became a vacation for them. This refreshing reunion passed quickly, and before too long we were hugging and saying good-bye. Glancing in my rearview mirror, I saw Scarlett's car disappear from view as we got on opposite on-ramps to the freeway. I was traveling back to the railroad, and Scarlett was taking our children home.

I smiled as I thought about my family and decided to call Scarlett to thank her again for coming to visit me. I reached for my cell phone in my coat pocket, but it was not there. After an unsuccessful search, I realized that the phone must have been put in Scarlett's car by accident.

I used my cell phone to keep in touch with my family, but it was also

necessary for my work. My wife and I had been driving in separate directions for 10 minutes, but I knew I had to retrieve my phone. I decided I would dash up to the next overpass, turn back in the opposite direction, and try to catch her. As I prepared to turn around, I seemed to hear a voice say, "Stop!"

I began slowing down, even though each passing moment was making it more difficult to recover my phone.

A second thought came: "Stay here!"

This strong feeling swept over me. Defying logic and reason, I pulled over and turned off the car. I did not know why, but I sensed that I should stay put. As I yielded to what I felt was a prompting from the Holy Ghost, I felt panic being replaced by peace. I offered a humble prayer,

grateful for Heavenly Father's direction and guidance.

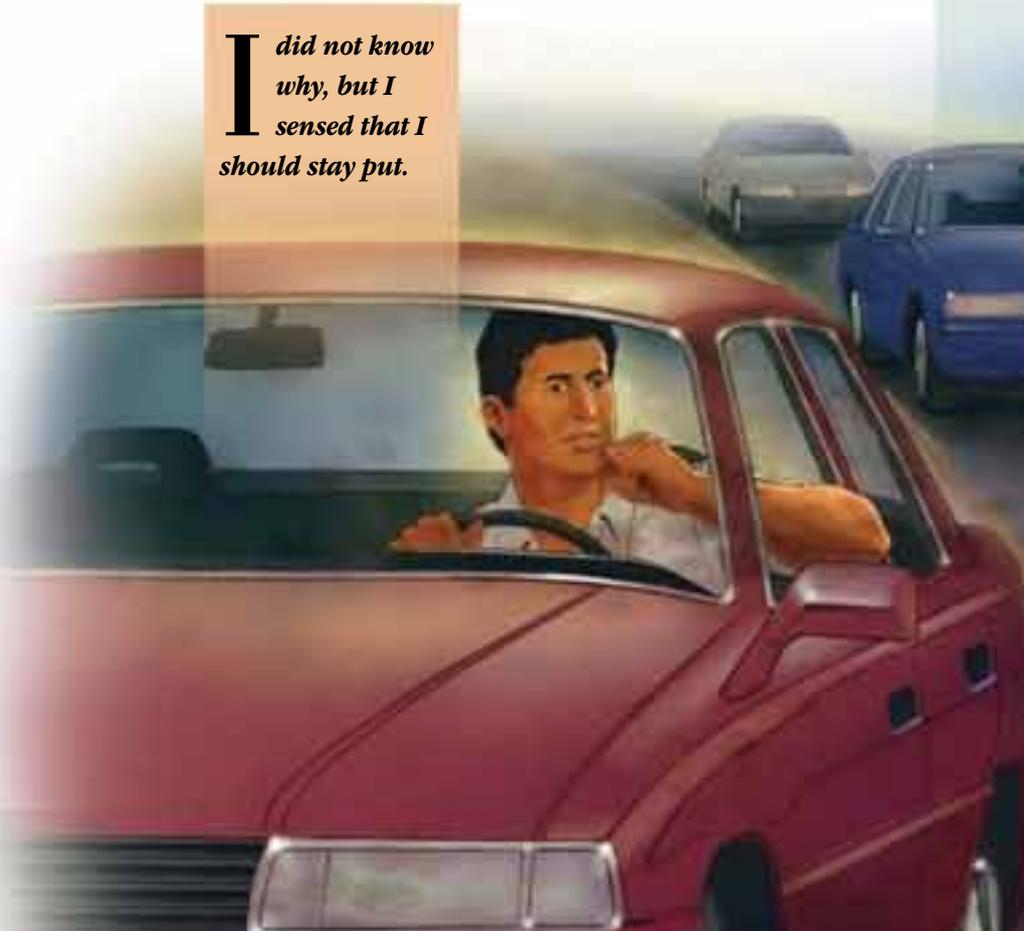
Shortly thereafter I caught sight of Scarlett driving toward me. When she saw me, she quickly brought the vehicle to a halt and came over to me with the cell phone in hand.

