

# THE New Era

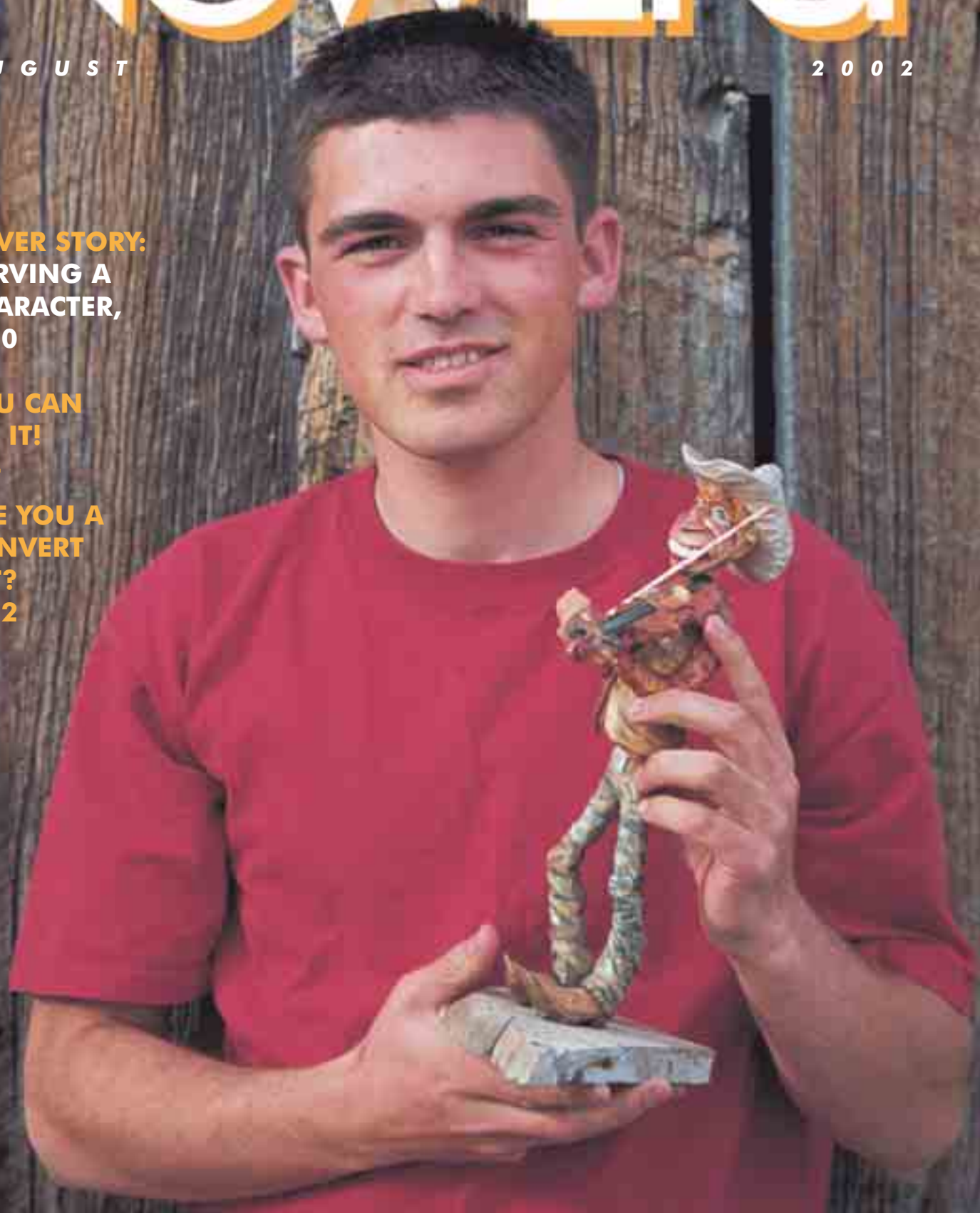
AUGUST

2002

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**CHARACTER,**  
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**DO IT!**  
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**ARE YOU A**  
**CONVERT**  
**YET?**  
**P. 12**



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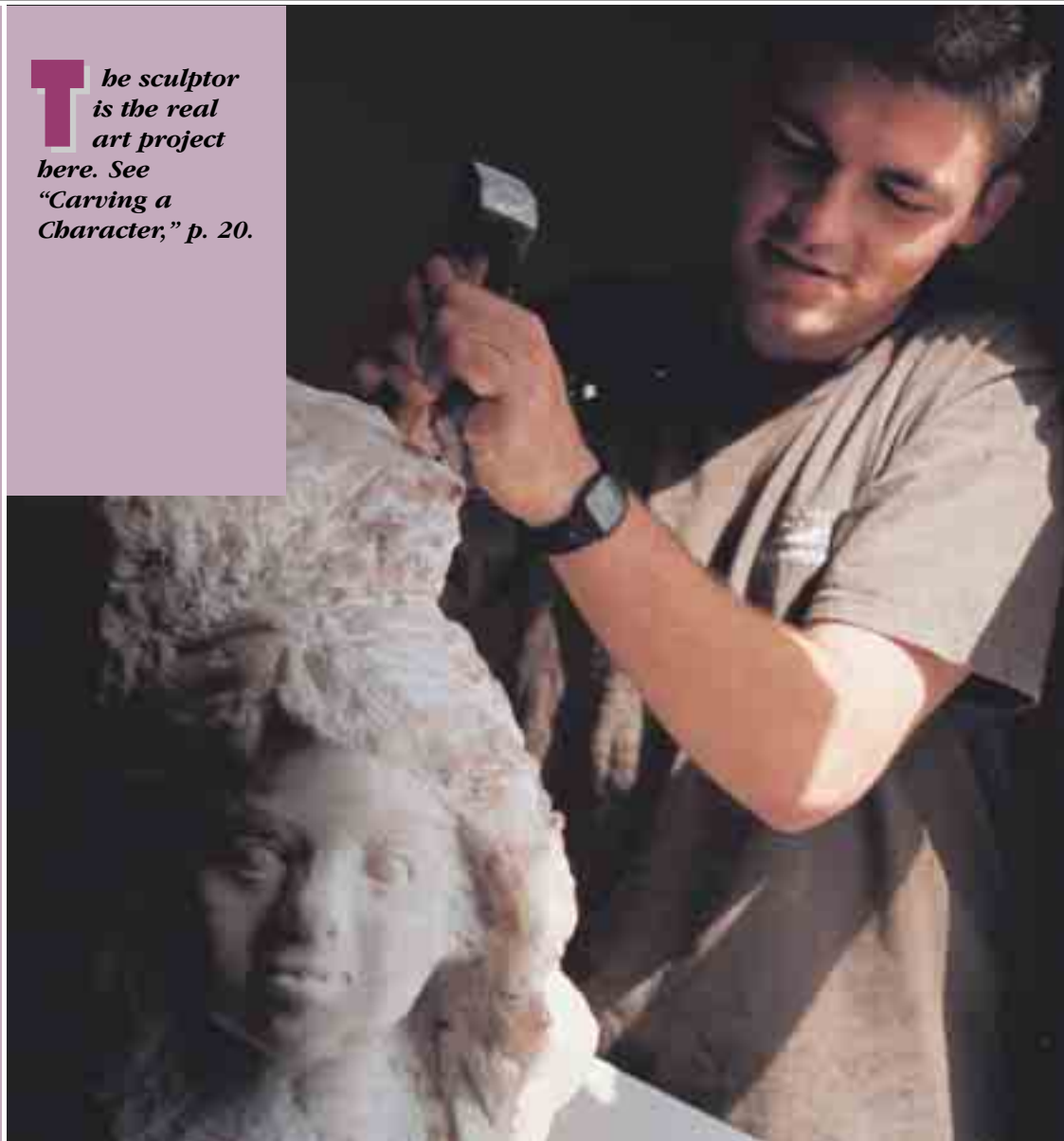
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**Cover:** Matt Rogers of  
Glendale, Utah, with  
one of the western  
carvings he's  
becoming known for.  
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Character," p. 20.

Cover photography:  
Larry Hiller (front),  
Ellie Carter (back)

**T**he sculptor  
is the real  
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# A FEW SIMPLE LESSONS

*Your challenges may seem monstrous, but if you remember and apply a few simple lessons, you will be victorious.*

I am farther down the road of life than you are, but my memory is pretty good and I haven't forgotten entirely how it felt to be where you are. And my children and grandchildren renew my memory of how it feels to be a teenager.

Some years ago we stopped at a small restaurant. The young woman who served our meal was courteous but very sober. When she handed me the check, I said, "Can you tell us which road we take to get out of town?" Suddenly she burst into tears and said, "Mister, I don't even know how I got into this town."

I have wished more than once that



**By President  
Boyd K. Packer**  
Acting President of the  
Quorum of the Twelve



we could have gone to a table in the corner and talked. Perhaps we could have helped her.

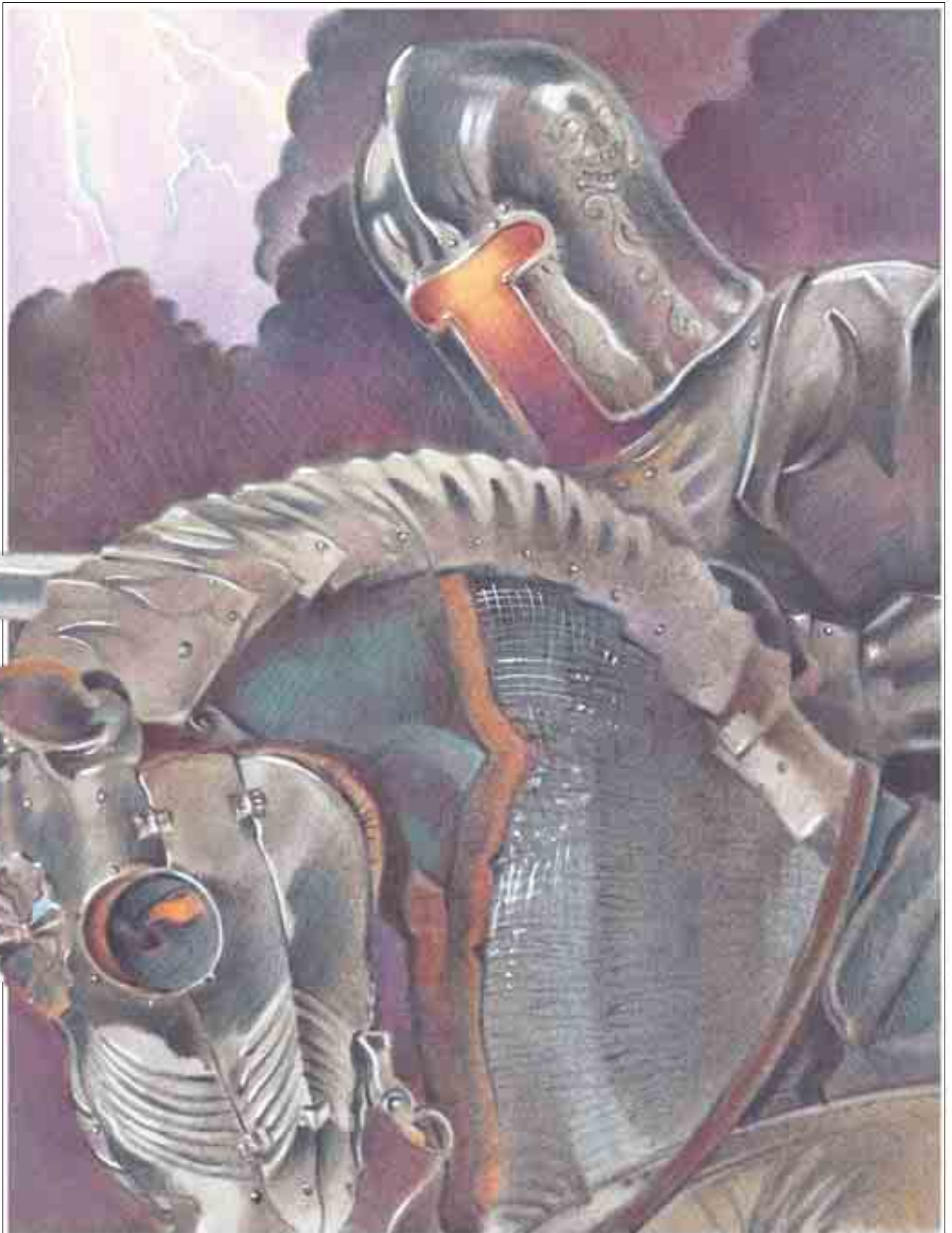
### **Teenage wishes**

Teenagers, even young men, sometimes feel like bursting into tears and saying, "Mister, I don't even know how I got here." You wonder who you are and why you are and how you got to where you are.

I know you sometimes feel that life isn't fair; why can't you have things others have. You even wonder why you can't be somebody else and exchange your body with someone who appears to be more beautiful or handsome or talented or brighter or stronger or thinner; or change personalities with someone who is not so shy or blundering or frightened as you are.

