

Liahona



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

2 Nephi 31:20

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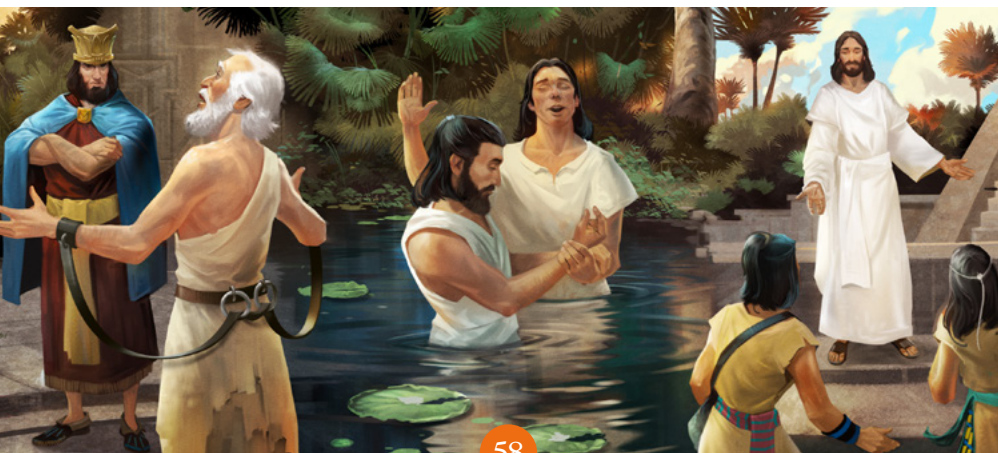
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Family Home Evening Ideas

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



"Commandments = Love," page 56: Consider asking your children about situations when they were tempted to disobey you. Examples might include playing in a busy street or going to bed at a certain time. Ask them why they think you gave them those instructions (because you love them). You could then use the article to apply this principle to commandments from Heavenly Father. Explain that Heavenly Father gives us commandments because He loves us and He knows that commandments help protect us. We can

show our love for Him by keeping those commandments.

"Looking Out for Elise," page 70: The article tells a story about a boy named Daniel who sometimes felt frustrated about his sister with health disabilities even though he loves her. Consider reading the article with your children. You could ask them how Daniel showed his love for his sister and then brainstorm ways your family could show love to one another, following Daniel's example.

MORE ONLINE

The *Liahona* and other Church materials are available in many languages at **languages.lds.org**. Visit [facebook.com/liahona.magazine](https://www.facebook.com/liahona.magazine) (available in English, Portuguese, and Spanish) to find inspirational messages, family home evening ideas, and material you can share with your friends and family.

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**By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Second Counselor in
the First Presidency

AFTER LOVE, THEN WHAT?

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has taught that “love is the very essence of the gospel.”¹

Love is so important that Jesus called it “the first and great commandment” and said that every other particle of the law and words of the prophets hang upon it.²

Love is the central motive for all we do in the Church. Every program, every meeting, every action we are part of as disciples of Jesus Christ should spring from this attribute—for without charity, “the pure love of Christ,” we are nothing.³

Once we understand this with our mind and heart, once we declare our love for God and for our fellowman—what then?

Is feeling compassion and love for others enough? Does declaring our love for God and our neighbor satisfy our obligation to God?

The Parable of the Two Sons

At the temple in Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews approached Jesus to trap Him in His words. The Savior, however, turned the tables on them by telling a story.

“A certain man had two sons,” He began. The father went to the first and asked him to go work in the vineyard. But the son refused. Later that son “repented, and went.”

The father then went to his second son and asked him to go work in the vineyard. The second son assured him that he would go, but he never went.

Then the Savior turned to the priests and elders and asked, “Which one of these two sons did the will of his father?”

They had to admit that it was the first son—the one who said he would not go but later repented and went to work in the vineyard.⁴

The Savior used this story to emphasize an important principle—it is those who obey the commandments who truly love God.

Perhaps this is why Jesus asked the people to listen to and follow the words of the Pharisees and scribes but not to follow their example.⁵ These religious teachers did not walk the talk. They loved to talk about religion, but sadly they missed its essence.

Actions and Our Salvation

In one of the Savior’s final lessons to His disciples, He spoke to them of the final Judgment. The wicked and the righteous would be separated. The good would inherit eternal life; the wicked would be delivered to eternal punishment.

What was the difference between the two groups?

Those who demonstrated their love through action were saved. Those who did not were condemned.⁶ True conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ and its values and principles will be witnessed by our actions in our daily lives.

In the end, mere declaration of love for God and fellowmen will not qualify us for exaltation. For, as Jesus taught, “not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter



into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”⁷

What Comes after Love?

The answer to the question “After love, then what?” can be simple and straightforward. If we truly love the Savior, we incline our hearts to Him and then we walk in

the path of discipleship. When we love God, we will strive to keep His commandments.⁸

If we truly love our fellowmen, we extend ourselves to help “the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.”⁹ For they who do these selfless acts of compassion and service,¹⁰ the same are disciples of Jesus Christ.

This is what comes after love.

This is the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Love—the Essence of the Gospel,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 91.
2. See Matthew 22:36–40.
3. See Moroni 7:46–47.
4. See Matthew 21:28–32.
5. See Matthew 23:3.
6. See Matthew 25:31–46.
7. Matthew 7:21.
8. See John 14:15.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 52:40.
10. See Mosiah 18:8–9.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

President Uchtdorf defines true disciples of Jesus Christ as those who show their love for Him and for others through their actions. He teaches us that “if we truly love the Savior, we incline our hearts to Him and then we walk in the path of discipleship.” Consider asking those you teach in what ways love has motivated them to walk in the path of discipleship. You could share your experiences with them as well. You might consider inviting them to pray for more charity and strength to act out of love.

Keeping the Commandments and Loving Others

When we think of love, often the first things that come to mind are romantic movies, chocolate, and flowers.

But love—*true* love—is a lot deeper and a lot more selfless than that. Jesus Christ lived for us and died for us because of His love for us. In fact, the two great commandments are to love God and love everyone else (see Matthew 22:36–40). But how can we *show* others that we love them?

President Uchtdorf shares Christ’s parable of the two sons, one who works for his father and one who does not. The Savior makes the point

that only the son who obeyed his father truly loved him. Similarly, when we obey God’s commands, we show that we love Him and want to return to Him.

But how do we show we love everyone else? President Uchtdorf explains that too: “If we truly love our fellowmen, we extend ourselves to help ‘the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.’ For they who do these selfless acts of compassion and service, the same are disciples of Jesus Christ.”

So the next time you see your parent, a sibling, or a friend, think about serving them to show your affection for them. Not only will it make them and you happy, but it will make your Father in Heaven happy too.



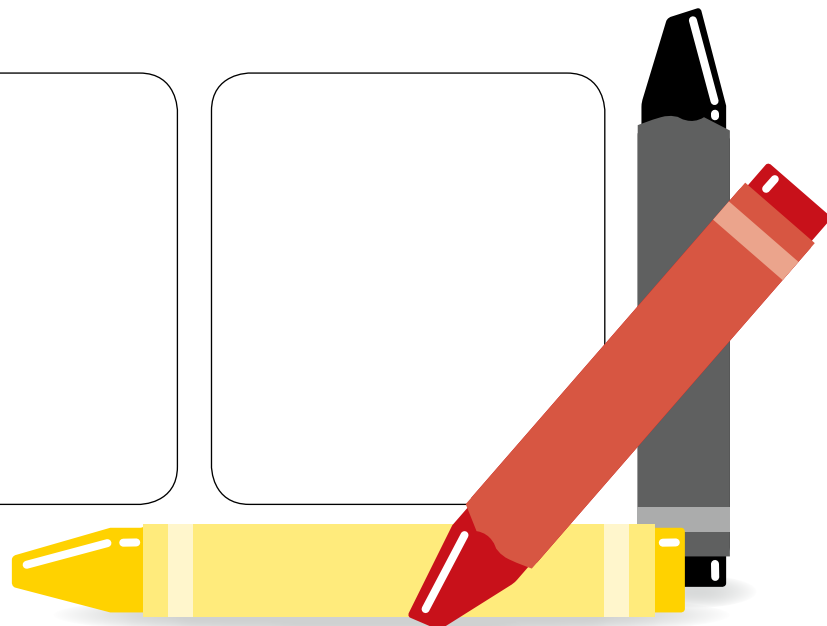
CHILDREN

Showing Love

Jesus shared a story of a father and his two sons. The father worked in a vineyard and asked his two sons to help. The first son said no at first but later came to help in the vineyard. The second son said that he would help, but then he never did. Jesus

taught that the first son showed more love for his father by being obedient.

Act out this story! Then write or draw three things you can do to show your love for Heavenly Father.



Prayerfully study this material and seek for inspiration to know what to share. How will understanding “*The Family: A Proclamation to the World*” increase your faith in God and bless those you watch over through visiting teaching? For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.

Parenthood Is a Sacred Duty

Our Heavenly Father established families to help us teach correct principles in a loving atmosphere. President Thomas S. Monson said: “Give your child a compliment and a hug; say, ‘I love you’ more; always express your thanks. Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved.”¹

Susan W. Tanner, former Young Women general president, taught: “Our Father in Heaven exemplifies the pattern we should follow. He loves us, teaches us, is patient with us, and entrusts us with our agency. . . . Sometimes discipline, which means ‘to teach,’ is confused with criticism. Children—as well as people of all ages—improve behavior from love and encouragement more than from fault-finding.”²

“If we faithfully have family prayer, scripture study, family home evening, priesthood blessings, and Sabbath day



observance,” said Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “our children will . . . be prepared for an eternal home in heaven, regardless of what befalls them in a difficult world.”³

Additional Scriptures

1 Nephi 8:37; 3 Nephi 22:13; Doctrine and Covenants 93:40; 121:41

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Love at Home—Counsel from Our Prophet,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Aug. 2011, 4.
2. Susan W. Tanner, “Did I Tell You . . . ?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 74.
3. Quentin L. Cook, “The Lord Is My Light,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 64.
4. Robert D. Hales, “Our Duty to God: The Mission of Parents and Leaders to the Rising Generation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 96, 95.

Consider This

Why is the gospel best taught by the language and example of love?

Faith, Family, Relief



Living Stories

“I was reading the newspaper when one of my young grandsons snuggled up to me,” said Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “As I read, I was delighted to hear his sweet voice chattering on in the background. Imagine my surprise when, a few moments later, he pushed himself between me and the paper. Taking my face in his hands and pressing his nose up to mine, he asked, ‘Grandpa! Are you in there?’

“ . . . Being *there* means understanding the hearts of our youth and connecting with them. And connecting with them means not just conversing with them but doing things with them too. . . .

“We must plan and take advantage of teaching moments. . . .

“ . . . The more I live, the more I recognize that the teaching moments in my youth, especially those provided by my parents, have shaped my life and made me who I am.”⁴

APRIL 2016 CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK

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

As you review the April 2016 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in future issues) to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.



DOCTRINAL HIGHLIGHT

Atonement of Jesus Christ

“I can emphatically state that because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, ultimately, in the eternal scheme of things, there will be no unfairness. ‘All that is unfair about life can be made right’ [*Preach My Gospel*, 52]. Our present circumstances may not change, but through God’s compassion, kindness, and love, we will all receive more than we deserve, more than we can ever earn, and more than we can ever hope for. We are promised that ‘God shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away’ [Revelation 21:4].”

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “That I Might Draw All Men unto Me,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 42.

Answers for You

Each conference, prophets and apostles give inspired answers to questions Church members may have. You can use your May 2016 issue or visit conference.lds.org to find answers to these questions:

- What are the four types of family councils, and why are they important? —See M. Russell Ballard, “Family Councils,” 63.
- How do we prepare for the temple? —See Quentin L. Cook, “See Yourself in the Temple,” 97.
- What are priesthood keys? —See Gary E. Stevenson, “Where Are the Keys and Authority of the Priesthood?” 29.

“Choose faith over doubt.”

Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Women general president, “Do I Believe?” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 89.

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



Rescue

“Here on earth . . . the dust and filth of the world stain our souls, making it difficult to recognize and remember our birthright and purpose.

“But all this cannot change who we truly are. The fundamental divinity of our nature remains. . . .

“You may feel that your life is in ruins. You may have sinned. You may be afraid, angry, grieving, or tortured by doubt. But just as the Good Shepherd finds His lost sheep, if you will only lift up your heart to the Savior of the world, He will find you.

“He will rescue you.

“He will lift you up and place you on His shoulders.

“He will carry you home.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “He Will Place You on His Shoulders and Carry You Home,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 104.

Future Roles

Multiple speakers sometimes address the same topic. Here is what three speakers said about preparing for future roles:

- “Young men, . . . live your life so that as a man you will bring purity to your marriage and to your children.” —D. Todd Christofferson, “Fathers,” 96.
- “Prayerfully determine what you can do—according to your own time and circumstance—to serve the refugees living in your neighborhoods and communities.” —Linda K. Burton, “I Was a Stranger,” 14.
- “In God’s plan of happiness, we are not so much looking for someone perfect but for a person with whom, throughout a lifetime, we can join efforts to create a loving, lasting, and more perfect relationship.” —Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “In Praise of Those Who Save,” 78.

Great Stories from Conference

What catches our attention better than a story? The following stories are among the many shared at conference:

- What doctrine comforted a couple in South America who longed to have their baby son sealed to them? —See W. Christopher Waddell, “A Pattern for Peace,” 90.
- What realization did a mother make as she flew with her critically ill toddler in a helicopter to Primary Children’s Hospital? —See Bonnie L. Oscarson, “Do I Believe?” 87.
- How did a priests quorum leader get one of his priests back to church? —See Mervyn B. Arnold, “To the Rescue: We Can Do It,” 53.



SISTER MABEL, SINGING

By R. Val Johnson
Church Magazines

Sister Mabel's passion for singing was painfully unrestrained.

My best friend shoved his elbow into my side to keep me from laughing. We were in sacrament meeting, after all, and we were singing the sacrament hymn.

But it was hard not to laugh, and Pat wasn't doing much better than I at keeping his mouth shut.

We were 15, and we knew everything. We knew that everyone in our ward was supposed to be perfect—but wasn't. We knew that sacrament meeting talks were supposed to be inspiring—but mostly were boring. And we knew that the worst singer in the world sat among us, mangling hymns that were supposed to send our thoughts heavenward—but usually sent them the other direction.

We could only cover our ears and wince. The occasional laugh seemed to help.

We weren't sure whether Sister Mabel (her first name, and the only one I remember anyone using for her) knew she was painful to listen to and didn't care or if she was totally oblivious to the effect her singing had on the rest of us. It's quite possible

no one had ever broached the topic with her. Though elderly, she was a formidable woman. Not in size, but in energy. Everything she did was energetic and loud. Especially her singing.

Her passion for singing found expression not only in our congregational singing but in our ward choir as well. Her enthusiasm there was unrestrained. Though I don't remember her singing ever being restrained in the congregation, in the choir it had free reign, rising to heights and depths I doubt any diva in the world has ever reached. Or wanted to.



Well, that was a long time ago. In the intervening years, Sister Mabel has passed away. Pat and I have gone our separate ways. And I, at least, have discovered I didn't know as much at 15 as I thought I did. I believe I've learned a few things about life—and singing—over the past 50 years.

I've learned that life needs be lived with passion and energy. Each minute is a treasure, and once it passes, it's gone forever, reflected only weakly in memory. I've learned that if you're going to serve others or worship the Lord, you're happiest and most effective when you do it with all the joy and energy you have.

I've learned that no one this side of the veil is perfect. All that the Lord asks of us is our hearts, might, minds, and strength—to the degree that we can offer them. He accepts our unrestrained offerings, as poor as they may be, as the full measure of our devotion.

It's ironic, I suppose, that I've also discovered I'm no better a singer than Sister Mabel was. I hope my fellow ward members have more charity for me than I had for her. If she were still here, I'd invite her to sing for me. I miss her angelic voice. ■

BLESSED FOR MY SERVICE

By John A. Grincer

The Lord delights to bless us, and I have found that no matter how much I serve, I continue to be in His debt.

As I was being introduced as a speaker recently, the person conducting politely mentioned some of my more prominent past Church callings, such as bishop, mission president, and member of a stake presidency. This brother was being gracious, but the thought occurred to me, why not introduce me as a ward mission leader (my current calling) or by some of my less-public callings?

I can honestly say that I felt the same guiding spirit in each calling, and each has been rewarding. I have always sought the Lord's guidance in my callings, and never have I felt let down. I have concluded that the Lord delights to bless us—regardless of where we serve.

I believe we will receive “a crown of immortality, and eternal life” (D&C 81:6) not because of prominent callings but rather because we have humbly served in whatever callings we have received. The Savior has said:

“Let not the head say unto the feet it hath no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand?”