"How did you know to stop and wait?" she asked.

Joyful tears filled our eyes as I related my experience receiving promptings from the Holy Ghost.

That incident has stayed with me, and I can never deny the divine help I received that day. It strengthened our testimonies that Heavenly Father is aware of the seemingly minute details of our lives. I strive to remain worthy of that same guidance I received many years ago. ■

I did not know why, but I sensed that I should stay put.



THE SAVIOR HAD NOT FORGOTTEN ME

By Roland Livings

When I was young, my mother taught me how to pray, and I would attend church with her every Sunday. My sister and brother were members of the choir at the local parish church in Hertfordshire, England, and it seemed natural to follow their example and attend.

Because I was only eight years old, I wasn't required to attend communion service early on Sunday mornings. I would sleep in but eventually would get up and cycle to the main morning service.

In the middle of the winter of 1952, with a foot of fresh snow on the ground outside and frost on the inside of my bedroom windows, I snuggled down in bed, determined not to go to church that Sunday.

My mother called for me to get up, but I pretended to be asleep. Then I could hear her footsteps as she started to climb the stairs. I called out, "It's all right. I'm getting up."

But then I said under my breath, "What's the point? There is no such person named Jesus Christ anyway." Immediately a voice came into my head and said to me, "There *is*, and you will serve me one day." The voice seemed so natural, as if a friend

were talking to me. The years went by, however, and I forgot about the experience.

I grew up, joined the Royal Navy, and after nine years began working for a fire-protection company. One evening after work, I heard a knock at the door. When I opened it, two sister missionaries introduced themselves. I was tired, dirty, and hungry, so I suggested that they come back later in the evening or some other time.

To my surprise they returned an hour later. I invited them in. As soon as they started talking, I knew there was something special about their message. My home felt different, and I knew it emanated from these two sisters.

They gave me the first discussion that night and the second discussion the following night. Two elders then came every night until I had received all the discussions. I began reading the Book of Mormon and praying. Getting down on my knees to pray for the first time in

20 years was the most spiritual experience I had had in my life.

I made the commitment to be baptized a week after finishing the discussions. After my baptism, Elder Ross and Elder Fullerger laid their hands on my head to give me the gift of the Holy Ghost. As soon as their hands touched my head, my experience with the Spirit 20 years before came back to me. Something precious that had been preserved within me—but had been suppressed by all the mistakes I had made in life—was spiritually reunited with my memory. I was overwhelmed to think that I meant so much to the Savior that He had not forgotten me.

I'm grateful to the missionaries who taught me the gospel and to the members of my first ward who nourished me. Most of all, I'm grateful to my Savior, whose existence I had once doubted but whom I now gratefully serve. ■

A voice came into my head and said, "There is a person named Jesus Christ."



