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**Cover:** Press Forward Like Joseph, p. 26  
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By Elder  
Dale G. Renlund  
Of the Quorum of the  
Twelve Apostles

# SPIRITUAL STABILITY

## *BUILDING AN UNSINKABLE SHIP*

*We need sufficient spiritual stability to successfully navigate our mortal lives and return safely to our heavenly home.*

In the early 17th century, Sweden's king, Gustav II Adolf, commissioned a warship that would be christened the *Vasa*. The ship represented a substantial outlay of resources, particularly the oak from which the vessel would be built. Gustav Adolf closely oversaw the construction process, attempting to ensure that the *Vasa* would fully realize his expectations.

After construction began, Gustav Adolf ordered the *Vasa* to be made longer. Because the width supports had already been built from precious oak, the king directed the builders to increase the ship's length without increasing its width. Although the shipwrights knew that doing so would compromise the *Vasa's* seaworthiness, they were hesitant to tell the king something they knew he did not want to hear. They complied. Gustav Adolf also insisted that this ship have not simply the customary single deck of guns but cannons on three decks, with the heaviest cannons on the upper deck. Again, against their better judgment, the shipwrights complied.

On August 10, 1628, the *Vasa* began its maiden voyage. After the *Vasa* left the harbor, a strong wind entered its sails, and the ship began to tip. Before long, "she heeled right over and water gushed in through the gun ports until she slowly went to the bottom under sail, pennants and all."<sup>1</sup> The *Vasa's* maiden voyage was about 4,200 feet (1,280 m).

Gustav Adolf's desire for an extravagant status symbol ruined the design of what would have been a magnificent sailing vessel, the mightiest warship of its time. The shipbuilders' reluctance to speak up—their fear of the king's displeasure—deprived the king of their knowledge and insight. All involved lost sight of the goals of the enterprise: to protect Sweden and to promote its interests abroad. A ship that attempts to defy the laws of physics is simply a boat that won't float.

For us to successfully navigate our mortal lives, we need sufficient spiritual stability to confront crosswinds and crosscurrents, make the necessary turns, and return safely to our heavenly home. There are things we can do to increase our spiritual stability. I will touch on four.





## Obeying God's Commandments

The first is obeying God's commandments. Just as the *Vasa* was subject to physical laws, we are all subject to spiritual laws. No one is exempt. We need to obey these spiritual laws, which we refer to as God's commandments.

Working with physical laws in the ship's construction might have felt restrictive to Gustav Adolf, but the *Vasa* would not have sunk before its mission started had it complied with these laws. Instead, it would have had the freedom and flexibility to accomplish what it was intended to do.

So, too, obedience to God's laws preserves our freedom, flexibility, and ability to achieve our potential. The commandments are not intended to restrict us. Rather, obedience leads to increased spiritual stability and long-term happiness.

Obedience is our choice. Jesus directed, "Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my commandments" (3 Nephi 15:10). It is that simple. Settle it. Decide now to be exactly obedient. Nothing will increase spiritual stability more. Nothing will give us greater freedom to accomplish our life's mission.

## Heeding Counsel and Becoming Lifelong Learners

Second, we need to pay attention and give heed to counsel from trusted sources and commit ourselves to becoming lifelong learners.

One of the pitfalls of gaining knowledge is the arrogance that can come when we think we know so much that there is nothing left to learn. We have all seen this in individuals who are too certain of their own brilliance. It is really hard to teach a know-it-all.

Mindful of this, and desirous to be a lifelong learner, President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has said, "I am still a child with lots to learn. Most folks can teach me something."<sup>2</sup> When he extended the call to me to be a General Authority, President Eyring taught me an important lesson. He said that when he hears someone tell a story that he has heard before or use a scripture that he is very familiar with, he asks himself, "Why is the Lord underlining that for me?" and "What have I yet to learn from that story or scripture?" If we wish to increase our spiritual stability, we will be willing to learn and will be sufficiently humble to accept guidance no matter our age and experience.

It really is our choice. We can listen to and heed counsel given to us by Church leaders, especially those we



Photographs of the ship *Vasa*

sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators; by parents; and by trusted friends—or not. We can seek to be lifelong learners—or not. We can increase our spiritual stability—or not. If we fail to increase our spiritual stability, we will become like the *Vasa*—a boat that won't float.

## Serving Others

Third, being outwardly directed, caring about others, and serving others increases our spiritual stability.

Eternity stays in clearer focus when we focus on others as we seek to help Heavenly Father's children. I have found it much easier to receive inspiration when I am praying to find out how I can help another than when I am simply praying for myself.

We may believe that at some future point we will be in a better situation to help. In reality, now is the time. We are mistaken if we think that it will be more convenient when we have more time, more money, or more anything to serve others. Regardless of circumstances, we have a choice. Will we help others or not? We flunk a significant test of mortality if we do not choose to help those in need. And, if we do help, we increase our own spiritual stability.

## Making Jesus Christ Our Foundation

Fourth, finally, and most important, our spiritual stability increases in proportion to the degree to which we establish Jesus Christ as our foundation.

Without Christ, we are driven like a vessel tossed about upon the waves. We have no power because we have no sail. We have no stability, especially in times of storm, because we have no anchor. We have no direction or purpose because we don't have anything with which to steer. We must make Christ our foundation.

In order to face, overcome, and be prepared for the crosswinds and crosscurrents of life, we must obey God's commandments; become humble, willing, and determined lifelong learners; serve others; and establish Jesus Christ as the foundation of our lives. As we do so we increase our spiritual stability. Unlike the *Vasa*, we will be able to return to safe harbor, having fulfilled our destiny. **NE**

*From a Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 16, 2014. For the full text, visit [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu).*

### NOTES

1. Letter from the Swedish Council of the Realm to King Gustav II Adolf; translation quoted in Richard O. Mason, "The *Vasa* Capsizes," [virtualschool.edu/mon/CaseStudies/Vasa/vasa.html](http://virtualschool.edu/mon/CaseStudies/Vasa/vasa.html). Many accounts of the *Vasa* exist; see, for instance, [vasamuseet.se/en](http://vasamuseet.se/en) for history and other links.
2. Henry B. Eyring, in Robert I. Eaton and Henry J. Eyring, *I Will Lead You Along: The Life of Henry B. Eyring* (2013), 409.

# WHEN LIFE HANDS YOU LEMONS, ARMOR UP

Don't go into battle unprepared. Let some lemons teach you how to apply God's armor.

## MATERIALS

- Two apples (red delicious work best, but any variety works)
- A halved lemon (or about a tablespoon of lemon juice)
- A knife and cutting board



You're minding your own business, going about your life, when out of nowhere a vicious beast attacks you! You want to charge it headfirst, but you realize that you've misplaced your helmet. The beast attacks you and you go to raise your shield, only to realize you left it at home. Dodging frantically, you reach for your trusty blade, only to panic when you see it far away from you, casually tossed in the roadside ditch. Is this the end for our young hero???

While our daily battles might not be as dramatic as the one above, we too are fighting for our lives every day against temptation and sin. To demonstrate the importance of putting on the armor of God, you can use this object lesson to teach your family in family home evening this week.

## PREPARATION

About 30 minutes before your lesson, cut one of the apples in half. Cover one half of the apple with the lemon juice. Keep these apple halves hidden during the first part of your lesson.

## OUR WEAK SPOT

**1.** Start your lesson by asking your family questions about armor. For example, what comes to mind when they think about armor? Medieval knights? Who uses armor today? Why?

**2.** Now you're going to make a quick subject change (don't worry, tell your family it still relates). Ask your family what bad things they were exposed to in the past week. Was someone unkind to your sister? Maybe your mom had to change the channel on the



TV when something inappropriate came on. Did your friends make fun of you for believing the way you do? What other things happened?

### PREPARING FOR BATTLE

**3.** While you're sharing your stories, cut your second apple in half. Squirt lemon juice on one half, just like you did during your preparation. Then, set the two halves of the apple side by side.

**4.** Read out loud Ephesians 6:11-18 and then Doctrine and Covenants 27:15-18. Talk with your family about the armor of God. What do the "breastplate of righteousness" and the other parts of armor signify? How can you put on the armor of God? Would the armor of God have helped with your bad situations in the last few weeks? How?

### PRESSING ONWARD

**5.** After sharing your thoughts about the armor of God, check back on your fruit (this works best if 10 minutes or so have passed). Not a lot has changed, right? Now bring out the apple you prepared earlier. One half of the original apple should look fine, but the other will be brown and unappetizing. Due to a process called oxidation, the half that didn't have lemon juice on it turned brownish because it came in contact with oxygen. Because you protected the other half with lemon juice, it resisted oxidizing (it didn't turn brown). The lemon juice acted like armor!

**6.** Now, compare the lemon juice and the armor of God. How are we like the two halves of the apple?

Just like the knight in the story, all too often we leave the house without being protected. Luckily, we can change that by turning to the Savior and His Atonement for help when we slip up. Through the repentance process, we can put on our armor again and help others to do the same. **NE**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER BOLLINGER



# YOUTH SPEAK OUT ON SEXUAL PURITY

*In the light of what Heavenly Father has revealed to us about marriage and intimacy, young people from England talk about the challenges and rewards of keeping their commitment to stay sexually pure.*



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY COLIN LIGERTWOOD

## TRUTHS FROM HEAVENLY FATHER ABOUT MARRIAGE AND INTIMACY



### For God's Plan to Thrive

"A family built on the marriage of a man and woman supplies the best setting for God's plan to thrive. . . .

"... It is in the matrimonial union of male and female as one that we attain

perhaps the most complete meaning of our having been made in the image of God—male and female. . . .

"... [Lucifer] attacks everything that is sacred about human sexuality, tearing it from the context of marriage with a seemingly infinite array of immoral thoughts and acts."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Why Marriage, Why Family," *Ensign*, May 2015, 52.

### Beautiful and Sacred

"Physical intimacy between husband and wife is beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife. God has commanded that sexual intimacy be reserved for marriage."

*For the Strength of Youth* (2011), 35.

We should avoid popular media that promote immorality and give a distorted and degrading view of sexuality.

ALMA R., 17, a priest: There's a lot of stuff about women having to be beautiful and men being muscled

to be accepted in society, which is, of course, wrong. The whole media is hyper-sexualized. It's everywhere—in magazines, on the Internet, tons of stuff. You just need to not look at it, because it'll bring you down.

SHAMYNE N., 18, a Laurel: Most sexual depictions are very dehumanizing, especially for women. Like music videos—the song could have really good lyrics, but it often has a man trying to have dominion over a woman or making the woman look like an object, trying to form us into something they think we should be. Usually they show people who are curvy and try to make us feel like we are not appealing.

JOSH P., 17, a priest: Things have changed in music and films from what they used to be. If you wanted to go looking for sexual material, it's easier to find, obviously. You're not necessarily frowned upon in society for going to find it, either. But we know it's harmful and we should avoid it.