Sometimes you wonder why you can't trade your parents for some better ones. No need to apologize; they sometimes wish they could trade you for someone easier to live with.

But parents and grandparents make allowances for those feelings. After all, we are just teenagers who have evened out a





few of our frustrations so they don't show as much as they did when we were your age. And someday, soon enough, *you* are going to be *us*!

#### **A different world**

I wish we could promise you that the world will be safer and easier for you than for us. But we cannot make that promise, for just the opposite is true.

There are temptations beckoning to you that were not there when we were teenagers. AIDS had not been invented when we were young, and drugs were something a doctor prescribed. We knew about opium from reading mysteries, but steroids, pills, and crack, and all the rest, belonged to future imaginations.

Modesty was not mocked then. Morality and courtesy were fostered in books and films as much as their opposites are today. Perversion was not talked about, much less endorsed as a lifestyle. What was shunned then as pornographic you see now on prime-time television.

Your challenge is much greater than was ours. Few of us would trade places with you. Frankly, we are quite relieved that we are not back where you are. Few of us would be equal to it.

But, oh, what a wonderful time to be young! You have knowledge of many

**Y**ou are  
more than  
a prince.  
*You are a child of  
God. Spiritually,  
you are of noble  
birth, the  
offspring of the  
King of Heaven.*



more things than we needed to have. It is my conviction that your generation is better and stronger than was ours—better in many ways! I have faith that you young men and young women can meet the world on its own terms and conquer it!

#### **The black knight**

Alfred, Lord Tennyson told of Gareth, a prince and a knight of King Arthur's round table, and of his quest. The fair Lady Lyonors had been stolen away by the horrible black knight, who held her in his castle. Many young knights tried to rescue her but failed. They returned defeated and broken, with tales of the awesome power of the black knight; they begged Gareth not to go.

But Gareth went to the castle with the drawbridge, the tower, and the window where "Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and wept" ("Gareth and Lynette," *Idylls of the King*, line 1360). Then, "high on a night-black horse, in night-black arms, with white breast-bone, and barren ribs of Death," a laughing skull engraved upon his helmet, "in the half-light—thro' the dim dawn—advanced the monster," more awesome, more terrible even than Gareth had been told (lines 1346–47, 49–50).

The black knight lowered his lance and thundered forward. Gareth, who had





been defeated in more than one tournament, sensed his terrible fate. Every logic and emotion shouted, "Flee for your life!" But he could not turn away. Not, that is, and keep his honor. Gareth lowered his lance and met the charge.

And then, to his surprise, Gareth unseated the black knight and tore his helmet away. There in that black armor with the bones engraven on it sat a little boy who began to cry and beg for mercy.

Young women, young men, no matter how many tournaments you lose along the way, no matter how monstrous your challenges may be, if you will learn a few simple lessons, it can be with you as it was with Gareth on that bridge before the castle of the black knight.

### **Of royal birth**

Gareth was only a prince. You are more than that. You are a child of God. He is the father of your spirit. Spiritually you are of noble birth, the offspring of the King of Heaven. Fix that truth in your mind and hold to it. However many generations in your mortal ancestry, no matter what race or people you represent, the pedigree of your spirit can be written on a single line. You are a child of God!

You are a dual being, a spirit clothed

in a mortal body. Your body is the instrument of your mind and the foundation of your character. Take nothing into your body which may harm it or disturb the functions of your mind and spirit. Anything that is addictive is dangerous.

Within your body is the power to beget life, to share in creation. The only legitimate expression of that power is within the covenant of marriage. The worthy use of it is the very key to your happiness. Do not use that power prematurely, not with anyone. The misuse of it cannot be made right by making it popular.

Your spirit operates through your mind, but cultivating your intellect is not enough. Reason alone will neither protect nor redeem you. Reason nourished by faith can do both.

### **The dark side**

A warning: there is a dark side to spiritual things. In a moment of curiosity or reckless bravado some teenagers have been tempted to toy with Satan worship. Don't you ever do that! Don't associate with those who do! You have no idea of the danger! Leave it alone! And there are other foolish games and activities that are on that dark side. Leave them alone!

There is a courage far greater than



**W**hen the black knight lowered his lance and thundered forward, the white knight held his ground. Too much was at stake.

Gareth needed to face the black knight. It is the courage to run away from unworthy things when you will be mocked for doing so. That courage is laced with wisdom. We had to gain it from experience; you need it now.

You have an alarm system built into both body and spirit. In your body it is pain; in your spirit it is guilt—or spiritual pain. While neither pain nor guilt is pleasant, and an excess of either can be destructive, both are a protection, for they sound the alarm: “Don’t do that again!”

Be grateful for both. If the nerve endings in your hands were altered so that you couldn’t feel pain, you might put them in fire or machinery and destroy them. In your teenage heart of hearts, you know right from wrong (see 2 Ne. 2:5). Learn to pay attention to that spiritual voice of warning within you. Even then, you will not get by without some mistakes.

### **Forgiveness**

Those who make one serious mistake tend to add another by assuming that it is then too late for them. It is never too late! Never!

While your temptations are greater than were ours, that will be considered in the judgments of the Lord. He said that “his mercies [are suited] according to the conditions of . . . men” (D&C 46:15). That is only just.

A great contribution to Christian doctrine is the explanation in the Book of Mormon of how justice and mercy and repentance and forgiveness work together to erase transgressions (see Alma 42).

The discouraging idea that a mistake (or even a series of them) makes it everlastingly too late does not come from the Lord. He has said that if we will repent, not only will He forgive us our transgressions, but He will forget them and remember our sins no more (see Isa. 43:25; Heb. 8:12; 10:17; Alma 36:19; D&C 58:42). Repentance is like soap; it can wash sin away. Ground-in dirt may take the strong detergent of discipline to

**W**hen you take the armor of God upon you, you will also conquer. Because Gareth stood firm, determined to keep his honor, he discovered that . . .



get the stains out, but out they will come.

### **The end of the world**

Teenagers also sometimes think, What’s the use? The world will soon be blown all apart and come to an end. That feeling comes from fear, not from faith. No one knows the hour or the day (see D&C 49:7), but the end cannot come until all of the purposes of the Lord are fulfilled. Everything that I have learned from the revelations and from life convinces me that there is time to spare for you to carefully prepare for a long life.

One day you will cope with teenage children of your own. That will serve you right. Later, you will spoil your grandchildren, and they in turn spoil theirs. If an earlier end should happen to come to one, that is more reason to do things right.

However limited your body may be, it is a precious gift.

One of you may be well-born and well-formed while another is not. In either case, there is a testing. That is what mortality is all about. The poorly born may lack self-esteem, or the well-born infected with pride. Pride is the most deadly spiritual virus. In the eternal scheme of things, who is to say which is the most favored?

From the Book of Mormon: “If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27).

There may be more justice in who we are and what we have or do not have than we ever suppose.

You are a child of God!

What a wonderful time to be young. You will see events in your lifetime that will test your courage and extend your faith. If you will face the sunlight of truth, the shadows of discouragement and sin and error will fall behind you. You must never give up! It is never too late! There is no knight in black armor with such



power as you may have if you live righteously.

He calls to you: "Wherefore, lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand.

"Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you;

"Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;

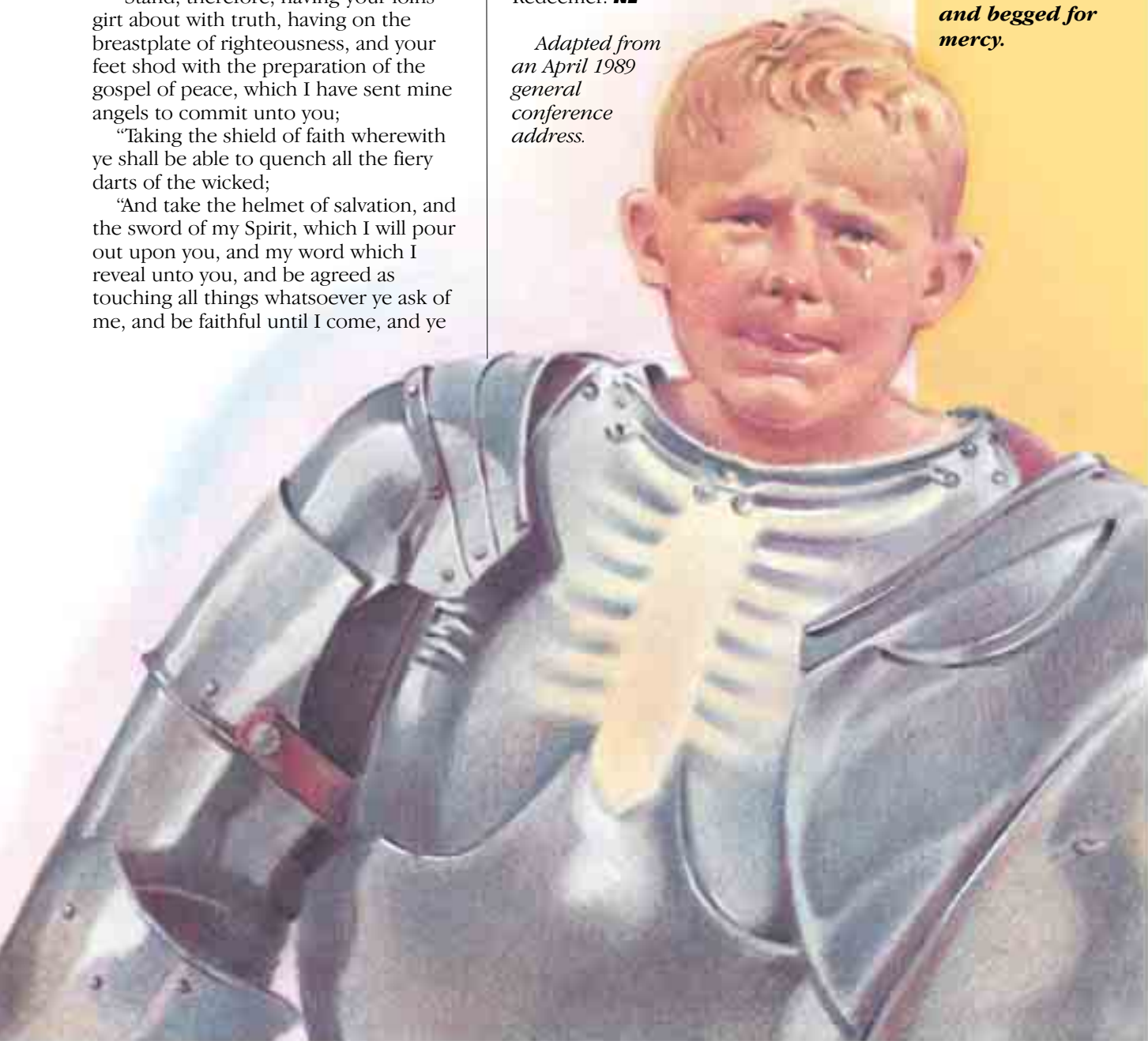
"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me, and be faithful until I come, and ye

shall be caught up, that where I am ye shall be also" (D&C 27:15–18).

God bless you young women and young men who struggle through the worrisome teenage years. Some of you may not yet have found yourselves, but you are not lost, for Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, our Savior and Redeemer. **NE**

*Adapted from  
an April 1989  
general  
conference  
address.*

***. . . the black knight had no power over him. In fact, within the black armor with bones engraven on it sat a little boy who cried and begged for mercy.***





# STOP

FOR AN ANSWER

*This was one mission preparation I couldn't put off any longer.*

**S**everal months before my mission I felt I needed to know for myself. I had read the Book of Mormon on my own and with my family, but I didn't feel I had a testimony. Now, in the middle

of mission preparation, I felt I needed to make sure I had a testimony—something I should have done long ago.

As part of this preparation I was taking a temple preparation class. One evening in that class I was thinking to myself, "How can I go to the temple and prepare for a mission if I don't have a testimony?"

I left the class confused and wanting to know the truth. It was dark. I didn't know what to do or where to go, so I sat in my car in the parking lot. I could

**D**iscouraged, I took the long way home so I could think. And that's when it happened.

By Joshua Snow  
Hansen



only imagine what Joseph Smith must have gone through in his search for truth.

As I sat in my car, I felt the urge to pray. I prayed with all the faith and energy I had. I felt that I really talked to God. But when I finished I didn't feel anything different. I felt discouraged.

As I left the stake center's parking lot, I decided to take the long way home. This was a route I would usually take if I wanted to think or get away from traffic. As I was driving and thinking, I came to a four-way stop. At that stop sign the Spirit came over me and bore witness to me that everything I was doing was true. I began to cry. The Spirit had influenced me so strongly that I had to pull over to the side of the road. There I thanked my Heavenly Father for that special witness.

I don't know why the answer to my prayers came at that time. I was just thankful it came. I am now a full-time missionary in the Illinois Chicago North Mission. It hasn't been easy. But whenever I have doubts, I am reminded of my experience at the stop sign and the counsel the Lord gave to Oliver Cowdery:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you desire a further witness, cast your mind

upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things.

"Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?" (D&C 6:22-23).

