

Ensign



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Strengthen Your
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Living a Covenant Life, p. 46

**Joseph Smith's Boyhood
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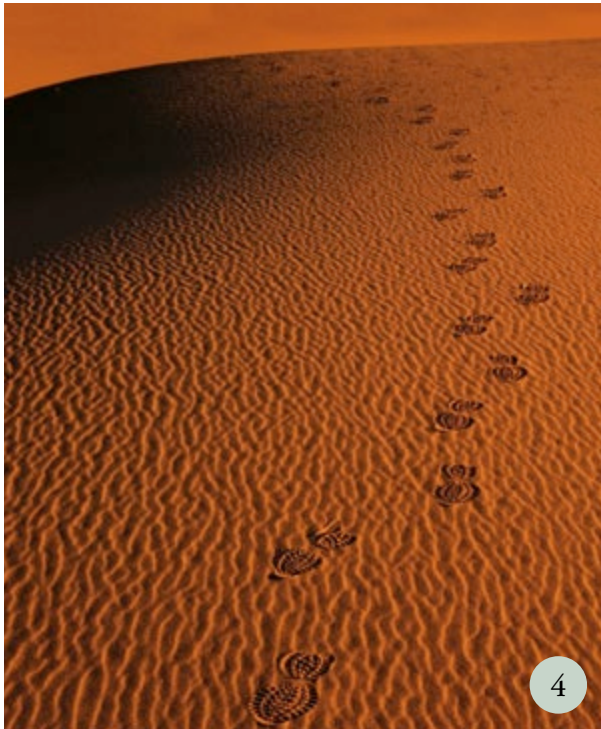


“Marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other human relationship.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson
of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles,
“Nurturing Marriage,”
Ensign, May 2006, 36.

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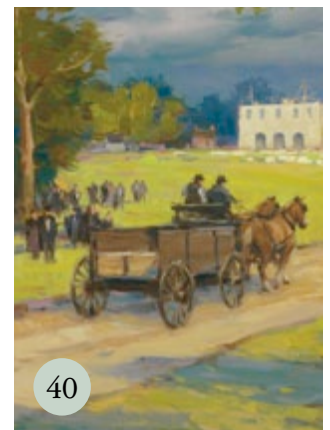
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A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
June 2013 Volume 43 • Number 6

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Family Home Evening Ideas

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



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CODY BELL

“Nine Principles for a Successful Marriage and Family,” page 24: Read the article to learn more about nine fundamental

principles from the family proclamation. Consider selecting two or three of these and discussing with your family how to apply them. You could also ask family members for ideas on creating a gospel-centered home. Conclude by singing “Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth” (*Hymns*, no. 298).

“Asking for Help through Prayer,” page 58: Consider reading as a family the principles of prayer drawn from Elder Cornish’s conference talk. Invite family members to share some personal experiences they have had with prayer, or watch together the Mormon Messages video “Prayer”

(mormonmessages.org). You could also read Alma 37:37 or Doctrine and Covenants 10:5 to learn when and why we should pray. Invite

family members to evaluate their personal prayers and to think of ways to improve.

“Finding the Way to Personal Revelation,” page 62: You may want to invite a family member to tell about a time when he or she received personal revelation regarding a question or challenge. Consider asking family members to report on one of the three aspects of receiving personal revelation described in the article. After discussing how your family can prepare to receive personal revelation, you could sing the Primary song “Search, Ponder, and Pray” (*Children’s Songbook*, 109).

SPOTLIGHTING THE ARTICLES OF FAITH

As our daughter’s eighth birthday drew near and we pondered how to best prepare her for baptism, the Articles of Faith came to mind. We decided that each week for family home evening, our family would spotlight one article of faith by memorizing it, discussing it, and then praying to gain a testimony of the principles it taught. As the end of the 13 weeks approached, we developed a game to challenge and reinforce our family’s understanding of all the Articles of Faith. It has been a great benefit to our entire family.

Jason and Rebecca Lund, Utah, USA

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We welcome donated submissions showing the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. Please submit articles

through ensign.lds.org, or send them to Ensign Editorial, 50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA. On each submission, please include your name, address, telephone number, email address, and the name of your ward and stake (or branch and district). Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified.



**By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Second Counselor in the
First Presidency

Walking IN CIRCLES

Have you ever heard the old saying that people who get lost tend to walk in circles?

Jan L. Souman, a German psychologist, wanted to determine scientifically if this was true. He took participants of an experiment to a large forest area and to the Sahara desert and used a global positioning system to track where they went. They had no compass or any other device. Instructions to them were simple: walk in a straight line in the direction indicated.

Dr. Souman later described what happened. “[Some] of them walked on a cloudy day, with the sun hidden behind the clouds [and with no reference points in view]. . . . [They] all walked in circles, with [several] of them repeatedly crossing their own path without noticing it.” Other participants walked while the sun was shining, with faraway reference points in view. “These . . . followed an almost perfectly straight course.”¹

This study has been repeated by others with different methodologies.² All returned similar results.

Without visible landmarks, human beings tend to walk in circles.

The Landmark of the Scriptures

Without spiritual landmarks, mankind wanders as well. Without the word of God, we walk in circles.

Both as individuals and as societies, we see this pattern repeated over and over in every dispensation since the beginning of time. When we lose sight of the word of God, we tend to get lost.

This is undoubtedly the reason the Lord commanded Lehi to send his sons back to Jerusalem for the brass plates. God knew that the descendants of Lehi would need reliable landmarks—points of reference—that would provide a guide they could use to determine if they were on course.

The scriptures are the word of God. They are God’s landmarks that show the way we should travel in order to draw closer to our Savior and reach worthy goals.

The Landmark of General Conference

The instructions given at general conference are another landmark that can help us know if we are on course.

Occasionally I ask myself, “Did I listen to the words given by the men and women who spoke at the most recent general conference of the Church? Have I read and reread their words? Have I pondered them and applied them to my life? Or have I just enjoyed the fine talks and neglected to apply their inspired messages in my personal life?”

Maybe while you were listening or reading, you jotted down a note or two. Perhaps you made a commitment to do some things better or differently. Just think about the



messages of last general conference. Many encouraged us to strengthen our families and improve our marriages. This issue of the *Ensign* also focuses on these eternal values, with many practical recommendations to bless our lives.

Are we noting and applying this worthwhile counsel? Are we recognizing and walking toward these real and valuable landmarks?

The Antidote to Wandering

Spiritual landmarks are indispensable for keeping us on the straight and narrow path. They give clear direction as to the way we should travel—but only if we recognize them and walk toward them.

If we refuse to be guided by these landmarks, they become meaningless, decorative masses that have no

purpose but to break up the flatness of the horizon.

It's not enough to go solely by our instincts.

It's not enough to have the best of intentions.

It won't do to rely only on our natural senses.

Even when we think we are following a straight spiritual path, without

true landmarks to guide us—without the guidance of the Spirit—we will tend to wander.

Let us, therefore, open our eyes and see the landmarks our benevolent God has provided to His children. Let us read, hear, and apply the word of God. Let us pray with real intent and listen to and follow the promptings of the Spirit. Once we have recognized the supernal landmarks offered by our loving Heavenly Father, we should set our course by them. We should also make regular course corrections as we orient ourselves toward spiritual landmarks.

In this way, we will not wander in circles but walk with confidence and certainty toward that great heavenly blessing that is the birthright of all who walk in the straight and narrow way of Christ's discipleship. ■

NOTES

1. See Jan L. Souman and others, "Walking Straight into Circles," *Current Biology*, vol. 19 (Sept. 29, 2009), 1538–1542.
2. See, for example, Robert Krulwich, "A Mystery: Why Can't We Walk Straight?" npr.org/blogs/krulwich/2011/06/01/131050832/a-mystery-why-can-t-we-walk-straight.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

As you prepare to teach from this message, you can search the scriptures for examples of people who were led by spiritual landmarks or people who wandered in circles. You could begin your study with these scriptures: Numbers 14:26–33; 1 Nephi 16:28–29; Alma 37:38–47. If you feel prompted, you can share insights from these examples with those you are teaching. Ask them what we can learn from these stories.

Landmarks for You

President Uchtdorf describes general conference and the scriptures as landmarks that help us avoid spiritual wandering. Ponder other spiritual landmarks that have influenced and guided your life. Write your experiences down in your journal. These quotations from President Monson may help you:



“Your [patriarchal] blessing is not to be folded neatly and tucked away. It is not to be framed or published. Rather, it is to be read. It is to be loved. It is to be followed. Your patriarchal blessing will see you through the darkest night. It will guide you through life’s dangers”

“Your Patriarchal Blessing: A Liahona of Light,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 66.

“Our Heavenly Father did not launch us on our eternal voyage without providing the means whereby we could receive from Him guidance to ensure our safe return. I speak of prayer. I speak too of the whisperings from that still, small voice.”

“The Race of Life,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 92.

CHILDREN

I Can Find My Way

President Uchtdorf says that we need to follow spiritual landmarks because they will help us choose the right and come closer to the Savior. Some of these landmarks are prayer, the scriptures, general conference, and the Church magazines.

Find your way through the maze by following these landmarks.

With your family, read a talk from the last general conference. What does the speaker suggest that we do to stay on the right path? Set goals with your family to apply what you learned.



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT GREER

Prayerfully study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life. For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.

Joy in Family History

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that the Spirit of Elijah is “a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family.”¹

As members of Christ’s restored Church, we have the covenant responsibility to search for our ancestors and provide for them the saving ordinances of the gospel. They without us cannot “be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:40), and “neither can we without our dead be made perfect” (D&C 128:15).

Family history work prepares us for the blessings of eternal life and helps us increase our faith and personal righteousness. Family history is a vital part of the mission of the Church and enables the work of salvation and exaltation for all.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: “When we research our own lines we become interested in more than just names. . . . Our interest turns our hearts to our fathers—we seek to find them and to know them and to serve them.”²



From the Scriptures

Malachi 4:5–6; 1 Corinthians 15:29; D&C 124:28–36; 128:15

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “A New Harvest Time,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 34.
2. Boyd K. Packer, “Your Family History: Getting Started,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2003, 17.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 475.
4. See *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 21.

Faith, Family, Relief



From Our History

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead.”³ We can serve as proxy in the temple for our deceased ancestors and perform necessary ordinances for them.

Sally Randall of Nauvoo, Illinois, whose 14-year-old son died, found great comfort in the promise of eternal families. After her husband was baptized for their son, she wrote to her relatives: “What a glorious thing it is that we . . . can be baptized for all of our dead [ancestors] and save them as far back as we can get any knowledge of them.” Then she asked her relatives to send her information on their ancestors, saying, “I intend to do what I can to save [our family].”⁴

WHAT CAN I DO?

1. How can I help the sisters I watch over to do family history?
2. Am I recording my personal history?

“I WILL NOT FORGET THEE”

By Becky Squire

As I walked into my routine doctor appointment, I was filled with excitement and hope. By ultrasound I had already seen my tiny baby’s heartbeat, but now, several weeks later, the tiny one inside me would be even bigger. Having experienced the miracle of pregnancy three times already, I never ceased to be amazed.

Ten minutes later I was crying alone in my car—the image of a still baby with no heartbeat forever imprinted in my mind.

During the days that followed, I was in a dazed stupor. I felt empty and alone. My husband had to go back to work, and our three children ran around the house as I halfheartedly fed them and tried to keep the house clean. But I was not really there. When I came home from running errands, the first thing I would do was check to see if I had any missed calls. None. I would check my email every hour. Nothing. I started wondering if my friends and neighbors cared about me. Were they even my friends at all? I didn’t notice how Satan was working on me.

I was sharing my feelings with my husband one night, and he immediately saw what was happening. He shared 1 Nephi 21:15–16 with me:

“I [will] not forget thee, O house of Israel.

“Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.”

I had learned about and studied the Atonement before. I thought I knew what it was. But I had failed to appropriately apply it to my life. Jesus had already suffered all

of my sorrows. He knew exactly how I felt.

“His most exemplary act, the Atonement, required Jesus to descend ‘below all things’ (D&C 88:6) and suffer ‘the pains of all men’ (2 Nephi 9:21). Thus we understand the Atonement has broader purpose than providing a means to overcome sin. This greatest of all earthly accomplishments gives the Savior the power to fulfill this promise: ‘If ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, . . . he will . . . deliver you’ (Mosiah 7:33).”¹



HE UNDERSTANDS

“There is nothing that we are enduring that Jesus does not understand, and He waits for us to go to our Heavenly Father in prayer. I testify that if we will be obedient and if we are diligent, our prayers will be answered, our problems will diminish, our fears will dissipate, light will come upon us, the darkness of despair will be dispersed, and we will be close to the Lord and feel of His love and of the comfort of the Holy Ghost.”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Behold, We Count Them Happy Which Endure,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 77.



My husband shared 1 Nephi 21:15–16 with me. I realized I needed my Savior to help me overcome my sorrow.

What better friend could I have during this tragic time than one who could surely sympathize with me? I realized I needed my Savior to help me overcome my sorrow. As I turned to the Lord, I immediately saw His love for me. I felt calm and peaceful, and I felt that Jesus understood me as I had never thought possible. He is exactly the kind of friend I was longing for in those days after my miscarriage—the kind of friend I needed most.

I know I can always turn to my Savior, not only when I need to repent of my sins but also when I need a shoulder to cry on. He is always there. When we are searching for someone to understand our pains and sorrows, let us not forget our truest friend, Jesus Christ. ■

Becky Squire lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. Donald L. Hallstrom, “Turn to the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 80.

HOW CAN WE OBTAIN PEACE?

President Thomas S. Monson spoke of three ways to find peace in our lives:

“I refer not to the peace promoted by man, but peace as promised of God. I speak of peace in our homes, peace in our hearts, even peace in our lives. Peace after the way of man is perishable. Peace after the manner of God will prevail. . . .

“First: Search inward. . . .

There shall be no peace until individuals nurture in their souls those

principles of personal purity, integrity, and character which foster the development of peace. . . .

“Second: Reach outward. . . .

Membership in the Church calls forth a determination to serve. . . .

“Third: Look heavenward. As we do, we find it comforting and satisfying to communicate with our Heavenly Father through prayer, that path to spiritual power—even a passport to peace.”

From “Finding Peace,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 3–7.

Which of these three ideas can you more fully implement in your life?



By President
Spencer W. Kimball
(1895–1985)

Twelfth President
of the Church

WORSHIP THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD

What are we to fear when the Lord is with us?

We learn from the scriptures that because the exercise of faith has always appeared to be more difficult than relying on things more immediately at hand, carnal man has tended to transfer his trust in God to material things. Therefore, in all ages when men have fallen under the power of Satan and lost the faith, they have put in its place a hope in the “arm of flesh” and in “gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know” (Daniel 5:23)—that is, in idols. This I find to be a dominant theme in the Old Testament. Whatever thing a man sets his heart and his trust in most is his god; and if his god doesn’t also happen to be the true and living God of Israel, that man is laboring in idolatry.

It is my firm belief that when we read these scriptures and try to “liken them unto [our]selves” (1 Nephi 19:24), as Nephi suggested, we will

see many parallels between the ancient worship of graven images and behavioral patterns in our very own experience.

The Lord has blessed us. . . . The resources that have been placed in our power are good and necessary to our work here on the earth. But I am afraid that many of us . . . have begun to worship them as false gods, and they have power over us. Do we have more of these good things than our faith can stand? Many people spend most of their time working in the service of a self-image that includes sufficient money, stocks, bonds, investment portfolios, property, credit cards, furnishings, automobiles, and the like to *guarantee* carnal security. . . .

Our Assignment

Forgotten is the fact that our assignment is to use these many resources in our families and quorums to build up the kingdom of God—to further the missionary effort and the genealogical and temple work; to raise our children up as fruitful servants unto the Lord; to bless others in every way, that they may also be fruitful. Instead, we expend these blessings on our own desires, and as Moroni said, “Ye adorn yourselves with that which hath

no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not” (Mormon 8:39).

As the Lord Himself said in our day, “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own God, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and *whose substance is that of an idol*, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall” (D&C 1:16; emphasis added).

A Poor Exchange

One man I know of was called to a position of service in the Church, but he felt that he couldn’t accept because his investments required more . . . of his time than he could spare for the Lord’s work. He left the service of the Lord in search of Mammon, and he is a millionaire today.

But I recently learned an interesting fact: If a man owns a million dollars worth of gold . . . , he possesses approximately one 27-billionth of all the gold that is present in the earth’s thin crust alone. This is an amount so small in proportion as to be inconceivable to the mind of man. But there is more to this: The Lord who created and has power over all

the earth created many other earths as well, even “worlds without number” (Moses 1:33); and when this man received the oath and covenant of the priesthood (see D&C 84:33–44), he received a promise from the Lord of “all that my Father hath” (D&C 84:38). To set aside all these great promises in favor of a chest of gold and a sense of carnal security is a mistake in perspective of colossal proportions. To think that he has settled for so little is a saddening and pitiful prospect indeed; the souls of men are far more precious than this.

One young man, when called on a mission, replied that he didn’t have much talent for that kind of thing. What he was good at was keeping

his powerful new automobile in top condition. . . . All along, his father had been content with saying, “He likes to do things with his hands. That’s good enough for him.”

Good enough for a son of God? This young man didn’t realize that the power of his automobile is infinitesimally small in comparison with the power of the sea or of the sun; and there are many suns, all controlled by law and by priesthood, ultimately—a priesthood power that he could have been developing in the service of the Lord. He settled for a pitiful god, a composite of steel and rubber and shiny chrome.

An older couple retired from the world of work and also, in effect, from

the Church. They purchased a pickup truck and camper and . . . set out to see the world. . . . They had no time for the temple, were too busy for genealogical research and for missionary service. He lost contact with his high priests quorum and was not home enough to work on his personal history. Their experience and leadership were sorely needed in their branch, but . . . they were not available. . . .

If we insist on spending all our time and resources building up for ourselves a worldly kingdom, that is exactly what we will inherit.

Forsake the Things of the World

In spite of our delight in defining ourselves as modern and our





tendency to think we possess a sophistication that no people in the past ever had—in spite of these things, we are, on the whole, an idolatrous people—a condition most repugnant to the Lord.

We are . . . easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. . . . We forget that if we are righteous, the Lord will either not suffer our enemies to come upon us . . . or He will fight our battles for us (see Exodus 14:14; D&C 98:37, to name only two references of many). . . .

What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord at His word and exercise a particle of faith in Him? Our assignment is

affirmative: to forsake the things of the world as ends in themselves; to leave off idolatry and press forward in faith; to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.

Exercise Greater Faith

We must leave off the worship of modern-day idols and a reliance on the “arm of flesh,” for the Lord has said to all the world in our day, “I will not spare any that remain in Babylon” (D&C 64:24). . . . We believe that the way for each person and each family to prepare as the Lord has directed is to begin to exercise greater faith, to repent, and to enter into the work of His kingdom

on earth, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It may seem a little difficult at first, but when a person begins to catch a vision of the true work, when he begins to see something of eternity in its true perspective, the blessings begin to far outweigh the cost of leaving “the world” behind.

Herein lies the only true happiness, and therefore we invite and welcome all people, everywhere, to join in this work. For those who are determined to serve the Lord at all costs, this is the way to eternal life. All else is but a means to that end. ■

Subheads added; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization have been standardized.

Excerpted from “The False Gods We Worship,” Ensign, June 1976, 3–6.

SERVING THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

By **Becky Young Fawcett**
Church Disability Services

When Lynn Parsons was called as the disability specialist in the Hurst Texas Stake, she wanted to fulfill her calling in a way that would bless the lives of members of her stake, especially members with disabilities and their families.

One of the first things Lynn did was to review information on her calling at lds.org (lds.org/callings/disability-specialist), and she used *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* to understand official Church policies regarding those with disabilities. The Disability Resources website (lds.org/disability) also served as a resource. It helped her understand various disabilities and served as a resource to share with members of her stake.

Handbook 2 states, “The bishopric or stake presidency may call a ward or stake disability specialist to help individuals and families.”¹ lds.org gives further information about this calling, explaining that

“the role of the disability specialist is to help facilitate increased participation and inclusion of Church members with disabilities.”²

With this understanding, Lynn says she wanted to “help leaders fulfill their callings by finding the tools they needed to serve those with disabilities.”