We can be good examples and teach our peers that physical intimacy between a husband and wife is beautiful and sacred.

ALMA: Someone in school asked if in theory I would have sex, and I explained that I wouldn't unless we were married. She seemed to take it like it made sense to her.

JOSH: When you first meet people, it's like gossip—"Oh, this guy doesn't have sex before marriage." And as people mature through the years it's not as gossipy as that first time. They learn to get over it and just move on, really.

■ **ANA M., 17, a Laurel:** I've had times at school where a friend will say, "Oh, this happened over the weekend," and I'm like, "Oh, I would never do that." And I'll explain. Or if someone has found out that I'm a Mormon, they'll come and ask me questions about what I believe in, what my attitude is toward sexual purity. Most of them are like, "That's pretty cool, but I'd never be able to do it." They respect me for it. If I'm talking to someone who is "sexually active," they're like, "Whoa, how can you wait that long?" But then you have the other side of it where they're like, "Oh, cool. There aren't many people who do that anymore." Sometimes it's both—like, "That's a bit weird, but that's kind of cool."

■ **SHAMYNE:** I have to explain to my friends that as a member of the Church, I have standards, so we know not to go into a guy's bedroom or be left alone with him, for example. And some find such high morals quite difficult to understand. But there are some people who respect me for my standards, and I find that they actually think about marriage again, about family and what will happen in the future. Also, in school, my skirt and my tops are covering everything, so the way guys approach me and the way they approach other girls because of the way we're dressed is completely different. Most of the guys I meet don't disrespect me. And that is an even bigger push for me to stay modest.

While peers may have worldly attitudes about sex, we can stand strong in upholding the Lord's standard.

■ **ANA:** For most people in society, sex before marriage isn't a big deal. At my school, there is no rule whatsoever in their minds. Some people like the idea of abstinence before marriage, but they're not following through with it unless there's some religious background to it.

■ **JOSH:** Most of my friends are 17 or 18, so as they get older they tend to have more steady kinds of

relationships, including sexual relationships. For us, it's the same as with any situation that contradicts the social norms—it's having the decision made up in your mind before the situation arises. Having that kind of mind-set makes it so that when the situation arises, you can just bat it off as simple nonsense.

■ **SHAMYNE:** It's quite common to hear someone talking about having sex. There's not really much talk of people saying no or abstaining. It's normal in society for someone to walk out of the house wearing something revealing; it's normal to people for someone to be standing on a corner with some serious public displays of affection. It makes me feel a bit cringy. Nowadays a lot of people think you don't have to get married to move in with someone, which isn't right.

When others ridicule us for our standards, we can take a mature attitude and stand strong.

■ **SHAMYNE:** At school my friends talk about how they're looking forward to their first sexual experience, and I have to explain that my first sexual experience is not going to be until I'm married. They don't take it as well as they should; they're quite judgmental about it. And there are some people who think I'm all high-and-mighty. So you just have to say, "You know, that's your opinion. I'm not going to compromise my standards just so I can fit in with you or just so you can like me."

■ **JOSH:** If young people are getting ridiculed, I'd say to them that the people ridiculing them will mostly grow out of it. As people grow older, they'll mature and get over it. They'll know who you are, and they'll respect you for it.

■ **ANA:** I'm quite a confident person, and my standards are not going to change for someone else, so when it comes to ridiculing, I just explain to them, "Look, this is what I believe to be true, and you believe other things



to be true. I'm not forcing you to adopt my standards. That's my thing; you don't have to do it."

Many aspects of the gospel and the Church strengthen us in our commitment to be sexually pure.

ALMA: My patriarchal blessing actually helps quite a lot, because it helps me to know that I will find someone who has the same standards and who is good for me, whom I can trust. General conference usually helps a lot, because of all the positive messages. Reading the *New Era* helps as well. It's got a lot of relatable stories, which you can read and empathize with people in them. My parents have had a huge impact on me and my standards. A lot

of it comes from making a decision and sticking to it. I've made it a personal goal to save myself till marriage.

JOSH: There are also videos, like the one with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland called "Stay within the Lines" (see [lds.org/go/linesNE416](https://lds.org/go/linesNE416)). That one's struck a chord with me.

ANA: At different times things hit you differently. There are some lessons at church where you're really just in tune with it and it hits you. Sometimes it's something a leader says. And there are other times where a general conference talk is really strengthening and motivating. Scriptures as well. You might read the same scripture over and over again, but there might be a time where you read it and it means something completely different or it hits you in a different way.

It's worth it to stay pure.

JOSH: If young people feel pressured into doing anything, it's definitely not worth going down that line just to fit in, to cave in to the peer pressure.

I know that even though people may be pressuring you, it's definitely worth it to stay strong, to resist the peer pressure, so you can be pure and worthy to serve a mission and get married in the temple.

ANA: It will be worth it. The main thing is to be worthy to go to the temple, because as a member of the Church, that's one of the big things that you always want to be is temple worthy. And to be worthy just makes you feel good about yourself.

SHAMYNE: I want to go on a mission soon, and I've been reading my scriptures a lot and going out teaching with the sister missionaries to prepare myself. I am still young; I have a lot to look forward to. I want to be married in the temple, and I want to be happy. NE



#### Speak Out

Share why you choose to be pure and read others' stories at [lds.org/go/pureNE416](https://lds.org/go/pureNE416). You can also watch a video to see what other youth say about staying sexually pure at [lds.org/go/chooseNE416](https://lds.org/go/chooseNE416).



# DON'T BE DAZZLED BY DECEPTION

*Learn how to see the sham behind the glam.*

By David Dickson  
Church Magazines

Six worlds were about to get ROCKED! Specifically, the individual worlds of my family and myself.

I've always had a strange obsession with glow sticks (let the raised eyebrows commence), and now I had a way to create my very own, insanely awesome, *massive* glow stick with a few basic ingredients from the store. This handy bit of knowledge came compliments of an Internet video I'd seen earlier that day.

"Prepare to be amazed!" I said as my family crowded into a dark bathroom for the science experiment. I combined the

mystical-yet-everyday ingredients of hydrogen peroxide, baking soda, and a soft drink into a container. Then I turned out the lights and sat back to watch the show.

One problem. Combining those three ingredients doesn't produce any sort of glow whatsoever. Zero, zilch, nada.

It was a hoax. I found out later that the people who made this video secretly added—wait for it—a glow stick to their bogus science gimmick. They set out to deceive people and got me good. My family and I all felt disappointment as we realized we'd been duped.



## SUNDAY LESSONS

This month's topic:  
**The Apostasy and  
the Restoration**



### BEWARE THE RAZZLE DAZZLE

Deceptions can certainly seem exciting and appealing. Indeed, that's the point. Deceivers almost universally try to make something appear better than it really is.

Yet all too often there's much more at stake than a neat science trick that falls flat. The consequences can be eternal.

“Satan’s methods of deception are enticing: music, movies and other media, and the glitter of a good time,” taught Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “When Satan’s lies succeed in deceiving us, we become vulnerable to his power.”<sup>1</sup>

The glitter and draw of deceptions—including the spiritual ones—often sparkle on the outside like a freshly waxed Lamborghini. It’s understandable to be intrigued by them. But the good news is you’re not alone in trying to see past these deceptions.

### HOW TO SEE CLEARLY

How, then, do we avoid getting tricked? Elder Oaks further taught, “The Holy Ghost will protect us against being deceived, but to realize that wonderful blessing we must always do the things necessary to retain that Spirit.”<sup>2</sup>

And boy do we need that spiritual help! There are so many voices out there. We’re constantly blasted with opinions, beliefs, and assertions. Often these opinionated assertions are shoved at us under the guise of pure fact. “You must never eat this one particular food, or else!”

Ever been baffled by all that noise? Even when it came to something really important? Joseph Smith was certainly confused while investigating religion in his youth: “In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?” (Joseph Smith—History 1:10).

So, you’re in good company if you sometimes find yourself puzzled by the world around you

and looking for answers. But, like Joseph Smith, we too can find direction and clarity if we seek heaven's help.

"Personal revelation can be honed to become spiritual discernment," taught President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "The gift of spiritual discernment is a supernal gift. It allows members of the Church to see things not visible and to feel things not tangible."<sup>3</sup>

"THE **gift of spiritual discernment** IS A SUPERNAL GIFT. IT **allows members** OF THE CHURCH **to see** THINGS NOT VISIBLE **and to feel** THINGS NOT TANGIBLE."

#### NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, "Be Not Deceived," *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 43.
2. Dallin H. Oaks, "Be Not Deceived," 46.
3. Russell M. Nelson, "Ask, Seek, Knock," *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 82–83.
4. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "It Works Wonderfully!" *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 20.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

Once you're able to see past those highly polished deceptions, don't be surprised if the plain and simple truth seems, well, a bit plain. At least at first glance.

"Sometimes the truth may just seem too straightforward, too plain, and too simple for us to fully appreciate its great value," taught President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. "So we set aside what we have experienced and know to be true in pursuit of more mysterious or complicated information. Hopefully we will learn that when we chase after shadows, we are pursuing matters that have little substance and value."<sup>4</sup>

The fact of the matter is, plain-and-simple spiritual truths are never plain or boring. When we follow God's commandments and live as He wants us to, *that's* when life becomes truly dazzling.

So shine on. NE

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION

### THINGS TO PONDER FOR SUNDAY

- How can you learn to seek revelation and obtain answers to your questions?
- What can you do to better recognize and discern promptings from the Holy Ghost?

### THINGS YOU MIGHT DO

- Study scriptures about revelation and the Holy Ghost.
- Share your stories of how revelation helped you find answers at [lds.org/go/answersNE416](https://www.lds.org/go/answersNE416).

MORMONAD

# PIECE OF FAKE?

Satan wants us to trade true joy for a mere illusion of happiness that will never satisfy.

