

Our Child Is His Child

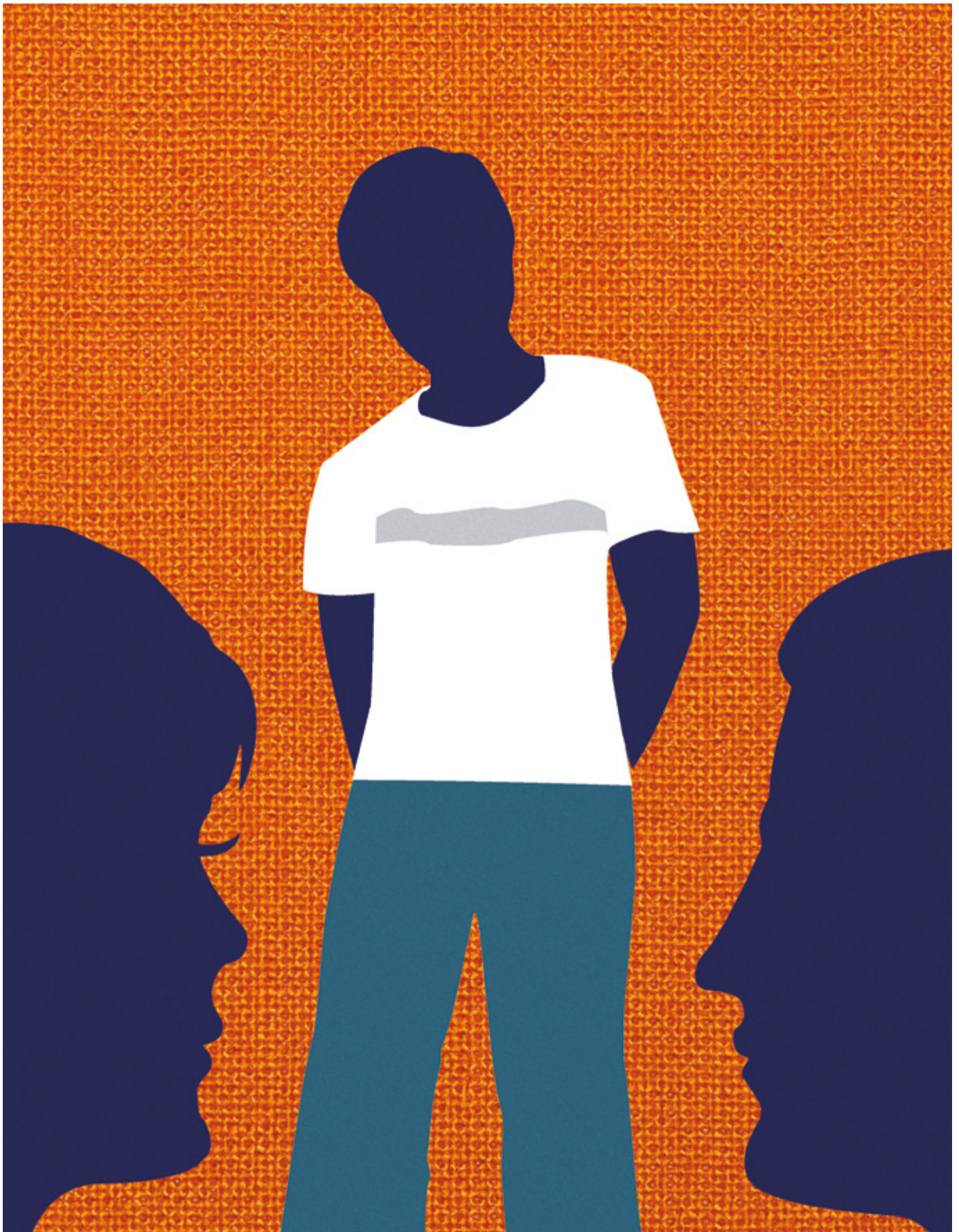
*We can trust the Lord to care for our
wayward children.*

By Martine Leavitt

You may have had to fight hard for your faith. Even if you were raised in the gospel, you may have had to sacrifice or struggle in choosing your faith. Perhaps you chose to go to church on Sunday instead of hanging out with your friends. Or you worked for a year to save the money for a mission and then put aside your education or career for two more years to serve the Lord. You perhaps lost friends because you chose to live the Word of Wisdom or just because you were a member of the Church. You accepted a lifelong journey of trying to be like your Savior—failing, repenting, and trying again. As much joy as being a member of the Church is for you, it probably came at some price.