Lynn also found information through community and national resources, the Internet, and ward and stake members who have a background working with people with disabilities. Lynn uses these resources as she looks for solutions to some of the challenges leaders and families face in her stake. She doesn’t always know where to turn for information or help, “but if you really seek the answer through prayer,” she says, “you will be inspired where to look to find your answer.”

Understanding Needs

Lynn also works to understand the disability-related

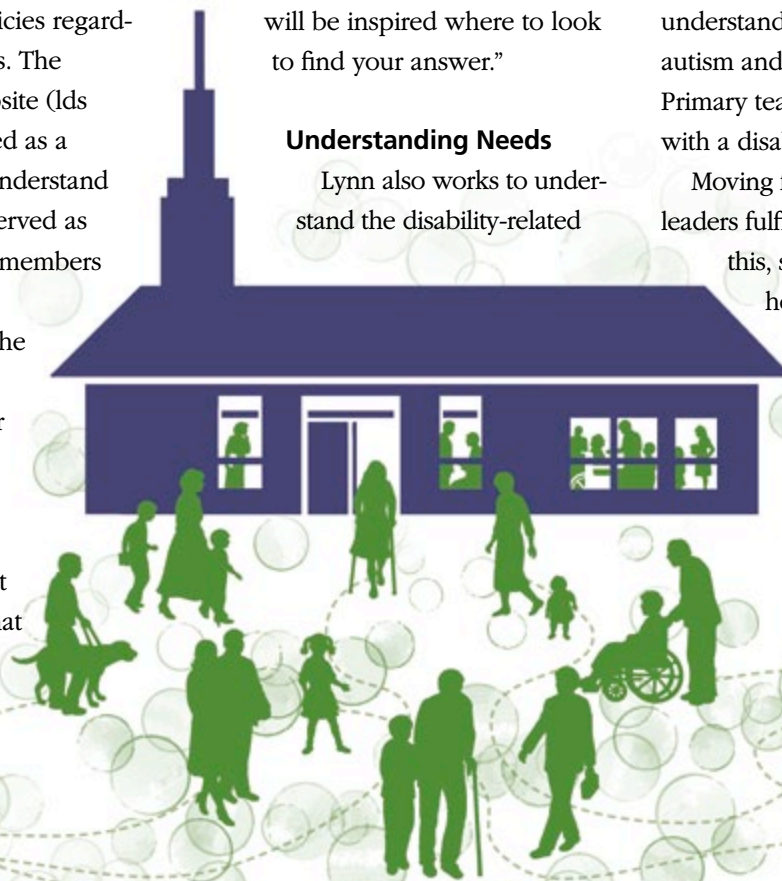
needs of leaders in her area. To do this, she asked her stake leaders to send a letter to bishops informing them of her calling and that she was available to help. She also met with the stake Primary presidency to understand challenges, and she made plans to meet with other groups of leaders. “I wanted to get the word out,” she said. “I wanted people to know where they could find some help.”

By letting members of the stake know she was ready to serve, Lynn soon found opportunities to help leaders. Within the first few months of being called as the disability specialist, she was invited to meet with a ward council to talk about characteristics of a specific disability. She served in other ways, such as helping a teacher understand how to teach a child with autism and suggesting that an assistant Primary teacher be called so a child with a disability could attend class.

Moving forward, Lynn plans to help leaders fulfill their callings. As she does this, she is helping members of her stake follow the example of the Savior in loving and reaching out to others, including those with disabilities. ■

NOTES

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 21.1.26.
2. “Disability Specialist,” www.lds.org/callings/disability-specialist.







**By President
James E. Faust
(1920–2007)**

Second Counselor in
the First Presidency

DEAR ARE THE Sheep That HAVE Wandered

*To those brokenhearted parents who
have been righteous, diligent, and prayerful in the
teaching of their disobedient children, we say to you,
the Good Shepherd is watching over them.*

President James E. Faust was sustained as Second Counselor in the First Presidency on March 12, 1995, and served in that calling until his death on August 10, 2007. This address, given in the April 2003 general conference, is included in this issue as one of several articles on strengthening the family.

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, my message this morning is one of hope and solace to heartbroken parents who have done their best to rear their children in righteousness with love and devotion but have despaired because their child has rebelled or been led astray to follow the path of evil and destruction. In contemplating your deep anguish, I am reminded of the words of Jeremiah: “A voice was heard in Ramah, . . . Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted.” To this the Lord gave this welcome reassurance: “Refrain thy voice from weeping, . . . for thy work shall be rewarded . . . ; they shall come again from the land of the enemy.”¹

I must begin by testifying that the word of the Lord to parents in this Church is contained in the 68th section of the Doctrine and Covenants in this remarkable instruction: “And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her

Those who wander “will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but it if leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father’s heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain.”



stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.”² Parents are instructed to “teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.”³ As a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, I accept this as the word of the Lord, and as a servant of Jesus Christ, I urge parents to follow this counsel as conscientiously as they can.

Who are good parents? They are those who have lovingly, prayerfully, and earnestly tried to teach their children by example and precept “to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.”⁴ This is true even though some of their children are disobedient or worldly. Children come into this world with their own distinct spirits and personality traits. Some children “would challenge any set of parents under any set of circumstances. . . . Perhaps there are others who would bless the lives of, and be a joy to, almost any father or mother.”⁵ Successful parents are those who have sacrificed and struggled to do the best they can in their own family circumstances.

The depth of the love of parents for their children cannot be measured. It is like no other relationship. It exceeds concern for life itself. The love of a parent for a child is continuous and transcends heartbreak and disappointment. All parents hope and pray that their children will make wise decisions. Children who are obedient and responsible bring to their parents unending pride and satisfaction.

But what if the children who have been taught by faithful, loving parents have rebelled or been led astray? Is there hope? The grief of a parent over a rebellious child is almost inconsolable. King David's third son, Absalom, killed one of his brothers and also led a rebellion against his father. Absalom was killed by Joab. Upon hearing of Absalom's death, King David wept and expressed his sadness: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"⁶

This paternal love is also expressed in the parable of the prodigal son. When his rebellious son returned home after having squandered his inheritance in riotous living, the father killed the fatted calf and celebrated the return of the prodigal, saying to his obedient, if resentful, son, "It was meet that we should

make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."⁷

I believe and accept the comforting statement of Elder Orson F. Whitney [1855–1931]:

"The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread

The love of a parent for a child is continuous and transcends heartbreak and disappointment. All parents hope and pray that their children will make wise decisions.



The prodigal son was welcomed back into the family, but his inheritance was spent. Mercy will not rob justice, and the sealing power of faithful parents will only claim wayward children upon the condition of their repentance and Christ's Atonement.



a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God.”⁸

A principle in this statement that is often overlooked is that they must fully repent and “suffer for their sins” and “pay their debt to justice.” I recognize that now is the time “to prepare to meet God.”⁹ If the repentance of the wayward children does not happen in this life, is it still possible for the cords of the sealing to be strong enough for them yet to work out their repentance? In the Doctrine and Covenants we are told:

“The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

“And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.”¹⁰

We remember that the prodigal son wasted his inheritance, and when it was all gone he came back to his father's house. There he was welcomed back into the family, but his inheritance was spent.¹¹ Mercy will not rob justice, and the sealing power of faithful parents will only claim wayward children upon the condition of their repentance and Christ's Atonement. Repentant wayward children will enjoy salvation and all the blessings that go with it, but exaltation is much more. It must be fully earned. The question as to who will be exalted must be left to the Lord in His mercy.

There are very few whose rebellion and evil deeds are so great that they have “sinned

away the power to repent.”¹² That judgment must also be left up to the Lord. He tells us, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”¹³

Perhaps in this life we are not given to fully understand how enduring the sealing cords of righteous parents are to their children. It may very well be that there are more helpful sources at work than we know.¹⁴ I believe there is a strong familial pull as the influence of beloved ancestors continues with us from the other side of the veil.

President Howard W. Hunter [1907–95] observed that “repentance is but the homesickness of the soul, and the uninterrupted and watchful care of the parent is the fairest earthly type of the unfailing forgiveness of God.” Is not the family the nearest analogy which the Savior’s mission sought to establish?¹⁵

We learn much of parenting from our own parents. My love for my father deepened profoundly when he was kind, patient, and understanding. When I damaged the family car, he was gentle and forgiving. But his sons could expect strong discipline if there was any shading of the truth or continued breaking of the rules, particularly showing disrespect for our mother. My father has been gone for almost half a century, but I still sorely miss being able to go to him for wise and loving counsel. I admit I questioned his counsel at times, but I could never question his love for me. I never wanted to disappoint him.

An important element of doing the best we can as parents is to provide loving but firm discipline. If we do not discipline our children, society may do it in a way that is not to our



liking or our children’s. Part of disciplining children is to teach them to work. President Gordon B. Hinckley [1910–2008] said: “One of the greatest values . . . is the virtue of honest work. Knowledge without labor is profitless. Knowledge with labor is genius.”¹⁶

Satan’s pervasive snares are increasing, and raising children is becoming harder because of this. Therefore, parents need to do the very best they can and to enlist the help that Church service and activity can provide. If parents misbehave and stray even temporarily, some of their children may be prone to take license from that example.

Now, there is another side to this coin that needs to be mentioned. I make a plea for children who are estranged from their parents to reach out to them, even if they have been less than they should have been. Children who are critical of their parents might well remember the wise counsel of Moroni when he said, “Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections,

Good parents are those who have lovingly, prayerfully, and earnestly tried to teach their children by example and precept “to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.” This is true even though some of their children are disobedient or worldly.

I make a plea for children who are estranged from their parents to reach out to them. . . . I hope all children will eventually turn their hearts to their fathers and also to their mothers.



that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been.”¹⁷

When Moroni visited the young Prophet Joseph Smith in 1823, he quoted the following verse concerning the mission of Elijah: “And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.”¹⁸ I hope all children will eventually turn their hearts to their fathers and also to their mothers.

A wonderful couple I knew in my youth had a son who was rebellious and estranged himself from their family. But in their later years, he reconciled with them and was the most caring and solicitous of all their children. As we get older, the pull from our parents and grandparents on the other side of the veil becomes stronger. It is a sweet experience when they visit us in our dreams.

It is very unfair and unkind to judge conscientious and faithful parents because some of their children rebel or stray from the teachings and love of their parents. Fortunate are the couples who have children and grandchildren who bring them comfort and satisfaction. We should be considerate of those worthy, righteous parents who struggle and suffer with disobedient children. One of my friends used to say, “If you have never had any problems with your children, just wait awhile.” No one can say with any degree of certainty what their children will do under certain circumstances. When my wise mother-in-law saw other children misbehaving, she used to say, “I never say my children would not do that because they might be out doing it right while I am speaking!” When parents mourn for disobedient and wayward children,

we must, with compassion, “forbid the casting of the first stone.”¹⁹

An anonymous Church member wrote about the continuous heartache her brother caused her parents. He got involved in drugs. He resisted all efforts at control and discipline. He was deceitful and defiant. Unlike the prodigal, this errant son did not come home of his own accord. Instead he got caught by the police and was forced to face the consequences of his actions. For two years his parents supported Bill’s treatment program, which brought about his eventual recovery from drugs. In summary, Bill’s sister observed: “I think my parents are extraordinary. They never wavered in their love for Bill, though they disagreed with and even hated what he was doing to himself and to their family life. But they were committed enough to their family to support Bill in any way necessary to get him through the tough times and onto more solid ground. They practiced the deeper, more sensitive, and extensive gospel of Christ by loving one who had gone astray.”²⁰

Let us not be arrogant but rather humbly grateful if our children are obedient and respectful of our teachings of the ways of the Lord. To those brokenhearted parents who have been righteous, diligent, and prayerful in the teaching of their disobedient children, we say to you, the Good Shepherd is watching over them. God knows and understands your deep sorrow. There is hope. Take comfort in the words of Jeremiah: “Thy work shall be rewarded” and your children can “come again from the land of the enemy.”²¹ I so testify and pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Jeremiah 31:15–16.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.
5. Howard W. Hunter, “Parents’ Concern for Children,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 65.
6. 2 Samuel 18:33.
7. Luke 15:32.
8. Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110.
9. Alma 34:32.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 138:58–59.
11. See Luke 15:11–32.
12. Alonzo A. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1919, 161.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
14. See John K. Carmack, “When Our Children Go Astray,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1997, 7–13.
15. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 32.
16. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 704.
17. Mormon 9:31.
18. Joseph Smith—History 1:39.
19. Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living* (1973), 58.
20. “With Love—from the Prodigal’s Sister,” *Ensign*, June 1991, 19.
21. Jeremiah 31:16.

Fortunate are the couples who have children and grandchildren who bring them comfort and satisfaction. We should be considerate of those worthy, righteous parents who struggle and suffer with disobedient children.



“Our God Will Never Us Forsake”

The arrival of little Isabella seemed like an answer to our prayers, but when the adoption didn't immediately go through, I felt my faith wavering.

By Jennifer Ann Holt

I had always wanted to be a mother. No matter what else was going on in my life, the thoughts of my future motherhood were floating in the corners of my mind. This made it all the more heartbreaking when, after several years of marriage, I had been unable to become pregnant, with no clear diagnosis for my infertility. After much prayer and pleading, a light was shed on our path. My husband and I each received strong promptings that we were to adopt a baby.

We moved forward without delay. After several months the classes, interviews, portfolios, and letters were behind us, and we were anxiously hoping for the long-awaited news that a birth mother had chosen us as the parents for her baby.



My tears flowed freely as our social worker told us that our prayers were finally going to be answered. A loving and selfless young woman had made the agonizing decision to place her unborn daughter in our family. We prepared over the next several weeks for the baby's arrival, and then at last she was born. Our sweet newborn, Isabella, was finally home.

A shadow peeked in on our joy when Isabella's birth father filed a lawsuit several days later, but we felt confident in the legal steps our attorneys had taken and in the Lord. The young man's intent soon became clear: he was not interested in parenting Isabella, just in punishing her birth mother. As we pleaded with the Lord for our daughter, a calming reassurance always came, but it was very difficult for me not to worry.

The legal battle stretched on for weeks, then months, then over a year. We were unable to finalize the adoption or take our beautiful daughter to the temple to be sealed to us. There were moments when my faith wavered. We had followed an unmistakable prompting and were doing everything in our power to end this legal issue. So why was it taking so long?

One day I was feeling particularly down. A court date was approaching, and I could not help but worry about what the outcome might be. I sat rocking my daughter, watching her sleep. She had grown into a beautiful toddler, and once again I sent my hopes and prayers heavenward. I was humming a familiar hymn that we always used as a lullaby, when all of a sudden the words that I had sung to Isabella countless times came

forcefully to my mind by way of comfort—and also as a gentle reprimand:

Why should we mourn or think our lot is hard?

'Tis not so; all is right.

Why should we think to earn a great reward

If we now shun the fight?

Gird up your loins; fresh courage take.

Our God will never us forsake;

And soon we'll have this tale to tell—

*All is well! All is well!*¹

The Spirit overwhelmed me as I realized that Heavenly Father was not going to forsake me and that I needed to have the faith and courage to believe He knew what was best. I knew my prayer would be answered as I hoped. Isabella was meant to be my daughter; all would be well.

Shortly after this experience, the judge ruled in our favor and finalized our adoption. We were able to take our precious girl to the temple to be sealed to us. A load was lifted from my shoulders, but the lesson I learned in the rocking chair remained. Trials come to each of us. Living righteously does not mean that our lives will be free of problems or sorrow, but no matter what hardships we face, we can always rely on Heavenly Father and His Son. They will not forsake us, and They will give each of us the strength to face whatever may come, so that in the end we can truly say, "All is well!" ■

Jennifer Ann Holt lives in Idaho, USA.

NOTE

1. "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 30.



OUR DEFINING TESTS

"Having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and keeping His commandments are and always will be the defining test of mortality. . . .

"Our doctrine is clear; we are to be positive and of good cheer. We emphasize our faith, not our fears. We rejoice in the Lord's assurance that He will stand by us and give us guidance and direction. The Holy Ghost testifies to our hearts that we have a loving Father in Heaven, whose merciful plan for our redemption will be fulfilled in every aspect because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ."

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "In Tune with the Music of Faith," *Ensign*, May 2012, 44.



Nine



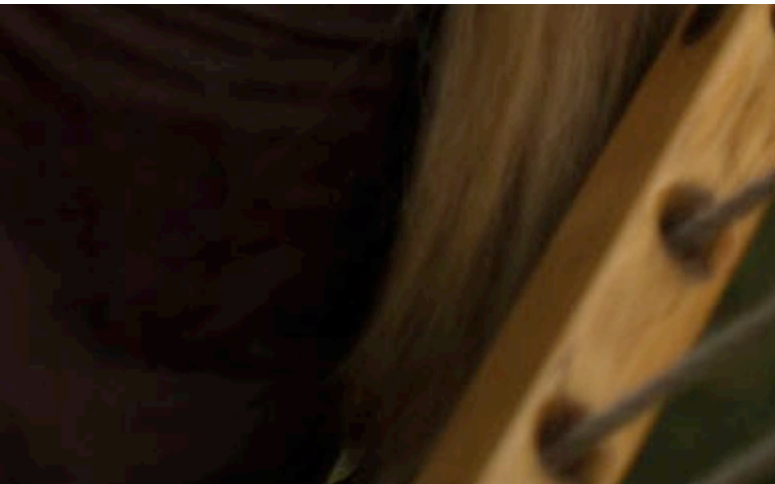
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CRAIG DIMOND AND CODY BELL

Principles

FOR A SUCCESSFUL
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

By Jennifer Grace Jones

Church Magazines



Amy Adams of Washington, USA, was trying to decide which activities would be best for her three young children when a conversation with her mother changed her mind. “What if you gave your children something better than training in sports or dance?” Amy’s mother asked. “What if by staying home, they could learn to feel the Spirit more?” Then her mother reminded her of what President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught about the power of focusing on life’s basic relationships (see, for example, “Of Things That Matter Most,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 19–22).

Amy and her husband, Brett, prayed about and pondered this counsel and felt it would be a good idea for their family to spend more time together at home. For one year, they chose to forgo dance and sports; instead they prepared meals, learned Primary songs, visited museums, and played outdoors. “Our children were able to feel the Spirit . . . because we took the time to stop and listen,” Amy says. Their children may not be the top sports and dance stars, she says, “but they have a testimony of the Savior.”

Amy and Brett prayed to know how they should personally follow the counsel of modern prophets, and doing so allowed them to receive inspiration for their family. Amy says this inspiration led to her “proudest moments as a mother.”

In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” modern prophets have outlined nine basic principles for strong, gospel-centered families: “Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities” (*Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129). The following teachings from Church leaders, examples from the life of Jesus Christ, and visual images give us a closer look at these nine principles and ways we can apply them.

FAITH



“Faith is confidence and trust in Jesus Christ that lead a person to obey him.”

