

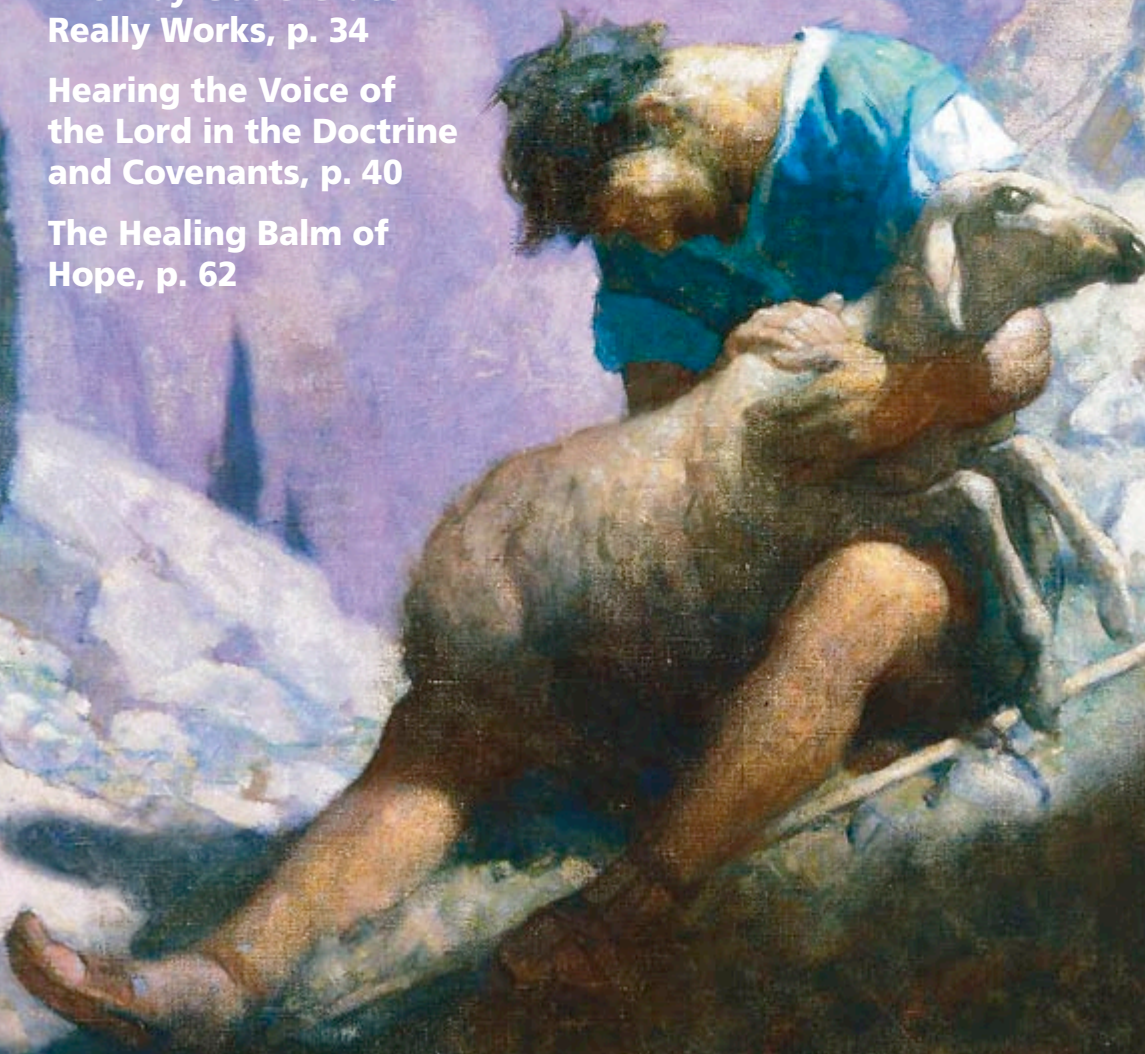
Ensign

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The Way God's Grace Really Works, p. 34

Hearing the Voice of the Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants, p. 40

The Healing Balm of Hope, p. 62





*“But whosoever
drinketh of the
water that I shall
give him shall
never thirst; but
the water that I
shall give him shall
be in him . . .
springing up into
everlasting life.”*

John 4:14

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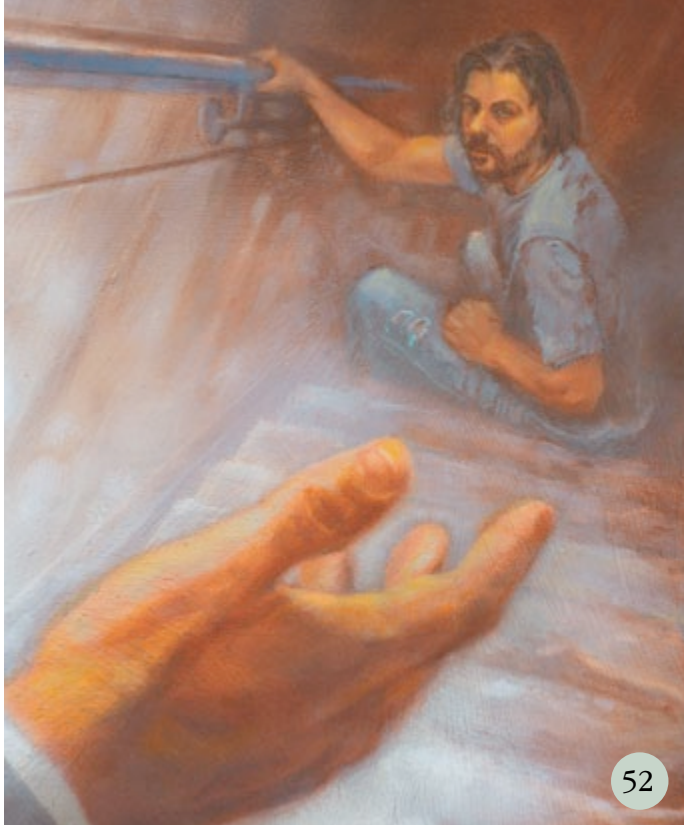
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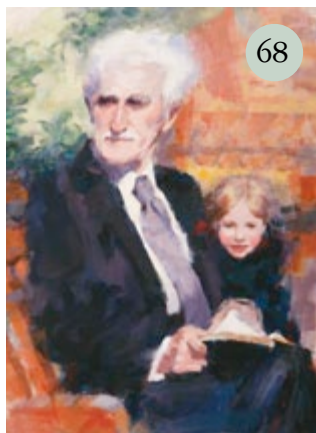
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A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
September 2013 Volume 43 • Number 9

The First Presidency: Thomas S. Monson,
Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf

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Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard,
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Family Home Evening Ideas

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



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CRAIG DIMOND

“Christlike Mercy,” page 30: Read the article ahead of time and then highlight the main points during family home evening.

Discuss with your family what it means to extend Christlike mercy. Consider inviting family members to tell about a time when someone showed mercy to them or when they showed mercy. You may want to select one of the five principles presented in the article, such as helping others in need, and talk about how your family can apply it.

“1,000 Things to Be Thankful For,” page 58:

Read the article as a family and then discuss how you might find “something each day to rejoice in.” Invite family members

to keep track of their blessings during the week, and at your next family home evening ask them to share what they found. To end the lesson, you could sing “Count Your Blessings” (*Hymns*, no. 241).

“The Healing Balm of Hope,” page 62:

Begin by asking family members what hope means to them. You could then discuss the definitions and benefits of hope presented in the article. Briefly summarize the author’s 10 strategies for cultivating hope and ask how these ideas could help strengthen your family. Then make a goal to practice one or two of the strategies in your family during the next week.

APPLYING LESSONS

While I was growing up, we took turns teaching the family home evening lesson. I remember when I was 9 or 10, I taught a lesson on compassion. A few days later, as I was doing my chores, my older brother wouldn’t stop bothering me, and I yelled at him. Hearing me, my mother asked, “What did you just teach the family about?” I was embarrassed to say, “Compassion.” She used this opportunity to reinforce the principles we had discussed. I am grateful that my parents valued family home evening and helped us make the lessons part of our lives.

Lynelle Merritt, 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
Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Second Counselor in
the First Presidency

Saints

FOR ALL SEASONS



I have childhood memories of a part of the world that could serve as a picture postcard for the changing seasons of the year. Each passing month was glorious and wonderful. During a perfect winter day, pristine snow blanketed the mountains and city streets. Spring brought cleansing rains and the explosion of green-dressed life. The lazy skies of summer served as a pleasant blue canvas for the blaze of a bright sun. And spectacular autumn transformed nature into brilliant shades of orange, yellow, and red. As a child, I loved each season, and to this day, I love the character and uniqueness of each one.

We have seasons in our lives as well. Some are warm and pleasant. Others are not. Some of the days in our lives are as beautiful as pictures in a calendar. And yet there are days and circumstances that cause heartache and may bring into our lives deep feelings of despair, resentment, and bitterness.

I am sure at one time or another we have all thought it would be nice to take up residence in a land filled only with days of picture-perfect seasons and avoid the unpleasant times in between.

But this is not possible. Nor is it desirable.

As I look over my own life, it is apparent that many of the times of greatest growth have come to me while passing through stormy seasons.

Our all-wise Heavenly Father knew that for His children to grow into the beings they were designed to become, they would need to experience seasons of adversity during their sojourn in mortality. The Book of Mormon prophet Lehi said that without opposition, “righteousness could not be brought to pass” (2 Nephi 2:11). Indeed, it is life’s bitterness that allows us to recognize, contrast, and appreciate its sweetness (see D&C 29:39; Moses 6:55).

President Brigham Young put it this way: “All intelligent beings who are crowned with crowns of glory, immortality, and eternal lives must pass through every ordeal appointed for intelligent beings to pass through, to gain their glory and exaltation. Every calamity that can come upon mortal beings will be suffered . . . to prepare them to enjoy the presence of the Lord. . . . Every trial and experience you have passed through is necessary for your salvation.”¹

The question is not whether we will experience seasons of adversity but how we will weather the storms. Our great opportunity during the ever-changing seasons of life is to hold fast to the faithful word of God, for His counsel is designed not only to help us weather the storms of life but also to guide us past them. Our Heavenly Father has given His word through His prophets—precious knowledge designed to lead us through the challenges of difficult seasons toward the unspeakable joy and brilliant light



of eternal life. It is an important part of our life's experience to develop the strength, courage, and integrity to hold fast to truth and righteousness despite the buffeting we may experience.

Those who have entered the waters of baptism and received the gift of the Holy Ghost have set their feet on the path of discipleship and are charged to follow steadily and faithfully in the footsteps of our Savior.

The Savior taught that the sun rises “on the evil and on the good, and . . . rain [falls] on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). Sometimes we cannot understand why difficult, even unfair, things happen in life. But as followers of Christ, we trust that if we “search diligently, pray always, and be believing, . . . all things shall work together for [our] good, *if [we] walk uprightly*” (D&C 90:24; emphasis added).

As members of His Church, as

Saints, we serve joyfully and willingly in all weather and in all seasons. And as we do so, our hearts become filled with hallowed faith, healing hope, and heavenly charity.

Still, we will have to pass through all seasons—both pleasant and painful. But no matter the season, as followers of Jesus the Christ, we will rest our hope upon Him as we walk toward His light.

In short, we are Saints of God, determined to learn of Him, to love Him, and to love our fellowman. We are pilgrims on the blessed road of discipleship, and we will walk steadfastly toward our heavenly goal.

Therefore, let us be Saints in spring, summer, fall, and winter. Let us be Saints for all seasons. ■

NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 261–62.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

The First Presidency has taught, “Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns” (*Hymns*, ix). As you discuss this message, consider singing with those you teach one of these hymns or another song about enduring adversity: “How Firm a Foundation” (no. 85); “The Lord Is My Shepherd” (no. 108); or “Let Us All Press On” (no. 243). If you feel prompted, share a time when a stormy season in your life turned out to be a blessing.



I Was Able to Let Go of My Sorrow

By Juan Zhu

When my friends Brother Chen and his wife were baptized into our ward, I was overjoyed. A year after their baptism, they were sealed in the temple, and their son who had passed away before they joined the Church was sealed to them. It was wonderful to see the Chens grow in the gospel.

Then Brother Chen was killed in a car accident the next year. Following the accident, his death seemed to always be on my mind and often haunted my dreams. I woke up in tears and asked over and over again, “Why? Why does the Lord allow this kind of tragedy to happen? Why does such a thing have to happen to this beautiful family?” One day, when I was struggling with these questions, I picked up a lesson manual and read these words from President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985):

“If we looked at mortality as the whole of existence, then pain, sorrow, failure, and short life would be calamity. But if we look upon life as an eternal thing stretching far into the premortal past and on into the eternal post-death future, then all happenings may be put in proper perspective. . . .

“Are we not exposed to temptations to test our strength, sickness that we might learn patience, death that we might be immortalized and glorified?”¹

At that moment, I decided to let go of my sorrow and look into the promised and possible future. I saw in my mind’s eye Brother Chen happily reunited with his family. That sight brought me peace. I know that Heavenly Father will give us the wisdom and courage to face adversities.

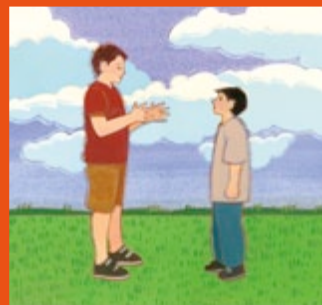
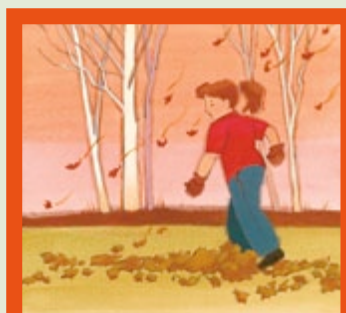
The author is from Taiwan.

NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 15.

Serving in All Seasons

President Uchtdorf teaches that we should “serve joyfully and willingly in all weather and in all seasons.” In the pictures below, children are using objects from different seasons to serve others. Match the object in the right column with its picture in the left column.



VISITING TEACHING MESSAGE

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

Self-Reliance

Self-reliance is the ability, commitment, and effort to provide for the spiritual and temporal well-being of ourselves and of our families.¹

As we learn and apply the principles of self-reliance in our homes and communities, we have opportunities to care for the poor and needy and to help others become self-reliant so they can endure times of adversity.

We have the privilege and duty to use our agency to become self-reliant spiritually and temporally. Speaking of spiritual self-reliance and our dependence on Heavenly Father, Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: “We become converted and spiritually self-reliant as we prayerfully live our covenants—through worthily partaking of the sacrament, being worthy of a temple recommend, and sacrificing to serve others.”²

Elder Hales counseled us to become self-reliant temporally, “which includes getting a postsecondary education or vocational training, learning to work, and living within our means. By avoiding debt and saving money now, we are prepared for full-time Church service in the years to come.



The purpose of both temporal and spiritual self-reliance is to get ourselves on higher ground so that we can lift others in need.”³

From the Scriptures

Matthew 25:1–13; 1 Timothy 5:8; Alma 34:27–28; Doctrine and Covenants 44:6; 58:26–29; 88:118

NOTES

1. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 6.1.1.
2. Robert D. Hales, “Coming to Ourselves: The Sacrament, the Temple, and Sacrifice in Service,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 34.
3. Robert D. Hales, “Coming to Ourselves,” 36.
4. See *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 51.

What Can I Do?

1. How am I helping the sisters I watch over find solutions to their temporal and spiritual needs?
2. Am I increasing my spiritual self-reliance through preparing for the sacrament and sacrificing to serve?

Faith, Family, Relief



From Our History

After the Latter-day Saints had gathered in the Salt Lake Valley, which was an isolated desert, President Brigham Young wanted them to flourish and establish permanent homes. This meant the Saints needed to learn skills that would allow them to become self-sufficient. In this effort, President Young had great trust in the capacities, talents, faithfulness, and willingness of the women, and he encouraged them in specific temporal duties. While the specific duties of Relief Society sisters are often different today, the principles remain constant:

1. Learn to love work and avoid idleness.
2. Acquire a spirit of self-sacrifice.
3. Accept personal responsibility for spiritual strength, health, education, employment, finances, food, and other life-sustaining necessities.
4. Pray for faith and courage to meet challenges.
5. Strengthen others who need assistance.⁴

APRIL 2013 CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK

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

As you review the April 2013 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in future issues) to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.

STORIES FROM CONFERENCE

A Light in Africa

By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Some years ago, my wife, Harriet, and I had a memorable experience in which we saw this promise fulfilled. We were in West Africa, a beautiful part of the world where the Church is growing and the Latter-day Saints are delightful. However, West Africa also has many challenges. In particular, I was sorrowed by the poverty that I saw. In the cities there is high unemployment, and families often struggle to provide for their daily needs and for their safety. It broke my heart to know that many of our precious members of the Church live in such deprivation. But I also learned that these fine members help each other to lighten their heavy burdens.

We eventually arrived at one of our meetinghouses near a large city. But instead of finding a people burdened and absorbed by darkness, we discovered a joyful people who were



radiating with light! The happiness they felt for the gospel was contagious and lifted our spirits. The love they expressed for us was humbling. Their smiles were genuine and infectious.

I remember wondering at the time if there could possibly be a happier people on the face of the planet.

Even though these dear Saints were surrounded by difficulties and trials, they were filled with light!

The meeting began, and I started to speak. But soon the power went out in the building, and we were left in complete darkness.

For a while I could hardly see anyone in the congregation, but I could see and feel the brilliant and beautiful

smiles of our Saints. Oh, how I loved being with these wonderful people!

The darkness in the chapel continued, and so I sat next to my wife and waited for the power to be restored. As we waited, something remarkable happened.

A few voices began singing one of the hymns of the Restoration. And then others joined in. And then more. Soon, a sweet and overwhelming chorus of voices filled the chapel.

These members of the Church did not need hymnbooks; they knew every word of every hymn they sang. And they sang one song after another with an energy and spirit that touched my soul.

To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit conference.lds.org.

Eventually, the lights sparked back on and bathed the room with light. Harriet and I looked at each other, our cheeks wet with tears.

In the midst of great darkness, these beautiful, wonderful Saints had filled this Church building and our souls with light.

It was a profoundly moving moment for us—one Harriet and I will never forget.

From “The Hope of God’s Light,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 76.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- How can you open your eyes to the hope of God’s light?
- How can following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ help you to walk in His light?
- What changes do you need to make to feel the light of the gospel more fully?

Consider writing your thoughts in your journal or discussing them with others.

Additional resources on this topic: *Gospel Principles* (2009), “The Holy Ghost,” 31–33; Gospel Topics on LDS.org, “Hope,” “Holy Ghost”; Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Infinite Power of Hope,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 21–24.

PROPHETIC WORDS ON HUMAN FRAILITY

“In this Church, what we know will always trump what we do not know. And remember, in this world, everyone is to walk by faith.

“So be kind regarding human frailty—your own as well as that of those who serve with you in a Church led by volunteer, mortal men and women. Except in the case of His only perfect Begotten Son, imperfect people are all God has ever had to work with. That must be terribly frustrating to Him, but He deals with it. So should we. . . . So be patient and kind and forgiving.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Lord, I Believe,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 94.

THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE

“The commandment to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force today. Thus, marriage between a man and a woman is the authorized channel through which premortal spirits enter mortality. Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage protect the sanctity of this sacred channel.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 42.

ANSWERS FOR YOU

Each conference, prophets and apostles give inspired answers to questions Church members may have. Use your conference issue or visit conference.lds.org to find answers to these questions:

- How do I stay strong when I am mocked for my beliefs? See Robert D. Hales, “Stand Strong in Holy Places,” 48.
- What can I do if someone I love is making bad choices? See Henry B. Eyring, “Come unto Me,” 22; and Richard G. Scott, “For Peace at Home,” 29.
- Why is marriage between a man and a woman so important? See David A. Bednar, “We Believe in Being Chaste,” 41; L. Whitney Clayton, “Marriage: Watch and Learn,” 83; and L. Tom Perry, “Obedience to Law Is Liberty,” 86.
- What is the purpose of the priesthood? See M. Russell Ballard, “This Is My Work and Glory,” 18.
- Why do we need a church? See Quentin L. Cook, “Personal Peace: The Reward of Righteousness,” 32; and D. Todd Christofferson, “Redemption,” 109.

THE PRIESTHOOD MUST BE USED WORTHILY

Heavenly Father gives a portion of His power and authority to worthy male members of the Church. This delegated authority is called the priesthood. Those who hold the priesthood are authorized to act in the Lord's name in leading His Church, teaching the gospel, blessing the sick, and performing the sacred ordinances necessary for salvation.

The priesthood must be used worthily because, as the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith, “the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and . . .

the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness” (D&C 121:36). Thus, there is a difference between the authority and the power of the priesthood. “Priesthood authority, which is the authorization to act in God's name, . . . is given by the laying on of hands. The power of the priesthood comes only when those who exercise it are worthy and acting in accordance with God's will.”¹

Because the priesthood is God's power, He sets the standards of worthiness for its use and reveals

those standards to His prophets and apostles. Priesthood holders become worthy by repenting of their sins and living in harmony with the gospel and commandments of Jesus Christ. The companionship of the Holy Ghost in their lives can help them know of their worthiness. ■

For more information, see Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–46; Thomas S. Monson, “Priesthood Power,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 66–69.

NOTE

1. M. Russell Ballard, “This Is My Work and Glory,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 18–19.

SAFEGUARD AND LIVE WORTHY OF THE PRIESTHOOD



“Our behavior in public must be above reproach. Our behavior in private is even more important. It must clear the standard set by the Lord. We cannot indulge in sin, let alone try to cover our sins. We cannot gratify our pride. We cannot partake of the vanity of unrighteous

ambition. We cannot exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion upon our wives or children, or any others in any degree of unrighteousness.

“If we do any of these things, the powers of heaven are withdrawn. The Spirit of the Lord is grieved. The very virtue of our priesthood is nullified. Its authority is lost. . . .

“ . . . [The priesthood] serves as a

guide by which to live our lives. In its fulness, its authority reaches beyond the veil of death into the eternities that lie ahead.