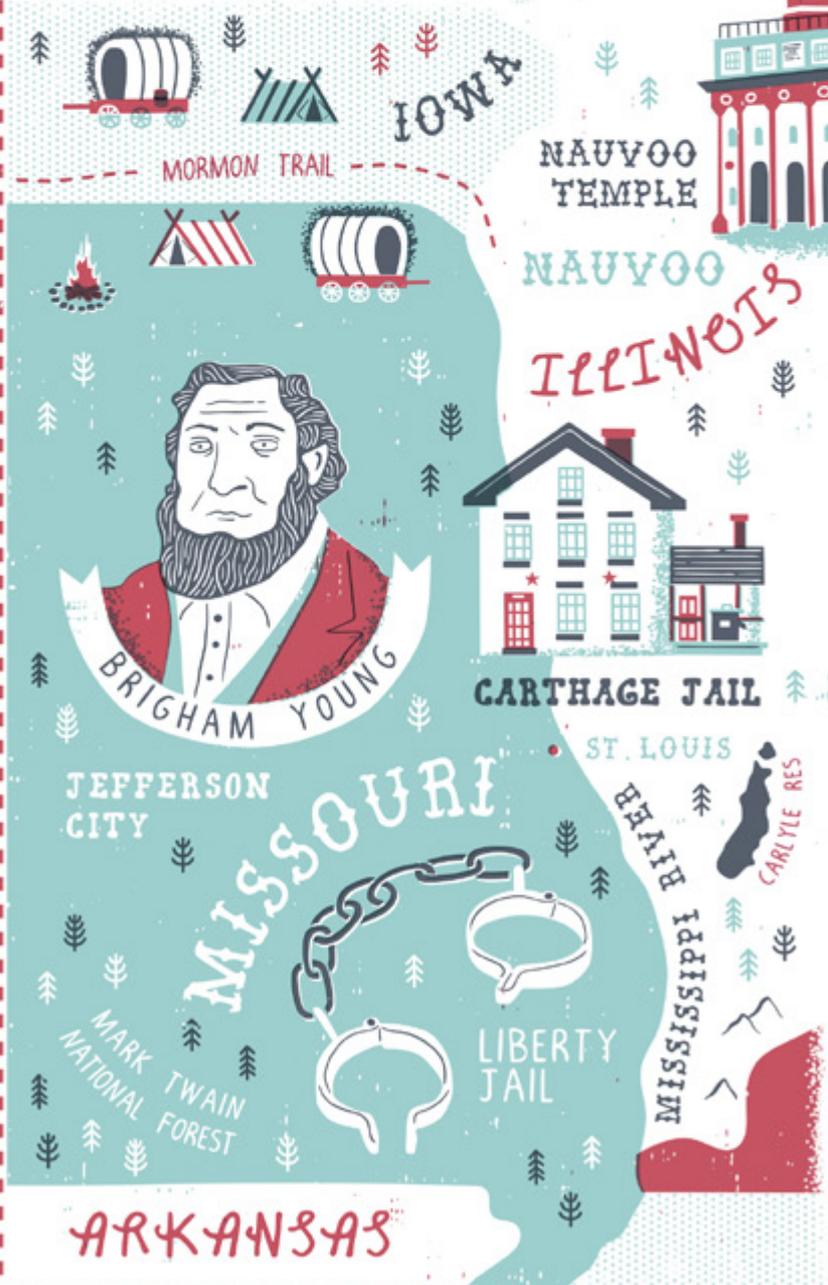
Don't take a single bite.

(See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "You Can Do It Now!" *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 56.)



# THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MORMONS

The textbook said some things about the Church that seemed wrong, but I had to find out for myself—and my classmates.



By Elise Mackley

High school. A necessary evil, I guess. Well, it's not really evil, but the homework is. Especially in history. In my U.S. history class we'd learned about the Pilgrims and Puritans, the Founding Fathers, and the expansion from the original colonies. It all sounded familiar.

But when we got to the part about Manifest Destiny and the role Mormons played in the settlement of the West, I couldn't believe what I was reading. I knew that there were some controversial events and even controversial figures in Church history, but it seemed like the authors of my textbook were presenting the most negative interpretation possible rather than a factual overview.

"Mom, is this really true?" I asked.

I pointed to the page I was on, and my mom read the first paragraph and then stopped. "Wow," she said. "Where did they come up with that information?"

The book had no footnotes, so we started checking some of the statements. It took hours,



but we checked in the Doctrine and Covenants, cross-checked manuals online at [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org), and found original documents at [JosephSmithPapers.org](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org). It was so cool to see the handwritten petition for redress, which Joseph Smith personally delivered to President Martin Van Buren (President of the United States) and to learn more about what really forced the Saints to leave Missouri and settle in Nauvoo. We also searched for a few of the quotes and found more original documents online at the Illinois and Missouri State Historical Societies. They showed what the textbook had taken out of context.

My high school has over 1,600 students, and I'm one of only two Mormons. I didn't want what we were reading to be the only thing the kids in my class ever learned about the Church. (I also checked and found out that this U.S. history book was first published in 1981, which means thousands of high school students had been taught false information.)

I'm not the type to draw attention to myself, but because I'd found out that so much of what was in our textbook was wrong, I decided to ask my teacher if he would let me make a presentation to my class. My mom

helped me type up the corrections, but when I showed my teacher the pages of information, he just glanced at them and said, "When authors have to cover 80 years of history in a couple of paragraphs, they aren't going to be able to include all the details."

I was really disappointed. I knew I could talk with my friends and point out specific errors, but there was no way for me to help the 25 other kids in my class—not to mention the kids in my teacher's other classes—understand the truth about Mormons. I didn't know what to do.

A week later my teacher changed his mind. He'd actually read the information I'd given him and realized that the authors hadn't just skipped parts of Church history or shown one side of it; they'd actually made up things that weren't even based on the truth. He wanted our class to know what was real, and he even wanted to publish what I'd given him so all the teachers in our school district could use it as a resource!

Like the scriptures say, even a little candle, when set on a hill, can give a lot of light (see Matthew 5:14–16). **NE**  
*Elise Mackley lives in Washington, USA.*



WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A MEMBER OF

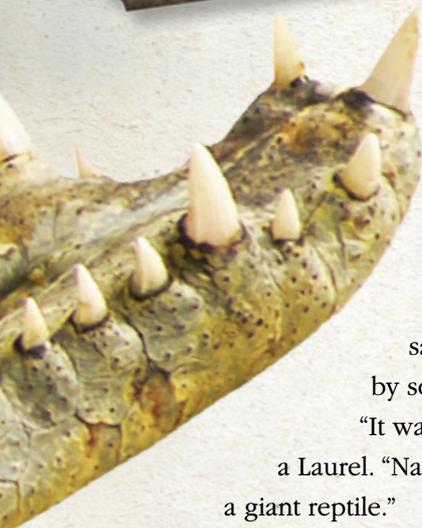
THE CHURCH IN

LOUISIANA,

USA?



**GATORS AND BOARS  
AND SERVICE, OH MY!**



**E**ver watch a hungry alligator leap from the water in a feeding frenzy just a few feet from your face?

Good times, right there. At least, good times if you're safe in a boat and surrounded by some of your closest friends. "It was crazy!" says Arizona H., a Laurel. "Nature's beautiful, even if it's a giant reptile."

You know you're in good hands when your Mutual activity involves ginormous reptiles and wild boars crashing through the swamp around you. For those of us living in more swamp-challenged climates, here's a quick glimpse at what it's like to be a member of the Church in Louisiana, USA.

**LIVING IN THE BIBLE BELT**

In an area with large high schools (think 2,000 students or so), there are only around six or seven LDS students in each of the two high schools included in this ward's boundaries.

"Down here is in the Bible Belt," says Jordan D., a Laurel. "We get called out on our standards a lot. Like the dating standard—they don't get that one at all. But tea and coffee—that's the worst."

In her high school, sweet tea is provided in the cafeteria by the jugful, not to mention all the tea in the vending machines. As she puts it, "Kids drink tea and coffee all day, every day." And a lot of her friends at school don't understand why she doesn't.

Sometimes those friends try to get her to drink tea along with them. "We all have our light that people can see, but they can't understand it," Jordan says. "So they're always watching."

Elizabeth L., a Mia Maid, added that "a lot of people aren't really familiar with our religion. There's only one LDS church building in our town, but on every corner there's a church of a different faith."

So yes, there are lots of different churches. But do you know what else that means? Lots of religious conviction! You can hardly attend a public event, from sports to



graduation ceremonies, that doesn't include at least a prayer.

And that famous southern hospitality? Alive and well. "Everyone is so nice," says Arizona. "If you're in a store and drop something, there are three people helping you to pick it up."

Even though they stick out in some ways because of their beliefs, these LDS youth have been able to find common ground with friends of different faiths.

"I've made friends of other faiths who have the same standards as me. They want to be modest because that's who they are," says Arizona. "Some of my friends believe different things from me, and that's OK. The gospel of Jesus Christ allows us to deal with challenges, even if it's in different churches."

### SERVING A WEEK IN ONE DAY

Several hours' drive from their area is the closest bishops' storehouse. The 13 youth in their ward wanted to head down for a service project. This particular storehouse serves a massive geographical area, providing food

and other necessities—including after hurricanes and other natural disasters.

"It was really spiritual," Elizabeth says. "We all got together and started working. It was pretty cool how all of us got so much done so fast."

The youth scrubbed food bins, bagged food, cleaned the delivery truck, did yard work, and helped in a dozen other ways.

"I had never been to a bishops' storehouse," Arizona says. "There are so many parts that make up a bishops' storehouse, it's amazing. I thought it was a big room with food in



it. It's so much more." Part of that "so much more" includes disaster relief gear like generators and blankets. "During Hurricane Katrina tons of people came needing help."

The youth service project was a massive success. So successful, in fact, that the senior missionary couple working at the storehouse that day figured the youth probably banged out a week's worth of service in a few hours.

So . . . what to do with the rest of the day?



## ADVENTURING WITH FRIENDS

Now we're back to those leaping alligators. When the youth planned the big service project at the storehouse, they thought they'd take advantage of the unique part of the world they live in at the same time.

"It's really pretty here," says Arizona. "Our backyard is part swamp, part lake. It's awesome."

After the service project, they still had time for a swamp tour. And yes, those swamps are full of swamp critters you wouldn't want to bump into while out on a brisk swim. But from within the safety of a tour boat? Bring it!

The tour guide would entice the alligators near the boat with marshmallows and hot dogs. "We were *so close* to the animals," Jordan says.

Then came time for the boars. The tour guide lured them from the trees with a shrill call. "I thought he was making a Wookiee call," Arizona says. Responding to the weird sound, the boars came charging out of the trees to get their share of the food haul.

"I think the world revolves around marshmallows," Arizona added.

## PULLING TOGETHER

Activities like the swamp tour and service project are only a small sample of how these youth stay connected. "I like how in my ward

all of the youth are really close," Jordan says. "We're a small group and we know each other better."

As a bonus, being in a tight-knit group like that is the best way to fend off a swarm of gators. Just in case. **NE**



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF RACHEL CLARK. PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK



# SHOCK, SORROW, & GOD'S PLAN

Through the most *devastating experience* of my life, I felt that *Heavenly Father was with me* during my entire journey.

By Paola Çajupi

It was an early morning in 2008 when my mother woke me up to go to school. I was really happy that morning, but I didn't know that it would turn into the worst day of my life or the last time I would be with her. I didn't finish all my classes that day because a friend of our family picked me up and told me that my mom had killed herself. I was only 12 years old.

I thought, "How can I live without my mother?" She was my best friend.

I cried for months. I didn't like going to school because the other children treated me differently and felt sorry for me. I had no clue what I was supposed to do; I only knew I had to be strong for everyone else.

