

Liahona

A detailed painting of the Nativity scene. Mary is on the left, cradling the infant Jesus in her arms. Joseph is on the right, looking down at the child. The scene is set in a manger with straw bedding. The lighting is warm and focused on the figures.

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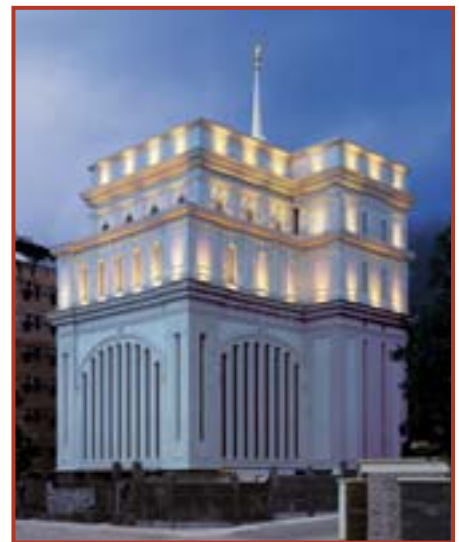
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FAMILY HOME EVENING IDEAS

*These ideas can be used for
classroom teaching as well
as in the home.*

"Quick to Observe,"

p. 14: Place several objects
where everyone can see them.
Have family members
close their eyes while
you remove one of the objects. As
they look at the objects again, see if
they were quick to observe and can
recall which object was removed.
Read aloud some examples from
the article to show the importance
of being quick to observe.



"Because of the Restoration . . .,"

p. 32: Hand out papers with
the words "Because of the
Restoration . . ." written on
them, and leave space for
answers. Search the article
together, looking for
phrases that fill in
the blank. Challenge family
members to write down blessings
they experience in the coming
week because of the Restoration.
At the next family home evening,
invite them to share what they
wrote.

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- F12 It Makes Them Happy *Patricia R. Jones*
- F14 Friend to Friend: Remembering Promises
Elder Jay E. Jensen

F4 He Sent His Son



As you look for the CTR ring hidden in this issue, remember the true meaning of Christmas.



ON THE COVER

Front: *Behold the Lamb of God*, by Walter Rane, courtesy of the Museum of Church History and Art. Back: Detail from *Brother Joseph*, by David Lindsley; photograph by Welden C. Andersen.

THE FRIEND COVER

Photograph by Christina Smith, posed by model.

"Room for Three," p. F10: Have your family stand in as small a circle as possible. What was necessary to successfully stand in the circle? Answers could include holding on to one other, picking up small children, and so on. Discuss ways to make room for each other and to stand as a unified family.

"It Makes Them Happy," p. F12: Ask family members to suggest qualities of a prophet. Are some qualities more important than others? Read about and discuss the capacity the Prophet Joseph

Smith had to enjoy life and people and the lasting effect it had on the youth in the account. Invite family members to share stories and their feelings about prophets who showed love and encouragement.

"Remembering Promises," p. F14: Open the scriptures to Doctrine and Covenants section 3. Read Elder Jay E. Jensen's experience as you study the verses he mentions. Discuss promises found in the scriptures, and invite family members to share times when remembering spiritual promises encouraged them.

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Treasured Gifts

BY PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON
First Counselor in the First Presidency

President David O. McKay (1873–1970) would frequently suggest the need for us to turn from the hectic day-to-day schedule filled with letters to answer, calls to be made, people to see, meetings to attend, and take time to meditate, to ponder, and to reflect on the eternal truths and the sources of the joy and happiness which comprise each person's quest.

When we do, the mundane, the mechanical, the repetitious patterns of our lives yield to the spiritual qualities, and we acquire a much-needed dimension which inspires our daily living. When I follow this counsel, thoughts of family, experiences with friends, and treasured memories of special days and quiet nights course through my mind and bring a sweet repose to my being.

The Christmas season, with its special meaning, inevitably prompts a tear and inspires a renewed commitment to God.

I reflect on the contrasts of Christmas. The extravagant gifts, expensively packaged and professionally wrapped, reach their zenith in the famed commercial catalogs carrying the headline "For the person who has everything."

In one such reading I observed a 4,000-square-foot (372-sq-m) home wrapped with a gigantic ribbon and comparable greeting card that said, "Merry Christmas." Other items included diamond-studded clubs for the golfer, a Caribbean cruise for the traveler, and a luxury trip to the Swiss Alps for the adventurer.

Then there is the remembered Christmas tale by O. Henry about a young husband and wife who lived in abject poverty yet who wanted to give one another a special gift. But they had nothing to give. Then the husband had a ray of inspiration: he would provide his dear wife a beautiful ornamental comb to adorn her magnificent long hair. The wife also received an idea: she would obtain a lovely chain for her husband's prized watch, which he valued so highly.

Christmas day came; the treasured gifts were exchanged. Then the surprise ending, so typical of O. Henry's short stories: the wife had shorn her long hair and sold it to obtain funds to purchase the watch chain, only to discover that her husband had sold his watch so that he might purchase the comb to adorn her beautiful long hair, which now she did not have.¹

At home in a hidden-away corner, I have a small black walking stick with an imitation



He died that we might live, and live everlastingly. Resurrection morning was preceded by pain, by suffering, in accordance with the divine plan of God. Before Easter there had to be a cross. The world has witnessed no greater gift.

silver handle. It once belonged to a distant relative. Why do I keep it for a period now spanning more than 70 years? There is a special reason. As a small boy I participated in a Christmas pageant in our ward. I was privileged to be one of the three Wise Men. With a bandanna about my head, Mother's piano bench cover draped over my shoulder, and the black cane in my hand, I spoke my assigned lines: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."² I vividly remember the feelings of my heart as the three of us "Wise Men" looked upward and saw a star, journeyed across the stage, found Mary with the young child Jesus, then fell down and worshipped Him and opened our treasures and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

I especially liked the fact that we did not return to the evil Herod to betray the baby Jesus but obeyed God and departed another way.

The years have flown by, but the Christmas cane continues to occupy a special place in my home; and in my heart is a commitment to Christ.

For a few moments, may we set aside the catalogs of Christmas, with their gifts of exotic description. Let's even turn from the flowers for Mother, the special tie for Father, the cute doll, the train that whistles, the long-awaited bicycle—even the books and videos—and direct our thoughts to God-given gifts that endure. From a long list I will cite just four:

1. The gift of birth
2. The gift of peace
3. The gift of love
4. The gift of life eternal

First, the gift of birth. It has been universally bestowed on each of us. Ours was the divine privilege to depart our heavenly home to tabernacle in the flesh and to



The passport to peace is the practice of prayer. The feelings of the heart, humbly expressed rather than a mere recitation of words, provide the peace we seek.

demonstrate by our lives our worthiness and qualifications to one day return to Heavenly Father, to precious loved ones, and to a kingdom called *celestial*. Our mothers and our fathers bestowed this marvelous gift on us. Ours is the responsibility to show our gratitude by the actions of our lives.

My own father, a printer, gave me a copy of a piece he had printed. It was titled "A Letter from a Father" and concluded with this thought: "Perhaps my greatest hope as a parent is to have such a relationship with you that when the day comes and you look down into the face of your first child, you will feel deep within you the desire to be to your child the kind of parent your dad has tried to be to you. What greater compliment could any man ask? Love, Dad."

Our gratitude to Mother for the gift of birth is equal or beyond that owed to Father. She who looked upon us as "a sweet new blossom of humanity, fresh fallen from God's own home, to flower on earth"³ and cared for our every need, comforted our every cry, and later rejoiced in any of our accomplishments and wept over our failures and disappointments occupies a singular place of honor in our hearts.

A passage from 3 John sets forth the formula whereby we might express to our parents our gratitude for the gift of birth: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."⁴ Let us so walk. Let us so honor the givers of this priceless gift of birth.

Second, the gift of peace. In the raucous world in which we live, the din of traffic, the blaring commercials of the media, and the sheer demands placed on our time—to say nothing of the problems of the world—cause headache, inflict pain, and sap our strength to cope. The burden of sickness or the grief of mourning a loved one departed brings us to our knees seeking heavenly help. With the

ancients we may wonder, “Is there no balm in Gilead?”⁵ There is a certain sadness, even hopelessness, in the verse:

*There is never a life without sadness,
There is never a heart free from pain;
If one seeks in this world for true solace,
He seeks it forever in vain.*⁶

He who was burdened with sorrow and acquainted with grief speaks to every troubled heart and bestows the gift of peace: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”⁷

He sends forth His word through the missionaries serving far and wide proclaiming His gospel of good tidings and salutation of peace. Vexing questions such as “From whence did I come?” “What is the purpose of my being?” “Whence go I after death?” are answered by His special servants. Frustration flees, doubt disappears, and wonder wanes when truth is taught in boldness, yet in a spirit of humility, by those who have been called to serve the Prince of Peace—even the Lord Jesus Christ. His gift is bestowed individually: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.”⁸

The passport to peace is the practice of prayer. The feelings of the heart, humbly expressed rather than a mere recitation of words, provide the peace we seek.

In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, the wicked King Claudius kneels and tries to pray, but he rises and says, “My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: / Words without thoughts never to heaven go.”⁹

One who received and welcomed the gift of peace was Joseph Millett, an early missionary to the Maritime Provinces of Canada, who learned while there and in his later experiences in life of the need to rely on heavenly help. An experience which he recalled in his journal is a beautiful illustration of simple yet profound faith:

“One of my children came in and said that Brother Newton Hall’s folks was out of bread, had none that day.

“I divided our flour in a sack to send up to Brother Hall. Just then Brother Hall came.

“Says I, ‘Brother Hall, are you out of flour?’

“ ‘Brother Millett, we have none.’

The gift of birth has been universally bestowed on each of us. Ours was the divine privilege to depart our heavenly home to tabernacle in the flesh and to demonstrate by our lives our worthiness and qualifications to one day return to Heavenly Father.



A segment of our society desperately yearning for an expression of true love is found among those growing older and particularly when they suffer from pangs of loneliness.

“Well, Brother Hall, there is some in that sack. I have divided and was going to send it to you. Your children told mine that you was out.’

“Brother Hall began to cry. He said he had tried others, but could not get any. He went to the cedars and prayed to the Lord, and the Lord told him to go to Joseph Millett.

“Well Brother Hall, you needn’t bring this back. If the Lord sent you for it you don’t owe me for it.’

“You can’t tell me how good it made me feel to know that the Lord knew there was such a person as Joseph Millett.”¹⁰

Prayer brought the gift of peace to Newton Hall and to Joseph Millett.

Third, the gift of love. “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” queried the lawyer who spoke to Jesus. Came the prompt reply:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”¹¹

On another occasion the Lord taught, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.”¹² The scriptures are filled with the importance of love and its relevance in our lives. The Book of Mormon teaches that charity is the pure love of Christ.¹³ The Master Himself provided an ideal pattern

for us to follow. Of Him it was said that

He “went about doing good . . . ; for God was with him.”¹⁴

A few lines from the favorite musical *The Sound of Music* suggest a course of action all might well follow:

*A bell is no bell 'til you ring it,
A song is no song 'til you sing it,
And love in your heart wasn't
put there to stay—*

*Love isn't love 'til you
give it away.*¹⁵



A segment of our society desperately yearning for an expression of true love is found among those growing older and particularly when they suffer from pangs of loneliness. The chill wind of dying hopes and vanished dreams whistles through the ranks of the elderly and those who approach the declining side of the summit of life.

“What they need in the loneliness of their older years is, in part at least, what we needed in the uncertain years of our youth: a sense of belonging, an assurance of being wanted, and the kindly ministrations of loving hearts and hands—not merely dutiful formality, not merely a room in a building, but room in someone’s heart and life.

“We cannot bring them back the morning hours of youth. But we can help them live in the warm glow of a sunset made more beautiful by our thoughtfulness, by our provision, and by our active and unfeigned love.”¹⁶ So wrote Elder Richard L. Evans (1906–71) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles some years ago.

At times an awareness of the elderly is brought into focus by a reminder from one ever so young. May I share with you a Pakistani folktale which illustrates this truth:

An ancient grandmother lived with her daughter and grandson. As she grew frail and feeble, instead of being a help around the house, she became a constant trial. She broke plates and cups, lost knives, spilled water. One day, exasperated because the old woman had broken another precious plate, the daughter sent the grandson to buy his grandmother a wooden plate. The boy hesitated because he knew a wooden plate would humiliate his grandmother. But his mother insisted, so off he went. He returned bringing not one, but two wooden plates.

“I asked you to buy only one,” his mother said. “Didn’t you hear me?”

“Yes,” said the boy. “But I bought the second one so there



All that we hold dear, even our families, our friends, our joy, our knowledge, our testimonies would vanish were it not for our Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

would be one for you when you get old.”

Frequently we are inclined to wait a lifetime to express love for the kindness or help given by another even long years before. Perhaps just such an experience prompted George Herbert to say, “Thou that hast given so much to [me], give one thing more . . . a grateful heart.”¹⁷

The story is told of a group of men who were talking about people who had influenced their lives and to whom they were grateful. One man thought of a high-school teacher who had introduced him to the poet Tennyson. He decided to write and thank her.

In time, written in a feeble scrawl, came this letter:

“My dear Willie:

“I can’t tell you how much your note meant to me. I am in my 80s, living alone in a small room, cooking my own meals,

lonely and like the last leaf lingering behind. You will be interested to know that I taught school for 50 years, and yours is the first note of appreciation I have ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning, and it cheered me as nothing has for years.”

As I read this account, I thought of the treasured line, “The Lord has two homes: heaven and a grateful heart.”

Much more could be said pertaining to the gift of love. However, a favorite verse sums up rather well this precious gift:

*I have wept in the night
For the shortness of sight
That to somebody’s need made me blind;
But I never have yet
Felt a tinge of regret
For being a little too kind.*¹⁸

Fourth, the gift of life—even immortality. Our Heavenly Father’s plan contains the ultimate expressions of true

love. All that we hold dear, even our families, our friends, our joy, our knowledge, our testimonies would vanish were it not for our Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Among the most cherished thoughts and writings in this world is the divine statement of truth: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”¹⁹

This precious Son, our Lord and Savior, atoned for our sins and the sins of all. That memorable night in Gethsemane His suffering was so great, His anguish so consuming that He pleaded, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”²⁰ Later, on the cruel cross, He died that we might live, and live everlastingly. Resurrection morning was preceded by pain, by suffering, in accordance with the divine plan of God. Before Easter there had to be a cross. The world has witnessed no greater gift, nor has it known more lasting love.

Nephi gives to us our charge:

“Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. . . . If ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

“And now, behold, . . . this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God.”²¹

I close with the words of a revered prophet, even President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973): “Life is God’s gift to man. What we do with our life is our gift to God.”

May we give generously to Him, as He has so abundantly given to us, by living and loving as He and His Son have so patiently taught. ■

NOTES

1. See “The Gift of the Magi.”
2. Matthew 2:2.
3. Gerald Massey, in *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* (1959), 39.
4. 3 John 1:4.
5. Jeremiah 8:22.
6. Author unknown.
7. John 14:27.
8. Revelation 3:20.

9. Act 3, scene 3, lines 97–98.
10. In Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Lessons Learned in the Journey of Life,” *Liabona*, May 2001, 41; *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 12.
11. Matthew 22:36–39.
12. John 14:21.
13. See Moroni 7:47.
14. Acts 10:38.
15. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, “Sixteen Going on Seventeen” (1959).
16. *Thoughts . . . for One Hundred Days* (1966), 222.
17. In Richard L. Evans, *Richard Evans’ Quote Book* (1971), 238.
18. In Richard L. Evans, “The Quality of Kindness,” *Improvement Era*, May 1960, 340.
19. John 3:16.
20. Matthew 26:39.
21. 2 Nephi 31:20–21.