All the doubts and fears I have had on my mission have been erased by that special witness at the four-way stop when the Spirit spoke peace to my mind and heart. **NE**





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

# THE CHALLENGE TO **BE**



*Are you converted yet?  
You may have a  
testimony—or at least  
the beginnings of one.  
But is your basic nature  
changing? That’s the  
goal.*

**I**t is not enough for us to be convinced of the gospel; we must act and think so that we are converted by it. The gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to become something.

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

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

# COME



my example, mastering as I have mastered, and you will become as I am, and all that I have will be yours.”

This parable parallels the pattern of heaven. The gospel of Jesus Christ promises the incomparable inheritance of eternal life, the fulness of the Father, and reveals the laws and principles by which it can be obtained.

Many Bible and modern scriptures speak of a final judgment at which all persons will be rewarded according to their deeds or works or the desires of their hearts. But other scriptures enlarge upon this by referring to our being judged by the condition we have achieved.

## **We will be judged**

The prophet Nephi describes the Final Judgment in terms of what we have become: “And if their works have been filthiness they must needs be filthy; and if they be filthy it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God” (1 Ne. 15:33). Moroni declares, “He that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still” (Morm. 9:14; see also Rev. 22:11–12; 2 Ne. 9:16; D&C 88:35). The same would be true of “selfish” or “disobedient” or any other personal attribute inconsistent with the requirements of God.

From such teachings we conclude that the Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have done. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have become. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.

### **Beyond testimony**

We qualify for eternal life through a process of conversion—not just a convincing but a profound change of nature. Jesus used this meaning when He taught His chief Apostle the difference between a testimony and a conversion. Jesus asked his disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Matt. 16:13). Next He asked, “But whom say ye that I am?”

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:15–17).

Peter had a testimony. He knew that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, and he declared it. To testify is to know and to declare.

Later on, Jesus taught these same men about conversion, which is far more than testimony. When the disciples asked who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, “Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

“And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:2–4). Later, the Savior confirmed the importance of being converted, even for those with a testimony of the truth. In the sublime instructions given at the Last Supper, He

**T**he gospel of Jesus Christ is the plan by which we can become what children of God are supposed to become. It's a lifelong process.



told Simon Peter, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32).

In order to strengthen his brethren, this man whose testimony had caused the Master to declare him blessed still had to be “converted.”

### **The challenge**

Jesus' challenge shows that the conversion He required for those who would enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matt. 18:3) was far more than just being converted to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel. To testify is to know and to declare. The gospel challenges us to be “converted,” which requires us to do and to become. We all know someone who has a strong testimony but does not act upon it so as to be converted.

The needed conversion by the gospel begins with being “born again” (see Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; John 3:7; 1 Pet. 1:23). In the waters of baptism and by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, we become the spiritual “sons and daughters” of Jesus Christ, “new creatures” who can “inherit the kingdom of God” (Mosiah 27:25–26).

In teaching the Nephites, the Savior referred to what they must become. He challenged them to repent and be baptized and be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, “that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day” (3 Ne. 27:20). He concluded: “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Ne. 27:27).

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the plan by which we can become what children of God are supposed to become. This spotless and perfected state will result from a steady succession of covenants, ordinances, and actions, an accumulation of right choices, and from continuing repentance. “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” (Alma 34:32).

Now is the time for each of us to work toward our personal conversion, toward becoming what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.

We are challenged to move through a process of conversion toward that status and condition called eternal life. This is achieved not just by doing what is right, but by doing it for the right reason—for



the pure love of Christ.

The Apostle Paul illustrated this in his famous teaching about the importance of charity (see 1 Cor. 13). The reason charity never fails and the reason charity is greater than even the most significant acts of goodness he cited is that charity, “the pure love of Christ” (Moro. 7:47), is not an act but a condition or state of being. Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in a conversion. Charity is something one becomes. Thus, as Moroni declared, “except men shall have charity they cannot inherit” the place prepared for them in the mansions of the Father (Ether 12:34).

Instead of being judgmental about others, we should be concerned about ourselves. We must not give up hope. We must not stop striving. We are children of God, and it is possible for us to become what our Heavenly Father would have us become.

How can we measure our progress? The scriptures suggest various ways. I will mention only two.

After King Benjamin’s great sermon, many of his hearers cried out that the Spirit of the Lord “has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). If we are losing our desire to do evil, we are progressing toward our heavenly goal.

The Apostle Paul said that persons who have received the Spirit of God “have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). I understand this to mean that persons who are proceeding toward the needed conversion are beginning to see things as our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, see them. They are hearing His voice instead of the voice of the world, and they are doing things in His way instead of by the ways of the world.

I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, whose Church this is. I testify with gratitude of the plan of the Father under which, through the Resurrection and Atonement of our Savior, we have the assurance of immortality and the opportunity to become what is necessary for eternal life. **NE**

*Adapted from an October 2000 general conference address.*



# Q & A

*At school the few Church members my age either make fun of me or avoid me. How can I make friends with youth in my ward when it is easier to spend my time with nonmember friends who seem to be more Christlike?*

## NEW ERA

This question really has two parts: What should I do about the Latter-day Saint youth in my ward or branch? And what should I do about my nonmember friends?

Unfortunately, Latter-day Saints do not always live exemplary lives. Youth in particular sometimes struggle with kindness and love. Consequently, young people are sometimes ignored or ridiculed by those who should be their friends.

If you find yourself in these circumstances, try to remember one very important point: You are a child of God. Your Heavenly Father loves you and is grateful for your every effort to live the gospel and to be active in your ward or branch. While Heavenly Father won't force others to live the gospel, He will sustain you in your attempts to be patient and not give up.

While you can't make others' decisions for them, you can choose how you react to those decisions. The most important thing you can do is try to be Christlike in your response when others tease or

**R**emember, you are a child of God. No matter how other people treat you, your Heavenly Father loves you.

**B**e friendly and try to set an example without being self-righteous.

**P**ray that their hearts may be softened and that yours may not be bitter.

**A**sk for advice from parents or Church leaders.

**D**on't let others determine your activity in the Church.

**H**old on to good friends whether they are members or not.

## READERS

**Don't let the behavior of others be your excuse for not trying to befriend them. What a Christlike attribute to refine: chronic kindness toward ungrateful recipients. There is nothing wrong with nonmember friends, but don't give up on the members.**

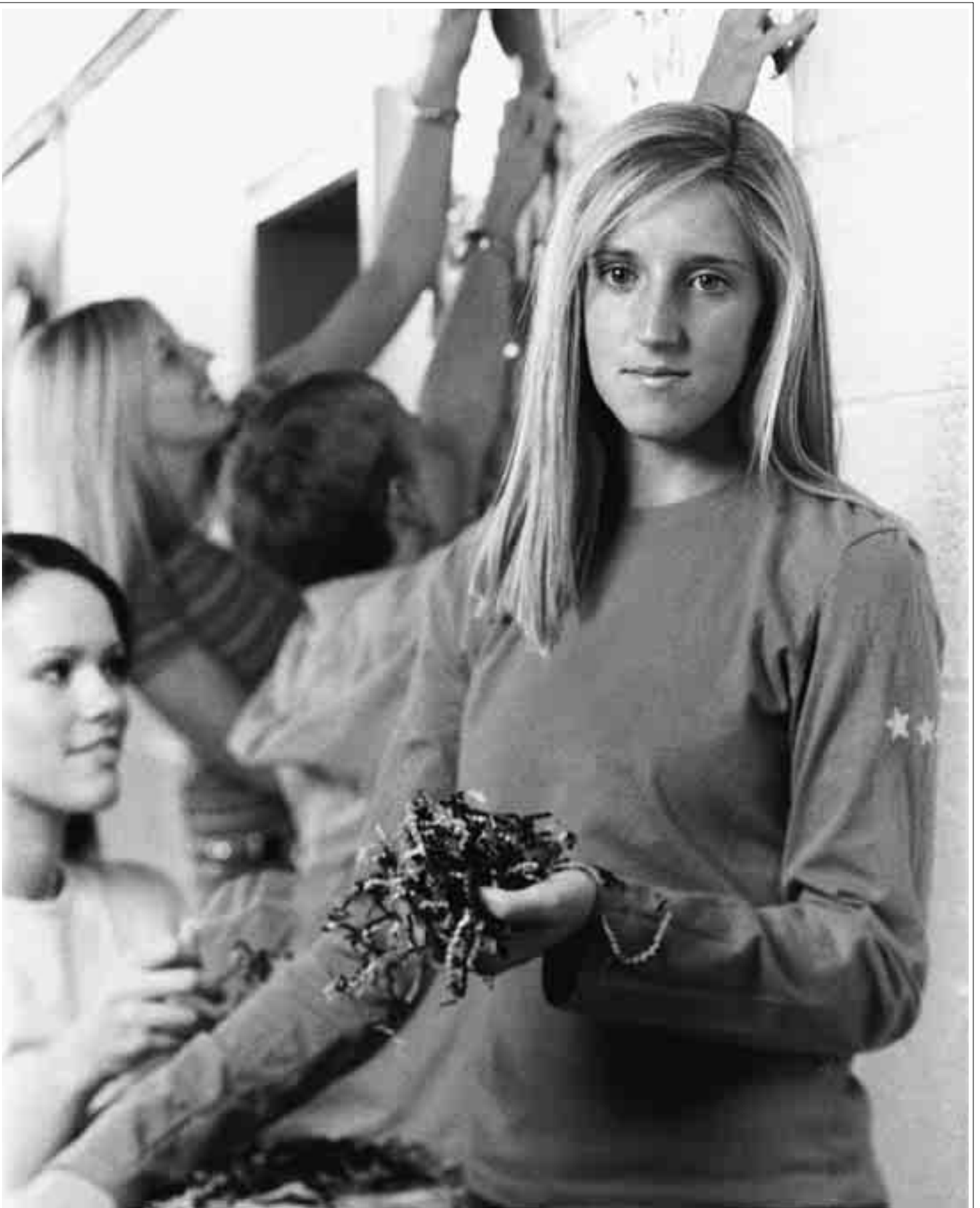
**Adriane Andersen, 17**  
Salt Lake City, Utah



**Jesus Christ gave us the commandment to love one another. Upon giving this commandment, He did not give any condition by which we can be exempted from keeping it. Therefore, we must learn to love everybody, regardless of their treatment toward us. If we love only those who love us, then we are no different from the publicans (see Matt. 5:46).**

**Christina E. Baliao, 16**  
Zambales, Philippines







ignore you. Be friendly and try to set an example without being self-righteous. Sometimes your kind behavior may make the situation worse. If that is the case, pray for hearts to be softened—yours that you may not be bitter, and theirs that they may see you for the person you are. If you treat others as children of Heavenly Father, perhaps they will eventually remember who they are and act accordingly.

You may not be able to handle the situation alone, so seek appropriate counsel and assistance from parents or Church leaders. The bishop or branch president is responsible for the spiritual welfare of the members he presides over, and he can seek guidance to know what to do.

But above all, don't let others determine your activity in the Church. If you give up trying to have Latter-day Saint friends, you will give up opportunities to serve and to grow. Look around your ward and branch for others—perhaps older or younger than you—who need your friendship. Is there a Primary child you could help? A widow? A mother with small children? You may find that many ward or branch members are grateful for your friendship.

The other question—what to do about your nonmember friends—is an easier one. If they are Christlike and treat you well, then spend time with them. Good friends are an asset—and if they really are your friends, they will respect your beliefs and will not ask you to do anything against your standards. And if you live your religion around them, they will likely be interested to know more about it. But even if they never show any interest in the Church, you probably share many positive values and can be a strength to each other in avoiding the world's temptations and evils. **NE**

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



*If some people who should be our friends turn against us, our obligation is not to retreat from them. We should show them that we love and care for them. Sometimes all we need to do is go to our knees.*



Elder Ihuoma Chidiebere Loveday, 20  
Nigeria Port Harcourt Mission

*Not all good people are members of the Church, and not all members are always good people. Surround yourself with Christ-like people of all faiths, but remember to treat everyone with kindness.*



Rose E. Hadden, 16  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**E**veryone needs good friends.

**Your circle of friends will greatly influence your thinking and behavior, just as you will theirs. When you share common values with your friends, you can strengthen and encourage each other. Treat everyone with kindness and dignity. Many nonmembers have come into the Church through friends who have involved them in Church activities” (Ensign, Nov. 1990, 46).**

—President Thomas S. Monson  
Of the First Presidency

*I don't pay attention if someone teases. It is sad, and it hurts to be treated in such a way. When I think of Jesus Christ's suffering, I realize this is not much in comparison. I continue trying to be kind to that person. The important thing is that I go to church not because of friends but to obey the law of the Sabbath and to worship.*

Sri Martini Wardoko  
Jakarta, Indonesia

**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**

*Sometimes it seems so hard to decide what's right and what's wrong. Why doesn't the Church just make a list telling me exactly what I can and can't do?*

*Please respond by October 1, 2002.*

# QUESTIONS?



# ANSWERS

THE WORLD DOESN'T MAKE SENSE  
WITHOUT THE CREATOR'S PERSPECTIVE.  
(See 1 Ne. 9:6.)

