


Liabona



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“Marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other human relationship.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Nurturing Marriage,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2006, 36.



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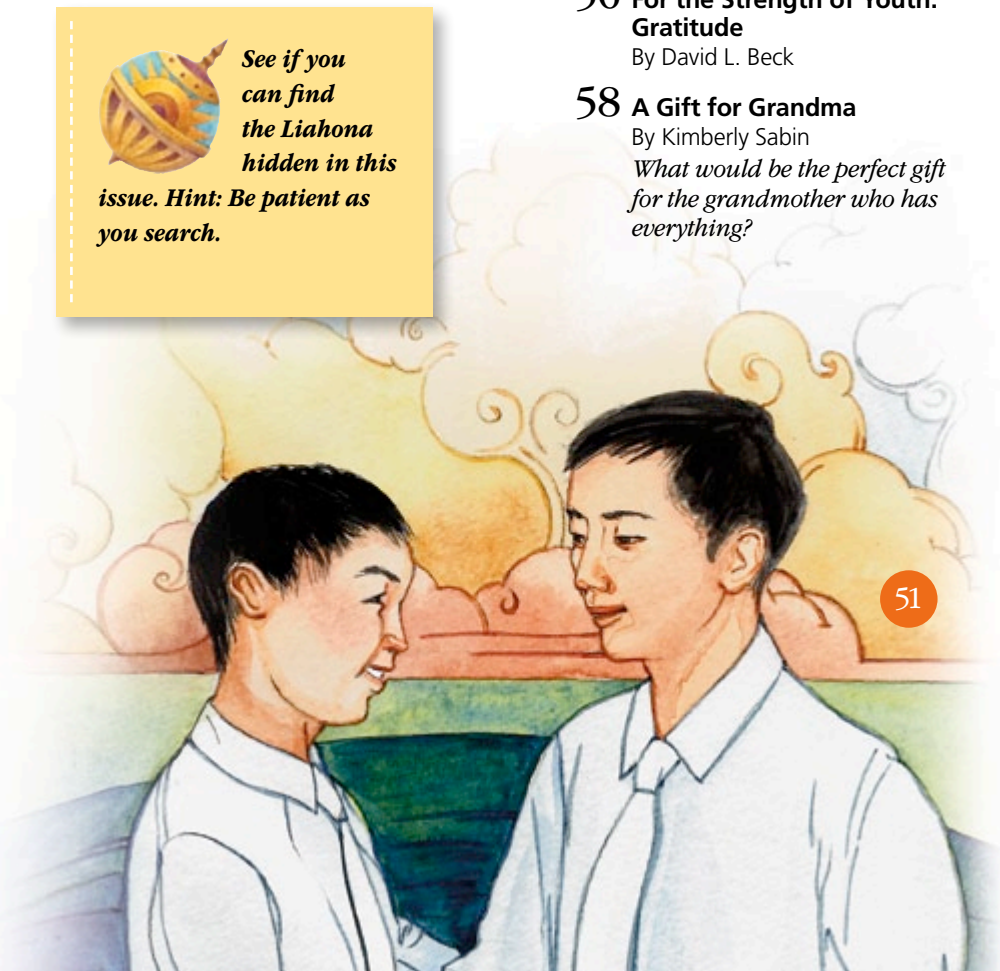
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Family Home Evening Ideas

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



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CODY BELL © IRI

"A Gift for Grandma," page 58: Consider reading about Kimberly's gift to her grandmother. You can use the following questions to help you discuss the story: Why do you think her letter meant so much to Grandma? How do you feel when someone thanks you for something? How do you think Heavenly Father feels about gratitude? You can read about gratitude in *For the Strength of Youth* on page 18. Consider telling the story of Jesus Christ healing the 10 lepers in Luke 17:11–19 and discuss what this story teaches about gratitude. For an activity, each family member could write a thank-you note to deliver to someone that week.

"A Baptism Blessing," page 66: You could begin your family home evening by

singing "Nephi's Courage" (*Children's Songbook*, 120). Then read the story of Trevor overcoming his fear of water and consider the following questions: Have you ever been afraid of doing something? What helped you not be scared? Invite family members to share things they need to do that they are worried about. As a family, discuss ways you can help each other develop courage. For an activity, you could create an obstacle course in the room. Blindfold someone in your family. Help him or her practice trust by safely walking through the obstacle course while listening to instructions. You can discuss how the Spirit will guide us and comfort us in situations where we aren't sure what to do.

IN YOUR LANGUAGE

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

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**By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Second Counselor in the
First Presidency

Walking IN CIRCLES

Have you ever heard the old saying that people who get lost tend to walk in circles?

Jan L. Souman, a German psychologist, wanted to determine scientifically if this was true. He took participants of an experiment to a large forest area and to the Sahara desert and used a global positioning system to track where they went. They had no compass or any other device. Instructions to them were simple: walk in a straight line in the direction indicated.

Dr. Souman later described what happened. “[Some] of them walked on a cloudy day, with the sun hidden behind the clouds [and with no reference points in view]. . . . [They] all walked in circles, with [several] of them repeatedly crossing their own path without noticing it.” Other participants walked while the sun was shining, with faraway reference points in view. “These . . . followed an almost perfectly straight course.”¹

This study has been repeated by others with different methodologies.² All returned similar results.

Without visible landmarks, human beings tend to walk in circles.

The Landmark of the Scriptures

Without spiritual landmarks, mankind wanders as well. Without the word of God, we walk in circles.

Both as individuals and as societies, we see this pattern repeated over and over in every dispensation since the beginning of time. When we lose sight of the word of God, we tend to get lost.

This is undoubtedly the reason the Lord commanded Lehi to send his sons back to Jerusalem for the brass plates. God knew that the descendants of Lehi would need reliable landmarks—points of reference—that would provide a guide they could use to determine if they were on course.

The scriptures are the word of God. They are God’s landmarks that show the way we should travel in order to draw closer to our Savior and reach worthy goals.

The Landmark of General Conference

The instructions given at general conference are another landmark that can help us know if we are on course.

Occasionally I ask myself, “Did I listen to the words given by the men and women who spoke at the most recent general conference of the Church? Have I read and reread their words? Have I pondered them and applied them to my life? Or have I just enjoyed the fine talks and neglected to apply their inspired messages in my personal life?”

Maybe while you were listening or reading, you jotted down a note or two. Perhaps you made a commitment to do some things better or differently. Just think about the



true landmarks to guide us—without the guidance of the Spirit—we will tend to wander.

Let us, therefore, open our eyes and see the landmarks our benevolent God has provided to His children. Let us read, hear, and apply the word of God. Let us pray with real intent and listen to and follow the promptings of the Spirit. Once we have recognized the supernal landmarks offered by our loving Heavenly Father, we should set our course by them. We should also make regular course corrections as we orient ourselves toward spiritual landmarks.

In this way, we will not wander in circles but walk with confidence and certainty toward that great heavenly blessing that is the birthright of all who walk in the straight and narrow way of Christ's discipleship. ■

NOTES

1. See Jan L. Souman and others, "Walking Straight into Circles," *Current Biology*, vol. 19 (Sept. 29, 2009), 1538–1542.
2. See, for example, Robert Krulwich, "A Mystery: Why Can't We Walk Straight?" npr.org/blogs/krulwich/2011/06/01/131050832/a-mystery-why-can-t-we-walk-straight.

messages of last general conference. Many encouraged us to strengthen our families and improve our marriages. This issue of the *Liahona* also focuses on these eternal values, with many practical recommendations to bless our lives.

Are we noting and applying this worthwhile counsel? Are we recognizing and walking toward these real and valuable landmarks?

The Antidote to Wandering

Spiritual landmarks are indispensable for keeping us on the straight and narrow path. They give clear direction as to the way we should travel—but only if we recognize them and walk toward them.

If we refuse to be guided by these landmarks, they become meaningless, decorative masses that have no

purpose but to break up the flatness of the horizon.

It's not enough to go solely by our instincts.

It's not enough to have the best of intentions.

It won't do to rely only on our natural senses.

Even when we think we are following a straight spiritual path, without

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

As you prepare to teach from this message, you can search the scriptures for examples of people who were led by spiritual landmarks or people who wandered in circles. You could begin your study with these scriptures: Numbers 14:26–33; 1 Nephi 16:28–29; Alma 37:38–47. If you feel prompted, you can share insights from these examples with those you are teaching. Ask them what we can learn from these stories.

Landmarks for You

President Uchtdorf describes general conference and the scriptures as landmarks that help us avoid spiritual wandering. Ponder other spiritual landmarks that have influenced and guided your life. Write your experiences down in your journal. These quotations from President Monson may help you:



“Your [patriarchal] blessing is not to be folded neatly and tucked away. It is not to be framed or published. Rather, it is to be read. It is to be loved. It is to be followed. Your patriarchal blessing will see you through the darkest night. It will guide you through life’s dangers”

“Your Patriarchal Blessing: A Liahona of Light,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 66.

“Our Heavenly Father did not launch us on our eternal voyage without providing the means whereby we could receive from Him guidance to ensure our safe return. I speak of prayer. I speak too of the whisperings from that still, small voice.”

“The Race of Life,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2012, 92.

CHILDREN

I Can Find My Way

President Uchtdorf says that we need to follow spiritual landmarks because they will help us choose the right and come closer to the Savior. Some of these landmarks are prayer, the scriptures, general conference, and the *Liahona*.

Find your way through the maze by following these landmarks.

With your family, read a talk from the last general conference. What does the speaker suggest that we do to stay on the right path? Set goals with your family to apply what you learned.



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT GREER

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

Joy in Family History

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that the Spirit of Elijah is “a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family.”¹

As members of Christ’s restored Church, we have the covenant responsibility to search for our ancestors and provide for them the saving ordinances of the gospel. They without us cannot “be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:40), and “neither can we without our dead be made perfect” (D&C 128:15).

Family history work prepares us for the blessings of eternal life and helps us increase our faith and personal righteousness. Family history is a vital part of the mission of the Church and enables the work of salvation and exaltation for all.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: “When we research our own lines we become interested in more than just names. . . . Our interest turns our hearts to our fathers—we seek to find them and to know them and to serve them.”²



From the Scriptures

Malachi 4:5–6; 1 Corinthians 15:29; D&C 124:28–36; 128:15

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “A New Harvest Time,” *Liahona*, July 1998, 34; *Ensign*, May 1998, 34.
2. Boyd K. Packer, “Your Family History: Getting Started,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Aug. 2003, 17.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 475.
4. See *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 21.

WHAT CAN I DO?

1. How can I help the sisters I watch over to do family history?
2. Am I recording my personal history?

Faith, Family, Relief



From Our History

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead.”³ We can serve as proxy in the temple for our deceased ancestors and perform necessary ordinances for them.

Sally Randall of Nauvoo, Illinois, whose 14-year-old son died, found great comfort in the promise of eternal families. After her husband was baptized for their son, she wrote to her relatives: “What a glorious thing it is that we . . . can be baptized for all of our dead [ancestors] and save them as far back as we can get any knowledge of them.” Then she asked her relatives to send her information on their ancestors, saying, “I intend to do what I can to save [our family].”⁴

“I WILL NOT FORGET THEE”

By Becky Squire

As I walked into my routine doctor appointment, I was filled with excitement and hope. By ultrasound I had already seen my tiny baby’s heartbeat, but now, several weeks later, the tiny one inside me would be even bigger. Having experienced the miracle of pregnancy three times already, I never ceased to be amazed.

Ten minutes later I was crying alone in my car—the image of a still baby with no heartbeat forever imprinted in my mind.

During the days that followed, I was in a dazed stupor. I felt empty and alone. My husband had to go back to work, and our three children ran around the house as I halfheartedly fed them and tried to keep the house clean. But I was not really there. When I came home from running errands, the first thing I would do was check to see if I had any missed calls. None. I would check my email every hour. Nothing. I started wondering if my friends and neighbors cared about me. Were they even my friends at all? I didn’t notice how Satan was working on me.

I was sharing my feelings with my husband one night, and he immediately saw what was happening. He shared 1 Nephi 21:15–16 with me:

“I [will] not forget thee, O house of Israel.

“Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.”

I had learned about and studied the Atonement before. I thought I knew what it was. But I had failed to appropriately apply it to my life. Jesus had already suffered all of my

sorrows. He knew exactly how I felt.

“His most exemplary act, the Atonement, required Jesus to descend ‘below all things’ (D&C 88:6) and suffer ‘the pains of all men’ (2 Nephi 9:21). Thus we understand the Atonement has broader purpose than providing a means to overcome sin. This greatest of all earthly accomplishments gives the Savior the power to fulfill this promise: ‘If ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, . . . he will . . . deliver you’ (Mosiah 7:33).”¹

What better friend could I have



HE UNDERSTANDS

“There is nothing that we are enduring that Jesus does not understand, and He waits for us to go to our Heavenly Father in prayer. I testify that if we will be obedient and if we are diligent, our prayers will be answered, our problems will diminish, our fears will dissipate, light will come upon us, the darkness of despair will be dispersed, and we will be close to the Lord and feel of His love and of the comfort of the Holy Ghost.”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Behold, We Count Them Happy Which Endure,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 77.



during this tragic time than one who could surely sympathize with me? I realized I needed my Savior to help me overcome my sorrow. As I turned to the Lord, I immediately saw His love for me. I felt calm and peaceful, and I felt that Jesus understood me as I had never thought possible. He is exactly the kind of friend I was longing for in those days after my miscarriage—the kind of friend I needed most.

I know I can always turn to my Savior, not only when I need to repent of my sins but also when I need a shoulder to cry on. He is always there. When we are searching for someone to understand our pains and sorrows, let us not forget our truest friend, Jesus Christ. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. Donald L. Hallstrom, "Turn to the Lord," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2010, 80.

My husband shared 1 Nephi 21:15–16 with me. I realized I needed my Savior to help me overcome my sorrow.

HOW CAN WE OBTAIN PEACE?

President Thomas S. Monson spoke of three ways to find peace in our lives:

"I refer not to the peace promoted by man, but peace as promised of God. I speak of peace in our homes, peace in our hearts, even peace in our lives. Peace after the way of man is perishable. Peace after the manner of God will prevail. . . .

"First: Search inward. . . .

There shall be no peace until individuals nurture in their souls those

principles of personal purity, integrity, and character which foster the development of peace. . . .

"Second: Reach outward. . . .

Membership in the Church calls forth a determination to serve. . . .

"Third: Look heavenward. As we do, we find it comforting and satisfying to communicate with our Heavenly Father through prayer, that path to spiritual power—even a passport to peace."

From "Finding Peace," *Liahona and Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 3–7.

Which of these three ideas can you more fully implement in your life?



By President
Spencer W. Kimball
(1895–1985)

Twelfth President
of the Church

WORSHIP THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD

What are we to fear when the Lord is with us?

We learn from the scriptures that because the exercise of faith has always appeared to be more difficult than relying on things more immediately at hand, carnal man has tended to transfer his trust in God to material things. Therefore, in all ages when men have fallen under the power of Satan and lost the faith, they have put in its place a hope in the “arm of flesh” and in “gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know” (Daniel 5:23)—that is, in idols. This I find to be a dominant theme in the Old Testament. Whatever thing a man sets his heart and his trust in most is his god; and if his god doesn’t also happen to be the true and living God of Israel, that man is laboring in idolatry.

It is my firm belief that when we read these scriptures and try to “liken them unto [our]selves” (1 Nephi 19:24), as Nephi suggested, we will

see many parallels between the ancient worship of graven images and behavioral patterns in our very own experience.

The Lord has blessed us. . . . The resources that have been placed in our power are good and necessary to our work here on the earth. But I am afraid that many of us . . . have begun to worship them as false gods, and they have power over us. Do we have more of these good things than our faith can stand? Many people spend most of their time working in the service of a self-image that includes sufficient money, stocks, bonds, investment portfolios, property, credit cards, furnishings, automobiles, and the like to *guarantee* carnal security. . . .

Our Assignment

Forgotten is the fact that our assignment is to use these many resources in our families and quorums to build up the kingdom of God—to further the missionary effort and the genealogical and temple work; to raise our children up as fruitful servants unto the Lord; to bless others in every way, that they may also be fruitful. Instead, we expend these blessings on our own desires, and as Moroni said, “Ye adorn yourselves with that which hath

no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not” (Mormon 8:39).

As the Lord Himself said in our day, “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own God, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and *whose substance is that of an idol*, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall” (D&C 1:16; emphasis added).

A Poor Exchange

One man I know of was called to a position of service in the Church, but he felt that he couldn’t accept because his investments required more . . . of his time than he could spare for the Lord’s work. He left the service of the Lord in search of Mammon, and he is a millionaire today.

But I recently learned an interesting fact: If a man owns a million dollars worth of gold . . . , he possesses approximately one 27-billionth of all the gold that is present in the earth’s thin crust alone. This is an amount so small in proportion as to be inconceivable to the mind of man. But there is more to this: The Lord who created and has power over all

the earth created many other earths as well, even “worlds without number” (Moses 1:33); and when this man received the oath and covenant of the priesthood (see D&C 84:33–44), he received a promise from the Lord of “all that my Father hath” (D&C 84:38). To set aside all these great promises in favor of a chest of gold and a sense of carnal security is a mistake in perspective of colossal proportions. To think that he has settled for so little is a saddening and pitiful prospect indeed; the souls of men are far more precious than this.

One young man, when called on a mission, replied that he didn’t have much talent for that kind of thing. What he was good at was keeping

his powerful new automobile in top condition. . . . All along, his father had been content with saying, “He likes to do things with his hands. That’s good enough for him.”

Good enough for a son of God? This young man didn’t realize that the power of his automobile is infinitesimally small in comparison with the power of the sea or of the sun; and there are many suns, all controlled by law and by priesthood, ultimately—a priesthood power that he could have been developing in the service of the Lord. He settled for a pitiful god, a composite of steel and rubber and shiny chrome.

An older couple retired from the world of work and also, in effect, from

the Church. They purchased a pickup truck and camper and . . . set out to see the world. . . . They had no time for the temple, were too busy for genealogical research and for missionary service. He lost contact with his high priests quorum and was not home enough to work on his personal history. Their experience and leadership were sorely needed in their branch, but . . . they were not available. . . .

If we insist on spending all our time and resources building up for ourselves a worldly kingdom, that is exactly what we will inherit.

Forsake the Things of the World

In spite of our delight in defining ourselves as modern and our





tendency to think we possess a sophistication that no people in the past ever had—in spite of these things, we are, on the whole, an idolatrous people—a condition most repugnant to the Lord.

We are . . . easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. . . . We forget that if we are righteous, the Lord will either not suffer our enemies to come upon us . . . or He will fight our battles for us (see Exodus 14:14; D&C 98:37, to name only two references of many). . . .