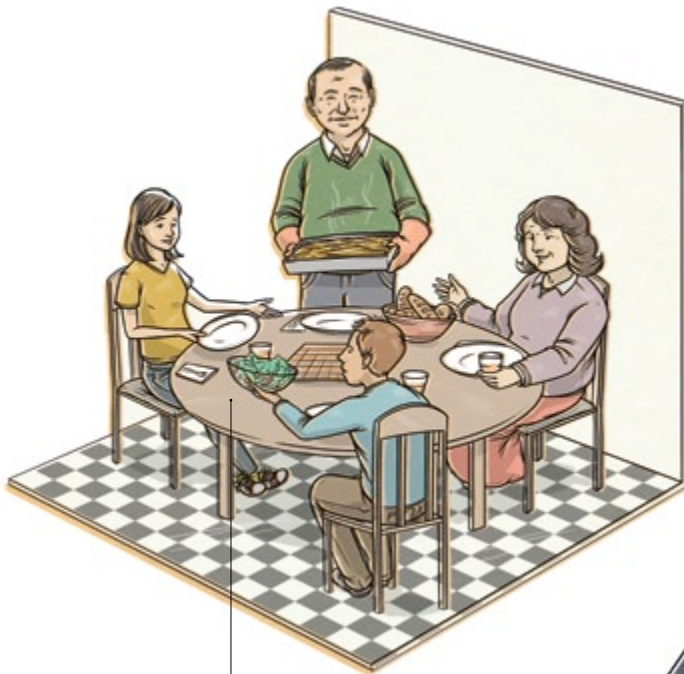
“There is nothing else to compare with it in all this world. Safeguard it, cherish it, love it, live worthy of it.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “Personal Worthiness to Exercise the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 52, 59.

Priesthood holders gain power in the priesthood through faith and obedience:



Worship in the temple.



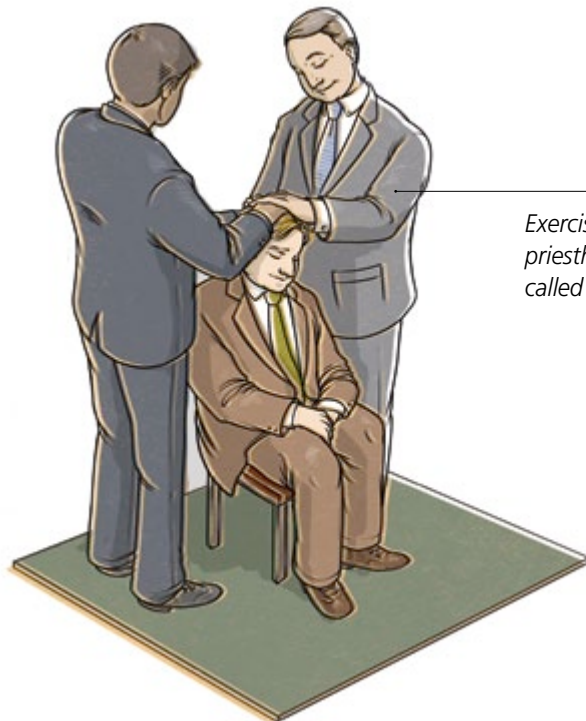
Treat your wife, children, and others kindly.



Serve faithfully in your calling.



Take the sacrament worthily.



Exercise the priesthood when called upon.

THE LORD NEVER SHOUTED AT ME

Name withheld

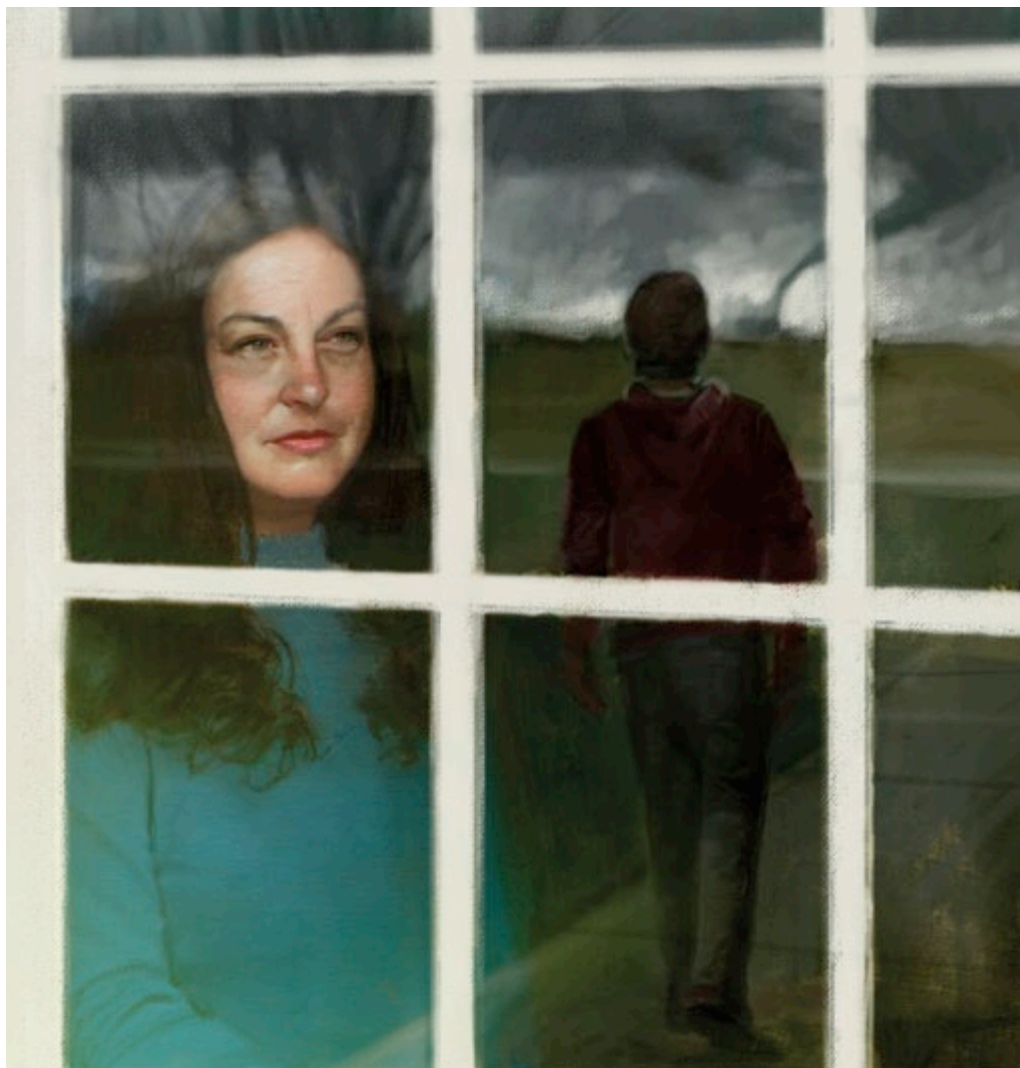
I felt helpless watching our eldest son fall into Satan's traps, and I often communicated my fear by becoming angry. I had to change myself instead of trying to change my son.

When our four children were young, my husband and I assumed that if we set good examples and brought them up in the gospel with lots of love and consistency, they would certainly not depart from that path.

One summer day we were forced to abandon that assumption. Our eldest son, about 14 years old, went swimming with his friends. When I came to the swimming pool with the younger children, I thought I saw him with a cigarette in his hands. I was worried, so I spoke to him about it later. He simply said I was mistaken. Unfortunately, that was the beginning of his lies.

Over time he distanced himself from us more and more. He was no longer approachable and often became angry without provocation. Alcohol, drugs, foul language, and a host of lies were added to the cigarettes. And his behavior toward the family became insufferable.

At first we tried to restrict his activities in order to protect him, but that just brought more resistance. Discipline had no effect. When I



reproached him and challenged him to change, our discussions often became loud arguments that brought more distance between us.

Our fears for our eldest son were hard on my husband and me. We tried to find guidance through prayer, but I felt helpless watching my eldest son choose such a dangerous path. As we

prayed, we felt guided to allow our son more space instead of controlling him with stricter rules. This seemed extremely counterproductive and counterintuitive, but all our previous attempts to stop his behavior had been unsuccessful. So we chose to punish or restrict him only when his actions directly affected our family life.



RECOGNIZE THE GOOD IN OTHERS

"I offer some final thoughts for those

who love a family member who is not making good choices. That can challenge our patience and endurance. We need to trust in the Lord and in His timing that a positive response to our prayers and rescue efforts can occur. We do all that we can to serve, to bless, and to submissively acknowledge God's will in all things. . . . With faith we can know that this straying loved one is not abandoned but is in the watchcare of a loving Savior.

"Recognize the good in others, not their stains. At times a stain needs appropriate attention to be cleansed, but always build on his or her virtues."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "For Peace at Home," *Ensign*, May 2013, 31.

Despite trying to follow the Lord's counsel, we found the situation worsened. I struggled to overcome my self-doubts and discouragement. My husband and I tried to be consistent with family home evening and family prayer, but I was overwhelmed with guilt as I remembered every time we had fallen short and every time I had behaved wrongly toward our son. I cried a lot, slept little, and was sometimes so physically exhausted that I only just managed to function.

Family life as we had known it hardly existed anymore. Family home evenings regularly ended in chaos and arguments. I especially was impatient with my loved ones and loudly let them know.

My husband and I recognized that we couldn't let our family be ground down by the situation. We decided to continue following the counsel of the Lord and the prophets, so we made an effort to hold spontaneous, informal family home evenings with the children who were willing. But I still couldn't accept that our eldest son was caught in Satan's traps. With prayer, fasting, and hope—all that seemed left to us—we cast our burden on the Lord and trusted Him.

The problems got worse. At one particularly difficult time, I asked my husband for a priesthood blessing. I hoped for words of comfort and

encouragement. But the Lord knew my true needs. I was admonished for arguing so loudly with my son. The Lord made me aware that He had never once shouted at me—but I shouted at my children all the time.

In that blessing, I was additionally counseled that I needed to talk to my son about my worries for him instead of reproaching him. I realized that my anger and criticism had actually been a manifestation of my fear for him. I was constantly attacking him, and he defended himself any way he could. I considered ways to change my behavior.

At this time, I was serving as an institute teacher. I found it wasn't difficult to deal calmly and considerately with the youth at church because I did not have to struggle with the emotions of a mother.

I tried to look at my son not with the eyes of a concerned mother but as an outsider. This strategy, and much prayer and fasting, helped me to rein in my emotions and see my son—who was now almost 18—with new eyes. I was once again able to see his good qualities. I managed to express my feelings and worries to him sincerely and without becoming anxious.

This became a turning point in our relationship. My son and I discussed many things, and I became able to let him bear the consequences of his

behavior on his own. My husband and I merely counseled him and advised him of ways he could solve his problems for himself.

I now know what it means to entrust my children to the Lord. He knows them better than I do. I have learned not to feel accountable for all my children's decisions. My husband and I discovered that the best help we could give our son was to turn to the Lord and trust in His will and counsel. ■

NEWS OF THE CHURCH

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

New Visiting Teaching Topics Begin in October

Beginning in October 2013 the Relief Society Visiting Teaching Messages will focus on the divine mission of Jesus Christ and His many roles and attributes.

As we read in *Daughters in my Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*, “When Jesus Christ was on the earth, He showed us the way we should live.”¹ By studying and focusing on the roles and attributes of the Savior, the sisters in the Church will learn to be like Him² and will be able to discuss with the sisters they serve how the teachings and example of the Savior can influence their lives.

The Lord showed us how to minister—how to watch over, strengthen, and teach one another. His was a ministry to individuals, one by one.³ Visiting

teaching is our opportunity to follow His example.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, testified that “visiting teaching is part of the Lord’s plan to provide help for people all over the world. . . . ‘He set a pattern in place.’”⁴ As visiting teachers, we also remember President Thomas S. Monson’s counsel: “We are the Lord’s hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us.”⁵ ■

NOTES

1. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 105.
2. See Moroni 7:48.
3. See *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 105; *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 9.5.
4. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 110.
5. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 112.

One Billion Records Now on FamilySearch

By **R. Scott Lloyd**
Church News

Volunteers around the world indexing (digitizing) the Church’s vast collection of genealogical records collectively reached a major milestone on April 19, 2013. On that date they attained one billion searchable records added to the Church’s FamilySearch website in less than seven years.

Volunteers have been extracting or indexing records in earnest since 1978, but in September 2006 the Family History Department launched a major innovation inviting virtually anyone anywhere to log on to the site and sign up to participate in the indexing project.

“The documents are drawn primarily from a collection of 2.4 million rolls of microfilm containing photographic images of historical documents from 110 countries and principalities,” explains a wiki entry on the FamilySearch site. “The documents include census records, birth and death certificates, marriage licenses, military and property records, and other vital records maintained by local, state, and national governments.” ■



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PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY D. ALBRED



Elder Perry Tells University Graduates to Keep Life Balanced

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke at commencement exercises for Brigham Young University In Provo, Utah, USA, in April 2013. He spoke of the need for finding balance in life and emphasized the need to provide time for family, time for work, time for study, time for service, time for self, and especially time for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He counseled the graduates to live providently. “One of the most important lessons you will ever learn is the security and peace that comes from living within your means,” he said.

He also stressed the importance of establishing a Christ-centered home. “Daily prayer and scripture study should be a part of every Latter-day Saint home,” he said. “Make the gospel of Jesus Christ a vital, active part of your life.”

Elder Nelson Visits Asia North Area

From February 23 to March 3, 2013, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles visited the Asia North Area. Elder Nelson said that no matter where he goes in the world, his message is the same. “We are here to teach and testify of the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel restored,” he told members in the area. “Ours is a message of peace and joy, of strengthening families, bonding husband and wife, children to their parents, and people to their ancestors . . . that they can all enjoy eternal life in the presence of God when their sojourn on earth is over.”

In addition to meeting with priesthood leaders and members throughout the area and a special district for military personnel in Okinawa, Elder Nelson also met with two local government officials in Japan.

Conference Is Coming

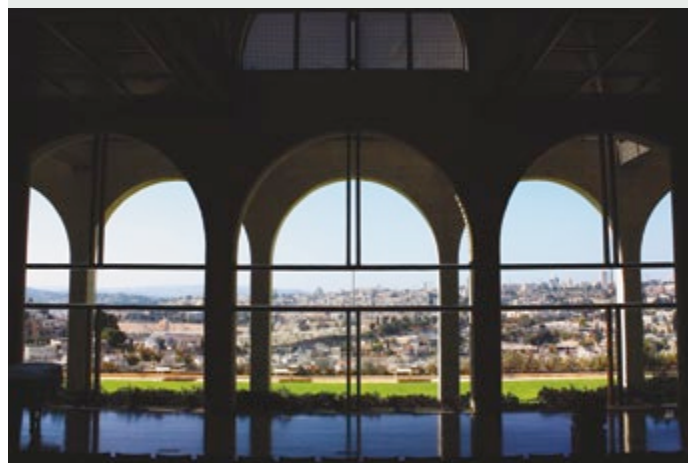
General conference is approaching once more, the time when Church leaders share with members the word of the Lord. As the Lord said, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). Here is an experience from the April 2013 general conference:

Conference on the Sea of Galilee

Some 60 students from the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies gathered on the shore of the Sea of Galilee last April to watch the Sunday morning session of general conference. A live Internet broadcast of the meeting was projected on the side of a shed located a short distance from the water. The students were in Galilee as part of a 10-day trip to the region. They recognized and appreciated the significance of the event.

Jennie Smithson, one of the students, said that it was a wonder “to be instructed by latter-day prophets and apostles while imagining ancient apostles being instructed on these exact same shores by Christ Himself.” ■

View from the BYU Jerusalem Center.



© IRI



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

The Justice and



I know that we will be with the Savior again, that if we are faithful to Him, we will stand free—unfettered and unencumbered—and that we will recognize in the marks in His flesh something of His bondage and imprisonment and dying sacrifice for us.

Mercy of God

It was unlike any other commencement or baccalaureate exercise I had ever attended or in which I had ever participated. There were 44 graduates, all male. They did not have traditional academic robes or caps or gowns. Each man wore a light blue denim shirt and dark blue denim trousers.

The ceremony was not held in a field house or a stadium or even a lovely auditorium. It was held in a modest interdenominational chapel at the Utah State Prison. The graduating class had successfully completed a year's course of Bible study, which was sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints but open to all who cared to participate.

The opening prayer was given by a young man who looked more like a mere boy. He was frightened to death, but he gave a prayer from his heart. He was in prison for 10 years to life on an armed

robbery charge. The closing prayer was given by a man who was 45 or 50 years old and who looked as if he could have been somebody's uncle. He was in for a life term on second-degree murder.

A young man who had been released

from prison had come back to get his certificate and to encourage his colleagues. He said, "Guys, the perspective in prison is really bad. It really looks better on the outside. Try to remember that." Then he turned to the outsiders, to the friends and families who had come,

and said, "You people are a light in a dark place. If it were not for love like yours, we would not be able to get from where we are to where we need to be."

When the service was over, the inmate who conducted said, with some emotion in his voice and a little mist in his eyes, "This is the most auspicious occasion of our year. It's better than Christmas. It's better than



Let us go to the place of penitence—to the bishop or to the Lord or to those we have offended or to those who have offended us.



Thanksgiving. It's even better than Mother's Day. It's better because we're enlightened, and that's as close as we come to being free."

Then the gates clanged shut behind my wife and me. That night we went home, and I confess I couldn't sleep. That experience haunted me. In the early hours of that morning, I had feelings and thoughts and a response to imprisonment and freedom (and their relationship to enlightenment and love) that I never had before.

The Justice of God

One impression I had that night is that God is just. Alma said: "Do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God" (Alma 42:25). The Apostle Paul said to the Galatians, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

One of my thoughts that followed is that Paul really meant we reap in kind. It came to me again that if we sow thistles, we don't really plan to get strawberries. If we sow hate, we don't really expect to receive an abundance of love. We get back in kind that which we sow.

Then another thought came as I remembered those men in their blue: it's one thing to reap in kind, but we reap, somehow, always in greater quantity. We sow a little thistle, and we get a lot of thistle—years and years of it, big bushes and branches of it. We never get rid of it unless we cut it out. If we sow a little bit of hate, before we know it we've reaped a lot of hate—smoldering and festering and belligerent and finally warring, malicious hate.

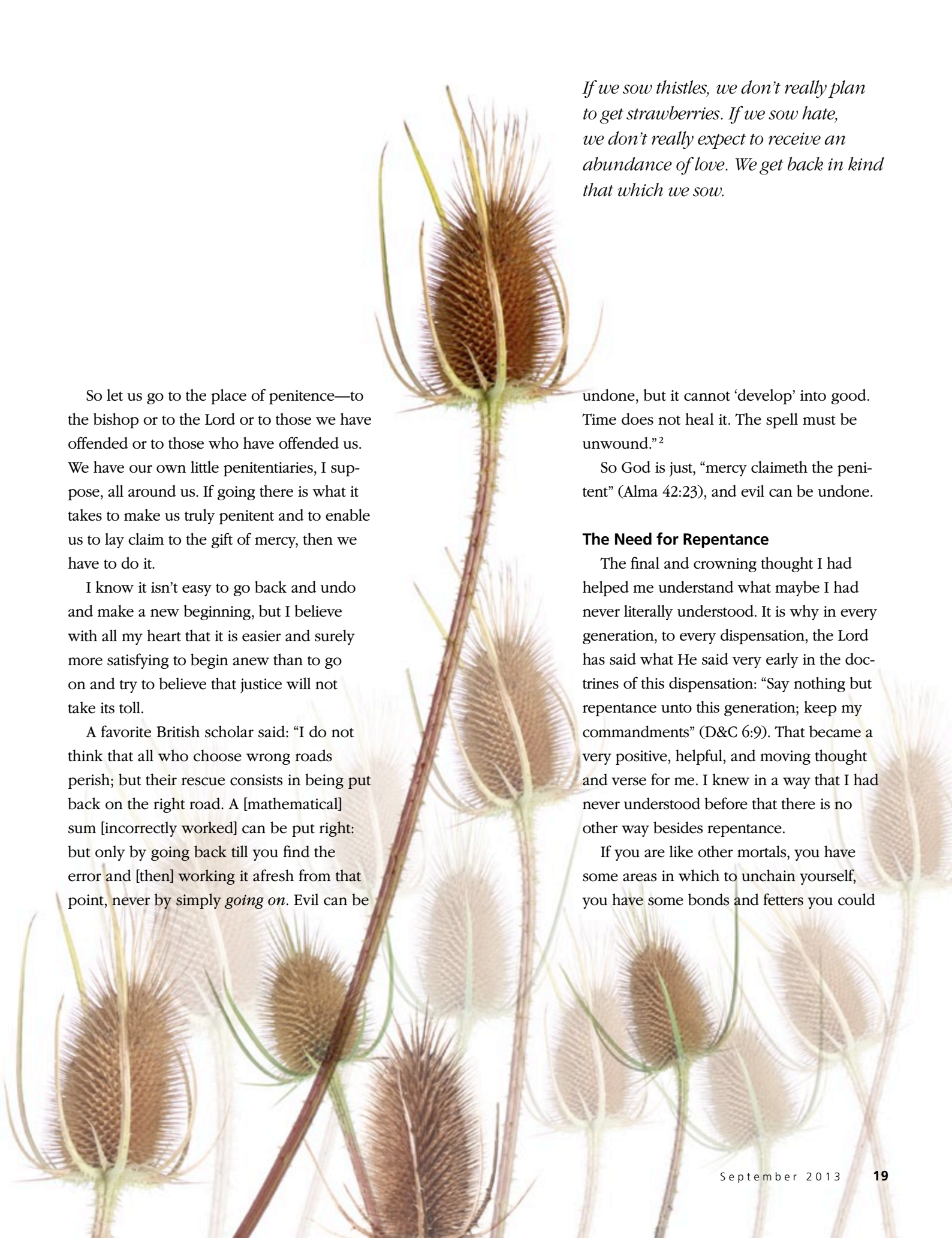
Then, ironically, I had a comforting

realization that my first thought—that God is just—wasn't as painful as it sounded. However frightening it may be that all of us have sinned, however frightening it may be to contemplate a just God, it is infinitely more frightening to me to contemplate an unjust God.