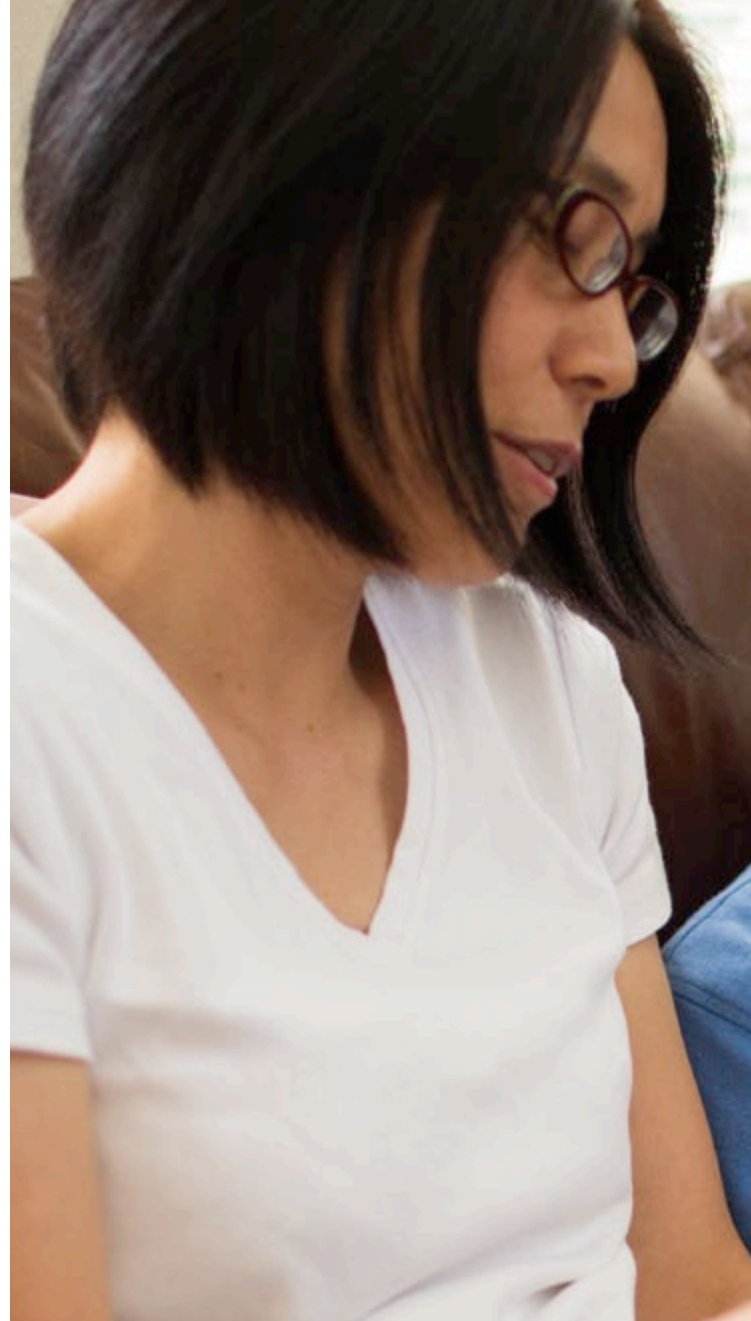
Guide to the Scriptures,
“Faith,” scriptures.lds.org.

From Church Leaders

As parents, we have been commanded to teach our children ‘to understand the doctrine of . . . faith in Christ the Son of the living God’ (D&C 68:25). . . .

“There is no other thing in which we can have absolute assurance. There is no other foundation in life that can bring the same peace, joy, and hope. In uncertain and difficult times, faith is truly a spiritual gift worthy of our utmost efforts. We can give our children education, lessons, athletics, the arts, and material possessions, but if we do not give them faith in Christ, we have given little.”

Elder Kevin W. Pearson of the Seventy, “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 38.



REPENTANCE



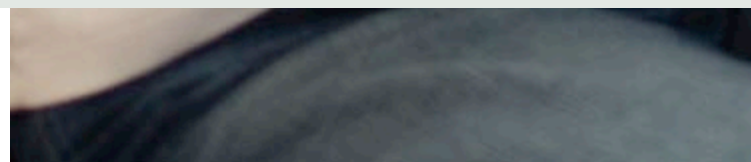
“Repentance implies that a person turns away from evil and turns his [or her] heart and will to God.”

Guide to the Scriptures,
“Repent, Repentance,”
scriptures.lds.org.

From Church Leaders

Today is always a better day to repent than any tomorrow. . . . Even should we be forgiven at some later time, the Lord cannot restore the good effects our repentance today might have had on those we love and are to serve. That is particularly poignant for the parents of young children. In those tender years there are chances for shaping and lifting spirits which may never come again. But even the grandfather who may have missed chances with his own children might, by choosing to repent today, do for grandchildren what he once could have done for their parents.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Do Not Delay,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 34.





FROM LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY CRAIG DIMOND, CODY BELL, AND CHRISTINA SMITH; THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, BY DEL PARSON © IRI

From the Life of Jesus Christ

When the Savior concluded the first day of His ministry to the Nephites, He looked into the faces of the people and saw that “they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer.” He was filled with compassion and said, “Have ye any that are sick among you? . . . Bring them hither and I will heal them.”

The multitude then came forward with their sick, and Jesus healed them one by one. And they all—2,500 men, women, and children—knelt at Jesus’s feet and worshipped Him.

The Savior then commanded the little children to be brought to Him and commanded the multitude to kneel down. He knelt in the midst of the children and began praying. The people were overcome with joy after hearing His prayer, and they bore this testimony: “The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father.” (See 3 Nephi 17:1–17.)

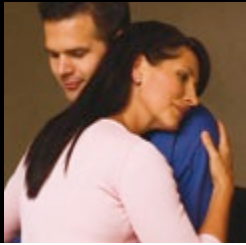
PRAYER



“Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other. The object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them.”

Bible Dictionary, “Prayer.”

FORGIVENESS



“To forgive generally means one of two things: (1) When God forgives men, he cancels or sets aside a required punishment for sin. . . . (2) As people forgive each other, they treat one another with Christlike love.”

Guide to the Scriptures,
“Forgive,” scriptures.lds.org.

From the Life of Jesus Christ

A Pharisee named Simon asked the Savior to come eat dinner. While they were eating, a woman who was known in the city as a sinner came to Jesus and stood nearby weeping. She knelt at the Savior’s feet and washed them with her tears, dried them with her hair, and anointed them with ointment. Simon watched the woman and thought, “This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him.”

The Savior then turned to Simon and taught him a parable:

“There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

“And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.”

Then Jesus asked Simon, “Which of [the debtors] will love [the creditor] most?” Simon answered that it was probably the debtor who was forgiven the greater debt. Jesus then turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Seest thou this woman? . . . Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” Then He promised the woman, “Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” (See Luke 7:36–50.)

From Church Leaders

“Remember, heaven is filled with those who have this in common: They are forgiven. And they forgive.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency,
“The Merciful Obtain Mercy,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 77.

FROM LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEVE BUNDERSON, DAVID WINTERS, AND MATTHEW REER, MAY NOT BE COPIED; DETAIL FROM JESUS WASHING THE FEET OF THE APOSTLES, BY DEL PARSON © IRI



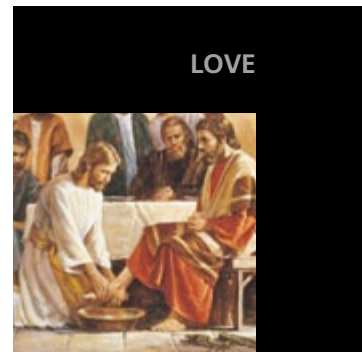


From the Life of Jesus Christ

On the eve of His Crucifixion and hours before the agony of Gethsemane, Jesus Christ observed a final Passover with His Apostles. When the meal concluded, Jesus “knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own unto the end.” The Savior then rose from supper and girded Himself with a towel. He filled a basin with water and washed His disciples’ feet. When He had finished, He gave them a new commandment:

“Love one another; as I have loved you. . . .

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.” (See John 13:1–5, 34–35.)



LOVE

“Deep devotion and affection. . . . The greatest example of God’s love for his children is found in the infinite atonement of Jesus Christ.”

Guide to the Scriptures, “Love,” scriptures.lds.org.

From Church Leaders

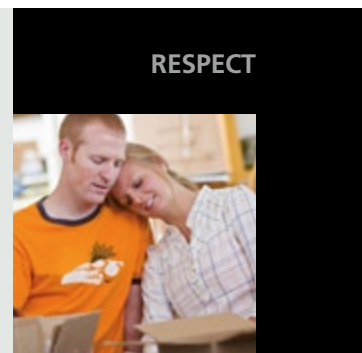
“To consider worthy of high regard.”

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (2003), “respect.”

When we have sampled much and have wandered far and have seen how fleeting and sometimes superficial a lot of the world is, our gratitude grows for the privilege of being part of something we can count on—home and family and the loyalty of loved ones. We come to know what it means to be bound together by duty, by respect, by belonging. We learn that nothing can fully take the place of the blessed relationship of family life. . . .

“Brethren, let’s treat our wives with dignity and with respect. They’re our eternal companions. Sisters, honor your husbands. They need to hear a good word. They need a friendly smile. They need a warm expression of true love.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Love at Home—Counsel from Our Prophet,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2011, 4.



RESPECT

COMPASSION



“Literally ‘to suffer with.’ It also means to show sympathy, pity, and mercy for another.”

Guide to the Scriptures,
“Compassion,” scriptures
.lds.org.

saw how many people from the city were with the woman and how deeply she grieved, He “had compassion on her.” He touched the stretcher where the young man lay and said, “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.” Immediately the man sat up and began to speak, and the Savior delivered him to his suffering mother. (See Luke 7:11–15.)

From the Life of Jesus Christ

The scriptures contain numerous accounts where the Savior demonstrated compassion for others. Being moved with compassion, He gave sight to two blind men (see Matthew 20:30–34), He cleansed a leper (see Mark 1:40–41), and He healed all the sick within a Nephite multitude (see 3 Nephi 17:6–9).

In a particularly touching account, Jesus approached the city of Nain, where He saw a funeral procession for a young man—“the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.” When the Savior



RECREATION



Healthy, virtuous activities that refresh the strength and spirit of all involved.

From Church Leaders

Just as honest toil gives rest its sweetness, wholesome recreation is the friend and steadying companion of work. Music, literature, art, dance, drama, athletics—all can provide entertainment to enrich one’s life and further consecrate it. At the same time, it hardly needs to be said that much of what passes for entertainment today is coarse, degrading, violent, mind-numbing, and time wasting. Ironically, it sometimes takes hard work to find wholesome leisure. When entertainment turns from virtue to vice, it becomes a destroyer of the consecrated life.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Reflections on a Consecrated Life,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 17.





FROM LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY CRAIG DIMOND, CODY BELL, AND DAVID STOKER; I WILL BELIEVE, BY LIZ LEVON SWINDLE, MAY NOT BE COPIED

From Church Leaders

Teaching children the joy of honest labor is one of the greatest of all gifts you can bestow upon them. I am convinced that one of the reasons for the breakup of so many couples today is the failure of parents to teach and train sons in their responsibility to provide and care for their families and to enjoy the challenge this responsibility brings. Many of us also have fallen short in instilling within our daughters the desire of bringing beauty and order into their homes through homemaking. . . .

“[My father] instilled in me a joy and appreciation for honest labor and prepared me for that time in my life when I would have the responsibility of providing for a family. The principles I was taught by my wise father of honest labor, of not wasting, of discipline, and of seeing a task to its completion were basic to my success.” ■

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Joy of Honest Labor,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 62, 64.

WORK



“To exert oneself physically or mentally especially in sustained effort for a purpose.”

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (2003), “work.”

STRENGTHENING
THE
**Family and
the Church**
THROUGH THE PRIESTHOOD

Parents, families, and individuals are blessed as they study and discuss these inspired messages.

By Richard M. Romney

Church Magazines

Do you remember these promises? You may have heard them in video excerpts shown during a council meeting, a fifth-Sunday meeting, or a Relief Society or priesthood quorum lesson. Or you may have discussed them in a family home evening. The promises are:

- Husbands and wives will be united.
- Fathers and mothers will provide greater spiritual leadership to their families.
- Youth will be prepared to make and keep sacred covenants and to serve the Lord as full-time missionaries and throughout their lives.
- Single members will be supported, receive the blessings of the priesthood in their homes, and be fully engaged in building the kingdom of God.
- Quorums and councils will work together to minister to Heavenly Father's children.
- The Church will be strengthened.

Those promises were made in March as the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles released messages on a DVD titled *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood*. At that time, ward and stake councils were invited to review the messages and then counsel together about how to use them. At the same time, families were invited to watch the video segments online at wwlt.lds.org as well as shorter excerpts as they become available. Leaders and teachers were encouraged to provide opportunities in meetings and classes for members to view segments and share their own impressions, experiences, and testimonies as prompted by the Spirit. Parents were invited to do the same at home with their families.

“The Holy Ghost will teach members how they can be strengthened by the power of the priesthood in their own roles and responsibilities,” says the “How to Use This Training” segment.

Dynamic Discussions

Though the messages were released three months ago, the study and discussions—and the accompanying blessings—continue today, and this approach is giving a new dimension to the nature of training in the Church. Unlike previous training, which was primarily a one-time broadcast for ward and stake leaders, this training is intended to be ongoing. That is why the video segments have been posted online at wwlt.lds.org. A related site, leadershiplibrary.lds.org, provides a link to the videos as well as additional resources to

help families, individuals, quorums, classes, and councils deepen their understanding and apply what they learn.

Each video segment focuses on a different aspect of the priesthood. Members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, along with other General Authorities and general officers, give inspired instruction about:

- How families can find strength and peace through the power of the priesthood.

WHERE TO FIND VIDEOS AND RESOURCES

Video segments and support materials are available at wwlt.lds.org. When accessing segments from the Internet in a meetinghouse, leaders are encouraged to download and play them on a computer rather than relying on the meetinghouse Internet connection.



- How to help every family experience the blessings of the priesthood.
- How those who hold priesthood keys strengthen homes and families.
- How to minister in Christlike ways.
- How to bring up children in light and truth.

Many of the gospel principles featured in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood* are also taught in *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, so reviewing information from the handbook may be helpful during study and discussions. Reviewing “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” may also prove helpful.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, explains that the messages in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood* are “designed to help us learn, through the power of the Holy Ghost, how Heavenly Father would have us minister, particularly in families.” That is the most powerful part of the training—not so much what is said in a video segment but

what the Holy Ghost teaches us as we ponder and discuss the principles taught.

Where to Share

All leaders, members, and families should be given an opportunity to hear and discuss the messages in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood*, either on the DVD or online.

The messages bless families as they use them in home evenings and other family settings. Husbands and wives are, after all, equal partners in leading their children. “There might be those occasions where a father or a mother needs to teach a principle, and they could use this resource as they’re trying to help a son or a daughter along the way,” explains Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the segment titled “This Is His Work.” And Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles notes that “however significant the teaching of a priesthood adviser or a Young Women adviser is in the Church—and we hope it’s very effective—that can’t

PROPHETIC PRINCIPLES FROM THE TRAINING

The video segments contained in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood* are filled with memorable teachings. Here are a few of them from members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

Elder L. Tom Perry, leading a discussion about priesthood keys, bears witness that “it is the Savior’s Church that we belong to. He’s the one that leads and guides and directs His prophet here on earth. There’s no doubt in my mind that He is the head of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson teaches that “nothing is more important for future missionaries than to feel the righteous influence of the priesthood in their homes and to experience its blessings in their lives.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks counsels that “priesthood power depends upon personal righteousness” and that the blessings of priesthood power are “available to men and women alike.” He says that families are the “image and forerunner of exaltation in the celestial kingdom.”

And **Elder M. Russell Ballard** testifies that “priesthood authority can bind families together through the sealing ordinances in the house of the Lord.” He also advises that “the brethren who lead in the wards and in the stakes need to draw close to the power that the women of the Church can bring to the building of the kingdom of God.”



The messages taught in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood* can be shared in a variety of settings, such as stake and ward councils.

possibly be as effective as the example of a mother or the example of a father.”

In Church settings, the messages can be used in stake presidency and bishopric meetings; stake and ward council meetings; priesthood executive committee meetings; stake auxiliary training meetings; presidency meetings, including Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies and Young Women class presidencies; fifth-Sunday combined priesthood and Relief Society meetings; Sunday quorum meetings and auxiliary classes; stake or district conference meetings (not in the Sunday general session); and ward or branch conference meetings (not in sacrament meeting).

Discussions could include how to strengthen youth and young single adults. Leaders could make assignments based on these discussions and follow up on the assignments regularly in council meetings.

The purpose of studying and discussing these messages is to help individuals and families strengthen their faith, build their testimonies, and deepen their conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Our safety and our success require only that we align our intents and our hearts with God’s wishes and so with His power,” President Eyring says. These messages are “a guide and an encouragement to make that alignment and to take others with us.”

The “Ministering” segment offers powerful examples of priesthood leaders visiting individuals and families,

demonstrating how such visits can assist in the rescue of less-active members.

“As we think about the charge that we receive to succor the weak, to lift up the hands that hang down, and to strengthen the feeble knees, we really can’t do that in a better way than when we’re one-on-one in someone’s home, providing this ministry and the pattern that Jesus Christ used,” says Presiding Bishop Gary E. Stevenson in the segment “This Is His Work.” “I think the real benefit will come as we discuss and learn, and then go out and do,” he says.

Strength and Peace

As this training continues throughout the Church, members will receive blessings as they apply the gospel principles that are taught. “All sons and daughters of God will be blessed if they follow the teachings and examples of these presentations,” Elder Ballard says.

Through the priesthood, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, youth, single members, quorums, and councils are ministering to others and finding inspiration as they follow the example of Jesus Christ. As they continue to do so, the promises made in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood* will be realized. Members will see the fulfillment of President Eyring’s promise from the final video segment: that even in dark times, “our families can be strong and at peace.” ■



By Elder Kevin W.
Pearson
Of the Seventy

IMPROVING YOUR Personal Prayers

What would listening to your personal prayers reveal about you and your relationship with Heavenly Father?

The divine invitation to pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus Christ is the single most mentioned commandment in all recorded scripture and is the most basic form of personal worship. Yet many of us struggle in our attempts to make personal prayer meaningful and revelatory.

I am convinced that personal prayer is one of the most significant challenges facing members of the Church, particularly youth and young adults. And because they struggle with prayer, they struggle spiritually.

Our personal prayers are a barometer of our spiritual strength and an indicator of our spiritual well-being. I have learned as a father, priesthood leader, and mission president that listening carefully to another's prayers can reveal much about his or her relationship with God.

What would listening to your personal prayers reveal about you and your relationship with Heavenly Father?

The Principle of Personal Prayer

To pray is to speak with God, the Eternal Father of our spirits—not at Him but with Him. He loves each of us perfectly and is full of mercy and understanding. He knows everything about us. He knows what we need, even when

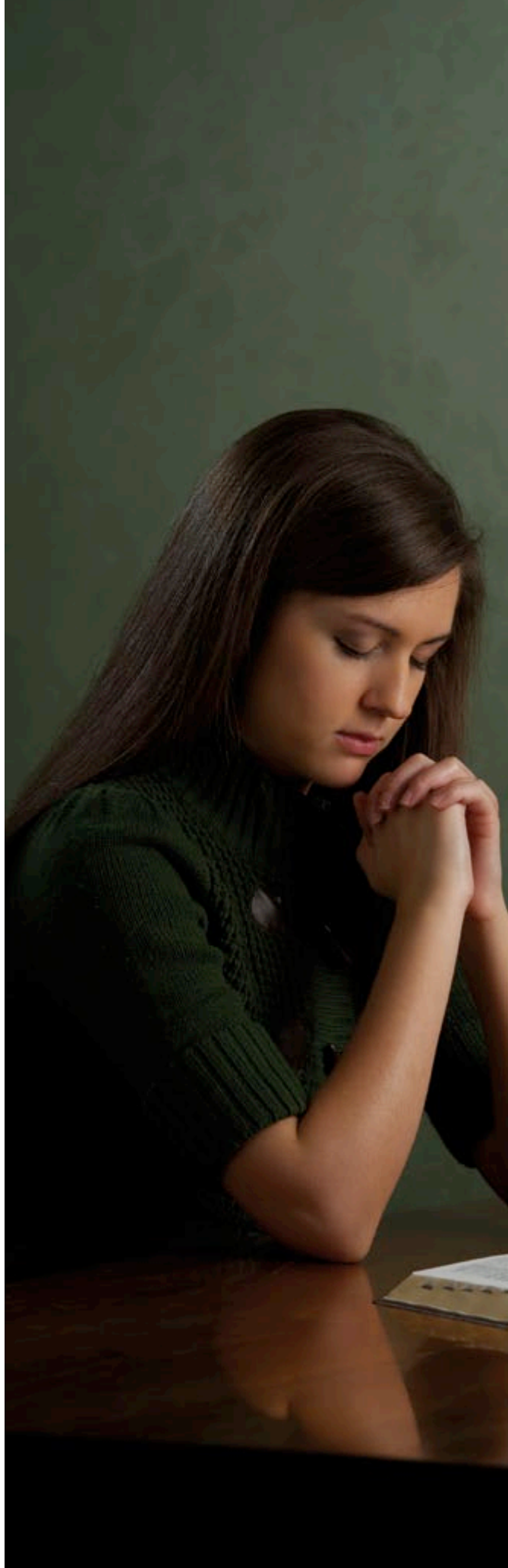


PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY LESLIE NILSSON

Prayer is powerful and compelling evidence of the reality of God the Eternal Father. Personal prayer is indispensable to understanding God and our divine identity.

we can see only what we want. He has infinite power and capacity to sustain and guide us. He is always willing to forgive us and to help us in all things.