What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord at His word and exercise a particle of faith in Him? Our assignment is

affirmative: to forsake the things of the world as ends in themselves; to leave off idolatry and press forward in faith; to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.

Exercise Greater Faith

We must leave off the worship of modern-day idols and a reliance on the “arm of flesh,” for the Lord has said to all the world in our day, “I will not spare any that remain in Babylon” (D&C 64:24). . . . We believe that the way for each person and each family to prepare as the Lord has directed is to begin to exercise greater faith, to repent, and to enter into the work of His kingdom

on earth, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It may seem a little difficult at first, but when a person begins to catch a vision of the true work, when he begins to see something of eternity in its true perspective, the blessings begin to far outweigh the cost of leaving “the world” behind.

Herein lies the only true happiness, and therefore we invite and welcome all people, everywhere, to join in this work. For those who are determined to serve the Lord at all costs, this is the way to eternal life. All else is but a means to that end. ■

Subheads added; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization have been standardized.

Excerpted from “The False Gods We Worship,” Tambuli, Aug. 1977, 1–4; Ensign, June 1976, 3–6.

SERVING THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

By **Becky Young Fawcett**

Church Disability Services

When Lynn Parsons was called as the disability specialist in the Hurst Texas Stake, she wanted to fulfill her calling in a way that would bless the lives of members of her stake, especially members with disabilities and their families.

One of the first things Lynn did was to review information on her calling at lds.org (lds.org/callings/disability-specialist?), and she used *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* to understand official Church policies regarding those with disabilities. The Disability Resources website (lds.org/disability) also served as a resource. It helped her understand various disabilities and served as a resource to share with members of her stake.

Handbook 2 states, “The bishopric or stake presidency may call a ward or stake disability specialist to help individuals and families.”¹ lds.org gives further information about this calling, explaining that

“the role of the disability specialist is to help facilitate increased participation and inclusion of Church members with disabilities.”²

With this understanding, Lynn says she wanted to “help leaders fulfill their callings by finding the tools they needed to serve those with disabilities.”

Lynn also found information through community and national resources, the Internet, and ward and stake members who have a background working with people with disabilities. Lynn uses these resources as she looks for solutions to some of the challenges leaders and families face in her stake. She doesn’t always know where to turn for information or help, “but if you really seek the answer through prayer,” she says, “you will be inspired where to look to find your answer.”

Understanding Needs

Lynn also works to understand the disability-related

needs of leaders in her area. To do this, she asked her stake leaders to send a letter to bishops informing them of her calling and that she was available to help. She also met with the stake Primary presidency to understand challenges, and she made plans to meet with other groups of leaders. “I wanted to get the word out,” she said. “I wanted people to know where they could find some help.”

By letting members of the stake know she was ready to serve, Lynn soon found opportunities to help leaders. Within the first few months of being called as the disability specialist, she was invited to meet with a ward council to talk about characteristics of a specific disability. She served in other ways, such as helping a teacher understand how to teach a child with autism and suggesting that an assistant Primary teacher be called so a child with a disability could attend class.

Moving forward, Lynn plans to help leaders fulfill their callings. As she does this, she is helping members of her stake follow the example of the Savior in loving and reaching out to others, including those with disabilities. ■

NOTES

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 21.1.26.
2. “Disability Specialist,” www.lds.org/callings/disability-specialist?







By President
James E. Faust
(1920–2007)

Second Counselor in
the First Presidency

DEAR ARE
THE
Sheep That
HAVE Wandered

*To those brokenhearted parents who
have been righteous, diligent, and prayerful in the
teaching of their disobedient children, we say to you,
the Good Shepherd is watching over them.*

President James E. Faust was sustained as Second Counselor in the First Presidency on March 12, 1995, and served in that calling until his death on August 10, 2007. This address, given in the April 2003 general conference, is included in this issue as one of several articles on strengthening the family.

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, my message this morning is one of hope and solace to heartbroken parents who have done their best to rear their children in righteousness with love and devotion but have despaired because their child has rebelled or been led astray to follow the path of evil and destruction. In contemplating your deep anguish, I am reminded of the words of Jeremiah: “A voice was heard in Ramah, . . . Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted.” To this the Lord gave this welcome reassurance: “Refrain thy voice from weeping, . . . for thy work shall be rewarded . . . ; they shall come again from the land of the enemy.”¹

I must begin by testifying that the word of the Lord to parents in this Church is contained in the 68th section of the Doctrine and Covenants in this remarkable instruction: “And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her

Those who wander “will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but it if leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father’s heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain.”



stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.”² Parents are instructed to “teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.”³ As a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, I accept this as the word of the Lord, and as a servant of Jesus Christ, I urge parents to follow this counsel as conscientiously as they can.

Who are good parents? They are those who have lovingly, prayerfully, and earnestly tried to teach their children by example and precept “to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.”⁴ This is true even though some of their children are disobedient or worldly. Children come into this world with their own distinct spirits and personality traits. Some children “would challenge any set of parents under any set of circumstances. . . . Perhaps there are others who would bless the lives of, and be a joy to, almost any father or mother.”⁵ Successful parents are those who have sacrificed and struggled to do the best they can in their own family circumstances.

The depth of the love of parents for their children cannot be measured. It is like no other relationship. It exceeds concern for life itself. The love of a parent for a child is continuous and transcends heartbreak and disappointment. All parents hope and pray that their children will make wise decisions. Children who are obedient and responsible bring to their parents unending pride and satisfaction.

But what if the children who have been taught by faithful, loving parents have rebelled or been led astray? Is there hope? The grief of a parent over a rebellious child is almost inconsolable. King David's third son, Absalom, killed one of his brothers and also led a rebellion against his father. Absalom was killed by Joab. Upon hearing of Absalom's death, King David wept and expressed his sadness: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"⁶

This paternal love is also expressed in the parable of the prodigal son. When his rebellious son returned home after having squandered his inheritance in riotous living, the father killed the fatted calf and celebrated the return of the prodigal, saying to his obedient, if resentful, son, "It was meet that we should

make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."⁷

I believe and accept the comforting statement of Elder Orson F. Whitney [1855–1931]:

"The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread

The love of a parent for a child is continuous and transcends heartbreak and disappointment. All parents hope and pray that their children will make wise decisions.



The prodigal son was welcomed back into the family, but his inheritance was spent. Mercy will not rob justice, and the sealing power of faithful parents will only claim wayward children upon the condition of their repentance and Christ's Atonement.



a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God.”⁸

A principle in this statement that is often overlooked is that they must fully repent and “suffer for their sins” and “pay their debt to justice.” I recognize that now is the time “to prepare to meet God.”⁹ If the repentance of the wayward children does not happen in this life, is it still possible for the cords of the sealing to be strong enough for them yet to work out their repentance? In the Doctrine and Covenants we are told:

“The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

“And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.”¹⁰

We remember that the prodigal son wasted his inheritance, and when it was all gone he came back to his father's house. There he was welcomed back into the family, but his inheritance was spent.¹¹ Mercy will not rob justice, and the sealing power of faithful parents will only claim wayward children upon the condition of their repentance and Christ's Atonement. Repentant wayward children will enjoy salvation and all the blessings that go with it, but exaltation is much more. It must be fully earned. The question as to who will be exalted must be left to the Lord in His mercy.

There are very few whose rebellion and evil deeds are so great that they have “sinned

away the power to repent.”¹² That judgment must also be left up to the Lord. He tells us, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”¹³

Perhaps in this life we are not given to fully understand how enduring the sealing cords of righteous parents are to their children. It may very well be that there are more helpful sources at work than we know.¹⁴ I believe there is a strong familial pull as the influence of beloved ancestors continues with us from the other side of the veil.

President Howard W. Hunter [1907–95] observed that “repentance is but the homesickness of the soul, and the uninterrupted and watchful care of the parent is the fairest earthly type of the unfailing forgiveness of God.” Is not the family the nearest analogy which the Savior’s mission sought to establish?¹⁵

We learn much of parenting from our own parents. My love for my father deepened profoundly when he was kind, patient, and understanding. When I damaged the family car, he was gentle and forgiving. But his sons could expect strong discipline if there was any shading of the truth or continued breaking of the rules, particularly showing disrespect for our mother. My father has been gone for almost half a century, but I still sorely miss being able to go to him for wise and loving counsel. I admit I questioned his counsel at times, but I could never question his love for me. I never wanted to disappoint him.

An important element of doing the best we can as parents is to provide loving but firm discipline. If we do not discipline our children, society may do it in a way that is not to our



liking or our children’s. Part of disciplining children is to teach them to work. President Gordon B. Hinckley [1910–2008] said: “One of the greatest values . . . is the virtue of honest work. Knowledge without labor is profitless. Knowledge with labor is genius.”¹⁶

Satan’s pervasive snares are increasing, and raising children is becoming harder because of this. Therefore, parents need to do the very best they can and to enlist the help that Church service and activity can provide. If parents misbehave and stray even temporarily, some of their children may be prone to take license from that example.

Now, there is another side to this coin that needs to be mentioned. I make a plea for children who are estranged from their parents to reach out to them, even if they have been less than they should have been. Children who are critical of their parents might well remember the wise counsel of Moroni when he said, “Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections,

Good parents are those who have lovingly, prayerfully, and earnestly tried to teach their children by example and precept “to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.” This is true even though some of their children are disobedient or worldly.

I make a plea for children who are estranged from their parents to reach out to them. . . . I hope all children will eventually turn their hearts to their fathers and also to their mothers.



that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been.”¹⁷

When Moroni visited the young Prophet Joseph Smith in 1823, he quoted the following verse concerning the mission of Elijah: “And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.”¹⁸ I hope all children will eventually turn their hearts to their fathers and also to their mothers.

A wonderful couple I knew in my youth had a son who was rebellious and estranged himself from their family. But in their later years, he reconciled with them and was the most caring and solicitous of all their children. As we get older, the pull from our parents and grandparents on the other side of the veil becomes stronger. It is a sweet experience when they visit us in our dreams.

It is very unfair and unkind to judge conscientious and faithful parents because some of their children rebel or stray from the teachings and love of their parents. Fortunate are the couples who have children and grandchildren who bring them comfort and satisfaction. We should be considerate of those worthy, righteous parents who struggle and suffer with disobedient children. One of my friends used to say, “If you have never had any problems with your children, just wait awhile.” No one can say with any degree of certainty what their children will do under certain circumstances. When my wise mother-in-law saw other children misbehaving, she used to say, “I never say my children would not do that because they might be out doing it right while I am speaking!” When parents mourn for disobedient and wayward children,

we must, with compassion, “forbid the casting of the first stone.”¹⁹

An anonymous Church member wrote about the continuous heartache her brother caused her parents. He got involved in drugs. He resisted all efforts at control and discipline. He was deceitful and defiant. Unlike the prodigal, this errant son did not come home of his own accord. Instead he got caught by the police and was forced to face the consequences of his actions. For two years his parents supported Bill’s treatment program, which brought about his eventual recovery from drugs. In summary, Bill’s sister observed: “I think my parents are extraordinary. They never wavered in their love for Bill, though they disagreed with and even hated what he was doing to himself and to their family life. But they were committed enough to their family to support Bill in any way necessary to get him through the tough times and onto more solid ground. They practiced the deeper, more sensitive, and extensive gospel of Christ by loving one who had gone astray.”²⁰

Let us not be arrogant but rather humbly grateful if our children are obedient and respectful of our teachings of the ways of the Lord. To those brokenhearted parents who have been righteous, diligent, and prayerful in the teaching of their disobedient children, we say to you, the Good Shepherd is watching over them. God knows and understands your deep sorrow. There is hope. Take comfort in the words of Jeremiah: “Thy work shall be rewarded” and your children can “come again from the land of the enemy.”²¹ I so testify and pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Jeremiah 31:15–16.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.
5. Howard W. Hunter, “Parents’ Concern for Children,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 65.
6. 2 Samuel 18:33.
7. Luke 15:32.
8. Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110.
9. Alma 34:32.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 138:58–59.
11. See Luke 15:11–32.
12. Alonzo A. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1919, 161.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
14. See John K. Carmack, “When Our Children Go Astray,” *Liahona*, Mar. 1999, 28–37; *Ensign*, Feb. 1997, 7–13.
15. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 32.
16. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 704.
17. Mormon 9:31.
18. Joseph Smith—History 1:39.
19. Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living* (1973), 58.
20. “With Love—from the Prodigal’s Sister,” *Ensign*, June 1991, 19.
21. Jeremiah 31:16.

Fortunate are the couples who have children and grandchildren who bring them comfort and satisfaction. We should be considerate of those worthy, righteous parents who struggle and suffer with disobedient children.



STRENGTHENING
THE
**Family and
the Church**
THROUGH THE PRIESTHOOD

Parents, families, and individuals are blessed as they study and discuss these inspired messages.

By Richard M. Romney

Church Magazines

Do you remember these promises? You may have heard them in video excerpts shown during a council meeting, a fifth-Sunday meeting, or a Relief Society or priesthood quorum lesson. Or you may have discussed them in a family home evening. The promises are:

- Husbands and wives will be united.
- Fathers and mothers will provide greater spiritual leadership to their families.
- Youth will be prepared to make and keep sacred covenants and to serve the Lord as full-time missionaries and throughout their lives.
- Single members will be supported, receive the blessings of the priesthood in their homes, and be fully engaged in building the kingdom of God.
- Quorums and councils will work together to minister to Heavenly Father's children.
- The Church will be strengthened.

Those promises were made in March as the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles released messages on a DVD titled *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood*. At that time, ward and stake councils were invited to review the messages and then counsel together about how to use them. At the same time, families were invited to watch the video segments online at wwlt.lds.org as well as shorter excerpts as they become available. Leaders and teachers were encouraged to provide opportunities in meetings and classes for members to view segments and share their own impressions, experiences, and testimonies as prompted by the Spirit. Parents were invited to do the same at home with their families.

“The Holy Ghost will teach members how they can be strengthened by the power of the priesthood in their own roles and responsibilities,” says the “How to Use This Training” segment.

Dynamic Discussions

Though the messages were released three months ago, the study and discussions—and the accompanying blessings—continue today, and this approach is giving a new dimension to the nature of training in the Church. Unlike previous training, which was primarily a one-time broadcast for ward and stake leaders, this training is intended to be ongoing. That is why the video segments have been posted online at wwlt.lds.org. A related site, leadershiplibrary.lds.org, provides a link to the videos as well as additional resources to

help families, individuals, quorums, classes, and councils deepen their understanding and apply what they learn.

Each video segment focuses on a different aspect of the priesthood. Members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, along with other General Authorities and general officers, give inspired instruction about:

- How families can find strength and peace through the power of the priesthood.

WHERE TO FIND VIDEOS AND RESOURCES

Video segments and support materials are available at wwlt.lds.org. When accessing segments from the Internet in a meetinghouse, leaders are encouraged to download and play them on a computer rather than relying on the meetinghouse Internet connection.



- How to help every family experience the blessings of the priesthood.
- How those who hold priesthood keys strengthen homes and families.
- How to minister in Christlike ways.
- How to bring up children in light and truth.

Many of the gospel principles featured in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood* are also taught in *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, so reviewing information from the handbook may be helpful during study and discussions. Reviewing “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” may also prove helpful.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, explains that the messages in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood* are “designed to help us learn, through the power of the Holy Ghost, how Heavenly Father would have us minister, particularly in families.” That is the most powerful part of the training—not so much what is said in a video segment but

what the Holy Ghost teaches us as we ponder and discuss the principles taught.

Where to Share

All leaders, members, and families should be given an opportunity to hear and discuss the messages in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood*, either on the DVD or online.

The messages bless families as they use them in home evenings and other family settings. Husbands and wives are, after all, equal partners in leading their children. “There might be those occasions where a father or a mother needs to teach a principle, and they could use this resource as they’re trying to help a son or a daughter along the way,” explains Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the segment titled “This Is His Work.” And Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles notes that “however significant the teaching of a priesthood adviser or a Young Women adviser is in the Church—and we hope it’s very effective—that can’t

PROPHETIC PRINCIPLES FROM THE TRAINING

The video segments contained in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood* are filled with memorable teachings. Here are a few of them from members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

Elder L. Tom Perry, leading a discussion about priesthood keys, bears witness that “it is the Savior’s Church that we belong to. He’s the one that leads and guides and directs His prophet here on earth. There’s no doubt in my mind that He is the head of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson teaches that “nothing is more important for future missionaries than to feel the righteous influence of the priesthood in their homes and to experience its blessings in their lives.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks counsels that “priesthood power depends upon personal righteousness” and that the blessings of priesthood power are “available to men and women alike.” He says that families are the “image and forerunner of exaltation in the celestial kingdom.”

And **Elder M. Russell Ballard** testifies that “priesthood authority can bind families together through the sealing ordinances in the house of the Lord.” He also advises that “the brethren who lead in the wards and in the stakes need to draw close to the power that the women of the Church can bring to the building of the kingdom of God.”



The messages taught in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood* can be shared in a variety of settings, such as stake and ward councils.

possibly be as effective as the example of a mother or the example of a father.”

In Church settings, the messages can be used in stake presidency and bishopric meetings; stake and ward council meetings; priesthood executive committee meetings; stake auxiliary training meetings; presidency meetings, including Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies and Young Women class presidencies; fifth-Sunday combined priesthood and Relief Society meetings; Sunday quorum meetings and auxiliary classes; stake or district conference meetings (not in the Sunday general session); and ward or branch conference meetings (not in sacrament meeting).

Discussions could include how to strengthen youth and young single adults. Leaders could make assignments based on these discussions and follow up on the assignments regularly in council meetings.

The purpose of studying and discussing these messages is to help individuals and families strengthen their faith, build their testimonies, and deepen their conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Our safety and our success require only that we align our intents and our hearts with God’s wishes and so with His power,” President Eyring says. These messages are “a guide and an encouragement to make that alignment and to take others with us.”

The “Ministering” segment offers powerful examples of priesthood leaders visiting individuals and families,

demonstrating how such visits can assist in the rescue of less-active members.

“As we think about the charge that we receive to succor the weak, to lift up the hands that hang down, and to strengthen the feeble knees, we really can’t do that in a better way than when we’re one-on-one in someone’s home, providing this ministry and the pattern that Jesus Christ used,” says Presiding Bishop Gary E. Stevenson in the segment “This Is His Work.” “I think the real benefit will come as we discuss and learn, and then go out and do,” he says.

Strength and Peace

As this training continues throughout the Church, members will receive blessings as they apply the gospel principles that are taught. “All sons and daughters of God will be blessed if they follow the teachings and examples of these presentations,” Elder Ballard says.