A basic principle of Latter-day Saint doctrine is that we have to know that God is just in order to go forward. One of God's attributes is justice, and we would not have the faith—because of fear—to live righteously or to love better or to repent more readily if somehow we didn't think that justice would count for us, if somehow we thought God would change His mind and decide there was another set of rules.¹ Because we know that God is just and would cease to be God if He weren't so, we have the faith to go forward, knowing that we will not be the victims of whimsy or caprice or a bad day or a bad joke. That assurance is very encouraging.

The Mercy of God

Then I had another thought. How grateful I was that because God is who He is, He has to be a merciful God also. In Alma 42, after Alma had established with Corianton that God had to be just, he declared that that same God would have to be merciful as well and that mercy would claim the *penitent*. Now, that thought was different to me because I had just been to the penitentiary. This thought gave me encouragement: Mercy could claim the penitent. I decided that if those men had to go to the *penitentiary* to take advantage of the gift of mercy—and if by going there, they found the gospel of Jesus Christ or the scriptures or the Atonement—then their imprisonment was worth it.



If we sow thistles, we don't really plan to get strawberries. If we sow hate, we don't really expect to receive an abundance of love. We get back in kind that which we sow.

So let us go to the place of penitence—to the bishop or to the Lord or to those we have offended or to those who have offended us. We have our own little penitentiaries, I suppose, all around us. If going there is what it takes to make us truly penitent and to enable us to lay claim to the gift of mercy, then we have to do it.

I know it isn't easy to go back and undo and make a new beginning, but I believe with all my heart that it is easier and surely more satisfying to begin anew than to go on and try to believe that justice will not take its toll.

A favorite British scholar said: "I do not think that all who choose wrong roads perish; but their rescue consists in being put back on the right road. A [mathematical] sum [incorrectly worked] can be put right: but only by going back till you find the error and [then] working it afresh from that point, never by simply *going on*. Evil can be

undone, but it cannot 'develop' into good. Time does not heal it. The spell must be unwound."²

So God is just, "mercy claimeth the penitent" (Alma 42:23), and evil can be undone.

The Need for Repentance

The final and crowning thought I had helped me understand what maybe I had never literally understood. It is why in every generation, to every dispensation, the Lord has said what He said very early in the doctrines of this dispensation: "Say nothing but repentance unto this generation; keep my commandments" (D&C 6:9). That became a very positive, helpful, and moving thought and verse for me. I knew in a way that I had never understood before that there is no other way besides repentance.

If you are like other mortals, you have some areas in which to unchain yourself, you have some bonds and fetters you could



be free of, and you have some sins you could repent of. May I isolate just one example: the bondage of ignorance.

What seems to me the supreme initial bond in our lives is simply not to know enough. We learn little clichés early in our lives. Two of them are “Ignorance is bliss” and “What I don’t know won’t hurt me.” Let me say with all the intensity I have that nothing will hurt you *more* than what you don’t know. I believe that we will be indicted for the resulting bondage that we incur and that we will serve some sentence in this life or the next for that which we fail to learn.

Within the tenets of our faith we learn that we cannot be saved in ignorance (see D&C 131:6), that what we learn in this life rises with us in the resurrection (see D&C 130:18), that we have so much the advantage in the world to come if we are knowledgeable (see D&C 130:19), that we are saved in proportion to that which we have

learned,³ that light and truth forsake the evil one (see D&C 93:37), that the glory of God is intelligence (see D&C 93:36), and on and on. At one time early in this dispensation, the entire Church, collectively, was indicted. The Lord says in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the *words* of eternal life.

“For you shall live by every *word* that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.

“For the *word* of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (verses 43–45; emphasis added).

The beginning of coming ultimately into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is where section 84 takes us, is the *word*.

“If ye abide in me, and my *words* abide in you,” the Lord declared in His ministry, “ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7; emphasis added).

I know it isn't easy to go back and undo and start again and make a new beginning, but I believe with all my heart that it is easier and surely more satisfying to begin anew than to go on and try to believe that justice will not take its toll.

The Importance of Freedom

If we had to pick a theme for our existence—the existence we know now, not our past in premortality and not what lies ahead—that theme would have to have something to do with the quest for true freedom. We know that an important part of the great Council in Heaven was spent in teaching us how we might progress toward complete freedom. The Father’s course was one of agency and choice—the freedom to err but ultimately the freedom to succeed. As many safeguards as possible and all the powers of the universe were brought to bear to guarantee our freedom to exercise our agency and return to our celestial home. These safeguards include the fulness of gospel truths and the Atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ.

We really do experience bondage and prison when we are not free. I almost wish I had been imprisoned sometime in my life so I could make this statement very dramatic. I wish I could talk like Peter or Paul and have the angels come to startle the guards and open the prison gates (see Acts 12:5–11; see also 16:25–26) or like Alma and Amulek and have the prison walls crumble (see Alma 14:23–29) or like Joseph Smith, who could write what may be the most sublime scriptural literature of our dispensation out of the very heart and center of a dingy, dismal, dreary prison (see D&C 121–23). We thank God that we live in such a time as we do, when the President and prophet of our Church does not need to live in fear of imprisonment and when we are not, at least politically and physically, required to go into bondage or into slavery. But there are other kinds of bonds and there are other kinds of

prisons in our lives that we need to destroy. All that we came here to do, we need to do.

I believe with all my heart that if we can repent of our sins, if we can be charitable with the sins of others, if we can take courage toward our circumstances and want to do something about them, the living Father of us all will reach down and, in the scriptural term, “bear [us] up as on eagles’ wings” (D&C 124:18).

I have been borne on eagles’ wings. I know with all my heart that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ. I know that Jesus leads this Church, that it is His Church, that He is the chief cornerstone, around which the foundation of living apostles and prophets is laid. I know that we will be with the Savior again, that if we are faithful to Him, we will stand free—unfettered and unencumbered—and that we will recognize in the marks in His flesh something of His bondage and imprisonment and dying sacrifice for us. I know that we must repent of our sins and that God has to be just, but I take great delight in the scriptures and in the words of the living prophets that where sin abounds, grace may much more abound and that “mercy claimeth the penitent.” ■

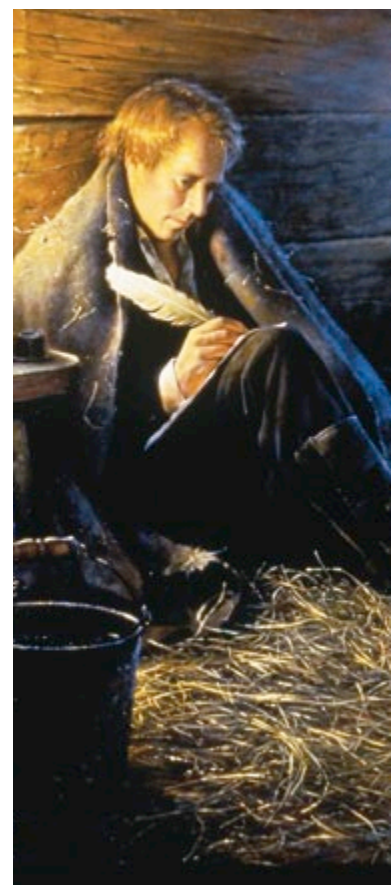
From a fireside address, “Borne Upon Eagles’ Wings,” delivered on June 2, 1974, at Brigham Young University. For the full address, go to speeches.byu.edu.

For more on this topic, see D. Todd Christofferson, “Redemption,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 109; and Craig A. Cardon, “The Savior Wants to Forgive,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 15.

NOTES

1. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 50–54.
2. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (1946), viii.
3. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 266.

Joseph Smith wrote what may be the most sublime scriptural literature of our dispensation out of the very heart and center of a dingy, dismal, and dreary prison.



Take My YOKE

A useful tool for harnessing animals became a central image in the Savior's invitation to come unto Him.

A Double Yoke

Purpose: To harness a pair of animals so that they can drag a load together as efficiently as possible. Used especially with oxen for plowing soil.

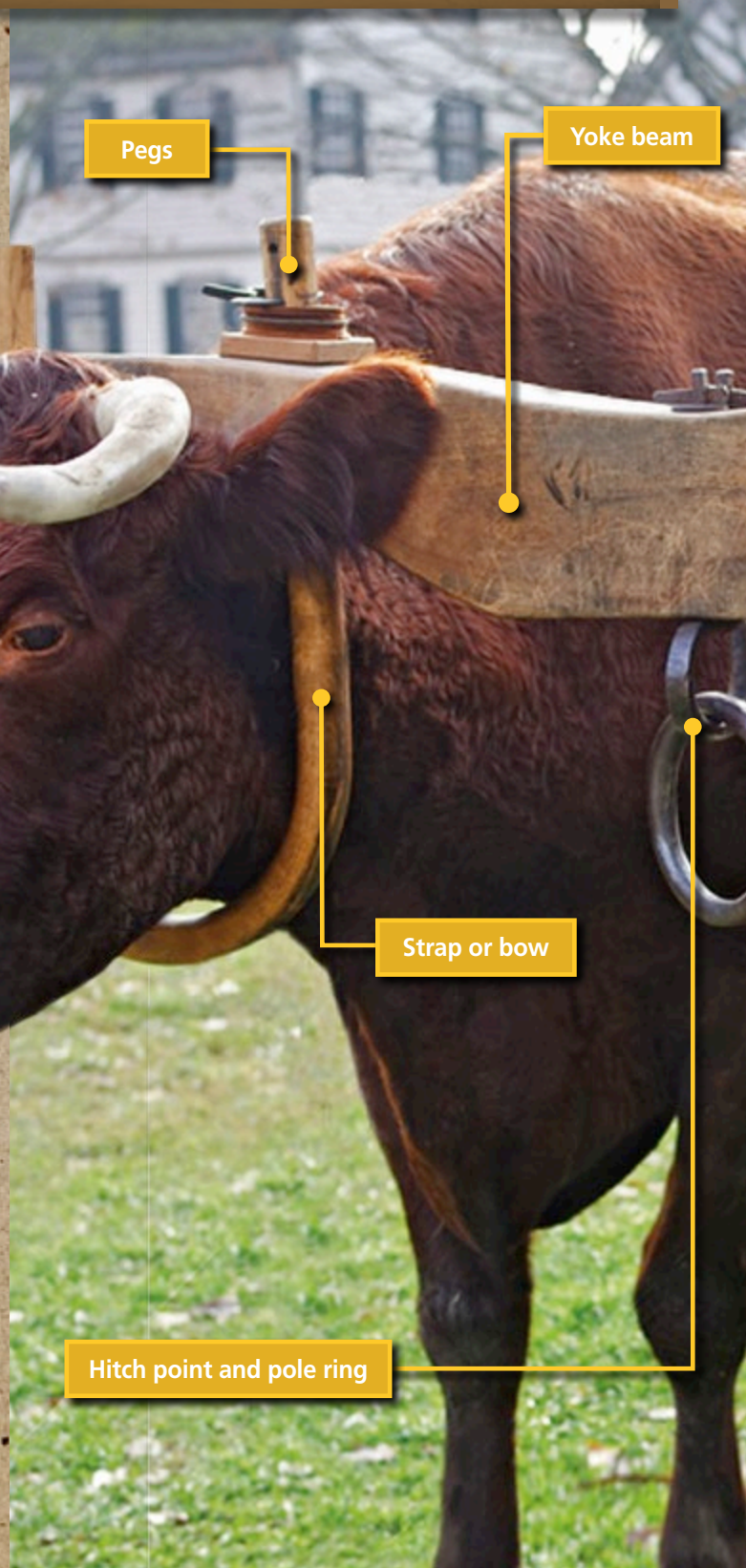
How it's made: A beam carved from a single piece of wood is fitted to a particular ox's shoulders, maximizing comfort and pulling force. The strap or bow around the neck is attached to pegs to secure the yoke. The hitch point connects the yoke to what's being pulled.

How it works: The beam rests in front of the shoulder hump (or withers), distributing weight and enabling natural and comfortable movement. Custom fitting each side allows oxen of unequal size or strength to pull together without one being dragged by the other.

Yoked with His Power

"You come unto Christ to be yoked with Him and with His power, so that you're not pulling life's load alone. You're pulling life's load yoked with the Savior and Redeemer of the world, and suddenly your problems, no matter how serious they are, become lighter."

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Mission and Ministry of the Savior," *Ensign*, June 2005, 18.



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TITLE BACKGROUND © PHOTOSPIN

upon You



CHRIST'S IMAGE, BY HEINRICH HOFMANN, COURTESY OF C. HARRISON CONROY CO.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28–30

What We Can Learn

A YOKE IS:

- **Designed to carry burdens.** Why drag the heavy weight of sin around? (see Isaiah 5:18). When we repent and come unto the Savior, He takes that burden away and gives us peace and healing.
- **Intended to help get work done.** With the Lord's yoke, we can help do His work (see Moses 1:39), and He will work with us (see Jacob 5:72). It's still work, but in it we find rest to our souls.
- **Custom fitted.** It's His yoke we take upon us—the one best suited for us, because His ways help us live in harmony with our true nature, “the nature of happiness” (Alma 41:11), and because the Savior knows us and can succor us individually (see Alma 7:12).

Righteous role models can greatly bless teens during one of the most critical stages of their lives.



TODAY'S YOUNG MEN NEED Righteous Role Models

By Hikari Loftus

Church Magazines

In high school, Todd Sylvester had two goals: to be great at basketball and to be known as the biggest partier in the school.

At the age of 14, Todd started drinking and using drugs. He was not a member of the Church, and his parents did not teach him, as he describes it, “one way or another” regarding his behavior. Over the years, his drug addiction and alcoholism ruined his once-promising basketball career and sent him down a path that left him contemplating suicide.

Unfortunately, elements of Todd’s story can be seen in the lives of many young men today, even among members of the Church. However, Todd didn’t have something young men of the Church have: righteous role models. Adult Church leaders can be a great blessing to teens during one of the most critical stages of their lives. Because of his background, Todd, who joined the Church at age 22, now tries to be a positive role model to youth in his ward.

Brother Sylvester’s turnaround came when, during his darkest hour, he uttered a simple prayer: “God, I need help.” A month and a half later, a longtime friend, who is a member of the Church, called him up and said, “Todd, I felt prompted to tell you that we need you on our side. . . . You’re going to help a lot of people, especially the youth and kids.”

A few years later, after his baptism and temple marriage, Brother Sylvester was called to serve in the Young Men program—a calling that would lead him to 14 years of serving the young men.

Using his past as motivation to help the young men he was called to serve, Brother Sylvester found a way to relate to the struggles he saw the boys go through. “I think most kids are afraid to talk about when they are struggling,” he says. “But I shared my story with these kids every year. I think because of that, they felt comfortable coming to me saying, ‘Hey, I’m struggling with pornography or drinking or suicidal thoughts.’” Brother Sylvester

could support them as they worked on repenting, which included visits with the bishop.

Leaders who listen and provide loving feedback to youth during critical times can create powerful connections that help shape a young person's identity. Mat Duerden, an assistant professor at Brigham Young University who received his PhD in youth development, says, "Adolescence is [when individuals] develop a sense of personal identity: values, beliefs, roles, etc. That is an exploratory process. Part of that process is getting feedback from peers or parents or other adults, and it can be really powerful if it is a respected and valued adult."

Brother Duerden continues, "The most effective mentoring roles are built on common respect for each other and the youth's feeling that there is someone who really cares about him no matter how he dresses or speaks."

"Most boys long to have a relationship with their dads," says Brother Sylvester. "If they don't have that, the next best thing is to be able to have a male adult figure they can talk to, bounce ideas off, and not be judged, ridiculed, or criticized because of their problems. I wasn't there to

"It is important to have shared experiences with the youth so you are on the same playing field. Instead of standing on the sidelines, you need to actively participate. There is real power in shared experiences.

"All members should be engaged with youth, regardless of their calling."

Mat Duerden, assistant professor, Brigham Young University

replace their dads, but I wanted to be there so they could talk to me in a way that is healthy."

While adult Church leaders can play a critical role in helping mentor a teen, prophets and apostles have said that the primary role models for youth are their parents. For example, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: "Fathers, you are the primary model of manhood for your sons. You are their most meaningful mentor, and believe it or not, you are their hero in countless ways. Your words and your example are a great influence on them" ("Fathers and Sons: A Remarkable Relationship," *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 47).

None of the strong relationships that Brother Sylvester created with the young men were immediate; he had to cultivate those relationships through years of service. Of the 20 young men he taught, 17 went on to serve missions.

At least 5 of them had no intention of serving before interacting with Brother Sylvester.

"The reason why I had such success with these boys is that they knew I absolutely loved them," Brother Sylvester says.

"They knew it—not because I said it but because I acted it. I really focused on their having a relationship with their Savior. I just felt that was the key for them to get through everything and to move forward in life and be successful."

By helping young men develop a relationship with the Savior, Brother Sylvester hoped that their testimonies would lead them toward serving missions, being married in the temple, and raising a righteous family. "That is the plan of happiness," he says. "That is why [helping the youth] is important." ■



SUCCESS STORIES

The following young men had positive role models who made a difference in their lives.

I Never Missed Sacrament Meeting Again

As an adolescent, I went through the normal trials of those that age. In addition, I had a father who was not active in the Church, so my mother was my only reference point in the gospel. Though I may not have realized it, I needed a priesthood holder to emulate.

Heavenly Father placed in my path a man who still, to this day, exercises great influence on me. His name is Paulo César dos Santos.

I recall one Sunday when I did not want to go to church. I wanted my mother to leave me in peace. I told her that she could go on ahead to church and I would get ready and go a little later. I did not go but stayed home and watched a race on TV. After a while, though, I heard Bishop Paulo's familiar voice calling from the gate. He patiently talked to me, and I reluctantly went to sacrament meeting.

This experience had a lifelong effect on me, and I have never missed a sacrament meeting since.

Vinicius Elias Barbosa Jardim,
São Paulo, Brazil

He Saw Me as a Child of God

Throughout my youth in Missouri, USA, Blaine Bartholomew, a member of the stake Young Men presidency, was a good friend to me at activities. However, I never took his friendship or advice to heart. It wasn't until I became 18 that a deeper relationship truly began. He watched me struggle and continue to fall, and as my bishop at the time, he tried to counsel me and lead me back to the path of righteousness. Eventually I fell into drugs and alcohol, and after moving away, I continued on that downward course.

When I returned home, I remembered Blaine and the love he had for me. He willingly continued that friendship and made me a part of his family. He became not only a friend but also a second father. Many times when I was drunk or under the influence of drugs he took care of me.

I am older now and cherish my relationship with Blaine. His constant encouragement, love, and support have meant more than he can know. He has never doubted my potential as a child of God. Now I am trying to overcome my sins and pride and am on the verge of

making covenants I never imagined I would

be able to make. I am grateful that

Heavenly Father raised up such a man to be an example for me.

Name withheld, Utah, USA



Still

A CLARION CALL

Prophets and apostles declare that “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” is even more relevant today than when it was first issued.

In a world where marriage is imperiled and traditional families are attacked, one document in particular provides clarity and guidance. Prophets and apostles say “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” applies as much or more today as when it was issued in 1995.¹

A Modern Title of Liberty

The proclamation on the family remains “a clarion call to protect and strengthen families,” according to Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.²

Our world is similar to the deteriorating Nephite society in the Book of Mormon, and Elder Ballard encourages Latter-day Saints to “make [the proclamation] a banner not unlike General Moroni’s ‘title of liberty,’ and to commit ourselves to live by its precepts.”³

Critical to Happiness

The world promotes many diverse paths to happiness. But modern prophets assert that the greatest possibilities for happiness exist in celestial marriage.⁴

If we live and act upon our knowledge that families can be eternal, Elder Ballard

promises that “we will attract the world to us. Parents who place a high priority on their families will gravitate to the Church. . . .

“Our family-centered perspective should make Latter-day Saints strive to be the best parents in the world. It should give us enormous respect for our children, who truly are our spiritual siblings, and it should cause us to devote whatever time is necessary to strengthen our families. Indeed, nothing is more critically connected to happiness—both our own and that of our children—than how well we love and support one another within the family.”⁵

Strength beyond Your Own

Elder Ballard counsels families everywhere to get a copy of the proclamation and to align themselves to its teachings.

“Be the very best and act the very best you can. God will give you strength beyond your own as you strive daily to fulfill the most sacred mortal responsibility He gives to His children. Listen to the voice of the Spirit and the counsel of the living prophets. Be of good cheer. God did not place you on earth to fail, and your efforts as parents



Find and share the proclamation on the family at lds.org/topics/family.

will not be counted as failure unless you give up.”⁶

Hope for Eternal Life

The family proclamation teaches that families can endure forever. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles teaches that “while salvation is an individual matter, exaltation is a family matter. . . . When a family is sealed in the temple, that family may become as eternal as the kingdom of God itself.”⁷

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, explains that our families are “fundamental not only to society and to the Church but also to our hope for eternal life.”⁸

A Warning ahead of Its Time

President Eyring warns that the consequences for ignoring the teachings in the family proclamation “will be more disastrous than simply lack of peace in this life or absence of happiness.”⁹

The proclamation is prophetic, he says, because it warns against the very things that have undermined families in recent years.

He quotes the prophetic warning and call to action with which the proclamation ends:

“We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”¹⁰

An International Document

When President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) introduced the family proclamation at the general Relief Society meeting on September 23, 1995, he said its purpose was to “warn and forewarn”¹¹ the world against deviating from its standards. Since then, the document has been published in many languages, has been repeatedly discussed in general conference, and is displayed in meetinghouses and homes internationally. It is a prophetic proclamation provided by a loving Heavenly Father to give guidance to His children—guidance that was never more needed than it is today. ■

NOTES

1. See M. Russell Ballard, “What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 41.
2. M. Russell Ballard, “What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest,” 41.
3. M. Russell Ballard, “What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest,” 42.
4. See Russell M. Nelson, “Celestial Marriage,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 92–94.
5. M. Russell Ballard, “What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest,” 42.
6. M. Russell Ballard, “The Sacred Responsibilities of Parenthood,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2006, 33.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Celestial Marriage,” 92, 93.
8. Henry B. Eyring, “The Family,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1998, 18.
9. Henry B. Eyring, “The Family,” 18.
10. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
11. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 100.

Christlike Mercy

The mortal ministry of the Savior provides us with practical examples of how we can be merciful.