THE LORD HAS PROVIDED

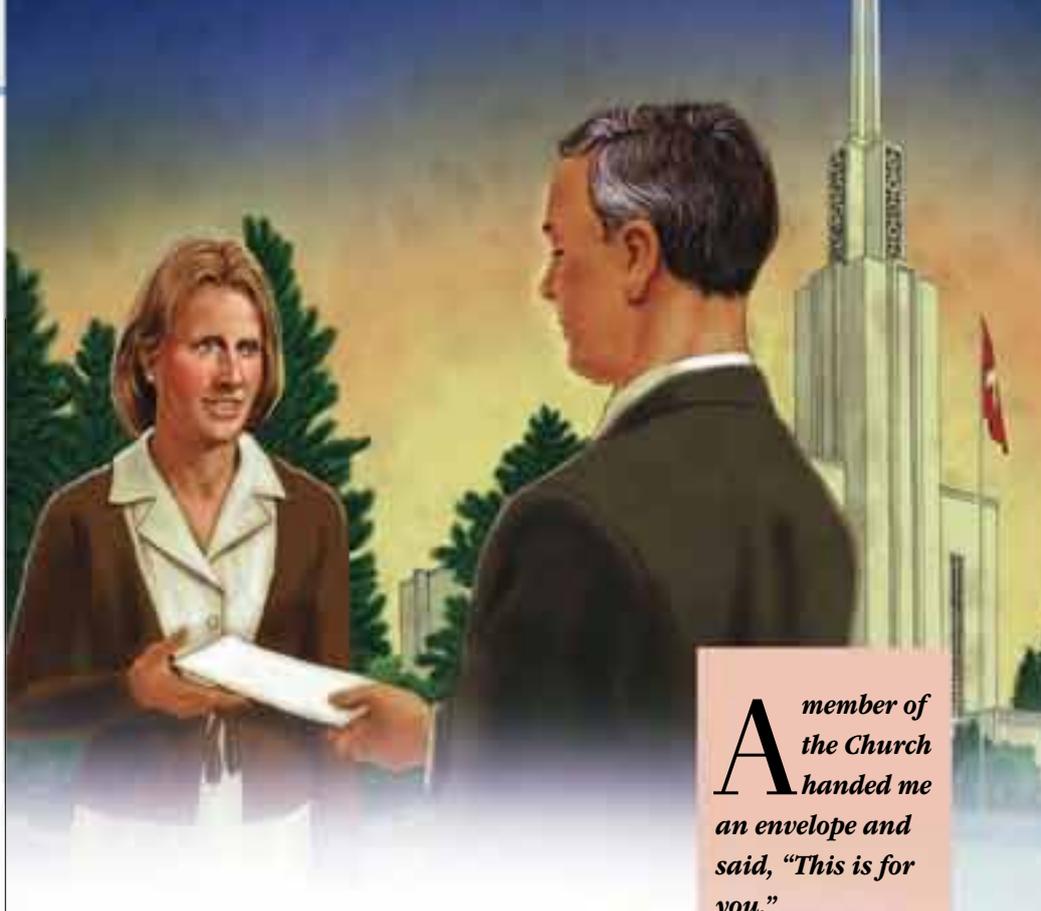
By Piera Zuppardo

After I married, one of my greatest desires was to have a large family. One night I had a dream and saw four girls and three boys who would become part of our family. As I started to have these children, the Lord helped my husband and me care for them. Anytime there was an illness or problem, priesthood blessings and miracles brought happy endings.

But then my husband passed away. Besides dealing with grief, I was pregnant and worried about how I would provide for my children. Yet I knew the Lord would continue to help me.

One of the ways He helped was to comfort me. While in the temple, I came to know that my husband was fine, that there was a reason he had to leave the earth, and that he would be helping us from the other side of the veil. I also felt strongly that I needed to return to the temple soon. I wanted very much to return in three months, but I knew that finding both time and money to return would be difficult. I attend the Bern Switzerland Temple, which is a long way from my home in Italy.

As I was walking out of the hostel near the temple, a member of the Church stopped me. He handed me an envelope and said, "This is for you."



A member of the Church handed me an envelope and said, "This is for you."

I opened the envelope and found money inside. "I can't take this," I said.

"Please take it," he told me. "While I was in the temple, I felt the Spirit prompting me to give this to you."

When I counted the money, I found that it was what I needed to cover the cost of driving from Italy to the temple and back. Three months later I returned to the temple.

