THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS . DECEMBER 2015

President Packer's Final Witness, p. 10

For Teachers: Better Questions, Better Learning, p. 20

Eternal Marriage: A Covenant within the Covenant, p. 24

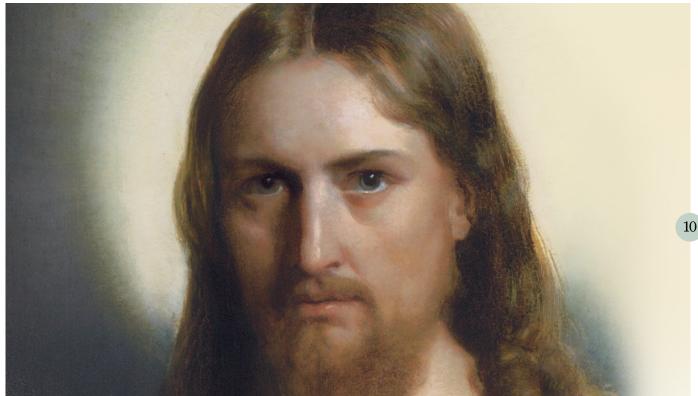
Quieting Your Worries about the Future, p. 34



"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

"Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Matthew 13:45-46

Liahona, December 2015



MESSAGES

- 4 First Presidency Message: Make Time for the Savior By President Thomas S. Monson
- 7 Visiting Teaching Message: Divine Attributes of Jesus Christ—Compassionate and Kind

ON THE COVER

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FEATURE ARTICLES

10 A Witness of the Savior Jesus Christ

By President Boyd K. Packer An Apostle of 45 years testifies of the Savior "with absolute certainty."

14 Joseph Smith and the Book of Revelation

By David A. Edwards Why did Joseph Smith call the book of Revelation "one of the plainest books God ever caused to be written"?

20 Asking the Right Questions in the Right Way

By Scott H. Knecht The right question can make a big difference when it comes to learning and teaching the gospel.

$24\,$ The New and Everlasting Covenant

By Elder Marcus B. Nash For all who abide the terms of the new and everlasting covenant, the reward is joy and peace in this world and eternal life in the next.

$32\,\,$ "I Made a Commitment to God" By Néstor Curbelo The dedication of one member in

Ecuador proved to be a defining moment in Church history there.

34 Be at Peace

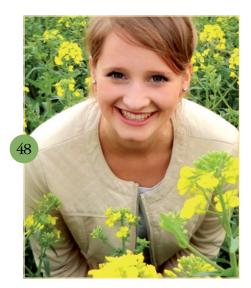
By Elder D. Todd Christofferson Take time this Christmas season to feel the Savior's reassurance.

DEPARTMENTS

- 8 We Talk of Christ: A Gift of Life and Love By Brad Allred
- 38 Latter-day Saint Voices
- 80 Until We Meet Again: The Real Christmas

By President Howard W. Hunter

YOUNG ADULTS



44 Returning Home Early from My Mission

By Brittany Romanello Casco I believed the stories of Christ's healing the sick, and I believed that He would do the same for me.

48 Young Adult Profiles: Living as a Witness in Germany

By Justina McCandless Understanding how Heavenly Father views her has helped Esther in her relationships with others.



See if you can find the Liahona hidden in this issue. Hint: What have you learned from your parents?

YOUTH

50 How to See the Real Meaning of Christmas

By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf How can we feel gratitude for Christ and renew our determination to follow Him?

51 A Life-Changing Gift at the Thrift Store

By Keanu Williams An answer to a prayer at Christmastime led to a forever family.

52 The New Guy

By Matthew Flitton Matthew was practically alone in his quorum, but he soon found that many of the priests just needed an invitation to come.

54 They Knew Joseph

Get to know the Prophet Joseph Smith through the words of people who knew him in person.

56 Are You a Getter or a Giver?

Reconsider your perspective on keeping the commandments and serving in the Church.

57 Poster: Use It or Lose It

58 Questions and Answers

I feel inadequate to be a Young Women class president. How can I be a better leader?

60 Things I Learned as a Young Convert By Elder Jörg Klebingat

Praying always and applying the Atonement daily can help you feel confident and clean all the time.

64 Personal Progress on My Family Tree

By Raisa Marcondes By doing her family history, Raisa found that she wasn't the only member of the Church in her family.

CHILDREN

65 Scriptures for Spencer

By Elder Marcus B. Nash Spencer didn't know why he wasn't sleeping well when his parents went out of town. What was wrong?

66 A Lesson from My Father

By Elder David A. Bednar Elder Bednar's father wasn't a member of the Church, but he still taught him an important lesson about the priesthood.

67 Scripture Figures: The Book of Mormon

68 Christmas Eve with the Córdobas

By Honney Thalia Cabel Losno Marycielo and her sister could give something better than gifts to the Córdobas for Christmas.

70 The Restoration Puzzle

By Heidi Poelman Anna had to give a talk in Primary. But how could she explain what Restoration means?

72 Scripture Time: Jesus Christ Will Come Again! By Erin Sanderson

74 For Young Children: The Nativity Story

DECEMBER 2015 VOL. 39 NO. 12 LIAHONA 12572

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Family Home Evening Ideas

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



"Be at Peace," page 34: Elder

Christofferson invites us to take time this Christmas season to sit guietly and think about baby Jesus. Consider reading the article together as a family and then inviting a spirit of reverence by reading scriptures, singing hymns, or watching Bible videos (available at Biblevideos.org) about the Savior's birth. Then allow time for each person to think about the Savior's birth and what it means to them. You might consider having journals or paper available for those who wish to record their thoughts. Ask family members to share their thoughts if they so desire.

Christmas video, Mormon.org: Consider ways your family can use this year's Christmas video to share the gospel with others. You might make Christmas treats to share with friends and deliver the treats with a card containing the web address to the video. You could also plan a family social media campaign and make goals for how many people you can share the video with. Another option would be to invite friends over to watch the video with you.

IN YOUR LANGUAGE

The Liahona and other Church materials are available in many languages at languages.lds.org.

Visit facebook.com/liahona.magazine to find family home evening ideas, Sunday lesson helps, and content you can share with friends and family.

TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE

Numbers represent the first page of the article.

Atonement, 10, 44, 60 Book of Mormon, 67 Christmas, 4, 8, 34, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 50, 51, 68, 72, 74, 80 **Compassion**, 7 Covenants, 24 Dedication, 32 Eternal life, 24 Family history, 64 Jesus Christ, 4, 10, 34, 50, 60, 72

Kindness, 7, 41, 58 Leadership, 58 Learning, 20 Love, 8 Marriage, 24 Missionary work, 32, 44, 48, 51, 52 New Testament, 14 **Obedience**, 24, 56 **Peace**, 34 Praver, 41, 42, 60

Priesthood, 66 Restoration, 70 Sacrifice, 8, 32, 39, 40, 43, 56, 60 Scripture study, 65 Second Coming, 72 Service, 4, 39, 41, 56, 58, 68 Smith, Joseph, 14, 54, 70 Talents, 57 Teaching, 20 Temple work, 42, 43, 58



By President Thomas S. Monson

make time for the **Savior**

nother Christmas season is upon us and with it the dawning of a new year. It seems as though only yesterday we were celebrating the Savior's birth and making resolutions.

Among our resolutions for this year, did we resolve to make time in our lives and room in our hearts for the Savior? No matter how successful we may have been thus far with such a resolution, I am confident we all wish to do better. This Christmas season is the perfect time to examine and renew our efforts.

In our busy lives, with ever so many other things competing for our attention, it is essential that we make a conscious, committed effort to bring Christ into our lives and into our homes. And it is vital that we, like the Wise Men from the East, remain fixed upon His star and "come to worship him."¹

Down through the generations of time, the message from Jesus has been the same. To Peter and Andrew by the shores of Galilee, He said, "Follow me."² To Philip came the call, "Follow me."³ To the Levite who sat at receipt of customs came the instruction, "Follow me."⁴ And to you and to me, if we but listen, will come that same beckoning invitation: "Follow me."⁵

As we follow in His footsteps today and as we emulate His example, we will have opportunities to bless the lives of others. Jesus invites us to give of ourselves: "Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind."⁶

Is there someone for whom you should provide service this Christmas? Is there one who awaits your visit?

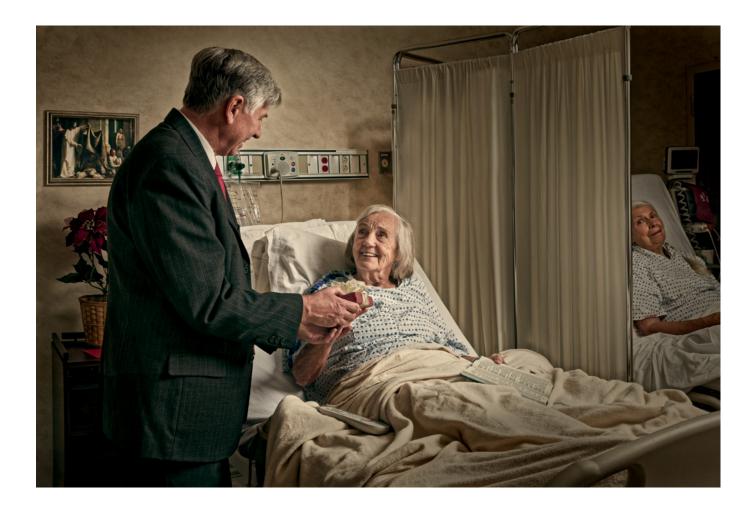
Years ago I paid a Christmas call at the home of an elderly widow. While I was there, the doorbell rang. There at the door stood a very busy and prominent physician. He had not been summoned; rather, he had just felt a prompting to pay a visit to a patient who was lonely.

During this season, the hearts of those who are confined reach out and yearn for a Christmas visit. One Christmas while visiting a care center, I sat and talked with five elderly ladies, the oldest of whom was 101. She was blind, yet she recognized my voice.

"Bishop, you are a little late this year!" she said. "I thought you would never come."

We had a wonderful time together. One patient, however, looked longingly out the window and repeated over and over, "I know my boy will come to see me today." I wondered if he would, for there had been other Christmas seasons when he had never called.

There is yet time this year to extend the helping hand, the loving heart, and the willing spirit—in other words, to follow the example set by our Savior and to serve as He would have us serve. As we serve Him, we will not



forfeit our opportunity, as did the innkeeper of old,⁷ to make time for Him in our lives and room for Him in our hearts.

Can we comprehend the magnificent promise contained in the message of the angel given to the shepherds abiding in the field: "I bring you good tidings of great joy. . . . For unto you is born this day . . . a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord"?⁸

As we exchange gifts at Christmas, may we remember, appreciate, and receive that greatest gift of all gifts the gift of our Savior and Redeemer, that we might have eternal life.

"For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift."⁹

May we follow Him, serve Him, honor Him, and receive in our lives His gifts to us, that we might be, in the words of Father Lehi, "encircled about eternally in the arms of his love."¹⁰

NOTES

1. Matthew 2:2.

- 2. Matthew 4:19.
- 3. John 1:43.
- 4. Matthew 9:9.
- 5. Doctrine and Covenants 38:22.
 6. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
- 7. See Luke 2:7.
- 8. Luke 2:10–11.
- 9. Doctrine and Covenants 88:33.
- 10. 2 Nephi 1:15.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

President Monson calls on us to "make a conscious, committed effort to bring Christ into our lives and into our homes." Consider discussing with those you teach how they can make this conscious effort individually and as a family. You might consider asking them to think of a specific person or family whom they could visit or serve this Christmas. "There is yet time this year to extend the helping hand, the loving heart, and the willing spirit."

Ways to Serve at Christmastime

President Monson takes the time to visit the elderly and those in care centers, especially at Christmastime. He noted that there are those who are happy because they've received visitors, while others only hope for visitors who never come. There are people waiting for somebody—maybe this Christmas, you can be that somebody.

The following is a list of just a few ways you can help make sure no one feels alone this Christmas. Feel free to think of more ways you can reach out in your community this season. "Is there one who awaits your visit?"





- Make Christmas cards to send to the missionaries and the single and elderly members of your ward or branch.
- Volunteer with a local community organization.
- Give copies of the Book of Mormon as Christmas gifts to your friends and neighbors.
- Visit elderly people in your ward or family.
- Make treats to deliver to your neighbors.

For more ideas on how you can serve in your community, go to lds.org/topics/humanitarian-service/help.

CHILDREN

Follow the Light

After Jesus was born, Wise Men brought Him gifts. They followed a new, bright star in the sky to find Him. Follow the path to get to Jesus. What gifts could you bring Him?

VISITING TEACHING MESSAGE

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

Divine Attributes of Jesus Christ: Compassionate and Kind

This is part of a series of Visiting Teaching Messages featuring divine attributes of the Savior.

" n the scriptures, compassion means literally 'to suffer with.' It also means to show sympathy, pity, and mercy for another."¹

"Jesus provided us many examples of compassionate concern," said President Thomas S. Monson. "The crippled man at the pool of Bethesda; the woman taken in adultery; the woman at Jacob's well; the daughter of Jairus; Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha—each represented a casualty on the Jericho road. Each needed help.

"To the cripple at Bethesda, Jesus said, 'Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.' To the sinful woman came the counsel, 'Go, and sin no more.' To help her who came to draw water, He provided a well of water 'springing



up into everlasting life.' To the dead daughter of Jairus came the command, 'Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.' To the entombed Lazarus, 'Come forth.'

"The Savior has always shown unlimited capacity for compassion.... Let us open the door of our hearts, that He—the living example of true compassion—may enter."²

Additional Scriptures

Psalm 145:8; Zechariah 7:9; 1 Peter 3:8; Mosiah 15:1, 9; 3 Nephi 17:5–7

Faith, Family, Relief



From the Scriptures

"My husband and I knelt by the side of our 17-year-old daughter and pleaded for her life," said Linda S. Reeves, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. "The answer was no, but . . . we have come to know . . . that . . . [the Savior] feels compassion for us in our sorrows."³

"One of my favorite stories from the Savior's life is the story of Lazarus. The scriptures tell us that 'Jesus loved Martha, . . . her sister [Mary], and [their brother] Lazarus.'"⁴ When Lazarus became ill, word was sent to Jesus, but when He arrived Lazarus had already died. Mary ran to Jesus, fell down at His feet, and wept. When Jesus saw Mary weeping, "he groaned in the spirit, and . . . wept" (John 11:33, 35).

"That is our charge. We must feel and see for ourselves and then help all of Heavenly Father's children to feel and see and know that our Savior has taken upon Himself not only all our sins but also our pains and our suffering and afflictions so that He can know what we feel and how to comfort us."⁵

Consider This

Who could be blessed by your compassion?

NOTES

- 1. Guide to the Scriptures, "Compassion," scriptures.lds.org.
- Thomas S. Monson, "The Gift of Compassion," *Ensign*, Mar. 2007, 6–7, 10; *Liahona*, Mar. 2007, 4–5, 8.
- 3. Linda S. Reeves, "The Lord Has Not Forgotten You," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 120.
- 4. Linda S. Reeves, "The Lord Has Not Forgotten You," 118.
- 5. Linda S. Reeves, "The Lord Has Not Forgotten You," 120.

A GIFT OF LIFE AND LOVE

My mother's gift showed us the true meaning of Christmas.

y Uncle Ed has always had an infectious love of life. Unfortunately, he also had a deficient pair of kidneys. For several years, Ed had been staving off kidney failure through dialysis. The treatments were painful and frequent. Each treatment wiped him out until the next one, and by the fall of 1995, he seemed to be just a shell of his former vibrant self.

The doctor finally told Ed that if he didn't get a new kidney soon, his body wouldn't hold out much longer. Although only one kidney is necessary to sustain life, Ed didn't want to ask anyone to donate one of theirs due to the risk that inherently accompanies any surgery. But there was no choice. Several close friends and family members were tested to see if their kidneys were compatible. Only one perfect match was found: Ed's sister, Dottie—my mother.

