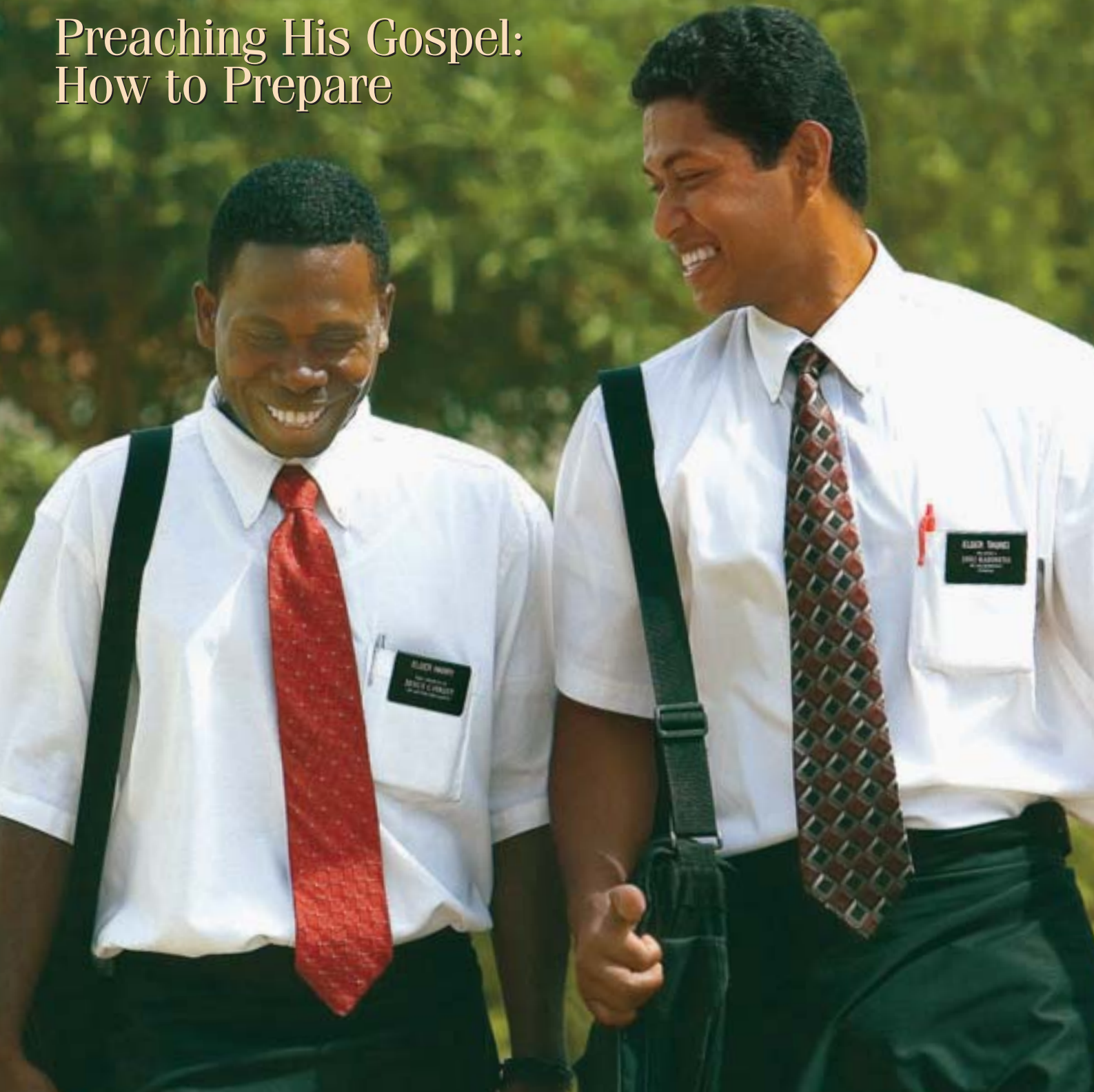


Liahona

Preaching His Gospel:
How to Prepare



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FAMILY HOME EVENING IDEAS

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

"How to Prepare to Be a Good Missionary," p. 10:

In advance, assign one question from the article to each family member.

Have them study Elder Ballard's response to their question and come prepared to teach the answer to the family. Testify that great joy comes from serving the Lord as a missionary.

"If I Had Known at 19 . . ."

p. 38: Share the four suggestions for missionaries, and discuss the principles involved. Role-play ways these suggestions can be used in school, work, or other areas of life.

Invite each family member to set a goal to use one of the suggestions for a week and report on the results.

"Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life," p. 41: Display a set of scriptures and a loaf of bread. Ask,





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- F8 Friendship Bracelets *Jennifer Rose*
- F11 Honest Morgan *Vicki H. Budge*
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- F13 Special Witness: I Just Received the Gift of the Holy Ghost. How Can I Feel the Influence of the Spirit in My Life? *President Boyd K. Packer*
- F14 Friend to Friend: Missionary Friends *Elder Gary J. Coleman*
- F16 Trying to Be like Jesus: CTR Rings in the Principal’s Office *Rebeca F.*



F11 Honest Morgan

As you look for the CTR ring hidden in this issue, think of how you can follow the Savior’s example in keeping the commandments.



“How does each of these provide nourishment?” Read the last two sections of the article. Testify of the power of Jesus Christ to nourish us spiritually.

“Friendship Bracelets,” p. F8: Read the story. Then have family members stand in a circle and hold hands. Tell them that as soon as their hand is squeezed they need to gently squeeze the hand of the person to the right of them. Explain that the hand squeezing represents acts of kindness. Invite

family members to always be kind and to pass on acts of kindness to others.

“Missionary Friends,” p. F14: Ask children to describe a time when they attended Primary in a different ward or branch. How did they feel? What could they do to make others feel comfortable when visiting their Primary? Make junior missionary badges to wear during family home evening as a reminder to always be kind and welcoming.

ON THE COVER

Front: Photograph by Welden C. Andersen.
Back: Photograph by Craig Dimond.

THE FRIEND COVER

Photograph by John Luke.

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The Gift of Compassion

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

A few years ago I had the opportunity to preside at a regional conference in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. As I enjoyed the sweet spirit which prevailed during the conference and the wonderful hospitality of the people, I reflected upon how the community's spirit of compassionate help had been tested in the extreme on April 19, 1995. On that day a terrorist-planted bomb destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City, taking 168 persons to their deaths and injuring countless others.

Following the conference, I was driven to the entrance of a beautiful and symbolic memorial which graces the area where the Murrah building once stood. The day was dreary and rainy, which tended to underscore the pain and suffering that had occurred on this spot. The memorial features a 400-foot (122-m) reflecting pool. On one side of the pool are 168 empty glass and granite chairs, in honor of each of the people killed. These are placed, as far as can be determined, where the fallen bodies were found.

On the opposite side of the pool there

stands, on a gentle rise of ground, a mature American elm tree—the only nearby tree to survive the destruction. It is appropriately and affectionately named “The Survivor Tree.” In regal splendor it honors those who survived the horrific blast.

My host directed my attention to the inscription above the gate of the memorial:

We come here to remember those who were killed, those who survived and those changed forever.

May all who leave here know the impact of violence.

May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity.

With tears in his eyes and with a faltering voice, my host declared, “This community and all the churches and citizens in it have been galvanized together. In our grief we have become strong. In our spirit we have become united.”

We concluded that the best word to describe what had taken place was *compassion*. My thoughts turned to the musical play *Camelot*, written by Alan Jay Lerner and based on a novel by T. H. White. King Arthur, in his dream of a better world where people



“But a certain Samaritan . . . had compassion on him . . . and bound up his wounds . . . and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” Now, as then, Jesus would say to us, “Go, and do thou likewise.”

would share an ideal relationship one with another, said, as he recalled the purpose of the Round Table, “Violence is not strength, and compassion is not weakness.”

Strength in Compassion

A stirring account which illustrates this statement is found in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible. Joseph was especially loved by his father, Jacob, which occasioned bitterness and jealousy on the part of his brothers. There followed the plot to slay Joseph, which eventually placed Joseph in a deep pit without food or water to sustain life. Joseph was extricated from the pit by a passing caravan of merchants, sold for 20 pieces of silver, and placed eventually in the house of Potiphar in the land of Egypt. There the young man prospered, for “the Lord was with Joseph.”¹

After years of plenty in Egypt, there followed years of famine. In the midst of this latter period, when the brothers of Joseph came to Egypt to buy corn, they were blessed by this favored man—even their own brother. Joseph could have dealt harshly with his brothers for the callous and cruel treatment he had earlier received from them. However, he was kind and gracious to them and won their favor and support with these words and actions:

“Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . .

“And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”²

Joseph exemplified the magnificent virtue of compassion.

During the meridian of time, when Jesus walked the dusty pathways of the Holy Land, He often spoke in parables.

Said He: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of

his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

“And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

“And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

“And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

“And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.”

Well could the Savior say to us, “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?”

No doubt our response would be, “He that shewed mercy on him.”

Now, as then, Jesus would say to us, “Go, and do thou likewise.”³

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

To the cripple at Bethesda, Jesus said, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.”⁴ To the sinful woman came the counsel, “Go, and sin no more.”⁵ To help her who came to draw water, He provided a well of water “springing up into everlasting life.”⁶ To the dead daughter of Jairus came the command, “Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.”⁷ To the entombed Lazarus, “Come forth.”⁸



Joseph could have dealt harshly with his brothers for the callous and cruel treatment he had earlier received from them. However, he was kind and gracious to them.

The Savior has always shown unlimited capacity for compassion.

On the American continent, Jesus appeared to a multitude and said:

“Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you. . . .

“ . . . And he did heal them every one.”⁹

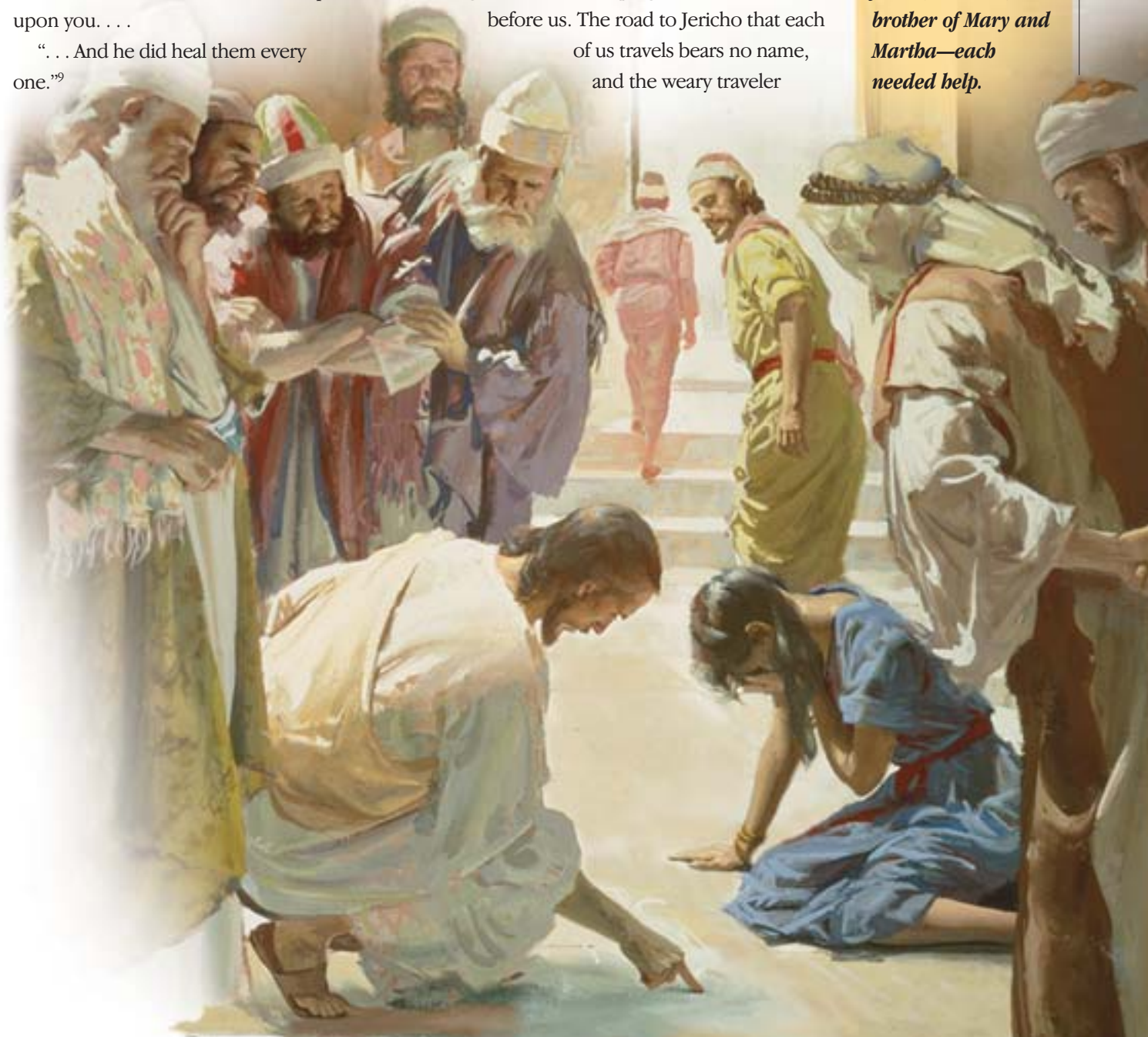
Our Jericho Road

One may well ask the penetrating question: These accounts pertain to the Redeemer of the world. Can there actually occur in my own life, on my own Jericho road, such a treasured experience?

I phrase my answer in the words of the Master: “Come and see.”¹⁰

We have no way of knowing when our privilege to extend a helping hand will unfold before us. The road to Jericho that each of us travels bears no name, and the weary traveler

Jesus provided us many examples of compassionate concern. *The crippled man at the pool of Bethesda; the woman taken in adultery; the daughter of Jairus; Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha—each needed help.*



I sat dejectedly. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a couple approach my table. 'Are you all right, young man?' the woman asked."

who needs our help may be one unknown.

Genuine gratitude was expressed by the writer of a letter received some time ago at Church headquarters. No return address was shown, no name, but the postmark was from Portland, Oregon:

"To the Office of the First Presidency:

"Salt Lake City showed me Christian hospitality once during my wandering years.

"On a cross-country journey by bus to California, I stepped down in the terminal in Salt Lake City, sick and trembling from aggravated loss of sleep caused by a lack of necessary medication. In my headlong flight from a bad situation in Boston, I had completely forgotten my supply.

"In the Temple Square Hotel restaurant, I sat dejectedly. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a couple approach my table. 'Are you all right, young man?' the woman asked. I raised up, crying and a bit shaken, related my story and the predicament I was in then. They listened carefully and patiently to my nearly incoherent ramblings, and then they took charge. They spoke with the restaurant manager, then told

me I could have all I wanted to eat there for



five days. They took me next door to the hotel desk and got me a room for five days. Then they drove me to a clinic and saw that I was provided with the medications I needed—truly my basic lifeline to sanity and comfort.

“While I was recuperating and building my strength, I made it a point to attend the daily Tabernacle organ recitals. The celestial voicing of that instrument from the faintest intonation to the mighty full organ is the most sublime sonority of my acquaintance. I have acquired albums and tapes of the Tabernacle organ and the choir which I can rely upon anytime to soothe and butress a sagging spirit.

“On my last day at the hotel, before I resumed my journey, I turned in my key; and there was a message for me from that couple: ‘Repay us by showing gentle kindness to some other troubled soul along your road.’ That was my habit, but I determined to be more keenly on the lookout for someone who needed a lift in life.

“I wish you well. I don’t know if these are indeed the ‘latter days’ spoken of in the scriptures, but I do know that two members of your church were saints to me in my desperate hours of need. I just thought you might like to know.”

What an example of caring compassion.

For Those in Need

At one privately owned and operated care facility, compassion reigned supreme. The proprietress was Edna Hewlett. There was a waiting list of patients who desired to live out their remaining days under her tender care, for she was an angelic person. She would wash and style the hair of every patient. She cleansed elderly bodies and dressed them with bright and clean clothing.

Through the years, in visiting the widows of the ward over which I once presided, I would generally start my

visits at Edna’s facility. She would welcome me with a cheery smile and take me to the living room where a number of the patients were seated.

I always had to begin with Jeannie Burt, who was the oldest—102 when she died. She had known me and my family from the time I was born.