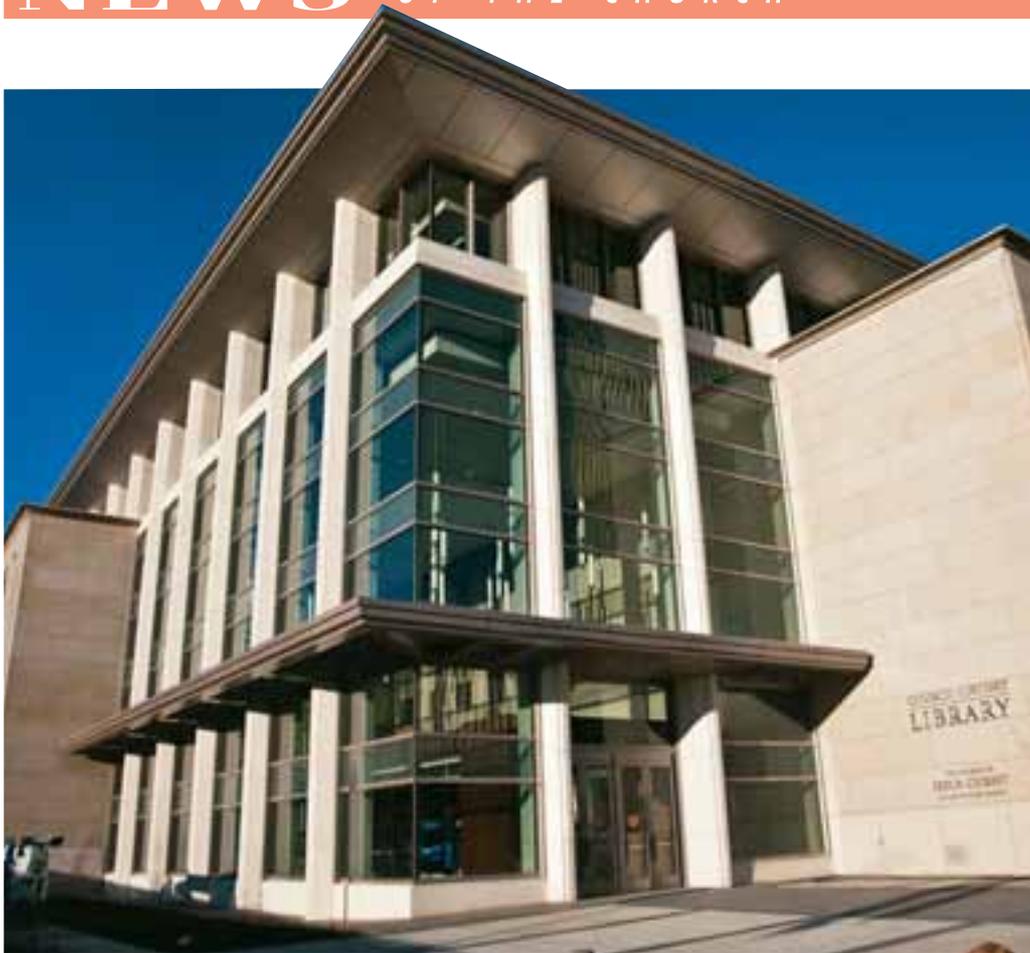
The Lord also provided for me by helping me get a job at a doctor's office. Soon I had an opportunity to certify to work in emergency care. I took the certification class, but the exam fell just two weeks after my baby was born. I had studied and attended class all through the course, but during those two weeks when I needed to study the most, I also needed to take care of my new daughter. I was overwhelmed. Without study time, I wasn't sure I could pass the exam.

I was about to give up and not take the test, but then I realized that the Lord had blessed me with this opportunity. When I prayed, the Spirit assured me that I had done my part and I would receive the Lord's help.

Trusting that the Lord would help me, I took the exam. I was relieved to find that it focused on material I knew best. I passed, and the increased opportunities that the emergency certification gave me were exactly what my family needed. I was able to spend more time with my children and earn more money to care for them.

I know Heavenly Father listens to my prayers and helps me when I ask obediently in faith. I know that He has helped me provide for my children and that I will be with them and my husband for eternity. ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT REIER



The new Church History Library is set to open to the public at the end of June.

Church History Library Set to Open

The property on North Temple Street between State Street and Main Street in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA—just north of the Church Office Building—has been home to many buildings since the pioneers settled the Salt Lake Valley.