Through the priesthood, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, youth, single members, quorums, and councils are ministering to others and finding inspiration as they follow the example of Jesus Christ. As they continue to do so, the promises made in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood* will be realized. Members will see the fulfillment of President Eyring’s promise from the final video segment: that even in dark times, “our families can be strong and at peace.” ■



Nine



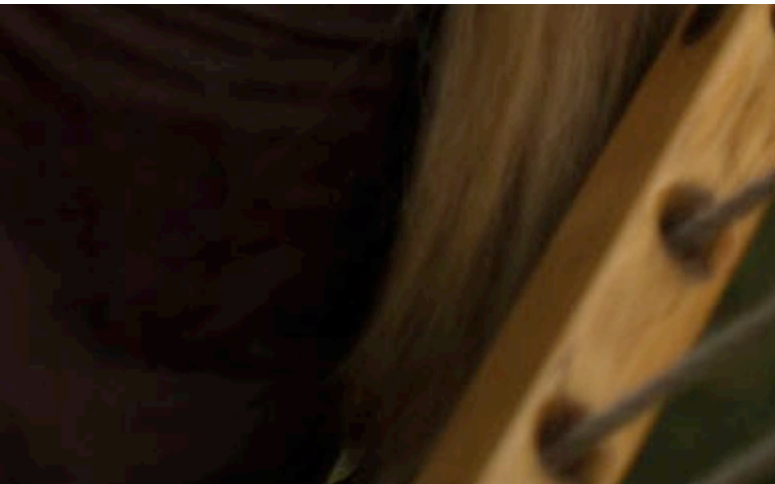
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CRAIG DIMOND AND CODY BELL © IRI

Principles

FOR A SUCCESSFUL
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

By Jennifer Grace Jones

Church Magazines



Amy Adams of Washington, USA, was trying to decide which activities would be best for her three young children when a conversation with her mother changed her mind. “What if you gave your children something better than training in sports or dance?” Amy’s mother asked. “What if by staying home, they could learn to feel the Spirit more?” Then her mother reminded her of what President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught about the power of focusing on life’s basic relationships (see, for example, “Of Things That Matter Most,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 19–22).

Amy and her husband, Brett, prayed about and pondered this counsel and felt it would be a good idea for their family to spend more time together at home. For one year, they chose to forgo dance and sports; instead they prepared meals, learned Primary songs, visited museums, and played outdoors. “Our children were able to feel the Spirit . . . because we took the time to stop and listen,” Amy says. Their children may not be the top sports and dance stars, she says, “but they have a testimony of the Savior.”

Amy and Brett prayed to know how they should personally follow the counsel of modern prophets, and doing so allowed them to receive inspiration for their family. Amy says this inspiration led to her “proudest moments as a mother.”

In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” modern prophets have outlined nine basic principles for strong, gospel-centered families: “Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities” (*Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129). The following teachings from Church leaders, examples from the life of Jesus Christ, and visual images give us a closer look at these nine principles and ways we can apply them.

FAITH



“Faith is confidence and trust in Jesus Christ that lead a person to obey him.”

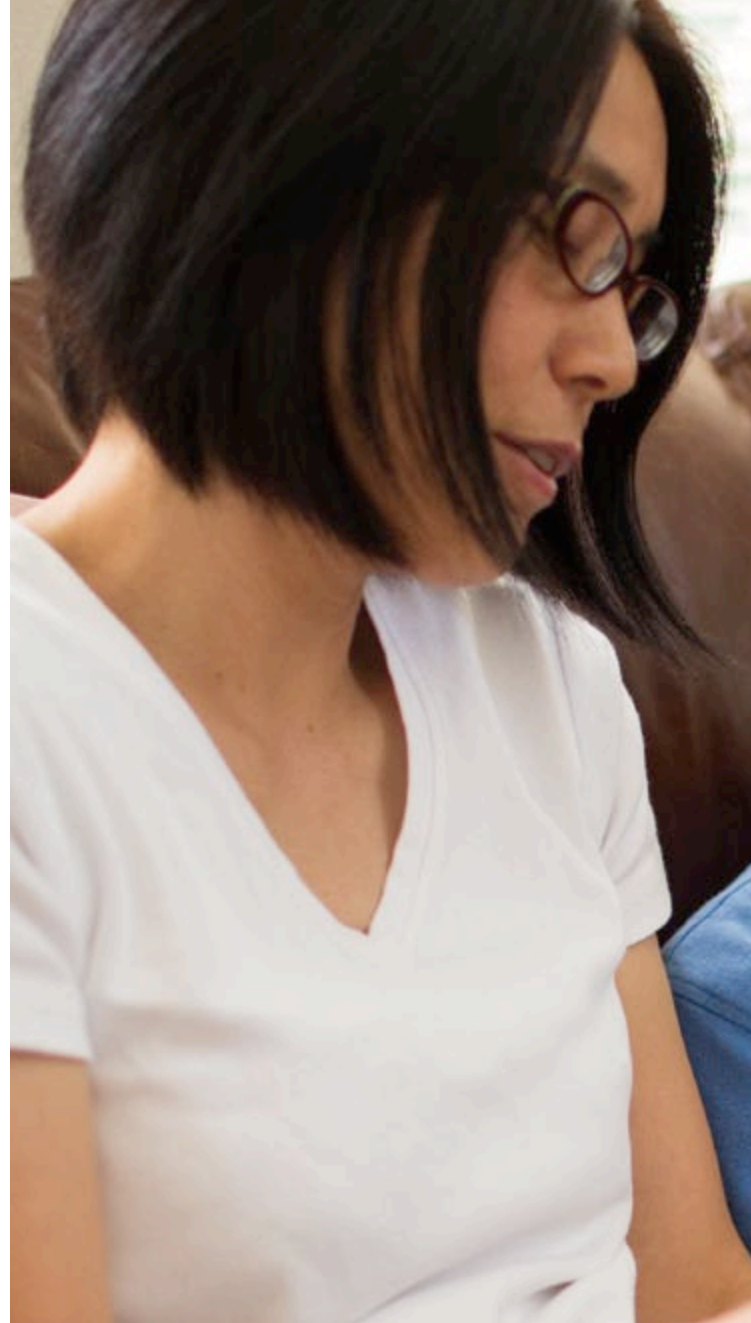
Guide to the Scriptures,
“Faith,” scriptures.lds.org.

From Church Leaders

As parents, we have been commanded to teach our children ‘to understand the doctrine of . . . faith in Christ the Son of the living God’ (D&C 68:25). . . .

“There is no other thing in which we can have absolute assurance. There is no other foundation in life that can bring the same peace, joy, and hope. In uncertain and difficult times, faith is truly a spiritual gift worthy of our utmost efforts. We can give our children education, lessons, athletics, the arts, and material possessions, but if we do not give them faith in Christ, we have given little.”

Elder Kevin W. Pearson of the Seventy, “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2009, 38.



REPENTANCE



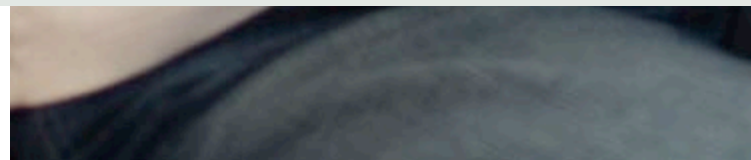
“Repentance implies that a person turns away from evil and turns his [or her] heart and will to God.”

Guide to the Scriptures,
“Repent, Repentance,”
scriptures.lds.org.

From Church Leaders

Today is always a better day to repent than any tomorrow. . . . Even should we be forgiven at some later time, the Lord cannot restore the good effects our repentance today might have had on those we love and are to serve. That is particularly poignant for the parents of young children. In those tender years there are chances for shaping and lifting spirits which may never come again. But even the grandfather who may have missed chances with his own children might, by choosing to repent today, do for grandchildren what he once could have done for their parents.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Do Not Delay,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2000, 40; *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 34.





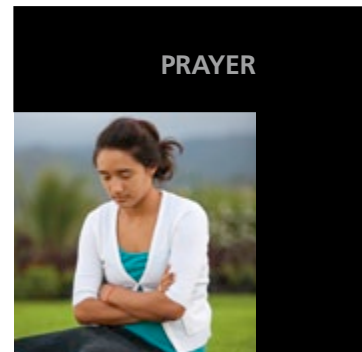
FROM LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY CRAIG DIMOND, CODY BELL, CHRISTINA SMITH © IRI, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, BY DEL PARSON © IRI

From the Life of Jesus Christ

When the Savior concluded the first day of His ministry to the Nephites, He looked into the faces of the people and saw that “they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer.” He was filled with compassion and said, “Have ye any that are sick among you? . . . Bring them hither and I will heal them.”

The multitude then came forward with their sick, and Jesus healed them one by one. And they all—2,500 men, women, and children—knelt at Jesus’s feet and worshipped Him.

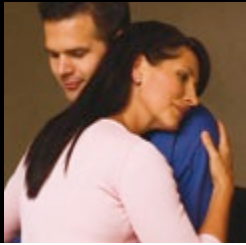
The Savior then commanded the little children to be brought to Him and commanded the multitude to kneel down. He knelt in the midst of the children and began praying. The people were overcome with joy after hearing His prayer, and they bore this testimony: “The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father.” (See 3 Nephi 17:1–17.)



“Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other. The object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them.”

Bible Dictionary, “Prayer.”

FORGIVENESS



“To forgive generally means one of two things: (1) When God forgives men, he cancels or sets aside a required punishment for sin. . . . (2) As people forgive each other, they treat one another with Christlike love.”

Guide to the Scriptures,
“Forgive,” scriptures.lds.org.

From the Life of Jesus Christ

A Pharisee named Simon asked the Savior to come eat dinner. While they were eating, a woman who was known in the city as a sinner came to Jesus and stood nearby weeping. She knelt at the Savior’s feet and washed them with her tears, dried them with her hair, and anointed them with ointment. Simon watched the woman and thought, “This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him.”

The Savior then turned to Simon and taught him a parable:

“There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

“And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.”

Then Jesus asked Simon, “Which of [the debtors] will love [the creditor] most?” Simon answered that it was probably the debtor who was forgiven the greater debt. Jesus then turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Seest thou this woman? . . . Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” Then He promised the woman, “Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” (See Luke 7:36–50.)

From Church Leaders

“Remember, heaven is filled with those who have this in common: They are forgiven. And they forgive.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency,
“The Merciful Obtain Mercy,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2012, 77.

FROM LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEVE BUNDERSON, DAVID WINTERS, AND MATTHEW REER, MAY NOT BE COPIED; DETAIL FROM JESUS WASHING THE FEET OF THE APOSTLES, BY DEL PARSON © IRI



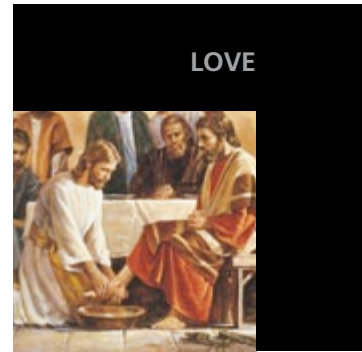


From the Life of Jesus Christ

On the eve of His Crucifixion and hours before the agony of Gethsemane, Jesus Christ observed a final Passover with His Apostles. When the meal concluded, Jesus “knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own unto the end.” The Savior then rose from supper and girded Himself with a towel. He filled a basin with water and washed His disciples’ feet. When He had finished, He gave them a new commandment:

“Love one another; as I have loved you. . . .

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.” (See John 13:1–5, 34–35.)



LOVE

“Deep devotion and affection. . . . The greatest example of God’s love for his children is found in the infinite atonement of Jesus Christ.”

Guide to the Scriptures, “Love,” scriptures.lds.org.

From Church Leaders

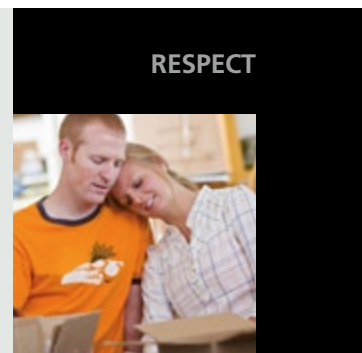
“To consider worthy of high regard.”

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (2003), “respect.”

When we have sampled much and have wandered far and have seen how fleeting and sometimes superficial a lot of the world is, our gratitude grows for the privilege of being part of something we can count on—home and family and the loyalty of loved ones. We come to know what it means to be bound together by duty, by respect, by belonging. We learn that nothing can fully take the place of the blessed relationship of family life. . . .

“Brethren, let’s treat our wives with dignity and with respect. They’re our eternal companions. Sisters, honor your husbands. They need to hear a good word. They need a friendly smile. They need a warm expression of true love.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Love at Home—Counsel from Our Prophet,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Aug. 2011, 4.



RESPECT

COMPASSION



“Literally ‘to suffer with.’ It also means to show sympathy, pity, and mercy for another.”

Guide to the Scriptures,
“Compassion,” scriptures
.lds.org.

saw how many people from the city were with the woman and how deeply she grieved, He “had compassion on her.” He touched the stretcher where the young man lay and said, “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.” Immediately the man sat up and began to speak, and the Savior delivered him to his suffering mother. (See Luke 7:11–15.)

From the Life of Jesus Christ

The scriptures contain numerous accounts where the Savior demonstrated compassion for others. Being moved with compassion, He gave sight to two blind men (see Matthew 20:30–34), He cleansed a leper (see Mark 1:40–41), and He healed all the sick within a Nephite multitude (see 3 Nephi 17:6–9).

In a particularly touching account, Jesus approached the city of Nain, where He saw a funeral procession for a young man—“the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.” When the Savior



RECREATION



Healthy, virtuous activities that refresh the strength and spirit of all involved.

From Church Leaders

Just as honest toil gives rest its sweetness, wholesome recreation is the friend and steadying companion of work. Music, literature, art, dance, drama, athletics—all can provide entertainment to enrich one’s life and further consecrate it. At the same time, it hardly needs to be said that much of what passes for entertainment today is coarse, degrading, violent, mind-numbing, and time wasting. Ironically, it sometimes takes hard work to find wholesome leisure. When entertainment turns from virtue to vice, it becomes a destroyer of the consecrated life.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Reflections on a Consecrated Life,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 17.





FROM LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY CRAIG DIMOND, CODY BELL, AND DAVID STOKER © IRI, I WILL BELIEVE, BY LIZ LEMON SWINDLE, MAY NOT BE COPIED

From Church Leaders

“Teaching children the joy of honest labor is one of the greatest of all gifts you can bestow upon them. I am convinced that one of the reasons for the breakup of so many couples today is the failure of parents to teach and train sons in their responsibility to provide and care for their families and to enjoy the challenge this responsibility brings. Many of us also have fallen short in instilling within our daughters the desire of bringing beauty and order into their homes through homemaking. . . .

“[My father] instilled in me a joy and appreciation for honest labor and prepared me for that time in my life when I would have the responsibility of providing for a family. The principles I was taught by my wise father of honest labor, of not wasting, of discipline, and of seeing a task to its completion were basic to my success.” ■

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Joy of Honest Labor,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 62, 64.

WORK



“To exert oneself physically or mentally especially in sustained effort for a purpose.”

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (2003), “work.”

WE NEED TO PRAY—NOW!

Our family was returning from a weekend getaway to Peace River, Alberta, Canada, about five hours north of our home in Edmonton. Darkness had long since descended on the northern landscape, and although the wind was blowing snow wildly across the road in front of us, all seemed peaceful and calm inside our van.

Suddenly an ominous warning light appeared on the dashboard. I had seen it only once before, years ago, and now I feared what was in store. I quickly turned off all unnecessary power, but the engine soon stalled. I knew we had traveled several kilometers since we had passed the last town, and it would be many more kilometers before we reached the next town. I could not even remember the last time we had encountered a vehicle going in either direction.

As we desperately considered our options, our 11-year-old son, Casson,

said, “We need to pray—now!” Not three months before, Casson had been devastated by the loss of his younger brother, who had passed away from cancer. How many prayers had Casson sent up to heaven as he struggled to understand why he had lost his only brother?

My wife and I were not sure how fully he had understood our explanation that our prayers need to be aligned with Heavenly Father’s will and not necessarily with our own desires. Yet here he was, showing us that we needed to turn to Heavenly Father and continue to have faith in Him.

Not long after we had finished praying, the headlights of an approaching vehicle began to sparkle in our rearview mirror. Within seconds a long flatbed truck en route to Edmonton stopped in front of us.

As the driver and I approached each other, he asked in a thick French Canadian accent, “Do you have any children in that van?” When I told him yes, he said he had passed another stopped vehicle several miles back but had not pulled over because of the bad weather. However, as he had approached us, he felt a distinct impression that we had children who needed his help. As a result, he stopped.

Within a few minutes he had our vehicle winched onto his truck, and we were heading to Edmonton. It was a cold trip back, but we were warmed by the sweet confirmation that Heavenly Father does hear prayers. Sometimes the answers come in ways we don’t envision, and sometimes the answers are more powerful and direct than we can ever imagine. We just need to have faith and trust in the Lord. ■
Jeffery R. McMahon, Alberta, Canada



Not long after we had finished praying, the headlights of an approaching vehicle began to sparkle in our rearview mirror.

I'LL NEVER GO TO ANOTHER DANCE

In our suburb of Chicago, Illinois, USA, fewer than 20 Latter-day Saint youth attend a high school of about 4,400 students on two separate campuses. We have been pleased with the education our son has received, and many good families with high standards live in our area.

In the spring of our son's junior year, he was invited to a school dance. His date wore a beautiful, modest dress, and we were eager to hear how their night went. When he came home, he said, "I will never go to another school dance!" He said students had engaged in provocative dancing, which the administration did nothing to stop. I was appalled.

I am a part-time employee of this school district, and a couple of days after the dance I sought out a vice principal. He is a man of integrity, and I felt that he would listen to my concerns. He recommended that I write to the high school principals.

I prayerfully considered what to say and decided to tell them I was disappointed with the inappropriate dancing and that nothing was done to stop it. The bar had been set high for academics, so why not for all activities?

Several months passed, and I thought my letter had fallen on deaf ears. But one day, during back-to-school registration, a vice principal asked me, "Are you the mother who wrote the letter about the school dances?"

"Yes, I am," I replied.

"I want you to know that your letter has caused quite a stir!" he said.

I learned that one of the principals wasn't convinced that changes needed to be made until he asked a few students their opinion. Everyone had the same reply: "We will never go to another school dance! They are too disgusting!"

The administration then implemented rules of dance etiquette, which would be enforced during an upcoming homecoming dance. The principal informed students that they would be asked to leave if they disregarded the rules.

