

Ensign



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Questions about the
Priesthood, p. 36**

**Building Zion Where
You Live, p. 28**

**Choosing Entertainment
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"The father has the authority and responsibility to teach his children and to bless and to provide for them the ordinances of the gospel and every other priesthood protection necessary. He is to demonstrate love and fidelity and honor to the mother so that their children can see that love."

President Boyd K. Packer,
President of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles,
"These Things I Know,"
Ensign, May 2013, 7.



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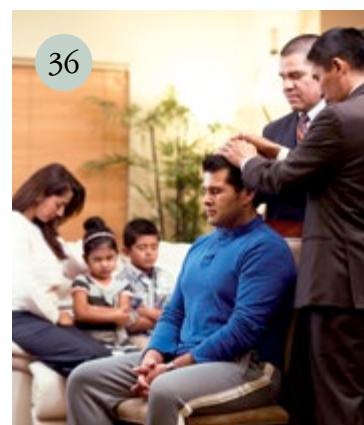
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Ensign

A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
June 2014 Volume 44 • 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.



"Touched by the Spirit of Elijah," page 24:

Consider discussing with your family the quotation from President Monson at the end of the article.

You could then help family members become more familiar with one of their ancestors. Photos, journal entries, artifacts, home videos, or a fan chart (see page 26 of the article) are great starting places. You may also want to explore together the various features at FamilySearch.org, including the training videos.

"Priesthood

Power—Available to All," page 36: Before family home evening, read the four questions Sister Burton asks in this article. Bring a small lamp to family home evening (make sure it is unplugged). Have different family members try turning it on. Liken the

power needed to operate the lamp to priesthood power. Plug in and turn on the lamp and discuss how we can all benefit from

the light of the lamp, or the power of the priesthood. Have family members consider ways they have been blessed by the priesthood. You could begin memorizing the scriptures in Doctrine and Covenants 84 that Sister Burton asks us to memorize.

"Agency and Answers: Recognizing Revelation," page 48:

Begin by telling your family about a time when a personal prayer was answered and how you received that answer. You could then discuss with them the "Three Ways to Find Answers" presented by Elder Scott. Conclude by singing together "Let the Holy Spirit Guide" (*Hymns*, no. 143).

MISSIONARY ROLE-PLAY

For family home evening we sometimes have our children pretend to be missionaries. Introducing ourselves as "Mr. and Mrs. Jones," my husband and I ask the children several questions, making sure to direct appropriate questions to each child so they all have a chance to share something. Afterwards, "Mr. and Mrs. Jones" compliment the children on their knowledge of the gospel, thank them for sharing their beliefs, and promise to pray about what was shared. We are always amazed at how much our children know, and the children experience some of the joys of sharing gospel truths with others.

Kim Peterson, Utah, USA

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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

We welcome donated submissions showing the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. Please submit articles through ensign.lds.org. Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified.



By President
Thomas S. Monson

HASTENING THE WORK

Do you realize that the restored Church was 98 years old before it had 100 stakes? But less than 30 years later, the Church had organized its second 100 stakes. And only eight years after that the Church had more than 300 stakes. Today we are more than 3,000 stakes strong.

Why is this growth taking place at an accelerated rate? Is it because we are better known? Is it because we have lovely chapels?

These things are important, but the reason the Church is growing today is that the Lord indicated it would. In the Doctrine and Covenants, He said, “Behold, I will hasten my work in its time.”¹

We, as spirit children of our Heavenly Father, were sent to earth at this time that we might participate in hastening this great work.

The Lord has never, to my knowledge, indicated that His work is confined to mortality. Rather, His work embraces eternity. I believe He is hastening His work in the spirit world. I also believe that the Lord, through His servants there, is preparing many spirits to receive the gospel. Our job is to search out our dead and then go to the temple and perform the sacred ordinances that will bring to those beyond the veil the same opportunities we have.

Every good Latter-day Saint in the spirit world is busy, said President Brigham Young (1801–77). “What are they

doing there? They are preaching, preaching all the time, and preparing the way for us to hasten our work in building temples here and elsewhere.”²

Now, family history work is not easy. For those of you from Scandinavia, I share your frustration. For example, on my Swedish line, my grandfather’s name was Nels Monson; his father’s name was not Monson at all but Mons Okeson. Mons’s father’s name was Oke Pederson, and his father’s name was Peter Monson—right back to Monson again.

The Lord expects you and me to perform our family history work well. I think the first thing we must do if we are to perform our work well is to have the Spirit of our Heavenly Father with us. When we live as righteously as we know how to live, He will open the way for the fulfillment of the blessings that so earnestly and diligently we seek.

We are going to make mistakes, but none of us can become an expert in family history work without first being a novice. Therefore, we must plunge into this work, and we must prepare for some uphill climbing. This is not an easy task, but the Lord has placed it upon you, and He has placed it upon me.

As you pursue family history work, you are going to find yourself running into roadblocks, and you are going to say to yourself, “There is nothing else I can do.” When you



come to that point, get down on your knees and ask the Lord to open the way, and He will open the way for you. I testify that this is true.

Heavenly Father loves His children in the spirit world just as much as He loves you and me. Regarding the work of saving our dead, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “And now as the great purposes of God are hastening to their accomplishment, and the things spoken of in the Prophets are fulfilling, as the kingdom of God is established on the earth, and the ancient order of things restored, the

Lord has manifested to us this duty and privilege.”³

Regarding our ancestors who have passed on without a knowledge of the gospel, President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) declared, “Through our efforts in their behalf their chains of bondage will fall from them, and the darkness surrounding them will clear away, that light may shine upon them and they shall hear in the spirit world of the work that has been done for them by their children here, and will rejoice with you in your performance of these duties.”⁴

There are millions upon millions of spirit children of our Heavenly Father who never heard the name of Christ before dying and going into the spirit world. But now they have been taught the gospel and are awaiting the day when you and I will do the research necessary to clear the way so that we can go into the house of the Lord and perform for them the work that they themselves cannot perform.

My brothers and sisters, I testify that the Lord will bless us as we accept and respond to this challenge. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 88:73.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 280.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 409.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 247.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Think of a favorite story from your family history and share this story with those you visit. You may want to use the questions in the children’s section of the First Presidency Message (page 6) to encourage those you visit to share their stories. Consider reading Doctrine and Covenants 128:15 and discussing the importance of performing temple ordinances on behalf of our ancestors.

Could I Enjoy Indexing?

By Emma Abril Toledo Cisneros

I participated in our stake goal to index 50,000 names. At first it was hard. On several occasions the batch I downloaded had difficult handwriting, and sometimes I wanted to return it and download a different one. But then I realized that if everyone thought like that, those batches would be left to the end. I could imagine many lines of people waiting in the spirit world, and I decided to continue trying to read those names and transcribe them without making a mistake.

I learned to have love for those people. I understood

that they truly did need help, and we also needed help from them. I came to better understand that Heavenly Father's perfect plan takes everyone into consideration. When we follow the inspiration and instructions of His chosen leaders, we will witness His mercy and infinite love.

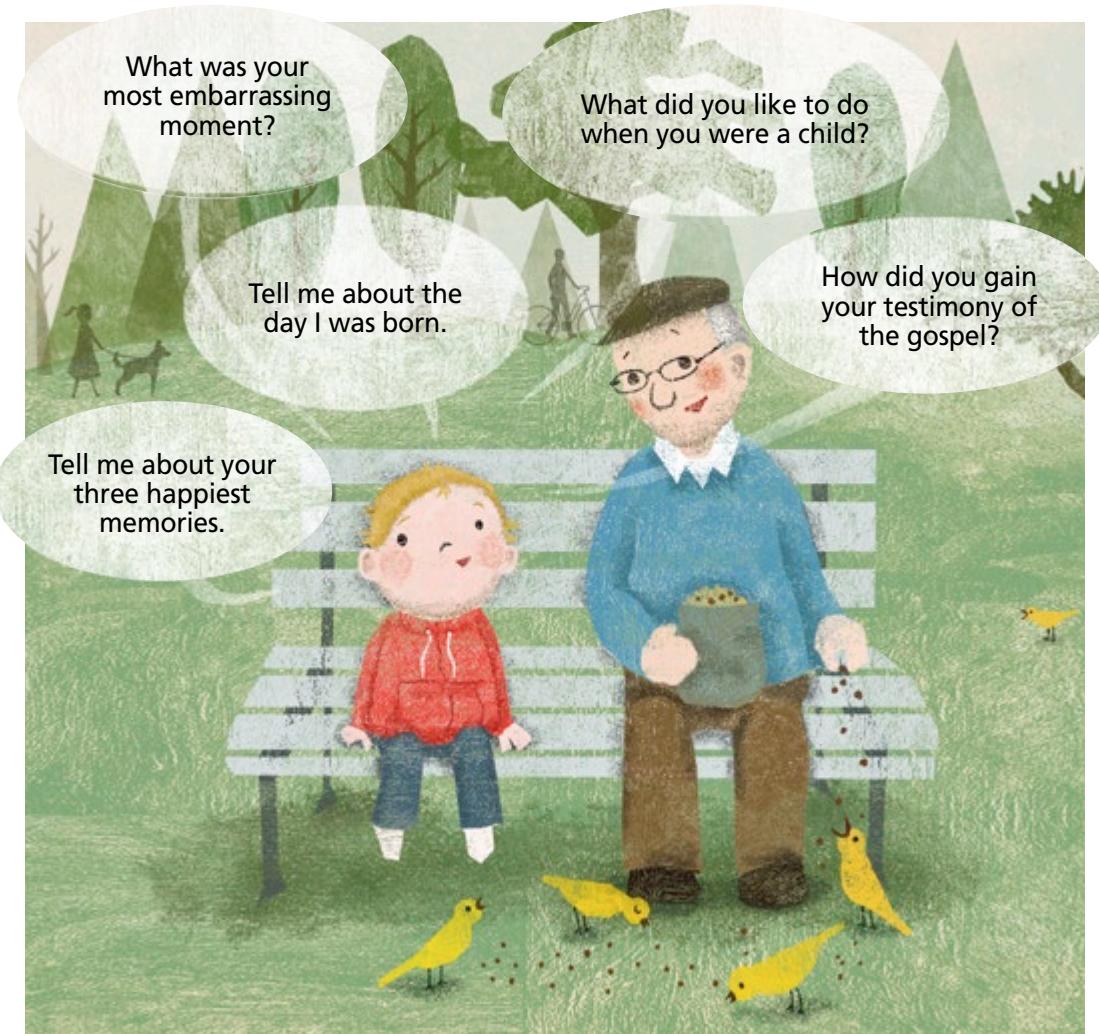
Indexing has been a lovely experience for me. I learned to value and love many things about family history. I also obtained gifts of great value from our Lord by obeying something as simple as participating in indexing.

The author lives in Veracruz, Mexico.

CHILDREN

Know Your Stories

Your parents and grandparents have had many adventures—some you don't even know about! Some of their stories will make you laugh, and they can help you have faith in Heavenly Father. But even adults feel shy sometimes. Use these questions to help them remember some of their favorite stories and write down or draw pictures of their answers.



Prayerfully study this material and seek to know what to share. How will understanding the life and mission of the Savior increase your faith in Him and bless those you watch over through visiting teaching? For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.

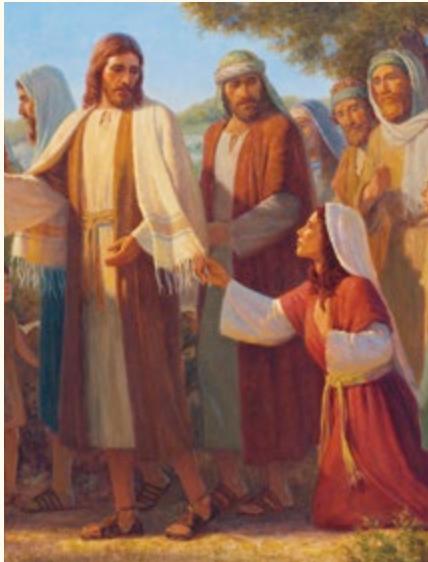
The Divine Mission of Jesus Christ: Minister

This is part of a series of Visiting Teaching Messages featuring aspects of the mission of the Savior.

As we minister to others, we become true followers of Jesus Christ, who set the example for us. President Thomas S. Monson said: “We are surrounded by those in need. . . . We are the Lord’s hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children.”¹

Linda K. Burton, Relief Society general president, taught: “With practice, each of us can become more like the Savior as we serve God’s children. To help us better [minister to] one another, I would like to suggest four words to remember: ‘First observe, then serve.’ . . . As we do so, we are keeping covenants, and our service, like President Monson’s, will be evidence of our discipleship.”²

We can pray each morning to recognize opportunities to serve others. “Heavenly Father will guide you, and angels will assist you,” said David L. Beck, Young Men general president. “You will be given power to bless lives and rescue souls.”³



From the Scriptures

Matthew 20:25–28; 1 Nephi 11:27–28;
3 Nephi 28:18

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “What Have I Done for Someone Today?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 86.
2. Linda K. Burton, “First Observe, Then Serve,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 78, 80.
3. David L. Beck, “Your Sacred Duty to Minister,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 56.
4. Lucy Meserve Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 36–37.
5. George Albert Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 77.

Consider This

1. How can prayer lead us to be instruments in the Lord’s hands?

2. How can ministering to others help us keep our covenants?

Faith, Family, Relief



From Our History

At the October 1856 general conference, President Brigham Young (1801–77) announced that handcart pioneers were still crossing the plains and that everyone was to help gather supplies for them immediately. Lucy Meserve Smith wrote that women “stripped off their petticoats [large underskirts], stockings, and every thing they could spare, right there in the Tabernacle, and piled [them] into the wagons.”

As the rescued pioneers began to arrive in Salt Lake City, Lucy wrote, “I never took more . . . pleasure in any labor I ever performed in my life, such a unanimity of feeling prevailed. I only had to go into a store and make my wants known; if it was cloth, it was measured off without charge.”⁴

President George Albert Smith (1870–1951) said of ministering to others: “Our eternal happiness will be in proportion to the way that we devote ourselves to helping others.”⁵

AMAZED AT THE LOVE JESUS OFFERS ME

By Cesar Lima Escalante

One Sunday before sacrament meeting, the bishop approached me and asked, “Can you help us bless the sacrament?” I said of course I would.

I went and got my hymnbook and then washed my hands before taking my place at the sacrament table. I opened the hymnbook, and the first hymn I saw was “I Stand All Amazed” (*Hymns*, no. 193). The meeting hadn’t started yet, so I began to read the first line: “I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me.” Immediately a feeling of profound love filled my heart.

The previous night I had been reading in the Bible about the end of the life of Jesus Christ—the parts involving the Last Supper, the Garden of Gethsemane, and His death and Resurrection. I imagined Jesus being tortured, beaten, and ridiculed by the executioners. I also pictured Jesus carrying out His atoning sacrifice in the Garden of Gethsemane while His disciples slept.

I realized that I was about to bless the bread and water that represent His body and blood. The sacrament

allows us to renew the covenant we made when we were baptized, which is to always remember Him, to keep His commandments, and to take His name upon us.

When sacrament meeting started, all of these thoughts were in my head. I felt profoundly that Jesus suffered in such a painful and incredible way that it is incomprehensible to us. The thought then came to me that He

endured the suffering because of His love for us—for me.

I felt so loved by the Lord that I couldn’t control my tears. I felt like I wasn’t worthy of what the Savior did for me. But I also felt that His love for me is perfect. A friend will lay down his life for his friends (see John 15:13). When the sacrament hymn started, I stood with another brother to begin the ordinance.



A SPIRITUALLY CLEANSING EXPERIENCE

“For the sacrament to be a spiritually cleansing experience each week, we need to prepare ourselves *before* coming to sacrament meeting. We do this by deliberately leaving behind our daily work and recreation and letting go of worldly thoughts and concerns. As we do, we make room in our minds and hearts for the Holy Ghost. . . .

“As we sing the sacrament hymn, participate in the sacrament prayers, and partake of the emblems of His flesh and blood, we prayerfully seek forgiveness for our sins and shortcomings. We think about the promises we made and kept during the previous week and make specific personal commitments to follow the Savior during the coming week.”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Coming to Ourselves: The Sacrament, the Temple, and Sacrifice in Service,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 34.



We folded back the beautiful white tablecloth that covered the bread. As I held the bread, I knew I had the responsibility of breaking it as part of the ordinance, but I hesitated. The bread represents the body of Christ. I thought of the soldiers hurting the Lord, and I didn't want to break the bread. When I broke the first piece, I thought of the painful and humiliating way Jesus was treated prior to His death—the crown of thorns, the whipping, the suffering. The tears continued to roll down my cheeks as I prepared the bread.

Then the thought came to me that these painful and humiliating events were necessary. They were part of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and He made the sacrifice because of His love for me and each one of us.

I began to feel a great peace and joy. I broke every piece of bread carefully and slowly, knowing that what I held in my hands was about to be blessed and sanctified for a special purpose and represented something

very precious, beautiful, and extraordinary. I felt the great responsibility of doing this ordinance so that those in the meeting could renew a covenant with the Lord and receive the blessings of the Atonement.

When we finished, I saw the trays filled with the broken bread. The sight was marvelous and sublime. My companion said the prayer. Never before had I so clearly understood the phrase “that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son” (D&C 20:77).

When I partook of the bread, I felt my Savior’s love once again. I felt protected, humbled, and determined to do what’s right. I wanted to examine my life and repent of all I had done wrong.

I’m thankful to Jesus Christ for His love for me. I’m thankful that we can receive the blessings of His Atonement: to be forgiven of our sins and have the chance to return to our Heavenly Father. ■

The author lives in Mexico City, Mexico.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

What can I do during the week to prepare better to take the sacrament? What do I think about during the sacrament? Do I feel forgiveness and receive inspiration as I take the sacrament?

THE CHALLENGES ARE THE BLESSINGS

By Rachel Harrison

What I thought were challenges of temple marriage turned out, instead, to be wonderful blessings.

I was talking with a good friend about the blessings of being married in the temple. I jokingly said I could think of only a few blessings, but I could think of plenty of challenges. “Well,” she said, “maybe those *are* the blessings!”

I knew she was right.

Being sealed in the temple has blessed me with an eternal perspective on marriage and family. My temple covenants have been the “glasses” by which my husband and

I have always viewed the options before us, even as a young, newly married couple.

An Eternal Perspective

We started our marriage with an eternal perspective, and we felt that meant we should not postpone or limit the children waiting to come to our family. My husband continued his tertiary (undergraduate) studies as our family grew. By the time he entered the workforce full-time, we had five children. I continued my studies part-time so I could care for our children at home. I look back fondly on those early years. They were awesome! We were in a little apartment with two children under 15 months, living on our meager student allowance and eating a lot of mince (hamburger).

I think of those early years as our pioneer years—we were crossing the “plains” of tertiary study, starting our family, and living on limited financial resources. I feel akin—but only to a small degree—to what one of the survivors of the Martin handcart company said of their journey: “Everyone of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we

became acquainted with him in our extremities.”¹

In the eyes of the world, what we chose to do in those initial years of marriage did not make sense. Postponing my graduation to have children, living on one income, and sacrificing some luxuries may have seemed foolish. But the Lord told Isaiah:

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Sacrificing worldly goals to follow Heavenly Father’s will for our family has been a humbling blessing in our lives.

Facing Challenges Together

We read in the Doctrine and Covenants that those who “are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice . . . are accepted of [the Lord].

“For I, the Lord, will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit” (D&C 97:8–9). Our five children are our precious fruit. They are

Marriage brings some of life’s most important responsibilities—and some of life’s most joyful moments. We want to hear about the joyful moments you’ve had in your marriage. Share your stories at ensign.lds.org (click “Submit Your Work”) or by email to ensign@ldschurch.org.



undoubtedly our greatest blessings.

As the years have passed, my husband and I have faced many challenges in our married life, and in retrospect I can honestly say I am grateful for them. The Lord blesses us with trials to refine us as individuals and to help us turn to Him and to our companions.

Temple marriage is the supreme covenant of exaltation. When this covenant is kept, it leads to the highest degree in the celestial kingdom, or eternal life, meaning eternal increase (see D&C 131:1–4). Because of this great reward, we should expect a temple marriage to stretch us, to change our very natures.

Elder Bruce C. Hafen, emeritus member of the Seventy, said: “We may start off being married for comfort. But then problems come along. If we

try seriously to solve them, we may not always be comfortable, but we will grow. Then we will end up being married not simply for comfort but for joy.”² Solving our problems together has not always been comfortable, but it has indeed brought us joy.

Hard Work and Joy

Being a mother is the hardest endeavor I have ever undertaken. Before having children, I thought motherhood would be mostly, if not always, joyful—interspersed with a moment or two of hard work. But I have come to understand that it is the other way around. Because of my eternal partnership with my husband, my parenthood and marriage have become a laboratory for becoming like Heavenly Father. The responsibility of parenthood in this life is

analogous to the work and purposes of our Heavenly Father, “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Being a wife and mother demands heavenly patience, strength, and love. Being a mother is helping me to become more like God in nature, desires, and possibilities.

Being sealed in the temple has blessed me in ways I had not expected. It is a source of strength to me and stability to my children. It is a welding link back to my ancestors and blesses them as I do their temple work. My temple marriage is worth every sacrifice, and I know it brings great blessings. ■

The author lives in New Zealand.

NOTES

1. Francis Webster, in William R. Palmer, “Pioneers of Southern Utah,” *The Instructor*, May 1944, 217–18.
2. Bruce C. Hafen, *Covenant Hearts: Marriage and the Joy of Human Love* (2005), 13.

SAMUEL

"The experience of the boy Samuel, as he responded to the Lord's call, has ever been an inspiration to me."¹ —President Thomas S. Monson

My mother, Hannah, was barren and prayed at the temple for a son, vowing to give him to the Lord. God answered her prayers; she gave birth to me. While I was still young, she brought me to the temple to serve Him. There the priest Eli cared for and taught me.²

As a child, I heard a voice calling my name one night. Three times I went to Eli, but he had not called me. He said it was the Lord calling me. I followed Eli's counsel when I heard my name the fourth time and answered, "Speak; for thy servant heareth."³ The Lord spoke to me, and as I grew older, He was with me. He called me to be His prophet.