By Randy L. Daybell

When the Prophet Joseph Smith and Martin Harris lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon translation, they received a severe rebuke from the Lord (see D&C 3:6–8, 12–13). Joseph lost the privilege of translating for a time and grieved over his disobedience.¹ After he humbled himself and petitioned the Lord for forgiveness, the Savior assured Joseph, “Remember, God is merciful; . . . and thou art still chosen, and art again called to the work” (D&C 3:10).

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught: “Christ is our exemplar. In His teachings [on mercy] as in His life, He showed us the way. He forgave the wicked, the vulgar, and those who sought to hurt and to do Him harm.”²

The scriptures show that mercifulness is one of the Savior’s supernal qualities. Jesus taught, “Blessed are the merciful” (Matthew 5:7), and “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:36).³ Mercy is defined as compassion and includes feelings and acts of sympathy, kindness, forgiveness, and love. Our capacity for mercy is often brought forth when we become aware of the unusual and distressing circumstances of others. Jesus Christ demonstrated an infinite capacity for mercy. He “could not look into men’s faces without being pained by their confusion, their perplexity, and their misery. . . . Whenever he saw men fainting and scattered abroad like sheep having no shepherd, his heart was moved with compassion on them.”⁴

The following principles from accounts in the New Testament illustrate how the Savior extended mercy and how we may choose to be merciful to others.

Jesus showed mercy by not blaming others.

At the Last Supper, hours before the betrayal, Judas Iscariot ate the Passover meal with the other disciples. When Jesus announced, “One of you shall betray me,” the disciples, including Judas, asked Him, “Is it I?” (Matthew 26:21–22). Jesus responded to Judas, “That thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:27). Then at the entrance to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus and Judas again met. Judas said, “Hail, master” and greeted the Savior with a kiss (Matthew 26:49), to which Jesus asked, “Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48). Jesus’s reply, while not relieving Judas of the consequences of his actions, does not lay blame upon him but rather appeals to Judas’s sense of right and wrong.

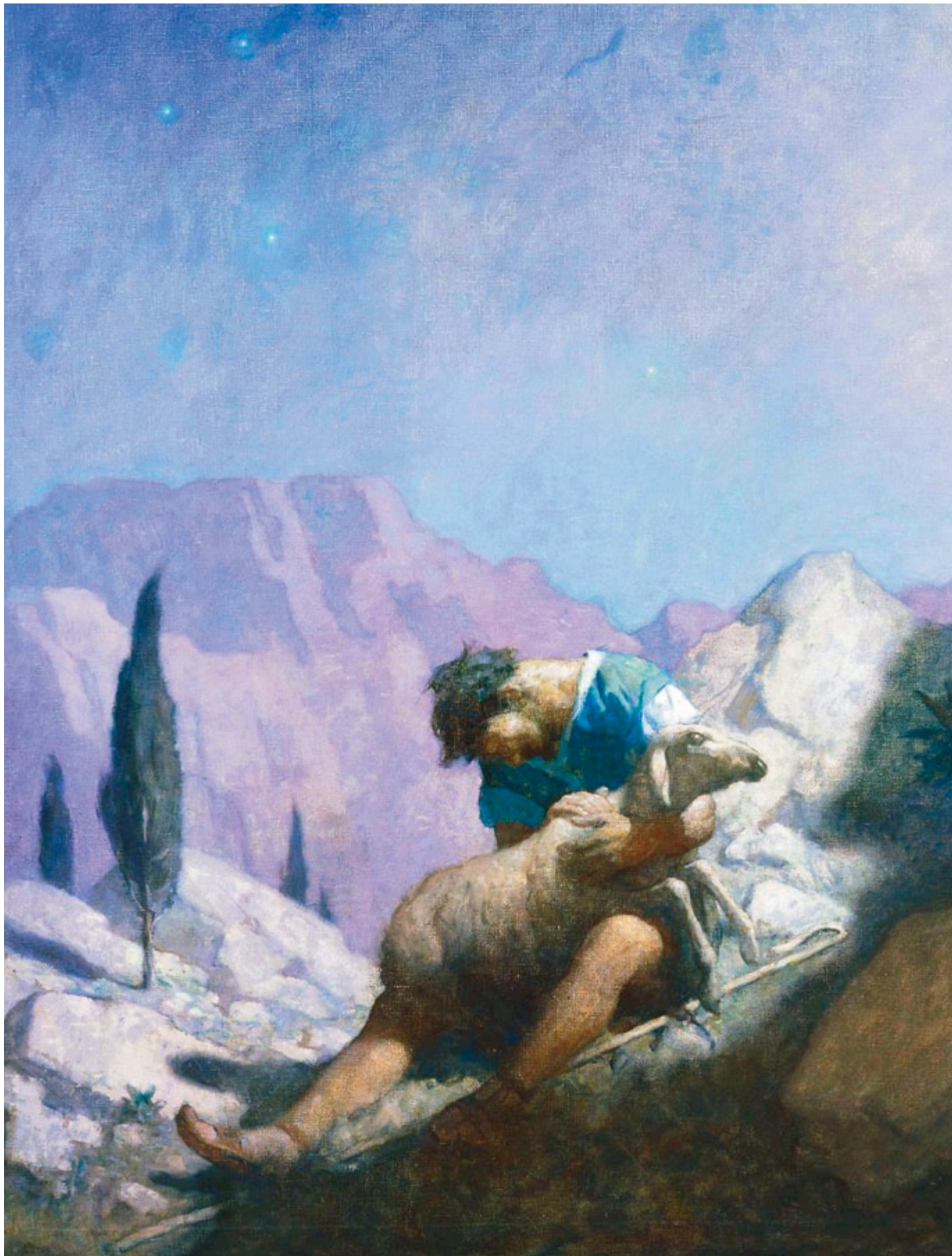
After Jesus had endured at the hands of Roman soldiers hours of imprisonment, beating, whipping, marching through the city, and carrying and being nailed to a cross, He mercifully looked upon His captors and pled, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus showed mercy by choosing to love rather than condemn.

Early in His ministry, Jesus stopped to rest and refresh Himself at a well in Samaria during one of His journeys. A woman came to the well to draw water, and the Savior engaged her in conversation. She was astonished that He would speak with her, “for the Jews [had] no dealings with

“Whenever [the Savior] saw men fainting and scattered abroad like sheep having no shepherd, his heart was moved with compassion on them.”

THE LOST LAMB, BY NEWELL CONVERS WYETH, REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE COLBY COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART



the Samaritans.” But He overlooked the traditions that devalued her in others’ eyes. He taught her about the living water of the gospel, and He testified to her, “I that speak unto thee am [the Messiah].” (See John 4:3–39.)

During the closing days of His Perea ministry, Jesus passed through the city of Jericho on His way to Jerusalem. A short, wealthy man named Zacchaeus climbed a tree to get a look at the Savior as He walked by. Jesus noticed him and invited Himself over to Zacchaeus’s house. Some of Jesus’s disciples complained when they saw this, saying that Jesus “was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.” But Jesus saw the goodness in Zacchaeus and said, “This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.” (See Luke 19:1–10.)

Jesus showed mercy by giving others many opportunities to repent and be forgiven.

Early in His ministry, Jesus returned to His hometown synagogue in the city of Nazareth, where He had worshipped many times. He read to those who had gathered for the Sabbath a prophecy from Isaiah about the Messiah. He then plainly testified to them that He was the Messiah. The people in the synagogue were “filled with wrath” at His words, and they “thrust him out of the city . . . that they might cast him” off a cliff. (See Luke 4:16–30.) Jesus’s lifelong friends had become His enemies. Some time later, Jesus ventured to Nazareth again and taught the people. And even though they were again offended by Him, He had tried twice to help them understand. (See Matthew 13:54–57.)

The leaders of the Jews were the Savior’s most bitter enemies. They sought to kill Him because He threatened their traditions. Yet Jesus repeatedly urged them to repent and be reconciled to the truth. The scriptures record at least 10 major sermons that Jesus directed specifically at these leaders where He identified their sins and invited them to repent.

Jesus showed mercy by avoiding bitterness.

Jerusalem was the site of the Savior’s eventual suffering and death. He could have become resentful and angry

toward the city and its people; instead He often expressed sadness at their wickedness and refusal to repent.

Days before His Crucifixion, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. A multitude of followers rejoiced, placing their garments on the ground in front of Him and praising God. (See Luke 19:28–38.) But Jesus knew that the loyalty of the people in Jerusalem would not last. As He looked over the city during His last week, the Savior wept, saying, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, . . . and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37; see also Luke 19:41–44).

Mere days later, the crowds turned on Jesus and clamored for His execution. As the Savior was led away to be crucified, “a great company of people, and of women, . . . also bewailed and lamented him.

“But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children” (Luke 23:27–28). Despite His public humiliation and intense personal suffering at the hands of the people in Jerusalem, the Savior did not become bitter against them and expressed sadness that they refused to repent.

Jesus showed mercy by helping others in need.

During one of His journeys, Jesus approached the city of Nain, where He saw “a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow” (Luke 7:12). Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles describes the ensuing miracle in his book *Jesus the Christ*: “Our Lord looked with compassion upon the sorrowing mother, now bereft of both husband and son; and, feeling in Himself the pain of her grief, He said in a gentle tone, ‘Weep not.’ He touched the stretcher [and] . . . addressing the corpse He said: ‘Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.’ And the dead heard the voice of Him who is Lord of all, and immediately sat up and spoke. Graciously Jesus delivered the young man to his mother.”⁵

Jesus performed numerous other miracles for people during times of need. He healed a leper, calmed the sea,



Jesus performed numerous miracles for people during times of need. He healed a leper, calmed the sea, and raised Jairus's daughter from the dead.

and raised Jairus's daughter from the dead. He made whole an infirm man at the pool of Bethesda, healed a deaf man with a speech impediment, and cleansed 10 lepers. Each was in desperate need.

The Savior has marked the path to follow. We can strive to be merciful by not blaming others, choosing to love rather than condemn, giving others many opportunities to repent, avoiding bitterness, and helping others in need. The more we recognize and remember the many mercies extended to us through Jesus Christ, the more we will learn to extend mercy to others.

President Uchtdorf has counseled: "There is enough heartache and sorrow in this life without our adding to it through our own stubbornness, bitterness, and resentment. . . . We must let go of our grievances. . . . *That is the Lord's way.*"⁶

When the resurrected Lord visited the Nephites in the Americas, He taught the people. And when it came time for Him to leave, Jesus "cast his eyes round about again

on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears. . . .

"And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.

"Have ye any that are sick among you? . . . Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are *filled with mercy*" (3 Nephi 17:5–7; emphasis added). His mercy is infinite. He will bless us with the divine gift of mercy if we will come unto Him (see Moroni 10:32). ■

The author lives in New York, USA.

For more on this topic, see Dallin H. Oaks, "Followers of Christ," *Ensign*, May 2013, 96.

NOTES

1. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2011), 69–71.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Merciful Obtain Mercy," *Ensign*, May 2012, 76.
3. The Greek word in Matthew 5:7 is *eleēmōn*, meaning *compassionate*. The Greek word in Luke 6:36 is *oiktirmōn*, also meaning *compassionate*.
4. Charles Edward Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus* (1908), 154.
5. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 33rd ed. (1977), 252.
6. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Merciful Obtain Mercy," 76–77.



HIS GRACE IS Sufficient

*How does God's grace
really work?*

By Brad Wilcox

A young woman once came to me and asked if we could talk. I said, "Of course. How can I help you?"

She said, "I just don't get grace."

I responded, "What is it that you don't understand?"

She said, "I know I need to do my best, and then Jesus does the rest, but I can't even do my best."

I said, "The truth is, Jesus paid our debt in full. He didn't pay it all except for a few coins. He paid it all. It is finished."

She said, "Right! Like I don't have to do anything?"

"Oh, no," I said, "you have plenty to do, but it is not to pay that debt. We will all be resurrected. We will all go back to God's presence to be judged. What is left to be determined by our obedience is how comfortable we plan to be in God's presence and what degree of glory we plan on receiving."

Christ asks us to show faith in Him,

repent, make and keep covenants, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end. By complying, we are not paying the demands of justice—not even the smallest part. Instead, we are showing appreciation for what Jesus Christ did by using it to live a life like His. Justice requires immediate perfection or a punishment when we fall short. Because Jesus took that punishment, He can offer us the chance for ultimate perfection (see Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48) and help us reach that goal. He can forgive what justice never could, and He can turn to us now with His own set of requirements (see 3 Nephi 28:35).

Grace Transforms Us

Christ's arrangement with us is similar to a mom providing music lessons for her child. Mom pays the piano teacher. Because Mom pays the debt in full, she can turn to her child and ask for something. What is

it? Practice! Does the child's practice pay the piano teacher? No. Does the child's practice repay Mom for paying the piano teacher? No. Practicing is how the child shows appreciation for Mom's incredible gift. It is how he takes advantage of the amazing opportunity Mom is giving him to live his life at a higher level. Mom's joy is found not in getting repaid but in seeing her gift used—seeing her child improve. And so she continues to call for practice, practice, practice.

If the child sees Mom's requirement of practice as being too overbearing ("Gosh, Mom, why do I need to practice? None of the other kids have to practice! I'm just going to be a professional baseball player anyway!"), perhaps it is because he doesn't yet see with Mom's eyes. He doesn't see how much better his life could be if he would choose to live on a higher plane.

In the same way, because Jesus has paid justice, He can now turn to



When we understand grace, we understand that the blessings of Christ's Atonement are continuous and His strength is perfect in our weakness.

us and say: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19); "Keep my commandments" (John 14:15). If we see His requirements as being way too much to ask, maybe it is because we do not yet see through Christ's eyes. We have not yet comprehended what He is trying to make of us.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, "The repenting sinner must suffer for his sins, but this suffering has a different purpose than punishment or payment. Its purpose is *change*" (*The Lord's Way* [1991], 223; emphasis in original). Let's put that in terms of the child pianist: The child must practice the piano, but this practice has a different purpose than punishment or payment. Its purpose is change.

The miracle of the Atonement is not just that we can live after we die but that we can live more abundantly (see John 10:10). The miracle of the Atonement is not just that we can be cleansed and consoled but that we can be transformed (see Romans 8). Scriptures make it clear that no unclean thing can dwell with God (see Alma 40:26), but no unchanged thing will even want to.

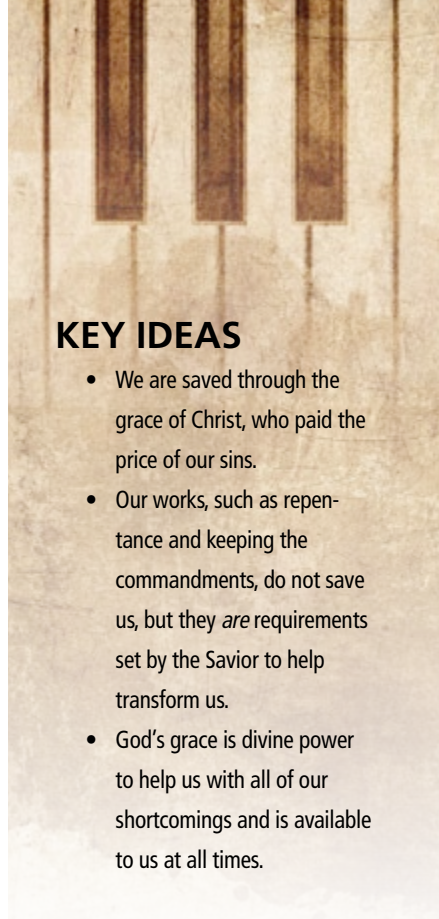
The miracle of the Atonement is not just that we can go home but that—miraculously—we can feel at home there. If Heavenly Father and His Son did not require faith and repentance, then there would be no desire to change. Think of your friends and family members who have chosen to live without faith and without repentance. They don't want to change. They are not trying to abandon sin and become comfortable with God. Rather, they are trying to abandon God and become

comfortable with sin. If the Father and the Son did not require covenants and bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost, then there would be no way to change. We would be left forever with only willpower, with no access to His power. If Heavenly Father and His Son did not require endurance to the end, then there would be no internalization of those changes over time. They would forever be surface and cosmetic rather than sinking inside us and becoming part of us—part of who we are. Put simply, if Jesus didn't require practice, then we would never become Saints.

Grace Helps Us

“But don't you realize how hard it is to practice? I'm just not very good at the piano. I hit a lot of wrong notes. It takes me forever to get it right.” Now wait. Isn't that all part of the learning process? When a young pianist hits a wrong note, we don't say he is not worthy to keep practicing. We don't expect him to be flawless. We just expect him to keep trying. Perfection may be his ultimate goal, but for now we can be content with progress in the right direction. Why is this perspective so easy to see in the context of learning piano but so hard to see in the context of learning heaven?

Too many are giving up on the Church because they are tired of constantly feeling like they are falling short. They have tried in the past,



KEY IDEAS

- We are saved through the grace of Christ, who paid the price of our sins.
- Our works, such as repentance and keeping the commandments, do not save us, but they *are* requirements set by the Savior to help transform us.
- God's grace is divine power to help us with all of our shortcomings and is available to us at all times.

but they continually feel like they are just not good enough. They don't understand grace.

There should never be just two options: perfection or giving up. When learning the piano, are the only options performing at Carnegie Hall or quitting? No. Growth and development take time. Learning takes time. When we understand grace, we understand that God is long-suffering, that change is a process, and that repentance is a pattern in our lives. When we understand grace, we understand that the blessings of Christ's Atonement are continuous and His strength is perfect in our weakness (see 2 Corinthians 12:9). When we understand grace, we can, as it says in the Doctrine and Covenants, “continue in patience until [we] are perfected” (D&C 67:13).

Grace is not a booster engine that

kicks in once our fuel supply is exhausted. Rather, it is our constant energy source. It is not the light at the end of the tunnel but the light that moves us through the tunnel. Grace is not achieved somewhere down the road. It is received right here and right now.

Grace Is Sufficient

The grace of Christ is sufficient (see Ether 12:27; D&C 17:8)—sufficient to cover our debt, sufficient to transform us, and sufficient to help us for as long as that transformation process takes. The Book of Mormon teaches us to rely solely on “the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8). As we do, we do not discover—as some Christians believe—that Christ requires nothing of us. Rather, we discover the reason He requires so much and find the strength to do all He asks (see Philippians 4:13). Grace is not the absence of God's high expectations. Grace is the presence of God's power (see Luke 1:37).

God's grace is sufficient. Jesus's grace is sufficient. It is enough. It is all we need. Don't quit. Keep trying. Don't look for escapes and excuses. Look for the Lord and His perfect strength. Don't search for someone to blame. Search for someone to help you. Seek Christ, and, as you do, you will feel the enabling power and divine help we call His amazing grace. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on July 12, 2011. For the full address, visit speeches.byu.edu.

How Is Doctrine Established?

By LaRene Porter Gaunt
Church Magazines

Doctrine comes today as it did anciently—through divine revelation to prophets.

As Latter-day Saints, “we believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9).

Of the relationship between revelation and doctrine, Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “In the Church today, just as anciently, establishing the doctrine of Christ or correcting doctrinal deviations is a matter of divine revelation to those the Lord endows with apostolic authority.”¹

Just as revelation is the means by which doctrine comes to prophets, seers, and revelators, each of us can also receive our own

confirmation that the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ are true. This personal revelation comes through prayer, scripture study, and the witness of the Holy Ghost. We show that we accept the doctrine of Jesus Christ by repenting, being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and continuing to follow the laws and keep the covenants of the gospel throughout our life.

The following flowchart, based on Elder Christofferson’s April 2012 general conference address, shows how doctrine is established.² ■

NOTES

1. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 86.
2. See D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ,” 86–90.

The First Presidency



The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



REVELATION OF DOCTRINE COMES FROM JESUS CHRIST

When revelation is doctrine for the whole Church, it comes to only the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (see Amos 3:7; D&C 1:38; 28:2).

REVELATION MAY COME BY . . .

HIS OWN PERSON

God appeared to Moses and showed him the workmanship of His hands (see Moses 1:1–9; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:15–20).

HIS OWN VOICE

The Lord spoke to Nephi and commanded him to build a ship to bring his family to the Americas (see 1 Nephi 17:7–8).

THE VOICE OF THE HOLY GHOST

This type of revelation is communicated Spirit to spirit. The New Testament Apostles received a confirmation through the Holy Ghost that they should not require new converts to keep the law of Moses (see Acts 15:5–29).

MESSENGER

The messengers Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and each committed the keys of his dispensation to the Prophet (see D&C 110:11–16).

REVELATION MAY COME TO . . .

THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH INDIVIDUALLY

The prophet and President of the Church can receive revelation individually that becomes doctrine when it is sustained by the united voice of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (see Acts 10; Official Declaration 2).

PROPHETS ACTING IN COUNCIL

The disciples in the Americas prayed to know what they should name the Church. Christ appeared to them and answered, “Whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name” (3 Nephi 27:7).



THE VOICE OF JESUS CHRIST

IN THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

*We can testify of Christ as we hear His voice
in the Doctrine and Covenants.*

By Gordon B. Holbrook

The words of the Savior are an invaluable source of inspiration and guidance. Throughout the millennia they have been as water to the thirsting soul. To ponder His words, we might typically turn to the New Testament or the Book of Mormon. In these books many of His words are recorded in the first person—for example, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12)—and it is as if we can hear His own voice as we read His words. But a careful consideration of the Doctrine and Covenants shows that it also is a stunning additional witness of Jesus Christ¹ and contains more of the Savior’s words recorded in the first person than the New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Pearl of Great Price combined.²

Christ says of His words in the Doctrine and Covenants:

“These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man;

“For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; . . .

“Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words” (D&C 18:34–36).

In the Doctrine and Covenants we can learn of the Savior’s divinity, His Atonement, and His doctrine—in His own words. And as we read His words, by the Spirit we can hear and feel His voice.