And then you have a child, and you discover a new type of love. You want to give your children the world. Even knowing it isn't reasonable or possible, you want to spare your child every pain and sorrow. You work every day so you can give them food, clothing, a home, an education—you just want them to be happy.

You know what has made you happy above all: the gospel of Jesus Christ. You take your children to church and you have family home evening and family prayer, and you try to put into words they can understand why you love being a member of this Church. You dream of sending your child on a mission or seeing them sealed for time and eternity in the temple of the Lord. You dream of seeing your grandchildren raised in the gospel.



But one day—suddenly or over time—you realize, or you are told, or you discover that your child has chosen not to embrace the principles of the gospel.

Heartache and Worry

Of course, you knew that this could be a possibility. You saw it happen in other families. You knew that a third of the spirit children of God rejected His plan. You knew that Adam’s son Cain murdered Adam’s other son Abel. You knew what happened to Esau, the son of Isaac, and some of the sons of Jacob. You knew about Lehi’s sons Laman and Lemuel.

But maybe you weren’t expecting how it would feel—the worry that your child will live his or her life without the principles of righteous living, the aching concern you

have for their ultimate happiness. Other people look at your child and say, “Well, he’s an adult. He’s made his choice.” But all you see is that little child, innocent and beautiful and funny, toddling around the world all by himself without anyone knowing just how wonderful he is. You sense that somehow—you don’t know exactly how—you are at fault.

An Invitation to Ponder

I had all these feelings as I watched a son stray from the gospel and go down dark paths. One day, as I was seeking comfort, I read Doctrine and Covenants 31, a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith to Thomas B. Marsh in September 1830. It was not the first time I had read it, but this time I slowed down and read it carefully and pondered it:

“Behold, you have had many afflictions because of your family; nevertheless, I will bless you and your family, yea, your little ones; and the day cometh that they will believe and know the truth and be one with you in my church.

“Lift up your heart and rejoice, for the hour of your mission is come; and your tongue shall be loosed, and you shall declare glad tidings of great joy unto this generation. . . .

“Therefore, thrust in your sickle with all your soul, and your sins are forgiven you, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your back, for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Wherefore, your family shall live.

“Behold, verily I say unto you, go from them only for a little time, and declare my word, and I will prepare a place for them. . . .

“Be patient in afflictions, revile not against those that revile. Govern your house in meekness, and be steadfast. . . .

“Go your way whithersoever I will, and it shall be given you by the Comforter what you shall do and whither you shall go.

“Pray always, lest you enter into temptation and lose your reward.





“Be faithful unto the end, and lo, I am with you. These words are not of man nor of men, but of me, even Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, by the will of the Father. Amen” (Doctrine and Covenants 31:2–3, 5–6, 9, 11–13).

A Closer Look

The second verse says, “Behold, you have had many afflictions because of your family; nevertheless, I will bless you and your family, yea, your little ones; and the day cometh that they will believe and know the truth and be one with you in my church.” As I read this, I had the impression that the Lord was acknowledging that he understood—that this truly was an affliction to me. But after that expression of understanding, the Lord declares, “Nevertheless, I will bless you and your family, yea, your little ones.”

That wonderful promise is followed by a series of instructions. We may not be able to stop the affliction we are having, but there are things we can do to ensure that the Lord’s promises are fulfilled and to find comfort while

we wait for those promises to be fulfilled.

The Lord, in effect, is saying, “Thrust in your sickle. Because of your service, you have earned your blessings and your family shall live” (see Doctrine and Covenants 31:5). I am convinced that when the Lord says “live,” He isn’t necessarily talking about mortal life. He is talking about a different kind of life: eternal life.