We can speak with Heavenly Father vocally or by forming thoughts and expressions in our minds and hearts. Personal prayers should be solemn, sacred expressions of praise and gratitude; heartfelt petitions for specific needs and desires; humble, contrite confessions and requests for cleansing forgiveness; pleadings for comfort, direction, and revelation. These expressions often cause us to pour out our very souls to our loving Heavenly Father.

Prayer is often a brief communication, but it can also be an open and continuous dialogue all throughout the day and night (see Alma 34:27).

Personal Prayer Is Essential

In the divine plan of our Heavenly Father, physical and spiritual separation from His presence are necessary. Prayer is an essential and enabling spiritual link between God and man. Without prayer, there is no possible return to the Father. Without prayer, sufficient faith to understand and keep the commandments is impossible. Without prayer, the necessary spiritual power to avoid temptation and overcome trials and adversity would be unavailable. Without prayer, repentance, forgiveness and the cleansing power of the Atonement are unattainable. With the power of personal prayer, all things are possible.

Prayer enables personal revelation and

spiritual gifts through the Holy Ghost. It is the spiritual channel made available to all God's children, giving us constant access to our Eternal Father, His Beloved Son, and the Holy Ghost. Prayer is powerful and compelling evidence of the reality of God the Eternal Father. Personal prayer is indispensable to understanding God and our divine identity.

Improving Your Prayers

Prepare to Pray

Often our personal prayers take place first thing in the morning before we are fully awake and alert or late at night when we are too tired to pray effectively. Our physical, mental, and emotional fatigue can prevent us from meaningful prayer.

Prayer is spiritual work preceded by mental and spiritual preparation. If we don't take the time to humble ourselves and carefully consider that we are about to call upon God the Eternal Father in the name of Jesus Christ, we will miss the very essence of the divine pattern established to bless us.

Schedule sufficient time to carefully and humbly communicate the deepest desires of your heart with Heavenly Father. Invite the Holy Ghost to help you know what to pray for. Praying vocally helps me to focus my prayers and to listen to myself without wandering mentally.

May I suggest finding a time and place where you can carefully ponder your life and your needs. Reflect on your divine identity and relationship to God. Strive to visualize Heavenly Father as you prepare to speak with Him. Think of the Savior in

whose name you will be praying. Doing so will help you focus and prepare to pray with a humble and grateful heart.

Live Worthily

We cannot be confident in our Heavenly Father's presence if we are not morally clean. Pornography, sexual transgressions, and entertainment of any kind that mocks virtue or promotes immorality can destroy our confidence in prayer and prevent us from receiving spiritual promptings. Remember, however, Satan will be the only one who tells you that you cannot or should not pray. The Holy Ghost always encourages us to pray, even if we are struggling with obedience and personal worthiness.

Pray with Purpose

Prayer is essential to the process of revelation. Inspired questions bring greater focus, purpose, and meaning to our prayers. If you want to receive more personal revelation through your prayers, you may want to think about what questions you are asking. Revelation generally comes in response to a question. The process of revelation requires us to search the scriptures, ponder them, and apply them to our lives. As we do so, the Holy Ghost helps us form inspired questions.

Align Your Will with the Father's

The Savior repeatedly commanded that we "must always pray unto the Father in [the Lord's] name" (3 Nephi 18:19). When we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, it means "our mind is the mind of Christ, and our wishes the

wishes of Christ. . . . We then ask for things it is possible for God to grant. Many prayers remain unanswered because they are not in Christ's name at all; they in no way represent his mind, but spring out of the selfishness of man's heart" (Bible Dictionary, "Prayer"). Prayers that follow this pattern represent vain hope, not faith.

Prayer is not a negotiation process. It is an alignment process. We don't move God to our point of view. Prayer is less about changing our circumstances and more about changing us. It is about seeking His will and asking for His help to do what we need to do. When we align our will with Heavenly Father's will, answers and spiritual power will flow more freely. Following this pattern allows us to pray with faith.

Did Heavenly Father Hear My Prayers?

Nearly 20 years ago, our fifth son, Benjamin, was born. My wife sensed that something wasn't right with Benjamin's eyes. We consulted a close friend and retinal specialist in our ward, who confirmed our concerns and diagnosed Benjamin's condition as retinal blastoma, a rare form of cancer of the eye. The news was devastating.

A few weeks later, Benjamin was to have the first of many surgical treatments. Prior to the operation we met with the surgeon and told him that we believed that he would find that

Prayer is less about changing our circumstances and more about changing us. It is about seeking His will and asking for His help to do what we need to do.





Benjamin's eye would be healed and not need to be removed. Our entire family and many ward members were fasting and praying for our son, and we had great faith that Benjamin would be healed.

An hour later, the surgeon returned and confirmed that Benjamin's eye had been destroyed by the tumor cells and that his other eye also had several serious tumors that needed immediate treatment. I was speechless. Completely overcome with grief and disbelief, I walked out of the hospital into the damp San Francisco morning and began to walk, weeping bitterly.

I had done everything I had been taught to do. We had prayed and received a strong impression to select this doctor. We had fasted and prayed and felt certain that our infant son would be healed through faith and through the power of the priesthood. Yet the Lord had not intervened. Our faith it seems had been no more than vain hope. I began to question everything I had ever believed. As I walked, I felt betrayed and angry. I was overcome with pain.

I am not proud of the conversation I had with Heavenly Father as I walked and wept that morning. After a time, I got hold of myself emotionally. I remember the words of a children's Primary song coming into my mind. "Heavenly Father, are you really there? And do you hear and answer every child's prayer?" Because you clearly haven't been listening to mine or maybe you just don't really care about me and my son. ("A Child's Prayer," *Children's Songbook*, 12.)

In that moment, a tender mercy came. In my mind and heart, I felt these words: "Kevin, he is my son too." The clarity of the prompting was unmistakable. I realized in that moment that I had not understood the purpose of prayer at all. I had assumed that, just because I had a righteous cause, I could use the priesthood and fasting and prayer to change the will of God.

For the first time in my life, I fully realized that I was not in charge. I knew that I needed to submit to Heavenly Father's will. I couldn't have what I wanted when and how I wanted it just because I was keeping the commandments. The purpose of prayer was not to tell Heavenly Father what to do, rather to find out what He would have me do and learn. I needed to align my will with His.

We would face another six years of serious challenges as we battled our little son's condition to save his other eye and his life. But I now knew that Heavenly Father was aware and in charge. And no matter how things ultimately worked out, He had heard and answered my prayer. Today our miracle son is serving a full-time mission in Spain.

I have absolute evidence in my own life that God is our loving Heavenly Father and does in fact hear and answer our prayers. As you continue to learn and understand the divine principle of personal prayer as the Savior taught it, prayer will become a source of great spiritual power and revelation in your life. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University-Hawaii on May 17, 2011. For the full text in English, visit devotional.byuh.edu.



LEFT: GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN; BY CASEY CHILDS, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM; RIGHT: MOB AT CARTHAGE JAIL, BY WILLIAM MAUGHAN © 1986 IRI; PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID HERD © 2012

The Prophet Joseph Smith (above, with his hand on the door) and his brother Hyrum were shot to death at Carthage Jail on June 27, 1844. Of the martyred prophet, the scriptures state, “[He] has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3). Also wounded was John Taylor (above, in the gray vest holding a stick). His pocket watch (left) was damaged during the event.

TWO WITNESSES, THREE DAYS, AND THE AFTERMATH OF THE MARTYRDOM

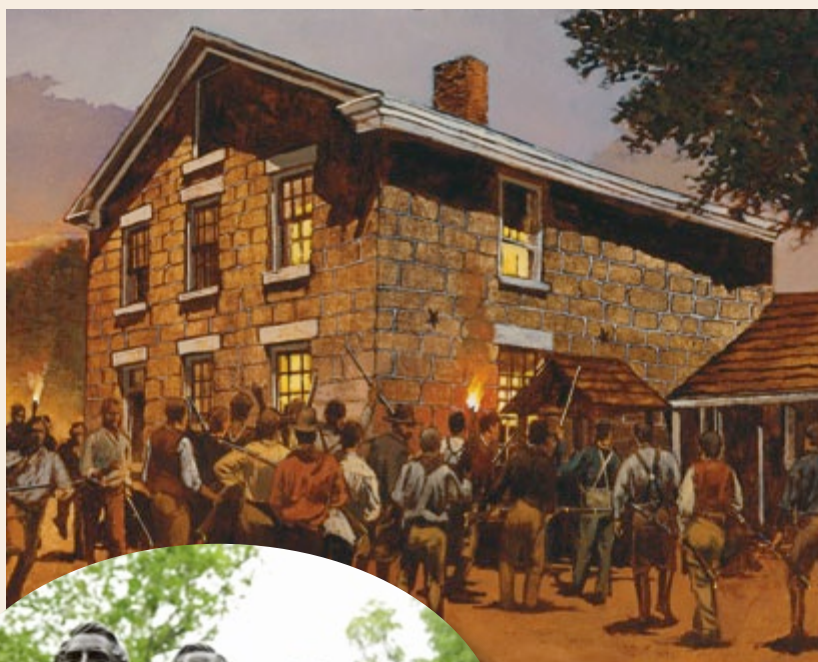
By LaRene Porter Gaunt
Church Magazines

“JOSEPH AND HYRUM ARE DEAD,” began Willard Richards’s message under the heading “Carthage Jail, 8:05 o’clock, p.m., June 27th, 1844.” It continued: “Taylor wounded, not very badly. I am well.”¹ And so it was that the Saints in Nauvoo learned of the death of their beloved prophet, Joseph Smith, and of his loyal brother Hyrum at the hands of a mob in Carthage, Illinois, about 20 miles (32 km) southeast of Nauvoo.

Earlier, during the hot, humid afternoon of June 27, John Taylor had sung “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief.”² The somber words and emotional message of the song matched the mood of the four men on the second floor of the brick jail.

When the mob rushed the building and clambered up the stairs, the captive men struggled to hold the door shut. Hyrum was the first to fall as a bullet passed through the door and killed him. John Taylor, heading for the window, was wounded by a bullet that pushed him against the windowsill. The impact against the windowsill shattered and stopped his watch. Willard Richards used a long walking stick as a weapon to stop the mob from entering as the Prophet ran to the open window. But it was impossible to stop the bullets. Bullets from both the doorway and the ground below hit Joseph, who was straddling the windowsill, and he fell from the window, landing on the ground below.

After the men on the stair landing withdrew to see the slain prophet outside, Willard Richards dragged the wounded John Taylor into the adjacent prison cell room and placed a straw tick



Above: An artist's concept of the jail during the Martyrdom. Note the open second-story window through which Joseph fell. Left: Statue of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, with Carthage Jail in the background.

over him to keep him hidden. Richards eventually heard shouts of “The Mormons are coming!” which caused the mob to retreat.

John Taylor’s watch became a symbol of the event; it stopped at 5 o’clock, 16 minutes, and 26 seconds.

With their deaths in Carthage, the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum sacrificed their lives and sealed their testimonies of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their ministries continue to stand today as an example of the scripture in Matthew 18:16: “In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”

Following are details of what happened in the days immediately after the Martyrdom.



*Left to right:
Willard Richards;
Governor
Thomas Ford;
the Hamilton
Hotel, a few
blocks from
Carthage Jail.*



THURSDAY, JUNE 27

As soon as it was safe, Willard Richards and innkeeper Artois Hamilton moved John Taylor and the bodies of the two martyrs to the nearby Hamilton Hotel. At the first opportunity, Willard Richards penned the short message mentioned above to be delivered to Nauvoo. About this time, Joseph and Hyrum's brother Samuel H. Smith arrived from Plymouth, Illinois, about 23 miles (37 km) southeast of Carthage, having outridden on horseback a group of attackers.

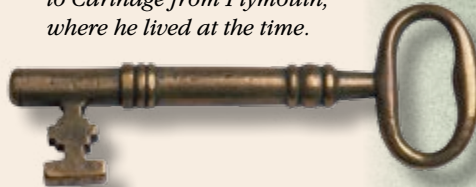
About midnight, Illinois governor Thomas Ford arrived and urged Willard Richards to write another message to the Saints in Nauvoo. In it, Willard Richards counseled, "Be still, be patient." In a postscript to this message, Ford advised the Saints, "Defend yourselves until protection can be furnished [if] necessary."³

FRIDAY, JUNE 28

Just after sunrise, Latter-day Saint farmer Arza Adams delivered Willard Richards's message to Nauvoo, where the news spread quickly. Adams observed, "It was a solemn time. Many a rosy cheek was wet with tears, both men and women."⁴

In the morning at the Hamilton Hotel, Willard Richards arranged for a guard of eight soldiers, provided by Governor Ford and General Deming, to travel with the bodies to Nauvoo. The bodies of Joseph and Hyrum were placed in rough oak boxes, covered with

Right: This map shows the locations of Nauvoo, Carthage, and Plymouth. On the day of the Martyrdom, the Prophet's brother Samuel rode on horseback to Carthage from Plymouth, where he lived at the time.



Above: The key to Carthage Jail.



brush for protection from the sun, and loaded onto separate wagons. With one wagon driven by the innkeeper, Artois Hamilton, and the other driven by Samuel Smith, the procession slowly made its way to Nauvoo.

At about 3:00 p.m., the wagon procession arrived in Nauvoo. A group directed by the city marshal met the procession east of the temple and escorted the wagons to the Mansion House, where a crowd of several thousand was waiting in



Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet Joseph, was expecting a baby at the time of the Martyrdom.



Above: Shortly after the bodies of the martyred brothers were brought to Nauvoo, a group of men that included Willard Richards and William W. Phelps addressed the Saints. Right: This map shows the route that those bringing the bodies to Nauvoo took down Mulholland and Main Streets. They were met by a group of Nauvoo leaders east of the temple, and the combined procession continued to the Mansion House.



the streets. Willard Richards, William W. Phelps, and others spoke to the crowd. Richards urged the Saints not to seek revenge and called for a vote to support his proposition for peace, which the Saints present unanimously sustained.

That evening, after the bodies were prepared and impressions of the faces were taken for death masks, Joseph and Hyrum's mother, Lucy, and other family members and relatives viewed the bodies. The coffins had been placed

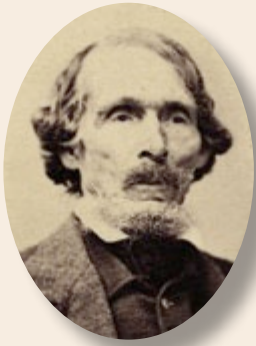
on tables in the Mansion House dining room. "A dry eye I did not behold," relative Almira Mack Covey wrote.⁵

The bodies were then prepared for the public viewing to be held the next morning. They were placed in lined coffins with a small glass square in the lids through which the public could see the faces of Joseph and Hyrum. The coffins were taken to the main floor parlor of the Mansion House and placed in outer boxes.



Above: Death masks were often created during this time period as a means of preserving the likeness of a deceased family member. Here are the death masks of Joseph (above) and Hyrum (below).

IMAGE OF HAMILTON HOTEL MAY NOT BE COPIED; BOTTOM LEFT: DETAIL FROM FORGIVE ME, JOSEPH, BY LIZ LEMON SWINDLE, MAY NOT BE COPIED; ABOVE: ILLUSTRATION BY J. KEN SPENCER; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY DON C. THORPE, COURTESY OF WILFORD C. WOOD FOUNDATION



Above: William W. Phelps, who gave the funeral address, and Vilate Kimball, who wrote to her husband, Heber C. Kimball, about the sorrow the Saints felt at the death of Joseph and Hyrum.

SATURDAY, JUNE 29

For several hours, thousands passed through the Mansion House to view the fallen brothers. “Every heart is filled with sorrow, and the very streets of Nauvoo seem to mourn,” wrote Vilate Kimball to her husband, Heber C. Kimball.⁶ He, like many other members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, was serving a mission elsewhere.

Shortly after 5:00 p.m., the Saints gathered at the meeting ground west of the temple to hear William W. Phelps give the funeral sermon. In the meantime, at the Mansion House precautions were being taken because of reports that enemies planned to steal the bodies. The coffins, removed from their outer boxes, were locked in a bedroom. The outer boxes were filled with bags of sand, nailed shut, and driven past the crowd at the meeting ground. The boxes were then driven to the graveyard, where a mock burial took place.

About midnight, a group of men met at the Mansion House and moved the coffins that held the bodies to the basement of the Nauvoo House. That night a violent thunderstorm passed over the area and discouraged a mob that intended to come to Nauvoo. Several weeks later, the bodies were removed from the Nauvoo House and buried under a small outbuilding near the Homestead, Joseph and Emma’s first home in Nauvoo. The bodies remained there until 1928, when they were moved to their current location, closer to the Homestead. ■

NOTES

1. Willard Richards, in Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise* (2002), 398. The content of this article is largely based on information found on pages 396–404 of this book.
2. “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief,” *Hymns*, no. 29.
3. See Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 399.
4. Arza Adams, in Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 400.
5. Almira Mack Covey, in Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 402.
6. Vilate Kimball, in Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 403.



Above: On the way to the graveyard, a hearse carrying the sand-filled boxes passed by the crowd gathered for the funeral services. Below: This map shows the proximity of the Mansion House (1), Nauvoo House (2), and Homestead (3), as well as the location of the meeting ground west of the temple (4).



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH OF VILATE KIMBALL COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY; ILLUSTRATION BY J. KEN SPENCER; TOP RIGHT: THE NAUVOO HOUSE BY DAVID H. SMITH, COURTESY OF COMMUNITY OF CHRIST; BOTTOM RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY LARENE PORTER GAUNT; PHOTOGRAPH BY CLARK DAVID MONSON © 2012



The bodies were kept hidden for a time in the basement of the unfinished Nauvoo House (above; right, as it appears today). In the fall, they were reburied under a small outbuilding not far from the river. This burial spot was a well-kept secret. The Saints prepared a sepulchre near the temple, but the bodies were never interred there.

In 1928, the bodies were moved a short distance to their current location, closer to the Homestead (below). Today the graves of Joseph, Hyrum, and Emma Smith are the focal point of this small family cemetery. Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith are also among the few buried here.





**By Elder
Donald L. Hallstrom**
Of the Presidency
of the Seventy

LIVING A Covenant Life

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read:

“And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

“Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

“And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh” (D&C 84:19–21).

Handbook 2: Administering the Church states that Church leaders are to “encourage every member to receive all essential priesthood ordinances, keep the associated covenants, and qualify for exaltation and eternal life.”¹

Everything we do in the Church supports this purpose in one way or another.

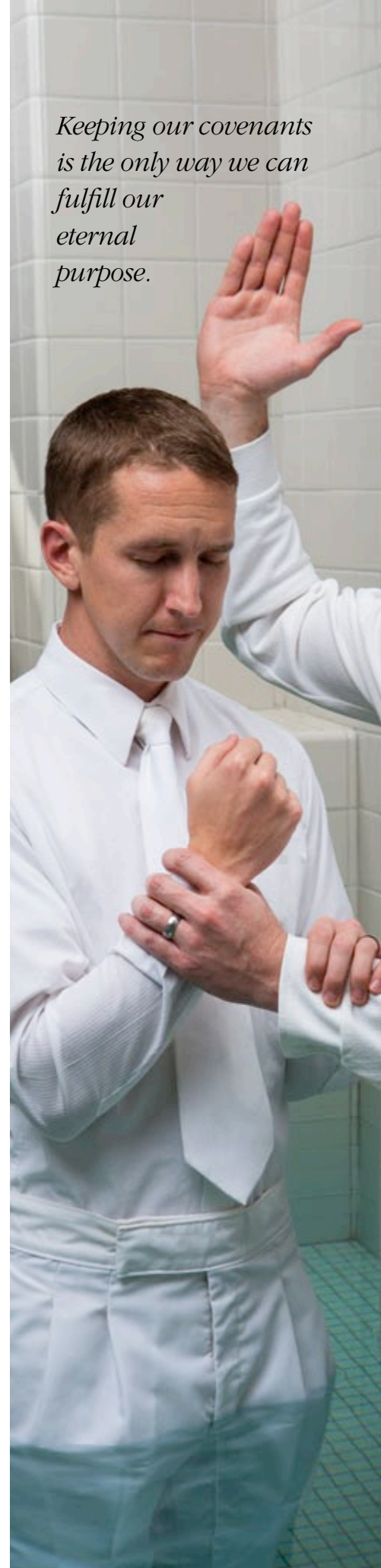
If we understand and believe the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the role of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in helping us achieve the glorious plan of God, our priorities become clear. However, we must relentlessly study the doctrine and exercise faith in the Savior as we live in a world that can cause us to forget who we really are. In today’s society, prominent voices say money is of greatest worth, position is of most value, and pleasure is our primary objective. Subtly or boldly, these voices can be influential and persuasive.