On one occasion Jeannie asked with her thick Scottish brogue, “Tommy, have you been to Edinburgh lately?”

I replied, “Yes, not too long ago I was there.”

“Isn’t it beautiful!” she responded.

Jeannie closed her aged eyes in an expression of silent reverie. Then she became serious. “I’ve paid in advance for my funeral—in cash. You are to speak at my funeral, and you are to recite ‘Crossing the Bar’ by Tennyson. Now let’s hear it!”

It seemed every eye was upon me, and surely this was the case. I took a deep breath and began:

*Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea.¹¹*

Jeannie’s smile was benign and heavenly—then she declared, “Oh, Tommy, that was nice. But see that you practice a wee bit before my funeral!” This I did.

At some period in our mortal mission, there appears the faltering step, the wan smile, the pain of sickness—even the fading of summer, the approach of autumn, the chill of winter, and the experience we call death, which comes to all mankind. It comes to the aged as they walk on faltering feet. Its summons is heard by those who have scarcely reached midway in life’s journey. Often it hushes the laughter of little children.

Throughout the world there is enacted daily the sorrowful scene of loved ones mourning as they bid farewell



***I extol those who,
with loving care and
compassionate concern,
feed the hungry, clothe
the naked, and house
the homeless. He who
notes the sparrow’s fall
will not be unmindful
of such service.***

to a son, a daughter, a brother, a sister, a mother, a father, or a cherished friend.

From the cruel cross, the Savior's tender words of farewell to His mother are particularly poignant:

"When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

"Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."¹²

Let us remember that after the funeral flowers fade, the well wishes of friends become memories, and the prayers offered and words spoken dim in the corridors of the mind. Those who grieve frequently find themselves alone. Missed is the laughter of children, the commotion of teenagers, and the tender, loving concern of a departed companion. The clock ticks more loudly, time passes more slowly, and four walls can indeed a prison make.

I extol those who, with loving care and compassionate concern, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and house the homeless. He who notes the sparrow's fall will not be unmindful of such service.

Havens of Peace

In His compassion and according to His divine plan, holy temples bring to our Father's children the peace which surpasses understanding.

Under the leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley, the number of new temples constructed and under construction staggers the mind to contemplate. Heavenly Father's compassionate concern for His children here on earth and for those who have gone beyond mortality merits our gratitude.

Thanks be to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for His life, for His gospel, for His example, and for His blessed Atonement.

I return in my thoughts to Oklahoma City. To me, it is beyond mere coincidence that now a temple of the Lord, in all its beauty, stands in that city as a heaven-sent beacon to mark the way to joy here on earth and eternal joy hereafter. Let us remember the words from the Psalms: "Weeping

may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."¹³

In a very real way, the Master speaks to us: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."¹⁴

Let us listen for His knock. Let us open the door of our hearts, that He—the living example of true compassion—may enter. ■

NOTES

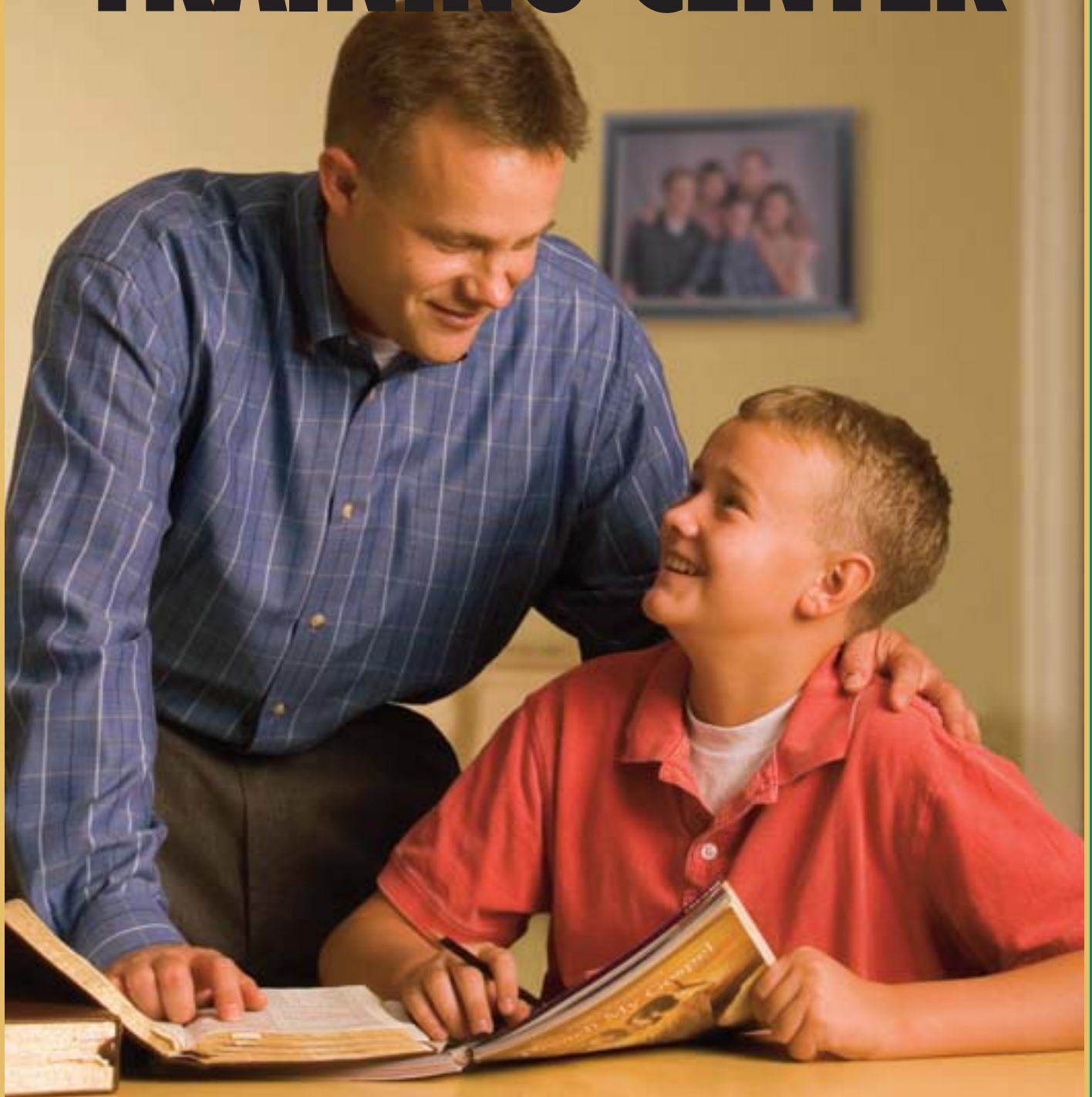
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|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Genesis 39:2. | 8. John 11:43. |
| 2. Genesis 45:5, 7. | 9. 3 Nephi 17:7, 9. |
| 3. See Luke 10:30–37. | 10. John 1:39. |
| 4. John 5:8. | 11. Lines 1–4. |
| 5. John 8:11. | 12. John 19:26–27. |
| 6. John 4:14. | 13. Psalm 30:5. |
| 7. Mark 5:41. | 14. Revelation 3:20. |

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

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

1. Prepare paper hearts for each family member. As you relate examples of compassion from President Monson's message, invite family members to think of people in need and how they could show compassion to them. Have them write their ideas on the hearts.
2. Retell several of the examples of compassion from the article. Ask the family to ponder the following questions: Who is my neighbor? Whom do I know right now who could be blessed by my compassion? What can I do to help this person? When can I start? Conclude by reading the final two paragraphs of the article and challenging the family to consider ways to put into action a plan for compassion.
3. After relating a few accounts from the article, ask for the common theme. Show a picture of the Savior, and testify of His compassionate hand in your own life. Challenge family members to strive to follow the example of the Savior in giving the gift of compassion.

MISSIONARY TRAINING CENTER



NOW IS THE TIME TO PREPARE. HOME IS THE PLACE TO START.
(See D&C 38:40.)

How to PREPARE to Be a Good Missionary



Commit yourself early in life to the idea of a mission. Focus on becoming a servant of the Lord.

The Church magazines asked Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles how youth can prepare for a full-time mission and what blessings come from serving.

Why does the Church ask every worthy young man to serve a mission?

The Lord has given no greater charge to His people than sharing the gospel with our Heavenly Father's children. Missionaries take people out of the darkness of the world and lead them to the safety and light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To find and teach and baptize and confirm someone who has never paid much attention to God or to Christ and His great atoning sacrifice is one of the greatest services a priesthood holder can provide.

We know the purpose of life. The rest of the world doesn't. It rests on the shoulders of every young man to prepare himself to declare that message to the world. It is exciting work.

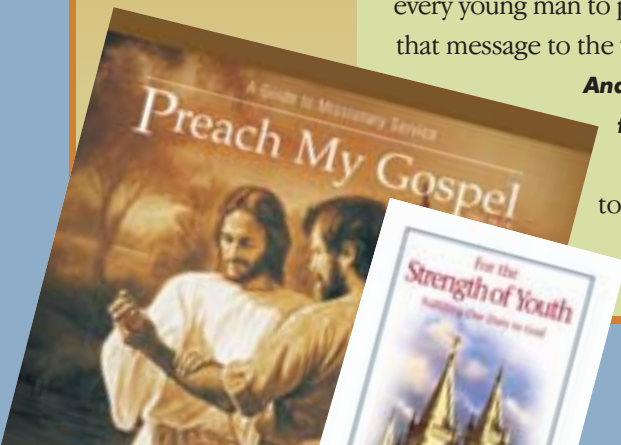
And young women? What is their responsibility?

A full-time mission is totally appropriate for a young woman, if that is what she

wants to do and she is worthy. Holding the priesthood comes with the obligation for young men to carry the message of the Restoration to the world. Young women are invited to participate in missionary work as it is appropriate to their circumstances. If they have prospects for marriage, that is a higher calling. But young women who are in a position to serve make great missionaries. They are good teachers, they have empathy, and they can relate particularly well to women. I don't think that we have a mission anywhere in the world where the mission president wouldn't be thrilled to get more sister missionaries.

How do young men and young women best prepare for a mission?

Attitude is the key. Young people need to commit themselves early in life to the idea of a mission. That way, when they get older and begin to face some of the world's temptations, those temptations will be less likely to penetrate their hearts or minds. They will resist the temptations because they are focused on becoming a servant of the Lord. It helps if they live in a gospel-sharing home. A missionary spirit is generated in a home







empty bucket. When missionaries know the gospel and how to teach it, they don't want to do anything else. They know they can teach anybody, anywhere, anytime, under any circumstances, using their own words accompanied by the power of the Spirit. They have self-confidence and inner strength. There's great power in that kind of preparation.

For this reason, I encourage every young man and every young woman to get acquainted with *Preach My Gospel*. Young people have the obligation to enlighten themselves, to understand for themselves the doc-

Missionaries need to be self-reliant. Young people ought to learn to take care of themselves and not be so dependent on their mother or father.

where parents and children share the gospel with one another.

What I tell new missionaries is that they need to lock into their minds that the 18 or 24 months they are on their missions are not theirs. That time is the Lord's. They are going to devote their skills and talents full-time to help build His kingdom. When missionaries think that way, they don't have trouble following the mission rules. They don't resist the counsel of the mission president, the guidelines in *Preach My Gospel*, and the counsel of the General Authorities. They embrace that counsel because they don't want to waste one minute of the Lord's time.

What else could prospective missionaries do to prepare?

Missionaries need to understand the doctrine, and they need to know how to share it. You can't take water out of an

trines of the Restoration. That preparation is every bit as important for a girl as it is for a boy. Whether the young woman gets married or serves a full-time mission, the gospel has to operate in her life.

Youth ought to get acquainted with what goes on in missionary work. They would find it helpful, if possible, to assist the missionaries and get a feel for the work.

I also recommend that youth study and follow the guidelines in *For the Strength of Youth*. Missionaries need to be morally clean and spiritually ready. If they live the principles in *For the Strength of Youth*, they will be spiritually prepared to be great missionaries.

What about physical, financial, and emotional preparation?

Missionaries need to be self-reliant. Young people ought to learn to take care of themselves and not be so dependent on their mother or father.



They need to be able to handle the physical demands of missionary work. Young people should keep their weight under control and be physically fit. The missionary daily schedule has built into it a 30-minute-a-day exercise program. Being physically tuned up enhances mental capacity.

Prospective missionaries need to learn to work. They ought to have a job and save money for their missions. Every mission president would concur with me that the missionary who has worked and saved and helped pay for part or all of his or her mission is a better-prepared missionary. Working and saving for a mission generates enthusiasm for serving and gives a young man or a young woman a good work ethic. Whatever else missionary work is, it is work!

Working toward a mission and being accountable for their own lives helps young men and young women emotionally as well. They know within themselves that they can succeed no matter where they are sent and no matter the circumstances. They know they are tough enough to handle anything in a world that is becoming less interested in

the things of God. We need missionaries with that kind of self-assurance.

What about learning a second language?

Most secondary schools require learning a second language, and students should work hard to do that. Now, they may learn Spanish and get sent to Taiwan, but that's all right. It's the discipline that comes of learning how to learn that is important. Having learned a second language, they will find it easier to learn the language of the people in the mission to which they are called.

How is that call determined?

First, the bishop or branch president interviews the young man or young woman and makes a recommendation. Then the stake or mission president interviews the person. Most missionary applications are sent electronically to Church headquarters. A photo accompanies the application. When the application arrives, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles looks at the photo and carefully reviews the prospective missionary's attitude as

What If You Can't Serve Full-Time?

Young men and young women with serious mental, emotional, or physical limitations are excused from full-time missionary service. They shouldn't feel guilty about that. They are just as precious and important to the Church as if they were able to go into the mission field.

But while they don't serve full-time, they can take every opportunity to find and help people join the Church. They can be member missionaries in college, at work, and in their neighborhoods. They ought to go forward, have a wonderful and full life, and help build the kingdom wherever they are. Not all of the Apostles serving today were

able to serve a full-time mission in their youth, some because they were required to serve in the military. But they all did missionary work. They all brought people into the Church.

Priesthood leaders are encouraged to help every faithful, righteous young man and woman serve. For example, they can assist the bishop as ward missionaries. They could work at a bishops' storehouse. If they live near a temple, they can serve in many ways there. Priesthood leaders need only think of ways and then move forward.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.



evidenced by what the local priesthood leaders have written, the young person's grades, and any expressed willingness to learn a language. The Apostle also considers the needs of all 344 missions around the world and then receives a spiritual impression of where the missionary should serve. All this is done under the direction of the President of the Church, and the call comes from him.

Why are some missionaries called to serve in their own countries?

Let me assure you that calls are a matter of revelation. Missionaries serve where the Lord wants them to serve. We need good, capable missionaries in every mission. For example, let's say there's a young man, a leader in school, living in Virginia in the United States. He opens his mission call and is shocked to learn he is being sent to Salt Lake City. But he isn't there long before he knows precisely why the Lord called him to serve there.



What would you say to young people who may feel, for whatever reason, they don't have what it takes to serve a mission?

In 2002 we raised the bar for missionary service. That means the requirements to be a worthy missionary need to be understood and lived by young people early on. They need to avoid the mischief of the world. Of course, repentance is possible and is a great blessing. But those who stumble must make their repentance true and complete, and that could take time. It may even require First Presidency clearance before they can serve. Raising the bar doesn't exclude anyone; it just requires more thorough—and sometimes very difficult—repentance. I plead with the youth, don't get into that! Don't put yourself through that. Just stay worthy to serve.

Now, there may be some young people who consider themselves unworthy or incapable of serving in spite of what they hear from their bishops or branch presidents. But here's the reality: priesthood leaders have the keys of endorsement. If the priesthood leaders indicate that a person is worthy and he or she is called, then he or she should exercise faith in that call and serve the Lord in full confidence that he or she is worthy and able.

How does a missionary receive the spiritual power he or she needs to be successful?

When missionaries first come into the field, they usually lack self-confidence. So we put them with good companions, and those companions teach them the way of missionary work. In a few months they are filled with the Spirit. They are filled with the joy that comes from bringing souls to Christ. They understand that they are helping Heavenly Father and the Savior in the great work of redemption. When they realize that, they are on fire.

This empowerment comes from their obedience, dedication, hard work, and enthusiasm. If they are not obedient, if they are not working hard doing the best they know how every day, they

won't have the same impact as those who radiate the spirit of the gospel.