One day, five or six months after my mom's death, I was alone in my room by the window, crying, trying to understand what I was here for. Suddenly I heard a voice in my head: "You are my daughter; I won't let you suffer." I knew it was God. But it surprised me because I didn't believe in Him anymore, especially since I felt that it was God who had taken my mother from me. Even though I didn't know what He meant, I felt safe.

Three years later I went to Rome, Italy, to visit my uncle. He kept telling me about this church he went to. One Sunday, he took me with him. I will always

remember walking toward the church's doors for the first time and feeling the love of Heavenly Father when I went in. It felt like home.

I started going to church every single Sunday and to every activity during the week. I loved being with the youth of the Church. They made me happier. They thought and believed in the same things that I did. Then, after three months, my summer holiday finished and I had to go back to Albania.

When I returned home, I told my dad about the feelings I'd had and how happy I'd felt during those three months going to Church activities. He didn't like it. He told me he wouldn't allow me to continue to go to church. So I would have to be patient for the next three years until I turned 18 years old. Then I could decide for myself and be baptized.

During this time I was blessed with so many people who would tell me about what they learned each Sunday at church. One of those people was Stephanie. She'd been living in Italy when my uncle joined the Church, but she had returned to her home in the United States. My uncle thought it would be good for us to write to each other, so I added her as a friend on Facebook.

Even though we'd never met in person, I will always be grateful to her for helping me build my faith and learn more about the gospel of Jesus Christ. She wrote to me almost every Sunday and told me everything she learned in church and then would answer my questions. She was a great friend to me.

Finally, after years of being patient, I was baptized just two days after my 18th birthday. And soon I will share with my mother the happiness I felt that day, because I will be baptized for her. I know she will be proud of the life I have chosen.

I feel blessed by Heavenly Father because He was with me during my entire journey in so many ways. I just had to wait and be patient because He had a plan for me. He's the one who gave me strength to go through all the challenges I faced. He was always there, helping me be happier. **NE**

*Paola Çajupi lives in Albania.*





# “I’LL GO SERVE”

Elder Rasband, a new member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, learned as a young man that callings come from the Lord.



When Elder Ronald A. Rasband was 19, he couldn't wait to serve a mission. Hoping to go where his father and brother had served, he excitedly opened his mission call as soon as it arrived.

“I thought I was going to Germany,” he recalls.

But he wasn't. Instead, he had been called to the Eastern States Mission, headquartered in New York City, USA.

Disappointed, he went downstairs to his bedroom to see if he could gain a testimony of his call. He knelt by his bed, said a prayer, and randomly opened his scriptures to section 100 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

“Behold, and lo,” he read, “I have much people in this place, in the regions round about; and an effectual door shall be opened in the regions round about in this *eastern land*.”

“Therefore, I, the Lord, have suffered you to come unto this place; for thus it was expedient in me for the salvation of souls” (D&C 100:3–4; emphasis added).

Immediately, the Holy Ghost confirmed that his mission call was no mistake.

“I knew then,” Elder Rasband recalls. “I quickly changed my focus from being hugely disappointed to the message I had received from the Lord: ‘Germany is not where I’ve

called you. I’ve called you to the eastern land. Go there and open your mouth, and I’ll give you success.’”

That’s just what happened.

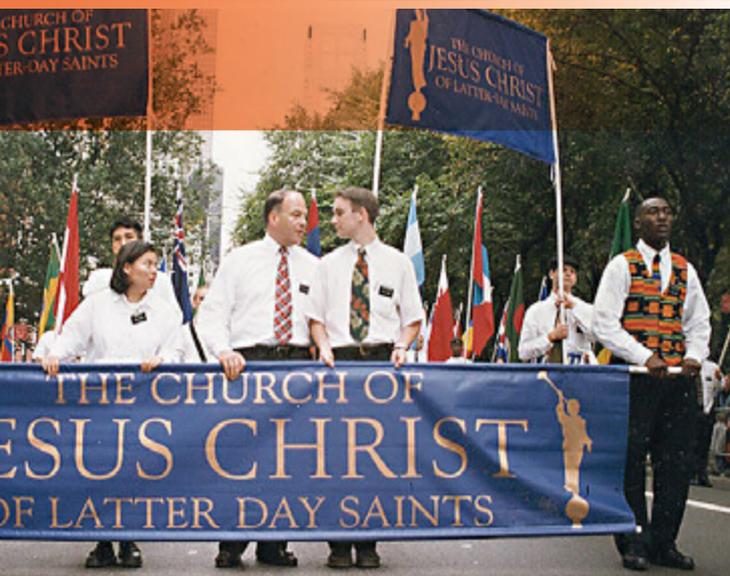
“The Lord blessed me with many miraculous, faith-promoting experiences,” he says. “My mission was huge for my spiritual life.”

That spiritual experience Elder Rasband had at home was the first of many such experiences he has had over the years. And his mission to the Eastern States was the first of many Church callings that would take him places he never expected to go.

With each calling—as a teacher, bishop, stake high councilor, mission president, member of the Seventy, and now as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ—Elder Rasband has accepted the Lord’s will and relied on His Spirit as he has served God’s children.

## PUTTING THE LORD FIRST

Elder Rasband was born February 6, 1951, in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. His childhood centered on Sunday meetings, Church sports, Scouting, odd jobs, and family. His mother taught him to love the scriptures while his father



PHOTOGRAPH OF NEW YORK CITY FROM THINKSTOCK. PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF ELDER RASBAND AND SISTER RASBAND. PHOTOGRAPH OF ELDER RASBAND AND SISTER RASBAND AT THE NEW YORK CITY COLUMBUS DAY PARADE, 1998. ELDER RASBAND AND SISTER RASBAND ON THEIR WEDDING DAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1973. AFTER BEING SUSTAINED AS AN APOSTLE, OCTOBER 3, 2015. ELDER AND SISTER RASBAND WITH MEMBERS IN MUMBAI, INDIA, NOVEMBER 18, 2015.

taught him the virtues of hard work. As a young man, Ron had a natural ability to lead and delegate. Those abilities proved essential when he became a father, a Church leader, and the president of a large chemical corporation.

When Ron married his wife, Melanie, in the Salt Lake Temple on September 4, 1973, they decided to always put the Lord first in their marriage and family. That commitment was tested in 1996. Ron was in the middle of a successful career when he was called to return to New York—this time as president of the New York New York North Mission. Remembering the lesson he had learned as a young man, he immediately quit his job to accept the call.

“You want me to go serve,” he said to Heavenly Father, “then I’ll go serve.”

As a mission president, he remembered another lesson—one he had learned from his professional experience: “People are more important than anything else.”<sup>1</sup>

Elder Rasband and his wife returned to Utah in 1999 but were home for less than a year when he was called as a General Authority Seventy. As a member of the Seventy, he served as a counselor in the Europe Central Area Presidency, helping to oversee the work in 39 nations.

He also supervised several areas in the United States and served as Executive Director of the Temple Department and as Senior President of the Seventy.

### HE LIVES!

When President Thomas S. Monson called Elder Rasband to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in October 2015, he assured him, “This calling comes from the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

Elder Rasband was overwhelmed and humbled, but he accepted the Lord’s will. And though he said he has much to learn as an Apostle, there’s one aspect of his new calling he can already magnify: “I can bear testimony ‘of the name of Christ in all the world’ (D&C 107:23). He lives! I bear that testimony to you with all the power and efficacy of my new assignment.”<sup>3</sup> **NE**

### NOTES

1. In “Elder Ronald A. Rasband,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 135.
2. Thomas S. Monson, quoted in Ronald A. Rasband, press conference, Oct. 3, 2015.
3. Ronald A. Rasband, testimony, Priesthood and Family Department devotional, Dec. 1, 2015.





# PRESS FORWARD LIKE JOSEPH

By Mackenzie Brown

*Stories from the Prophet Joseph Smith's life  
can give you courage.*

**I**t's easy to read stories about Joseph Smith and think that we could never be as strong and faithful as he was. But the truth is that as a person, he wasn't so different from us, and many of the trials he faced were in some ways very similar to what we face today.

What made Joseph so faithful wasn't just his dedication and courage, but also his willingness to press forward with steadfastness in Christ even when things looked bleak. Here are six examples of when Joseph pressed forward when it would've seemed easier just to give up. As you read the examples, think about how you too can press forward through challenges you face in your life.





“If any of you lack wisdom,  
let him ask of God.”

—James 1:5

## PRESSING FORWARD THROUGH DARK TIMES

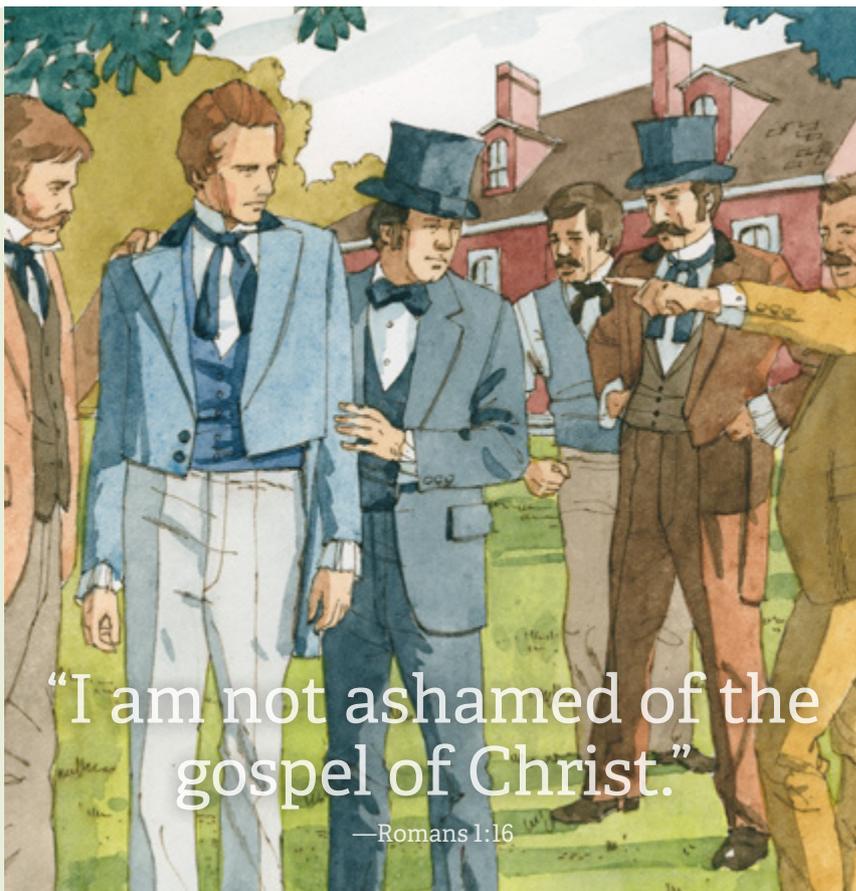
When Joseph was young, there was a lot of confusion and contention about religion. That made choosing a Church really hard. After he read James 1:5, he decided to act in faith and trust that God would answer his prayer. When Joseph went into the grove to pray, he was immediately attacked by a dark force. Joseph explained, “But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction . . . , I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16). God the Father and Jesus Christ came, and Their light immediately drove back the darkness.