When I grew old, I appointed my sons as judges over Israel. My sons

were unrighteous, so the elders of Israel asked for a king. I warned the people of the dangers of having a king, but they persisted in their pleas. The Lord commanded that I should "hearken unto their voice."⁴

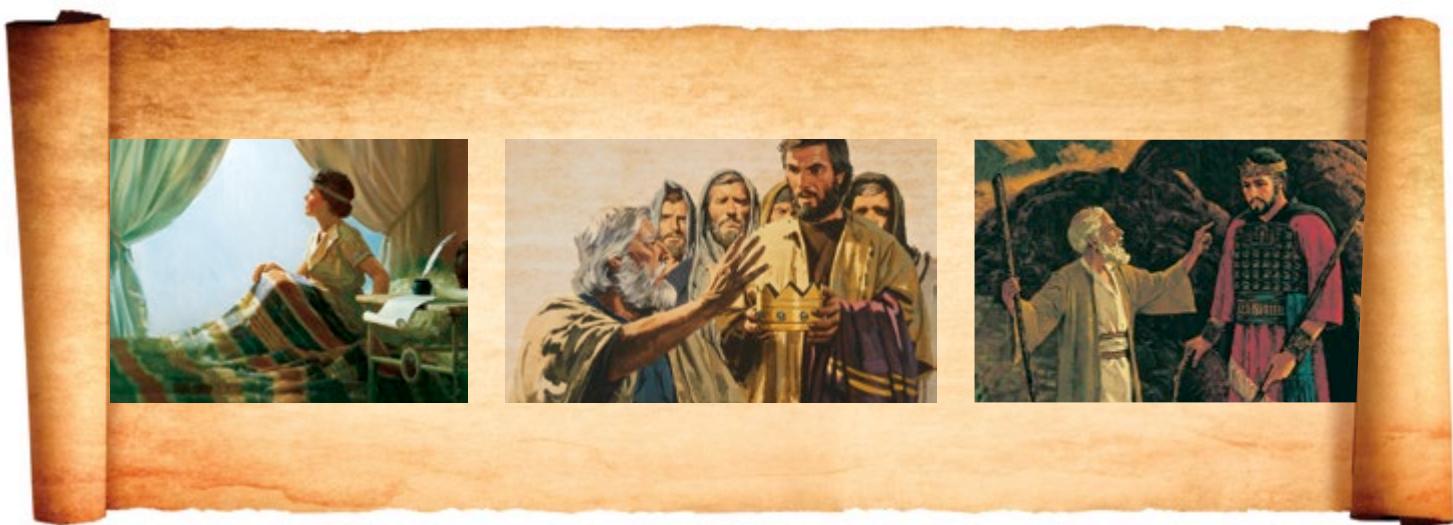
The Lord sent me Saul—"a choice young man"⁵—and I anointed him as "captain over [the] people Israel."⁶ He became their king. However, when the Lord commanded Saul to destroy the Amalekites and all they had, he disobeyed. He kept the Amalekites' animals and offered them as sacrifices. I taught Saul that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."⁷

Due to Saul's disobedience, the Lord commanded me to anoint a new king from among the sons of Jesse.

Jesse presented his seven oldest sons to me, but the Lord had not chosen them.⁸ The Lord revealed to me that the youngest son, David, should be the king. By countenance or stature, David's older brothers may have looked more like future kings, but the Lord had chosen this young shepherd boy to lead His people. From this experience I learned that "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."⁹ ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, "The Priesthood in Action," *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 47.
2. See 1 Samuel 1-2.
3. 1 Samuel 3:10.
4. 1 Samuel 8:22.
5. 1 Samuel 9:2.
6. 1 Samuel 9:16.
7. 1 Samuel 15:22.
8. See 1 Samuel 16:10.
9. 1 Samuel 16:7.



TITHES AND OFFERINGS

By paying tithes and offerings, children can learn that the Lord keeps His promises.

In an article on pages 36–37 of this month's *New Era*, Elder Anthony D. Perkins of the Seventy talks about how paying tithing before spending his earnings as a youth taught him to distinguish between wants and needs.

Elder Perkins says that when he kept this commandment, "my faith grew stronger and so did my desire to keep [the Lord's] other commandments." He practiced a principle taught in *For the Strength of Youth*: "Your attitude is important in paying tithing. . . . Pay it willingly with a thankful heart" ([2011], 38).

Suggestions for Teaching Youth

- Youth can often learn from the examples of others. See "The Blessings of Tithing" (*Ensign*, Mar. 2013, 60) to read about five individuals who were blessed because they paid tithing. Discuss how tithing has blessed your family. You may also wish to talk about how tithes and

offerings bless all members of the Church.

- Consider reading together the section on tithes and offerings in *For the Strength of Youth* (pages 38–39). You might discuss how fasting and fast offerings are related and how your family pays fast offerings.

Suggestions for Teaching Children

- Consider using the following demonstration: Place 10 coins on a table. Ask family members how they would feel if you said you would give them nine of the coins and you would keep just one to help build the Lord's kingdom. Would they be willing to accept such an offer? You could then explain the parallels between this situation and the law of tithing.
- You could use the "For Little Friends" section in the August 2011 *Friend* (pages 32–34), which includes a real-life experience in which a boy learns that paying tithing is a good



SCRIPTURES ON THIS TOPIC

- Leviticus 27:30, 32
- Deuteronomy 26:12
- Nehemiah 10:38
- Malachi 3:8, 10; see also 3 Nephi 24:8, 10
- Luke 18:12
- Alma 13:15
- Doctrine and Covenants 64:23; 97:10–12; 119:3

choice—even if his contribution is a single coin. You could also complete the related activities with your children. ■

Previous editions of Church magazines can be found online at lds.org/magazine.



**By Bishop
Gérald Caussé**
First Counselor in the
Presiding Bishopric

Follow the Path of **HAPPINESS**

Youth, in general, is the perfect time to make personal plans.

As a young adult you should have dreams for your future. Perhaps your dream is the hope of an athletic achievement, the creation of a great work of art, or the acquisition of a diploma or professional position. Perhaps you even have a precious image in your mind of your future husband or wife.

How many of your wishes will come true? Life is full of uncertainty. There will be key moments for you that may change the course of your life in an instant. Such a moment may consist of no more than a look, a conversation, or an unplanned event. There will be new opportunities, such as the recent declaration by President Thomas S. Monson concerning the age of missionary service.¹ Sometimes course changes in our lives come from unexpected challenges or disappointments.

Most people dislike the unknown. The uncertainty of life can create a lack of confidence, a fear of the future.

Some hesitate to make commitments out of fear of failure, even when good opportunities present themselves. For example, they may delay getting married, seeking an education, starting a family, or getting established in a stable profession, preferring to just hang out or remain in the cozy comfort of their parents' home.

Another philosophy that will limit us is illustrated by this maxim: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" (2 Nephi 28:7). This philosophy favors indulging in immediate pleasures regardless of their future consequences.

The Path of Happiness

There is a different path than the paths of fear or doubt or self-indulgence—a path that brings peace, confidence, and serenity in life. You can't control all the circumstances of your life, but you have control of your happiness. You are the architect of it.

Your happiness is more the result of your spiritual vision and the principles upon which you base your life

Your happiness depends more on the principles you choose to follow than on the external circumstances of your life.

than of anything else. These principles will bring you happiness regardless of unexpected challenges and surprises. Let me review some of these essential principles.

1. Recognize Your Personal Worth

Recently my family and I spent a few relaxing days in southern France. One evening, just after the sun had set and darkness had enveloped the surrounding countryside, I decided to lie down on a lounge chair outside the house. My eyes began to examine



Become
who you
are.

Trust
in God's
promises.

Recognize
your personal
worth.

the heavens. At first they were an impenetrable black. Suddenly, a light appeared in the sky like a spark, then two, then three. Progressively, as my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I found myself admiring a myriad of stars. What I had thought was a dark sky transformed into the Milky Way.

As I reflected on the immensity of the universe and on my own physical insignificance, I asked myself, “What am I before such grandeur and magnificence?” A scripture came to my mind:

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8:3–4).

Immediately follows this comforting phrase: “For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour” (Psalm 8:5).

This is the paradox and the miracle of the Creation. The universe is immense and infinite, yet at the same time, each of us has unique worth that

is glorious and infinite in the eyes of our Creator. My physical presence is infinitesimal, yet my personal worth is of immeasurable importance to my Heavenly Father.

Knowing that God knows us and loves us personally is like a light that illuminates our life and gives it meaning. Whoever I am, whether I have friends or not, whether I'm popular or not, and even if I feel rejected or persecuted by others, I have an absolute assurance that my Heavenly Father loves me. He knows my needs; He understands my concerns; He is eager to bless me.

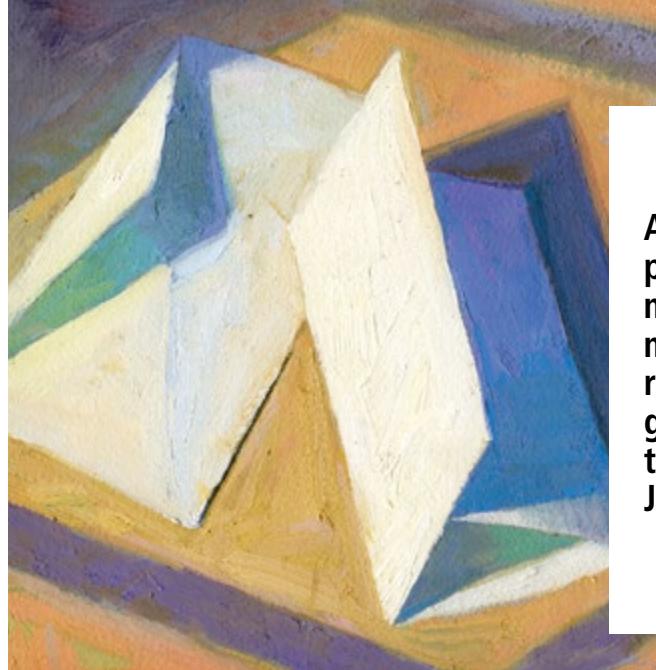
Imagine what it would mean to you if you could see yourself as God sees you. What if you looked at yourself with the same benevolence, love, and confidence that God does? Imagine the impact it would have on your life to understand your eternal potential as God understands it.

I testify that He is there. Seek Him! Search and study. Pray and ask. I promise that God will send you tangible signs of His existence and His love for you.

2. Become Who You Are²

Becoming who you really are sounds like a paradox. How can I become who I already am? I will illustrate this principle through a story.

The film *The Age of Reason* tells the story of Marguerite, a prosperous banker who leads a hectic life filled



A letter from your premortal self might say, "Dear me, I hope you will remember that my greatest desire is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ."

with travels and conferences. Even though she has an adoring suitor, she says she doesn't have time for marriage or children.

The day she turns 40 she receives a mysterious letter that says, "Dear me, today I am seven years old and I'm writing you this letter to help you remember the promises I made when I was seven, and also to remind you of what I want to become." The author of the letter is none other than Marguerite when she was seven years old. What follows are several letters in which the little girl describes in detail her life's goals.

Marguerite realizes that the person she has become is nothing like the person she wanted to become when she was a young girl. As she decides to reclaim the person she envisioned as a child, her life is turned upside down. She reconciles with her family

and determines to consecrate the rest of her life to serving people in need.³

If it were possible for you to receive a letter from your premortal life, what would it say? What impact would such a letter from a forgotten but very real world have on you if you were to receive it today?

This letter might say something like: "Dear me, I am writing to you so you will remember who I want to become. I hope you will remember that my greatest desire is to be a disciple of our Savior, Jesus Christ. I support His plan, and when I am on earth, I want to help Him in His work of salvation. Please also remember that I want to be part of a family that will be together for all eternity."

One of the great adventures of life is finding out who we really are and where we came from and then consistently living in harmony with our true

identity as children of God and with the purpose of our existence.

3. Trust in God's Promises

A teaching from the prophet Malachi is at the heart of the Restoration of the gospel: "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" (Joseph Smith—History 1:39). Thanks to the Restoration, you are the children of the promise. You will receive as an inheritance the promises made to your fathers.

Reread your patriarchal blessing. In this blessing the Lord confirms that you are tied to one of the twelve tribes of Israel, and because of this, through your faithfulness, you become an heir to the immense blessings promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God

promised Abraham: "For as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father" (Abraham 2:10).

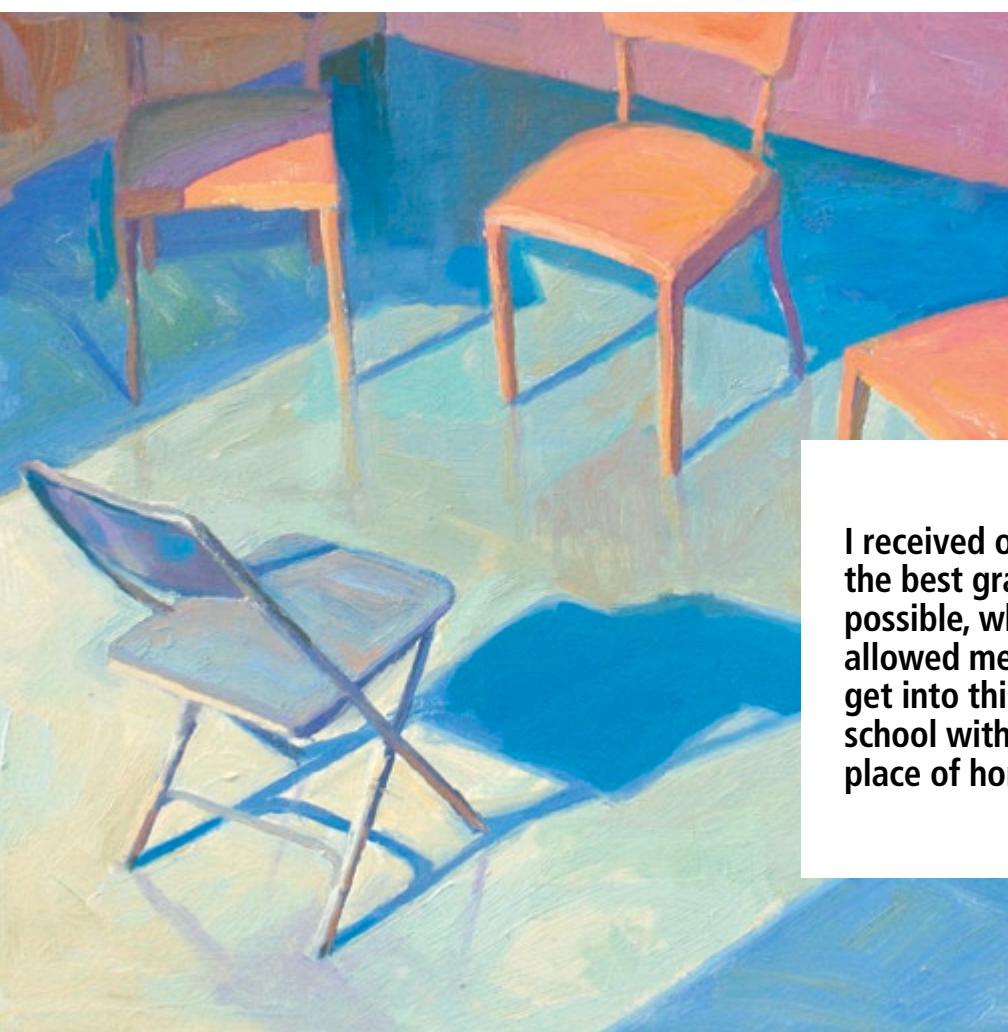
These promises are tangible, and if we do our part, God will do His. On the other hand, these promises do not ensure that everything that happens in our lives will be in accordance with our expectations and desires. Rather, God's promises guarantee that what happens to us will be in accordance with His will. The greatest thing we can desire in life is to align our will with God's will—to accept His agenda for our lives. He knows everything from the beginning, has a perspective that we don't have, and loves us with an infinite love.

I illustrate this principle with a

personal experience. When I was young, I decided to prepare for the entrance exam to the best business schools in France. This preparation, which lasted a year, was very challenging. At the beginning of the year I decided that whatever the heaviness of the task, I would never let my studies prevent me from attending my Sunday meetings or from participating in an institute class once a week. I even accepted a call to serve as the clerk in my young adult ward. I was confident that the Lord would recognize my faithfulness and would help me accomplish my objectives.

At the end of the year, when exams approached, I felt that I had done my best. When I arrived for the examination at the most reputable school, I had full confidence that the Lord would answer my desires. Unfortunately, the oral exam in my strongest subject was an unexpected disaster—I received a grade that prevented me from getting into this highly coveted school. I was distraught. How could the Lord have abandoned me when I had persevered in my faithfulness?

When I presented myself at the oral exam for the second school on my list, I was filled with doubt. In this school the exam that was weighted the heaviest was an interview with a jury presided over by the director of the school. The



I received one of the best grades possible, which allowed me to get into this school with a place of honor.

beginning of the interview was normal —until I was asked a seemingly insignificant question: “We know that you studied a lot to prepare for this exam. But we would be interested to know what your activities were outside of your studies.”

My heart skipped a beat! For one year I had done only two things: study and go to church! I feared that the jury would negatively interpret a description of my membership in the Church. But in one second I made the decision to remain faithful to my principles.

For 15 minutes or so, I described my activities in the Church: my Sabbath meetings, institute classes, and responsibilities as the ward clerk. When I had finished, the director of the school spoke.

“You know, when I was young, I studied in the United States,” he said. “One of my best friends was a Mormon. He was a remarkable young man, someone who had great human qualities. I consider Mormons to be very good people.”

That day I received one of the best grades possible, which allowed me to get into this school with a place of honor.

I thanked the Lord for His goodness. It took me several years, however, to understand the miraculous blessing of not getting into the first school. In the second school, I met key people. The

benefits of my association with them became evident throughout the entire length of my career and are still important in my life and in the lives of members of my family.

If things don’t turn out the way you had hoped or expected after you have done all in your power, be ready to accept the will of your Heavenly Father. He will not inflict upon us anything that is not ultimately for our good. Listen for that calming voice that whispers in our ears: “All flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God” (D&C 101:16).

Your Future Is As Bright As Your Faith

The more I contemplate the course of my life with my wife, Valérie, the more I believe that what has made the difference is that we shared a common vision of eternal life in our youth. We wanted to start an eternal family. We knew why we were on earth and what our eternal objectives were. We knew that God loved us and that we had great worth in His eyes. We had every confidence that He would answer our prayers in His way and at the time He deemed good.

I don’t know if we were ready to accept His will in all things because that was something we had to learn—and that we continue to learn. But we wanted to do our best to follow Him and consecrate ourselves to Him.

I testify, with President Monson, that your “future is as bright as your faith.”⁴ Your happiness depends more on the principles you choose to follow than on the external circumstances of your life. Be faithful to these principles. God knows you and loves you. If you live in harmony with His eternal plan and if you have faith in His promises, then your future will shine!

You have dreams and goals? That’s good! Work with all your heart to accomplish them. Then let the Lord do the rest. He will make you into what you cannot make of yourself.

At all times, accept His will. Be ready to go where He asks you to go and to do what He asks you to do. Become the men and women He is nurturing you to become.

I testify that this life is a wonderful moment of eternity. We are here with a glorious goal—that of preparing to meet God. ■

From a CES devotional address, “We Are the Architects of Our Own Happiness,” delivered in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on November 12, 2012. For the full address, go to lds.org/broadcasts.

NOTES

1. See Thomas S. Monson, “Welcome to Conference,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 4–5.
2. This phrase is attributed to Pindar, one of the most celebrated Greek poets. See Pindar, *Pythian* 2.72, in *Olympian Odes, Pythian Odes*, ed. and trans. William H. Race (1997), 239.
3. See *L'âge de raison (With Love . . . from the Age of Reason)*, directed by Yann Samuell (2010).
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Be of Good Cheer,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 92.

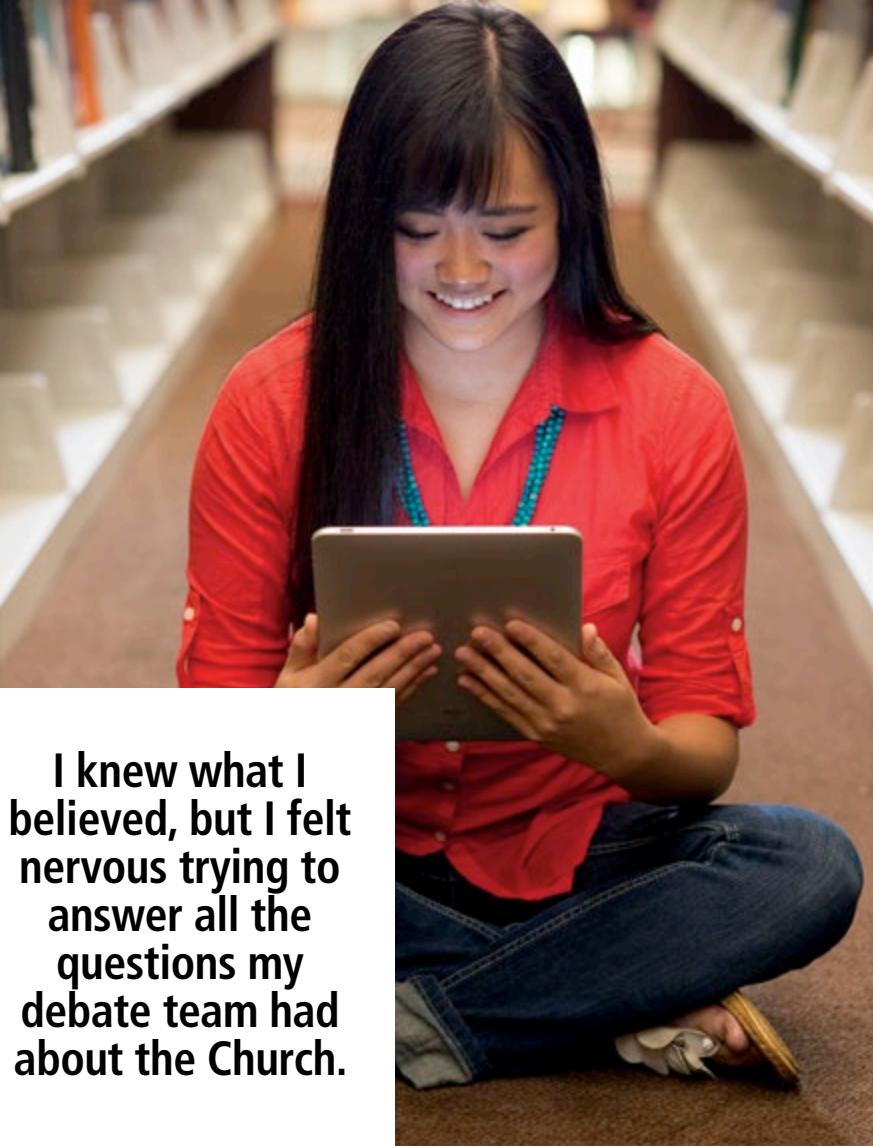
Sharing the Gospel Online

By Maria Mahonri-Yggrazil Arduo Andaca

I have not always been courageous in sharing the gospel with my friends. Many of them knew of my religion, but I never did more to share my testimony. Nevertheless, if someone had the wrong idea about the Church, I tried my best to correct it.

When I started college, I joined the debate society. The other members discovered I was a Latter-day Saint when I corrected them on what was said about “the Mormons” after a debate. I had never talked about my religion before, so I got a lot of questions that day. I felt scared and almost avoided answering. I knew what I believed, but I did not know how to share it. I prayed but didn’t seem to get an answer.