But we do not have to be confused about what is most important. Ordinances and their associated covenants have power to elevate our lives above a merely temporal existence. Covenants are foundational and essential.

Ordinances and Covenants

Ordinances are sacred ceremonies in which we make covenants. Covenants are promises we make with God. To connect us with heaven and help us overcome the confusion of the mortal world, ordinances raise our view, providing a vision

*Keeping our covenants
is the only way we can
fulfill our
eternal
purpose.*



of the things of eternity. Baptism (in which we are born again spiritually and take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ), confirmation (in which we become a member of the Savior's Church and receive the incomparable gift of the Holy Ghost), ordination to the holy Melchizedek Priesthood (whereby we obtain God's holy authority and promise to magnify our callings), the endowment (wherein we are given a gift of divine protection, power, and understanding), and sealing (whereby we are connected to our families in an eternal model) collectively bestow on us what we need to fulfill God's plan.

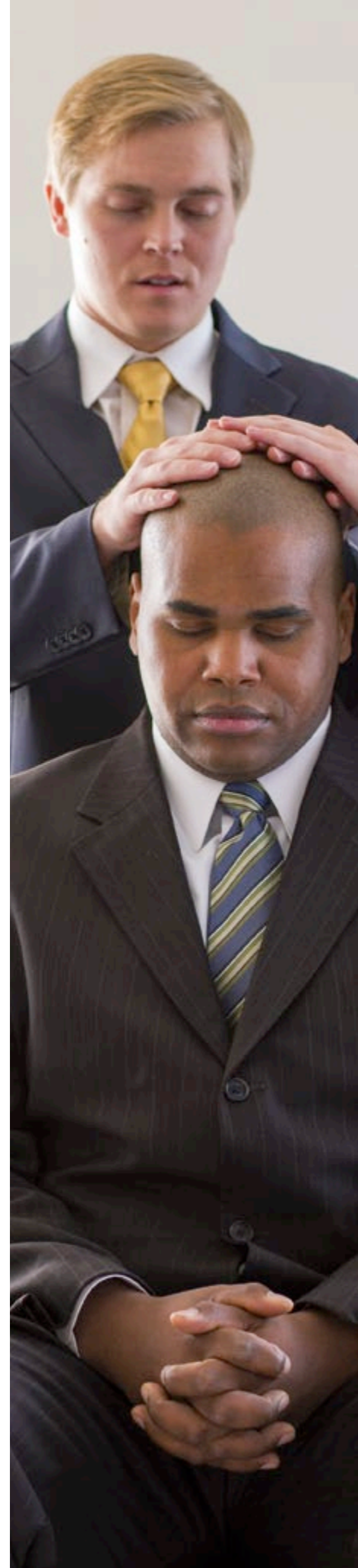
Keeping our covenants will allow us to gain eternal life, "which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7).

Nearly 44 years ago I went to the Laie Hawaii Temple and received the holy endowment. I remember as if it were yesterday the power and protection I felt as I made covenants. That experience changed me. It elevated my understanding of the priesthood I held. It guided me as a full-time missionary. It directed the kind of wife I would seek. It provided a perspective of the life I desired. Over the ensuing four decades, seeking to keep those covenants has made all the difference in my life, in my marriage, and in my family. Covenants are our guide, our iron rod, our never-changing standard.

One of the identifying characteristics of the Lord's people is that they make and keep covenants. A revelation given to Brigham Young in January 1847 at Winter Quarters states:

"Let all the people of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and those who journey with them, be organized into companies, with *a covenant and promise* to keep all the commandments and statutes of the Lord our God. . . .

"And this shall be our *covenant*—that we will walk in all the *ordinances* of the Lord" (D&C 136:2, 4; emphasis added).



Are you a covenant keeper? Are you living your life by covenant or simply by convenience? Are your covenants the basis of your decisions and the direction of your life?

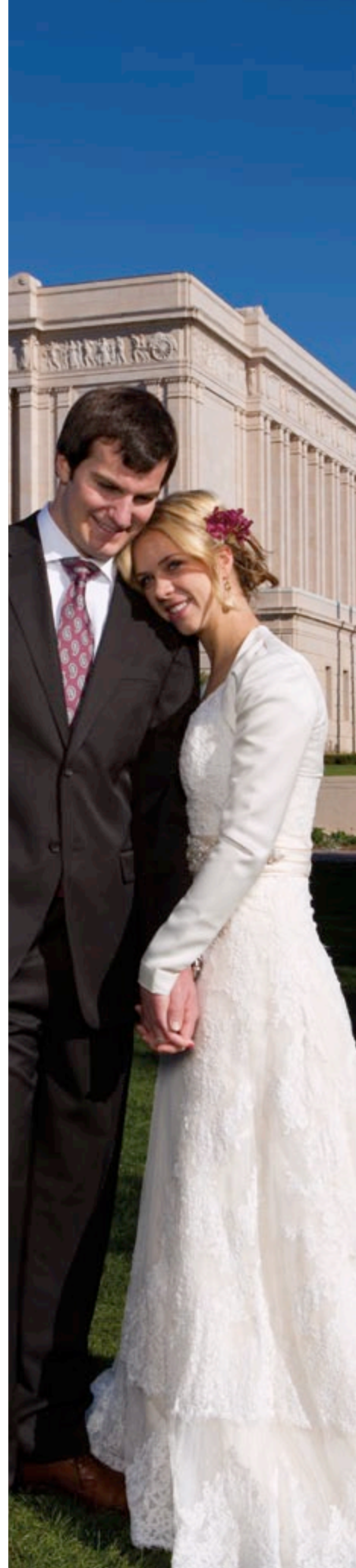
Living by covenant is the way we mature in gaining the attributes of godliness. During our spiritual development, we can reach a significant point when we recognize that our covenants are a blessing, not a burden. This brings great peace, even in difficult times. It also provides protection.

It is common for us to pray for physical safety. However, I have come to pray even more fervently for the strength to live true to my covenants. This provides spiritual protection. Whether we live a long or short life upon this earth is of little consequence in the eternities. What really matters is *how* we live. Living the life of a covenant keeper is of highest value because keeping our covenants is the only way we can fulfill our eternal purpose.

Living True to Our Covenants

While serving in Asia, my wife, Diane, and I met Appa Rao Nulu in a small village outside of Hyderabad, India, in 2006. He was born crippled. His society taught him that his potential was severely limited. However, as a young man he met the full-time missionaries. They taught him of a greater potential, both in this life and in the eternities to come. He was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church.

With significantly raised vision, he set a goal to become an elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood and a full-time missionary. In 1986 he was ordained an elder and called to serve in India. Walking was not easy. He did his best using a cane in each hand and fell often, but quitting was never an option. He had made a commitment (a covenant) to honorably and devotedly serve a mission, and he did.



When we met Brother Nulu nearly 20 years after his mission, he cheerfully greeted us where a road ended and then led us down an uneven dirt path to the one-room home he shared with his wife and three children. He still walked with great difficulty, but he harbored no self-pity. Through personal diligence, he had become a teacher, providing schooling for the village children.

When we entered his modest house, he eagerly took me to a corner and pulled out a box that contained his most important possessions. He wanted me to see a piece of paper. It read, “With good wishes and blessings to Elder Nulu, a courageous and happy missionary; June 25, 1987; Boyd K. Packer.” On that occasion, when then-Elder Packer was visiting India and speaking to a group of missionaries, he affirmed to Elder Nulu his potential. In essence, Brother Nulu was telling me he was living true to his covenants.

On this visit to the Nulu home, the mission president accompanied us. He was there to interview Brother Nulu, his wife, and his children in preparation for the parents to receive their endowment and be sealed, and for the children to be sealed to their parents. We also shared the happy news that through the Church’s General Temple Patron Assistance Fund,² financial arrangements had been made for the family to travel to the Hong Kong China Temple for these ordinances. They wept with joy, realizing that their long-awaited dream was to be fulfilled.

Weeks later they arrived in Hong Kong, but their excitement quickly turned to disappointment when immigration officials would not let them enter. The family had secured visas, but officials judged that they might not return to India. After being held six hours in a secured room at the airport, the Nulus’ prayers were answered. An official called Church headquarters in Hong Kong and verified the purpose of the family’s trip. They were allowed into Hong Kong based on the goodwill the Church had established.

The next day the Nulus entered the temple. In the Lord’s divine management, Diane (the only person they knew in Hong Kong besides me) was working in the temple that day. When Sister Nulu unexpectedly saw Diane, she tightly embraced her and sobbed with joy. Diane served as Sister Nulu’s escort during the endowment, and she observed the

sealing of this faithful couple and then the children to their parents. Their happiness was unspeakable.

The Savior’s Example

The premier example of a covenant life is the Savior. When Heavenly Father’s glorious plan was presented, Jehovah’s covenant-making response was, “Here am I, send me” (Abraham 3:27). Understanding the plan, He said:

“And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

“And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; . . . and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever” (Abraham 3:25–26).

As a model, Jesus was baptized and then taught us the importance of ordinances (see Matthew 3:13–17). The Atonement, the Savior’s most exemplary act, required Him to descend “below all things” (D&C 88:6) and suffer “the pains of all men” (2 Nephi 9:21). During this incomprehensible experience, He pleaded that the Father might “remove this cup” (Luke 22:42). However, honoring His covenant with the Father motivated Him to make a profound statement: “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

For some of us, where we are spiritually is not where we need to be. What does the Lord ask of covenant keepers? “Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days” (D&C 64:34).

The heart is symbolic of love and commitment. A willing mind suggests our best effort, our finest thinking, and our seeking God’s wisdom. Consider at least one thing you have felt about your personal covenants and act upon it.

Our commitment to a covenant life is of monumental importance—not just to us but also to generations that will follow. Firmly establishing a covenant relationship with God will be the supreme legacy we provide our posterity. If we haven’t already done so, now is the time! ■

From an address delivered May 10, 2011, at Brigham Young University–Idaho. For the full text in English, go to web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches/speeches.aspx.

NOTES

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 3.4.
2. The General Temple Patron Assistance Fund assists Church members who otherwise could not afford to attend the temple.



**By Elder
Brent H. Nielson**
Of the Seventy

MOVE FORWARD

WITH FAITH

*May we stay out of roundabouts and move forward with faith
in God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.*

A few years ago my wife, Marcia, and I arrived on assignment in New Zealand. We had been there only a few hours when we were given keys to a car and told we needed to be in Hamilton, a two-hour drive from our home in Auckland. This didn't sound like a difficult task until we got in the car and started to drive.

In New Zealand they drive on the right side of the car and on the left side of the road, opposite of what we were used to in the United States. To make matters more difficult, in New Zealand almost every intersection is a roundabout—a circular drive connecting several intersecting roads. We don't have many of those in the western United States.

We spent a lot of our trip in roundabouts. In fact, we noticed that we could stay in a roundabout as long as we liked; there was no requirement to get out. So as we were trying to determine directions, we found ourselves stuck in roundabouts, going in circles.





Marcia and I are currently helping our six children make the transition to adulthood. We have watched them, their spouses and friends, and many other young adults go through the process of getting an education, choosing to serve a mission, deciding to marry, selecting an occupation, making mistakes, and developing a testimony. We have noticed that occasionally they get stuck in a roundabout. Instead of moving forward to their destination, they spend time going around and around, their progress stalled.

Their biggest challenge seems to be fear—fear of the future, fear of failure, fear of not knowing who they are or what they can become. I have learned a very important lesson. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, fear is the opposite of faith. If you have fear, faith diminishes, but if you have faith, fear diminishes.

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we need have no fear. We need not fear death, because we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His gift of the Resurrection. We need not fear what man can do to us, because we know that if God is with us and if we have faith in Jesus Christ, we can accomplish whatsoever thing is expedient to His work (see Moroni 7:33). We need not fear the future, because we know that as we keep the commandments, the Lord will bless us.

Paul teaches, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”

(2 Timothy 1:7). We move forward with faith in God the Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ.

If we eliminate fear, we can get out of the roundabouts that stop our progress and keep us from reaching our divine potential.

The Roundabout of Forgetfulness

The first roundabout where we can get stalled is when we forget who we really are and fail to understand our divine identity. Many young single adults and young married members struggle with their identity and wonder why they are here on earth.

Your future is extremely bright. Never before has knowledge and information been so readily available. The world in which you live is incredible. To succeed, you will need the very best education possible. You will want to understand how technology works and how it can benefit you and your children.

In all of your learning, understand that the most brilliant minds of our day are only discovering and inventing what God already knows and has created. The more we learn, the more we understand how little we know about God and His creations.

However, I do know that, above all that He has created, you are His most prized and divine creation. Just as Moses learned when he spoke with God face to face, you are God’s son or daughter (see Moses 1:4, 6–7).

Imagine your ability—as you live righteously, receive sacred ordinances, and follow God’s commandments—to “inherit all things” (Revelation 21:7). Does that begin to expand your understanding and imagination of who you really are and what you can possibly achieve? Do you begin to see that if you take your education and couple it with enlightenment from the Holy Ghost, you will begin to



understand things as they really are and as they really will be? (see Jacob 4:13). Do you understand that “with God all things are possible”? (Matthew 19:26). And here is the fascinating part: you are His divine heir (see 1 Corinthians 2:9).

To move forward with faith, you must get out of this roundabout and understand that God is truly your Father and that you are His divine creation.

The Roundabout of Sin

Because of our Father’s infinite love for us, He has provided a plan whereby we may return to Him. To become like our Father and inherit all that He has, it was necessary for us to obtain a physical body. Our bodies, as functional as they are, have desires, appetites, and passions that are sometimes difficult to control. We spend a lifetime learning how to overcome our physical desires and understanding how our spirits can become the master of our souls. Because our Father knew this process would be difficult, He knew we would sin. He also knew that no unclean thing could return to His presence (see 3 Nephi 27:19).

Justice, or the law of God, requires that someone pay for our sins. Our Father provided a Savior for us, His Only Begotten Son, even Jesus Christ (see John 3:16). When the need for a Savior was presented in premortality, Jesus Christ stepped forward and said, “Here am I, send me” (Abraham 3:27).

We overcome sin and move forward with faith in the Savior as we take upon ourselves His name and understand and apply His infinite Atonement by repenting of our sins. We gain some insight into His experience by reading His words in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:39, 42; Luke 22:41–44; see also D&C 19:16–19). I am not aware of any more tender words ever being recorded than the intimate prayer of the Son to His Father just prior to the Atonement (see John 17).

If you find yourself stuck in the roundabout of sin, go see your bishop, confess your sins to him, and allow the Atonement to work for you. Most important, move forward with faith in Jesus Christ. The Savior does not want us to sit trapped by our sins. When we do that, we miss the indescribable joy and happiness the Atonement can bring to us.

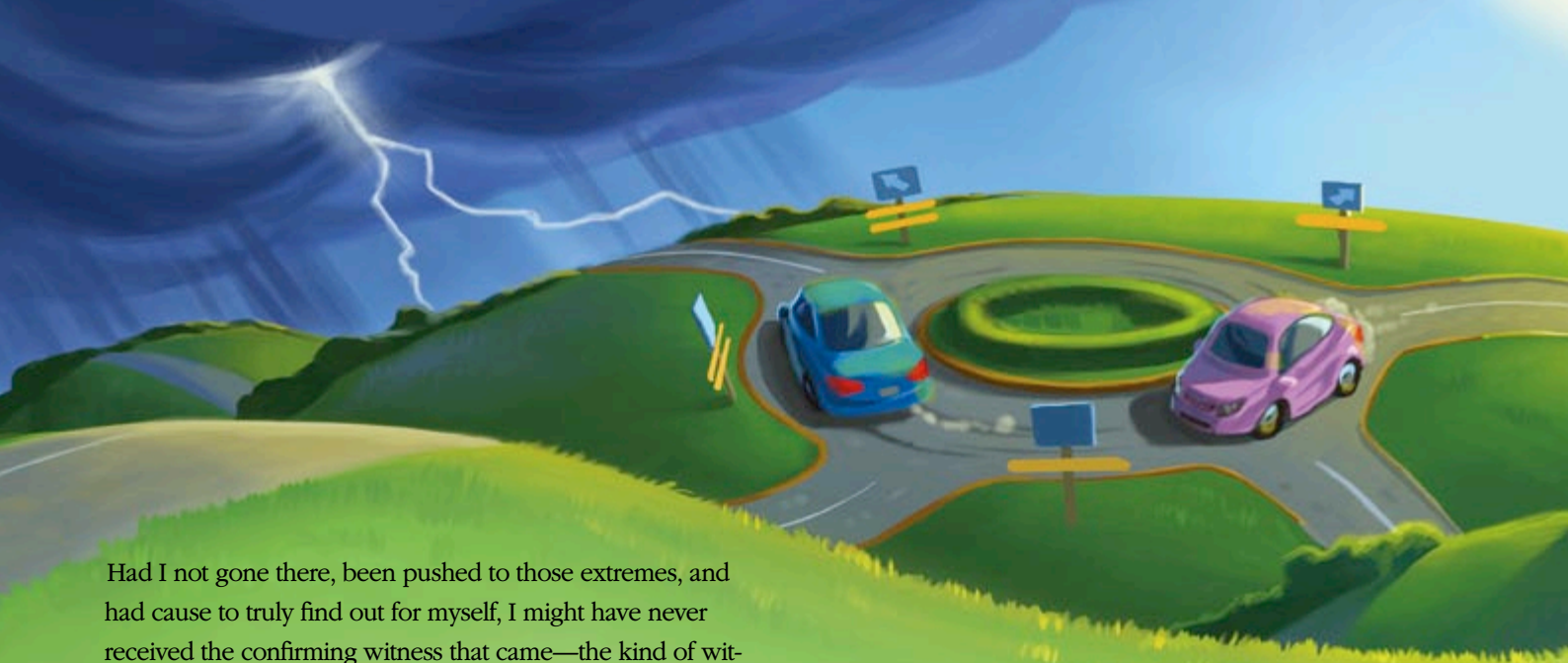
The Roundabout of Deciding to Serve a Mission

The prophets and apostles have made it clear that every able, worthy young man should serve an honorable, full-time mission. President Thomas S. Monson has also welcomed young women to serve a mission if they choose.¹ The Savior’s call is clear: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

My mission in Finland changed my life. Because Finland is on the top of the world, it is often dark. It is also extremely cold; the snow melts in May and comes again in September. My first winter there I spent in Rovaniemi, a few miles south of the Arctic Circle. When the sun went down the first part of December, we rarely saw it again until February. The temperature was often below zero (-18°C).

We were asked to find people to teach. I would wear two pairs of socks, two pairs of gloves, a shirt, a sweater, my suit, a heavy coat, a hat, and a scarf. As we would leave our apartment, my eyes were the only part of my body not covered. After walking just 100 yards (90 m) from our apartment, I would be freezing cold. We would be out working from 9:00 in the morning until 9:00 at night. We had little success.

The Finnish people thought we had lost our minds; I wondered the same thing. All I could do was ask the Lord if the work really was true. He often answered me in no uncertain terms. It was in the icy winter of Finland that the fire of the Spirit bore witness to me of the truthfulness of the gospel.



Had I not gone there, been pushed to those extremes, and had cause to truly find out for myself, I might have never received the confirming witness that came—the kind of witness that goes deep down inside and never leaves you.

During my time in Finland, I taught and baptized three people. Up to that time I had never experienced the great joy I felt as I watched someone accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. But the truth is, there was a fourth convert—me. Had I labored all my days and converted only myself, the experience would still have been worth it to me.