Originally owned by Heber C. Kimball (1801–68), First Counselor to President Brigham Young (1801–77), the land has been occupied by homes, a school, a mill, a blacksmith shop, a pharmacy, a cafe, an ice-cream shop, a dance academy, a bowling alley, an advertising agency, and the mission home—a

precursor to the Provo Utah Missionary Training Center.

While the lot has hosted many buildings that have become a part of history, it will now host history itself.

The Church History Library

The newly finished Church History Library opens to the public on June 22, 2009. The 230,000-square-foot (21,000-square-meter) library will hold more than four million Church documents from around the world, ranging in date from 1830 to the present.

Christine Cox, director of customer service for the

Church History Library, said that preserving Church history and making it available to members is important because it helps “them to increase their faith and to make and keep their sacred covenants. One of our main purposes . . . is to bless the lives of the members of the Church,” as well as to create “a great archival facility to preserve” Church materials as long as possible.

The five-floor building will hold 270,000 books, pamphlets, magazines, manuals, and newspapers; 240,000 original, unpublished journals, diaries, papers,

manuscripts, and local Church unit histories; 13,000 historic photographs, posters, and maps; 23,000 audiovisual recordings and microfilm rolls; and 3.7 million patriarchal blessings.

The library has everything from last month’s *Ensign* to a board game called *Mormonopoly*; Brigham Young’s journal from 1844; a first edition copy of the Book of Mormon that Joseph Smith hand-addressed to Vienna Jacques, one of the three women referenced in the Doctrine and Covenants; and the Joseph Smith Papers.

A Growing Need

The Church History Library has needed a new home for some time. For nearly 40 years its documents have been housed in the east wing of the Church Office Building. However, the Church Office Building was not designed to be an archive. It does not have the appropriate seismic and fire protection or sufficient temperature and humidity controls.

In addition, the available space for employees, Church-service missionaries, and the collections has been dwindling because the library adds 500 to 700 archival collections—as well as some 6,000 published items—each year.

The Church announced plans to build the Church History Library on April 20, 2005, and broke ground on October 11, 2005.

A State-of-the-Art Building

Church History Department specialists and the company that designed

the building consulted with international experts on records preservation and archival design in order to create a building that would best meet the needs of the Church.

The new building has wireless access, general-use and special collections reading rooms that are open to the public, 14 storage rooms, and a records preservation area.

The record storage vaults will have temperature, humidity, and lighting control and seismic and fire protection. Of the 14 main storage areas, 12 will be kept at 55 degrees Fahrenheit (13 degrees C) with 35 percent relative humidity. For color motion picture films, photographs, and records of special significance, the other 2 storage rooms will be maintained at -4 degrees

Fahrenheit (-20 degrees C) with 30 percent relative humidity.

None of the individual archival storage areas connect to one another, and reinforced concrete walls surround each compartment in order to limit damage to Church records in the event of a fire. The building has fire sprinklers for the 55-degree vaults and is equipped with smoke and heat detectors that constantly take samples of the air. The -4 degree rooms rely on an oxygen suppression system to immediately put out a fire before it can damage the valuable records.

Kevin Nielson, Church History project manager over the building, said the new library is prepared for the millions of documents it will hold. Its storage rooms contain 40,048 shelves that

average 40 inches (106 cm) wide.

The structure is not only well-built, but it is also “green,” or environmentally friendly, according to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.¹ The building is designed to recycle waste, help control building temperatures with window shades, and use environmentally sustainable materials.

A Library for Everyone

The facility has an open stacks collection and a preservation collection. Documents from both of these collections are available for public viewing. Those from the open stacks collection are in the public library area. Staff members retrieve the documents from the archival preservation storage rooms for visitors upon request.

Access to the library is free and open to the public; however, since it is an archival facility, photo identification is required to request materials from the storage rooms.

“We’re trying to get the message out that we are open to everyone and we welcome people to come in and use the facility,” Sister Cox said.

A Design with a Message

The goal of the Church History Library’s design was to help explain why the Church keeps records.

The main foyer of the building will have replicas of the Laie Hawaii Temple’s bas-reliefs representing Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, and current dispensations. The engravings symbolize how record keeping has been an important part of each dispensation. Brother Nielson said the bas-reliefs were positioned so visitors would be able to see a representation of record keeping in different dispensations and then be able to see the people in the library reading and studying records of this dispensation.

