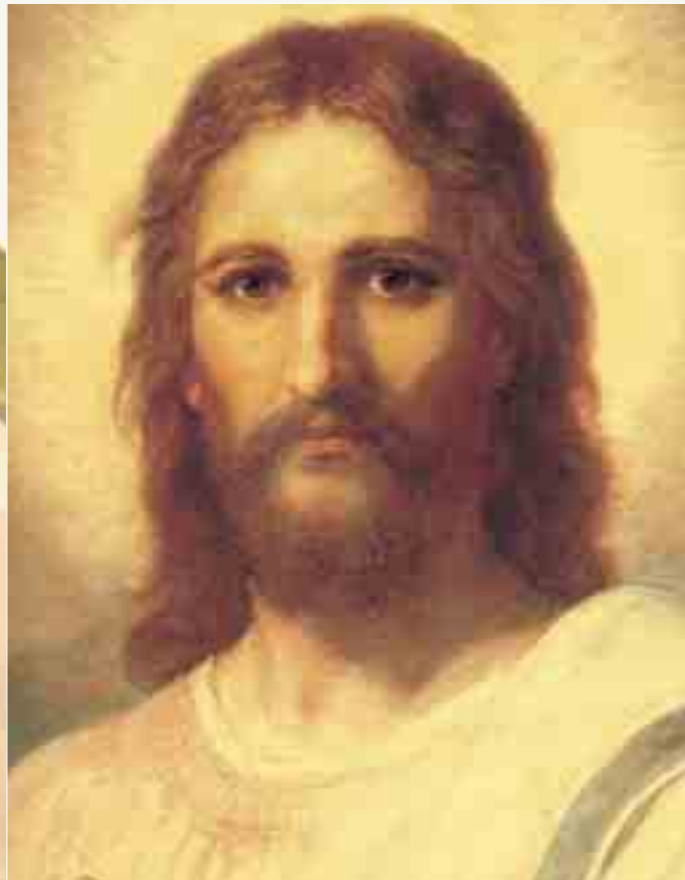


THE
NewEra

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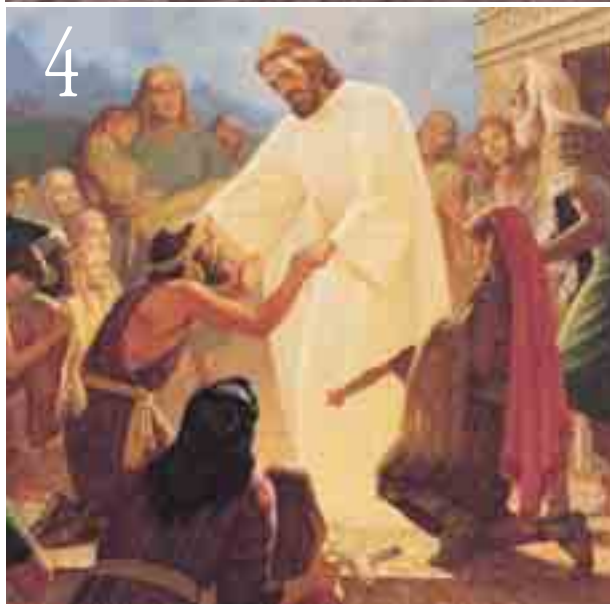
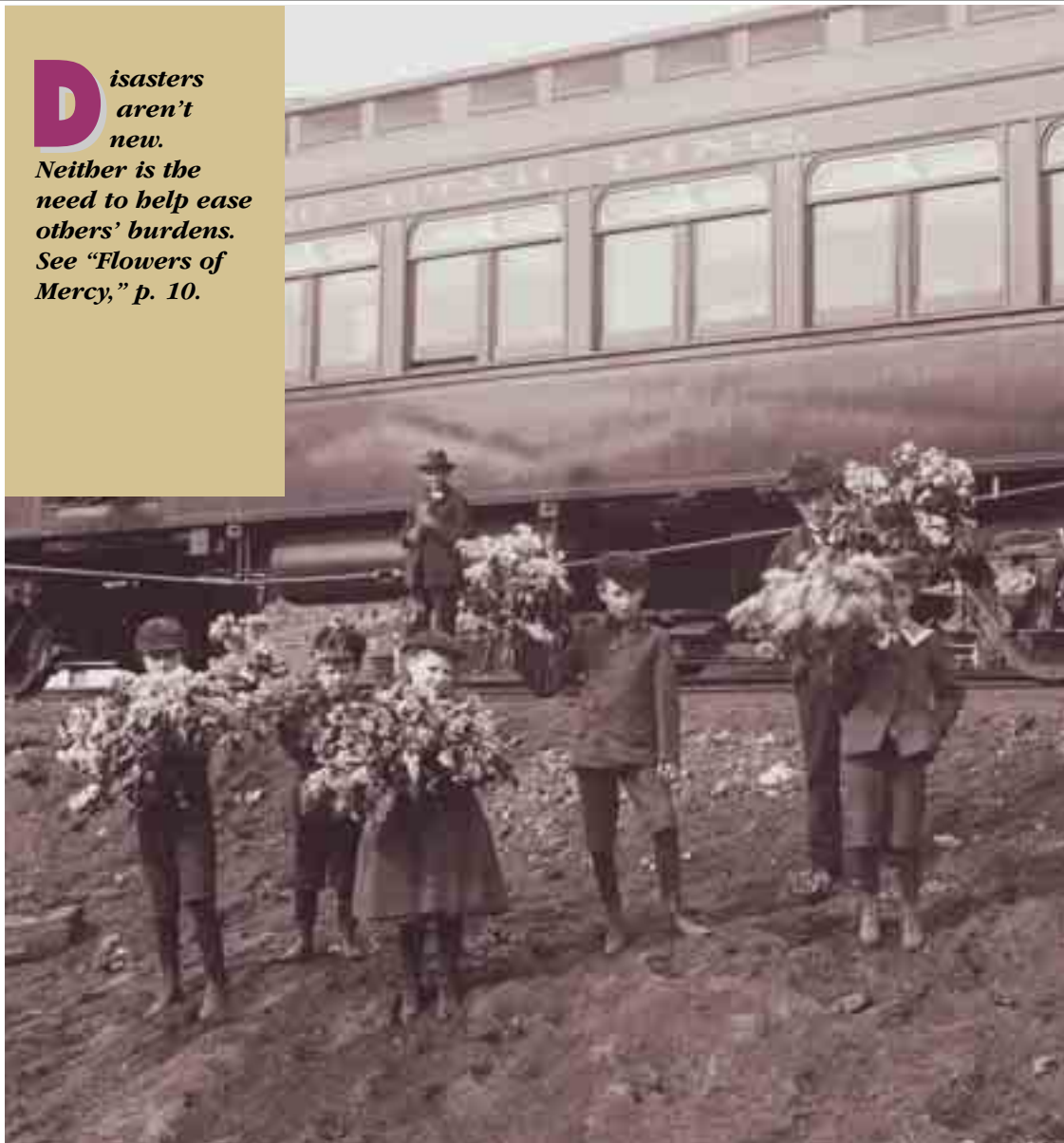
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Cover: *The Savior's life*
is an example to us of
how we should show
sympathy to those who
suffer. See "Flowers of
Mercy," on p. 10.

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Disasters
aren't
new.

Neither is the
need to help ease
others' burdens.
See "Flowers of
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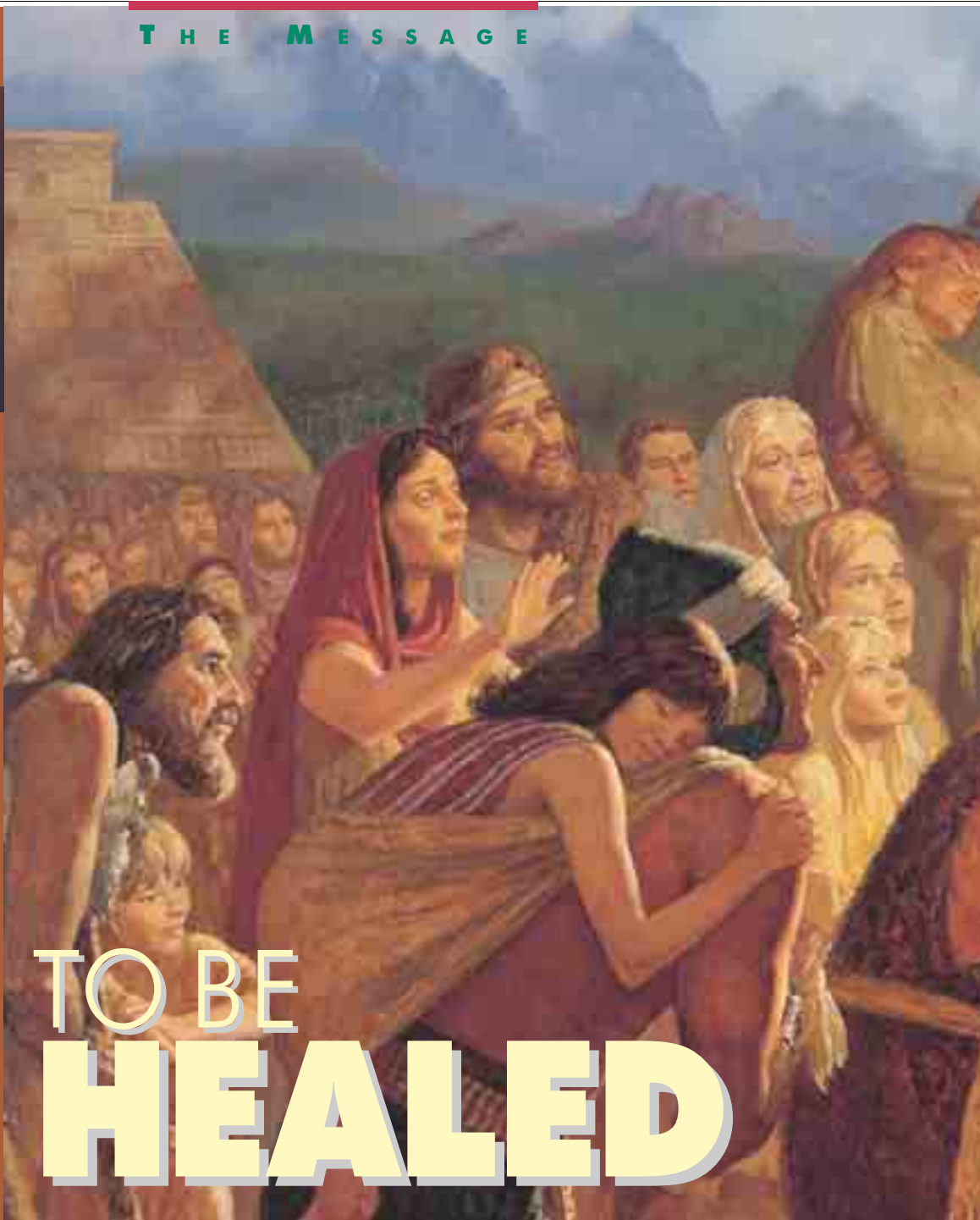
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by Elder
Richard G. Scott
of the Quorum of the
Twelve



TO BE HEALED

“Have ye any that . . . are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you” (3 Ne. 17:7).

The surest, most effective, and shortest path to healing comes through application of the teachings of Jesus Christ in your life.

Oh, how we all need the healing the Redeemer can provide. Mine is a message of hope for you who yearn for relief from heavy burdens that have come through no conscious act of your own while you have lived a worthy life. It is based on principles embodied in the teachings of the Savior. Your challenge may be a serious physical disability, a struggle with lingering illness, or a daily wrestle with a

life-threatening disease. It may have roots in the death of a loved one, the anguish caused by another bound by sin, or come from abuse in any of its evil forms. Whatever the cause, I testify that lasting relief is available on conditions established by the Lord.

The key to healing

Help from the Lord always follows eternal law. The better you understand



that law, the easier it is to receive His help. Some of the principles upon which His healing is predicated follow.

It is important to understand that His healing can mean being cured, or having your burdens eased, or even coming to realize that it is worth it to endure to the end patiently, for God needs brave sons and daughters who are willing to be polished when in His wisdom that is His will.

Recognize that some challenges in life will not be resolved here on earth. Paul pled thrice that “a thorn in the flesh” be removed. The Lord simply answered, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:7, 9). He gave Paul strength to compensate so he could live a most meaningful life. He wants you to learn how to be cured when that is His will and how to obtain strength to live with your

challenge when He intends it to be an instrument for growth. In either case the Redeemer will support you. That is why He said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:29–30).

When you feel you can do no more, temporarily lay your challenges at His feet. The scriptures tell you how. For example, when the oppressed people of Alma “did pour out their hearts to him; and he did know the thoughts of their hearts,” the Lord blessed them, saying:

“I will . . . ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that . . . you cannot feel them, . . . that ye may know . . . that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

“And . . . the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:12, 14–15).

Submitting “cheerfully and with patience” to all His will lets you learn precious if difficult lessons and eternal truths that will yield blessings (see Jacob 4:10).

The example of Alma and Amulek is enlightening. While striving to do good among the people of Ammonihah, they were taken captive. Amulek trusted his more seasoned companion, Alma, who led him to greater confidence in the Lord. Forced to observe women and children consumed by fire, Amulek said, “Perhaps they will burn us also.” Alma answered, “Be it according to the will of the Lord”—a vital principle. “But . . . our work is not finished; therefore they burn us not” (Alma 14:12–13).

The chief judge and others over many days smote, spit upon, starved, questioned, and harassed them with mocking words and threats. Though commanded to speak, they withstood, bound and naked, in silence waiting patiently for the Lord to inspire them to act. Then “the power of God was upon Alma and Amulek, and they rose.” Alma cried, “Give us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance. And they broke the cords with which they were bound” (Alma 14:15, 19, 24–26). The earth shook; the prison walls were rent. All who smote Alma and Amulek were slain, and they were freed. On another occasion Alma



prayed, “O Lord . . . have mercy on this man, and heal him according to his faith which is in Christ” (Alma 15:10).

These two examples give the essential key to healing. The Lord will give relief with divine power when you seek deliverance in humility and faith in Jesus Christ.

Trust the Lord

Don't say, “No one understands me; I can't sort it out, or get the help I need.” Those comments are self-defeating. No one can help you without faith and effort on your part. Your personal growth requires that. Don't look for a life virtually free from discomfort, pain, pressure, challenge, or grief, for those are the tools a loving Father uses to stimulate our personal growth and understanding. As the scriptures repeatedly affirm, you will be helped as you exercise faith in Jesus Christ (see Enos 1:15–18). That faith is demonstrated by a willingness to trust His promises given through His prophets and in His scriptures, which contain His own words. You may not fully understand how to do this yet, but trust that He will help you use your agency to open the doors for His healing to occur. Faith in Christ means we trust Him; we trust His teachings. That leads to hope, and hope brings charity, the pure love of Christ—that peaceful feeling that comes when we sense His concern, His love, and His capacity to cure us or to ease our burdens with His healing power.

Is there a potentially destructive pattern in your life? When discouraged do you feel overwhelmed and in desperation seek for others to solve your problems, overlooking your own capacity to make much improvement? Do you understand the necessity to do what you can so that the Lord can do what He will to help you?

What you can do

Your access to the Savior's help comes in different ways. The most direct and often the most powerful way is through humble, trusting prayers to your Father in Heaven, which are answered through the Holy Ghost to your spirit (see Hel. 3:35). Yet this help is sometimes difficult to initiate and hard to recognize when you are learning how to pray with faith. If

so, begin elsewhere. Trust someone near to you; then as you learn, that trust will extend to God and His healing. Begin with a friend or bishop who understands the teachings of the Savior. Often they have personally obtained healing through application of truth with faith in the Redeemer. They can show you how. Or start by reading, pondering, and applying the teachings of the scriptures. They are a very powerful source of assistance. While examples and anecdotes will help to understand principle, you will find that power comes from scriptural doctrine, as these quotes illustrate:

- “I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you” (3 Ne. 17:8).
- “Come unto me with full purpose of heart” (3 Ne. 18:32).
- “Return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you” (3 Ne. 9:13).
- “Turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, [and] if ye do this, he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage” (Mosiah 7:33).

Priesthood blessings

Even if they had unlimited time and resources, which they don't, priesthood leaders could not provide all of the help. They are agents of the Lord, and His law requires that you do your part. They will show you the way. They can provide priesthood blessings. Your faith, purity, and obedience and that of the priesthood holder have great effect on the pronouncement and realization of the blessing. Healing can occur in the act, yet more often it occurs over a period of time determined by the faith and obedience of the individual and the will of the Lord. I feel that the pace is generally set by the individual, not by the Lord. He expects you to use other resources available, including competent professional help when indicated; then He provides the balance needed according to His will.

God's love heals

Love is a potent healer. Realizing that, Satan would separate you from the power of the love of God, kindred, and friends who want to help. He would lead you to feel that the walls are pressing in

Priesthood leaders are agents of the Lord. They will show you the way. They can provide priesthood blessings. Your faith, purity, and obedience, and that of the priesthood holder, have great effect on the pronouncement and realization of the blessing.



“**G**od does notice us, and He watches over us. But it is usually through another mortal that He meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other” (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, 252).

around you and there is no escape or relief. He wants you to believe you lack the capacity to help yourself and that no one else is really interested. If he succeeds, you will be driven to further despair and heartache. His strategy is to have you think you are not appreciated, loved, or wanted so that you, in despair, will turn to self-criticism, and in the extreme even to despising yourself and feeling evil when you are not. Remember the wisdom of the Lord “is greater than the cunning of the devil” (D&C 10:43). If you have such thoughts, break through those helpless feelings by reaching out in love to another in need. That may sound cruel and unfeeling when you long so much for healing, but it is based upon truth. Paul taught, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2).

Love comes by learning how to give it to another in a spirit of trust. If you feel deprived of love, that is difficult. Yet sustained concern and support of others will engender their interest and love. You will feel needed. You become an instrument through which the Lord can bless another. The Spirit will let you feel the Savior’s concern and interest, then the warmth and strength of His love. President Spencer W. Kimball said: “God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another mortal that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 252).

Faith in Jesus Christ

Challenge comes as testing from a wise, knowing Father to give experience, that we may be seasoned, mature, and grow in understanding and application of

His truths. When you are worthy, a challenge becomes a contribution to growth, not a barrier to it. Yet no matter what the source of difficulty and no matter how you begin to obtain relief—through a qualified professional therapist, doctor, priesthood leader, friend, concerned parent, or loved one—no matter how you begin, those solutions will never provide a complete answer. The final healing comes through faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and obedience to His commandments. That is why human reaction to challenge in life that engenders hatred, despondency, distrust, anger, or revenge must be supplanted by the tender mercies of a loving Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son.

When anguish comes from evil acts of others, there should be punishment and corrective action taken, but the offended is not the one to initiate that action. Leave it to others who have that responsibility. Learn to forgive; though terribly hard, it will release you and open the way to a newness of life. Time devoted by one injured to ensure the offender is punished is time wasted in the healing process.

In summary, do what you can do a step at a time. Seek to understand the principles of healing from the scriptures and through prayer. Help others. Forgive. “Submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:15). Above all, exercise faith in Jesus Christ.

I testify that the surest, most effective, and shortest path to healing comes through application of the teachings of Jesus Christ in your life. It begins with an understanding of and appreciation for the principles of moral agency and the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It leads to faith in Him and obedience to His commandments, and that brings healing.

If you are caught on a plateau of spiritual healing and don’t seem to be making progress, if you seem to be constantly dependent on another mortal for support, look up in faith to Jesus Christ. I know that the Master loves you and will heal you according to your faith in Him. **NE**

Adapted from an April 1994 general conference address.

NOTICING Sarah

Angie was fun, outgoing, beautiful, and the center of our attention. As we crowded around her we didn't even notice Sarah sitting alone.

by Alison Tanner

Angie was one of my dearest high school friends. There wasn't a person I could think of who didn't like her. She was not only fun, outgoing, and beautiful; she was also kind and compassionate.

One afternoon on our way home from a youth ski trip in Colorado, we stopped for dinner. After ordering our burgers and fries, several of us followed Angie. We all crowded around her table, caught up in discussions about skiing, friends, and boys.

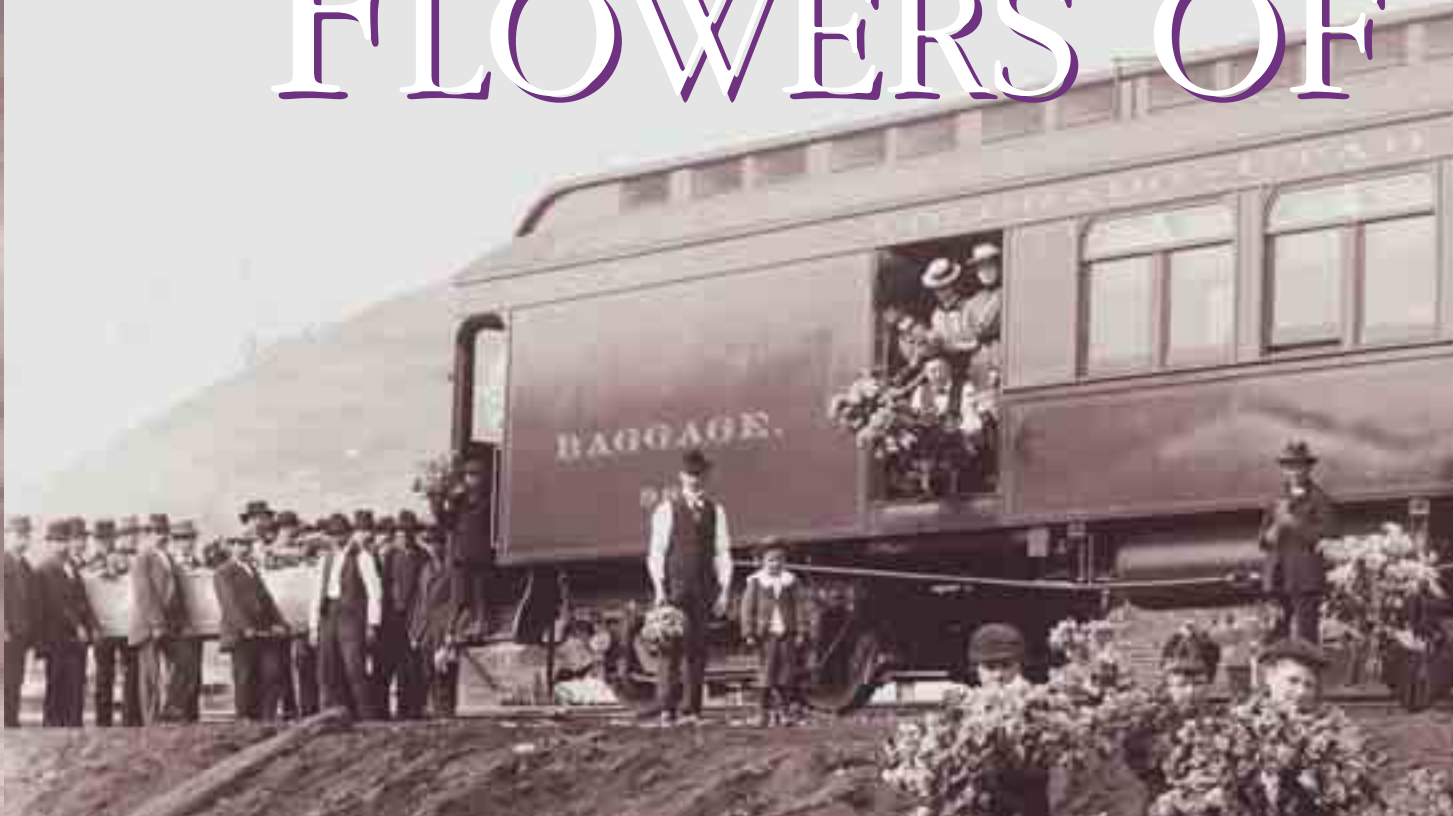
I didn't even notice Sarah sitting alone, quietly eating her dinner. Without saying a word, Angie carefully slid out of her chair, picked up her tray, and walked over

to her. The rest of us continued our conversations, but eventually, one by one, we all noticed what Angie had done. Sarah had always seemed a little odd and unapproachable, but her eyes seemed to light up as the two girls sat together eating dinner. It didn't take long before the rest of us followed. For one short dinner, Sarah became the center of attention.

Twelve years later, I remember very little about that ski trip. However, Angie's example of kindness and friendship to that awkward teenage girl has made a permanent impression in my heart and mind. I am grateful to a friend who taught me to be a better person by her quiet example. **NE**



FLOWERS OF



by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander
of the Presidency
of the Seventy

On May 1, 1900, a coal mine in the central Utah mining town of Scofield exploded, killing 200 men. This tragedy remains one of the worst mining disasters in U.S. history. The following remarks were given at the 100-year commemoration of this incident, to which a postscript was added after the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks on September 11, 2001.

I have read some of the histories of the disaster which we commemorate this day. Of particular note is the account of the near spontaneous collection of flowers throughout Salt Lake City by young and old to be sent to Scofield to somehow alleviate the terrible suffering and grief. I was moved to tears as I read from the account.

“In Salt Lake words cannot describe the scenes that took place. Every one was anxious to do their part, and the school children, . . . hastened from house to house gathering flowers from all the gardens in the city until almost three carloads were furnished” (*History of the Scofield Mine Disaster*, 57).

The flowers were placed in the baggage compartment of a special train bound for Scofield. I quote now from the account.



Mercy

The flowers “were spread out on the seats two and three feet high throughout the rest of the car. . . .

“Everything seemed to be there that might help to cheer those who have lived out in the hills, far away from the flowers and who are now experiencing the most dreadful calamity that has ever occurred in the western country. . . .

“The . . . car, with the lilacs and cut flowers, was switched into a sidetrack near the cemetery early in the morning.

The car was next to the roadway over which the long train of wagons passed as they bore the bodies to their last resting place. The doors of the car were thrown open, and as each wagon came by, it halted while Captain Barrett and his aids, . . . buried the coffins under lilacs and handed each driver a bunch of cut flowers for the widows and children who accompanied the coffins. At the forward end of the car, the boys in charge were almost overwhelmed by requests for flowers. Work as fast as they could, the mournful little groups of women and children, in significant black, were still there awaiting their turn for the blossoms. If the donors of the flowers and the people who helped collect them could have seen the gratitude and appreciation of Scofield they would have been repaid an hundred fold for their work. . . .

Devastated by the news of the mine disaster, people in Salt Lake City had their children cut nearly every flower growing in their gardens and load them on train cars to be sent to the site of the tragedy. Coffins were piled high with flowers before the drive to the cemetery.



The Levi Jones family (above) gather around the coffin of their lost loved one. Other families were harder hit, with one family losing nine family members. The cemetery in Scofield was the scene of multiple funerals and the gathering place for sorrowing families.

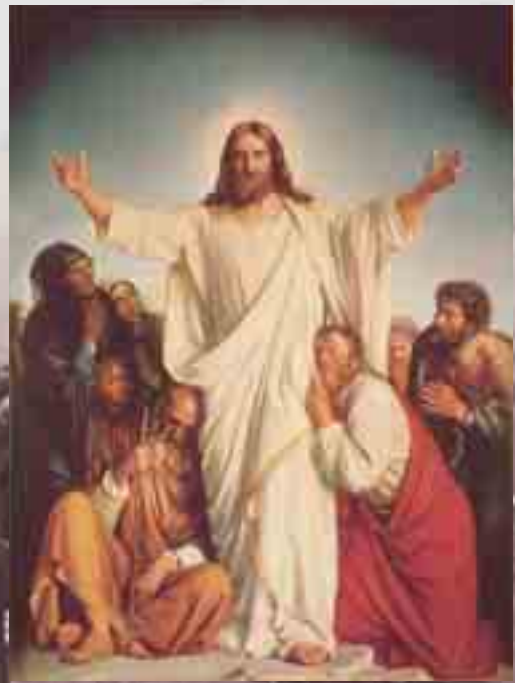
“Just before noon came a plea from the Finns. Their spokesman came aboard the car and said they had sixty-one dead, none of whom had a friend in the country, aside from the people of their nationality. He asked as a favor that flowers be reserved for them until their train came down the canyon. There was an abundance for all, and the man’s face lighted with evident pleasure when he was assured that all the coffins would be decorated and the graves covered with flowers. The distribution alone took nearly all the time from nine o’clock in the morning until the heavy rain late in the afternoon stopped the melancholy procession” (57–61). To these flowers were added additional bouquets from towns along the route of the train.

There is something of great value to learn from this beautiful account of the flowers. It is tragedy, grief, trials, and tribulation that come of this mortal life that draw us together. But it is the flowers we offer each other that place us on the healing road. For me the flowers represent more than words could ever convey. Truly, the flowers were the very

essence of the divine. They were love, compassion, and sympathy. As such they were given and as such they were received. In my mind’s eye, I see these flowers of mercy, after a long train trip, as fresh as the moment they were picked. I believe that they must have been refreshed during their journey by the fountain of living water. The flowers let the grieving families of Scofield know that they were not alone. They required no words of explanation.

The day of tragedy has not passed. Among us still are those who suffer: the widowed, the orphaned, the bereaved, the lonely, and the victims of senseless violence, to name only a few. It is a rare person indeed who in the course of life does not taste of these. When we do, it is the flowers of compassion, sympathy, love, and mercy—sent by others who know somewhat of our feelings—that pull us through and put us on the road to healing.

John Nicholson, a speaker at one of the funeral services, said, “Sympathy is the grandest of qualities. Without it there is no power, for an unsympathetic man is



wrapped up in himself and is a center without a circumference” (*Utah Historical Quarterly*, Spring 1973, 188).

How beautiful are the words of Christ and His Atonement that teach us of the universal need of compassion and mercy toward one another. The beautiful words of King Benjamin include these:

“And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish” (Mosiah 4:16).

This same admonition is given by Alma at the waters of Mormon. He identifies compassion and mercy as characteristics of the people of God. Such people, Alma teaches, are “willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light;

“Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

As we consider the tragedy that occurred 100 years ago, let us also con-

sider the beauty of the flowers and everything that those flowers represented. Let us decide today that we will be more like the school children and others a century ago who were willing to provide the flowers that brought healing to those who found themselves in the midst of great tragedy and loss.

Tragedy is still with us in this world. In past months, we have faced an enormous tragedy in the terrorist destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City and the damaging of the Pentagon in Washington D.C. For those of us who can feel the pain of the victims and their families only from a distance, we can still develop sympathy to help remove our feelings of hopelessness or inappropriate anger and, as we search for ways to serve, allow the healing that our Savior promises to enter our lives. Even if we cannot pick the flowers from our gardens to send to those who suffer, we can learn to let feelings of love and support for our fellow beings dominate our lives as Jesus Christ taught when He said, “Love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34). **NE**

The day of tragedy has not passed. Among us still are those who suffer: the widowed, the orphaned, the bereaved, the lonely, and the victims of senseless violence, to name only a few. How beautiful are the words of Christ and His Atonement that teach us of the universal need of compassion and mercy toward one another.

EVERYONE



There I was, all set to wallow in self-pity and peanut butter cups when suddenly I discovered that I was not alone after all. And I certainly wasn't rejected.

Everyone was going to the prom except me. It just wasn't fair.

It was only two days before the junior prom, and all the junior class was looking forward to one of the great events in the life of a high school girl.

To make it an even more memorable experience, the senior boys had drawn up a list of all the girls in the junior class. They made it their duty to be sure that each girl had a date. It was a wonderful gesture, and because of them, every girl in the junior class had a date. Everyone but me, that is.

Somehow I had been overlooked. The knowledge of that only added to my embarrassment, and I couldn't bring myself to tell anyone, not even my closest friends. I felt sure I would be able to live through this and simply hide away in my room for the night eating peanut butter cups. Everyone would be too caught up in the spectacular evening to realize I wasn't there.

But that plan was also not to be my fate. I was reminded that the junior girls on the drill team were required to perform the "Couples Dance" after the introduction of class members. I would have to go to the prom without an

escort, perform the dance, and leave by myself. Everyone in the world would know that I didn't have a date to that all-important dance.

Two nights before the prom I locked myself in my room to perform the peanut butter cup ritual that I had earlier envisioned would take place on the night of the prom. I lit a solemn candle as a reminder that I alone carried this humiliating burden. Before I could take the first pitiful bite of candy, the tears were already racing down my face. What a lonely, sad creature I was. What a terrible day to remember and someday explain to my grandchildren, "Oh yes, the junior prom is a night I will never forget." I pictured myself quickly changing the subject with them so they wouldn't know what a reject their old granny had been.

But as I sobbed in the middle of the greatest agony I had experienced in my young life, a wonderful, warm feeling of peace and love engulfed me. There were no words spoken to my mind, but suddenly I had full knowledge that I was not alone. My Savior was aware of my sorrow, very much aware. He had not forsaken me even when the outcome was not essential to my salvation. He cared enough for me to let me know He shared in my pain.

What a spectacular knowledge this was. Suddenly, my memories of the

by Patricia Reece Roper

BUT ME



prom would not be as tarnished as I had imagined. One of the greatest truths of my life had been taught to me in a very special, loving way.

After that moment of sadness, everything changed. The next day the error was discovered and quickly rectified. Several boys apologized and insisted that they thought I already had a date. They were very thoughtful and concerned, and soon I had an escort.

The night of the prom was great, but it was nothing compared to what I had just experienced. Even though the

decorations were beautiful, my dress was perfect, and I had that all-important date,

that night could never compare to the feeling

I had when the Spirit bore witness of the great love my Savior has for me. His love

never fails, even when our pain is temporary, or even seemingly silly. It

wasn't essential to my salvation to go to the prom, but it is essential to know of the great love the Lord has

for each of us. Now I know I'll be able to truthfully tell my grandchildren that the junior prom was one of the greatest experi-

ences of my life. **NE**

Q & A

“Some people say I’m dating before 16. My friend and I don’t date yet. We just hang out after school until my mom comes home from work. We are together a lot, but we don’t date. Isn’t this okay?”

NEW ERA

You know the rules for dating: wait until you’re 16, don’t pair off, and date people who respect your standards. But what are the rules for hanging out?

Many LDS teens are moving away from the traditional date and instead they are just hanging out—getting together informally and doing whatever—usually watching TV or a movie or talking.

The words we use to describe associating with people of the opposite sex may change, and the trends in socializing may change, but principles and guidelines for our behavior stay the same.

Don’t play with definitions. Some LDS teens think it’s okay to pair off exclusively with one person before they are 16 because they call it hanging out instead of dating. It’s still spending time alone with one person. If you pair off, the attractions and emotions you will feel toward that person are the same whether you call it dating, going out, going steady, or hanging out.

When Church leaders talk about relationships between girls and boys,

Don’t play with definitions. Some LDS teens think it’s okay to pair off with one person before they are 16 because they call it hanging out instead of dating.

You don’t need a set of rules to dictate every aspect of your life if you understand the principles that should govern your actions.

If you pair off with one person, the temptations you will feel are the same whether or not you call it dating.

You should plan what you are going to do before you get together.

READERS

Having a friend of the opposite sex is a good thing. However, you need to make sure you don’t end up becoming too close. A good suggestion is to invite at least one more friend or sibling to hang out with you while you are together.

**Andrew Olsen, 14
Kaysville, Utah**



Satan tempts us in many ways. Never allow yourself to be put into a situation with your friend that would compromise your standards. The prophet has counseled us to abstain from dating until the age of 16, and it is important to realize the favorable consequences that come from following that guidance.

**Carolyn Strege, 16
Grand Rapids, Minnesota**





they talk about principles and guidelines that apply no matter what words we use to define those relationships. You don't need a set of rules to dictate every aspect of your life if you understand the principles that should govern your actions.

Church leaders have given us wise counsel to help us deal with these attractions and emotions in *For the Strength of Youth*. Let's look at some of the counsel they have given for dating, and see how it applies to hanging out.

"Do not date until you are at least 16 years old. Dating before then can lead to immorality, limit the number of other young people you meet, and deprive you of experiences that will help you choose an eternal partner." The same can be said for hanging out with one person a lot.

"Avoid going on frequent dates with the same person." A major reason for that advice is to avoid spending too much time with one person, which is exactly what hanging out often leads to.

"Plan dating activities that are positive and inexpensive and that will help you get to know each other. Do things that will help you and your companions maintain self-respect and remain close to the Spirit of the Lord" (*For the Strength of Youth*, 24, 25). This brings up one of the biggest problems with hanging out—there is no plan.

Planning what you are going to do should take place before you get together. When you are just hanging out you don't know what you will be doing, where you will be going, or when you will be done.

What matters most is that you internalize principles to guide your actions. If you want more advice from LDS teens about hanging out, read "Just Hanging Out" in the August 2001 *New Era*. Remember, you can always find past articles at www.lds.org. **NE**

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



Refrain from early dating or going steady. Avoid at all cost the familiarity trap. Instead of spending time in a lovers' lane, why not develop your minds and your personalities?" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 58).

—Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve

If you feel guilty when your friends say you are dating before you are 16, then what you are doing isn't right. There are probably cases when it is okay to be with a guy or girl after school for a while, but for the most part it should probably be avoided.



Crystal Raben, 17
American Falls, Idaho

Although you are just friends and mean no harm by hanging out together, it would probably be best to have at least one or two more people with you just to be safe.



Larry B. Beltran, 18
Ocampo, Philippines

You shouldn't hang out with your friend alone. Satan has the power to turn the best boy and the best girl to do wrong. If you don't think your judgment is correct, pray and ask Heavenly Father. He will answer you.



Mary Hill, 15
Chadron, Nebraska

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send us your answer to the question below, along with your name, age, and where you are from. Please include a snapshot of yourself that is 1 1/2 by 2 inches (4 by 5 cm) or larger.

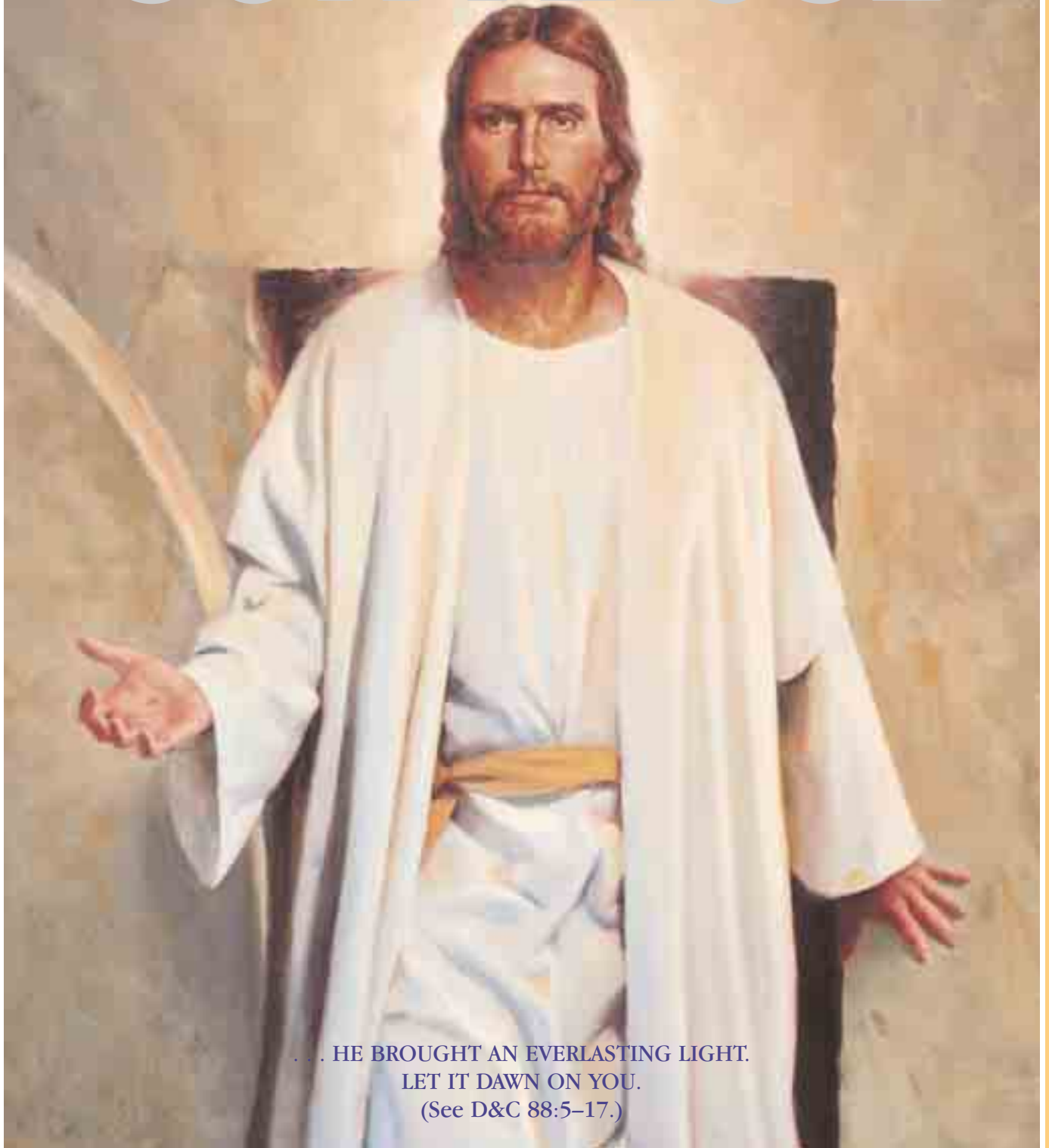
Q&A, *New Era*
50 East North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

QUESTION

I've been through the repentance process, but how do I know if I've really been forgiven?

Please respond by June 1, 2002.

WHEN THE
SON AROSE



... HE BROUGHT AN EVERLASTING LIGHT.
LET IT DAWN ON YOU.
(See D&C 88:5–17.)

Pang Yang, Lre Lor, Toua Yang, Sandy Yang, and Mylea Moua (left to right) stand tall as righteous examples in the Hmong branch of the Anoka Minnesota Stake.



by Shanna Ghaznavi

A NEW TRADITION

These Hmong teens in Minnesota have found that keeping their faith still allows them to keep everything good and true in their culture.

Mylea Moua's cousins make fun of her for going to church. Some of her close family members discourage her church attendance. Her friends at school wonder why she would ever want to be a Latter-day Saint.

Mylea's challenges are not unique in the Twin Cities Second (Hmong) Branch of the Anoka Minnesota Stake. Many of the youth have less-active



parents and nonmember family members who mock their religion. It would be easy for Mylea, a Mia Maid, to just quit coming to church. "A lot of Hmong people ask 'How can the Church help you?' They reject it," she says. "I don't really care what people think, because how I feel makes me happy. But I feel bad for them because they don't have the gospel."

Unlike many of the older Hmong generation in Minnesota, Mylea and the other youth feel it's possible to be both Hmong and LDS. "I do the best I can and try to be a good example," she says.

Sandy Yang, the Beehive president, is also doing her best to be a good example, though she says it is more difficult to share the gospel with her family than with her friends. Her parents



Mylea (left) and Sandy (above) try to bring the light of the gospel into their homes and preserve their heritage while leaving non-Christian traditions behind.



divorced when she was eight years old. "It was hard, but I felt the warmth of Jesus Christ, and I knew everything was going to be okay," she says. "I started to come to church more, and I learned the divorce was not about me. It was about my parents." Sandy's father is no longer active in the Church, but her mother and some of her brothers and

sisters are. She says it's her testimony that takes her through the hard times and keeps her coming.



Toua Yang (above) Pang Yang (right) and See Moua (far right) are doing their part to establish a tradition of faith in their own lives and in their families.

Sandy and the other Hmong youth agree that regular scripture study and attending Sunday School really help to strengthen their testimonies. “I guess I know a lot because of the gospel,” says Toua Yang, Sandy’s brother. “Without it I wouldn’t know why I’m here or what I would do after I died.” He credits going to seminary and trying to teach others about the gospel with helping his testimony grow. Toua, a priest, plans to tell more people about the gospel when he goes on a mission in two years.

“We’re kind of the first generation, you know,” Mylea says. Even though many of their parents or even grandparents are members of the Church, the non-Christian Hmong traditions are still a strong influence in their lives.

Most of the older generation of Hmong people in the Anoka Stake are from Laos and Cambodia. The Hmong tradition includes the practice of shamanism, which involves ancestor worship and belief in good and evil spirits that can be summoned

by a priest, or shaman. The Hmong culture and shamanism are linked, but are not the same thing, so the Hmong youth try to preserve their heritage while living the gospel and leaving non-Christian traditions behind. But their task is difficult.

Pang Yang, Toua’s sister, says death is the end of existence in the Hmong tradition. She’s happy she knows a better way. “It’s easier because I know what’s wrong and what’s right. The gospel is safer than the Hmong way. I think it’s easy because I know where I’ll go when I die.”

The Hmong youth are looking to the future—trying to rise above the difficulties of the traditions in their homes. Mylea and the others try to bring their younger brothers and sisters to church regularly to establish a tradition of faith in their families. Establishing a gospel tradition is a real goal, says See Moua, Mylea’s sister. “It’s not far now. It makes you want to keep the commandments,” See says.

Pang is also excited about the future.




“I really look forward to getting married in the temple. That’s the one thing I really want to do.”

Ultimately, it’s their individual testimonies that keep these Hmong youth active in the Church while they face so much opposition from friends and family. “Sometimes you doubt,” says Mylea. “And I had doubts.” But when she learned more about the life of Joseph Smith and about the gospel, her doubts left her. “Everything was taken away from Joseph Smith, even his own life. Now I know he wasn’t lying.”

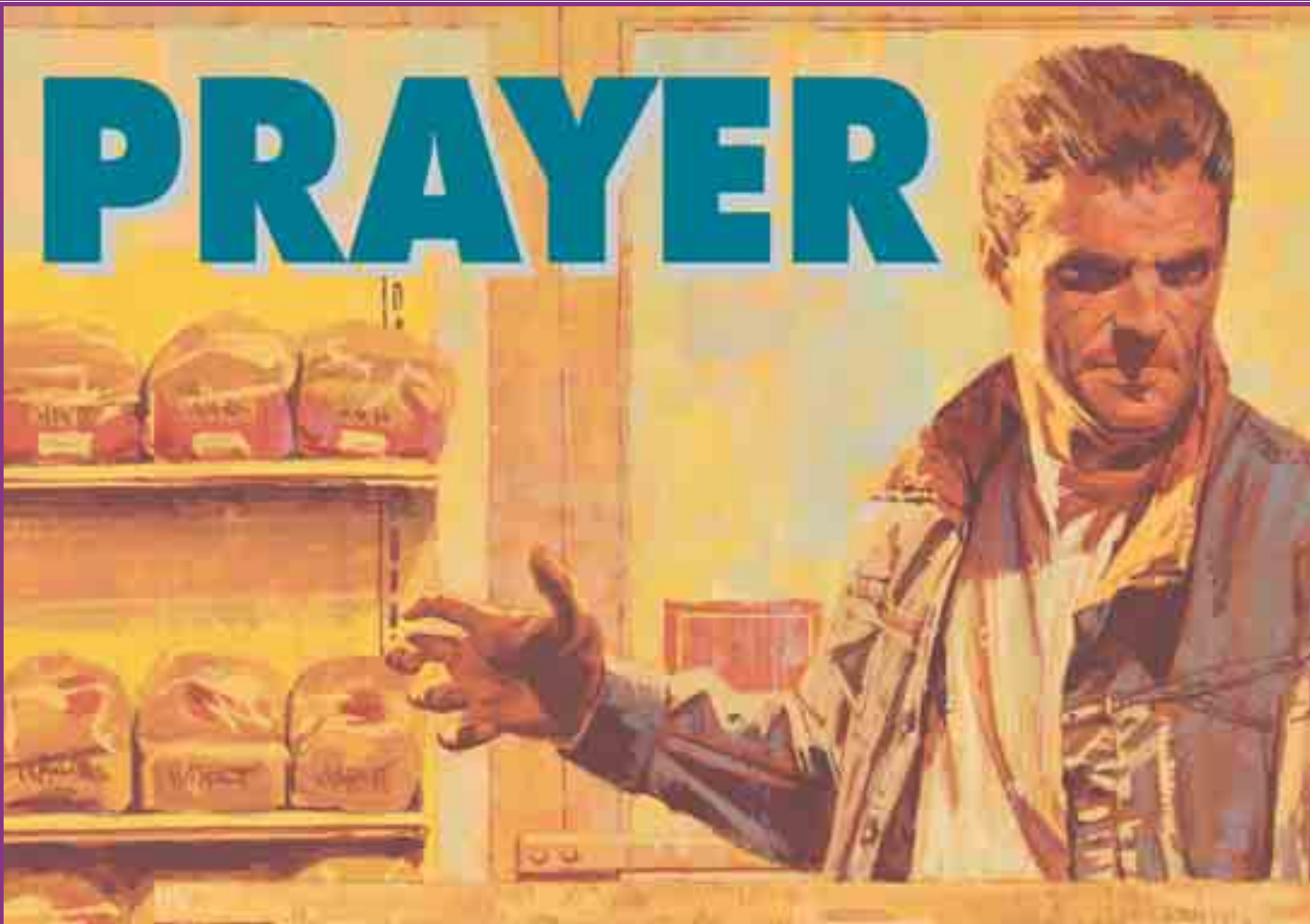
The other Hmong youth know challenges to their faith will come, either through their families’ traditions or just from their own doubts. That’s why they keep coming to church—the more they learn and the more they rely on the Lord, the stronger they become in the gospel. They know who they are, why they’re here, and where they’re going. And their testimonies grow stronger with each Sunday School lesson, each seminary class, and each time they choose to keep the Lord’s commandments and standards. **NE**

A PATTERN OF LIVING

“f all the traditions we should cultivate within ourselves and our families, a ‘tradition of righteousness’ should be preeminent. Hallmarks of this tradition are an unwavering love for God and His Only Begotten Son, respect for prophets and priesthood power, a constant seeking of the Holy Spirit, and the discipline of discipleship which transforms believing into doing. A tradition of righteousness sets a pattern for living which draws children closer to parents, and both closer to God, and elevates obedience from a burden to a blessing” (*Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 28).

—Elder Donald L. Hallstrom
of the Seventy

PRAYER



*He threatened my life,
but what I felt for him
wasn't hate or disgust.*

I had just started my first job, and I loved it. On a particular day, not long after I started, a co-worker and I heard the bell telling us a customer had come in the door. It was a man, about 50 years old, who looked just like anyone else. The man walked about half the distance to our counter from the door before he pulled out a knife. He then walked very quickly to us and demanded money from the till.

Fortunately, he just took the money and ran. Even before he was out the door, I began to call the police. After hours of questions we finally left the police station. I thought about what had just happened as I drove home. I had

been scared, but all I could think was, What happened in this man's life that made him resort to breaking the law and putting innocent lives in danger? I wondered what his life was like.

The strangest part was that I kept wishing I could help this man. I kept asking myself if there was someone who could have helped him, who could have led him to think more about his choices in life. Then I began to think about all the people I knew. I wondered if there might have been someone who needed me, but I had not listened to the Spirit long enough to know it.

As all this was going through my mind, I had an overwhelming feeling. I prayed, first to thank my Heavenly Father for protecting me, but then to ask Him to bless the man who robbed our store. I asked Him to help the man find the happiness I have in my life. I knew Heavenly Father was the only one who knew how to help this man.

by Tiffany Koch

FOR A THIEF



At that moment I realized how truly blessed I was to have the gospel. No matter what happens, I know I can turn to my Father in Heaven and He will help me. The gospel was a very special gift I had been taking for granted all my life.

I wanted to find the man who robbed the store and tell him about prayer and about the gospel. I wanted to tell him of the Atonement and of God's plan for us. But I especially wanted to share my testimony of God's love for all His children.

Even though this man put my life in danger, he is a precious child in Heavenly Father's sight. He is one of His lost sheep. I felt then, and even now feel, a love for this man I do not know. **NE**

DECIDE TO DECIDE



by Elder
Ralph W. Hardy Jr.
Area Authority Seventy
North America East Area

The Master had already “decided to decide.” He had decided to place Himself beyond temptation and far away from the outer boundaries of risk. “Get thee behind me, Satan”!

Decide now how you will handle temptation, and when you are faced with the real thing, you’ll know what to do.

Just before He began His formal ministry, the Savior had a dramatic experience with Satan. Luke records that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There He was, “forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

“And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread” (Luke 4:2–3).

And in other ways Satan used all of his formidable powers to tempt and undermine the physically weakened Christ. Then, in a final attempt to subvert the mission of the Lamb of God, Satan, having taken “him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

“And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

“If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is

written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Luke 4:5–8).

Jesus had made His decision. The Lord could easily have had the stone made into bread. The mortal Messiah, had drawn a figurative line—a line which He would not cross under any circumstances.

The Master had already “decided to decide.”* He had decided to place Himself beyond temptation and far away from the outer boundaries of risk. With simple, direct authority Jesus rebuked this real adversary: “Get thee behind me, Satan”! He never veered from the sure course of His ministry, not even as He hung in agony from the cross when, at that last awful moment, the Eternal Father withdrew His presence and the great sacrifice was made alone.

Christ’s life is the pattern for our lives when, in a world awash with evil, we are faced with temptation and the immense powers of darkness: “Get thee behind me, Satan.”

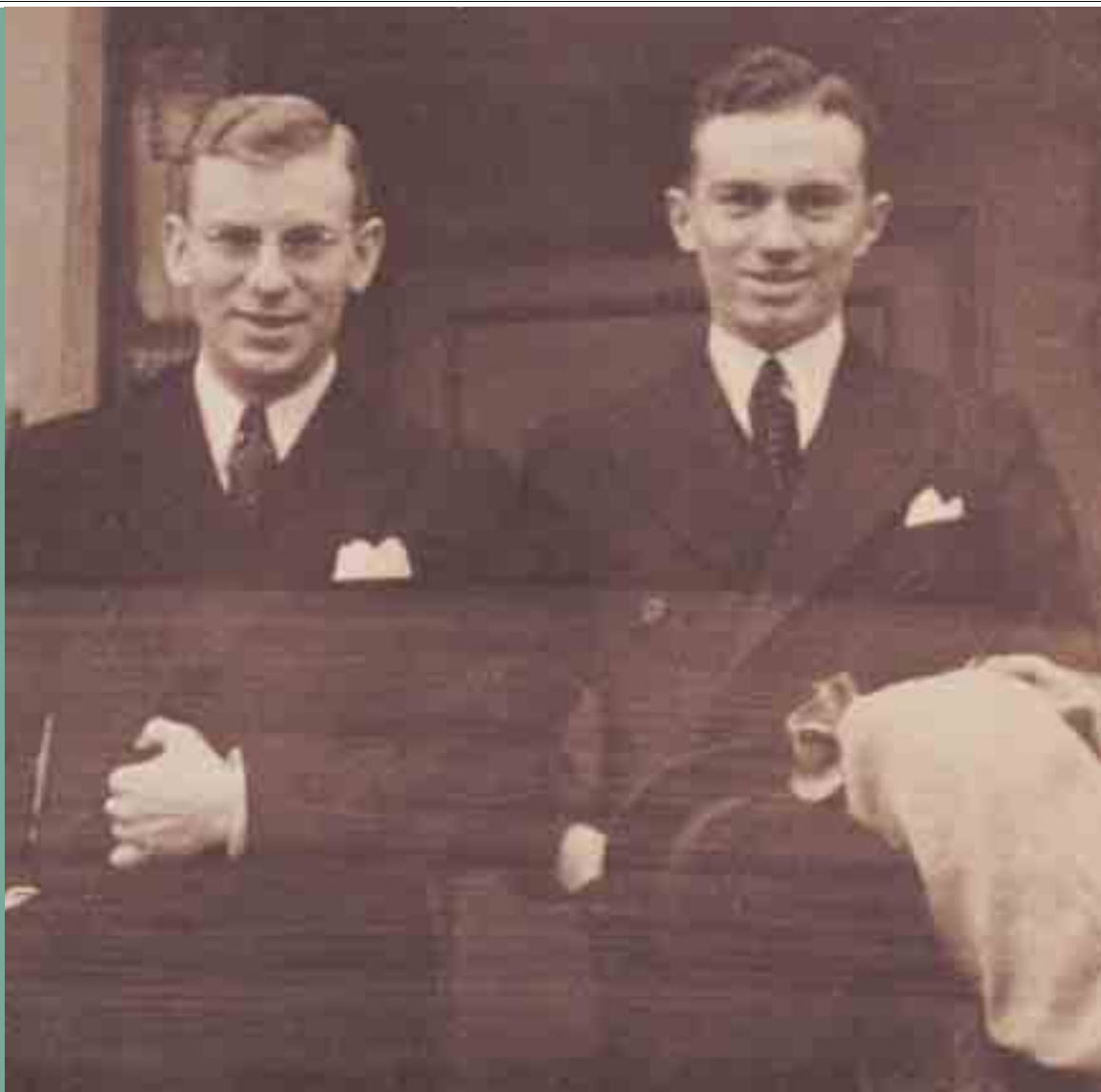
You are faced with the unrelenting temptations of the world today. You must also, as did the Lord Jesus Christ, decide early.

Elder Hinckley’s day of decision

In the early days of his mission in Great Britain, a young Elder Gordon B. Hinckley felt considerable discouragement. President Hinckley’s biographer, Sheri Dew, has written:



Discouraged with the lack of progress on his mission, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley (far right) received counsel from his father and from the scriptures that turned him around.



“After he had taken as much as he felt he could, Elder Hinckley wrote his father that he wasn’t getting anywhere with missionary work, and that he couldn’t see the point in wasting his time and his father’s money. Responding as both father and stake president, Bryant Hinckley sent a reply that was brief and to the point: ‘Dear Gordon, I have your recent letter. I have only one suggestion: forget yourself and go to work.’

“Earlier that day [Elder Hinckley] and his companion had studied the promise recorded in the Gospels: ‘For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it’ (Mark 8:35).

“That scripture, combined with his father’s counsel, seared his soul. With the letter in hand, he went into his upstairs

bedroom at 15 Wadham Road and got on his knees. As he poured out his heart to the Lord, he promised that he would try to forget himself and lose himself in the Lord’s service. Many years later [President Hinckley] indicated the significance of that series of events: “That July day in 1933 was my day of decision. A new light came into my life and a new joy into my heart. The fog of England seemed to lift, and I saw the sunlight. Everything good that has happened to me since then I can trace back to the decision I made that day in Preston” (*Go Forward with Faith*, 64).

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, had “decided to decide.”

My choices

When I was 16, my seemingly healthy, vigorous 41-year-old father dropped dead

while water skiing. As you can imagine, this was a shocking event in my life and caused me much anguish. Why did this happen? This event was cause for considerable reflection and much prayer as I struggled to set my own course. A few months later, standing on the newly grown grass over his grave at the Ogden, Utah, cemetery, I decided several important matters:

One, that I would always keep the Word of Wisdom.

Two, that I would serve a mission.

Three, that I would always make him proud that I was his son.

Four, that I would strive to be successful as he was.

Five, that I would always be active in the Church.

Six, that I would marry someone in the temple as fine as my mother.

These were simple yet life-defining decisions. They were as indelible as the words carved on my father's headstone, for my resolve was, in effect, carved in stone—unalterable and resolute. I had "decided to decide."

As I concluded my mission in Scotland in 1963, I completed in my black leather journal a list of other decisions resulting from the experience of the past 24 months. Some were decisions of the world. However, the most important decisions were spiritual and of eternal consequence: my allegiance to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, my love of the living apostles and prophets, my resolve to always follow the Lord's prophet, my commitment to a program of gospel scholarship, and my resolve to keep the commandments.

Since February 1963, I have made few other decisions of such course-setting magnitude and long-term consequence. Once they were prayerfully made, these decisions never had to be made again.

Decide now

If you have not already done so, you should decide what you will and will not do. In other words, decide upon your personal standard of conduct and behavior. What road you will take, what enticements of the world you will forever shield your eyes, ears, mind, and body from, including pornography in all its forms, questionable movies, television,

music, personal attire, and any other conduct not becoming a member of this great Church.

Decide that, in action as well as in thought, you will be sexually pure, avoiding adultery, fornication, or anything like unto them. Decide that you will keep the Lord's commandments: honesty, tithing faithfulness, the Word of Wisdom, and temple worthiness.

And, particularly with respect to the young men, that you will serve a mission.

Decide whom you will marry in the temple, and what steps you will take to attain that most important goal.

Decide that you will follow the direction of the Lord's living apostles and prophets.

Your early, resolute decisions will form a pattern that will shape not only your eternal lives, but also those of living and unborn loved ones who draw, or will draw, support from you.

Be spiritually alert

Why must we decide to decide? We know that indecision and procrastination are prime weapons of the adversary.

We make many decisions each day; however, like the pre-programmed defaults on your computer software programs, there are some decisions which should have been made long ago, so they are no longer subject to debate, compromise, or waffling.

As the Lord's servant, I promise you that our Heavenly Father, in answer to prayer, will help you make these early, crucial decisions. As confirmed members of the only true and living Church, if you live worthily, it is your right, privilege, and inheritance to receive the revelation and companionship of the Holy Ghost. I testify that this personal revelation will come to you, because it has come to me. And you can develop the sure habit of acting on this stream of personal, decision-making revelation.

I pray that you will "decide to decide." **NE**

Adapted from a young single adult fireside given in the Washington-Baltimore Area on March 16, 2001.

**In 1997, Elder J. Willard Marriott, Jr., an Area Authority Seventy, used the term "Decide to Decide" as a chapter heading in his book The Spirit to Serve. He attributed this to one of his favorite teachings of President Spencer W. Kimball.*

“Each of us has a choice between right and wrong. But with that choice there inevitably will follow consequences. Those who choose to violate the commandments of God put themselves at great spiritual and physical jeopardy. . . . Each of us, with discipline and effort, has the capacity to control our thoughts and our actions. This is part of the process of developing spiritual, physical, and emotional maturity” (Ensign, May 1987, 47).

—President Gordon B. Hinckley

RISING ABOVE

Bad days are common with most teens, but depression is more than just a bad day. It is a health condition that can affect you mentally, physically, and spiritually. Seeking help is vitally important.

by Shanna Ghaznavi

For anyone suffering from depression, there is hope, there is help, there is healing. Here's where to find them.

When people told Melissa* to snap out of it, it only made her feel worse. She would try but would still wake up the next day feeling awful. "I didn't know what to do. I would sleep the day away because I felt totally worthless."

"I didn't even realize I was depressed," she says. "I didn't even think to turn to my Heavenly Father for help."

She also didn't want to talk to her mom about what she was feeling. "I thought my mom would not like me for opening up and letting her know I was hurting. But once I talked to her she was really supportive, and I needed that."

When Melissa was 14, her mom took her to a doctor. "At first I thought, No way! I don't need a counselor. I'm fine!"

* Names have been changed

But I guess I wasn't fine. When you're depressed you don't really realize there's something wrong with you. And when you finally do recognize it, you're so immune to it that it's hard to deal with."

Melissa has been in counseling for more than a year, and she looks forward to her once-a-week therapy sessions now. She's glad she decided to get help. "I didn't think I would ever need help. I didn't think I would ever go through the things I went through. After a while I finally realized I needed to get down on my knees and ask for help. And that help came. I turned to my scriptures more often, and there would always be something there I needed to hear."

Melissa has suffered a lot because of depression, but she feels her reactions to her trials have made her into a better person. "When I say a prayer I thank Heavenly Father for my challenges because they make me stronger and they strengthen my testimony and help me grow closer to Him."

But I'm a teenager!

Ups and downs are completely normal if you're a teenager—but you already know that. Your mood can change daily



THE BLUES

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

Not everyone will experience the same depressive symptoms, but one or a combination of the following symptoms should be a warning. Prolonged (longer than two weeks) and severe symptoms are a sign that you need to ask for help. Some of the most common symptoms of depression are:

- A persistent sad, anxious, or empty feeling
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
- Decreased energy or increased fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or getting up
- Appetite change and/or weight loss or gain
- Restlessness and irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, stomachaches, or other chronic pain
- Thoughts of death or suicide

(National Institute of Mental Health)

There is help. There is happiness. There really is light at the end of the tunnel. It is the Light of the World, the Bright and Morning Star, the light that is endless, that can never be darkened (see John 8:12). It is the very Son of God Himself. . . .

“To any who may be struggling to see that light and find that hope, I say: Hold on. Keep trying. God loves you. Things will improve. Christ comes to you in His ‘more excellent ministry’ (Heb. 8:6) with a future of better promises. He is your ‘high priest of good things to come’” (Heb. 9:11) (*Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 36).

—Elder
Jeffrey R. Holland
of the Quorum of
the Twelve

or even hourly. So how can you know if you or someone you know is suffering from depression, and not just adolescent highs and lows? How can you tell if what you’re feeling is the effect of passing clouds or of long-term darkness?

Some of the symptoms of depression are persistent sadness, lack of energy, and suicidal thoughts. You might not enjoy many of the things you used to, and daily tasks might seem overwhelming (see sidebar, page 31). Although the same factors cause depression in both sexes, boys and girls tend to react differently to the same problems. Boys often act out in many cases, through violence, substance abuse, or getting into other kinds of trouble. Girls tend to become sad and withdraw socially, emotionally, or both. Each person will have a different combination of symptoms.

There is no one cause for depression. Chemical imbalances, heredity, certain styles of thinking, and environment could all be factors leading to this common health problem. Fortunately, it is also generally very treatable.

More than five percent of teens in the United States experience some form of depression each year, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. It can affect you emotionally as well as physically and spiritually. Many of the feelings of peace and calm usually associated with the Holy Spirit are hard to feel if you are depressed.

Get help

Although depression is limiting in many ways, you always have the choice to ask for help. “You can’t do it on your own, you need help,” Melissa says. “The longer you hold [your problem] in, the worse it will be.”

“It does not mean you’re crazy. It does not mean you’re bad,” says Dorann Mitchell, a clinical social worker who also works with LDS Family Services.

CLEARING UP SOME MISCONCEPTIONS

Depression is real. There are many misconceptions about depression. Here are a few of the falsehoods you might have heard, along with the truth about this serious mental condition:

False: All teenagers are moody. They don’t have real depression.

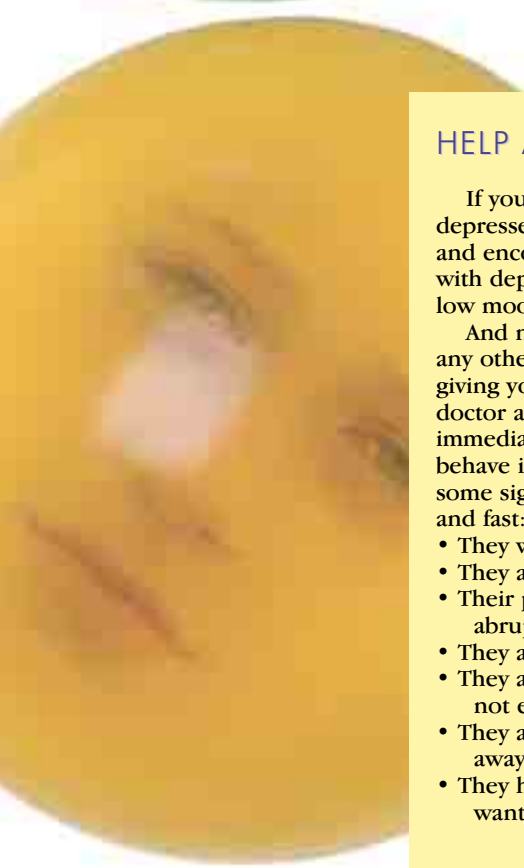
True: People of any age can suffer from depression. While it is true that the teen years bring many ups and downs, those who suffer from prolonged depression have a very real health problem.

False: Teens who say they’re depressed just need to snap out of it.

True: That’s like telling someone to perform surgery on himself. Depression is not a phase. It is a serious illness. Those who suffer from depression should see a doctor to find out how to begin treatment.

False: Telling someone that your friend is depressed is betraying a trust.

True: A real friend would do his best to make sure his friend gets help. Depression takes away motivation, and your friend might not recognize that he or she needs help or care about getting help. It’s up to you to be a good friend.



HELP A FRIEND

If you have a friend who is depressed, offer your support, patience, and encouragement. Remember, people with depression can't just snap out of a low mood.

And never ignore talk of suicide or any other signals your friend might be giving you. Tell a trusted adult or doctor about your friend's threats immediately. Not all suicidal teens will behave in the same way, but here are some signs that your friend needs help, and fast:

- They want to be alone all the time.
- They are moody and irritable.
- Their personality has changed abruptly.
- They are using drugs or alcohol.
- They are sleeping too much or not enough.
- They are giving their possessions away.
- They have talked about suicide or wanting to die.

"Sometimes you just can't get out of it. If you can't talk yourself out of something, that's okay. But that means you should seek out the things that can help you. . . . Sometimes you can't pray it away." Sister Mitchell suggests using all the help available to you.

"We all need help from other people at different times, and that certainly fits with the gospel," Sister Mitchell says.

The most important step to recovery, and probably the hardest, is to actually seek help. It might not seem that there's a way out—or that things will ever change—but those hopeless feelings are an illusion created by the depression. Those feelings can be overcome if you take that first step of seeking help.

Treatments for depression often involve a combination of therapy and antidepressant medications. It is important not to self-medicate. Turning to herbal or natural supplements before going to a doctor is dangerous to your health. And you already know substance abuse is definitely not the answer to any problem.


God is there

"There were times when I felt like my prayers were not being answered. I was frustrated," says Anna, 17, who's in treatment for depression.

Anna was doing everything she was supposed to. Her life was in line with the gospel. So why didn't Anna think she was getting an answer?

Sometimes depression can make it harder to feel the comfort of the Holy Ghost, even when you haven't done anything wrong. Anna says she realizes now that God does love her and that He was with her all along; but she just couldn't feel Him there. "I know now that He's there to help and that I can pray to Him or just talk to Him."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve has said, "If you seek His help, be sure your life is clean, your motives are worthy, and you're willing to do what He asks—for He will answer your prayers. . . . He loves you perfectly and wants to help you" (*Ensign*, Nov.



Doctors,
family,
medica-
tion, priesthood
leaders, friends—
all are good
sources of help.
But no matter
how you get help,
ultimate healing
will always come
from the Savior.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOURSELF

- Pray whenever you need help and comfort.
- Read the scriptures and other uplifting books.
- Listen to uplifting music.
- Ask for a priesthood blessing.
- Serve others. You have a lot to offer.
- Spend time with your family and friends. Let them help you.
- Eat healthily.
- Exercise regularly.
- Be patient. You'll improve gradually once you seek treatment.
- Talk to a friend.
- Try to break negative thought patterns.
- Prioritize what you need to do, and set realistic goals on a schedule you can handle.
- Start a worthwhile hobby to get your mind off things.
- Keep a journal.
- Get help from:
 - Your parents
 - Your bishop or youth leader
 - LDS Family Services
 - A school counselor
 - Your family doctor
 - Local crisis lines (Check your phone book for listings under "mental health," "health," "social services," or "crisis intervention services").

1989, 32).

Attitude can make all the difference, too, says Becky, who's also being treated for depression. "Your attitude definitely changes the way you feel," even though there's only so much you can do on your own when you have depression.

We cannot avoid adversity, says Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve. "The only question is how we will react to it. Will our adversities be stumbling blocks or stepping-stones? . . . Like the mortal life of which they are a part, adversities are temporary. What is permanent is what we become by the way we react to them. Our adversities can be the means of obtaining blessings unobtainable without them" (*Ensign*, July 1998, 7, 9).

Things are still not easy for Melissa, Becky, and Anna. But since they have turned to the Lord and requested help from other sources as well, they are doing much better, and they now feel their lives are worth living. Becky says, "Even if you feel like no one else has ever gone through this, Jesus Christ has. He has felt every single thing."

The Savior was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: . . . Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: . . . and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:3–5). No matter how you get help, ultimate healing will always come from the Savior. He will ease your burdens. His gospel is a gospel of peace and hope. Never doubt that He wants you to be happy. **NE**

"I'm glad we chose food storage over new furniture."



"We're missing a piece from our chess set and were wondering if we could use you, Bishop."



While vacationing, our family of six was enjoying a dip in the hotel pool. Our daughter Jennifer heard some rather ugly language being used by some of the other hotel guests. "Didn't you read the pool rules on the wall?" she asked, pointing to a nearby sign. "It says, 'No profound language.'"

Jewell Nelson-Beardall
Provo, Utah

"Now I know why they call it a mess kit."



Cartoons by Val Chadwick Bagley



Be

PRAYERFUL

You cannot do it alone. As you follow President Hinckley's counsel to be prayerful, you will find that your life is blessed in many ways.

by Caroline H. Benzley

Thank your Heavenly Father for His goodness and express the righteous desires of your heart. He hears. He responds. He answers.

Be prayerful. . . . You need His help, and you know that you need His help. You cannot do it alone.”

As President Gordon B. Hinckley stated, we “cannot do it alone.” We cannot make it through this life without the help of our Heavenly Father. We need the power of prayer in our lives.

President Hinckley spoke to youth about prayer at his youth fireside in November 2000 (see *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 4). *Be prayerful*, the last of the six B’s in the prophet’s talk, affected many young men and young women. In his talk, President Hinckley reminded us about the power of prayer and the many blessings that come from praying often.

A great gift

Prayer is a great source of wisdom and support. The guidance and strength that come from prayer help us improve virtually all aspects of our lives, including our ability to follow the counsel of the prophet. “Prayer has helped me live the other B’s,” wrote 15-year-old Clint Vickery.

Prayer not only helps us attain our goal of following the prophet, but prayer is also a great gift in other aspects of our life. Prayer is a way to contact our Heavenly Father and to increase our testimony of the gospel. Sixteen-year-old Will Hatch found that as he prayed out loud his testimony increased.

“There is power in prayer,” wrote Will. “Prayer is a direct spiritual experience between you and your Father in Heaven. There is power in vocalizing prayer. I have noticed that prayer brings you directly out of the passive gospel state to an active gospel state, which is a state when you fully participate in the gospel. That active state is a direct result of personal prayer. I believe my whole life has changed as a result of personal prayer. I want everyone to know the truth of this great and marvelous work. It is true. We can be saved if we only put forth effort. I know Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ lives, and the Atonement is real.”

For Aaron Curley from Wallsburg, Utah, prayer became a source of comfort and inspiration after he incorporated the prophet’s counsel into his life.

“When President Hinckley gave us the talk for the youth I really did not know for myself that praying has a comforting spirit. I started to think that the only way I would know that prayer works would be by trying it out. Now I know that I have the Spirit with me during my day. On top of that I find that it is easier to resist temptation. For me it has changed my life

He answers," says President Hinckley. "Not always as we might wish He would answer, but there is no question in my mind that He answers."

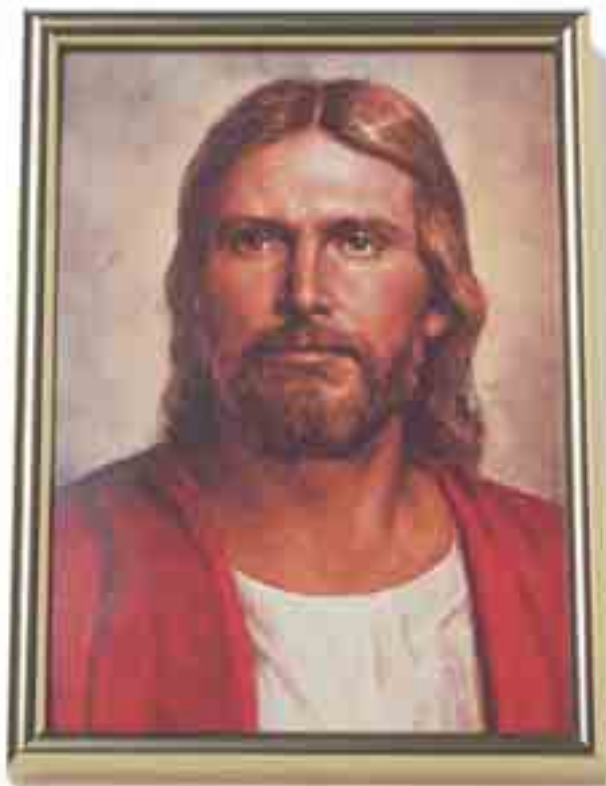
to the point where I am going on a mission, and before I did not know if I wanted to. By living these simple things I now have a stronger testimony of Christ. I know He lives and will come again."

Righteous desires of the heart

In his talk, President Hinckley suggested that the youth, through prayer, thank the Lord for His blessings. He also encouraged them to use prayer as a means of expressing needs and desires to the Lord. "Get on your knees and thank Him for His goodness to you and express to Him the righteous desires of your hearts."

Richelle James from Littleton, Colorado, discovered that expressing the righteous desires of her heart through prayer brought great results.

"After I went to the fireside, I decided that I wanted to work on being more prayerful. When I was in high school sports, I was involved in diving. I started to really stress out because my grades were going down, and I would seldom see my parents because I was so busy with diving. So I prayed that I could have the Spirit with me through the diving season and that I would have time to do homework, etc. Within that week I really started to change. I became happier, less stressed, and my grades went up. I also started to do



really well in diving."

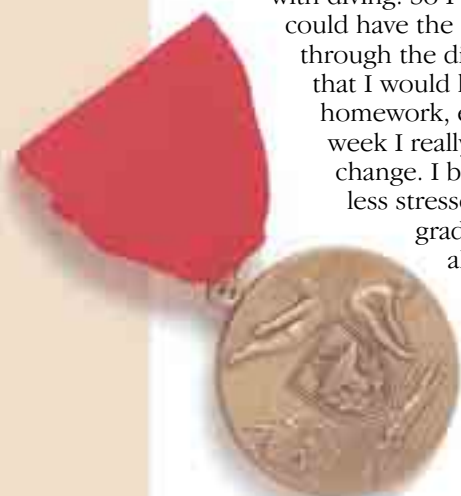
Like Richelle, Whitney Brown from Poway, California, found comfort after expressing her needs and concerns in her prayers.

"Moving was a very difficult experience for me; however, through prayer, I was able to know of my Heavenly Father's love for me and His awareness of my situation. I felt my Father's love as I never had before, and it made going much easier. I knew that He was always there for me to talk to."

He answers

The prophet assured us that our Heavenly Father listens to our prayers. "The miracle of it all is that He hears, He responds. He answers—not always as we might wish He would answer, but there is no question in my mind that He answers."

We know He will answer our prayers, but it may not always be in the way that we want. As Edgar Castro from Los Angeles, California, explains, "When people are prayerful, they're always in contact with Heavenly Father. I started to be more prayerful, and I feel that my



Father in Heaven listens to my woes, thanks, and questions. I know He does answer my prayers, one way or the other.”

Speaking with the Lord

As we incorporate President Hinckley’s *Be prayerful* into our lives it is important that we not only pray often, but that we pray with meaning and intent. President Hinckley advised the youth to “Live so that in good conscience you can speak with the Lord.”

If we live righteously we should always feel comfortable speaking with the Lord. Speaking with Him means more than just reciting a list of routine desires and wants. Instead we should take the time, morning and night, to have a true conversation with the Lord. After listening to President Hinckley, 17-year-old Jill Miller decided to improve her prayers.

“Ever since President Hinckley’s counsel I have made a special effort to make my prayers more meaningful,” she wrote. “I have grown much closer to my Heavenly Father. Having a good relationship with Him and feeling of His love for me has helped me in every aspect of my life. I wasn’t always doing what was right and what would make my Father in Heaven proud and happy with me. By praying more earnestly it has helped me remember my desire to be good.”

You cannot do it alone

Prayer is a gift from our Heavenly Father—a gift that will help us throughout our entire lives. We cannot make it through this life alone. By following the prophet’s counsel to be prayerful the Lord will bless us. Through His power He will give us strength to overcome the evil things of this world. For the Lord is, as President Hinckley reminded us, “The source of all wisdom and power.” And it is only through Him that we gain the answers and guidance that we need in order to return to and live with Him someday. **NE**





TEST YOUR LDS I.Q.

- 1 Where did the organization of the restored Church occur on April 6, 1830?
 - a) Fayette, New York
 - b) Harmony, Pennsylvania
 - c) Manchester, New York
- 2 On what day of the week was the Church organized?
 - a) Saturday
 - b) Sunday
 - c) Tuesday
- 3 Why did Joseph Smith choose five men to be his associates when he organized the Church?
 - a) They were the first five men besides him to be baptized.
 - b) The laws of the Church required him to.
 - c) The laws of the state required him to.
- 4 Approximately how many people gathered for the organization of the Church?
 - a) 25
 - b) 60
 - c) 110
- 5 Of the following, who was not baptized on the day the Church was organized?
 - a) Martin Harris
 - b) Oliver Cowdery
 - c) Lucy Mack Smith

Answers: 1a; 2c; 3c; 4b; 5b.

“By the atonement of Jesus Christ the sins of the repentant shall be washed away; though they be crimson they shall be made white as wool. This is the promise given to you.”

(Gospel Doctrine, 5th ed., 98–99).

—President Joseph F. Smith
(1838–1918)



WRITE AWAY!

We want you to tell us how the Atonement and Resurrection of the Savior have come to have personal meaning for you. Send your true experiences to the *New Era*, 50 East North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84150 or to cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org. Please send your submissions by July 1, 2002.



MURAL, MURAL, ON THE WALL

The youth of the El Paso Texas Mount Franklin Stake used their artistic talents and some plain hard work to beautify an entire city block. Three youth from the stake designed a mural and stenciled it paint-by-number style on a block-long wall in the heart of El Paso. The city provided all the equipment they needed. The youth provided more than 700 hours of service to paint the 139-foot wall.



PERPETUAL EDUCATION FUND

The youth of the Westminster Third Ward (Huntington Beach California North Stake) know the importance of education. Using half the funds they had raised for their youth conference, they donated to the Perpetual Education Fund. Their check was presented to Elder John K. Carmack, emeritus member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, who is the managing director of the PEF.

Last April President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the establishment of the PEF. The fund exists to fight poverty by broadening educational and employment opportunities among young Church members. Young men and women—returned missionaries mostly—can borrow money from the fund to pay tuition. After they receive an education and are able to earn money, they repay their loans to the fund. The money revolves through the fund to continue to provide educational opportunities for the youth of the Church. The PEF started in four countries initially, but it will eventually be available wherever there are Church members who qualify for its use.

The Westminster youth responded, along with thousands of other Church members, to President Hinckley's call to help other Church members become self-reliant and successful (see *Ensign*, May 2001, 51–53).

Reach Out



by Elder
Dallin H. Oaks
of the Quorum
of the Twelve

Nothing is impossible to those who keep God's commandments. But help only comes as we move forward.

How do we respond when we are confronted with a task that seems to be impossible?

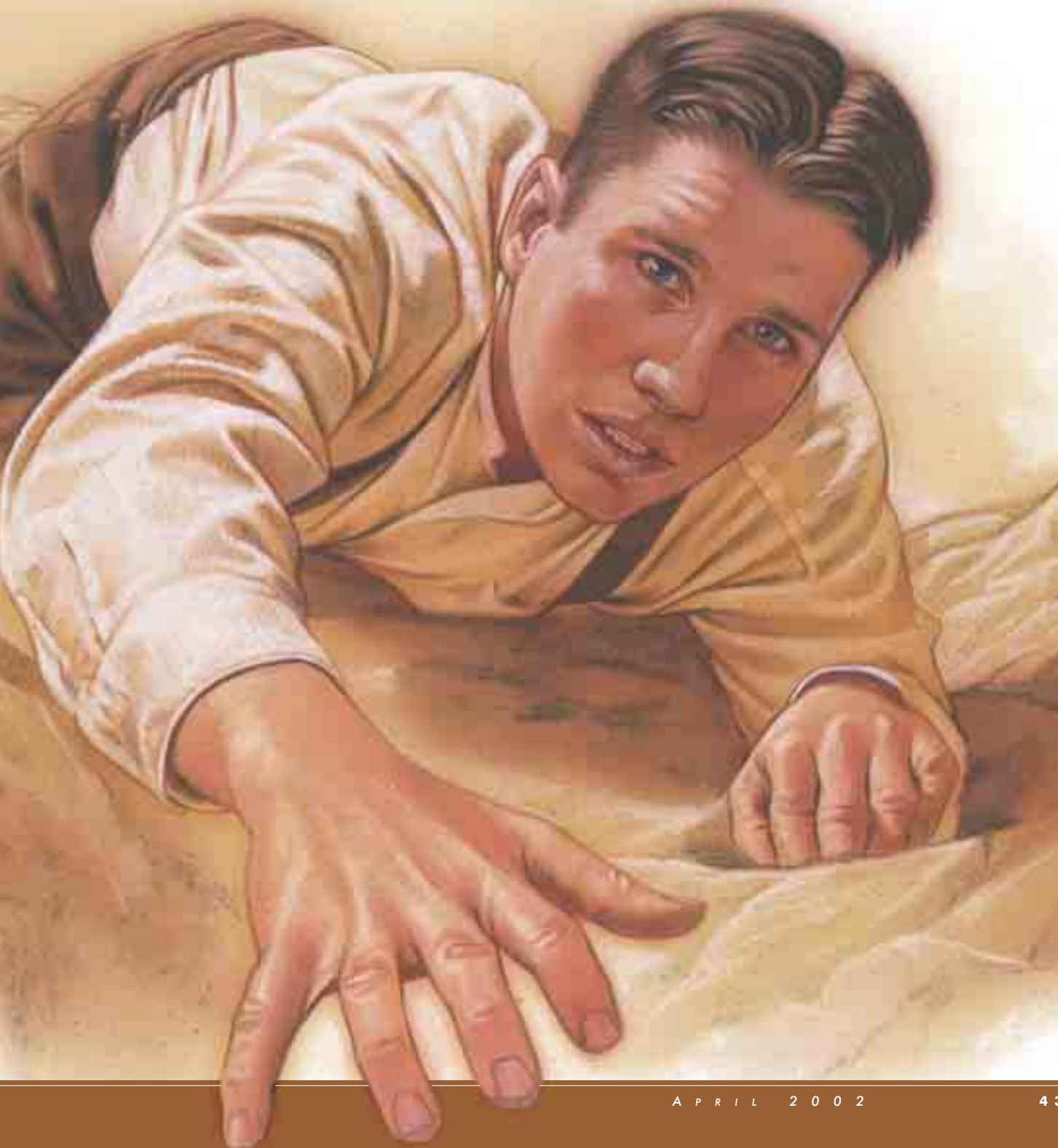
All of us face obstacles. All of us have challenges. We all walk paths that lead us toward heights we think we cannot ascend. Sooner or later we all stand at the foot of cliffs we think we cannot scale.

In 1895 my great-grandfather, Abinadi Olsen, was called on a mission to the Samoan Islands. Obedient to the call of the prophet, he left his wife and four small children, including my maternal grandmother, Chasty Magdalene, in the

town of Castle Dale, Utah. He traveled by train and ship to the mission headquarters in Apia, a journey of 26 days. His first assignment was to labor on the island of Tutuila.

After many weeks of living in what he called a grass hut, eating strange food, suffering severe illnesses, and struggling to learn the Samoan language, he seemed to be making no progress in his missionary work. Homesick and discouraged, he seriously considered boarding a boat back to Apia and telling the mission president he didn't want to waste any

AND *Climb!*





When the brother of Jared sought to have the Lord solve his problem, the Lord put the problem back in his lap. The brother of Jared worked on the solution, making 16 transparent stones that he then asked the Lord to touch with His finger.

more time in Samoa. The obstacles to the accomplishment of his mission seemed insurmountable, and he wished to return to his wife and children, who were struggling to support him in the mission field.

My great-grandfather's experience

A friend who heard Abinadi Olsen describe the experience some years after his return, quoted him as follows:

"Then one night, as I lay on my mat on the floor of my hut, a strange man entered, and in my own language told me to get up and follow him. His manner was such that I had to obey. He led me through the village and directly against the face of a perpendicular solid-rock cliff. That's strange, thought I. I've never seen that here before, and just then the

stranger said, 'I want you to climb that cliff.'

"I took another look and then in bewilderment said, 'I can't. It's impossible!'

"'How do you know you can't? You haven't tried,' said my guide.

"'But anyone can see'—I started to say in objection. But he cut in with, 'Begin climbing. Reach up with your hand—now with your foot.'

"As I reached, under orders that I dared not disobey, a niche seemed to open in the solid-rock cliff and I caught hold. Then with my one foot I caught a toehold.

"'Now go ahead,' he ordered. 'Reach with your other hand,' and as I did so another place opened up, and to my surprise the cliff began to recede; climbing became easier, and I continued the ascent without difficulty until, suddenly, I found myself lying on my pallet back in my hut. The stranger was gone!

"'Why has this experience come to me? I asked myself. The answer came quickly. I had been up against an imaginary cliff for those three months. I had not reached out my hand to begin the climb. I hadn't really made the effort I should have made to learn the language and surmount my other problems'" (*Improvement Era*, Aug. 1957, 554).

It is hardly necessary to add that Abinadi Olsen did not leave the mission. He labored for three and a half years, until released by appropriate authority. He was an exceptionally effective missionary, and he was a faithful member of the Church for the rest of his life.

They're not insurmountable

When we face seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the fulfillment of righteous responsibilities, we should remember that when we are involved in the work of the Lord, the obstacles before us are never as great as the power behind us. We should reach out and climb. Handholds will only be found by hands that are outstretched. Footholds are only for feet that are on the move.

We are told that faith precedes the miracle. We have also learned that personal efforts precede it. These words of President Spencer W. Kimball convey that message: "Let's go forward!"

The scriptures record many instances when the Lord blessed those who tried to do the impossible. Nothing is impossible to the Lord.

When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, they encamped by the Red Sea. The Egyptians thought the Israelites were trapped. Their backs were to the sea as they faced the pursuing chariots of Pharaoh. “Fear ye not, . . .” Moses declared, for “the Lord shall fight for you” (Ex. 14:13–14). The Lord then told Moses to command the children of Israel “that they go forward” into the sea (Ex. 14:15). As they did so, Moses stretched out his rod over the sea, as commanded, and the children of Israel went through the sea on dry ground (see Ex. 14:16, 22). They had gone forward in faith, and what seemed impossible had occurred.

The example of the brother of Jared

The brother of Jared faced the problem of illumination in the closed vessels his people had constructed. He sought to have the Lord solve the problem. The Lord put the problem back in his lap by asking, “What will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels?” (Ether 2:23). The brother of Jared ventured on the solution of the problem. He elected to molten 16 transparent stones. Then, with great faith, he asked the Lord to touch these stones with His finger “and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness . . . that we may have light while we shall cross the sea” (Ether 3:4). His prayer was answered. The problem was solved by the initiative of a faithful person and the blessings and power of God.

When Nephi was directed to return to Jerusalem to obtain the sacred records from Laban, he went forth in faith to do as he was commanded, even though he did not see how this could be done. Nephi knew that the Lord would give no commandment, save He would prepare a way to accomplish the thing He had commanded (see 1 Ne. 3:7). Through Nephi’s faith and initiative he accomplished his mission, and generations have been blessed by the outcome.

Nothing is impossible to those who keep God’s commandments and follow His directions. But the blessings that carry us over obstacles do not precede



our efforts; they follow them. The Liahona was given to guide Lehi and his children, but it came after years in the desert, not when they were still in Jerusalem. The word of the Lord on the organization of the Camp of Israel (see D&C 136) didn’t come in Nauvoo. It came on the west bank of the Missouri River near present-day Omaha, almost a year after the Saints had left Nauvoo.

What do we do when we face obstacles in the fulfillment of righteous responsibilities? We reach out and climb! The blessings that solve problems and carry us over obstacles come to persons who are on the move. **NE**

Originally printed in the August 1985 New Era.

The Liahona was given to guide Lehi and his family, but it came after they had journeyed in the desert, not when they were still in Jerusalem.

Becoming

I didn't have the gospel in my life. My boyfriend was trying to lead me in the wrong direction. Things just weren't going well. Finally, I turned to the Lord in prayer and told Him I would do anything to feel sweet and pure again. The next morning, my roommate invited me to go to church with her.

by Kersten Campbell

My life had turned ugly. I hungered to feel the same sweet purity I had known as a child.

You are the most beautiful girl I have ever seen." I smiled, as the boy I loved whispered in my ear. We were holding hands, waiting to enter the sealing room of the temple, where we would be sealed for time and all eternity. As we entered, I caught a glimpse of us in one of the golden-edged mirrors in the sealing room. We did look beautiful—both of us, dressed in white, smiling, glowing, filled with a joy we didn't know existed. I felt my eyes become moist as I watched the room fill with friends and family. The Spirit of the Lord was strong.

As the door closed I reflected on a time when I did not feel so beautiful. Four years before I didn't know much about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Some of my friends were members, and I knew they didn't smoke or drink alcohol, but I didn't know much about their religion.

My first year at college was exciting. It was the first time I was away from home, and I was determined to do and try everything I had never done before. I ate junk food and stayed up all night chatting with my roommate, who was a member.

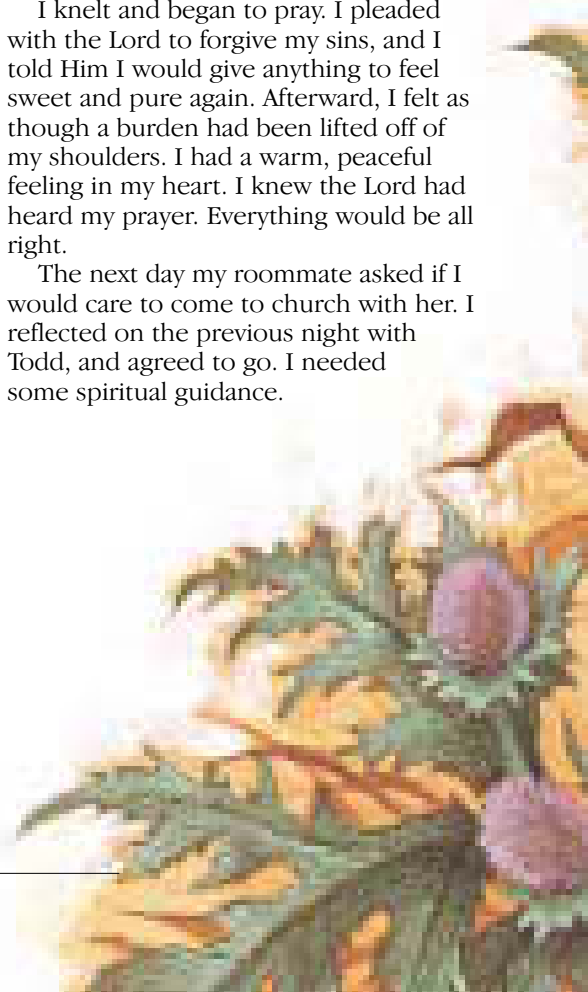
Then I began to date Todd. He began to take me to parties at his fraternity. At the time I did not have the gift of the

Holy Ghost, but I could still sense darkness at those parties.

Soon Todd began to pressure me to do things I was uncomfortable with—things my parents had warned me against. After one such night of resisting his pleas, I lay in bed and wept for hours. I remembered a feeling I had when I was a child that was sweet and pure. I had felt close to God. Now, I felt far from Him.

I knelt and began to pray. I pleaded with the Lord to forgive my sins, and I told Him I would give anything to feel sweet and pure again. Afterward, I felt as though a burden had been lifted off of my shoulders. I had a warm, peaceful feeling in my heart. I knew the Lord had heard my prayer. Everything would be all right.

The next day my roommate asked if I would care to come to church with her. I reflected on the previous night with Todd, and agreed to go. I needed some spiritual guidance.



Beautiful



knew I was home. I felt closer to God than I had ever felt before. I felt beautiful. It was the deep and glowing beauty that comes from righteousness.

The church was much different than the ones I had attended as a child. I was surprised there was no priest. It was fast and testimony meeting, and I was interested to see how deeply the members felt about their religion. I began to feel a desire to be that committed to the Lord.

I started talking to the missionaries. I liked what they told me, but each night I asked the Lord if the Church were true, and each night I received no answer. My parents were upset that I was investigating the Church. They gave me some anti-Church literature that confused me. I asked my member friends about what I had read, and every question I had about the Church was answered. Finally, I felt as if I would burst if I did not know. I knelt in my room and pleaded with the Lord to reveal to me if this was His true Church.

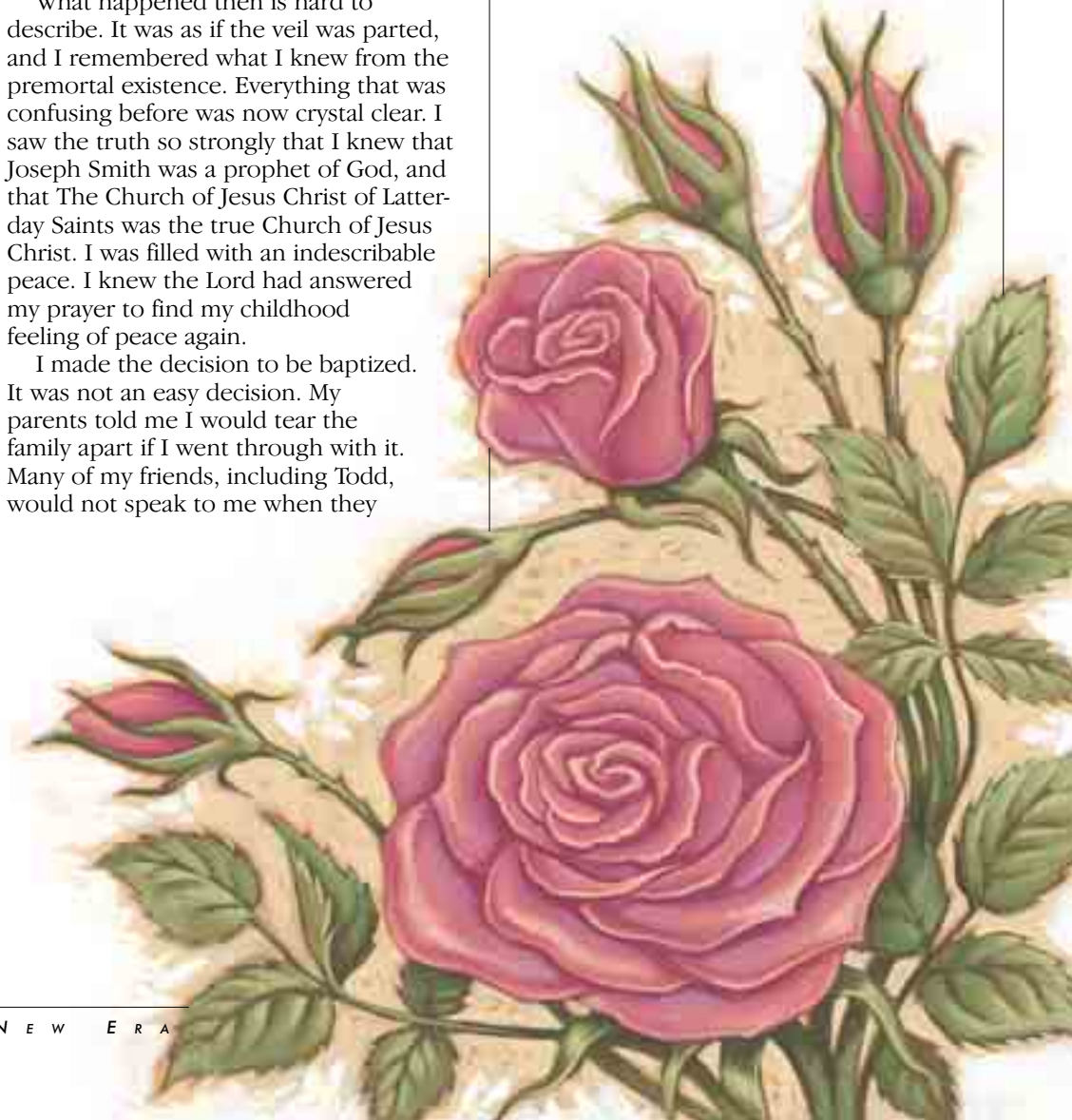
What happened then is hard to describe. It was as if the veil was parted, and I remembered what I knew from the premortal existence. Everything that was confusing before was now crystal clear. I saw the truth so strongly that I knew that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the true Church of Jesus Christ. I was filled with an indescribable peace. I knew the Lord had answered my prayer to find my childhood feeling of peace again.

I made the decision to be baptized. It was not an easy decision. My parents told me I would tear the family apart if I went through with it. Many of my friends, including Todd, would not speak to me when they

heard I was joining the Church. I felt alone.

When I was baptized my parents did not come, but as I came from the waters of baptism I knew I was home. I had found the truth and I would never let it go. I felt closer to God than I had ever felt before.

I felt beautiful. It was the deep and glowing beauty that comes from righteousness. It was the same beauty that I saw in all the faces surrounding me in the temple. And as I knelt across the altar from my future husband and saw our reflections go on forever in the mirrors that surrounded us, I knew I would give up everything to be worthy to be in that room. I would give up everything to feel the peace and joy and beauty that filled my soul. It was beautiful, and nothing on earth could ever compare. **NE**



Creative ideas for using this issue of the New Era.

Family Home Evening Ideas

□ In “Reach Out and Climb” on page 42, Elder Oaks illustrates the importance of personal effort when facing a difficult challenge. Read a few favorite excerpts to your family, then identify something your family can work on together like regular family prayer or consistent scripture study.

Personal Improvement

□ “Becoming Beautiful,” page 46, describes one girl’s experience of being worthy to be sealed in the temple. The next time you visit the temple, spend some time quietly reflecting on the importance of being married there. Write your feelings in your journal or verbally share your thoughts with your family.

□ President Hinckley has counseled that all Church members should “Be Prayerful” (see page 36). If you’re out of the habit of saying personal prayers, devise some kind of reminder for yourself: a note taped to your nightstand or an object resting on your pillow. Make a goal to go for one whole month without missing a morning or evening prayer.

□ In Q&A on page 16, teens are warned of the dangers of pairing off with one person even if you’re just “hanging out.” Have you fallen into a friendship or dating rut? Invite some new people to join you and your friends when you get together. Make sure the group plans something to do instead of always watching a video.

Young Men and Young Women Activity Ideas

□ “Flowers of Mercy” on page 10 tells of the importance of demonstrating sympathy and compassion for others. Prayerfully identify something your class or quorum can do to let a family in your ward or neighborhood know you care about them. Some ideas might be doing yard work, making cards, or simply paying a visit. Clear all plans with your ward bishopric.

□ Being a convert to the Church can be a difficult trail to blaze for many youth, especially when they are from a different cultural or ethnic background (see “A New Tradition,” page 20). Is there a member of your class who can share a tradition, a food, or a game from another culture with the rest of the class? Increasing understanding can go a long way to make everyone more accepting of differences in all aspects of life.

Seminary Devotional

□ On a large piece of paper, write out the scripture from James 1:5 that inspired the Prophet Joseph to go to the Sacred Grove. Cut the scripture up into pieces. Set aside the piece that reads, “ask of God.” Ask the class to assemble the pieces. The phrase, “ask of God,” will be missing. Bring out the last piece and place it to finish the verse. Point out that the most important thing in figuring out any puzzle or problem in life is to include asking God.

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No one to talk to

Thanks a lot for publishing the story “A Day in the Life of a Superstar” (June 2001). I feel the same way Mike does. I feel there is no one to talk to about the way I feel about the Church and things. Lots of kids I know make fun of the Church. I live in Utah, so I know there are a lot more Mormons at my school than in other places. I just wish they would hold their standards high and act like examples instead of giving in to peer pressure.

*Erin Zundel
Sandy, Utah*

A warm-up

I would like to thank you all so much for all you do with this magazine. For a long time I could barely get myself to read the scriptures, but I could read the *New Era*. After a while the magazine became a sort of a warm-up for me, making me want to read the scriptures to gain even more from them. The stories have impacted my life so much, and I am forever indebted to the work put into this magazine.

*Matt Roney
Atlanta, Georgia (via e-mail)*

Excited to get it

I just want to say that your articles and stories are so good. You can always learn something from them. I especially loved the story “Just Hanging Out” (Aug. 2001). It taught me about dating and stuff. Thanks so much for making me excited to get the *New Era* every month.

*Rachelle Brewer
Snowlow, Arizona*

Questions I have

I just wanted to say how much I appreciate your magazine. Questions and Answers always help me because they are questions I have, and the youth give great answers. The stories are awesome. I love reading them because they are a large help in dealing with problems I have. Thank you so much!

*Katrina Dalton
Allen, Texas (via e-mail)*

“The stories are awesome. I love reading them because they are a large help in dealing with problems I have.”



Can help us

Thank you for writing the article “My Terrible, Horrible Day” (Sept. 2001). I know exactly how that girl felt because there are days when I feel the same. And I know the power of the priesthood can help us in our daily activities. When I have really bad problems, a blessing is all it takes to put me back on my feet again. I really like this story.

*Katrina Cox
North Las Vegas, Nevada (via e-mail)*

A wonderful gift

I want to thank you so much for “My Terrible, Horrible Day” (Sept. 2001). I read that story right before school started, and I was so nervous because I had three super-tough classes. It reminded me of the wonderful gift of the priesthood. I am so grateful I am a member of the Church, and that I have a worthy priesthood holder for my father.

*Heather Schultz
Westminster, California*

Wide open

I just want to thank you for “Open Your Mouth” in the October 2000 issue. As a missionary this article helped me understand the importance of opening my mouth. I love the *New Era* and will continue reading and pondering the messages in the articles.

*Elder Asuquo Nsiong
Nigeria Lagos Mission (via e-mail)*

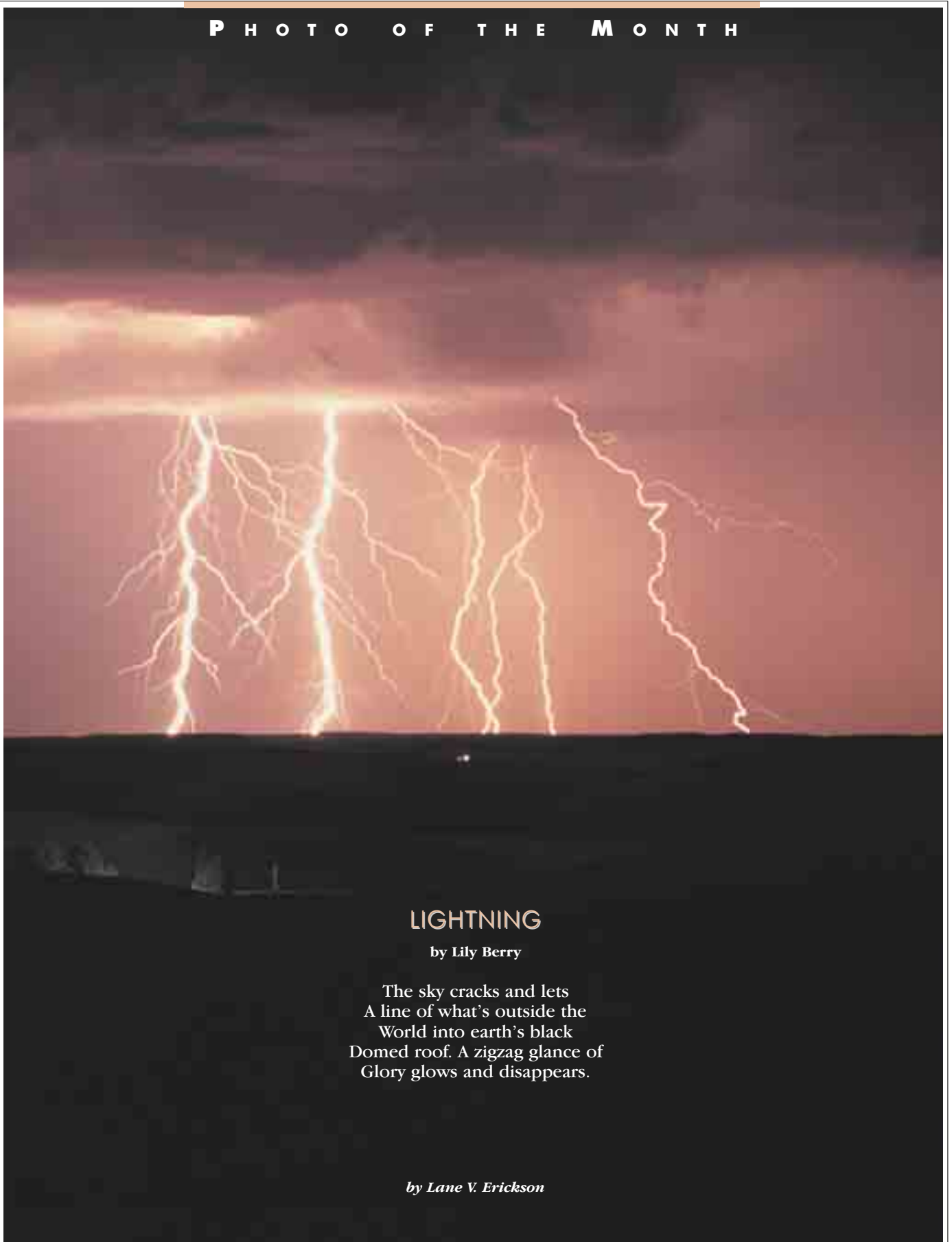
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Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.



LIGHTNING

by Lily Berry

The sky cracks and lets
A line of what's outside the
World into earth's black
Domed roof. A zigzag glance of
Glory glows and disappears.

by Lane V. Erickson



“Even if we cannot pick the flowers from our gardens to send to those who suffer, we can let feelings of love and support for our fellow beings dominate our lives as Jesus taught.”

*See “Flowers of Mercy,”
p. 10.*