The Lord needs you on a mission, but perhaps even more important, you need a mission for yourself. It is there you will feel and understand the sweet whisperings of the Spirit and learn the lessons you need to know to be a good husband or wife, a good parent, and an outstanding member of the Church.

If you are worried about serving a mission, follow the Savior's call. You will need to exercise both faith and courage to leave the roundabout of indecision, but choosing to serve a mission will be one of the most important decisions you make in your life.

The Roundabout of Dating

Your decision to marry the right person in the right place and by the right authority is critical to your eternal happiness. The right place, of course, is the temple, and the right authority is the wonderful sealing power that has been restored to the earth. As for the right person, you should not make this decision lightly. It will require you to seek the confirming Spirit of the Holy Ghost and to feel safe and comfortable with your decision. If you have received those comforting feelings, then move forward with faith.

Many cultures teach that you can't marry until your education is complete or you have established yourself in your

occupation. That culture is not God's culture. Marriage is ordained of God.² It is in marriage that true happiness is found. You must not let education or other worldly pursuits keep you from this important step.

Marcia and I were married when she had two years left to complete her bachelor's degree and I was just beginning three years of law school. During those three years, we completed our degrees and had our first two children. I went to school during the day while Marcia stayed with the children. She went to school at night while I stayed with the children. At the same time we cleaned a 10-story condominium.

Each day we had to vacuum every floor. By the end of our experience there, we each had a child on our back in a backpack as we vacuumed. I would start on the tenth floor, and Marcia would start on the first floor, and we would meet on the fifth floor. Those are some of our best memories. We would not trade those wonderful first years of our marriage for anything.

If you are stuck in the roundabout of delaying marriage, move forward with faith. Marry the right person in the right place under the right authority. You will be forever grateful you did.

The Roundabout of Choosing a Career

How can you know as a young adult what you should do with the rest of your life? The answer is you don't need to know. At this stage of your life, you simply pick something that interests you, allows you to be constructive in your life, and provides opportunities to serve others. You confirm that decision with the Lord and then move forward with faith.



As you move forward,
new doors will open and
opportunities will present themselves.

Don't sit idly by because you can't see the next 70 years mapped out perfectly before you. The most important aspect of our agency is that you and I act for ourselves and not be acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26). We choose, and then we act on our choices. We move forward in faith, and the Lord will bless us.

One of our sons finished his mission in Poland in 2006 thinking he wanted to be a psychologist. He began studying psychology but soon realized he didn't want to be a psychologist, but he was interested in the behavior of people. He began to focus on market research and became interested in why people buy what they buy and make consumer choices the way they do. He graduated in psychology and business. It was not where his education started, but he was out of the roundabout and moving forward with faith.

Unfortunately, the job market was weak, especially in market research. He could have sat at home stuck in the roundabout of watching TV or playing video games or feeling sorry for himself. Instead, he found a company that did market research, and he met with the owner. He told the owner he was interested in the company and wondered if he could just come and work as an intern for free. The owner thought free was good, so within days our son was working at the company. Within weeks the owner spoke with our son and told him the company really liked his work ethic, and asked if he would like to be hired full-time.

Our son is now working in a field and in a job he loves. He moved forward with faith, not fear, and the Lord blessed him. As you choose your major or your occupation, find something you enjoy that will allow you to become a true disciple of Christ. Then do it.

When we keep the commandments, the Lord is bound to help us. When we don't, we have no promise (see D&C 82:10).

As we keep the commandments and do those things the Lord has instructed, we will be guided and directed throughout our life. But if we sit and worry all the time about whether we are making the right choice, we will miss opportunities that will present themselves along the way.

May we stay out of roundabouts and move forward with faith in God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. ■

From a devotional address delivered May 24, 2011, at Brigham Young University–Hawaii. For the full text in English, go to <https://devotional.byuh.edu/archive>.

NOTES

1. See Thomas S. Monson, "As We Meet Together Again," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 5–6; see also "Welcome to Conference," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 4–5.
2. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Why is marriage essential to God's eternal plan for His children?

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have proclaimed that "marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129).

When a man and woman are sealed to one another in the temple for time and eternity, their relationship with each other and with their children can continue forever, provided they keep their covenants.

Life's greatest joys are found in marriage and family life. Men and women complement each other, and God intends that they progress together. "In marriage all of the worthy yearnings of the human soul, all that is physical and emotional and spiritual, can be fulfilled" (Boyd K. Packer, "Marriage," *Ensign*, May 1981, 15).



I FINALLY HAD AN Eternal Family

*When my father died, I longed to hear the words,
“I know you’ll be together again as a family someday.”
But nobody said them.*

By Stefanie Shifflett Hughes

As a young girl growing up in the Church, I became acutely aware that my father was not a member. He did not attend meetings with us except on certain holidays. He never spoke of missions like the other dads or held a calling. But he was mine, and I loved him fiercely. Although I sometimes felt as if I wore a sign that read “half Mormon” at functions in my small ward in Virginia, USA, I was content in my little world.

The summer before I entered third grade, my father died unexpectedly in an accident involving his semitruck. After the accident happened—thousands of miles away from my home—it took several days for my family to receive the news. It was a defining moment. My world was turned on its head as I tried to cope with being fatherless.

As hard as that was, subsequent events affected me more profoundly than his actual death. That same year, the fathers of two other families in our congregation died unexpectedly, also leaving young families behind. While at church, I overheard quiet phrases of comfort given to these other families by ward members: “At least you have been to the temple together” or “I know you will be together again as a family one day.” No one offered these words of kindness to me or to my brother. I longed to hear them. I did not understand why no one said them to me. Were we not good enough? I wondered. Did my teachers dislike me? Had I done something wrong? I was shocked, confused, and upset. I felt as if I’d added a second sign around my neck that read “un-eternal.”

A few years passed, and my mother met and married a Church member.

They were sealed in the temple while my brother and I stayed with friends and relatives for the weekend. I had decided that I loved my father too much to be sealed to anyone else. However, I once again felt I'd been left out of the equation. I remember crying in the bedroom of a kind sister's home. She encouraged me to be of good cheer. She said that one day, when I walked into the temple to be sealed, I would understand much more than I did now.

As a preteen I am sure I doubted her sage advice. Nothing she or anyone else said changed my deep sense of unrest and "un-belonging." Those two awful feelings were some of the most common emotional denominators of the next decade of my life. My newly acquired family was fraught with domestic disappointment. I harbored deep resentment and sorrowed for the family I'd once had and lost. Church activity was difficult for me, primarily due to self-induced feelings of unworthiness and nonacceptance.

My mortal father's death and my poor relationship with my stepfather compelled me to seek out my Father in Heaven's influence. I desperately needed love and acceptance. I found it—and infinitely more—in Him. I developed an unbreakable bond with Him—He who is bound by neither time nor mortality. I received a witness of the Church's truthfulness.

Despite this, my road was decidedly rocky, and I made many wrong turns along the way. Yet the Lord loved me and knew my needs. When I was in my twenties and had been married for a couple of years, my nonmember husband agreed to attend a small birthday celebration at the home of some wonderful members in my new ward. Two sister missionaries were also there—and ready to give him the first discussion while he ate his cake. As I listened, I suddenly

remembered the comforting words of that well-intentioned sister nearly 15 years earlier—her promise that I would understand about the temple when I went.

Over a spiritually intense two-week period, my husband devoured the discussions, forsook his sins, was baptized, and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. During this time, changes occurred within my heart as well. I now understood that I was never "half Mormon" or "un-eternal" in the eyes of my Heavenly Father. No matter what hardships I had endured or would yet endure on this earth, the worth of my soul was always good enough to be ransomed by my beloved Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My husband and I received our endowments and were sealed one year after his baptism. I wept with wonder as I realized that my intense desire to hear the comforting words expressed to the families in my childhood ward was ultimately a desire for the peace I had been unable to attain in my family. As my husband and I knelt across the altar with our young daughter and newborn son, I knew we were now a family forever and entitled to the promises of life eternal and the riches of eternity. Indeed, I rejoiced that I had now bestowed a legacy—a legacy I'd sought my whole life—upon my children. I could raise my children in the covenant and help them obtain the knowledge and understanding I never had.

Since then, I have had temple work done for my father. And while I don't know all the answers to my family situation, I have faith that Heavenly Father is merciful and fair and will bless all families in eternity. I know that through time, faith, and obedience, we can all receive a personal affirmation that we are children whom God loves. And as we keep our covenants, we can feel assured that we will never be left out or left behind. ■

Stefanie Shifflett Hughes lives in Virginia, USA.



NO BLESSING WILL BE DENIED

"The Lord has promised that in the eternities no blessing will be denied his sons and daughters who keep the commandments, are true to their covenants, and desire what is right.

"Many of the most important deprivations of mortality will be set right in the Millennium, which is the time for fulfilling all that is incomplete in the great plan of happiness for all of our Father's worthy children. We know that will be true of temple ordinances. I believe it will also be true of family relationships and experiences."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75.





ASKING FOR HELP THROUGH PRAYER

By studying Elder J. Devn Cornish's experience, we can learn important principles that will help us as we seek answers to our prayers.

In his October 2011 general conference address, Elder J. Devn Cornish of the Seventy shared a story of his experience with prayer in which he asked Heavenly Father for help. His experience teaches us important principles and demonstrates a pattern of prayer.

Here's the situation he found himself in when he needed the Lord's help:

"One evening I was riding home after a long period [of working] in the hospital, feeling tired and hungry and at least a bit discouraged. . . .

I was, frankly, finding it hard to just keep pedaling.

"My route would take me past a fried chicken shop, and I felt like I would be a lot less hungry and tired if I could pause for a piece of chicken on my way home. I knew they were running a sale on thighs or drumsticks for 29 cents each, but when I checked my wallet, all I had was one nickel [5 cents]."

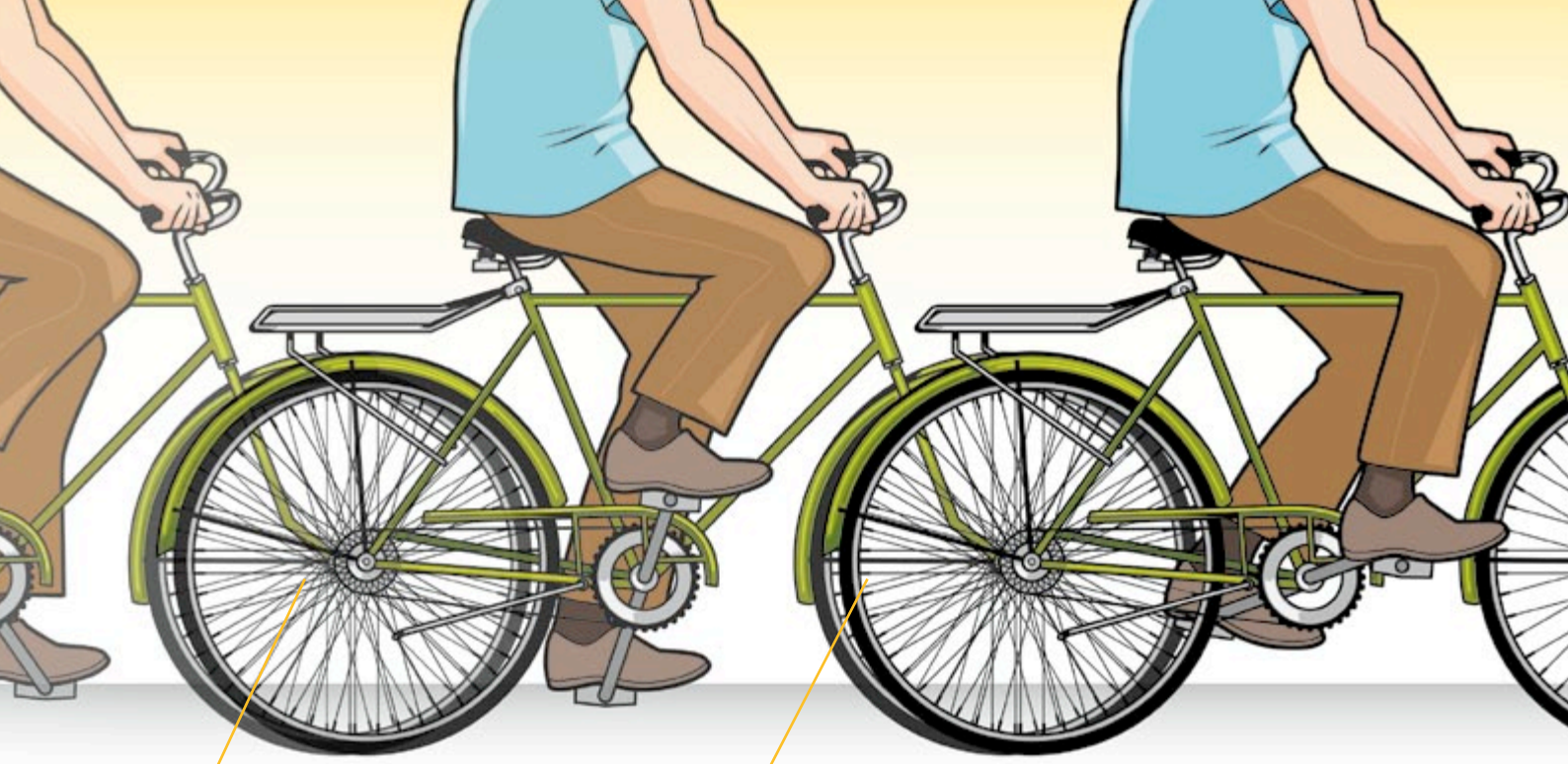
1

"As I rode along, I told the Lord my situation and asked if, in His mercy, He could let me find a quarter on the side of the road."

We can turn to our Father in Heaven for help with our problems. As we pray for help, we not only explain our dilemma but also present a possible solution. The brother of Jared demonstrated this pattern when he offered a solution to the Lord as he prayed for light for his people's vessels (see Ether 2:22–25; 3).

"When we explain a problem and a proposed solution, sometimes Heavenly Father answers yes, sometimes no. Often He withholds an answer, not for lack of concern, but because He loves us—perfectly. He wants us to apply truths He has given us. For us to grow, we need to trust our ability to make correct decisions. We need to do what we *feel* is right. In time, He will answer. He will not fail us."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Learning to Recognize Answers to Prayer," *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 31.



2

"I told Him that I didn't need this as a sign but that I would be really grateful if He felt to grant me this kind blessing."

We should remember that communication with our Heavenly Father is a blessing.

"Prayer is a privilege and the soul's sincere desire. We can move beyond routine and 'checklist' prayers and engage in meaningful prayer as we appropriately ask in faith and act, as we patiently persevere through the trial of our faith, and as we humbly acknowledge and accept 'not my will, but Thine, be done.'"

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Ask in Faith," *Ensign*, May 2008, 97.

3

"I began watching the ground more intently but saw nothing."

After we pray, we should actively demonstrate our faith in the Lord and do our part. Sometimes we have to search for answers.

"He is our perfect Father. He loves us beyond our capacity to understand. He knows what is best for us. He sees the end from the beginning. He wants us to act to gain needed experience. . . . We are expected to assume accountability by acting on a decision that is consistent with His teachings without prior confirmation. We are not to sit passively waiting or to murmur because the Lord has not spoken. We are to act."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Learning to Recognize Answers to Prayer," *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 31–32.

CRY UNTO GOD

"Cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever" (Alma 37:36).



THANKFUL FOR EVERY BLESSING

“He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God; wherefore it is done even as he asketh.

“And again, I say unto you, all things must be done in the name of Christ, whatsoever you do in the Spirit;

“And ye must give thanks unto God in the Spirit for whatsoever blessing ye are blessed with” (D&C 46:30–32).

4

“Trying to maintain a faith-filled but submissive attitude as I rode, I approached the store.”

We should maintain faith even when it seems our prayers are not being answered.

“No earthly authority can separate us from direct access to our Creator. There can never be a mechanical or electronic failure when we pray. There is no limit on the number of times or how long we can pray each day. There is no quota of how many needs we wish to pray for in each prayer. We do not need to go through secretaries or make an appointment to reach the throne of grace. He is reachable at any time and any place.”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Lifeline of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 59.

5

“Then, almost exactly across the street from the chicken place, I saw a quarter on the ground.”

We should wait on God’s timing. Often we are not given the answer we are seeking right when we ask, or even at the last moment. But we should trust that God knows best and will answer in His own way and in His own time.

“The issue for us is trusting God enough to trust also His timing. If we can truly believe He has our welfare at heart, may we not let His plans unfold as He thinks best?”

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, *Even As I Am* (1982), 93.



1. Dear Heavenly Father, . . .
2. I thank thee for . . .
3. Please bless . . .
4. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

6 "With gratitude and relief, I picked it up, bought the chicken, savored every morsel, and rode happily home."

We should show God our gratitude for His gifts and blessings. Part of this gratitude comes in recognizing God's answers.

"In His mercy, the God of heaven, the Creator and Ruler of all things everywhere, had heard a prayer about a very minor thing. One might well ask why He would concern Himself with something so small. I am led to believe that our Heavenly Father loves us so much that the things that are important to us become important to Him, just because He loves us. How much more would He want to help us with the big things that we ask, which are right (see 3 Nephi 18:20)?"

Elder J. Devn Cornish of the Seventy, "The Privilege of Prayer," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 101.

CHILDREN Prayer Sticks

When you close your eyes, fold your arms, and bow your head, you are ready to pray to Heavenly Father. But how do you know what to say? Use these prayer sticks to help you remember the steps of prayer.

Before you begin to pray, look at the sticks. Start with stick 1. This is how you begin prayer. Next look at stick 2 and think of the things that you are grateful for. Then look at stick 3 and think of the blessings you would like to ask Heavenly Father for. Stick 4 will remind you how you should finish your prayer.

To make the sticks, you will need:

- Four craft sticks
- Markers

Label the sticks with the different parts of prayer, and then use the markers to color the sticks.

Your family can help you review the parts of prayer. Hand out the sticks to your mom, dad, and siblings. Ask them to discuss the sticks in order.

Finding the Way

TO PERSONAL REVELATION

*How do I receive personal revelation
to answer questions and build my testimony?*

By Stephanie S. Smith

I lay awake in bed thinking, because my mind was too active to allow me to sleep. “I know I have a testimony of tithing, prayer, and personal revelation,” I thought. “But how do I know if I have a testimony of Jesus Christ?” This question tugged at the corners of my mind until I fell asleep.

Over the course of the following weeks, I prayed and searched for an answer in the scriptures and in the readings for Relief Society. As I studied, I felt inspired to serve others, an action that didn’t seem to relate to my question. However, as I felt love and peace from seeking ways to serve, my studies also became more focused and led me to the words “God is love” (1 John 4:16).

As I read these words I felt the Spirit, and I knew that my prayers for understanding had been answered. I knew that the love I felt when I served others was just a small manifestation of the Savior’s and Heavenly Father’s love for all of God’s children. That love I felt helped me realize that I knew that the Savior is real and that He loves me.

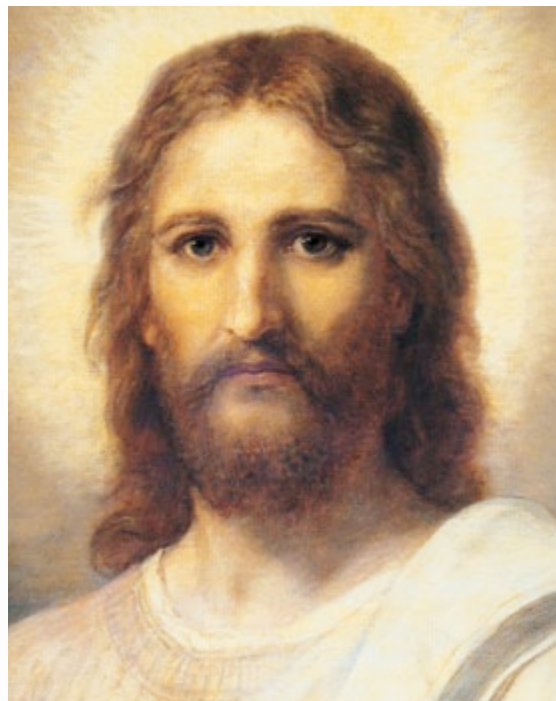
Through this and other experiences, I eventually formulated a model of how to receive personal revelation and how to make deliberate choices in order to better receive that inspiration. Often revelation comes “line upon line” (2 Nephi 28:30) from (1) diligently asking questions, (2) seeking the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and (3) acting upon received knowledge.