On December 7, many of Ed's friends and family joined in fasting and prayer in behalf of him and Dottie. The surgeons who performed the operation were twin brothers. Even more interesting, one of them had donated a kidney to the other.



"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.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

John 3:16–17

Ed and my mother were impressed to learn that with each surgery, these two doctors did all that they could and then bowed their heads and left the outcome in the Lord's hands.

On the day of the operation, one doctor removed one of my mother's kidneys. As he sewed her back up, his brother carefully secured the donated kidney inside Ed's abdomen.

The surgery was a success, but it remained to be seen if Ed's body would accept the new kidney. The antibodies in his immune system were suppressed to improve his chances, so Ed had to be isolated in intensive care to protect him from viruses. Even after he was released, he had to remain isolated from everyone except his immediate family. On Christmas Eve, however, Ed received special permission to attend my grandparents' annual Christmas Eve celebration.

Wearing a face mask, Ed walked in the door, headed straight for Dottie, and enveloped her in a tremendous hug. As they embraced each other, there wasn't a dry eye in the house. Everyone could feel the love emanating from them. A sister had suffered in order to give her brother the gift of



life. It was a gift of love, a gift of sacrifice, a gift he couldn't provide for himself.

As I watched them, with tears streaming down my face, it dawned on me: this could be what it will be like to meet the Savior face to face. He did something for us that we are unable to do for ourselves. Only He, being divine, was able to endure a sacrifice so great that the law of justice would be satisfied. And only He, being perfect, was worthy to atone for the sins of all mankind so that the law of mercy could be extended to all who accept Him as their Savior.

As I savored these insights, I recommitted myself to do all I could to show my appreciation for the Savior and His sacrifice. I would strive to live my life as a disciple so that someday I might be worthy to enter His presence, embrace Him, and personally thank Him for loving me enough to make such a sacrifice. ■ The author lives in Utah, USA.

SHARING GIFTS

What does the Lord's loving sacrifice mean to you?Who could benefit from a gift of the Savior's love?With whom could you share the gospel, offer a message of hope, or share the joy of the season?





By President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015) President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

A Witness of the Savior JESUS CHRIST

During his 54 years as a General Authority and his 45 years as an Apostle, a special witness "of the name of Christ in all the world" (D&C 107:23), President Packer humbly bore testimony. Shortly before his death on July 3, 2015, President Packer requested that the following excerpts from his ministry be shared in the Liahona. In the spirit of the Christmas season, they highlight his witness of and love for the Savior Jesus Christ.

I Love the Lord

"I love Christmas. There is a spirit at Christmastime. It descends upon the world not just to members of the Church but across the world—a testimony and a witness that Jesus is the Christ.... As a servant of the Lord, as one of the Twelve, I know that Jesus is the Christ....

"I love the Lord. I love His work. I love The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and bear witness of Him who is our Master and our Friend."¹

Of Him I Am a Witness

"There are some things just too sacred to discuss. . . .

"It is not that they are secret, but they are sacred; not to be discussed, but to be harbored and to be protected and regarded with the deepest of reverence.

"I have come to know what the prophet Alma meant:

"... It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.

"'And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full' (Alma 12:9–10)....

DETAIL FROM CHRIST AND THE YOUNG CHIILD, BY CARL HEINRICH BLOCH



"Now, I wonder with you why one such as I should be called to the holy apostleship. There are so many qualifications that I lack. There is so much in my effort to serve that is wanting. As I have pondered on it, I have come to only one single thing, one qualification in which there may be cause, and that is, I have *that* witness.

"I declare to you that I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know that He lives. He was born in the meridian of time. He taught His gospel, was tried, was crucified. He rose on the third day. He was the first fruits of the resurrection. He has a body of flesh and bone. Of this I bear testimony. Of Him I am a witness."²

He Accepted the Penalty

"Before the Crucifixion and afterward, many men have willingly given their lives in selfless acts of heroism. But none faced what Christ endured. Upon Him was the burden of all human transgression, all human guilt. And hanging in the balance was the Atonement. Through His willing act, mercy and justice could be reconciled, eternal law sustained, and that mediation achieved without which mortal man could not be redeemed.

"He by choice accepted the penalty in behalf of all mankind for the sum total of all wickedness and depravity; for brutality, immorality, perversion, and corruption; for addiction; for the killings and torture and terror—for all of it that ever had been or all that ever would be enacted upon this earth. In so choosing He faced the awesome power of the evil one, who was not confined to flesh nor subject to mortal pain. That was Gethsemane!

"How the Atonement was wrought we do not know. No mortal watched as evil turned away and hid in shame before the Light of that pure being. All wickedness could not quench that Light. When what was done was done, the ransom had been paid. Both death

and hell forsook their claim on all who would repent. Men at last were free. Then every soul who ever lived could choose to touch that Light and be redeemed.

"By this infinite sacrifice, 'through [this] Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel' (Articles of Faith 1:3)."³

The Master Teacher

"In the course of my efforts to teach His gospel, I have come to know Him, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father. I stand in reverence before Him with deep regard for what He taught, and with deep regard for how He taught. It is not untoward for any of us to aspire to teach as He taught. It is not untoward for any of us to aspire to be like Him. He was not just a teacher; He was the master teacher."⁴

The Truth Most Worth Knowing

"As mortals, we may not, indeed cannot, understand fully *how* the Savior fulfilled His atoning sacrifice. But for now the *how* is not as important as the *why* of His suffering. Why did He do it for you, for me, for all of humanity? He did it for the love of God the Father and all mankind. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13). "In Gethsemane, Christ went apart from His Apostles to pray. Whatever transpired is beyond our power to know! But we do know that He completed the Atonement. He was willing to take upon Himself the mistakes, the sins and guilt, the doubts and fears of all the world. He suffered for us so that we would not have to suffer. Many mortals have suffered torment and died a painful, terrible death. But His agony surpassed them all. . . .

"His suffering was different than all other suffering before or since because He took upon Himself all of the penalties that [could ever be] imposed on the human family. Imagine that! He had no debt to pay. He had commit-

There has been only One in all the annals of human history who was entirely sinless, qualified to answer for the sins and transgressions of all mankind and survive the pain that accompanied paying for them.

ted no wrong. Nevertheless, an accumulation of all of the guilt, the grief and sorrow, the pain and humiliation, all of the mental, emotional, and physical torments known to man—He experienced them all. There has been only One in all the annals of human history who was entirely sinless, qualified to answer for the sins and transgressions of all mankind and survive the pain that accompanied paying for them.

"He presented His life and in essence said, 'It is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world' (Mosiah 26:23). He was crucified; He died. They could not take His life from Him. He consented to die. . . .

"If you have stumbled or even been lost for a time, if you feel that the adversary now holds you captive, you can move forward with faith and not wander to and fro in the world any longer. There are those who stand ready to guide you back to peace and security. Even the grace of God, as promised in the scriptures, comes 'after all we can do' (2 Nephi 25:23). The possibility of this, to me, is the truth most worth knowing.

"I promise that the brilliant morning of forgiveness can come. Then 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding' (Philippians 4:7) comes into your life once again, something like a sunrise, and you and He 'will remember [your] sin no more' (Jeremiah 31:34). How will you know? You will know! (See Mosiah 4:1–3.)"⁵

My Witness

"After all the years that I have lived and taught and served, after the millions of miles I have traveled around the world, with all that I have experienced, there is one great truth that I would share. That is my witness of the Savior Jesus Christ.

"Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon recorded the following after a sacred experience:

"'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' (D&C 76:22-23).

"Their words are my words."6

"How privileged I have been throughout my life to be able to bear my special witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. I testify in all humility, but with absolute certainty, that He is the Only Begotten of the Father. This is His Church; He presides over it and directs this work. He is our Redeemer. I know He lives, and I know Him. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen."⁷ ■

NOTES

- Mine Errand from the Lord: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Boyd K. Packer (2008), 337.
- 5. "The Savior's Selfless and Sacred Sacrifice," *Ensign*, Apr. 2015, 39–40; *Liahona*, Apr. 2015, 37–38; see also "Truths Most Worth Knowing," Church Educational System Devotional, Nov. 6, 2011.
- 6. "The Witness," Ensign or Liahona, May 2014, 97.

^{1. &}quot;Our Witness of the Lord," General Authority training, Dec. 5, 1974.

^{2. &}quot;The Spirit Beareth Record," Ensign, June 1971, 87, 88.

^{3. &}quot;Who Is Jesus Christ?" Ensign or Liahona, Mar. 2008, 15.

^{7.} President Packer wrote this concluding testimony prior to his passing.

JOSEPH SMITH

The Prophet Joseph Smith helped remove some of the mystery surrounding the book of Revelation and showed its relevance in our day.



By David A. Edwards Church Magazines

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA SMITH; JOHN ON PATMOS, BY HAROLD COPPING © PROVIDENCE COLLECTION

he book of Revelation was written in the first century A.D., but it was the last book of the New Testament to be accepted as canon (authoritative scripture). Some Christian scholars in later centuries questioned its authorship, objected to some of its doctrines (for instance, its teachings about the Millennium or its teaching that people would be judged according to their works), and found its Old Testament allusions and visionary narrative to be too strange and too different from other New Testament writings.

But certain irrefutable facts led to the book's general acceptance. For instance, many of the earliest Christian writers mentioned the book of Revelation, attributing it to John the Apostle, and quoted from it extensively and approvingly in their writings. Several other books whose canonicity was not disputed could not claim such evidence.

By the early 19th century, when God called Joseph Smith as the Prophet of the Restoration, the book of Revelation was included in almost all versions of the Bible and was widely read. The imagery of John's vision stoked people's imaginations and gave rise to



Because of Joseph Smith, we know that Nephi learned that John the Revelator was appointed and foreordained to write the visions of the last days now found in the book of Revelation (see 1 Nephi 14:19–29). many different interpretations, as it continues to do today.

As the Prophet of the dispensation of the fulness of times, Joseph Smith was in a unique position to shed light on the book of Revelation and help make it less daunting to read and understand. He did this in at least two ways: (1) he explained specific parts of the book of Revelation and expanded its overall context, and (2) he demystified it.

Explain and Expand

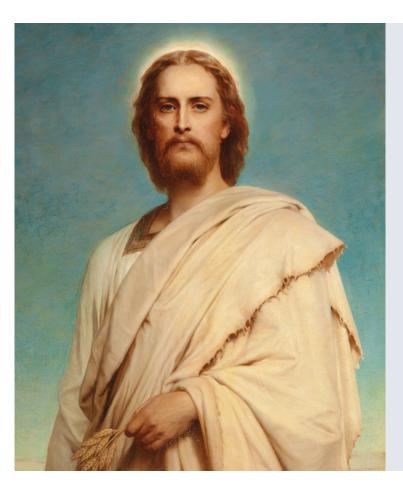
The best example of Joseph Smith's providing an explanation of the book of Revelation is in Doctrine and Covenants 77. Received in March 1832, this revelation consists of a question-and-answer about specific verses in Revelation, chapters 4–11. The Prophet said that this explanation was revealed to him while he was engaged in his inspired translation of the Bible (see D&C 77, section introduction).

The questions are pretty straightforward, essentially asking, "What does this mean?" and "When will this happen?" The answers are likewise straightforward, though not always exhaustive. The answers sought and received by the Prophet Joseph Smith place various speculative interpretations out of bounds and generally help us see how John's vision relates to the latter-day work.

For example, this revelation helps us see that the seven seals in the book described by John beginning in chapter 5 of Revelation represent seven major time periods in earth's history and that the final two are the ones that deal with our day and beyond (see D&C 77:6–7), helping us see why John's vision spends so much more time with the sixth and seventh seals. Joseph Smith's revelation then goes on to explain how some of the figures in the sixth seal (the four angels and the 144,000 servants sealed from the tribes of Israel) relate to the work of the Restoration and gathering in the last days (see D&C 77:9–11).

This explanatory revelation was, of course, not the only contribution the Prophet Joseph Smith made to our understanding of the book of Revelation from his translation of the Bible. As he worked, he sometimes was inspired to simply render the text more clearly,¹ but often he also was inspired to add or revise text in order to draw links to other scriptures so that they reinforce one another.² Part of Joseph Smith's work with the Bible, then, appears to have been to weave these common threads between the various books of scripture in order to present a unified tapestry of teachings and prophecies, and the book of Revelation is no exception.

In addition, through other revelations and translations, Joseph Smith expanded upon the context of the book of Revelation by showing that it follows a pattern of panoramic visions given to various prophets throughout the ages. In the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price, we learn that Nephi, the brother of Jared, Moses, and Enoch all had similar visions showing the sweep of human history, including the end of the world. We also learn that although these other prophets were shown the end of the world, they were forbidden from sharing it with the world because John was foreordained to write it (see 1 Nephi 14:25-26). So, the Book of Mormon, brought forth



ONE OF JOSEPH SMITH'S FAVORITE QUOTES FROM THE BOOK OF REVELATION

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10).

This statement of the angel to John was repeated often by the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is a key to understanding the nature of testimony as well as the need for prophecy and revelation in the Church and in our personal lives. For example, Joseph Smith said:

"Salvation cannot come without revelation; it is in vain for anyone to minister without it. No man is a minister of Jesus Christ without being a Prophet. No man can be a minister of Jesus Christ except he has the testimony of Jesus; and this is the spirit of prophecy" (*History of the Church*, 3:389).

through the Prophet Joseph Smith, teaches us that we were meant to have John's description of the events leading up to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and that it is worthy of our study.

Because of such additional light revealed through Joseph Smith, we are better able to see the overarching theme of Revelation: that "there will be an eventual triumph on this earth of God over the devil; a permanent victory of good over evil, of the Saints over their persecutors, of the kingdom of God over the kingdoms of men and of Satan.

... The victory [will] be achieved through Jesus Christ."³ In addition, Joseph Smith emphasized that Revelation's message centers on Jesus Christ as the focus of our hope and teaches us that by being faithful to Him and His work in the latter days, we can overcome the world.

Demystify

In a conference of the Church on April 8, 1843, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "The book of Revelation is one of the plainest books God ever caused to be written."⁴ This statement may have shocked his listeners because it so thoroughly contradicted their own experience. So what did the Prophet mean by it?

While Joseph Smith certainly did unlock some of the mysteries of the book of Revelation, in this address he also seems to have aimed to demystify it. He did this by showing that the book's cryptic imagery isn't always as cryptic as we may think and that a scripture's having impenetrable imagery doesn't necessarily bestow it with any greater importance or meaning for us.

For instance, elsewhere in the address, Joseph Smith showed that a careful reading of the book of Revelation can place limits on permissible interpretations. He pointed out that the first three chapters of the book deal with John's day and "things which must shortly come to pass" (Revelation 1:1) and that the rest of the book deals with "things which must be hereafter" (Revelation 4:1), or beyond John's day.⁵ By placing some limits on what the imagery in these parts of the book could apply to, these time frames render them somewhat less mysterious.

Some Things We Know about the **BOOK OF REVELATION** Because of JOSEPH SMITH



Because of the additional light revealed through Joseph Smith, we are better able to understand **Revelation's** theme of the victory of Christ and His Saints over the devil and the world.

> **REVELATION 5-8** D&C 77:6-7, 12

The seven seals represent seven time periods. The final two deal with our day and beyond.

After the seventh seal is opened, Christ will return, and the wicked will be destroyed.

REVELATION 7:1–8 D&C 77:8-11

The four angels and the 144,000 servants sealed from the tribes of Israel relate to the work of the Restoration and gathering in the last days.

RESTORATION

RESURRECTION

REVELATION 12:4, 7-9 D&C 29:36-37; 76:25-29

The earth will be

cleansed, and

will begin (see

D&C 88:89-110).

REVELATION 20:2 1 NEPHI 22:26

Satan will be bound during the Millennium

"because of the righ-

teousness of [Christ's]

people."

the Millennium

John's vision briefly harks back to the premortal war in heaven in order to highlight the ongoing war on earth between God's and Satan's forces.