Sometimes life can feel hard. We might even feel like we’re surrounded by darkness. Joseph’s experience teaches us that light is more powerful than darkness, God is more powerful than Satan, and if we press forward in faith and call upon God for help, He will comfort us, strengthen us, and help us overcome any darkness. (See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Hope of God’s Light,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 70.)

## PRESSING FORWARD THROUGH PERSONAL ATTACKS

After the First Vision, Joseph began sharing his experience with others. To his surprise, many people ridiculed him, mocked him, and basically told him he was deceived or crazy. But Joseph remained true to his testimony. He said, “I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it” (Joseph Smith—History 1:25).

It’s becoming more and more common today for people to mock and ridicule Church members for their faith. But, like Joseph, we can press forward by strengthening our testimony in Jesus Christ. With faith in Him, we can have the courage to stand up for our beliefs, even when they’re not popular (see Romans 1:16).



“I am not ashamed of the  
gospel of Christ.”

—Romans 1:16



“A merry heart maketh a  
cheerful countenance.”

—Proverbs 15:13

## PRESSING FORWARD AND HAVING FUN

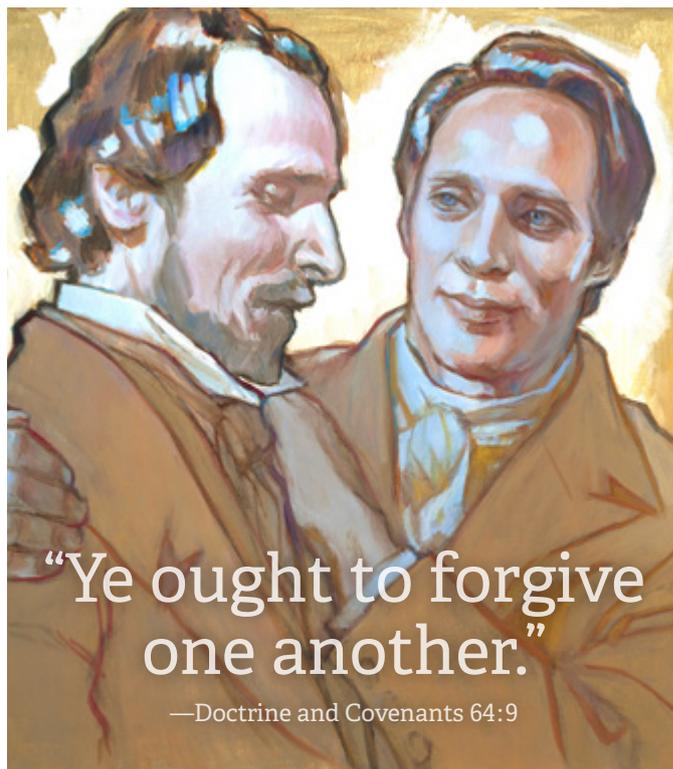
Joseph might have been serious when he preached the gospel, but he also loved to have fun. He described himself as having a “native cheery temperament” (Joseph Smith—History 1:28), which came out when he played pulling sticks and other games—especially with children.

For a lot of youth today, it can be tough to find time to have fun when we are busy with school and homework. Like Joseph, don’t forget to have fun, exercise, and enjoy life! (See Thomas S. Monson, “Finding Joy in the Journey,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 84; see also Proverbs 15:13.)

## PRESSING FORWARD AND FORGIVING OTHERS

Joseph admitted time and again that he wasn't perfect, but some of his friends started to doubt that he was even a prophet of God. They apostatized and some even attacked him, like the time when some of the congregation got together with mobs and tarred and feathered Joseph and Sidney Rigdon near Kirtland, Ohio. Through all the betrayals, Joseph never strayed from the teachings of the gospel. Following Jesus Christ's example, Joseph frequently forgave those who persecuted him and showed love to his enemies (see *History of the Church*, 1:261–65).

Like Joseph, we probably have a lot of experience being forgiven by God for our sins, but our progress can stall if we don't forgive others for wrongs they have done to us. As we forgive others, the Lord will guide us, give us peace, and bless us, helping us to press forward with faith, confidence, and joy. (See D&C 64:9–10.)



“Ye ought to forgive  
one another.”

—Doctrine and Covenants 64:9

FRIENDS AT FIRST SHALL BE FRIENDS AT LAST. BY ROSE DATOC DALL; JOHN THE BAPTIST, APPEARING TO JOSEPH SMITH AND OLIVER COWDERY, BY DEL PARSON; JOSEPH REPENTING, BY DAN BURR



“The Holy Ghost . . . will  
show unto you all things  
what ye should do.”

—2 Nephi 32:5

## PRESSING FORWARD WITH SCRIPTURE STUDY AND PRAYER

When Joseph was translating the Book of Mormon with Oliver Cowdery, they came across a passage of scripture that talked about baptism. The two men felt a desire to be baptized themselves, so they went before the Lord in prayer. Because of their faith, they were visited by John the Baptist and given the Aaronic Priesthood. Joseph and Oliver were then directed to baptize each other and later received the gift of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 13; Joseph Smith—History 1:68–73).

Like Joseph, we can seek answers to our questions by searching the scriptures and praying in faith to know how to apply the teachings. We can receive personalized revelation that applies directly to our lives and can teach us what we need to do to progress in our journey back to Heavenly Father. (See 2 Nephi 32:3, 5.)



“God is merciful; therefore,  
repent of that  
which thou hast done.”

—Doctrine and Covenants 3:10

## PRESSING FORWARD AND REPENTING

When Joseph began translating the Book of Mormon, Martin Harris was his scribe. Martin’s wife didn’t believe in the golden plates, so Martin begged Joseph to allow him to take the first 116 pages of the manuscript home to show his wife. Joseph asked the Lord several times for permission and was told no twice before a final yes.

Martin borrowed the pages but eventually lost them. As a result, Joseph was rebuked by the Lord and lost the privilege of translation for a season. But, after he repented and learned a valuable lesson about obedience, he was again granted the ability to translate (see D&C 3, 10).

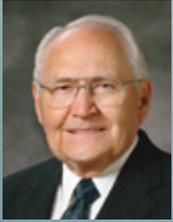
Like Joseph, we sometimes make mistakes. Sometimes we “[fear] man more than God” (D&C 3:7). God gave us the gift of His Son so that we, too, could repent. As we repent and turn back to God, He will forgive us and help us fulfill our missions (see D&C 3:10.) **NE**

*Mackenzie Brown lives in Utah, USA.*



**You’re Probably More Like  
Joseph Than You Think**

Have you had experiences like Joseph’s?  
Share them and read stories of others at  
[lds.org/go/JosephNE416](https://lds.org/go/JosephNE416).



By Elder  
L. Tom Perry  
(1922-2015)

Of the Quorum  
of the Twelve  
Apostles

A large, weathered metal anchor is shown underwater, resting on a sandy seabed. The anchor is dark and rusted, with a white patch on its fluke. A chain is attached to the crown of the anchor. The background is a clear blue-green water with some light rays filtering through.

# THE PRIESTHOOD: A SURE ANCHOR

*This article was prepared by Elder L. Tom Perry on May 28, 2015, two days before his passing, to be shared with young priesthood holders.*

**T**he greatest strength in my life has been the priesthood of God. I believe it will also be a sure anchor for you young men. But for it to have power in your life, you need to understand and use it.

### Early Experiences with the Priesthood

I grew up in a comfortable environment in Logan, Utah. I had no childhood worries about food or shelter or education. But perhaps because life was easy, I needed something to hold on to that would anchor me.

For me that anchor was the priesthood of God. I was in an unusual situation when I was growing up. My dad was called to be the bishop when I was a year old, and he was my bishop for 19 years. His fatherly and spiritual guidance was a tremendous help to me.

I think that is mostly why I looked forward to receiving the Aaronic Priesthood on my 12th birthday. I remember the special day I felt my father's hands on my head as he ordained me. After that, I advanced through the offices of the Aaronic Priesthood and received callings I enjoyed very much.

Passing the sacrament was very special to me. You could see people commit themselves to obey the Lord

and keep His commandments as they partook of the emblems of His body and blood.

### Growing in Priesthood Understanding

As time progressed, I graduated from high school, and then after a year in college, I was called on a mission. I enjoyed every minute of it and loved my companions. One in particular was a strength to me.

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*"I needed something to hold on to that would anchor me. For me that anchor was the priesthood of God."*

---

I learned much from him as we fulfilled our responsibilities.

Because the country was at war, when I returned from my mission I joined the United States Marine



Corps. When the war was over, I returned to college, married, and started a family. Successive professional moves took me to many places across the United States, where I learned much as I served in many priesthood callings. I finally landed in Boston, Massachusetts, where I served as a stake president. It was from there that I was called to be an Assistant to the Twelve and then, after 17 months, to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

### Lessons Learned as an Apostle

What have I learned as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve?

I've learned that there is a guide, an anchor, and a protection in the priesthood.

The priesthood has always existed. Before Adam came to earth, he had the priesthood. As Adam's posterity scattered with the priesthood, it became necessary to organize how the priesthood was administered. The Lord did that by calling Abraham to preside over his family of priesthood holders. This organization continued under Isaac and Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel.

Centuries later, the children of Israel found themselves in captivity. The Lord

sent Moses to deliver them, but when he did, they proved themselves not ready as a people for the Melchizedek Priesthood. So they were left with the Aaronic Priesthood until the time of the Savior.

I find it very interesting what the Savior did first as He began His ministry. He organized the Melchizedek Priesthood. He called twelve Apostles and taught them the laws and order of the priesthood. He called Peter to be the chief Apostle, establishing a line of authority in His Church. In that day and this, it is Jesus Christ who selects His

chief Apostle to preside over the Church, and it is the Savior who directs him in his priesthood duties.

So the priesthood has a direct line from our Lord and Savior

through the chief Apostle to the other Apostles and on to the other priesthood holders in the Church.

Keys of authority are given to the Apostles, and as long as those keys are on the earth, we will be guided by the Lord Himself. This divine direction protects us and assures us that the Church will not vary from the truth. It will remain consistent because it is not directed by any earthly being. It is directed by the Lord.

### Learn the Doctrines of the Priesthood

The greatest advice I have for you young men is to study the doctrines of the priesthood, understand the power you have in exercising your priesthood, and learn how it can bless your lives and the lives of others.