You know, oftentimes I'll ask new converts when they knew for the first time that the Church is true. It is not unusual for them to say, "I came to know the Church is true when I was taught by the elders or sisters and felt the power of their belief and saw the radiance of their countenance." If you're not actively and anxiously engaged, the Spirit won't be empowering your missionary service as it will if you are.

What blessings come to those who serve missions?

Dedicated missionaries who do their very best learn lessons as important or even more important than anything they can learn in university study. I'll give you an example. Missionaries learn how to relate to people, how to talk to

people, how to help people. Whether they are going to be doctors, lawyers, merchants, or something else, the ability to relate to people can be the difference between being successful or not in that career.

A second great blessing is that missionaries become doctrinally anchored to the reality of the Atonement. There comes to them a love for and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ that will absolutely bless them and their families in mortality and on into eternity. The most powerful learning experiences we can have are when we teach someone else. And that is what missionaries do. They internalize the doctrine; they internalize the reality of the Atonement. And this will bless them in all future Church assignments.

Another great blessing is that as missionaries reach out to rescue and pull into the light of the gospel families who are wandering in the darkness, they see what they don't want in their own lives. The experience clarifies for them the values they want to live by, the kind of family they want, the way they want to teach their children, and the goals they need in order to claim the promised blessings of the temple. A mission is the greatest education in the world.

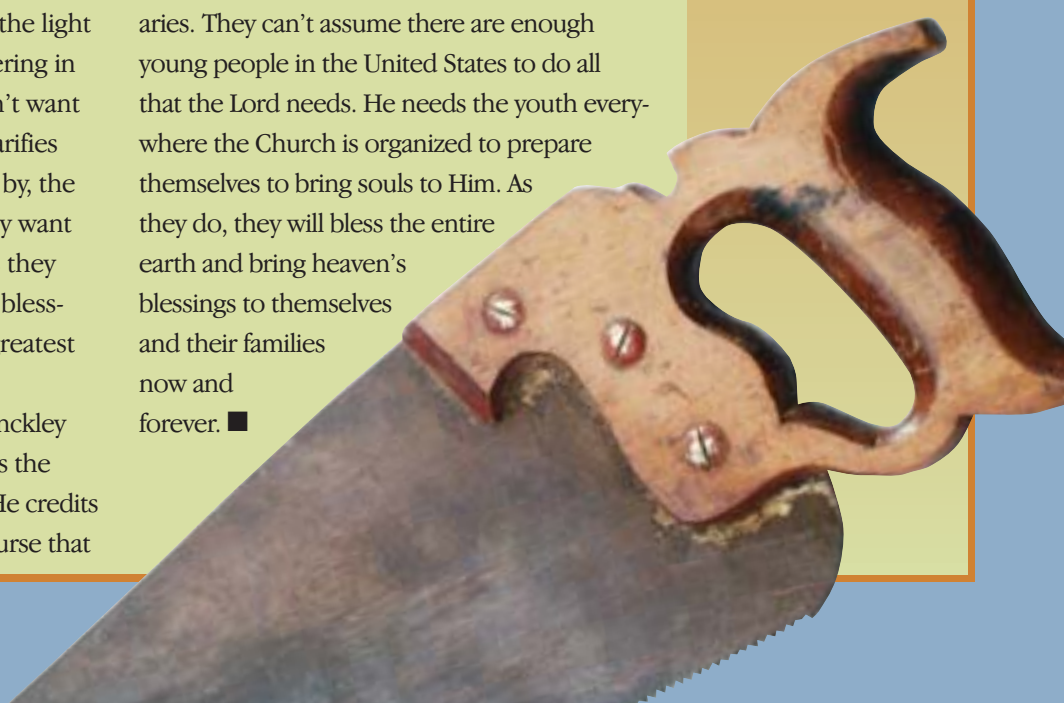
You know, President Gordon B. Hinckley has said many times that his mission is the foundation of his lifetime of service. He credits his mission for putting him on the course that



Dedicated missionaries learn how to relate to people, how to talk to people, how to help people. A mission is the greatest education in the world.

brought him to lead the Church. I think you'll agree that he is doing so in a magnificent way.

We're at a time in the Church's history when young men and young women all over the world need to rise up and serve as missionaries. They can't assume there are enough young people in the United States to do all that the Lord needs. He needs the youth everywhere the Church is organized to prepare themselves to bring souls to Him. As they do, they will bless the entire earth and bring heaven's blessings to themselves and their families now and forever. ■



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MISSIONARY

Tag along and sneak a peek at the ups and downs of mission life.

BY ADAM C. OLSON
Church Magazines

Hey, wake up,” someone says, poking you.

Groggily, you look at the clock next to your bed. It’s 6:30 a.m.? What’s going on? Wait, that’s not your clock. And this isn’t your bed. Where are you?

“Hey,” the voice says, “you’re the one who wanted to follow us around. It’s time to get the day started.”

As you peer up at the missionary standing over your bed, you finally remember what’s going on. Church magazines offered you the opportunity to follow a missionary companionship around for a day, and you jumped at the chance to see what missionary life is really like.

You just didn’t realize it would start this early.

“Hi, I’m Elder Jesse Ward, from Utah,” the tall missionary says as you sit up. “Welcome to Spain. This is my companion, Elder Pierrick Triplet.”

Elder Triplet is from France, and he isn’t learning just Spanish but English too. Despite the challenge of having to learn two languages at once, Elder Triplet is grateful to be on a mission.

“I’m a convert,” he says. “I’ve had a

great change in my life, and I’d like others to have it too. A mission can be hard work, but seeing someone change his or her life is worth it.”

They’ve got your attention. You’ve always heard that a mission can be



6:41 a.m.



the best two years of your life. Today you get a chance to find out why.

6:41 a.m. After taking time to pray, the missionaries spend some time working out. Push-ups, sit-ups, even a little light weight lifting are the usual for Elder Ward. Breakfast follows a shower and shave. Cold cereal is a favorite.

8:07 a.m. Missionaries spend a good deal of time studying individually and as a companionship so they can obtain the word before declaring it (see D&C 11:21). After language study and personal scripture study, it's time for companionship study using *Preach My Gospel*.

9:55 a.m. Missionaries dedicate a lot of time to planning, at the beginning of the day, throughout the day, and at the end of the day. They talk not just about what they're going to do but about what each investigator needs.

Today the elders are talking about



8:07 a.m.

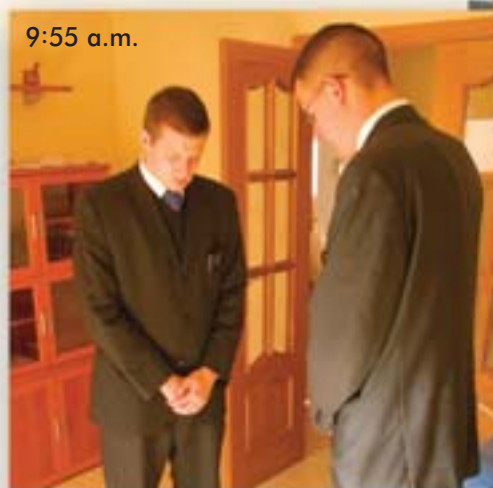
a man from France, an investigator they're going to invite to be baptized.

"He's worried," Elder Triplet says. "He doesn't feel worthy."

"Let's talk about repentance and how God remembers sins no more," Elder Ward suggests after the companions think it over. "Why don't you

teach it in French to make sure he understands?"

The last thing the elders do before leaving is pray—again. This is one of many prayers they'll offer today. Missionary work requires a lot of heavenly help. Then it's out the door and off to the bus stop in a hurry.



9:55 a.m.





11:09 a.m. Missionaries talk to anyone anywhere anytime about the gospel, because they never know who is going to be interested. While waiting for the bus, the missionaries chat with a young man and give him a pamphlet with their phone number on it.

He thinks it's true. He wants to pay tithing. But he doesn't believe he needs to be baptized again. He was a little argumentative."

"He's a great guy," Elder Ward says, shaking his head. "Maybe he'll be ready to talk about baptism next time."

2:06 p.m. The missionaries jump on another bus, this time to El Casco, the historic quarter of Toledo, Spain. They stop by an investigator's business to invite him to an activity that night.

"You can get lost in here really quick if you aren't paying attention," Elder Ward says of the maze of narrow streets lined with buildings that seem to lean over those walking below.

2:24 p.m. While navigating the tight streets, the missionaries stop to offer help to a woman carrying a heavy

11:21 a.m. A 10-minute bus ride and a short walk later, the missionaries arrive at a rented meetinghouse at the same time as their investigator. The meeting begins well, but the investigator's concerns push the 45-minute lesson they had planned on to more than an hour.

"That was the most frustrating lesson I've ever been in," Elder Triplet says afterward. "He likes the Church.



load. They spend a moment explaining who they are and what they do, but the woman isn't interested.

2:47 p.m. It's siesta time in Spain, so the missionaries catch a bus back to their apartment, or *pisso*, for lunch. "Everything shuts down between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m.," Elder Ward explains. "Some people get mad if you knock on their doors."

"This is *chorizo*, or sausage," Elder Triplet says poking at lunch. "It's typical food. We eat a lot of noodles and *chorizo* because it's cheap and easy to make."



2:06 p.m.

"The mission is great preparation for marriage," Elder Ward laughs as he mixes his Kool-Aid. "You have to learn to get along, cook, clean, do laundry, budget, and take care of yourself."



2:24 p.m.





4:59 p.m.



7:45 p.m. Two buses later the elders make it to the activity they had planned with the sister missionaries who work in the same city, Sister Kathleen Bonifay and Sister Brittany Hofman.

The people they were expecting to come didn't. "That's the way it goes sometimes," Elder Ward says. But after a little footwork, the missionaries are able to gather a handful of other investigators living nearby. After a hymn and a video, you can feel the influence of the Holy Ghost as the missionaries bear testimony of the Book of Mormon as another witness of Jesus Christ. The activity is a success.



4:59 p.m. The elders end up with a little unexpected free time on their hands, but missionaries are used to doing some planning on the fly. Their backup plan was to do some tracting.

5:42 p.m. In El Casco, where so many people live above street level, knocking on doors often means carrying on conversations with people on their balconies. And even in historic tourist towns, a missionary has to look out for dogs.

The elders have some success: "We found some great people," Elder Ward says. "There were some youth from Paraguay. They invited us back tomorrow." And some failure: "We had a half-hour conversation with one man," Elder Triplet says. "It was like talking to a wall."

4:24 p.m. Back in El Casco, the missionaries meet with the branch president about current activation efforts.

"This is a great area," says Elder Ward, who explains that Church attendance has gone from about 15 to 80 members each week because one family set the example of fellowshipping.



5:42 p.m.

“The Lord takes care of you when you put forth your best planning and best effort,” says Sister Bonifay.

9:13 p.m. After a hike to the bus stop, the elders and sisters have made it back to their respective apartments, where they’ll call their leaders, review the day and their long-range plans, and make plans for the next day.

“Well, this is what we do,” Elder Ward tells you. “It doesn’t change much.”



7:45 p.m.

9:13 p.m.

he says. “But I see life differently now. I love my life. I’m a missionary. I’m speaking to people about Christ every day. Leaving will be bittersweet.”

You’ve enjoyed getting a taste of missionary work as well. As exciting as it is, missionary work can be exhausting. Now it’s time to get some rest and prepare yourself for *your* day as a missionary. It has a way of coming faster than you think. ■

Elder Triplet laughs. “We are the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.”

Things didn’t go exactly as the elders had planned, but the day went well anyway. They made some good contacts, pulled off a powerful activity, bore testimony of Christ, and did their best to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

“I’ve heard people say these are

the best two years of their lives,” Elder Triplet says. “The two years are great, but that doesn’t necessarily mean they’re the best 730 days of my life. There are some days I thought would never end. But I have loved being a missionary.”

Elder Ward agrees. He has mixed emotions about leaving. “I always thought I’d be excited to go home,”



Gifts to Bring Home from the Mission Field



Here are 10 great, enduring, wonderful gifts that I hope every missionary would bring home from the mission field.

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

Quite a few years ago I was in an airport and happened to meet some returning missionaries. Their families were there. They were picking up their baggage, and I said to one of them, “What’s all this you have?” He said, “These are gifts I am bringing home.” And that has given me the title of what I would like to share: “Gifts to Bring Home from the Mission Field.”

1. A knowledge of and love for God our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). There is no greater gift that comes to anyone in this world than a certain, reassuring conviction that God, our Eternal Father, lives and that Jesus is the Christ. I believe that. I think it is so very, very important.

2. A knowledge of and love for the scriptures, the word of the Lord.

As a missionary, I read each evening before going to bed a few chapters of the Book of Mormon, and there came into my heart a conviction which has never left: that this is

the word of God, restored to the earth by the power of the Almighty, translated by the gift and power of God to the convincing of the Jew and the Gentile that Jesus is the Christ. I thank the Lord for the testimony which I have of the truth of the word of God as found in these sacred revealed books. And I would hope that every missionary would leave his or her field of labor with a conviction in his or her heart that these things are true.

3. An increased love for parents.

I have attended hundreds of missionary meetings over the years. I love to hear missionaries speak of their love for the Lord, but I also love to hear them speak with great appreciation and love concerning their parents. Boys who had been careless and indifferent stand on their feet and with tears in their eyes thank the Lord for their fathers and their mothers. In these days, what a salutary and wonderful thing it is to hear a strong young man stand up and speak with great feeling concerning his father and his mother, saying things he would never have said before in all of his life. Every boy and girl ought to come home with an increased love for parents.



4. A love for the people among whom they labored.

I love the English people. No one can sell the English short in my mind because I labored with them, I lived with them, I was in their homes at their firesides, I learned to know their hearts, and I learned to love them.

I have learned to love the people of Asia. I spent 11 years among them, and I love them. To me, I love them as much as I love anybody because of the experience I have had as a missionary, as it were, among them.

There's something wrong if a missionary doesn't come back with a great love for the people among whom he labored.

5. An appreciation for hard work.

Every missionary ought to come to realize that work, work, work is the key to getting things done, the key to success in life. There is no substitute



for work, for getting up in the morning and getting at it and staying with it to get the job done. I don't know of a greater asset for whatever lies ahead in life than the capacity to discipline oneself to work.

6. The assurance that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is available to each of us when we live for it.

The availability of inspiration—each of us, if we live for it, if we cultivate it, can have it. I love these great words of revelation, these words of promise: “God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 121:26). What a precious gift to bring home—the assurance, the certainty that if we live for it, we have available to us that which comes by the power of the Holy Spirit.

7. An understanding of the importance of teamwork.

No one can do this work alone. We work in pairs. “In the mouth of two or more witnesses shall [all things] be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1). We work together. There is no place for prima donnas in the mission field. Our efforts are largely team efforts, and what a marvelous thing it is to learn to work with other people.

8. The value of personal virtue.

I think there is no greater thing concerning future integrity that a missionary can learn than the value of personal virtue. I think there are fewer words greater than the promise given under the inspiration of the Lord as set forth by the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly.” That’s the commandment. And then the promise: “Thy confidence [shall] wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45). That’s the promise to those who walk in virtue.

9. The faith to act.

“I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way . . . that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth” (1 Nephi 3:7).

We ask tremendous things of missionaries. It is so hard for shy and diffident young people to do the things we sometimes ask them to do. But what a marvelous thing that they try. They have the faith to do, the faith to act, the faith to go forward and make the effort. And what a marvelous gift that is to bring home.

10. The humility to pray.

Recognize that there is a power greater than ours, that no matter how good a man is, he is not good enough, that no matter how wise he is, he is not wise enough, that no matter how strong he is, he is not strong enough for all of the things which he will face in life, and that there is a source of power to which he can go with the assurance that he will be listened to and that there will be a response.

These are 10 gifts that I would hope every missionary would bring home with him or her—not a lot of tinsel, not a lot of dolls, not a lot of rugs or furs or dresses or plates, but these great, enduring, wonderful things. God bless you to keep the faith, and while doing so, enjoy with great happiness that which you are called to do. ■

From an address given at a seminar for new mission presidents on June 24, 1983.

Become an Instrument in the Hands of God by Listening to and Following the Promptings of the Spirit



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

How Can I Feel the Promptings of the Spirit?