True Light
Lord
He who liveth
Advocate
He who was
lifted up
I am
Life
Love
Jesus Christ
Lamb
Creator
Messiah
the son of God
One
The Beginning and The End
Alpha & Omega
Great
Savior
Light
Your Lord
& your God
Redeemer
who
so loved the
world

CHRIST'S DIVINITY

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Savior teaches us about Himself, helping us come to know Him, love Him, and draw near to Him. He says of His divinity, “I am the Lord thy God” (D&C 132:53), “I am the true light that is in you” (D&C 88:50), and “I am your advocate with the Father” (D&C 110:4). “I . . . will stand by you” (D&C 68:6). “I am the good shepherd” (D&C 50:44). In all, the Doctrine and Covenants contains more than 1,000 references to Him by such titles as Lord, Savior, Redeemer, Alpha and Omega, Son of God, the Only Begotten, the Lamb, and the Light and Life of the World.



Jesus assures us that He is “the Son of the living God, who created the heavens and the earth” (D&C 14:9). He tells us, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you” (D&C 88:63). He offers us these comforting words: “Let not your hearts be troubled; for in my Father’s house are many mansions, and I have prepared a place for you; and where my Father and I am, there ye shall be also” (D&C 98:18). Our Savior will never abandon us. He says, “What I say unto one I say unto all, be of good cheer, little children; for I am in your midst, and I have not forsaken you” (D&C 61:36).

He says, “What I say unto one I say unto all, be of good cheer, little children; for I am in your midst, and I have not forsaken you” (D&C 61:36).

*Wherefore,
I am in your midst,
and I am
the good shepherd, and
the stone of Israel.
He that buildeth upon
this rock shall never fall.
D&C 50:44*

*Father, ... behold the blood
of thy Son which was shed, the blood
of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;
Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe
on my name, that they may come unto me
and have everlasting life. D&C 45:4-5*

CHRIST'S ATONEMENT

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Savior teaches us about His Atonement, giving us knowledge of His suffering and its purpose: that we might repent and ultimately return to Him. Of the pain during His atoning sacrifice, He says:

“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

“Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:18–19).

He reveals that He was willing to suffer for us because “the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

“For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

“And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance” (D&C 18:10–12).

The Savior also declares that as part of His Atonement, He is “the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—

“Saying: Father, behold [my] sufferings and death. . . .

“Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe



on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life” (D&C 45:3–5).

Christ’s words show His love for us when He says that He “so loved the world that he gave his own life, that as many as would believe might become the sons [and daughters] of God” (D&C 34:3).

Jesus Christ tells us how He gained power over sin and death:

“I, having accomplished and finished the will of him whose I am, even the Father, concerning me—having done this that I might subdue all things unto myself—

“Retaining all power, even to the destroying of Satan and his works at the end of the world” (D&C 19:2–3).

Of the Savior and His Atonement, the Prophet Joseph Smith recorded this testimony:

“He came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;

“That through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him” (D&C 76:41–42).

We too can testify of Christ and His Atonement as we come to know His words and recognize His voice (see D&C 18:36).

CHRIST'S DOCTRINE



In the Doctrine and Covenants, as in the Book of Mormon, we find clear teachings regarding the doctrine of Christ, allowing us to gain a fuller understanding of our Heavenly Father's plan for us. The Father, through His Beloved Son, the Great Jehovah, is "the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them." We are created "after his own image and in his own likeness." Through transgression of God's commandments, we "became fallen man" (see D&C 20:17–20). Because we are fallen beings, "God gave his Only Begotten Son," who "suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them" and "was crucified, died, and rose again on the third day" to pay for our sins and conquer death (see D&C 20:21–25).

The Doctrine and Covenants identifies covenants we must make to return to our Heavenly Father. Those who enter into the presence of the Father and gain eternal life are "they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, . . .

"That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power" (D&C 76:51–52).

Those who obtain this blessing are they who have entered "into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]" (D&C 131:2).

The Savior says, "Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel" (D&C 33:12; see also D&C 33:10–15; 39:5–6).

Finally, while in the New Testament we learn that to receive eternal life we must come to know our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ (see John 17:3), Christ's words in the Doctrine and Covenants make this requirement for eternal life more personal and bear testimony of His divinity: "This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. *I am he*" (D&C 132:24; emphasis added).

*Take upon you
the name of
Christ,
and speak the truth
in soberness.
And as many as repent
and are baptized
in my name,
which is
Jesus Christ,
and endure
to the end,
the same shall be
saved.*

D&C 18:21-22

Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear,
 for I the Lord am with you,
 and will stand by you;
 and ye shall bear record of me,
 even Jesus Christ,
 that I am the Son of the living God,
 that I was, that I am, and that I am to come.
 D&C 68:6



CHRIST TESTIFIES

The living and loving Son of God testifies of the truth of His words recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants: “What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; . . . my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same. . . . And the record is true” (D&C 1:38–39).

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Savior invites each of us in His own voice to receive Him, His Atonement, and His doctrine. He testifies: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the same that came unto mine own, and mine own received me not. I am the light which shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not” (D&C 6:21; see also D&C 10:57; 11:29; 39:3; 45:8). “Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the

world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me” (D&C 50:41). ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. The revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants that do not contain first-person declarations of Jesus Christ are sections 13, 20, 65, 74, 77, 102, 109, 113, 116, 123, 131, 134, and 138, as well as Official Declarations 1 and 2.
2. The Doctrine and Covenants contains about 91,000 of the Savior’s words recorded in first person, compared to about 41,700 in the New Testament, about 22,200 in the Book of Mormon, and about 7,900 in the Pearl of Great Price (see the accompanying chart).

Book of Scripture	Approximate Number of the Savior’s Words Recorded in First Person
Old Testament	138,217
New Testament	41,684 (Matthew: 13,512; Mark: 5,407; Luke: 12,295; John: 8,057; Acts–Revelation: 2,413)
Book of Mormon	22,252
Doctrine and Covenants	91,051
Pearl of Great Price	7,909



By Elder
Kent D. Watson
Of the Seventy

Whither Shall

A few years ago, I served as a volunteer in the employment center at BYU–Hawaii and taught a class in accounting. One of my favorite students was named Katoa (Toa). At the time, he was the only student at the university from Tuvalu, a group of Polynesian islands located 2,500 miles (4,000 km) southwest of Hawaii.

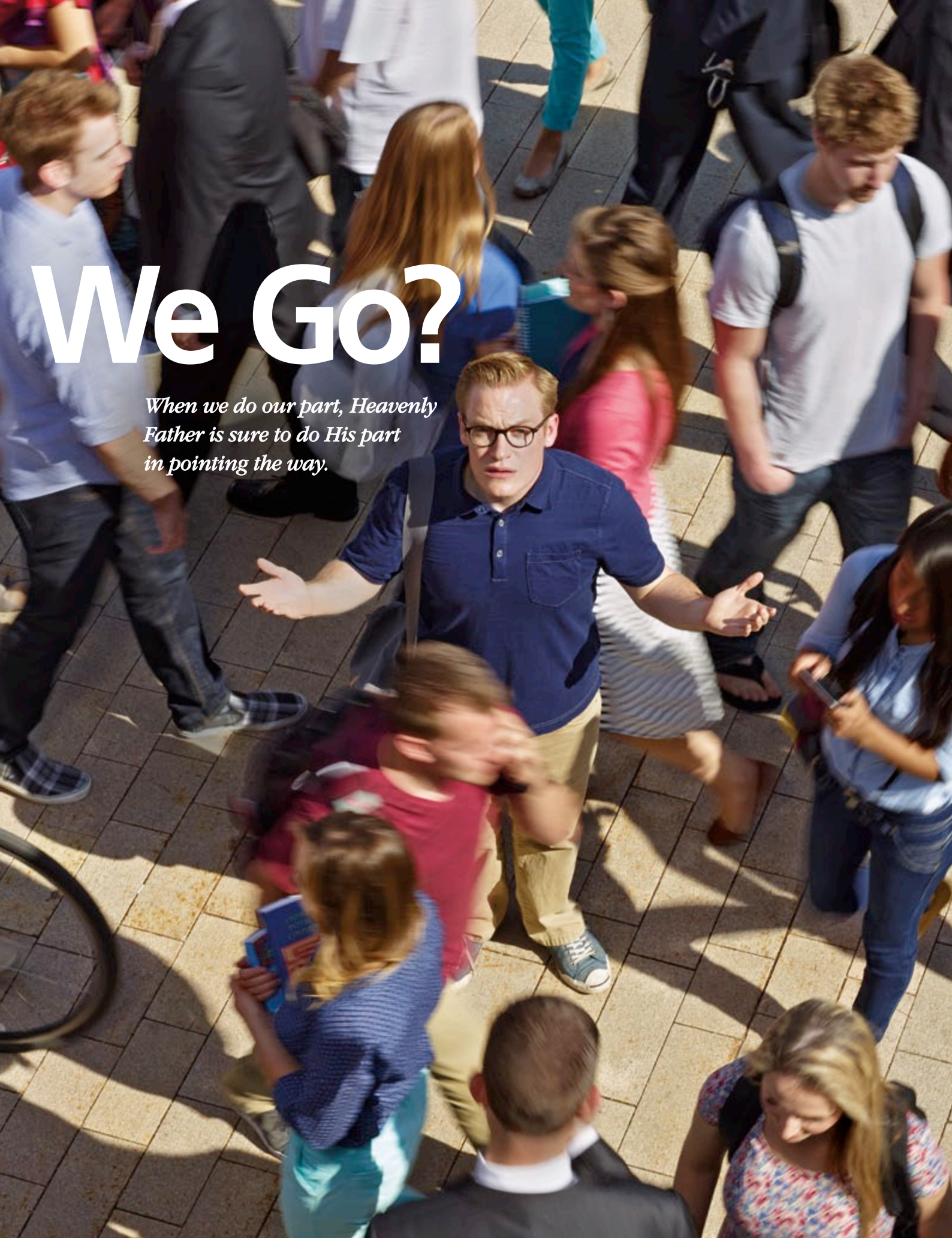
Toa came to me to talk about his plans after graduation, asking where he should go. I answered at the time, “Go where you have the best opportunity.” I have had six years to reflect on that counsel. I now have additional perspective gained from further experience, and I would like to respond in a more thoughtful way to Toa’s question.

In an uncertain world, the question of where to go is one that each of us will ask and need to answer—repeatedly. There are several key decisions we must make when we are seemingly least experienced. Perhaps you have had to answer some important questions already:

- Should I serve a mission?
- What should I study?
- What kind of work should I do?
- How will I support my family?
- Whom should I marry?
- How will I respond to Church callings?
- Do I intend to keep all of God’s commandments?

When I was in college, computing was something new. When I began my career, there was no such thing as a personal computer. The electric typewriter was our most complex tool. The Internet was barely a dream. We could not even imagine all-in-one handheld devices. “Social media” was not in our vocabulary.

I realize each day how changing technology creates broad possibilities, many choices, and an amazing array of opportunities. There are some constants, however—eternal principles that are unchanging and that can help us answer the question that Toa asked me several years ago. I share six.



We Go?

When we do our part, Heavenly Father is sure to do His part in pointing the way.

1. Be obedient.

Keep all of the commandments and be “reconciled unto Christ” (2 Nephi 33:9). The Israelites were taught obedience as a condition of entering the promised land:

“Keep all the commandments . . . that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, *whither ye go* to possess it. . . .

. . . Hearken diligently unto my commandments . . . to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 11:8, 13; emphasis added).

Soon after Lehi and his family arrived in the land of Bountiful, the Lord said to Nephi, “Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy

direction and guidance are portions of those blessings. Our Heavenly Father keeps His promises.

2. Pray always.

If I were responding to Toa today, I would invite him to follow the pattern the Lord has set for us, which is to pray earnestly, “with real intent, having faith in Christ” (Moroni 10:4). Be diligent as you inquire of your Heavenly Father where you should go. That is what the brother of Jared did when he was asked to “go and inquire of the Lord . . . *whither we shall go*” (Ether 1:38; emphasis added). The Lord heard the brother of Jared and had compassion on him (see verse 40). He said: “I will go before thee into a



Nephi had hope for those who “enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the strait path which leads to life, and continue in the path until the end of the day of probation.”

people across these waters” (1 Nephi 17:8). Nephi did not ask why or seek clarification about where they would end up after crossing the waters. His direct response to the Lord was:

“Lord, *whither shall I go* that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?”

“And it came to pass that the Lord told me *whither I should go*” (1 Nephi 17:9–10; emphasis added).

Later, after Nephi had lived a lifetime of obedience and had been a great influence upon his people, he taught, “For none of these can I hope except they shall be reconciled unto Christ, and enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the strait path which leads to life, and continue in the path until the end of the day of probation” (2 Nephi 33:9).

For Latter-day Saints, the greatest benefit of being reconciled to Christ by keeping God’s commandments is that we will surely receive promised blessings. Personal

land which is choice. . . . And there will I bless thee and thy seed” (verses 42–43).

I remind you of an important principle to remember when you are seeking God in prayer. That principle is our moral agency, and it is a wonderful blessing.

“Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life” (2 Nephi 10:23).

Sometimes life is not easy. God does not command us in all things. Our Father’s plan is that “men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient.” We are “free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).

The Liahona worked according to faith and diligence (see

1 Nephi 16:29). Sometimes the answer for us may not be clear. We must first study things out in our minds and trust the Lord (see D&C 9:8). The heavenly expectation is that we will act for ourselves, but when we do our part, we will have the sweet assurance that we can make correct decisions.

3. Listen carefully to the still, small voice.

If you are diligent, patient, meek, and steadfast, the promise is that “it shall be given you by the Comforter what you shall do and *whither you shall go*” (D&C 31:11; emphasis added).

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord said of Jared Carter, “I will send upon him the Comforter, which shall teach him the truth and the way *whither he shall go*” (D&C 79:2; emphasis added). Unfortunately, Jared Carter did not continue in diligence. He said, “The spirit of God in a measure has left me,” and he eventually fell away.¹

I recall an experience that occurred when the People’s Republic of China was opening its doors to my profession. I was invited by my firm to begin our practice there. When we won our first major transaction, it was a cause for celebration. I sat at the head table with China’s minister of finance. The celebration opened with a dignitaries’ toast. There were TV cameras and photographers. They brought out a silver tray of crystal goblets filled with enticing champagne for the toast. I was there as the senior partner in China representing a global enterprise that had a sterling reputation.

What was I to do? Would it be OK to lift a goblet in celebration, raise it to my lips, taste the champagne but not swallow? I pictured in my mind what it would look like on television if I did so. I wondered how my wife, Connie, my children, and my mother would feel.

Early in my career, I decided that I would not be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I decided long before the toast that the values I had been taught by my mother would take preference over any cultural expectations. Commandments and covenants must trump customs and business practices. As it turned out, my decision not to touch a goblet did not hurt my career; in fact, it enhanced my opportunities.

In asking whither you should go, listen to the still, small voice—the voice of the Comforter—which “will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5).

Sometimes the answer for us may not be clear. We must first study things out in our minds and trust the Lord.



4. Magnify your callings.

Every Latter-day Saint is instructed to pray, “labor in the church . . . [and] be diligent in all things” (D&C 75:28–29). As they do so, it will “be made known from on high, even by the Comforter, *whither they shall go*” (D&C 75:27; emphasis added). Over the years, I have been frequently asked, “How can I achieve balance among my family responsibilities, ecclesiastical duties, and professional obligations?”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles tells of a turning point in his life when, as a young, hardworking associate in a law firm, he was called to be a stake missionary. He was told that his calling would

father murmured. Yet Nephi honored his father.

“I said unto my father: Whither shall I go to obtain food? “And it came to pass that he did inquire of the Lord” (1 Nephi 16:23–24).

I have the privilege of serving with Subandriyo, a great Church leader from Indonesia. He joined the Church as a young man. He is from a poor home without many material things. When Subandriyo fell in love with Steffi, he asked her mother if they could marry. He had no money, nothing for a traditional wedding party. But he said to Steffi’s mother, “I have no money for a wedding, but I promise you that I will make your daughter the happiest woman on earth and



It is in seeking the kingdom of God that we can know from on high, even by the Comforter, whither we shall go.

require 40 hours of proselyting per month in addition to time for other meetings. With faith, he accepted the call.

“I suffered no reduction in my accomplishments or advancement in my employment,” he recalls. “Indeed, my success in my work and my advancement in the firm seemed to accelerate rather than decline.”²

The Lord has promised, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). Surely it is in seeking the kingdom that we can know from on high, even by the Comforter, *whither we shall go*.

5. Honor your parents and be loyal to your family.

The prophet Nephi provides a wonderful example of this principle. During a difficult time, his brothers criticized him because he had broken his steel bow and his people had no way to obtain food. Even his

I will always take care of her.”³ He has kept that promise.

It was my good fortune to have met Connie while I was in college. We married and were blessed with a beautiful daughter when we were still in school. We had barely enough money to pay our bills. Our baby slept on a pillow in a cardboard box, and we slept on a mattress on the floor. Following graduation, our first purchase was a crib for our daughter. The floor was good enough for us. The baby crib lasted for five wonderful children. We are now in our 45th year together. Our first purchase of a baby crib is a wonderful memory associated with starting our family.

Connie has always been my support and helpmate. Without her indefatigable loyalty, the interesting path that has been our life together would not have been possible. Never looking back, she has supported our partnership with a willing heart and with complete fidelity.

6. Know that God knows you.

Our Heavenly Father knows each of us and will always be there for us. He was with us in the beginning. He knows us as we were then. He knows us as we are now. And He knows what we can become. (See D&C 93:23–24.)

When President Thomas S. Monson graduated from college, he received job offers from major multinational companies. In deciding where to go, he made his decision a matter of prayer. He has taught: “There are factors within you and within me, even basic principles with which we have been imbued from our creation, which seem to call out and demand of us our best. Those particular years and those cravings and those bits of inspiration seem to be telling you and me, ‘Seek the best in life. Look for opportunities where you can be of greatest service.’”⁴

Shortly after graduation, he had the opportunity to become a commissioned officer in the United States Naval Reserve, which meant he would need to be released from serving as a counselor in a bishopric. He prayed again and conferred with his former stake president, Elder Harold B. Lee (1899–1973), then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Elder Lee counseled him not to accept the commission as a naval officer. President Monson obeyed, declined the commission, and requested to be discharged. Not long afterward, he was called at age 22 to be the bishop of his ward.

President Monson has taught that our decisions determine our destiny. He said: “I would not be standing before you, had I not followed the counsel of a prophet, had I not prayed about a decision, had I not come to an appreciation of the important truth: The wisdom of God oft times appears as foolishness to men. But the greatest single lesson we can learn in mortality is that when God speaks and a man obeys, that man will always be right.”⁵

Our Heavenly Father knows us. He is there for us. If we seek Him, we will find Him. If we ask, He will answer. When we do our part, He is sure to do His part in pointing the way and answering the question, “Whither shall we go?” ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University–Hawaii on March 20, 2012. For the full address, visit devotional.byuh.edu/archive.

NOTES

1. Jared Carter, in Susan Easton Black, *Who’s Who in the Doctrine and Covenants* (1997), 53.
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, *Life’s Lessons Learned* (2011), 44–46.
3. Included with permission from Subandriyo.
4. See Heidi S. Swinton, *To the Rescue: The Biography of Thomas S. Monson* (2010), 115.
5. See Swinton, *To the Rescue*, 110–11.

Our Heavenly Father knows us. He is there for us. If we seek Him, we will find Him.



ANSWERING QUESTIONS

How can personal revelation help me?

“The Lord is most generous in giving revelation. . . . The Lord loves you and wants to reveal to you His mind and will. Could you ever imagine the Lord having a problem He could not solve? I can’t. Because you are entitled to revelation, He can help you solve every concern you have . . . if you will but seek His help.”

Elder Tad R. Callister of the Presidency of the Seventy, “The Power of the Priesthood in the Boy,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 53.



*I felt really lonely, so lonely that it seemed
no one cared about me anymore. I felt
miserable and worthless.*

Rescued

BY THE GOSPEL

*I was lonely and without hope,
until I felt the touch of the Master in my life.*

By Lionel Hougnon

It was a clear day in August 2006, and I was walking down the train tracks in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. I threw another empty beer bottle in the bushes and once again wiped my tears across my dirt-stained face. My life during the last several years had become virtually meaningless. I was a drunkard, and I was homeless, broke, and lonely. I had decided that the next day I was going to eliminate all my worries by running in front of the commuter train when it was going full speed, instantly ending my misery. I had located the spot where I would hide and watch for the train to approach. At that point, the engineer would have no time to stop.

*'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But held it up with a smile.¹*

Have you ever felt really lonely, so lonely that it seemed no one cared about you anymore? It's a miserable, hopeless feeling to have convinced yourself that you are worth nothing. I couldn't really remember the last time I had felt love from someone. I had no family or friends, and I don't think anyone knew I existed. My relationship with God was almost nonexistent. That night I drank a 12-pack of beer until I nearly passed out.

*“What am I bidden, good folks,” he cried,
“Who’ll start the bidding for me?”
“A dollar, a dollar”; then, “Two!” “Only two?
Two dollars, and who’ll make it three?”*

The next morning I prepared for my last day on earth. I bought and consumed another case of beer to further cloud my judgment. I then purchased a train ticket with the little money I had left. My plan was to ride the train to the destination I’d previously chosen, go to my hiding spot, and wait for the next train to come.