# CARVING A

*The figures he carves are just for fun. Shaping his own life? That's for real.*

**T**hey seem to be everywhere, looking back at you—rough-hewn faces with enormous mustaches and lopsided grins, topped by oversized hats. Here and there a head woodenly grins from a windowsill or countertop. On a bookcase stands a quartet of

By Larry Hiller

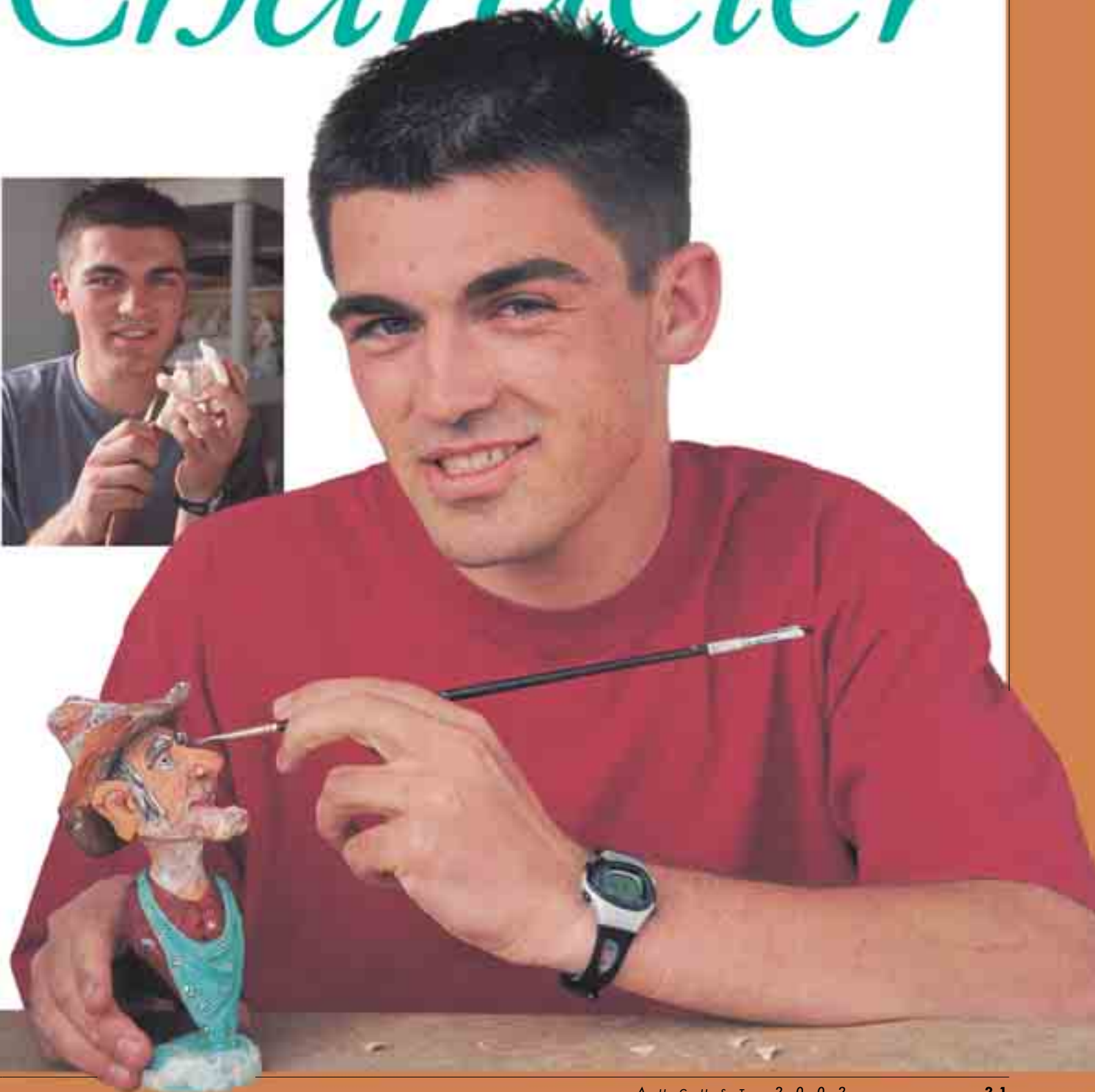
musicians, fiddles and legs bowed. Nearby, a goofy gunslinger nervously points his six-shooter at the horizon.

Matt Rogers's western woodcarvings have earned him a growing reputation among those who make or collect such work. His mother, Julie, is a professional artist who teaches art. And his siblings all have artistic talents. So you might say Matt's accomplishments are to be expected. But raw talent is just the beginning.





# Character





### The right stuff

The first piece of wood Matt carved was pine. And his chief tool was a pocketknife. Not exactly the best material or tool for wood carving. Pine is brittle. It chips and has hard knots in it. And Matt quickly learned that serious wood-carvers use a whole range of special tools that doesn't include pocketknives. Matt has also learned that sometimes it's the carver who is being shaped and molded.

Glendale, where the Rogers family lives, is a small southern Utah town spread along Highway 89 in the bottom of a beautiful mountain valley. It's a place of apple orchards and pastures, with a rich pioneer history. TV reception in the valley is quite poor, but that just helps make for richer family relationships and more time for developing talents. The Rogers's white-frame farmhouse is full of drawings and paintings, carvings and sculptures, all produced by family members.

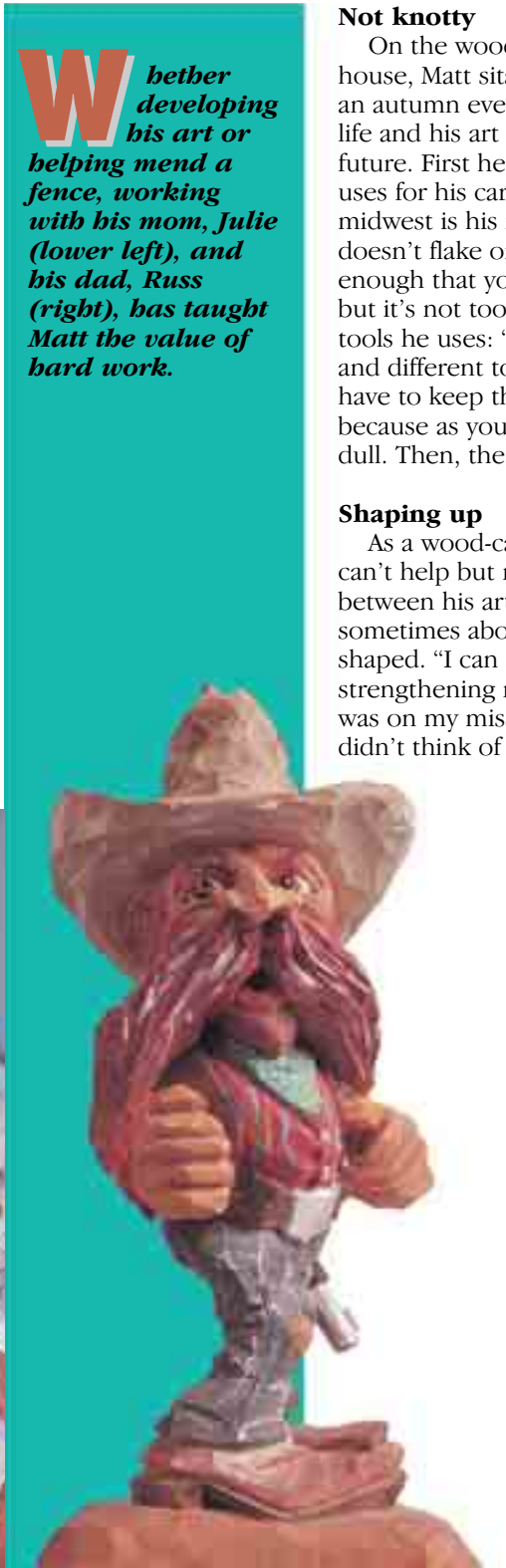
**W**hether developing his art or helping mend a fence, working with his mom, Julie (lower left), and his dad, Russ (right), has taught Matt the value of hard work.

### Not knotty

On the wooden porch of the farmhouse, Matt sits in the dimming light of an autumn evening and talks about his life and his art and his hopes for the future. First he talks about the wood he uses for his carvings. Basswood from the midwest is his material of choice. "It doesn't flake or chip like pine. It's soft enough that you can carve details in it, but it's not too soft," he says. And the tools he uses: "V gouges and U gouges, and different tools for different details. I have to keep them sharp and fine-edged, because as you use them they become dull. Then, the tool's not effective."

### Shaping up

As a wood-carver and sculptor, Matt can't help but make comparisons between his art and his life. He thinks sometimes about how his life has been shaped. "I can see the Lord strengthening me. For two years when I was on my mission, I served others and I didn't think of myself. Then I'd read my





patriarchal blessing, and I could see these things that had come to pass. I don't know yet exactly what I'm going to do with my life, but I know that the Lord has a plan. That's part of a process."

So, is the Lord "carving" him?

"Yeah," Matt answers.

Is it painful?

"Sometimes it is, yeah."

One of the things that has shaped Matt's life is diabetes, discovered when he was 12. He had to spend Easter in a hospital, badly dehydrated. How has it shaped him?

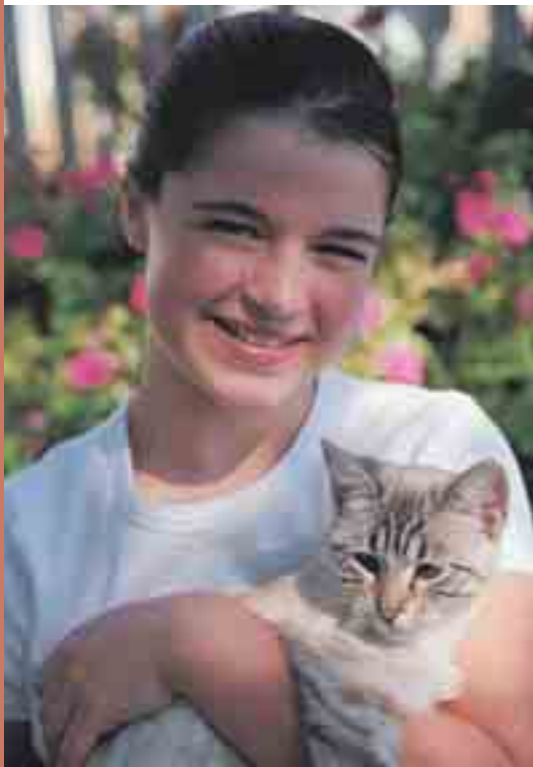




“There’s a scripture that I like that could explain it better than I can. It’s in Ether, chapter 12, verse 27: ‘I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; . . . for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.’ ”

Matt sits in thought for a minute. The night has deepened and warm, yellow light from the kitchen spills onto the porch. In the pasture below the house, a horse whinnies softly. The talk turns to the qualities of wood again—about the problems with the big knots in wood like pine, how hard and brittle they are and how difficult they make it to shape the wood. And how difficult it must be for the Lord to shape us if our hearts are hard and brittle.

Matt sees the process of shaping people as a joint effort between the Lord and the individual. “You live your life and live the principles you have been taught, and the Lord will take you and show you things that you wouldn’t otherwise think He could do.”



### The ultimate project

Each of Matt's carvings starts out pretty rough. But bit by bit, piece by piece, he turns it into something. "I have a vision of what I want it to be. And I make the rough cuts. And when I get it carved out, I change a couple of things to make it better. And then I make a few more coarse cuts and and make it still better." And so the process goes.

But it takes patience. "Sometimes you can get really involved in a piece and you ruin it because you haven't stopped to

**M**att's example is watched—and respected—by his sisters, Shannie (opposite page, left) and Rachel (top, left), and by his brothers, Jake and Steve (below).

look at what you are doing. You have to stand back, be patient, and wait," Matt says. It's like the experience he had with some of his investigators in the mission field. For example, one woman didn't think she could give up smoking. "We had to be patient with her and give her blessings. But in the end, she made it and she, her husband, and their son and daughter were baptized."