I anxiously awaited our son's return from the homecoming dance. When he arrived, he said students who had tried to get away with the old behavior

were removed. He said it was the best dance he had ever attended.

I wrote to the administration, thanking them for making this one of the best school dances in a long time. The vice principal I knew responded: "Thank you for starting that conversation last spring. Without your input we might not have moved forward in this area."

I have since found out that most of the schools in our county are adopting these new dance rules, so thousands of students will now be able to enjoy school dances.

I pray that the Lord will bless all of us to find the courage to speak out and up for what we believe. I learned that one person can make a difference. ■

Wendy Van Noy, Illinois, USA



After the administration had implemented rules of dance etiquette, I anxiously awaited our son's return from the homecoming dance.

I PRAYED FOR YOU

Recently I was running a little late to church and hurried into the chapel during the opening hymn. When I walked into the chapel, I saw that it was fuller than normal. As I looked around at the numerous visitors, I realized two things: it was our ward's Primary program, and my usual spot was taken.

I hurriedly took a seat on the first row of chairs in the overflow seating just in time to see a young mother arrive with her two-year-old son in tow and her six-month-old daughter in her arms. I noticed that her husband didn't follow her in. When I glanced around the chapel, I saw that he was on the stand, sitting at the piano—he was the accompanist for the Primary.

Throughout the meeting I enjoyed helping with the young boy and listening to the Primary children.

Because I am single, I usually sit with a particular friend. But that day my friend was out of town. I thought it might be nice to sit with the young mother and her children instead, so I asked if I could join them. The mother agreed. Throughout the meeting I enjoyed helping with the young boy and listening to the Primary children.

At the end of sacrament meeting, the mother leaned over and said she had prayed for me that morning. I waited for her to elaborate. She said she had prayed that I would be at church and that I would sit with her and help her. She had thought she might not be able

to make it through sacrament meeting by herself. I felt overwhelmed that

I had answered her simple prayer, offered just that morning.

I know that the Lord loves us more deeply than we can truly comprehend. Witnessing an answer to a simple request taught me a powerful lesson, and I am sure the experience taught this mother as well. When I asked if I could sit with this sister, I wasn't thinking about being the answer to a prayer—I was just doing what I would want someone to do for me if I were in her situation.

Truly Heavenly Father hears and answers our prayers, even the seemingly small ones. ■

Ami Hranac Johnson, Idaho, USA



YOU REMOVED MY SADNESS

For some time I was active in doing family history and temple work. As I progressed in my research, though, I knew I would have trouble finding information about one person—my maternal grandfather.

My mother was not raised with her father and had lost contact with him, her siblings, and all her father's relatives. She didn't have anything to confirm his birth date or birthplace, and she wasn't sure where or when he had died. I wondered if I would ever find the necessary information.

One day as I was looking through my mother's diary, I noticed a photograph of my grandfather. As I turned it over, I saw that he had signed and dated the photo and indicated how old he was at the time. I now had an approximate date for his birth! I excitedly searched his name and the dates on FamilySearch. To my great astonishment, I saw that his ordinances had already been done. Who could have done my grandfather's temple work?

I soon discovered that the work had been performed by one of my long-lost maternal uncles. I searched for his contact information and eventually found his telephone number.

I was nervous about calling him because he had met me 30 years before—when I was one. I didn't know how he would react.

Still, I decided to call. When he answered, I explained how I had found the information about my

grandfather—his father—and told him that I was his niece.

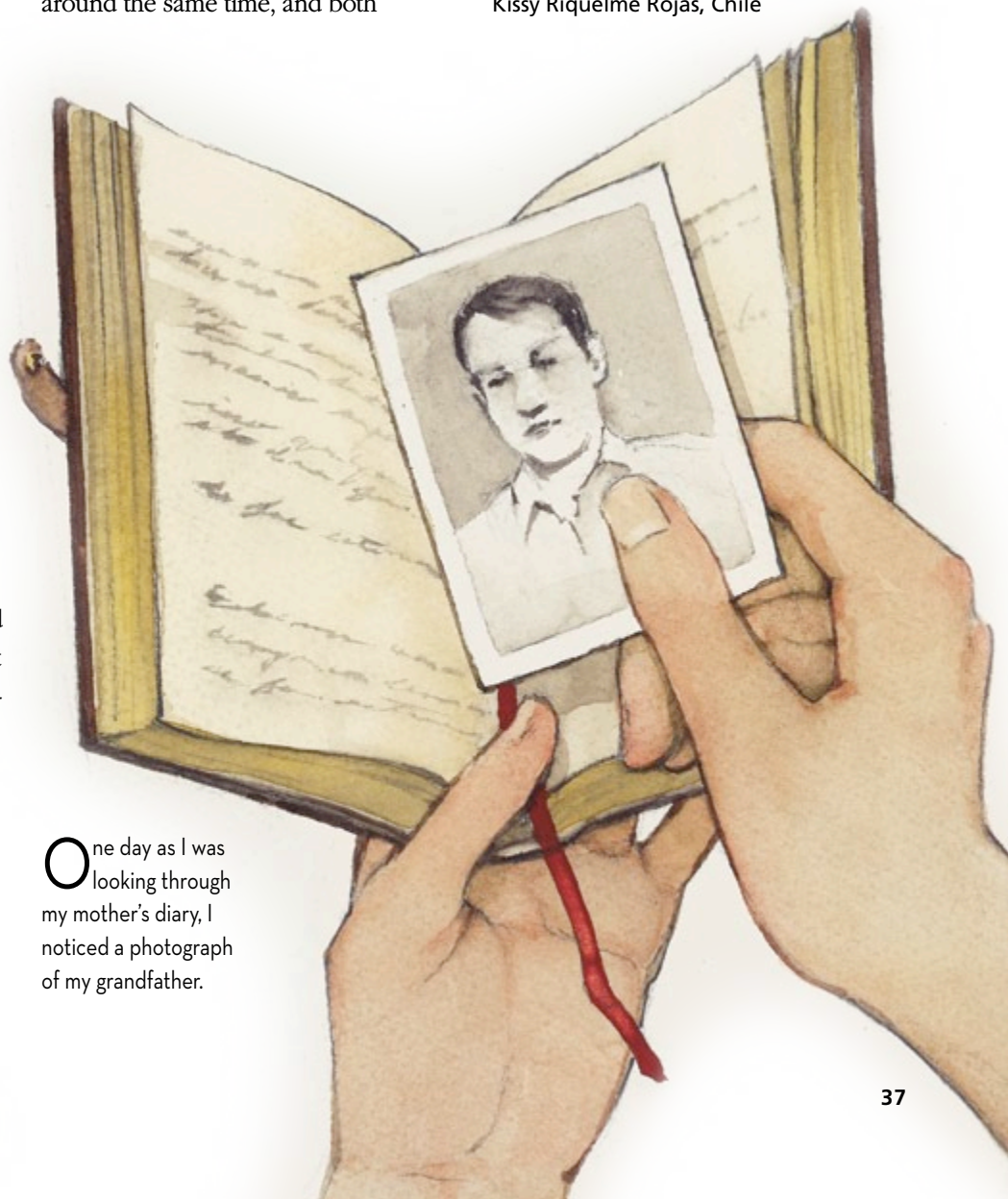
I will always remember his response: "You could never know the sadness I have felt about having lost contact with your mother. Now you have removed that sadness from me!"

We learned that his family and mine, though separated, had been baptized and confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints around the same time, and both

families were firm in the gospel. It was a joyful, emotional moment for us.

I had long understood that family history and temple work can connect us to our deceased ancestors, but I had never considered that it could connect us to our living relatives as well. I am grateful that I have been able to help unite our family through family history—not only in the spirit world but also during our earthly life. ■

Kissy Riquelme Rojas, Chile



One day as I was looking through my mother's diary, I noticed a photograph of my grandfather.



By Elder Kevin W.
Pearson
Of the Seventy

IMPROVING YOUR Personal Prayers

What would listening to your personal prayers reveal about you and your relationship with Heavenly Father?

The divine invitation to pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus Christ is the single most mentioned commandment in all recorded scripture and is the most basic form of personal worship. Yet many of us struggle in our attempts to make personal prayer meaningful and revelatory.

I am convinced that personal prayer is one of the most significant challenges facing members of the Church, particularly youth and young adults. And because they struggle with prayer, they struggle spiritually.

Our personal prayers are a barometer of our spiritual strength and an indicator of our spiritual well-being. I have learned as a father, priesthood leader, and mission president that listening carefully to another's prayers can reveal much about his or her relationship with God.

What would listening to your personal prayers reveal about you and your relationship with Heavenly Father?

The Principle of Personal Prayer

To pray is to speak with God, the Eternal Father of our spirits—not at Him but with Him. He loves each of us perfectly and is full of mercy and understanding. He knows everything about us. He knows what we need, even when

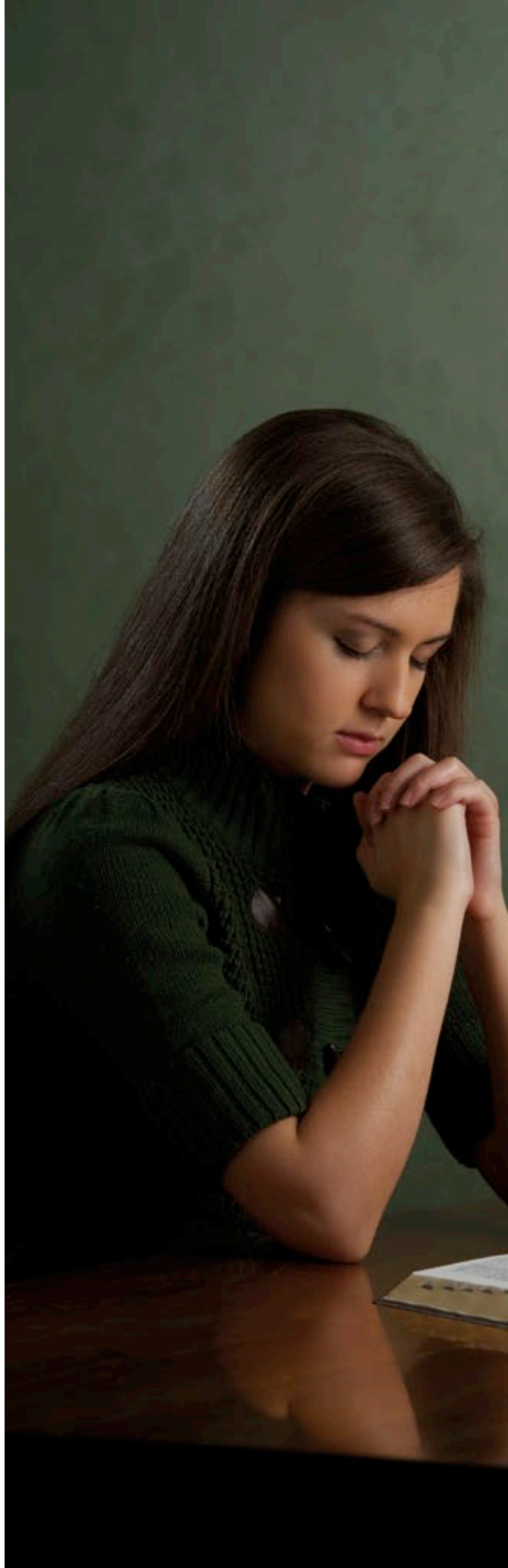


PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY LES NILSSON

Prayer is powerful and compelling evidence of the reality of God the Eternal Father. Personal prayer is indispensable to understanding God and our divine identity.

we can see only what we want. He has infinite power and capacity to sustain and guide us. He is always willing to forgive us and to help us in all things.

We can speak with Heavenly Father vocally or by forming thoughts and expressions in our minds and hearts. Personal prayers should be solemn, sacred expressions of praise and gratitude; heartfelt petitions for specific needs and desires; humble, contrite confessions and requests for cleansing forgiveness; pleadings for comfort, direction, and revelation. These expressions often cause us to pour out our very souls to our loving Heavenly Father.

Prayer is often a brief communication, but it can also be an open and continuous dialogue all throughout the day and night (see Alma 34:27).

Personal Prayer Is Essential

In the divine plan of our Heavenly Father, physical and spiritual separation from His presence are necessary. Prayer is an essential and enabling spiritual link between God and man. Without prayer, there is no possible return to the Father. Without prayer, sufficient faith to understand and keep the commandments is impossible. Without prayer, the necessary spiritual power to avoid temptation and overcome trials and adversity would be unavailable. Without prayer, repentance, forgiveness and the cleansing power of the Atonement are unattainable. With the power of personal prayer, all things are possible.

Prayer enables personal revelation and

spiritual gifts through the Holy Ghost. It is the spiritual channel made available to all God's children, giving us constant access to our Eternal Father, His Beloved Son, and the Holy Ghost. Prayer is powerful and compelling evidence of the reality of God the Eternal Father. Personal prayer is indispensable to understanding God and our divine identity.

Improving Your Prayers

Prepare to Pray

Often our personal prayers take place first thing in the morning before we are fully awake and alert or late at night when we are too tired to pray effectively. Our physical, mental, and emotional fatigue can prevent us from meaningful prayer.

Prayer is spiritual work preceded by mental and spiritual preparation. If we don't take the time to humble ourselves and carefully consider that we are about to call upon God the Eternal Father in the name of Jesus Christ, we will miss the very essence of the divine pattern established to bless us.

Schedule sufficient time to carefully and humbly communicate the deepest desires of your heart with Heavenly Father. Invite the Holy Ghost to help you know what to pray for. Praying vocally helps me to focus my prayers and to listen to myself without wandering mentally.

May I suggest finding a time and place where you can carefully ponder your life and your needs. Reflect on your divine identity and relationship to God. Strive to visualize Heavenly Father as you prepare to speak with Him. Think of the Savior in

whose name you will be praying. Doing so will help you focus and prepare to pray with a humble and grateful heart.

Live Worthily

We cannot be confident in our Heavenly Father's presence if we are not morally clean. Pornography, sexual transgressions, and entertainment of any kind that mocks virtue or promotes immorality can destroy our confidence in prayer and prevent us from receiving spiritual promptings. Remember, however, Satan will be the only one who tells you that you cannot or should not pray. The Holy Ghost always encourages us to pray, even if we are struggling with obedience and personal worthiness.

Pray with Purpose

Prayer is essential to the process of revelation. Inspired questions bring greater focus, purpose, and meaning to our prayers. If you want to receive more personal revelation through your prayers, you may want to think about what questions you are asking. Revelation generally comes in response to a question. The process of revelation requires us to search the scriptures, ponder them, and apply them to our lives. As we do so, the Holy Ghost helps us form inspired questions.

Align Your Will with the Father's

The Savior repeatedly commanded that we "must always pray unto the Father in [the Lord's] name" (3 Nephi 18:19). When we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, it means "our mind is the mind of Christ, and our wishes the

wishes of Christ. . . . We then ask for things it is possible for God to grant. Many prayers remain unanswered because they are not in Christ's name at all; they in no way represent his mind, but spring out of the selfishness of man's heart" (Bible Dictionary, "Prayer"). Prayers that follow this pattern represent vain hope, not faith.

Prayer is not a negotiation process. It is an alignment process. We don't move God to our point of view. Prayer is less about changing our circumstances and more about changing us. It is about seeking His will and asking for His help to do what we need to do. When we align our will with Heavenly Father's will, answers and spiritual power will flow more freely. Following this pattern allows us to pray with faith.

Did Heavenly Father Hear My Prayers?

Nearly 20 years ago, our fifth son, Benjamin, was born. My wife sensed that something wasn't right with Benjamin's eyes. We consulted a close friend and retinal specialist in our ward, who confirmed our concerns and diagnosed Benjamin's condition as retinal blastoma, a rare form of cancer of the eye. The news was devastating.

A few weeks later, Benjamin was to have the first of many surgical treatments. Prior to the operation we met with the surgeon and told him that we believed that he would find that

Prayer is less about changing our circumstances and more about changing us. It is about seeking His will and asking for His help to do what we need to do.





Benjamin's eye would be healed and not need to be removed. Our entire family and many ward members were fasting and praying for our son, and we had great faith that Benjamin would be healed.

An hour later, the surgeon returned and confirmed that Benjamin's eye had been destroyed by the tumor cells and that his other eye also had several serious tumors that needed immediate treatment. I was speechless. Completely overcome with grief and disbelief, I walked out of the hospital into the damp San Francisco morning and began to walk, weeping bitterly.

I had done everything I had been taught to do. We had prayed and received a strong impression to select this doctor. We had fasted and prayed and felt certain that our infant son would be healed through faith and through the power of the priesthood. Yet the Lord had not intervened. Our faith it seems had been no more than vain hope. I began to question everything I had ever believed. As I walked, I felt betrayed and angry. I was overcome with pain.

I am not proud of the conversation I had with Heavenly Father as I walked and wept that morning. After a time, I got hold of myself emotionally. I remember the words of a children's Primary song coming into my mind. "Heavenly Father, are you really there? And do you hear and answer every child's prayer?" Because you clearly haven't been listening to mine or maybe you just don't really care about me and my son. ("A Child's Prayer," *Children's Songbook*, 12.)

In that moment, a tender mercy came. In my mind and heart, I felt these words: "Kevin, he is my son too." The clarity of the prompting was unmistakable. I realized in that moment that I had not understood the purpose of prayer at all. I had assumed that, just because I had a righteous cause, I could use the priesthood and fasting and prayer to change the will of God.

For the first time in my life, I fully realized that I was not in charge. I knew that I needed to submit to Heavenly Father's will. I couldn't have what I wanted when and how I wanted it just because I was keeping the commandments. The purpose of prayer was not to tell Heavenly Father what to do, rather to find out what He would have me do and learn. I needed to align my will with His.

We would face another six years of serious challenges as we battled our little son's condition to save his other eye and his life. But I now knew that Heavenly Father was aware and in charge. And no matter how things ultimately worked out, He had heard and answered my prayer. Today our miracle son is serving a full-time mission in Spain.

I have absolute evidence in my own life that God is our loving Heavenly Father and does in fact hear and answer our prayers. As you continue to learn and understand the divine principle of personal prayer as the Savior taught it, prayer will become a source of great spiritual power and revelation in your life. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University-Hawaii on May 17, 2011. For the full text in English, visit devotional.byuh.edu.

“My brother has a problem with pornography. He is working with our bishop on it, so I want to support him, but it has affected my trust in him. How do I deal with this?”

It's great that you want to support your brother. He'll need your encouragement. Since your brother has made you aware of this challenge in his life and you know that he is diligently addressing it, he has already taken a huge step toward regaining your trust. Overcoming the secrecy and deceit so often associated with this challenge is evidence of major progress. This can help you begin to place more trust in him. It will take time for that trust to fully mature. But that doesn't mean you can't still love him. You can pray for him, be a good example to him, and do other things to help him.