*“Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;
Going for three—” But no . . .*

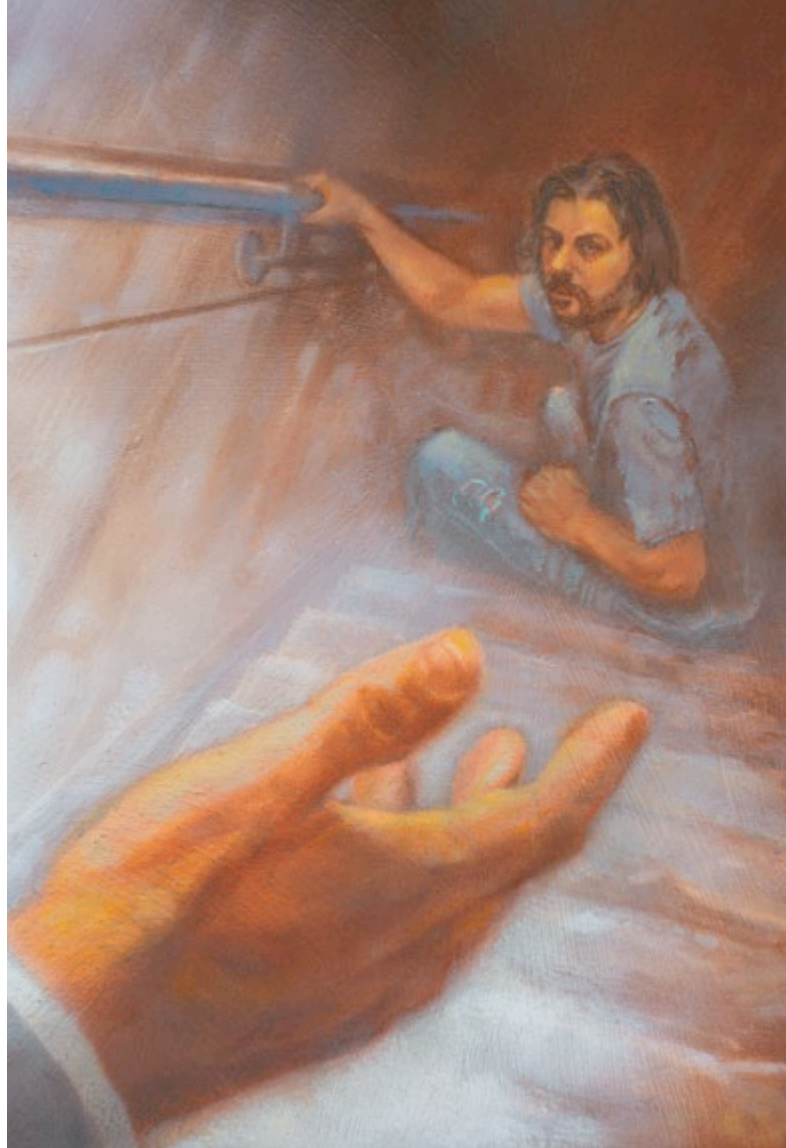
I approached the train, boarded, and took a seat near the rear of the last car. After the train left the station, I realized I had taken the wrong one! I was traveling in the opposite direction from what I had planned. I was frustrated because I now had to recalculate where I would get off and catch the right train to take me to my planned hiding spot. The train finally stopped where I could make a transfer. As I got off, I noticed that I was near a veterans’ hospital.

*From the room, far back, a gray-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow.*

After the train left, I started walking but hesitated and then stopped because I felt something directing me to walk toward the hospital. It was almost as though I was being led. I walked into the emergency room and checked myself in, beginning my uphill climb.

I was in the hospital for more than a year. I received emotional, mental, and physical aid to help me overcome my severe alcohol addiction, depression, and suicidal tendencies. After 14 months I was recovering physically, but I still felt spiritually dead.

Eventually I moved into an apartment for homeless vets recovering from alcohol addictions. Each day I walked around the neighborhood for exercise, often passing an LDS chapel with a sign out front: “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Visitors Welcome.”



*Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,
And tightening the loose strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet
As a caroling angel sings.*

One day I decided to call the visitors’ center on Temple Square. I told them about the sign I saw on the church and asked if I was really welcome. They told me I was more than welcome to attend services at the church. I felt comfortable about what they said and decided to go the next Sunday. When Sunday came, I dusted off my old suit, put on a white shirt and tie, and visited the church with the welcome sign. The service missionaries from the ward were expecting me. They greeted me with love and warmth. I felt as though I had known them before. I did not realize then that it would be those missionaries, the bishopric, and the ward members and leaders who would start helping me become in tune with the Savior.

Latter-day Saints greeted me with love and warmth the first Sunday I went to church. They started helping me become in tune with the Savior.

During the next several weeks, I began my study of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I attended all the meetings, including the Gospel Principles class. I started the missionary lessons and began reading the scriptures and praying. It wasn't long before I committed to a baptismal date.

My baptism and confirmation were the sweetest and most spiritual experiences I'd ever had. Tears came to my eyes as we opened with the song "I Know That My Redeemer Lives"² because I knew personally that He does live. As I was immersed in the water, I felt as though my sins were being washed from me and that the chains of my addiction were being broken. During my confirmation, I felt the power of the priesthood and the sweet spirit of the Holy Ghost provide me with spiritual strength. It seemed to me that my body had been reborn and refilled with spiritual energy. For the first time in my life, I felt I had self-worth. I knew that I was indeed clean and free of addiction.

*The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said, "What am I bid for the old violin?"
And he held it up with the bow.*

As I partook of the sacrament that first Sunday as a member of the Church, I realized that I was now drinking the waters of eternal life rather than drowning my sorrows with beer. I recall passing the sacrament to the bishop as a recently ordained deacon and feeling honored to be worthy to represent the Lord by passing His sacred emblems.

I now know that God has something for me to do in this life, and that is why He directed me to the hospital and to that ward. I feel a peace and a clear direction that I have never felt before.

*"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?
Two thousand! And who'll make it three?
Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice,
And going, and gone!" said he.*

It was only a few years ago that my soul and body were worth nothing to me or to the world. My entire life was focused on the next high from a case of beer. My god was alcohol, and it dictated my every move.

I dressed one Sunday in a new suit and my nicest shirt. I was going to bear my testimony in fast and testimony meeting. I had searched for several days for the right words. I had never spoken in front of a crowd, and I worried about the correct things to say. I had spent hours at a store looking at greeting cards, searching for the right phrase or word. The time finally came, and I walked to the front of the chapel. My palms were sweaty, and I was extremely nervous. I



ANSWERING QUESTIONS

What does it mean to be redeemed?

"Among the most significant of Jesus Christ's descriptive titles is Redeemer. . . . The word *redeem* means to pay off an obligation or a debt. *Redeem* can also mean to rescue or set free as by paying a ransom. If someone commits a mistake and then corrects it or makes amends, we say he has redeemed himself. Each of these meanings suggests different facets of the great Redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ through His Atonement, which includes, in the words of the dictionary, 'to deliver from sin and its penalties, as by a sacrifice made for the sinner.' [*Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (1988), 'redeem.']"

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Redemption," *Ensign*, May 2013, 109.



*After my baptism, I felt filled
with spiritual energy, clean,
and free of addiction.*

carefully pulled out the greeting card I had purchased and read the underlined message that almost expressed my feelings of thankfulness. I then took a moment, put down the card, and with tears in my eyes told the congregation how much I loved my Father in Heaven and how thankful I was to His servants for helping save my physical and spiritual life.

*The people cheered, but some of them cried,
“We do not quite understand
What changed its worth.” Swift came the reply:
“The touch of a master’s hand.”*

There were not many dry eyes in the congregation after the meeting. I hope that if there were members of the congregation who also needed to feel worthwhile, maybe my words offered a little hope and peace for them. I pray that they will be able to feel the touch of the Master as I have.

I identify with the woman in the New Testament who had an issue of blood and who tried to make her way to Jesus through the crowd of people in Jerusalem. She had faith that by simply touching the Savior’s garment she would be healed. (See Mark 5:25–34.)

It’s possible for us to touch the hands of the Master. I know because I have touched them. His hands are the hands of His servants, and they are outstretched continually.

*And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin.*

I often think about some of the other battered and scarred people I met back in the days of my alcohol addiction and severe depression. Each day we would beg and

try to scrounge enough change to purchase more beer. Day after day we sat drinking our lives away while the rest of the world passed us by. We were completely out of tune with anything spiritual and focused only on eliminating reality through alcohol. I am grateful to know now that the Savior always cared and that we were always Heavenly Father's children.

*But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand
The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.*

I was recently ordained a high priest and called as the second assistant in the ward high priests group. As hands were laid upon my head to set me apart, I truly felt the power of the priesthood, and I was once again reassured of my worth and the change in me wrought by the Master.

Not long ago I took a walk past the hiding spot where I had foolishly planned to wait before throwing myself in front of an oncoming train. I contemplated how close I had come to doing so and then bowed my head and said a prayer thanking my Father in Heaven for saving me.

Today I look around for people who are struggling as I was a few years ago. I find them all the time. The other day an individual in our ward who was suffering from severe mental and physical health problems asked if I would give him a blessing. I had never given a blessing before. I laid my hands on his head and felt the Holy Ghost whisper to me what to say. After the blessing, I put my hands on this brother's shoulders and realized that I was blessing someone similar to who I had been a couple of years before. It was a powerful feeling knowing that I could be a tuned instrument in the hands of the Lord.

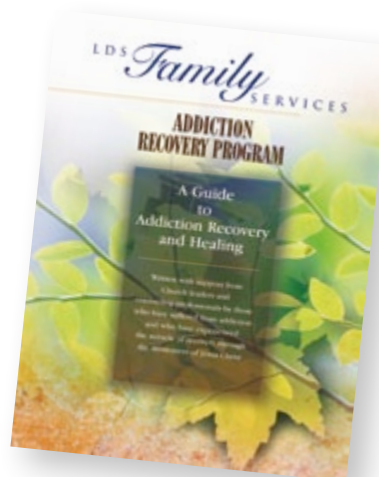
Today I am committed to be God's servant, reaching my hands down and trying to lift those who have lost hope. I pray that we will all reach out to those whom the world considers to be of little or no worth. May we lift them up as the Savior would, with love, understanding, and compassion.

You never know—the soul who is dusted off, tuned up, and played may someday be the one who does the dusting, tuning, and playing of beautiful music in the lives of others. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. These lines of poetry and the others that appear in this article are from Myra Brooks Welch, "The Touch of the Master's Hand," in *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People*, ed. Jack M. Lyon and others (1996), 182–83.
2. "I Know That My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 136.



ADDICTION RECOVERY PROGRAM

The Addiction Recovery Program, offered through LDS Family Services, includes free and confidential support meetings for people dealing with addictions to alcohol, drugs (both prescription and illegal), tobacco, coffee and tea, pornography, inappropriate sexual behavior, gambling, codependency, and disorders associated with eating. To find a meeting near you, visit addictionrecovery.lds.org. Your priesthood leader may also have information about nearby meetings.

Even if you cannot attend one of the meetings, you may benefit from the program study guide. *A Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing* is available from Distribution Services (store.lds.org) or as a PDF when you visit the "Overcome Addiction" section of the Addiction Recovery Program website. The guide is available in several languages.

1,000 THINGS

to Be Thankful For

By **Richard M. Romney**
Church Magazines

“You need a number,” one of the students said when the English teacher announced the assignment. “What do you mean?” the teacher replied.

“You know,” the student said, “like on a magazine cover. You don’t just say, ‘Write an essay about several things you’re thankful for.’ You need to say, ‘10 Things to Be Thankful For,’ or ‘50 Things to Be Thankful For.’”

And pretty quickly, the class turned into an auction. “I bet I can give you 100 things to be thankful for,” one student said. And the class settled on that.

But when my then 12-year-old daughter Charlotte got home and started working on her essay—which was due in one week—she felt hard pressed to come up with a list that long.

An Expanding List

Charlotte is a faithful Latter-day Saint, and she began as I knew she would, with the things she is most grateful for—Heavenly Father, the Savior, the Holy Ghost, the plan of salvation, the Atonement, the scriptures, prayer, Church meetings, seminary.

“Will your teacher be all right with you being so religious in an English essay?” I asked.

“She told us we could include anything, as long as we’re talking about what we, personally, are thankful for,”

Charlotte said. And she continued, adding additional predictable items—family, home, food, clothing, pets.

To expand the list, she began to itemize. Rather than writing just “the gospel,” she also included temple covenants, missionary work, baptism, and service. Rather than saying “my family,” she listed people individually—name after name, starting with her mother, who passed away when Charlotte was just eight years old, then her father, her brothers, her sister, her sister-in-law, her cousins, aunts, and uncles. Then she went back in time to grandparents both living and dead, great-grandparents she had heard us talk about or had read about in family records, as well as earlier ancestors and the legacy they created.

That led her to gratitude for all the journals and photo books her mother left behind. Soon the list included memories, birthdays, weddings, youth conferences, the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, refrigerators, cinnamon rolls, breakfast, and choir practice.

But by bedtime her list was still short of 100.

Sibling Chivalry

So the next day Charlotte called her sister, Brittany, who was away at college in another part of Utah. Charlotte explained what she was doing and asked for ideas. Brittany gave her several suggestions—communication, technology,



a warm fire and hot chocolate on a cold winter night, the good Samaritan who had rescued Brittany when her car slid off the road in the snow, green lights when you're going somewhere in a hurry. And last but not least, she said with a pixie-like laugh, "Strawberries!"

Then came an unexpected idea. "I think you can do more than 100 things," Brittany said. "Why not come up with 1,000?" And Brittany immediately decided to help her sister by getting students in her photography class to contribute their ideas—education, home-cooked dinners, flowers, gentle rain, and happy music. They offered dozens of candidates for the list.

Others in our family also joined in. Taylor, a brother in Arizona, added hard work and good neighbors. Miles, a brother in North Carolina, urged Charlotte to include freedom as well as Church humanitarian efforts throughout the world. Another brother, McKay, wanted to make sure Charlotte included missionary service and living prophets among her dozens of items. And so the list quickly grew and grew.

Of course some suggestions were silly, almost frivolous—sunglasses, teddy bears, can openers, gelatin desserts.

*When you count
your blessings one
by one, they
really add up.*

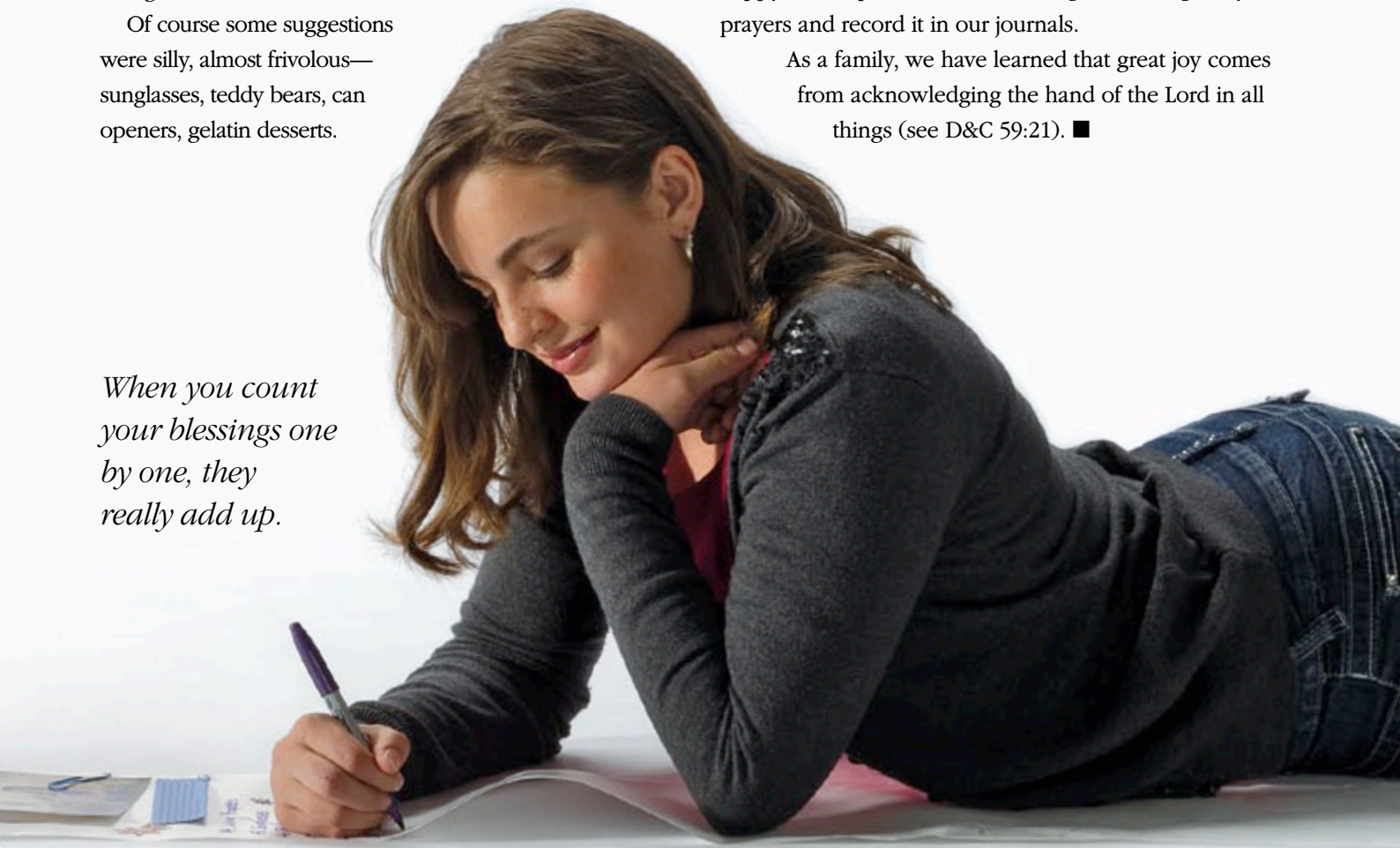
But others were profound. I particularly recall what one of the students in the photography class said about being grateful for light, from the blue rays of morning to the bright reds of sunset and everything in between. "I am grateful for light because it is the language of creation," he said. He could have been quoting Doctrine and Covenants 88:6–13.

Total Joy

The week spent searching for things to be thankful for changed our family. Charlotte completed her assignment with a nice two-page description of thankfulness. She attached a list that finally totaled 1,213, a list that today, at age 16, she still has in a box stored in her closet. But the total wasn't important. What mattered was that, long after Charlotte's essay was written, the attitude of gratitude lingered.

The marvelous result was that we now have a family tradition—and I have a personal tradition—of finding something each day to rejoice in. We have found that when we are thankful day after day, our attitudes are more often happy and hopeful. We reflect that gratitude regularly in our prayers and record it in our journals.

As a family, we have learned that great joy comes from acknowledging the hand of the Lord in all things (see D&C 59:21). ■



my Prayers *of* Gratitude

As we struggled financially, I felt that we had so many needs to pray for. Could I really focus my prayers on just gratitude?



By Christie Skrinak

Years ago my husband and I purchased a home we adored and spent a lot of time and money fixing it up. Eighteen months later, the economy took a dive. We had to spend our hard-earned savings on a hefty mortgage and a slew of unforeseen expenses.

Months of trials and financial hardships went by. We hit a particularly difficult month of home and auto repairs, medical bills, and a decrease in pay. Our savings quickly disappeared.

I remember praying, asking over and over again for the things we needed. Consumed by stress, I found it difficult to care properly for our children and our family's needs as I was falling into depression and despair. Still, I continued to pray, seeking comfort and knowing prayer to be the anchor keeping me from falling further into darkness.

After months of praying for help, I began thinking of ways to pray more fervently. The Spirit brought to my mind counsel from priesthood leaders and scriptures that taught the importance of expressing gratitude to Heavenly Father. These promptings helped me realize that I needed to express deeper appreciation for my blessings and ask less for the things my family and I needed. I decided that I would try for one week to let go of my daily pleadings and express only gratitude in my prayers.

It was difficult. I felt my family had so many needs. I felt as though I was letting my family down by not asking for the blessings we so desperately needed. How would the Lord bless me when I didn't ask?

Despite my nervousness about it, I tried. I soon realized that my prayers were no longer monotonous pleadings. I regained the ability to recognize the needs of others and see beyond my problems to the blessings that were still mine. My gratitude was drawing me closer to the Savior, comforting me in ways I could not have received otherwise.

A scripture kept coming to mind: "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little

faith?" (Matthew 6:30). This scripture humbled me as I continued to pray. Through gratitude, I was learning more about true humility.

As the week progressed, my prayers changed from "I thank Thee for food, clothing, and shelter" to "I thank Thee for the family that Thou hast preserved and kept well, for the protection Thou dost continue to afford us. I thank Thee for the provisions Thou wilt continue to bless us with." I also remember praying, "I thank Thee for our dependence upon Thee, for Thy mindfulness of us, and for the pathway Thou art preparing for us to escape this bondage, whatever it may be." Somewhere along the line, my prayers became prayers of not just gratitude, not just humility, but of faith also. Without asking for blessings, I was expressing faith that the Lord would provide for us, and my faith was growing exponentially.

During these prayers, my thoughts were often drawn to the sacrifice of the early Saints, and I would ask myself what I was willing to sacrifice. A few more days passed, and we put our beloved home up for sale. The real estate market was severely depressed, but amazingly we were blessed to sell our home. Though we took a significant loss—as we had expected—our family was now in a position to begin building a more firm temporal foundation.

Still, selling our home in such difficult times is not the miracle that I take with me from this experience. The miracle is the faith I developed and the understanding I gained. President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, declared gratitude to be a "saving principle."¹ I think I experienced something of what he was talking about as I turned my heart and prayers to Heavenly Father, receiving comfort, peace, and guidance. My newfound testimony of gratitude is that it inspires humility, humility encourages faith, and faith brings miracles. ■

The author lives in Nevada, USA.

NOTE

1. See James E. Faust, "Gratitude as a Saving Principle," *Ensign*, May 1990, 85–87.

HOPE

THE
HEALING
BALM
OF

*We all have
a need for
life-affirming
hope. Here
are some
strategies for
developing
this attribute.*

By Vaughn E. Worthen

Associate Director, Counseling and Career Center, Brigham Young University

Jewish psychiatrist Viktor Frankl and his father, mother, brother, and wife were all imprisoned in concentration camps during World War II. He and a sister, who had emigrated before the war, were the only survivors in his family. During three years as a prisoner of war (prisoner number 119,104), Frankl witnessed and endured great suffering and cruelty. He noted, “It is a peculiarity of man that he can only live by looking to the future.” He warned that “the sudden loss of hope and courage can have a deadly effect” and that “the prisoner who had lost faith in the future—his future—was doomed.”¹

The importance of hope has long been heralded. The writer of Proverbs states, “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12), and Moroni warned that “if ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair” (Moroni 10:22). An Irish proverb states, “Hope is the physician of each misery.”

We are commonly exposed to negative news, economic worries, reports of natural disasters, wars and rumors of wars, personal and family adversity, health concerns, dire future forecasts, and the drip of daily worries. There is a great need for life-affirming hope.