A few days later, while I was on Facebook, I saw an article from LDS.org that my leader from church had posted. It made me realize I could also post things from the Church. I looked up the topics my debate team had asked about, posted links on my wall, and tagged all those who were involved. I felt they would be better satisfied with the answers.



I knew what I believed, but I felt nervous trying to answer all the questions my debate team had about the Church.

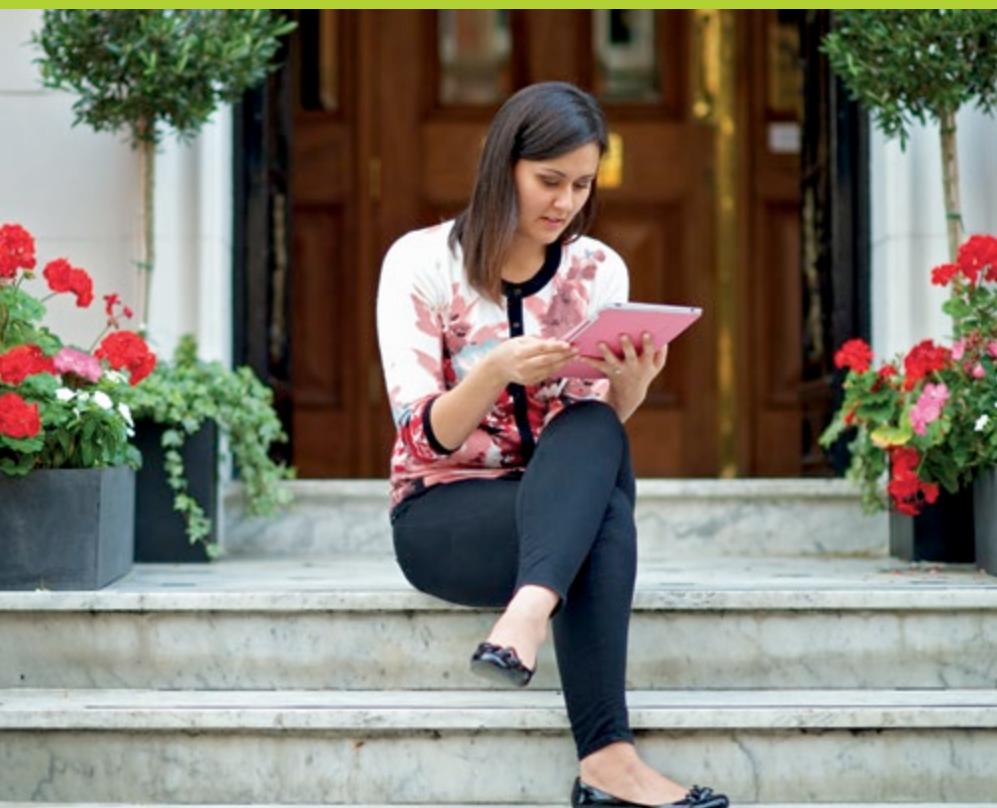
I had never posted about my beliefs online before, so this has brought a lot more curious people asking about my religion. As they ask questions, I try to give the basic answers as well as links to Church materials. This way people do not have to rely only on my answers but can also rely on what the General Authorities say about their questions. When the conversations become more sensitive, I answer the person privately through messaging.

I am really glad the Church provides online materials. I still feel butterflies in my stomach whenever someone surprises me with a question about the Church. But now I no longer wait for their questions to come; I proactively post Church materials online. I know these materials can help both my member and nonmember friends alike. ■

The author lives in Metro Manila, Philippines.

I Find Joy in Family History

You, today's young adults, are curious, tech savvy, and undaunted. Never has a generation been so well prepared to use the tools for finding and sharing information about their ancestors. Here's a sampling of how family history is blessing the lives of your peers. Since things are changing so quickly online, we've supplemented their experiences with some of the latest helps available.



When . . .

I SEARCH ORIGINAL RECORDS

I thoroughly love digging through dusty records like maps, newspapers, microfilms, charts, photographs, documents, journals, and books. The sense of satisfaction that comes is similar to the reward of mining for buried treasure—occasionally you strike a rich vein of golden information. Now many of my ancestors and their families have received their temple ordinances.

Cassandra Nielsen, Utah, USA

New At FamilySearch.org, there are over 3 billion historic records easily searchable online, with 500 million more added yearly.

I REALIZE WE NEED EACH OTHER

The importance of family history hit me in a college religion class when I realized that we cannot be made perfect without our ancestors (see D&C 128:15). For the first time in my life, I marveled at how much I could learn from the courage, failures, and faith of my own forefathers. I realized that family history is as much about discovering who I am as it is about doing vital temple work for them. I will be forever grateful for the class lesson that taught me we cannot attain perfection without our ancestors.

Shannon Kelly, Utah, USA

New Go to Family Tree at FamilySearch.org to see if someone may have added interesting stories or photos of your ancestors. Or you can add your favorite stories or photos for others to enjoy.



I DO TEMPLE WORK FOR MY ANCESTORS

When I moved away from home to attend college, I brought along index cards, each with the information about one of my ancestors. As I did the baptisms for my ancestors in the temple, a feeling of selfless love came into my heart (see D&C 2:1–3). Doing this work also helped me feel connected to my immediate family while I was living far from home.

Sister Denali Lathrop, Arizona Tempe Mission

New To see what ordinances still need to be done for your ancestors, go to Family Tree at FamilySearch.org and select "Temple," followed by "Opportunities."



I GATHER STORIES FROM MY GRANDMA

As a 23-year-old going to school and working, I didn't think I had much time for family history. During the summer of 2013, however, I found a surprisingly convenient opportunity to preserve my grandmother's life story. Several decades ago, she had ridden her bicycle across America, so my sister and I decided to do the same that summer. Of course we wanted Grandma with us, so she drove the car behind us as we biked from California to Florida. (See picture below.) Coming home, we rode in the car with Grandma. I loved the stories Grandma told us about her life, so I made an audio recording of them. Later I gave each family member a book containing transcriptions of these stories as a Christmas present.

Matthew LeBaron, Virginia, USA

New See familysearch.org/myfamily for the booklet *My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together*, available in 25 languages. It can help you start gathering family stories.



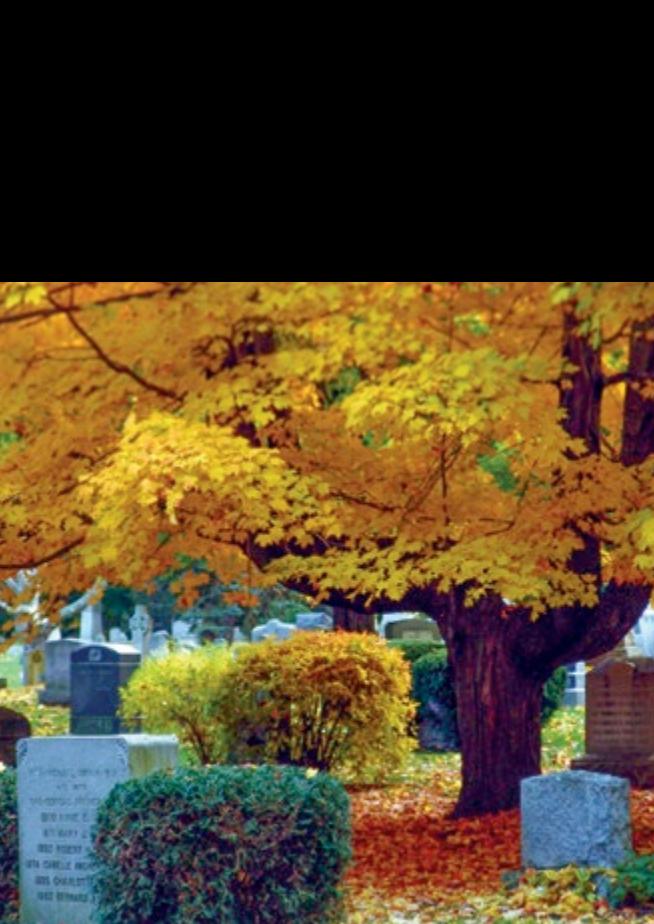
WE DO FAMILYSEARCH INDEXING

As newlyweds my husband, Daniel, and I went to Chile and gathered our family history, resulting in temple ordinances for 3,000 ancestors. Back in Utah, we became so involved in our college studies that we had little time to do family history, so we started doing indexing instead. Most mornings Daniel did indexing, while our 22-month-old son sat nearby with his toy computer, imitating his father. It changed the spirit in our home, and our efforts will give deceased children of our Heavenly Father a chance to enjoy the blessings of the gospel.

Rose Marie Stewart, Cachapoal, Chile

New See familysearch.org/indexing. Volunteers have extracted more than two billion names worldwide from scanned documents. This indexing makes historic records searchable online. Exciting new changes have recently been made to make indexing even easier. You will love them.





I WRITE THE STORIES OF MY ANCESTORS

When I was a child, my family gathered around the tombstones of my third great-grandparents, and my father told us story after story about this pioneer family. My curiosity about my ancestors never left me. Because so many of the temple ordinances had been done for my ancestors, I prayed to know what I could do. Writing stories of my ancestors came as an answer to my prayer. In the process of doing this, I have come to know, love, and cherish them.

Katherine Olson, Utah, USA

New At familysearch.org/photos/stories, you can use a simple automated process to write an ancestor's story right online and link it to the person's Family Tree profile—preserving it there for future generations.

I WRITE IN MY JOURNAL

As I face life decisions, I write in my journal pertinent scriptures, conference quotes, and summaries of Church magazine articles that meet my spiritual needs. These give me strength and direction. During trials, I reread my journals and find uplifting reminders of the Lord's hand in my life. The records I've kept of both the pleasant moments and the difficult ones show me how the Lord has always blessed me in the past, is assisting me in the present, and will always be there in my future. My journal does not depict a perfect person. It is a record of my journey of self-discovery and becoming. I also "write the things of my soul . . . for the learning and the profit of my children" (2 Nephi 4:15).

Theresa May, USA



I MEET A NEWLY DISCOVERED RELATIVE

I have had muscular dystrophy since age seven, so I am unable to lift my hands, write with a pencil, move my legs, or hold up my head and neck. Yet I know God sent me here with a purpose, so I place my trust in Him. Every day I prop up my computer to do family history. While researching my Garcia line, I discovered I was related to a professional

football player, Joe Kapp, who was known for his toughness and leading his team to the Super Bowl. His mother was a first cousin to my great-grandma. I emailed him and he came to visit me. He signed a football for me, and I gave him a Book of Mormon. We talked about his glory days as a football player and about my life. As we did, we both recognized that we had strength and determination in common. I don't know how long the Lord will continue to preserve my life, but I am determined to use all my strength to accomplish the Savior's work. After all, now I know toughness runs in my family.

Raj Sidhu (pictured above), California, USA

New Search engines such as Google, Yahoo, or Bing can provide clues. Try typing in an ancestor's name and see what happens. The Church also continues to make agreements with commercial family history websites. By fall 2014, members will be able to create free personal accounts and access billions of records on Ancestry.com, MyHeritage.com, and findmypast.com.

Touched by the SPIRIT OF ELIJAH

By Carol Brennan Moss

Family History Department

While working on a Personal Progress value project involving family history, 13-year-old Amanda D. of Utah, USA, came across a document written by her great-grandmother Genevieve, who died in 1989. In it, Amanda's ancestor bore her testimony of the gospel and encouraged family members to strengthen each other in the gospel and to pray for one another. Amanda never knew her great-grandmother, but now she has been able to share her great-grandmother's testimony with other family members through the wonders of technology. The first step Amanda took was to post her find as a story on her family tree at FamilySearch.org. From now on, anyone looking for her great-grandmother on the website will find not only Genevieve's vital information but also her personal testimony and picture. The second step Amanda took was to post her great-grandmother's testimony on social media directly from the family tree for her entire family to see.

Amanda is just one of thousands of youth in the Church today whose hearts have been touched by the spirit of Elijah. These youth are following the admonition of Elders

*Using new tools,
family members
of all ages can
now work together
to receive the
blessings of
family history and
temple work.*

Richard G. Scott and David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, both of whom have promised the youth protection from the influences of the adversary as they immerse themselves in this work.¹

The promise of the spirit of Elijah, found in the scriptures, says, "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."² Elder Bednar has described the spirit of Elijah as a "distinctive influence of the Holy Ghost [that] draws people to identify, document, and cherish their ancestors and family members—both past and present."³ What is the importance of connecting with our ancestors? President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has explained that unlike those of us who have received a testimony of the gospel and are able to be baptized, our ancestors who receive a testimony in the spirit world cannot be baptized for themselves. "Someone in this world must go to a holy temple and accept the covenants on behalf of the person in the spirit world. That is why we are under obligation to find the names of our ancestors and ensure that they are offered by us what they cannot receive there without our help."⁴

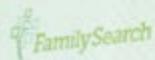
Volunteer

Get Help •

Church Websites •

Sign In

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints



MY PHOTOS PEOPLE ALBL



Search

photos of your ancestors

Drag and drop or click to add family photos here.



Technology Is Speeding Up the Work

Amazing developments in technology allow us to accomplish the work of salvation more easily than ever before for millions more people who have lived on the earth. Just as the automobile and the airplane have been major contributors to advancing the work of the Lord in modern times by reducing the difficulty of travel in spreading the gospel, the Internet and computer technology are advancing family history and temple work at an unprecedented rate by enabling us to find, preserve, and share our family history information more easily and more quickly. We can find records in minutes that, until recently, were not available to most family history researchers. The accessibility of these records also means that instead of relying on just one or two family members to research our family's past, we can now all contribute to the work.

The website FamilySearch.org was introduced to the world in May 1999. It was an instant success, experiencing more than 1.5 billion hits by October of that year. Back then, users could perform a basic search for an ancestor in limited databases and compiled genealogies, such as Ancestral File and the International Genealogical Index (IGI). Today we can search over 3.5 billion records in databases containing actual images of records, add sources to individuals in our family trees, and directly process temple work on FamilySearch.org. The new features of adding photos and stories to our family members on the tree enable individuals young and old to become instantly engaged in the work. Their hearts turn as they discover pictures of their relatives and read facts about them in both record and story forms. Constance Lewis of Utah said she was brought back into doing family history work when two of her grandchildren—ages 12 and 14, one in Atlanta and one in San Diego—were fired up by their wards to do family history work by using Family Tree on FamilySearch.org.

Today it is possible to examine your own family tree and then make corrections or eliminate incorrect information instantly. You can also add records from the historical collections as sources to individuals in your tree, all from your computer at home or at your local family history center.

Become Involved in Your Family History

Family home evening may be a great time to introduce your family to your ancestors by using the interactive fan chart on FamilySearch.org, a colorful visual presentation of your family tree with a display of your four direct lines. Bruce Bolingbroke of Utah and his family experienced a powerful family home evening using the fan chart. For each of Brother Bolingbroke's grandparents' lines, they were able to identify the first ancestor to migrate to America. They discovered that their ancestors came from seven different countries, some even crossing with the Pilgrims to the original colonies. After studying the fan chart, they looked into the stories and photos of their ancestors. In one of the stories, they discovered a testimony of the restored gospel given by Brother Bolingbroke's second great-grandfather, who had immigrated to the United States from Switzerland. His testimony had been recorded near the end of his life. Through these experiences, the family felt the spirit of Elijah and an increased love and appreciation for the work.

Collaboration has become a valuable part of doing family history. Both young and old are meeting online as they share information about related ancestors. The family tree on FamilySearch.org displays the names of those who have contributed information or a source for an ancestor, so it's possible to click on the contributor's name and find contact information. As photos and stories are added for an individual or an entire family, collaboration can bring added information to the family tree.

Nanette Sorensen from Utah and her aunt collected photos from Sister Sorensen's great-aunts and great-uncles and uploaded the photos to the family tree. Because these photos had been scanned in preparation for a family reunion, it was easy to put them on the tree as well. Sister Sorensen and her aunt didn't know who some of the individuals in the photos were, but after the images had been on the tree for a week or so, others had viewed them and were able to correctly identify them. This process brought family history to life for Sister Sorensen, and her heart has been turned to her fathers.

Access to searchable records on FamilySearch.org is made possible through the vigilant work of indexers throughout the world. Many youth, both inside and outside of the Church, are involved because of their agility with computers. As indexers examine a digital image for names, dates, and locations, they enter the information into a computer program. In this way, a person can be found in a document because his or her name is linked to a digital image. Everyone is invited to be involved in indexing. Directions are found at FamilySearch.org. As indexers realize that each name represents a real person, their hearts are often turned to the work and they begin a search for their own family members.

Under the Get Help menu on FamilySearch.org, there are hundreds of training videos that can quickly put you at ease about the different functions of the website. The videos can be repeatedly reviewed until a concept is firm in your mind. If you still have questions, round-the-clock technical support is available so that you can talk or "chat" with someone in real time.

Family history helps us turn our hearts to our fathers.



Find the Joy in Family History and Temple Work

The process of preparing and submitting names for temple ordinances is now easily done online. If you have difficulty accomplishing all of the temple ordinances yourself, you may choose to release names electronically so that selected ordinances can be completed by others. The information is sent all over the world, and the work may be accomplished in several temples on different continents in a short time. You can track the progress of names online and know when and where the work has been completed. The many added features of FamilySearch.org are there to help us experience the blessings of family history and temple work.

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) said, “I have learned that those who engage in family history research and then perform the temple ordinance work for those whose names they have found will know the additional joy of receiving both halves of the blessing.”⁵ Family members of all ages can now work together to receive those blessings.

Young Amanda was able to feel a special connection to her great-grandmother Genevieve when she discovered that her ancestor had loved dancing, just as Amanda does today. They both discovered the world of dance at the same age. From Genevieve’s journal, Amanda learned that her great-grandmother had also experienced the awkwardness that comes with those teenage years. Because of these discoveries, Amanda says she can now feel her ancestors cheering her on during difficult times. It’s as President Thomas S. Monson has said: “We discover something about ourselves when we learn about our ancestors.”⁶ That is part of the blessing of turning our hearts to our ancestors. ■

NOTES

1. See Richard G. Scott, “The Joy of Redeeming the Dead,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 94; David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 26–27.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 2:2; see also Malachi 4:5–6; 3 Nephi 25:5–6; Doctrine and Covenants 110:14–15.
3. David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” 25.
4. Henry B. Eyring, “Hearts Bound Together,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 78.
5. Howard W. Hunter, “A Temple-Motivated People,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 4–5.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “Constant Truths for Changing Times,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 21.



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

THE CALL TO Be Christlike

In the history of Israel down through the ages, when things got too sinful or society became too secular or life with the Gentiles began undermining the moral code and commandments God had given, the children of the covenant would be sent fleeing into the wilderness to start all over and reestablish Zion.

In Old Testament times, Abraham, the father of the covenant, had to flee for his life from Chaldea—literally Babylonia—in his quest for a consecrated life in Canaan, which we now call the Holy Land (see Abraham 2:3–4). But it wasn’t many generations before the descendants of Abraham lost their Zion and were in bondage in far-off, pagan Egypt (see Exodus 1:7–14). So Moses had to be raised up to lead the children of promise into the wilderness again.

Not many centuries later, a story of special interest to us unfolded when one of those Israelite families, headed by a prophet named Lehi, was commanded to flee Jerusalem because, alas, Babylon was again at the door! (See 1 Nephi 2:2.) Little did they know that they were going to an entirely new continent to establish a whole new concept of Zion (see 1 Nephi 18:22–24). And little did they know that such an exodus had already happened with a group of their forefathers called the Jaredites (see Ether 6:5–13).

It is of interest to all who celebrate the Restoration of the gospel that the colonization of America was born of a group fleeing their former homelands in order to worship as they wished. A distinguished scholar of the Puritan settlement in America described this experience as Christianity’s “errand into the wilderness”—the effort of modern Israelites to free themselves of Old World godlessness and once again seek the ways of heaven in a new land.¹

God is calling to Israel in these latter days to be more Christlike and to be more holy than we now are in our determination to live the gospel and establish Zion.



I remind you of one last flight. It was that of our own Church, led by our own prophets, leading our own religious ancestors. With Joseph Smith being hounded through the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Missouri, and finally being murdered in Illinois, we were to see the latter-day reenactment of Israel's children again seeking a place of seclusion. President Brigham Young (1801–77), the American Moses, as he has been admirably called, led the Saints to the valleys of the mountains as those foot-weary Saints sang:

*We'll find the place which God for us prepared,
Far away in the West,
Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid;
There the Saints will be blessed.²*

Zion. The promised land. The New Jerusalem. For more than 4,000 years of covenantal history, this has been the pattern: Flee and seek. Run and settle. Escape Babylon. Build Zion's protective walls.

Until this, our day.

Build Zion Where You Are

One of the many unique characteristics of our dispensation is the changing nature of how we establish the kingdom of God on earth. This dispensation is a time of mighty, accelerated change. And one thing that has changed is that the Church of God will never again flee. It will never again leave Ur in order to leave Haran in order to leave Canaan in order to leave Jerusalem in order to leave England in order to leave Kirtland in order to leave Nauvoo in order to go who knows where.

No, as Brigham Young said for us all, “We have been kicked out of the frying-pan into the fire, out of the fire into the middle of the floor, and here we are and here we will stay.”³

Of course, that statement became a statement for members of the Church all over the world. In these last days, in our dispensation, we have become mature enough to stop running. We have become mature

enough to plant our feet and our families and our foundations in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people *permanently*. Zion is everywhere—wherever the Church is. And with that change, we no longer think of Zion as *where* we are going to live; we think of it as *how* we are going to live.

To frame this new task, I draw upon three incidents.

Three Incidents and Three Lessons

1. A few years ago a young friend of mine—a returned missionary—was on one of the college basketball teams in Utah. He was a great young man and a very good ball-player, but he wasn't playing as much as he had hoped he would. His particular talents and skills weren't exactly what his team needed at that stage of its development or his. That happens in athletics. So, with the full support and best wishes of his coaches and teammates, my young friend transferred to another school, where he hoped he might contribute a little more.

Things clicked at the new school, and my friend soon became a starter. And wouldn't you know it—the team's schedule had this young man returning to play against his former team in Salt Lake City.

The vitriolic abuse that poured out of the stands that night on this young man—a newlywed who paid his tithing, served in the elders quorum, gave charitable service to the youth in his community, and waited excitedly for a new baby coming to him and his wife—should not have been experienced by any human being anywhere, anytime, whatever his sport or university or whatever his personal decisions had been about either of them.

The coach of this visiting team, something of a legend in the profession, turned to him after a spectacular game and said: “What is going on here? You are the hometown boy who has made good. These are your people. These are your



friends.” But worst of all, he then said in total bewilderment, “Aren’t most of these people members of your church?”