Try not to judge him. If he feels judged, he will probably feel worse about his struggles, and that will make it harder for him to change. Everyone has weaknesses; that's one reason the Savior provided the Atonement. Trust in the Lord and in the fact that, through repentance, your brother can change and be forgiven.

Since you know that your brother is working with your bishop on this issue, you could talk to your bishop about this situation. He and your parents can help you know what to do. As a family you can work together to help your brother. You could have a family fast to help him (see Matthew 17:21), which will provide a shield against temptation.

Note: Many young women also struggle with addictions to pornography. The same advice would apply in relationships with sisters.

Express Sorrow but Not Rejection



Pornography is no small thing, and it hurts a lot to find out that someone you care about has a problem with it. Try to forgive him, no matter how long it takes. Also remember that forgiveness and trust are separate. By his actions your brother can earn your trust back. Express sorrow but never rejection. He needs to feel that he is not alone, and he needs to be held accountable

for his actions. When you love him despite the addiction, he will see hope and find the strength to overcome the problem.

Bethany A., age 18, Arizona, USA

Encourage Him



I know it's hard when you invest so much trust in someone and then he abuses it. The first thing

I would do is pray and ask Heavenly Father for strength to talk to your brother. You can talk to him weekly about how he is doing and find scriptures in your personal scripture study that will encourage him to get help. Supporting him, even though he has lost your trust, is important. Let him know that the Lord loves him and will forgive him. Remind him of hymn 187, "God Loved Us, So He Sent His Son." Let him know that Jesus Christ atoned for our sins, and if we repent, we can improve a little bit every day.

Naomi B., age 16, Minnesota, USA

Support Him

Show him that you love him no matter what his choices have been. Support him every step of the way and let him know how glad you are that he's working at it. The trust won't come rushing back all at once, but he's trying to earn it back. He's on the right track, and as he learns how he can become better, you can learn how to trust him again.

Kirstin M., age 17, North Carolina, USA

Be Forgiving

The power of the Atonement, if you apply it, will help your brother have the strength to repent. The Atonement provides healing for those who have been injured, as well as for those who have made hurtful choices. Be forgiving always and look to love instead of turning to anger.

Seth B., age 18, Missouri, USA

Pray for Guidance

Kneel down and ask for guidance from our Heavenly Father and speak with your brother and pray with him. As we humble ourselves before our Heavenly Father, He “will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). He will help your brother be strong against temptation and always choose the right.

Alejandra B., age 22, California, USA

Don't Lose Hope

Don't lose hope in your brother, because this is the time when he needs his family most. Overcoming a problem with pornography is hard enough for him without the worry of losing his family's confidence in him. I've had the same problem, and I'm working to repent to be worthy to go to the temple to be sealed to my family. I was always afraid of what my parents would say or how they would treat me. I was surprised when I found out how supportive they were and how eager

they were to offer solutions to help me become better. If your brother is consulting with his bishop and making an honest effort, he's making progress.

Young man from Alaska, USA

Trust the Lord



The Atonement is not just for our sins but also for our hardships and struggles. Jesus Christ knows exactly how you

feel—He has felt it before. Reach out to Him, and you'll find His hand waiting to lift you up. Pray for His help and the healing power of the Atonement. Tell Heavenly Father all your concerns, worries, and hopes for the situation. Most importantly, don't just wait for a miracle to happen—do something. Study the scriptures, search for wisdom that will help you, and keep faith that everything will work out.

Megan A., age 19, Arizona, USA



A WAY TO MAKE CORRECTIONS

“Our Heavenly Father knew before we came to this mortal

existence that negative forces would tempt us to drift from our course, ‘for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God’ [Romans 3:23]. That is why He prepared a way for us to make corrections. Through the merciful process of true repentance and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, our sins can be forgiven and we will ‘not perish, but have everlasting life’ [John 3:16].”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “A Matter of a Few Degrees,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2008, 60.

UPCOMING QUESTION

“What am I supposed to think about during the sacrament?”

Submit your answer by July 15 at liahona.lds.org, by email to liahona@ldschurch.org, or by mail to:

Liahona, Questions & Answers 7/13
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

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.



**By Elder
Steven E. Snow**
Church Historian
and Member of
the Seventy

The overwhelming evidence of Church history is positive and faith-promoting. In its full context, it is absolutely inspiring.

I enjoy reading historical accounts of the early Church members who left their homes and, with great sacrifice, gathered with the Saints. I find their stories compelling, and I draw great strength from learning what they went through to live and demonstrate their faith by following the prophets and doing hard things. When you read what *they* did, somehow *your* lot in life doesn't seem quite so difficult.

I love Church history. I'm reading more of it now than ever, and I find it fascinating and faith-promoting. For instance, it is absolutely astounding what the early missionaries accomplished, having no resources other

than a burning faith and testimony that caused them to do remarkable things. Those examples help me understand that I can do hard things if I continue to feed my faith and testimony. Time after time, my testimony is strengthened as I see what has happened with this great work as it has rolled forward.

Viewing the Past from the Present

History is a great way to be inspired to prepare yourself spiritually. In our history we can see those who prepared themselves spiritually and overcame and those who fell away because they weren't spiritually prepared for what came. We can learn that dedication

BALANCING CHURCH HISTORY

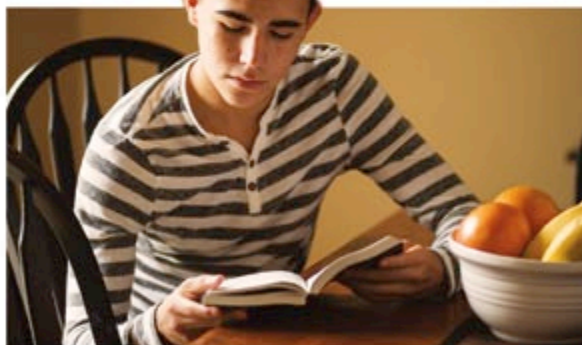




to the gospel, prayer, and testimony can help us do great things and that we've got to spend time developing our spiritual side or we'll pay the price.

The people in our history were regular people like us, many of whom did extraordinary things. While they were all seeking for perfection, they weren't perfect. Those early Church members had their difficulties and struggled with things just as we do today. But I find strength in knowing that those challenges, those strivings for perfection, have been around for a long time.

Certainly, the world has changed in the last generation or two. The Internet has put all kinds of



Like anything, you have to approach Church history with balance.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

How do I answer my friends who say that some of our history, like angels and buried gold plates, is hard to believe?

If our history falls outside what people imagine to be possible, it's normal that they would be skeptical. We would simply point out that it is consistent with other miraculous events in God's dealings with man throughout history, and we would bear our testimony to them and ask them to study it for themselves. Then we would invite them to ponder it and pray to Heavenly Father about it, "with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ" (Moroni 10:4).

If they are willing to perform this "experiment," to "exercise a particle of faith" (Alma 32:27) and ask God, the Holy Ghost will reveal the truth to them.

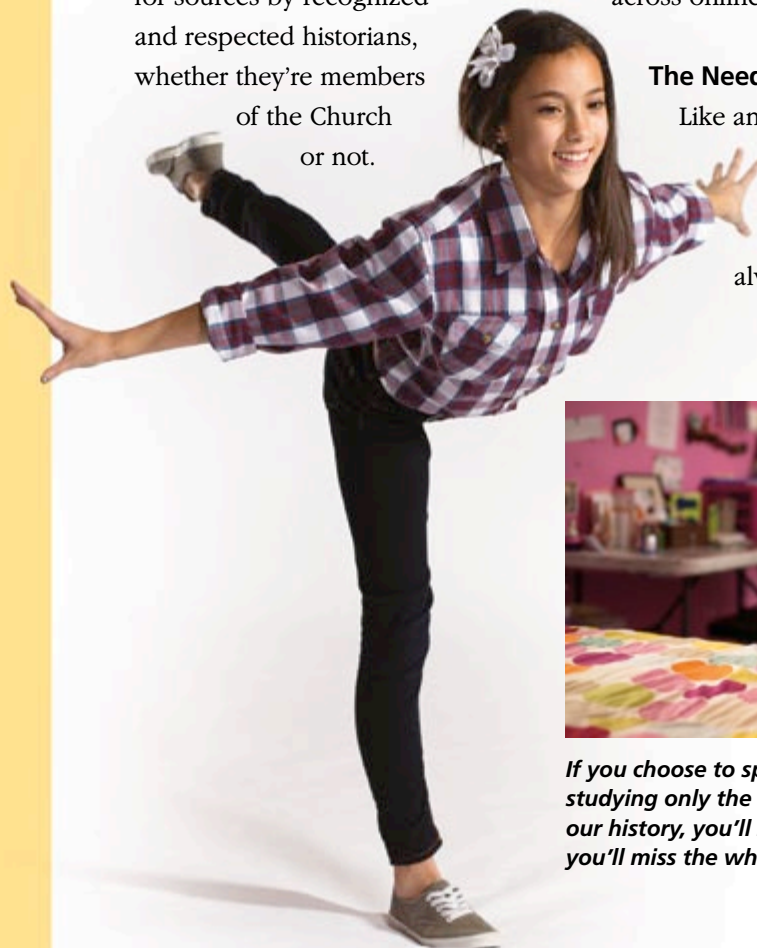
information at our fingertips—good, bad, truthful, untruthful—including information on Church history. You can read a great deal about our history, but it's important to read about it and understand it in context. The difficulty with some information online is that it's out of context and you don't really see the whole picture.

Information that tries to embarrass the Church is generally very subjective and unfair. We should seek sources that more objectively describe our beliefs and our history. Some websites are very mean-spirited and can be sensational in how they present the information. Look for sources by recognized and respected historians, whether they're members of the Church or not.

Some young people are surprised and shocked by anti-Mormon material on the Internet because they haven't fortified themselves against it. They may not have spent enough time on the spiritual side to prepare and strengthen themselves for whatever may come. When life experiences come to knock their legs out from under them, it's important that they do those basic things we always talk about: continuing to study the scriptures and having meaningful prayer with our Heavenly Father. Those basic things prepare people for all kinds of adversity, including anti-Mormon articles they'll come across online.

The Need for Balance

Like anything, you have to approach Church history with balance. The true Church has always been a minority,



If you choose to spend much of your time studying only the controversial chapters of our history, you'll see a few threads, but you'll miss the whole quilt.

and it seems like we've always had a target on our back. We'll always face adversity, and we might as well get used to that. The best way to deal with it is to make sure we're personally worthy and that our testimony is strong. If you're spending time on websites that criticize the Church and its history but aren't spending time in the scriptures, you're going to be out of balance, and those negative things may have an unduly strong effect on you. If you were in proper balance, they wouldn't.

In my own teenage years I didn't completely understand the importance of developing spiritually. I was probably more interested in becoming a good football player than in becoming a good student of the Book of Mormon. It wasn't until I reached the mission field that, like many young men, I had that transformation and understood what happiness is really about. It's the joy, the peace that comes from serving the Lord, from studying and from praying, from loving and helping others. I find if I ignore those aspects of my life, things don't go as well as they should. If I do those things, everything seems a little more in balance.

As I keep my life in balance, I can look at history objectively and understand that while most of our ancestors are to be admired, they were human and made mistakes. There are sad or confusing episodes in our history that we seek to understand better, but some of these questions might not be

answered on this side of the veil. And that's fine.

If a friend came to me with an honest question about a controversial issue from Church history, I'd do my best to answer it. And if I found that he was spending a lot of time in that area, the first questions I'd want to ask him are: "Are you reading the Book of Mormon? Are you saying your prayers? Are you keeping your life in balance so that you can protect yourself against the storms of life?"

The overwhelming evidence of Church history is positive and faith-promoting. If you choose to spend much of your time studying only the controversial chapters of our history, you'll see a few threads, but you'll miss the whole quilt. And you need to understand the whole picture of our history. In its full context, it is absolutely inspiring.

For example, Joseph Smith was a remarkable person. Was he perfect? No. We're all mortal. But to read the Book of Mormon and the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants and to see what he did in restoring the Church in a short period of time is a remarkable testimony. All prophets have challenges and difficulties, and it shouldn't surprise us that Joseph Smith saw adversity and offended a few people. But he clearly was a prophet of God.

No Time Like the Present

I can't imagine a greater time to be a member of the Church. When my wife and I were married, there

were 13 temples in the entire Church, and we had a goal to visit every one of them. Now there are around 140 temples, and we're never going to visit them all. All of these fruits of the Restoration—prophets and apostles, temples, priesthood, the Book of Mormon, the revelations—are a great blessing in our lives. And it was all made possible by the Savior, by His gospel, by our Father's plan.

I may be a simple guy in many respects, but I'm smart enough to know that my Heavenly Father loves me. He loves us all. We really are His sons and daughters. He really wants us to return to Him. He doesn't micromanage our lives. That's part of our growing process. He wants us to learn and exercise agency and deal with adversity. But, truly, I can see His hand in my life and in my family's life. And I'm grateful that we get this mortal experience, because I love life. A lot of stuff goes wrong, but there are a lot of great things in life, and I'm grateful we as spiritual beings have a chance to come to earth and gain a body and learn things that are going to help us through the eternities.

History blesses our lives because it gives us a chance to look back. Sometimes it's hard to look back on our own lives, but through history we can look back in the lives of others and learn things that have blessed them. And we can help ourselves avoid mistakes by doing the things that have blessed our ancestors. ■



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



STRONG

A testimony can come to any ordinary person, wherever he or she may be, because our Heavenly Father and the Holy Ghost know each one of us intimately.

Seeking for an Answer in the Sacred Grove

As a young person, I had the opportunity to be in Palmyra, New York, one summer evening. I found myself in the Sacred Grove, alone. I knelt down to pray, asking Heavenly Father to provide me some manifestation or indication about what I truly already knew had occurred in that sacred place. I prayed with great sincerity, for a long time, in an attitude of reverence. And I did not receive any answer or any prompting from the Holy Ghost. Nothing came. Finally, I gave up and left disappointed, wondering, “What didn’t I do right? Why? What more was needed?” It seemed to me that with the surroundings, there could not be any better place to receive an answer to such a prayer.

I learned from that experience that we cannot demand things from God.

We cannot say, “You have to answer me in this way, right this moment.” It is up to Him to decide how and when and what He will communicate to us. Our responsibility is to always be in the right condition to receive the promptings or whisperings, the revelation, the inspiration of the Spirit. But He makes the decision of how and when.

Receiving an Answer at Home

What I was seeking at that time—which did not come then—did indeed come to me five or six weeks later. I was at home reading the Book of Mormon. And without my asking, there came upon me a strong impression, feeling, and communication through the Holy Ghost that confirmed my belief and testimony.

It was such a strong communication that it made me cry. It was also such a pure communication that it had no

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAN BURR

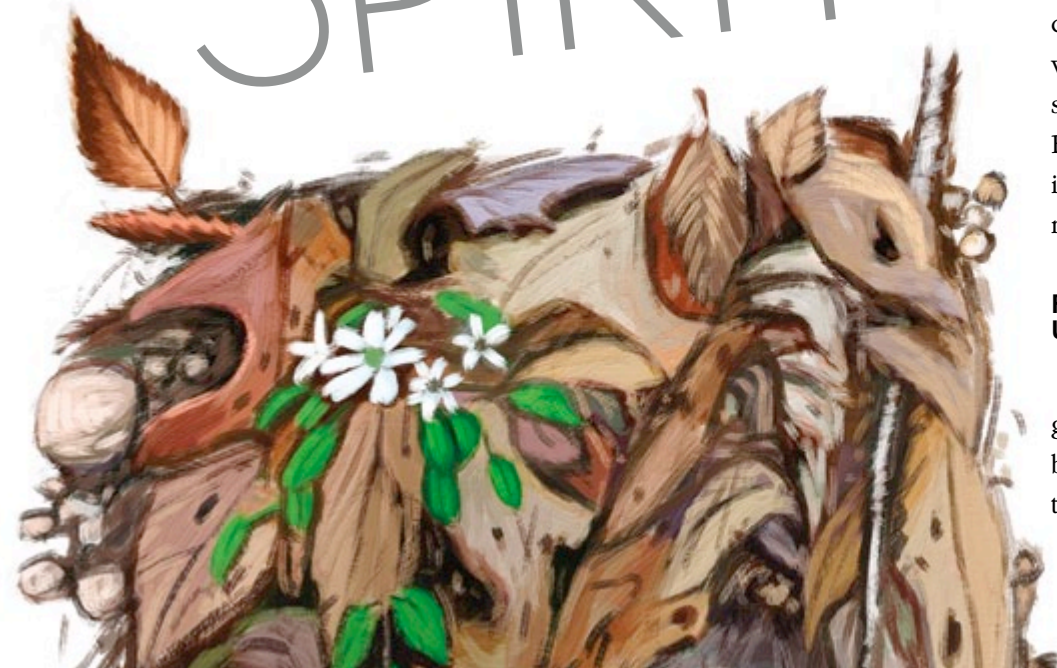


IMPRESSIONS OF THE SPIRIT

need for words. The Spirit does not need to be limited to words; He can communicate Spirit to spirit with a language that is unmistakable because it has no words. It is a communication of pure knowledge and intelligence from the Spirit, and I have come to know that it truly is the best way to acquire knowledge. It is stronger and longer lasting than touching or seeing; we can come to doubt the physical senses, but we cannot doubt when the Holy Spirit speaks to us. It is the surest witness. Because of this, the unforgivable sin is to deny the Holy Ghost or the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

Feeling God's Love and Understanding

I truly feel fine that the Lord did not give me an answer in the Sacred Grove because I might have come to think that one must make a pilgrimage to



Palmyra in order to be able to receive a testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Now I know that it can come at any place. You don't have to go to Jerusalem in order to receive a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. That testimony can come to any ordinary person, wherever he or she may be, because our Heavenly Father and the Holy Ghost know each one of us intimately. They know where we are and how to find us. And They don't need visas. In fact, They are acquainted with the entire world! They already know.

I promise you, young people, that if you will continue faithful, asking, the Lord is going to give you the same answer, the same testimony, the same confirmation that He gave me, because I know that He loves all of you as much as He does me or President Thomas S. Monson or any one of His children.

God's love is for everyone, and it is infinite. He knows how to communicate with each person. He knows where you are and how to reach your heart and spirit through the Holy Spirit. Do not stop praying. Do not stop asking. Do not stop obeying the commandments. The time will come, if it has not already, when you will receive this strong testimony. And it will not be just once. But rather, through the Lord's mercy, it will come time after time after time throughout your life.