REVELATION 20:5 D&C 76:81-85

APOSTASY

John sees a ondering

John sees war

John sees famin

John sees martyrs for Chris

2

3

5

6

Those who will not be resurrected until after the Millennium are those who will inherit the telestial kingdom.

"The earth shall pass away so as by fire" (see D&C 43:32-33).

> "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (Revelation 21:2). This could refer to the return of the city of Enoch (see Moses 7:63).



REVELATION 20:11-13 D&C 128:6-7

The books (on earth and in heaven) from which men will be judged by their works include records related to the salvation of the dead.

REVELATION 17:5

The entity identified by John as "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations" is the church of the devil. This church encompasses all forces opposed to Jesus Christ, His gospel, and His Church, for there are only two churches: the Church of the Lamb of God and the church of the devil. In addition, Joseph Smith taught that sometimes a beast is just a beast. He explained that when John said he saw beasts in heaven (see Revelation 4:6), what he actually saw were . . . beasts in heaven. The Prophet thus demonstrated that at least some of John's descriptions of his visions are literal while others are figurative.⁶ He also explained a principle related to such figures:

"Whenever God gives a vision of an image, or beast, or figure of any kind, He always holds Himself responsible to give a revelation or interpretation of the meaning thereof, otherwise we are not responsible or accountable for our belief in it. Don't be afraid of being damned for not knowing the meaning of a vision or figure, if God has not given a revelation or interpretation of the subject."⁷

Knowing the interpretation of every detail of mysterious visions is not paramount in our study of the scriptures. The mysteries of the prophets' figurative language are not the same as the mysteries of God, which are given to the person who "repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing" (Alma 26:22).

By demystifying the book of Revelation, the Prophet removed potential distractions from the weightier matters of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Of course, John's vision gives us important information about the latter days: the Apostasy and Restoration, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, His triumph over the devil, His millennial reign, and the Resurrection and Final Judgment. These things can help us as we strive to find the truth and follow the Lord's will. But if we get hung up on a particular interpretation of a figure described in that vision, we may neglect things that matter most.⁸

As we study the book of Revelation and take advantage of the wonderful light shed on it through the Prophet Joseph Smith, we can see where we stand in the grand scope of the world's history and of God's dealings with His children. Knowing this, we can see the importance of our personal testimony of Jesus Christ and of participating fully in His work in the latter days. Then we can overcome the world and, with Christ, inherit all things from the Father (see Revelation

3:21; 21:7).

NOTES

- 1. See, for instance, Revelation 2:1, footnote *a*; or Revelation 6:14, footnote *a*.
- 2. For instance, Joseph Smith's rendering of Revelation 1:7 (in the Bible appendix) reads: "For behold, he cometh *in the* clouds *with ten thousands of his saints in the kingdom, clothed with the glory of his Father.* And every eye shall see him; and they who pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." The words added by Joseph Smith (in italics) connect this verse with other scriptural teachings about Christ's Second Coming—for instance, Matthew 16:27 ("the glory of his Father") and Jude 1:14 ("ten thousands of his saints").
- 3. Bible Dictionary, "Revelation of John." 4. *History of the Church*, 5:342.
- 5. Of course, as Joseph Smith knew, the first five of the seven seals deal with past events, but these serve to highlight the theme of a purpose or an endpoint to
- highlight the theme of a purpose or an endpoint to human history, culminating in the events leading up to the Second Coming—well beyond John's day. 6. In this particular example, the beasts themselves are literal, representing four individual beasts, while
- are literal, representing four individual beasts, while John's *description* of them contains figurative elements (multiple eyes and wings) representing their abstract attributes rather than their appearance (see Revelation 4:6–8; D&C 77:4).
- 7. History of the Church, 5:343.
- 8. Joseph Smith apparently felt this was particularly true for missionaries. He said: "Oh, ye elders of Israel, hearken to my voice; and when you are sent into the world to preach, tell those things you are sent to tell; preach and cry aloud, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent and believe the Gospel.' Declare the first principles, and let mysteries alone, lest ye be overthrown. Never meddle with the visions of beasts and subjects you do not understand" (*History of the Church,* 5:344).

By Scott H. Knecht Seminaries and Institutes Asking the Right **Questions** in the Right Way

Learning how to prepare for, create, ask, and respond to questions can make all the difference in how you learn and teach the gospel. here are a lot of things that can go into creating a great lesson or a great family conversation. Activities, silent study, and working with groups are a few of the tools that gospel teachers—whether it be those with formal callings, volunteer seminary or institute teachers, or parents—might use to enhance their teaching.

But included in the top two or three necessary skills that all teachers should possess is the ability to work well with questions: to create them, to ask them, and to encourage meaningful responses. President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "To ask and to answer questions is at the heart of all learning and all teaching."¹ To be an effective teacher, it is imperative to acquire this skill. Here are five suggestions for doing just that.

Seek the Most Effective Responses

Sitting in a class as a learner and hearing a great question reminds us of the power of excellent teaching. But how to create and ask effective questions is puzzling and may look daunting to many teachers. Fortunately, it is a skill any teacher can learn.

As you create questions, try to determine what type of response the question will elicit. Some questions seek a specific type of response—one that corresponds exactly to the question asked. Those questions work well in a math class ("What is the area of this square?") or in a science class ("At what temperature does water boil?") because there is only one discoverable and verifiable answer. They are also useful in gospel study as a way to get the facts in place to begin a discussion but do little to fuel discussion. In general, however, those kinds of questions are used the most because they are easy to prepare.

We ask things like, "What did we study last time?" or "Tell me the name of . . ." These questions often cause those you teach to freeze up. They think they know the answer but aren't sure and so are afraid to venture a guess. The teacher often interprets this silence as a sign that the question was



too hard, when in reality the question is too basic to elicit anything more meaningful from learners than a quick answer.

In order to generate classroom discussion, a much more useful question is one that invites a variety of thoughtful responses. When you ask this kind of question, you can find out what those you ask are thinking about the subject or what they are puzzling over during your discussion. For example, Moroni chapter 1 contains four verses, each full of deep feeling. What would happen if you read all four verses with those you're teaching and then asked, "Which of those verses causes the deepest feelings inside of you?" Give them a minute to start talking. Since you are not asking for a specific response, almost anything they say is useable. I've used that very chapter with that very question and received some incredible responses that generated deep discussions.

Those are the types of questions that invite thinking and feeling as opposed to questions that require recall or simply a statement of facts. There is a time and place for recall, but the teacher can say much of what needs to be recalled, as in, "Remember that last time we talked about Moroni 1 and how each verse contains some powerful lessons . . ." Just by my saying that, it will stir up thoughts, and learners will be more likely to jump in and continue the discussion. However, if I say, "What did we talk about last time?" I will usually be met with silence and shrugs.

Ask the Second Question

A common question used by gospel teachers is some variation of this: "So how important is faith in your life?" At first glance that sounds like a meaningful inquiry, but if you think about it, there is only one answer: "Very important." Of course, faith (and any other gospel principle) *is* very important, but that type of question generally leads nowhere by itself because you still have to ask the follow-up question, which is something like: "Why is it so important?" or "Will you give us an example of when it was important in your life?" Those questions can get things going in class, so go right to them and skip the first question. Asking the second question first will save time and keep the discussion moving better.

Write Your Questions Beforehand

It is very helpful to do two things as you prepare your lesson. First, write the question out. Don't just think of it; write it. Choose words carefully and read them over a few times to make sure that the question asks what you want it to ask in a clear way.

Second, ask yourself, what will those I teach do when I ask that question? There have been times when I thought I had a really good question written, then I said it out loud, and as I pictured my class, I knew it would fall flat. The question may have worked for a different class, but for my particular class I knew it would fail, so I started over. I know that if I have two or three really well-thought-out and well-written questions in my lesson plan, I can start conversations. Other questions will naturally follow, but I need wellcrafted starting points.

This technique works just as well at home. We seem to have a lot of spontaneous gospel discussions in my home when the questions and answers flow, but there have been times when something more serious and direct needed to be said to a particular child. In those cases I learned that if I prepared specific questions, practiced my delivery of them, and worked through scenarios of possible outcomes, things went a lot better. Those questions weren't written on paper; they were written in my heart, and I could use them as needed.

Don't Be Afraid of Silence

If you've created a really good question, one that causes thought and allows for some latitude in response, then don't be surprised if it takes people a few seconds to come up with their answers. There could be silence, but don't be alarmed. Surface questions -the ones that only require certain answers (e.g., "How many Articles of Faith are there?")-get answered quickly. Deep questions-those that require responses-often need time to simmer in a learner's mind. In this case, silence is your friend. Let it happen, and when those you are teaching begin to respond, you will be pleasantly surprised at what they come up with.

Ask Questions about the **Scriptures**

If you truly want to enhance your ability to create and ask effective questions, you need to learn to ask great questions about the scriptures during your study and preparation time.

One way to approach scripture reading is to do it for personal inspiration. We read chapters and verses to enjoy the beauty found therein and to be edified with doctrine and truth. A different approach, which works better for parents or teachers preparing

lessons, is to read the scriptures and probe the scriptures with questions. I do this to stimulate thought as I'm trying to decide how best to help those I teach to understand the scriptures. Here is an example: Doctrine and Covenants 18:10 contains a phrase that is well known and lifts our spirits, "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God." I love that thought, but if all it is to me is inspirational, then it is not as useful in a class.

What if I pondered this question as I studied and prepared: "So what is the worth of a soul? I know it is great, but can we put a value on it?" One night at dinner one of my daughters asked that very question, and it stimulated a lot of discussion. This is where we ended up: The worth of a soul is what someone will pay for it, and what did our Father pay for our souls? He paid with the blood of His perfect Son. That makes each soul valuable beyond description. We would not have arrived at that conclusion without the question directed to the text itself.

That dinner table conversation could easily be replicated in other teaching settings. If you want to ask better questions of those you teach, ask real questions about the scriptures as you read and study and prepare. Be full of wonder and don't be afraid to probe. The scriptures can always hold up to increased scrutiny. The better you become at asking questions about the scriptures while you study, the better you will become at asking those same great questions of those you teach.

Continue to Develop Your Teaching Ability

There is a tendency to look at great teachers and think that they were just born that way. They appear to have a gift that would be difficult for the average person to acquire. Of course, the ability to teach is one of the gifts of the Spirit (see Moroni 10:9-10), so some of the skill you are seeing may be a gift from heaven—but it's a gift open to all who seek it. So much of what great teachers do is available to you also through study and practice. Learning to ask effective questions is such a skill. As you prayerfully seek the ability to do that, you will find that there is great worth in creating questions that stir those you teach into thinking, and your ability to do

that very thing will increase. The author lives in California, USA. NOTE

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^{1.} Henry B. Eyring, "The Lord Will Multiply the Harvest" (satellite broadcast address to religious educators in the Church Educational System, Feb. 6, 1998), 5-6.

As part of His plan, the Father established the new and everlasting covenant to enable His sons and daughters to return to His presence and inherit eternal life.



By Elder Marcus B. Nash Of the Seventy

The NEW AND EVERLASTING Covenant

As we understand and live according to the new and everlasting covenant, we will inherit eternal life.

The Purpose of Life

Each human being is a beloved son or daughter of heavenly parents.¹ Heavenly Father's plan of salvation provides to each the opportunity to receive eternal life, which is the life God leads.² There is no greater gift.³ Knowledge of the plan of salvation explains the purpose of life and, if we so choose, will inform our decisionmaking from an eternal perspective.

The plan and its relevance to mortality were explained powerfully in an October 2015 *Liahona* article on the subject by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.⁴ As part of His plan, the Father established the new and everlasting covenant to enable His sons and daughters to return to His presence and inherit eternal life.

In His preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord said: "Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, . . .

"That mine everlasting covenant might be established."5



This covenant, often referred to by the Lord as the "new and everlasting covenant," encompasses the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, including all ordinances and covenants necessary for the salvation of mankind.⁶ Although establishing the Lord's new and everlasting covenant on the earth is a primary purpose of the Restoration, some Latter-day Saints do not understand the covenant's significance and the promise of good things to come for those who abide within it. The purpose of this article is to help each of us better understand and live according to the new and everlasting covenant so that we may inherit eternal life. It will also explain how one of the most important ordinances and covenants of the gospel-eternal marriage-fits within the new and everlasting covenant of the gospel.

The Meaning and Purpose of the New and Everlasting Covenant

A covenant in the gospel sense is a pact, a contract, or an agreement between God and a

The new and everlasting covenant "is the sum total of all gospel covenants and obligations." person (or persons) who receives priesthood ordinances performed by one with priesthood authority and who agrees to abide by the terms and conditions of the associated covenant. These terms and conditions are established by God.⁷

The new and everlasting covenant "is the sum total of all gospel covenants and obligations"⁸ given anciently⁹ and again restored to the earth in these latter days. This is explained in Doctrine and Covenants 66:2: "Verily I say unto you, blessed are you for receiving *mine everlasting covenant, even the fulness of my gospel,* sent forth unto the children of men, that they might have life and be made partakers of the glories which are to be revealed in the last days, as it was written by the prophets and apostles in days of old."¹⁰ Because the covenant has been restored in the last dispensation of time, it is "new," and because it spans all eternity,¹¹ it is "everlasting."

In the scriptures the Lord speaks of both "the" new and everlasting covenant and "a"

new and everlasting covenant. For example, in Doctrine and Covenants 22:1, He refers to baptism as "*a* new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning." In Doctrine and Covenants 132:4, He likewise refers to eternal marriage as "*a* new and an everlasting covenant." When He speaks of "a" new and everlasting covenant, He is speaking of one of the many covenants encompassed by His gospel.

When the Lord speaks generally of "the" new and everlasting covenant, He is speaking of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which embraces all ordinances and covenants necessary for the salvation and exaltation of mankind. Neither baptism nor eternal marriage is "the" new and everlasting covenant; rather, they are each parts of the whole.

Those Who Endure to the End in the New and Everlasting Covenant Receive Eternal Life

Great and eternal blessings are promised to those who receive gospel ordinances performed by proper priesthood authority and sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise,¹² and who then keep the sacred covenants associated with the ordinances. These blessings include forgiveness of sins,¹³ the power of godliness,¹⁴ and the companionship of the Holy Ghost,¹⁵ together with the guidance, inspiration, comfort, peace, hope, and sanctification that attend that gift.¹⁶

The greatest of all the blessings and gifts of God is eternal life—which is the life God lives!¹⁷ This gift is given only to those who receive all gospel ordinances and abide by the covenants encompassed within the new and everlasting covenant.¹⁸ In the Lord's words: "The new and everlasting covenant . . . was instituted for the fulness of my glory."¹⁹ Indeed, those who enter into the new and everlasting covenant and endure to the end "shall come forth in the first resurrection . . . and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths."²⁰ The Lord emphatically declares that "it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever. Then shall they be gods."²¹ In summary, those who enter into the new and everlast-

> ing covenant and endure faithfully to the end will (1) receive the fulness of the glory of God, (2) enjoy the power of godliness in time and eternity,²² (3) be exalted, (4) enjoy eternal marriage and increase, and (5) become gods. Taken together, these blessings culminate in the gift of eternal life.

We Must Obey Each Covenant within the New and Everlasting Covenant

The Lord unequivocally declared that we receive these supernal blessings only as we obey His laws as set forth in the new and everlasting covenant: "The new and everlasting covenant . . . was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God."²³ He also declared, "For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world."²⁴ In the same section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord echoed this point: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory."²⁵

The straightforward requirement that we must obey the laws of God in order to receive the glory He offers the faithful applies to all the ordinances and covenants within the new and everlasting covenant. For example, if I do not

Great and eternal blessings are promised to those who receive gospel ordinances.

HOTOGRAPH AT REXBURG IDAHO TEMPLE

receive the ordinance and keep the covenant of baptism, I will be damned, meaning that I cannot progress-I cannot inherit the fulness of His glory. Likewise if I do not receive the ordinances of the temple and keep the associated covenants or, indeed, if I refuse to receive any of the ordinances of the gospel or if I refuse to abide by any of the associated covenants, I cannot be exalted. Instead, I will be damned, meaning that my progress will be stopped. In short, I must receive every ordinance of the gospel and abide by every associated covenant if eternal life is my desire.