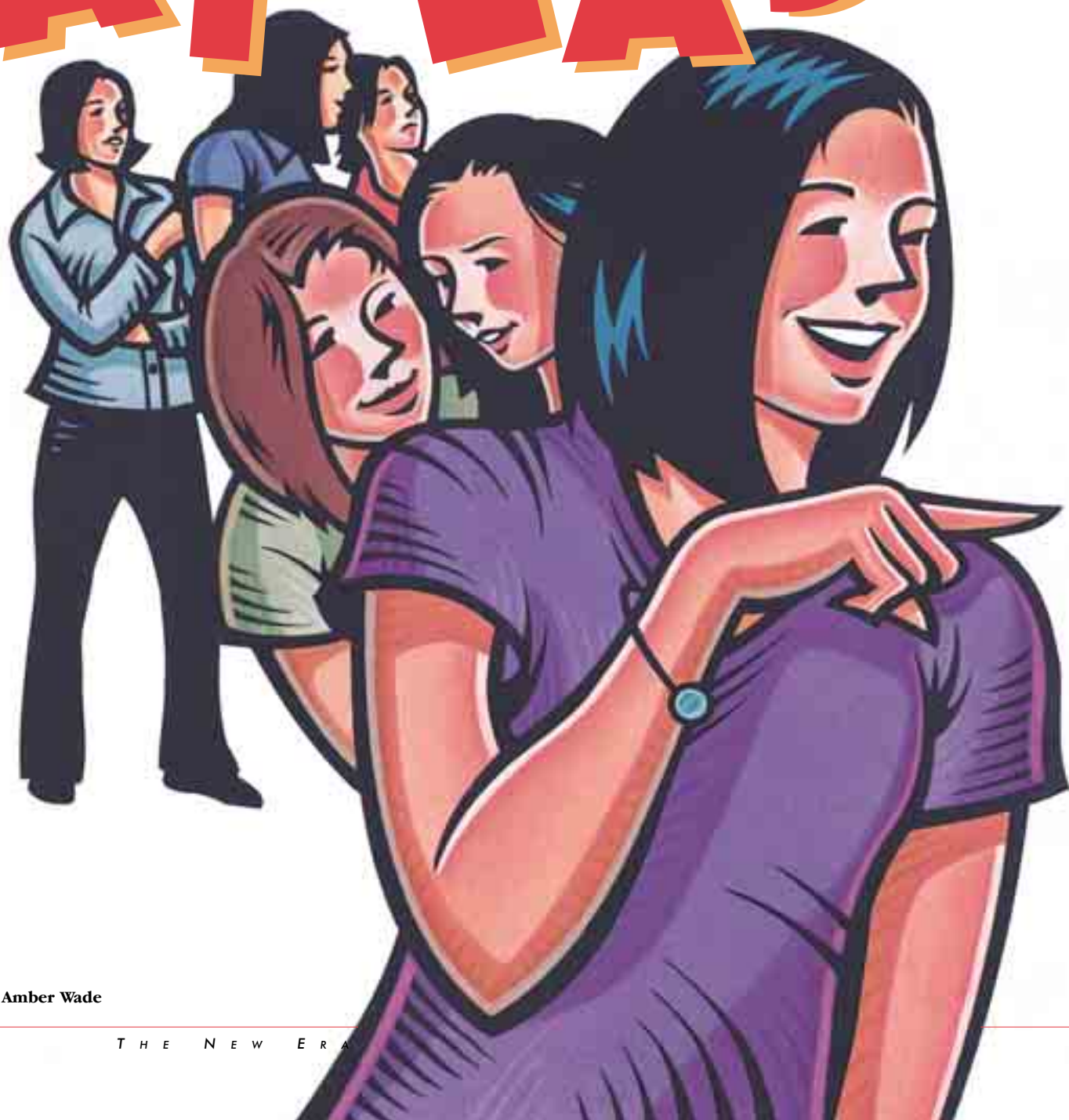
Thinking back, Matt speaks fondly of his mission presidents and how they helped to shape him as a missionary, making him a sharper tool in the Lord's hand. "I had a lot of spiritual guidance," he says. And the people he helped the Lord shape? "I think about them a lot, and about how they are doing. I miss the people, the interaction with them."

Considering how much he cares about people, it's no wonder Matt has been teaching sculpting at an area art center, even as his future is still being shaped. After all, a piece of wood is still just a piece of wood. But a life—now that's a real work of art. **NE**





# FRIENDS AT LAST



By Amber Wade

**W**henever I heard the bell ring for lunch, I dreaded going to my locker. My locker was at the end of the hall, so I had to hurry to catch up with my friends. Every day was the same. I always ran into my tormentors just as I was about to reunite with my friends.

The group of six girls would pass me, swearing at me, calling me names, and openly loathing my existence. Though I pretended not to care, day by day the names and taunts tore at my heart and caused my self-esteem to plummet.

“Why me?” I thought. Out of everyone in the school, why did they single me out? I had never done anything to any of them, yet I was their victim.

Every day I would come home from school, torn apart. My mom would faithfully sit me down and pick up the pieces of my tattered self-esteem. She told me she loved me and that the girls were just jealous. I only nodded, not believing her in the slightest.

Often I would flee to my scriptures. Nothing brought relief as they did. One day I read Matthew 5:44, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

That night as I knelt in prayer, I changed the words I usually spoke. Instead of asking the Lord to help me avoid or conquer my “enemies,” I asked Him to bless them. I asked that they would know they were loved and that they might be as lucky as I was to have the true gospel that could help them.

I continued to pray for them every night. I knew they were so lost, so miserable with life. What would it be like to be in their situation? I prayed and prayed. It seemed nothing was happening.

Just as I was ready to give up all hope, I received a call from my friend’s mother. She asked me to come to a new-member discussion with a girl my age so she could get to know some girls in the ward. I agreed, willing to help and excited at the idea of a new friend.

I got to my friend’s house a little early. I was ecstatic to meet the new girl and welcome her. I’ll never

forget my feelings when the new girl walked in and we made eye contact. It was her, the ringleader of my tormentors. We awkwardly shook hands and sat at opposite ends of the room. The lesson went quickly. I cannot remember anything that was said.

As I sat in my room that night, I was so full of emotions I thought I would explode. Confusion, embarrassment, joy, and discomfort all crowded into my being.

At first this girl and I kept our distance at church. I still harbored negative feelings about her, and I didn’t know what to say when we encountered one another. I felt that way until the day she bore her testimony. It was so strong and passionate. I knew I should try harder to be her friend. She had such a love for the gospel, and I wanted that for myself, more than I already had. I began to compliment her and make small talk every time we met.

Though it took another year and a half for us to become friends, I wouldn’t trade our friendship for anything. I have such a love for her now. Her testimony and quiet strength amaze me. The change I saw in her leaves me in awe. She is my living witness that our prayers are answered.

**NE**

**S**he was the ringleader of the group that tormented me. Now I was supposed to do **WHAT** for her?





# Hosanna!

## Nauvoo Temple Dedication

Any temple dedication is special, but the dedication of the Nauvoo Illinois Temple carries with it a special meaning that touched the hearts of Church members all over the world.

The original temple was dedicated in 1846, and thousands of Saints were able to make sacred covenants there before they were driven from Nauvoo. That temple experience gave them the necessary spiritual strength for the journey west. Shortly afterward, the temple was almost completely destroyed by fire. And what was left was demolished by a tornado in 1850. In April 1999, President Gordon B. Hinckley announced its reconstruction, and, this year, the Nauvoo Temple became the Church's 113th completed temple. It stands as a monument to the sacrifice and dedication of the early Saints.

From June 27 to 30, there were 13 dedicatory sessions. Saints from 68 countries viewed the dedication in what was the largest satellite broadcast the Church has ever undertaken. Here are just a few comments from youth who were able to attend a dedicatory session via satellite.



*"What I will remember most will be how strong the Spirit was and how emotional President Hinckley was. He is an amazing man, and to listen to him speak with such knowledge and power was great. I knew that what he was saying was coming from the Lord."*

Jessica Merrill  
Medford, Oregon



*"As the prophet poured out his soul, the congregation couldn't help but freeze and listen to his words. Even if I had wanted to talk I doubt I could have. After feeling the Spirit that strongly I would return again and again if I had the chance."*

Steven Pray  
Lewisville, Texas



*"The dedication was beautiful, and I know my testimony has been strengthened. It made me realize how far we have come as a church and helped me to appreciate Joseph Smith much more. I await the day I will be able to see the Nauvoo Temple."*

Danielle Huysmans  
Auckland,  
New Zealand



*President Gordon B. Hinckley places mortar around the cornerstone of the temple. Speaking of those who built the original temple, he said in a news conference prior to the first dedicatory session, "There will be with us today an unseen audience. I feel confident of that."*



*"The Hosanna Shout is my favorite part of temple dedications because it is so strong and powerful. This dedication meant a lot to me because my ancestors were among the pioneers that traveled across the wilderness. I am glad to have been a part of this special dedication."*

Adam Harrison  
Laupahoehoe, Hawaii



*"As I walked into the chapel I felt at peace. That peace became stronger as the prophet and other Church leaders began to speak. I felt my Heavenly Father near telling me that this was the right place to be—not just on this night, but that this was the true gospel to live."*

Jenny West  
Ellisville, Missouri



*"During the dedication, when President Boyd K. Packer said the Nauvoo Temple was the place that the sealing of families first took place in this dispensation, it made me feel a love for my family and really appreciate that I have been sealed to them."*

Matthew Ah Mu  
Auckland,  
New Zealand





*Be*



# SMART

*Being smart is more than having brain power. Reach your full potential by educating your mind and your hands. The benefits are both spiritual and secular.*

**A**lmost every teenager dreams of having a new car to drive to school, to work, or anywhere else they need to go. Although it is fun having a car, at President Gordon B. Hinckley's November 2000 youth fireside, he explained that a good education is more important than a car (see *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 4).

"You need all the education you can get," he said. "Sacrifice a car, sacrifice anything that is needed to be sacrificed to qualify yourselves to do the work of the world."

President Hinckley went on to explain that the Lord desires that we gain a good education. "The Lord wants you to

educate your minds and hands, whatever your chosen field. Whether it be repairing refrigerators, or the work of a skilled surgeon, you must train yourselves. Seek for the best schooling available. Become a workman of integrity in the world that lies ahead of you. I repeat, you will bring honor to the Church and you will be generously blessed because of that training."

### **Planning and sacrifice**

It is important to plan for the future so that you can follow the Lord's commandments—for as President Hinckley stated, "[The Lord] wants you to train your minds and hands to become an influence for good as you go forward with your lives."

After hearing President Hinckley's talk, 18-year-old Heather Hancock realized that obeying the Lord's commandment to gain an education requires planning and sacrifice.

"I am a senior in high school faced with the decisions that go along with college. Where to go. How to pay for it. What to study. President Hinckley's talk on being smart has helped me a great deal. There have been many times where I have thought about buying a new car or clothes, but the words from President



*Obeying the Lord's command to educate ourselves may require sacrifices, but it is worth it.*

By Caroline H. Benzley



Hinckley's talk, 'Sacrifice anything that is needed,' come to mind. They have helped me to stay focused in school and save money for college. I know how important education is, and I am willing to sacrifice other material things to obtain it."

### **What the world will pay you**

Education is particularly important because it is something that will greatly affect our future. "The world will pay you what it thinks you are worth," President Hinckley said. "And your worth will increase as you gain education and proficiency in your chosen field."

Because education is a worthy pursuit that is pleasing to the Lord, we can be assured He will help us as we strive to increase our knowledge and skills in our schoolwork or in our chosen field of work. Seventeen-year-old Annie Anderson feels the Spirit helped her improve her school studies.

"I didn't exactly have to work hard at school until I went to high school. I was working but not as hard as I needed to to get the grades needed to go to a good college. When I heard President Hinckley's counsel to try harder in school, I decided it was something that I needed to work on. I asked Heavenly Father to help me as I worked to get better grades. I have felt the Spirit as I study, and I know that when I have put forth the effort, Heavenly Father has helped me. There wasn't a drastic change in my grades, nor did I become really smart overnight, but I know the Lord loves us and will help us accomplish what He asks us to do."

### **On the right track**

In order to gain a good education in any area it is important to make good choices. In his talk, President Hinckley related a story about a railroad car that ended up 1,500 miles away from its destination because a railroad worker

*"I asked Heavenly Father to help me as I worked to get better grades. I have felt the Spirit as I study, and I know that when I have put forth the effort, Heavenly Father has helped me."*



made a bad choice. Our lives, like a railroad car, may easily get on the wrong track. Poor decisions now may cause us to lose our chances for education in the future. As President Hinckley explained: "The movement away from our original destination may be ever so small, but if continued, that very small movement becomes a great gap and we find ourselves far from where we intended to go."

Anna Bardonski from Littleton, Colorado, discovered this truth after listening to President Hinckley's counsel on being smart.

"Being a junior in high school I have realized that this year is a very important and crucial year. I realized that being smart is more than just trying to learn and trying to get good grades. It also means being smart in my choices, my actions, my schoolwork, my example, and the things that I say. As I prepare to go to college I realize I must try extra hard throughout the rest of the year and next year too. This has helped me be an example, prepare for college, and be smart in the choices I make."

### **Smart is an action word**

Just because we are commanded to get a good education does not mean we will not have obstacles and trials. Sometimes the adversary may try and get us off the right track and away from gaining a good education. Laura Anne Money from Elk Ridge, Utah, had an experience with this as she attempted to improve her education.

"I am often content to take the path of least resistance; occasionally I am unmotivated. This is evident by the college I am attending, and the easy classes I am taking. I feel unchallenged and uninspired. President Hinckley's statement to *Be smart* made me realize it didn't matter how intelligent I was. If I didn't exercise my mind and actually do something with it, I would never reach



my potential. I decided to apply to a much more challenging college. Chances were I would not be accepted, but that was a risk I was willing to take. The application process was a nightmare. Online, fax machines, forms, interviews, information; everything seemed to be going against me; nothing was going right! It seemed as if the adversary knew all my weaknesses (procrastination, forgetfulness, laziness, distractions) and threw them in my face all at once! I'd never felt such strong resistance to what I was trying to do.