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

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

1. Place before the family a few items of worldly value (a treat, a wallet, a toy, for instance). Ask family members to identify which one they think is most valuable. Then show something of sentimental value (a family picture, a journal, scriptures, and so on). Read the first four paragraphs of the article. Compare the material things we give at Christmas to the spiritual things. Challenge the family to value and give gifts of deeper meaning.
2. Prepare beforehand a representation of the four gifts that President Monson cites (for example, wrap gifts or draw pictures). One at a time, present each gift to the family members, and discuss each using the examples and stories in the article. Testify of the generosity of our Savior, and discuss ways we can give our lives back to Him.
3. Ask family members to think of gifts that would last forever. What qualities do these gifts possess? List President Monson’s gifts, and discuss how these gifts shape eternity. Encourage family members to give a gift this Christmas that will have an eternal effect.

MAKE ROOM FOR THE SAVIOR



INVITE HIM INTO YOUR LIFE.
(See John 14:23.)

This Is the Christ

Reverently • = 58-66

1. They heard His voice, a voice so mild. It pierced them
(2. I read His) words, the words He prayed While bear - ing

mp

through and made their souls to quake. They saw Him come, a man in
sor - row in Geth - sem - an - e. I feel His love, the price He

white, — The Sav - ior, who had suf - fered for their sake. They felt the
paid. — How man - y drops of blood were spilled for me? With Saints of

rall. *a tempo*

wounds in hands and side, And each could tes - ti - fy: This is the
old in joy - ful cry I too can tes - ti - fy:

slower

Words: James E. Faust, b. 1920, and Jan Pinborough, b. 1954

Music: Michael Finlinson Moody, b. 1941

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3 Nephi 11:3-17

Luke 22:42, 44



Christ. This is the Christ, the ho - ly Son of God, Our Sav - ior, Lord, Re -

a tempo



deem - er of man - kind. This is the Christ, the Heal - er of our



souls, Who ran - sored us with love di - vine. 2. I read His



ran - sored us with love di - vine.



BORDER: PHOTOGRAPH BY WILDEN C. ANDERSEN



Sharing the Joy

BY CONSUELO CONESA LEONE

It was 1963, and I was serving as a full-time missionary in the Argentina North Mission. Ten elders and my companion and I served in three small branches in Mendoza.


December arrived and with it Christmas! It was my first Christmas in the mission field. We had great hopes as we all made our plans for Christmas Eve. The elders hired a man to drive us around in his four-wheeled cart, pulled by two horses. We planned to stop on street corners where lots of people would be rushing by to make their last-minute purchases.

When it was time to leave, the 12 of us climbed into the cart and sat with our feet hanging over the sides and back. The driver slowly guided the cart. We stopped every four or five blocks at the corners we had chosen. Our group then got out and formed a semicircle, sisters in front and elders behind. We opened our hymnbooks and let our voices fill the night air, time and again, with Christmas carols.

“Joy to the world, the Lord is come!” Men and women, teenagers and children, stopped to listen, caught up in the spirit of Christmas. Many of them looked surprised, as if they were remembering the real event they were getting ready to celebrate.

When the cart started to head for another stop, we noticed that many of the listeners were following us. Each time there were more and more. Through my tears, I could see their smiling faces. What joy we felt! We received many referrals and contacts, as we had hoped we would.

The crowd asked us to sing “Joy to the World” (*Hymns*, no. 201) again.



As we sang they cried, touched
by the Spirit on that unforgettable
Christmas Eve.

After more than 40 years, my
heart still overflows with gratitude
as I remember my first Christmas
as a missionary. I thank my Heavenly
Father for the gift of His Son. And I
thank Him for the knowledge that there
is indeed “joy to the world,” for “the
Lord is come!” ■

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Quick to *OBSERVE*

BY ELDER DAVID A. BEDNAR
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

In October 1987 Elder Marvin J. Ashton, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, spoke in general conference about spiritual gifts. I recall with fondness the impact his message had upon me at that time, and the things he taught then continue to influence me today. In his message Elder Ashton detailed and described a number of less conspicuous spiritual gifts—attributes and abilities that many of us might not have considered being spiritual gifts. For example, Elder Ashton highlighted the gifts of asking; of listening; of hearing and using a still, small voice; of being able to weep; of avoiding contention; of being agreeable; of avoiding vain repetition; of seeking that which is righteous; of looking to God for guidance; of being a disciple; of caring for others; of being able to ponder; of bearing mighty testimony; and of receiving the Holy Ghost (see “There Are Many Gifts,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 20).

Another seemingly simple and perhaps underappreciated spiritual gift—the capacity of being “quick to observe” (Mormon 1:2)—is vitally important for you and for me in the world in which we do now and will yet live.

The Spiritual Gift of Being Quick to Observe

All of us have learned important lessons from the central characters in the Book of Mormon. As we read about and study the lives of Nephi, Laman, Alma, King Noah, Moroni, and many others, we discover things we should and should not do, and we realize more completely the kinds of people we should and should not become.

In my study of the Book of Mormon I have been especially impressed with a particular description of Mormon, the principal compiler of the Nephite record. The specific depiction of this noble prophet to which I would direct our attention is contained in the first five verses of the first chapter of Mormon:

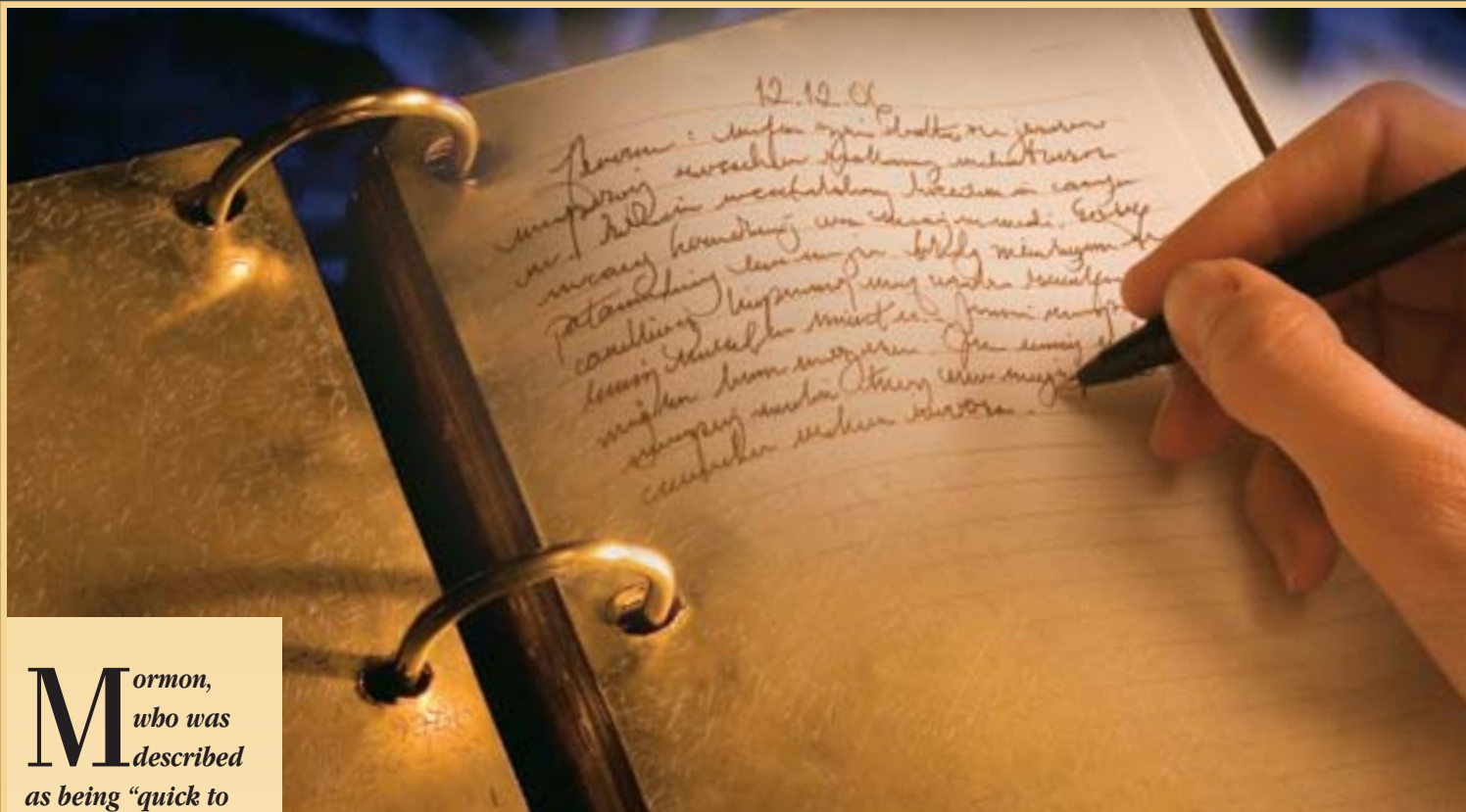
“And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon.

“And about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord, he came unto me, (I being about ten years of age . . .) and Ammaron said unto me: I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art *quick to observe*;

“Therefore, when ye are about twenty and four years old I would that ye should remember the things that ye have observed concerning this people; . . .



We can hope to obtain the supernal gift of discernment and its light of protection and direction only if we are quick to observe.



Mormon, who was described as being “quick to observe,” wrote, “I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard.” As you study and learn and grow, I hope you also are learning about and becoming quick to observe.

“And behold, . . . ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people.

“And I, Mormon, . . . remembered the things which Ammaron commanded me” (Mormon 1:1–5; emphasis added).

Please note that the root word *observe* is used three times in these verses. And Mormon, even in his youth, is described as being “quick to observe.” As you study and learn and grow, I hope you also are learning about and becoming quick to observe. Your future success and happiness will in large measure be determined by this spiritual capacity.

Please consider the significance of this important spiritual gift. As used in the scriptures, the word *observe* has two primary uses. One use denotes “to look” or “to see” or “to notice”—as we learn in Isaiah 42:20: “Seeing many things, but thou *observest* not; opening the ears, but he heareth not” (emphasis added).

The second use of the word *observe* suggests “to obey” or “to keep”—as is evident in

the Doctrine and Covenants: “But blessed are they who have kept the covenant and *observed* the commandment, for they shall obtain mercy” (D&C 54:6; emphasis added).

Thus when we are quick to observe, we promptly look or notice and obey. Both of these fundamental elements—looking and obeying—are essential to being quick to observe. And the prophet Mormon is an impressive example of this gift in action.

I now want to present several examples of the lessons that can be learned when you and I are blessed to be quick to observe.

I have a dear friend who served as a stake president. The patriarch in the stake over which he presided had experienced some health challenges and was unable to perform in his calling. The ailing patriarch had difficulty moving about and dressing and caring for himself, and his strength was limited. One Sabbath afternoon this good stake president visited the home of the patriarch to encourage him and check on his well-being. As the stake president entered the home, he found the patriarch

dressed in his suit and white shirt and tie, sitting in a recliner in the front room. The stake president greeted the dear patriarch and, knowing how hard it must have been to dress himself, graciously suggested to the patriarch that it was not necessary for him to get dressed up on the Sabbath or to meet visitors. In a kind but firm voice, the patriarch reproved the stake president and said, “Don’t you know that this is the only way I have left to show the Lord how much I love Him?”

The stake president was quick to observe. He both heard and felt the lesson, and he applied it. Reverence for the Sabbath day and the importance of respect and appropriate demeanor and dress took on added importance in the ministry of the stake president. The spiritual ability to see, hear, remember, and act upon that lesson was a great blessing in his life—and in the lives of many others.

Before attending her sacrament meetings, Sister Bednar frequently prays for the spiritual eyes to see those who have a need. Often as she observes the brothers and sisters and children in the congregation, she will feel a spiritual nudge to visit with or make a phone call to a particular person. And when Sister Bednar receives such an impression, she promptly responds and obeys. It often is the case that as soon as the “amen” is spoken in the benediction, she will talk with a teenager or hug a sister or, upon returning home, immediately pick up the phone and make a call. As long as I have known Sister Bednar, people have marveled at her capacity to discern and respond to their needs. Often they will ask her, “How did you know?” The spiritual gift of being quick to observe has enabled her to see and to act promptly and has been a great blessing in the lives of many people.

Sister Bednar and I are acquainted with a returned missionary who had dated a special young woman for a period of time. He cared for her very much, and he was desirous

of making his relationship with her more serious. He was considering and hoping for engagement and marriage. This relationship was developing during the time that President Hinckley counseled the Relief Society sisters and young women of the Church to wear only one earring in each ear.

The young man waited patiently over a period of time for the young woman to remove her extra earrings, but she did not take them out. This was a valuable piece of information for this young man, and he felt unsettled about her

nonresponsiveness to a prophet’s pleading. For this and other reasons, he ultimately stopped dating the young woman, because he was looking for an eternal companion who had the courage to promptly and quietly obey the counsel of the prophet in all things and at all times. The young man was quick to observe that the young woman was not quick to observe.

I presume that some of you might have difficulty with my last example. You may believe the young man was too judgmental or that basing an eternally important decision, even in part, upon such a supposedly minor issue is silly or fanatical. Perhaps you are both

erred because the example focuses upon a young woman who failed to respond to prophetic counsel instead of upon a young man. I simply invite you to consider and ponder the power of being quick to observe and what was actually observed in the case I just described. The issue was not earrings!

One final example. I have long been fascinated by the nature of the interaction between the Spirit of the Lord and Nephi found in chapters 11 through 14 of 1 Nephi. Nephi desired to see and hear and know the things his father, Lehi, had seen in the vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8). In chapters 11 through 14 the Holy Ghost assisted Nephi in learning about the nature and meaning of his father’s vision. Interestingly, 13 times in these



chapters the Spirit of the Lord directed Nephi to “look” as a fundamental feature of the learning process. Nephi repeatedly was counseled to look, and because he was quick to observe, he beheld the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 11:8), the mother of the Savior (see 1 Nephi 11:20), the rod of iron (see 1 Nephi 11:25), and the Lamb of God, the Son of the Eternal Father (see 1 Nephi 11:21).

I have described only a few of the spiritually significant things Nephi saw. You may want to study these chapters in greater depth and learn from and about Nephi’s learning. As you study and ponder, please keep in mind that Nephi would not have seen what he desired to see, would not have known what he needed to know, and could not have done what he ultimately needed to do if he had not been quick to observe. That same truth applies to you and to me!

Quick to observe. Prompt to watch and to obey. A simple gift that blesses us individually and in our families and extends blessings to so many other people. Each of us can and should strive to be worthy of this significant spiritual gift—even the capacity of being quick to observe.

The Importance of Being Quick to Observe

Let me now address the question of why the spiritual gift of being quick to observe is so vital for us in the world in which we do now and will yet live. Simply stated, being quick to observe is an antecedent to and is linked with the spiritual gift of discernment. And for you and for me, discernment is a light of protection and direction in a world that grows increasingly dark.

Much like faith precedes the miracle, much like baptism by water comes before the baptism by fire, much like gospel milk should be digested before gospel meat, much like clean hands can lead to a pure heart, and much like the ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood are necessary

before a person can receive the higher ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood, so being quick to observe is a prerequisite to and a preparation for the gift of discernment. We can hope to obtain that supernal gift of discernment and its light of protection and direction only if we are quick to observe—if we both look and obey.

President George Q. Cannon (1827–1901), who served as a counselor to four Presidents of the Church, taught powerfully about the gift of discernment:



“One of the gifts of the Gospel which the Lord has promised to those who enter into covenant with Him is the gift of discerning of spirits—a gift which is not much thought of by many and probably seldom prayed for; yet it is a gift that is of exceeding value and one that should be enjoyed by every Latter-day Saint. . . .

“Now, the gift of discerning of spirits not only gives men and women who have it the power to discern the spirit with which others may be possessed or influenced, but it gives them the power to discern the spirit which influences themselves. They are able to detect a false spirit and also to know when the

Spirit of God reigns within them. In private life this gift is of great importance to the Latter-day Saints. Possessing and exercising this gift they will not allow any evil influence to enter into their hearts or to prompt them in their thoughts, their words or their acts. They will repel it; and if perchance such a spirit should get possession of them, as soon as they witness its effects they will expel it or, in other words, refuse to be led or prompted by it.”¹

Can we recognize how crucial this spiritual gift is in our lives today and how being quick to observe is a powerful invitation for the blessings of discernment?