The terms of the covenants we as Latterday Saints agree to live can be grouped into four categories: (1) to take upon us the name of the Savior, to remember Him always, and to follow His example; (2) to keep all His commandments; (3) to willingly serve God's children as part of His work of salvation, even at personal sacrifice: and (4) to consecrate ourselves and our means to the Lord's work.

According to God's law, the gospel

(and the glories it offers) is received through specified ordinances administered by the authority of the priesthood. It is through the priesthood ordinances that the power of godliness is manifest in our lives-but only to the extent that we keep the associated covenants. The covenant activates, or gives life to, the ordinance, just as an engine activates a car and enables it to transport its occupants from one place to another. In short, to the degree we thoughtfully and faithfully keep the covenants associated with the ordinances we receive, we will grow in our knowledge of God and experience the "power of godliness"²⁶ by the grace of God through the Atonement of Christ.²⁷

The Place of Marriage in the New and Everlasting Covenant

In Doctrine and Covenants 132:4, the Lord stated that He was going to reveal "a" new and everlasting covenant and

added, "If ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory." These words refer to the covenant of eternal marriage²⁸ performed by proper priesthood authority,29 which is a central and essential part of "the" new and everlasting covenant (the fulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ).³⁰ The Lord emphasized the great importance of the covenant of eternal marriage by telling us that those who reject this covenant will not receive eternal life.31

It is through the

power of godliness

is manifest in our lives.

Some people, including some Church members, inaccurately read Doctrine and Covenants 132:4 to mean that plural marriage is necessary for exaltation, leading them to believe that plural marriage is a necessary prerequisite priesthood ordinances that the for exaltation in the eternal realm. This, however, is not supported in the revelations. As recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 131 and 132, the Lord introduced the law of eternal marriage by expressly referring to the sealing of one man and one woman

(see Doctrine and Covenants 132:4-7, 15-25).

By setting forth the law of eternal marriage in the context of a monogamous marriage, the Lord makes plain that the blessings of exaltation, extended to each man and each woman who worthily enters into the covenant of eternal marriage performed by proper priesthood authority, are independent of whether that marriage is plural or monogamous.³²

Doctrine and Covenants 132:19 makes it clear that eternal life is promised to a monogamous couple who are sealed by the authority of the priesthood and who abide in the covenant-with no additional condition or requirement. Any man and woman who are sealed in this way and who abide within the covenant will be exalted.³³ Historical practice is consistent with the doctrine of eternal marriage as explained here.³⁴ The ordinance that seals couples for eternity includes identical covenants and blessings for monogamous marriages and for the authorized plural marriages performed



in the past. These same covenants and blessings will be made available after this life to the faithful who did not have the opportunity to be sealed in mortality.³⁵

After revealing the law and covenant of eternal marriage between one man and one woman, the Lord taught Joseph Smith that a man can in righteousness marry more than one wife within the covenant of eternal marriage when authorized or commanded by the Lord through His duly ordained prophet (who holds the relevant priesthood keys).³⁶ The authorization and command to practice plural marriage, given by the Lord to Abraham and other prophets of antiquity,³⁷ was likewise given to the Prophet Joseph Smith: "I gave unto thee, my servant Joseph, an appointment, and restore all things."³⁸

Years later, the Lord rescinded His authorization and command for Church members to enter the practice of plural marriage (in other words, be sealed to more than one living spouse) when President Wilford Woodruff "Celestial marriage is essential to a fulness of glory in the world to come." (1807–98) issued the Manifesto of 1890.³⁹ This led to the end of the practice of plural marriage, meaning no member of the Church could be married or sealed to more than one living spouse. Notably, the Manifesto does not preclude any worthy man who has been sealed to a wife now deceased from being sealed to another, living spouse. The foregoing is consistent with the revealed doctrine that monogamy is the Lord's standard for marriage unless He declares and authorizes otherwise through His duly appointed representative, meaning the President and prophet of the Church.⁴⁰

On behalf of the First Presidency and in response to the question "Is plural or celestial marriage essential to a fulness of glory in the world to come?" President Charles W. Penrose (1832–1925) wrote: "Celestial marriage is essential to a fulness of glory in the world to come, as explained in the revelation concerning it; but *it is not stated that plural marriage is thus essential*."⁴¹



In 1933 the First Presidency declared: "Celestial marriage—that is, marriage for time and eternity—and polygamous or plural marriage are not synonymous terms. Monogamous marriages for time and eternity, solemnized in our temples in accordance with the word of the Lord and the laws of the Church, are Celestial marriages."⁴²

Consistent with these statements, Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote: *"Plural marriage is not essential to salvation or exaltation*. Nephi and his people were denied the power to have more than one wife and yet they could gain every blessing in eternity that the Lord ever offered to any people. *In our day, the Lord summarized by revelation the whole doctrine of exaltation and predicated it upon the marriage of one man to one woman. (D&C 132:1–28.)* Thereafter he added the principles relative to plurality of wives with the express stipulation that any such marriages would be valid only For all who abide the terms of the new and everlasting covenant, the reward is joy and peace in this world and eternal life in the next. if authorized by the President of the Church. (D&C 132:7, 29–66.)^{*43}

Today, as directed by the Lord through His prophet, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints no longer practices plural marriage, and individuals who do practice it are not allowed to join the Church or remain members of it. The Church affirms that monogamy is God's standard for marriage except when He authorizes or commands otherwise through His prophet. The Church does not teach that participation in plural marriage is necessary for exaltation.

Conclusion

There is much that we do not know about life in the hereafter; however, we do know that receiving and abiding within the new and everlasting covenant is necessary to inherit eternal life. We also know that for such, the "same sociality which exists among us here"—in mortality —"will exist among us there"—in the afterlife— "only it will be coupled with eternal glory."⁴⁴ The supernal blessings available through the new and everlasting covenant are central to the grand purpose of the Father's plan and the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ in these latter days. The "perfect brightness of hope"⁴⁵ this glorious covenant inspires in the faithful provides "an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God."⁴⁶ For all who abide the terms of the new and everlasting covenant, the reward is joy and peace in this world and eternal life in the next.⁴⁷

NOTES

- 1. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129; see also *God Loveth His Children* (pamphlet, 2007), 1.
- See Robert D. Hales, "The Plan of Salvation: A Sacred Treasure of Knowledge to Guide Us," *Ensign*, Oct. 2015, 24–31; *Liahona*, Oct. 2015, 32–39.
- 3. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
- 4. See Robert D. Hales, "The Plan of Salvation: A Sacred Treasure of Knowledge to Guide Us," *Ensign*, 24–31; *Liahona*, 32–39.
- 5. Doctrine and Covenants 1:17, 22.
- 6. Doctrine and Covenants 66:2.
- 7. See Bible Dictionary, "Covenant."
- 8. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:156.
- 9. See Jeremiah 32:40; Doctrine and Covenants 22:1.
- 10. Emphasis added; see also Doctrine and Covenants 39:11; 45:9; 49:9; 88:131, 133; 101:39.
- 11. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:7.
- 12. President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught: "*The Holy Spirit* of Promise is the Holy Ghost who places the stamp of approval upon every ordinance: baptism, confirmation, ordination, marriage. *The promise is that the blessings will be received through faithfulness*. If a person violates a covenant, whether it be of baptism, ordination, marriage or anything else, the Spirit withdraws the stamp of approval, and the blessings will not be received. Every ordinance is sealed with a promise of a reward based upon faithfulness. The Holy Spirit withdraws the stamp of approval where covenants are broken" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:45; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:52–53; 132:7).
- 13. See Acts 2:38; 2 Nephi 31:17; Moroni 8:25.
- 14. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-21; see also Moroni 10:32-33.
- 15. See John 14:26; Doctrine and Covenants 121:45-46.
- 16. See 2 Nephi 32:5; 3 Nephi 27:20; Moroni 8:26; Doctrine and Covenants 11:13; Moses 6:59–61.
- 17. "Eternal life is God's life, or life with God" (Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Oct. 1956, 61). "Those who are married in the temple for all time and eternity obtain the blessing of *eternal lives*. I put stress on *eternal lives*. Eternal life is God's life, that is, to be like him" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. (1957–66), 4:197).
- 18. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
- 19. Doctrine and Covenants 132:6.
- 20. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
- 21. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20.
- 22. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-21.
- 23. Doctrine and Covenants 132:6.

- 24. Doctrine and Covenants 132:5.
- 25. Doctrine and Covenants 132:21.
- 26. Doctrine and Covenants 84:20-21.
- 27. See Moroni 10:32-33.
- 28. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:4, 15.
- 29. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:7, 18.
- 30. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:6–7; see also Doctrine and Covenants 66:2.
- 31. Please note that eternal life is denied those who "reject" this covenant. Those who, in contrast, did not have the opportunity for eternal marriage in this life will be given the opportunity for eternal marriage in the next life. Please see also footnote 35 below.
- 32. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:15-25.
- 33. For an additional example affirming that monogamous couples who are sealed for eternity and keep the associated covenants merit exaltation, see Doctrine and Covenants 131.
- 34. See Gospel Topics, "Plural Marriage in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," topics.lds.org.
- 35. "There is no Latter-day Saint who dies after having lived a faithful life who will lose anything because of having failed to do certain things when opportunities were not furnished him or her. In other words, if a young man or a young woman has no opportunity of getting married, and they live faithful lives up to the time of their death, they will have all the blessings, exaltation, and glory that any man or woman will have who had this opportunity and improved it. That is sure and positive" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow* [2011], 130).
- 36. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:34–35, 37–39.
- 37. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:34–39.
- 38. Doctrine and Covenants 132:40.
- 39. See Official Declaration 1.
- 40. See Jacob 2:27–30. Although the Lord has not explained all the reasons for commanding or authorizing the practice of plural marriage, in Doctrine and Covenants 132 the Lord offers two reasons: (1) to fulfill promises pursuant to the Abrahamic covenant, and (2) "to multiply and replenish the earth" (D&C 132:63; see also verse 34). Jacob 2:30 offers perhaps the most succinct statement of why at times the Lord has commanded the practice of plural marriage: "For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things." See also Gospel Topics, "Plural Marriage in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," topics.lds.org.
- 41. Charles W. Penrose, "Peculiar Questions Briefly Answered," *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1912, 1042; emphasis added.
- In James R. Clark, comp., Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 vols. (1965–75), 5:329.
- 43. Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed. (1966), 578-79; emphasis added. See also the following statement by Elder Melvin J. Ballard (1873-1939) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "Those who are denied endless increase cannot be what God is, because that in connection with other things, makes him God. The eternity of the marriage covenant ought to be understood by Latter-day Saints clearly to be the sealing of at least one woman to one man for time and for all eternity. Then do not get confused on that point and imagine that it necessarily means more than one woman. It may be, certainly, but it does mean at least that one man and one woman are sealed together by the power of the holy priesthood and by the sealing approval of the Holy Ghost for time and for all eternity, and then that they keep their covenants, before they will be candidates for the highest degree of celestial glory, and unto them only of all these groups of our Father's children is the promise made of endless or eternal increase" (The Three Degrees of Glory: A Discourse by Melvin J. Ballard, Sept. 22, 1922, 10; emphasis added).
- 44. Doctrine and Covenants 130:2.
- 45. 2 Nephi 31:20.
- 46. Ether 12:4.
- 47. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.

"I MADE A **COMMITMENT** TO GOD"

By Néstor Curbelo

Church History Adviser, South America South Area

irgilio Simarrón Salazar was a leader in his native Chachi community of northern Ecuador. To this day, the Chachi maintain their distinct way of life and their own system of justice with a communal council, governors, and judges. These leadership roles are typically positions of honor that families hold for generations and that are built on a deep foundation of community respect and esteem. Respect for the position was a trust to be cared for and passed on to the next generation.

But Virgilio Simmarón's plans for his life changed in 1996, when his son, Wilson, returned from studies in Quinindé with copies of the Book of Mormon and a firm testimony of his new religion. Filled with the faith and enthusiasm of one who has found the truth, Wilson shared the message of the gospel with his family, and they were soon baptized in the waters of the Canandé River.

As the Simarróns shared the gospel with Chachi friends and neighbors, however, a serious conflict developed. Some Chachis felt that Virgilio Simarrón's beliefs made him a heretic and even considered violence The Church was established in Guayacana, Ecuador, thanks in large part to Virgilio Simarrón, who made a difficult decision in order to stay true to his testimony.

against him. Others felt that, as a governor, he should not participate in a new faith that might divide the people. With this concern, they took him to be tried by the communal council. It would be one of the most difficult experiences of Virgilio's life.



Following the missionary work of the Simarrón family, 60 people were baptized in the Canandé River in May 1999.

Wilson relates what happened: "The council, in full assembly, told my father, 'You will remain as our governor if you renounce the Church of Jesus Christ; you must retract.' My father said, 'I made a commitment to God, and when a man makes a commitment to God, it is not retractable. I cannot give up the Church. If you think I'm a governor who has divided the Chachi people, then oh my people, choose you this day another one in my place.' Then I saw the scene of my father crying. The council was in total silence for more than five minutes—nobody said anything. Then someone said, 'Then Governor, leave.' Slowly my father stood, so my mom, my sister, and I went down and left the council."

After Brother Simarrón was removed from his office, difficult days followed for the family. Feeling contempt from many who had once respected them, the family turned to the faith they had embraced and preached the gospel with great fervor. Their stake president, Omar Intriago Cesar, explains: "They began to preach the gospel from house to house to each family of this community. The Guayacana Branch started with Virgilio Simarrón and his son, Wilson. The Church was established because of his faith, his strength, and his testimony."

In just a few years, the efforts of the Simarrón family bore great fruit. May 30, 1999, became a day of celebration in Guayacana when a large baptismal service was held. President Intriago recalls, "We arrived with Roberto Garcia, the mission president, and both participated in that glorious day, where on the beaches of the Canandé River, two missionaries baptized 60 people. Then, President Garcia on one side and I on another confirmed as members of the Church all who were baptized. It was a privilege that will never be erased from my life."

Although Virgilio gave up his governorship to stay true to his testimony, he was able to pass on another legacy to the next generation: that of serving the people by establishing the gospel among them. He lived to see Wilson serve a full-time mission and then return to Guayacana to marry his wife, Ruth, and have children. Some years later, Virgilio died faithful in the Church. His wife, Maria Juana Apa, has lived to witness their son's calling, in 2014, to serve as branch president in Guayacana.

Wilson is very aware of the heritage his father always wanted to give him. "My ancestors have always been governors, heads of soldiers, strong warriors," he says. "I feel that all these ancestral roots still manifest in me. But now that I am a member of the Church, all that strength has helped me become a good soldier of Jesus Christ."





Above: A new generation of leaders, Ruth and Wilson Simarrón of the Guayacana Branch (with branch members shown at left).



By Elder D. Todd Christofferson Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

BE AT PEACE

I hope you will take time this Christmas season to sit for a few quiet moments and let the Savior's Spirit warm you and reassure you of the worthiness of your service, your offering, and your life.

t's always encouraging for me to contemplate the offering of service and sacrifice that Latter-day Saints make to their families, their wards, and their Heavenly Father. It's a consecrated, sacred thing. I don't believe there's a higher honor that can come to us than that the Lord would consider our offering as worthy and appropriate and that He would respect and receive it.

That is the great commendation of the Father to the Son when He refers to Him as "my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (3 Nephi 11:7; see also Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 9:35; D&C 93:15; Joseph Smith—History 1:17). What a beautiful title. What greater honor could there be than that God would say to you, "My beloved son" or "My beloved daughter," and that you would receive His commendation that your offering is acceptable to Him, "in whom I am well pleased."