Diligently Ask Questions

My experience of receiving personal revelation started with me asking a question, but simply asking wasn't enough. I also had to put work into finding the answers. The Primary song "Search, Ponder, and Pray"¹ describes the work needed to gain a testimony of scriptures: search, or study; ponder, or think about what you have studied; and pray about what you have learned. This same process can apply to learning about any other aspect of the gospel.

When Alma was preaching throughout the land of Zarahemla to the Nephites, he told the people how he had gained his testimony: "Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself" (Alma 5:46). Alma's words demonstrate how asking questions can be an active pursuit, involving both time and effort.

Sometimes it can be discouraging to put so much effort into seeking answers, but I take comfort in the words of Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who said, "As you emphasize your faith and not your doubts, your faith will grow."² Perhaps another purpose of this cycle of study, reflection, and prayer is to help us show to God and ourselves that we have (or are willing to build) the faith to receive answers. As Moroni wrote, "Ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith" (Ether 12:6).



Seek the Companionship of the Holy Ghost

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said that to receive personal revelation, it is essential to have "a willingness to keep God's commandments to keep open spiritual communication with Him."³ Obeying God's commandments qualifies us to have the constant

companionship of the Holy Ghost,⁴ who testifies of all truth, both secular and spiritual (see John 16:13; Moroni 10:5; D&C 121:26).

To explain how we can invite the Holy Ghost to have a more prominent influence in our lives, Elder Keith K. Hilbig, who became an emeritus member of the Seventy in October 2012, said: “As we fast, renew our covenants during the sacrament, and attend the temple, we further access the Spirit. In these settings the Holy Ghost may manifest His influence with great impact. . . . The Holy Ghost extends our vision and allows that eternal perspective to influence the decisions we make in our daily lives.”⁵

How and where we choose to spend our time can affect how much the Holy Ghost can influence us. When I am seeking answers, I can feel the Spirit more if I improve my scripture study, spend more time in the temple, and devote extra time to sincere prayer and reflection. When I am more devoted to doing what I know is right, the Spirit is better able to dwell with me.

Elder Scott also counseled: “Have patience as you are perfecting your ability to be led by the Spirit. By careful practice, through the application of correct principles, and by being sensitive to the feelings that come, you will gain spiritual guidance. I bear witness that the Lord, through the Holy Ghost, can speak to your mind and heart.”⁶

Act upon Knowledge

The scriptures and the words of the prophets teach that as we act upon received inspiration, we are able to receive more inspiration (see 2 Nephi 28:30). According to Elder Hilbig, as we “strive to *apply* what has been learned to our personal lives,” then “the Spirit will quicken our inner selves” and “new understanding will come precept upon precept.”⁷ In this manner, the Holy Ghost confirms and expands upon the knowledge first given.

Alma described the process of gaining a testimony by comparing the word of God to a seed (see Alma 32:28–43). He said that if the seed sprouts, “ye must needs know that the seed is good” (verse 33). But he then asked, “After ye have tasted this light [or goodness] is your knowledge

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Who can receive revelation?

Revelation is open to everyone. When we pray, our Heavenly Father responds to us through the influence of the Holy Spirit. This is called inspiration or personal revelation and is given to us for our individual needs. As parents, we can receive revelation for our family situations. When we are called and set apart to serve in a Church calling, we can receive inspiration for the class, quorum, or auxiliary we are responsible for. Revelation for the entire Church comes to the President of the Church. For more information, go to www.lds.org/topics/revelation.

perfect? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither must ye lay aside your faith, for ye have only exercised your faith to plant the seed” (verses 35–36). The work to nourish the seed by exercising faith in the word of God continues. Likewise, receiving and retaining knowledge of eternal truths is a process of continual learning. Eventually our spiritual knowledge can become like “a tree springing up unto everlasting life” (Alma 32:41).

A Process for Continued Learning

When I asked myself if I really had a testimony of Jesus Christ, the next question naturally followed: How do I receive personal revelation to answer questions and build testimony?

Eventually I came to recognize how these three aspects of receiving personal revelation—diligently asking questions, seeking the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and acting upon knowledge—worked together to answer my questions and deepen my testimony “line upon line.”

This process helped me answer my question about having a testimony of the Savior, and it has helped me receive personal revelation in many areas of my life. ■

Stephanie S. Smith lives in Utah, USA.

FEEDING MY TESTIMONY

During my teenage years I fell away from the Church, and for a long time I thought it was because I never had a testimony. After reading my journal written when I was 15, I realized that I had had a testimony—but that I had stopped feeding it through prayer and scripture study. I had become numb to the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

When I started to read the scriptures again and pray, I began to feel the Spirit. I wanted to feel more; I wanted to try to be a better person. The principle of repentance and forgiveness became a joy for me.

I know that through reading the scriptures and expanding our knowledge and through praying about the things we have learned, our testimonies will grow. As we feel the Spirit and grow stronger in our testimonies, we will want to be the best people we can and be ready to see our Heavenly Father.

Aisling Sheridan-Pope, Leinster, Ireland

NOTES

1. “Search, Ponder, and Pray,” *Children’s Songbook*, 109.
2. Quentin L. Cook, in Heather Whittle Wrigley, “Elder Cook Expresses Love to Members in Australia, New Zealand,” *Church News and Events*, Jan. 20, 2012, lds.org/church/news/elder-cook-expresses-love-to-members-in-australia-new-zealand.
3. Richard G. Scott, “Truth: The Foundation of Correct Decisions,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 90.
4. See *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 83–84.
5. Keith K. Hilbig, “Quench Not the Spirit Which Quickens the Inner Man,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 39.
6. Richard G. Scott, “To Acquire Spiritual Guidance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 9.
7. Keith K. Hilbig, “Quench Not the Spirit,” 39.

Joseph Smith's Boyhood Surgery

MERCY DURING A “DESPERATE SIEGE”

How did faith, courage, and the unique skills of Dr. Nathan Smith save seven-year-old Joseph Smith's leg and his life 200 years ago?

By Vivian M. Adams

Education outreach chair for the Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Association



A Year of Pain

What Joseph later called “Typhus Fever”² afflicted many in Lebanon in 1813. Joseph’s mother, Lucy, reported that the epidemic caused her family “one whole year of affliction . . . disease, pain, and trouble,” and she was grateful for attention given to young Joseph by his brother Hyrum.³ Joseph later

recalled that during this year of affliction “my father dispaired [*sic*] of my life.”⁴ Doctors were able to reduce the fever but not the pain that settled in Joseph’s shoulder. Hoping to alleviate his pain, Joseph’s parents sent for Dr. Parker, a Lebanon physician, who insisted that the distress was caused by a sprain and administered a bone liniment, which proved ineffective.

When Dr. Parker called again, he discovered “a very large fever . . . sore between Joseph’s breast and shoulder.” When the sore was lanced, “a full quart of matter” was discharged. The pain

When the 1812–13 typhoid epidemic swept through New England, the Joseph Smith Sr. family, then living in Lebanon, New Hampshire, was seriously affected. The disease, which took some 6,000 lives, struck each of their seven children. The fever left young Joseph with osteomyelitis, an infection of the bone in his left leg between the knee and ankle—a condition that threatened his life.¹ According to the medical practice of the time, amputation was the only recourse. However, the faith and determination of Joseph’s parents, the skill of Dr. Nathan Smith, and the courage and faith of the boy Joseph combined to not only save his leg but also preserve his physical ability to fulfill his appointed mission.

Above: Dr. Nathan Smith was uniquely qualified to operate on young Joseph Smith's infected leg. Right: Joseph requested that his father hold him during the surgery.

PORTRAIT OF NATHAN SMITH BY SAMUEL F. B. MORSE; IF FATHER WILL HOLD ME,
BY LIZ LEMON SWINDLE, MAY NOT BE COPIED



in Joseph's shoulder "shot like lightning (as he said) down his side into the marrow of his leg bone on the same side."⁵ It is assumed that bacteria from the shoulder abscess spread through his bloodstream into the tibia of his left leg. Joseph cried out in anguish, "Oh, Father, the pain is so severe! How can I bear it?"⁶

The infected leg began to swell. After three weeks of excruciating pain, Joseph was attended by Dr. Stone, a surgeon from Hanover, who made an eight-inch incision between Joseph's knee and ankle, hoping to alleviate the boy's distress. As the incision healed, Joseph's mother reported, "the pain became as violent as ever." A second and longer incision was made, and again "as the healing progressed, the swelling continued to rise."⁷

A Grim Recommendation

A "council of surgeons"⁸ now came from Dartmouth Medical College (a few miles from the Smith home), including doctors later identified as Smith, Perkins, and Stone.⁹ Upon examining young Joseph, these surgeons concluded that the diseased bone now encased within new bone growth would likely spread internal infection and cause Joseph's death. Their recommendation was the standard procedure for such a case—amputation.

Young Joseph refused amputation.¹⁰ Mother Smith also implored Dr. Nathan Smith, the principal surgeon, not to amputate. As a young practitioner in 1798, Dr. Smith had developed an experimental surgery—cutting through new bone growth in order to extract the infected bone from the interior cavity.¹¹ Dr. Smith agreed to try to save Joseph's leg by performing this surgery.¹²

Joseph assured his parents and his physicians that he could endure this experimental surgery without the suggested cords to bind him and without alcohol as a sedative. He asked that his father hold him during the surgery and requested that his mother leave the room. He declared, "I will do whatever is necessary to be done in order to have the bone taken out. . . . The Lord will help me. I shall get through."¹³

Experimental Surgery

During the surgery, Dr. Smith cut into Joseph's leg and removed "nine large pieces"¹⁴ of bone from the abscessed cavity. Following surgery, another 14 pieces worked their way to the surface and were removed from the wound.¹⁵

Circumstances surrounding Joseph's operation were nothing short of remarkable. To remove fragments of diseased bone rather than rely on amputation was virtually unheard of in America or England in 1813.¹⁶ Dr. Nathan Smith of Hanover, New Hampshire, who lived five miles from his patient's home, was the only surgeon in the United States with the knowledge and skill to successfully perform this unique procedure.¹⁷ When he stepped into the Smith home, he had 15 years of experience performing this particular surgery.¹⁸ Even then, he advised the Smiths of conventional measures before introducing the possibility of an experimental surgery—a surgery that would not be addressed in medical literature until 1827 by Dr. Nathan Smith himself.¹⁹ It was not until after World War I that his methods were adopted as standardized medical procedure.²⁰

Though the Smiths may not have known the full extent of Dr. Smith's accomplishments, there is little question that the medical community held him in high regard. At the time of Joseph's surgery, Dr. Smith had founded Dartmouth Medical College, had taught as its first professor, was president of the New Hampshire Medical Society, and had been appointed a professor at Yale Medical School in New Haven, Connecticut. During his career, Dr. Smith cofounded medical schools at Yale, Bowdoin College in Maine, and the University of Vermont. He was also a compassionate country physician whose own children had been afflicted with fever in the 1813 epidemic.²¹

Acknowledging the Hand of the Lord

Joseph's childhood surgery helped make it possible for him to physically participate in the Restoration of the gospel. While we often think of the work of the Restoration as a spiritual work, it also required strenuous



NOTES

1. See LeRoy S. Wirthlin, "Joseph Smith's Surgeon," *Ensign*, Mar. 1978, 59.
2. Joseph Smith, *History, 1838–1856*, volume A-1, p. 131, <http://josephsmithpapers.org>.
3. See Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, ed. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor (1996), 76, 73.
4. Joseph Smith, *History, 1838–1856*, volume A-1, p. 131, <http://josephsmithpapers.org>.
5. Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 72–73.
6. In Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 73.
7. Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 73.
8. Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 73.
9. See Joseph Smith, *History, 1838–1856*, volume A-1, p. 131, <http://josephsmithpapers.org>.
10. See Joseph Smith, *History, 1838–1856*, volume A-1, p. 131, <http://josephsmithpapers.org>.
11. See Wirthlin, "Joseph Smith's Surgeon," 59, 60.
12. See Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 73–74.
13. See Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 74–75; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 2.
14. Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 75.
15. See Joseph Smith, *History, 1838–1856*, volume A-1, p. 131, <http://josephsmithpapers.org>; LeRoy S. Wirthlin, "Joseph Smith's Boyhood Operation: An 1813 Surgical Success," *BYU Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Spring 1981), 153.
16. See LeRoy S. Wirthlin, "Nathan Smith (1762–1828): Surgical Consultant to Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3 (Spring 1977), 329.
17. See Wirthlin, "Nathan Smith," 321, 337.
18. See Wirthlin, "Nathan Smith," 329.
19. See Wirthlin, "Nathan Smith," 330, 334, and footnotes.
20. See Wirthlin, "Nathan Smith," 319.
21. See Wirthlin, "Nathan Smith," 321, 324, 326, 334.
22. Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 76.
23. See Wirthlin, "Nathan Smith," 337.

Joseph Smith's boyhood surgery helped make it possible for him to participate in the important physical work of the Restoration, including the building of cities and temples.

physical effort from the Prophet Joseph Smith. He walked, marched, ran, and rode on horseback in order to lead the work. He hefted and hid the plates, eluded enemies, and led a growing Church from New York to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. He led Zion's Camp, endured imprisonment, drained swamps, constructed temples, and built cities.

In looking back on her family's experiences in the typhoid epidemic of 1813, Mother Smith recalled, "We

realized the blessing . . . [and] felt more to acknowledge the hand of God" through a "desperate siege."²² Through the faith of Joseph Sr., Lucy, and young Joseph, that siege aligned the Smith family with one of the greatest physicians of early America²³ and enabled Joseph to fully pursue his work. During the bicentennial of Joseph's surgery, it is fitting to reflect on the Lord's mercies toward the boy who would become the prophet of the Restoration. ■

WE NEED TO PRAY—NOW!

Our family was returning from a weekend getaway to Peace River, Alberta, Canada, about five hours north of our home in Edmonton. Darkness had long since descended on the northern landscape, and although the wind was blowing snow wildly across the road in front of us, all seemed peaceful and calm inside our van.

Suddenly an ominous warning light appeared on the dashboard. I had seen it only once before, years ago, and now I feared what was in store. I quickly turned off all unnecessary power, but the engine soon stalled. I knew we had traveled several kilometers since we had passed the last town, and it would be many more kilometers before we reached the next town. I could not even remember the last time we had encountered a vehicle going in either direction.

As we desperately considered our options, our 11-year-old son, Casson,

said, “We need to pray—now!” Not three months before, Casson had been devastated by the loss of his younger brother, who had passed away from cancer. How many prayers had Casson sent up to heaven as he struggled to understand why he had lost his only brother?

My wife and I were not sure how fully he had understood our explanation that our prayers need to be aligned with Heavenly Father’s will and not necessarily with our own desires. Yet here he was, showing us that we needed to turn to Heavenly Father and continue to have faith in Him.

Not long after we had finished praying, the headlights of an approaching vehicle began to sparkle in our rearview mirror. Within seconds a long flatbed truck en route to Edmonton stopped in front of us.

As the driver and I approached each other, he asked in a thick French Canadian accent, “Do you have any children in that van?” When I told him yes, he said he had passed another stopped vehicle several miles back but had not pulled over because of the bad weather. However, as he had approached us, he felt a distinct impression that we had children who needed his help. As a result, he stopped.

Within a few minutes he had our vehicle winched onto his truck, and we were heading to Edmonton. It was a cold trip back, but we were warmed by the sweet confirmation that Heavenly Father does hear prayers. Sometimes the answers come in ways we don’t envision, and sometimes the answers are more powerful and direct than we can ever imagine. We just need to have faith and trust in the Lord. ■
Jeffery R. McMahon, Alberta, Canada



Not long after we had finished praying, the headlights of an approaching vehicle began to sparkle in our rearview mirror.

I'LL NEVER GO TO ANOTHER DANCE

In our suburb of Chicago, Illinois, USA, fewer than 20 Latter-day Saint youth attend a high school of about 4,400 students on two separate campuses. We have been pleased with the education our son has received, and many good families with high standards live in our area.

In the spring of our son's junior year, he was invited to a school dance. His date wore a beautiful, modest dress, and we were eager to hear how their night went. When he came home, he said, "I will never go to another school dance!" He said students had engaged in provocative dancing, which the administration did nothing to stop. I was appalled.

I am a part-time employee of this school district, and a couple of days after the dance I sought out a vice principal. He is a man of integrity, and I felt that he would listen to my concerns. He recommended that I write to the high school principals.

I prayerfully considered what to say and decided to tell them I was disappointed with the inappropriate dancing and that nothing was done to stop it. The bar had been set high for academics, so why not for all activities?

Several months passed, and I thought my letter had fallen on deaf ears. But one day, during back-to-school registration, a vice principal asked me, "Are you the mother who wrote the letter about the school dances?"

"Yes, I am," I replied.

"I want you to know that your letter has caused quite a stir!" he said.

I learned that one of the principals wasn't convinced that changes needed to be made until he asked a few students their opinion. Everyone had the same reply: "We will never go to another school dance! They are too disgusting!"

The administration then implemented rules of dance etiquette, which would be enforced during an upcoming homecoming dance. The principal informed students that they would be asked to leave if they disregarded the rules.

I anxiously awaited our son's return from the homecoming dance. When he arrived, he said students who had tried to get away with the old behavior

were removed. He said it was the best dance he had ever attended.

I wrote to the administration, thanking them for making this one of the best school dances in a long time. The vice principal I knew responded: "Thank you for starting that conversation last spring. Without your input we might not have moved forward in this area."

I have since found out that most of the schools in our county are adopting these new dance rules, so thousands of students will now be able to enjoy school dances.

I pray that the Lord will bless all of us to find the courage to speak out and up for what we believe. I learned that one person can make a difference. ■

Wendy Van Noy, Illinois, USA



After the administration had implemented rules of dance etiquette, I anxiously awaited our son's return from the homecoming dance.

I PRAYED FOR YOU

Recently I was running a little late to church and hurried into the chapel during the opening hymn. When I walked into the chapel, I saw that it was fuller than normal. As I looked around at the numerous visitors, I realized two things: it was our ward's Primary program, and my usual spot was taken.

I hurriedly took a seat on the first row of chairs in the overflow seating just in time to see a young mother arrive with her two-year-old son in tow and her six-month-old daughter in her arms. I noticed that her husband didn't follow her in. When I glanced around the chapel, I saw that he was on the stand, sitting at the piano—he was the accompanist for the Primary.

Throughout the meeting I enjoyed helping with the young boy and listening to the Primary children.

Because I am single, I usually sit with a particular friend. But that day my friend was out of town. I thought it might be nice to sit with the young mother and her children instead, so I asked if I could join them. The mother agreed. Throughout the meeting I enjoyed helping with the young boy and listening to the Primary children.

At the end of sacrament meeting, the mother leaned over and said she had prayed for me that morning. I waited for her to elaborate. She said she had prayed that I would be at church and that I would sit with her and help her. She had thought she might not be able

to make it through sacrament meeting by herself. I felt overwhelmed that

I had answered her simple prayer, offered just that morning.

I know that the Lord loves us more deeply than we can truly comprehend. Witnessing an answer to a simple request taught me a powerful lesson, and I am sure the experience taught this mother as well. When I asked if I could sit with this sister, I wasn't thinking about being the answer to a prayer—I was just doing what I would want someone to do for me if I were in her situation.

Truly Heavenly Father hears and answers our prayers, even the seemingly small ones. ■

Ami Hranac Johnson, Idaho, USA



YOU REMOVED MY SADNESS

For some time I was active in doing family history and temple work. As I progressed in my research, though, I knew I would have trouble finding information about one person—my maternal grandfather.

My mother was not raised with her father and had lost contact with him, her siblings, and all her father's relatives. She didn't have anything to confirm his birth date or birthplace, and she wasn't sure where or when he had died. I wondered if I would ever find the necessary information.

One day as I was looking through my mother's diary, I noticed a photograph of my grandfather. As I turned it over, I saw that he had signed and dated the photo and indicated how old he was at the time. I now had an approximate date for his birth! I excitedly searched his name and the dates on FamilySearch. To my great astonishment, I saw that his ordinances had already been done. Who could have done my grandfather's temple work?