2. I was invited to speak at a stake single-adult devotional. As I entered the rear door of the stake center, a 30-something young woman entered the building at about the same time. Even in the crush of people moving toward the chapel, it was hard not to notice her. She had a couple of tattoos, a variety of ear and nose rings, spiky hair reflecting all the colors now available in snow cones, a skirt that was too high, and a blouse that was too low.

Some questions leapt to my mind: Was this woman a struggling soul not of our faith, who had been led—or even better, had been brought by someone—to this devotional under the guidance of the Lord to help her find the peace and the direction of the gospel she needed in her life? Or was she a member who had strayed from some of the hopes and standards the Church encourages for its members but who was still affiliating and had chosen to attend this Church activity that night?

3. While participating in the dedication of the Kansas City Missouri Temple, Sister Holland and I were hosted by Brother Isaac Freestone, a police officer by profession and a high priest in the Liberty Missouri Stake. In our conversations he told us that late one evening he was called

to investigate a complaint in a particularly rough part of the city. Over the roar of loud music and with the smell of marijuana in the air, he found one woman and several men drinking and profaning, all of them apparently totally oblivious to five little children—about two to eight years of age—huddled together in one room, trying to sleep on a filthy floor with no bed, no mattress, no pillows, no anything.

Brother Freestone looked in the kitchen cupboards and in the refrigerator to see if he could find a single can or carton or box of food of any kind—but he could find nothing. He said the dog barking in the backyard had more food than those children had.

In the mother’s bedroom he found a bare mattress, the only one in the house. He hunted until he found some sheets, put them on the mattress, and tucked all five children into the makeshift bed. Then, with tears in his eyes, he knelt, offered a prayer to Heavenly Father for their protection, and said good night.

As he arose and walked toward the door, one of the children jumped out of bed, ran to him, grabbed him by the hand, and pled, “Will you *please* adopt me?” With more tears in his eyes, Brother Freestone put the child back in bed, found the stoned mother (the men had long since fled), and said to her: “I will be back tomorrow, and heaven



help you if some changes are not evident by the time I walk in this door. And there will be more changes after that. You have my word on it.”⁴

What do these three incidents have in common? They give three tiny, very different real-life examples of Babylon—one as silly as deplorable behavior at a basketball game, one more cultural and indicative of one-on-one challenges with those who live differently than we do, and one a very large and very serious matter.

Lesson 1: Never Check Your Religion at the Door

First, let’s finish the basketball incident. The day after the game, when there was some public reckoning and a call to repentance over the incident, one young man said, in effect: “Listen. We are talking about basketball here, not Sunday School. If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. We pay good money to see these games. We can act the way we want. We check our religion at the door.”

“We check our religion at the door”? Lesson number one for the establishment of Zion in the 21st century: You *never* check your religion at the door.

That kind of discipleship cannot be—it is not discipleship at all. As the prophet Alma taught, we are “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in” (Mosiah 18:9)—*not* just some of the time, in a few places, or when our team has a big lead.

Whatever the situation or provocation or problem, no true disciple of Christ can check his or her religion at the door.

Lesson 2: Be Compassionate but Be Loyal to the Commandments

That leads me to the young woman at the devotional. However one would respond to her, the rule forever is that our behavior has to reflect our religious beliefs and our gospel commitments. Therefore, how we respond in any situation has to make things better, not worse. We can’t act or react in such a way that we are guilty of a greater offense than, in this case, she is.

That doesn’t mean we don’t have opinions, we don’t have standards, or we somehow completely disregard divinely mandated “thou shalts” and “thou shalt nots.” But it does mean we have to live those standards and defend

those commandments in a righteous way to the best of our ability, the way the Savior lived and defended them. And He always did what should have been done to make the situation better—from teaching the truth to forgiving sinners to cleansing the temple.

So with our new acquaintance, we start, above all, by remembering she is a daughter of God and of eternal worth. We start by remembering that she is someone's daughter. We start by being grateful that she is at a Church activity, not avoiding one. In short, we try to be at our best in this situation in a desire to help her be at her best.

We keep praying silently: What is the right thing to do here? What is the right thing to say? What *ultimately* will make this situation and her better? Asking these questions and really trying to do what the Savior would do is what I think He meant when He said, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

This Church can never dumb down its doctrine in response to social goodwill or political expediency or any other reason. It is only the high ground of revealed truth that gives us any footing on which to lift another who may feel troubled or forsaken. Our compassion and our love—fundamental characteristics and requirements of our Christianity—must *never* be interpreted as compromising the commandments.

When we face such situations, it can be very challenging and confusing. Young people may ask, “Well, we don’t believe we should live or behave in such and such a way, but why do we have to make other people do the same? Don’t they have their free agency? Aren’t we being self-righteous and judgmental, forcing our beliefs on others, demanding that *they* act in a certain way?”

In those situations you are going to have to explain sensitively why some principles are defended and *some* sins opposed *wherever they are found* because the issues and the laws involved are *not* just social or political but eternal in their consequence. And while not wishing to offend those who believe differently from us, we are even more anxious not to offend God.

It is a little like a teenager saying, “Now that I can drive, I know I am supposed to stop at a red light, but do we really have to be judgmental and try to get everyone else to stop at red lights? Does *everyone* have to do what we do? Don’t others have their agency? Must they behave as we do?” You then have to explain why, yes, we do hope *all* will stop at a red light. And you have to do this *without* demeaning those who transgress or who believe differently than we believe because, yes, they do have their moral agency.

There is a wide variety of beliefs in this world, and there is moral agency for all, but no one is entitled to act

*Our behavior has to reflect
our religious beliefs and
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*Therefore, how we respond
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as if God is mute on these subjects or as if commandments matter only if there is public agreement over them. In the 21st century we cannot flee any longer. We are going to have to fight for laws and circumstances and environments

that allow the free exercise of religion and our franchise in it. That is one way we can tolerate being in Babylon but not of it.

I know of no more important ability and no greater integrity for us to demonstrate in a world from which we cannot flee than to walk that careful path—taking a moral stand according to what God has declared and the laws He has given but doing it compassionately and with understanding and great charity.

Lesson 3: Use Gospel Values to Benefit Communities and Countries

Not many of us are going to be police officers or social service agents or judges sitting on a legal bench, but all of us should care for the welfare of others and the moral safety of our extended community. In speaking of the need for us to influence society beyond the walls of our own home, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said:



"In addition to protecting our own families, we should be a source of light in protecting our communities. The Savior said, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' . . .

"In our increasingly unrighteous world, it is essential that values based on religious belief be [evident in] the public square. . . .

"Religious faith is a store of light, knowledge, and wisdom and benefits society in a dramatic way."⁵

If we don't take gospel blessings to our communities and our countries, we will never have enough policemen—there will never be enough Isaac Freestones—to enforce moral behavior even if it were enforceable. And it isn't. Those children in that home without food or

clothing are sons and daughters of God. That mother, more culpable because she is older and should be more responsible, is also a daughter of God. Such situations may require tough love in formal, even legal, ways, but we must try to help when and where we can because we are not checking our religion at the door, even as pathetic and irresponsible as some doors are.

No, we can't do everything, but we can do something. And in answer to God's call, the children of Israel are the ones to do it—not to flee Babylon this time but to attack it. Without being naive about it, we can live our religion so broadly and unfailingly that we find all kinds of opportunities to help families, bless neighbors, and protect others, including the rising generation.



Reflect Your Love of Jesus Christ

Latter-day Saints are called upon to be the leaven in the loaf, the salt that never loses its savor, the light set upon a hill never to be hidden under a bushel. So start presenting!

If we do right and talk right and reach out generously with our words and our deeds, then, when the Savior cuts short His work in righteousness, says time is no more in this last dispensation, and comes in His glory, He will find us doing our best, trying to live the gospel, trying to improve our lives and our Church and our society the best way we can.

When He comes, I so want to be caught living the gospel. I want to be surprised right in the act of spreading the faith and doing something good. I want the

Latter-day Saints are called upon to be the leaven in the loaf, the salt that never loses its savor, the light set upon a hill never to be hidden under a bushel.

Savior to say to me: “Jeffrey, I recognize you not by your title but by your life, the way you are trying to live and the standards you are trying to defend. I see the integrity of your heart. I know you have tried to make things better first and foremost by being better yourself and then by declaring my word and defending my gospel to others in the most compassionate way you could.”

He will certainly add: “I know you weren’t always successful with your own sins and with the circumstances of others, but I believe you honestly tried. I believe in your heart you truly loved me.”

I want to have something like that encounter someday as I want nothing else in this mortal life. And I want it for you. I want it for us all. “Israel, Israel, God is calling”⁶—calling us to live the gospel of Jesus Christ personally in small ways and large ways, to reach out to those who may not look or dress or behave quite as we do, and then (where we can) to go beyond that to serve in the widest community we can address.

I love the Lord Jesus Christ, whose servant I am trying to be. And I love our Heavenly Father, who cared enough to give Him to us. Regarding that gift, I know that God is calling to Israel in these latter days to be more Christlike and to be more holy than we now are in our determination to live the gospel and establish Zion. I also know that He will give us the strength and the holiness to be true disciples if we plead for them. ■

From a CES devotional address, “Israel, Israel, God Is Calling,” delivered at Dixie State University in St. George, Utah, on September 9, 2012. For the full address, go to lds.org/broadcasts.

NOTES

1. See Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956), 2–3.

2. “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30.

3. Brigham Young, in James S. Brown, *Life of a Pioneer: Being the Autobiography of James S. Brown* (1900), 121.

4. Isaac Freestone, experience shared with the author, May 5, 2012.

5. Quentin L. Cook, “Let There Be Light!” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 28, 29.

6. “Israel, Israel, God Is Calling,” *Hymns*, no. 7.



By Linda K. Burton

Relief Society
General President

PRIESTHOOD POWER



AVAILABLE TO ALL

Priesthood authority is conferred by ordination, but priesthood power is available to all. Righteousness is the qualifier for each of us to invite priesthood power into our lives.

We are privileged to live in this season of Church history when questions are being asked about the priesthood. There is great interest and desire to know and understand more about the authority, power, and blessings associated with the priesthood of God. It is my hope that the doctrine

of the priesthood may “distil upon [our souls] as the dews from heaven” (D&C 121:45; emphasis added). I testify that the Lord is hastening His work, and it is imperative for us to understand how the Lord accomplishes His work so that we may receive the power that comes from being aligned with His plan and purposes.

The Lord has always accomplished His work, which is to “bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39), through the power of His priesthood. By it the heavens and earth were created. Through priesthood ordinances, the effects of the Fall can be overcome because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Because the authority of



the priesthood is entrusted to man to bless Heavenly Father's children, He wants us to invite the power of the priesthood into our homes to bless and strengthen our families and our individual lives.

In the 2013 worldwide leadership training, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphatically stated: "Men are not the priesthood!"¹ To me, that was a wake-up call as well as an invitation to all of us to study, ponder, and come to better understand the priesthood. If someone, perhaps a child or a friend who is a member of another faith, asked you the following questions, could you give an answer?

- What is the priesthood?
- Why is the priesthood so important?
- What are the keys of the priesthood?
- Who holds priesthood keys?

What is the priesthood?

The priesthood is the eternal power and authority of God by which He blesses, redeems, and exalts His children. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained the priesthood this way: "Priesthood is the means whereby the Lord acts through men to save souls. . . . A priesthood holder is expected to exercise this sacred authority in accordance with God's holy mind, will, and purposes. *Nothing about the priesthood is self-centered. The priesthood always is used to serve, to bless, and to strengthen other people.*"²

"Nothing about the priesthood is self-centered. The priesthood always is used to serve, to bless, and to strengthen other people."

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

make sacred, eternal covenants; no authority to bless or baptize, to heal or comfort. . . . There would be no light, no hope—only darkness."³

The thought of no priesthood power is sobering. I, for one, stand up and rejoice that this sacred power has been



As I have studied, pondered, and sought to understand the priesthood, it has been helpful for me to consider what the world would be like *without* it. Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explored this idea when he said: "Can you imagine how dark and empty mortality would be if there were no priesthood? If the power of the priesthood were not upon the earth, the adversary would have freedom to roam and reign without restraint. There would be no gift of the Holy Ghost to direct and enlighten us; no prophets to speak in the name of the Lord; no temples where we could

restored to the earth through a prophet of God in this last and glorious dispensation of the fulness of times!

Elder Oaks cautions us, however, in our references to the priesthood: "While we sometimes refer to priesthood holders as 'the priesthood,' we must never forget that the priesthood is not owned by or embodied in those who hold it. It is held in *a sacred trust to be used for the benefit of men, women, and children alike.*"⁴

Why is the priesthood so important?

We know that "the divine plan of happiness enables family relationships

to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.⁵ As Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Priesthood authority has been restored so that families can be sealed eternally.”⁶

“Priesthood authority is required to perform the ordinances of the gospel. . . . Each ordinance opens the door to rich spiritual blessings.”⁷ Jesus bestowed the sacred keys of the kingdom on Peter with the charge that “whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

What are the keys of the priesthood?

A simple explanation of priesthood keys is found in the May 2012 *New Era*:

“With a set of keys, you can do a lot of things that you wouldn’t otherwise be able to do—enter buildings, drive cars, and open trunks, among other things. Keys, basically, mean authority and access.

“The same is true of priesthood keys. They control access to the blessings and ordinances of the priesthood. . . . Priesthood keys are the right to preside over and direct the Church. . . . Keys usually apply to a geographic area, like a ward, stake, or mission. They also usually include authority over specific ordinances and activities (for instance, baptism,

the sacrament, missionary work, and temple work).”⁸

Who holds priesthood keys?

“Jesus Christ holds all the keys of the priesthood pertaining to His Church. He has conferred upon each of His Apostles all the keys that pertain to the kingdom of God on earth. The senior living Apostle, the President of the Church, is the only person on earth authorized to exercise all priesthood keys (see D&C 107:91–92). . . . [He then] delegates priesthood keys to other priesthood leaders so they can preside in their areas of responsibility. . . . Auxiliary presidents and their counselors do not receive keys. They receive delegated authority to function in their callings.”⁹

There is a difference, however, between priesthood authority and priesthood power. Priesthood authority is conferred by ordination, but priesthood power is available to all. Since priesthood power is something we all desire to have in our families and homes, what do *we* need to do to invite that power into our lives? Personal righteousness is imperative to having priesthood power.

Understanding the Doctrine of the Priesthood

There are things we can do to better understand the doctrine of the priesthood.

First, seek to be worthy of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Because the doctrine of the priesthood is best understood

by revelation, it is essential to have the help of the Holy Ghost to reveal and distill the doctrine upon our souls.

Second, attend the holy temple. We know that temples “are the most holy of all places of worship”¹⁰ and provide the ideal setting to learn



about the priesthood by the spirit of revelation.

Third, study the scriptures. Searching, pondering, and studying the scriptures are invitations for the Holy Ghost to reveal to us important truths about the priesthood. I recommend the following to you for your careful and prayerful consideration: Doctrine and Covenants sections 13, 20, 84, 107, and 121, and Alma 13. Then I invite you to memorize the oath and covenant of the priesthood, which can be found in Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44. By doing so, I promise you that the Holy Ghost will expand your understanding of the

priesthood and inspire and uplift you in wonderful ways.

I would also invite you to ponder Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–46 and ask yourselves questions such as:

- Is my heart set upon the things of this world?



- Do I aspire to the honors of men or women?
- Do I try to cover my sins?
- Am I prideful?
- Do I exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon my children, my spouse, or others?
- Am I earnestly striving to practice righteous principles such as persuasion, meekness, long-suffering, kindness, gentleness, love unfeigned (meaning genuine, sincere, or heartfelt love)?
- Does virtue garnish my thoughts unceasingly?
- Do I long for the Holy Ghost to be my constant companion?

The words *persuasion, meekness, long-suffering, kindness, gentleness, and love unfeigned* took on a new and very personal meaning to me as I remembered a blessing I requested of my father years ago.

When I was a young single adult, I was struggling with a difficult decision. As I had done on several occasions, I approached my dad and requested a father's blessing. Expecting him to immediately act on my request, I was surprised when he responded by saying, "I'll need some time to prepare to give you this blessing. How would you feel about waiting a couple of days?"

Interestingly, 40 years later, I have forgotten what he said in that father's blessing, but I'll never forget the profound reverence my dad had for the holy priesthood as he prepared himself spiritually to pronounce a father's blessing upon my head. He understood the principles taught in Doctrine and Covenants 121 and was determined to live them in order to qualify for priesthood power to bless his family. His example of meekness, long-suffering, kindness, gentleness, and love unfeigned continues to bless my life.

Words of the Living Prophets

It is my privilege to work with inspired prophets, seers, and revelators on an almost daily basis. If we really want to know the doctrine of the priesthood, we have a reliable and God-given living resource: prophets, seers, and revelators. I testify that they

are men of God possessing priesthood power by personal righteousness.

In a recent general conference, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "In our Heavenly Father's great priesthood-endowed plan, men have the unique responsibility to administer the priesthood, but they are not the priesthood. Men and women have different but equally valued roles. Just as a woman cannot conceive a child without a man, so a man cannot fully exercise the power of the priesthood to establish an eternal family without a woman. In other words, in the eternal perspective, both the procreative power and the priesthood power are shared by husband and wife."¹¹

I am learning that women's moral influence is a complementary gift to priesthood power. Speaking to the women in the Church, President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) urged, "We entreat you to minister with your powerful *influence* for good in strengthening our families, our church, and our communities."¹² In a recent general conference, Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said to the women, "Whether you are single or married, whether you have borne children or not, whether you are old, young, or in between, your moral authority is vital."¹³

Similarly, Elder Ballard remarked, "There is nothing in this world as personal, as nurturing, or as life changing as the *influence* of a righteous woman."¹⁴

We have addressed a few of the questions associated with the holy priesthood of God, but there are undoubtedly others.

First Obey, Then Understand

I conclude with an experience that has helped me to deal with unanswered questions. A few years ago, my husband and I were invited to a gathering of many experienced Church leaders. A new presiding officer had recently been called, and at the end of the meeting a very difficult and contentious question was asked. Realizing the difficulty of the question, my husband and I immediately offered up our sincere prayers to Heavenly Father on behalf of this new leader. As he came to the pulpit to respond to the question, I witnessed a change in his countenance as he stood majestically, squared his shoulders, and spoke with the power of the Lord.

His response was something like this: "Brother, I do not know the answer to your question. But I will tell you what I do know. I know that God is our Eternal Father. I know that Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. I know that Joseph Smith saw God the Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and was the instrument through which the power of the priesthood was restored to the earth. I know the Book of Mormon is true and contains the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I know we have a living prophet today who speaks for the

The priesthood of God is a sacred trust given to bless men, women, and children so we can return as families to live eternally together in God's presence.

and priesthood power and authority this is. ■

From an address given for Women's Conference at Brigham Young University on May 2, 2013.

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, "The Power of the Priesthood in the Family" (worldwide leadership training meeting), wwlt.lds.org.
2. David A. Bednar, "The Powers of Heaven," *Ensign*, May 2012, 48; emphasis added.



Lord to bless our lives. No, I do not know the answer to your question, but these things I know. The rest I take on faith. I try to live this simple statement of faith I learned years ago from Marjorie Hinckley, wife of President Gordon B. Hinckley, who said, 'First I obey, then I understand.'

The priesthood of God is a sacred trust given to bless men, women, and children so we can return as families to live eternally together in God's presence. Righteousness is the qualifier for each of us to invite priesthood power into our lives. May this doctrine distill upon our souls and draw us closer to Him whose Church

3. Robert D. Hales, "Blessings of the Priesthood," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 32.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, "The Relief Society and the Church," *Ensign*, May 1992, 36; emphasis added.
5. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
6. Russell M. Nelson, "Nurturing Marriage," *Ensign*, May 2006, 37.
7. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.1.2.
8. "Priesthood Keys," *New Era*, May 2012, 38.
9. *Handbook 2*, 2.1.1.
10. Guide to the Scriptures, "Temple, House of the Lord," scriptures.lds.org.
11. M. Russell Ballard, "This Is My Work and Glory," *Ensign*, May 2013, 19.
12. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 157; emphasis added.
13. D. Todd Christofferson, "The Moral Force of Women," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 30.
14. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 156; emphasis added.

The following web page teaches key ideas about the priesthood and could be helpful in home evening, Sunday lessons, or missionary work: lds.org/go/b614000.



LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN Italy A LEGACY OF FAITH

By Lia McClanahan

The history of the Church in Italy begins in New Testament times, when the capital of the Roman Empire was home to a group of faithful Christians.

The Bible doesn't record who originally took the gospel to Rome, but a branch of the Church had been there for "many years" (Romans 15:23) when the Apostle Paul sent a letter to the Romans in about A.D. 57.

Paul described the Christians in Rome as "full of goodness" (15:14). He was acquainted with some of them, and his epistle contained a long list of beloved Saints to whom he sent greetings (see 16:1–15).

Paul extolled the faith of those Christians and told them that he prayed fervently for them. He longed to see them and hoped God would grant that he might visit them soon (see 1:8–15).

When he did at last go to Rome, it was as a prisoner, but the Church members' anticipation of his arrival was such that some of the brethren traveled 43 miles (69 km) to meet him at the Appii forum. Seeing them, "he thanked God, and took courage" (Acts 28:15).

Later, Paul suffered martyrdom in Rome, where Christians were severely persecuted by Nero and other emperors. Eventually the Church fell into apostasy, but the early Roman Saints left a legacy of faith at the center of the empire, setting the stage for Christianity to spread throughout the world.



Youth of the Rome Italy East Stake help clean and paint a homeless shelter.

TIME LINE

* 63 B.C.: Roman military leader Pompeius conquers Jerusalem, which becomes part of the Roman Empire

A.D. 45: The Apostle Paul, a Roman citizen, begins first missionary journey throughout Roman Empire

64: Christians blamed for the great fire of Rome and begin to be persecuted by Roman government



► 313: Constantine becomes the first Christian Roman emperor and legalizes Christian worship

380: Emperor Theodosius I makes Christianity the official state religion of Roman Empire and paves the way for Christianity to spread throughout the world

A People Hidden Up by the Lord

In 1849, Elder Lorenzo Snow (1814–1901) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was called to establish a mission in Italy. As he was contemplating where to commence, he learned about the Waldensians, a religious community in the Piedmont mountains of northwestern Italy.

The Waldensians had endured extreme persecutions over seven centuries because of their beliefs. Predating the Protestant Reformation by several hundred years, they preached that Christ's early Church had fallen into apostasy. They separated themselves from the Roman Catholic Church and were declared heretics, driven from cities, tortured, and slaughtered. Rather than renounce their faith, they fled to the upper mountains.¹

"A flood of light seemed to burst upon my mind when I thought upon [the Waldensians]," recorded Elder Snow. In a letter home he wrote, "I believe that the Lord has there hidden up a people amid the Alpine mountains."²

In other regions of Italy, laws were not favorable for missionary activity. But two years before Elder Snow arrived, the Waldensians in the Piedmont region had been granted religious freedom after centuries of persecution.³ Not only that, but several among them had received remarkable dreams and visions preparing them to receive the missionaries' message.⁴

Elder Snow, accompanied by two missionary companions, dedicated Italy for the preaching of the gospel on September 19, 1850. Elder Snow recorded, "From that day opportunities began to occur for proclaiming our message."⁵

Over the next four years, the missionaries' efforts met with both success and opposition. They published two missionary tracts and an Italian translation of the Book of Mormon. They baptized a number of converts. But by 1854, the work had dwindled—the missionaries were called away to other areas, the staunchest converts were immigrating to Utah, and persecution was growing. In 1862 all active proselyting was discontinued, and the mission was closed in 1867.