I pray at this Christmas season that you might have some sense of the Lord's regard for your offering, some sense of how you stand in His eyes, some sense of the beloved status you occupy as His son or His daughter. And I pray that knowledge of that status may give you a great deal of comfort, reassurance, and confidence that you are approved in His eyes.





THE SAVIOR'S GIFT OF PEACE

"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' [John 14:27]."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Treasured Gifts," *Ensign*, Dec. 2006, 7; *Liahona*, Dec. 2006, 5.

The Savior's Birth

When we talk about the birth of Jesus Christ, we appropriately reflect on what was to follow. His birth was infinitely significant because of the things He would experience and suffer so that He might better succor us—all culminating in His Crucifixion and Resurrection (see Alma 7:11–12). But His mission also included the beauty of His service, the miracles of His ministry, the relief He brought to the suffering, and the joy He offered—and still offers—to the mourning.

I also like to think of what comes later. Two of my favorite verses speaking of that time are found at the end of chapter 7 in the book of Revelation:

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Revelation 7:16–17; see also 21:4).

That captures for me the holy hope of what is coming, of what it will be like during the great Millennium and the celestial reign of Christ that follows.

With all of that to come, though, I think it's appropriate this time of year to just think about that baby in the manger. Don't be too overwhelmed or occupied with what is to come; just think about that little baby. Take a quiet, peaceful moment to ponder the beginning of His life—the culmination of heavenly prophecy but the earthly beginning for Him. Take time to relax, be at peace, and see this little child in your mind. Do not be too concerned or overwhelmed with what is coming in His life or in yours. Instead, take a peaceful moment to contemplate perhaps the most serene moment in the history of the world when all of heaven rejoiced with the message "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

Let the Spirit Warm You

Some years ago I heard a radio interview featuring Bishop Desmond Tutu, the



Anglican archbishop in South Africa. He had just published a book with his daughter about the reconciliation that had taken place in South Africa following apartheid.¹ Basically, the book's message is that there is good in all people.

During the interview the host asked a perceptive, inspired question of Bishop Tutu: "Have you found that your relationship to God has changed as you've grown older?"

Bishop Tutu paused and then said, "Yes. I am learning to shut up more in the presence of God."





Take a peaceful moment to contemplate perhaps the most serene moment in the history of the world—when all of heaven rejoiced with the message "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." He recalled that when he prayed in his earlier years, he did so with a list of requests and solicitudes. He would approach heaven with what he called "a kind of shopping list." But now, he said, "I think [I am] trying to grow in just being there. Like when you sit in front of a fire in winter, you are just there in front of the fire, and you don't have to be smart or anything. The fire warms you."²

I think that is a lovely metaphor just sit with the Lord and let Him warm you like a fire in winter. You don't have to be perfect or the greatest person who ever graced the earth or the best of anything to be with Him.

I hope you will take time this Christmas season to sit for a few quiet moments and let the Savior's Spirit warm you and reassure you of the worthiness of your service, of your offering, of your life. Sit quietly with that little baby and come away spiritually strengthened and better prepared for all that is going to come later. Let that moment be one of rest and refreshing and reassurance and renewal.

God grant you that blessing this Christmas as you, with me, bear witness of the Savior Jesus Christ—His centrality to our lives, to all human life, and to the very purpose of existence.

We worship Him, we serve Him, and we love Him. May your life reflect that love through your offering this Christmas season and always. ■

NOTES

- 1. Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu, *Made for Goodness: And Why This Makes All the Difference* (2011).
- 2. Desmond Tutu, in "Desmond Tutu, Insisting We Are 'Made for Goodness'" (NPR interview by Renee Montagne, Mar. 11, 2010), npr.org.

RUNNING TO THE TEMPLE

n December 1999 we were preparing for our annual Christmas trip to the Bern Switzerland Temple. The trip, a special tradition we began shortly after our marriage, is one way we commemorate the Savior's birth.

We live about eight hours by car from the temple, and bad weather preceded our departure. Uprooted trees, a sharp wind, and icy roads would make the journey treacherous.

I felt uncertain and didn't understand why we were encountering so many obstacles when we knew that the Lord wanted us to go to the temple. Would He not open our way?

My husband, Antonio, and I knelt in prayer with our children and said to our Heavenly Father that unless He told us differently, we would head for Bern the next day.

"If the road is truly impassable," Antonio said after our prayer, "we'll come back."

I felt our decision was right, but I was still fearful. The next morning, full of doubt, I wanted to pray again. Antonio told me we had already received our answer, but he lovingly and patiently knelt beside me.

When we left, it was barely dawn and dark clouds hovered over us. As we drove, I could see a small bit of blue sky near the mountains. A timid ray of sun broke through the clouds. That glimmer of sunshine strengthened my vacillating faith. Miraculously, the sun came out and the temperature rose. There was no fog, no ice, no wind—only a clear, extraordinarily warm winter day. My eyes filled with tears. It seemed that Heavenly Father had answered our prayers.

After we arrived at Bern, it began to snow heavily and continued to snow throughout our stay. As we headed to the temple before dawn the next morning, the storm turned into a blizzard. For a minute I was afraid, and I began to run along the sidewalk that leads to the temple.

Then a thought came into my mind: "This is the way it should be. The world howls at us with troubles, but we must run to the peace of the Lord found in His house."

We had a wonderful time at the temple that Christmas season, but we worried about our trip home. The snow continued to fall, and our youngest son developed a high fever. On the day of our departure, however, the snow miraculously stopped, and our son's fever broke after he received a priesthood blessing.

As the peace of the temple sustained us, a Bible verse came to my mind: "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14). With gratitude, I realized that no, it is not. ■ Antonella Trevisan, Udine, Italy

As we headed to the temple before dawn the next morning, the storm turned into a blizzard.

MY CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

During the fall of 1968, our bishop asked my parents if they would pledge money toward building the Provo Utah Temple. Wards don't do that today, but it was common back then. My dad pledged U.S. \$1,000. That might not seem like much money, but it was to us. My father was working two jobs to help support a son in college, a son on a mission, and five children at home.

When my father sat us down for family council and told us he had pledged \$1,000 toward the temple, I remember thinking, "You might as well have pledged \$1 million because both amounts are unreachable." I couldn't believe he had pledged that much, and we had less than four months to gather the funds.

We chose four ways to help raise money: we would forfeit gift giving that Christmas and donate the money we would have spent on gifts; my sisters and I would donate our babysitting money; my little brother would do odd jobs to earn money; and as a family we would go to a local farm, pick apples daily for a few weeks, and donate the earnings.

We gift wrapped a shoebox that would hold our deposits, added a picture of a temple and a picture of Jesus Christ, and placed the box on a small table. Excitement grew as our donations increased. Our focus switched from the presents we wanted to our gift for the Savior. I so appreciated the gift He had given God's children—His life—that I wanted to give something back to Him.

Picking apples turned out to be the most difficult and satisfying way to earn money. It was draining, but we were strengthened and rewarded as we spent time together as a family. We began to be "knit together in unity and in love" (Mosiah 18:21).

As Christmas approached, I would peek into the donation box, but I was always disappointed. Despite our efforts, we were far from our goal.

I felt wonderful, though, about our decision to forfeit presents. I knew that our sacrifices were small, but I had faith that the Savior would be pleased.

One day my dad announced that we had reached our goal and that he had donated the money. I never found out how we raised the rest so quickly.

The fulfillment of Dad's pledge that Christmas was miraculous. But for me, the real miracle was that through giving instead of receiving, I grew closer to the Savior. That was better than any Christmas gift I could have received. Seven years later the gift was returned to me as I knelt across an altar in the Provo Temple to be sealed for time and all eternity to my husband. ■ Joan Burton Stott, California, USA Upon opening a box, I found a homemade apron fashioned from Christmas fabric.

STRINGS OF SACRIFICE

One Christmas years ago I had too much on my mind to savor the season. My husband, Andy, had developed a cough that, following medical tests, briskly evolved into lung damage, surgery, reconstruction of his esophagus, and biopsies—"just to be safe." His surgery occurred a week before we moved to a new home.

A few weeks before Christmas, I visited with my neighbor Janae. She asked if I was ready for Christmas. I managed to reply that I was as ready as I would be. I mentioned that we'd always made Christmas cookies with my grandma just before Christmas, and that I'd wanted to make aprons for the girls but probably wouldn't get around to it.

A week later I settled in the overstuffed chair beside our Christmas tree. The girls were in bed, and Andy was working in his office when I heard the doorbell. I opened the door to find Janae on my doorstep, holding three packages as snowflakes fell behind her.

"Come in," I said, certain that she could sense my surprise.

"Thanks, but I need to get back," she said. "These are for your girls."

Janae handed me the packages.

"They're aprons," she said. "They're not the best, but I was able to finish them tonight."

In a moment of humbled astonishment, I breathed a thank-you. We hugged, and I watched her make her way home.

As I sat again in my chair, I carefully unfastened the white satin ribbon of one box. Upon opening it, I found a homemade apron fashioned from Christmas fabric. I ran a seam between my thumb and forefinger as I thought about Janae. She had four small children, including twins who were just over a year old. She taught piano, and she held a busy and important calling in our ward.

I tried to figure out when she would have had time to make aprons, and I knew at once that she didn't have time. She made time.

Tears fell as I felt the love of Heavenly Father extended through Janae—a measure of warmth and comfort as I was encircled about "in the arms of [His] love" (D&C 6:20).

It has been many years since we received the aprons. My daughters have long since outgrown them, but I keep them in my pantry, hanging by their strings from a polished hook underneath newer ones. Each time I see Janae's gifts, I'm reminded of the comfort and love I felt that night. They remind me of what I want to be—a disciple of Jesus Christ worthy of revelation and willing to give service. ■ Candice A. Grover, Idaho, USA

I WAS NOT ALONE

Sitting in a hastily dug defensive position, I looked out over the sand toward the north—toward Iraq. It was December 24 during Desert Shield, and I had drawn guard duty starting at midnight.

I was the only Latter-day Saint in my battalion, so the holiday was even lonelier. We had been in the desert of Saudi Arabia since August, and now Christmas was here with a cold, starlit night. The camp was asleep, and I had a few hours with the bluish-grey dunes and my thoughts.

I thought of my wife and son in Georgia, USA, and how I would miss the festivities back home—the tree, the presents, a real Christmas dinner. Then I began to ponder the Christmas story.

I wondered about the night that Christ was born. I wondered how dark it was and if there was a moon to cast its brightness over the landscape or if there was only starlight. Since there were no electric lights at His birth, the night must have been something like the one I was witnessing. There would have been no festivities—just dark, quiet night. Then a wonderful thought struck me. The Bible states that Wise Men later came from the East, guided by a star that appeared in the night sky. As I looked into the dark sky, I realized I was to the east of Bethlehem and that one of the centers of knowledge at that time was Baghdad. Could the Wise Men have come from a location not far from where I was? What star shone? Was it still in the sky? Could I see it?

I gazed skyward in wonder at God's creations and felt a warmth that came from within. It did not matter if I was in the same location or if the same star was in the sky. What mattered is that I shared the same knowledge as the Wise Men of an infant born in Bethlehem who is the King of kings.

I was not alone that Christmas; rather, I was united with all those who seek Him, whether they be Wise Men, prophets, or just lonely soldiers in a hole in the desert. That night my testimony of the birth of the Savior was strengthened, and the next morning the Holy Spirit was still with me.

Instead of being a sad Christmas that year, it became one of my most prized Christmases. ■ Robert Hoffman, Washington, USA

> A^s I looked into the dark sky, I realized I was to the east of Bethlehem.



prayed that by the end of the night, the "Sub for Santa" jar would be full.

A MODERN-DAY WIDOW'S MITE

The borrowed white tablecloths and snowmen centerpieces gave the cultural hall a festive look as lastminute preparations were being made for our family Christmas party.

As we waited for our guests, my gaze drifted to a table where an empty jar—labeled "Sub for Santa"—sat. I prayed that by the end of the night, the jar would be full.

During our party preparations we had discovered that my cousin's husband had been out of work for over a year and a half. Her family's main source of income consisted of handling five paper routes, which required them to begin each day at 3:30 a.m. The majority of their income went to paying the mortgage and other necessities, leaving little for things they wanted, such as Christmas presents.

My cousin's family was one of the first to arrive. I watched as they made their way toward the dining tables, past our Christmas jar. As they approached, my cousin's husband stopped to read the sign on the jar. Without hesitating, he took out his worn wallet, pulled out a couple of dollars, and tossed them in the container, oblivious to who the family "in need" was.

Emotion welled up in my throat, and I instantly recalled the New Testament story of the widow and her two mites. Wealthy men were flaunting their large donations to the treasury when "there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites" (see Mark 12:41–42).

The Savior then said to His disciples: "This poor widow hath cast more

in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

"For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:43–44).

Jesus Christ said she gave in "her want" and cast in "even all her living." She could have given only one mite. That probably would have satisfied what was required, but her faithful heart and willingness to sacrifice all caught the attention of the Son of God.

No one would have blamed my cousin's husband for walking past the jar thinking, "If I had I would give" (Mosiah 4:24). His great example of charity and love for his fellowmen touched not only me but also other members of my family who were watching him. I knew his family would be fine because "charity is the pure love of Christ, . . . and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him" (Moroni 7:47).

We had hoped to give his family something that night, which we did → later on, but by giving in the midst of his own time of need, he showed us that when it came to what mattered most, he was already a rich man. ■ Stephanie H. Olsen, Utah, USA ILUSTRATION BY ALLEN GARNS

HOW DID THEY KNOW OF MY NEED?

Nearly 20 years ago I received my mission call to serve in Japan. With great anticipation and some anxiety, I prepared to leave for my mission in January. Around this time both of my parents lost their jobs.

I had funding for my mission once I arrived, but our family struggled financially. I wasn't sure where I would get money for upfront expenses like mission clothes, luggage, and other necessities. I was working a part-time job but wouldn't have enough. I was especially concerned with how I would get money to apply immediately for a passport so I would have it in time to leave for Japan.

One afternoon, in desperation, I went to my room and pleaded with Heavenly Father. I shared my desire to serve in Japan and my gratitude that my dream of serving a mission would come true soon. I choked back tears, telling Him how I needed \$75 for a passport that I just did not have. When I arose from my prayer, I knew everything was going to work out. I didn't know how, but a quiet peace assured me that the Lord would provide.

Later that day I opened our mailbox to find a Christmas card inside. The individual who delivered it had made a concerted effort to maintain anonymity. There was no stamp on the card; it had been delivered by hand. On the inside of the card was typed, "Congratulations! You are the recipient of random acts of Christian kindness. Merry Christmas, Hannah. Good luck on your mission."

Inside the card was \$100. I stood at my front door and cried. Who did this, and how did they know of my need?

Years later I still don't know who brought the money to my house that day. I have thought about that person, or persons, a lot since then. They demonstrated what I believe Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles meant when he said: "The compassion of Christlike friends deeply touches and changes our lives. . . . In this Church, prayers for help are often answered by the Lord through the simple, daily service of caring brothers and sisters. In the goodness of genuine friends, I have seen the reflected mercy of the Lord Himself."1

That act of kindness changed me, helping me to leave on time for my mission and inspiring me to look for ways to be the answer to the prayers of others. ■

Hannah Eiselin, Arizona, USA

NOTE

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Valued Companions," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 32.

opened our mailbox to find a Christmas card inside. There was no stamp on it; it had been delivered by hand.

Returning Home Early FROM MY MISSION

By Brittany Romanello Casco

Receiving my mission call was one of the most profound and glorious moments of my life. I had thought about a mission many times since gaining a testimony of the gospel at age 18. I remember when I received my call to serve in the Taiwan Taichung Mission, I knew that it was right, and I was so excited to serve.

I read my scriptures daily, attended my missionary and temple preparation classes, and even attempted to learn Mandarin Chinese on my own. As the only child in my family, I knew that my mission would bring honor not only to myself but also to my parents and my Heavenly Father. The day I entered the missionary training center (MTC), I felt as if nothing could ever go wrong during the next 18 months. I was excited about everything from seeing baptisms to trying the Taiwanese cooking I had heard so much about. Little did I know when I entered the MTC that my mission would be very different from what I had expected.