"When I thought I'd just give up, I said a prayer asking if this is what I was supposed to do. I received two answers: Yes this is what I need to do, and it will work. The second was a realization that the adversary was so upset by my decision he was doing everything to stop me. After that prayer, everything fell into place. Being smart is more than just mind power, it is an action word, an act of will. I realized that by following one of President Hinckley's B's, the adversary would be defeated. Just think what would happen if I followed all of them!"

### **Education pays**

Laura is right. It is amazing what happens when we follow the counsel of the prophet. When we sacrifice all that we can to follow his advice to be smart we can expect great blessings. As President Hinckley stated: "There can be no doubt, none whatever, that education pays."

Education will pay in both spiritual and secular ways. As we follow the mandate of the Lord, found in Doctrine and Covenants 88:79, to become educated in "things both in heaven and in the earth," we will be blessed with great spiritual growth and wonderful earthly experiences that will help us live happy and successful lives. **NE**

**I** realized that being smart is more than just trying to learn and trying to get good grades. It also means being smart in my choices, my actions, my schoolwork, my example, . . . "







# HITTING A HIGH NOTE



**W**hen they decided to put the gospel message to music and make a CD, these youth added to the harmony of their ward and their own lives.

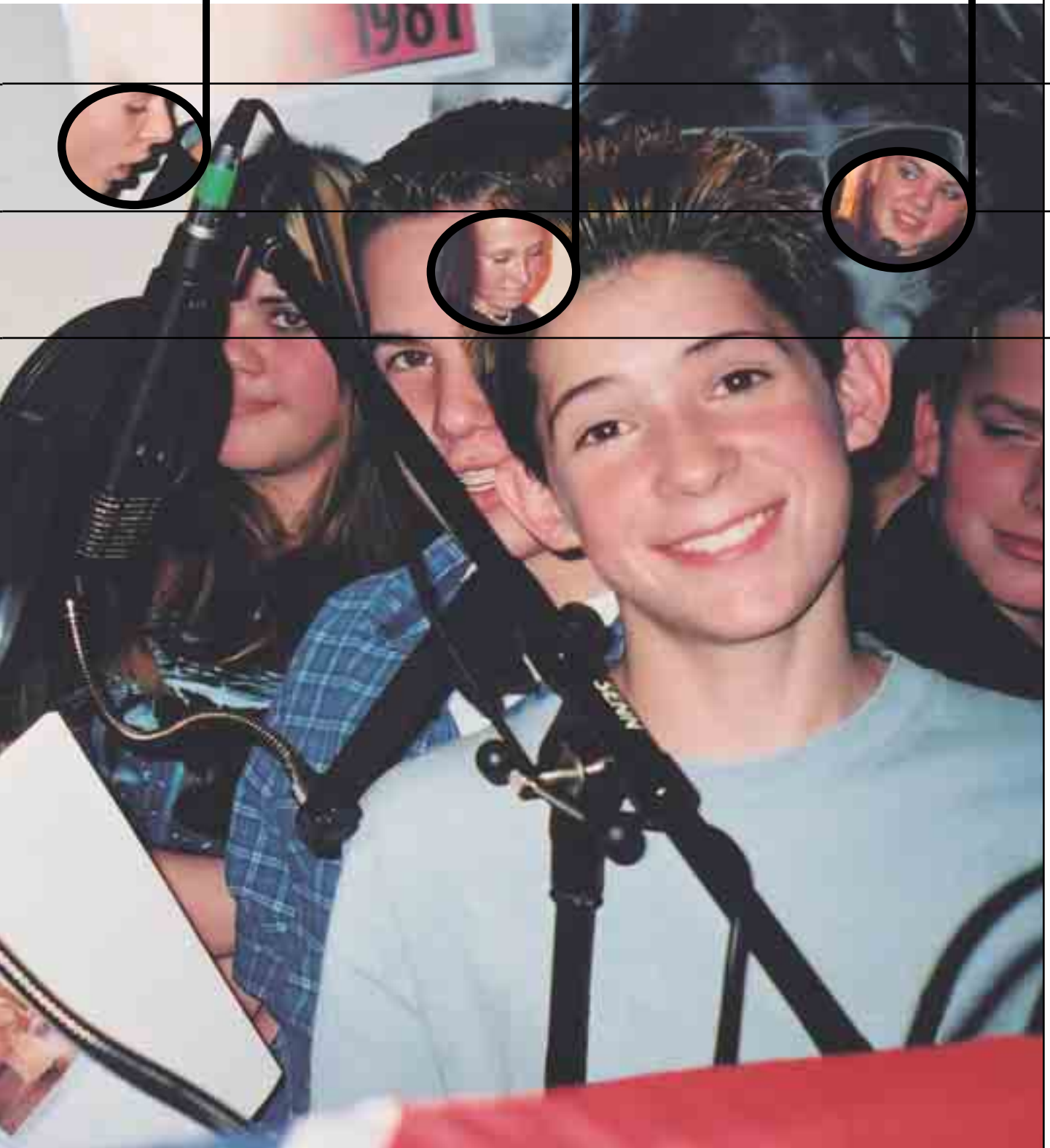
By Maggie Olason

When it seems like “Been there; done that” is the reaction to every suggestion made in planning youth activities, then you might try what members in the High Wycombe Ward in the Staines England Stake did. Think of something challenging and interesting, then see if it can be done.

The teens suggested that it might be great fun to record their own CD for their super activity. That meant writing the lyrics, performing the music, and, before anything else, making assignments.

What kind of song could they write? First, it had to include everyone, and some people readily admitted that singing was something they’d rather listen to than do. They agreed that to include everyone, they really needed something simple with some sections to pull in everyone. Lindsey Judd, a Mia Maid, agreed to write the lyrics. One of the Young Men leaders agreed to compose a background track.

Lindsey said, “My first source of





**U**sing every voice was the challenge, but every person fit into the song no matter the quality of their singing. The High Wycombe Ward used the activity to build unity just like the song drew in each singer.

information was *For the Strength of Youth*. That is where I found the topics to write about. I looked some of those topics up in the scriptures and found a really good first line in D&C 45:57. ‘For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day.’ I had my topics, some scripture lines, and my own knowledge. I just started to rhyme.”

Next came the practicing. The date for the recording came, and 19 youth and 5 leaders drove to a small recording studio for what turned out to be a three-hour recording session. The professional musicians who ran the studio were overwhelmed to have 19 teens crowding into the small studio. Some parts took many retakes to get right, and other parts made it in one take. Every teen participated; every voice was recorded. The musicians asked some meaningful questions about the young people, who asked if they could say a prayer after the session was over.

The best parts of the day didn’t end up on the recording. MaLanie Robison said, “I learned how important it is for everyone to work together as a team. When we were all singing together, all bunched up around the microphones, I kept thinking how cool it was that each person, with his own unique talents and differences, could become one and sing about our similar belief in the Savior.”

“I think our recording of a CD was great,” said Richard Holt. “It taught us the importance of teamwork, patience, and, most important of all, we proclaimed the gospel.”

With the CD finished, the young people discovered that words put to music really make them easier to remember. “I think it was good,” said Camilla Warren, “to give the song words that remind us of our standards.”

So, as their song says, “Whether you’re in Malibu or in Timbuktu, if you pray with faith, He’ll always be there. He’ll be there to guide you and to answer your prayer.”

And in the background, you’ll hear the High Wycombe Ward youth humming along. **NE**



T H E E X T R A S M I L E



Ryan Stoker

**M**y family went to Yellowstone Park a couple of years ago. As we stopped at Old Faithful geyser, my mom told my little brother Zach about Old Faithful and why it was called Old Faithful. After that, whenever people asked Zach about our trip, he told them Old Faithful went off every day except Sunday because it was faithful.

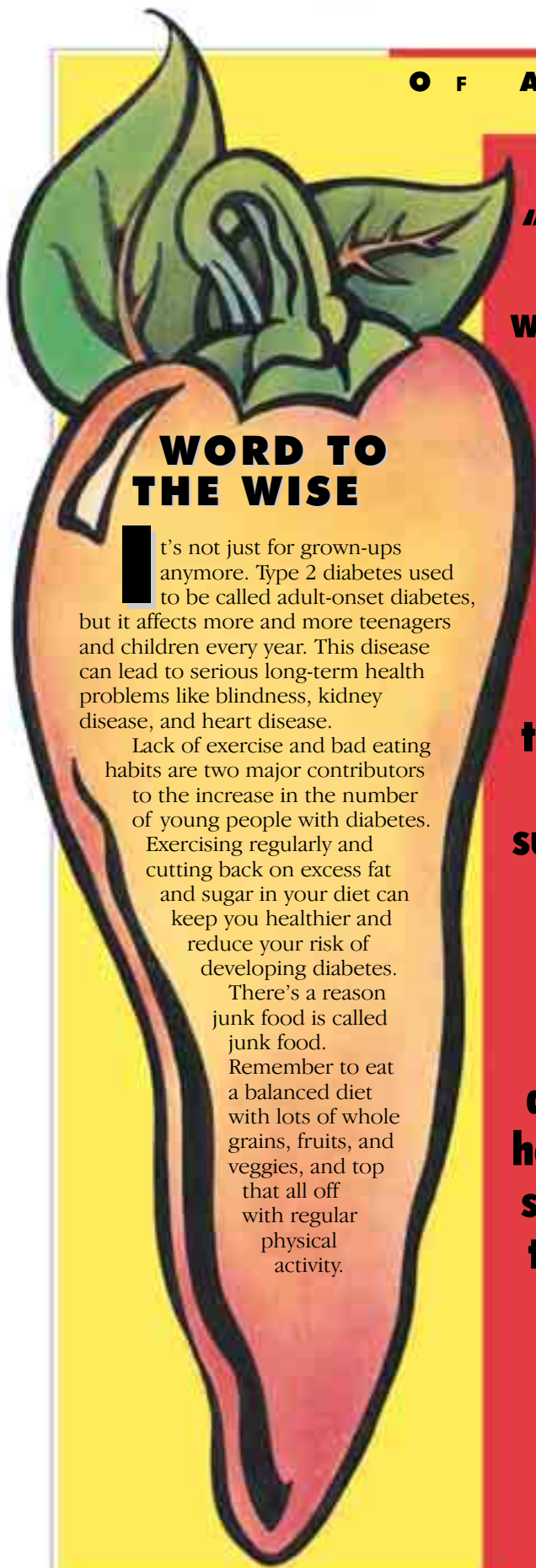
Kim Kitchen  
Providence, Utah



Ryan Stoker



Val Chadwick Bagley



## WORD TO THE WISE

**I**t's not just for grown-ups anymore. Type 2 diabetes used to be called adult-onset diabetes, but it affects more and more teenagers and children every year. This disease can lead to serious long-term health problems like blindness, kidney disease, and heart disease.

Lack of exercise and bad eating habits are two major contributors to the increase in the number of young people with diabetes. Exercising regularly and cutting back on excess fat and sugar in your diet can keep you healthier and reduce your risk of developing diabetes.

There's a reason junk food is called junk food. Remember to eat a balanced diet with lots of whole grains, fruits, and veggies, and top that all off with regular physical activity.

**"No matter what your past has been, you have a spotless future. . . . guard that future and remember that when the Judge shall summon [you], he will not look [you] over for medals, for diplomas, for honors, but for scars, and . . . that there be no stains between the scars."**

—Elder Hugh B. Brown  
(1883–1975)  
*(Improvement Era,*  
Dec. 1969, 95).

## UNSCRAMBLE YOUR LDS I.Q.

**U**nscramble the names of the people below who appear in the Doctrine and Covenants, and then see if you know what they all have in common.

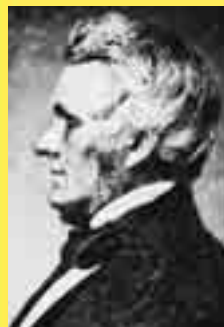
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2. tpartyappler
3. lwoffroofuwirdd
4. olonhartjy
5. themebergtrailsog



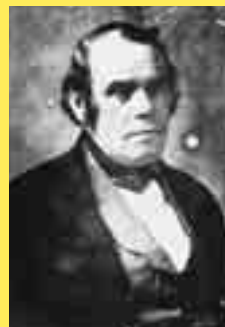
1



3



4



2



5

*Answers: Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, George Albert Smith. They were all members of Zion's Camp (see D&C 103:29–40).*





## MISSIONARY MUTUAL

**T**here are a lot of fun things you could do for Mutual. The youth of the Plymouth First Ward (Plymouth England Stake) used their Mutual night as an opportunity to do missionary work.

Each of the eight young women and seven young men in the ward, which covers about 15 square miles, brought a less-active or nonmember friend to Mutual. At the activity they had a barbecue, played games, and just got to know each other better. The full-time missionaries were invited, too, and they joined in the fun.