Continuing to Receive a Witness

Thus it happened to me. While I was serving a mission in Tucumán, Argentina, I was teaching a family and bearing testimony about the First Vision of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The family did not believe it. However, in the moment I bore my testimony, I received another confirmation of my

testimony. The Spirit said, "Your words of testimony are true." He was testifying to me about my testimony.

Throughout your life you are going to repeatedly receive confirmations that God is there, that He is our Heavenly Father, that He lives, that He called the Prophet Joseph Smith to serve as the Prophet of the Restoration, that His Son lives, and that His grace is sufficient to save us, cleanse us, and forgive us all. That testimony comes time after time throughout our lives.

I know of these things. I am a special witness of them. I know that our Lord lives, that He is literally a resurrected being, that He guides and is at the head of this Church that bears His name, that it is His, and that you are His sheep. ■

From an address given to youth in Salta, Argentina, in November 2011.



O HOW GREAT THE PLAN OF OUR GOD!



At a time when there was so much hurt and loneliness in my heart, my knowledge of the gospel gave me the confidence to move forward.

By Amarsanaa E.

I was raised in a place where the Church was not well known—a town now called Berkh, in northern Mongolia. I am the middle child of three boys, and growing up, we were together all the time. When my older brother went to the city to go to school, I missed him a lot. Two years later he came home for his summer vacation. That summer our family went hunting for three months in the rocky hills. It was one of the best summer vacations of my life.

My brother started telling me about a church he had joined called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At that time I didn't like Christian churches, so I didn't pay much attention to what he was telling me.

One autumn day we arrived home from hunting to discover some visitors from the city. They were from the Church that my brother had been talking about. He returned to the city with them that night. Later we heard

why he had left: he had received a mission call. He hadn't even told us he had sent in his application! My older brother left for his mission to the United States of America soon after.

Converted to the Gospel

The next year, when I finished high school, I went to the city to attend a university. The family I stayed with turned out to be members of the Church. On Sunday morning they invited me to come to church with



EVEN THE HARDEST TIMES CAN BE A BLESSING

"If we have faith in Jesus Christ, the hardest as well as the easiest times in life can be a blessing. In all conditions, we can choose the right with the guidance of the Spirit. We have the gospel of Jesus Christ to shape and guide our lives if we choose it. And with prophets revealing to us our place in the plan of salvation, we can live with perfect hope and a feeling of peace."

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Mountains to Climb," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2012, 26.

them. Since I'd heard a lot about this Church, I decided that I would try going once.

I ended up attending church many times. I couldn't help but feel peaceful every time I was there. People there were nice, always shaking hands with me. The Church was different from what I had thought. Soon I started taking discussions from the missionaries. I met with the missionaries for almost two years.

I knew I wanted to be baptized, but my baptism had to be postponed because of my struggles with the Word of Wisdom. It was difficult for me, but eventually I was ready for baptism. I was fortunate to be baptized by my older brother, who had returned from his mission only months earlier. When I remember that moment now, I cry sometimes. It was the happiest moment of my life.

After I joined the Church, my brother talked about missionary work almost every day. He always encouraged me to go on a mission. With his help, I filled out

my mission application. I will never forget how happy my older brother and I were then.

A Frightening Experience

One evening my brother called me to come and meet with him after work. He wanted to talk with me about some things relating to my mission. We set a time to meet at the central square.

Around this time parliamentary elections were happening in Mongolia. When we met at the central square, citizens were holding a demonstration because of the election. Police were there, but the demonstration was getting violent and scary, escalating into a riot. A big building and several cars were on fire, and people were screaming. It was frightening.

My brother and I had met far away from the demonstration, but he was worried. He gave me money for a taxi and told me to go straight home. He told me that I would see him the next day. He planned to go back to his



home, which was close to where he worked. The taxi arrived, and we said a quick good-bye before I drove away.

I soon found out that the government had closed all the roads because of the rioting. Unable to get to my home, which was in the outskirts of the city, I spent the night at work instead. Armored cars and armed soldiers were everywhere. The fighting worsened, and that night a state of emergency was called. It lasted for four days.

When the state of emergency ended, my brother-in-law came to pick me up. We got to his home to find all our relatives waiting there. They were all crying. I learned that my older brother had been shot as he was walking home.

My heart felt like it was going to burst. My brother died when he was 24 because of that demonstration. The days following my brother's death were among the most horrible of my life.

It was during this difficult time that I received my mission call. After

having been through my conversion, baptism, and mission paper preparation with my brother, I was left to open my mission call alone. To my surprise, I was called to serve in my own country.

Since I was alone, I knelt down right there and thanked my Heavenly Father in prayer. And I prayed for my brother. I cried and cried while I prayed. At this time, when there was so much hurt and loneliness in my heart, I felt the Spirit witness of the plan of salvation more deeply to me, and my faith was strengthened.

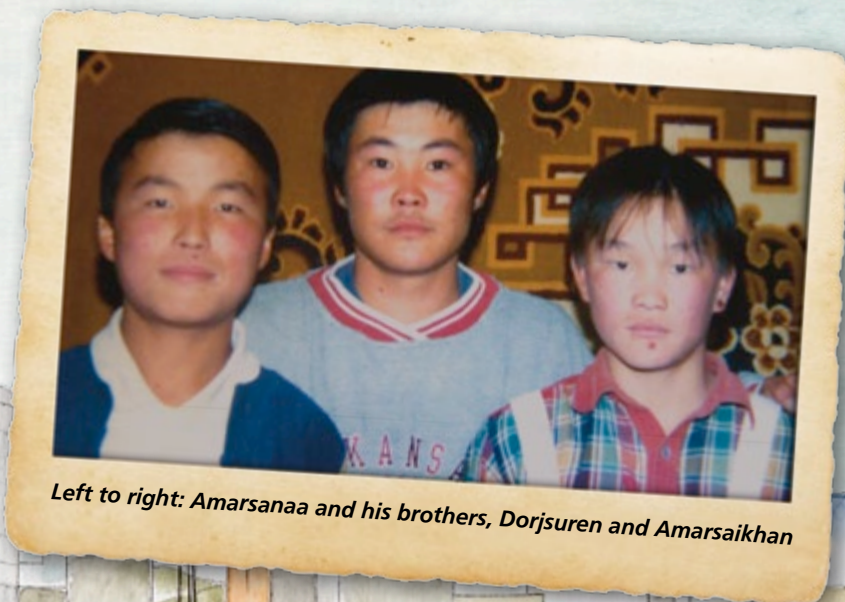
A Testimony of His Plan

Even though my brother was not there to open my mission call with me, I will always be grateful to him.

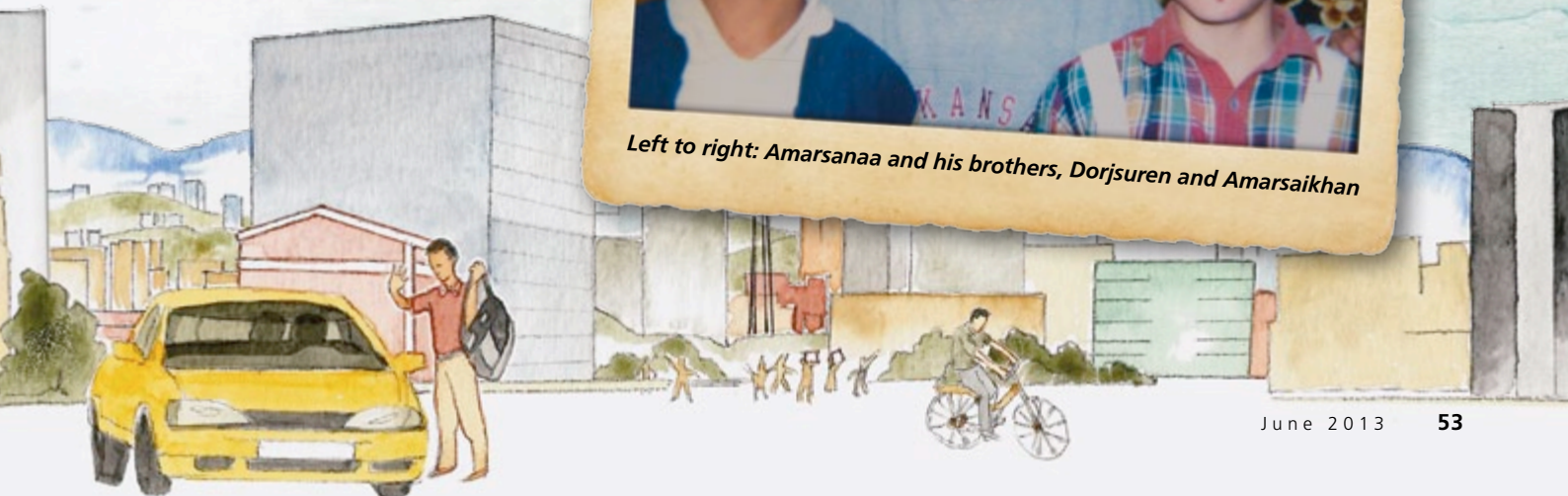
I am also very grateful that God has given us the plan of salvation through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It is the most amazing plan. If we follow this plan, we will feel peace in our hearts.

The scriptures tell us: "O how great the plan of our God! For . . . the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls" (2 Nephi 9:13).

I know that my brother is alive in the spirit world. This knowledge gives me the confidence I need to do well on my mission. I know he will be with me during the difficult times—and so will the Lord. ■



Left to right: Amarsanaa and his brothers, Dorjsuren and Amarsaikhan





Five Ways to Follow the Counsel of Priesthood Leaders

The Lord spoke to His disciples and taught the people in His day. Today He continues to do so.

Although the Savior isn't physically among us, He calls members of His Church to lead and guide us, and He asks us to follow their counsel as they receive it through the Holy Spirit.

Who can receive revelation that applies to me?

Revelation can come to you personally through the Spirit, and it can also come through priesthood leaders set apart for specific callings to help them receive guidance for those entrusted to their care.

The prophet receives revelation for the entire Church; your Area Presidency receives it for your area; your stake president for your stake; and your bishop for your ward. Revelation comes to these individuals in their callings, but it all comes from the same source: Heavenly Father.

What does it mean to sustain our leaders?

Raising our right arm to the square when we sustain people is a physical demonstration that we promise to honor, respect, and support them as

they seek to magnify their callings. Following the counsel of our leaders is one way we can sustain them. Leaders have wisdom and perspective, and their instruction is meant to help us live the gospel. By being obedient to their counsel, we will increase in faith and strengthen our testimony.

Here are five ways you can follow the counsel of your priesthood leaders:

1. *Attend general, stake, and ward conferences.* You might want to bring paper and a pen to take notes. As you listen to your priesthood leaders, write down any impressions you feel, things you should do, or changes you should make in your life. Make sure to take notes when they speak to you in other Church meetings or interviews as well.
2. *Pray to receive a testimony of the counsel they give.* The Holy Ghost can testify to you that the counsel given is Heavenly Father's will.
3. *Make specific plans on how you will incorporate the counsel into your life.* For example, prophets

YOU CAN SUSTAIN LOCAL LEADERS BY:

- Accepting the call to serve.
- Helping when asked.
- Preparing for lessons by reading them ahead of time.
- Praying for your leaders.
- Participating in class.

have counseled members of the Church to get an education. What are your plans? Will you go to college or a vocational school? What will you study? When will you go? What are you doing now to prepare so you're accepted into the program you desire?

4. *Keep yourself informed.* Learn the current counsel of Church leaders by reading Church materials. *For the Strength of Youth* is a great resource. The *Liahona*

contains the words of the prophets and apostles. If your ward or branch has a newsletter, read any messages given by your local priesthood leaders. Most important, review what leaders have said in recent general conferences.

5. *Start right away.* Sometimes we can be tempted to delay following the counsel of our leaders. After you make specific plans to incorporate that counsel, act immediately. ■



JOIN THE CONVERSATION



Throughout June you'll be studying about the priesthood in your Young Women and Sunday School classes and priesthood quorums. Consider what questions you have about the priesthood, how it affects your life, and how you can support priesthood leaders. Share your questions with your parents or youth leaders so they can help you better understand the doctrines of the priesthood in your lessons this month. You may also want to think about experiences you've had where the priesthood blessed your life. Write down your feelings, and consider sharing them with others at home, at church, or on social media.



I TOOK THE BISHOPRIC'S CHALLENGE

As I neared the end of seventh grade, I began to feel like I was missing something. I prayed each night and was involved at church, but it just wasn't enough. I had thought about reading the Book of Mormon and seeing if the Church really is true, but I was too afraid to step out of my comfort zone to make sure.

My bishopric challenged our youth group to regularly read the scriptures on our own. I meant to, but I felt that I just didn't have time.

I then had such a strong feeling that I *needed* to read the Book of Mormon and see if it is true. I felt as though I could never find peace if I didn't.

I started reading and was barely halfway through the first chapter when I felt the Spirit so strong, like I had never felt it before. It was so peaceful; I wanted it to stay with me forever.

I'm grateful my leaders were inspired to challenge us to read the Book of Mormon. They are always ready to help when I have a spiritual problem. I know the gospel is true, for it has blessed me so much.

Camryn G., Utah, USA

LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE BUNDERSON, MAY NOT BE COPIED; FAR RIGHT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ELDON LINSCHOTEN



By David L. Beck
Young Men
General President

GRATITUDE

Each of us will be happier if we are full of gratitude.

In the summer of 2011, I had the privilege of meeting Josh Larson at the Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico, USA. A few months later, Josh was helping his father clean out a warehouse. Without warning, a chain transporting a 1,480 pound (670 kg) beam suddenly snapped, dropping the beam onto Josh, crushing him from his neck to his legs. Miraculously, Josh's father was able to move the beam off his son's body. He performed CPR until emergency personnel arrived to transport Josh, who was still not breathing, to the hospital.

Josh spent days in critical condition. Doctors worked fervently to repair his cracked skull, shattered sinuses, and other severe injuries. After numerous operations, Josh was eventually stabilized. He then began the long, slow road to recovery.

Today Josh still experiences many of the effects of his accident. He has a damaged eye, is partially deaf in one ear, and has a metal plate in his head. Yet he chooses to look at his ordeal as a blessing. He knows that he owes his life and his recovery to Heavenly Father and the support of those

around him. Gratitude fills his heart.

Gratitude during Adversity

At a recent conference for youth, Josh talked about the prayers and fasting offered by family, friends, neighbors, and ward and stake leaders: "I am counting my blessings. Prayers have been answered. I think this has been more of a blessing than a trial. I love all you guys."

Josh is an example of the teaching in *For the Strength of Youth*: "Live with a spirit of thanksgiving and you will



Josh's recovery has been long and slow. He still experiences many of the effects of his accident but considers the accident to be more of a blessing than a trial.





KEY IDEAS ABOUT GRATITUDE

“The Lord wants you to have a spirit of gratitude in all you do and say. . . .

“In your prayers, pour out your heart to your Father in Heaven in thanks for the blessings you have received. . . .

“. . . Express your gratitude to others for the many ways they bless your life.”

For the Strength of Youth (booklet, 2011), 18.

have greater happiness and satisfaction. . . . Even in your most difficult times, you can find much to be grateful for.”¹

Gratitude can turn trials, even as serious as the one Josh faced, into blessings. It takes effort to exercise gratitude and have an optimistic approach to life. Yet the Lord truly blesses us, and His tender mercies should not go unnoticed or unappreciated. The Book of Mormon prophet Moroni reminds us of the importance of gratitude and encourages us to “remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts” (Moroni 10:3).

Help of the Holy Ghost

In our busy lives, it can be easy to overlook and forget Heavenly Father’s guidance in our daily activities. The

Holy Ghost helps us remember that we have much to be grateful for. President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught, “It is the Holy Ghost who helps us see what God has done for us.” He urged us “to find ways to recognize and remember God’s kindness.”²

Feelings of gratitude will inspire us to follow the Lord and live a life of service.

As we allow the Holy Ghost to remind us of God’s kindness and love for us, we will be filled with feelings of gratitude. These feelings will move us to thank our Father in Heaven. *True to the Faith* teaches: “Thank your Heavenly Father for His goodness to you. You can express your gratitude to God by acknowledging His hand in all things,

thanking Him for all that He gives you, keeping His commandments, and serving others. . . . Work at being grateful. You will find that it yields wonderful results.”³

As we recognize our blessings, our testimonies increase. The more we are able to see the Lord’s hand in our lives, the closer we come to Him. One of the best ways we can show our gratitude to our Father in Heaven is by expressing thanks to Him and to others for the ways they touch our lives.⁴

These feelings of gratitude will inspire us to follow the Lord and live a life of service—a life that inspires those around us and promotes positive change. ■

NOTES

1. *For the Strength of Youth* (booklet, 2011), 18.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “O Remember, Remember,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 67–68.
3. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 79.
4. See *For the Strength of Youth*, 18.



A GIFT FOR GRANDMA

By Kimberly Sabin Plumb

A simple letter to say thanks meant so much to my grandmother.

When I was young, my grandma often had get-togethers for my cousins and me. There were about 14 of us, and we were always excited when Grandma invited us over for dinners, sleepovers, game nights, and holidays. Grandma's house was the place to be!

Every activity at Grandma's house was fun. But I never thought about all of the time and work that went into each activity. I just thought that was what grandmas did, and I loved it!

After years of fun cousin memories at Grandma's house, our family moved away. Later my grandma came to spend a special day with us in our new home. My family thought long and hard to find the perfect gift for her. She has more stuff than anyone I know. What could we get the grandma who has everything?

I asked my dad for ideas, and he told me the same thing he says every year: "Why don't you write her a really nice letter?" I was out of ideas, and so early the next morning, before anyone else was awake, I sat at the kitchen table with my feet on the cold tile and wrote my grandma a special letter.

At first I wondered what I could write besides, "You are so wonderful.

Thanks for everything." As I looked out the kitchen window at the palm trees and the sky, I thought of the many things Grandma had done for us over the years. I remembered that I had never told my grandma how much those times spent together as a family meant to me.

In my letter, I told my grandma that I love her, and I thanked her for all of the special memories. I let her know how important they still were to me, even years later. Then I put the letter in an envelope, tied it with a red ribbon, and went back into my warm, carpeted room.

When the time came to give Grandma her gifts, I slowly pulled out

my letter. I didn't know how to feel about my gift to her.

She looked surprised when I gave her the envelope. I watched closely as she carefully tore off the end of the envelope and pulled out the letter on narrow pink paper. As she read it, she started to smile and tears filled her eyes. I had never seen my grandma cry before. She slowly looked up and turned toward me with warm, brown eyes. She whispered, "Thank you, thank you. I didn't think anyone remembered."