I promise if you'll learn the doctrines of the priesthood and fulfill your priesthood duties, the priesthood will be a sure anchor that will keep you spiritually safe and bring you great joy. Be a true priesthood quorum. Reach out to your friends and bring them into your quorum. Create a brotherhood in your quorum that will be a permanent foundation for your lives. **NE**



# COMMITTED TO *Quit*

*My piano skills weren't improving, even after years of practice. My parents said I could quit on one condition: I had to learn 50 hymns.*

By Gretchen Blackburn

I stormed into my house, eyes flooding with tears after yet another disappointing piano lesson. It was my fourth year taking piano, and I had barely improved past “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” My teacher had tried to find something positive to say about my horrific playing, but I only felt worse. My parents were paying money for piano lessons that I didn’t want and had no hope for.

I wanted my parents to let me quit. “Please,” I begged. “I’ll do anything. What will it take?”

After discussing it between themselves, they said, “If you learn 50 hymns, we will let you quit.”

I started practicing right away. I wanted to quit so badly I was willing

to spend extra time on the piano.

The first hymn, “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” (*Hymns*, no. 19), took nearly a month to master. I was still intent on quitting, so I continued practicing.

An interesting thing happened: the hymns got easier to master. I felt happier throughout the week. I found myself humming hymns during the day and singing louder in sacrament meeting.

Eventually, I stopped keeping track of how many hymns I knew. As I became more skilled on the piano, I realized I could learn a new hymn almost perfectly in less than 30 minutes.

When I finally did add them

all up, I had learned way over 50 hymns. And there was no way I was going to quit playing piano. I had become much more confident in my abilities to play and had felt the power of the hymns in my life.

Hymns are like scriptures; they speak truth. When I play the hymns, I feel like I am immersing myself in the scriptures. Learning how to play the hymns has been a kick start to building my testimony and learning truth. I find myself going through the words of different hymns to help me throughout my day. Playing piano has strengthened my testimony and has opened doors for me wherever I go. **NE**

*Gretchen Blackburn lives in New York, USA.*



# GUARDING



# THE SABBATH

By Jeri Schille

At age 16, I began working as a lifeguard and teaching swimming lessons at an outdoor swimming pool in the center of the town. It was my dream job. Two years later I became the pool manager with a lot of responsibility.

As summer approached, I interviewed and hired all the lifeguards, arranged the work schedules, and organized the swimming lesson schedule. My days were full of lifeguarding and teaching lessons, and each night I counted all the money and took it to City Hall after we cleaned and locked up the pool.

The summer was going well and I loved my job. Then one day, several of the guards came to me wanting the following Sunday off; they all planned to be out of town. The pool had always been open on Sundays, but I had never had to work them because I never scheduled myself and the others weren't bothered by working on Sunday.

I could almost hear the tempter's voice in my ear saying, "Just work one Sunday. What's the big deal?" But I wanted to remain firm in my commitment to never work on Sunday. It took a lot of arranging, but I finally was able to fill that shift and didn't have to work.

Over the next several weeks, I felt more and more anxiety about the whole Sunday situation. I realized that there might be some day in the future where I would have to work because no one else was available or might call in sick. I had made a commitment to keep the Sabbath day holy, and I didn't want to break it, but I needed a solution or I would have to find a job elsewhere for the next summer.

I gave the problem a lot of thought and decided I might be able to figure out a way

to get the pool closed on Sundays. Could it even be possible? I would have to approach the city council, since they were the ones who were in charge of the city pool.

So I brainstormed all the ideas I could think of to justify closing the pool. I figured out how many people usually came to swim each Sunday and what the average revenue was. I deducted the costs of operating the pool, heating the water, and paying the lifeguards. Typically, Sundays were slow at the pool—and my minor research had confirmed that. Closing the pool could save the city money.

A friend of mine helped me find more reasons why closing the pool on Sundays was beneficial to the city. Together we worked on a proposal, and a few weeks later I took the proposal to the city council. To my great surprise, they agreed and accepted my proposal. Within a short time that summer the pool was open each week only Monday through Saturday.

I learned several lessons from this experience:

1. The Lord opens up ways for us to keep the commandments if we are committed to doing so.
2. He blesses us for trying our best to keep the commandments.
3. We always have a choice—no matter what situation we're in, we can exercise agency.
4. We can bless the lives of others, as well as our own, with the proper use of agency.

I am grateful to know that if we do our part, the Lord can help us do amazing things. **NE**

*Jeri Schille lives in Washington, USA.*





SECRETS TO

# SUMMER SATISFACTION

*This summer doesn't have to be a bummer.*

By David A. Edwards

Church Magazines

Summer's coming.<sup>1</sup> Do you want a boring summer or a roaring summer? Do you want your summer to leave an impression in the couch, or do you want it to leave an impression on your life?

Imagine if a time traveler came (in a time machine that looks like a car, a phone box, or whatever you like) and took you to see your post-summer self. What would you see? Would you see a happy, motivated, refreshed young person with a boatload of memories and accomplishments? Or would you see a young person who looks

pretty much the same as you do right now, only with an expression that betrays a vague sense of regret over lost opportunities?

The big secret to summer satisfaction is to know what you really want and how to get it.

You may think, "That's easy. I want to binge-watch all five seasons of *The Fairy Angst Chronicles*, and the way to do it is to sit myself down and not get up."

But knowing what you *really* want means searching your innermost desires—the things that really stir within you. This includes the good things you desire for both

yourself and others, not just in the moment but in the long run. It also means being mindful of the kind of person you want to be and the kinds of things you want to do or be capable of doing—and what it takes to get there.

Entertainment is fine, of course. So are recreation and amusement. But as you look forward to summer, try to see beyond these things. If you do, you'll find that there are some small and simple ways to bring real satisfaction to your summer.

Here are five ideas that may mean the difference between *meh* and *yeah!* for you this summer.

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**NOTE**

1. This is, of course, technically true for both the northern and southern hemisphere. It's just that in the southern hemisphere, summer is a little further off. To our southern hemisphere readers: Just put this article aside for a few months and then read it in October so you can start preparing for the long summer holidays.

1

# STRENGTHEN YOUR STRENGTHS

## IDEAS.....

Are you a great athlete, musician, artist, woodworker? Are you strong in scripture reading, daily prayer, or service? Great! Decide now to do things to stay strong—and get even stronger. You could:

- » Sign up for a class, workshop, summer camp, or summer job in your chosen field.
- » Resolve to spend at least 30 minutes each day strengthening your strengths.
- » Find out if there's an award, certification, or other accomplishment you can aim for during the summer. Or just make one up and ask someone to help you track your progress so you can give yourself a reward for completing certain requirements.
- » Watch a series of online educational videos to improve a skill.

## EXAMPLE.....

*One young man was already pretty mechanically inclined and was a quick learner. His dad asked him to learn how to fix a problem with the car, so he spent some time watching online videos on auto repair. The next thing his dad knew, the car was fixed.*



## HOW TO START.....

- » Identify a strength.
- » Set an end-of-summer goal.
- » Set weekly goals.
- » Set daily goals.

2

# COMPOUND YOUR INTERESTS

## IDEAS.....

Are you interested in cars? Are you interested in poetry too? Spend some time thinking about how you can combine these interests into a single activity. This sort of creative thinking can be fun and can yield some surprisingly practical and innovative results.

## EXAMPLE.....

*One young man was interested in the outdoors as well as in making some money for a mission (and some for spending), so he got a job at a national park for the summer.*

*A young woman was interested in both drawing and computers, so one summer she decided to combine those interests by learning all about a computer software suite for drawing and image editing. This summer activity led her to her eventual career in graphic design.*

## HOW TO START.....

- » Identify an interest.
- » Identify another interest.
- » Think of an idea to combine them.
- » Set an end-of-summer goal.
- » Set weekly goals.
- » Set daily goals.

3

# FIND A MENTOR

## IDEAS.....

There are probably lots of things you don't know how to do but would like to know how to do. Find someone who can teach you how to do one of those things. It could be:

- » A parent or grandparent (an added bonus is strengthening multigenerational bonds).
- » A coach or teacher in a class, workshop, or summer camp.
- » A sibling or friend.
- » A boss at a summer job.

## EXAMPLE.....

*One young woman learned sewing from her grandmother one summer. They forged a stronger bond and made some great clothes for the new school year.*

## HOW TO START.....

- » Identify something you'd like to learn.
- » Identify someone who could help you learn it.
- » Set an end-of-summer goal.
- » Figure out which days you can meet so you can learn from your mentor.
- » Set weekly goals.
- » Set daily goals.



4



## FORM A TEAM

### IDEAS.....

Are you and your friends (or quorum or class) a dream team? a super squad? Do you want to be? Then band together for an awesome undertaking this summer. You could:

- » Form a musical group.
- » Start a babysitting service.
- » Co-author a screenplay.
- » Create an inspirational video to share online (and send the link to the *New Era*).
- » Clean up people's yards or houses.

### EXAMPLE.....

*One group of young men built a canoe together and planned a trip in it one summer. In the process, they learned some valuable skills, had fun, and reached out to include less-active young men from their quorum.*

### HOW TO START.....

- » Identify something that you and some friends can work on together.
- » Set an end-of-summer goal.
- » Figure out which days you can work on it together.
- » Set weekly goals.
- » Set daily goals.