President Stephen L Richards (1879–1959), who served as a counselor to President David O. McKay, has provided additional instruction about the nature and blessings of discernment:



“First, I mention the gift of discernment, embodying the power to discriminate . . . between right and wrong. I believe that this gift when highly developed arises largely out of an acute sensitivity to impressions—spiritual impressions, if you will—to read under the surface as it were, to detect hidden evil, and more importantly to find the good that may be concealed. The highest type of discernment is that which perceives in others and uncovers for them their better natures, the good inherent within them. . . .

“. . . *Every member in the restored Church of Christ could have this gift if he willed to do so.* He could not be deceived with the sophistries of the world. He could not be led astray by pseudo-prophets and subversive cults. Even the inexperienced would recognize false teachings, in a measure at least. . . . We ought to be grateful every day of our lives for this sense which keeps alive a conscience which constantly alerts us to the dangers inherent in wrongdoers and sin.”²

As we integrate the teachings of Presidents Cannon and Richards, we learn that the gift of discernment operates basically in four major ways.

First, as we “read under the surface,” discernment helps us detect hidden error and evil in others.

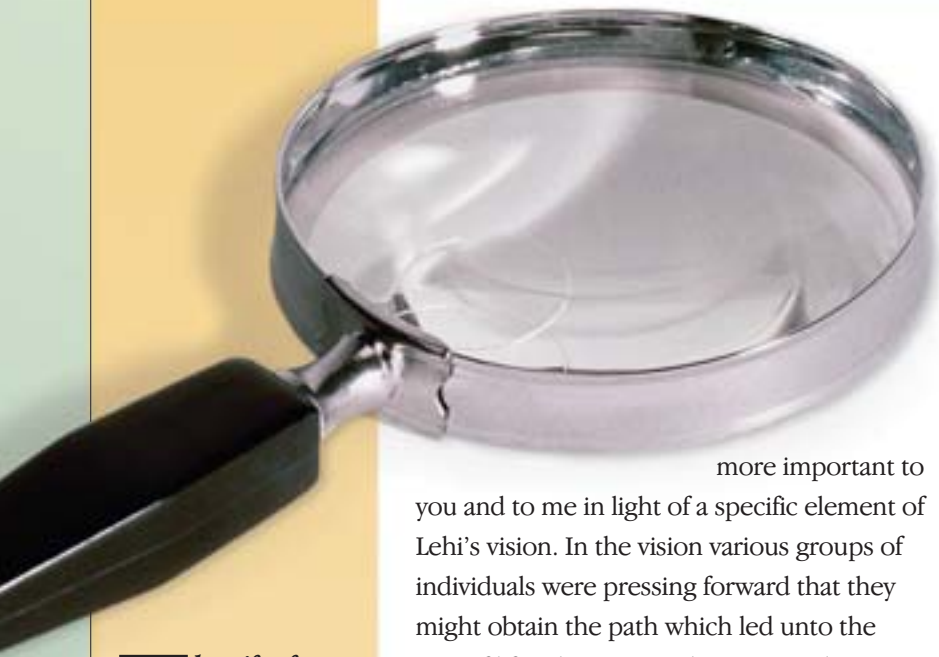
Second, and more important, it helps us detect hidden errors and evil in ourselves. Thus the spiritual gift of discernment is not exclusively about discerning other people and situations, but, as President Cannon taught, it is also about discerning things as they really are within us.

Third, it helps us find and bring forth the good that may be concealed in others.

And fourth, it helps us find and bring forth the good that may be concealed in us. Oh, what a blessing and a source of protection and direction is the spiritual gift of discernment!

The teachings of Presidents Cannon and Richards concerning the power of discernment to detect hidden evil and to identify good that may be concealed become even

Discernment, like the iron rod, is a light of protection and direction in a world that grows increasingly dark. With it, you and I can press forward safely through the mist of darkness.



The gift of discernment opens to us vistas that stretch far beyond what can be seen with natural eyes or heard with natural ears.

more important to you and to me in light of a specific element of Lehi's vision. In the vision various groups of individuals were pressing forward that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree of life. The strait and narrow path came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree. The mist of darkness described in the vision represents the temptations of the devil that blind the eyes of the children of men and lead them into broad roads so that they are lost (see 1 Nephi 12:17).

Now please pay particular attention to verse 23 in 1 Nephi 8, and let us liken this scripture to our day and the challenges we face in an increasingly wicked world:

“And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.”

I repeat again for emphasis the truth that discernment is a light of protection and direction in a world that grows increasingly dark. You and I can press forward safely and successfully through the mist of darkness and have a clear sense of spiritual direction. Discernment is so much more than recognizing right from wrong. It helps us distinguish the relevant from the irrelevant, the important from the unimportant, and the necessary from that which is merely nice.

The gift of discernment opens to us vistas that stretch far beyond what can be seen

with natural eyes or heard with natural ears. Discerning is seeing with spiritual eyes and feeling with the heart—seeing and feeling the falsehood of an idea or the goodness in another person. Discerning is hearing with spiritual ears and feeling with the heart—hearing and feeling the unspoken concern in a statement or the truthfulness of a testimony or doctrine.

I frequently have heard President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, counsel members and priesthood leaders, “If all you know is what you see with your natural eyes and hear with your natural ears, then you will not know very much.” His observation should help all of us to appropriately desire and seek these spiritual gifts.

Observing and discerning also enable us to assist others who are seeking to obtain the path and who desire to press forward with steadfastness in Christ. Blessed with these spiritual gifts, we will not lose our way; we will not wander off; we will not be lost. And we can hope to obtain the supernal gift of discernment and its light of protection and direction only if we are quick to observe. As Alma taught his son Helaman, “See that ye take care of these sacred things, yea, see that ye look to God and live” (Alma 37:47).

I declare my special witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer and our Savior. I know that He lives. I invoke His blessing upon each of you—that you may desire to be and become quick to observe and truly discerning. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on May 10, 2005.

NOTES

1. *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of George Q. Cannon*, comp. Jerreld L. Newquist (1987), 156–57.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 162–63; emphasis added.



Our First Christmas

BY ABRAHAM MENES SAGRERO

Christmas was coming, and it was obvious that my wife and I, who were newlyweds, were not going to have any money to buy a Christmas tree, ornaments, decorations, or a fine dinner.

We had started with no home, no jobs, and very little money. But God helped us. We found a small apartment, and I started looking for a job. I hadn't finished my degree, so I took various sales jobs. My income was modest, just enough to pay for food and rent. I would leave home early; sometimes I would come back successful, sometimes not. If I was not, I would feel defeated, but my wife, who was pregnant, would greet me with a smile. Then the difficulties would seem less challenging.

In Mexico, Christmas Eve is celebrated even more than Christmas Day. When I was single, I celebrated by eating codfish and a salad that included beets, oranges, and peanuts. But this Christmas Eve we didn't know what we would be having for dinner. We had a little money and a small gas stove fueled by a borrowed tank of gas. We didn't have a refrigerator or furniture for the living room or dining room—just a little wooden table my grandmother had given me and a couple of chairs we had received from a friend.

As I thought about our situation, I became depressed. But I remembered that God never forsakes us, and

I humbled myself like a child and went to Him in prayer.

My prayer was answered. I had peace in my heart and felt that all would be well. I opened the trunk of my car, and in one corner I found a small piece of dried fish. I remembered that several months before, I had helped my father move some fish, and this piece must have been left behind. Because of the salt it hadn't gone bad.

I showed it to my wife, and she said she would cook it. We went to buy tomatoes and other ingredients. We washed the fish and soaked it to get the salt out.

That night, by the light of a small bulb, we sat at our little unpainted wooden table and remembered the birth of Jesus Christ and how He was born with even less than we had. We enjoyed the most delicious dinner I had ever eaten and went to bed early. The next morning we stayed in bed and watched Christmas movies. It was a very happy day. In our poverty the spirit of Christmas brightened our little home and gave us hope and courage.

In January our daughter was born, bringing more happiness into our home.

Many Christmases have come and gone since then, and we no longer lack decorations or a Christmas tree or the fragrance of pine. We have had many fine dinners with succulent dishes. But I cherish most the memory of our first Christmas together. It was the poorest in material things but the richest in things spiritual and eternal: just the two of us with our unborn daughter and the spirit of Christmas. ■

Questions & Answers

“My parents are divorced, and sometimes I feel like we aren’t a ‘real’ LDS family because we can’t be sealed in the temple. I’m beginning to feel alienated from the Church. How can I deal with these feelings?”

L I A H O N A

Every Latter-day Saint family is different. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. And each is welcome in the Church. The gospel of Jesus Christ is for the perfecting of the Saints, not for perfect Saints. Here are some suggestions to help you with this challenge:

Learn from your family, and prepare for your future family. With all of our imperfections, we cannot have perfect families now. But you can learn from your family’s strengths and weaknesses. Decide now what kind of family you want when you get married. Look forward to and prepare for an eternal marriage by making the right choices today.

Live the gospel. Do all you can to make your home a place where the Spirit can dwell. One way to do that is by honoring your parents. Even though they are divorced, they are still your parents—they gave you the gift of life—and they deserve your love.

As you try to live the gospel, the Holy

All families have challenges; all are welcome at church.

Set a goal to marry in the temple one day.

Live the gospel so you can have all of its blessings.

Learn from your family and love them.

Be hopeful and try to grow closer to the Lord through this trial.

Ghost will comfort you, and the Atonement will strengthen you. The Savior atoned so we can have every blessing available to us if we are righteous. That includes the blessing of eternal families.

Your parents’ divorce won’t determine your eternal future. Your personal worthiness does. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “[The Lord] will make possible all you qualify in worthiness to receive. Do not be discouraged. Living a pattern of life as close as possible to the ideal will provide much happiness, great satisfaction, and impressive growth while here on earth regardless of your current life circumstances” (“First Things First,” *Liabona*, July 2001, 7; *Ensign*, May 2001, 7).

Be hopeful. When you have family problems, it is easy to feel sad. But remember that this challenge, like any trial, can teach you some important lessons and help you grow spiritually and emotionally. You can feel hope



READERS

as you pray and plan for the day when your future children can enjoy the blessings of an eternal family.

The Lord designed the family for our benefit. Our families can help strengthen and guide us. Learn to love and appreciate your family. The Lord loves your family—with its unique challenges and gifts. Your experiences with them will teach you much that will benefit you not only in this life but in the eternities to come.



My parents were divorced for several years and thankfully got married again, but during that time I felt much the way you described in

your question. I prayed to Heavenly Father for strength and comfort. Through this experience I've learned to turn to and trust Heavenly Father, for He knows what is best. I've also learned to pray with an open heart when I have troubles and questions. When I finish praying I read my scriptures, for I might come to a chapter

with the answer I need. When you have those feelings of alienation, try reading the scriptures and praying for guidance.

Marie P., 13, Arizona, USA



I also had that same feeling when my parents separated, but I overcame it. Just think that no matter what happens, Jesus is there to comfort you. He's always there to guide us to the right path and make us feel that we are loved. When you feel that, you will feel

the right path and make us feel that we are loved. When you feel that, you will feel

great about being a member of the Church. Think of what Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ want you to be, and by that you can be strong.

Robert S., 15, Philippines



One of the ways to deal with these feelings is with the help of Church leaders and friends. Your leaders can help you spiritually, and your friends can help you understand

that this isn't the end of the world but rather an incentive to try and help your family be more united. It is good to know that nothing happens by chance and that everything has a purpose in life and that God has an eternal love for us.

Juan B., 17, Brazil

Despite the trials that your family and parents have faced, remember that you will be accountable for your own actions in life, not those of your parents. Find comfort in knowing that one day you can get married in the temple. Don't feel like an outcast, but instead feel proud to be a member of the true Church. If you can't set aside your feelings of alienation, read Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.

Judith O., 14, Maryland, USA



Let not your parents' divorce discourage you or make you feel like a stranger in the Church, whether your family is sealed in the temple or not.

The most important thing you should do is to keep the faith and avoid the factors that led to the divorce of your parents so that you can be sealed in the holy temple.

Alexander H., 20, Nigeria

I grew up with divorced parents. My father was in a different branch than us, and my mother could



“To you who have experienced divorce: Don't let disappointment or a sense of failure color your perception of marriage or of life. Do not lose faith in marriage or allow bitterness to canker your soul and destroy you or those you love or have loved. . . .

“May God bless each of us to treat one another as befits one who refers to himself as a Latter-day Saint. May there be none among us who are made to feel as ‘strangers and foreigners,’ but may we all feel as ‘fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God’ (Ephesians 2:19).”

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95), “The Church Is for All People,” *Tambuli*, Aug. 1990, 45; *Ensign*, June 1989, 77.

not attend church because of her work schedule. My sister and I came to church alone. This was difficult, and it felt odd, but we continued to come. If you will hold to your testimony and keep the commandments, your life will be blessed. If you pray and seek to keep the Spirit in your heart, you will be able to overcome the trials in this life. In the end, you will be rewarded.

Jess D., 18, Nevada, USA



The feeling of not belonging within the Church is not of God since His Church is for all His children who believe in it, notwithstanding their situation. Exclusion has no place in

the Church because everybody is accepted. It isn't easy to face a family situation like this, but the gospel offers hope and a positive perspective for each situation that we confront. Set worthy goals now, and begin to prepare yourself for when you create your own family and can establish eternal bonds.

Ixchel C., 23, Mexico

Responses are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

NEXT QUESTION

“How can I strengthen my testimony to make sure I stay true to the gospel?”

SEND US YOUR ANSWER, along with your name, birth date, ward and stake (or branch and district), and photograph (including your parent's written permission to print the photo) to:

Questions & Answers 1/07

50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420

Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA

Or e-mail: liahona@ldschurch.org

Please respond by January 15, 2007. ■

Blessings of Belonging to Relief Society



Prayerfully select and read from this message the scriptures and teachings that meet the needs of the sisters you visit. Share your experiences and testimony. Invite those you teach to do the same.

How Can Relief Society Strengthen Your Relationship with Jesus Christ?

Sarah Cleveland, former first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency:

“We design to act in the name of the Lord—to relieve the wants of the distressed, and do all the good we can. . . . We have entered into this work in the name of the Lord. Let us boldly go forward” (Relief Society Minutes, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Mar. 17, 1842, 12; Mar. 30, 1842, 24).

Kathleen H. Hughes, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency:

“Whatever our circumstance, we are blessed as women. We have made covenants with Heavenly Father to do His work—and we are doing that work! Like Mary and Martha, we have placed ourselves at the Master’s feet and have ‘chosen that good part’ [see Luke 10:42]. We have chosen Christ, and we have chosen Relief Society. . . . It is pleasant to think that [Mary and Martha], and other faithful women who were Christ’s disciples, might have met

together to learn their part in building the kingdom. They were covenant women like us. They had determined to give the Savior all their hearts. So, too, when the Relief Society was organized, it grew out of our divine calling and our desire to serve, to love, and to care for each other” (“In Covenant with Him,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 108).

Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

How Can Relief Society Bless You and Your Family?

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Relief Society guides mothers in nurturing their daughters and in cultivating in husbands and sons and brothers courtesy and courage. . . . The defenses of the home and family are greatly reinforced when the wife and mother and daughters belong to Relief Society. . . . Strong Relief Societies carry a powerful immunizing and healing influence for the mothers and the daughters, for the single parent, for the single sisters, for the aging, for the infirm. . . . Both [Relief Society and

priesthood quorums] have as their consummate purpose to secure the family eternally” (“The Relief Society,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 72–74).