Grandma, who had done so much to build strong family relationships, had no idea that I remembered or was grateful for those times together. She wiped her eyes and said, "Kimberly, thank you. That was the best present anyone could ever give me."

I gave Grandma a big hug, feeling her soft skin against my cheek and smelling her "grandma" smell that was a mix of baby powder and musk. I was so grateful for my dad's idea to write her a letter. I didn't know that words of gratitude and love would mean more to my grandma than all of the knickknacks, perfume, and fruitcakes that money could buy. ■

The author lives in California, USA.



EXPRESS LOVE IN WORD AND DEED

"With gratitude in our hearts, may we fill our days—

as much as we can—with those things which matter most. May we cherish those we hold dear and express our love to them in word and in deed."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Finding Joy in the Journey," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 87.

The Bad Movie

When Evelyn saw the name of the movie, her heart started to pound.



By Julia Woodbury

Church Magazines

Based on a true story

"I will only read and watch things that are pleasing to Heavenly Father"

(My Gospel Standards).

Class, I have a surprise for you," Mrs. Taylor said as she walked to the front of the room.

Evelyn looked up from her test, grinning. There was a big "A+" at the top.

"You all did so well on your tests that tomorrow we'll watch a movie as a reward," Mrs. Taylor said, writing three movie titles on the board. "Here are the options we can vote on," she said over everyone's cheers.

Evelyn bounced in her seat, trying to see what the titles were. The first two movies were some of her

favorites. She leaned over to her friend Katy. "Which one are you going to vote for?"

"Definitely number three," Katy said. "My parents wouldn't let us watch it at home, so I never got to see it."

Evelyn looked at the board again and saw the name of the third movie. Her heart started to pound. Evelyn had heard of this movie, and she knew it was one she wouldn't feel right about watching. What if her class voted for it?

"Who would like to vote for option one?" Mrs. Taylor asked.

Evelyn stretched her hand high and looked around. She bit her lip nervously. Only two other people were voting.

Mrs. Taylor made tally marks on the board. "Option two?"

Evelyn's heart sank. Only three hands went up.

"And option three?"

Fifteen hands shot up. Evelyn slumped down in her seat, a sick feeling settling in her stomach. How could she get out of watching that movie if everyone else wanted to?

When she got home, Evelyn went straight to her room and let



"In order to help others, we ourselves need the spiritual and moral courage to withstand the evil we see on every side."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Three Goals to Guide You," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 119.

from Mom explaining how watching the movie would make Evelyn feel uncomfortable. In the other hand she carried three of her favorite movies. Evelyn handed the note to Mrs. Taylor and watched her read it.

"Thank you for letting me know how you feel," Mrs. Taylor said.

"My mom says it is OK for me to go sit in with another class while the movie is playing," Evelyn said. "But I also brought some other movies in case everyone would like to watch one of them instead."

Mrs. Taylor smiled and reached for the stack of movies. "A movie is not much of a reward if we can't all enjoy it," she said.

Mrs. Taylor wrote the new titles on the board. "Class, I'd like to vote again on the movie for today. I have some new options for you."

Evelyn went and sat at her desk, happy she wouldn't have to miss out on the class reward. But the best reward of all was knowing that Heavenly Father had taken away her fear and given her courage to do what was right. ■

her backpack fall to the floor with a heavy *thunk*. The sick feeling had stuck with her the entire day. "I wish I actually could be sick," she thought. "Then I wouldn't have to go to school tomorrow."

Evelyn pulled her test out of her backpack and stared at it, clutching it in her hands. "The movie was supposed to be a reward, not a punishment!" she thought, angrily crumpling the test up and stuffing it under her bed. Tears welled up in her eyes. She knelt by her bed and started to cry. Then she started to pray. She choked out a few tangled

sentences, asking Heavenly Father to take the problem away, but after a while her prayer changed. "Please help me to make this better. I don't want to see a movie that will make me feel bad, and I hope that my friends and teacher will understand."

Evelyn finished her prayer. The trembling, sick feeling had disappeared. She didn't even feel afraid anymore.

Jumping to her feet, Evelyn raced out of her room to find Mom. She had an idea.

The next day, Evelyn walked into class. In one hand she held a note



By Elder Quentin L. Cook
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
The members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are special witnesses of Jesus Christ.



Does
Heavenly Father
love members
of the Church
more than He
loves other
people?

**God loves all
His children.
He wants all
of them to
return to Him.**

**We should also
love and respect
all people.**

**We can help
those who do
not yet know
that God loves
them.
Then they can
have great joy!**



By Elder José L. Alonso
Of the Seventy

A Patient Prayer

I grew up in Mexico with my siblings, my mother, and my grandmother. Every day after doing homework and chores, I played football. I loved football! I would pretend that my right leg was one team and my left leg was the other team.

One day when I was playing football, I suddenly couldn't breathe very well. I rested for a few minutes, but I still had trouble breathing. I became so sick that I had to go to the hospital.

The hospital room had many other children in it, but I missed my family and felt very alone. Although I was not a member of the Church yet, I believed in God. Every day I prayed to be healed, but instead I got worse and worse. The doctors thought I might not live.

The doctors finally sent me home from the hospital, but I had to spend the next year in bed. I took many pills and had two shots every day. And I still had a prayer in my mind and heart. I told Heavenly Father that if I got well, I would serve Him all the rest of my life.

Then one day when I was reading in bed, I accidentally dropped my book on the floor. When I leaned down to pick it up, I realized that I was breathing normally. I dropped



the book again. Again I could pick it up without any problem!

I got out of bed. At first I was dizzy because I had not walked by myself in such a long time. I looked in the mirror and saw that I was smiling. I knew that I had received an answer from Heavenly Father.

Every day since then, I have tried to do something to express my gratitude to Heavenly Father. When I

grew up, I became a doctor to help answer the prayers of other children. And now I am trying to serve Heavenly Father with my calling in the Church.

The answers to prayers do not always come easily, and they do not always come right away. But I know Heavenly Father answers our prayers. He knows our needs, and He knows what is best. ■

I Will Follow Heavenly Father's Plan by Being Baptized and Confirmed

You can use this lesson and activity to learn more about this month's Primary theme.

The Book of Mormon tells about a group of people who gathered together in a forest called Mormon. They wanted to hear Alma teach about the gospel of Jesus Christ. After Alma taught them for many days, he asked them if they wanted to make a covenant to serve God and keep His commandments. He told them that if they would be baptized, the Holy Ghost would always be with them (see Mosiah 18:7–10).

When they heard this, the people were so happy that they “clapped their hands for joy” (Mosiah 18:11). Alma baptized about 200 people in the Waters of Mormon. These people thought of the forest of Mormon as a beautiful place because that is where they learned about the Savior and were baptized (see Mosiah 18:30).

Like Alma's people, we feel joyful as we look forward to or remember being baptized. Like those people, when we are baptized, we make a covenant with God. We promise to keep His commandments and

serve Him. We take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and become members of His Church. When we are confirmed, we receive the same

wonderful promise that Alma's people received: that the Holy Ghost can be with us always, if we keep God's commandments. ■



LISTEN TO THE STILL, SMALL VOICE

Ask one of your parents or another adult to help you cut out the pictures on this page and put them in a bag. Take turns choosing pictures out of the bag. Find the sentence and scripture that match each picture and read them aloud.



The Holy Ghost helps us feel Heavenly Father's love and other good feelings like joy, gentleness, and kindness. He often speaks to our hearts and minds through a still, small voice (see Galatians 5:22–23).

LET'S TALK

Ask someone who has been baptized and confirmed to describe his or her feelings about that special day. If you have already been baptized, share with someone else the feelings you had when you were baptized and confirmed.

The Holy Ghost warns us of danger and helps us recognize when we need to be careful (see D&C 9:9).



The Holy Ghost is a teacher. He teaches us about Jesus Christ and helps us remember all that we have already learned from our parents, teachers, and the scriptures (see John 14:26).



The Holy Ghost guides us and helps us see clearly to make decisions that will bring us back to Heavenly Father (see 2 Nephi 32:5).



Sometimes the Holy Ghost is called the Comforter. Like a soft blanket, He helps us feel safe and peaceful (see John 14:16, 27).



SCRIPTURE AND SONG

- Mosiah 18:8–11
- "When I Am Baptized" (*Children's Songbook*, 103)



A Baptism Blessing



Going under water always made Trevor feel nervous. How could he be baptized?

By Kasey Eyre

Trevor sat down on the couch and put his chin in his hands. His brothers were playing with Grandpa. He wished he could have fun too, but he couldn't stop worrying about his baptism.

Mom sat down next to him and ruffled his hair. "What's wrong?" she asked. "Don't you want to play?"

Trevor shook his head, frowning.

Mom looked at him a moment, then put her arm around him. "Are you still afraid to go under the water?"

Trevor nodded.

The thought of being underwater always scared Trevor. When he was three, he had fallen into a swimming pool. He could never forget how scared he had felt as he sank deeper

and deeper into the water until someone pulled him out. He had been nervous around water ever since.

“Why isn’t anything working?” Trevor asked. “We prayed, and we even visited the font. Nothing worked!” Springing up from the couch, Trevor ran into his room.

Slamming the bedroom door behind him, Trevor fell onto his bed. Soon he heard a soft knock on the door.

Trevor looked over as Dad sat down beside him. “Mom told me you’re still nervous about getting baptized,” Dad said.

Trevor nodded. “I keep praying, but the scared feeling won’t go away.”

Dad thought a minute. “Sometimes when we pray for something, it doesn’t happen right away. You might feel scared now, but maybe by tomorrow you’ll feel better.”

Trevor shook his head, but then he remembered when he was nervous about starting school last year. Dad had given him a blessing. Maybe a blessing could help him get baptized too. He looked up at Dad. “Do you think you and Grandpa can give me a blessing?”

Dad nodded. “I think that’s a great idea.”



A little while later, Trevor sat down in a chair in the family room. Dad and Grandpa placed their hands on his head. Dad blessed him, saying that if he had faith, Heavenly Father could help him to feel calm and peaceful.

The next day as he sat at his baptism in his white clothes, Trevor still felt nervous. He was glad he had received a blessing, but what if he stayed scared? How would he get baptized?

After hearing a talk about baptism, Dad leaned over. “It’s time to go to the font,” he said. Trevor nodded and followed Dad to the font. Dad went in first.

It was Trevor’s turn. He hesitated, but then he remembered his blessing. “Heavenly Father, please help me to have faith,” he prayed silently to himself.

Slowly, Trevor put one foot in the

water. It was nice and warm. Trevor took another step.

With each step, he could feel his worry and fear melting away. Dad took him by the arm and smiled. “Ready?”

Trevor felt calm and peaceful. This was the feeling Heavenly Father had promised to give him. He nodded. “Ready.”

Dad raised his right arm and said the baptismal prayer. As Dad lowered him under the water, Trevor wasn’t afraid. All he could feel was that calm, peaceful feeling growing stronger.

Trevor came out of the water smiling. He knew that his faith had helped him overcome his fear so he could be baptized. He knew Heavenly Father would always help him when he was trying to choose the right. ■

The author lives in Nevada, USA.



“When we choose to follow Christ in faith rather than choosing another path out of fear, we are blessed.”

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Live by Faith and Not by Fear,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 73.

Hi! I'm Enkhjin from Mongolia



I do not have any pets, although I really want a puppy. Sometimes we visit the countryside, where I get to see cows, sheep, camels, horses, and goats. In the wintertime, I like to build snowmen there. Here I am with my brother and friend at Turtle Rock in Terelj National Park.

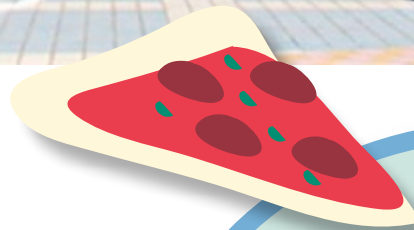
What is your favorite thing to do with your family? Enkhjin A., age 8, from Mongolia loves visiting the country with her family and picking wild berries and strawberries.

I feel happy when my family spends time together. We enjoy having family home evening and going to church every week. We also read the Book of Mormon and pray together every day. These things help keep my family strong.





I live with my mom, dad, and two brothers in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. One million people live in our city! We live on the 12th floor of an apartment building.



In this picture, I'm reading a story to my brother. I like reading a lot! I am in the third grade. I also like mathematics and drawing. One of my classmates is not a member of the Church, but I taught her about the Word of Wisdom and told her to drink milk instead of coffee or tea. I also taught her how to pray to Heavenly Father, since she didn't know. I also invited her to family home evening at my house.

ENKHJIN'S FAVORITES:

Foods—pizza and mashed potatoes

Scripture—1 Nephi 3:7

Songs—"Away in a Manger,"
"Book of Mormon Stories"

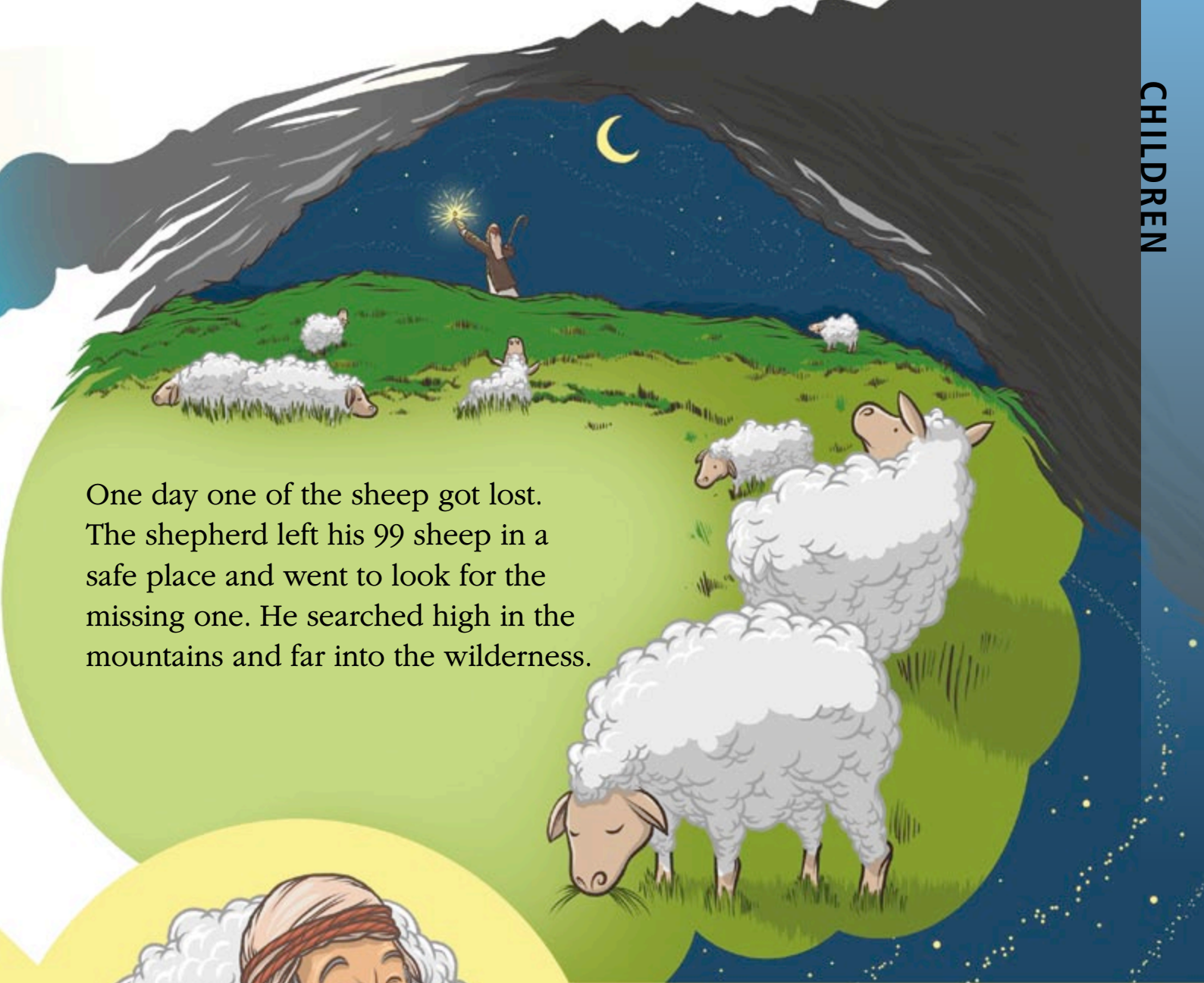


The Shepherd and the Lost Sheep


By Margo Mae, Utah, USA



Jesus taught people by telling them stories. One day He told a story about a shepherd who had 100 sheep. The shepherd was very good and kind. He kept his sheep safe from wild animals. He watched over them at night.



One day one of the sheep got lost. The shepherd left his 99 sheep in a safe place and went to look for the missing one. He searched high in the mountains and far into the wilderness.



When he finally found his sheep, the shepherd rejoiced. He put the sheep on his shoulders and carried it home.



The shepherd called his friends together and told them how he had found his sheep. They celebrated together.

Jesus Christ is like the shepherd in the story, and we are like the sheep. Jesus watches over us and helps protect us from danger. He doesn't give up on us when we make mistakes. And He rejoices when we repent and return to His gospel. That is why the scriptures call Him the Good Shepherd. ■

From Matthew 18:12-14 and Luke 15:3-7.



JESUS TEACHES THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

*“What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?”
(Luke 15:4).*

ILLUSTRATION BY JARED BECKSTRAND

NEWS OF THE CHURCH

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

Church Has Witnessed Historical Changes during President Monson's Ministry

During the past five years of President Thomas S. Monson's leadership, the Church has witnessed historical changes that have impacted members worldwide. The deep fingerprint of the Church's 16th President can be found etched on a wide variety of key announcements and new policy implementations, ranging from missionary work and priesthood leadership training to prolific temple building.

Many of the policies and announcements unveiled during President Monson's administration have a global reach—yet, at their core, they are designed to serve and care for individuals. His lifelong concern for the one is evident in each historical moment.