5



## BLESS FOR SUCCESS

### IDEAS.....

The activities you choose for this summer will be filled with opportunities to bless others. You just have to be aware of that fact and inject the spirit of service into whatever you do. Think of how what you're learning blesses both you and others. Learning a new skill or building on an existing one can mean being more helpful, delightful, or inspiring to someone, whether it's your family, friends, employer, or contacts on social media. And remember, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

### EXAMPLE.....

*One young man took his newfound interest in landscaping and applied it to his own house, beautifying the yard and delighting his parents.*

### HOW TO START.....

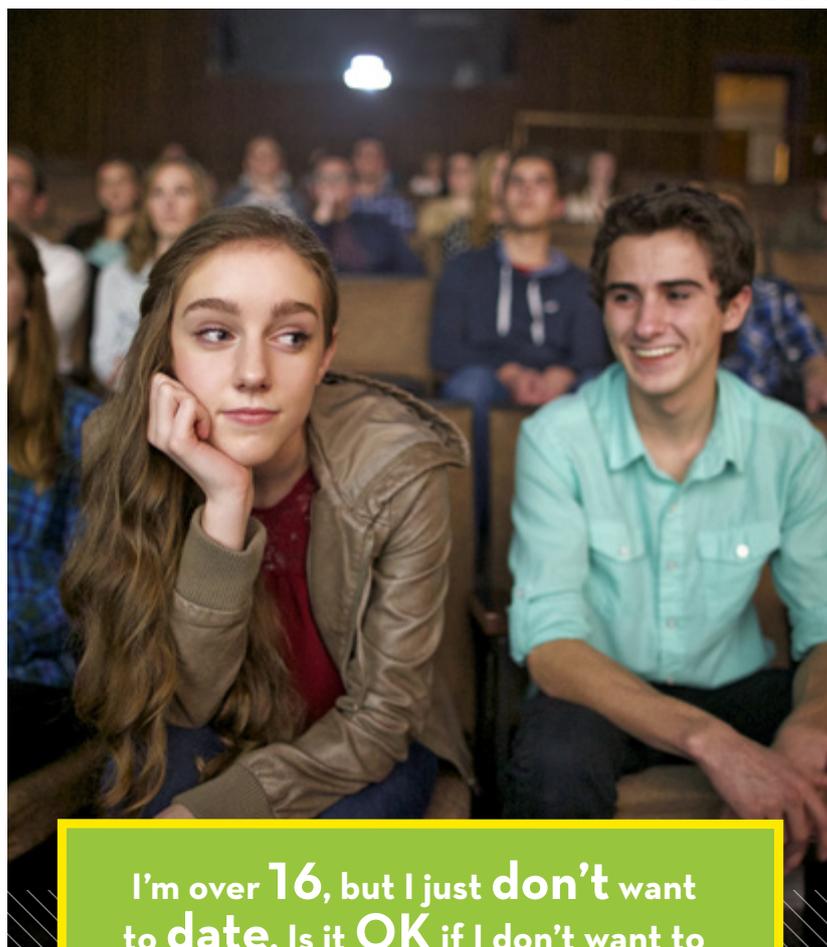
- » Identify people you can serve this summer.
- » Set an end-of-summer goal.
- » Identify what they need that you can help with.
- » Set weekly goals.
- » Think of when you can help.
- » Set daily goals. **NE**

## Will we ever receive more scripture?

First of all, there are two definitions of “scripture.” On the one hand, “whatsoever [the Lord’s servants] shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture” (D&C 68:4). This could include things taught by prophets and apostles in general conference, and we are receiving that kind of “scripture” continually.

On the other hand, there is scripture that is officially recognized and added to our books of scripture (what we call “the standard works”). From time to time, the Church authorities will decide to add something to the standard works and present it to the Church for acceptance (see Bible Dictionary, “Canon”). This may not happen frequently, but “we believe that [God] will yet reveal many great and important things” (Articles of Faith 1:9), including things that may be added to our books of scripture. Whether scripture of this kind is added depends on the Lord’s timing, as well as our faithfulness.

We also know that many ancient scriptures we don’t currently have will eventually come forth. Some of them may come forth when we’re ready to receive them—for instance, the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon (see Ether 3:27; 4:6) and the “fulness of the record of John” (D&C 93:18). At the latest, this will happen at the time of the Second Coming, when “all things which have been revealed unto the children of men shall . . . be revealed” (2 Nephi 30:18). **NE**



## I’m over 16, but I just don’t want to date. Is it OK if I don’t want to date until I’m older?

After you turn 16, the decision about when to start dating is really up to you and your parents. If you decide to put it off until later, that’s fine. The important thing is to prepare for when you’ll choose someone to marry in the temple.

Dating is one way to get to know members of the opposite sex so that you can learn what qualities you like and acquire social skills that will help as you choose your spouse. If you’re not comfortable with it, that’s OK. Just don’t shun all interaction with the opposite sex entirely. Learn to have normal, friendly relationships with a variety of people. Also, when you say you want to put off dating “until you’re older,” make sure that “older” isn’t *too* old. When you’re a young adult (in your 20s), you most certainly should be dating with the purpose of finding a spouse. You may want to get at least a little dating experience before that time. **NE**

“I get made fun of  
at school for being LDS.

I know I need to  
stand up  
for my beliefs,  
but it’s so hard!

How do I become  
brave enough?”

**Y**ou’re right that you need bravery to confront this situation. After all, Jesus Christ has commanded, “Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations” (D&C 115:5). But having the courage to let your light shine may or may not mean speaking up against those who mock you.

In either case, you can let the opposition inspire you to be better. As you work hard to strengthen your testimony, you can develop the kind of quiet courage that will help you speak up or simply continue doing what is right, even if others mock.

Being teased can be upsetting, but remember that you can pray to be filled with charity so that others can feel Christ’s love through you (see Moroni 7:48). Because every situation is unique, seek the guidance of the Spirit to know how to respond in a Christlike way in each instance.

Depending on the situation, it might be best to speak privately with those who have made fun of you or even to just ignore unfriendly taunts while continuing to live your beliefs. If others aren’t interested in listening to what you have to say, your example of kindness, forgiveness, and sincerity may be the best message you can send. **NE**

**Show True Courage**

Those who make fun of you may not stop simply because you get brave enough to ask them to stop, but they might stop when you exert your courage by living what you are—a Latter-day Saint. Before you know it, the radiance of our Heavenly Father’s approval will shine on you, hopefully opening their eyes to the restored gospel in your life.

*Bright U., 17, Imo State, Nigeria*

**Find Strength in the Basics**

Prayer and fasting are important because they will help you be able to face the jokes and challenges at school, just as Jesus Christ faced much mocking when He was here on earth. They will help you develop more love and patience toward people.

*Walter C., 15, Jaén, Peru*



**Be Guided through Prayer**

For a long time I was the only member in my school. My closest friends seemed to understand me, but other school friends made fun of me. One day I prayed and felt the need to talk with one of them who encouraged the others to make fun of me. I explained that I didn’t feel angry at him, but I asked him to give me the



respect he'd like to have. After hearing our conversation, one of my teachers always defended me when he saw something happen. I know that the Lord will be with you as you talk with these people.

**Shanela S., 14, Pangasinan, Philippines**

### Build Your Testimony

First, gain a real testimony of the truths you want to share with others. Then have love for the people making fun and don't get into arguments, because contention is never supported by God (see 3 Nephi 11:29). Most important, strive to have the Spirit always with you. The Spirit will help you have more love and more courage, and He will make your words powerful.

**Julia F., 19, Hesse, Germany**



### Love Your Enemies

I have been in similar situations. If you have faith and humble yourself, you will be blessed with strength and faith that you need to "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, ... and pray for them" (Matthew 5:44). I'd encourage you to search the scriptures for answers on how to be strong. Pray when you are feeling alone in your faith. Romans 8:31 says, "What shall we then say to

these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" You have God on your side! Anything is possible.

**Reagan T., 15, Utah, USA**



### Don't Be Afraid

Speak about your religion more often or purposely do things to bring it up. I was in a similar situation and wrote, "I Love Being LDS" on my backpack. By doing so, I opened the door to several missionary opportunities and showed people that I wasn't afraid to let them know I am LDS. Whatever you do, don't let them get to you. Pray for them and for yourself. Soon you'll find that if you focus on saving others' souls, you won't be as afraid to let them know the truth of our Father's gospel.

**Savanna P., 14, Texas, USA**

*Responses are intended for help and perspective, not as official pronouncements of Church doctrine.*



### THE COURAGE OF OUR CONVICTIONS

"It is often difficult to be different and to stand alone

in a crowd. It is natural to fear what others might think or say. Comforting are the words of the psalm: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?' [Psalm 27:1]. As we make Christ the center of our lives, our fears will be replaced by the courage of our convictions."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Be an Example and a Light," *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 88.

## UPCOMING QUESTION

"How can I know God is listening to my prayers?"

Send your answer and photo by May 15, 2016.

Go to [newera.lds.org](http://newera.lds.org), click "Submit Your Work," sign in with your LDS account, and then select "New Era" under "Choose Magazine." Click "Add File" to select your file and photos, and then click "Submit" to upload and send us your file.

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.



## The Apostasy and the Restoration

There are so many different ideas out there from so many different sources. Who's right? Who's wrong? How can you tell the difference? With the wonderful light of the Restoration, God has given us guidance.

As you study and discuss the Apostasy and the Restoration this month, you may ask yourself these questions:

- How does the Restoration help me see truth from error?
- How am I blessed by the restored Church?
- How can I strengthen my testimony of the Restoration?

For some answers to these questions, read the scriptures listed in the Topical Guide under "Restoration of the Gospel," "Joseph Smith," and "Book of Mormon." You'll also find teachings on the Restoration in October 2015 general conference talks at [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org).

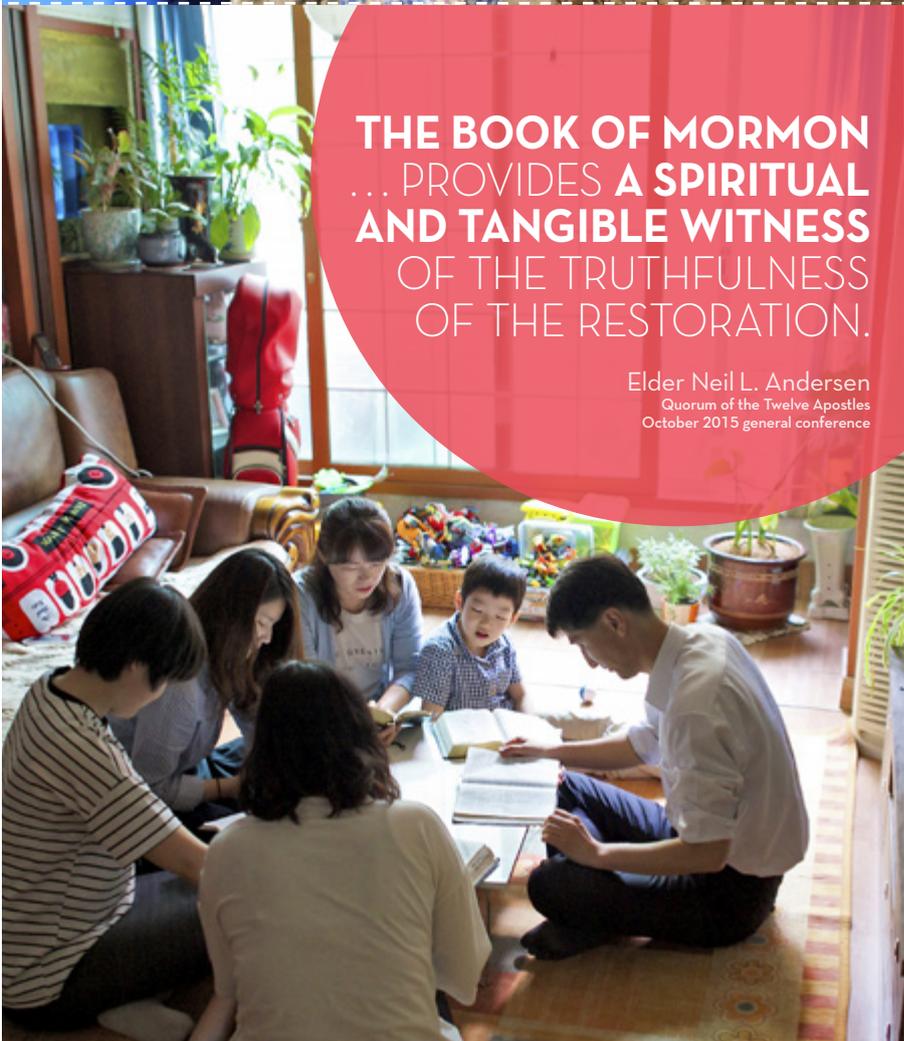
### Share These Cards

Give yourself an easy reminder to think about this month's theme. Just place these cards in your scriptures, locker, or bedroom. You can also download or share them online at [lds.org/go/cardsNE416](http://lds.org/go/cardsNE416).