President Gordon B. Hinckley:

“God bless the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. May the spirit of love, which has motivated its members for more than a century and a half, continue to grow and be felt over the world. May their works of charity touch for good the lives of uncounted numbers wherever they find expression. And may light and understanding, learning and knowledge, and eternal truth grace the lives of generations of women yet to come, throughout the nations of the earth because of this singular and divinely established institution. May they recognize, one and all, their great responsibility and blessing to be ‘instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work’ (Alma 26:3)” (“Video: Instruments in the Hands of God,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 106). ■





BY ELDER LYNN A. MICKELSEN
Of the Seventy

My casual approach to prayer changed one night on a campout. As I jumped into my sleeping bag, I looked over to see my friend praying. When he finished he said, “Lynn, don’t you pray?”

At this time of year my thoughts turn to the Savior and Joseph Smith, and I love to read about them in the scriptures. The most important gift I received for Christmas as a teenager was my triple combination: the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price. It was leather bound with a dedication in the flyleaf by my father. That gift was not important to me then. In fact, I was disappointed.

Since then that triple combination has become precious to me because it reminds me of the things I learned as a teenager about the Savior and His life. That triple combination went with me on my mission. It served me while I was a bishop. It became a precious possession to me and still is. I wore out the first binding, and it has been rebound.

I think the most significant scriptures are personal testimonies, like Joseph Smith’s. I have never doubted from the first time I read it that Joseph Smith saw what he said he saw in the Sacred Grove.

I’m grateful Joseph prayed and had that sacred experience, the First

Vision. We don’t always receive visions or answers as powerful as Joseph’s answer was, but our answers can be just as clear, whether they are ideas, answers to questions, or confirmations of decisions.

An Example of Prayer

I understand Joseph Smith’s need to pray. I had always prayed before I went to bed at night. When I became a teenager I didn’t stop believing, but I stopped taking the time to pray. One day that changed.

I had gone on a campout with some young men, and one of my good friends and I were in a tent together. I jumped into my sleeping bag, and I looked over to see my friend kneeling on his sleeping bag and praying. When he got into his sleeping bag, he said, “Lynn, don’t you pray?”

I answered, “Not as much as I should.” And I made up my mind then that no one would question again whether I prayed.

“Don’t You Pray?”

I also understand Joseph Smith's wanting to be alone as he prayed. On another occasion a few years later, I was in a similar situation, this time with a young man I didn't know. I was nervous about praying in front of him, so I waited for him to go to bed so I could kneel and pray without him watching me.

But he wouldn't go to bed, so I finally knelt and prayed and got into my sleeping bag. When he got into bed a few minutes later, he said, "Lynn, do you always pray like that?"

"Yes, I try to. If I ever hurry and get into bed

forgetting to pray, I get out of bed and kneel and pray."

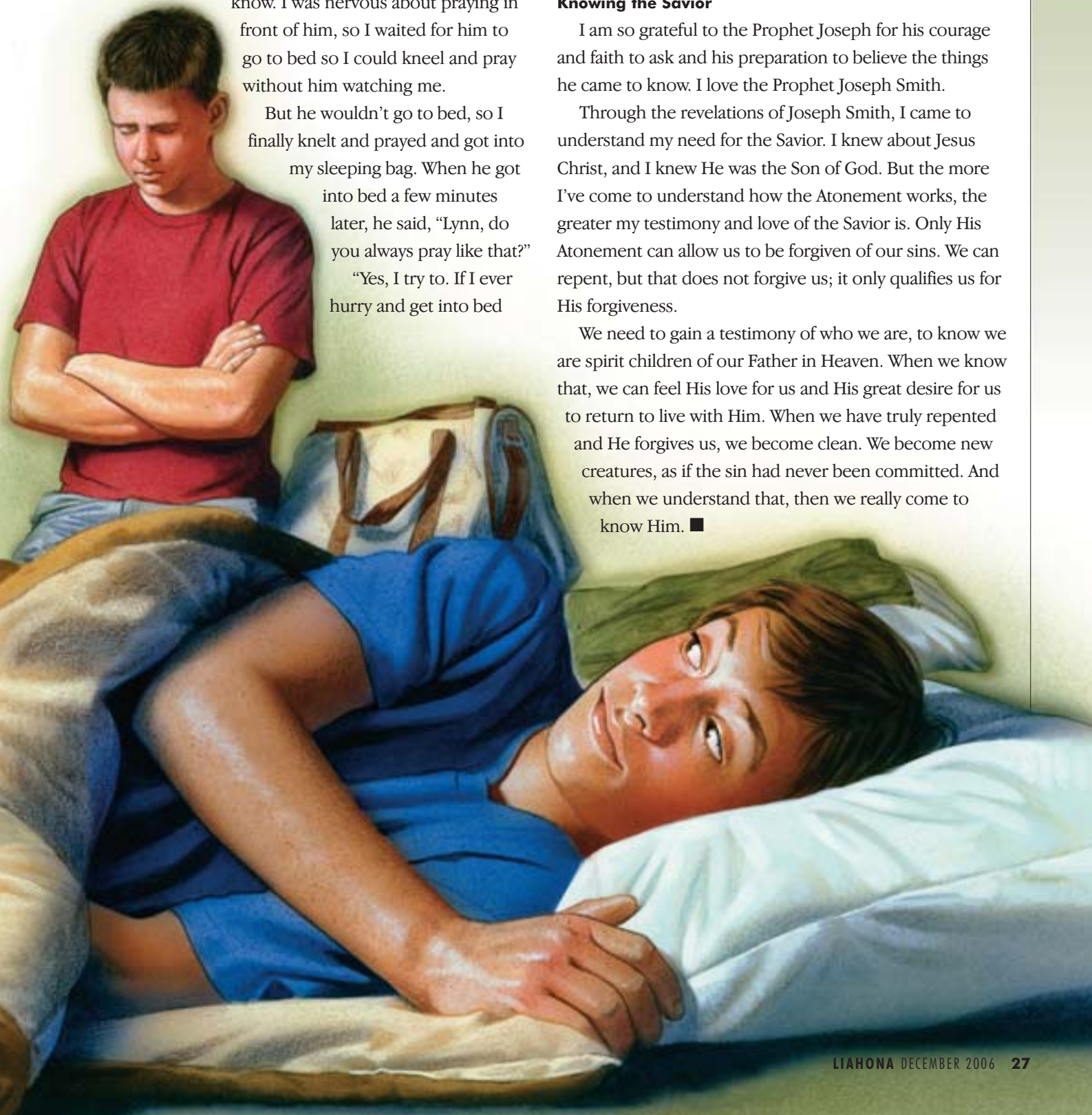
He said, "I should do that."

Knowing the Savior

I am so grateful to the Prophet Joseph for his courage and faith to ask and his preparation to believe the things he came to know. I love the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Through the revelations of Joseph Smith, I came to understand my need for the Savior. I knew about Jesus Christ, and I knew He was the Son of God. But the more I've come to understand how the Atonement works, the greater my testimony and love of the Savior is. Only His Atonement can allow us to be forgiven of our sins. We can repent, but that does not forgive us; it only qualifies us for His forgiveness.

We need to gain a testimony of who we are, to know we are spirit children of our Father in Heaven. When we know that, we can feel His love for us and His great desire for us to return to live with Him. When we have truly repented and He forgives us, we become clean. We become new creatures, as if the sin had never been committed. And when we understand that, then we really come to know Him. ■



A Watch, Some Buttons, and Joseph's Cloak



Items from a recent exhibit at the Museum of Church History and Art give us a glimpse into Joseph Smith's everyday life.

BY SALLY ODEKIRK
Church Magazines

A gold watch, a cloak, rusty farm tools, and slate pencils from a bygone era. These common items from the 1800s are meaningful because they come from the daily life of Joseph Smith.

Because he lived 200 years ago, looking at artifacts from the Prophet's life helps us understand him better. Makenzie Head, 13, from Cedar Hills, Utah, visited the Museum of Church History and Art to see these items. She wrote that viewing artifacts from the Prophet Joseph's life "has really given me a better understanding of how he lived and the different things he had during his life that are so different from what we have now. What also amazed me were the many things that were actually used by the Prophet. It definitely strengthened my testimony of him."

Following are some photos of the artifacts that were on display or are stored at the Church museum.

The caption information comes from Mark Staker, museum curator.

Left: A replica of the gold plates that was on display at the museum. Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses, said three silver rings held the plates together so they could open like a book. Below: These buttons and clasps were found during an archaeological investigation at the Smith family's log home site in Palmyra, New York.



Above: A false shirtfront, made by Lucy Mack Smith for her son Joseph in 1841. This popular men's clothing element, known as a bosom, was typically worn to hide buttons or seams or to provide decoration. Left: Joseph Smith owned this gold watch but gave it to pay for legal services.



Above: This cradle was made around 1805 and is similar to what Joseph Smith's family would have used.

Right: These nails and horseshoe were found at the Joseph Smith log home site. The round metal piece attached to the handle of a scythe. As a boy Joseph Smith used a scythe to cut grain. Below: A stone fragment from the Nauvoo Temple.

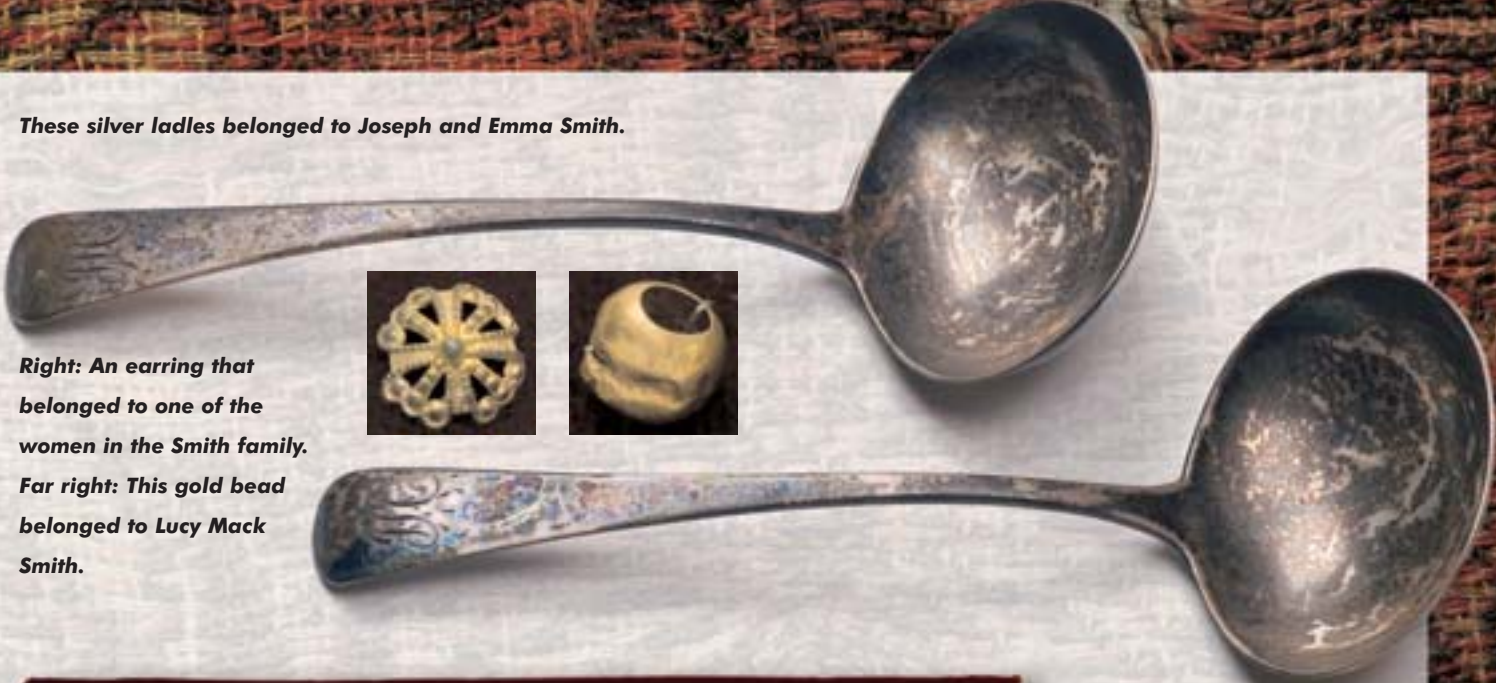


Below: Recovering from leg surgery, Joseph used a crutch like this.



Far left: These slate pencils were likely used as Joseph Smith's parents taught him to read, write, and solve math problems at home. Above: This first edition Book of Mormon was a gift from Joseph Smith to Martin Harris. It is open to the testimony of the Three Witnesses. Right: The Prophet wore this cloak as lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion.

These silver ladles belonged to Joseph and Emma Smith.



Right: An earring that belonged to one of the women in the Smith family.



Far right: This gold bead belonged to Lucy Mack Smith.

Left: These surgical instruments are similar to the ones used when Joseph Smith was young. He had an infection that killed a portion of his leg bone. A doctor recommended amputating his leg, but young Joseph and his mother refused.



Right: This issue of the Nauvoo Neighbor, published after Joseph and Hyrum Smith were martyred, was printed to share the details of their deaths with a general audience. Below: After the Prophet's death, locks of his hair were given to some of his friends. It was common in the mid-1800s to share locks of hair as a way to remember loved ones who had died.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF EARRING, BEAD, HAIR, AND SLATE COURTESY OF MUSEUM OF CHURCH HISTORY AND ART; PHOTOGRAPHS OF SURGICAL TOOLS AND CRUTCH BY CRAIG DIMOND; CLOAK: GIFT OF VIENNA JACOUES; SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS: GIFT OF ROLLA BURNS WILLIAMS; LOCK OF HAIR: GIFT OF CLARA W. BEEBE AND A. E. HYDE, JR.



BECAUSE OF THE RESTORATION...



BY MANDI ANDRE

The dictionary says the word restore means to “bring back into existence or . . . into a former or original state” (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. [2003], 1063). Many of the biblical prophets promised that in the last days God would restore the gospel one last time before the Savior’s Second Coming. In 1820 God began restoring the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

One day I began wondering how the Restoration affects my everyday life. Here’s what the Restoration did for me in just one average week.

Last Sunday my dad gave me a priesthood blessing.

Because of the Restoration, I know he has been given the authority to act in the name of Jesus Christ. My dad can bless me whenever I am sick or need extra help.

On Monday I woke up for school and said my prayers.

Because of the Restoration, I knew I was praying to a loving Heavenly Father and that I am His daughter, created in His image. I also read from the Book of Mormon. Because of the Restoration, I have another witness that Jesus Christ really lived. That night we had family home evening.

Because of the Restoration, I am blessed with loving parents who teach me the truth.

On Tuesday I went to the temple my first time and performed baptisms for the dead.

Because of the Restoration, I was able to help those who have died without the gospel to have eternal blessings.

On Wednesday I went to my closet and picked out something modest to wear. Because of the Restoration, I know that my body is sacred and that I need to be a good example to those who see me. I also have the guidance of living prophets and apostles, who have given me *For the Strength of Youth*, which contains guidelines to help me make righteous choices.

On Thursday I tried my best to live the gospel. Because of the Restoration, I have the gift of the Holy Ghost as my companion to help me always. I also have a bishop and Young Women leaders to watch over me

as special advisers. And because of the Restoration, I know about the Atonement so that when I make a mistake I can repent and be forgiven.

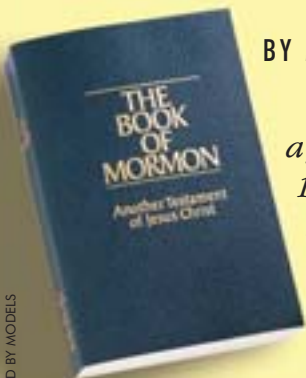
On Friday I enjoyed being with my friends. Because of the Restoration, I have friends who also want to live the gospel. These good friends are a big blessing in my life. I also have opportunities to share the gospel with my friends who are not members of the Church.

On Saturday I thought about my brother, Tyler, who is serving a mission in Brazil. I miss him very much, but because of the Restoration, I know what he is doing is right. I want to go on a mission someday too.

Today is Sunday again. Because of the Restoration, I took the sacrament and renewed my promises to follow Jesus Christ. I was reminded that I am a daughter of God and that His plan has been restored so I can one day return home to Him.