Getting Sick

About four months into my mission, I began to experience pain—not only during physical activities like riding my bike or morning exercise but also when I was sleeping or doing personal study. I began rapidly losing weight. Even drinking water made me sick. Doctors' tests could not determine what was wrong. I had no parasites or viruses. My mission president, my missionary companion, and I were all confused by my deteriorating health.

During the month that followed, I maintained faith that surprised even me. Although I felt frustrated, I was convinced that if I kept working harder, biking faster, and speaking my Little did I know when I entered the missionary training center that my mission would be very different from what I had expected.

broken Chinese to everyone I saw, that God would miraculously heal me. I believed the stories of Christ's healing the sick and raising the dead, and I believed wholeheartedly that He would do the same for me—a weak but enthusiastic missionary. Then one Sunday while my companion and I were biking to the Church





meetinghouse to meet an investigator, the pain and convulsions throughout my body became unbearable. When we arrived at the meetinghouse, I asked the elders to give me a blessing, which helped. As the days passed, priesthood blessings became more frequent and so did prayers for healing.

It was the darkest day of my mission when I awoke one morning in the fiery Taiwanese heat and realized that I could not even move my body enough to get out of bed. At that moment I knew that I would not be able to be a missionary for much longer. My mission president came to visit me, and we counseled together. We talked of all the possibilities, and after much prayer and many tears, the Spirit confirmed that I needed to return home and focus on getting well.

Returning Home Early

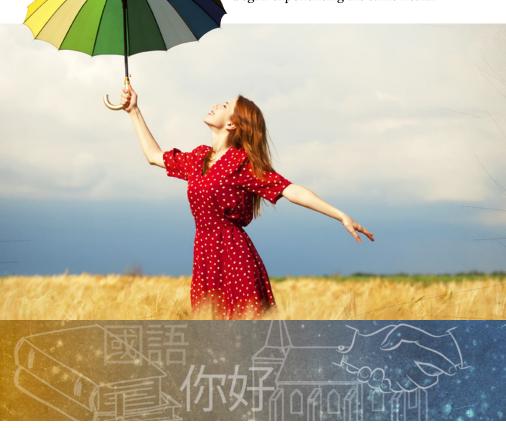
Instead of coming home to balloons and "Welcome Home" signs, I was wheeled off the plane to my frightened parents, who immediately took me to the hospital emergency room. Months of testing began, but the doctors could not find what was wrong with me. In addition, well-intentioned people around me said things like, "When are you going back out?" "Are you going to stay home?" "Maybe you were supposed to get married." I felt ashamed and confused. Was I worthy of God's love? Why was this happening when I had served so diligently? Wasn't I a good missionary? Was God listening to me? Would my peers accept my "flawed" missionary service?

Over the next six months, I struggled with my testimony, which I felt guilty about. I wondered if I had fallen from grace and if Heavenly Father really loved me. Though I gradually began to feel a little better, I didn't feel

Although my body could not be 100 percent healed physically, my heart has never been more whole or ready to serve the Master. like I had before my mission. And I still found myself avoiding moving on with my life.

Then one evening my good friend and I were talking. He too had experienced the pain and sorrow of coming home early from his mission because of illness and was working toward returning to the mission field. I remember that night was the first time in six months I had felt true peace. The voice of the Spirit whispered to me, "You need to go back." I was so relieved to finally know in which direction to move. I went to see my bishop the following day. Then I wrote a fervent letter to the Missionary Department asking if I could return to the mission field. My request was granted, and one month later I was again wearing my name tag.

Six months later, however, I began experiencing the same health



problems over again. I remember lying in a hospital bed, delirious from hours of tests and injections. I couldn't believe this was happening. This time I knew my mission was over. With tears of disappointment and regret streaming down my face, I listened to my wise mission president say: "Sister Romanello, you loved the Lord two times as much, because you came back." I felt so much comfort from his words. This time as I boarded the plane home, I promised my Heavenly Father I would remain faithful even if I didn't receive answers.

Finding Healing in Christ's Atonement

It has now been a little more than two years since I returned home. I still have lingering problems, and my stamina and energy have not been the same since before I served my mission. The doctors have never figured out what is wrong with me. It has not been easy for me to be a returned missionary who did not get to serve the full length of my mission. Nevertheless, I still love every one of my sweet converts. It has taken time for me to feel validated and know that my shortened missionary service had value just as 18- or 24-month missions have value to other missionaries.

The Lord has given me many opportunities to talk to others who

have faced the trauma of returning home unexpectedly. I know Heavenly Father has led me to them to share my testimony and help them realize that returning home early because of health problems is not a flaw to be kept a secret but an experience to be discussed.

The first time I returned home, I experienced how it felt to neglect my faith, but the second time I returned, I experienced what it was like to stay true. I kept to the basics: studying the scriptures, attending institute, participating in church, and fulfilling my callings. I prayed many times to know why everything happened the way it did. I stopped blaming myself, and I stopped blaming Heavenly Father. As I look at my life since returning home and my visits with my Chinese brothers and sisters who live in my home city. I maintain the firm position that there has been an eternal purpose to it all.

I love the words in Mosiah 5:15: "Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all." I believe that if I continue living my life in dedication to the Lord, I will be forever blessed. In that way, I know I was healed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, for although my body could not be 100 percent healed physically, my heart has never been more whole or ready to serve the cause of the Master.

The author lives in Utah, USA.

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS IF I RETURN HOME EARLY DUE TO HEALTH CONCERNS?

For those with physical, emotional, or mental health challenges, talk to your bishop or branch president for more information on the young Church-service missionary program.

Service missions can be a great blessing, allowing individuals to live at home and receive appropriate medical care while growing and maturing in the service of the Lord."

Donald B. Doty, M.D., Chairman, Missionary Department Health Services, "Missionary Health Preparation," *Ensign*, Mar. 2007, 67.

Living as a Witness in

By Justina McCandless

nly a 30-minute train ride from the metropolis of Hannover and nestled comfortably among acres of flowered springtime fields sits the small German city of Stadthagen. This is the place where 19-year-old Esther Graf grew up. It's a place where everything can be reached by foot or bicycle, where bakeries and ice-cream stores dot the streets, and where weekday markets fill the city square.

Stadthagen is also home to a thriving Latter-day Saint community.

Although the city is small, Stadthagen has a large ward—an anomaly for Germany, where there are fewer than five members for every 10,000 Germans. But for Esther it has been the perfect place to learn how to live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and how to use those principles to serve and bless others.

When Esther was 14, she received her patriarchal blessing, which

brought about an important realization. "It became clear to me how important I really am to Heavenly Father," she says. "I learned how important all of us are to Him."

She takes that knowledge and applies it to her relationships with others.

In her calling on the stake young single adult council, for example, she's responsible for making sure everyone feels included. "I'm learning not to be critical of others but to get to know them instead."

She also keeps that in mind when she's at school. "I'm asked pretty often about my religion, but I don't find that bad in any way," she says. "Somehow it always makes me happy because then I simply remind myself how much it helps me and how much it brings to my life. Through the gospel I just know so much.

"There's always going to be people who make fun of our faith and who

Standing behind her beliefs makes sharing them easy.

don't understand it," she says, "but it's really not so bad when we stand behind what we believe."

Esther's love for and trust in God is what helps her the most in living and sharing the gospel.

"Before you worry," she said, "trust God first. When I do that and I have faith, everything else is simple. When we trust God, we can move forward in our lives with faith and confidence in the future. When we do that, we can live as witnesses of God." ■ *The author lives in Germany.*



MORE ABOUT ESTHER

What do Germans like to eat?

Germans like to eat potato or noodle casseroles. My favorite food is potatoes with vegetables and sauce. I especially love peas and Brussels sprouts.

What do you do for fun?

I listen to music, sing, and play the piano or guitar. I like to bake. I'm teaching myself how to make fancy cakes.

What is dating like in Germany?

We don't go on dates. It'd be strange if a guy said, "Do you want to go on a date with me?" Here you get to know people in groups, and if you like someone, you talk on the phone and online. You meet now and then, and then you either start a relationship or you don't.

THE CHURCH IN GERMANY

- 39,401 Latter-day Saints
 - 15 stakes 3 missions
 - 2 temples
- 89 wards • 85 branches

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BY THE NUMBERS

- 80,995,685 people (estimate as of July 2014)
- 6,200 museums
- Over 400 zoos, the most in one country in the world

FACTS ABOUT GERMANY

Capital: Berlin Language: German (Deutsch)



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

HOW TO SEE THE REAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

hen we prepare for Christmas by pondering its real meaning, we prepare to experience the Christ and His message. May I suggest three things we may want to study, ponder, and apply in this season of preparation.

First, rejoice in the birth of our Savior. We celebrate the birth of the Son of God, the Creator, our Messiah. We rejoice that the King of kings came to earth, was born in a manger, and lived a perfect life. When Jesus was born, the joy in heaven was so great it could not be contained (see Luke 2:8–14).

Second, ponder His influence in our lives today. Christmas is a time for remembering the Son of God and renewing our determination to take upon us His name. It is a time to reassess our lives and examine our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Let this be a time of remembrance, of gratitude, and a time of forgiveness. Let it be a time to ponder the Atonement of Jesus Christ and its meaning for each of us personally. Let it especially be a time of renewal and recommitment to live by the word of God and to obey His commandments. By doing this, we honor Him far more than we ever could with lights, gifts, or parties.

Third, look steadfastly for His coming. While the Christmas season is typically a time for looking back and celebrating the birth of our Lord, it seems to me that it should also be a time of looking to the future. Let us look forward. Let us prepare for that blessed day when He will come again. Let us be as wise as those ancients who watched for His coming.

I pray that during this season and always, we will see the purity of the story of the Savior's birth and feel sincere gratitude for His life, teachings, and saving sacrifice for us. May this gratitude cause us to renew our determination to follow Him. May it also lead us to draw closer to our family, our church, and our fellowmen. And may we look steadfastly forward to that blessed day when the resurrected Christ will walk the earth again as our Lord, our King, and our blessed Savior.



HOW HAVE YOU APPLIED THIS?

Several Christmases ago, my grandma asked all her children and grandchildren to serve others on her behalf. My sisters knitted baby hats and served at an animal sanctuary, and my brother put up a widow's Christmas lights. I found family names and took them to the temple. We all wrote Grandma letters describing our experiences-tears shone in her eyes as she read them on Christmas morning. I felt grateful for my grandma's example and realized that as I had "by love serve[d]" others (Galatians 5:13), I had gained more charity and felt closer to family members both living and dead.

Amanda S., Utah, USA

From the 2010 First Presidency Christmas Devotional.

LIFE-CHANGING GIFT AT THE THRIFT STORE

By Keanu Williams

ne year we didn't have much money for Christmas, so I prayed for help to be able to buy a gift for my stepdad, Adrian (whom my sister and I call Weegee). My sister and I had only two dollars between us to spend on gifts.

When my mom said we were going to a nearby thrift store to shop for Christmas gifts, I ran to my room and prayed for help: "Please help us find a gift for two dollars."

At the store Elaina and I looked through the books and found a triple combination that looked brand new. We were so excited when we found it. I held onto it tight as we ran through the aisles to my mom. Jumping up and down, we said together, "We found a gift for Weegee!" At the checkout my mom asked, "How much for this?" The lady replied, "Two dollars." My prayer was answered.

At that time our stepfather was not a member. He didn't like Mormons, he didn't believe in "the Mormon book," and he didn't like members picking us up for Young Men and Young Women activities. He even chased away the elders. But the ward members and missionaries didn't give up on him.

On Christmas day we saved his gift for last. Elaina and I said, "This is the greatest gift anyone could ever give you! It will make you happy." Weegee guessed a couple of times, and we laughed at his answers. We told him, "It's an awesome gift! It's going to change your life. It changed ours."

Our mom was worried that he would be mad about our gift to him, but Elaina and I knew it was the right thing to do.

When he opened it, he thanked us for the gift and said he would read it.

Because we love Weegee, we wanted him to learn about Jesus Christ and the gift of His Atonement. We wanted him to believe like we do, to pray and repent, and to have the gospel in his life.

He read and prayed about the Book of Mormon, and with the help of the elders and ward members, he was baptized and is now a member of the Church. We were so happy to be sealed in the temple, and we know we will always be together forever as a family.

The author lives in Arizona, USA.

I didn't have much money to buy a gift for my stepdad, so before we went shopping, I said a prayer.



The NEW GUY I was the only active priest in my new ward.

How was I going to get other priests to church?

By Matthew Flitton Church Magazines

hen my family moved a few months after I turned 18, I found myself in a new ward and facing a challenge. Within two weeks of my moving in, almost all of the priests were made elders. I was also called to be the first assistant in the priests quorum.

In giving me this calling, the bishop explained that there were a lot of priests on the roll, but almost no one showed up. We had a lot of work to do to encourage people to attend.

"Just invite people to come," he said.

Only one other priest came to church, a guy named Ryan, who showed up a couple times each month. I decided to go knock on doors of our less-active quorum members and invite them to our activities. I was nervous, afraid that they'd get upset at me for inviting them to church. I figured they weren't coming because they didn't like church. But I also figured it was good practice for my upcoming mission to try to invite, so I gritted my teeth and started

calling the other priests or stopping by their houses. I invited them to firesides, to activities, to church.

What surprised me was that some actually responded and came. We eventually had a group of four priests who started coming on a regular basis. It wasn't that they didn't like church-they had just been waiting for an invitation to come. They were just as nervous about a new situation-attending church—as I had been.

Some activities were more successful than others. Everyone showed up for volleyball, but I struggled to get people to attend other activities.

Youth conference that year was especially rewarding as I watched some of these young men stand up and bear their testimonies. I felt like I had made a difference in their lives.

One of the differences I saw was that Ryan was attending church every week and we had become good friends.

Ryan and I both received the Melchizedek Priesthood about six months after I moved in. I had chosen to wait until after my mission to attend college so I could work to save for my mission. Ryan was already established in a trade, and he decided not to go to college either. After work we often hung out together.

Once, we stayed up most of the night trying to get through the book of Alma as Ryan read the Book of Mormon for the first time. It was exhausting but spiritually energizing. It was also great to see the changes



Ryan was making in his life. He gave up old habits, created better ones, and changed some of his friends so he could be with people who shared his standards.

I had been looking forward to my mission since I had started going to church a few years before. Ryan wasn't sure if he would go. While hanging out, we discussed my mission and my excitement to serve. As I encouraged him and answered gospel questions, I gained more confidence in my own abilities to serve as a missionary. Ryan was old enough to go but struggled with his decision.

"I wasn't sure if my testimony was strong enough, even though I felt good about the Church at the time," he said. "I did want to go, but it was really difficult to leave family."

The day finally came when I could start filling out my mission papers. When I told Ryan, he surprised me by saying he had decided to serve as well. Our mission calls arrived on the same night. Ryan left to serve in Canada a month before I started my mission in France.

When I came home two years later, I looked up all the priests I

It wasn't that they didn't like church they had just been waiting for an invitation to come. had worked with. It saddened me to learn that some had stopped going to church shortly after I left, but I was happy to see Ryan again. He had served an honorable mission, and just as with Alma and the sons of Mosiah, I had more joy to see that he was still my brother in the Lord (see Alma 17:2). ■

THEY KNEW JOSEPH

hat kind of a man was Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the Restoration? We can learn more about him by reading what those who met him and those who knew him well had to say about him.