We know that we do not “earn” eternal life—it is a supernal gift from a loving God through the merits, grace, and mercy of the Savior, Jesus Christ (see Doctrine and Covenants 14:7; 2 Nephi 2:8). We are saved by faith through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. But our service shows our faith. We serve because the Lord asks us to, which shows that we love Him, that we have taken upon ourselves His name, and that we desire to have His Holy Spirit to be with us, which in turn sanctifies us. As concerned parents, continuing to serve in our callings and to be loving brothers and sisters to the rest of our Father’s children brings the opportunity for blessings of all sorts in our lives.



Steps for Going Forward

The Lord then says, “Be patient in afflictions, revile not against those that revile. Govern your house in meekness, and be steadfast” (Doctrine and Covenants 31:9).

There’s a lot in this verse.

1. **“Be patient.”** It can be hard to be patient as the years go by and that wandering child doesn’t seem to notice just how patient we have been. It can be hard to be patient when you see your child making choices that could lead them into difficult situations. But you know what “patient” looks like, and so you behave patiently, even when your heart is breaking.
2. **“Revile not against those that revile.”** *Revile* means to “criticize in an abusive or angrily insulting manner.”¹ You remember that you cannot hope your child will want to return to the fold if he or she feels driven away by criticism, anger, or insults.
3. **“Govern your house in meekness.”** Moses was meek above all men (see Numbers 12:3). When the children of Israel sinned in the desert, he fell on his face before the Lord. He was heartbroken, but he taught the people, was submissive when they spoke against him, and prayed for them. At the same time, the word *govern* probably implies that you can expect that those in your home will meet a certain standard of behavior. You can expect that within the walls of your home, the Spirit will not feel unwelcome.
4. **“Be steadfast.”** To be steadfast is to be “resolutely or dutifully firm and unwavering.”² One woman I spoke to, who watched one child after another fall away, said that she felt her own testimony wavering. The years had been hard and disappointing, and she didn’t like being so different from her children. But the Lord seems to be assuring us that He will help us have the strength to be steadfast, firm, and unwavering—and that peace will come.

Peace and Hope for Parents

The Lord has these additional thoughts to get you through

hard days: “It shall be given you by the Comforter what you shall do” (Doctrine and Covenants 31:11). The Lord assures you that He will guide you through the Holy Ghost.

One time in the Old Testament, a man named Manoah, having heard that his barren wife was going to conceive, was visited by an angel of the Lord. He is the only man in scripture, as far as I know, who got to ask an angel for parenting advice. Manoah said to the angel, “How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?” (See Judges 13:2–12.)

As I read this, I wondered what the angel would say. This child was to grow up and be a judge for Israel—how to raise such a special child?

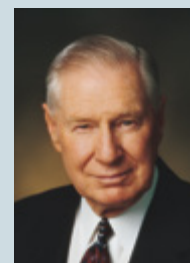
The angel answers this way: First he cautions the mother not to drink any wine or strong drink and not to eat any unclean thing. And then he says, “All that I commanded her let her observe” (Judges 13:14).

By keeping the commandments, we parents will be doing what we can. We will be striving to live worthy of the ongoing guidance and comfort of the Holy Ghost. We can trust that the Lord will care for our wayward child, knowing that our child is His child too. He loves our child more even than we can comprehend. He will be our everlasting help. ■

The author lives in Alberta, Canada.

NOTES

1. Oxford Dictionaries, “revile,” oxforddictionaries.com.
2. Oxford Dictionaries, “steadfast,” oxforddictionaries.com.



REPENTANCE OF WAYWARD CHILDREN

“If the repentance of the wayward children does not happen in this life, is it still possible for the cords of the [parents’ temple] sealing to be strong enough for them yet to work out their repentance? In the Doctrine and Covenants we are told, ‘The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God, “ ‘And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation’ [Doctrine and Covenants 138:58–59].”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Dear Are the Sheep That Have Wandered,” *Ensign*, May 2003, 62.