Because of the Restoration, I know the scriptures are true. I know that this is the restored Church of Jesus Christ. I know that living prophets are guiding us today. I know that through restored temple ordinances my family can be together forever.

Because of the Restoration, we are blessed every day of the week—and every day of our lives. ■



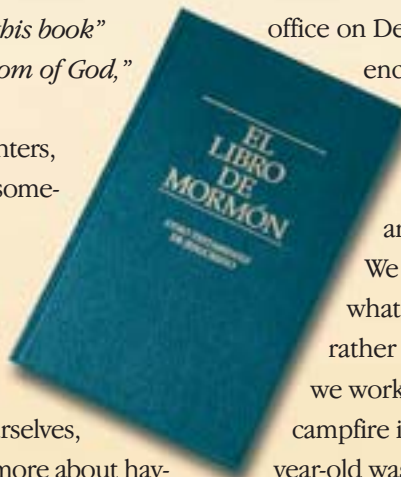
Taking the Challenge

One year ago members of the Church around the world finished reading the Book of Mormon in response to President Gordon B. Hinckley's August 2005 challenge. Church magazines received an unusually large outpouring of letters of testimony, experience, and gratitude from those who met the challenge. A few of those responses follow.

How We Did It

"I think something remarkable must have happened to the people of this Church. They were observed reading the Book of Mormon while riding the bus, while eating lunch, while in the doctor's office waiting room, and in scores of other situations. I trust and hope that we have drawn closer to God because of the reading of this book" (Gordon B. Hinckley, "Seek Ye the Kingdom of God," Liahona and Ensign, May 2006, 83).

Every night at 7:00. My wife, two daughters, and I read together each night at 7:00. If someone happened to be visiting at that time, we asked him or her to read with us. The reading itself was a great blessing. But our daughters (ages 12 and 13) also increased in reading ability, and we all learned about prioritizing, disciplining ourselves, and managing our time. We understood more about having a house of order. And as a family, we felt an increased love and unity in our home. *B. Akanit Sapprasert, Pakkret, Thailand*



Closer to heaven. I am a flight attendant, and it was inspiring to pass through the cabin and see passengers reading the Book of Mormon. After all the passengers had been served, I tried to find enough time to read a chapter or two, and I challenged myself to write down at least one thing I learned that day. I usually work the morning flights, so I was in the air and reading before the sun came up. I found that there was something special about reading while feeling closer to heaven. *Emily Bryn Arnell, Farmington, Utah, USA*

Audio scriptures. When I drive to and from work, I tune my radio to news or commentaries. But for the last four months of 2005, I listened to the Book of Mormon on CD. I finished the last chapters of Moroni in my home office on December 29, 2005. After this great experience, I love the Book of Mormon even more.

Arturo Maldonado, Los Angeles, California, USA

Paint buckets and plundering. Our lives are busy, and it was difficult to read every day. We finally decided that we would read no matter what, and we found ourselves reading in some rather unusual places—sitting on paint buckets as we worked on our remodeling project or around a campfire in our backyard. We wondered if our four-year-old was even listening at times, but then one day when asked why his room was so messy, he replied, "Someone has been plundering in there!" *Buxton family, West Point, Utah, USA*

Completing the picture. My husband and I and our three children decided that we would each read the Book of Mormon individually. We cut a print of an ancient prophet holding golden plates into five pieces. Each family member was responsible to complete the picture by completing our reading. Our youngest son does not read yet, so I read an illustrated Book of Mormon with him.

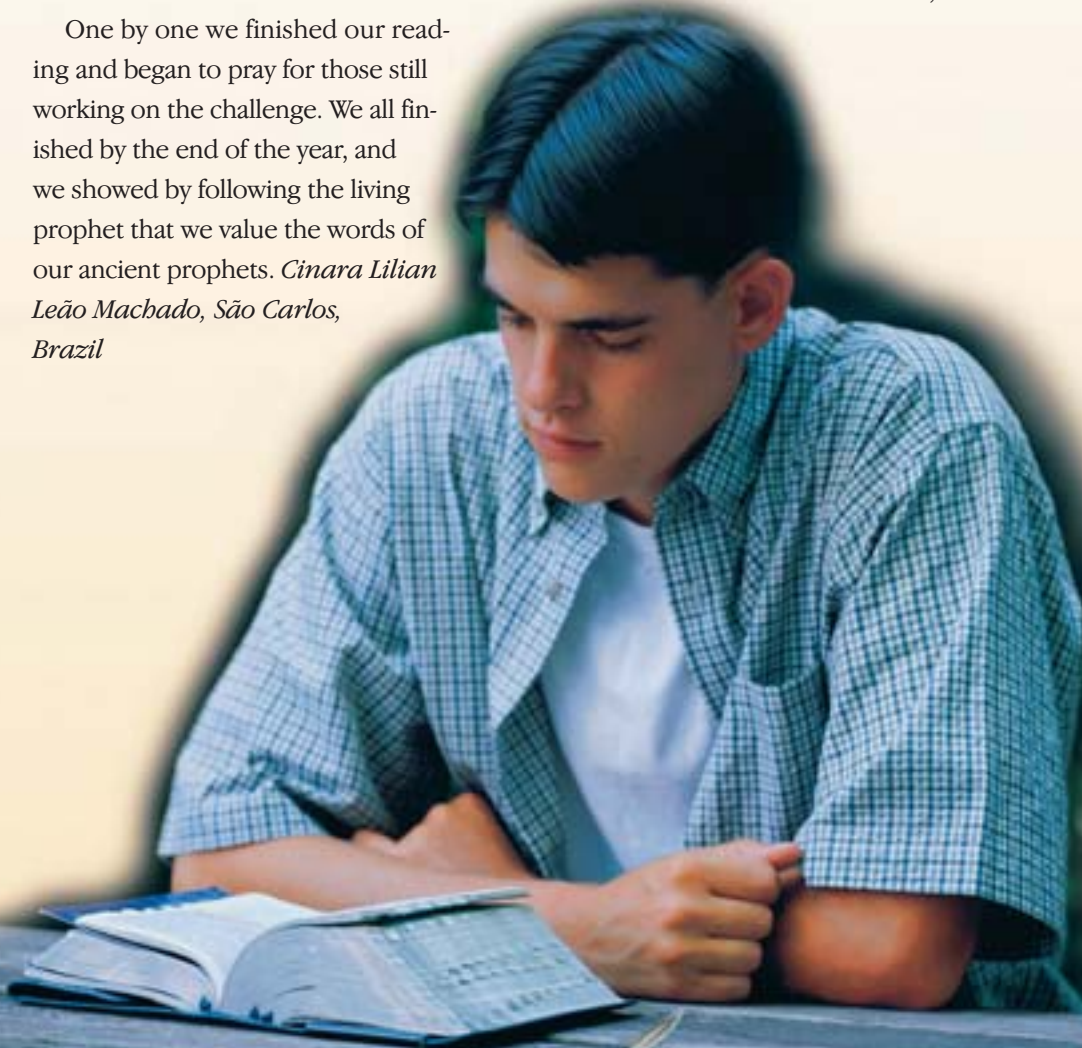
One by one we finished our reading and began to pray for those still working on the challenge. We all finished by the end of the year, and we showed by following the living prophet that we value the words of our ancient prophets. *Cinara Lilian Leão Machado, São Carlos, Brazil*

Reading aloud. I read aloud to a dear friend who is 91 and lives in the cottage next door. As we read we would stop and discuss how teachings apply to our lives. I will always consider this one of the richest experiences of my life. Sometimes the Spirit was so intense I was brought to tears. I am thankful for a wise and inspired prophet, who extended this challenge. *Sylvia Willis, Hampstead, North Carolina, USA*



"If each of you will observe this simple program [to read or reread the Book of Mormon by the end of the year], regardless of how many times you previously may have read the Book of Mormon, there will come into your lives and into your homes an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God."

President Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Liahona and Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6.





Young women from St. George, Utah, responded to the challenge and experienced, as President Hinckley said, “something remarkable.”

Book of Mormon commuting. My fiancé and I were proceeding very slowly in our Book of Mormon study. Then we learned about the challenge, and we began in earnest to meet it. We both take the train to work, and during the commute I was able to let go of the things of the world. When several people on the train were interested in what we were doing, I shared my testimony and gave out pass-along cards. I know the Book of Mormon can transform our lives for the better. *Luciana Martins, São Paulo, Brazil*

Making it mine. Having read the Book of Mormon many times, I felt it was time to use a different approach. I had already downloaded the Book of Mormon to my personal computer and color coded the verses, using recurrent themes. I went through it again, highlighting in bold verses that explained important principles to me and in italic verses that were interesting for historical or other reasons. I also inserted notes and references that gave useful background.

As I continued, many impressions came to me. I inserted them as notes. As the months went by, the notes increased—many of them applying to situations in the lives of my family members and myself and in my Church assignments. Many writers have written about the Book of Mormon, but this collection of notes helped me make the Book of Mormon *my* book. The copy I printed out is

personalized for my needs and those of my family.
Jon M. Taylor, Bountiful, Utah, USA

What It Did for Us

“Last year I asked members of the Church throughout the world to again read the Book of Mormon. Thousands, even hundreds of thousands, responded to that challenge. The Prophet Joseph said in 1841, ‘I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book’” (Liahona and Ensign, May 2006, 83).

The gift of time. When I read about the challenge, I immediately made the excuse that I was too busy to even attempt it. When I later began reading, I constantly reminded myself that if I didn’t finish, I could always say I was just too busy. But something amazing happened. On the days I read, time seemed to stand still and allow me the chance to get everything accomplished. This blessing was the remedy to my busy life. I was able to spend more time with my family and on my Church calling, while still being able to accomplish all I needed to in my job. I realized that Heavenly Father will provide what is necessary if I put Him first. *Julie Major, Nibley, Utah, USA*

Peace and forgiveness. Early in 2005 my husband gave two men a ride. When my husband returned home, he discovered that his *sapelu* (machete) was missing. This really hurt him: he’d done a good deed, and this was how he was repaid. The incident bothered my husband to the point that he was having trouble finding peace.

Several months later, we awoke to find that our house had been broken into. Worse, we realized the intruders had come into the rooms where our children and we had been sleeping. I was angry and thought, “If my husband was so upset about a knife, he will go completely nuts now!” But he had a spirit of peace that spilled over to the rest of us. He expressed gratitude that nobody had been hurt and hope that the people who had taken our things would use them to improve their lives.

SOMETHING REMARKABLE: TESTIMONIES OF THE BLESSINGS

AN ADDED MEASURE OF THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

When I had need to be guided, the Holy Ghost was there. I was better able to turn to my Heavenly Father to find counsel. When I had opportunities, I shared the gospel with more confidence. Sarah Berthier, Dijon, France

Every morning I asked that the Holy Ghost be my companion so He could enlighten my mind. A miracle occurred: the Book of Mormon was opened to me anew. I received answers to questions I had had for years. Tatyana Vyshemirskaya, Krim, Ukraine

I was able to feel an extra portion of the Spirit throughout the day. I felt an inner peace inside, which was reflected in my relationships with family members. Libia Zulema Luna de Rubio, León, Mexico

A STRENGTHENED RESOLUTION TO WALK IN OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMANDMENTS

An unparalleled blessing of spiritual strength helped me make enormous strides in overcoming weaknesses. So great and humbling is this blessing that I know there is no better way to begin or end the day than in the scriptures.

Michael B. Clark,
Syracuse, Utah, USA

We have been blessed with the desire to hold regular family home evening, morning and evening prayer, and, of course, scripture study. Studying the scriptures consistently makes me crave the fruits of the Spirit. Leslie Quinn, Idaho Falls, Idaho, USA

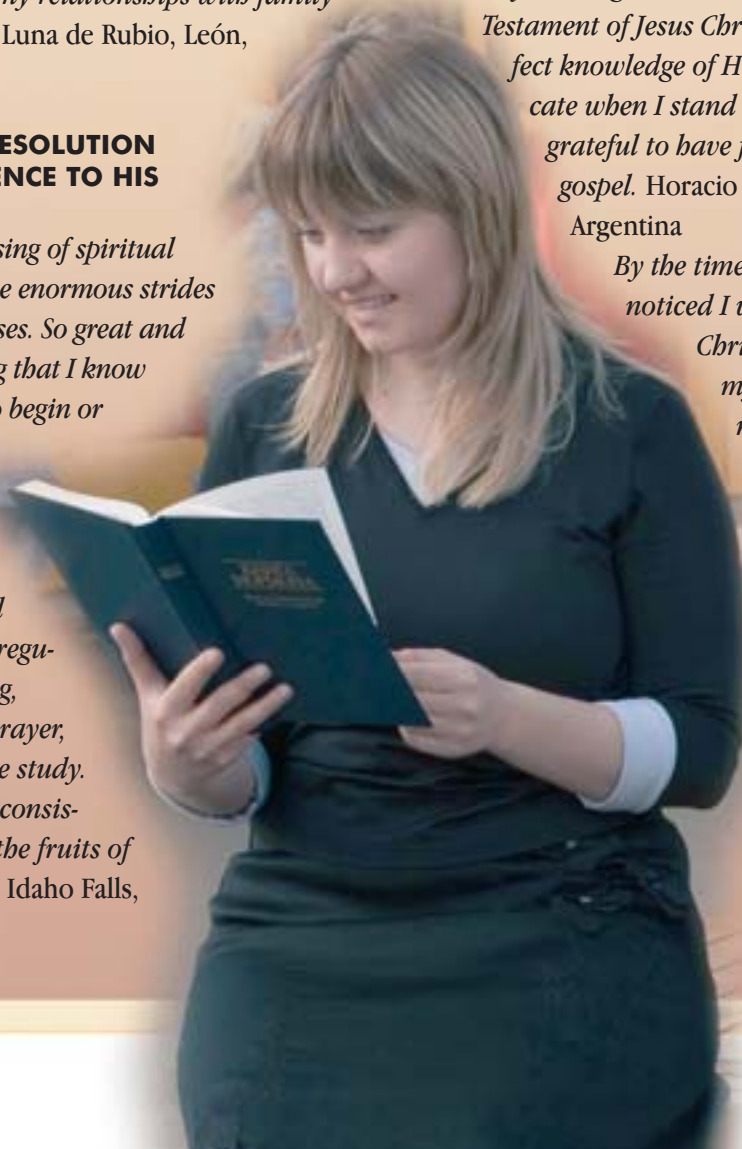
I went from reading the printed words on the page, to hearing the words in my head, to speaking the words each day, to living the words, to writing the words on my heart, and finally to making the words a permanent part of my soul. C. E. Tapie Rohm Jr., San Bernardino, California, USA

A STRONGER TESTIMONY OF THE LIVING REALITY OF THE SON OF GOD

Because I studied longer each day, I made connections I had never made before. The Book of Mormon truly is full of testimonies of Jesus Christ. Because of the Spirit I felt, my own testimony of my Redeemer increased. Dagmar Leiß, Hamburg, Germany

By reading the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, I gained a more perfect knowledge of Him who will be my advocate when I stand before God. I am grateful to have found His restored gospel. Horacio Chemin, Rawson, Argentina

By the time I got to 3 Nephi, I noticed I was thinking about Jesus Christ more often. I found myself wondering what my Savior would think about what I was reading or doing. Thoughts of Him came as a gift, and I began to understand how I could “always remember Him.” Alice M. John, Ogden, Utah, USA



I was speechless at the change. Why was I not able to feel the same peace? Then I realized: while I had been “too busy” to start reading, my husband was firmly entrenched in the Book of Mormon. *Kathleen Arp, Pesega, Samoa*

An eternal family. My family members and I are converts. My dad was baptized in 2000, and he had attended several temple preparation classes but was reluctant to go through the temple. Then my family accepted President Hinckley’s challenge to read the Book of Mormon, and I truly believe it prepared us spiritually so we would be able to receive the blessings of the temple. In October, a high councilor firmly but happily told my dad he needed to set a date to receive his endowment and to be sealed as a family. My dad agreed, and from then on everything fell into place. My dad went to the temple in late October, and we were sealed on November 19. We had been waiting years to enter the temple, but as we diligently read the Book of Mormon, the Lord prepared a way for us to enter His house and be sealed for eternity. *Danielle Crane, Sandy, Utah, USA*

Small and simple. I took the challenge—no major miracles, just small and simple things. In difficult circumstances, I felt the gentle guidance of the Holy Spirit. *Mark Vader, Riverton, Utah, USA*

Really for us? I honestly thought that President Hinckley must be talking to those who weren’t reading. After all, we had nightly scripture study, family home evening, and family councils; we prayed together. We thought we would just continue reading a few verses a night.