NON-MORMONS WHO MET JOSEPH

Many non-Mormons who met Joseph were impressed. For example, Josiah Quincy, a Harvard graduate and soon-to-be mayor of Boston, visited Joseph Smith in Nauvoo. He said Joseph was a "phenomenon to be explained," a man born to lead, "of commanding appearance ... whom it seemed natural to obey." He said that future textbooks might refer to Joseph Smith as exerting "powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen."¹

RECENT CONVERTS WHO MET HIM

Converts who met Joseph for the first time also expressed admiration. Five days after arriving in Nauvoo from England, William Clayton wrote home: "Last night many of us [were] in company with Brother Joseph, our hearts rejoiced to hear him speak of the things of the Kingdom, he is an affectionate man and as familiar as any of us. We feel to love him much and so will you."²

Mary Alice Cannon Lambert, who was 14 when she arrived in Nauvoo, said, "Several of the leading brethren were there to meet the company of saints that had come on [the boat]. Among those brethren was the Prophet Joseph Smith. I knew him the instant my eyes rested upon him, and at that moment I received my testimony that he was a Prophet of God."³

> You can read more about Joseph Smith in chapters 43 and 47 of Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith. The statements there will help you get to know the Prophet Joseph.

PEOPLE WHO KNEW HIM WELL

John M. Bernhisel, an early member of the Church, was a doctor. He boarded in the Smiths' home for several months. He said Joseph Smith had "strong mental powers," lots of energy, "a profound knowledge of human nature," "calm judgment," "enlarged views," and a "love of justice." "He is kind and obliging, generous and benevolent, sociable and cheerful, and is possessed of a mind of a contemplative and reflective character. He is honest, frank, fearless and independent, and as free from [false appearances] as any man to be found."⁴

Howard Coray, one of Joseph's clerks, was impressed by the Prophet's ability to meet with all types of peopledoctors, lawyers, priests, and others-who came to "ask hard questions." He wrote that Joseph "was always equal to the occasion.... I was truly gratified, at seeing how much at ease he always was, even in the company of the most scientific, and the ready [prompt, prepared] manner in which he would answer their questions."5

Daniel D. McArthur, who later led a handcart company to the Salt Lake Valley, said, "My testimony is that he was a true Prophet of the living God; and the more I heard his sayings and saw his doings the more I was convinced that he had of a truth seen God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ."6

PROPHETS WHO KNEW HIM

10

John Taylor, who became the third President of the Church, said, "If you were to ask Joseph what sort of ... man Adam was, he would tell you at once; he would tell you his size and appearance and all about him. You might have asked him what sort of men Peter, James and John were, and he could have told you. Why? Because he had seen them."7

The Prophet's nephew, Joseph F. Smith, became the sixth President of the Church. He wrote that Joseph Smith "was brimming over with the noblest and purest of human nature, which often gave vent in innocent amusements-in playing ball, in wrestling with his brothers ... and enjoying himself; ... he was full of joy; he was full of gladness, he was full of love, and of every other noble attribute that makes men great and good, and at the same time simple and innocent; ... he had power, by the grace of God, to comprehend the purposes of the Almighty too. That was the character of the Prophet Joseph Smith."⁸ ■

NOTES

- 1. Josiah Quincy, "Joseph Smith at Nauvoo," Figures of the Past from the Leaves of Old Journals, 3rd ed. (1883), 376-400; see also Richard L. Bushman, "The Character of Joseph Smith," BYU Studies, vol. 42, no. 2 (2003), 29-30.
- 2. Bushman, "The Character of Joseph Smith," 33. 3. Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 496.
- *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 498–99.
 Bushman, "The Character of Joseph Smith," 29.
- 6. Teachings: Joseph Smith, 496.
- 7. Teachings: Joseph Smith, 103.
- 8. Teachings: Joseph Smith, 499.



ARE YOU A GETTER or A GIVER?

ave you ever paused to think about *why* you serve others and keep the commandments? This month would be a good time to do that as you study about building the kingdom of God in your lessons at church. You can ask yourself, am I motivated more by what I can *get* or by what I can *give*?

The questions above will help you see whether you tend to face inward (thinking of yourself) or outward (thinking of others).

It's OK to think about blessings you'll receive, but if you find that you tend to look inward more than outward, try looking up. President Thomas S. Monson has taught: "Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. We can look up and reach out for divine help" ("Do Your Duty—That Is Best," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 58). ■

USEIT ORLOSEIT

Weed out the excuses and develop your talents. You can play a key role in making the world a better place. "I feel inadequate to be a Young Women class president. How can I be a better leader?"

f you feel inadequate when you receive a calling, you're in good company. Jeremiah, Enoch, and Joseph Smith were all young and all felt inadequate when they received their prophetic calls, but the Lord still used them to further His kingdom. Just as the Lord used prophets of old to accomplish great things, as you pray and rely on Him, He can use you.

Perhaps the best thing you can do for your class members is be their friend. Learn their names. You could pray for them daily and maybe even fast for them if they are struggling. Consider asking about their lives outside of church, smiling and greeting them whenever you see them, and sitting by them at church or at school. Be on the lookout for those who may need extra love and support.

And don't be afraid to ask for help. Heavenly Father won't leave you alone—He has given you counselors and adult advisers. They will help you, and so will He.

As President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said: "Get on your knees and ask for the blessings of the Lord; then stand on your feet and do what you are asked to do. Then leave the matter in the hands of the Lord. You will discover that you have accomplished something beyond price" ("To the Women of the Church," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 114).

Be a Friend

As a class president, I too felt unqualified. But it's important to try to make the young women feel loved and included. Be a supportive friend and listen to your counselors when making decisions. Set a righteous example and strive to live the Young Women values, but don't expect yourself to be perfect. All that Heavenly Father expects is for you to try. If you call on Him, He will give you the strength and direction you need.

Rebecca N., age 16, New Hampshire, USA



Serve Willingly I felt the same thing, since I was the Mia Maid class president. I can still remember the

feeling I had when I entered the bishop's office for the interview. I could have declined, but I knew that it was not an assignment from my bishop it was a calling from God. Heavenly Father will help us fulfill our callings if we willingly submit ourselves to Him and are humble.

Nicole P., age 16, Philippines

Love Those You Serve

To become a better leader, you must really love those you serve. Letting go of any grudges and forgiving is therefore necessary. You can pray to see their worth as God does. Pray to feel the love He has for you as well as for your class members. I know from experience that Personal Progress can

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

help you develop the qualities and values necessary to fulfill your calling. God will give you the power you need if you'll ask for that help. *Mary B., age 16, Washington, USA*



Start Where You Are You can be a better leader by exercising the qualities you want to have. Pray for the

Spirit to be with you when you make decisions. Pray to pay attention to the needs of the young women. There's a lot you could do to become a better leader, but I found that the first step is always believing that you can. *Savanna P, age 15, Texas, USA*

Attend the Temple

When I was a newly called deacons quorum president, I wasn't sure how to increase my spirituality. I started doing family history, usually each Sunday. I have been going to the temple every Saturday morning. My goal was to take male baptism and confirmation names as often as I could. After I went to the temple each week, I would feel a little more spiritual, and that way I was able to help my quorum better. *Josh B., age 13, Utah, USA*

Act on Inspiration

If the Lord has extended a calling to you, it's because there is a work that you can do. We need to ask of God, as James 1:5 says. By the power of

.

the Holy Ghost, it will be revealed to us what we should do (see 2 Nephi 32:5). With His help, we can "know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5). Then we need to follow the inspiration we receive. I have a deep conviction that since it's the Lord who guides us, we can all magnify our callings. *Lucy D., age 17, France*

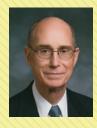


Plan Edifying Activities

Hold regular meetings with your presidency and plan edifying

activities that meet the girls' needs and interests. When a young woman in your class does not attend, let her know that you missed her. One of the scriptures that has helped me is Mosiah 18:9.

Karen P., age 16, Mexico



THE LORD CHOSE YOU

"You are called of God. The Lord knows you. He knows whom He would have serve in every position in His Church. He chose you.... The person who was inspired to recommend you for this call didn't do it because they liked you or because they needed someone to do a particular task. They prayed and felt an answer that you were the one to be called....

"You are called to represent the Savior. Your voice to testify becomes the same as His voice, your hands to lift the same as His hands."

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Rise to Your Call," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2002, 76.



UPCOMING QUESTION

"I want to invite my cousins to church, but I'm scared their parents will get mad. How can I share my testimony with my cousins?"

Submit your answer and, if desired, a highresolution photograph by January 15, 2016, at liahona.lds.org or by email to liahona@ ldschurch.org.

The following information and permission must be included in your email or letter: (1) full name, (2) birth date, (3) ward or branch, (4) stake or district, (5) your written permission, and, if you are under age 18, your parent's written permission (email is acceptable) to publish your response and photograph.

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.



By Elder Jörg Klebingat Of the Seventy

Things I Learned as a **YOUNG CONVERT**

When I was new in the Church, I saw a great example of sacrifice from the other youth in my ward. From that point onward, I have learned many great lessons.

joined the Church when I was 17 years old. I had been introduced to it through Americans from a military base in my hometown in Germany. There was no Germanspeaking ward in my area, so I attended church with the Americans at the military base in the little multidenominational army chapel.

One Sunday not long after I was baptized, at the end of the services, the bishop stood up and asked, "Can all the parents with seminary students please remain behind?" He also asked me to join them.

Once these families, the bishop, and I were the only ones remaining in the chapel, the bishop explained that I was eligible to join their seminary class for the next school year. But I attended the local German school, which started over an hour earlier than the American school that all of the youth from the military base attended. In order for me to have enough time to race down the hill to get to my school on time, they would have to move their seminary class to 6:00 a.m., more than an hour earlier than they had been meeting.

The bishop then asked everyone to vote on whether they would be willing to make this sacrifice so that I could join the class. Immediately, all the parents and all the students raised their hands and said yes.



The bishop asked everyone to vote on holding seminary an hour earlier so that I could attend. They all said yes. That was quite an impressive moment for me. It taught me a lesson about sacrifice. These young students were willing to personally sacrifice their own comfort—not only for a day or a week but for the whole school year—on behalf of a new convert who otherwise could not have participated in seminary.

I'm still grateful for their sacrifice, realizing how important that one year of seminary (studying the Doctrine and Covenants) was for my early life in the Church. Without seminary I wouldn't have had much contact with the Church except on Sunday. Daily seminary was a great preparation for a mission. It taught me a lot about discipline, and, of course, it blessed me to no end in my knowledge of the gospel and the scriptures. Ask me all the Doctrine and Covenants scripture mastery verses from back then, and I will still know them. These experiences helped me to draw closer to Heavenly Father and also helped me to deal with the challenges of being the only German-speaking member of the Church in my town.

Commune with God

After I finished school and before I went on a mission, I completed mandatory military service. While I was in the military, I picked up a habit that I've kept to this day: to pray always.

Obviously, the environment in the military wasn't always very spiritual—the lockers, the pictures, the talk,

the movies people watched at night. But I knew I was going to go on a mission. I wanted to stay strong. I didn't want to fall. I didn't want to give in to peer pressure. So I developed a habit of praying in my heart all the time.

Walking from building to building, going up and down hills in the forests, lying in the foxholes, playing war games—wherever I was, I would engage with Heavenly Father in prayer whenever I could, filling minutes and sometimes hours by communing or talking with Heavenly Father in order to draw close to Him and stay strong. Mostly, I would just give thanks.

This habit is still with me. When I'm driving somewhere or sitting in a bus or walking someplace, it has become natural for me to always have a prayer in my heart or to "pray always" as the scriptures say (see, for instance, 2 Nephi 32:9). That's a good habit to develop at an early age.

We know we're supposed to say our prayers, but that doesn't just mean kneeling for a brief moment in the morning and at night as a favor to Heavenly Father. Prayer should turn into an honest, deep, and ongoing communion with your Father, which, over time, will help you draw closer and closer to Him. Developing this habit of prayer will help you face all of the temptations out there in the world (see 3 Nephi 18:15, 18). So, when you're going from point A to point B, or whenever you have a free moment, consider spending less time listening to music or texting and a little more time praying in your heart.

Apply the Atonement of Jesus Christ at All Times

As you continue to pray and to learn the gospel, you will find that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is available to you every hour of every day in order to help you "retain a remission of your sins" (see Mosiah 4:11–12). You can go before Heavenly Father to access this power and be made clean literally at any time, not just on Sunday, not just when you go to the bishop to confess something serious.

The Lord means for you to draw upon the Atonement of Jesus Christ daily so that you can become clean and worthy, feel the Spirit, and be guided all the time rather than having constant ups and downs. By drawing upon the Atonement every day, you can have this blessing no matter what mistakes you may have made in the past. Many youth feel that repentance consists only of going to the bishop and telling him about serious sins. But repentance is a lot more. It means making a humble, consistent, prayerful, daily effort to (1) study the scriptures, especially those that teach about the Atonement of Christ, and then (2) learn how to actually apply it in your life every moment of every day. That is what it's for. Let Heavenly Father know every day that this is what you want-to be better today than you were yesterday.

and striving to keep the commandments and apply the Atonement every day, *all the time*. As the Apostle Paul said, "Examine yourselves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). But once you learn about the Atonement and how to draw upon it, you'll find that you can feel the Lord's love despite your shortcomings.

Understand who you are, and understand who Christ is and what He did for you. Then put those two things together so that you can be clean all the time and have confidence in yourself and in Heavenly Father and the Savior. Then, by extension, you will have a good sense of self-worth and self-confidence.

In time, these are things I began to learn as a young convert, and they have blessed my life greatly. As you sacrifice, study, and strive to stay close to Heavenly Father, He will bless you as well. Never give up! ■

The Atonement of Jesus Christ is available to you every hour of every day.

Don't allow the adversary to put any distance between you and Heavenly Father by causing you to feel that you're not good enough, that everybody else is better—as if the Savior's Atonement and His love and approbation were dangled in front of you but never reachable. That just isn't true. Heavenly Father loves you just as you are today, but, of course, you *always* have to keep improving

Personal Progress on MY FAMILY TREE

My brother and I are the only members of my family in the Church– at least that's what I thought before beginning my family history work.

By Raisa Marcondes

had always procrastinated doing my genealogy. But my desire to serve a mission led me to set goals to help prepare myself to be a better missionary. With the help of an inspired bishop, I decided to begin working on Personal Progress. In order to accomplish certain goals and good works projects, I needed to become involved in genealogy. So I went to work.

I know the Spirit guided me, because one Sunday night, after only three hours of work, something amazing happened.

As soon as I began, I remembered that my great-great-grandfather had been the governor of the state of Amazonas, Brazil. So I typed his name into an online search engine, and to my surprise, I found a Wikipedia page about both my great-great-grandfather and my great-great-grandmother! I immediately recognized in them talents and gifts I have, and emotion began to well up inside me. But there was still much more to discover.

Looking through the links on the page, I noticed one of them said "family tree." I clicked on it, and I found branches of my family I'd had no idea even existed. But what most caught my attention was the name of my great-aunt, Rosalina Meireles, who apparently lived in Utah.

I was astonished. I thought only my brother and I were members of the Church. Could there really be other Church members in my family? When I clicked on her name, I saw a link to a Facebook page, so I contacted her. Within two days I received a message from her, confirming that we were related and that she too was a member of the Church.

I felt immensely grateful to Heavenly Father for allowing me to feel such great joy as I felt in that moment.

I continued searching for my deceased ancestors, and Heavenly Father blessed me with so many family names that I could take to the temple. But He also helped me find living family members who are faithful in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. And I owe it all to Personal Progress, family history work, and my desire to serve a mission. ■ *The author lives in Manaus, Brazil.*



Scriptures for Spencer

By Elder Marcus B. Nash of the Seventy

"I love to read the holy scriptures, And, ev'ry time I do, I feel the Spirit start to grow within my heart" (Children's Songbook, 109).

When my wife and I were first married, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) encouraged members of the Church to read the scriptures every day with their families. We wanted to follow the prophet, so we decided we would do that together as a couple and then with our future children.

Years later, our family had grown to five children, including our youngest, Spencer.

Once, when Spencer was six years old, my wife and I went away for just a few days and left the children with a babysitter. When we returned home, I sat down with Spencer and asked him how everything had gone while we were away. He told me that he'd had a hard time sleeping. When I asked why he didn't sleep well, he thought about it and said he did not know.

Later that evening our family began our nightly routine of reading the Book of Mormon together.