D&C 8:2: “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“The Spirit of God . . . will be as soft as a whisper, coming as a thought to our minds or a feeling in our hearts. . . . Choose to put yourself in a position to have experiences with the Spirit of God through prayer, in scripture study, at Church meetings, in your home, and through wholesome interactions with others” (“To Act for Ourselves: The Gift and Blessings of Agency,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 7).



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

“Put difficult questions in the back of your minds and go about your lives. Ponder and pray quietly and persistently about them. The answer may not come as a lightning bolt. It may come as a little inspiration here and a little there, ‘line upon line, precept upon precept’ (D&C 98:12). Some answers will come from reading the scriptures, some from hearing speakers. And, occasionally, when it is important, some will come by very direct and powerful inspiration” (“Prayers and Answers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 21).

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Write down impressions or thoughts that you feel came from God. . . . Think carefully about whether the truth you received requires action. It is by obedience to commandments that we qualify for further revelation of truth and light” (“A Life Founded in Light and Truth,” *Ensign*, July 2001, 13).

How Can the Spirit Magnify Me to Be an Instrument in the Lord’s Hands?

Eliza R. Snow (1804–87), former Relief Society general president:

“When you are filled with the Spirit of God, . . . that [Spirit] satisfies and fills up every longing of the human heart, and fills up every vacuum. When I am filled with that spirit my soul is satisfied. . . . The Spirit of God will impart instruction to your minds, and you will impart it to each other. . . . Remember that you are Saints of God; and that you have important works to perform in Zion” (*Woman’s Exponent*, Sept. 15, 1873, 62).

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Women . . . who can hear the voice of the Lord, and who respond to those promptings, become invaluable instruments in His hands. . . . Never doubt that your influence is absolutely vital to preserving the family and to assisting with the growth and spiritual vitality of the Church” (“Women of Righteousness,” *Liabona*, Dec. 2002, 42; *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 72).

Bonnie D. Parkin, Relief Society general president:

“If we are in tune with the Spirit, if we are seeking the Lord and His guidance, if our direction is to return to our Father in Heaven, the sweet moments will come. And we will treasure them, for we have become instruments in the hands of God” (“Sweet Moments,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 108). ■

Home, Family, and Personal Enrichment

around the World



Left: Relief Society sisters in the San Miguel de Allende Ward, Celaya Mexico Stake, perform a dance they learned at a home, family, and personal enrichment activity.

Right: As part of an enrichment meeting and activity in the Mont St. Hilaire Ward, Longueuil Québec Stake, sisters learn how to grow sprouts—a healthy addition to their diet.



Left: Sisters in Orem, Utah, enjoy quilting, which has long been a favorite activity among Relief Society sisters.



Left: Sister Adelma M. Linhares sews for a service project in her São Paulo, Brazil, ward. This enrichment activity benefited public hospitals in the area.

LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH BY JUAN CARLOS SANTOYO; TOP RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY LAURENT LUCUIX; ABOVE: PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTINA SMITH; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY ANA CLÁUDIA OLIVEIRA; BACKGROUND © DYNAMIC GRAPHICS, INC.

BY CONNIE D. CANNON

Relief Society General Board

A place “where hearts and hands are joined together in a safe, relaxed, and enjoyable environment” is how Bonnie D. Parkin, Relief Society general president, describes home, family, and personal enrichment meeting. It is a place where women of all ages can strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ and learn parenting and homemaking skills. It is a time when sisters can socialize, learn, and be uplifted.

Since January 2006, when the new guidelines for home, family, and personal enrichment went into effect, Relief Society sisters around the world have caught the vision of what this program can be.

Enrichment Meetings

Instead of monthly meetings, home, family, and personal enrichment meetings for all sisters are held

four times a year. One of these four meetings commemorates the March 17, 1842, organization of the Relief Society. In addition to ward or branch meetings, the stake or district Relief Society holds one or two enrichment meetings each year. One of these enrichment meetings is held in conjunction with the annual broadcast of the general Relief Society meeting in September.

Enrichment Activities

The ward or branch Relief Society also offers regular activities for groups of sisters with similar interests. In doing so, Relief Society leaders respond to the needs and wants of the sisters to determine what activities to offer.

Home, Family, and Personal Enrichment

Meetings

In quarterly enrichment meetings, Relief Society sisters can “feel a sense of belonging as they participate in activities that build spiritual strength, develop personal skills, strengthen home and family, and exercise charity through service,” says Sister Parkin. “In these meetings bonds of sisterhood are strengthened, new and less-active members are fellowshipped, and missionary opportunities abound.”

Following are examples of what stakes and wards have done for their home, family, and personal enrichment meetings.

One ward celebrated the founding of Relief Society with a program they called “Sisterhood, a Tapestry of Love.” It was based on the talk given by President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, at the general Relief Society meeting in September 2002.¹ After dinner, eight sisters shared their experiences and thoughts on what Relief Society meant to them as a place for learning, making eternal friendships, enjoying sisterhood, and offering service.

One stake enrichment meeting focused on building faith in Jesus Christ with a sharing of testimonies. Stephanie Wilkey, stake Relief Society president, writes: “We had felt inspired to have a home, family, and personal enrichment meeting based on one of the principles of charity: kindness. It took every bit of faith we had to follow the promptings we had received as a presidency to carry through with this idea. My counselors assured me that the sisters would come and that they would stand and speak to us of the things of the heart. Oh, did they

come! Close to 350 sisters poured into the chapel on a windy, rainy evening. They stood and poured their hearts out to each other in magnificent testimonies of applying the principle of kindness in their lives. As the sisters left the building an hour and a half later, they expressed with words and tears that they had felt the love of the Lord and were so very grateful they had come.”

In another stake, Relief Society president Mickie Neslen realized that financial security helps strengthen families. She and the stake presidency prepared a stake home, family, and personal enrichment meeting that traveled from ward to ward. It began with a spiritual lesson on finances. Afterward, the sisters were invited to visit five different stations with 15-minute presentations by knowledgeable sisters:

1. “Budgeting” featured various ways to keep track of and manage money with notebooks, envelopes, or software.
2. “Money-Saving Tips” consisted of simple ways to save money each day.
3. “Finances for Kids” demonstrated a variety of ways to teach finances to children, including interactive games.
4. “Preparing for the Future” reviewed information about disability insurance, assisted living, nursing care, and other retirement concerns.
5. “The Cost of Credit” pointed out the dangers of debt and how to avoid it.

These enrichment meetings helped educate and strengthen the sisters in many important ways.

NOTE

1. See “You Are All Heaven Sent,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 110.



“We need to laugh together,” says one Relief Society sister in the Juniper Ward, Lancaster California Stake. “It balances out my life just to be with the sisters at home, family, and personal enrichment meetings.”

Right: Among the Relief Society activities in the Makati Second Ward, Makati Philippines Stake, was a presentation on how to prepare virgin coconut oil.



Sisters at this enrichment meeting in the Tacuarembó First Ward in Uruguay learned the artistic craft of flower arrangement.



Left: Because Elvira Garza of the San Fernando First Ward, Valle Hermoso Mexico Stake, loves home canning, she was the perfect choice to teach the process at a home, family, and personal enrichment activity.

Below: Sisters in the Jardines Ward, Mexico City Ermita Stake, study and learn together.



Left: Each July the Mexico City Chapultepec Stake holds classes that teach basic skills. The sisters choose one class to attend from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. each day during the week. Here sisters learn to cut hair.



Left: After a spiritual lesson in the Odessa Tsentralny Branch in Ukraine, Relief Society sisters attend a class on storing food products safely. Below: Skilled hands sew a tote bag at a home, family, and personal enrichment activity in the Votorantim Ward, Sorocaba Brazil Barcelona Stake.



Above: Relief Society sisters around the world, such as these in Brazil, learn food storage and other preparedness skills in an effort to help provide for their families in an emergency.



Home, Family, and Personal Enrichment

Activities

Home, family, and personal enrichment activities are less structured than the quarterly meetings. They can be organized by specialists, under the direction of the presidency. At first, the concept of activities seemed challenging to some leaders. But as they have assessed the sisters' needs, counseled with priesthood leaders, and prayed for inspiration, they have come up with good ideas and developed confidence. Some successful ideas include learning do-it-yourself home repairs, marriage enrichment classes, study groups using *Preach My Gospel*, bringing lunch to shut-in sisters, and a support group for sisters with infertility challenges.

"I wondered how this new program would bring sisters together if we met in smaller groups, but I was willing to try it," writes Richelle Pearce of the Shadowbrook Ward, Kaysville Utah South Stake. "I make bread a couple of times a week, so after making the proper arrangements, the Relief Society leaders invited anyone who was interested to come to my home for an activity.

"The next Thursday five sisters showed up at my door. They were from all different stages of life: one new mother, one working mom, one senior sister, and two with large families like mine. What happened over the next two hours was a testimony to me of the inspiration of this program. The sisters not only learned how to grind wheat and make bread, but they also talked, laughed, shared ideas, and really connected. By the time they left with their bread and wheat flour, I knew this program could bring sisters together in a wonderful way."

In Nigeria, learning how to bake bread did more than teach an important skill. A sister in the Ikot Ekpene Branch, Nigeria Uyo Mission, says enrichment activities changed her life. She explains that after her baptism and confirmation she had stopped attending church. Then a Relief Society sister invited her to an enrichment activity where they learned how to make soap, a commodity difficult to come by in the distant village where she lived. At another activity she learned to bake high-quality bread, which was not available close to her home. Her enthusiasm has continued as sisters gather regularly to bake bread for their homes and for the sacrament on Sundays.

In Mexico, interested sisters learned some methods for cutting hair. For many, learning this money-saving skill helped their families financially.

In one singles ward, Relief Society leaders asked the elders quorum to teach the Relief Society sisters how to change a flat tire and check the oil in their automobiles. This not only helped build self-reliance among the sisters, but it also provided an opportunity for these young single members to socialize with each other.

How, then, are the new guidelines for home, family, and personal enrichment being received by Relief Society sisters? They are being welcomed in many areas with faith, enthusiasm, and creativity. As time goes on, this inspired program will continue to grow and bless the lives of even more Relief Society sisters of all ages around the world. ■



Having Faith in God's Timeline

As a single woman, I have come to appreciate that the Lord sustains us in our unique timelines.

BY CATHERINE EDWARDS

When I was 19 years old, one of my best friends was married. The wedding was wonderful, she looked beautiful, the groom was handsome, and they were happy. I, on the other hand, was a little distraught. I was caught off guard by what she was doing. She was altering my vision for her—and for me. I definitely wanted to get married, just not yet. I thought we were both so young, and here she was marrying not only before graduating from college, but before she had the chance to travel much or engage in intellectually stimulating career opportunities. I was up the night prior to her wedding, anxious about what would happen in her future, while she was sound asleep, rightly confident in her decision.

As I look back on my reaction, I have to smile. What was I thinking? I look at her life now: she has two lovely children and a loving home. A few months after her wedding it became clear to me that she had made the right decision, and it is even clearer now. I recognize that she was prayerful and thoughtful and trusted in God's promptings to her.

That was almost 20 years ago. I am still single. The majority of my friends are married; they have husbands and children and homes. I have a home: a rented two-bedroom apartment in New York City. I don't have a husband or children. I've wondered on occasion if people have the same late-night concerns for me as I had for my friend.

I am sure I have made some errors in my life, but I don't believe I have done anything that would preclude me from the blessing of marriage. I admittedly wonder on occasion if my life would be different if I had done better or worked harder or been kinder, and yet I realize I have done good things and that I consistently try to move forward with an eternal perspective. I try to do my part to fulfill my desire for a temple marriage.

I also recognize that God understands the timeline for important events in my life, and it is different from the timeline of many others. I am tremendously grateful to understand this. My appreciation has grown as I have developed faith in a loving Heavenly Father, who understands what I need and what I can give to others.



Recognizing that my life is on a different timeline has been a process. My queries to God regarding His design for me have led to a sense that I have distinct potential and goodness. I find that this sense of assurance is most often challenged not by my own ideas but by the frequently well-intentioned concerns of others. The feelings of others regarding my single state are not dissimilar from the reaction I had toward my 19-year-old, soon-to-be-married friend. I presumed that I understood what she should do, but I was wrong.

Sometimes people suggest possible explanations as to why I don't have a husband and children yet. I know that most often these ideas are kindly offered, and yet underlying them seems to be a sense that I have erred in my eligibility for the blessings of marriage and children. I have been told that perhaps I am too picky, too aggressive, too smart, too career oriented, too independent, too liberal, and—my favorite—too happy. I must say that on occasion I take some of these critiques as compliments, and yet at the same time I recognize that there are married women who are smarter, more aggressive, pickier, and more independent than I am.

A Goal of Discipleship

As I reflect on what I believe is God's timeline for important events in my life, I am keenly aware of my choices and agency. As children of our Heavenly Father, we are given the happy opportunity and responsibility to pursue the blessing of marriage. By working toward that goal, we are doing our part.

As a member of the Church, I have the blessings of prayer, the scriptures, the ward I attend, and the words of the prophets to give me a deeper understanding of Heavenly Father and the Savior. Each of these blessings provides guidelines for using my agency well. I hope that wisdom is reflected in the decisions I make, including in my response to unanticipated joys and challenges.

I regularly take stock of my life and my situation. The most important aspect of that self-inquiry is the question of my worthiness. I have made a dedicated effort to abide by the doctrines and practices of the Church: to attend my meetings and the temple, to pay tithing, to live a virtuous life, and to serve others. I believe in the Savior's Atonement and in the efficacy of lives spent living by the commandments and the directives of the prophets.

of my life that year. As we sat around the table in Sister Parkin's office, we spoke of the challenges and the blessings in our lives. At the end she asked us if we had a final comment we wanted to make. I raised my hand and pronounced, "The Church is the best place to be a single woman." Given the opportunity over the course of that short hour to bear my testimony of service and loyalty to God, I had genuinely deepened my testimony of my role in the Church. I knew what my role was before, but I needed that forum to articulate it and deepen my conviction of its importance.

Confidence in the Individual

In the Church I believe there is a distinct need to develop confidence in the individual, not as he or she should fit into some culturally prescribed timeline but as he or she follows personal revelations from a loving Heavenly Father. It is important to have confidence that other people may be doing the right thing and to recognize that even when their lives look different, they have unique offerings we need. It is too easy to assume that one schedule is right for everyone.

Everyone has challenges. Whether we are married, divorced, widowed, or not yet married, we all have the blessing of our common divine ancestry and divine and distinct roles.

Of course I pray that I will marry and that my husband and I will have children. In the meantime I am working to extend and expand my gospel-oriented life. I have blessings as a single woman that I would be ungrateful and negligent to squander, and I am confident that those blessings will ultimately make me a better wife and mother.

I am grateful for a loving Heavenly Father, who knows us and knows what we can do with our lives—disparate and exciting as they are. I am grateful for the life I have and the opportunities ahead of me. I pray that each of us can have confidence in the Lord's timelines for us, timelines that are supported by our good decisions and faith in God. ■

MARRIAGE AND THE LORD'S TIMING



"The timing of marriage is perhaps the best example of an extremely important event in our lives that is almost impossible to plan. Like other important mortal events that depend on the agency of others or the will and timing of the Lord,

marriage cannot be anticipated or planned with certainty. We can and should work for and pray for our righteous desires, but despite this, many will remain single well beyond their desired time for marriage.

"So what should be done in the meantime? Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ prepares us for whatever life brings. This kind of faith prepares us to deal with life's opportunities—to take advantage of those that are received and to persist through the disappointments of those that are lost. In the exercise of that faith, we should commit ourselves to the priorities and standards we will follow on matters we do not control and persist faithfully in those commitments, whatever happens to us because of the agency of others or the timing of the Lord. When we do this, we will have a constancy in our lives that will give us direction and peace. Whatever the circumstances beyond our control, our commitments and standards can be constant.

"The commitments and service of adult singles can anchor them through the difficult years of waiting for the right time and the right person. Their commitments and service can also inspire and strengthen others. Wise are those who make this commitment: I will put the Lord first in my life, and I will keep His commandments. The performance of that commitment is within everyone's control. We can fulfill that commitment without regard to what others decide to do, and that commitment will anchor us no matter what timing the Lord directs for the most important events in our lives."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Timing," *Liahona and Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 15.

FROM *Friends* TO *Sisters* TO *Companions*

Valeria led Paula to the gospel through friendship, example, and always being there to help.