“Also the body hath need of every member, that all may be edified together, that the system may be kept perfect” (D&C 84:109–10).

I have feared some Church callings during my life. Whenever I had such thoughts about a potential calling, it was a sure bet I would soon receive it. To accept such callings has required faith and reliance on promises found in the scriptures.



Nephi said, “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 for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7). Paul declared, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

At times we may feel that it's our right to refuse a calling if we fear it. But we need to remember that Church leaders pray about callings and the individuals who are to receive them.

When we refuse a calling, the position passes to another, who will have the opportunity to grow and be blessed for serving (see D&C 58:32).

The Lord delights to bless us, and I have found that no matter how much I serve, I continue to be in His debt. Truly, He has blessed my family and me beyond my wildest dreams for our service in His kingdom. ■

The author lives in Western Australia.

EXPECTING TWINS, FINDING MIRACLES

By Cheryl Lapating-La Torre

We thought everything in our lives would go smoothly, but things soon became complicated and I was terrified of what else could go wrong.



One night as I was watching the news, something caught my attention. I recognized the reporter as a college classmate. She had achieved her dream of being a newscaster!

“What about me?” I asked myself. “What have I achieved?” I looked at the baby asleep in my arms and thought about the events of the past three years.

I had always thought I would have a career, but when my husband, Charles, and I had our first daughter,

Chevy, my priorities changed. I quit my job to care for her. We had faith in Jesus Christ that as long as we paid our tithing and obeyed the commandments, everything would be OK.

Things were going smoothly until, one day, Charles was laid off from his job. We had faith we’d be all right, but we knew we needed to act. We decided I should get a job too, so Charles and I started job hunting. After a few weeks, I was hired at a

call center. I hated leaving my nine-month-old with a babysitter every day, but it was our best solution.

Just a month into my job, I found out I was expecting. Fortunately, Charles soon found a job. It didn’t pay much, but it would help. For a while we felt relieved.

My pregnancy became very difficult, and I had to quit my job. At my monthly checkup, we were shocked to discover I was having twins. Charles

and I were scared, but we trusted Heavenly Father.

About three and a half months into my pregnancy, I woke up bleeding. I thought I was having a miscarriage, so I went to the hospital. The babies were OK, but the doctor put me on bed rest for the rest of the pregnancy.

Things were becoming so complicated. The hospital bills left our bank account empty, and Charles's meager income was not enough to provide for our needs. I felt worthless. I could not help earn income or take care of Chevy. I sometimes forgot that I was carrying two special spirit children. I pleaded every day and night with my Heavenly Father for relief. I was terrified of what else could go wrong. But one thought kept returning to my mind: Heavenly Father lives and He knows our needs.

Charles was struggling too, but he stayed strong. He assisted me and cared for Chevy on top of his job. His priesthood blessings comforted me, and his love strengthened me. We were scared, but we faced this new test together.

I did my best to accept the situation. Instead of moping around, I read the scriptures, Church magazines, and good books. I sang hymns too—"How Firm a Foundation" (*Hymns*, no. 85) in particular made a huge difference. I came closer to my Savior. I realized

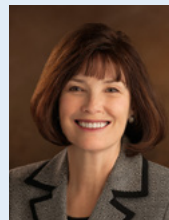
how much I did have to be thankful for despite our circumstances.

As days went by, we felt God's hand work in our lives. Big and little miracles popped up everywhere. Our families and friends paid for some of our expenses. I felt their love and concern for our family. The Relief Society presidency assigned one or two sisters to visit me each day. They brought groceries, cooked and cleaned, took care of Chevy, shared spiritual thoughts, and cheered me up. They prayed for my recovery and the continued safety of the twins. We never went hungry. These sisters didn't know how much their service helped me carry my burden. When the time came, Heavenly Father made my delivery very easy, and both girls were healthy.

Years have passed since that challenging time in our lives, but there hasn't been a day when we haven't felt God's love. Our financial situation is much better now, and our children are growing up to be smart and talented. We are stronger and better prepared for future challenges because we know that Heavenly Father blesses His children in His own time and will never leave them helpless or comfortless. Life is not an easy journey, but God will always be with us and guide us. ■

The author lives in the Philippines.

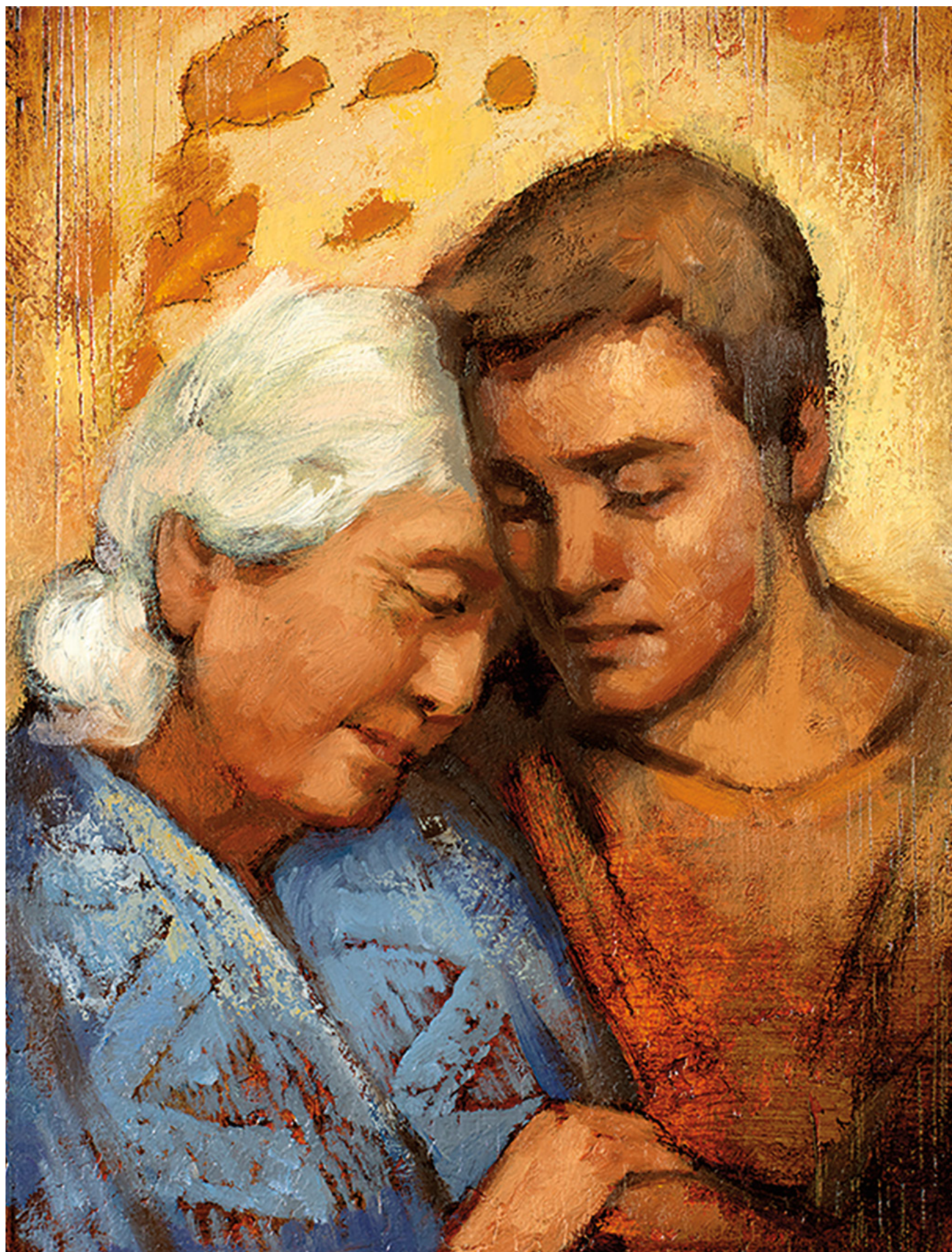
PURPOSEFUL CHALLENGES



"I do not know why we have the many trials that we have, but it is my personal feeling

that the reward is so great, so eternal and everlasting, so joyful and beyond our understanding that in that day of reward, we may feel to say to our merciful, loving Father, 'Was that all that was required?' . . . What will it matter, dear sisters, what we suffered here if, in the end, those trials are the very things which qualify us for eternal life?"

Linda S. Reeves, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, "Worthy of Our Promised Blessings," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 11.





**By Elder
Don R. Clarke**

Served as a General
Authority Seventy
from 2006 to 2015

PRACTICE

Pure Religion

If you want to be happy, feel the Holy Ghost, and grow closer to the Savior, then practice pure religion.

A couple of years ago, a young man I'll call John came to my office shortly after he had returned from his mission. "Elder Clarke, I need help," he said to me with great concern. "I loved my mission. It changed me. However, I am losing some of those sacred and special feelings that I felt in the mission field. What can I do to feel like I felt in the mission field?"

I have seen this happen many times. What he was asking was, "What can I do to be happy, feel the Holy Ghost, and be close to the Savior?" This is a question we all should ask every day.

On that afternoon in my office, we turned to James 1:27 and read, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Next we read Alma 34:28: "If ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith."

Then we reviewed the story in the Gospel of John in which Peter and other disciples had gone fishing and caught nothing but then were told by the Savior to

move their net to the other side of the boat and caught 153 fish. After they had eaten, Peter and the Savior talked. The Savior knew He was instructing this soon-to-be prophet and president of the Church for one of the last times.

“Lovest thou me?” the Savior asked.

Peter answered, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”

Then the Savior said, “Feed my lambs.”

The Savior asked the same question two more times and then instructed: “Feed my sheep” (see John 21:3–17).

Peter was really being instructed to practice pure religion, or to care for the people. The prophet of God today also cares for and loves the people. President Thomas S. Monson is a great example of one who practices pure religion. He has spent his entire life loving and caring for people.

I have seen many returned missionaries like my friend John. If you ask them why they loved their missions, almost always they will say because of their love for the people. The day missionaries start to care more about

others than themselves, they become happy. It is that way for all of us. Our lives will always be happier if we care for and love others.

The opposite of caring for others is thinking about oneself: my car, my studies, my job, my problems. When it is always about us, our connection with heaven isn’t as strong as it could be.

I told John that if he would practice pure religion, he would be happy and feel as he had felt on his mission. Likewise, if *you* want to be happy, feel the Holy Ghost, and grow closer to the Savior, then practice pure religion. From the scriptures above we learn four key practices that can be defined as pure religion.

1. Visit and Care for Widows

John went back to college and acted upon what we had discussed. Later he sent me an email in which he shared his experience reading inspirational stories from the Church magazines to elderly people at an assisted-care facility.



“Many individuals felt a great amount of love and support from the Savior as the Spirit testified of simple truths and testimonies,” he wrote. “I had never known I was capable of feeling such love from and for strangers with whom I had little connection. But I felt the Savior’s love for them, for those kind souls. It appeared clear to me that I would meet these individuals—now riddled by dementia and physical ailments—on the other side. I would see their husbands and wives, who have been looking over them from the other side of the veil. I felt very much the presence of my grandfather—whom I had never met—as I sat with my grandmother, and his spirit strengthened me and supported me. I knew he was thankful for my simple visit.”

He continued: “Who knew that I could find such tender mercies? It seems so meaningless to come home after something like that and just turn on the TV or tune out in some other way. It has changed me to realize that these tender experiences are available at all moments of the day as we, as Saints, strive to focus and help others in some way.”

You can do this too, and the Lord will bless you as He blessed John.

2. Help Orphans

There are many orphans throughout the world. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could connect with or write to one regularly?

When our son, Nate, returned from his mission, he had the same feelings as my friend John. Nate decided to volunteer to become a mentor in a program that matches adults with children in need of supportive one-on-one relationships. That service changed his college experience.



Now that he is married, Nate and his wife, Carla, have “adopted” again through the program. It has been a great blessing for them in their marriage to share what they have with those in need.

When my wife, Mary Anne, and I served in the Bolivia Santa Cruz Mission, we had a missionary who was an orphan boy. He had no family. The Lord assigned him to be Elder Hawkins’s trainer. I don’t think he was the best trainer, but Elder Hawkins was the best companion for an orphan boy who had become one of the Lord’s missionaries.

Elder Hawkins’s parents wrote to this missionary during his mission and have continued to write to him for the past 15 years. Because of Elder Hawkins and his family, this orphan boy has been loved and cared for and is now happily married, employed, and active in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We all can help change orphan children.

Does the Lord trust us to be an answer to someone else’s prayer? Can He count on us to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost?



3. Care for the Poor and Needy

The scriptures constantly remind us of the importance of helping the poor and the needy. We all have this responsibility.¹ One way we can increase our help to the poor and the needy is to pay a generous fast offering. President Brigham Young (1801–77) said:

“The first year that I came into this valley I had not flour enough to last my family until harvest . . . , and persons were coming to my house every day for bread. I had the blues about [it] one day; I went down to the old fort and by the time I got back to my house I was completely cured. I said to my wife, ‘Do not let a person come here for food and go away empty handed, for if you do we shall suffer before harvest; but if you give to every individual that comes we shall have enough to last us through.’ . . .

“I intend to keep doing so, that my bread may hold out, for if I do not I shall come short.

“Do you believe that principle? I know it is true, because I have proven it so many times.”²

The following experience was posted on a Christian website by a physician in Colorado, USA, who coasted into a gas station after his car had sputtered and died. As he prepared to call a tow truck, he saw a woman, whose old car was parked by a gas pump, slip and fall down.

“I got out to see if she was okay. When I got there, it looked more like she had been overcome by sobs than that she had fallen; she was [a] young woman who looked really haggard with dark circles under her eyes. She dropped something as I helped her up, and I picked it up to give it to her. It was a nickel.

“At that moment, everything came into focus for me: the crying woman, the ancient [car] crammed full of stuff with three kids in the back (one in a car seat), and the gas pump reading [U.S.] \$4.95. I asked her if she was okay and if she needed help, and she just kept saying, ‘I don’t want my kids to see me crying.’”

Understanding her situation, the physician took out his credit card, filled up her car with gas, and then bought two big bags of food and some gift certificates for her and her children at a fast-food restaurant next to the gas station.

“She told me her name, and that she lived in Kansas City [Missouri, USA],” he said. “Her boyfriend [had] left two months ago, and she had not been able to make ends meet. . . . In desperation [she] had finally called her parents, with whom she had not spoken in about five years. They lived in California and said she could come live with them and try to get on her feet there. So she packed up everything she owned in the car.”

The doctor gave her a hug and offered a prayer for her safety on the road. As he walked to his car, the woman asked, “Are you like an angel or something?”

The doctor replied, “Sometimes God uses regular people.”

Then he observed: “It was so incredible to be a part of someone else’s miracle. And of course, . . . when I got in my car it started right away and got me home with no problem. I’ll put it in the shop tomorrow to check, but I suspect the mechanic won’t find anything wrong.”³

Does the Lord trust us to be an answer to someone else’s prayer? Can He count on us to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost? The more we follow the Spirit’s promptings, the more opportunities the Lord will present to us to be the answer to someone else’s prayer.

4. Feed His Lambs and Sheep

When Jesus had His conversation with Peter, His first counsel was, “Feed my lambs.” The Savior knows that if we feed the lambs, we won’t have to look for lost sheep. Some of us may have younger brothers or sisters, nephews or nieces, or other people we know who need help. May we be great examples for them, and may we find the lambs who need our help.

Will you find and help a lamb? Will you, as a shepherd, be trustworthy enough to care for the lambs and the sheep, as the Savior has asked us to do?

The question the Savior asked of Peter could be asked of each of us: “Lovest thou

me?” As we practice pure religion by visiting and caring for widows, helping orphans, caring for the poor and needy, and feeding His lambs and sheep, we will show the Savior that we love Him! As we do this, we will be happy, feel the Holy Ghost, and feel closer to Him. ■

From a devotional address, “Pure Religion,” delivered at Brigham Young University on January 13, 2015. For the full address in English, go to speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “Are We Not All Beggars?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 40–42.
2. Brigham Young, “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, June 18, 1856, 116.
3. “Friends Are God’s Way of Taking Care of Us,” lisburn.com/stories/friends_are_gods_way.html.



WE TOO MUST GIVE

“Although I may not be my brother’s keeper, I am my brother’s brother, and ‘because I have been given much, I too must give.’ ”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Are We Not All Beggars?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 42.





Tithing,

TIMING, AND TRANSPORTATION

By Atilio Coitiño Guzmán

One Saturday my wife and I realized that we did not have enough money to take public transportation to church the next day, and there was no way to make a cash withdrawal. Our tithing was in a donation envelope ready to be given to the bishop. We began to talk about how we would travel to church. If we used the tithing money to pay for transportation, we felt that the Lord would understand; however, we decided that it was not right.