Hope Defined

At a time when his family, religion, and civilization were being destroyed, Mormon declared, “I would speak unto you concerning hope” (Moroni 7:40). To what source did Mormon look for unfailing hope? He instructs, “Ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal” (Moroni 7:41). This is the ultimate of all we might hope for. To possess this hope is to believe that today’s pain is only a way station on the road to deliverance. It requires patience with current circumstances. It is the belief that there will be a coming day when “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain” (Revelation 21:4). Hope’s lifeblood is faith, and like faith, hope is required to lay hold on eternal life (see Ether 12:32). Through “meekness and lowliness of heart,” we can receive “the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope” (Moroni 8:26).

Divine hope is sustained not because things always turn out as we wish but because we know that “all things wherewith [we] have been afflicted shall work together for [our] good” and to the glory of the Lord’s name (D&C 98:3).

President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “At times there appears to be no light at the tunnel’s end—no dawn to break the night’s darkness. We feel surrounded by the pain of broken hearts, the disappointment of shattered dreams, and the despair of vanished hopes. . . . If you find yourself in such a situation, I plead with you to turn to our Heavenly Father in faith. He will lift you and guide you. He will not always take your afflictions from you, but He will comfort and lead you with love through whatever storm you face.”²

Hope inspires confidence that when life’s storms “beat upon [us],” there is no storm that can “drag [us] down to the gulf of misery and endless wo” when we are built on the sure foundation, the “rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God” (Helaman 5:12). Hope is the portal to peace.

Hope develops in the crucible of experience if the right ingredients are present. Those ingredients include the following: faith in God; righteous living; positive expectations;

living with purpose; setting and working toward goals; initiating and sustaining personal effort; bridling thoughts, emotions, and behaviors; a willingness to tackle challenges; and competence in creating healthy relationships.

Benefits of Hope

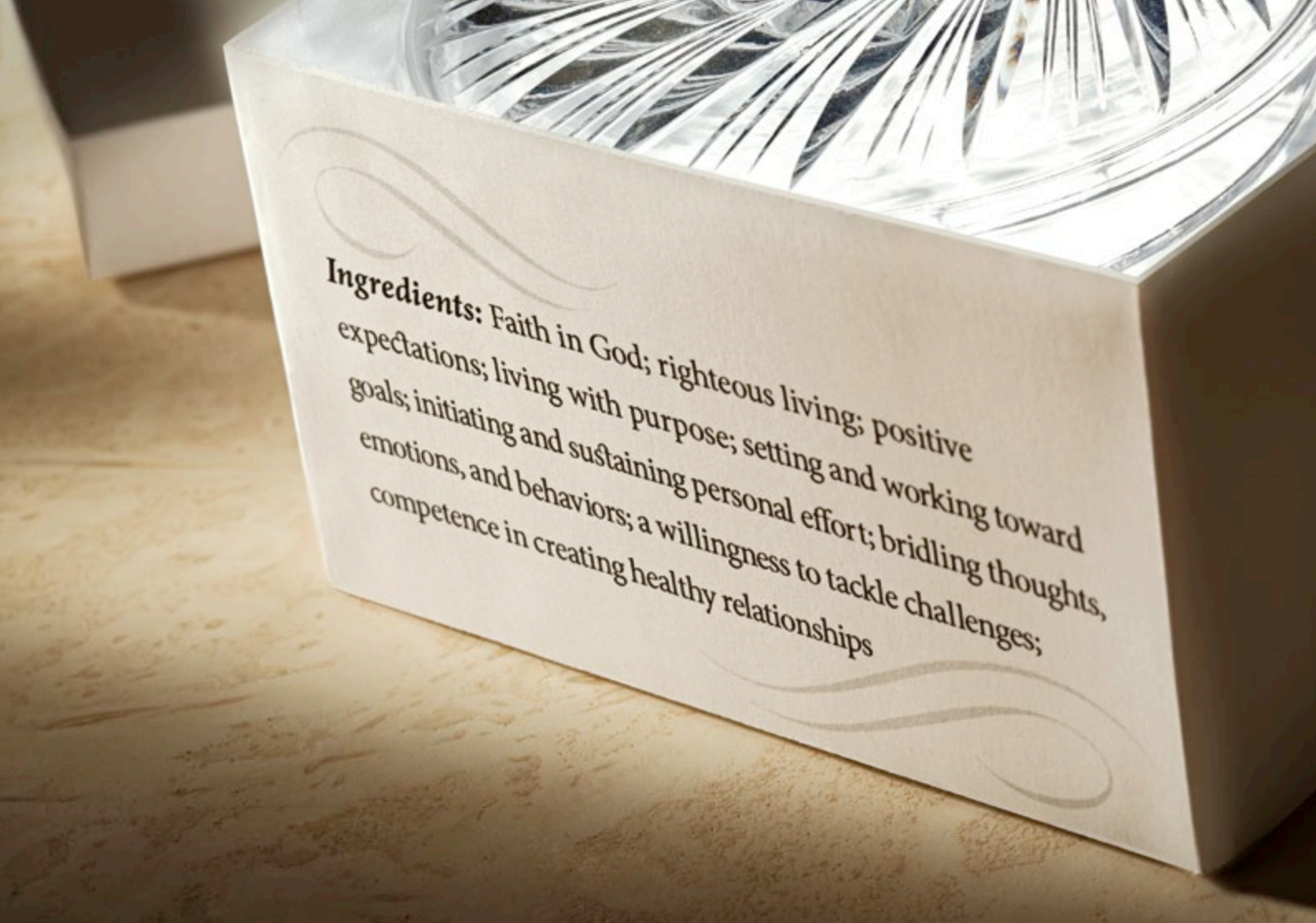
Research demonstrates that hopeful individuals make healthier lifestyle choices, recover from illness and injury more effectively, and experience increased life expectancies. They manifest less depression and anxiety, find greater purpose in life, and experience improved mental health and increased life satisfaction. They persevere when barriers arise, are more effective problem solvers, and adapt when circumstances warrant it. They are successful in finding benefits from adversity. They enjoy more positive relationships and seek and receive social support. Hopeful students experience enhanced academic success.³

As a psychologist at Brigham Young University working with students in distress, and as a former bishop having worked with discouraged and troubled ward members, I have observed the power of hope and its ability to sustain and strengthen. I have also witnessed the destructive and demoralizing effects that arise from hopelessness. In my experience, profound and sustaining hope is more than an attitude; it is an orientation of the spirit toward God. Those who lack this orientation are at a significant disadvantage. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has implored us to remember that “regardless of how desperate things may seem or how desperate they may yet become, . . . you can always have hope. Always.”⁴

Strategies for Cultivating Hope

While hope is surely a gift from God, it is also an attribute that can be cultivated. The following strategies may be helpful in strengthening the capacity for hope.

Trust in God. We can’t always see the shore that marks the end of our present difficulties, but we can receive assurance that God’s “furious wind” always blows us “towards the promised land” (Ether 6:5). Remember that “man doth



Ingredients: Faith in God; righteous living; positive expectations; living with purpose; setting and working toward goals; initiating and sustaining personal effort; bridling thoughts, emotions, and behaviors; a willingness to tackle challenges; competence in creating healthy relationships

not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend” (Mosiah 4:9). We need to have faith that “he doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world” (2 Nephi 26:24) and that “all these things shall give [us] experience, and shall be for [our] good” (D&C 122:7). Rather than ask why we are faced with trials, we generally experience better outcomes when we concentrate on efforts to study God’s plan for our happiness, align our lives with His will, repent as necessary, and follow in His footsteps.

Focus on the positive. Although challenges arise and need to be dealt with, it is counterproductive to dwell too much on pain and difficulty. The scriptures counsel us to “let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly” (D&C 121:45). Such elevating and sanctifying garnishing comes from recognizing and accentuating the positive; taking time to count our blessings; evaluating what we view, listen to, and read as well as the way we spend our time; and filling our lives with things that are

uplifting and strengthening. As a result, our “confidence [will] wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45), who is the source of all abiding hope.

Identify and challenge negative beliefs. Negative thoughts are the termites of the soul. If we find ourselves frequently thinking or saying, “I can’t,” “It’s too hard,” or “It’s unfair,” then we might ask ourselves if such thoughts are accurate and if they are helping us build the lives we want. It may help to replace these inaccurate assumptions with more constructive thoughts, such as, “I will try,” “I will give it my best,” and “Life is what I make of it.” If unproductive, negative thinking remains persistent and significantly impairs our growth, we should consider seeking help, including the aid of a professional counselor.

Associate with hopeful people and environments. The faith and courage of others inspire and help us believe in the power of possibility. We can think of positive people we know and seek opportunities to associate with them

and learn from them by observing how they approach life. We can then experiment with something we have discovered through these observations by trying it out in our own lives.

Develop confidence. Confidence is the breeding ground for hope. Confidence is generated by confronting challenges and striving for and achieving meaningful goals. We can gain confidence by tackling a task we have been putting off, engaging in a difficult conversation we might have been avoiding, or working on developing a talent. We should focus on effort and progress rather than complete success. Confidence is not the certainty of success but rather the conclusion that failure does not determine our worth—we lose nothing by trying.

Improve self-control. Hope is created when we possess meaningful goals, believe in our ability to achieve them, and create workable plans to reach them. Efforts to harness thinking, emotions, and behaviors improve self-control. We can choose a goal and then create a plan to make it happen. This might involve learning a language; memorizing quotations or scriptures; establishing a desired habit; or controlling time, eating, exercise, or finances. We can augment these efforts by reviewing successes we have enjoyed in the past and reminding ourselves that effort pays dividends. We should be both patient and persistent in working toward our goals.

Discover unexpected benefits. Life's menu serves each of us our portion of spinach—we may not like such fare, but it can strengthen us. The trials we face can provide unexpected benefits. We can identify something we have struggled with or considered a failure and then ask ourselves questions such as the following:

- Is there anything I have learned or can learn from this experience?
- Are there others who have experienced something like this whom I could emulate?
- Can I develop increased compassion for others and their difficulties because of this experience?
- Can this bring me closer to God?

Many of life's most important lessons are learned from the trials and challenges we experience.

Rejoice in life's small victories. Hope emerges and is sustained when we regularly discover reasons for it. Capitalize on the small victories that unfold daily, such as completing assignments, submitting job applications, reading your scriptures, or exercising for a few minutes each day. These accomplishments provide proof that effort is rewarded, lead to enhanced self-confidence, contribute to effective goal-setting, and instill belief that success can be achieved. Try to notice and celebrate at least two of these victories each day.

Take care of yourself. Hope is easier to develop and maintain when we are physically healthy, emotionally resilient, mentally alert, involved in supportive relationships, engaged in interesting work and hobbies, and spiritually nourishing and developing ourselves. Evaluate these dimensions of life. Choose one aspect to work on and establish goals and plans to improve. Just working to improve that aspect can produce hope, even if success is incomplete. Living a balanced and healthy life provides a shield against the pounding surf of the storms of mortality.

Seek spiritual or professional help. When our best efforts are insufficient, we may need spiritual guidance or professional help. Talking with religious leaders may lead to spiritual healing. Medical conditions that interfere with hope attainment may require treatment. Mental health concerns may need professional attention. In every effort, continue to lean on God. Do not suffer alone.

Heavenly hope is predicated on acceptance of divine will. It is enabled through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It is received as a gift and confirmed by feeling God's love for us. Hope is fed by faith and provides a foundation for charity. The *doctrine of hope* is based on faith and trust in a benevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent God. The *principle of hope* can be applied both spiritually and psychologically. We can do much to establish habits of hope and an optimistic orientation. Hope is the anchor for the soul, the sail for our dreams, and the balm for our pains. It is the one-size solution that fits all. ■

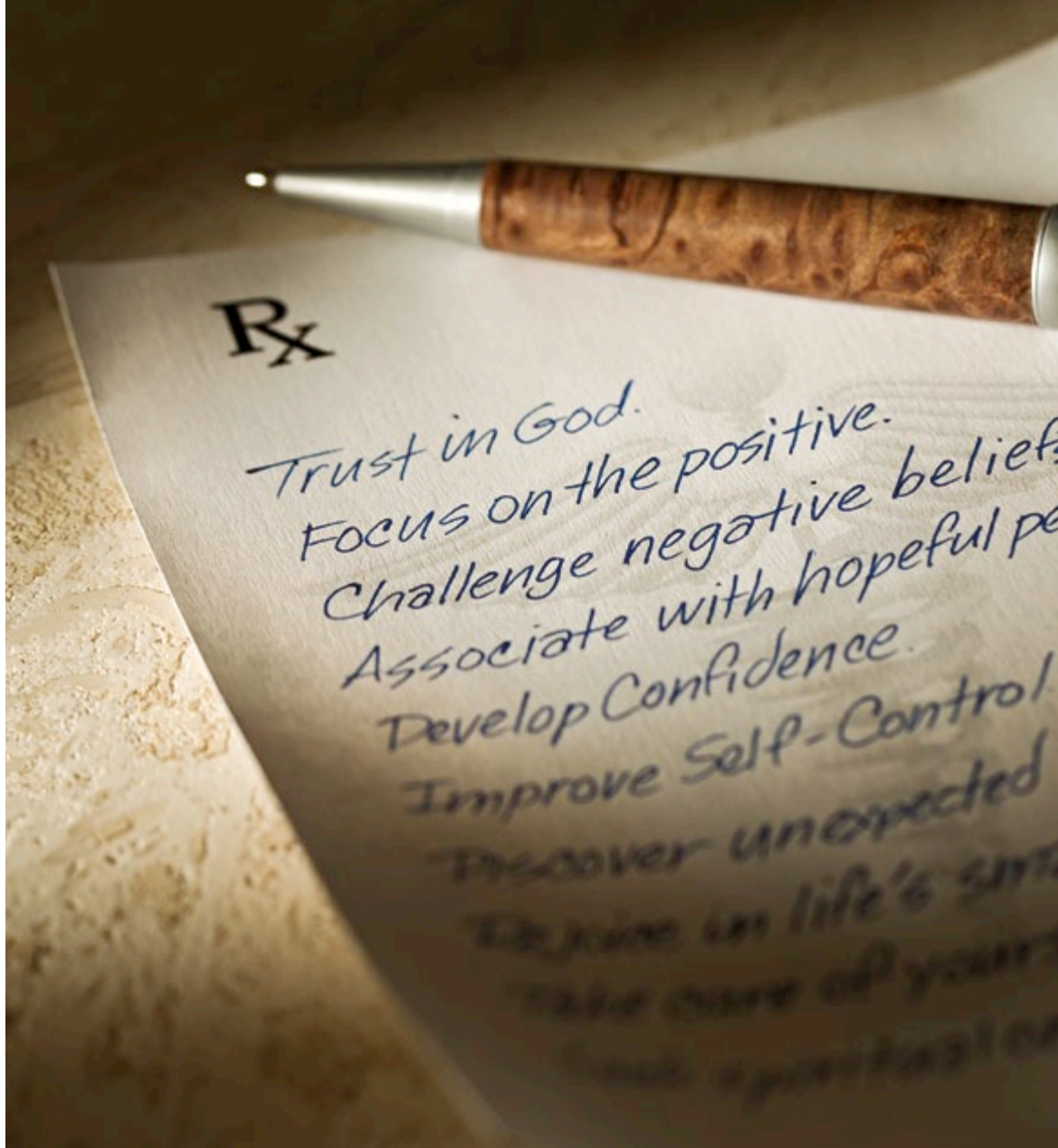


GOD'S LIGHT

"There may be some among you who feel darkness encroaching upon you. You may feel burdened by worry, fear, or doubt. To you and to all of us, I repeat a wonderful and certain truth: God's light is real. It is available to all! It gives life to all things. [See D&C 88:11–13.] It has the power to soften the sting of the deepest wound. It can be a healing balm for the loneliness and sickness of our souls. In the furrows of despair, it can plant the seeds of a brighter hope. . . . It can illuminate the path before us and lead us through the darkest night into the promise of a new dawn.

"This is 'the Spirit of Jesus Christ,' which gives 'light to every man that cometh into the world.' [D&C 84:45–46.]"

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "The Hope of God's Light," *Ensign*, May 2013, 75.



NOTES

1. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (1963), 115, 120, 117.
2. Thomas S. Monson, "Looking Back and Moving Forward," *Ensign*, May 2008, 90.
3. For more information about research into the effects of hope, see the following: Glen Affleck and Howard Tennen, "Construing Benefits from Adversity: Adaptational Significance and Dispositional Underpinnings," *Journal of Personality*, vol. 64, no. 4 (Dec. 1996), 899–922; Jennifer S. Cheavens, David B. Feldman, Amber Gum, Scott T. Michael, and C. R. Snyder, "Hope Therapy in a Community Sample: A Pilot Investigation," *Social Indicators Research*, vol. 77 (2006), 61–78; David B. Feldman and C. R. Snyder, "Hope and the Meaningful Life: Theoretical and Empirical Associations between Goal-Directed Thinking and Life Meaning," *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, vol. 24, no. 3 (2005), 401–21; Rich Gilman, Jameika Dooley, and Dan Florell, "Relative Levels of Hope and Their Relationship with Academic and Psychological Indicators among Adolescents," *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2006), 166–78; Paul Kwon, "Hope, Defense Mechanisms, and Adjustment: Implications for False Hope and Defensive Hopelessness," *Journal of Personality*, vol. 70, no. 2 (Apr. 2002), 207–31; Toshihiko Maruta, Robert C. Colligan, Michael Malinchoc, and Kenneth P. Offord, "Optimists vs. Pessimists: Survival Rate among Medical Patients Over a 30-Year Period," *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, vol. 75 (2000), 140–43; Christopher Peterson, "Explanatory Style as a Risk Factor for Illness," *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1988), 119–130; Christopher Peterson and Tracy A. Steen, "Optimistic Explanatory Style," in *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, ed. C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez (2002), 244–56; Michael F. Scheier and Charles S. Carver, "Effects of Optimism on Psychological and Physical Well-Being: Theoretical Overview and Empirical Update," *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1992), 201–28; C. R. Snyder, "Hope Theory: Rainbows in the Mind," *Psychological Inquiry*, vol. 13, no. 4 (2002), 249–75; C. R. Snyder, Kevin L. Rand, and David R. Sigmon, "Hope Theory: A Member of the Positive Psychology Family," in *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, ed. C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez (2002), 257–67.
4. M. Russell Ballard, "The Joy of Hope Fulfilled," *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 32.

PROVIDING CARE FOR *Elderly* Loved Ones

By **Todd F. Cope**
Registered Nurse

Delia (names have been changed) was a wonderful neighbor. Even when she was well into her 90s, her house was one that neighbors loved to visit. That's why so many people were willing to help her. But as Delia grew older, she began to expect her neighbors and ward members to meet all of her needs.

With encouragement from her bishop, a concerned visiting teacher contacted Delia's daughter, Anne. She explained to Anne that neighbors and ward members were happy to help but that Delia had become demanding, even calling people in the middle of the night.

Anne arranged for Delia to see her doctor, who diagnosed Delia with dementia. Anne immediately hired a part-time caregiver to help Delia with household tasks, and she recruited the help of family members who lived nearby. With this help and the willingness of neighbors and ward members, Delia was checked on daily. These arrangements worked well for a time, but concerns for her safety soon surfaced when the caregiver arrived one day to find a dish towel smoldering in the oven. Delia's doctor recommended that she receive around-the-clock care.

After a great deal of prayer, contemplation, and discussion, Anne determined that the best way to meet Delia's needs was to move her to

*As in all things,
we can look to
the example
of the Savior
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regarding
elderly loved
ones.*

an assisted-living facility. Anne found herself in tears after moving her mother, and she contemplated having Delia move in with her. Seeing his mother's guilt, Anne's son helped her recognize that under the circumstances, she was doing what was best for Delia.

"Honour Thy Father and Thy Mother"

One blessing of modern medicine is the greatest life expectancy in modern history. But this blessing also presents challenges for many as they wrestle with the realities of caring for an aging or otherwise dependent loved one. Latter-day Saints often feel an additional burden because of the desire to follow the loving and appropriate admonition of modern prophets to care for aging and dependent family members.

The Lord's charge to "honour thy father and thy mother" (Exodus 20:12) sets the standard for a child's responsibility toward his or her parents. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) counseled families to "give their elderly parents and grandparents the love, care, and attention they deserve." President Benson added, "When the elderly become unable to care for themselves, even with supplemental aid, care can be provided in the home of a family member when possible."¹



The ideal situation allows elderly loved ones to remain in their own homes, where they can receive supplemental care as necessary. If needs increase to the point that being on their own is no longer practical, they can live with another family member. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “When aged parents who are not able to live alone are invited to live with their children, this keeps them in the family circle and allows them to continue their close ties with all members of the family.”²

Most Latter-day Saints are aware of the responsibility to care for elderly loved ones and the blessings that accompany such service. Yet many struggle for an understanding of their personal role in fulfilling this sacred duty. As a professional caregiver, I regularly meet with people who feel trapped between their sense of obligation to care for aging loved ones and the realities of life.

Provide as Best You Can

Unfortunately, the ideal situation does not exist for everyone. The demands of modern society often mean that the homes of potential caregivers are unoccupied for a good portion of the day. These realities of life may not, of themselves, prevent adult children from taking care of their elderly parents, but they can interfere with the ability to personally provide that care. In any case, the admonition is simply to provide and does not include specific or personal instructions. For some, care may be provided in the form of personal assistance at the bedside; for others, it may be in the form of financial or other personal resources. We must simply provide in the best way we can.

The Lord does not expect us to give more than we can reasonably give (see Mosiah

WELFARE GUIDELINES

“When Church members are doing all they can to provide for themselves but cannot meet their basic needs, generally they should first turn to their families for help. When this is not sufficient or feasible, the Church stands ready to help.”

Handbook 2: Administering the Church (2010), 6.1.1.

4:27) and surely would not be pleased with the negative disruption of a family because of a sense of duty or a perceived obligation to care for an elderly loved one at home. It is my experience that when such attempts are made simply to avoid feelings of guilt, the result is often substandard care, caregiver burnout, and family resentment toward loved ones.

Modern society typically offers several appropriate options for care. Care can be arranged in the home, in an institution, or through a combination of both, depending on individual needs and circumstances. In determining where a loved one’s needs will best be met, seek the advice of those who are or have been in similar circumstances, along with that of competent professionals. Where possible, those receiving care should have input regarding care decisions. Consult with other family members and with your bishop or branch president, and attend the temple to seek guidance. Prayerfully consider counsel received from all sources (see D&C 9:7–9).