The Italian Mission was active only 12 years, but during that time, 12 families and seven individuals were converted and immigrated to Utah. The Waldensians who embraced the gospel infused the Church in Utah with strength, and today tens of thousands of members trace their heritage back to the 72 faithful Waldensians who left the home of their forefathers to join the Latter-day Saints in the Rocky Mountains.⁶

Hastening the Work

After the Italian Mission closed, no official missionary work was done in Italy for almost a hundred years.

► 1173: Waldo of Lyons, France, starts a movement to return to the original gospel taught by Christ and His Apostles



1215: Waldo and his followers, the Waldensians—some of whom live in Italy—are declared heretics and are persecuted

1843: Giuseppe (Joseph) Toronto baptized in Massachusetts, USA—the first Italian to join the Church

1848: King Carlo Alberto of Piedmont-Sardinia grants religious liberty to the Waldensians



► 1850: Elder Lorenzo Snow, Joseph Toronto, and B. H. Stenhouse begin missionary efforts in Italy

1852: An Italian translation of the Book of Mormon published

When the light of the gospel began to shine again in Italy, it was amid World War II, when Latter-day Saint military personnel from the United States were stationed in cities throughout Italy. These members formed groups that met for Sunday meetings, and the groups continued after the war as the members were assigned to military bases in Italy.

Over the next 20 years, the Lord hastened His work. Native Italians began to join the Church after encountering missionaries in nearby countries. Military members' groups in Naples and Verona were organized into branches under the direction of the Swiss Mission. The mission had the Book of Mormon retranslated into Italian and published. The time for missionaries to be sent to Italy was drawing near.

In 1964, Italy was organized as a district of the Swiss Mission, and soon Italian-speaking missionaries were sent to several cities. In 1966, the Italian Mission was organized, 99 years after the original Italian Mission had closed. Elder Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) of the Quorum of the

Twelve offered a prayer rededicating Italy for the preaching of the gospel.

Ten years from the time the mission opened, the number of members in Italy had increased from about 300 to 5,000. That number had doubled by 1982. In recent years, growth has been dramatic. From 2005 to 2010, four new stakes were created, taking the total number of stakes to seven. Today there are nearly 25,000 Latter-day Saints in Italy.

Establishing the Church

Elder Craig A. Cardon of the Seventy is one of thousands of Latter-day Saints who trace their ancestry back

Elder Ezra Taft Benson (center) meets with missionaries of the newly formed Italian Mission.





▲ Meet some Italian Saints: The inspiring stories of three modern Italian Latter-day Saints are found in the online version of this article at ensign.lds.org.

to Phillipine Cardon, a Waldensian convert who immigrated to Utah in 1854. Elder Cardon has witnessed the Lord's work unfolding in the land of his ancestors, first as a missionary in the newly opened Italian Mission in the 1960s and then as president of the Italy Rome Mission in the 1980s.

When Elder Cardon was called to be a mission president in 1983, all but one of the chapels in Rome were rented buildings. In those days new Church buildings were paid for partly by donations from members

1854: Missionary work dwindles as persecution grows and missionaries shift their focus to Switzerland; Waldensian converts begin immigration to Salt Lake City, Utah

1862: All active proselyting in Italy stops

1944: LDS military members' groups are established in Italy

the Church. I am convinced that their commitment was a central part of what allowed the Church to continue to grow to the point for a stake to be organized and now a temple constructed in Rome.⁷

Prior to being called as a General Authority, Elder Cardon returned to Italy in 2005 to be present when the Rome Italy Stake was created. It was a sweet experience. "Here was priesthood strength," he says, "the keys of the priesthood, the scriptural definition of a place of refuge—a stake—now established in Rome."



◀ 1964: The Church publishes a new Italian translation of the Book of Mormon; the Swiss Mission organizes an Italian district

► 1966: The Italian Mission organized; Elder Ezra Taft Benson rededicates Italy for the preaching of the gospel



in the area. Because funds were needed to construct several buildings, it looked impossible on paper for the members to be able to contribute so much. After the matter was given prayerful consideration, the Italian members were invited to take the money they would have spent on Christmas that year and donate it to the building fund. Instead of gifts, families would place a brick under their Christmas trees to represent their sacrifice.

"What happened on that occasion was miraculous," says Elder Cardon. "The contributions exceeded the need. Because of this and the Saints' continued tithing faithfulness, the Lord poured out a rich spiritual blessing upon the mission and upon the Saints throughout the area as they willingly responded to do all they could to establish



The meetinghouse of the Catania Ward on the coast of Sicily. The Catania Branch was formed in 1967, a year after the Italian Mission was organized.

A Temple in Rome

In the October 2008 general conference, when President Thomas S. Monson announced that a temple would be built in Rome, an audible gasp and whispers of excitement swept across the Conference Center. In Italy, congregations of Saints watching by satellite let out shouts of joy. One sister remembers, “We went to our homes as if on wings, with joy in our hearts.”

Why is the idea of a temple in Rome so meaningful? Besides being aware of the temple’s profound spiritual significance, members have a sense of the city’s historical significance, says Elder Cardon: “Its governance and power



1972: President Harold B. Lee visits members in Italy, the first Church President to visit in latter days

1981: The Milan Italy Stake organized, the first stake in Italy

1993: The Church given legal recognition to formally own property and perform government-recognized marriages



► **2008:**
The Rome Italy Temple announced by President Thomas S. Monson

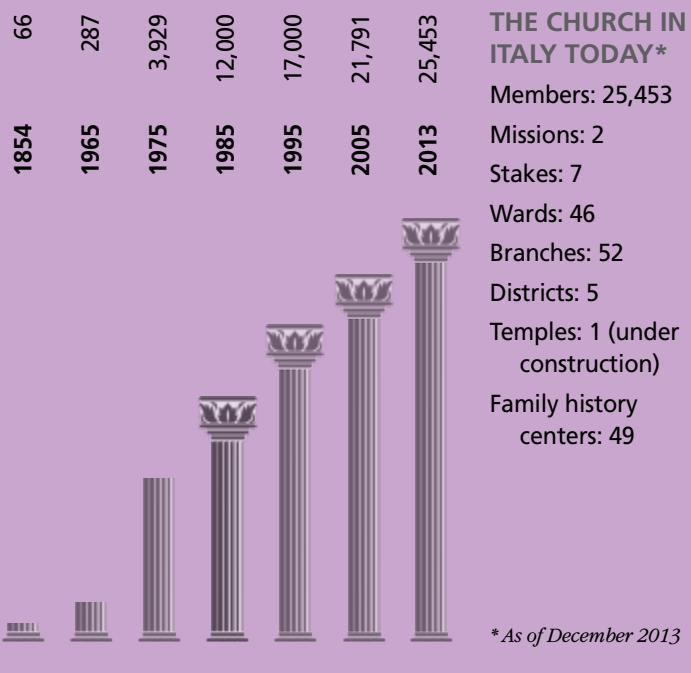
2012: The Church given the highest legal status granted to religions in Italy

during its particular season; its explorers, artists, scientists, and inventors who have contributed so much to the world; and the blessing that the religious power of Rome has been in helping to introduce Christianity throughout the world are all a part of Rome’s history, now graced by a temple of the Lord.” At the 2010 groundbreaking ceremony, President Monson said, “With regard to the temple which will be built upon this site, it means everything to Latter-day Saints.”⁸

For over 40 years, Italian members have traveled to the Bern Switzerland Temple, some journeying two days to get there. Massimo De Feo, former president of the Rome stake and now an Area Seventy, believes the Rome Temple is a sign that the Lord has seen the years of service and sacrifice from the Latter-day Saints and recognizes their great desire for a temple.

When the announcement about the temple was made, Elder De Feo says the excitement was like that felt in a stadium when a team wins at the last second; the joy was

MEMBERS IN ITALY



*As of December 2013

similar to what he imagines we felt in the premortal life when the plan of salvation was announced. The Saints were hugging, smiling, and crying. It was true happiness.

“It is marvelous to serve the Lord in these days,” says Elder De Feo, “so special for Italy, for Rome.” He testifies, “I know that the Lord is greatly blessing this part of His kingdom.”⁹ ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

- See Ronald A. Malan, “Waldensian History: A Brief Sketch,” Waldensian Families Research, www.waldensian.info/History.htm.
- Lorenzo Snow, *The Italian Mission* (1851), 10–11.
- Lorenzo Snow, *The Italian Mission*, 10–11.
- Diane Stokoe, “The Mormon Waldensians” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1985), 26–27. For an example of one such dream, see Elizabeth Maki, “Suddenly the Thought Came to Me’: Child’s Vision Prepares Her Family for the Gospel,” June 3, 2013, history.lds.org/article/marie-cardon-italy-conversion.
- Lorenzo Snow, *The Italian Mission*, 15, 17.
- Stokoe, “The Mormon Waldensians,” 1–5, 71–84.
- Craig A. Cardon, from an interview with the author in June 2013.
- Thomas S. Monson, in Jason Swenson, “Rome Italy Temple Ground-breaking,” *Church News*, Oct. 23, 2010, ldschurchnews.com.
- “Interview with President Massimo De Feo—Italy—Episode 1,” *Into All the World* (archived radio program), mormonchannel.org.



By Elder
Richard G. Scott
Of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles

AGENCY AND ANSWERS

Recognizing Revelation

What sometimes seems an impenetrable barrier to communication is a giant step to be taken in trust.

Across from me a woman sat sobbing. With tear-filled eyes, she told me, "I don't know what I believe anymore." She spoke of having struggled and prayed many days to know how to make a vitally important decision in her life, without success. She anguished, "I don't know what to do. If you'll tell me what to do, I'll do it." With her hand on the scriptures, she said, "God told us He would help us. He answers everybody else's prayers. Why won't He answer mine?"

When one is caught in a whirlpool of emotion, it is difficult to find a way out alone. My prayer is to help you who have similar feelings.

When answers to urgent prayer don't seem to come, it can be that we don't understand some truths about prayer or because we don't recognize answers when they come.

Principles of Prayer

Communication with our Father in Heaven is not a trivial matter. It is a sacred privilege. It is based upon unchanging principles. When we receive help from our Father in Heaven, it is in response to faith, obedience, and the proper use of agency.

She said, "God told us He would help us. He answers everybody else's prayers. Why won't He answer mine?"

It is a mistake to assume that every prayer we offer will be answered immediately. Some prayers require considerable effort on our part. True, sometimes impressions come when we have not specifically sought them. They generally concern something we need to know and are not otherwise able to find out.

We are here on earth to gain experience we can obtain in no other way. We are given the opportunity to grow, to develop, and to gain spiritual maturity. To do that, we must learn to apply truth. How we face challenges and resolve difficult problems is crucially important to our happiness.

To better understand prayer, I have listened to the counsel of others, pondered the scriptures, and studied the lives of prophets and others. Yet what seems most helpful is seeing in my mind a child approaching trustingly a loving, kind, wise, understanding Father, who wants us to succeed.

Don't worry about your clumsily expressed feelings. Just talk to your Father. He hears every prayer and answers it in His way.

When we explain a problem and a proposed solution, sometimes He 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.

I have described the absolute reality of our relationship with our Father. There is nothing about us He does not know. He is conscious of our every need and could provide all of the answers. Yet, because His purpose is our eternal happiness, He encourages us to make the correct choices.

Three Ways to Find Answers

1. Look for Evidence That He Has Already Answered You

Like many of us, Oliver Cowdery did not recognize the evidence of answers to prayers already given by the Lord.



To open his—and our—eyes, this revelation was given through Joseph Smith:

“Blessed art thou for what thou hast done; for thou hast inquired of me, and behold, *as often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction* of my Spirit. If it had not been so, thou wouldest not have come to the place where thou art at this time.

“Behold, thou knowest that thou hast inquired of me and I did *enlighten thy mind*; and now I tell thee these things that thou mayest know that thou hast been enlightened by the Spirit of truth” (D&C 6:14–15; emphasis added).

If you feel that God has not answered *your* prayers, ponder these scriptures—then carefully look for evidence in your own life of His having already answered you.

2. Pay Attention to Feelings

To help each of us recognize answers given, the Lord said:

“If you desire a further witness, 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?*” (D&C 6:22–23; emphasis added).

The Lord provides further insight by counseling us to study a problem out in our mind and then to ask if it be right:

“If it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall *feel* that it is right.

“But if it be not right you shall have no such *feelings*, but you shall have a stupor of thought” (D&C 9:8–9; emphasis added).

3. Act When He Withholds an Answer

It is vitally important to recognize that the Lord also responds a third way to prayer by *withholding an answer* when the prayer is offered. Why would He do that?

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:

When He answers *yes*, it is to give us confidence.

When He answers *no*, it is to prevent error.

When He *withholds an answer*, it is to have us grow

through faith in Him, obedience to His commandments, and a willingness to act on truth. 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.

Most often what we have chosen to do is right. He will confirm the correctness of our choices His way. That confirmation generally comes through packets of help found along the way. We discover them by being spiritually sensitive. They are like notes from a loving Father as evidence of His approval. If, in trust, we begin something that is not right, He will let us know before we have gone too far. We sense that help by recognizing troubled or uneasy feelings.

Nephi’s efforts to obtain the plates of brass show how the principles work (see 1 Nephi 3:6–7). After two unsuccessful attempts, Nephi remained confident. He crept into the city toward the house of Laban without all the answers.

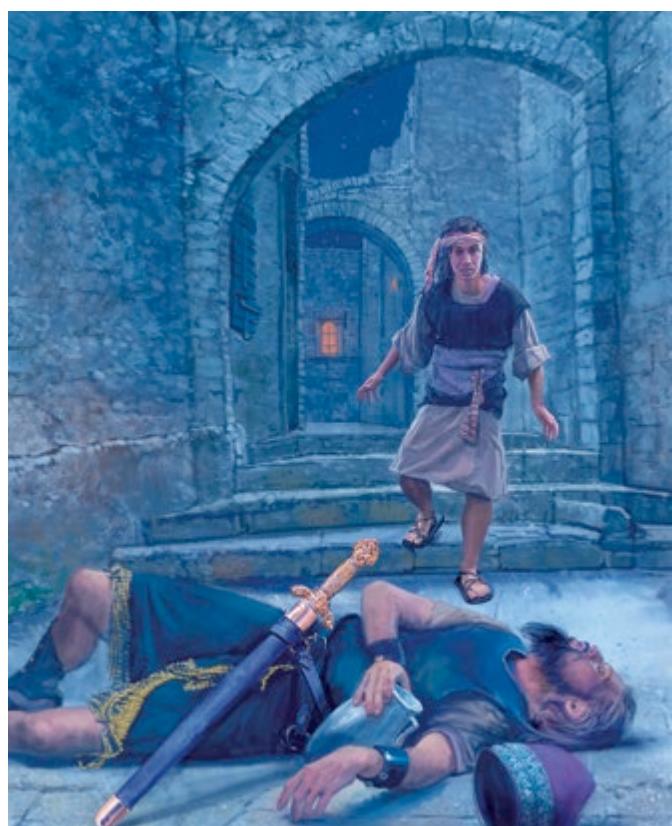


ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN CULL

He observed, “I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do,” significantly adding, “*Nevertheless I went forth*” (1 Nephi 4:6–7; emphasis added).

Nephi was willing to try time and again, using his best efforts. He expressed faith that he would be helped. He refused to be discouraged. But because he acted, had confidence in the Lord, was obedient, and properly used his agency, he received guidance. He was inspired step after step to success, and in his mother’s words was “given . . . power [to] accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded” (1 Nephi 5:8; emphasis added).

Sometimes answers to prayer are not recognized because we are too intent on wanting confirmation of our own desires.

Nephi knew he was required to confide in God, to exercise faith, and to act so that he could receive help, step by step. He did not murmur nor ask for a full explanation. But, observe particularly, he did not wait passively for help. He acted! By following spiritual law, he was inspired and given power to act.

Trusting God’s Will and Way

Sometimes answers to prayer are not recognized because we are too intent on wanting confirmation of our own desires. We fail to see that the Lord would have us do something else. Be careful to seek His will.

I confess I don’t know how to make a correct decision except where there is righteousness and trust in a Heavenly Father. The principles simply will not work when agency is intentionally used at variance with the will of God. If there is unrepented sin, we are left to our own devices to flounder and struggle on our own. We *can* be rescued through our own repentance.

When we seek inspiration to help make decisions, the Lord gives gentle promptings. These require us to think, to exercise faith, to work, to struggle at times, and to act. Seldom does the whole answer to a decisively important matter or complex problem come all at once.

More often, it comes a piece at a time, without the end in sight.

I have saved the most important part about prayer until the end. It is gratitude! Our sincere efforts to thank our beloved Father generate wondrous feelings of peace, self-worth, and love.

Why is it that the most impoverished seem to know best how to thank the Lord? In the highlands of Guatemala, members barely subsist. Going to the temple requires great sacrifice. A visit takes a year of preparation. There is hard work, sacrifice to save money and food, the spinning, dyeing, and weaving of new clothing. There is the long, bare-foot walk out of the mountains, the crossing of Lake Isabel, the bus rides with little food. Tired and worn, they arrive at the temple. They scrub until they shine, dress in their new clothing, and enter the house of the Lord.

Reclothed in white, they are taught by the Spirit, receive ordinances, and make covenants. One highland woman was greatly touched by the spirit and meaning of the endowment. Entering the celestial room, she saw others seated, with heads reverently bowed. Innocently, she knelt at the entrance to the room, oblivious to others. She bowed her head, sobbed, and for twenty minutes poured out her heart to her Father in Heaven. Finally, with her dress soaked with tears, she raised her head. The sensitive temple matron asked, “May I help?” She responded, “Oh, would you? This is my problem: I’ve tried to tell Father in Heaven of my gratitude for all of my blessings, but I don’t feel that I’ve communicated. Will you help me tell Him how grateful I am?”

This counsel about prayer is true. I have tested it thoroughly in the laboratory of my own personal life. I have discovered that what sometimes seems an impenetrable barrier to communication is a giant step to be taken in trust.

If you seek His help, be sure your life is clean, your motives are worthy, and you’re willing to do what He asks—for He *will* answer your prayers. He is your loving Father; you are His beloved child. He loves you perfectly and wants to help you. ■

From an October 1989 general conference address.



WE ARE STILL YOUR Brothers

I learned through personal experience that the Lord is aware of the challenges faced by single fathers in the Church.

By Richard M. Romney

Church Magazines

As is the case for me on many nights, I went to sleep that Friday night exhausted. After a particularly challenging 10-hour day at work, I had come home to fix dinner, drive my daughter to a junior high school activity, do three batches of laundry, go shopping, put the groceries away, pick up my daughter, give up (for lack of time) on going to my mission reunion, do the dishes, pay some bills, and, as I was going to bed about midnight, receive an email from a family member asking me if I was dating anyone yet.

I chuckled. "Like I have time to date," I thought.

Years of Challenge

I have spent many years as a single father, caring for five children as they have grown. That particular night, as on many other nights, I felt so alone, so overwhelmed. I wondered how on earth I could continue to cope.

After reading my scriptures, I prayed for strength to continue one more day. Knowing general conference began the next day, I asked, as I always do, to receive guidance particularly suited to me. "Heavenly Father," I pleaded, "help me to know that someone understands the challenges of single fathers in the Church."

Saturday Afternoon

My answer came on Saturday afternoon. Elder David S. Baxter of the Seventy gave a message to single parents, and as he spoke, I knew that Heavenly Father was using Elder Baxter to speak to me: "Now, there are, of course, some single families where it is the father who is the single parent. Brethren, we also pray for you and pay tribute to you. This message is also for you."¹

I sat in my chair and cried. Someone did understand. Most important of all, the Lord understood. And not only had I received an unmistakable answer to my prayer, but I also found myself reliving memory after memory of blessings, strength, and comfort I had received through the years as a single father in the Church.

Blessed by the Sisters

The first image that came to my mind was of our ward's Relief Society sisters—not just one image but a succession of them. I saw the sisters, when my wife was dying, bringing meals and cleaning floors and visiting with my children. I remembered how later on they offered to make photo scrapbooks with my daughters, to teach them to sew and cook, to include them and their brothers in school car pools and take them on errands while I was at work.



I particularly remembered one Relief Society president altering the sleeve size on my son's football uniform.

I saw Primary leaders and Young Women leaders who, knowing there was not a mother in our home, watched over my daughters, counseling them about how to select a dress or do their hair for school dances, filling their lives with guidance that I, as a father, could only awkwardly provide. And I saw the young women of the ward simply taking time to laugh and joke and help my daughters to feel normal.

As a single father, I have been grateful time and again for sisters whose "charity never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:8; see also Moroni 7:46).

And the Brothers, Too

Next I saw a succession of priesthood brethren—leaders, friends, neighbors, and especially home teachers. I sensed that they had prayed for me and about me, that in councils they had talked about my family and our needs in a sincere desire to serve us as the Savior would serve.

I remembered testimonies borne of the plan of salvation, invitations to come to the temple, and high priests group and Sunday School discussions conducted with sensitivity toward those without spouses. I remembered a kind bishop who assigned me to home teach with my sons so that I could spend more time with them and a stake president who reassured me that I was "handling things just right." I thought of times when I came home to find my lawn had been mowed or my driveway shoveled. And I cried again as I thought of a less-active brother who, even



A FAITHFUL FATHER

Watch the story of a faithful single father raising two teenage sons at mormon.org/me/lfrq.

though he had been working all night, came to my rescue when my car conked out several miles from home.

Did someone understand the challenges of the single fathers of the Church? Obviously the Lord did, and His reminder about all the help that He had sent my way humbled me.

Since That Day

Since that day, I have read and re-read Elder Baxter's address and tried to live by the counsel it provides. Here are some principles that have become particularly meaningful to me.²

Live within the framework of the gospel. There are no exceptions to the law of obedience, even when you are lonely, tired, and desperate for support. "Bless you for avoiding the type of companionship that would come at the expense of virtue and discipleship. That would be far too high a price to pay." Be faithful. Say your prayers. Read your scriptures. Attend your meetings.

Look to the future with confidence. "While you cannot change the past, you can shape the future." Strive to raise your children in righteousness and truth, knowing that their achievements will stand as a tribute to you. Along the way, you will receive blessings, even if they aren't apparent at first. Prepare to enjoy the blessings of being part of a complete, eternal family.