BY REBECCA MILLS HUME
AND BRAD WILCOX

Valeria Pontelli of Río Gallegos, Santa Cruz, Argentina, didn't set out to convert her friend. She simply lived her standards with conviction. Because she is a member of the Church, there were certain things she did and certain things she didn't do, and all her friends knew it. One of those friends was Paula Alvarez, who always watched Valeria closely and was impressed with how faithfully and consistently she lived her beliefs.

Paula had a wonderful family, but they didn't have the gospel—at least not until Valeria came on the scene. Paula remembers, “Valeria was not ashamed of the testimony she had. She knew who she was. She knew she was a daughter of a royal and eternal King, a daughter of God.”

That knowledge and confidence impressed Paula's uncle, Moises. He began investigating the Church and meeting with the missionaries. The day he announced he was getting baptized, Paula was a little shocked. She hadn't expected her uncle to be willing to make such big changes in his life.

The whole family was invited to the

baptism, but Paula was hesitant to attend. She didn't know what to expect. Finally, her family convinced her to accompany them to her uncle's baptism. Paula remembers, “As we witnessed my uncle entering the waters of baptism, the Spirit touched my heart. The impact was deep, even undeniable. In that moment I also wanted to commit myself to God and do whatever He might ask of me.”

“May I speak to you?” Paula said, pulling Valeria aside. “I felt something special at my uncle's baptism,” she explained quietly.

Valeria told her friend she had felt the promptings of the Spirit. “He's telling you that you need to follow your uncle's example.”

“But I can't do it alone,” said Paula.

“Don't worry. I'll help you,” assured her friend. Before long, Paula and her whole family were meeting with the missionaries and accepting the invitation to be baptized. Their lives changed forever.

Paula says, “The standards I always saw my friend live were now mine. My friend's testimony was now mine.” Not long after, Paula began to feel an intense desire to share with others what she had been given. When she had been a member for one year, she filled out



her mission papers, met with her priesthood leaders, and received a call to serve in the Chile Santiago East Mission.

Valeria says, “As I watched my friend prepare to serve her mission, the Spirit touched my heart. I wanted to commit myself to serve God the way she was.”

“May I speak to you?” This time it was Valeria who had pulled Paula aside. “I’ve felt something special as you have been preparing to leave on your mission.”

Paula told her friend the same thing her friend had once told her: “It’s the Spirit telling you what you need to do.”

Valeria’s plans hadn’t included a full-time mission. She wasn’t quite sure how to proceed. “I can’t do it alone,” she told Paula.

“Don’t worry. I’ll help you,” her friend assured.

Later, when Valeria opened her call, she was surprised to be going to the same mission as her friend. Paula began serving in October 2002; Valeria joined her in February 2003.

During their missions they saw each other quite often at conferences and activities. They enjoyed catching up and sharing news from their separate areas. They never dreamed that in November 2003 they would be assigned

as companions. Their friendship bloomed into a relationship that will last forever. They have gone from being friends to sisters in the gospel to missionary companions.

Sister Valeria Pontelli says, “At first I was afraid that working together might damage our friendship, but that fear faded the first day. This chance to work together has only strengthened our relationship, and our friendship has helped us in the work.”

Others agree. One woman, who used to be less active but has come back to church because of the efforts of these two missionaries, says, “You can’t help but love them because you can see the love they feel for each other and for everyone around them. They are my angels.”

It was hard for these two companions to say good-bye in March 2004, when Sister Paula Alvarez’s mission came to an end. She was nervous about returning to Argentina and all that the future might bring. These two sisters talked about her concerns as they walked to their appointments together. “I can’t do it alone,” said Sister Alvarez.

“Don’t worry,” came the familiar words from her companion, Sister Pontelli. “I’ll help you.” ■

If I Had Known at 19...

what I know now, I would have done a few things differently as a missionary.

BY ROGER TERRY

I served in northern Germany from 1975 to 1977. These were indeed two of the most memorable years of my life, but memory also brings with it some added perspective. Hindsight being a wonderful gift, I offer four suggestions that might help those of you who are preparing to serve a mission.

1. I would make it my second highest priority to love my companion.

My companions came in various shapes and sizes with unique gifts and personalities. Some became instant friends and have remained so over the years. Others I didn't have much in common with beyond tracting and teaching. One



or two, I'm ashamed to admit, I didn't have very warm feelings about. In fact, sometimes things got downright icy.

But with each of these companions, I had at least one piece of common ground: we were both sacrificing our time, means, and effort to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. If I had it to do again, I would try my hardest to be every companion's best friend, regardless of how well our personalities or interests meshed. I would encourage him and try to be contagiously enthusiastic without being critical.

If loving my companion would be my second highest priority, what would be first, you might ask? To be obedient. Loving your companion does not mean you should follow him in disobeying commandments or mission rules. Fortunately, none of my companions were disobedient. A couple were not as motivated as they could have been, but what they needed more than criticism or nagging was someone to accept and strengthen them.

2. I would look for miracles. In fact, I would expect them.

I remember sitting in the mission home at the end of my mission, sharing a testimony meeting with 13 elders and one sister who were also going home. I don't remember what I said. I don't remember what the other elders said. But I will never forget Sister Thorpe's testimony. She explained that

in the interview with her stake president 18 months earlier she had revealed a secret desire: “I want to see miracles on my mission,” she had confided to him. Then, almost apologetically, she had asked him if it was wrong to seek miracles. He had assured her it was not wrong. After relating this conversation to us, she testified, “I’ve seen miracles on my mission.”

I suddenly realized I had also seen miracles, but I hadn’t sought them or expected them. I had just let them happen. By failing to seek them and expect them, I probably prevented quite a few. Miracles come by faith, and faith has something to do with expecting certain things to happen and actively working to bring them to pass.

If I were going out to serve today, I would do my part, but I would also expect the Lord to do His part in my work as His servant. He specializes in miracles, which we might define as things He can do for us that we can’t do for ourselves. I’ve come to believe He is more willing to *perform* miracles than we are to *receive* them. Teaching by the Spirit is probably the most effective way a missionary can open the door to miracles. It invites the Lord’s influence directly into an investigator’s life.



3. I would work smarter and harder.

My first district leader’s motto seemed to be “Work smarter, not harder.” I don’t agree with the second half of this motto, but if I had it to do over, I would certainly try to work smarter. My district leader was quite creative *and* quite successful. For instance, he organized a volleyball team among the youth in his branch, and they invited their friends to play. It was a fun and simple way to help the youth be missionaries.

I would expect to see miracles. The Lord specializes in miracles, and I’ve come to believe that He is more willing to perform them than we are to receive them. If we do our part, the Lord will do His part.



My companion and I loved working together. We were united. We worked hard. And because of our attitude and effort, I believe the Lord blessed us with success.

Teaching opportunities and conversions resulted from this nonthreatening approach to sharing the gospel.

I was probably too rigid and restrictive in my definition of what the Lord's work should be. I considered myself lazy if I wasn't out knocking on doors all day long or teaching serious investigators. But the Lord's work doesn't have to be hard to be considered work. If I were a missionary today, I would, under the guidance of my mission president, try to be more creative in finding people to teach.

4. I would not let rejection and failure discourage me.

On my mission, rejection and failure were as much a part of our everyday lives as eating and breathing. It was easy to expect rejection and anticipate that our investigators would lose interest in our message. But five weeks in one particular city taught me a valuable lesson. It was a city where no one had ever had much

success. But someone forgot to tell my companion or me. We got along famously. We worked hard. And we had fun. We met lots of people interested in our message. We had a thriving investigator class each Sunday in this tiny branch. Miracles were happening in people's lives. And we felt we were just scratching the surface of this golden city.

Why did we have so much success there? I believe the Lord blessed us with success because of our attitude. My companion and I loved working together. We were united. We worked hard. We honestly believed the city was a gold mine just waiting to yield up its treasures. Attitude has a lot to do with faith. Faith has everything to do with success. And faith is contagious.

Unfortunately, I was late in understanding this lesson. I failed to make the connection between the *fruits* of our labors and the *way* we labored. Consequently, I was not able to apply this principle as successfully in my next two assignments.

There are probably many other things I would do differently if I had the chance to serve my mission over again, but these four stand out in my mind. If you look at these ideas carefully, you'll see that they fall within the qualifications the Lord Himself outlined for His servants: "And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work. Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence" (D&C 4:5-6). ■





Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life

BY ELDER WON YONG KO
Of the Seventy

When Jesus Christ was on the earth, He performed many miracles such as turning water into wine, healing the sick and disabled, and even raising Lazarus from the dead. The miracle witnessed by the largest audience was likely the feeding of the 5,000 with five loaves and two fishes. This miracle is described in all four Gospels (see Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:34–44; Luke 9:12–17; John 6:5–14). Let us examine some of the details of this miraculous story and discuss why it is relevant in our day.

The Savior's Compassion

The Savior performed this miracle because of His compassion for the people. Mark wrote that as Jesus looked over the crowd of people eagerly listening to His words, He “was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd” (Mark 6:34). He was aware that “the day was now far spent” and that, being in “a desert place” (Mark 6:35), the people did not have access to food.

Yet Jesus withheld His power to perform the miracle for a time, deciding to test His disciples first. He asked Philip, “Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” (John 6:5).



Why did He ask Philip this question when “he himself knew what he would do” (John 6:6)? Perhaps

He wanted His disciples to fully recognize that they could not feed that many people with the money and time given to them. If the vast multitude was to be fed, it would require a miracle.

Then the disciples brought the food one boy had, the only food available to them: five barley loaves and two small fishes. I like to think that perhaps this boy was hungry but saved the food for his great Teacher instead of worrying about himself. This might have contributed to the great setting of the miracle.

“And They Sat Down in Ranks”

Jesus Christ deliberately accomplished one more task before performing the miracle: He commanded His disciples “to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties” (Mark 6:39–40). Why did He ask the people to sit down like this? Certainly He wanted to ensure that the process of distributing food was orderly. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles adds to our understanding:



Jesus taught the people not to focus on physical bread, but to seek for much more important bread: “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.”

Jesus fed more than 5,000 people with only five loaves and two fishes—a divine act. He declared Himself the “bread of life”—a divine teaching.

“There was nothing informal or unorganized about our Lord’s planning or performance. The assembled hosts were seated in a systematic way by companies and in ranks. His beneficence was not promiscuous largess scattered to a mob. Rather he was providing necessary and otherwise unavailable food to an inquiring congregation of hearers. Then too, there was to be no question left in anyone’s mind as to what actually took place. The apostles were to distribute the loaves and fishes in an orderly way, treating all with fairness and impartiality.”¹

In addition, I believe that—as with Philip—the Lord wanted the people to notice just how vast the multitude was when the miracle was

performed. He may have wanted to ensure that there were no arguments about the number of people who participated in this great miracle.

The number of people in the crowd was actually more than 5,000 because women and children were not counted. Therefore, many more than 5,000 people were miraculously fed with the five loaves and two fishes.

After the Savior took the five loaves and fishes, “he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves” (Mark 6:41) and then gave them to His disciples to pass to the people. They then distributed the fishes. The people did not take just a little food, worrying about a shortage. Instead, they took “as much as they would” (John 6:11) and “did all eat, and were filled” (Mark 6:42).

Jesus gave further instruction after performing the miracle. He told His disciples, “Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost” (John 6:12). The disciples gathered 12 baskets of food!

It was clear that by His power Jesus performed the miracle. The account in the book of John ends with this comment:

“Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world” (John 6:14).

Spiritual Nourishment

The story does not end there. All of these events were only a prelude to what the Savior taught afterward. He performed this miracle in a dramatic way so the people clearly understood that He has great power, and they



were thus better prepared to accept His teaching—which was so much more important than eating the loaves and the fishes.

A short time after performing this miracle, Jesus taught the people not to focus on physical bread but to seek for much more important bread: “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (John 6:27).

The people were confused about what He said. Their minds were still on the loaves they had eaten. They could not understand the meaning of the term “bread of life.”

Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

He continued to explain: “I am that bread of life. . . . This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever” (John 6:48, 50–51).

Some people murmured because of His saying. They thought they knew Jesus, son of Joseph the carpenter. They forgot the power by which Jesus had performed such a great miracle. Many chose to leave Him. Jesus asked His Twelve Apostles, “Will ye also go away?” (John 6:67). Peter answered with a testimony that was powerful in its simplicity: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

Even though the Savior had prepared the people well for being taught His divine nature and mission, they still did not understand the significance of the miracle or of Jesus’s teaching that He is the Bread of Life. But the Twelve, led by Peter, assured Him of their testimonies. This must have given the Lord great comfort.



Knowing that Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life—the way by which all can receive eternal life—we have an important responsibility. We should seek to help people come to Him.

Relevance in Our Day

Today, some may think the miracle of the loaves and fishes is only an ancient story and is not relevant in our day. In so doing, they miss the point of this miraculous story and do not understand the significance of the “bread of life.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “In our contemporary success and sophistication we too may walk away from the vitally crucial bread of eternal life; we may actually *choose* to be spiritually malnourished, willfully indulging in a kind of spiritual anorexia.”²

The Bible Dictionary explains that miracles are “an important element in the work of Jesus Christ, being

not only divine acts, but forming also a part of the divine teaching” (732; see also Guide to the Scriptures, “Miracle,” 165). The miracle of the loaves and fishes is a good example of this definition. Jesus fed more than 5,000 people with only five loaves and two fishes—a divine act. He declared Himself the “bread of life”—a divine teaching.

Knowing that Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life—the way by which all can receive eternal life—we have an important responsibility. We should seek to help people come to Him and partake of His word, like the people who were filled with the loaves and fishes. Our friends may not know they are hungry in spirit. They may try to consume many things to satisfy their spiritual hunger, and as a result, they may feel frustrated and lost. Let us help them know how they can be spiritually filled—by coming unto Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. ■

NOTES

1. *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (1966–73), 1:344.
2. “He Hath Filled the Hungry with Good Things,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 65.

Pen Pals and Referrals

By Brittany Jones Beahm

My companion handed me an envelope and said, “Sister Jones, I think this is for you.” I looked at the return address and was pleased to see my cousin’s name printed neatly in the corner. I had just been transferred to a new city from the other side of southern France and didn’t think anyone back home in the United States was aware of my new address. I opened the envelope and read a short note in which my cousin said that she had recently received an e-mail from her French pen pal after eight years of no contact.

My cousin explained that although

she and Céline had received each other’s address in their high school French and English classes, respectively, they had never actually written to each other. My cousin was therefore very surprised to receive Céline’s e-mail. She didn’t know if Céline lived in southern France where I was serving, but she included her name and address, asking me to contact her if possible.

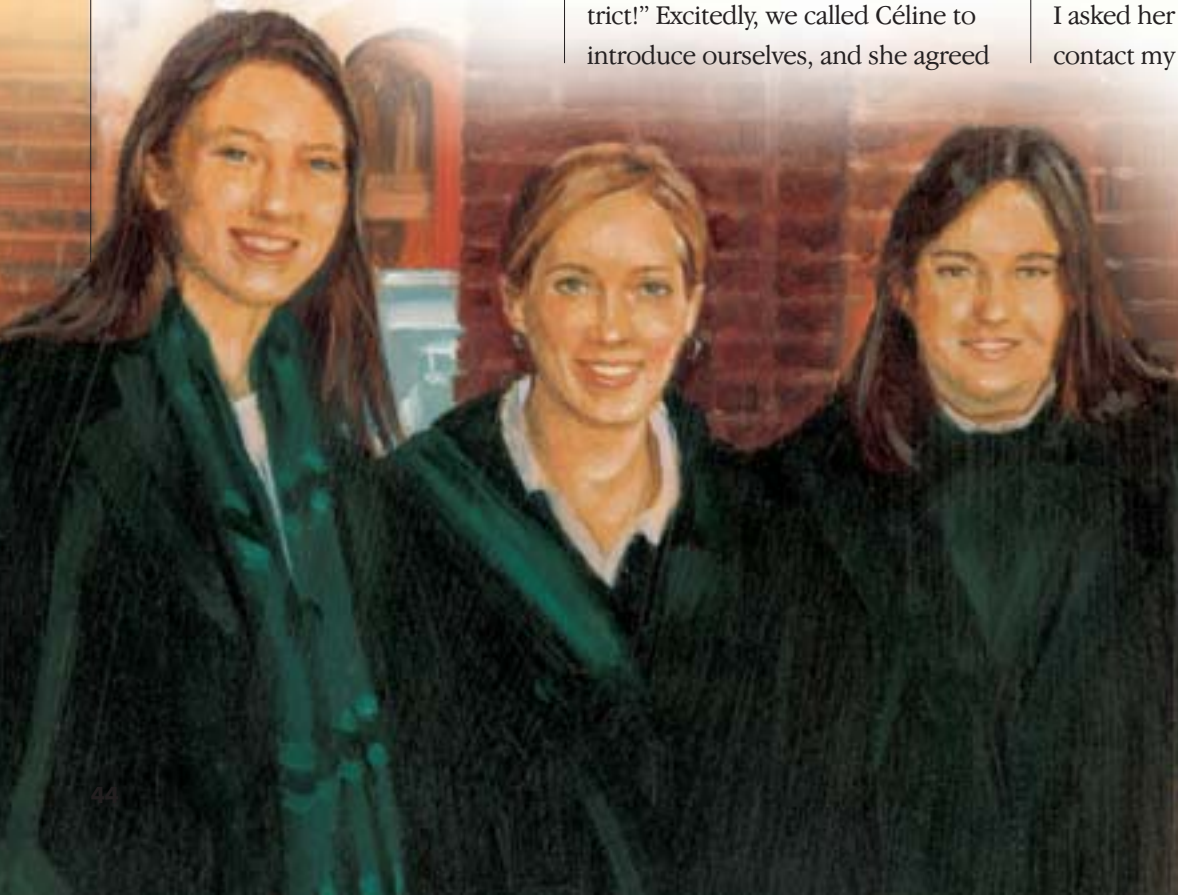
Because I was new to the area, I handed the note to my companion and asked her if my cousin’s pen pal lived in the mission. “Not only does she live within mission boundaries,” she responded, “she lives in our district!” Excitedly, we called Céline to introduce ourselves, and she agreed

to meet with us. We took the short train ride to Montauban.