It was a few days later that it hit me: a prophet of the Lord asked us to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year, and I’m going to ignore it? That night we met as a family, and I was astonished at the resounding “Yes” I received as a commitment to meeting the goal. I told the

kids that we would have to read on vacations, birthdays, nights when we were tired. “No problem” was the response.

It didn’t take long for the spirit of that great book to take over. We started to understand gospel principles, to communicate more as a family. My wife and I felt our testimonies were strengthened, and I heard the kids explaining scripture stories as if they had served missions and taught the gospel for years! Taking this challenge has changed our lives forever. *Shawn O’Leary, Poulsbo, Washington, USA*

Insights for others. While responding to the challenge, I read Mosiah 18 and couldn’t get it out of my mind. About two days later I sat down with a new member (I served as branch president). This brother wanted to know again why he needed to be baptized into the Church when he had previously been baptized in another church. Without hesitation, I opened to Mosiah and asked him to read in chapter 18. When he finished we were both silent for a while. Then the brother told me that he had felt prompted to counsel with me. I silently bowed my head and thanked Heavenly Father for the gift of a prophet and his challenge to reread the Book of Mormon. *Akingbade A. Ojo, Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria*

Blessings available. When I started to read my Book of Mormon, things started to change in my life. I found myself waking up so I could pray to my Heavenly Father to tell Him how grateful I was for the blessings of knowing of Him and the plan of salvation and the restored gospel. I know that I got to this place because I rose to the challenge from our prophet, who knew how much we would be blessed if we listened and obeyed.

My experience does leave me with questions: Why did we have to be challenged? How long will it take us to learn that these blessings are constantly there for us if we will read the Book of Mormon daily? *Angela Broderick, Merthyr Tydfil, Wales* ■



How the Hong Kong Temple Came to Be



President Hinckley's selection of the site for the Hong Kong China Temple illustrates how revelation operates to bless God's children on earth.

BY ELDER MONTE J. BROUGH AND
ELDER JOHN K. CARMACK

Of the Seventy

In the spring of 1991 the First Presidency requested the Asia Area Presidency—consisting of Elders Merlin R. Lybbert, W. Eugene Hansen, and Monte J. Brough—to discreetly begin a search for a temple site in Hong Kong. They found several small and, in their view, inadequate sites with extremely high price tags. President Gordon B. Hinckley visited those sites in April of that year and encouraged the Area Presidency to keep looking.

Late in 1991 two more sites were identified. One was part of a government development project near an ocean bay known locally as Junk Bay (a “junk” is a Chinese boat). The other potential site was located in Fanling. Neither the Fanling nor the Junk Bay site was easily accessible or convenient to the people who would use the temple, so the search continued.

Unfortunately, time was running short. If Hong Kong was going to have a temple, it would best be built by July 1, 1997.

A little world history might be important here to understand the urgency of completing





Above: The Hong Kong temple's ground-breaking involved (from left to right) Elder and Sister Kwok Yuen Tai, Elder and Sister John K. Carmack, and Elder and Sister David E. Sorensen. Opposite page: An architectural elevation rendering, an artist's concept of the finished temple, and a view of Hong Kong.

the temple in Hong Kong by July 1997. In 1898 Hong Kong became a British colony with the signing of a 99-year lease, expiring June 30, 1997. In December

1984, British and Chinese authorities signed a declaration confirming that the British government would hand over Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997.

In June 1992 the Area Presidency was reorganized, with Elders Monte J. Brough, John K. Carmack, and Kwok Yuen Tai as members of the presidency.

In July President Hinckley called the Area Presidency twice to discuss the Fanling and Junk Bay sites. President Hinckley also indicated that he and Ted Simmons, managing director of the Church Physical Facilities Department, would come to Hong Kong on July 25 to choose the site for the temple.

When President Hinckley and Brother Simmons arrived, Elders Brough and Carmack took them to half a dozen potential sites, starting at Kom Tong Hall, where the area office was located. (Elder Tai was away from Hong Kong on a trip at the time.) After looking at all the sites, President Hinckley, Brother Simmons, and Elders Brough and Carmack met with four stake presidents in the Hong Kong region. President Hinckley discussed his feelings about the various sites and probed the stake presidents' feelings. He found them supportive of any decision he would make.

The group was exhausted from the rigorous day of prayerfully reviewing the various properties. President Hinckley retired to

his hotel room and requested that Elders Brough and Carmack come back the next morning to further discuss the matter. It was apparent that the Area Presidency had yet to find a solution President Hinckley could accept.

At about 6:45 a.m., President Hinckley called Elder Brough and requested that he and Elder Carmack come to his hotel room at 8:00 a.m. Brother Simmons joined them there at the appointed time, and President Hinckley then shared, on a sheet of white paper, a detailed drawing. During the night, he had envisioned a building of about eight floors above ground, with the temple on the top floors and other functions housed on the lower floors. It included replacement facilities for the Kowloon Tong chapel and the Hong Kong mission home and office, since the new building would require that these existing buildings on side-by-side lots be demolished. This concept of multiple use, President Hinckley explained, would depart from tradition in that all other temples in the Church at that time were stand-alone buildings.

President Hinckley asked Elders Brough and Carmack to express their feelings. They each responded that the concept of a multi-story, multi-use building had not even been considered previously, but they had a strong conviction that President Hinckley had received inspiration—even revelation—about what the Lord intended.

After briefly reviewing the other options, President Hinckley asked the brethren to join in prayer. He asked if it would be all right if he offered the prayer. He then discussed the whole matter with the Lord. He talked of the need for a temple in China to bless the people



in that area of the world. The prayer was powerful and compelling, evidencing his love for all the people of Asia.

Those present then returned to the Kowloon Tong site, walking the area. They crossed the street to check the neighborhood and view the site from all aspects, checking particularly the access to it from the underground railway systems. Then Elders Brough and Carmack returned President Hinckley and Brother Simmons to the Kai Tak International Airport.

After returning to Salt Lake City, President Hinckley presented his sketch to the Temple Department, asking that the architects turn the concept into building plans as soon as possible. Seeing an opportunity to expand the functions of the building, the department’s architects created a plan for a larger building—nearly twice the size of President Hinckley’s initial concept. To build this building, they would need a variance to the height limitations and other restrictions imposed on buildings in the area.

When the plans were completed, permission was

sought to build this expanded facility, but after many months of negotiations with Hong Kong officials, the proposed building was rejected.

At the April 1993 general conference, President Hinckley invited Brother Simmons and Elders Brough, Carmack, and Tai to his office. He asked why the approval process was going so slowly and what might be done to obtain a building permit. After referring to President Hinckley’s earlier experience in Hong Kong and testifying of the feelings the Area

Presidency had on that occasion, the Area Presidency unanimously recommended that the Church return to the original concept described by President Hinckley in Hong Kong.

Once the plans were redone to reflect the original concept in President Hinckley’s sketch, the necessary approvals were quickly obtained. Within days,

various British, Hong Kong, and Chinese officials issued permits for the temple’s construction.

On May 26 and 27, 1996, President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated the Hong Kong China Temple. In the dedicatory prayer, he prayed:

“Thy Church in this area now comes to full maturity with the dedication of this sacred temple. We pray that this harvest of souls may continue, that in the future as in the present, Thy people may be free and secure in their worship and that none shall hinder the service of missionaries called to this area. We pray that Thy work may grow and prosper in the great Chinese realm, and may those who govern be ever receptive to those called and sent as messengers of revealed truth.” ■

Elder Monte J. Brough was sustained as a member of the Seventy in 1988; Elder John K. Carmack served as a member of the Seventy from 1984 to 2001.



My Father's Last Words

BY ELDER JORGE LUIS DEL CASTILLO

Area Seventy
South America South Area



The principle of tithing is not primarily about money; it is about faith.

One of the greatest blessings of my life was being able to serve a full-time mission. It was a wonderful event for the whole family, since I was the oldest of three brothers. My parents were converts to the Church and had been baptized when I was four years old, thanks to two fine missionaries who knocked on the door of their home in Bernal, a suburb south of Buenos Aires, Argentina. As a result, my parents always hoped their children would likewise help people find the religion that had made them so happy.

Things were going wonderfully as the first year of my mission went by. Then, when I was serving in Córdoba, Argentina, I received some sad news from home: my father was very ill. He had recently undergone surgery, and the doctors had found that his illness was much advanced, in the terminal stage.

The mission president decided that I should go home, visit my father, and return to the mission field the next day. So I went home and found my father on the verge of death, most of the time unconscious and immobile. I spent most of my time at his bedside. Those were hours of sorrow, of peace,

and of the abundant companionship of the Spirit. All my thoughts were centered on the Lord and His great plan.

At some point my father regained consciousness. He looked at me but did not recognize me. However, as I began to express how much I loved him and how grateful I was to be his son, he realized he was listening to his eldest child, the missionary. Tears started to roll down his cheeks, and making great effort to communicate, he said, “Your mother is a saintly woman; she is our example.” Then I clearly heard these words from his lips: “Even if you don’t have anything to eat, always pay your tithing.”

He did not say much more. I wrote down his words in my journal, left the house, and returned to the mission field. A few hours later my father passed away.

With the passage of time, as I began my own family and watched my children grow up, this experience with my father came to my mind. As I pondered the significance of life and death, I thought, “What last words of counsel would I leave my children if I knew the time had come to leave this world?” I could not think of anything better than the counsel I had received from my father: “Even if you don’t have anything to eat, always pay your tithing.”

The law of tithing is a great blessing to our family. I have learned that the Lord does not need my tithing; rather, I am the one who needs the blessings that come from obeying this law.

I have also learned that it does not matter if our donation envelope is bulging or if it contains just a few coins. We have met our obligation to the Lord if our tithing is 10 percent of our income. As we pay our tithing we become partners with the Lord. We take a stand in favor of building temples, in which all the ordinances of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ are made available to families. We take a stand in favor of building meetinghouses, where we can attend each Sunday with our families and partake of the sacrament if worthy. We take a stand in favor of helping missionary work reach the ends of the earth. And finally, we take a stand in favor of having the Church “stand

independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world” (D&C 78:14).

I consider the law of tithing a law of protection for my home and the most important principle in the sound financial management of our family’s resources.

Church members who understand the principle of tithing know that it is not primarily about money; it is about faith. Let us have faith in the promises of the Lord, who declared, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10). ■

Elder Jorge Luis del Castillo served as an Area Seventy from 1997 to 2005.



He Gave My Gift Away

By Dellene Grasmick

I ran the soup kitchen at the Food and Care Coalition in Provo, Utah, for 11 years. We encouraged our patrons to help us when they could. One man, Mike (name has been changed), had been living in his car for about four years. He always volunteered to help, and I appreciated everything he did for me.

It was the Christmas season, and I wanted to show my appreciation, so

I gave him a Christmas card with a short message expressing my thanks and a book of tickets to the dollar-movie theater that was close by. Mike was overwhelmed. He thanked me several times and said he couldn't remember the last time he had received a present from anyone.

This happened at about noon on Christmas Eve. After dinner that evening, Mike came to me and apologized for having given away two of the movie tickets. I told him they were his, and he could do whatever he wanted with them. He said, "Well, this lady was sitting across from me at dinner. I'd never seen

her before, but she told me it was her birthday and she hadn't received any presents. So I gave her one of the tickets."

"Then, there was a man sitting by me," Mike continued. "We got to talking. I found out he was leaving on the bus tonight, but it didn't leave until 11:00 p.m., and he had nowhere to wait until it came. I gave him one of the tickets so he could go in where it was warm and watch a movie."

I was so teary eyed and choked up that I could hardly tell him what a generous and Christlike thing he had done. ■

I gave him one of the tickets so he could go in where it was warm and watch a movie until his bus came," Mike explained.





Christmas Tamales

By Hina Burcion

I had about two months left on my mission in Costa Rica, and I was serving with an American companion, Sister Nguyen. We were excited to be celebrating Christmas and were preparing small bags of sweets and cookies to deliver on Christmas Eve to friends and families in the small city where we lived.

I had spent most of my mission in very poor areas, and I was grateful. The Lord had blessed me by allowing me to teach people in humble homes, to live among them and learn of their kindness, their humility, and their spirit of sacrifice.

The last family we visited to drop off some treats was the Carmona family, a large family that was one of the poorest in the ward. They all—parents, children, in-laws, and grandchildren—lived in a small wooden hut covered with sheet metal, lacking electricity and any other modern comfort. They were preparing traditional tamales that they would eat during the holidays. We made our delivery and returned to our house.

Very early on Christmas morning we heard a knock on the door. To my surprise, I found myself face-to-face with Minor, the 13-year-old son of the Carmona family. He was holding a small package in his hand.

“Sisters,” he said, “Mother sent me to give you these tamales. Have a merry Christmas!”

I was so thankful they had thought of us—we who had not yet received anything from our own families, we who had not been expecting anything. And this family that probably had just enough for themselves offered us a part of their Christmas “feast.”

I showed my companion the package, and I could see tears running down her cheeks. “Sister, what’s wrong?” I asked.

She answered me very simply: “Sister Burcion, it’s Christmas!”

Yes, it was Christmas, and they had shared the little they had with us, the missionaries, as they would have shared with Christ. It was the only gift we received that Christmas day, a gift I will never forget. ■

Our Difficult Neighbor

By Diane Hubbard

My husband and I were living in a second-story apartment with our small son and daughter. We looked forward to Christmas that year with our two children. Our son was growing fast, and as any normal toddler, he liked to move a lot. He often ran around the apartment just for fun. We enjoyed his antics, but our neighbor downstairs was rather impatient. He often turned up his music in retaliation and came upstairs to complain to us.

It was a frustrating situation for us. What is a little boy supposed to do all day if he is not able to move freely? It broke my heart to keep him quiet when he was so full of gleeful energy. We met with our apartment manager and our neighbor to try to resolve the conflict. As we talked I noticed that our neighbor was especially defensive in his words and attitude. During the discussion, the Savior’s words from Matthew 5:44 came to my mind: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” I did not necessarily consider him an enemy, but we certainly didn’t see eye to eye.

He was in the military, and his wife had not been able to join him yet, so he was alone in a strange town. And



W*e ignored
the loud
music
and wished our
neighbor a heartfelt
merry Christmas.*

when he came home from work, he had to deal with this noise above his apartment. I began to see how difficult it might be for him, but I still did not have a fair solution. I started to pray for him, and my heart was touched to be a little more sympathetic.

We welcomed my husband's parents to spend the holidays with us that year. On Christmas Eve we were enjoying each other's company and the special spirit of the season. Soon we heard and felt the vibration of loud music coming from the apartment below. It seemed very loud this time, but I remember feeling sorry for him rather than impatient. Thinking about the verse in Matthew 5, I made

up a plate of homemade Christmas cookies for our neighbor.

My husband and I went down to deliver them. When our neighbor opened the door, he scowled at us and said, "WHAT?" I could tell he was expecting an unpleasant confrontation. Instead, we ignored the loud music and wished him a heartfelt merry Christmas. We smiled, and I could see his face soften as he accepted the cookies. He smiled back and thanked us, wishing us a merry Christmas also. It wasn't long before the music was turned down.

We saw our neighbor outside a few days later, and he thanked us again for the cookies. He was smiling at us

again, and we found it easy to smile back at him. We asked him if he had a church to go to, because he was new in town. He said he hadn't found one yet, so we invited him to our church, and he accepted our invitation. He began visiting with the missionaries and soon wanted to be baptized. He and our son had their picture taken together on the day of his baptism.