The other possibility was to not go to church, and again we thought that the Lord would understand since we had never missed before. However, if that happened, we would not be able to take our tithing to the bishop, so that possibility was also ruled out.

Trying to be faithful, we decided to leave earlier than usual and walk to church. We left on that beautiful Sabbath day for the chapel, which was about three miles (4.8 km) from our home. For our four children (the oldest was six), it was like a party, and they enjoyed running and playing along the way.

When we reached a certain point on a wide and dangerous street, I heard the Spirit tell me, “You should cross now.” I told my wife, and she responded that it was dangerous because that part of the street began to curve, blocking our view of oncoming cars. I responded that I felt we should cross there, so we quickly crossed, my wife and I each taking two children. Just as we stepped onto the sidewalk, a car stopped on that side, and the driver asked, “Are you going to church?”



We had no money to go to church, so we started to walk.

The driver was a brother who did not belong to our ward, but I had met him before because I had visited his ward. We responded affirmatively, and he offered to drive us there. As we got in the car, the brother explained that he never took this route and he was only passing that way because his business partner had lost the keys to the office and he was taking his keys to his partner.

I thought to myself that this hadn't happened by chance. The Lord knew we needed transportation to go to church. Our tithing was in my pocket, and it provided

us the opportunity to teach our children about the blessings that come from paying tithing. We arrived at the chapel earlier than ever but happy and grateful. We participated in all the meetings and did not tell anybody about what had happened.

Summers in São Paulo are very hot, especially at midday, when our Church meetings ended. We were preparing to return when someone came up and asked us, "Do you have someone to take you back?" We responded that we didn't, and he said to us, "Do you want me to take you?" We accepted his offer, and my wife and I looked at each other with emotional smiles.

More than once the Lord had given us a great blessing for our obedience. ■

The author lives in São Paulo, Brazil.



OBEDIENCE BRINGS HAPPINESS

"When we keep the commandments, our lives will be happier, more fulfilling, and less complicated. Our challenges and problems will be easier to bear, and we will receive [Heavenly Father's] promised blessings. But while He gives us laws and commandments, He also allows us to choose whether to accept them or to reject them. Our decisions in this regard will determine our destiny. . . .

"May we realize that our greatest happiness in this life will come as we follow God's commandments and obey His laws!"

President Thomas S. Monson,
"Keep the Commandments,"
Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2015,
83, 84.





**By Elder
Ronald A.
Rasband**

Of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

Faith, Fairness, AND Religious Freedom

As you follow the invitation to reach out to others in a spirit of fairness, you will feel an increase in the Savior's love for you and for all of Heavenly Father's children.

I suspect that for some of you the phrase “religious freedom” feels more like “freedom to discriminate.” I want to talk with you about this view and help you understand what the Church means when it talks about religious freedom and why it is so vitally important for your future and for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I also plan to address some misgivings and misunderstandings some of you may have when it comes to religious freedom.

Some of you may struggle with an understanding of religion's role in society, politics, and civic issues. Some of you may wonder why religious groups are involved in politics in the first place, and often you may be skeptical of the motives of religious people when they become involved. In recent years the collective voice of groups who feel that religion should not play a role in political deliberation has grown louder.

The opportunity to be involved in the political process is a privilege given to people in most nations. Laws and legislation play an important teaching role in shaping social and moral culture. We need every individual in society to take an active role in engaging in civic dialogue that helps frame laws and legislation that are fair for everyone.

Freedom for All

What are we talking about when we refer to religious freedom? I am going to tell you the stories of two people. As I do so, I would like you to think about how you would feel if you were one of these individuals.

The first story is about someone I will call Ethan. He had recently started his job in a career he had longed for, and he wanted to make a good impression. He came early to work and stayed late. He picked up extra projects and did excellent work. He was well liked by many of his colleagues and was enjoying his job. One day at lunch with a couple of co-workers, he felt comfortable telling them he was gay. An awkward silence followed because no one knew how to respond. Ethan was disappointed by his colleagues' cold response, and he felt hurt and rejected.

After that lunch meeting, things became increasingly awkward for Ethan at work. He began to feel vulnerable and less valued. He found himself excluded from large projects and social activities after work, and his productivity began to suffer because he felt he did not belong and was not wanted. After a few months he was let go because his boss felt he was not keeping up. Despite all the claims to the contrary, Ethan knew he had been fired for being gay.

Now I want to tell you about Samantha. Samantha had just started work in the administrative offices of a local university. She was excited to work in a stimulating environment full of diverse thoughts, ideas, and backgrounds.

One day at work a co-worker approached Samantha, said she had heard that Samantha was a Mormon, and asked if that was true. Samantha cheerfully responded that it was, but the question that followed surprised her.

"So why do you hate gays?" her co-worker asked. Samantha was surprised by the question but tried to explain her belief in God and God's plan for His children,

which she said includes guidelines on moral and sexual behavior. Her co-worker countered by telling her that the rest of society had progressed beyond those beliefs. "And besides," she said, "history is full of people using religious teachings to wage wars and marginalize vulnerable groups."

Samantha restated her convictions and her understanding of God's love for all people and then asked her co-worker to respect her right to believe. The co-worker felt compelled to tell other employees about their conversation, and over the next few weeks, Samantha felt increasingly isolated as more and more co-workers confronted her with questions and attacks.

Samantha's boss, seeing the increase in religious conversations in the workplace, cautioned Samantha that proselytizing in their work environment would put her job in jeopardy. Her

work, like Ethan's, began to suffer. Rather than risk being fired, Samantha started to look for another job.

Now, these are hypothetical stories, and yet they are not. There are many Samanthas and Ethans. However we choose to live and whatever choices we make, we all share a common humanity and desire for fairness and kindness. Ethan should not have been fired for being gay, and Samantha should not have been intimidated for being

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

"We must understand that the faithful use of our agency depends upon our having religious freedom. We already know that Satan does not want this freedom to be ours. He attempted to destroy moral agency in heaven, and now on earth he is fiercely undermining, opposing, and spreading confusion about religious freedom—what it is and why it is essential to our spiritual life and our very salvation."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 111–12.



religious. Both were wrongly criticized, judged, and retaliated against.

In today's society it is politically correct to empathize with Ethan's situation but less so with Samantha's. Ethan may find his case picked up by an advocacy group as yet another example of antigay discrimination. And, indeed, he does deserve protection.

But what about Samantha? Who will defend her right to religious conscience? What about her right to live authentically as a person of faith, committed to loving and serving everyone but also having the right to choose what is right and wrong and to live her life accordingly?

Fairness for All

Our society has become so blinded by its quest to redress wrongful discrimination against one class of people that it is now in danger of creating another victimized class: people of faith, like you and me.

Already some religious schools are being questioned because they require students and faculty to adhere to an honor code that requires fidelity and chastity. CEOs of large companies have been marginalized or forced to resign because their personal religious views are no longer politically acceptable. And some businesses have been forced to close because their owners have spoken their conscience.

Despite what you may have heard or read over the years, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has stood consistently for freedom of choice and conscience. Many years ago the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) wrote, “We believe . . . that all men are created equal, and that all have the privilege of thinking for themselves upon all matters relative to conscience.”¹

He later went on to say: “If . . . I have been willing to die for a ‘Mormon,’ . . . I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, “We believe . . . that all men are created equal, and that all have the privilege of thinking for themselves upon all matters relative to conscience.”



Jesus Christ looked past people's ethnicity, rank, and circumstances in order to teach them simple truth.

other denomination; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of . . . any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves.”²

So what is the position of the Church on religious freedom? I can assure you that apostles and prophets, under the inspiration of heaven, have given significant consideration to this issue. We believe in following the commandments of God, which are designed to secure our eternal happiness. However, “God will force no man to heav’n.”³ We believe in creating a space for everyone to live their conscience without infringing on the rights and safety of others. When the rights of one group collide with the rights of another, we must follow the principle of being as fair and sensitive to as many people as possible. The Church believes in and teaches “fairness for all.”⁴

Protecting conscience is about

safeguarding the way someone thinks and feels and safeguarding that person's right to act on those beliefs. I am talking about someone telling you that the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs you have are not allowed, valued, or acceptable because your views are not popular. A war in heaven was fought for agency, and it is a gross violation of that agency to force you to betray your conscience because your views do not align with the crowd.

Please do not misunderstand. When I speak of being authentic, I do not mean the Lord gives us a free pass to live any way we choose without consequences. We are still accountable to Him for our choices. He has said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). The commandment to seek perfection implies that we start where we are and seek the Lord's help to lift us to where He wants us to go. Being true to our authentic self requires continual effort to

connected. And you know that everything on the Internet is always perfectly 100 percent accurate, right? Of course not. So do not believe everything you see on the Internet about the Church and its position on gay rights.

A recent example of the Church's "fairness for all" approach occurred in January 2015, when the Church held a press conference with three Apostles and a member of the Young Women general presidency to remind our members, the community, and the Utah state legislature that the Church favors a balanced approach that secures the rights of all people.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles expressed the following at that press conference: "We call on local, state and the federal government to serve all of their people by passing legislation that protects vital religious freedoms for individuals, families, churches and other faith groups while also protecting the rights of our LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] citizens in such areas as housing, employment and public accommodation in hotels, restaurants and transportation—protections which are not available in many parts of the country."⁵

With the passage of protections for both LGBT and religious people six weeks later, our Church leaders and others congratulated the LGBT community. It was encouraging to see them protected against eviction, housing discrimination, or being fired from a job because of their sexual orientation or gender. We also congratulated our religious friends of other denominations, seeing them similarly protected in the workplace and in the public square.

Utah—and the Church—received national news coverage and praise for such a historic compromise. Now, note that no doctrinal or religious principles were sacrificed. No changes were made to God's moral law or to our belief that sexual relations should occur only within marriage between a man and a woman. The outcome was fair to all and reflected a consistency in moral standards and teachings and in respect for others.

A Message of Fairness

Not many of us will play prominent roles in government and lawmaking, so you may be wondering how this topic pertains to you personally in your day-to-day life. I would like to talk about three things you can do to support and promote a message of fairness.

First, try to view others through a lens of fairness. To do this requires you to first acknowledge that Heavenly Father loves all of His children equally. There is no choice, sin, or mistake that you or anyone else can make that will change His love for you or for them. That does not mean He excuses or condones sinful conduct; nor do we—in ourselves or in others. But that does mean we reach out in love to persuade, help, and rescue. The Savior has said, "Love one another; as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

When you feel completely and perfectly loved, it is much easier to love others and to see them the way the Savior does. Please turn to our Heavenly Father in prayer and ask to receive the pure love of Christ both for yourself and for others. The Father has promised that you will feel this love if you ask in faith (see Moroni 7:48).

Being filled with this pure love will guide your thoughts and actions, especially in a political arena that can at times be contentious. Tensions can flare easily when we discuss politics, especially when we discuss religious freedom. If we allow these moments to get the better of us, we will appear unchristian to our family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances.

Remember how the Savior handled tough questions and challenging viewpoints. He remained calm, He showed respect, and He taught truth, but He never forced anyone to live the way He taught.

Second, let fairness guide your treatment of others. Jesus Christ looked past people's ethnicity, rank, and circumstances in order to teach them simple truth. Remember the Samaritan woman at the well (see John 4:5–30), the Roman centurion (see Matthew 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10), and the unpopular publican (see Luke 18:9–14). The Lord has commanded us to follow His example, saying, "Follow me,

Christ looked past people's ethnicity, rank, and circumstances in order to teach them simple truth. Remember the Samaritan woman at the well (see John 4:5–30), the Roman centurion (see Matthew 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10), and the unpopular publican (see Luke 18:9–14). The Lord has commanded us to follow His example, saying, "Follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do" (2 Nephi 31:12). Do not judge people or treat them unfairly because they sin differently than you, or we, do.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in treating others fairly is in the balance required in supporting religious freedom when you have friends or family members who experience same-sex attraction or who are firm supporters of LGBT rights. Some of you worry that you will appear intolerant or unsupportive if you seek protections to exercise your faith publicly and freely.

Again, study the life of our Savior and seek His guidance. The Savior demonstrated perfectly how to reach out in love and encouragement while also holding firm to what we know to be true. Remember that when the woman was caught in adultery, the Lord asked for anyone without sin to step forward and be the first to condemn her. When no one approached, our Savior, who was without sin, commented, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). The forgiveness and kindness He showed her did not contradict His teachings that sexual intimacy is meant for a husband and a wife who are legally and lawfully married. You too can be unyielding in right and truth yet still reach out in kindness.

When Christ's friends and followers ended their

relationships with Him, He expressed sadness and pain. However, when a relationship ended, it was because others were uncomfortable with His teachings, not because He was uncomfortable with others.

As we seek to treat others fairly, we must remember the principle of agency. We must always respect the ability of others to make choices and ask that they extend to us the

same courtesy. When talking with others about religious freedom, we must always remember that we can disagree without becoming disagreeable. Please do not shy away from a dialogue regarding these important issues simply because you are worried that it might be difficult or uncomfortable. We can pray for help, and we can expect that the Savior will help us speak and act in a way that is pleasing to Him.

Third, stand up for fairness if you see another's rights being impeded. Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was a great example of someone who firmly believed in man-woman marriage, and yet he was willing to stand up for the rights of others. He left an example of ensuring that others' rights were protected when he witnessed unfair treatment or an imbalance in law.

From the time of Joseph Smith to our day, our legacy is one of reaching out to heal breaches and hurt without compromising the doctrine that is not ours to change.

Be Actively
Involved

This brings me to my final point, and that is the need for

SUPPORT AND PROMOTE FAIRNESS BY:

1. Viewing others through a lens of fairness.
2. Letting fairness guide your treatment of others.
3. Standing up for fairness if you see another's rights being impeded.





active involvement from your generation on this issue. I stand with the leaders of our Lord's Church when I say that we need your generation's natural understanding of compassion, respect, and fairness. We need your optimism and your determination to work through these complex social issues.

We have faith that you will turn to the Savior to understand how to live a Christlike life while also showing fairness and love to others who do not share your beliefs. We know that you want to be a part of something meaningful, and we know that you are resilient and collaborative.

Most important, we need you to engage in dialogue regarding the complexities of this issue and find solutions for how to best extend fairness to everyone, including people of faith. These conversations need to be occurring in our schools, in our homes, and in our relationships with friends and co-workers.

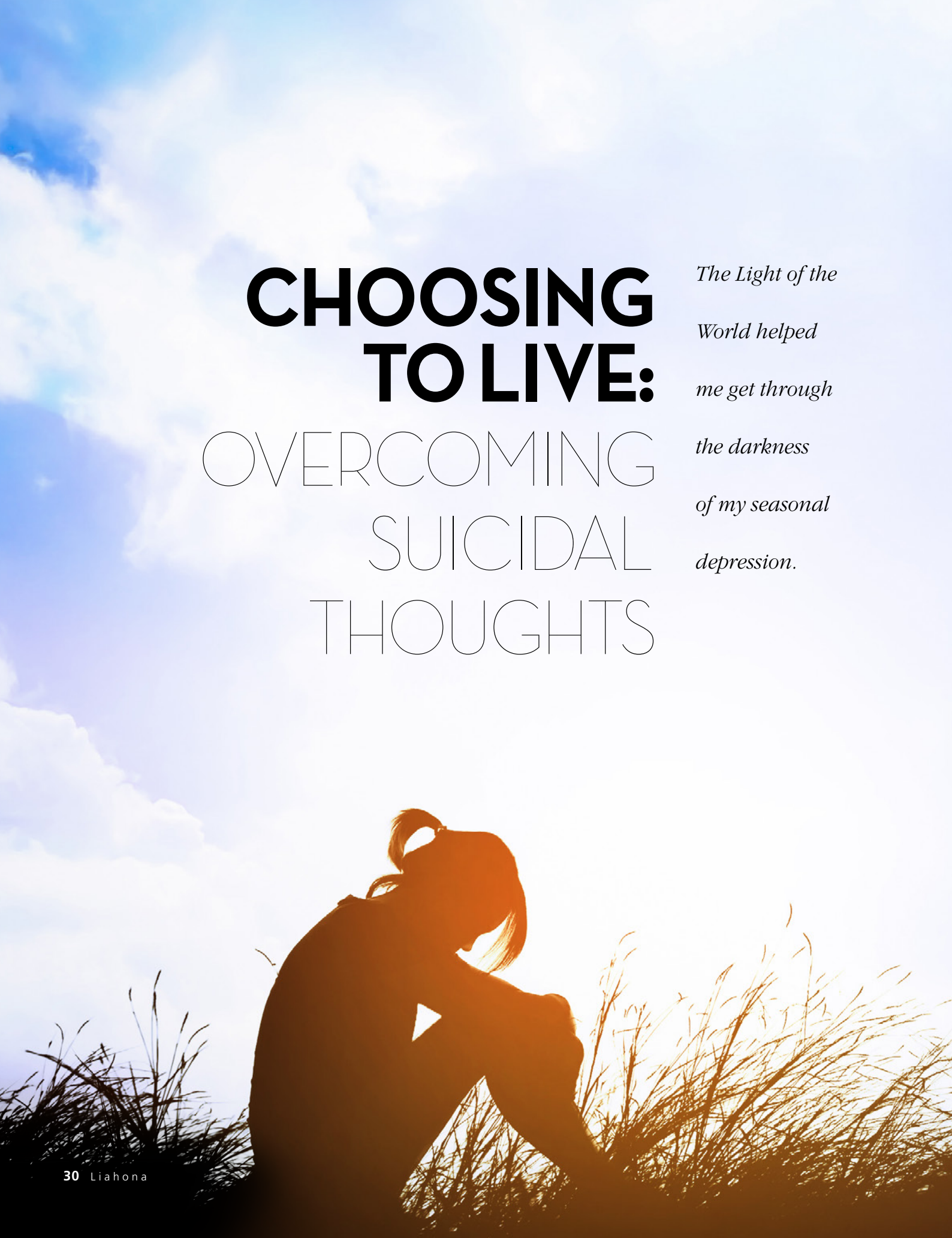
When you have these conversations, please remember these principles: see others through a lens of fairness, treat them with respect and kindness, and expect the same treatment in return.