As we stepped off the train, we were greeted warmly by Céline and her parents. They invited us to their home and asked us to share our message. As we taught them about the Book of Mormon and the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Spirit bore witness of the truthfulness of the restored gospel. The family expressed their appreciation for the values taught by the Church, and after a lengthy discussion we left them with a copy of the Book of Mormon, a prayer, and a promise to return.

That was the first of several visits with Céline and her family. My mission ended while they were still in the process of learning about the Church, but before I said good-bye to Céline, I asked her why she had decided to contact my cousin after eight years.

I marveled at how a loving Father allowed a lost address to be found and an old connection to be made.



Her response surprised me: “When I was cleaning out a drawer, I came across her address on a small piece of paper I thought I’d lost. I felt strongly that I needed to write to her.”

On the way home to our apartment I gazed out the train window and marveled at how a loving Father allowed a lost address to be found and an old connection to be made at the very time I was unexpectedly transferred to a new city for the last six weeks of my mission. He is mindful of all and will make miracles happen, even with such a small and simple thing as a pen pal’s address. ■

Never Too Late

By Sylvia de Moscuí Maldonado

While I was serving as a full-time missionary in my homeland of Ecuador, one day I had a definite feeling that someone special was waiting for us—someone who would accept the gospel.

As my companion and I walked, we came to a humble house. An elderly lady, perhaps 80 years of age, smiled sweetly at me. I smiled at her in return. I was ready to keep walking, but the woman looked so happy to see us. Something told me to stop right there.

Many people in that little town were illiterate, so I asked her if she could read. Her answer was an enthusiastic yes. I was suddenly filled with



excitement. I felt that she was the person the Lord wanted us to teach. I took a Book of Mormon from my bag and showed it to her. I was surprised when she began to read aloud from the first page without needing glasses. I asked her if she would like to have the book, and again she answered yes. Happiness glowed in her tired eyes—eyes that had long been seeking a better life.

We began to teach her the gospel, and the Spirit bore witness to her of its truthfulness. Such tender feelings filled my heart.

As we concluded our lesson, I showed her chapter 11 of 3 Nephi, which tells about the visit of Jesus Christ to the Americas. She promised to read it. She marked the page herself and kissed the book,

beaming with an unspeakable joy.

We made other visits to our new investigator, and we were delighted to find she read everything we assigned her. After completing her daily work, she would read the Book of Mormon late into the night. She also started attending church, although it took two hours for her to walk slowly to the meetinghouse. Her feelings about the Book of Mormon and Jesus Christ grew rapidly and deeply. After hearing all of the missionary lessons, she wanted to be baptized and pay tithing.

What great blessings this dear woman received! Her heart was ready to follow the Lord, and His Spirit guided us to her. She taught us about love, courage, sacrifice, joy, and obedience. Above all else she taught us that it is never too late to change. ■



If you will allow the Spirit to magnify your callings, you will be able to work miracles for the Lord.”

Speaking the Language of the Spirit

By Sergio Adrián López

As missionaries in the Argentina Buenos Aires South Mission, my companion, Elder Allred, and I received a referral card to contact a family from Russia. When we found the house, the woman recognized us as missionaries and invited us in to meet her family.

We quickly realized the Balva family understood very little Spanish, and it was difficult for us to understand them as well. From their broken Spanish, we gathered that they had been in Argentina only a short time but were eager to learn about the Church. We adapted the first lesson into simplified Spanish, and the family flipped through their two Russian-Spanish dictionaries as we slowly taught our message, but we weren't sure how much of it they really understood.

After making an appointment to return, we walked home, discussing how difficult it had been to convey the meaning of our message. We wondered if the family would understand the other lessons any better or if they would get frustrated and ask us to stop coming.

We returned to visit the Balva family the following day to see how they were and if they had begun reading the Book of Mormon and praying to know of its truthfulness. To our surprise and joy, they excitedly showed us a paper on which they had written in Spanish the principles we had taught them. They also shared with us what they had read in 3 Nephi 11 regarding the Savior's visit to the American continent, assuring us that they had understood all we had

discussed the day before and that they were excited to learn more.

Over the next few weeks my testimony was strengthened as the Holy Ghost witnessed to the Balva family of the gospel's truthfulness and enlightened their understanding in Spanish. Heavenly Father knew the desire of their hearts and recognized the sincerity of their prayers to find truth. Together, the Balva family, Elder Allred, and I experienced the joy described in D&C 50:22: "Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together"—not because we spoke the same language but because of the universal language of the Spirit.

The Balva family introduced us to another Russian family, whom we were also privileged to teach. Both families made covenants with Heavenly Father by entering the waters of baptism not long after we met them.

I am a witness that the words of

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) are true: “The influence of the Spirit is the most important element in this work. If you will allow the Spirit to magnify your callings, you will be able to work miracles for the Lord” (new mission presidents’ seminar, June 25, 1986). ■

The First of a Thousand Souls

By Norie Tsubaki Murae

My companion and I, serving in the Japan Fukuoka Mission, were working in an area known as Kasuga, located near the Kumamoto Station. The people who lived in this area were very skeptical about religion. But knowing this, our mission president told us, “There are a thousand people in Kumamoto who have been prepared by the Lord. Please find them.”

One rainy day we decided to try to find Noboru Yamagata, a less-active member we had never met. Approaching his house, we noticed a sign that read, “No religious solicitation”—a common warning in Japanese culture. But heeding the promptings of the Spirit, we knocked on the door.

Brother Yamagata’s mother answered the door and informed us that her son was out of town. She went on to say that she would be friendly to anyone who had ties to him, as is traditional for Japanese families, and she consequently invited us in. But despite her surface hospitality, her face wore a threatening expression.

As we sat down, she warned, “I don’t want to hear anything about religion.” She then began to talk about herself and expressed how strongly she felt about certain values in her life.

To our surprise she talked about faith, love, and the Beatitudes, and we took the chance to tell her that these principles were also important to us. We recounted the glorious vision that resulted from Joseph Smith’s faith, and we described the importance of the Book of Mormon in the Restoration of the gospel.

It was interesting to observe the change that took place in Mrs.

Yamagata as she listened to our message. Tears ran down her cheeks as we testified of the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith. She replied, “Joseph Smith was a lucky man.”

When we said good-bye at last, her face shined and her eyes sparkled with happiness. She said, “Thank you for coming today. My son must have led you to me.” We shook hands, and she jokingly said, “I won’t be washing my hand today!”

As we walked home we realized that this woman was one of the people our mission president had described as being ready to receive the gospel. Clearly, the Spirit had prepared her heart for our message, and we knew she was the first of a thousand souls we needed to find. ■



Our mission president told us, “There are a thousand people who have been prepared by the Lord. Please find them.”

Magazine Brings Serenity and Harmony

We are very grateful for the *Liabona*. We have observed that it brings serenity to our spirits and harmony to family relationships. We use it as a storybook because we like reading truth-based bedtime stories to our children. It is a great blessing to have the simple messages of the restored gospel made available in this enjoyable magazine. *Cazorla family, Spain*

Testimonies of Faith

I thank Heavenly Father for this marvelous magazine, the *Liabona*. Through it we receive testimonies of faith from the entire world. This communication from our brothers and sisters around the world strengthens us spiritually. *Ilka Odierno, Brazil*

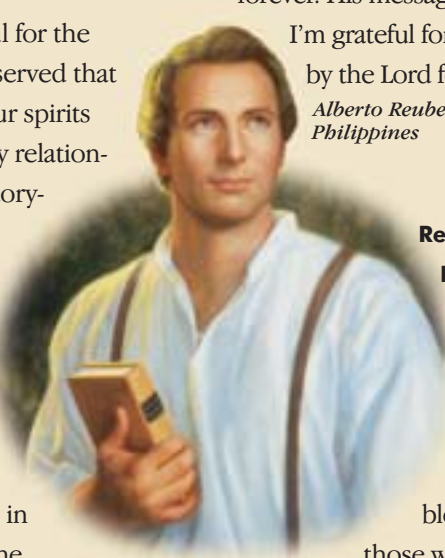
Cherishing Marriage

I would like to thank you for publishing the general conference addresses in the May 2006 issue, particularly Elder Russell M. Nelson’s message, “Nurturing Marriage.” Aleth and I were married last year in the Manila Philippines Temple. We have been blessed, but we go through the challenges all married couples do. Elder Nelson’s message has reminded us of the beauty and sacredness of marriage. He taught us how to strengthen our

marriage, cherish it, and make it last forever. His message was so timely.

I’m grateful for Apostles called by the Lord for our day.

Alberto Reuben C. Reyes, Philippines



Reinforced My Knowledge

I want to express my gratitude for those who make the *Liabona* possible, as well as for those who share their

personal stories. I am especially thankful for the Gospel Classics article by President Hugh B. Brown, “The Profile of a Prophet” (June 2006). His experience reinforced my knowledge that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in our day and that this is His Church, organized under His direction through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Herwin A. Pado, Philippines

Hope, Courage, and Spiritual Strength

I am 73 years old. I have a great love for our prophet and for all the General Authorities and local leaders of the Church and for all my brothers and sisters in this world. I am especially grateful to you who dedicate yourselves to preparing the beautiful messages of the *Liabona*, which are sent to us every month. They give us hope, courage, and spiritual strength to face the tempests of life.

Otilia Pereira, Portugal

A Comfort

Like no other magazine, the *Liabona* teaches me. The stories inspire me to do good continually. Sometimes reading the *Liabona* comforts me when I am broken-hearted and depressed. It helps me overcome trials and temptation, making me firm and constant in keeping the commandments of God.

Beeny Mayang, Philippines

COMING NEXT MONTH

In January 1989 Elder David B. Haight (1906–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles fell ill and was taken by ambulance to the hospital, where he had two abdominal surgeries. Before he was taken to the hospital, crushing pain drove him to his knees. He prayed that his life would be spared. As he prayed, he began to lose consciousness. The sound of the siren was



the last thing he remembered. In his unconscious state, the pain ceased, and he found himself in a peaceful setting.

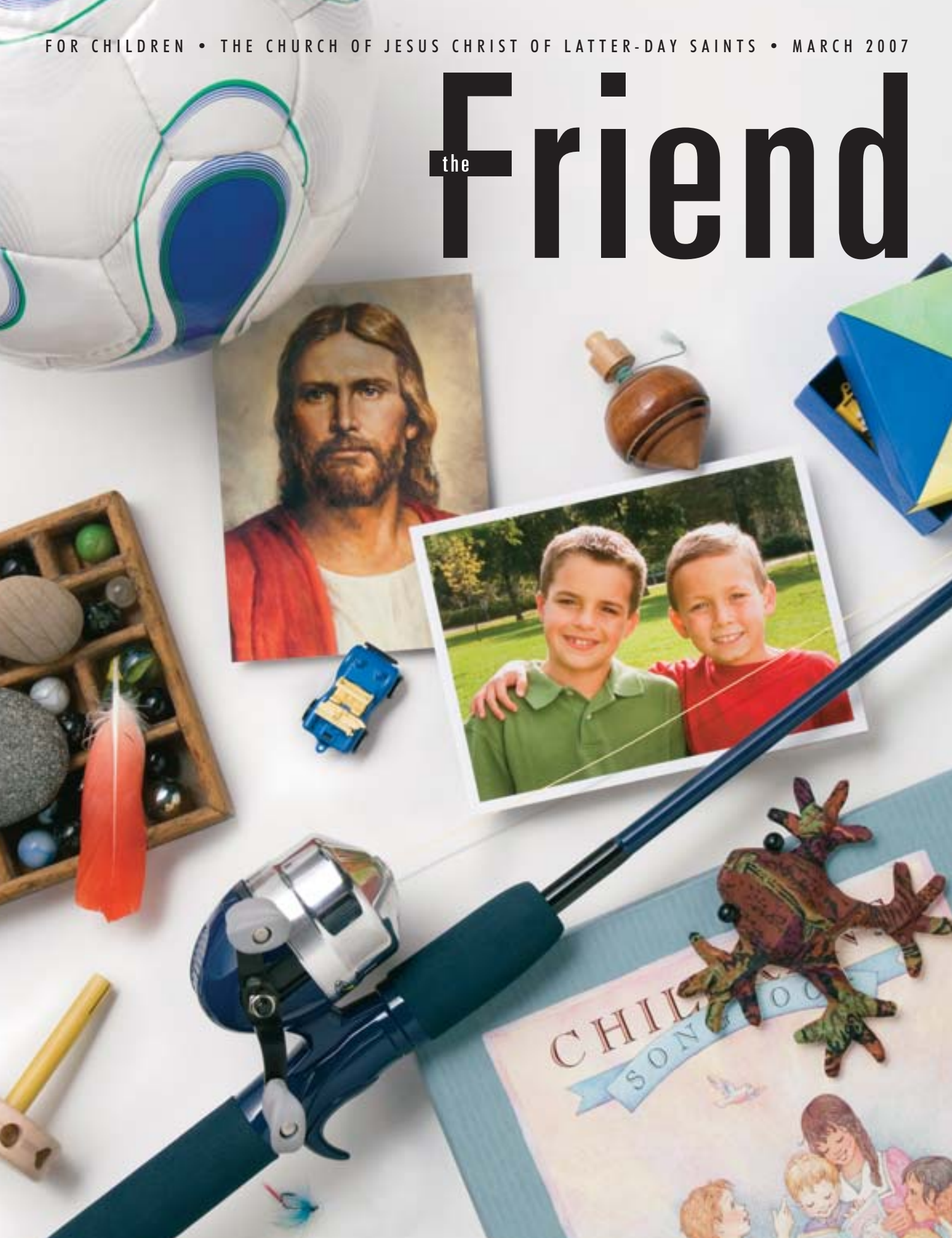
He became aware of being in a holy presence.

In next month’s *Liabona*, look for Gospel Classics: “The Sacrament—and the Sacrifice,” Elder Haight’s testimony of the Savior and an account of what he learned while unconscious.

DETAIL FROM PROPHET OF THE LORD, BY DAVID LINDSLEY, MAY NOT BE COPIED; BORDER AND AMBULANCE © PHOTOSPIN

FOR CHILDREN • THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • MARCH 2007

the Friend



Be More Forgiving

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

I clipped an article written by Jay Evensen from the *Deseret Morning News*. With his permission, I quote from it:

“How would you feel toward a teenager who decided to toss a 20-pound [9-kg] frozen turkey from a speeding car headlong into the windshield of the car you were driving? How would you feel after enduring six hours of surgery using metal plates and other hardware to piece your face together? . . .

“ . . . The victim, Victoria Ruvolo, . . . was more interested in salvaging the life of her 19-year-old assailant [attacker], Ryan Cushing, than in . . . revenge. . . . She insisted on offering him a plea deal. Cushing could serve six months in the county jail and be on probation for five years if he pleaded guilty to second-degree assault.