"I was so overwhelmed at the success of the activity," says Ruth Ng, one of the Young Women. "My testimony of missionary work was surely increased."



**"G**et a notebook . . . a journal that will last through all time, and maybe the angels may quote from it for eternity. Begin today and write in it your goings and comings, your deepest thoughts, your achievements and your failures, your associations and your triumphs, your impressions and your testimonies. Remember the Savior chastised those who failed to record important events."

—President Spencer W. Kimball  
(1895–1985)  
(see 3 Ne. 23:6–13)  
(*New Era*, Oct. 1975, 5).

## WRITE AWAY!

**W**e want to hear about your experiences with the new Duty to God and Personal Progress programs. Write to us about your successes and challenges in working with the new requirements, and share any ideas you have that might be helpful to other young men and young women. Send your write-ups to *New Era*, 50 East North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150. Or e-mail us at [cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org](mailto:cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org).





# HOW YOU CAN KNOW



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

*You can gain your testimony the same way the prophets gained theirs—through the witness of the Spirit.*

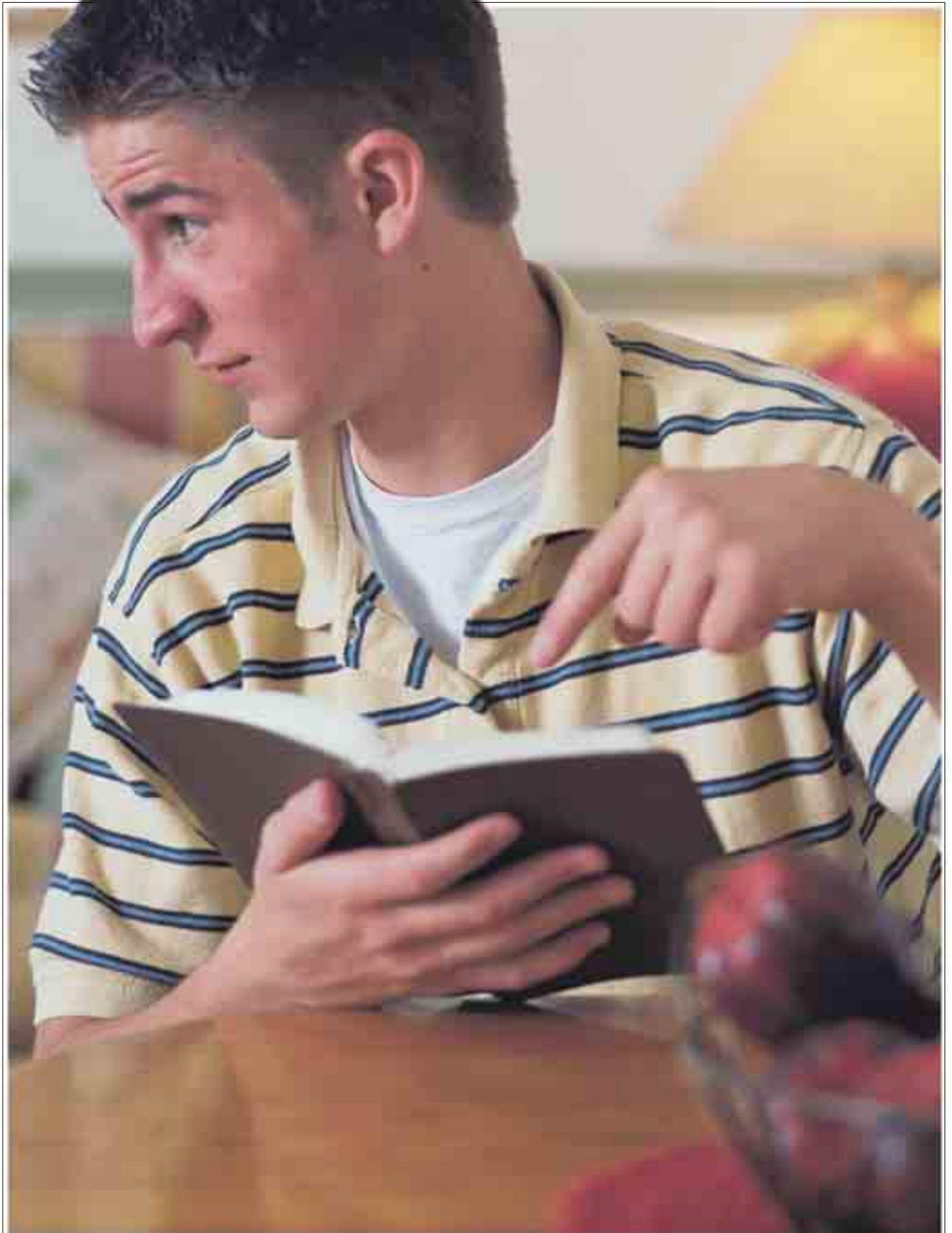
**W**hen we raise our hands to sustain the prophet, it is important for each of us to have a personal testimony that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, who leads His Church today through the prophet He has chosen.

Our testimony comes by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost. The testimony received and carried within us enables us to hold a steady course in times of prosperity and to overcome doubt and fear in times of adversity. Each of us

needs to know what a testimony is, how we can get it, and what our responsibilities are once we have received a testimony.

A testimony is the spirit of prophecy (see Rev. 19:10). It is a personal revelation from God, revealing the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A testimony comes through the Holy Ghost; it makes a deep and lasting impression on the soul.

Individual testimonies are the foundation and strength of the Church. Our testimony provides a guiding light that leads to a commitment which directs our conduct and our way of life. Our testimony is true north on a spiritual compass. It is a moving force that cannot be seen but can truly be felt. It is a burning within that tells us what is right. It is when, as President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) said, “your heart tells you things your mind doesn’t know”



(*Speeches of the Year*, 1973, 101).

Our testimony is the fruit of obedience in the form of peace, joy, and understanding in our hearts of gospel principles. A testimony is a shield of faith “wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (D&C 27:17).

Our testimony is a measurement of our faith. Faith is testimony; testimony is faith. Having a strong testimony allows us to help others in their search for truth. Our testimony is a gift from God. It should be shared, but we do not have the authority to bestow a testimony upon someone else, because a personal testimony is granted by the Holy Ghost. It can aid others in gaining knowledge for themselves—a knowledge abiding in the heart that leaves no room for doubt.

Our testimony is a knowledge of who we are, where we came from, and where we are going eternally if we are faithful. We must each gain such a testimony if we are to withstand the trials and adversities of mortality and go on to the glorious eternal future we all desire.

What do we learn about testimony from the lives and teachings of the prophets of God? We learn that a testimony is very personal. We can each gain a testimony of the truth through the Holy Ghost.

### **Prophets in this dispensation**

Fifteen men have presided over The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in this dispensation. Every one of them has had an unshakable testimony of the reality of God, the divine sonship of Jesus Christ, the truth of the gospel, the Book of Mormon, and the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith. How did they receive their testimonies? Can we obtain a testimony in the same way?

We are familiar with the vision received by the Prophet Joseph Smith and how he obtained his testimony of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Joseph had serious reflection about religions of his time. He read in the scriptures that if he lacked wisdom, he could ask of God, and wisdom would be

**W**e do not give our testimony in the manner that Joseph Smith gave his life. Rather, we give testimony by devoted service in our lives each day to lift and strengthen others.



given to him. The passage of scripture found in James 1:5 came to his heart with great power and feeling. Joseph reflected on the scripture again and again. He retired to the woods to express in humble prayer the desire of his heart, to do as James directed—to ask of God.

As we humbly testify to the world, there appeared to Joseph in answer to his prayer the very Eternal God of heaven and earth and His Only Begotten Son, who is the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. They appeared to this young man, who in the eyes of the world seemed to be a common lad, revealing in a few brief moments more truth about the nature of God than was had among all the churches and professions of belief in the entire world. The boy prophet, Joseph, now knew that God the Father and Jesus Christ were separate personages. Each had a body of flesh and bones. They could indeed reveal themselves to their chosen prophets just as they did to the prophets in ancient times. Living testimony, personal revelation, is the foundation stone of true religion.

Joseph Smith sealed his testimony with his own blood. The Prophet’s martyrdom was a voluntary acceptance of death to seal the testimony of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants (see D&C 135:1) and to bear holy witness of Jesus Christ and His gospel in this dispensation. We do not give our testimony and life in the manner that Joseph Smith, the martyred Prophet, gave his life. Rather, we give testimony by devoted service in our lives each day to lift and strengthen others.

The prophets who followed Joseph Smith in this dispensation each obtained their own testimonies by the same basic principles with individual application. If we consider their lives carefully, we can discover the process by which testimony comes. For example, President Brigham Young received a testimony of the truth of the Book of Mormon after two years of studious consideration. President John Taylor (1808–1887) required only three weeks to discover that the restored



gospel of Jesus Christ embodied the true religion that existed anciently as recorded in the Bible and now again restored to the earth. President Wilford Woodruff (1807–91) searched diligently for six years before finding the truth. He finally found it in the teachings and testimony of two Mormon missionaries. President Lorenzo Snow (1814–1901) was the fifth President of the Church. When he met the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1831, he wrote, “A light arose in my understanding which has never been extinguished” (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1992, 3:1367).

#### President McKay’s testimony

President David O. McKay (1873–1970) was the ninth president of the Church. In his boyhood he desired to know, as Joseph Smith had known, of the reality of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. One day while herding cattle in the foothills near his home, he sought a testimony through prayer. He said:

“I dismounted, threw my reins over my horse’s head, and there under a serviceberry bush I prayed that God would declare to me the truth of his revelation to Joseph Smith.”

He prayed fervently and sincerely with as much faith as he could find within him. When he finished his prayer, he waited for an answer. Nothing seemed to happen. Disappointed, he rode slowly on, saying to himself at the time, “No spiritual manifestation has come to me. If I am true to myself, I must say I am just the same ‘old boy’ that I was before I prayed” (*New Era*, Jan. 1972, 56).

A direct answer to this prayer was many years in coming. While serving a mission in Scotland, Elder McKay received a powerful spiritual manifestation. He later commented, “Never before had I experienced such an emotion. . . . It was a manifestation for which as a doubting youth I had secretly prayed most earnestly on hillside and in meadow. It was an assurance to me that sincere prayer is answered ‘sometime,



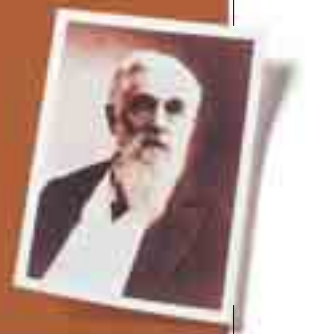
somewhere.” (*David O. McKay*, 50).

Each of the prophets has testified of the personal revelation by which they have come to know the truthfulness of the gospel and of the spiritual strength of such revelation.

People often ask me, “How do you know? How can you know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ?” While there seems to be no exact formula by which each of us receives a testimony, there does seem to be a discernable pattern. Though prayer is important in gaining a testimony, we cannot merely ask in prayer for a testimony and expect it to be given immediately to us.

Generally, testimony emerges over time and through life’s experiences. We can compare testimony to the process of watching a photograph develop. Powerful impressions of the Spirit come like flashes of light on receptive photographic film. Like the chemicals needed to develop the picture, certain spiritual conditions and experiences are needed in

**W**hen President Lorenzo Snow met the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1831, he wrote, “A light arose in my understanding which has never been extinguished.”



our lives for our personal testimony to develop into a certain truth and knowledge. And like a photograph, a testimony, if not carefully preserved, will fade with time.

Testimonies often come when there is willingness to serve where we are called. They come when a decision is made to strive to be obedient. Testimonies come during efforts to help, lift, and strengthen others. They come from prayer and from studying the scriptures and applying them in our lives.

Whatever our circumstances, there seem to be moments in each of our lives when we can be given the knowledge that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ. There is no greater search in life that we can embark upon than the quest to gain a testimony of the truth.

While each of our lives is different, I believe we can, with some confidence, outline from the testimony of others, such as the prophets, and our personal experience the process and phases we go through to gain a testimony:

**Continue to pray.** Have a sincere desire to know the truth and express that desire in humble prayer to our Heavenly Father. “If ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you” (Alma 32:27).

**Search the scriptures.** The scriptures are filled with the testimonies of those who have gone before. Even they, though long dead, can reach our heart and bring peace to our minds and direction to our lives.

**Ponder gospel principles.** Think about them. Test them with further prayer. Relate them to what we know and feel. All the truths we will learn can eventually fit together into a fervent, undoubting testimony.

**Be humble and receptive.** Have ears to hear when Heavenly Father leads us to someone who can teach us about the gospel of Jesus Christ. This may be a teacher, family member, neighbor, friend, or acquaintance. It might be a missionary who contacts us through tracting or referral. But know that once we pray, study, and have faith with a

**P**resident David O. McKay learned that, generally, testimony emerges over time and through life's experiences. President Howard W. Hunter expressed sympathy for youth who doubt their testimony. He said, “These doubts can be resolved . . . by exercising moral, spiritual, and mental effort.”



desire to learn spiritual matters, the Lord will provide a way for us to gain further light and knowledge.