The Salt Lake Temple is in full view of the building’s main entrance and window-enclosed main foyer. Brother Nielson said the building’s position was chosen to communicate to visitors the important relationship between record keeping and making and keeping sacred covenants. ■

NOTE

1. LEED is a certification program that evaluates and rates buildings on their impact on the environment and their use of sustainable resources.



The Church History Library (center) was designed to point visitors to the Salt Lake Temple as a reminder of the relationship between record keeping and making and keeping covenants.



Louise Parker of South Africa earned a purchase award for her piece, *Who Can Find a Virtuous Woman? II*.

Church Displays Selections from Eighth International Art Competition

By Kimberly Bowen, Church magazines

The Church History Museum's Eighth International Art Competition exhibit

opened to the public in the Conference Center on March 23, 2009, and will run through October 11, 2009.



Donna Moyer of California, USA, earned a merit award for her quilt, *Consider the Lilies*.

The theme for the competition is "Remembering the Great Things of God."

This year's competition drew nearly 1,100 entries from both professional and amateur member artists. A jury evaluated the entries and selected 266 for display. Robert Davis, senior exhibit developer for the museum, said one third of the selected

pieces came from outside of the United States; they represent 44 countries.

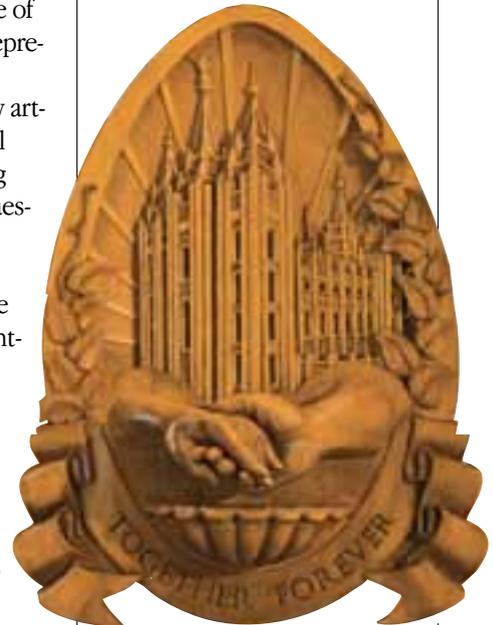
Jurors looked for new artwork centered on gospel themes and representing worldwide cultural and aesthetic traditions, styles, and media. Some of the media represented in the competition include painting, drawing, sculpting, needlework, and woodcarving.

One of the three-dimensional pieces in the exhibit is a bronze cast statue of two horses harnessed together in a field, where a bishop left them when he felt inspired to check on an elderly member in his ward. Another entry, from Syria, is an Armenian lace starburst. The lace represents the great things of the Lord the artist learned from her mother, who also taught her the lace-making art. A member from Uruguay entered a carved wood image representing temple marriage and the sealing power. A Hungarian member contributed a painting of a woman reading to her child from the Bible. The

description that came with the painting was part of a song from the *Children's Songbook*.

Brother Davis said that even though the artwork came in many forms, it all had the common subject matter of the gospel.

In the painting *The Spirit of Prayer*, which received a purchase award, Claudio Roberto Aguiar Ramires, from Brazil, painted three images of Nephi kneeling to pray. The



Ruben Alfredo Cabrera of Uruguay earned a merit award for his wood carving, *Together Forever*.

first image shows Nephi kneeling to pray for help as he was building the ship. The second image depicts him tied to the ship during the storm as he struggled to kneel and pray. The third image portrays him praying after arriving at the promised land.

"[Nephi] was always thankful to the Lord and recognized His hand in his life,"

Brother Ramires said, explaining why he had painted each of the images.

Adam Abram, from Utah, USA, who received a merit award for his painting, *Gethsemane*, said about his artwork, “This isn’t a painting about suffering, it’s a painting about getting through the suffering.” He said his hope for the painting is that people will look at their own struggles and trials in life and know that with the Savior’s help they can prevail.