“We should prayerfully seek inspiration and direction in caring for the elderly,” said President Benson. “There is always a great diversity of individuals and individual needs.”³

Remain Actively Involved

If the best care decision for your parent or other loved one is placement in an appropriate care facility, be aware that your obligation does not end there. Elder Oaks said: “When it is not possible for parents to be cared for in the homes of their children, so that some type of institutional care is obtained, their children should remember that institutional care will generally focus on physical needs. Members of the family

should make regular visits and contacts to provide the spiritual and emotional sustenance and the love that must continue in the family relationship for mortal life and throughout all eternity.”⁴

Regardless of the care arrangements, remain actively involved in your loved one’s life. This involvement will vary with individual circumstances, but consistent, meaningful association will be a blessing to you and your loved one.

When my father’s health declined in his senior years, the family came together and determined the best way to meet his needs. Our circumstances, individual skills, and abilities combined to create an ideal situation that allowed us to provide care in his home until his death. As a family, we still have the privilege of working together in caring for our mother, now in her 94th year. This service brings great joy into the lives of everyone involved, but it is not always easy. Even with 11 living children and their families working together, Mother still needs care that includes the selfless service of concerned neighbors and ward members.

Turn to the Lord

Most of us will at some time be blessed with the opportunity to assist in the care of an elderly loved one. Though we may feel

unprepared, we can turn to the Lord for direction in making the difficult decisions that are part of this responsibility. Our individual roles in providing care may vary, but the responsibility to participate in providing that care remains constant for each of us.

As in all things, we can look to the example of the Savior in making care decisions regarding elderly loved ones. Even in His final hours, He made appropriate arrangements for the care of His mother in her time of need (see John 19:26–27). May we all do likewise for our loved ones. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Elderly in the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 6, 7.
2. Dallin H. Oaks, “Honour Thy Father and Thy Mother,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 16.
3. Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Elderly,” 8.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, “Honour,” 16.

*The Spirit can both guide and comfort us as we seek to serve elderly loved ones. President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught: “The Holy Ghost is sent to you and to those you care for. You will be strengthened and yet inspired to know the limits and extent of your ability to serve. The Spirit will comfort you when you may wonder, ‘Did I do enough?’” (“The Caregiver,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 124).*





By Elder David B. Haight (1906–2004)
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

WHAT DOES JESUS MEAN TO US TODAY?

Elder David B. Haight was ordained an Apostle on January 8, 1976, and served in that quorum until his death in 2004. As an Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, he delivered this address in general conference on April 6, 1974. For the full address, see the May 1974 Ensign at LDS.org.

The Jesus I know and believe in is Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. This witness has been revealed to me by the blessing and influence of the Holy Ghost. I know that He is . . . the Creator of the world and all that is in it, that He is our Savior who loves each of us and who died on the cross for us, who teaches us compassion and forgiveness, the friend of all, healer of the sick, the giver of peace to all who will listen and believe.

Modern man must not be led astray from ancient and latter-day truths—truths and spiritual experiences that occurred when prophets walked and talked with Jesus. What did Jesus mean to the ancient apostles? What did He mean to Peter?

Mark, writing of the events on the morning of the Resurrection, states that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James were directed by the [two angels] they encountered as they entered the sepulcher, “Go . . . tell his disciples and Peter” (Mark 16:7). They were directed specifically to inform Peter. Peter and John hurried to the sepulcher. Peter entered, saw the neatly folded linen clothes and the handkerchief that had been about His head. Peter was now a personal witness of this great event.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter . . . preached of the glorious gospel and testified of Jesus of Nazareth. People were pricked in their hearts and asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). And Peter, with that newly developed depth of conviction, replied, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Three thousand souls believed and were baptized. They felt of the spirit and power of our Lord’s senior Apostle. Could we ever doubt what Jesus meant to Peter?

I am always strengthened by the fervor and magnitude of John’s conviction. There was never any doubt. He testified: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,

and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by him. . . . In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:1, 3–5). . . .

It may be beyond our own comprehension to realize what Jesus meant to Nephi when the resurrected Christ appeared on the western continent, saying, “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.” . . .

Then Nephi writes, “The multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet” (3 Nephi 11:10, 15). . . . They had been in His presence, and they could testify.

What did Jesus mean to the boy Joseph Smith? The appearance of God the Father and Jesus Christ to the boy prophet in modern times is described in his own words: “I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun. . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17). . . .

Spiritual knowledge and spiritual experiences must not and need not disappear from the mind of modern man, because the testimonies of ancient and modern prophets have been recorded for man's own benefit, and today believers testify of these truths. Modern man must replace uncertainties and doubt with a desire to know more of Jesus.

It is our responsibility and glorious opportunity to bear constant testimony of Jesus the Christ. We must testify to

the world of His godship, the actuality of His birth in the flesh of both divine and mortal parentage. He was selected to perform the essential mission of the Restoration and Redemption. This He did—He was crucified and rose from the grave, thus making it possible for every human being to be resurrected through this marvelous Atonement of Jesus, saint and sinner alike.

All can be placed on the pathway to eternal progression. Everyone who accepts Him and is repentant receives

forgiveness of his past sins and the opportunity to gain exaltation. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Could the mind of man possibly develop a more noble concept for the destiny of man? Jesus Christ is the central figure.

To the question "What does Jesus mean to modern man?" I testify that He means everything. ■

Punctuation, capitalization, and citations standardized.



Modern man must not be led astray from ancient and latter-day truths—truths and spiritual experiences that occurred when prophets walked and talked with Jesus.

MUSIC AND DANCING

Since music is such a prominent factor in the lives of most youth, it's important to help young men and young women focus on music that inspires and uplifts. On pages 32–33 of this month's *New Era*, Sister Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president, writes about the influence of music. When we use music for good, she explains, it “enhances our senses, touches our emotions, and creates memories.”

The ideas below can help you teach your children about the importance of listening to good music.

Suggestions for Teaching Youth

- With your teen, read the “Music and Dancing” section of *For the Strength of Youth* ([booklet, 2011], 22–23). Consider talking about how and why the standards discussed will strengthen your teen and help him or her stay converted to the gospel. You may want to listen to some of your teen's music and discuss together how it makes each of you feel as you listen to it and how it measures up to the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*. You'll find youth experiences in the video “The Song of

the Heart” at lds.org/go/music1 and these articles: “Changing My Music” (lds.org/go/music2) and “Sitting on the Sidelines” (lds.org/go/music3).

- Watch “The Kyiv Ukraine Temple Youth Cultural Celebration” Mormon Messages for Youth video at lds.org/go/music4. Discuss how we can use music and dancing to praise and show thanks to our Heavenly Father (see D&C 25:12; 136:28). Reflect on ways your family can use music and dancing to honor the Lord.
- Find free music downloads and streaming of inspirational music at lds.org/youth/music.

Suggestions for Teaching Children

- Have a music-based family home evening. Let each family member choose a favorite hymn or Primary song and share why it's a favorite. Then have the whole family sing the songs together. Visit lds.org/music to find instrumental or vocal accompaniment for the hymns and Primary songs.
- Consider holding a family home evening where you listen to



SCRIPTURES ON MUSIC AND DANCING

Psalm 149:1–3

Isaiah 12:5

Ephesians 5:19

Doctrine and Covenants

25:12; 136:28

music or learn a cultural dance from the country you live in or from countries your ancestors are from. You could even create a special song or dance unique to your family.

- Read Sister Wixom's message and try the sentence-completion experiment she mentions in the first few paragraphs; use additional songs if desired. Have one person select a song and only say (not sing) the first line or part of the chorus. See how few words it takes to guess the song. Or have a person hum a song and see who can remember the words. Discuss how music and lyrics can influence us even if we don't think we're really paying attention to the words or beat when a song is played. ■

IN OTHER CHURCH MAGAZINES

THE NEW ERA

Come, Follow Me Support: Commandments

While much of the world may think about commandments merely as restrictions, prophets teach that the commandments are given by a loving Heavenly Father to bless us and bring us joy. Read more about what members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have taught about the blessings of obedience in “Steps to Happiness” on page 22 and “Focus on the Blessings” on page 37.

Strength against Peer Pressure

Sometimes the paths that veer from the strait and narrow can seem

pretty appealing. So how can you navigate through today’s world while standing strong in the gospel and holding tight to the iron rod? Find out in “What’s So Great about the Great and Spacious Building?” on page 4.

Support for Family Home Evening

Add some zest to your next family home evening with an object lesson using oranges

and a pitcher of water. See how “Citrus Warriors” (page 16) can help your family understand the importance of putting on the whole armor of God.

STEPS to Happiness

Commandments are not given to restrict but rather to make possible what we truly desire and what our Heavenly Father, who loves us, wants for us.

At times, when people get an impression, thinking that the commandments are restrictions or limitations that complicate life, they make every opportunity of happiness or the pleasure of life, to violate the commandments given to us and give us to happiness. They are not to be made but rather to make possible to allow us to achieve in the life and to be more whole in our happiness and what our Heavenly Father, who loves us, wants for us.

They are like a light of stars. Each may vary in brightness, but each commandment and with each commandment that we give, we can never separate. Then, if we understand the essence of the commandments, we can keep the commandments, even if it means we are all alone in our life.

Join the conversation

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

“I think, when people get an impression, thinking that the commandments are restrictions or limitations that complicate life, they make every opportunity of happiness or the pleasure of life, to violate the commandments given to us and give us to happiness. They are not to be made but rather to make possible to allow us to achieve in the life and to be more whole in our happiness and what our Heavenly Father, who loves us, wants for us.”

“They are like a light of stars. Each may vary in brightness, but each commandment and with each commandment that we give, we can never separate. Then, if we understand the essence of the commandments, we can keep the commandments, even if it means we are all alone in our life.”

For more information on this topic, see Thomas S. Monson’s “Commandments: Blessings and Challenges” in the November 2013 issue of *The New Era*. Visit www.newera.org for more information.

THE FRIEND

In Charge of the Lesson

In “I’ve Got This!” Thomas shares a family home evening lesson by himself and shares it with his family (page 44). You can use “Family Home Evening in Seven Easy Steps” (page 45) to help children learn how they can plan their own lesson to share with the family.

Serving God through Serving Others

The Primary theme for September is “I will serve God with all my heart, might, mind, and strength.” Read about this theme

on pages 42–43, and look through the rest of the magazine to find many stories about children serving God by serving others (for example, “Bobby’s Birthday Surprise” on pages 8–9, “Cleaning Up Dirt Clods” on pages 22–23, and “What Happened to Your Arm?” on pages 38–39).

COMMENT

Similar Challenges

Thank you for the article about Ethan (“Embracing Ethan, Accepting Autism”) in the January 2013 *Ensign*. We have a daughter with challenging behaviors who is now 24. She passes out the programs in the foyer before sacrament meeting, and it makes her feel important to have this responsibility. She has a beautiful smile and a light in her eyes that is a window to heaven. We are grateful for the understanding ward members and for a loving bishop who wanted to find a way for her to serve in our ward. It is nice to read about families who have similar concerns and challenges. Thank you again for a very positive article.

**Terry Reed
Arizona, USA**

Bobby's Birthday Surprise

The lesson that found in the commandments leads to joy.

By Charlotte Cottrell and Christine Kline (September 2013)

As the lesson was underway (September 13), Bobby looked down the aisle to his first class. He was only one day left of preschool before Sunday. Bobby asked the teacher if he could go to the store to get the lesson ready for Sunday. He was only one day left of preschool before Sunday. Bobby asked the teacher if he could go to the store to get the lesson ready for Sunday. He was only one day left of preschool before Sunday.

Charlotte told Bobby and walked upstairs. Bobby stopped talking to watch her go. “Remember me, Charlotte,” Bobby said. “I don’t do them today. Don’t have to do them on my birthday, and don’t do them.”

He looked back to his name, then stopped. He was only one day left of preschool before Sunday. Bobby asked the teacher if he could go to the store to get the lesson ready for Sunday. He was only one day left of preschool before Sunday.

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SERMON BEHIND THE PULPIT

As my family sat a few rows behind the deacons one sacrament meeting, all I could think about before the opening hymn was that one of the deacons had failed to properly tie his long tie and correctly tuck in his wrinkled shirt. I thought someone should have helped him out. After all, when passing the sacrament, deacons should be an example of the Savior in action and dress.

The meeting proceeded, and I forgot about him. After the deacons had passed the sacrament, the talks began. The second speaker was the young man's mother. She spoke of her conversion, of her trials growing

up, and of her struggles as a single mother. It was a wonderful talk that left her in tears. She took her seat on the stand and continued to cry as the ward choir gathered to sing.

Just then her son, with his crooked tie and untucked shirt, stood and walked to the stand. He hugged his mother and crouched beside her to comfort her. Tears came to my eyes as the scene played out before me; I was touched beyond words. But then realization dawned, and I hung my head. Sitting in my crisp double-breasted suit, with my perfectly tied tie and polished black shoes, I realized I had truly missed something

in preparing for the sacrament.

The young man and his mother came down from the stand and sat together as the choir began to sing. I sat there, unable to listen to the music because the sermon taught by this deacon flooded my heart with a message of Christlike charity.

He had performed his act with tenderness and care. There was not the slightest sign of embarrassment on his young face—only pure love. The subsequent messages over the pulpit that day were good, but I will always remember the sermon behind the pulpit. ■

Jeff Fullmer, Idaho, USA

With his crooked tie and untucked shirt, he stood and walked to the stand. He hugged his mother and crouched beside her to comfort her.



TWO NEW DEACONS

Some years ago I had the privilege of serving as deacons quorum adviser. In our quorum we had three active deacons, all of whom were called to be part of the quorum presidency.

In one of their meetings, this young presidency decided they wanted at least two of the less-active deacons in their quorum to begin attending Church meetings and activities. They prayerfully set a date—a Sunday six weeks away—by which to achieve their goal. They prayed for success in this sacred endeavor and prayerfully pledged to do the following:

- Pray together regularly.
- Fast together.
- Visit each deacon on the roll.
- Plan activities so that any returning deacons would enter a well-structured program.

The presidency felt that these goals were the will of the Lord, so they moved forward with faith and confidence.

During the following weeks, these three young men did what they had promised, expecting that their prayers would be answered. They prayed together, fasted together, visited the less-active deacons and invited them back, and prepared activities, believing that they needed to be prepared for an increase in attendance.

Despite their diligence, no deacons returned—not to church or to any other activity. The date approached, and though

they were disappointed that members of their quorum were not returning to church, the young men remained confident that Heavenly Father would answer their prayers.

The Sunday of their goal arrived, and none of the young men whom the presidency had reached out to came to church. But the bishop announced during sacrament meeting that two 12-year-old young men who had been investigating the Church

would be baptized that evening.

What a blessing it was for these two new members of the Church to join a quorum with such a presidency. And what a blessing it was for the presidency to see their efforts and prayers answered so directly and to learn that the Lord keeps His promises.

Such was the excitement in the quorum that one member of the presidency said, “Let’s do this again.” ■

Anthony Poutu, New Zealand

During the following weeks, these three young men prayed together, fasted together, and invited the less-active deacons back to church.



HEAVENLY FATHER'S LOVE

Some time ago our friends asked if their son, John, and his girlfriend could stay at our place for a weeklong visit. John is less active, and his girlfriend is not a member of the Church. We let her have our son's room and gave John a couch in the living room.

Before they arrived, we prayed to Heavenly Father, asking how we should present ourselves to them—as teachers, parents, or simply friends? The answer came that we needed to follow the promptings of the Spirit and help them spiritually.

Every evening my husband, son, and I sit down to study the scriptures.

On the first evening with our guests, we felt that we should not invite them to study with us. But the next evening before scripture study, John shyly knocked on our door and said, “Mary is afraid to ask, but she would like to know if we can join you.”

We swung open the door, invited them in, and began studying the Book of Mormon together. Mary had never read scriptures before and did not know whether she believed in God. She admitted that when she came to our home, she had been afraid we might make her take part in something religious she did not understand.

To make Mary feel comfortable, my husband told her about the plan of salvation, the Savior Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith's First Vision, and the Book of Mormon. She talked with us until midnight.

The next day, John and Mary joined us for a discussion with the missionaries. I will never forget the spirit that filled the room. After a simple discussion, we talked about the nature of our Heavenly Father. Then Mary asked why God allows suffering if He loves us, a question I had pondered for a long time.

Several days earlier I had received a letter from a friend who had miscarried her third child, so Mary's question touched my heart. I testified that times of happiness and joy occasionally cannot teach us as deeply and eternally as times of personal tragedy. I told Mary that grief can temper us just as fire tempers iron. If we remain true to God while passing through trials, our faith will grow.

It was an unforgettable discussion. Afterward we sat silently while the Spirit testified of our Heavenly Father's love. When Mary looked up, her eyes were bright and full of tears.

I do not know what will happen in the coming years, but I know for certain that the understanding I saw in Mary's eyes that day will help her throughout her life and may help lead her to her Heavenly Father. ■

Anna Nikiticheva, Russia



John shyly knocked on our door and said, “Mary is afraid to ask, but she would like to know if we can join you for scripture study.”

HE BLESSED MY SOUR NOTE

My ears burned bright red with embarrassment as my teenage son, Derek, and I finished singing “Be Still, My Soul”¹ in sacrament meeting. I had not properly warmed up my voice before the meeting began, and as a result, when I tried to reach a high note, my voice cracked badly.

I slid back onto my bench, feeling uncomfortable despite supportive looks from my smiling wife, assuring me that I had not ruined the spirit of the meeting.

After the closing prayer I headed for my car to retrieve a lesson manual. A sister in our ward stood near the door, sobbing. A friend supported her with an arm around her shoulder. As I passed by, the weeping sister called my name and expressed her appreciation to me for choosing the hymn we sang and for performing it in a way that touched her deeply.

She explained that she had given birth to a stillborn baby several days earlier and had battled anger and despair ever since. As Derek and I sang the hymn, she had felt the Spirit wrap her aching soul in a peaceful, comforting warmth. It had filled her with the hope she needed to bear her cross of grief.

I awkwardly mumbled thanks and headed out the door, feeling blessed and humbled by her words. As I reached the car, I remembered a devotional address by Kim B. Clark, president of Brigham Young

University–Idaho. He had said, “When we act in faith in [Jesus] to do His work, He goes with us” to serve others and “blesses us to say just what they need to hear.” He also taught that “what we actually say and actually do may feel a little awkward or not very polished. . . . But the Savior takes our words and our actions and He carries them through His spirit unto the hearts of the people. He takes our sincere but imperfect effort and turns it into something that is just right, indeed, into something that is perfect.”²

Tears of gratitude filled my eyes as

I returned to the meetinghouse. The Lord had blessed an unpolished musical number and carried its message perfectly into the grieving heart of a young sister to comfort her sorrowing soul. In addition, the Lord used this touching experience to carry into my heart a much deeper understanding of a profound gospel principle. ■

Randy Lonsdale, Alberta, Canada

NOTES

1. *Hymns*, no. 124.
2. Kim B. Clark, “Love by Faith” (Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional, July 29, 2010), www.byui.edu/Presentations/Transcripts/EducationWeek/2010_07_29_Clark.htm.

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THE LONGEST SACRAMENT MEETING

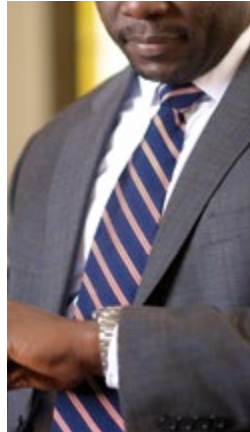
By Okon Edet Effiong

I love to read Latter-day Saint religious books. And because these books are not readily available in Nigeria, I borrow them from a friend. Desiring to return my friend's books within a few days, I always carry them with me and use spare moments to read.

One Sunday I had a borrowed book with me as I attended sacrament meeting in the ward where I am assigned as high councilor. I read the book while I waited to give the bishop a message from the stake presidency. When the bishop arrived, he asked me to speak to his first counselor since he needed to greet some visitors. After passing the message to the first counselor, I took a seat on the stand.

No sooner had I sat down, however, than I realized my friend's book was gone. With about five minutes before the meeting was to begin—and with the presiding authority seated on the stand—I thought I shouldn't leave. Sick about disappointing my friend, I thus started my ordeal in the longest sacrament meeting I have ever attended.

I hoped that time would pass quickly, but every item on the meeting agenda took what seemed like a lifetime. I was restless, praying silently that God would keep the book safe.



Sacrament meeting usually lasts for 70 minutes. But one Sunday it seemed to stretch on forever.

Truly, the talks were not long, but an unreasonable anxiety had taken over my mind. Five minutes before the end of the meeting, I could bear it no more. I passed a note to the first counselor asking if I had left the book by him. I wished he would nod his head yes. He shook it instead.

I did not close my eyes during the benediction but closely monitored the two remaining places where I thought the book might be. Meanwhile, I decided that, if necessary, I would go to the Sunday School classes to announce that I had lost a book.

Surprisingly, however, when sacrament meeting concluded, my feelings had changed radically, and I wasn't worried about the book. The Holy Spirit showed me—in just a few short moments of spiritual enlightenment—that my concerns were misplaced. I learned that what *truly* mattered was whether or not I would protect those things that God had put into my care. My mind immediately listed what I could remember God entrusting to me: my soul, my family, those I home teach, those I should share the gospel with, ward members I serve, my departed ancestors who need temple work, and so on.

I did find the book after what became an important soul-searching experience. But at the end of the longest sacrament meeting, I also found areas of my life that needed improvement. And I found the commitment to work on the priorities Heavenly Father desires. ■

The author lives in Lagos, Nigeria.

INSIGHTS



How can I become a part of missionary work?

“As missionaries enter this new age where they will use computers in the work of the Lord, we invite the young and the old, the adults, the young adults, the youth, and the children everywhere to join with us in this exciting new work by becoming Facebook friends with the missionaries in your area on your own computers and sharing their gospel messages online, and by becoming involved in missionary work yourselves.”



In his article “The Justice and Mercy of God,” Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles uses sowing thistles as a metaphor for becoming trapped in sin. “We sow a little thistle, and we get a lot of thistle—years and years of it, big bushes and branches of it. We never get rid of it unless we cut it out.” To read his counsel on how we can repent and lay claim to mercy, see page 16.