I don't remember any more problems with loud music, but I do recall the special blessings of following the scriptures in our lives. It still warms my heart to remember how the simple gift of Christmas cookies quickly changed an unpleasant relationship into a wonderful friendship. ■

My Pocket Was Empty

By Jerry L. Zaugg

Finances were tight for our young family in 1979. I was a student at Colorado State University. Meager funds from loans and my wife's enterprises were deposited directly into a savings account. Then we would withdraw a budgeted amount every week for expenses. As Christmas approached we recognized that this holiday would be a frugal one.

One Friday evening we decided that I would take the two oldest of our four children to explore the excitement of the local shopping mall. En route we made our bank withdrawal, electing to withdraw the full December amount at the beginning of the month to cover the increased expenses of the holidays. I took the full amount in small bills.

Although no snow had fallen, the weather was cold and raw with an icy wind. Arriving at the crowded mall parking lot, I hurriedly extracted the boys from the van, eager to get inside the bright, warm mall.

For well over an hour we wandered from store to store, enjoying the rich sights and smells. At last we agreed to cap our outing with some ice cream. With shock, however, I immediately discovered that my shirt pocket was empty of its recent bulge of money.

I fought down a rising panic as we quickly retraced our steps. But with each negative response to our anxious inquiries about someone finding some money, our sense of loss increased. After making a last, futile stop at a security desk, we sadly returned home.

We related the bad news to my concerned wife. How could we buy food, pay the rent and utilities, and cover other expenses for the month, let alone provide a few extras for Christmas? The children began to softly cry and whisper among themselves. Somberly we gathered in family prayer to ask for guidance. Then, as we were discussing every possible but unlikely avenue to compensate for the loss, the phone rang.

It was the security guard at the mall. "Are you the people who recently reported the loss of some money?" he asked.

"Yes, we are," I answered.

"How much was it, and in what denominations?"

After we gave him the information, he asked if we could return to the mall.

With guarded anticipation we made the short journey back. The security guard told us that several people

had turned in numerous small bills found scattered by the wind in the parking lot. A count revealed the exact amount we had lost. There was no one to thank, for these honest souls left no names. The guard smiled and wished us a merry Christmas as he handed us the small stack of bills. Much relieved and profoundly grateful, we drove home.

We then knelt as a family and offered our thanks for the blessings given. Christmas was saved for our little family, and an eternal lesson was learned. These honest people were wonderful examples to us. What better way to give thanks to our Heavenly Father for the birth of His Son than by living the true spirit of Christmas? ■



Christmas Presents

I was baptized with my wife and three children on September 27, 1980. When we became part of the Paniqui Philippines District, I was called to be on the district high council. As part of my calling, I visited seven branches. In each branch, I noticed that very few members had a copy of the scriptures in Tagalog. I began giving them the *Liabona* in Tagalog for Christmas. Even now, I still give away copies of the *Liabona* as Christmas presents.

Pablo M. Butolan, Philippines

The Gospel in Different Cultures

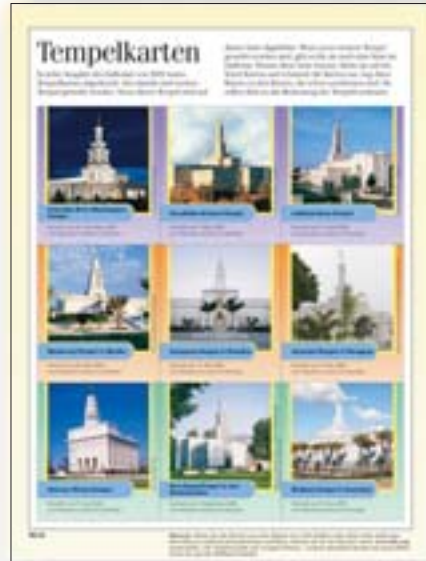
Every month I wait for the *Liabona* magazine to come. It is truly a light in my life. I like it very much when you publish articles about how the gospel goes to faraway places and changes people's lives. Even in diverse cultures, people are able to accept the gospel and live it. It is a confirmation to me that this is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Siria Maria Cordero, Dominican Republic

Strengthens My Testimony

I'm very grateful to my Heavenly Father for the great blessing of having the *Liabona* magazine from month to month. I really enjoy reading it. The counsel of the General Authorities as well as the experiences of members from all over the world are a great help to me in making decisions in my daily life. It also strengthens my testimony of Jesus Christ. I love the *Liabona* magazine.

Cinthya Morales Hidalgo, Ecuador



Loves Temple Cards

When I was baptized three years ago, I learned about the temple and loved it. Right from the beginning, my daughter, Jessica, just four years old at the time, loved traveling to see the temple. Jessica loves the stories in the *Liabona* and loves the temple cards, which she collects. Through my daughter, I have been able to strengthen my testimony about the house of the Lord.

Petra Longerich, Germany

Thank You

I thank you for your time and your efforts. I love the *Liabona* magazine. I enjoy reading it. The messages and illustrations are food for the soul. The gospel is everything to me; it is the greatest happiness. I love this Church. I know with all my heart that it is true. I pray for all of you and give thanks for all.

Christian Yosemith Suarez Rodriguez, Mexico

CALL FOR ARTICLES

As a Church leader, have you had a good experience using the *Liabona* to counsel or help a new or less-active member? We invite you to submit personal accounts of how you or others have used the *Liabona* to assist others.

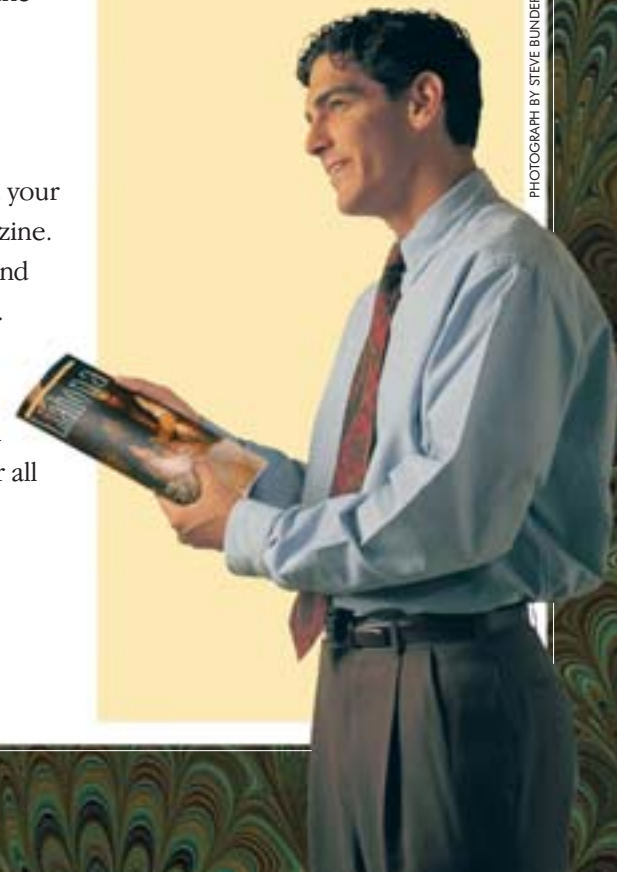
Please send your submission (500 words or fewer) by January 15, 2007, to liabona@ldschurch.org or to:

Liabona, Using the *Liabona*

50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA

Please include your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and ward and stake (or branch and district).

While we cannot acknowledge receipt of individual responses, authors whose submissions are selected for publication will be notified.



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE BUNDERSON, POSED BY MODEL

the Friend



*A Christmas Message from the First Presidency
to the Children of the World*



Christmas *Light*

In the Holy Land, a star appeared in the heavens at the time of the Savior's birth. In the New World, there was light for a day and a night and a day to mark His coming to earth as a newborn babe. His life continued in light as He was the perfect example of obedience, goodness, and love.

As we study the Savior's life and teachings, sing songs of joy to honor Him, keep His commandments, honor our parents, and love and serve one another, we will keep that light shining bright this Christmastime and all through the coming year. ●





ILLUSTRATION OF BETHLEHEM © NOVA DEVELOPMENT; ILLUSTRATION OF SHEPHERDS BY ERIC P. JOHNSEN



Luke 2:7

Note: If you do not wish to remove pages from the magazine, this activity may be copied, traced, or printed from the Internet at www.lds.org. For English, click on "Gospel Library." For other languages, click on the world map.



1 Nephi 11:13-21



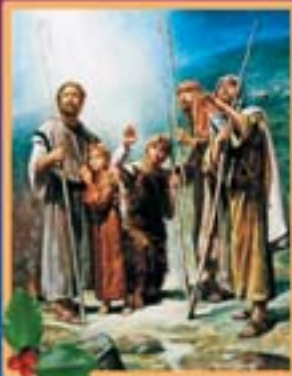
Isaiah 7:14



Luke 1:39-45



Luke 2:1-6



Luke 2:8-20



Matthew 2:1-12



Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23



Matthew 24:30, 36

He Sent His Son

“The angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10–11).

BY ELIZABETH RICKS



This year we have been learning about promises. A promise is a pledge that you will do something or not do something.

As we read the scriptures, we see that the Father and the Son always fulfill Their promises. One of the greatest promises that Heavenly Father made was to send His Son to the earth. In the Grand Council in Heaven, Heavenly Father promised to send a Savior. The Savior would atone for our sins so that we could live with Heavenly Father again.

How did Heavenly Father send His Son to the earth? He sent Him as a newborn baby. He allowed Jesus to learn and grow, just the way that we learn and grow. Because Heavenly Father loves us so much, He allowed His Son to die for us. But then Jesus was resurrected, making it possible for us to live again too.

What a wondrous promise Jesus Christ was to the earth! Heavenly Father had promised to send Him. Heavenly Father kept His promise.

What does Heavenly Father expect from us? The Primary song “He Sent His Son” reminds us:

Have faith, have hope, live like his Son, help others on their way.

What does he ask? Live like his Son.

(Children’s Songbook, 34–35)

As we live as Jesus lived, we will qualify for the promises that Heavenly Father has for us.



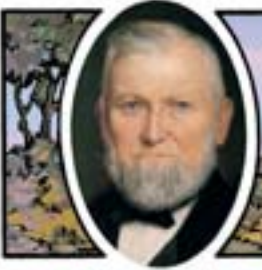
Before-or-After Game

Glue page F4 to heavy paper, and cut out the cards. Place the round nativity card on a flat surface. Read the scripture listed. Take turns choosing cards and reading scriptures. If the scripture tells about an event that happened or a prophecy that was given *before* Jesus was born, put it before the picture of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. If the scripture tells about an event or prophecy that came *after* Jesus was born, put the card after the picture of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus.

Sharing Time Ideas

1. A week ahead, invite a member of the bishopric or branch presidency to come to Primary, and tell the children that he will be visiting them. When the children enter the room, remind them that a guest is coming. Sing a Christmas song while they wait. Look to see if the guest is coming. Tell the children that Heavenly Father promised to send a Savior to the world. The people waited and waited for the Savior. They didn’t know exactly when the Savior would come. Continue singing until the guest arrives. Have him arrive with a set of scriptures wrapped as a gift. Invite a child to unwrap the gift and read John 3:16. Have the guest share the story of how Heavenly Father gave the gift of His Son to the world. Have the pianist softly play while the guest reads Luke 2:1–20. Explain that the guest had promised to come visit and he kept his promise. Heavenly Father promised to send His Son; Heavenly Father kept His promise.

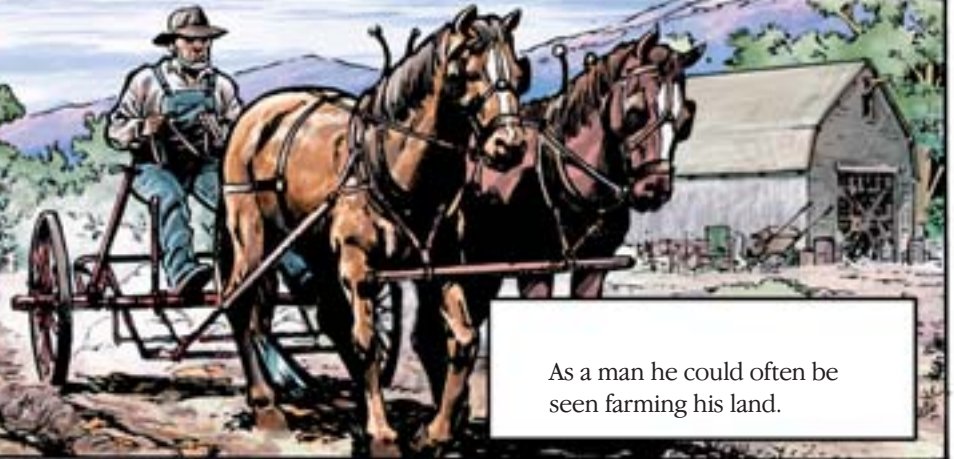
2. Remind the children that all year we have been talking about the promises of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Have the children mark 2 Nephi 10:17. Explain that we too can make promises. We need to promise to follow Jesus Christ. Ask the children to suggest things Jesus did that they can do. List their ideas on the chalkboard. Divide the children into groups. Allow the groups to illustrate an idea from the chalkboard. ●



FROM THE LIFE OF PRESIDENT WILFORD WOODRUFF

A Hard Worker

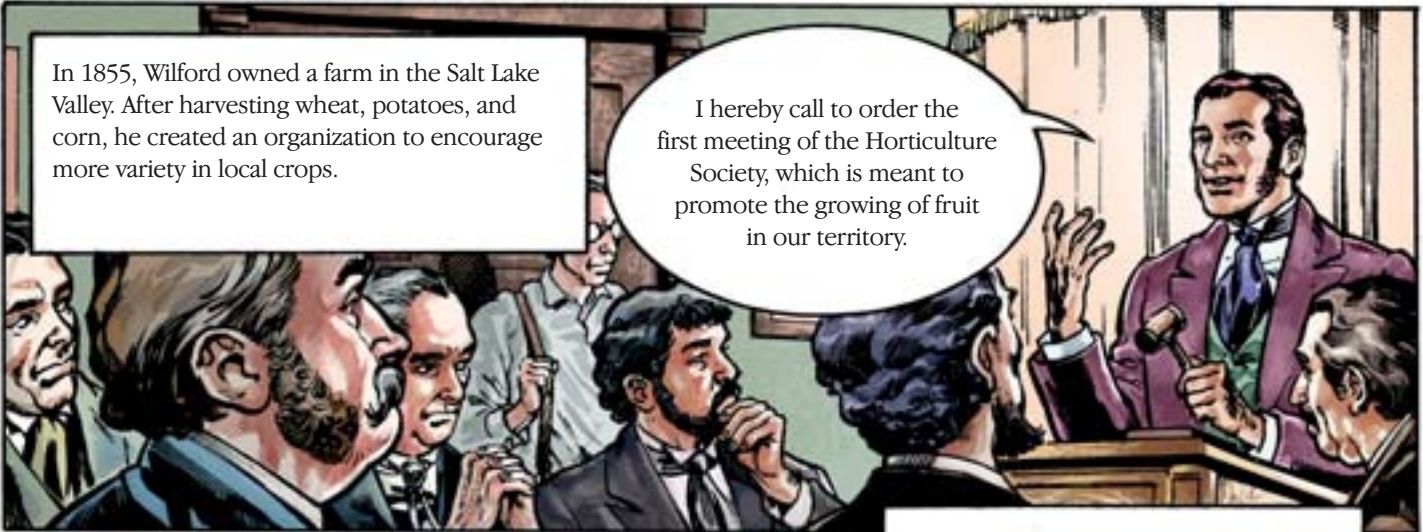
Wilford Woodruff loved working with his hands. When he was a boy, he learned the value of hard work from his father and grandfather.



As a man he could often be seen farming his land.

In 1855, Wilford owned a farm in the Salt Lake Valley. After harvesting wheat, potatoes, and corn, he created an organization to encourage more variety in local crops.