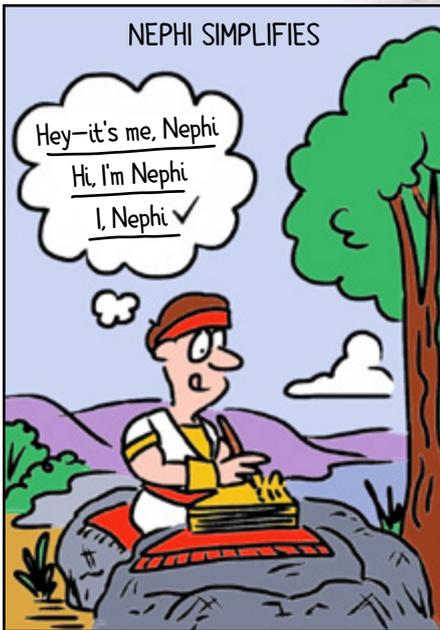
IN THE CHURCH  
WE NOT ONLY  
**LEARN DIVINE  
DOCTRINE; WE  
ALSO EXPERIENCE  
ITS APPLICATION.**

Elder D. Todd Christofferson  
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles  
October 2015 general conference



**THE BOOK OF MORMON  
... PROVIDES A SPIRITUAL  
AND TANGIBLE WITNESS  
OF THE TRUTHFULNESS  
OF THE RESTORATION.**

Elder Neil L. Andersen  
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles  
October 2015 general conference





## HONEST IN ALL THINGS

At the beginning of every semester at school, we get a free set of products containing a notebook, an agenda, and a random sample product. One year I lined up to get my set and realized that the sample I got was particularly useful for me.

At the end of the day, I saw that they were still giving samples of the same product. It would be easy to get in line again and get a second set, and I decided to do it. After all, they were free, and I needed that product.

I made a quick stop at the restroom, where I saw a cell phone that some girl had left by accident. It was one of the latest models, and

I had just lost my own phone a week before. But I didn't even consider keeping it. "That's stealing," I said to myself.

Then, on my way to get my second set of free stuff, I realized that would be as dishonest as keeping the phone because I would have to lie and say I hadn't gotten one before.

I was thankful for this small experience that taught me a big lesson. I turned the phone in and went home with only one notebook, one agenda, and one sample product—but with a nice feeling for being true in all things, no matter how small.

**Alivsi H., Jalisco, Mexico**

# BLESSED FOR OBEYING THE LAW OF TITHING

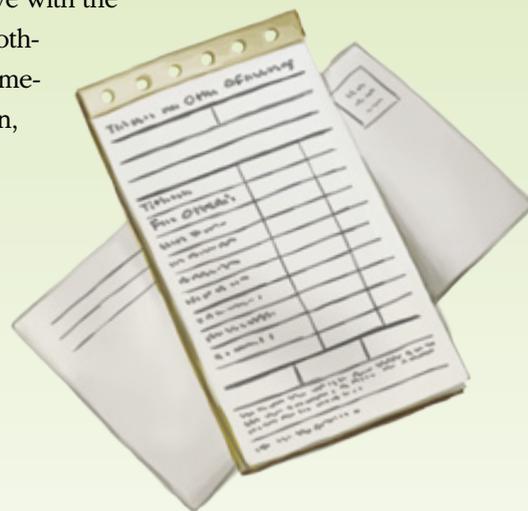
**W**hen I was little, my family and I had many financial trials that lasted until I was about 10 years old. My dad couldn't find other work, so he worked as a street vendor and earned very little. My mother stayed home to care for me and my younger brother.

But even going through so many tribulations, we had a testimony of paying tithing and giving other offerings. We faithfully paid our tithing every month and never lacked anything. We know with certainty that we were continually blessed because of the Lord's infinite kindness and because He keeps His promises when we are obedient to His commandments.

Our days of financial trial finally ended. The blessings that the Lord has given us in these last few years have been amazing.

I know that for those who faithfully pay tithing and pay their offerings in love with the goal of blessing the lives of others, nothing will lack and something even better can happen, as with me and my family. The blessings will increase. I know this. I lived this.

**Sabrina T., São Paulo, Brazil**



# A KNOCK FROM A PROMPTING

**O**ne day I was walking by a family's house in my ward and I remembered the parents had recently divorced. I was thinking about what I could do for them and a prompting came to me to go ask if the father was home. It scared me to death and I almost walked away. But trusting that God knows best, I approached the door, knocked, and waited. The mother opened the door slowly; as I looked at her face it was obvious she had been crying. I asked if the father was home, and she said no. I didn't know what to say next, so I asked if I could rake her leaves or do any other task for her. She said she didn't need any help at that time, but she would

let me know when she did. I left, confident that I had done what God wanted me to do.

Over the next couple of weeks, I befriended her son and played hockey with him and talked with him. A few weeks later my mom told me that the sister had told my mom what happened because I knocked on her door. She had been thinking a lot about how her family would be

impacted by her husband's absence and how her son would no longer have a friend. She had been praying for guidance at the exact moment I knocked on the door.

I know that spiritual promptings can come to you if you are ready for them and that they can change your life and the lives of those you touch.

**Adam B., Utah, USA**



By President  
Russell M. Nelson

President of the Quorum  
of the Twelve Apostles

## HOW TO COMMIT TO CHRIST

The importance of an inward commitment to the Lord is symbolized as we partake of the sacrament. Contrast it to other promises made in life, usually symbolized by an outward sign, such as a raised hand or a written signature. The Lord has invited us to symbolize our covenant with Him by a sign that is inward as well as outward. When the sacred emblems of His flesh and blood are administered to us, **we are invited to take them into our bodies.** As we do, His atoning sacrifice literally becomes a part of our own identity.

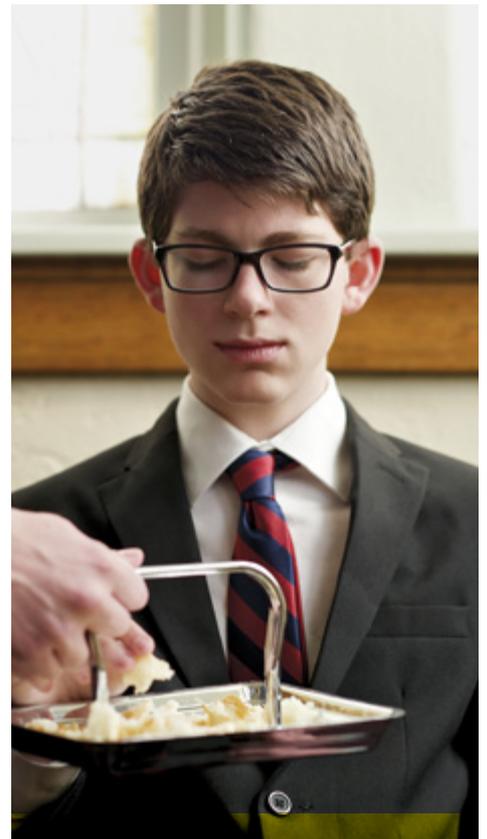
One day **you will be asked** if you **took upon yourself the name of Christ** and if you were **faithful to that covenant.** The newest convert makes the same covenant that each of us has made, to take upon us the Lord's name. We are all allowed—even encouraged—to achieve the fulness of the stature of Christ (see Ephesians 4:13).

I come to you now in my true identity as a husband, a father, and an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. My priorities are my wife, my family, and my ministry. I am to teach plain and precious things that have been restored in these latter days. As special witnesses of His name in all the world, the Apostles “talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ” (2 Nephi 25:26).

In a very real way, you bear similar responsibility. As Jesus said to His faithful followers in ancient America, He would surely say to you, “Ye are my disciples; and ye are a light unto this people, who are a remnant of the house of Joseph” (3 Nephi 15:12). You and I are **bear witness;** we are to **minister;** we are to **enlighten;** we are to **be an example** to all who come within our sphere of influence.

This privilege is ours, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year—even on vacation. The Savior stated simply: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). Your most sincere sign of adoration of Jesus is your emulation of Him. **NE**

*From a Church Educational System fireside given on September 10, 2000.*



### HOW HAVE YOU APPLIED THIS?

I come unto Christ by going to church every Sunday, being reverent in Church meetings, reading scriptures, and by simply talking to Heavenly Father by praying. Heavenly Father appreciates all that we do for Him, even if it's just a small thing.

Carl L., Philippines

Coming unto Christ means living in a way that allows us to draw near unto Him and always have His Spirit to be with us, taking the sacrament worthily, and sharing the gospel by word and by deed.

Aaron B., Utah, USA

#### Share Your Experiences

Share how you show your commitment to Jesus Christ and read the experiences of other youth at [lds.org/go/commitNE416](https://lds.org/go/commitNE416).



May we  
HEAR AND HEED  
THE ETERNAL TRUTHS  
taught by the  
LORD'S AUTHORIZED  
REPRESENTATIVES.

Elder David A. Bednar  
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles  
October 2015 general conference

## WHAT'S ONLINE



### PRINT FAMILY ORDINANCE CARDS *at Home*

Great news! As you take on the #TempleChallenge (see [lds.org/go/challengeNE416](https://lds.org/go/challengeNE416)), you can print family ordinance cards from home. When you're ready to print the names of ancestors you've found on FamilySearch.org, select "Print Family Ordinance Cards." Then follow the instructions, and you'll have your own temple-ready family ordinance cards to take to the baptistry. For answers to frequently asked questions about printing family ordinance cards, visit [lds.org/go/ordinanceNE416](https://lds.org/go/ordinanceNE416).



### CHECK OUT "ORIGIN" AT

[lds.org/go/originNE416](https://lds.org/go/originNE416)

### FINDING ANSWERS

What do you do when you have questions? Like Joseph Smith, do you turn to prayer? Watch as one young woman finds inspiration from Joseph Smith's story in her search for truth.

### LEARN TO PLAY *Hymns in 10 Minutes*

Want to learn to play a hymn on the piano in 10 minutes? You can! You can also find the *Keyboard Course* book through the LDS.org music library.



### LEARN HOW TO PLAY HYMNS AT

[lds.org/go/pianoNE416](https://lds.org/go/pianoNE416)

THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