The museum offered 18 Purchase Awards to add the pieces to its collection. The jury awarded 20 Merit Awards at a reception on Friday, March 20. Another three pieces will receive Visitors’ Choice Awards near the closing of the exhibit.

The Church has held the worldwide art competition every three years since 1987. The museum initially created the competition to increase its art collection.

“I’ve been associated with all of the shows, and it’s been very satisfying,” Brother Davis said. “It’s a good thing. I can think of nothing in the world that quite approaches this.”

In the past, the exhibit has been shown in the Church History Museum. However, with the growing response to the art competition, the exhibit moved to the Conference Center this year to allow it more room. The artwork will be displayed during both the April and October general conferences.

The exhibit is in the Grand Atrium Foyer of the Conference Center, 60 West North Temple Street, Salt

Lake City, Utah. Visitors may enter at door 15. Exhibit hours are Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

“It’s satisfying to see the way people express

themselves,” Brother Davis said. “Art is a personal thing, and I think it draws from the divine. People have a uniqueness that comes out in their art, but they also serve as a witness of the gospel in many different ways.”

The *Liabona* and *Ensign* often feature many of the submissions. Selections from this year’s exhibit as well as past exhibits are also available on the Church History Web site at www.lds.org/churchhistory/museum/competition. ■

Art Competition Award Winners

Merit Awards

Adam Abram, Utah, USA, *Gethsemane*

Ruben Alfredo Cabrera, Uruguay, *Together Forever*

Jaimie Davis, Montana, USA, *Schimmelbusch Family Quilt*

Jacob Elton Dobson, Indiana, USA, *Articles of Faith 2 and 3*

Tracy Ann Holmes, California, USA, *The Three Gardens*

Irene Monson Jenkins, Utah, USA, *Heirloom Blessing Dress*

Lurain Lyman, California, USA, *Garden Tomb*

Donna Moyer, California, USA, *Consider the Lilies*

Nnamdi Okonkwo, Nigeria, *Love*

Kathleen Bateman Peterson, Utah, USA, *The Child*

Walter Clair Rane, California, USA, *Blessed Are They Who Are Faithful and Endure*

J. Kirk Richards, Utah, USA, *The Greatest in the Kingdom*

Randall Todd Stilson, Utah, USA, *Salvador Mundi*

Leroy Transfield, New Zealand, *Joseph and the Boy Jesus*

Lesla Udall, Utah, USA, *Whenever I Hear the Song of a Bird*

Rebecca Wagstaff, Utah, USA, *Passageway*

William Whitaker, Illinois, USA, *Seven Generations: Rachel Wears Black*

Sherri Williams, Utah, USA, *Behold Your Little Ones*

Blanche Wilson, Utah, USA, *I Remember*

Janis Lorene Wunderlich, Ohio, USA, *Family Frenzy*

Purchase Awards

Jubal Aviles Saenz, Mexico, *We Will See Each Other Again on the Other Side*

Cassandra Barney, Utah, USA, *Atonement*

Chin Tai Cheng, Taiwan, *Many People Shall Go*

Rose Datoc Dall, Virginia, USA, *Flight*

Ramon Ely Garcia Rivas, Ecuador, *I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go*

Filiberto Gutierrez, Texas, USA, *Come unto Jesus*

Michael Tom Malm, Utah, USA, *Saving That Which Was Lost*

Eréndira de Martínez Hernández, Mexico, *With No Exception of Persons*

Emily McPhie, Utah, USA, *Windows of Heaven*

Valentina Olekseevna Museeyenko, Ukraine, *As Sisters in Zion*

Louise Parker, South Africa, *Who Can Find a Virtuous Woman? II*

Emmalee Rose Glauser Powell, Utah, USA, *Joseph William Billy Johnson: Holiness to the Lord*

Claudio Roberto Ramires, Brazil, *The Spirit of Prayer*

GayLynn Lorene Ribeira, California, USA, *Bring Up Your Children in Light and Truth*