“Had he been convicted of first-degree assault—the charge most fitting for the crime—he could have served 25 years in prison. . . .

“According to an account in the *New York Post*, Cushing . . . made his way to where Ruvolo sat in the courtroom and tearfully whispered an apology. ‘I’m so sorry for what I did to you.’

“Ruvolo then stood, and the victim and her assailant



President Hinckley promises that love and forgiveness can work miracles.

embraced, weeping. She stroked his head and patted his back as he sobbed, and witnesses . . . heard her say, ‘It’s OK. I just want you to make your life the best it can be.’”¹

Who can feel anything but admiration for this woman? Somehow forgiveness, with love and tolerance, accomplishes miracles that can happen in no other way.

The great Atonement was the supreme act of forgiveness. The suffering was so great, the agony so intense, that none of us can understand it when the Savior offered Himself as a ransom for the sins of all mankind. I know only that it happened and that it was for me and for you. It is through Him that we gain forgiveness. It is through Him that all mankind will be granted resurrection from the dead. It is through Him and His great sacrifice that we are offered the opportunity through obedience of eternal life.

May God help us to be a little kinder, to be more forgiving, to lay aside old grudges and nurture them no more. ●

From an October 2005 general conference address.

NOTE

1. “Forgiveness Has Power to Change Future,” *Deseret Morning News*, Aug. 21, 2005, p. AA3.

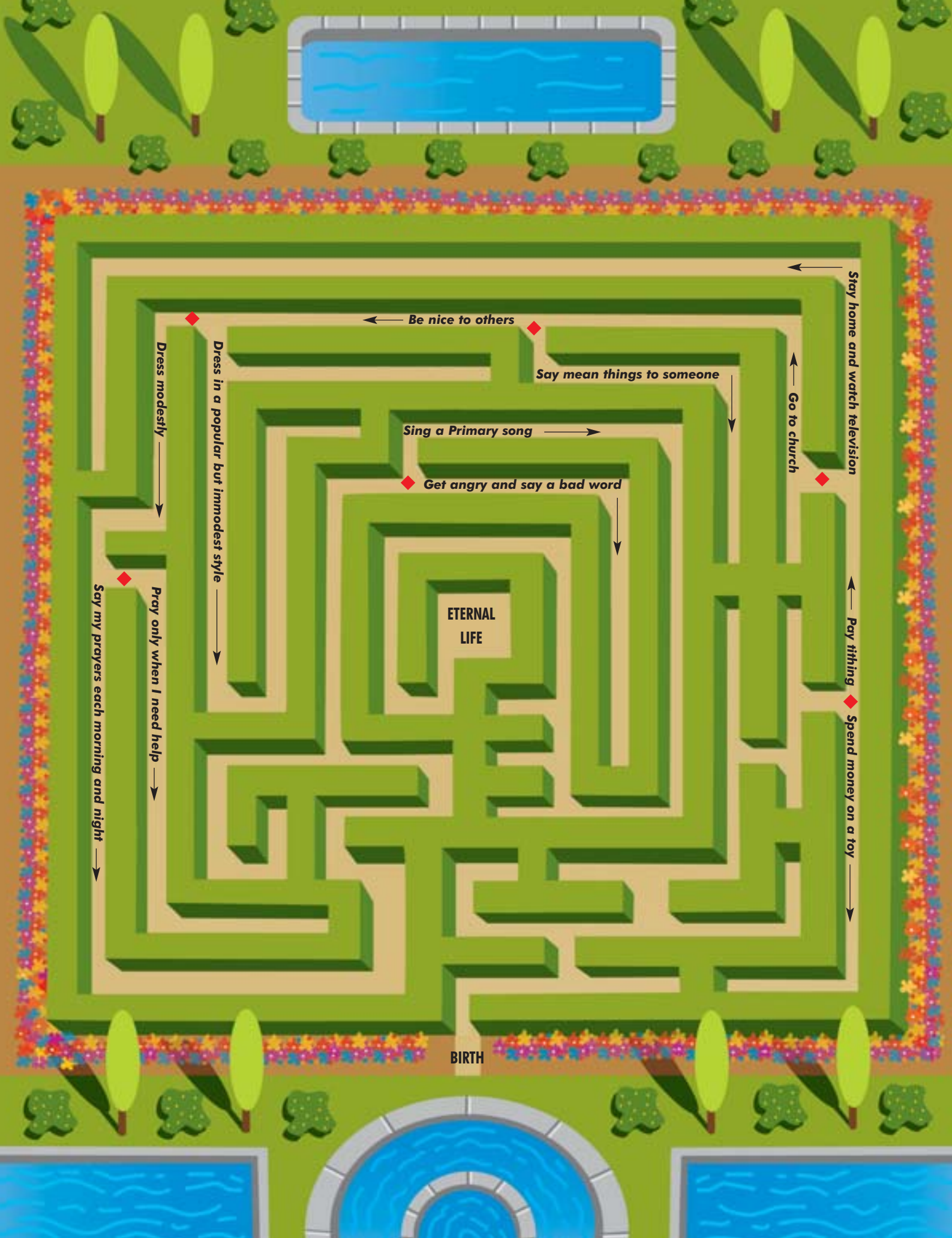


THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. How do you think Victoria Ruvolo's forgiveness may have affected Ryan Cushing? Why?

2. President Hinckley reminds us that Jesus Christ suffered for our sins. Through Him we receive forgiveness if we repent. How does knowing this help us forgive others?

3. Does forgiving someone mean we have to let him or her keep hurting us?



ETERNAL
LIFE

BIRTH

Stay home and watch television

Go to church

Pay tithing

Spend money on a toy

Be nice to others

Say mean things to someone

Sing a Primary song

Get angry and say a bad word

Dress modestly

Dress in a popular but immodest style

Pray only when I need help

Say my prayers each morning and night

Try, Try, Try

“Follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do” (2 Nephi 31:12).

BY ELIZABETH RICKS



Many years ago people made fancy garden mazes to delight their friends. They trimmed hedges to form pathways where others could walk and wander and try to find the way out. Many people enjoyed strolling through these large garden mazes. Others sometimes became confused in the passageways, but they still enjoyed the pleasant walk and eventually found their way out. They had to try, try, try. Garden mazes still exist, and visitors enjoy navigating through them.

Just as visitors make their way through garden mazes by making a decision at every fork in the path, each of us makes our way through life. Every day we are faced with decisions. Some of the decisions are not important. It probably doesn't matter if you wear a blue shirt or a red shirt. But many decisions *are* important. When you are faced with a decision about whether to tell the truth or tell a lie, it is important to tell the truth.

For important decisions, you can make the right choice if you ask yourself, “What would Jesus do?” When we try to be like Jesus—when we try, try, try—we will do what is right. Jesus always did what was right. Our faith grows when we follow His example.

Activity

With your finger, trace a path through the garden maze. Every time you come to a choice, decide which choice Jesus would make. Beginning at “Birth,” follow Jesus's example until you get to “Eternal Life.”

Sharing Time Ideas

1. Explain that following Jesus's example will help us return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. Ask the children what an example is, and give illustrations. For instance, a teacher might solve a math problem to show students how to solve other problems. A soccer coach might kick a ball to show how to kick. Explain that following Jesus's example can help us make good choices. Prepare case studies (see “Case Studies,” Teaching, No Greater Call [1999], 161–62) of true-to-life situations. Give one case study to each class, and have them discuss the problem. Ask the children to solve the problem by asking, “What would I do if I followed Jesus's example?” Have each class report on how they could follow Jesus. Explain that to be like Jesus, we must try. Trying is the key. Testify that following Jesus's example will take effort, and it will make us happy.

2. Invite the bishop or branch president (or another member of the bishopric or branch presidency) to show the children a driver's license. (Any kind of license, such as a fishing license or a marriage license, would also work.) Have him tell the requirements he had to meet to get his license. Then have him show an even more important piece of paper: his temple recommend. Ask him to tell the children some of the things they need to do to get a temple recommend. Prepare several slips of paper on which you write a gospel principle one needs to live in order to go to the temple and a number of steps. For example, “You keep the Word of Wisdom—advance two steps.” Place a picture of a temple on each wall. Have four children begin in the center of the room, and have each one move toward a different temple. (Clarify that this is not a competition. You want all the children to reach the temple.) Have each child choose a slip of paper, read the principle, and move the number of steps it indicates. When each child reaches the temple, have him or her look on the back of the picture for the name of a song. Sing the song, and continue the game. After you have sung all of the songs, encourage the children to live worthy to attend the temple. ●

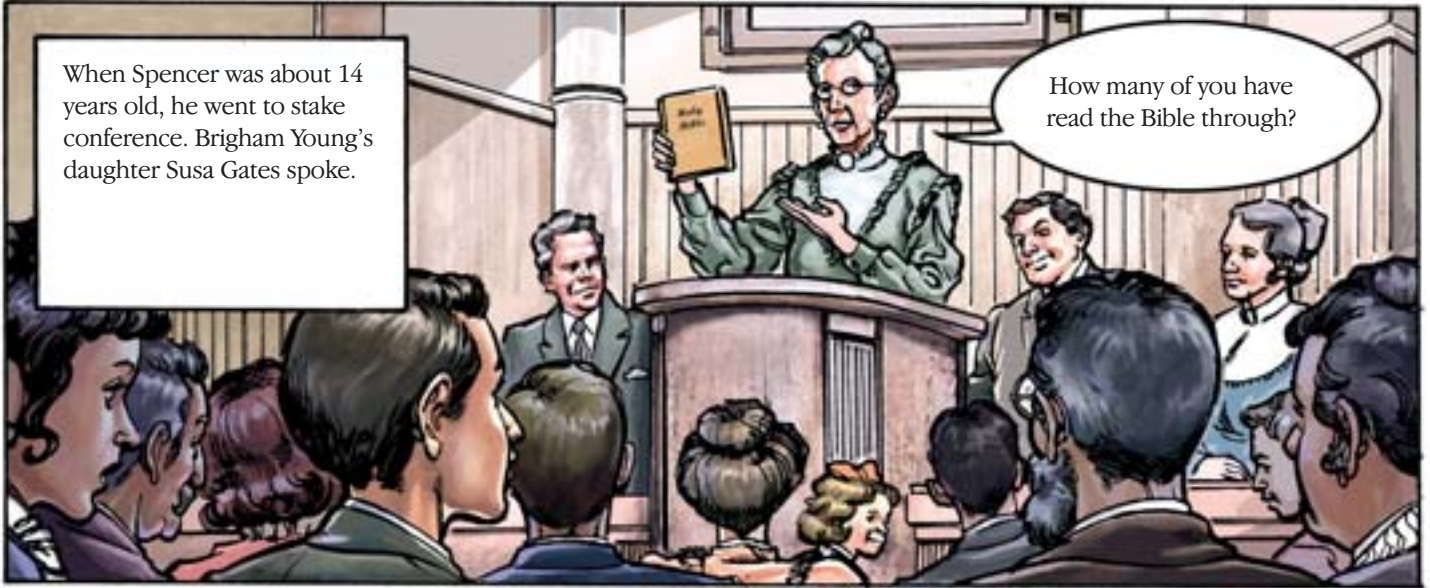


FROM THE LIFE OF PRESIDENT SPENCER W. KIMBALL

Reading the Bible

When Spencer was about 14 years old, he went to stake conference. Brigham Young's daughter Susa Gates spoke.

How many of you have read the Bible through?

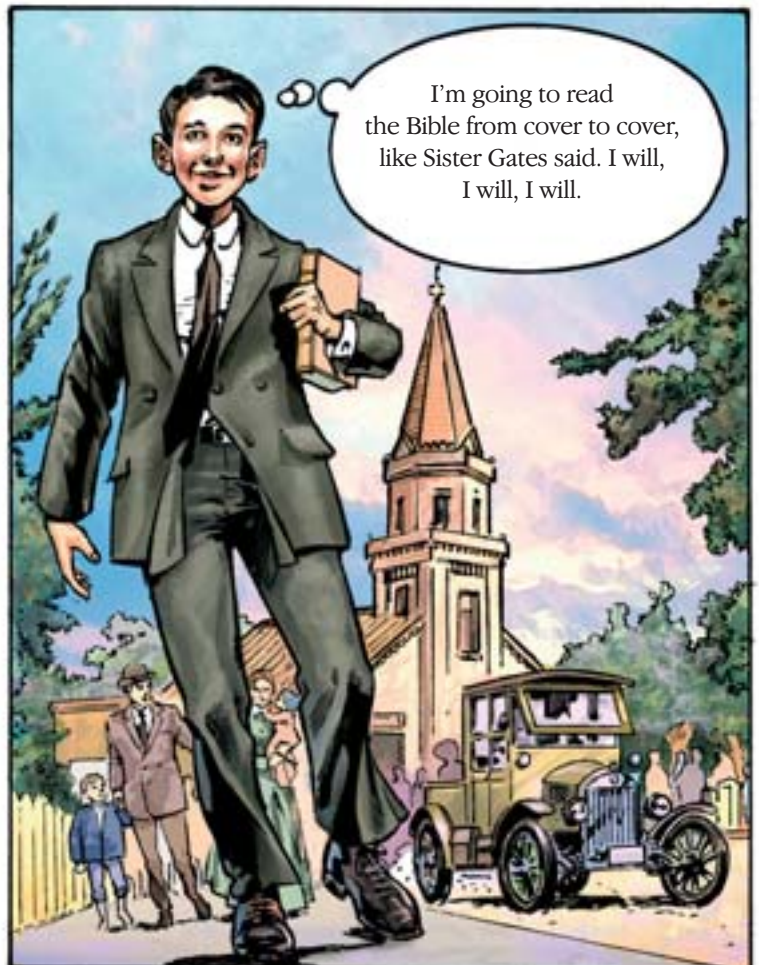


Spencer looked around. There were about 1,000 people in the hall, but only five or six hands went up.

I read the funny papers all the time. I've read so many books, yet I've never read the Holy Bible. Why?

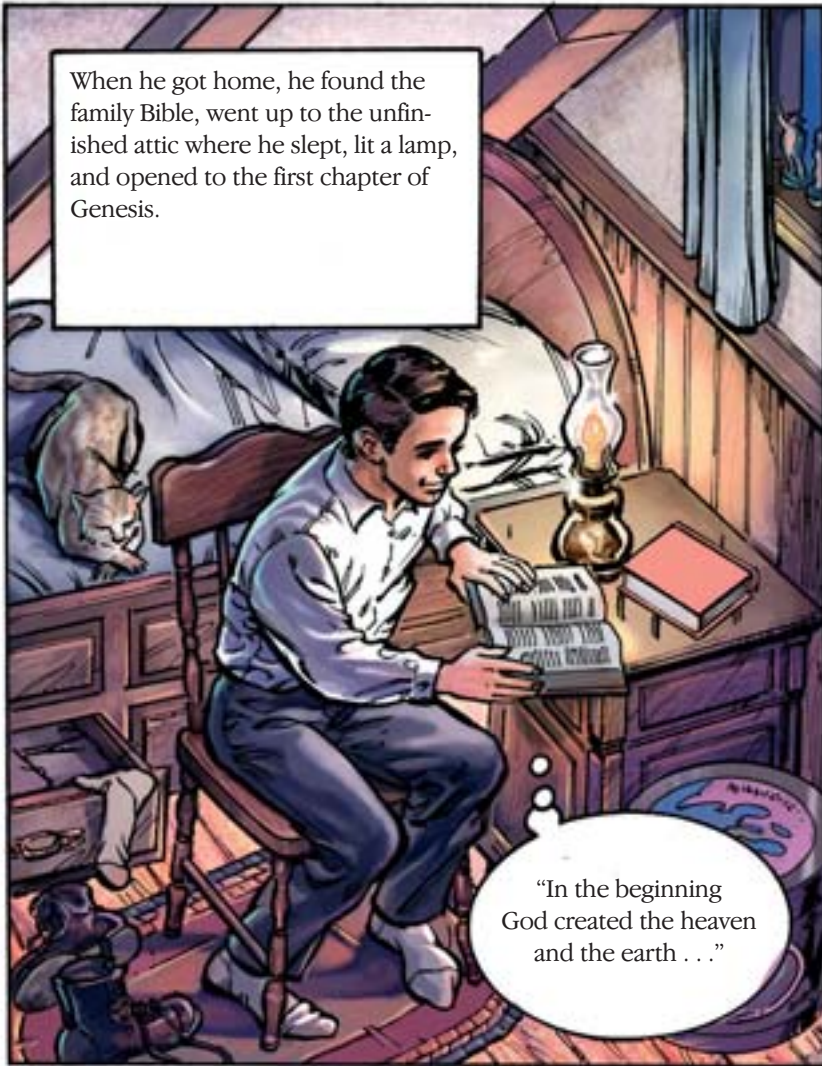


I'm going to read the Bible from cover to cover, like Sister Gates said. I will, I will, I will.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY SAL VELLUTO AND EUGENIO MATTOZZI

When he got home, he found the family Bible, went up to the unfinished attic where he slept, lit a lamp, and opened to the first chapter of Genesis.