I soon discovered that the work had been performed by one of my long-lost maternal uncles. I searched for his contact information and eventually found his telephone number.

I was nervous about calling him because he had met me 30 years before—when I was one. I didn't know how he would react.

Still, I decided to call. When he answered, I explained how I had found the information about my

grandfather—his father—and told him that I was his niece.

I will always remember his response: "You could never know the sadness I have felt about having lost contact with your mother. Now you have removed that sadness from me!"

We learned that his family and mine, though separated, had been baptized and confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints around the same time, and both

families were firm in the gospel. It was a joyful, emotional moment for us.

I had long understood that family history and temple work can connect us to our deceased ancestors, but I had never considered that it could connect us to our living relatives as well. I am grateful that I have been able to help unite our family through family history—not only in the spirit world but also during our earthly life. ■

Kissy Riquelme Rojas, Chile



One day as I was looking through my mother's diary, I noticed a photograph of my grandfather.

NEWS OF THE CHURCH

Visit news.lds.org for more Church news and events.

Church Has Witnessed Historic Changes during President Monson's Ministry

During the past five years of President Thomas S. Monson's leadership, the Church has witnessed historic changes that have impacted members worldwide. The deep fingerprint of the Church's 16th President can be found etched on a wide variety of key announcements and new policy implementations, ranging from missionary work and priesthood leadership training to prolific temple building.

Many of the policies and announcements unveiled during President Monson's administration have a global reach—yet, at their core, they are designed to serve and care for individuals. His lifelong concern for the one is evident in each historic moment.

Here are a few highlights from the first half-decade of the presidency of Thomas S. Monson:

- In a move to expand the opportunities for young members of the Church to serve full-time missions, President Monson announced on October 6, 2012, that men may begin serving at age 18 and women at age 19. His announcement was made during the opening session of the Church's 182nd Semiannual General Conference and sparked an outpouring of missionary enthusiasm. Since the announcement, the Church's Missionary Department has received historic numbers of applications from both young men and young women eager to serve.
- In a letter cosigned by his counselors in the First Presidency—President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf—President Monson announced the 2013 implementation of a new youth curriculum designed “to strengthen and build faith, conversion, and testimony” in the young people of the Church. The new curriculum allows for more interactive teaching in Aaronic Priesthood, Young Women, and youth Sunday School classes patterned after how the Savior taught during His ministry on earth. Weekly classes utilize many of the online resources of the modern-day Church, allowing the youth to enjoy unprecedented participation and involvement.
- Under the direction of President Monson and the First Presidency, the Church continues to provide annual worldwide leadership training meetings to assist local priesthood and auxiliary leaders and families in their efforts to serve the members and deepen conversion. The training meetings allow local leaders to receive direction from members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and other General Authorities and general auxiliary leaders. The worldwide training has included instruction on using the new administrative handbooks (introduced in 2010), training on conducting effective ward councils, and strengthening the family and the Church through the priesthood.
- In 2010 the First Presidency began assigning members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to conduct two new kinds of international meetings—priesthood leadership conferences and area reviews. During each priesthood leadership conference, stake presidencies, bishops, and branch presidents within a designated area of the Church are brought together for training. During each area review the leaders also take an in-depth look at what is happening with the Church in a given ecclesiastical area and review such things as humanitarian service, welfare needs, missionary work, and family history and temple work.



President Thomas S. Monson speaks to the media at the announcement of the new First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Monday, February 4, 2008.

- During President Monson’s administration, 33 new temples have been announced throughout the world. Seventeen have been dedicated and five others rededicated after extensive renovations. President Monson himself presided at the dedications of temples in Calgary, Alberta, Canada; Cebu City, Philippines; Curitiba, Brazil; Kyiv, Ukraine; Panama City, Panama; Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; and Draper, Utah; Kansas City, Missouri; Rexburg, Idaho; South Jordan, Utah; The Gila Valley, Arizona; and Twin Falls, Idaho, USA; and at the rededication of temples in Mexico City, Mexico; and Atlanta, Georgia; Boise, Idaho; and Laie, Hawaii, USA.
- President Monson has also presided over a period of unprecedented reach from the Church’s online resources, delivering the words of the prophets and the programs of the Church to some 14 million members across the earth. Online highlights include a variety of Church-produced videos, including the series of films depicting key moments from the New Testament.
- Under the direction of the First Presidency, the Church produced a new book titled *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*. The book is intended as a personal and family resource to strengthen women in their responsibilities.
- Under President Monson’s leadership, the Church has responded to disasters across the globe, reaching out and helping those in need. Some major humanitarian responses in the past five years include efforts to help after an earthquake in Haiti, an earthquake and tsunami in Japan, and flooding in Thailand. The Church also responded to a severe food crisis across eastern Africa, helped immunize children in many nations, and has provided clean water to many remote villages, as well as helping recovery efforts after disasters in the United States. In addition, the Church dedicated a new 570,391-square-foot (53,000 square meter) welfare facility in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. ■

Elder Christofferson Counsels Members in Central America

By Elder Don L. Searle

Church News contributor

The work of the Church today is to prepare a people who will be ready to receive and serve the Lord when He comes, Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles told members of the Arraijan Panama Stake earlier this year.

It was a theme that Elder Christofferson sounded several times during a tour of Central America from

Elder D. Todd Christofferson greets a young woman following a meeting in Panama.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES DALRYMPLE © IRI

January 11 through 20 while speaking to gatherings of youth, to young single adults, to missionaries, to local leaders, and to members in stake conference meetings.

Elder Christofferson was accompanied by his wife, Kathy Christofferson, and Elder Richard J. Maynes of the Presidency of the Seventy and his wife, Nancy Maynes. As he traveled first to Costa Rica, then Guatemala, and last to Panama, Elder Christofferson was joined in different places by the members of the Area Presidency: Elder James B. Martino, President; Elder Carlos H. Amado, First Counselor; and Elder Kevin R. Duncan, Second Counselor.

Elder Maynes also traveled to Honduras and Belize to visit with leaders and members there.

Elder Christofferson spoke to hundreds of young people gathered at Strength of Youth conferences in Costa Rica and Panama; to groups of missionaries in San Jose, Costa Rica; Guatemala City; and Panama City; to large groups of young single adults in the three countries; and to gatherings of priesthood and auxiliary leaders.

He also visited with the presidents of Costa Rica and Guatemala to help

cement important relationships with those governments.

In Costa Rica Elder Christofferson urged the youth and young adults to obey the commandments, to remember that Heavenly Father knows and loves them, and to read the scriptures every day and seek to receive all that the Spirit will give them as they read.

He bore a strong testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and of Jesus Christ. “I pronounce a blessing upon you that you may receive this same testimony I am expressing,” he said, and added, “[Jesus Christ] is real. I invoke upon you this night His blessings.”

In Guatemala he stressed the importance of the family. “In creating a family, we fulfill our greatest purpose on earth,” he said.

He spoke to youth in Panama and testified, “The leader of this Church is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is a very involved leader and is personally active in guiding His Church.”

A priesthood leadership conference emphasized focusing not on tasks and being busy but on the outcomes of priesthood service, principally individual conversion.

Elder Maynes also presided at a variety of meetings, including young adult and missionary meetings in Belize and Honduras, and offered counsel and spiritual direction to hundreds in those Central American lands. ■

Jason Swensen contributed to this report.



The priesthood line of authority for those performing ordinances can be traced back to the Savior.

Members Can Request Priesthood Line of Authority

By Ryan Morgenegg

Church News

The Church can now provide priesthood line of authority information as a service to members upon request. Priesthood line of authority is a sequential pattern of ordinations that can be followed back to the early beginnings of the Church and ultimately to the Savior.

Though a priesthood holder with the office of Seventy may be included in a member's personal line of authority, no separate line of authority is maintained for the office of Seventy. Also, priesthood line of authority for ordained bishops and patriarchs is traced through their high priest ordination.

Only information about Melchizedek Priesthood lines of authority can be requested from the Church; Aaronic Priesthood lines are not available. Members may request Melchizedek Priesthood line of authority information only for themselves, a child living at home, or a young missionary who is currently serving. These documents are not official Church records.

If you wish to request your priesthood line of authority, include your full legal name, birth date, membership record number (available on a temple recommend or from your ward clerk), the name of the individual who ordained you to the office of elder or high priest (if known), and your return address and telephone number or email address.

Send your request to:

Priesthood Line of Authority

Global Service Center

120 North 200 West

Salt Lake City, Utah 84103-1514

Fax: 1-801-240-6816

Telephone: 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-3500

Email: Send an email to lineofauthority@ldschurch.org with PLA in the subject line. In return you'll receive a form to fill out and return (there is an automated reply to any message that contains "PLA" in the subject line). ■

Tabernacle Choir to Tour Midwest

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square will visit six cities in America's heartland this summer. The tour will include stops in Columbus, Ohio; Indianapolis, Indiana; Chicago, Illinois; Milwaukee and Madison, Wisconsin; and Minneapolis, Minnesota, from June 12 through June 20, 2013.

The choir's repertoire will range from Bach and Broadway to American folk hymns and spirituals.

Since its first tour outside of Utah in 1893, the choir has performed in music capitals from Israel and Russia to Japan and Australia. The all-volunteer choir and orchestra usually tour every other year.

Church High School in Mexico to Become New MTC

On January 29 an announcement was made that the Church-owned high school Benemérito de las Américas in Mexico City, Mexico, would be converted into a missionary training center.

Elder Russell M. Nelson and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, both of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, presided and spoke at the January 29 meetings at the Benemérito campus where the plans for the future MTC were announced. The change from school to MTC is expected to occur following the end of the Benemérito school year in June 2013.

The new MTC will train elders,



The Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square will perform in five states in the Midwest from June 12 through June 20.

PHOTOGRAPH © IRI

sisters, and couples who will serve not only in Mexico, but also in other countries of North, Central, and South America. Even missionaries from the United States who have been called to Spanish-speaking assignments in their own country may be trained in Mexico City. The MTC in Provo, Utah, will continue to provide Spanish-language training for many missionaries as well.

Tegucigalpa Honduras Temple Dedicated

On Sunday, March 17, 2013, following a cultural celebration and three-week open house, the Tegucigalpa Honduras Temple was

dedicated in three sessions, which were broadcast to all Church units in Honduras and Nicaragua.

Honduran members, who have traditionally traveled several hours to the Guatemala City Guatemala Temple, rejoiced to see the country's first temple dedicated. The temple was first announced by the First Presidency in a June 9, 2006, letter, and ground was broken on the current site on September 12, 2009.

Correction

Page 21 of the February *Ensign* indicates that Dima Ivanov lives in Vladivostok, Russia, but he actually lives in Ulan-Ude, Russia.

IN OTHER CHURCH MAGAZINES

THE NEW ERA

FIVE WAYS TO FOLLOW THE COUNSEL OF PRIESTHOOD LEADERS
The Lord speaks to his disciples and taught the people in his day. Today, he continues to do so.

WHY YOU SHOULD FOLLOW THE COUNSEL OF PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

YOU CAN ENJOY LOCAL LEADERSHIP

- Following the counsel of your bishop
- Following the counsel of your stake president
- Following the counsel of your ward or branch president
- Following the counsel of your Sunday School teacher
- Following the counsel of your youth leader
- Following the counsel of your family members

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

ENJOY LESSONS
From the Priesthood and Youthful Men

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

I LOVE THE BISHOP'S CHALLENGE

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

the Counsel of Priesthood Leaders” on page 38.

Studying the Conference Issue

Last month, Church members looked forward to receiving

the conference issue of the *Ensign* in the mail. But have your youth done much with it since it arrived? Find ideas to help them learn from the conference issue in “Studying General Conference” on page 40.

True Identity

Youth often spend their teenage years trying to discover and define who they are. Elder Dallin H. Oaks provides advice for them in “How to Define Yourself” on page 48,

where he reminds us that the only characteristic we need to define ourselves by is the fact that we are sons and daughters of God.

NEW CHURCH LEADERS

HOW TO DEFINE YOURSELF

HOW HAVE YOU APPLIED IT?

Following Priesthood Counsel

This month’s *Come, Follow Me* lessons for youth focus on the priesthood. One of the lesson outlines for Sunday School is about following counsel from priesthood leaders. You’ll find ideas related to this topic in “Five Ways to Follow

THE FRIEND

Preparation for Baptism

Do you know a child who is preparing for baptism? Read “Understanding Baptism” on page 24 of the June *Friend* for ideas on how to explain the different elements

of baptism, the preparation that is needed, and the covenants that are made in this special ordinance. Look elsewhere in the magazine for stories of

how other children prepared for and looked forward to baptism.

Mary Elizabeth Rollins

The June *Friend* will feature part 1 of a three-part story about the life of Mary Elizabeth Rollins, a special young girl from Church history (see page 8). Children can learn about her in the “A Girl of Great Faith” series.

Understanding Baptism

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

WHY IS BAPTISM IMPORTANT?

HOW IS BAPTISM PERFORMED?

WHAT COVENANTS ARE MADE AT BAPTISM?

WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTER BAPTISM?

Conversion in Kirtland

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

COMMENT COVER TO COVER

Some time ago I made a resolution to read the *Ensign* from cover to cover every month. Before then, I would read selected articles from the magazine and skip others, assuming I already knew what I needed to know about certain subjects, or thinking they didn’t apply to me, and not allowing the Holy Ghost to teach me more. As I continue the practice of reading each *Ensign* all the way through, I find myself becoming more eager for the coming month’s issue. Thank you so much for the inspiring and timely articles!

Felicia Wilson
Virginia, USA

FAITH OF THE ISLANDERS

By Joshua J. Perkey

Church Magazines

On a recent trip from the United States to the Marshall Islands and Tonga, I was struck by the pure faith of those I met. By and large, it seemed to me, their faith is uncluttered by Western society's ever-shifting definitions of morality and truth. The faith of the islanders is profound, as described by former mission president to Tonga, Elder John H. Groberg (of the Seventy, 1976–2005). It is rooted in the Atonement and the plan of salvation. Such faith ceases to question that which has been learned by the Spirit.

In some ways, life on the Pacific Islands tends to move at a gentler pace than I was used to. Although the islanders have access to cars and TVs, movies and the Internet, sports and a number of other activities, such things seem to be less obtrusive than they are in many cultures, including in the United States.

Of course, the islanders face challenges of their own. Like me, they must find ways to provide food and shelter as well as take care to protect their testimonies. Yet time and time again, I witnessed the faith of those who did not waver under the pressure of challenges or get diverted by busyness or distractions. Instead, they are aware of the Lord's hand in their lives. As Elder David S. Baxter of the Seventy (and former Pacific Area President) explained, "They believe in miracles, they expect to receive them, and they do."



The islanders I met accept what they know to be true and let the doubts fade away.

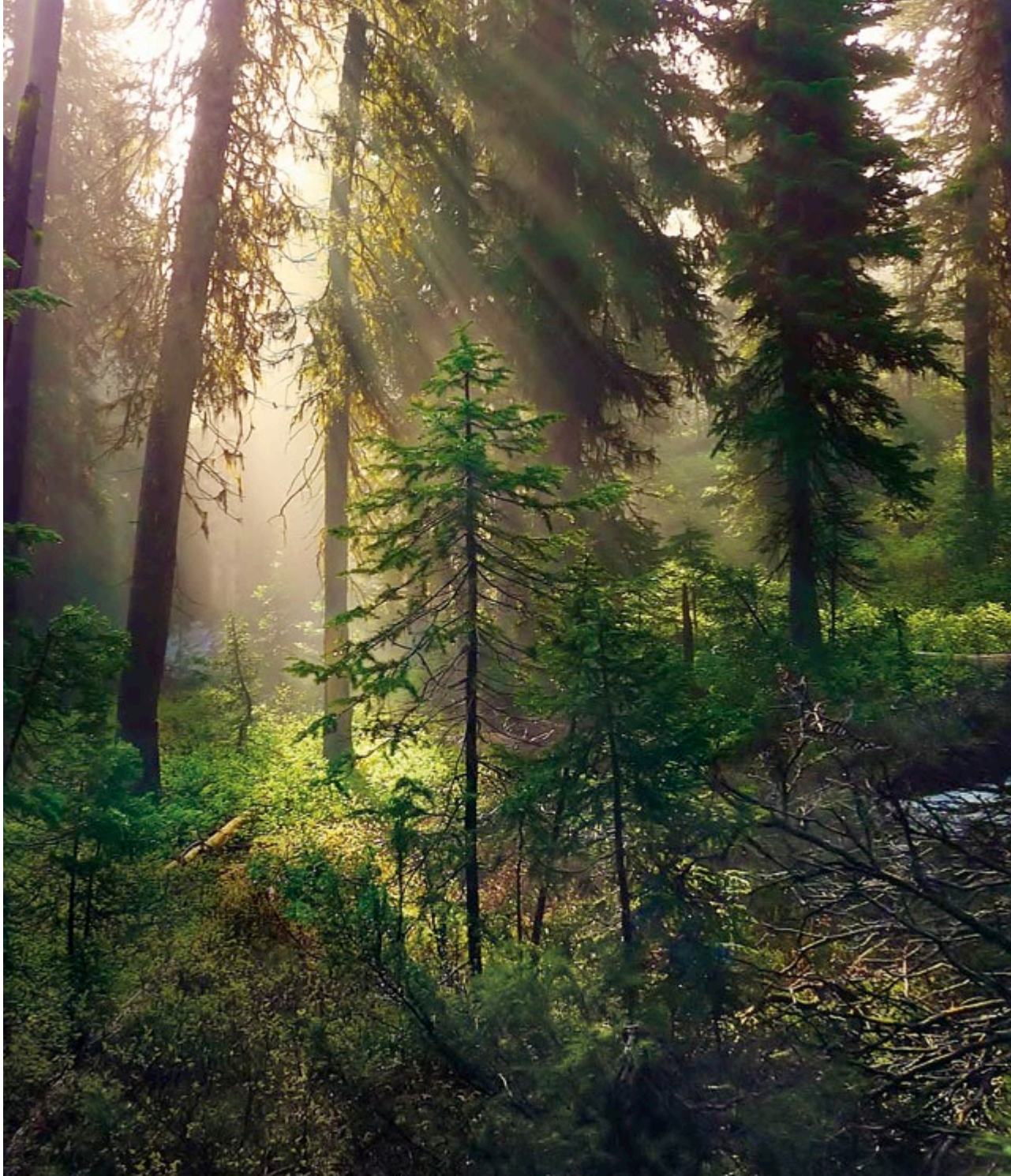
As I returned home from my experience in the South Pacific, I pondered several questions: Why do some people remain firm in their faith, while others allow questions or doubt to disturb their thoughts? Why, with a testimony once gained, do some allow it to weaken or become fragile? Why, when some witness the Lord's hand in their life, are they surprised?

Perhaps the answers lie with how resolutely a person's heart is placed on the altar of the Lord. For the islanders I met, the decision is not one they seem to make and remake with frequency. Having established their faith on the Rock of their Redeemer, the sure foundation, many cease to question; they refuse to let their testimonies be shaken. They accept what they know to be true and let the doubts fade away.

That is a quality I want to perfect. When challenges to my beliefs arise, I want to be able to do what the Lord told Oliver Cowdery to do: "Cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things. Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?" (D&C 6:22–23). Such remembering leads to unwavering faith.

This type of faith is pure and free of distractions. It is devoted and accepting. It affirms: "I know this. I do not need to question it again."

Exercising this kind of faith in our Heavenly Father and His plan allows His power to be active in our lives. It does not yield to attacks on our beliefs, to weariness, or to the unknown. It allows us to say, "He lives!" And that, for me, is enough. ■



How can I strengthen my relationship with God?

“To strengthen our relationship with God, we need some meaningful time alone with Him. Quietly focusing on daily personal prayer and scripture study, always aiming to be worthy of a current temple recommend—these will be some wise investments of our time and efforts to draw closer to our Heavenly Father. Let us heed the invitation in Psalms: ‘Be still, and know that I am God.’ [Psalm 46:10.]”



“The family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children,” write the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” The proclamation lists nine principles for strengthening marriages and families: “faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.” See the article on page 24 for further insights into each of these nine principles.