Ai Meng Tsai, Taiwan, *Teach Me to Walk in the Light*

Colleen Wallace, Australia, *Coming of Christ*

Elsbeth Young, Utah, USA, *For Such a Time as This*

Josephus Matheus Wilhelmus Van Gemert, Netherlands, *I Am the Alpha and the Omega* ■

Construction Begins on The Gila Valley Temple

Ground was broken for The Gila Valley Arizona Temple on February 14, 2009. It will be the third temple in Arizona. The first, in Mesa, was completed in 1927. In 2002, some 100 temples later, the Snowflake Arizona Temple was dedicated. With the dedication of the Draper Utah Temple in March, there are now 129 operating temples throughout the world. Another 16 are announced or under construction, including two others in Arizona.

Atlanta Georgia Temple to Close for Renovation

The Atlanta Georgia Temple is set to close on July 1, 2009, for renovations that will take approximately 18 months to complete. Members are invited to

attend other temples, as their circumstances permit, while the temple is closed. Some nearby temples are open by appointment only, so patrons and priesthood leaders will need to contact the temple in advance. The Atlanta Temple was dedicated on June 1, 1983.

FamilySearch Releases 1900 U.S. Census

FamilySearch has now made the 1900 U.S. Census available on its online database. The census contains information on more than 76 million people, including many who left family in their home countries when they immigrated from around the world. The 1900 census included information such as how long an immigrant had been in the country along with their naturalization status. FamilySearch has digitalized and indexed census

records for 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1900.

BYU Professor Receives Religious Freedom Award

Brigham Young University law professor W. Cole Durham Jr. was awarded the First Freedom Center's 2009 International First Freedom Award for helping to increase the constitutional protection of religious freedom. Brother Durham counseled with the Iraqi government about the current Iraqi constitution and was present when it was signed. He has also advised government authorities in Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Peru, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine on laws relating to religious freedom. ■

Comment

Guided on the Bus

Riding the bus to work one day, I read President Henry B. Eyring's address "Our Hearts Knit as One" from the October 2008 general conference (*Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 68). There was wonderful symbolism with knitting and how it relates to gaining unity. No sooner had I finished reading the message than I looked up and there in front of me was a lady knitting! As I watched her, the symbolism President Eyring had used made even more sense to me. I count this as a tender mercy from the Lord. Of all articles to choose from that day, I feel I was directed to that one.

*Brad Peterson
Utah, USA*



Real-Life Miracles

Please continue to publish articles about adoption like "The Gift of Adoption" in the February 2009 issue (p. 36). I am the grandmother of the adoptive family in our case. The two open adoptions my daughter and her husband have had have been real-life miracles—everything about them. I have been educated and blessed beyond words.

*Pam Brennan
Arizona, USA*

Which Was Your Favorite *Ensign* Article?

Maybe you've been an *Ensign* reader for only a year or two. Maybe you've been reading since the magazine began in January of 1971. Either way, we'd like to know: Of all the articles you've read in the magazine, what was your favorite?

In January of 2011, the *Ensign*, *New Era*, and *Friend* will celebrate their 40th anniversaries. If you will help us make a list, the *Ensign* would like to reprint in 2011 some of your favorite articles.

Maybe it was an article that taught you something

new about the gospel. Maybe it was an article that helped you change your life or overcome a challenge. Send us the title and when it was printed by August 15, 2009.

Send your suggestions to ensign@ldschurch.org or to: *Ensign* Magazine, Room 2420, 50 E. North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220.

Editors of the *New Era* and the *Friend* may also want to reprint articles that stand out in the minds of readers who grew up with their magazines. If you remember a favorite article from the *New*



January 1971 was the first edition of the *Ensign*.

Era or the *Friend*, please send your suggestion to newera@ldschurch.org or friend@ldschurch.org. The mailing address is the same as that of the *Ensign*. ■



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The Savior Walked on Water, by Walter Rane

“When Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

“But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand” (Matthew 14:29–31).



Let us," encouraged
President Brigham
Young, "show to the
world that we have talent
and taste, and prove to the
heavens that our minds
are set on beauty and
true excellence." See Elder
Douglas L. Callister, "Our
Refined Heavenly Home,"
page 54.

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