"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth . . ."

He read every night, even when he was confused by what he read.



I don't really understand this part, but I'm sure it will be worth it to keep reading. At least I'll have some idea of what's in the Bible when I'm finished.

A year later he closed the book, having read the whole thing. He had learned not only more about the Bible but also that he could set a goal and achieve it.



From Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball Jr., Spencer W. Kimball (1977), 56-57; and Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball (2005), 59-60.

Friendship Bracelets

“A friend loveth at all times” (Proverbs 17:17).

BY JENNIFER ROSE

Church Magazines
Based on a true story



I met Megan when my family moved into our new house. She lived down the street, and we were both in Sister Crawford’s Primary class. We became friends and played together a lot. I watched Megan closely, trying to remember how she told a joke or how she fixed her hair or how she talked to other kids so easily. I thought Megan was perfect. I was shy. I wanted to be like Megan.

One day I called Megan to see if she wanted to play. She didn’t say anything at first.

“Caitlin is already over here,” she finally said.

Caitlin was in our Primary class too. I waited for Megan to invite me over, but she didn’t. Her end of the line was quiet.

“Oh. OK,” I stammered. Megan hung up without saying anything else.

That Sunday in Primary, Sister Crawford asked us, “What does it mean to be a good friend?”

I smiled at Megan, but she didn’t see me. She turned the other way and whispered to Caitlin. Suddenly Caitlin laughed out loud.

“Please quiet down, girls,” Sister Crawford said. They stopped whispering, but their shoulders trembled with giggles. Sister Crawford turned to me. “Angie, what do you think makes a good friend?”

“Well, someone who is nice and likes to play with you and—”

Megan and Caitlin giggled louder. My face got hot, and I looked at the floor. Were they laughing at *me*?

Sister Crawford frowned at them, then smiled at me. "That's right, Angie," she said. She looked around at the class. "How can you be a good friend?"

Adam raised his hand. "We can help people," he said.

Sister Crawford nodded. "A good friend wants to help and serve others. Jesus Christ taught that when He lived on the earth. He also taught us that we should be kind to everyone."

I looked at Megan and smiled at her. She didn't smile back. I felt an empty spot in my chest. Didn't Megan like me anymore?

At the end of the lesson, Sister Crawford held up a small basket. "I have something for you," she said. She reached into the basket and showed us colorful strings that had been tied in small circles. "These are friendship bracelets. You wear it on your wrist, and whenever you look at it you can remember to be a good friend."

Maybe friendship bracelets would help! Maybe Megan and I could get matching bracelets. As the basket went around the class, I leaned toward

Megan. "What color are you going to get?" I asked her.

Megan shrugged. "Maybe a yellow one."

"Me too," I said.

Caitlin chose a blue bracelet. Then she passed the basket to Megan. Megan fingered a few bracelets, then pulled out a blue one too. I stared at her. Blue? She quickly handed me the basket. I stared into it, not knowing what to do. There were only yellow bracelets left. I slowly pulled one out.

Megan and Caitlin giggled and held out



I didn't want to lose my friendship with Megan. I knew Heavenly Father could comfort me and help me forgive her.

their arms side by side, admiring their matching blue bracelets. I felt a lump rise in my throat. Tears stung my eyes. I clenched my teeth together to keep from crying. I was *not* going to cry in front of them.

* * * *

I threw myself into Mom's arms as soon as we got home from church. "What's wrong, honey?" Mom asked as I started to cry. Through my tears I told her what had happened. She sat next to me on my bed and held me close. "I'm sorry, Angie," she said.

"Doesn't Megan want to be my friend anymore?" I asked.

Mom stroked my hair. "Sometimes we don't know why people do certain things," she said. "I'm sorry that happened."

"Sister Crawford said today that we should try to be kind to everyone, like Jesus was. But I don't want to be kind to Megan."

"I understand," Mom said. "But I also agree with Sister Crawford. It might be hard, but we should try to be kind even if someone hurts our feelings. Jesus taught us to forgive others."

"How can I do that?" I asked. I thought of the way Megan and Caitlin had laughed, and I felt that empty feeling again.

Mom pointed to a figurine of a girl kneeling in prayer that I kept on my nightstand. "Whenever



"Each one of you can be a friend to someone, even if it is only by smiling. . . . Let the sunshine that is in your heart show in your face."

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Your Light—a Standard to All Nations," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2006, 113.

someone hurts my feelings, I ask Heavenly Father to help me forgive that person. I ask Him to soften my heart and the other person's heart."

"Does it work?" I asked.

Mom smiled and kissed the top of my head. "I always feel better when I've talked to Heavenly Father," she said.

When I said my prayers that night I thanked Heavenly Father for the friendship I had with Megan. Then I asked Him to help me forgive her. I scrunched up my eyes and thought hard. "Please help Megan and me be friends again," I said.

I prayed for those things for the next few days. On Saturday I was swinging on our swing set when Megan came up our walk. I stopped swinging. We looked at each other but didn't say anything. Finally Megan reached out and put something in my hand.

"This is for you," she said. I opened my hand and saw a blue friendship bracelet.

"Do you want to play?" Megan asked. "Caitlin is coming over to my house. We're going to pretend we're princesses, and Noodle is going to be the queen."

Noodle was Megan's gray-striped cat. I giggled, picturing Noodle wearing a crown. I felt the empty spot inside shrinking. "Yes, I'd like to come over," I said. "Thanks."

I smiled at her, and this time Megan smiled back. ●



“Honesty is not only the best policy, it is the only policy!”

Elder David B. Haight (1906–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Ethics and Honesty,” Ensign, Nov. 1987, 15.



“Do that which is honest” (2 Corinthians 13:7).

Honest Morgan

BY VICKI H. BUDGE

Based on a true story

One day Morgan pushed a toy truck across the kitchen table. Morgan’s baby brother, Jacksen, sat in his chair and watched. Morgan pushed his truck too hard, and it crashed into a glass of orange juice.

“Mom! Mom!” Morgan cried. “Jacksen knocked the orange juice over!”

Mom soaked up the orange juice with a towel.

“Morgan,” she said, “today is your day to be honest.”

“What’s honest?” Morgan asked.

“Honest is when the person who knocked over the orange juice tells me what he did. He does not tell me that someone else did it.”

“OK, I knocked over the orange juice,” Morgan said.

“Now am I honest?”

“Yes,” Mom said. “You are honest, Morgan. I am proud of you.” ●



My faith in Jesus Christ grows when I follow His example and keep His commandments. "Follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do" (2 Nephi 31:12).

I just received the gift of the Holy Ghost. How can I feel the influence of the Spirit in my life?

★ The voice of the Spirit is a still, small voice—a voice that is *felt* rather than heard. It is a spiritual voice that comes into the mind as a thought put into your heart.

★ Prayer is so essential a part of revelation that without it the veil may remain closed to you. Learn to pray. Pray often. Pray in your mind, in your heart.

★ This voice of the Spirit speaks gently, prompting you what to do or what to say, or it may caution or warn you.

★ Inspiration comes more easily in peaceful settings.

★ This guidance comes as thoughts, as feelings, through impressions and promptings.

★ If we follow the promptings of the Spirit, we will be safe, whatever the future holds. We will be shown what to do. ●

From "The Cloven Tongues of Fire," Liahona, July 2000, 9, 10; Ensign, May 2000, 8; "Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise," Liahona, June 1997, 10, 11; Ensign, Nov. 1994, 59, 60; "Reverence Invites Revelation," Ensign, Nov. 1991, 21; "Revelation in a Changing World," Ensign, Nov. 1989, 14.



President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, shares some of his thoughts on this subject.



Missionary Friends

“Go forth and declare his Gospel unto the children of men” (Moses 8:19).



From an interview with Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy; by Hilary M. Hendricks

I grew up faithfully participating with my family in the Catholic Church. We attended church and church activities regularly, and we prayed as a family each evening at home. Throughout my boyhood, friends from church helped me make good choices.

When I was nine years old, I became an altar boy. Altar boys in the Catholic Church help the priest during the Sunday worship service, called Mass. My brothers and many of my friends served with me—a great honor for us. We lit candles at the altar, carefully unfolded the priest’s robes, and placed the scriptures next to the altar. During the service we helped pass the bread for Communion, similar to the sacrament.

To become altar boys, we memorized words of the Mass in Latin. We also participated in weekly religion classes. Each summer my friends and brothers and sisters and I attended Bible school about 20 miles (32 km) from our home. My parents were busy on our wheat farm during the summer. They could have used our help during those weeks, but they felt it was important that we have this opportunity to learn

about God and be with good friends. The faith of the priests and nuns who were our teachers impressed me. I decided then that I would do what God wanted me to do.

In my junior high and high school years, many of my classmates chose to do things that I had been taught were not right, like drinking alcohol and smoking. I kept busy working on the farm, playing sports, acting in school plays, and participating in activities at my church. I felt blessed to have good friends who were also trying to choose the right.

When I was a college student and I began to learn about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, good friends again made a difference for me. I remember well my first visit to an LDS ward, which met in a tiny community hall. The moment I stepped out of the car, my college friends swarmed around me. “It’s great to see you!” they said. “So glad you could make it!” I had never shaken hands with so many people in my life. “Wonderful to have you here,” said people I’d never met. “Come back again.” I’m still touched by that ward’s love for me, a stranger.



Everything going on about me that day felt strange. The worship service I had experienced as an altar boy was very structured and extremely quiet. The Latter-day Saint worship service was so different—so much fellowship before the meeting, so many new ideas to think about and new things to experience. As I sat in that hall, I had many questions and doubts. But the warmth and friendship of Church members helped me to feel comfortable. Then, as I studied the gospel, the witness of the Holy Ghost helped me want to be baptized.

I am grateful for the restored truths available only in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And I am grateful for the friends who helped me to find those truths.

Reach out to others and make them feel welcome. Remember to smile and be kind.

As children who belong to the Church of Jesus Christ, you are blessed to know so much about our Heavenly Father and His Son. Your faith will grow as you attend church, pray, and study the scriptures on your own and with your family.

As you make good choices for your own life, please reach out to others who are not members of the Church or who may not attend church regularly. Welcome them to Primary. Smile. Sit next to someone who is new. Ask about others' interests, and always speak kindly. The love you share will help those around you make good choices and come to know the Savior Jesus Christ and the teachings of His restored gospel. ●



CTR RINGS

in the Principal's Office

BY REBECA F.

One day at school before I was eight, they were inspecting our hands and nails to see if they were clean, and the principal saw my CTR ring. After the principal checked the rest of my row, she came back to me and said, "Rebeca, come with me to the principal's office." Then she said to my teacher, "Can I take Rebeca for a while?"

In her office, she asked me

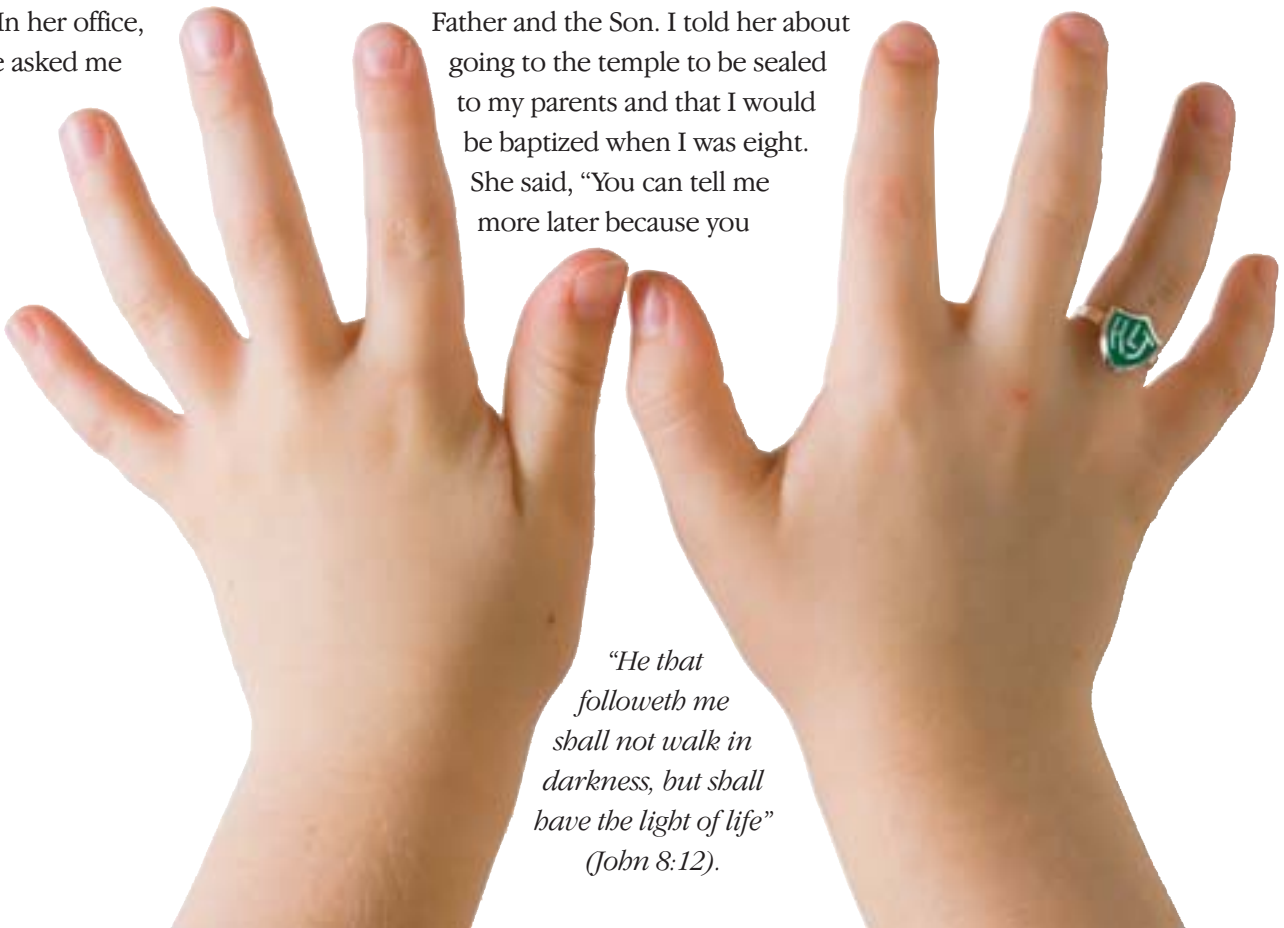
what the ring meant. I said, "Choose the right." I explained that at church they teach us to do good, pray, and read the scriptures. She asked which church I went to, and I said, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Then she asked me what that church was about, and I told her about Joseph Smith going into a grove to pray and seeing the Father and the Son. I told her about going to the temple to be sealed to my parents and that I would be baptized when I was eight. She said, "You can tell me more later because you

need to be in math class right now."

Later I took the principal a copy of the Book of Mormon with my testimony inside.

I have a goal to be a missionary when I grow up. But right now I am trying to share the gospel with my friends. ●

Rebeca F., age 12, Guatemala



*"He that
followeth me
shall not walk in
darkness, but shall
have the light of life"
(John 8:12).*



MAY NOT BE COPIED

The Lord's Harvest, by Marilee Campbell

This painting is based on a favorite missionary scripture found four times in the Doctrine and Covenants: "Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God" (D&C 6:3; 11:3; 12:3; 14:3).



The Lord has given no greater charge to His people than sharing the gospel with our Heavenly Father's children. Missionaries take people out of the darkness of the world and lead them to the safety and light of the gospel of Jesus Christ." See Elder M. Russell Ballard, "How to Prepare to Be a Good Missionary," p. 10.