Suddenly Spencer exclaimed, "That's it!" I asked what he was talking about. "That's why I couldn't sleep very well at night."

"Why couldn't you sleep?" I asked.

"We didn't read the scriptures at night while you were gone, and I like how the scriptures make me feel."

Spencer had learned that reading the scriptures every day brings us the comfort, peace, and guidance of the Holy Ghost.

We can learn to love the scriptures when we read them daily. When we do, we will be guided by the Holy Ghost and strengthened by our Heavenly Father. ■





A Lesson from My Father

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

learned a great lesson from my father about priesthood authority and power.

I grew up in a home with a faithful mother and a wonderful father. My dad was not a member of our Church but still came to Church meetings with our family. He coached our ward softball team and helped with Scout activities.

As a boy I asked my dad many times each week when he was going to be baptized. My father replied

each time, "David, I will join the Church when I know it's the right thing to do."

One Sunday I asked my dad when he was going to be baptized. He just smiled and asked me a question. "David, your church teaches that the priesthood was taken from the earth anciently and has been restored by heavenly messengers. If your church truly has the restored priesthood of God, then why are so many of the men in your church no different about doing their priesthood duty than the men in my church?"

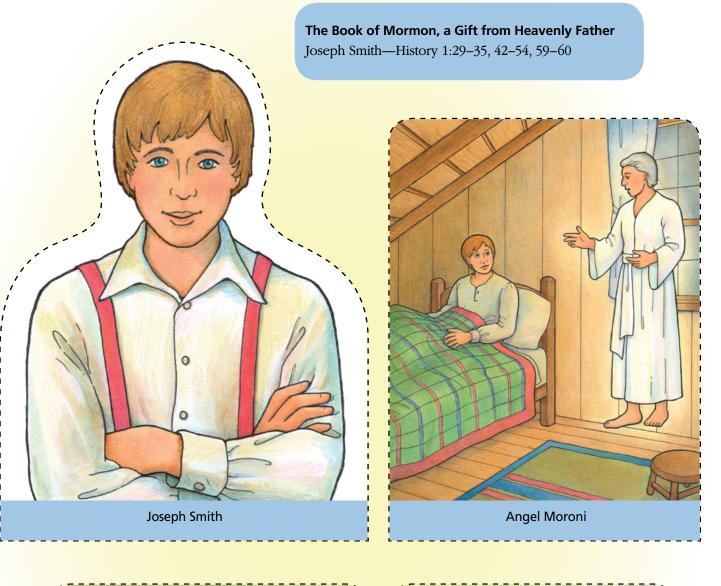
My mind went blank. I had no answer for my dad.

I knew that men who hold the priesthood *should* act differently than other men. Priesthood holders should not only receive priesthood authority but also be faithful and worthy to exercise God's power.

I decided I never wanted to be a poor example to my father. I simply wanted to be a good boy. The Lord needs all of us who hold the priesthood to be honorable, virtuous, and good boys at all times and in all places.

A number of years later, my father was baptized. I had the opportunity to confer upon him the Aaronic and the Melchizedek Priesthoods. One of the great experiences of my life was seeing my dad receive the authority and qualify for the power of the priesthood. ■





Ut out these scripture figures and glue or tape them to cardboard, heavy paper, small paper sacks, or craft sticks. Store them in an envelope or bag, along with the label that lists the scriptures.

Christmas Eve with the Córdobas

Marycielo and I had only one present. How could we share? **By Honney Thalia Cabel Losno** Based on a true story

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

On Christmas Eve there were only two presents under our little tree. One was for my two-yearold sister, Marycielo, and one was for me. Money was tight, Mama said, so it was all we would have.

That night Mama read a story from the *Liahona* about a Christmas without any presents. As she read, I felt happy and peaceful. Maybe having only one present wasn't so bad. Then Mama said, "Instead of playing games like we usually do for Christmas Eve, what if we bring gifts to a family in the ward?"

"But what can we give them?" I asked.

"Well, we have a bit to spare."

I glanced at our two presents, then at the picture of Jesus on the wall. "I guess Jesus would share what He had."

We prayed about which family to visit. Many of the families we knew didn't have much that year. After praying, we felt like we should visit the Córdoba family. They had three children, and their papa had lost his job.

We went to the store and bought *panetón* (a holiday bread), a baked

chicken, and three little presents. We had fun picking them out. Mama spent all the money she had, about 30 Peruvian *soles* (about U.S. \$10).

Once we were done, we drove to the Córdobas'. I held Marycielo's hand as we walked to the door.

Sister Córdoba saw us and came out to hug us. "What a nice surprise! Come in! Sit down," she said. As we walked inside, she squeezed Mama's hand and patted my shoulder. "Rolando and the girls will be so happy to see you," she told me.

The floor inside the house was made of dirt. There was no electricity, just candles. I was a little sad for the Córdoba family. I wished we could do more to help them. But Mama didn't seem to notice the dirt or candles. She was just happy to be here with Sister Córdoba.

"We came to wish you a *feliz Navidad*!" Mama said. "We're glad we're friends." She gave the food and presents to Sister Córdoba, who gave a big smile and said thank you.

Rolando, Madeline, and Raquel ran in from the other room to say hello. Marycielo peeked around my leg and smiled. She laughed when Rolando made a funny face at her. Soon everyone was talking, telling jokes, and laughing.

"This is better than playing games by ourselves," I thought. I was glad we had come. It didn't matter that we didn't have much to share. And it didn't matter if the floors were dirt. Christmas wasn't about what we had. It was about being together.

As we got ready to leave, Sister Córdoba hugged us again. "Thank you so much," she said. Her voice was shaking, and I could see tears in her eyes. I stood on my tiptoes and kissed Sister Córdoba on the cheek.

"Feliz Navidad," I said. ■ *The author lives in Peru.* The Restoration P11771e

What does the word Restoration mean?

By Heidi Poelman

Based on a true story

"For I have conferred upon you the keys and power of the priesthood, wherein I restore all things" (D&C 132:45).

On the way home from church, Anna remembered the little slip of paper her teacher had given her. "Mom, guess what! I'm giving a talk in Primary next Sunday."

"That's great," Mom said. "On what?"

"I have to talk about the Restoration. But I'm not sure what that is."

"Restoration means that God brought back, or restored, everything He wants His Church to have," Mom said. *"Through the* Prophet Joseph Smith, He brought back temples, the priesthood, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Without the Restoration, we wouldn't have the Church!" Anna nodded. "I guess that makes sense. But I don't think I can explain it like you did."

Priesthood

"Hey, I have an idea," Mom said as they got home. "Come with me."

Anna followed Mom to the family room. They had started a puzzle last night, and the pieces were still spread out on a small table.

"Think of the gospel like a finished puzzle." Mom picked up a piece. "Many pieces of the picture were on the earth at different times. But after Jesus and the Apostles died, many gospel truths were lost or changed. Those pieces of truth needed to be brought back."

"So then what happened?" Anna shuffled some of the loose pieces.

"Many years later God called a young farm boy to bring all the pieces back and put them together like when Jesus was on the earth. Who do you think that was?"

"Joseph Smith!" Anna said, smiling. "I think I'm starting to get it." She and Mom talked more about Joseph Smith and the different pieces of the gospel that God brought back through him.

The rest of the week, Anna wrote and practiced her talk. She prayed to Heavenly Father that she could be brave and share her message in Primary.

On Sunday, when it was time for Anna's talk, she stood up, took a deep breath, and held up a puzzle on a board so everyone could see. All the pieces were together in the puzzle.

"A long time ago, many of the important pieces of the gospel were on the earth. When Jesus and His Apostles died, some pieces got lost."

PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

"Joseph Smith . . . was the instrument in God's hands in bringing forth sacred scripture, lost doctrine, and the restoration of the priesthood."

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Joseph Smith," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 28.

Anna took some pieces out of the puzzle and set them down. "Then Heavenly Father and Jesus called Joseph Smith as a prophet to bring back the missing pieces of the gospel. This is called the Restoration." She picked up a puzzle piece to show the Primary. On the back were the words "Priesthood power." Then Anna showed the rest of the pieces. She read the back of each piece before she put it in its spot in the puzzle. "A living prophet . . . twelve Apostles . . . temple work for eternal families . . . baptism by immersion . . . laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost." Anna held up the finished puzzle. "Now we have all the pieces of the gospel. That means we can see the big picture of how we can be happy and live with Heavenly Father again someday. I am grateful for the Restoration. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen." *The author lives in Utah, USA.*

Jesus Christ Will Come Again!

By Erin Sanderson

On Christmas, people all over the world celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Someday we will celebrate another wonderful day the Second Coming, when Jesus returns to the earth! Prophets have taught about what will happen before Jesus comes again. One of those things is that His gospel will be preached all over the world.

Having faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ helps us feel peaceful, even when things happening in the world seem scary. Jesus said, "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" (John 14:27).

As you think about Jesus this Christmas, remember that He will return again someday, not as a baby but as the King of kings. Then everyone will know that He is the Son of God and the Savior of the world! ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

LEARN MORE

When Jesus returns, He will reign on the earth for 1,000 years. This time will be called the Millennium. During the Millennium, people will be so righteous that Satan can't tempt them. There will be no sorrow, and people who follow Christ will feel peaceful and happy.

FAMILY TALK

A treasure is something special that is very valuable. Read Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:36–37. Talk about how "treasuring up" Christ's words helps us prepare for His Second Coming. Where do we find His words?

Song: "When He Comes Again" (Children's Songbook, 82)

Scripture: John 14:27

Video: Go to Biblevideos.org to watch "Glad Tidings of Great Joy: The Birth of Jesus Christ."

I CAN BE READY

Make a booklet to remind you of the ways you can prepare now for when Jesus comes again.

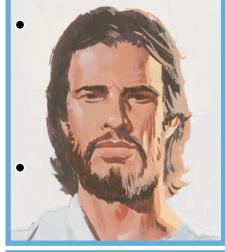
Cut out and stack the cards. Thread and tie a string through the two holes.

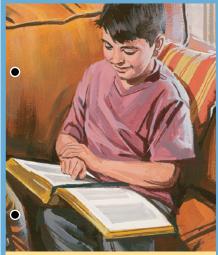
SCRIPTURE TIP

Here are three ways you can understand the scriptures better:

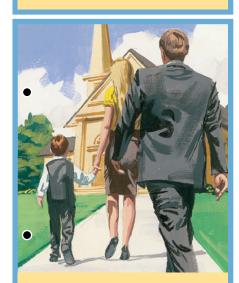
- Before you begin reading the scriptures, pray to Heavenly Father to ask for help understanding them.
- 2. Take time to think about what you read.
- Tell someone about what you learned and felt, and write about it in a journal.

I Can Be Ready When Jesus Comes Again





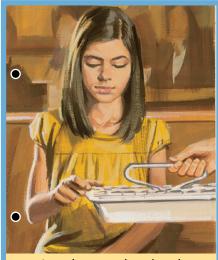
I can read the scriptures.



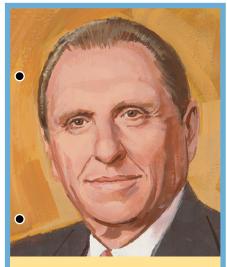
I can obey the commandments.



I can pray every day.



I can keep my baptismal covenants.



I can follow the prophet.

FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

The Nativity Story

A long time ago, a woman named Mary and a man named Joseph were going to be married. Mary and Joseph were good people who did what God wanted them to do.

> One day an angel came to Mary and told her she was going to have a baby! The angel said she should name the baby Jesus. The baby would be the Son of God, the Savior.



Mary and Joseph had to travel to a town called Bethlehem to pay taxes.

The town was very crowded. So Mary and Joseph spent the night in a place where animals were kept. That night baby Jesus was born!

A new star appeared in the sky.

Shepherds were taking care of sheep in nearby fields. Angels came and told the shepherds that the Savior had been born. The shepherds went to find and worship the baby Jesus.

CHILDREN

Far away, Wise Men saw the new star. They knew it was a sign that the Savior had been born. They followed the star until they found Jesus. They gave Him presents and worshipped Him.

After the Wise Men left, an angel visited Joseph. The angel said a bad king wanted to hurt Jesus. The angel said their family should move to Egypt to be safe.



Joseph, Mary, and Jesus lived in Egypt until it was safe to return to Israel. Jesus grew up in a town called Nazareth. He learned to be helpful, kind, and obedient. He learned everything that He needed to learn to be our Savior. He always followed God's plan for Him.



At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Point to the pictures of these people, who were part of the Nativity story.

We can be like **Mary and Joseph** by doing what God wants us to do. We can be like the **shepherds** and **Wise Men** by following Jesus Christ. We can be like the **angels** by telling others the real story of Christmas. And we can be like **Jesus** by following His example!

FROM THE SCRIPTURES You can read the Nativity story in Matthew 1:18–25; 2; Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–20.



By President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) Fourteenth President of the Church

THE REAL CHRISTMAS

The real Christmas comes to those who have taken Christ into their lives.

n Paul's short letter to the Galatians, he showed great concern over their apparent disbelief and their forsaking of his teachings regarding Christ. He wrote to them: "But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:18-19). In other words, Paul expressed himself as suffering pain and anxiety until Christ be "formed" in them. This is another way of saying "in Christ," as that expression is used by Paul repeatedly in his writings.

It is possible for Christ to be born in men's lives, and when such an experience actually happens, a man is "in Christ"—Christ is "formed" in him. This presupposes that we take Christ into our hearts and make Him the living contemporary of our lives. He is not just a general truth or a fact in history, but the Savior of men everywhere and at all times. When we strive



to be Christlike, He is "formed" in us; if we open the door, He will enter; if we seek His counsel, He will counsel us. For Christ to be "formed" in us, we must have a belief in Him and in His Atonement. Such a belief in Christ and the keeping of His commandments are not restraints upon us. By these, men are set free. This Prince of Peace waits to give peace of mind, which may make each of us a channel of that peace.

The real Christmas comes to him who has taken Christ into his life as a moving, dynamic, vitalizing force.

In his contemplation of the Christmas season, James Wallingford penned these lines:

Christmas is not a day or a season, but a condition of heart and mind. If we love our neighbors as ourselves;

- if in our riches we are poor in spirit and in our poverty we are rich in grace;
- if our charity vaunteth not itself, but suffereth long and is kind;
- if when our brother asks for a loaf, we give ourselves instead; if each day dawns in opportunity and sets in achievement, however small—
- then every day is Christ's day and Christmas is always near. (In Charles L. Wallis, ed., Words of Life [1966], 33)...

If you desire to find the true spirit of Christmas and partake of the sweetness of it, let me make this suggestion to you. During the hurry of the festive occasion of this Christmas season, find time to turn your heart to God. Perhaps in the quiet hours, and in a quiet place, and on your knees alone or with loved ones—give thanks for the good things that have come to you, and ask that His Spirit might dwell in you as you earnestly strive to serve Him and keep His commandments. He will take you by the hand and His promises will be kept. ■

From "The Real Christmas," Liahona, Dec. 2005, 12–15.

INSIGHTS



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Members in Natal, Brazil.
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What can we do to make the Sabbath a delight?

"The Sabbath provides a wonderful opportunity to strengthen family ties. . . . We make the Sabbath a delight when we teach the gospel to our children. . . . In addition to time with family, you can experience true delight on the Sabbath from family history work. . . . Make the Sabbath a delight by rendering service to others, especially those who are not feeling well or those who are lonely or in need."

President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Sabbath Is a Delight," Ensign or Liahona, May 2015, 130, 131.

Also in This Issue

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Returning Home **Early** from My Mission

After returning home, I struggled with my testimony. But eventually I promised Heavenly Father I would remain faithful even if I didn't receive answers.



FOR YOUTH



Things **I Learned** as a Young Convert

Imagine joining the Church at age 17 and being the only member in your town who speaks your language. Read about what Elder Klebingat of the Seventy learned in that situation!

FOR CHILDREN

The Nativity Story

Enjoy a six-page illustrated story of the birth of baby Jesus!



ENGLISH

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS