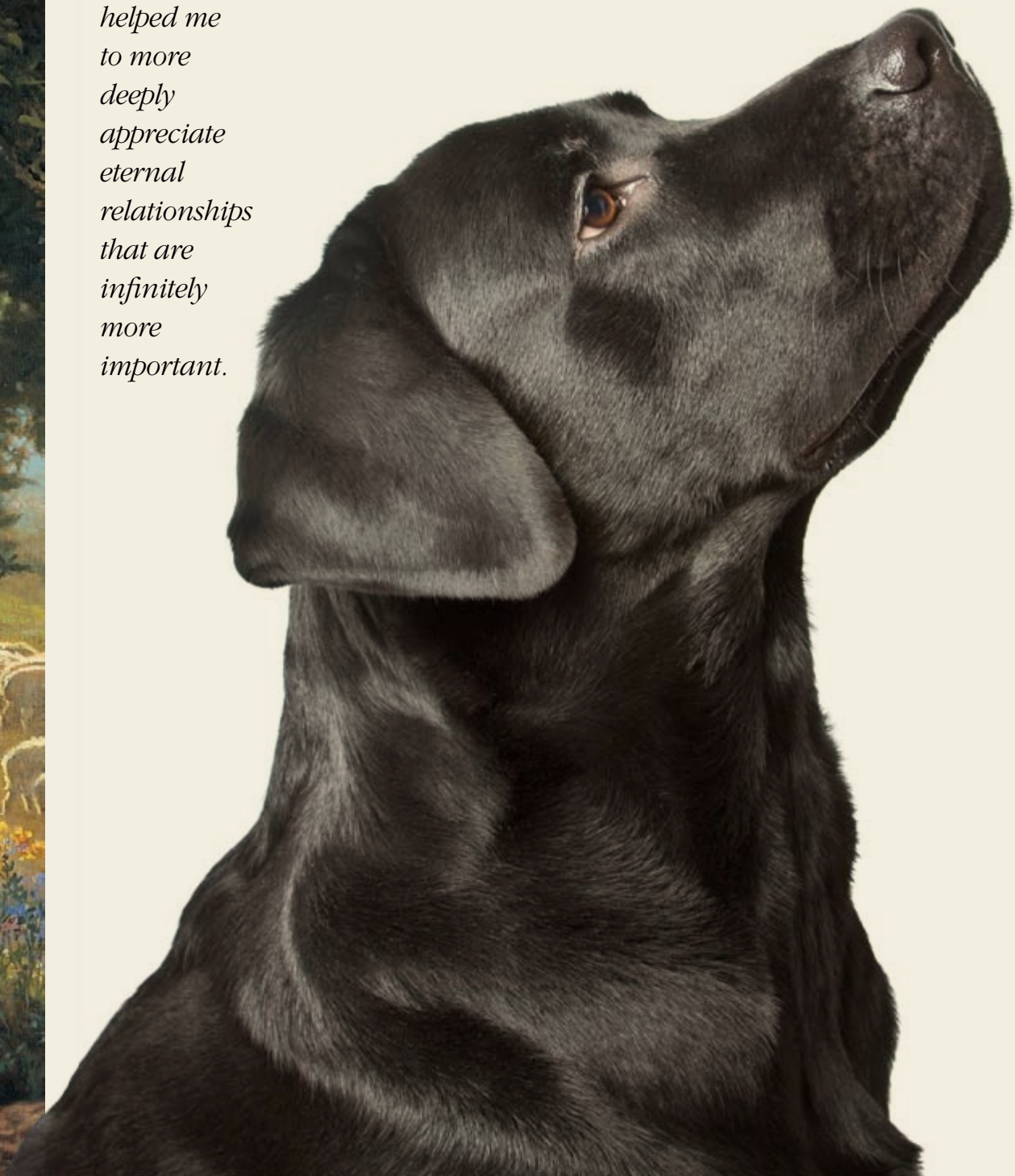
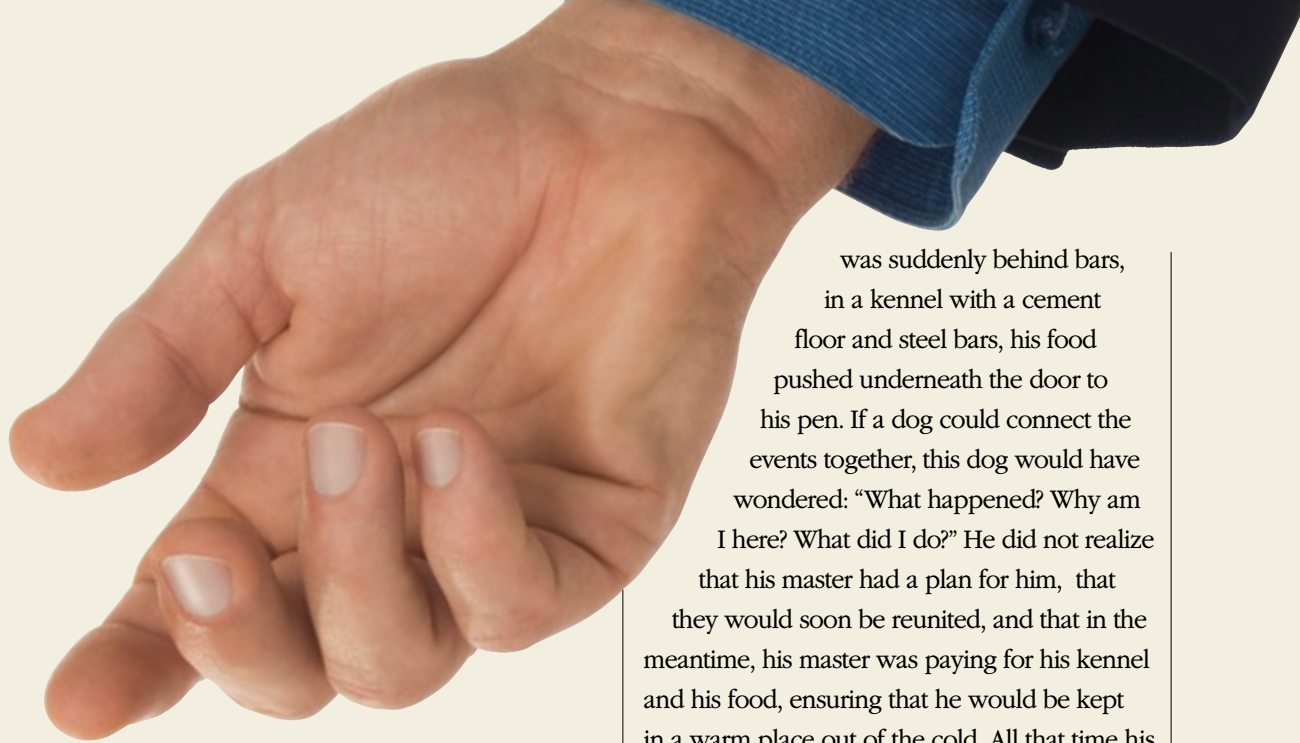


THE MASTER'S LOVE

*Watching a
Frenchman
and his
Labrador
retriever
helped me
to more
deeply
appreciate
eternal
relationships
that are
infinitely
more
important.*





While serving as a mission president in France, I would travel with Sister Andersen once a month to the airport to pick up the arriving missionaries.

On one occasion as we stood waiting outside of the baggage claim area, we met a very interesting Frenchman who was also waiting. The difference was that while we were waiting for missionaries, he was waiting for his dog.

He spoke fondly of his large, black Labrador retriever, with great affection and respect, almost as we would speak of one of our children. I could sense that he treated the animal with love and kindness. The man had been transferred to the city of Bordeaux and until he could get settled in the right apartment he had left his dog in a kennel in his previous city. Now things had been properly arranged, and the dog was arriving on the same plane as our missionaries.

In my imagination I thought of what had transpired—from the point of view of the dog. I imagined that he had been treated like a king in his master's home. He may have been allowed to jump on the sofas and sleep on the foot of his master's bed. Maybe he even had his own shelf in the refrigerator, stocked with his own special food.

Then one day, without any explanation, he

was suddenly behind bars, in a kennel with a cement floor and steel bars, his food pushed underneath the door to his pen. If a dog could connect the events together, this dog would have wondered: "What happened? Why am I here? What did I do?" He did not realize that his master had a plan for him, that they would soon be reunited, and that in the meantime, his master was paying for his kennel and his food, ensuring that he would be kept in a warm place out of the cold. All that time his master was preparing a place for him at an even finer house in Bordeaux.

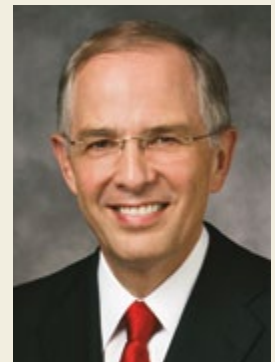
Suddenly, looking through the glass into the baggage area, we could see workers rolling out a large crate. We could hear the barking of the dog inside. I could tell he was frightened and anxious. Again, in my mind I could imagine two men arriving at the kennel one day, taking the dog, and putting him in the crate. Soon the Labrador found himself in the belly of an airplane. Again he must have wondered what was happening. I could imagine his fear.

Now, at last, the crate was in front of us. Workers opened the door, and out came the beautiful Labrador. First he was nervous. His head was up, he was alert, and he was ready to defend himself.

Then suddenly the eyes of the black Labrador met the eyes of his master. Immediately, the dog's behavior changed. His barking stopped and his tail started wagging. He jumped into the arms of his master and they embraced, a Frenchman and his dog reunited.

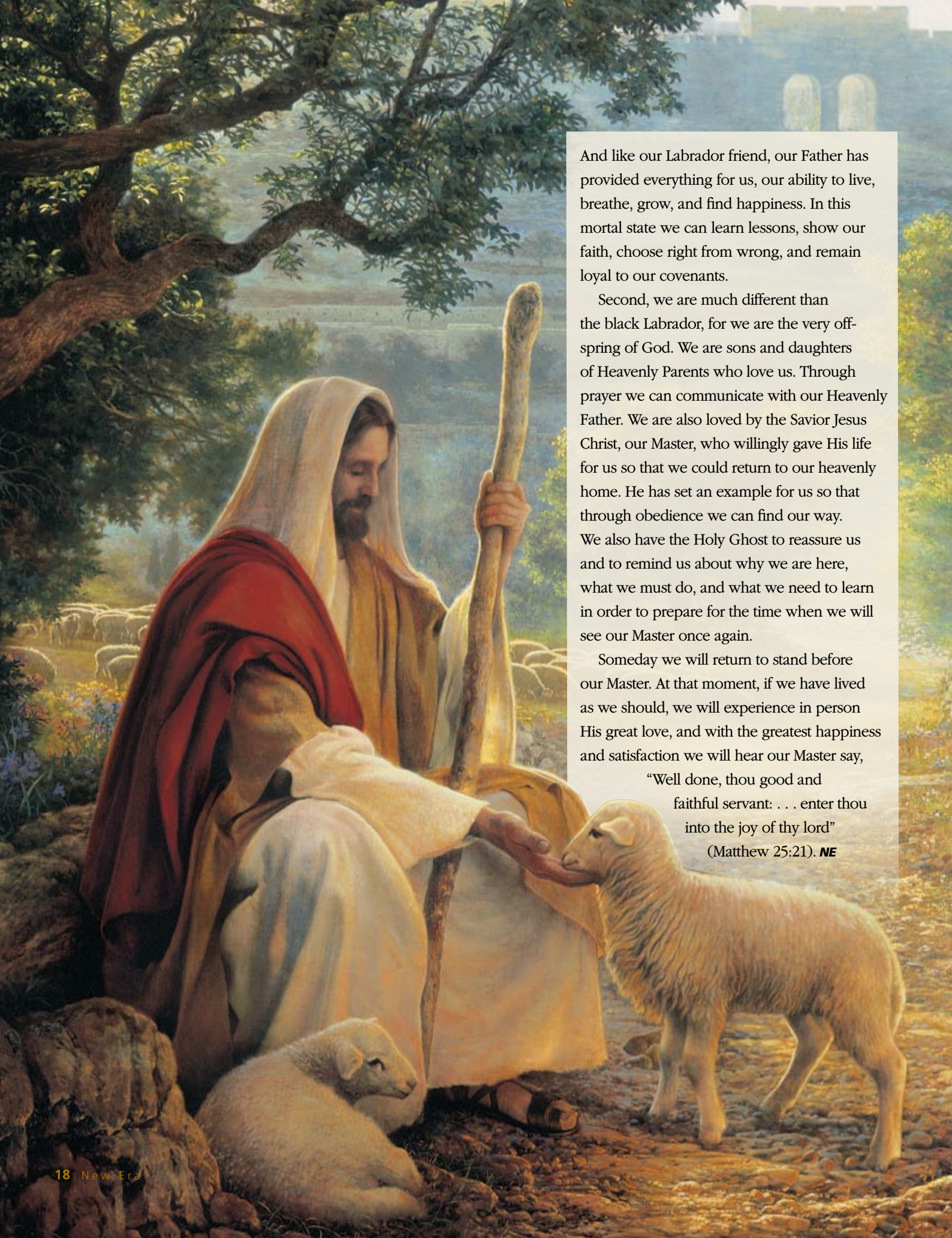
I have thought since that I learned two important lessons from this experience, as it pertains to our own experience here on earth.

First of all, we too are far from our heavenly home. Like the dog who went to the kennel, we are in a state that is not natural for us.



By Elder Neil L. Andersen

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



And like our Labrador friend, our Father has provided everything for us, our ability to live, breathe, grow, and find happiness. In this mortal state we can learn lessons, show our faith, choose right from wrong, and remain loyal to our covenants.

Second, we are much different than the black Labrador, for we are the very offspring of God. We are sons and daughters of Heavenly Parents who love us. Through prayer we can communicate with our Heavenly Father. We are also loved by the Savior Jesus Christ, our Master, who willingly gave His life for us so that we could return to our heavenly home. He has set an example for us so that through obedience we can find our way. We also have the Holy Ghost to reassure us and to remind us about why we are here, what we must do, and what we need to learn in order to prepare for the time when we will see our Master once again.

Someday we will return to stand before our Master. At that moment, if we have lived as we should, we will experience in person His great love, and with the greatest happiness and satisfaction we will hear our Master say,

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord”

(Matthew 25:21). **NE**