An Increase of Love

Finally, I want to leave you with my testimony and my witness that as you follow the invitation to reach out to others in a spirit of fairness, you will feel an increase in the Savior's love for you and for all of Heavenly Father's children. Your example of respect and fairness will open doors and create meaningful friendships that you will cherish throughout your life.

I witness to you that our Heavenly Father lives, that He knows you, and that He loves you personally. He stands ready to help you. He has revealed His plan to us not only so that we can return and live with Him forever but also so that we can be blessed and happy

The Savior demonstrated perfectly how to reach out in love and encouragement while also holding firm to what we know to be true.



**CHOOSING
TO LIVE:**
OVERCOMING
SUICIDAL
THOUGHTS

*The Light of the
World helped
me get through
the darkness
of my seasonal
depression.*

Name withheld

My battle with suicidal thoughts began shortly after I moved to a cold city in Iceland, where the lack of sunlight during the winter triggered severe seasonal affective disorder (SAD). As my pain grew too intense for me to handle, I considered suicide.

During the first year I didn't accept that I was depressed. I was scared to tell anyone, even my own husband, about my thoughts. No one in my family or at church knew I suffered from a life-threatening illness; they saw me as an active Church member with a fervent testimony who faced no major challenges. I prayed often, begging for relief, and Heavenly Father strengthened me. I became more careful with my diet, exercised often, immersed myself in the scriptures, served others, and kept all the commandments. But it wasn't enough.

Depression surged toward me like a giant wave. So I ran faster and prayed harder, but I couldn't always outrun the wave. I swam against the current, praying I would survive until my kids came home from school or until lunch. Some days I would live from minute to minute, using sheer willpower to defeat my thoughts and urges.

I remember feeling intense mental pain the first time I almost committed suicide. I did not plan or think ahead—I temporarily lost the ability to logically think. Afterwards I realized how close I had come to taking my own life. I wondered what was wrong with me. I told myself that I shouldn't have suicidal thoughts, and I pretended that they had never existed. I convinced myself that I would never have these thoughts again.

But suicidal thoughts continued to enter my mind when I least expected them. The temptation to end my excruciating pain was very strong. But I wanted to be healed. Though I didn't understand then that I was suffering from an acute illness (an illness that is severe and sudden), I knew I could be healed. So I asked for a priesthood blessing.

My husband, unaware of my struggles, said many things during the blessing that told me Heavenly Father was aware of me. He promised me that I would handle my challenges. Immediate healing was not the solution, but I accepted that Heavenly Father would help me overcome my struggle.

Summer arrived, full of sunshine and long days. It was never dark, not even at midnight. I was happy and felt like myself again. But as the days rapidly shortened in



September, my depression returned and suicidal thoughts infiltrated my mind. I was frightened. At first I tried what I had tried the previous year: praying more, exercising more, and trying harder at everything. But the suicidal urges grew stronger and more severe. I struggled for two months and finally realized that I couldn't survive another winter on my own. I realized that Heavenly Father has blessed us with modern medicine and doctors. To recover, I needed to be willing to open up about my depression and visit a doctor.

Asking for help was the hardest thing I've ever done. I could hardly speak through my tears when I told my husband about my depression and that I needed help. I couldn't say the word *suicide* out loud. My husband made an appointment with a psychiatrist for me.

My doctor prescribed medicine, which helped me get through the winter. Like many people, I struggled to find the right dosage and deal with the side effects. This brought additional stress to my marriage and my family, but my husband and my children supported me.

When spring came, my deep depression lifted, and I no longer needed medication. We moved to a sunny city. I thought all was well and that I would leave my mental illness behind. But I was not completely healed. Feelings of guilt arose for my previous thoughts, feelings, and urges. I disliked that my teenagers had figured out that

I had been suicidal. I felt like I had wasted more than a year of my life.

Also, I was scared—especially when the shorter days in September arrived again. I experienced intense daily flashbacks and feared I would suffer acute depression again. But I could see the Lord's hand in my life as I was led to a wonderful doctor and started therapy. I learned that I also suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). With my doctor's guidance, I dealt with PTSD.

And then I experienced a miracle. After mighty prayer and seeking to apply the Savior's Atonement in my life, the Lord removed my feelings of guilt rapidly, distinctly, and tangibly. His voice explained that I didn't have to carry guilt because my depression wasn't my fault. Jesus Christ carries that burden for me through the power of His Atonement. I was filled with light and felt hopeful again.

I don't know all the reasons why I had to face the challenges of life-threatening illness. Although I still carry all the memories, the mental and physical pains are gone. Every day I am grateful for my family, my doctor, and my time here on earth. Because of my illness, I gained empathy and love for others. I grew emotionally and spiritually and gained knowledge that I would not have learned otherwise. I experienced precious spiritual moments with my Heavenly Father and my Savior. My experiences have encouraged me to embrace life. ■



HE CAN HEAL US

“There is no physical pain, no spiritual wound, no anguish of soul or heartache, no infirmity or weakness you or I ever confront in mortality that the Savior did not experience first. . . . He can reach out, touch, succor, heal, and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do relying only upon our own power.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 90.

HOW TO CREATE A SUICIDE-PREVENTION SAFETY PLAN

By Doug Thomas

Licensed clinical social worker

You can create a safety plan so that if you have thoughts of hurting yourself, you can start at step 1 and continue through the steps until you feel safe. The best time to create your plan is before you find yourself in a crisis. Keep your plan where you can easily access it, such as in your cell phone. There are websites and apps that have helpful templates to fill out, or you can create a plan with the help of an expert (see step 6 below) or on your own using these suggestions:

1. Recognize the warning signs.

What sorts of thoughts, moods, and behaviors tell you a crisis might be developing? Write them in your own words. For example: “When I cancel all my activities and only want to sleep.” “When I keep having thoughts of being a burden.” “When I feel agitated, like I need to do something immediately to get out of pain.” Noticing these warning signs will help you know you need to activate your plan.

2. Try to calm and comfort yourself.

Create a list of soothing and relaxing activities that you can do when you have thoughts or urges to harm yourself. Examples may include going for walk, taking a warm bath, exercising, praying, or writing in a journal.

3. Think about your reasons for living.

At times, the pain may swallow up positive feelings. Create a list to remind

yourself of the people you love, things you like to do, and blessings you have felt grateful for.

4. Reach out to others and ask for help.

List several people (with phone numbers) you can talk to and who would be willing and available to help you through the rest of your safety plan during a crisis. These people could include friends, ward members, and family members.

5. Make sure you are in a safe environment.

This may involve asking someone to help remove items that you are likely to use to hurt yourself, or going somewhere else until your feelings shift. Make a list of social settings—such as parks, gyms, movie theaters, and so on—that are safe and distracting.

6. If you still feel like harming yourself, contact a professional.

List names, numbers, and locations of clinicians, emergency rooms, and crisis hotlines. Suicide.org/international-suicide-hotlines.html lists hotlines for dozens of countries. For example, the United States number is 1-800-273-TALK.

7. After doing all of this, if you still don't feel safe, call emergency services or go to your nearest hospital and ask for help.

Editors' note: An article in next month's magazine will have additional helps for those struggling with suicidal thoughts. The "Suicide" entry at topics.lds.org also has helpful links, talks, and information.



“GATHERED TOGETHER in My Name”

The Lord has appointed ward and branch councils to help us minister in love and unity.

By Jakob R. Jones

Not long ago I attended a family home evening with a family whom I love very much: a young husband and wife and their little daughter. As their bishop I had come to their home acting partly on a prompting from the Spirit and largely on a prompting from this young father’s concerned mother and sister, who were also present. The Lord had been working with this family to make big changes in their lives and bring them back to the blessings of the gospel and the Church. But something had happened that day.

For months this young father had been deeply concerned about providing for his family. His employment was expected to end soon, and he and his wife were in the midst of deciding whether to relocate their family to another state. That would mean significant changes for the family. Earlier that day this father learned that some greatly anticipated financial relief would not be coming; it was crushing news.

When I arrived at their apartment, I could see the deep discouragement in his face. The responsibility of providing for a family and the unwelcome news weighed heavily on the shoulders of this young father.

His wife had chosen a chapter of scripture for the lesson to address their concerns of feeling overwhelmed. The father read the entire chapter. You may recognize these words from Isaiah 55:

“Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy . . . without money and without price. . . .





“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, . . . behold, there will I be in the midst of them” (D&C 6:32).

Those words from the Savior are not just good advice or mere words of comfort. For the young prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, those words of the Savior set forth the doctrine and pattern for obtaining revelation and guidance and for making decisions in the kingdom of God.

The Lord was in the midst of that family council that night. They had invited His Spirit through prayer and scripture study. They were united in purpose. They were filled with love for one another. They brought their best ideas and experiences and laid them before each other and before the Lord and asked for His guidance. They made decisions in unity and then took action.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord” (verses 1, 8).

And then the family discussed what those verses meant to them. The Spirit of the Lord filled that little apartment as this family home evening evolved into a family council. This young father shared his fears and concerns and desires, and everyone shared their love and concern for each other. They talked about what to do, what options they had, what actions to take.

It was a very open discussion. There were some disagreements. I felt impressed to simply listen and observe. Finally, in unity the husband and wife determined they should make the decision together with the Lord through prayer. I then offered words of support and encouragement.

The Lord’s Pattern of Revelation

I can recall few times when I’ve recognized the Spirit of the Lord more strongly than in that little apartment that evening with that humble, struggling family. It was a fulfillment of the Lord’s promise given to His disciples long ago: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, as touching one thing, behold, there will I be in the midst of them—even so am I in the midst of you” (D&C 6:32).

The Church Is Governed through Councils

The Church handbook teaches the doctrine of councils:

“The Lord’s Church is governed through councils at the general, area, stake, and ward levels. These councils are fundamental to the order of the Church.

“Under the keys of priesthood leadership at each level, leaders counsel together for the benefit of individuals and families.”¹

At all levels of this Church, we strive to operate by those same principles the Savior taught to His disciples and to Oliver and Joseph—to come together in unity and council.

Each ward has a ward council that “includes the bishopric, ward clerk, ward executive secretary, high priests group leader, elders quorum president, ward mission leader, and presidents of the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School.”²

All the work done by this group of ward leaders is ultimately focused on helping “individuals build testimonies, receive saving ordinances, keep covenants, and become consecrated followers of Jesus Christ.”³

You may have heard the statement “There is safety in counsel.”⁴ Why? One of the reasons is the simple fact that no one of us is as smart as many of us together. Each of us brings a unique perspective and set of experiences and insights.

The Church handbook also teaches how ward council meetings can be most effective at including the unique perspectives of each member of the council: “During the meeting, the bishop explains each matter being considered, but he does not normally decide how to resolve the matter until he has heard the discussion. He encourages discussion without dominating it. He asks questions and may ask particular council members for their suggestions. He listens carefully before making a decision. These discussions should foster a spirit of inspiration.”⁵

Simply put, we bring our unique talents and abilities and perspectives. We plead with the Lord to be with us, to guide us with His Spirit, to make up the difference in what we lack, and to know the needs of the members we serve. We discuss the needs of families and individuals and strive to come to decisions in unity. Then we go to work and ask the Lord to bless the members of the ward.

Counseling Together in Ward Council

Eight months before I attended that home evening with that young family, the ward council was gathered on a Sunday morning. We opened with prayer and watched a video about helping individuals and families receive the blessings and ordinances of the gospel. I asked the council members if anyone had come to mind as we viewed the video. That led to a discussion of this family. We expressed our love for them. We talked about possible callings, how we could help the father work toward Melchizedek Priesthood ordination, and how we could help the

couple work toward receiving temple ordinances.

As the bishop I made some assignments. It seemed the discussion was nearly closed, but something did not feel quite right. It was the Young Women president who finally said, “I think we’re moving too fast. I kind of feel like we need to focus on the basics with them, like family home evening and scripture study and prayer.” Then that “not quite right” feeling went away. She spoke, not on behalf of the Young Women organization, but out of love for this family, and in that moment the Spirit bore witness to us of the truth of her counsel.

This sister’s comment reopened the discussion. We talked about how to help the family develop a pattern of scripture study, prayer, and home evening. The young father’s sister was serving as one of our ward missionaries, so the ward mission leader took the assignment to work with her and the home teachers to institute regular family home evenings. My wife and I delivered a copy of the *Family Home Evening* resource guidebook and a hymnbook to their home.

The most consistent support and strength came from the mother and sister of this young father as they consistently attended family home evening



“When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

with the family, ultimately leading to that important family night that I was privileged to attend.

The handbook states: “Both men and women should feel that their comments are valued as full participants. . . . The viewpoint of women is sometimes different from that of men, and it adds essential perspective to understanding and responding to members’ needs.”⁶ As a young bishop I sit in council with Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society presidents who have much more wisdom and life experience and insight than I. They are often very much my teachers in Christlike character and even in how to be a good father and priesthood holder.

I am so grateful for the women of this Church. I hope our sisters never feel unheard or disregarded in our council meetings. Ward council members operate as equals. The keys of presidency given to a bishop are a matter of order, organization, and assigned responsibility but never a designation of dominance or spiritual superiority.

Unity

The handbook describes the importance of unity: “After open discussion, the bishop may make a decision, or he may wait to discuss the matter further with his counselors. After he makes a decision, council members should support it in a spirit of unity and harmony.

“If council members have strongly unsettled feelings about an important decision, the bishop may wait for another council meeting to consider the matter further and seek spiritual confirmation and unity.”⁷

Unity is another reason there is safety in councils. Sometimes as individuals we think we know what action needs to be taken, and we often want to jump right to the end result. We forget that the Lord’s end goal is not in our developing a plan of action. It is that each of His children comes to know Him. You remember how the Lord prayed for His disciples:

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. . . .

“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. . . .

“ . . . Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. . . .

“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” (John 17:3, 9, 11, 23).

The Lord’s objective is that we become His—that we become one with Him, with our Heavenly Father, and with each other. The process is as important as the result. Councils are part of the divinely appointed process by which unity is achieved and by which we become Christ’s. The Lord has stated, “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27).

That commandment may also be used as a test. For example, the Lord might have conversely stated, “By this ye shall know that ye are mine, when ye are one with each other and one with me.”

The father of a family may receive revelation that



relocating the family will bring blessings and unity. But without the unity of his wife and children, his plan may not bring the expected results.

A bishop may receive revelation for a ward mission plan, but unless the ward council is united with that revelation, the blessings will not come, and the bishop will be left to wonder what went wrong.

Here is how President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, described how the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles operates:

“The calling of 15 men to the holy apostleship provides great protection for us as members of the Church. Why? Because decisions of these leaders must be unanimous. Can you imagine how the Spirit needs to move upon 15 men to bring about unanimity? These 15 men have varied educational and professional backgrounds, with differing opinions about many things. Trust me! These 15 men—prophets, seers, and revelators—know what the will of the Lord is when unanimity is reached!”⁸

I bear witness that the Lord is interested in the details of our individual lives. I am ever amazed at how far the Savior is willing to go, or to send one of His servants, to rescue one of His children. How grateful I am for the councils appointed with the responsibility to care for Heavenly Father’s children. ■

The author lives in California, USA.

To learn more about family councils, see Elder M. Russell Ballard’s April 2016 general conference address, “Family Councils.”

NOTES

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 4.1.
2. *Handbook 2*, 4.4.
3. *Handbook 2*, 4.4.
4. See Henry B. Eyring, “Listen Together” (Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 4, 1988), 2, speeches.byu.edu.
5. *Handbook 2*, 4.6.1.
6. *Handbook 2*, 4.6.1.
7. *Handbook 2*, 4.6.1.
8. Russell M. Nelson, “Sustaining the Prophets,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 75.



IF YOU’RE NOT SERVING ON THE WARD COUNCIL

- As a visiting teacher or home teacher, you can pray for those you visit. You care for them. When you report to your leaders on how your families are doing, you can pray that the information will make it to the ward council and that the members of the council will be guided by the Spirit to address the needs of those families.
- You may have a spouse whom you regularly send off to a ward council meeting. You may be tempted to complain of his or her absence, especially if you are left alone to get your children ready for church. You can pray that your spouse will be guided by the Spirit, that his or her service will bring some of our Heavenly Father’s children to Christ, and that your family will be blessed.
- When you receive a calling or an invitation to speak in sacrament meeting, you can know that that opportunity to serve has come from the Lord through His servants through the council.

PRESSING FORWARD THROUGH THE PLATEAUS

Outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling, and skiing are a big part of my life. Recently, it struck me how similar our time on earth is to the time I dedicate to outdoor fitness. I tend to focus on building my stamina and skills in one activity for a time or season. Then by choice, chance, or invitation, I switch to another. No matter how fit and confident I feel in a type of fitness, though, upon switching to a new enterprise, I find myself winded, falling short, and feeling muscles I've "never felt before." Then I settle into the new type of fitness and rebuild the necessary endurance and skills.

Similarly, in life we tend to become focused on certain habits. We become comfortable. Then by choice, chance, or invitation, our plateau of comfort and ease becomes a period of challenge and opportunity for growth.

Tackling life's challenges can be a daunting task. Nephi encourages us, saying, "Press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and

No matter how fit and confident I feel in a type of fitness, upon switching to a new activity, I find myself winded, falling short, and feeling muscles I've "never felt before."

of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20).

Occasionally, I wonder how nice it might have been to have remained indefinitely in the premortal existence, listening to Heavenly Father simply *tell* us about His great plan of happiness. However, our progression required a "classroom"—earth—where we could experience mortality for ourselves.

Over the years as I have testified of the truthfulness and need for Heavenly Father's plan, new opportunities and

sometimes-painful experiences have embedded this teaching into my soul. We seem to learn gospel truths in layers, revisiting the same subjects again and again. I sometimes find myself asking, "How much deeper are we going to go here?" Or, like fitness, "How many other muscle groups do I still need to train?"

Still, as the seasons of life change and challenges vary, I know that the Lord will provide me with the experiences I need. And as I press forward, I will learn to become more like Him and return to His presence. ■

Christopher Drake, California, USA



ILLUSTRATION BY ALLEN GARRIS

THIS TIME I ACTED

I buckled my daughter into the well-worn car seat. Our budget was tight, so I was grateful for the recent hand-me-down. It served as a booster seat since my daughter had outgrown her previous car seat. I looked forward to running errands on that beautiful day.

We pulled into our first stop, the library. As I unstrapped my daughter, I noticed a young Hispanic woman parked next to us. A baby, unable to fully support himself, sat directly on the back seat, hunched into a little ball. The young mother struggled to cinch the seat belt tight enough for his small form. I had two thoughts.

“She doesn’t have a car seat for her baby. I could give her mine.”

And then I talked myself out of it.

“She probably doesn’t speak English. I might offend her. My car seat is awfully worn; maybe she wouldn’t want it. If she did, how would I replace it?”

So I did nothing.

She slipped into the driver’s seat and drove away.

Before I reached the library’s doors, regret engulfed me. I knew I had made the wrong choice, and there was no way to undo it.

I pulled on the doors but they didn’t budge. The library hadn’t opened yet. I spent the rest of my errand run endlessly replaying the scene, haunted by the fact that I had done nothing.

After my last errand, I decided to try the library again. I pulled into the same parking spot as before. To my surprise, I saw the same mother and son parked beside me again. An immense burden lifted from my heart.

This time I acted without hesitation. I unbuckled my child’s car seat and approached the young mother. She didn’t speak English. With gestures, I pointed to her baby and the car seat and her car. Together we buckled the car seat in the car. As I showed her how to use it, I realized I already knew the only Spanish I needed to know: “gracias.”

My heart overflowed with gratitude to a merciful Heavenly Father for

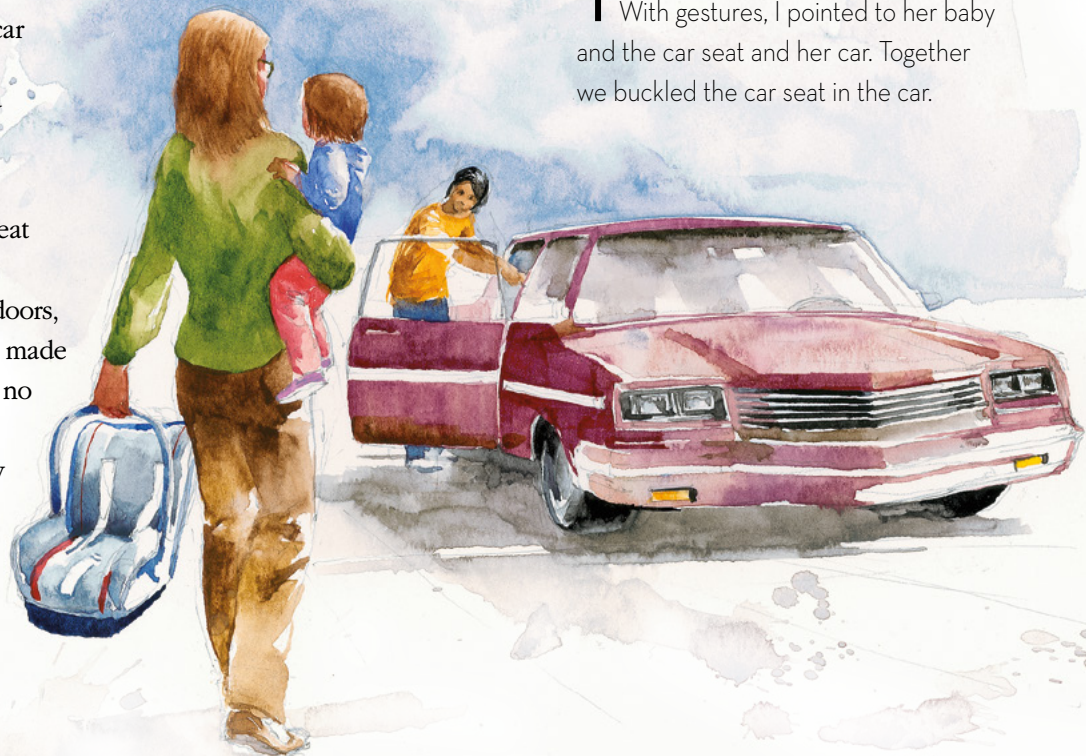
giving me a second chance to help a sister in need.

I added one final errand to the list—a nearby thrift store. I buckled in my daughter and drove carefully to the store. In the back corner of the shop, sitting on the floor, was a car seat—identical to the one I had just given away and just as worn. I purchased it, awed and humbled at the morning’s sequence of events.

Through the Savior’s gentle but effective teaching, the lesson had been planted deep into my heart: follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost—the first time. ■

Teresa Weaver, Texas, USA

This time I acted without hesitation. With gestures, I pointed to her baby and the car seat and her car. Together we buckled the car seat in the car.



MY UNSEEN INVESTIGATOR

I was blessed with wonderful parents. My mother was a member of the Church, and although my father wasn't, he still supported us in our Church activities. Growing up, I prayed daily that my father would join the Church.

When I received my patriarchal blessing at age 16, I was promised that I would be an influence in helping my father join the Church. I talked with him about the things I learned in seminary. I told him about the scriptures that state that it is necessary to be baptized and confirmed to enter the kingdom of God (see John 3:5). Tearfully, I told him about the blessings of the temple that would make it possible for us to be together forever.

I attended a small school in Arizona, USA. I had wonderful friends during high school even though I was the only Church member in my class. At the time, President David O. McKay (1873–1970) was the prophet. We often heard his counsel for

While I was outside the house painting and you and the kids were inside holding those meetings, I was convinced I had been on the outside looking in long enough.

“every member [to be] a missionary” (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* [2011], chapter 6). One summer my sister Marilyn and I invited some friends to take the missionary lessons. They took two lessons and were no longer interested. We were disappointed, but it didn't end our friendships.

I went to college at the end of that summer. During spring semester, I received a letter from my dad. He wrote: “It is my greatest privilege to be the head of a household of wonderful girls. Because of all of your strong testimonies of the gospel and the meetings and interest in other young people last summer, I really started getting interested in the Church. While I was outside the

house painting and you and the kids were inside holding those meetings, I was convinced I had been on the outside looking in long enough. I have thanked Heavenly Father many times for your mother and the fact that she was brought up in the Church and for the way she has brought up you girls.”

My father was soon baptized, and a year later our family was sealed for time and eternity in the Mesa Arizona Temple.

Even though none of our friends joined the Church, the most important person in our lives did. We never know how we will be blessed when we follow the counsel of the prophet. ■

Diane Mitchell Call, Arizona, USA



ILLUSTRATION BY ALLEN GARMS

SEEKING ETIENE

A few weeks before leaving to serve a full-time mission, I went to visit the home of an old friend who was not a member of the Church. I intended to stay for just a few minutes, but due to a heavy rainstorm, I had to stay longer than anticipated. So my friend, his mother, and I sat down and began to talk about the Church and my upcoming mission.

I explained that I might be assigned to serve in cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, or Brasília.

For some reason, my friend's mother decided to give me the address of her sister who lived in a town near Rio de Janeiro. She said that I should go and visit her if I were ever sent there.

I left for my mission on July 7, 1982. I served in many different cities,

including one near the place my friend's aunt lived. I thought about visiting her, but her home was not in my area. I didn't tell the missionaries assigned to that area about her because I was still hoping I would be able to go myself.

At that time, missionaries served for 18 months. The time passed without seeing my friend's aunt and her family.

Years later, while attending a ward social, I happened to see my non-member friend. I learned that he had been invited by one of his relatives, an aunt named Etiene who had recently been baptized into the Church. I then found out that Aunt Etiene had just moved into our ward from the state of Rio de Janeiro. I quickly came to love his aunt Etiene, and we loved to talk

together about our memories of Rio de Janeiro. To my embarrassment, I learned that she was the same woman I wanted to visit during my mission. She had been baptized only recently, after the unexpected death of her husband.

Fortunately, she has forgiven me for not encouraging other missionaries to visit her. However, she was disappointed over the time she lost while she was not enjoying the blessings of the gospel.

Regrets such as these are not felt just by returned missionaries but may also come to all of us if we neglect to heed the promptings of the Spirit, whether that means inviting friends to come to a Church activity or giving a referral to the missionaries. Let us go to the Lord and ask for inspiration. He will speak to us by the still, small voice of the Spirit. He will give us the help we need to do missionary work with dedication and love. ■

Elson Carlos Ferreira Paraná, Brazil



No Neutral Ground

HOW MEDIA INFLUENCES US

By Aysia Tan

In our modern, technology-filled world, we are bombarded with options: watch this, read that, listen to this. Our society is saturated with media and entertainment, and the influence they have on our beliefs, thoughts, and actions is subtle but powerful. The things we allow to fill our minds end up shaping our being—we become what we think about. My graduate studies took me on an exploration of the influence of media, and the overwhelming conclusion I found is that the media we choose to consume will inevitably affect us, whether positively or negatively.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has explained: “Technology in and of itself is neither inherently good nor bad. Rather, the purposes accomplished with and through technology are the ultimate indicators of goodness or badness.”¹ Our task is not to reject technology but rather to use it in ways that will enrich our lives.

We can use the power of media to our



advantage, to better our thoughts and behaviors by:

(1) Acknowledging our susceptibility to media influence and recognizing how it influences us.

(2) Identifying and choosing positive media options.

How Does Media Affect Us?

No one is immune to media's influence. We cannot expect to indulge in media designed to affect us mentally and emotionally without its influence being sustained in our subconscious long after the movie is over, the book is closed, or the song ends. Those who believe media does not affect them are often the people who are most affected because they deny the influence and are therefore not guarded against it. Just as water will continue to seep through a leak in a boat, whether or not we acknowledge the leak, so will media continue to influence our thoughts whether or not we address its impact.

Entertainment media can influence our thoughts as we turn to it for relief from the stresses of our everyday lives. We often seek entertainment as a temporary solace from our everyday troubles, whether through movies, books, television, magazines,

or music. Although we turn to entertainment media to relax, we must not relax our standards. It is at that very time we must be cautious of what we allow into our minds.

To fully enjoy the entertainment experience, some people instinctively accept whatever messages the medium offers and therefore allow the suggested perspectives to influence their perceptions. Film critics described the use of this concept in film:

Our responsibility is not to avoid media altogether or to merely reject negative media but to choose wholesome and uplifting media.

"Truth depends on early and thoroughly convincing establishment of a strange or fantastic environment, sense of another time, or unusual characters, so that we are caught up in the film's overall spirit, mood, and

atmosphere. If the filmmaker is skillful at creating this semblance of truth, *we willingly agree to suspend our disbelief*, and we leave our skepticism and our rational faculties behind as we enter the film's imaginary world."²

If we suspend our disbelief, we tend to be more open to the values, expectations, and beliefs the media portrays. Thus, media may subtly influence our thoughts. But in this influence is the danger of accepting viewpoints that may not be in harmony with gospel principles.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles brought attention to the function of entertainment media when he said, "Did you know that the original Latin meaning of the word *amusement* is 'a diversion of the mind intended to deceive?'"³ At times, we seek diversion. We turn to media to distract us from our own real-world problems, and we depend on it to make us believe whatever it has to offer. The more believable the medium, however true or false, the more we enjoy it.

Social psychologist Karen E. Dill said: "When we are transported by the world of fiction, our attitudes and beliefs change to be more consistent with ideas and claims that take place

within the story. We suspend our disbelief and in so doing, we open ourselves up to absorbing involuntarily the belief system dramatized in the fictional world and to acting on those beliefs and ideas. Many times what we see on the screen provokes a change or a response outside our awareness. This is how the fantasy world of media shapes our realities.”⁴

By allowing media to fulfill its purpose in *amusing* us, we might replace our ordinarily rational thought processes with thoughts proposed by the media, which ultimately leads to changes in our beliefs and behaviors. Elder David B. Haight (1906–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “As the thought is father to the deed, exposure can lead to acting out what is nurtured in the mind.”⁵

To remain in control of the media influence in our lives, it is essential that we choose uplifting media and recognize our susceptibility to the media’s influence. Media affects our thoughts and can therefore influence our actions. King Benjamin’s counsel applies to us today: “Watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds” (Mosiah 4:30).

How Do We Choose Positive Media Options?

By understanding the influence media has on our lives, we can consciously address the options before us. Our choices make all the difference in determining our sensitivity to the Spirit and the goodness around us. Every decision we make brings us closer to or further from our Father in Heaven.

Christian author C. S. Lewis wrote: “Our leisure, even our play, is a matter of serious concern. There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.”⁶

Our responsibility is not to avoid media altogether or to merely reject negative media but to actively surround ourselves with wholesome and uplifting media. Fortunately, in the vast media offerings, there is much that is good and wholesome, where traditional values are upheld and respected. There are countless books, movies, songs, and more with messages of hope and happiness, love and kindness, joy and forgiveness.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “Because of its sheer size, media today presents vast and sharply contrasting options. Opposite from its harmful and permissive side, media offers much that is positive and productive. . . . *Thus our biggest challenge is to choose wisely what we listen to and what we watch.*”⁷

Perhaps a television show or book series we once enjoyed has declined on the morality scale but we find it hard to give up, or perhaps a new

movie is particularly popular or enticing and we see no harm in watching



it. However, giving in just a little makes it easier to give in a little more down the road until we have given ourselves over to indulgences from which we find it difficult to bring ourselves back. But by setting standards for ourselves to allow only wholesome media into our lives, we allow ourselves to be more receptive to the Spirit.

We can follow the timeless advice that Susanna Wesley gave in 1725 to her son John, a founder of Methodism: “Would you judge the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure, [of the innocence of malignity of actions? Take this rule.] Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind; that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.”⁸

The Power to Choose

By choosing to participate in morally uplifting media, we invite the Spirit and allow ourselves to be strengthened. The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us that we are given the power to act for ourselves (see 2 Nephi 2:26). Seeking after those things which are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13) opens

our hearts and minds to adopting thoughts and attitudes that lead us to righteous behaviors. In these efforts, we will be blessed with protection against the influences of the adversary (see Helaman 5:12).

The great advances in media technology with which the Lord has blessed us come with a responsibility for us to choose how to use those technologies. Through study and experience, I have seen the impact media has, whether or not we choose to acknowledge it. Before us are the options of the morally degrading or the wholesome and uplifting. We have the choice—but more importantly, we have the power to choose. ■



The *For the Strength of Youth* booklet can also be for the strength of young adults. The section “Entertainment and Media” has some excellent guidelines for our media choices.

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, “To Sweep the Earth as with a Flood” (Brigham Young University Education Week devotional, Aug. 19, 2014), speeches.byu.edu.
2. Joe Boggs and Dennis Petrie, *The Art of Watching Films* (2004), 43; emphasis added.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Sanctify Yourselves,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 39; *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 48.
4. Karen Dill, *How Fantasy Becomes Reality: Seeing Through Media Influence* (2009), 224.
5. David B. Haight, “Personal Morality,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 70.
6. C. S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (1967), 33.
7. M. Russell Ballard, “Let Our Voices Be Heard,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 16; emphasis added.
8. *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings* (1997), 109.

Building the Kingdom

in Australia

By Ben Robinson

As the sun rises over Mount Baw Baw, Callan Brooks is doing what he loves: building. He smiles as he fits another two-by-four into place, feeling the sense of accomplishment for a job well done.

Watching Callan work, you'd never guess that he is hearing impaired. But it hasn't slowed him down. To Callan, it seems he was born to do this. And perhaps he was—for five generations his family has been builders.

"When I was 15, I left school to start my apprenticeship," he says. "If you find an apprenticeship you like, it's common among Australians to leave school and do that full time." Callan has been building ever since. Whether he's constructing homes, bolstering his own testimony, or magnifying a calling, Callan is consistently engaged in building God's kingdom.

Just as his hearing loss hasn't held him back from his work in construction, it hasn't hindered his desire to learn and preach the gospel.

"While growing up, I barely understood 10 percent of what was said from the pulpit," Callan says. He wanted to serve a full-time mission but didn't qualify because of his hearing. However, he prayed and trusted that the Lord's will would be done. Then something unexpected happened: Callan's hearing worsened.

"When I was 18, I was completely deaf for six long months. I went to church for the feelings, because that's all I got out of it," he explains.

During this time, Callan built his testimony and relied on the Spirit. But what initially seemed to be a larger trial turned out to be the answer to his prayers. Because of the sudden drop in his hearing ability, he qualified for a cochlear implant, which improved his hearing enough to qualify him for a full-time mission. Callan soon left to serve in Perth, Australia.

Now home in Moe, Victoria, Callan serves in his ward's Young Men presidency, where he helps 10 young men

Setbacks and hearing loss couldn't stop this young adult from helping hasten the Lord's work in Australia.

stay strong in the gospel in a place where remaining so is particularly difficult. To do this, he emphasizes the role of the Spirit in building up true conversion.

"We try to lead the young men to experience their own conversion through reading the Book of Mormon and utilizing Church programs," he says.

The impact of this fifth-generation builder's work is obvious, through his work on buildings, his witness of the gospel, and his mentoring of young men in his ward. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



MORE ABOUT CALLAN

What kinds of activities are there for young single adults?

Australia has large conventions every year where all the YSAs are invited to gather together. Because young adults are so spread out in Australia, it helps to have a time for everyone to meet. This is a great sacrifice for members, as they will travel thousands of miles to attend.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I love to play sports, primarily basketball. We have a big Easter basketball competition run by the members every two years. It includes a women's division, a three-point competition, and a dunk competition.

THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

- 143,891 Latter-day Saints
- 303 congregations
- 145 family history centers
- 6 missions
- 5 temples

FACTS ABOUT AUSTRALIA

- Capital: Canberra
- Official language: English

BY THE NUMBERS

- Over 23 million people
- Over 500 national parks
- Highway 1 is the world's longest national highway, with 9,000 miles (14,500 km) of road circumnavigating the country





GO SEE REBECCA

By Mindy Raye Friedman

I was a few months into my mission in the Illinois Chicago South Mission and still serving in my first area. The sisters' area next to us had recently been closed, so we had responsibility for all of the Spanish-speaking investigators from that area. Among them was a woman named Rebecca.

The first time we met Rebecca, I was impressed by her faith. She lived in the basement of a house, so we had to knock on her windows for her to come open the door for us. The previous missionaries had begun to teach her after she requested a *Finding Faith in Christ* video. If she had not called for a video, the missionaries may never have found her.

I could tell from what she told us that Rebecca had a hard life. She had once been a very happy person, but now she was separated from her son and other family. Although she was in humble circumstances, I felt the Lord's love for her.

As we taught her, I could tell she was feeling the Spirit. Our visits would lift her mood considerably. Unfortunately, she lived far away, and it was hard to visit her as often as we would have liked.

One Friday when we had zone conference, we planned to go out to that part of our area afterwards since we were already halfway there. We asked Rebecca if she would be home, but she said she would be working. We decided we would still visit other investigators we had in the area.

We ended up with some extra time there, and we weren't sure what to do. Then my

companion said, "I think we should go see if Rebecca is home." This suggestion didn't make sense to me since Rebecca told us she would not be home. It was then I heard a voice telling me, "Go back and visit her." I felt as if my body was literally being pulled in the direction of Rebecca's house. It was the strongest impression I have ever felt.

I told my companion to turn the car around, and we went to Rebecca's house. We knocked on the windows twice, and no one answered. I was so disappointed because I knew there had to be a reason the Lord sent us. I suggested we knock one more time. We waited, and then just as we were about to leave, Rebecca answered the door.

She was home because she had just been fired from her job, and she really needed someone to talk to. She had been praying that we would come. She told us we were her angels. We were able to talk to her and make her feel better by teaching her more about the gospel.

I'm so glad Heavenly Father cares for each of His children and listened to Rebecca's prayer, and I'm glad we could follow the prompting to go visit her, so we could be that answer. Our Heavenly Father knows all the things that are going on in each of our lives, and when we rely on Him and ask in faith, He will help us with the things we need. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

No one came to the door when we knocked, but we knew we had been sent there to help one of God's children.

LOOK TO THE LIGHT

“Even though we may feel lost
in the midst of our current circumstances,
God promises the hope of His light.”

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

“The Hope of God’s Light,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 70.



TO THE POINT

If I was faithful in the premortal life, why is it so hard to be so now?

All people who come to earth chose in the premortal life to follow Heavenly Father's plan and to accept Jesus Christ as the Savior. But that doesn't mean that obedience and righteousness in this life will be easy. Because Heavenly Father's plan intends for this life to be a true test of how we use our agency, our memories of premortal life have been removed. Also, as part of His plan, we have received physical bodies, which are subject to appetites, lusts, and temptations we did not know as spirits. This makes us more easily enticed by things that are "carnal, sensual, and devilish" (Moses 5:13), which is why "the natural man is an enemy to God" (Mosiah 3:19).

A person can overcome these challenges only if he or she "yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord" (Mosiah 3:19). It isn't easy, but Jesus Christ will strengthen you and transform you as you listen to the Spirit, make good choices, and come unto Him. ■

What should I do if I question something a prophet has taught?

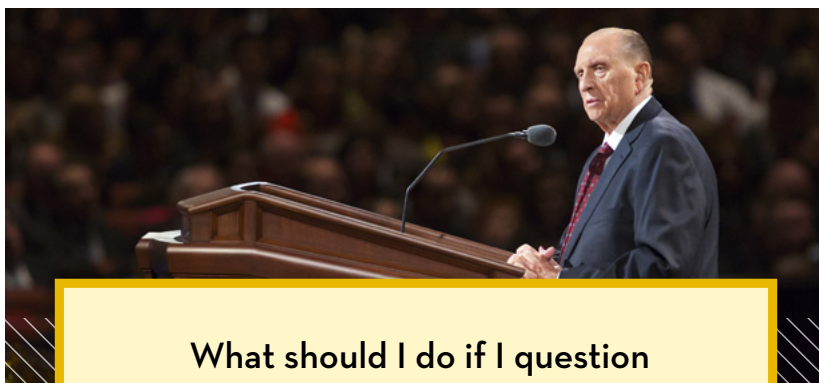
When the restored Church was organized, Joseph Smith received a revelation telling the early Saints, "His [the prophet's] word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith" (D&C 21:5).

Joseph Smith also said that "a prophet [is] a prophet only when he [is] acting as such."¹ This means that "a statement made by one leader on a single occasion often represents a personal, though well-considered, opinion, not meant to be official or binding for the whole Church."² It's usually obvious when the prophet is "acting as such," such as addressing Church members in an official capacity.

It is our privilege to ask Heavenly Father for our own witness "about whatever His prophet has proclaimed."³ If we don't receive a witness, then we should study what other prophets have said about the matter and choose a course of action. The best course of action is to follow the combined, consistent counsel of the prophets "in all patience and faith." As we do, we will be blessed (see 1 Nephi 2:11, 16, 19). ■

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:265.
2. D. Todd Christofferson, "The Doctrine of Christ," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2012, 88.
3. Russell M. Nelson, "Becoming True Millennials" (worldwide devotional for young adults, Jan. 10, 2016), lds.org/broadcasts.



SEWING & A SECOND CLASSES & CHANCE

*I missed a chance to share the gospel with my piano teacher.
Could I follow through on this next prompting?*

By Belen Chaparro

When I was 18, my family moved from southern Argentina to northern Argentina, where my father served as a mission president. The first few months were a difficult adjustment for my family and me. We hadn't made friends yet, so we started looking for activities to participate in. I signed up for piano classes.

My piano teacher, Mabel, was the best teacher I'd ever had. I greatly enjoyed the classes, and I began to advance rapidly in my ability to play. However, Mabel was ill with cancer and was having a hard time. She spent a lot of time traveling to visit healers, doctors, and priests in different places. She had to be hospitalized several times, but she would recuperate and come back to teach with the same good spirits and dedication.

Day after day, class after class, I wanted to share with her the hope of God's plan, the hope that Jesus Christ gives with His power, but I didn't know how.

When classes started up after summer vacation, Mabel was ill again. After some time of not hearing from her, I called and left a message asking how she was doing. The next day her daughter told me that Mabel had passed away. I fell into a profound sorrow. I knew that I should have shared the gospel with her but had put off that moment for so long that I lost the opportunity.

I began taking sewing classes, and I had another wonderful teacher. She believes in God but belongs to a different religion. In one of the classes, the gospel came up, and when she asked me what religion I belonged to, I replied that I was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She seemed confused at the name, and I clarified, "People also know us as Mormons." She immediately got excited and said, "I love the Mormons!" with a smile on her face.

She continued, "I can tell you're a Mormon," and she began to list the

reasons why. I was happy that she noticed I strived to live the gospel. She asked me a little about baptism in the Church. As I explained it, she said right away, "I can't get baptized into your church because I was raised in a different religion." In hearing her tell me about her beliefs, I learned a lot about what I could share with her. I felt the quiet but firm feeling to give her a Book of Mormon, and I knew it was the Spirit speaking to me.

I obtained a Book of Mormon, grabbed a sheet of paper, and wrote her a short but sincere dedication with my phone number on the other side, in case she had questions. I put the paper in the book, wrapped it up, and put a bow on it. I gave it to her the next class. She was thrilled to receive it and thanked me.

All week I wondered how she had reacted to opening the gift—if she liked it or not. The next class I arrived a little late and was surprised with her reaction as I entered

the room. She hugged me and said emphatically, “I loved it, loved it, loved it! The book you gave me is lovely, beginning at the introduction when it talks about the plates. It is so true! It has lovely scriptures. I started reading, and I’m halfway through. I can’t stop reading it!”

Hearing so much excitement, the rest of the class turned around to see what was going on. One of my classmates, whom I had been talking to about the Book of Mormon, asked if this book brought peace. My teacher replied, “It made me want to weep, not from sadness but from being blessed.” She couldn’t stop smiling and hugging me.

I felt very happy. At that moment, I came to understand that we cannot judge who is ready to receive the word of God. We cannot know how open a person’s heart is. If God inspires us to share, we need to take action because He knows better than we do. ■

The author lives in Salta, Argentina.



COMMANDMENTS = LOVE

What does love have to do with commandments?



By Charlotte Larcabal
Church Magazines

When you think about commandments, you might think of stone tablets, rules, boundaries, demands, or requirements. You probably don't automatically think of love. What do commandments have to do with love?

Well, everything.

Because He Loves Us

Remember when you were little and your parents didn't let you play on a busy street? or when they made you eat more vegetables or go to bed earlier than you wanted to?

You probably didn't understand why there were so many rules. And you probably weren't always happy about them, either. But now that you're older, can you see why your parents gave you all those rules?

It was because they loved you and wanted what was best for you.

As the most perfect parent, Heavenly Father gives us rules or commandments for the same reason: He loves us and wants what's best for us. Even more than that, He wants us to become like Him and receive all that He has.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained this with a parable:



AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE

"God's commandments are a manifestation of His love for us, and obedience to His commandments is an expression of our love for Him."

Carole M. Stephens, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, "If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 120.



“A wealthy father knew that if he were to bestow his wealth upon a child who had not yet developed the needed wisdom and stature, the inheritance would probably be wasted. The father said to his child:

“All that I have I desire to give you—not only my wealth, but also my position and standing among men. That which I *have* I can easily give you, but that which I *am* you must obtain for yourself. You will qualify for your inheritance by learning what I have learned and by living as I have lived. I will give you the laws and principles by which I have acquired my wisdom and stature. Follow my example, mastering as I have mastered, and you will become as I am, and all that I have will be yours.”¹

Like the father in Elder Oaks’s story, Heavenly Father wants us to have everything He has and become everything He is. His commandments are like stepping stones to help us learn and grow and become like Him.

“I give unto you a new commandment, . . . or, in other words, I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation” (D&C 82:8–9).

Like a toddler who doesn’t understand why he’s not allowed to play in the middle of a busy, dangerous street, we may not always understand the reasoning behind certain commandments or standards. But when

we understand that God gives us commandments because He loves us and wants to guide us so that we will become like Him, it becomes easier to obey Him.

Because We Love Him

You could think of every commandment as a big “I love you!” sign from God. And when we choose to keep His commandments, it’s like we’re saying “I love you!” right back to Him.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, put it simply when he answered the question “Why bother with God’s commandments?”

“We obey the commandments of God—out of love for Him! . . .

“ . . . Our obedience to God’s commandments comes as a natural

outgrowth of our endless love and gratitude for the goodness of God.”²

Heavenly Father has given us everything we have—from the ability to move to the very air we breathe—and all He asks is that we keep His commandments (see Mosiah 2:21–22). It’s the best way we can show our love and gratitude to Him.

Jesus Christ said so Himself (see John 14:15).

Why does Heavenly Father give us commandments? Because He loves us.

Why do we keep His commandments? Because we love Him.

Commandments equal love.

It’s that simple. ■

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32; *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 40.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Gift of Grace,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 109.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

THINGS TO PONDER FOR SUNDAY

- How do the commandments help me become more like Heavenly Father?
- How does knowing that God loves me help me keep the commandments?

THINGS YOU MIGHT DO

- As you study commandments, look for and note the promised blessings.
- When has keeping the commandments helped you feel closer to Heavenly Father? Share your feelings with your family, friends, or on social media.



Why the Book of Mormon?

I had always depended on others for a testimony of the Book of Mormon, but I decided it was time to seek my own.

By Elvin Jerome Laceda

Why do we need the Book of Mormon when we already have the Holy Bible? I've thought about this question a lot. As a teenager I was curious about the Book of Mormon, but I didn't have the motivation to read it. For one thing, nobody encouraged me to read it at home because I was the only member of the Church in my family, except for my grandfather who had passed away.

One Sunday at a testimony meeting, many members testified about the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, which I had recently begun to doubt. They challenged those who hadn't read it to gain their own testimony that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on the earth.

I pondered if my testimony of the Church and of Joseph

Smith was strong enough to withstand the temptations and enticements of Satan. I realized that it wasn't. My testimony was weak because I had depended only on the testimonies of Church leaders and members. I promised myself that starting that day, I would seek my own testimony.

I decided to read the Book of Mormon. In the introduction I read, "We invite all men everywhere to read the Book of Mormon, to ponder in their hearts the message it contains, and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ if the book is true. Those who pursue this course and ask in faith will gain a testimony of its truth and divinity by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See Moroni 10:3–5.)" I knew I was personally being invited to read the Book of Mormon. As I continued reading, I felt the warmth of the Holy Ghost testifying of the book's divinity and truthfulness.



THE BOOK OF MORMON WILL INCREASE YOUR FAITH

“Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon give us the beautiful assurance that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. . . . Some or all of the Book of Mormon is now in 110 languages across the world. It provides a spiritual and tangible witness of the truthfulness of the Restoration. When was the last time that you read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover? Read it again. It will increase your faith.”

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Faith Is Not by Chance, but by Choice,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 66–67.

I found that the Book of Mormon does testify of Christ, and I was ashamed for doubting its truthfulness. At school I had learned how judges of the law carefully study a case’s evidence before passing judgment. I had done the opposite with the Book of Mormon: I had judged it before I read it.

I finished reading with a humble heart and courage to defend what I believe. Also, I’m happy because I have a companion as I read the Book of Mormon again. My grandmother was baptized shortly before I finished reading the Book of Mormon the first time.

I have a firm testimony that Jesus Christ is my Savior, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true and living Church of God here on the earth. ■

The author lives in the Philippines.



By Elder Yoon
Hwan Choi
Of the Seventy

STRENGTHENED by the Word of God

When I learned how to apply the words of the prophets, I changed my life from what I wanted to be to what the Lord wanted me to be.

While I was growing up in Korea, my father allowed his children to attend the church of our choice, but often during dinner we disagreed about our different religious beliefs. Because of this contention, my father wanted to unify our family's religious beliefs. Since my younger brother was going to meetings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with my uncle, my dad began attending meetings with them to learn more about the Church. I also attended and was impressed by fun Mutual activities and how the seminary program strengthened young people spiritually.

When I was 16, my parents and I were baptized, and the rest of our 23 family members and relatives joined the Church within seven months.

When we joined the Church, we committed to being fully active and to continuing to learn about gospel doctrines. We did this by studying the scriptures faithfully every day, along with reading many other Church books and manuals. During the next few years, I learned two important principles about staying strong in the Church:

1. Study the scriptures at seminary, church, and home.
2. Listen to and follow the counsel of the prophet.

STRENGTH IN THE SCRIPTURES

In addition to studying the scriptures at home, my brother and I also faithfully attended seminary and Mutual. In those days, we had Sunday School in the morning, with sacrament meeting in the late afternoon. Because of the distance to our meetinghouse, we stayed at the church building, attended seminary class, and enjoyed visiting and being with other members of the Church until after sacrament meeting. A lot of young people were joining the Church in Korea at that time, and as we learned together and had fun at activities, we became close.

I was called to serve in my Aaronic Priesthood quorum and worked closely with the young women who served in their classes. We learned how to care for and pray for those we led as well as how to plan activities together and use our time wisely.

During the week, I studied the scriptures for seminary before I did my school work. When I was too tired to do my homework or was having challenges at school, I opened my seminary manual, studied, and prayed. I found that when I did that, I could refresh my mind and focus better on my homework. I still apply this in my life. Today, whenever I have a hard time, I still read my scriptures or general conference talks to refresh my mind.

Many high school students in Korea spend most of their time going to school and studying late. We learned that when we took time out for seminary and Mutual activities, we felt refreshed and were blessed to do better with our schoolwork. The lessons I learned there also helped me in other situations while I was still in school.

One day at school, one of my teachers taught a lesson about Utah, USA, in our geography class and said some things about the Church that were wrong. I thought, “Should I correct him in front of everyone, or should I go up to him privately after class?” In that moment, the words of my seminary teacher came to my mind. She had said, “Do not argue with or offend anyone when someone says wrong things about the Church.”

I felt that I should remain quiet and respectful during class. When I visited with him afterward, I told him that I was a member of the Church, and I corrected him on the incorrect



things that he had taught in the class. He said, “I didn’t know you were a Mormon. Thank you for telling me.” Afterward he corrected his lecture to give accurate information, and he still treated me with respect. I was grateful for the counsel I’d been taught through my seminary teacher.

MILITARY OR MISSION?

When I was young, I wanted to be a general in the army. I planned to apply to the military academy in order to further my goal. That decision meant that I wasn’t expecting to serve a mission because I knew that the program in the academy for military officers would not excuse anyone for any religious activity.

Then I had the opportunity to go to a regional conference in Seoul, Korea—an experience that changed the direction of my life. During the conference, I heard President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) counsel youth to:

- a) attend seminary,
- b) serve an honorable mission,
- c) marry in the temple, and
- d) work toward exaltation.

I knew his counsel was right, and I remembered the verse that says, “My word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

When I heard the prophet speak about the importance of serving a

mission as a priority in life, I knew I should put my trust in the Lord, serve a mission, and forego my dream to become a general, remembering to “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

Even though I no longer planned to attend the military academy, serving three years as a soldier was still required for all young men. I had already served one year in the Korea Busan Mission when I received orders from the Korean government to report for military duty. I served three years in the army, and after I was discharged, I wanted to finish my mission. I was then called to the Korea Seoul Mission and served another year there.

“ARE YOU CRAZY?”

When I returned from my mission, I was again blessed by following the counsel from prophets. For example, when I finished my mission, I decided to marry, even though I hadn’t finished my schooling. In Korea, the tradition is to be financially stable and complete your schooling before marrying and starting a family. But I knew I needed to follow the counsel of the prophet and work toward marriage right away. My wife and I had met when we were in the youth program and were good friends before my mission, so we knew each other well. We were married shortly after I came

MY ADVICE TO YOU

As you follow the counsel of the prophets and apostles, you will be blessed.

1. Study the scriptures, go to seminary, participate in the *Come, Follow Me* lessons, and use *Preach My Gospel* to be a great missionary both now and, for those who serve, as a full-time missionary.
2. Listen to and follow the counsel of the prophet.
3. Do all things in wisdom and order.

home, even though her friends said, “Are you crazy? You don’t have any money.”

We went against the cultural tradition because we knew we needed to follow the Lord’s counsel. Our lives have been blessed by following the counsel of the prophet, and we have had experiences we might not otherwise have had.

The Lord’s counsel to do all things in wisdom and order (see Mosiah 4:27) is sometimes different from what society teaches, but when we are obedient to the Lord’s timetable, we will find our lives changed for the better. I am grateful for the living prophet, who leads us in the Lord’s way today. I know that “when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21). ■



**By Elder
Robert D. Hales**
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles



HOW TO SHOW GRATITUDE

My deepest gratitude is for the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Atonement is the foundation upon which all gospel truths reside. . . .

Gratitude is a state of appreciation, an act of thanksgiving, which causes us to be humble because we recognize an act of kindness, service, or caring from someone else which lifts us and strengthens us.

Ingratitude is the attitude of being unaware or not recognizing when someone has assisted us or helped us or, even worse, when we know we have been helped and have not given thanks privately or publicly.

In some quiet way, the expression and feelings of gratitude have a wonderful cleansing or healing nature. Gratitude brings warmth to the giver and the receiver alike.

Gratitude expressed to our Heavenly Father in prayer for what we have brings a calming peace—a peace which allows us to not canker our souls for what we don’t have. Gratitude brings a peace that helps

us overcome the pain of adversity and failure. Gratitude on a daily basis means we **express appreciation** for what we have now without qualification for what we had in the past or desire in the future. A recognition of and appreciation for our gifts and talents which have been given also allows us to **acknowledge the need for help and assistance** from the gifts and talents possessed by others.

Gratitude is a divine principle: “Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things” (D&C 59:7).

This scripture means that we **express thankfulness** for what happens, not only for the good things in life but also for the opposition and challenges of life that add to our experience and faith. We **put our lives in His hands**, realizing that all that transpires will be for our experience.

When in prayer we say, “Thy will be done,” we are really expressing faith and gratitude and acknowledging that we will **accept whatever happens in our lives**.

HOW HAVE YOU APPLIED THIS?

I know that whenever I am grateful to my Heavenly Father, I am much happier. I love to serve others and show my thankfulness toward my Heavenly Father. By doing this, I am able to gain a better understanding of why I was sent here and what my mission is here on earth. Having a grateful heart brings us peace.

Callie M., age 15

May we feel true gratitude for the goodness of God for all the blessings that have been given to us and express those feelings of thankfulness in prayer to our Heavenly Father. ■

From an April 1992 general conference address.

OUR SPACE



MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

By Kwamena Koomson, Ghana

Helaman 5:12

This scripture helps me understand that it is only by centering our lives on Jesus Christ that we can overcome the adversary. Even when trials come upon us, if we are built upon the rock of Jesus Christ, all things are possible.

This scripture has helped me remain strong during challenging times.

I know that God lives and that He sent His Only Begotten Son to earth to atone for the sins of mankind. ■

GOD SAW MY SADNESS

By Danelys W. Rodríguez,
Dominican Republic

One Sunday at church I realized that my time with the Young Women program was almost over and I would soon be with the young single adults. I was sad because I knew that things would never be the same. After Sunday School, I tried to cheer up, but I just couldn't do it. I tried to tell myself that Heavenly Father did

not want me to feel sadness but rather joy (see 2 Nephi 2:25).

I was just about to cry on my friend's shoulder in the hallway when the ward clerk came up to me and said, "Sister Danelys, here's the mail!" He handed me a white envelope with only my name on it. I was curious to know what it was, so I asked the clerk who had sent it. As he walked away, he told me it was from the patriarch and that it was a copy of my patriarchal blessing. I did cry, but my tears were tears of joy because I knew God had seen my sadness and had provided a way for me to find joy in my

sadness. My patriarchal blessing had finally arrived in writing, at the precise moment when I needed it most.

When I got home and read it, I cried again and prayed and thanked God for it and for helping me to remember how fortunate I am to be His daughter and to have the light of the everlasting gospel in my life.

When sad times come, even though I may not understand them at the time, I know that God can help me find happiness. I learned this through the love that God offers me in my life. He offers this love to each one of us, and it is within us to accept this marvelous feeling. We can overcome trials with God's guidance. We can smile and be happy. ■

Which Path to Choose?



By Abbey F., age 11, Virginia, USA

It was the first day at my new school. I loved making new friends and was pretty good at it. I got to my classroom and saw all of the people. I thought I was going to have a great year. During lunch with my new friends, we all sat down next to a

girl from another class. Her name was Hannah. When I sat down, Hannah said, “Wow, your shoes really stink. I wondered if it was the garbage can or your fashion sense.”

I was really surprised when she said that, and so were the others. So I got up and moved to another table by another new friend.

The next day at recess, Hannah had something else mean to say. This went on and on each day, but every time, I would not say something rude back because my Sunday School teacher, Brother Lawson, said that you should treat others the way you want to be treated. When

I thought of that, I asked Hannah politely to please stop or please tell me why she was acting like this to me.

Then I went home and told my mom about all of the things Hannah had said. I felt like exploding! My mom said, “Abbey, just try not to be rude back. Sometimes people act the way they do because something hard is going on at home.”

So I went to school thinking about what my mom and Brother Lawson said. That day at school, Hannah finally told me that hard things were going on at home and she said mean things because she was mad. I forgave her, and this year she is in my class and we are really good friends!

I learned that following Jesus is the best path. ■

Every day, Hannah had something mean to say.





Heavenly Father Hears YOUR PRAYERS

By Neill F. Marriott

Second Counselor
in the Young
Women General
Presidency

One time when I was young, I needed to know that Heavenly Father knew me and understood the troubles I faced. I asked Him to guide me to find a scripture that would help me feel better. I opened the scriptures and read, “We glory in tribulations . . . knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and



and decided to honor the Sabbath and not to play in games on Sundays. He worried that he wasn’t getting better because he was missing those games. Jack’s little brother Charles knew he was worried. One day Charles said the family prayer. He asked Heavenly Father to help Jack not be worried about soccer. Charles



patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts” (Romans 5:3–5). This scripture taught me that my hard experiences could help me gain patience, experience, and hope, and feel God’s love for me. I knew Heavenly Father heard my prayer and answered me through

the scriptures. I had faith that things would get better.

My grandson Stuart also learned that Heavenly Father hears our prayers. He needed a friend at school. He and his mom decided to pray to help him find a friend. Every day when the recess bell rang, Stuart knew that his mom was praying for him. Pretty soon he made a new friend! Stuart learned that Heavenly Father cares about his worries. He learned that Heavenly Father would answer his prayers.

When my grandson Jack was 10, he played on a competitive soccer team. Jack talked with his parents



knew that a great way to help his brother was to pray for him. He had faith that his prayer would help Jack.

We need help in this life, and Heavenly Father wants to give us that help. He loves us. He will listen when we pray! ■

BLESSINGS AND PRAYER

Heavenly Father has many blessings He wants to give us. Think of a huge treasure chest filled with blessings for you. Your faithful prayers unlock the "treasure chest" of blessings. We need to pray in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and ask our Heavenly Father to bless us.

faith

These treasures are some blessings you can pray for.
What other blessings do you want to pray for?

courage

knowledge

testimony

Answers to prayer might take a long time,
or they might not be what you expected.
But Heavenly Father is always listening. He
will answer your prayers. He loves you.

comfort



BEE-ing a Missionary

From an interview by Jenna Koford, Utah, USA

Every member can be a missionary. My stake president in California gave us a challenge to share the gospel. When I had to give a school report on a state in the United States, I knew this was my chance!



THE CHALLENGE

My teacher asked us to pick a U.S. state and build a diorama, or a miniature scene. I told my teacher I wanted Utah. I've been to Utah many times on family vacations. I wanted to learn more about the "Beehive State." And I thought it might help me with missionary work!



FUN FACTS

I learned that the golden spike that linked the First Transcontinental Railroad was placed in Utah. I put a picture of the Salt Lake Temple in my project. I also wrote facts about President David O. McKay (1873–1970) because he is my grandpa's favorite prophet.



Showing my box to some friends and the missionaries.

THE BEEHIVE

I wanted to show my class our Savior's beautiful creations in my diorama. I covered a box in bees and designed it like a beehive. Beehives remind us to work as hard as bees to spread the gospel.

**JESSE'S TIPS FOR STANDING TALL**

- Listen to the Spirit's promptings.
- Don't use bad language or the Lord's name in vain.
- If something bad is going on, walk away or find other activities to do that make you feel better.
- Look for opportunities to help others.

STANDING TALL

How do you follow Jesus by standing tall? Trace your footprint, and send us your story and photo, along with your parent's permission. Submit it through liahona.lds.org (click "Submit an Article") or email liahona@ldschurch.org.

THE BUZZ ABOUT BEE-ING A MISSIONARY

I took my school project to the open house. Everyone loved my bee box! My teacher gave me an A+! I hope people will see what a great place Utah is. Maybe they will ask questions about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I can't wait until I'm old enough to go on a mission and share the gospel even more!



Looking Out for Elise



By Merillee Booren

Based on a true story

"I'll walk with you. I'll talk with you. That's how I'll show my love for you"
(Children's Songbook, 140).

Daniel stared out the window. He saw his friends heading to the park with their basketballs. He wanted to go too.

"I can't take you today, Daniel," Mom said. "Your sister has a bad cold. And you're not quite old enough to go alone. I'm sorry."

Daniel frowned at his sister, Elise. She was sitting in her wheelchair with her toys on her lap. She was five, but she couldn't walk or talk yet. Elise coughed hard. She got sick a lot, and she couldn't go outside if it was too hot or too cold. And she had to eat through a tube in her stomach.

Daniel loved his sister, but sometimes he felt angry too. It was hard to always do what was best for Elise. He just wanted to play with the other kids. His stomach knotted in frustration.

"It's not fair!" he said to Mom. "Everything is always about Elise!" He ran down the hall to his room.

Two days later Elise's cough got much worse, and she had to go to the hospital. Daniel's grandparents came to stay with him. Mom and Dad spent most of their time at the hospital with Elise for the rest of the week.

Daniel's grandparents could take him to play with the other kids. But now Daniel was worried about Elise. He was sorry for what he had said to his mom that day. He didn't like how sometimes he couldn't go play because of Elise. But Daniel loved how she smiled when he talked to her, and being with her made him feel happy.

Daniel looked out the window, hoping to see Mom and Dad bringing Elise home.

Suddenly Daniel saw Mom's car turn into the driveway. He ran to meet her.

"Mom, I'm sorry for what I said about Elise that day I got mad," he said, hugging her tight.

"It's OK," Mom said as she hugged him back. "I know you love her. It doesn't seem fair that we can't always do the things you want to do. It's hard sometimes for everybody. But I know we are blessed to have Elise in our family."

Daniel said, "I miss her."

"Me too," said Mom. "The doctor said she can probably come home tomorrow."

Two weeks later Daniel and Elise were both in Primary.

WHEN LIFE'S NOT FAIR

You might feel frustrated or worried when life doesn't seem fair. Here are some good ways to handle those feelings.

- Write or draw what you're feeling.
- Do something you love, like play outside or listen to music.
- Make a list of things that are going right.
- Pray and tell Heavenly Father how you feel. Ask for His help to feel better.
- Share your feelings with someone.

"Everyone find a partner and form a circle!" the Primary president said.

Daniel hurried forward and grabbed his sister's wheelchair.

"Elise is my partner," he told her teacher. He wheeled her up front to join the circle of children.

He looked over at Elise. She smiled at him, and he smiled back.

Daniel was glad Elise could be home again. He wanted to be a special brother to her. ■

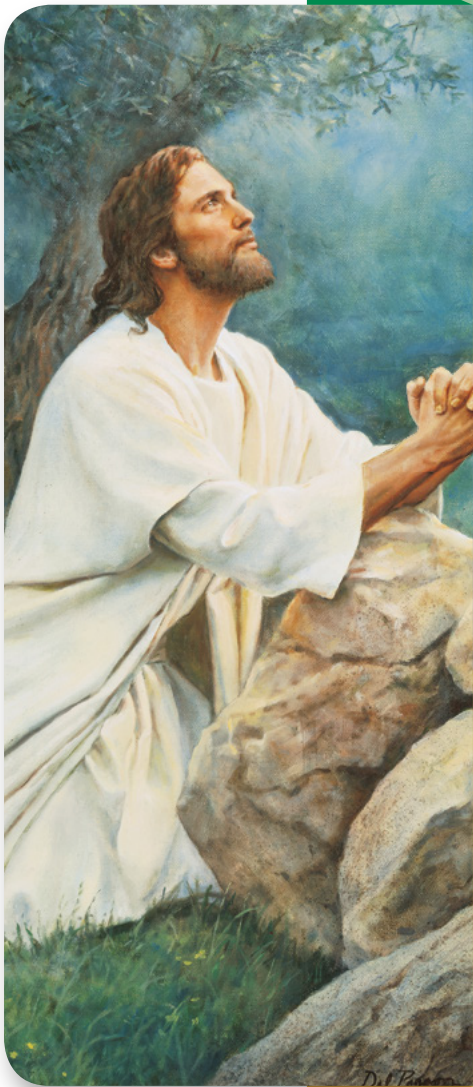
The author lives in Oregon, USA.





By Elder
Dallin H. Oaks
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

Why is the Savior's Atonement important?



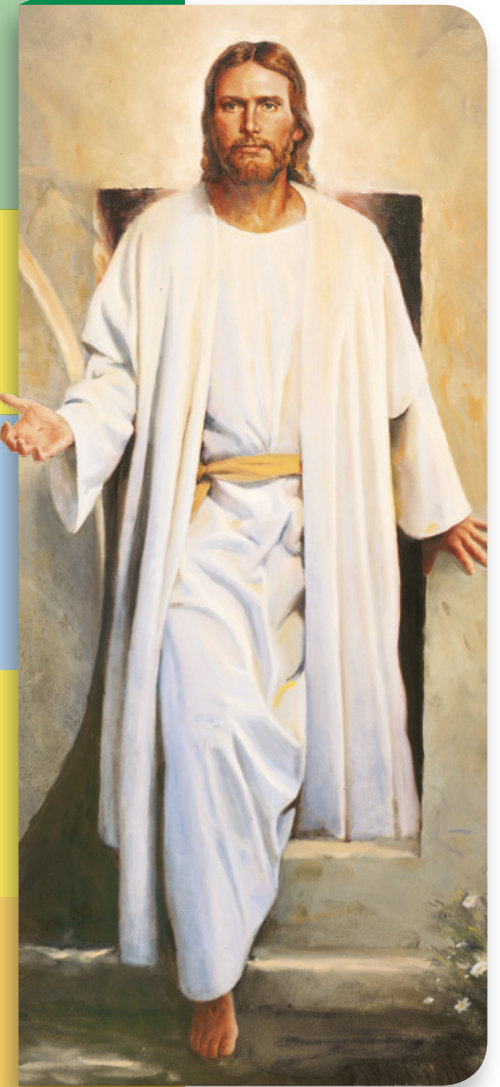
Our Savior's Atonement made resurrection possible so all of us will live again after we die.

It also made it possible for us to be clean from our sins if we repent.

As part of His Atonement, Jesus suffered challenges of every kind so He could know how to help us feel better when we are sad or struggling.

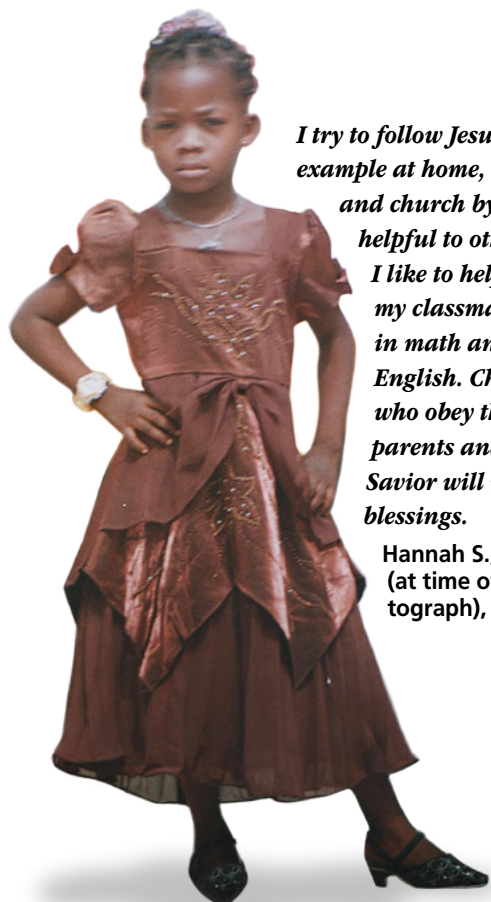
Jesus Christ can help and strengthen anyone who asks.

He understands our pain and suffering, and He is there for us.



From "Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ," Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2015, 61–64.

OUR PAGE



I try to follow Jesus's example at home, school, and church by being helpful to others. I like to help my classmates in math and English. Children who obey their parents and the Savior will receive blessings.

Hannah S., age 6
(at time of photograph), Nigeria

I like to pray because I feel that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ bless us. I believe They live and love us.

I like family home evening and going to church with my parents because I learn about God and His Son.



Soon I will turn 12 and receive the Aaronic Priesthood, which will allow me to enter the temple and perform baptisms for my ancestors. I'm very happy!

Abel S., age 11 (at time of drawing), Peru



By Ananda A., age 9 (at time of drawing), Brazil



QUESTION FOR YOU

"My older brother is serving in the military, and I miss him a lot. How can I feel closer to him?"

Submit your response online at liahona.lds.org (click "Submit an Article") or email your response to liahona@ldschurch.org. Please include your full name, age, stake or district name, and parent's permission.

Jesus Loves Everyone

After Jesus Christ was resurrected, He visited the Nephites. He taught them about the sacrament, and He showed them how to pray. He taught them to be kind and to be peacemakers. Even though there were a lot of people, He blessed every child and healed everyone who was sick. He prayed to Heavenly Father for the Nephites because He loved them.



My family and I visited some poor children and gave them toys and food. I feel very happy because I know I helped someone.
Lía C., age 7, Chihuahua, Mexico



"Be My Hands," by Kate P., age 11, Utah, USA

BELOW: ILLUSTRATION BY JARED BECKSTRAND



Cut, fold, and keep this challenge card!



JESUS

I Can Be Loving!

- Memorize 3 Nephi 12:16.
- Give a smile, hug, or nice note to show someone that you love them!
- Read 3 Nephi 12:1–9 and pick a quality you can work on this month.
- I challenge myself to . . .

This Month's Scriptures

After you read a scripture passage, color the matching numbered areas on the picture!

1 3 Nephi 12:1–9, 16

3 3 Nephi 13:6–8, 19–21

5 3 Nephi 18:19–21, 24

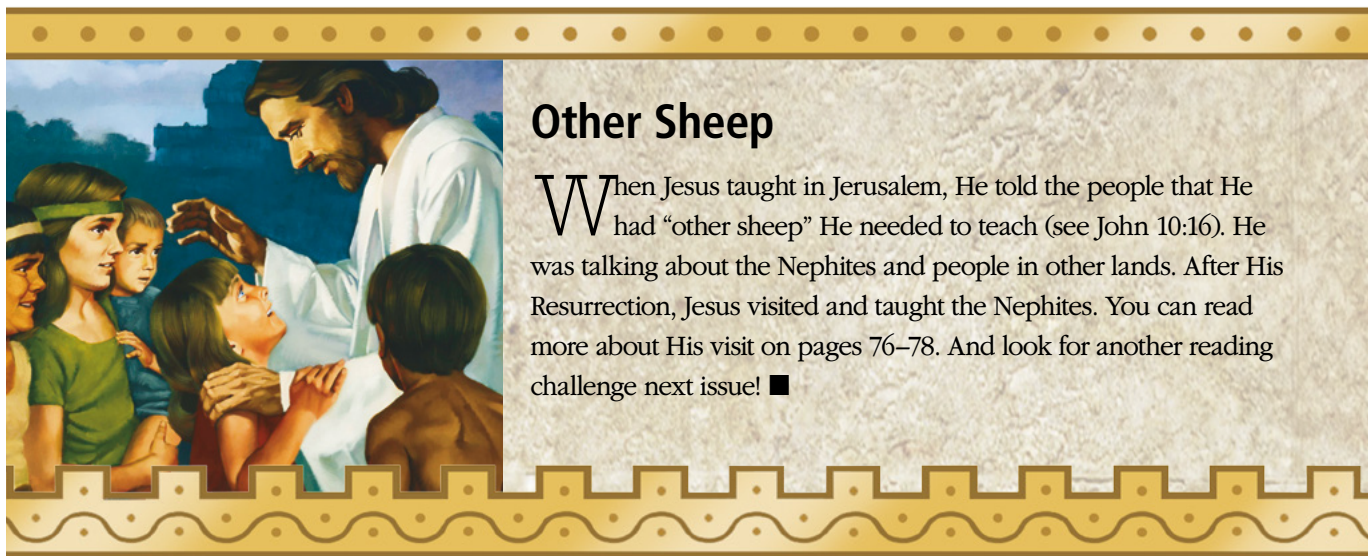
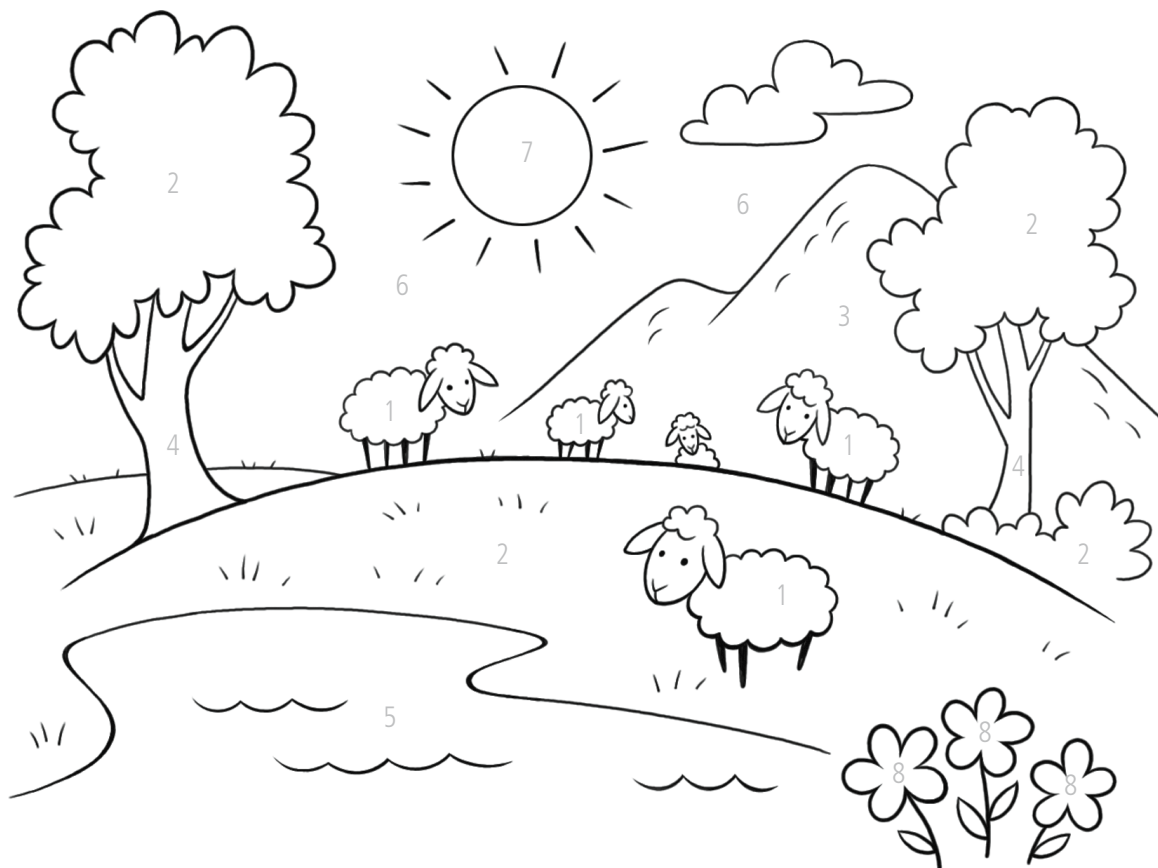
7 3 Nephi 19:11–26

2 3 Nephi 12:19–20, 44, 48

4 3 Nephi 18:1–12

6 3 Nephi 18:35–39

8 3 Nephi 20:1, 29–31



Other Sheep

When Jesus taught in Jerusalem, He told the people that He had “other sheep” He needed to teach (see John 10:16). He was talking about the Nephites and people in other lands. After His Resurrection, Jesus visited and taught the Nephites. You can read more about His visit on pages 76–78. And look for another reading challenge next issue! ■

Jesus Visits the Nephites

When Jesus lived on the earth, He healed people who were sick or hurt. He taught people how to pray. He blessed the children.



He called 12 Apostles and gave them the sacrament to help them remember Him. Then Jesus died and was resurrected.



After He was resurrected, Jesus went to visit the Nephites, who lived across the ocean.

He called 12 disciples and gave them the priesthood. He healed people who were sick or hurt. He taught people how to pray. Everyone bowed down and worshipped Him.





Jesus told the Nephites to bring their children to Him. He prayed, and then He blessed each child. Angels came to visit them.

Jesus gave the Nephites the sacrament so they would always remember Him. ■



I Can Help My Family



ILLUSTRATION BY APRYL STOTT



By President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994)

Thirteenth President of the Church

THE GREAT STUMBLING BLOCK TO ZION

Pride is essentially competitive in nature.

Pride is a very misunderstood sin, and many are sinning in ignorance (see Mosiah 3:11; 3 Nephi 6:18). In the scriptures there is no such thing as righteous pride—it is always considered a sin. . . .

The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. *Enmity* means “hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.” It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us.

Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God’s. When we direct our pride toward God, it is in the spirit of “my will and not thine be done.” . . .

Our will in competition to God’s will allows desires, appetites, and passions to go unbridled (see Alma 38:12; 3 Nephi 12:30).

The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives (see Helaman 12:6). They pit their perceptions of truth against God’s great knowledge, their abilities versus God’s priesthood power, their



accomplishments against His mighty works.

. . . The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren’t interested in changing their opinions to agree with God’s.

Another major portion of this very prevalent sin of pride is enmity toward our fellowmen. We are tempted daily to elevate ourselves above others and diminish them (see Helaman 6:17; D&C 58:41).

The proud make every man their adversary by pitting their intellects, opinions, works, wealth, talents, or any other worldly measuring device against others. In the words of C. S. Lewis: “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man.

. . . It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone” (*Mere Christianity* [1952], 109–10). . . .

The proud stand more in fear of men’s judgment than of God’s judgment (see D&C 3:6–7; 30:1–2; 60:2). “What will men think of me?” weighs heavier than “What will God think of me?” . . .

When pride has a hold on our hearts, we lose our independence of the world and deliver our freedoms to the bondage of men’s judgment. The world shouts louder than the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. The reasoning of men overrides the revelations of God, and the proud let go of the iron rod (see 1 Nephi 8:19–28; 11:25; 15:23–24). . . .

Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion. I repeat: *Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion. . . .*

We must yield “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,” put off the prideful “natural man,” become “a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord,” and become “as a child, submissive, meek, humble” (Mosiah 3:19; see also Alma 13:28). ■

From “Beware of Pride,” Ensign, May 1989, 4–7; punctuation standardized.

INSIGHTS



What is a father's most important work?

“Perhaps the most essential of a father’s work is to turn the hearts of his children to their Heavenly Father. If by his example as well as his words a father can demonstrate what fidelity to God looks like in day-to-day living, that father will have given his children the key to peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Fathers” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 94.

Also in This Issue

FOR YOUNG ADULTS



No Neutral Ground

HOW MEDIA INFLUENCES US

Whether we like it or not, media affects us one way or the other. It's up to us to choose wisely.

p. 44

FOR YOUTH

p. 58

Why the Book of Mormon?

I had already judged the Book of Mormon before I'd read it. But then I decided to give it a fair trial.



FOR CHILDREN



Jesus Visits the Nephites

p. 76

Teach your children about why the Savior's visit to the Nephites was important.