I hereby call to order the first meeting of the Horticulture Society, which is meant to promote the growing of fruit in our territory.



Over the years, he won many awards for his farm projects.

Some of his prizes were for best-fenced and cultivated farm, best acre of sugar cane, best squash, best sugar beets, best bush beans, best cantaloupes, best apples, and best grapes.

The award for best overall produce goes to Wilford Woodruff.

Thank you! I put a lot of hard work into those vegetables.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY SAL VELLUTO AND EUGENIO MATTOZZI

Wilford didn't let old age get in the way of his work. One of his favorite activities was gardening outside with his children and grandchildren.

Grandfather, may I help?

Of course. Take that hoe over there, and help me get rid of these weeds.

One day, Wilford was upset when one of his grandchildren finished hoeing a patch of vegetables a little before he did—even though he was 90 years old!

Grandfather, I'm all finished.

I'm getting old. That's the first time in my life that one of my grandchildren has ever outdone me in hoeing.

After he died, many people remembered Wilford Woodruff as a man who worked hard, both in his garden and for the Lord.

President Woodruff loved to work hard.

He was just as devout with the scythe or the sickle as he was with the hymnbook or at the pulpit.

All honorable work was God's work, whether it was digging a ditch, preaching a sermon, or writing a history.

Adapted from *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 225, 227; *Susan Arrington Madsen, The Lord Needed a Prophet* (1990), 68; *Emerson Roy West, Profiles of the Presidents* (1974), 134–35; and *Preston Nibley, The Presidents of the Church* (1974), 123.

A Week for the Christmas Story

As a family, use this activity to remind one another of the wondrous story of the Savior's birth. Begin on December 18. (1) Find number 1 (the star) on the nativity scene. (2) Sing the song listed. (3) On page F16 find the item labeled number 1, cut it out, and glue it on the nativity scene in the outline that is the same shape as that item.

Repeat on the following five nights. Read the scripture listed, sing the song, and then glue the cutout on the nativity scene.

On Christmas Eve, read the two scriptures given at number 7, and then invite family members to share their testimonies of Jesus Christ. Sing the final song listed.

This activity may be done all on one night, if you prefer. You may also sing your favorite Christmas songs in place of those suggested.

4. Luke 2:8-12

"The Shepherd's Carol"

(Children's Songbook, 40;
or Tambuli, Dec. 1993, F8)

Luke 2:13-14

"Far, Far Away on Judea's Plains"

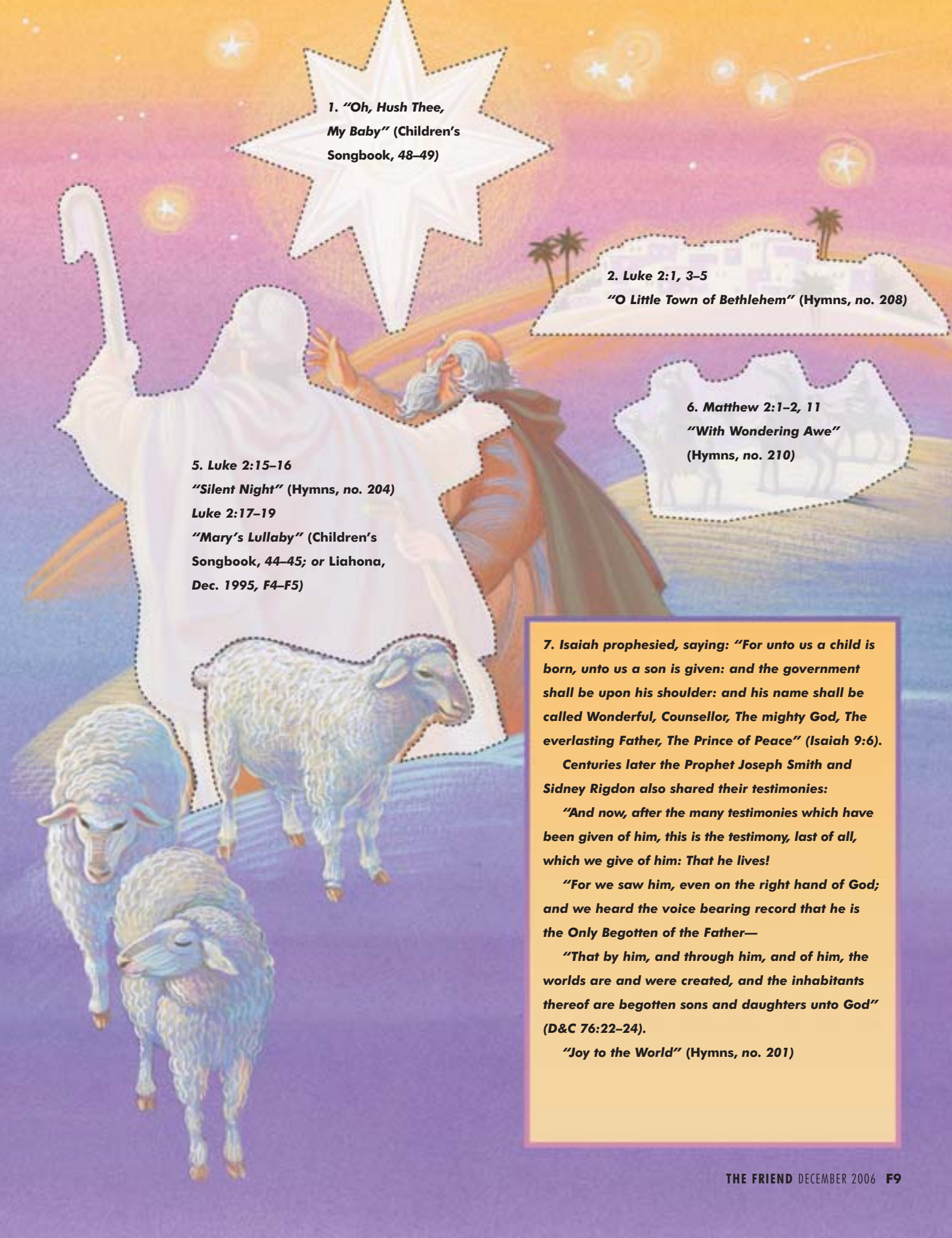
(Hymns, no. 212)

3. Luke 2:6-7

"Away in a Manger" (Children's

Songbook, 42-43; or Hymns, no. 206)

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DILLEEN MARSH



1. "Oh, Hush Thee,
My Baby" (Children's
Songbook, 48–49)

2. Luke 2:1, 3–5

"O Little Town of Bethlehem" (Hymns, no. 208)

5. Luke 2:15–16

"Silent Night" (Hymns, no. 204)

Luke 2:17–19

"Mary's Lullaby" (Children's
Songbook, 44–45; or Liahona,
Dec. 1995, F4–F5)

6. Matthew 2:1–2, 11

"With Wondering Awe"
(Hymns, no. 210)

7. Isaiah prophesied, saying: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Centuries later the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon also shared their testimonies:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:22–24).

"Joy to the World" (Hymns, no. 201)

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love” (Romans 12:10).

Room FOR Three

BY STACIE A. HEAPS

Based on a true story

Brent ran downstairs, his little sister, Lindsey, following close behind. “Mom!” Brent cried. “Lindsey won’t leave us alone!”

Brent’s best friend, Clint, had come over to play. The boys were playing with Brent’s fire truck and putting out the fires in the skyscrapers they had built out of blocks. “Lindsey always wants to do what we’re doing,” Brent said. “Why can’t she go away?”

“Brent, please be nice to your sister. She just wants to spend time with you,” Mom said.

“But, Mom, she always wants to tag along. Can’t she do something else for a while?”

“How about if we color together, Lindsey?” Mom asked. Lindsey nodded.

“Thanks, Mom,” Brent said as he started back up the stairs.

“Don’t forget, Brent,” Mom called after him. “You and Clint have practice for the Christmas program in less than an hour.”

“OK, Mom,” Brent replied.

“Mommy, why doesn’t Brent like me?” Lindsey asked, tears forming in her eyes.

“He does like you,” Mom said. “But sometimes he just wants to be with his friends. Brent loves you very much, even if he doesn’t always show it.”



A little while later, Mom took Brent and Clint to the church to practice for the Christmas program. Brent was excited. He was going to play Joseph this year. Before, he’d always been a sheep or a shepherd or a Wise Man. That was neat, but this year would be the best ever.

“OK, we’re going to practice the scene at the inns,”

Brother Mitchell said. “Joseph and Mary, take your places. Innkeepers, it’s time.”

The Primary children hurried to their places onstage as Joseph and Mary approached the first inn.

“Please, do you have a room that we could stay in for the night?” Brent asked. “My wife is going to have a baby very soon, and she needs a place to rest.”

“I’m sorry. There’s no room,” the innkeeper said.

“Come on, Mary. Let’s try another place,” Brent said. They walked to the next innkeeper. “Hello, sir. We’ve come a long way, and my wife is going to have a baby very soon. Do you have a place where we can stay?”

“No, we’re all full. There’s no room.”

Brent went to the next innkeeper and knocked on the door, then the next, and then the next. The answer was always the same.

“There’s no room.”

“No room.”

“No room.”

“I’m so sorry, Mary,” Brent said. “Let’s try this one last place.” He turned and knocked on the door. “Sir, please, we’re very far from home, we have no place to go, and my wife is going to have a baby very soon. We’ve tried every inn in town. Do you have anywhere that we could stay?”

“I’m sorry. We’re all full.”

Joseph and Mary turned away slowly, looking sad. “I’m sorry, Mary,” Brent began. “I don’t know what—”

“Wait! Wait just a moment,” the innkeeper called after them. “Maybe I have a place after all. Come with me.”

The innkeeper led them to the stable with cows, sheep, and other animals. “It’s not much, but you can stay here if you like.”

“This is wonderful,”

Brent said gratefully.

“Thank you very, very much.”

* * * *

A few days later, Clint was at Brent’s house again. They were playing in a big box, pretending it was a fort that protected them from invaders. But Lindsey kept bothering them, asking if she could come inside too.

“Lindsey, why don’t you go do something else? Can’t you see that there’s no room for—” Brent stopped mid-sentence. He thought of the words that he’d heard just a few days before: “No room,

no room, no room.” He thought of Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus, who meant so much to all of them. Then he looked at his little sister.

“I’m sorry, Lindsey. Of course there’s room for you. There’s always room for three.” ●



“Be of good cheer, little children” (D&C 61:36).

It Makes Them Happy

BY PATRICIA R. JONES

The Prophet Joseph Smith enjoyed playing games with children. This was no surprise to those who knew the Prophet; he often showed his love for children. He once helped two children out of thick mud when they were stuck. He played with and loved little babies. When the Prophet played with children, he made the games fun, both for those participating and those watching.

One day Joseph played a game of ball with some of the young men in Nauvoo. The Prophet’s older brother Hyrum saw him. Hyrum had a great love for his brother, and he didn’t like to see people given a chance to find fault with him. Hyrum was afraid that if people saw Joseph having fun with the young men, they might think this wasn’t what a prophet should do.

After the ball game, Hyrum approached

Joseph and said that such conduct was not proper for a prophet of the Lord. He spoke out of love, wishing to guide his brother.

The Prophet looked lovingly at Hyrum. He knew Hyrum was concerned about him, and he trusted and often listened to the advice of his older brother. But this time Joseph simply answered him in a mild voice. “Brother Hyrum, my mingling with the boys in a harmless sport like this does not injure me in any way, but on the other hand it makes them happy and draws their hearts nearer to mine; and who knows but there may be young men among them who may sometime lay down their lives for me!”¹

The Prophet Joseph was right. When persecution again started for him, two young men in Nauvoo risked their lives to discover the Prophet’s enemies and their plots against him. The young men showed how much they had come to love the Prophet by how much they risked their own safety for his. Joseph Smith dearly loved children, and they loved the Prophet too. ●

NOTE

1. In Lorenzo Snow, “Reminiscences of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Deseret Semi-Weekly News*, Dec. 23, 1899, 1.



“Men who knew Joseph best . . . loved and sustained him as a prophet.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Joseph, the Man and the Prophet,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 73.



“Remember also the promises which were made to you” (D&C 3:5).

Remembering Promises



BY ELDER JAY E. JENSEN
Of the Seventy

When I was serving as mission president in Colombia, I left on a Thursday morning to fly to a city in our mission. I spent the day interviewing, and as I spoke with the missionaries, a number of concerns began to worry me.

After a zone conference with the missionaries, I conducted a district conference with Church leaders and members on Saturday and Sunday. There were challenges in this area: low Church attendance, poor preparation, and other concerns. The experiences that I had over these four days left me feeling low.

On the flight home, I used the time to read, ponder, and pray. I took my scriptures in hand and thumbed through the pages, reading here and there. Soon I came to some verses in Doctrine and Covenants

section 3 that will never be the same to me: “The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught” (v. 1).

I thought about these words. I realized that on my trip I had come to the wrong conclusion that the purposes, designs, and works of God were being “frustrated” in that city.

I continued on: “For God doth not walk in crooked paths” (v. 2). Some of the missionaries

Age 10 (right) with his brothers Marvin (left) and Richard (center).



Age 12.



Age 19, before his mission.

The scriptures taught me to remember the great promises given to me.

and members seemed to be walking in crooked paths.

In verse 5 I found a treasure—one of the most wonderful insights I have ever found in the scriptures: “Behold, you have been entrusted with these things.”

I paused to reflect upon the things entrusted to me: my wife and six children, 100 missionaries, 6,000 members, 13–14 million nonmembers, a mission, districts, branches, budgets, buildings, and so forth.

Then I came to the phrase “remember also the promises” (v. 5). What power, what insight, what comfort, what depth of feeling and meaning! Four words from scripture had never affected me as those four did that day.

I realized that for four days I had focused on nothing but problems. Not once had I stopped to remember the great promises given to me. I asked myself, “What promises?” The first ones that came to my mind were those in my patriarchal blessing. I had it with me on the plane, and I read it over. My, what promises! I then pondered on the special promises given to me when I was set apart as mission president. I thought about the promises of the temple and promises from the scriptures. My spirit soared! I was inspired!

As I look back on that flight home, I realize I was taught from on high. From that day until today, my life has been different, all because of four simple words: “remember also the promises.” ●

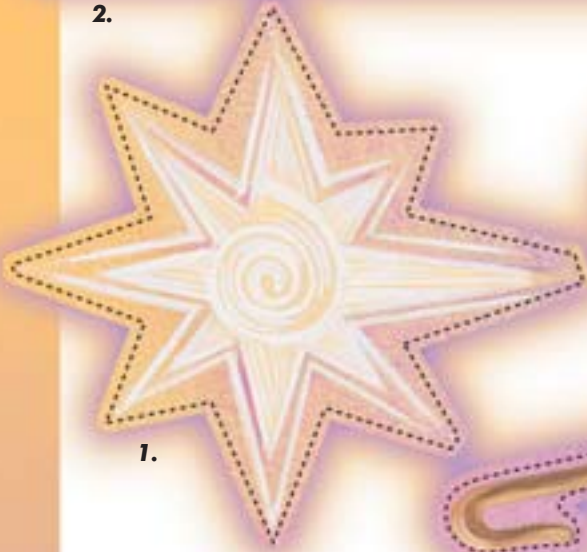


**Elder and Sister Jensen (center)
with their children and
grandchildren.**





2.



1.



5.



6.

*For activity and instructions, see
pages F8–F9.*



4.



3.



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Determination, by Julie Rogers

James Kirkwood, age 11, carried his brother Joseph, 4, up the five-mile (8-km) ascent known as Rocky Ridge in Wyoming on October 23, 1856, during a fierce snowstorm. Fifteen members of the Willie handcart company died that night, including James. This painting is among the art in the Seventh International Art Competition.



December 2006 marks the annual celebration of the Savior's birth, the 201st anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and one year since many members of the Church rose to a prophet's challenge and completed reading or rereading the Book of Mormon. These members testify that a prophet's promise was fulfilled, that there did come into their lives and their homes "an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God." See "Taking the Challenge," p. 34.