Here are a few highlights from the first half-decade of the presidency of Thomas S. Monson:

- In a move to expand the opportunities for young members of the Church to serve full-time missions, President Monson announced on October 6, 2012, that men may begin serving at age 18 and women at age 19. His announcement was made during the opening session of the Church's 182nd Semiannual General Conference and sparked an outpouring of missionary enthusiasm. Since the announcement, the Church's Missionary Department has received historic numbers of applications from both young men and young women eager to serve.
- In a letter cosigned by his counselors in the First Presidency—President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf—President Monson announced the 2013 implementation of a new youth curriculum designed “to strengthen and build faith, conversion, and testimony” in the young people of the Church. The new curriculum allows for more interactive teaching in Aaronic Priesthood, Young Women, and youth Sunday School classes patterned after how the Savior taught during His ministry on earth. Weekly classes utilize many of the online resources of the modern-day Church, allowing the youth to enjoy unprecedented participation and involvement.
- Under the direction of President Monson and the First Presidency, the Church continues to provide worldwide leadership training meetings to assist local priesthood and auxiliary leaders and families in their efforts to serve the members and deepen conversion. The training allows local leaders and members to receive direction from members of the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and other General Authorities and general auxiliary leaders. The worldwide training has included instruction on using the new administrative handbooks (introduced in 2010), training on conducting effective ward councils, and strengthening the family and the Church through the priesthood.
- In 2010 the First Presidency began assigning members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to conduct two new kinds of international meetings—priesthood leadership conferences and area reviews. During each priesthood leadership conference, stake presidencies, bishops, and branch presidents within a designated area of the Church are brought together for training. During each area review the leaders also take an in-depth look at what is happening with



President Thomas S. Monson speaks to the media at the announcement of the new First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Monday, February 4, 2008.

the Church in a given ecclesiastical area and review such things as humanitarian service, welfare needs, missionary work, and family history and temple work.

- During President Monson's administration, 31 new temples have been announced throughout the world. Sixteen have been dedicated and five others rededicated after extensive renovations. President Monson himself presided at the dedications of temples in Calgary, Alberta, Canada; Cebu City, Philippines; Curitiba, Brazil; Kyiv, Ukraine; Panama City, Panama; Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; and Draper, Utah; Kansas City, Missouri; Rexburg, Idaho; South Jordan, Utah; The Gila Valley, Arizona; and Twin Falls, Idaho, USA; and

at the rededication of temples in Mexico City, Mexico; and Atlanta, Georgia; Boise, Idaho; and Laie, Hawaii, USA.

- President Monson has also presided over a period of unprecedented reach from the Church's online resources, delivering the words of the prophets and the programs of the Church to some 14 million members across the earth. Online highlights include a variety of Church-produced videos, including the series of films depicting key moments from the New Testament.
- Under the direction of the First Presidency, the Church produced a new book titled *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*. The book is

intended as a personal and family resource to strengthen women in their responsibilities.

- Under President Monson's leadership, the Church has responded to disasters across the globe, reaching out and helping those in need. Some major humanitarian responses in the past five years include efforts to reach out after an earthquake in Haiti, an earthquake and tsunami in Japan, and flooding in Thailand. The Church also responded to a severe food crisis across eastern Africa, helped immunize children in many nations, and has provided clean water to many remote villages. In addition, the Church dedicated a new 570,391-square-foot (53,000 square meter) welfare facility in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. ■

Church Leaders Discuss the “Hastening of Work”

By Sarah Jane Weaver

Church News

In the midst of changes that require Latter-day Saint teenagers to take a greater role in missionary preparation, family history and temple work, and Sunday instruction, leaders say the youth of the Church have been “called to action” and asked to “arise and shine forth” (D&C 115:5).

The changes make one thing obvious: “The Lord has something He wants to do,” said Elder Paul B. Pieper of the Seventy.

Elder Pieper, Executive Director of the Priesthood Department, recently participated in a *Church News* roundtable discussion about the changes that will impact youth in many areas. Also participating in the roundtable discussion were Elder Allan F. Packer of the Seventy and Executive Director of the Family History Department, Elder William R. Walker of the Seventy and Executive Director of the Temple Department, Elder W. Craig Zwick of the Seventy and Assistant Executive Director of the Missionary Department, Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy and Commissioner of Church Education; Elder Dennis C. Brimhall, an Area Seventy and managing director of the Family History Department, and Linda K. Burton, Relief Society general president.

Making reference to the lower age at which young men and young women can begin missionary service, to the new youth curriculum, and to a First Presidency letter asking that youth get involved in family history research and take family names to the temple, Elder Pieper said he did not see the “three strands coming together” before conference. “I remember going to conference . . . and

asking myself, ‘How did all of this get correlated?’ It was obvious it was the Lord’s hand.”

Elder Zwick said the Lord’s words are clear: “I will hasten my work in its time” (D&C 88:73). “The Lord Himself is taking charge here,” he added. “I don’t think there has ever been a generation of youth that has been prepared for the curriculum like [the youth] are today. I don’t think there has ever been a group of youth that has done as many baptisms or more ordinances for the dead . . . [or] that has been as close to temple work and all of the facets of that as this group. And certainly all of that . . . prepares them for missionary service and builds a sure foundation for additional responsibilities in the years following their missions.”

It is a very powerful message that God trusts His youth, said Elder Brimhall.

“When the Lord does anything, all the things fall into place at the right time, and that is what is happening with this,” said Elder Johnson, noting that those working on the new youth curriculum did not know there would be a shift in the age when missionaries could begin service.

Elder Walker spoke of the First Presidency letter encouraging youth to complete their family history and take those names to the temple. “The youth being able to have their own limited use recommends . . . has been a really wonderful thing,” he said. “Young people [are] anxiously engaged in doing the work in the temple and understand the doctrine. . . . That really helps to prepare them spiritually for all these wonderful things that are in store for them.”



Elder Packer said that recently he heard of a young woman who stood and shared her testimony of family history work. “This is a whole lot more fun than what the old people said it was going to be,” she said.

“That is the Spirit of Elijah,” said Elder Walker. “That is the turning of the hearts of the children to the fathers and the fathers to the children.”

Church leaders agree that the Lord is hastening His work and that the youth of the Church have been called to action.

Family history work, Elder Packer added, will change how the youth make decisions and how they feel about challenges. He said they might think, “If Grandpa did this, I can do it too.”

He said that a temple president reported that when youth stand proxy in baptism for any name, they come out smiling, but “when they do it for an ancestor, they have tears in their eyes. They feel something deeper; they feel something more.”

Helping the youth gain perspective is a goal of the new youth curriculum—where learning resources replace lesson manuals, said Elder Pieper. The curriculum will allow youth instructors to determine what they need to build into each Sunday experience to prepare youth for temple and family history work and missionary service.

“The new MTC is the home,” said Elder Packer. “The new family history center is the home. The new curriculum is going to help the youth and the parents both in that role.”

The message to parents is “Church leaders trust you as parents and trust these young men and young women who are being raised in your homes,” said Elder Zwick.

All the changes move the “Church to where it needs to be, where it’s prophesied to be,” said Elder Johnson. “The Lord knows what the future is, and . . . this is just one of the many things He is doing to advance that kingdom, to help it roll forth.”

Elder Pieper said, when contemplating all that happened during general conference this October, he sees “a prophet with keys, flinging doors open and saying, ‘There you go.’ We are inviting you to come and get engaged in this work. It is the Lord’s time now. We all know that. We all felt it. The Church is feeling it. Of course it will work.” ■



Elder Christofferson Counsels Members in Central America

By Elder Don L. Searle

Church News contributor

The work of the Church today is to prepare a people who will be ready to receive and serve the Lord when He comes, Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles told members of the Arraiján Panama Stake on January 20, 2013.

It was a theme that Elder Christofferson sounded several times during a tour of Central America from January 11 through 20 while speaking to gatherings of youth, to

Elder D. Todd Christofferson greets a young woman following a meeting in Panama, in January.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES DALRYMPLE © IRI

young single adults, to missionaries, to local leaders, and to members in stake conference meetings.

Elder Christofferson was accompanied by his wife, Kathy Christofferson, and Elder Richard J. Maynes of the Presidency of the Seventy and his wife, Nancy Maynes. As he traveled first to Costa Rica, then Guatemala, and last to Panama, Elder Christofferson was joined in different places by the members of the Area Presidency: Elder James B. Martino, President; Elder Carlos H. Amado, First Counselor; and Elder Kevin R. Duncan, Second Counselor.

Elder Maynes also traveled to Honduras and Belize to visit with leaders and members there.

Elder Christofferson spoke to hundreds of young people gathered at Strength of Youth conferences in Costa Rica and Panama; to groups of missionaries in San José, Costa Rica; Guatemala City, and Panama City; to large groups of young single adults in the three countries; and to gatherings of priesthood and auxiliary leaders.

He also visited with the presidents of Costa Rica and Guatemala to help cement important relationships with those governments.

In Costa Rica Elder Christofferson urged the youth and young adults to obey the commandments, to remember that Heavenly Father knows and loves them, and to read the scriptures every day and seek to receive all that the Spirit will give them as they read.

He bore a strong testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and of Jesus Christ. “I pronounce a blessing upon you that you may receive this same testimony I am expressing,” he said, and added, “[Jesus Christ] is real. I invoke upon you this night His blessings.”

In Guatemala he stressed the importance of the family.

“In creating a family, we fulfill our greatest purpose on earth,” he said.

He spoke to youth in Panama and testified, “The leader of this Church is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is a very involved leader and is personally active in guiding His Church.”

A priesthood leadership conference emphasized focusing not on tasks and being busy but on the outcomes of priesthood service, principally individual conversion.

Elder Maynes also presided at a variety of meetings, including young adult and missionary meetings in Belize and Honduras, and offered counsel and spiritual direction to hundreds in those Central American lands. ■

Jason Swensen contributed to this report.

Church High School in Mexico to Become New MTC

On January 29, an announcement was made that the Church-owned high school Benemérito de las Américas in Mexico City, Mexico, would be converted into a missionary training center.

Elder Russell M. Nelson and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, both of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, presided and spoke at the January 29 meetings at the Benemérito campus where the plans for the future MTC were announced. The change from school to MTC is expected to occur following the end of the Benemérito school year in June 2013. For more than four decades, the Benemérito de las Américas facility has functioned as a boarding school—so dormitories and other needed infrastructure for the MTC are already in place.

The new MTC will train elders, sisters, and couples who will serve not only in Mexico, but also in other countries of North, Central, and South America. Even missionaries from the United States who have been called to Spanish-speaking assignments in their own country may be trained in Mexico City. The MTC in Provo, Utah, will continue to provide Spanish-language training for many missionaries as well.

Tabernacle Choir Earns Recording and Internet Success

The latest year-in-review issue of *Billboard* magazine, the recording industry trade publication, features the year-end charts for 2012. In one of those charts, the choir, with the Orchestra at Temple Square,



The Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square placed high in the year-end charts from Billboard magazine and had more than three million hits on its YouTube channel by the end of 2012.

was named the Number 1 Traditional Classical Albums Artist.

Overall, the choir and orchestra charted on five of the year-end lists and twice on an albums list. It placed 3rd and 9th on Traditional Classical Albums (for the albums *Glory! Music of Rejoicing* and *This Is the Christ* respectively); 4th on Traditional Classical Albums Imprint; 5th on Traditional Classical Albums Label; and 12th on Classical Crossover Albums (for the album *Glad Christmas Tidings* featuring David Archuleta).

In addition to its recording industry success, the choir on January 17 topped one million views on the YouTube channel it launched less than three months before, on October 30, 2012. The channel had an estimated 3.23 million minutes watched by viewers by the end of 2012. To access the channel, go to www.YouTube.com/user/MormonTabChoir.

Nourished by the Word

Hearing the editions of the *Liahona* has been an extremely edifying experience for me. I have shared the audio download with a member with vision problems, another who is a professional driver, and with other friends with reading difficulties.

I am currently taking a post-graduate class 200 km (130 miles) from my home, and listening to the magazine has made the bus trip more rapid and pleasant. When I heard the general conference issue I felt as though I were living in the days of Jacob, having “been nourished by the good word of God all the day long” (Jacob 6:7).

Francisco Flavio Dias Carneiro, Brazil

Inspires, Motivates, and Strengthens

I love the *Liahona*! It inspires me and motivates me to stay on the right path. It also helps me in my calling in Young Men. When things get hard and I feel down, I turn to the Book of Mormon and the *Liahona*. They strengthen my testimony that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love and care for each of us.

James Aaron S. Perez, Cebu, Philippines

FAITH OF THE ISLANDERS

By Joshua J. Perkey

Church Magazines

On a recent trip from the United States to the Marshall Islands and Tonga, I was struck by the pure faith of those I met. By and large, it seemed to me, their faith is uncluttered by Western society's ever-shifting definitions of morality and truth. The faith of the islanders is profound, as described by former mission president to Tonga, Elder John H. Groberg (of the Seventy, 1976–2005). It is rooted in the Atonement and the plan of salvation. Such faith ceases to question that which has been learned by the Spirit.

In some ways, life on the Pacific Islands tends to move at a gentler pace than I was used to. Although the islanders have access to cars and TVs, movies and the Internet, sports and a number of other activities, such things seem to be less obtrusive than they are in many cultures, including in the United States.

Of course, the islanders face challenges of their own. Like me, they must find ways to provide food and shelter as well as take care to protect their testimonies. Yet time and time again, I witnessed the faith of those who did not waver under the pressure of challenges or get diverted by busyness or distractions. Instead, they are aware of the Lord's hand in their lives. As Elder David S. Baxter of the Seventy (and former Pacific Area President) explained, "They believe in miracles, they expect to receive them, and they do."



The islanders I met accept what they know to be true and let the doubts fade away.

As I returned home from my experience in the South Pacific, I pondered several questions: Why do some people remain firm in their faith, while others allow questions or doubt to disturb their thoughts? Why, with a testimony once gained, do some allow it to weaken or become fragile? Why, when some witness the Lord's hand in their life, are they surprised?

Perhaps the answers lie with how resolutely a person's heart is placed on the altar of the Lord. For the islanders I met, the decision is not one they seem to make and remake with frequency. Having established their faith on the Rock of their Redeemer, the sure foundation, many cease to question; they refuse to let their testimonies be shaken. They accept what they know to be true and let the doubts fade away.

That is a quality I want to perfect. When challenges to my beliefs arise, I want to be able to do what the Lord told Oliver Cowdery to do: "Cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things. Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?" (D&C 6:22–23). Such remembering leads to unwavering faith.

This type of faith is pure and free of distractions. It is devoted and accepting. It affirms: "I know this. I do not need to question it again."

Exercising this kind of faith in our Heavenly Father and His plan allows His power to be active in our lives. It does not yield to attacks on our beliefs, to weariness, or to the unknown. It allows us to say, "He lives!" And that, for me, is enough. ■

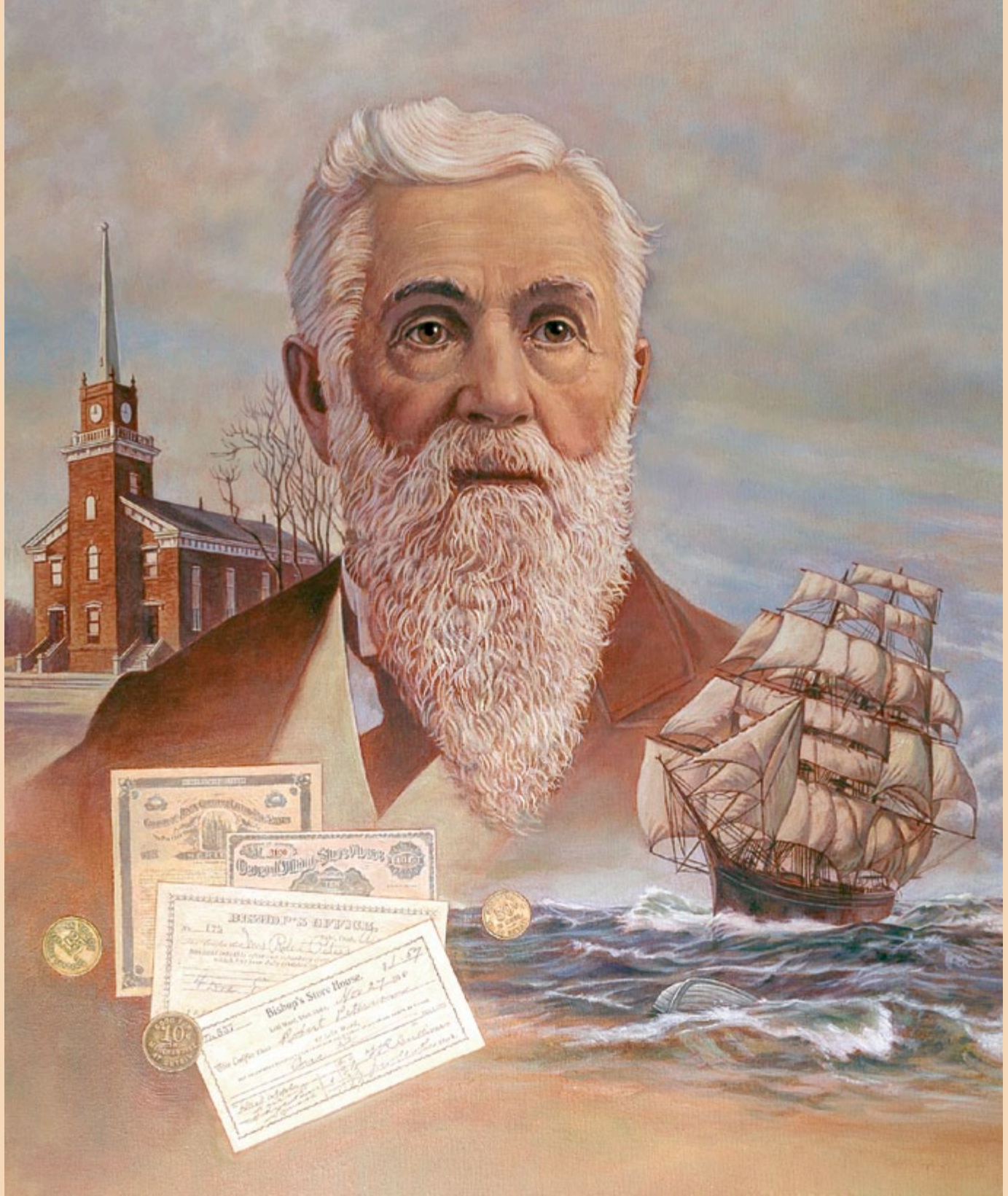


ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT T. BARRETT

LORENZO SNOW

Lorenzo Snow traveled the world to spread the gospel. When he was sailing to Hawaii, a **storm** tipped over his boat. Lorenzo trusted in the Lord and was saved from drowning. While speaking at the **St. George Tabernacle** in 1899, President Lorenzo Snow felt inspired to teach the importance of paying a full tithe. As more members began paying **tithes**, the Church's finances grew more stable. The Saints paid with money when they had it and with things such as eggs, milk, and cattle when they didn't.



“The family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children,” write the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” The proclamation lists nine principles for strengthening marriages and families: “faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.” See the article on page 26 for further insights into each of these nine principles.