Find yourself through service. "When you live to lift the burdens of others, your own burdens become lighter. Although circumstances may not have changed, your attitude has. You are able to face your own trials with greater acceptance, a more understanding heart, and deeper gratitude for what you have, rather than pining for what you yet lack."

Trust in the Lord. “Although you often feel alone, in truth you are never *totally* on your own. . . . Your perspective and view of life will change when, rather than being cast down, you look up. . . . As you do your very best in the most difficult of human challenges, heaven will smile upon you. . . . Let the redemptive, loving power of Jesus Christ brighten your life now and fill you with the hope of eternal promise.”

No Second-Class Citizens

I also found great comfort in this statement from Elder Baxter: “Please never feel that you are in some kind of second-tier subcategory of Church membership, somehow less entitled to the Lord’s blessings than others. In the kingdom of God there are no second-class citizens.”

A recent report indicates that in the United States, roughly one in twelve households with minor children is headed by a single father, the highest number in history. “When people talk about single parents, the fact is it’s usually code for single mothers,” says a senior researcher. “It’s important to recognize that there’s a pretty significant minority of those parents who are dads.”³

As the Church continues to grow, it will also include more and more single parents, among them single fathers. My appeal to single parents is, remember that others do understand that you face challenges in running a home and raising a family on your own. Especially remember that Heavenly Father loves you. Remain faithful and He will bless you. And my appeal to all Latter-day Saints is, remember that single fathers are still your brothers. Whether we are single because we never married, are divorced, or are widowed, we are eager to join with you in living the gospel and building the kingdom of God. ■

NOTES

1. David S. Baxter, “Faith, Fortitude, Fulfillment: A Message to Single Parents,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 39.
2. Except where noted, all quotations in the remainder of the article are from David S. Baxter, “Faith, Fortitude, Fulfillment,” 37–39.
3. Gretchen Livingston, in Lois M. Collins, “1 in 12 Households Headed by Single Dad, Pew Study Finds,” *Deseret News*, July 4, 2013, deseretnews.com/article/865582639/1-in-12-households-headed-by-single-dad-Pew-study-finds.html.



ANSWERING QUESTIONS

What sort of service truly helps single fathers?

As a single father, I have learned that my fellow Saints want to help me but that they sometimes struggle to know what to do. Here are some observations and suggestions based on my own experience.

Sisters provide invaluable service. In the same way that the priesthood watches over children without a father in the home, sister Saints can watch over children who don’t have a mother in the home.

Meet true needs. Not all men are mechanically inclined; I was relieved when a neighbor helped me repair a broken pipe. On the other hand, I love to cook and don’t need lots of tips about preparing nutritious meals for my children.

Suggest specific ways you’d like to help. Saying, “Let me know if I can do something” puts the burden on me. Asking, “Could we haul away those branches you trimmed?” enables me to respond.

Offer to stay with my children for a few hours. Single parents need time to replenish their energy to be more effective fathers or mothers.

The way reassurance is given makes a difference. Just listening may be the greatest support you can provide. And a simple word of welcome or thanks may lift someone’s spirit more than a lot of advice, especially advice about dating.

Invite me to everything, but understand the demands on my time. Allow me to continue to participate and serve, but remember I have to balance responsibilities normally shared by two.

Long-term support is important. Don’t assume that as time passes, needs disappear. I’m pleased when home teachers check on progress.

THAT WE MAY Rejoice Together

By Jennifer Grace Fallon

Church Magazines

My mission companion and I felt excited about our assignment to a new area, and we set to work immediately and with energy, knocking on doors and making contacts in order to find people to teach. At first, it seemed as though the community was filled with people who were ready and willing to receive the Savior's message. In just a few weeks, we found more than 40 people who said they wanted to hear more.

Unfortunately, none of those people ever became progressing investigators. Eventually, my companion and I ended up in the same situation we had been in when we arrived in the area—with an empty teaching pool.

One morning, as I pondered how to help our work progress, the Spirit brought the Savior's words to my mind:

“Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

“And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

“And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

“I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours” (John 4:35–38).

I felt the Spirit bear witness to me that my companion

and I had been playing the role of the sowers—we had been sowing gospel seeds among all the people we met. And yet sowing seeds was not our primary role as full-time missionaries. The Lord had sent us to reap the seeds that had already been sown by the members in the area, so that “both he that soweth [the member] and he that reapeth [the missionary] may rejoice together.”

Getting the Members Involved

Build Confidence

As my companion and I prayed about how to increase member involvement, we felt impressed to follow the counsel found in *Preach My Gospel*: “There are many ways to help the members. For example, help build their faith by teaching them the message of the Restoration and other doctrines of the lessons. Help them feel the Spirit and power of our message. Strengthening their understanding of the doctrine of Christ will do more to increase their trust in you and to build their excitement to do missionary work than anything else you can do.”¹

My companion and I took a ward list and prayed about which families we should begin visiting to help them renew their desire to share the gospel. We also counseled with the bishop to know which families to visit regularly.

We put together a few “missionary training lessons” that



*My companion and I
were having trouble
helping our investigators
progress. We needed
to enlist the members
in order to fulfill our
purpose as missionaries.*

we taught to these families weekly. We did not generate new content for these lessons but relied on the scriptures and content of *Preach My Gospel*, a tool that many had overlooked. These lessons focused on the blessings we receive from the plan of salvation and the joy we encounter as we develop charity.

The point of the lessons was not to implement another program in the Church. They provided a plan to help us establish trust with the members and boost their confidence in their ability to participate in missionary work. Many times we arrived at the homes of these members and the Spirit would prompt us to teach something different from what we had planned.

We also made it a practice to share during these visits the little miracles that my companion and I noticed during the day. Whenever we noticed the Lord guiding us, we made sure to point it out to one another and then share those stories with the families we visited so that they knew Heavenly Father would guide them in their missionary efforts. Our testimony of the Lord's miracles solidified as we recognized them and shared our experiences.

We began to see many miracles unfold in this area. The families we visited became more enthusiastic about missionary work, and their enthusiasm influenced other people in the ward. We began to receive referrals for friends and neighbors who had been prepared through years of interactions to receive the gospel and make sacred covenants. We witnessed families return to activity, new members join the Church, and members share Spirit-filled testimonies with their neighbors during everyday conversations.

Obey with Exactness

In order for the members to trust us with referrals for their friends and neighbors, my companion and I knew that we needed to find ways to improve our interactions with the members. As we pondered what to do, one scripture stood out:

“Behold, verily I say unto you, for this cause I have sent you—that you might be obedient, and that your hearts might be prepared to bear testimony of the things which are to come;

“And also that you might be honored in laying the foundation, and in bearing record of the land upon which the Zion of God shall stand” (D&C 58:6–7).

My companion and I understood from this scripture that we had been sent forth to be obedient, to prepare our hearts to bear pure testimony of the gospel, and to lay the foundation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We set aside time each day to visit with the members, and during those visits we read this scripture, promised to obey the mission rules and the Spirit, shared our testimonies of the gospel, and invited them to join with us in laying the foundation for the Savior’s return.

My companion and I looked on our promise of obedience as a solemn pledge, and we tried to conduct ourselves with integrity at all times. The ward began welcoming us into their homes with increased warmth. We had been obedient missionaries before, but communicating our commitment to obedience helped the members understand the type of missionaries we wanted to be.

Heavenly Father showed us that He was pleased with our obedience by providing almost immediate blessings. One evening, my companion and I began praying desperately for guidance as, one by one, our appointments and backup plans fell through. We felt impressed to drive to the other side of our area, but we had nothing to do in that area, and it was getting too late to keep knocking on doors. We decided to follow the prompting anyway. We drove to that neighborhood and prayed fervently to know how the Lord would have us spend our time. A member family that we had not met lived nearby, and we decided to see if they were home. They answered the door and were shocked to see us on their porch. Their friend had asked them to take some time that evening to answer questions about the Church, and they had just sat down with her and said an opening prayer when we knocked on the door. They invited us in and we taught this good family friend about the Restoration.

This experience showed the members that my companion and I were dedicated to following the Spirit. Shortly thereafter, they introduced us to another friend, who studied the gospel and was baptized.

The Transition into Member Missionary Work

I didn’t understand at this time in my mission that these experiences with the members would serve as substantial training for me in how to conduct myself as a missionary after I returned home. Before I left for my mission,

I thought missionary work was the responsibility of the missionaries. Now I understand that missionary work is *my* responsibility.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said it this way: “If you truly progress in the process of becoming a missionary, . . . then when the day arrives for your honorable release as a full-time missionary, you will depart from your field of labor and return to your family—but you will never cease your missionary service. A [disciple of Jesus Christ] is a missionary at all times and in all places.”²

As missionaries (both member and full-time), we are called to “*invite* others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel.”³ Whether the person accepts our invitation is between that person and the Lord. We can count ourselves as true disciples—true missionaries—when we extend the invitation.

It can be hard to extend invitations that are continually rejected, but because I want to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, I also want to do my part to feed His sheep (see

Before I left for my mission, I thought missionary work was the responsibility of the missionaries. Now I understand that missionary work is my responsibility.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT CASEY

John 21:15–17). And I trust that the Savior will guide me, because “every [person] which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God” (Moroni 7:13).

My favorite part about serving a full-time mission was waking up every morning with the knowledge that I was exactly where the Lord wanted me to be and doing exactly the work He wanted me to do. I felt as though I had finally found my life. My transition into member missionary work has been difficult, and I have had to relearn many of the lessons I learned on my mission. As I strengthen my discipleship and obey promptings with exactness, I am slowly becoming the lifelong missionary that I want to be. The Savior is ever patient with me, and I am beginning to experience again His promise: “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:39). ■

NOTES

1. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 161.

2. David A. Bednar, “Becoming a Missionary,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 46.

3. *Preach My Gospel*, 1; emphasis added.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

What is the proper relationship between members and full-time missionaries?

“We properly pray for the safety and success of the full-time missionaries throughout the world. And a common element in many of our prayers is a request that the missionaries will be led to individuals and families who are prepared to receive the message of the Restoration. But ultimately it is my responsibility and your responsibility to find people for the missionaries to teach. Missionaries are full-time teachers; you and I are full-time finders. And you and I as lifelong missionaries should not be praying for the full-time missionaries to do our work!

“If you and I would truly pray and ask in faith, as did Joseph Smith [see Joseph Smith—History 1:10–20]—if we would pray with the expectation to act and not just to express—then the work of proclaiming the gospel would move forward in a remarkable way.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Ask in Faith,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 95.



All the media you consume has an effect on you. Is your choice of media edifying, purposeful, and inspiring?

By Katherine Nelson

When Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were brought to King Nebuchadnezzar's court, they were told to eat the king's meat and drink the king's wine. But they decided to eat pulse (a food made of grain) and drink water instead. After 10 days, "their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. . . . [And] God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (Daniel 1:15, 17).

Although we often use this story to illustrate important principles about the Word of Wisdom and the food we *literally* consume, it teaches other principles about what we *figuratively* consume. This includes the media we use for entertainment—anything from fine arts, books, dance, and music to digital and social media. Just as Daniel and his friends made a conscious decision to avoid the lavish, heavy foods that would not have given them the nourishment they needed—and might have distracted them from their training in the king's court—so we must be discerning in selecting wholesome entertainment (see D&C 25:10).

The following suggestions can help us choose which entertainment is worth our valuable time in this probationary state.



Avoid Light-Mindedness

We turn to entertainment for relief from daily cares. It can be a time to relax and share laughter and good discussion with family and friends.¹ The refreshment we feel from these activities comes from the influence of the Holy Ghost, whose fruits are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance" (Galatians 5:22–23). In order to feel refreshed after our recreation, we must choose entertainment that keeps us open to the promptings and healing power of the Holy Ghost.

MEDIA WITH MERIT



Be an Active Agent

Although it can be easier to passively allow the entertainment we listen to, view, and read to enter our hearts and minds unchecked, an essential part of life is to learn how to become agents—to learn "to act for [ourselves] and not to be acted upon" (2 Nephi 2:26). Part of becoming a true agent is being judicious about the entertainment you use.

Rather than thoughtlessly consuming media for entertainment, we must become aware of how much time we're spending with it and what messages—overt or covert—it is sending. Ryan Holmes, director of Digital Media Group at Brigham Young University, explains that we must make "deliberate use of technology" and carefully consider "all its consequences."⁵ Amy Petersen Jensen, chair of the

department of Theatre and Media Arts at Brigham Young University, says that it's essential to "choose to engage in active media conversations and avoid passive media consumption."⁶



Spend Time Wisely

Part of being a more active agent is becoming conscious of how much time we spend on entertainment. With so much to choose from, it's easy to get caught up ingesting "whatever comes your way via text, email, data feeds, streams, and notifications."⁷ But when we do, we while away the "days of [our] probation" (2 Nephi 9:27) with time-wasting activities that do not help us become stronger, wiser, more charitable representatives of Jesus Christ.

Instead of wasting whole evenings on the latest viral video, hot new show, or status update, we could consciously carve out time to enjoy meaningful entertainment that rejuvenates us. Brother Holmes says, "Make a conscious choice. You decide what, when, and how you are going to interact digitally."⁸



Choose Media That Edifies

Another important part of carefully selecting our entertainment is being mindful of what messages the media is sending.

Every form of entertainment communicates something, whether its messages are intentional or not. While enjoying a film or a book, for example, ask yourself what messages it communicates to you through its symbols, characters, lyrics, and images. What are its values? What behaviors does it endorse? Most importantly, does it help you think about and reverence Jesus Christ? Does it help you understand His divinity? Does it teach you something about sacrifice? about love? about selflessness? Does it say something about the importance of families or the sanctity of marriage? If you can't glean some gospel-related truth from your entertainment's messages, it's not valuable and not worth your time.

Some might be tempted to say, "It's just entertainment—not school or church. I don't need to be learning something from it." But whether you are conscious of it or not, "whatever you read, listen to, or look at has an effect on you."⁹

When we engage our minds and hearts in evaluating the media we consume, we have moments of reflection. Professor Jensen calls these moments a "conversation": "an interchange—a back and forth or give and take in which we listen and respond. The best conversations that we have often become moments of private repentance, because it is often during conversations that we change our minds, find a new path, or decide to do better. The changes we make to our souls in these moments are usually small, simple, incremental, comforting, and productive."¹⁰

We seek after "anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy"—even in our leisure time (Articles of Faith 1:13). As representatives of Jesus Christ we must insist "that everything [we] read or [watch] . . . teach something good or build something good in [ourselves] or [our families]." Our engagements with entertainment should be "purposeful, consecrated actions . . . that [help us] obtain and share the vision of our Heavenly Father."¹¹

We know that such virtuous, lovely, and praiseworthy entertainment—media with merit—edifies us, prepares us for life's challenges, and strengthens our discipleship. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129, which lists "wholesome recreational activities" as one of the principles that build a happy family.
2. *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), 11.
3. See Dallin H. Oaks, "Powerful Ideas," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 27.
4. Brad Wilcox, "If We Can Laugh at It, We Can Live with It," *Ensign*, Mar. 2000, 29.
5. Ryan Holmes, "The Truth of All Things" (Brigham Young University devotional, May 7, 2013), speeches.byu.edu.
6. Amy Petersen Jensen, "Some Hopeful Words on Media and Agency" (Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 20, 2012), speeches.byu.edu.
7. Holmes, "The Truth of All Things," speeches.byu.edu.
8. Holmes, "The Truth of All Things," speeches.byu.edu.
9. *For the Strength of Youth*, 11.
10. Jensen, "Media and Agency," speeches.byu.edu.
11. Jensen, "Media and Agency," speeches.byu.edu.

Parenting, Unplugged

By Jan Pinborough

Church Magazines

The Savior spoke four simple words: “Behold your little ones.” The Nephites turned their eyes toward their children. And what followed is among the most sacred events in all of scripture. (See 3 Nephi 17:23–24.)

I first experienced “beholding” when my first daughter was a newborn. Her small, insistent cry had awakened me at about midnight, and I was getting ready to feed her when it happened. She opened her eyes wide and looked for several long, precious moments straight into my eyes. As she and I truly “beheld” each other for the first time, I sensed something about the eternal bond we would share.

The study of neurobiology has confirmed the vital importance of parent-child “beholding.” According to neurobiologist

Dr. Allan N. Schore, the non-verbal communication of “mutual gaze” is essential to the proper development of the infant brain.¹ In later years, this connection remains crucial to the development of the minds, hearts, and spirits of our growing children.

“Beholding” is not giving a casual, distracted glance. It is the act of attending to another with the heart and mind. It is giving the kind of focused attention that says, “I see you. You are important to me.”

For today’s parents, this kind of beholding often requires the discipline to unplug, a conscious choice to turn away from our screens and turn off our digital devices. It may mean resisting the temptation to check our text messages or scroll through social media posts. It may involve thoughtfully establishing personal and family media rules, setting boundaries that will protect the sacred time that we give to one another in our families daily.

By striving to more fully and more frequently behold our little ones, we will nourish our children’s sense of worth, enrich our relationships with one another, and enjoy more of those sacred moments when we see into the hearts of our children. ■

NOTE

1. See Allan N. Schore, “Relational Trauma and the Developing Right Brain: The Neurobiology of Broken Attachment Bonds,” in Tessa Baradon, ed., *Relational Trauma in Infancy* (2010), 19–47.



DISCONNECT AND LISTEN WITH LOVE

“The answer to our prayer of how to meet our children’s needs may be to more often technologically disconnect. Precious moments of opportunity to interact and converse with our children dissolve when we are occupied with distractions. Why not choose a time each day to disconnect from technology and reconnect with each other?

Simply turn everything off. When you do this, your home may seem quiet at first; you may even feel at a loss as to what to do or say. Then, as you give full attention to your children, a conversation will begin, and you can enjoy listening to each other.”

Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president, “The Words We Speak,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 82.





THE LORD PROVIDED A



Finding themselves in the midst of a civil war in Liberia, these eight missionaries determined that somehow they would continue their work.

By Elizabeth Maki

Church History Department

When civil war broke out in Liberia in late 1989, eight native Liberian missionaries of the Church were serving in the country. By July 1990, conditions were so bad that those missionaries were shuttered inside their homes, unable to preach the gospel and forced to risk death just to meet with members.

With their work grinding to a complete halt, Elders Marcus Menti and Joseph Myers, zone leaders in Monrovia, determined to go wherever they had to in order to complete their missions and serve as they had been called to do. That meant leaving Liberia, so together with the other four missionaries serving in Monrovia—Taylor Sellie, Joseph Forkpah, Roverto Chanipo, and Dave Gonquoi—they devised a plan. With the help of Philip Abubakar, a counselor in the local branch presidency and the missionaries’ driver, the elders planned to travel north to Sierra Leone, cross the border, then continue to Freetown, where their mission presidency had already been compelled to flee.¹

The plan seemed like a long shot.

“Our driver himself was not really convinced we would make it,” Elder Menti later said. But the missionaries assured Brother Abubakar that they had fasted and prayed a great deal about this decision, and they were confident that the Lord would bless them in their efforts to be obedient.

The missionaries made ready to depart. Before they could leave, however, there was a crucial order of business to

attend to: Find and bring in the last set of elders in Liberia, Elders John Gaye and Prince Nyanforh, who were serving just outside Monrovia, in Paynesville.

Delivered from Death

The Liberian civil war that erupted in late 1989 was fueled in part by ethnic tensions that prompted unrest in the country. The rebels targeted and regularly killed civilians belonging to certain groups.

For Elder John Gaye, the threat of execution was very real. When rebels descended on Paynesville and Elder Gaye didn’t dare leave, he and Elder Nyanforh were trapped in their home for some time. Elder Nyanforh had to sneak out to find food. He managed to get the missionaries some sustenance and return home safely—but just barely so.

“I told him that I would not go out there again because they killed two or three men, and I’m afraid to go out,” Elder Nyanforh later said. Rebels were everywhere, and the situation was perilous.

After several days, the missionaries’ neighbors planned their exodus. They called for the elders to join them, and Elder Gaye and Elder Nyanforh did. But as the group was making its way out of the area, they were apprehended by the rebels.

“They came interrogating us—to know where we’re from,” Elder Nyanforh recalled.

*Missionaries
are welcomed to
Freetown by the
mission president.*



The rebels interrogated each person to determine the individual's identity and other information. But before they made it to the missionaries, darkness had fallen and the rebels decided to wait until daylight to continue their investigation.

Elder Gaye prayed all night, pleading for his life to be spared. "I was confident of the Lord's help," he said.

When morning came, the soldiers resumed their questioning. With just one more person to question before it would be Elder Gaye's turn, the missionary said he "began to imagine paradise."

But before he was questioned, a familiar face arrived. A Latter-day Saint who was fighting for the rebels recognized the missionaries. He was a clerk in the local branch, and he knew Elder Gaye. "But he concealed my identity to his colleagues," Elder Gaye said. The soldier told the men that the missionaries were brethren in his church, and without further question, Elder Gaye and Elder Nyanforh were released.

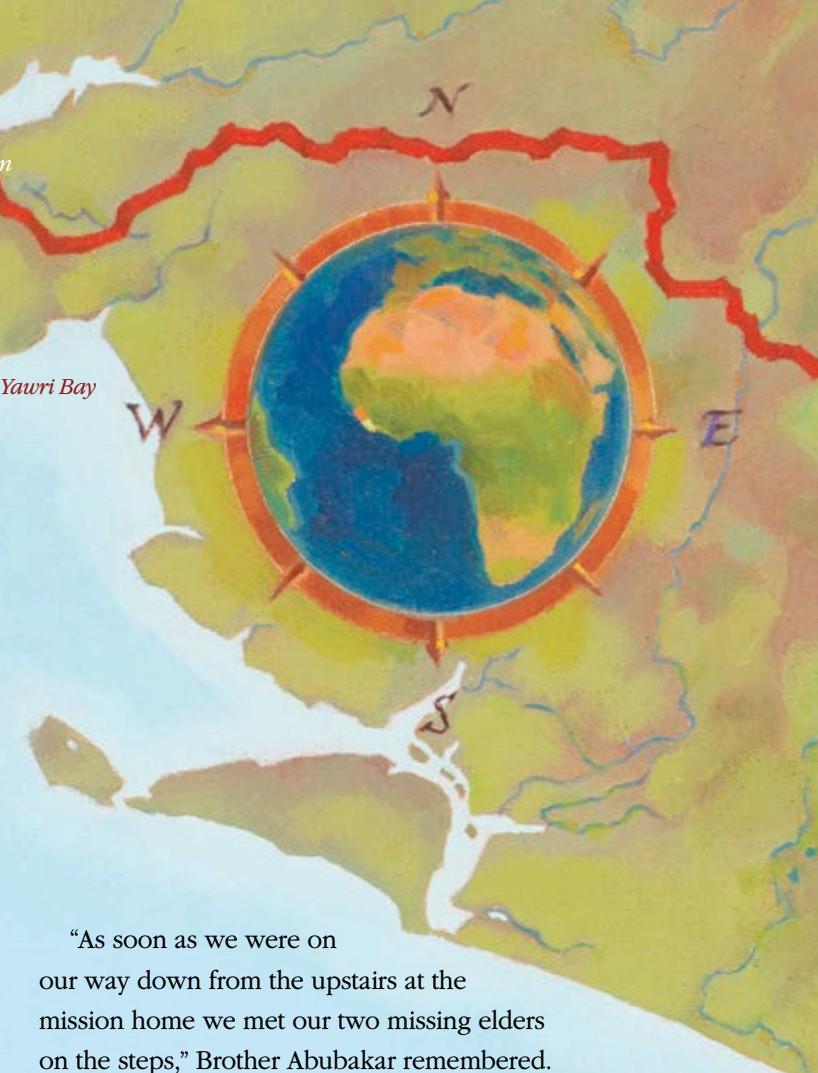
The elders were taken to a refugee camp 13 miles (20.9 km) from Monrovia, and it was during their brief stay there that the other missionaries in Monrovia planned their escape. The elders in Monrovia had sent someone to Paynesville, but by the time the searchers made it, Elder Gaye and Elder Nyanforh had already gone.

Fleeing Monrovia

The six missionaries and their driver began searching for gasoline to make their journey. Eventually they traded half a bag of rice for four gallons (15.14 L), adding it to what was left in the tank—all the while knowing the total would not be sufficient for the 370-mile (595.5 km) journey on bad roads.

On July 15, 1990, the seven men prepared for their journey. They held a sacrament meeting early in the morning, then planned to leave for Freetown. But small delays kept pushing back the start of their journey.

It was afternoon before they made it to the mission home to inform their acting mission president of their plans and bid farewell, and it was 2:00 p.m. before they left the mission home for Freetown. The timing turned out to be fortuitous.



"As soon as we were on our way down from the upstairs at the mission home we met our two missing elders on the steps," Brother Abubakar remembered.

After a week in the refugee camp, Elder Gaye and Elder Nyanforh—after many days of fasting and prayer—had felt prompted that morning to leave for Monrovia. After eight hours on foot, they arrived at the mission home just in time to join their fellow missionaries in their escape to Sierra Leone.

With nothing but a five-seat sedan, the eight missionaries and their driver set off. The tank held a total of five and a half gallons (20.8 L) of gasoline as they began their trip, and the prospects of getting more along the way were dismal.

"Some said we would end up pushing the car many miles toward the border," Elder Menti wrote. But the missionaries continued to trust in the Lord. Quoting 1 Nephi 3:7 ("I will go and do . . .") to their driver, they were determined to move forward.

It was less than 100 miles (160.9 km) to the border, but with nine adult men in a small sedan and more than 50 checkpoints at which they would be stopped along the way, the odds were solidly against them. However, they set off believing that Heavenly Father would help them.

Elder Menti recalled that Brother Abubakar was surprised when there was no change in the gas gauge, even

GUINEA



SIERRA LEONE



Missionaries run behind the car for miles at a time.

Bo

Kenema

Red line indicates journey traveled by the missionaries.

Border between Liberia and Sierra Leone

The missionaries reach the border and initially are unable to enter the country.

Klay District



LIBERIA




Elders Gaye and Nyanforh arrive in Monrovia in time to leave for Sierra Leone.

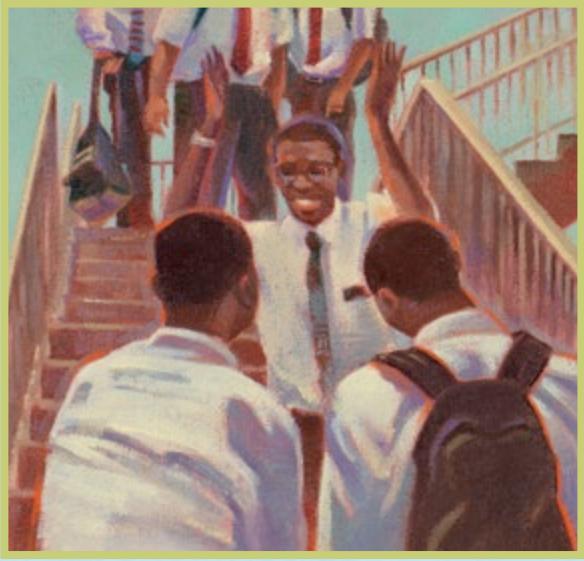
Mamba Point, Monrovia

Paynesville

Elders Gaye and Nyanforh are released and sent to a refugee camp.

Eight missionaries and their driver set off in a five-seat sedan.

Six missionaries in Monrovia are trapped and unable to work.



THE CHURCH IN SIERRA LEONE

1981: Michael Samura, a native of Sierra Leone, is baptized in the Netherlands.

January 1988: The first official Church meeting is held in Sierra Leone.

May 1988: J. Duffy Palmer, president of the Liberia Monrovia Mission, welcomes the first missionaries called to serve in Sierra Leone.

June 1988: A group of 14 people are baptized—the first to be baptized in the country.

May 1989: From atop Leicester Peak, Elder Richard G. Scott blesses the land of Sierra Leone.

July 1990: Missionaries from Liberia flee to Sierra Leone.

October 2004: Groundbreaking takes place for the first meetinghouse.

December 2012: Elder Jeffrey R. Holland organizes the 3,000th stake in the Church and the first one in the country, in Freetown.

after many miles: “He was very much astonished. We were not for we knew the Lord would provide a way.”

The missionaries made it to Sierra Leone that evening, with gasoline to spare, and they were able to buy five more gallons at the border.

When they arrived at the border, the immigration checkpoint had already closed, so the missionaries took turns sleeping in the car that night. The following morning, yet another obstacle arose.

Of the nine men in the car, only five had documents that would enable them to cross the border. They were all told to return to the embassy in Monrovia, but after some time the immigration officers offered to help them because they were missionaries.

Once the missionaries were across the border, the journey in some ways became more difficult, as the roads in Sierra Leone were far inferior to those in Liberia. At some points there were gaps in the road that the car had to be pushed across or lifted over.

When the road became almost impossible to drive on, Brother Abubakar ordered the missionaries to get out and run behind the car while he navigated through the rough areas.

Elder Menti recalled having to run after the car for stretches as long as two miles. Along the way, they passed many cars stuck on the road.

Late that night, after 34 hours on the road, the eight missionaries and Brother Abubakar arrived at the home of mission president Miles Cunningham in Freetown. After the starved and exhausted missionaries ate, they were able to have their first night of peaceful sleep in two months.

Blessings in Freetown

For the missionaries, the move was a monumental one. Most of them had never left Liberia before, but they felt a powerful desire to continue their work. A month later, blessings for their sacrifice became evident: With the missionaries assigned to the three branches in Sierra Leone, the rate of baptisms rose and the number of branches quickly doubled.

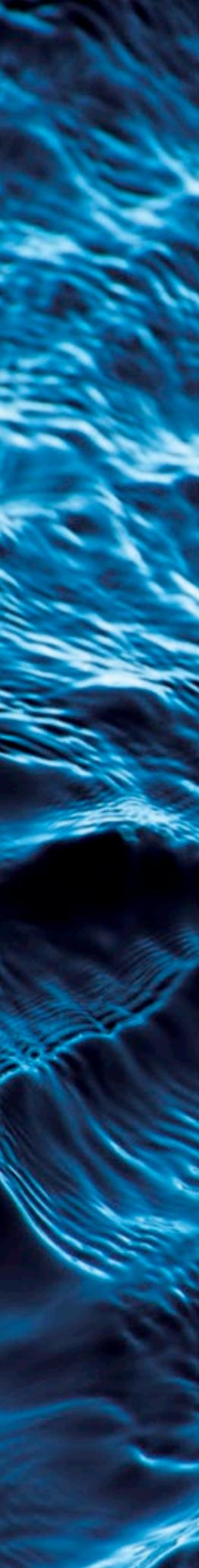
“All that was seriously needed to open the branches was more priesthood,” recalled Walter Stewart, a senior missionary from the United States who was serving in Freetown. Elder Stewart also felt that the Liberian missionaries were better equipped to communicate with and relate to the investigators and members in Sierra Leone than the senior missionaries had been.

Elder Stewart said these missionaries “brought a powerful spirit of faith and devotion to this part of the mission,” which was bred from what they had suffered in Liberia. “They are [the] first to recognize the hand of the Lord in this modern miraculous exodus.”

“We know that the Lord [had] more work for us here in Sierra Leone,” Elder Menti later said. “Many areas have been opened to the preaching of the gospel.” Though their journey was difficult and perilous, Elder Menti said, “the Lord provided a way” for them to continue their missionary work. ■

NOTE

1. Quoted material and historical information in this article come from the following sources in the Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah: Walter Travis Stewart, “A Modern Miraculous Exodus, 1990”; Prince S. Nyanforh, Oral History, interviewed by Steven R. Sorensen, 1999; James Moyle Oral History Program; accounts by Marcus Menti, John Gaye, and Musa Philip Abubakar collected in “Accounts of Latter-day Saint Missionaries Escaping Liberia, 1990.”



Faith Enough

By Julee Sharik

*Faith enough . . .
To form molten stones of glass
Seeking the Creator's touch*

*Faith enough . . .
In the midst of the tempest to say,
"Take me up, and cast me forth
into the sea"*

*Faith enough . . .
To serve earthly royalty with
hidden, burning testimony,
To recognize one sent from God*

*Faith enough . . .
To let go of the boat
And step out onto the billowing wave*

*Faith enough . . .
To follow God's newly called Moses
In wagon and handcart,
across the unknown plains*

*Though my story is still being written,
In reading theirs I find I too have
. . . Faith enough*

The author lives in Utah, USA.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MASSIMO DE CANDIDO/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK



The Dews from Heaven

What can little drops of water teach us about how we are blessed?

FACTS ABOUT DEW

What it is. Condensed water vapor on a cooled surface.

How it is formed. When air cools below the dew point (the temperature at which relative humidity reaches 100 percent), water molecules in the air cluster to form dewdrops on cool surfaces through condensation (changing from a gas to a liquid). Under certain conditions, drops also form in the air, creating a night mist.

When it occurs. Dew usually forms at night, when temperatures are falling.

What its effects are. Dew moistens and cools whatever it forms on. Because of this, it can help plants survive hot, dry summers. In the westernmost areas of the Holy Land, for instance, moist air from the sea causes large amounts of dew to form during the summer months, greatly benefiting crops.

BIBLE FACTS

- In Hebrew, the word for *dew* and *night mist* is the same (*tal*).
 Moses was the first prophet to teach that God's word "shall distil as the dew" (Deuteronomy 32:2).
- The manna that fed the children of Israel in the wilderness came with the dew (see Numbers 11:9).
 The miraculously refreshing and reviving effect of dew upon the plants in the Holy Land prompted Isaiah to use it as a figure of resurrection (see Isaiah 26:19) and Hosea to use it as a figure of repentance (see Hosea 14:4–5).



HOW HEAVENLY FATHER COMMUNICATES

"Most frequently, revelation comes in small increments over time and is granted according to our

desire, worthiness, and preparation. Such communications from Heavenly Father gradually and gently 'distil upon [our souls] as the dews from heaven' (D&C 121:45)."

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,
"The Spirit of Revelation," *Ensign*, May 2011, 88.



"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven."

Doctrine and Covenants 121:45

What We Can Learn

Dew:

- **Collects gradually.** Though the Lord can flood our souls with revelation and inspiration at times, we are more likely to experience a gradual increase in understanding and testimony of His word throughout our lives.
- **Forms quietly and invisibly.** A testimony of the truth is a gift from God. Because of this, it can seem miraculous to us. President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has said, "We become taller in our testimony like we grow in physical stature and hardly know it is happening, because it comes by growth" ("How Does the Spirit Speak to Us?" *New Era*, Feb. 2010, 3).
- **Helps keep plants alive in harsh conditions.** We live in a world that is hostile to faith and testimony, but our Heavenly Father never leaves us to wither. When we allow God's word to "distil upon [our souls]," we can be refreshed and kept alive spiritually, and we can then thrive, grow, and bring forth the fruits of faith—a change of heart, a love of God and our fellowmen, and good works.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I attend the temple regularly, and each time I go I feel peace. However, I don't feel I am receiving the increased understanding I hear Church leaders describe. How can I make attending the temple a learning experience?

A few years ago, my dear husband passed away after a courageous battle with kidney cancer. Although I had a little over three years after his diagnosis to adjust to the possibility of his passing, I was still not remotely prepared for life without him. I felt overwhelmed with grief and anxiety. I couldn't face life without the man I had cherished for 43 years.

After three sleepless nights, I found myself awake early one morning with a strong prompting to go to the temple. While I waited for the temple to open, I was inspired to read my scriptures to prepare myself to receive the revelation, understanding, and peace I was desperately seeking. I distinctly remember reading, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers" (D&C 112:10).

During that morning's temple session, an overwhelming feeling of comfort filled me. I understood the

words of the ordinances better than I ever had before. In the celestial room, the Spirit impressed upon me that only through my obedience to my covenants would I be able to live with my eternal sweetheart again. I could no longer live life in a daze, for I was wasting precious time!

The trial of losing my spouse has given me a fresh perspective on the ordinances of the temple. With each visit, I want to make sure I understand the importance of *every* commandment I must follow to be worthy to live with my husband again.

Although the sting of my husband's absence has not lessened, I become stronger each day as I continue my earthly test and remember the Savior's promise of peace (see John 14:27). For me, that promise is fulfilled in the temple, where my trials have helped me receive deeper understanding of the plan of salvation.

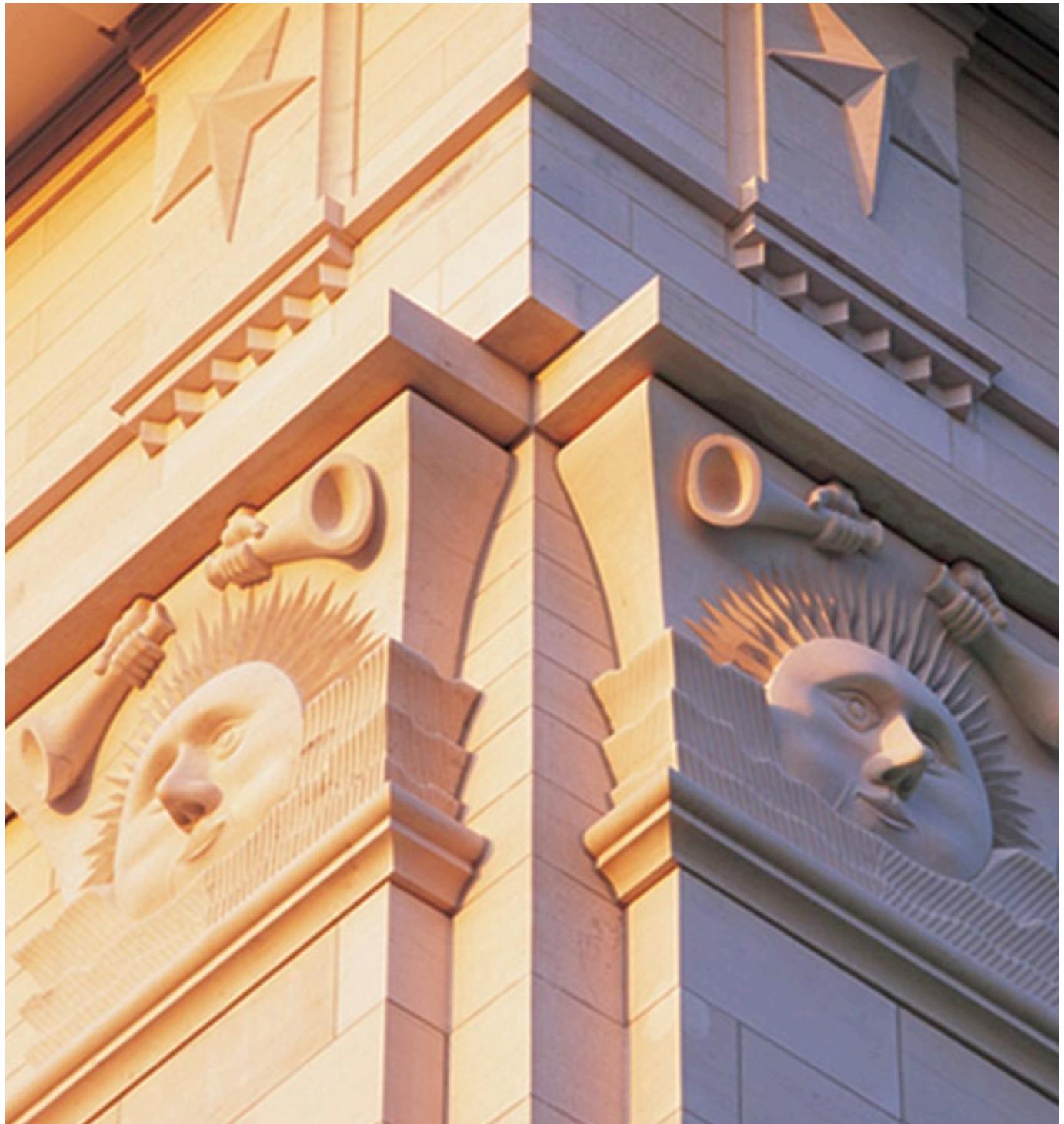
Donna P. Edwards, Utah, USA

I always try to go to the temple after fasting and then focus on being completely open so that I can be taught by the Spirit.

I try to have *open eyes, to look* for things I haven't noticed before. I try to notice the symbols and think about what they represent, searching the scriptures for insights or asking questions in the temple when appropriate.

I try to have *open ears, to listen* to what's being taught during sessions. I try to remember that I'm there as a proxy, usually for a family member. I like to look at the information I have on the person I'm there for, even if it's just the name and birth or death date. I like to pray that the person will be receptive to what's being done in that person's behalf.

I also try to have an *open mind, to learn* something new or to remember what I haven't thought about for some time. I try to take in everything around me and see things in a new light.



Finally, I try to have an *open heart*, *to love* and to receive love. I try to be grateful for everyone and everything the Lord has blessed my life with. I feel privileged to worship in the temple, a place where the Lord resides. I find that when I have a

grateful heart and am full of love, the powers of heaven are with me and I feel true happiness.

When I leave the temple, I break my fast with a prayer and then eat, giving thanks for the blessing of being spiritually and physically fed.

As I think about the blessings of temple worship, I am reminded of the words “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

Sherrie Ruegsegger, Wisconsin, USA



session, our minds are more focused on what is truly important and we are able to review our problems, concerns, and questions more clearly.

Participate in all kinds of temple work. When we do not have enough time for a session, we take the opportunity to perform sealing or initiatory ordinances. We try to listen closely to the words of the covenants made and blessings promised. We find that we get a more complete picture of the way each ordinance fits into the others when we participate in all of them.

Allison Anderson, Georgia, USA



My husband and I have tried to make temple attendance and learning a priority. Here are a few things we have learned that help enrich our temple experience:

Focus on covenants. One thing we try to do as we listen and participate in the temple work is to be active learners. We try to listen closely to the specific covenants we make and think about how we live them each day or how we can improve our observance of them.

Go with a question. The temple is a wonderful place to receive personal revelation. We often go with a question in mind and search for the answer. We have tried to hear the Lord's voice as He speaks to us through the Spirit. We have found that taking a moment in the celestial room after a session is a wonderful time to think and pray. By the end of the

It takes extra effort to have my temple experience be a learning experience. Before I go, I take the time to pray for understanding. I seek the companionship of the Spirit to help me make important connections between the temple instruction and my desire to be more like the Savior and overcome the world. Studying the scriptures faithfully every day also helps prepare me for temple learning.

I have realized that when I attend the temple more often, I can remember and ponder important concepts, including my covenants and the potential blessings I can receive. Every visit is another opportunity to practice active listening and thinking.

I have also learned to be patient if I don't understand something right away and to wait upon the Lord for answers to my questions. I know the temple is a "house of learning" (D&C 109:8), and I cherish the spiritual

maturity and insight I gain as I seek learning in the house of the Lord.

Cindy Woodbury, Arizona, USA

Each time I go to the temple, I say a little prayer beforehand. I thank Heavenly Father for the opportunity to feast on spiritual nourishment and ask Him to help the experience strengthen my spirit. I also ask that my mind will be open to His teaching so that I may learn the things He would have me learn at that time.

Then, when I reach the celestial room, I always make sure to take the time to pray some more. I try to focus on not just silently *talking* to Heavenly Father but also *listening* to Him. I rarely leave the celestial room without spending time in the scriptures, where I can do more listening by reading the words of the Lord. I love to dive deeper into cross-references, and I learn a lot by

searching the Topical Guide for subjects that were on my mind during the endowment.
Mandy Bell, Utah, USA

The revelation I receive through my participation in temple ordinances depends on how I prepare my heart for a temple learning experience.

The night before going to the temple, I pray to my Heavenly Father to teach me something that I have questions about or that I need in my life at that time. Some of the greatest learning comes when I am in the greatest need—when I have challenges and problems and am

seeking answers. As I pay close attention while in the temple, I am impressed with thoughts that not only point out answers to questions or solutions to challenges in my life but also teach me about Heavenly Father's ways.

During one period in my life, I felt physically, emotionally, and spiritually weak. When I went to the temple I felt deeply the spiritual power that is there. It blessed me, lifted me, strengthened me, and brought me peace and joy during that challenging time of my life. Not only did I feel peace, but I also received a deeper understanding of the purpose of my trials.

Yvonne Mughal, Utah, USA



TAUGHT FROM ON HIGH

"The temple is a house of learning. Much of the instruction imparted in the temple is symbolic and learned by the Spirit. This means we are taught from on high. Temple covenants and ordinances are a powerful symbol of Christ and His Atonement. We all receive the same instruction, but our understanding of the meaning of the ordinances and covenants will increase as we return to the temple often with the attitude of learning and contemplating the eternal truths taught."

Silvia H. Allred, former first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, "Holy Temples, Sacred Covenants," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 113.



MY NOTE ON THE GRAVESTONE

During the summer of 2003, I was in Michigan, USA, researching my great-great-uncle Robert Hall. At the end of my trip, I revisited a cemetery I had been to 20 years earlier.

When I had visited the cemetery before, I noticed flowers on one of the headstones with the last name Hall. This time I wrote a note, dated it, and laminated it to protect it from the weather. Then I prayerfully left the note at the headstone, hoping that someone who could help me learn more about Robert Hall would find it. I returned home to California

hopeful but skeptical that anything would come of this note.

A week later I received a letter from a distant cousin named Deke Bentley.

"Yesterday I had a strange experience," he wrote. "At 3:00 p.m. I was headed to buy strawberries when I decided to stop by the Plains Road Cemetery to check out my ancestors' graves. I had not been there for several years. Next to the graves was your postcard."

Deke had gone to the cemetery the same day I had left the note. I called him immediately. During our

conversation I found out that he lived in Hillsdale, more than 50 miles (80 km) from the cemetery.

A few months later I eagerly returned to Michigan to visit Deke. He told me he had relatives buried in the cemetery directly across from his home, and he asked if I would like to go there. He told me that the cemetery had four gravestones of Halls, two that he knew nothing about.

At the cemetery, Deke showed me the gravestones. The two he didn't know about belonged to Martin and Anna Hall. I hadn't brought my records, but I distinctly remembered having researched a Martin Hall.

We rushed to the county courthouse an hour before it closed, hoping a death record would identify Martin's parents. It did! Martin's father was Robert Hall! The Holy Ghost confirmed to me that my long search had ended.

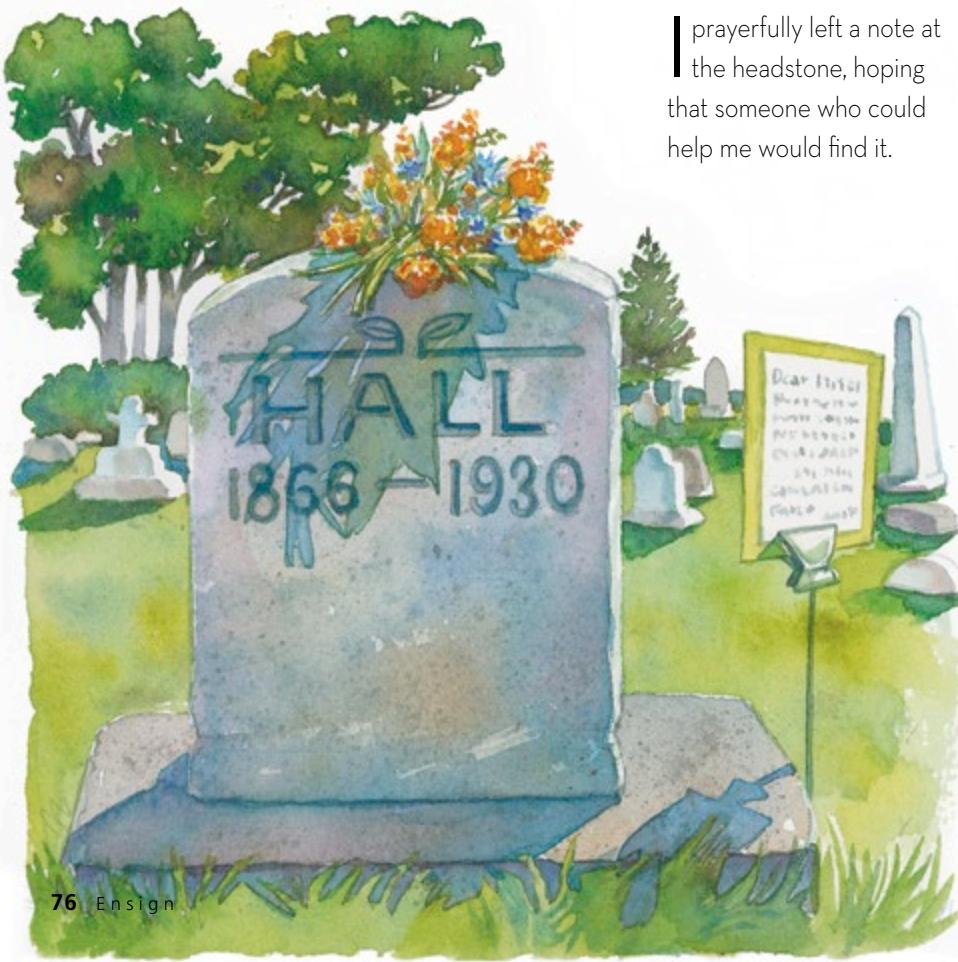
Deke, not a member of the Church, said finding Robert Hall seemed "almost spiritual." I smiled, knowing that the Spirit had led me.

"You may have been disappointed that you didn't leave your note 20 years ago," Deke said, "but the fact is that I moved to Hillsdale just three years ago!"

This experience was a lesson to me that family history is indeed part of God's work and that He leads us in our righteous efforts. ■

Marianne Chaplin Stovall, California, USA

I prayerfully left a note at the headstone, hoping that someone who could help me would find it.



WILL THE LORD HEAL OUR SON?

When our son was four years old, he would frequently ask me to sing “Master, the Tempest Is Raging” (*Hymns*, no. 105). His little eyes would shine during the chorus when the Lord commands the winds and the waves to be still. He would ask me about Jesus’s power. I would answer that Jesus can do anything in righteousness because He has all power. The Savior was our son’s hero.

But when our son was 13 years old, he went into a deep depression. He no longer had any desire to speak or even to eat. He lost interest in his former activities, and he especially did not want to participate in family prayers or family home evenings. He seemed to no longer have an interest in church or the gospel.

The rest of our family prayed and fasted often for him, as did many brothers and sisters from our ward and stake and many of our friends and relatives. Our efforts felt like Alma the Elder’s experience of praying for his son (see Mosiah 27:14, 22–23).

We did not want to force the gospel on our son, so we told him that he did not have to participate in our family prayers or family home evenings but that we would like him to be there with us. As we followed the Savior’s words to “pray in your families unto the Father . . . that your . . . children may be blessed” (3 Nephi 18:21), both our family prayers and our family home evenings became more powerful. We

felt the Spirit in our home. And though our son was silent, he was there.

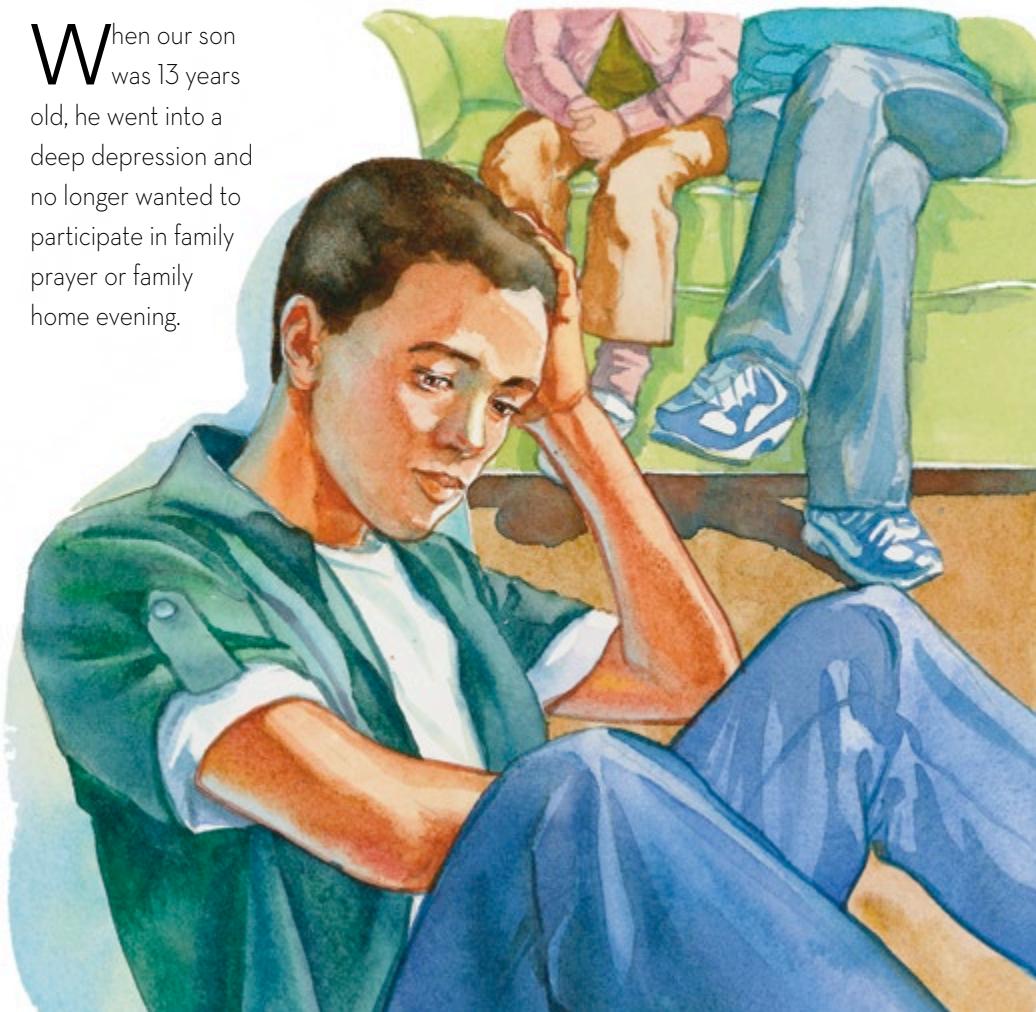
Little by little over the next two years, we saw that our prayers and family home evenings were having an influence on our son. During one family home evening, he bore testimony of the Savior and then asked if he could prepare a family home evening. He began to participate in family prayers and to attend church happily. He experienced a mighty change of heart that came as he felt the redeeming love of the Savior (see Alma 5:26). The Lord, with His healing power, had truly saved our son.

When our son was 13 years old, he went into a deep depression and no longer wanted to participate in family prayer or family home evening.

He began to be happy and full of life once again, willing to help others and to show love. He told me he knew the Savior had healed him. Our son’s trials helped him forge a powerful testimony and an increase in love for and trust in the Savior. He served the Lord as a missionary in the Argentina Buenos Aires South Mission. After his return he married in the temple, and he and his wife have a wonderful daughter.

I know that the Savior has the power to heal, to work miracles, and to make us happy in this life and in the life to come. ■

Ana Cremaschi Zañartu, Santiago, Chile



ARE YOU A MORMON?

I was far from home attending an international conference for my job. Hundreds of people attended, but I was the only one from my state and region.

One evening a dinner was hosted for all the attendees. As we entered the dining hall, each of us received four tickets to use at the bar to order free alcoholic beverages. It occurred to me how easy it would be for someone far from home to be tempted by such an opportunity, thinking that no one would ever know. It was a fleeting thought, and I handed the tickets back to the person at the door.

During dinner I sat with seven strangers. I drank water as we ate, talked, laughed, and exchanged information that would help us in our employment.

The next morning at breakfast I greeted a gentleman who had been seated at my table. I was excited to notice by his name tag that he was from my hometown—a town I had not lived in for 35 years. After high school I had left home for college, married, and moved away.

As we discussed places and community events we both knew, he asked me if I still had family there. I replied that I did not but that I had many good friends there and that we kept in touch. He asked who they were, and I began to name some of them.

After the first few names he stopped me and said, "Wait, are you a Mormon? All the people you have named are Mormons."

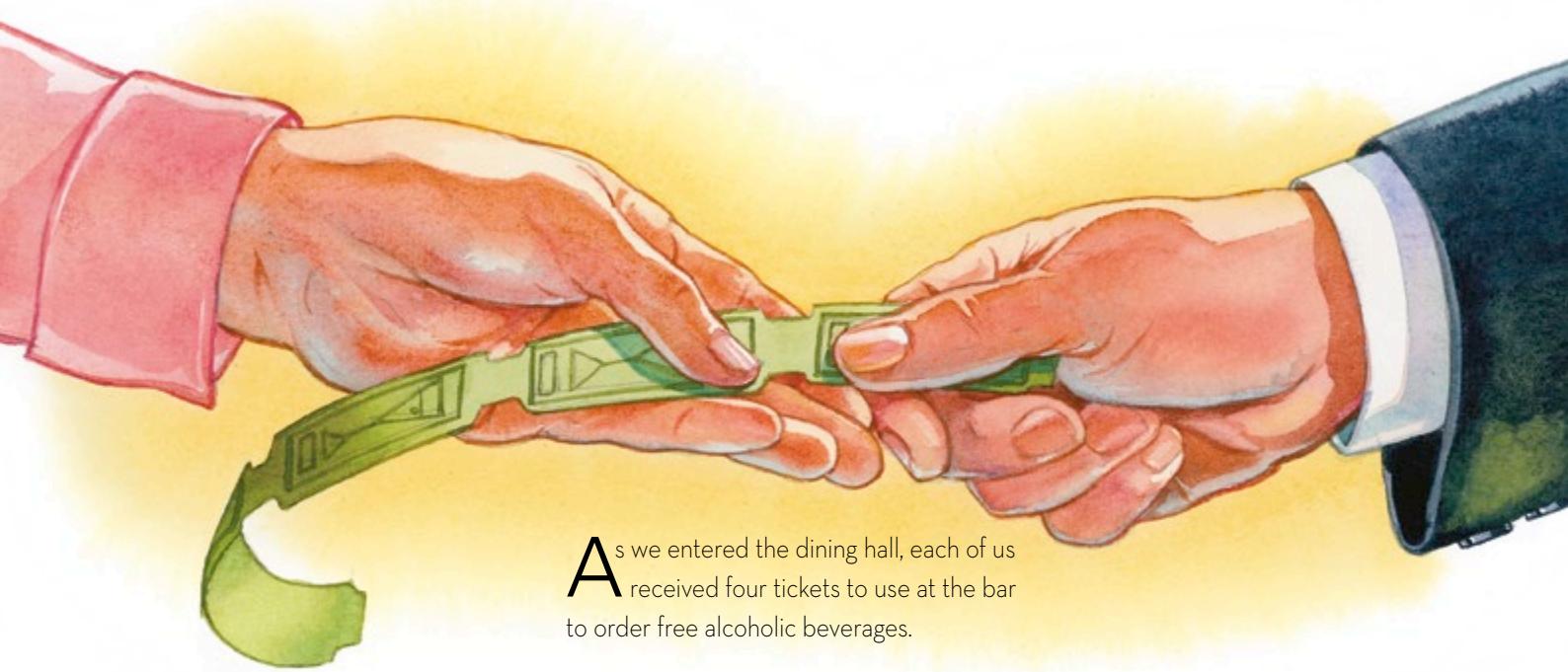
When I acknowledged that I was a

Latter-day Saint, he told me what fine citizens those friends were and how they had served the community and been good examples to all. For several minutes he shared his admiration for the Church and my friends, telling me how they had been advocates for good in the community.

As we parted, I could not help but think what might have happened had I chosen to use those drink tickets. I had been taught to choose the right by those very people we spoke of. I would have been uncomfortable and ashamed to admit that I was a member of the Church had I used the tickets.

How grateful I am for the example of those worthy, active, serving friends—35 years later and 2,000 miles (3,220 km) away from the home of my youth. ■

Carol A. Bowes, North Carolina, USA



As we entered the dining hall, each of us received four tickets to use at the bar to order free alcoholic beverages.

THE PROPHET ANSWERED MY PRAYER

At the end of my second year I applied to my university's graphic design program. I wasn't accepted, but I was eligible to reapply the following year. I wasn't thrilled about waiting another year to graduate.

The closest thing to my chosen major was photography. So I prayed about changing my major and felt good about it. I just wanted to get my degree!

At the start of the fall semester, I had classes on film and on the social history of photography. I was excited about both. But as I looked over the syllabus of my film class, I noticed that students would be required to watch many R-rated movies. In my photography class the teacher stated that the pictures we would be studying would be violent, disturbing, and sexual. She said that was what photography was mostly about these days.

My heart sank as I contemplated what to do. I knew that the gospel taught against such things, but these classes were required. I thought of the scripture about being in the world but not of the world (see John 15:19). Could I be in these classes but not of them?

I prayed to know what to do and to have the faith to do what was right. I also counseled with my wife, parents, and brother. As I spoke with my brother, he reminded me of the following verse: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange

for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

I knew that education is important, but was I in the wrong field? How could I drop out of school temporarily when the light at the end of the tunnel was so close?

Late one night while I was up with our sick baby, the thought came to me to look up President Thomas S. Monson on the Internet. Soon I was watching a general conference talk President Monson had delivered in October 2011. I listened intently as he talked about the deterioration of society's moral compass, saying that inappropriate and immoral behavior had become acceptable by many.

Then he said exactly what I needed to hear: "We must be vigilant in a world which has moved so far from

that which is spiritual. It is essential that we reject anything that does not conform to our standards, refusing in the process to surrender that which we desire most: eternal life in the kingdom of God."¹

These words pierced me with great power. As tears ran down my face, I knew that a living prophet had answered my prayer.

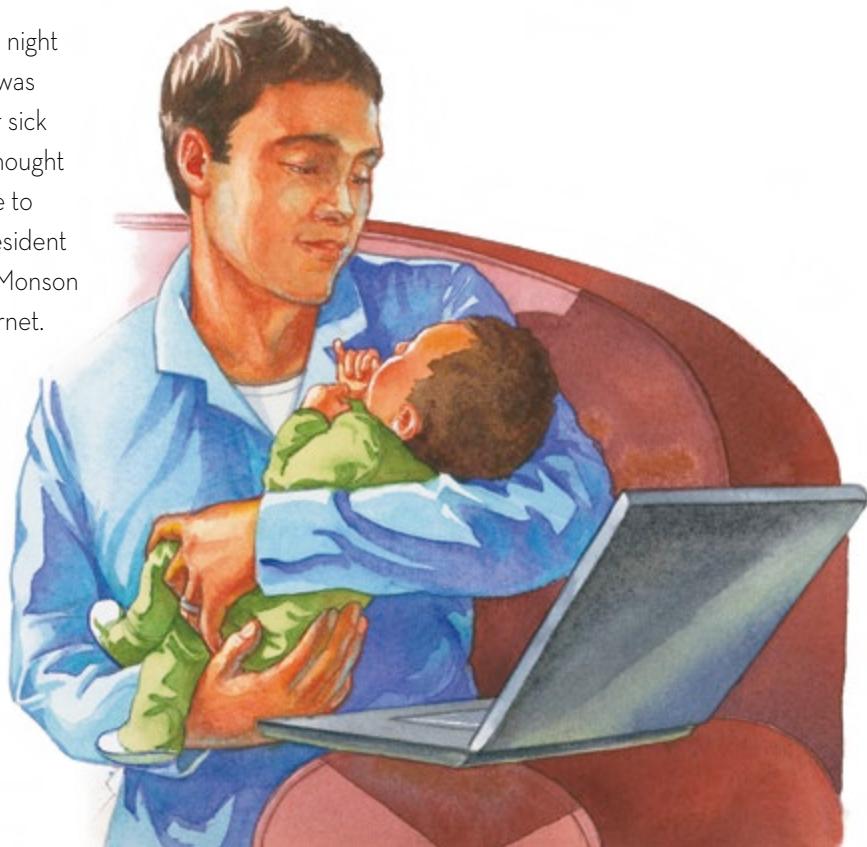
Although I have postponed my plans for graduation, I know that the Lord will bless my family and me as we follow the prophet, reject the views of the world, obey the commandments, and support gospel standards. ■

Derrick Fields, Missouri, USA

NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, "Stand in Holy Places," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 83.

Late one night while I was up with our sick baby, the thought came to me to look up President Thomas S. Monson on the Internet.



THE POWER OF WHEN

By Kelly Louise Urarii

My husband's illness came on suddenly. One morning he was cutting the lawn, and the next thing we knew he was falling ill. By the next day he was on life support. As we moved from the emergency room to the operating room, one of the doctors spoke of *if* they would be able to save him.

Because the illness he contracted was rare, he had a slim chance of survival. I couldn't believe the dramatic turn of events. I felt overcome with despair.

Thankfully, Pierre made it through his first surgery and was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU). There would be a long road ahead, but his chances improved with each passing hour. The first of many nurses spoke to me the morning after the initial surgery. She talked about *when* Pierre made it to the next step of the treatment. I paused with the impact of that word. There was so much more hope in *when* than *if*—it communicated confidence, expectancy. I thanked her for the choice of word, and she smiled knowingly.

Pierre received many priesthood blessings, which provided great encouragement. We knew to watch for the hand of the Lord in our lives, since His influence was not a matter of *if* but of *when*. Every time Pierre's health became dangerously fragile, I reminded him of the blessings and that we needed to demonstrate



*We knew to watch
for the hand of
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lives, since His
influence was not
a matter of if but
of when.*

our faith in the Lord. This was a sacred journey, and each day was a gift.

The hope of *when* kept us positive. However, 18 days into the journey, things went terribly wrong. During the seventh surgery, his doctors determined that the disease was too widespread. The medical team tearfully expressed their sorrow as they told me that Pierre would not survive the night.

I was able to be with my eternal companion as he passed through the veil. We were blessed to have his only living child from a previous marriage on the phone to relay the love that he had for his father. Pierre passed peacefully.

Weeks later, at his graveside, words of comfort came from Mosiah 2:41: "Ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, . . . if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (emphasis added).

Pierre and I had always determined that the *if* in that scripture would be a *when* for us. We knew that by staying committed to our covenants, we would be reunited—it was a question only of *when*. We trust in the Lord's plan of eternal families and eternal life. It's the power of *when* that keeps us moving forward. ■

The author lives in British Columbia, Canada.

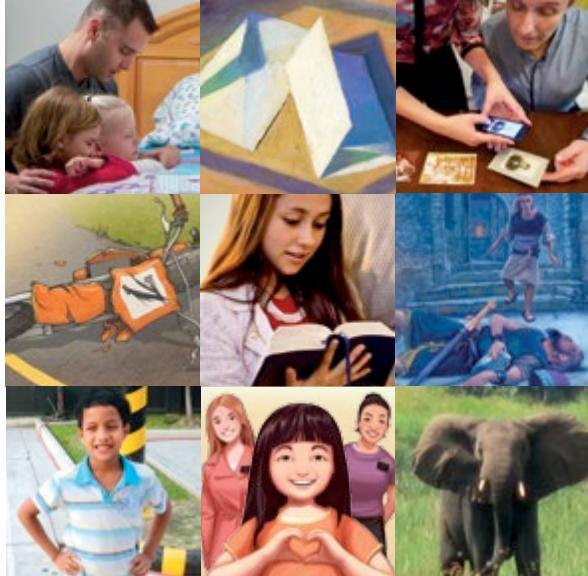
INSIGHTS



What is my generation's role in hastening the work of salvation?

"The leadership of the Church has issued a clarion call to the rising generation to lead the way in the use of technology to experience the spirit of Elijah, to search out their ancestors, and to perform temple ordinances for them. Much of the heavy lifting in hastening the work of salvation for both the living and the dead will be done by you young people. . . . Remember, we without our roots and branches cannot be saved. . . . We finally have the doctrine, the temples, and the technology for families to accomplish this glorious work of salvation."

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Roots and Branches," *Ensign*, May 2014, 46, 47.



In Church Magazines

Ensign: Are you a single father? You are not alone. See "We Are Still Your Brothers" on page 52 to read how single fathers can face their unique challenges.

New Era: This month's issue features a special section on the Holy Ghost to help youth understand the roles and fruits of the Spirit, the importance of following gentle promptings, and how to recognize and receive answers to prayers. See pages 2–22.

Friend: Look in this month's *Friend* (page 24) for a play your children can put on about being kind and having fun at the same time. And you can have fun watching it!