**Live our testimony.** We must obediently follow the Savior's teachings and the prophets' examples. Our testimony and example will assist others who are searching for the truth.

**Share our testimony.** “O that I were an angel,” proclaimed Alma, “and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God” (Alma 29:1). Let others know that we know. Bear our testimony in fast meeting. Tell our family; tell our friends. We will find when we share our testimony it becomes stronger, and there are many others around us who also want to embrace the truth.

**Be willing to endure the test of time.** Do not think that it is easy to maintain a testimony. Others will test us. Sometimes they will point the finger of mockery and scorn. Sometimes they may persecute you openly. Be prepared. Know in advance that the best of God's children have had the courage of true conviction and were willing to suffer ridicule, deprivation, and even death for the sake of true testimony. Is each of us willing to do likewise?

#### **A shield of faith**

In our day, those blessed with a testimony of the truth have a shield of faith that will protect them from the fiery darts of the adversary at the hands of critics and detractors. We should not let others determine our faithfulness and affect our testimony and ultimately our eternal salvation.

Doubts about matters of religion that arise from a lack of knowledge can be constructively resolved. The solutions are instruction, study, and prayer, which result in increased testimony, which drives out further doubts.

Years ago, while a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) spoke to the youth regarding their testimonies:

“I have sympathy for young men and young women when honest doubts enter

their minds and they engage in the great conflict of resolving doubts. These doubts can be resolved, if they have an honest desire to know the truth, by exercising moral, spiritual, and mental effort. They will emerge from the conflict into a firmer, stronger, larger faith because of the struggle. They have gone from a simple, trusting faith, through doubt and conflict, into a solid substantial faith which ripens into testimony” (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1960, 108).

The fruits of testimony may be observed in the lives of the faithful. Those lifted by the power of testimony can find greater happiness and fidelity in marriage. Their testimonies are an antidote to the plague of divorce. They enjoy greater freedom, seldom enslaved to alcohol, tobacco, drugs, abuse, and other forms of self-indulgence. They find strength to deal with the problems of life.

Each of us will be tested, tempted, and tried for our testimonies and to find out if we will remain true and faithful through these trials of our faith.

We also know that if we do not continue faithful in the testimony that is imparted to us by the Spirit, then the light dwindles until it is extinguished. A testimony must be constantly nourished and defended, or it will waste away.

I wish to bear my own testimony in the strongest and most direct manner possible. I know that God lives. I bear witness to the reality and divinity of His Son Jesus Christ, who leads this Church, and who reveals the word of the Father to our generation. I bear my testimony to the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, the eternal nature of the priesthood, the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the assurance that God has again spoken through a living prophet. **NE**

*Adapted from an October 1994 general conference address.*





# Angel UNAWARE

**N**ew town, new school, first day of seventh grade—I had pinned my hopes on the peer mentorship class as a way to meet lots of people. Instead, I met Kevin.

By Jana Pope

*I prayed for friends and acceptance. The answer I received was totally unexpected.*

I was sure Heavenly Father had failed me. Or He had at least forgotten I existed.

I sat all alone at an empty table as the lunchroom around me buzzed with laughter and conversation. I was the new girl. And the first day of seventh grade is not an easy time to make friends.

I had prayed about the move to Texas, and I felt it was the right thing. But now here I was, alone with my mashed potatoes. All the comfort and reassurance I felt before were gone.

As the bell rang I remembered I had my peer mentorship class next—my last hope for getting into the “in” crowd. The counselor had told me that a lot of kids take the class to meet people and get

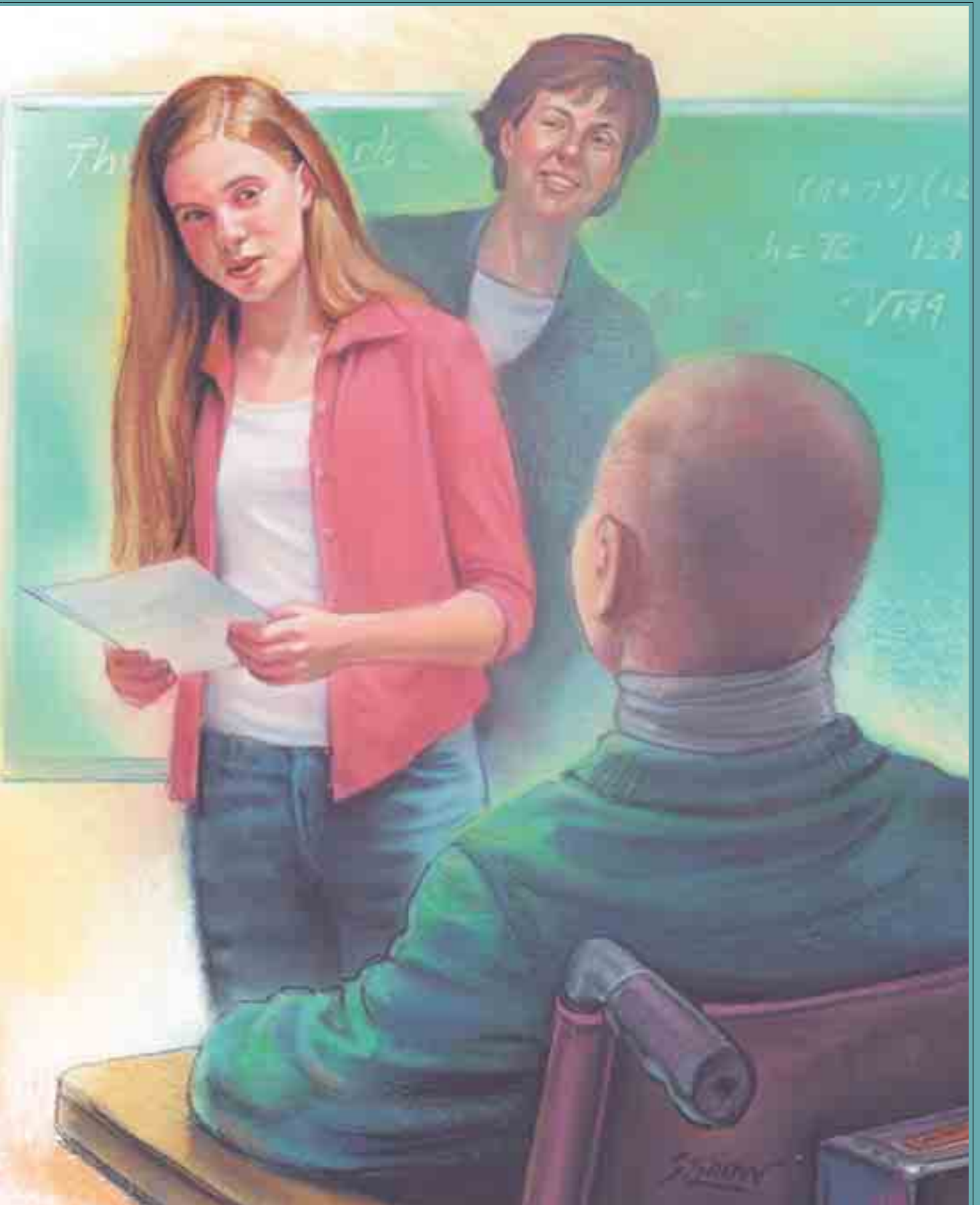
involved—exactly what I was looking for. I hurried down the hall with new hope for my social life. I would finally have friends here.

“Welcome to class. Today you will each be assigned to a student with a special need or concern. Your job will be to help him or her throughout the year.” With that Mrs. Watson began running down the class roll, assigning each student to be a tutor or mentor. When she came to me she asked me to see her after class.

“Kevin is a special case. He needs a lot of help. It won’t be easy. Are you okay with that?”

“Sure!” How hard could it be?

The next day I met Kevin Mathison. He had no hands, no feet, and he controlled his electric wheelchair with a lever held in his mouth. I must admit that, when I saw him, I had less than Christlike feelings. I was afraid. Here I was, desperately looking for friends and popularity in this new place, and I was the one to be picked to help Kevin. Why couldn’t they get someone else to do it?





**M**e? Someone else's guardian angel? That was the message of the simple pin. I had been searching for friends. I had learned to be one.

Kevin had a rare disease that was gradually deteriorating his skin and connective tissues. Although the counselor had talked with me briefly about his condition, I was not at all prepared for what I saw when we met. His arms, legs, and neck were bandaged, his hair was gone, and his face was badly scarred. Perhaps more shocking than all the rest, however, was Kevin's smile—so bright and so genuine that his blue eyes sparkled with it.

I wish I could say that at that moment I put aside my selfish fears and saw Kevin for the incredible spirit he was, but unfortunately it took me most of that year to even feel comfortable with him. Though very lonely and disappointed, I stuck with Kevin. I helped him get to

classes, complete assignments, and eat lunch. But, oh, how I dreaded those lunch hours I spent spoon-feeding Kevin while my classmates were chatting and laughing about clothes and guys. I felt I would never belong. And having to help Kevin around everywhere was certainly not helping.

As for Kevin, he was excited simply to have someone to talk to. His warm smile greeted me every morning. Throughout the year he told me all about his family and his favorite sports teams. I eventually found myself laughing and even enjoying our time together. The last day before Christmas break, Kevin came into class and asked me to open his bag for him. When I unzipped his bag, I found a small box wrapped in green paper.

"Open it. It's for you." He seemed more serious than usual as he watched me struggle to untie the bow. When I opened the box, a lump came to my throat. It was a small pin—a guardian angel.

"Thanks for being a friend, Jana," Kevin said softly.

I couldn't believe it. All this time I had been searching and praying for friends, and here he was right in front of me. Kevin didn't give me the instant popularity I had wanted, but he did give me a lesson in service, friendship, and unconditional love that has been with me ever since.

Kevin Mathison died one month before he would have graduated. At our high school graduation ceremony, I stood with the rest of my class as an honorary diploma was awarded to his family. Tears streamed down my face as I silently thanked Kevin for the years of friendship and love he gave me. This young man, the sight of whom made me uncomfortable and afraid five years ago, had become beautiful—not because his appearance ever changed, but because he gave me better eyes with which to see.

I know Heavenly Father put Kevin and me together for a reason. I prayed to have friends, and the Lord showed me that first I had to *be* one. I still have Kevin's pin in my room. It reminds me that if I look outside myself, I truly can be a guardian angel—or at least a friend. **NE**



*Creative ideas for using this issue of the New Era.*

**Young Men and Young Women Activity Ideas**

□ President Hinckley challenged the youth of the Church to be educated and trained to meet the demands of the working world (see “Be Smart,” page 30). With the help of your ward or stake employment specialist, hold a career fair as a combined activity. With the approval of your priesthood leaders, invite guest speakers from your ward and stake to talk about their careers and how they prepared for the work they do.

□ Elder Robert D. Hales tells us we can discover the process by which testimony comes by studying the lives of the prophets (see “How You Can Know,” page 40). Plan an evening with the prophets. Assign individuals to share a story each about a latter-day prophet. Use visual aids such as photographs, slide presentations, or videos, if you can.

**Seminary Devotional Idea**

□ Bring a glass of water to class, and have your friend complain about being very thirsty. You say you’re thirsty, too, then drink the water while your friend looks on. The point: When others are thirsty and you have living water—or the gospel of Jesus Christ (see John 4:10, 13–14)—it’s not fair to quench your thirst and not your neighbor’s. Be a missionary and share the gospel.

**Personal Improvement**

□ “There is no knight in black armor with such power as you may have if you live righteously,” says President Boyd K. Packer in “A Few Simple Lessons” on page 4. Read D&C 27:15–18, then describe the whole armor of God with a poem or story; a painting or sculpture; a photograph or drawing. Display your work where you can see it each day.

□ Elder Dallin H. Oaks says that “instead of being judgmental about others, we should be concerned about ourselves” (see “The Challenge to Become,” page 12). For two weeks do not criticize or judge anyone, especially members of your family. Record your experiences and feelings in your journal, then try it again—this time for a month!

**Family Home Evening Ideas**

□ Can anyone in your family sculpt shrubs or create art out of old engine parts? How about refinishing a scratched and peeling table? Learn a new craft as a family and fill your house with your own creative work like the Rogers family did in “Carving a Character,” page 20.

**Value or Duty to God Project**

□ Help others in your community “Be Smart” (page 30) by volunteering to help with tutoring programs. Concentrate your efforts in an area in which you excel.

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**Gained a lot**

I am very grateful for the *New Era*. It has really helped me a great deal in my life. I especially appreciated Elder Neal A. Maxwell's message "I Am But a Lad" in the February 2002 issue. It reminded me of what I think of myself. But I have gained a lot from that message—like coming on a mission, which is a great blessing to me. Keep up the good work. There are people who feel they have lost their personal possibilities.

*Sister Shelly T. Kollab  
Nigeria Port Harcourt Mission (via e-mail)*

**Especially for her**

The *New Era* always seems to have the answers to my problems and questions. It is almost like the articles are written specifically for me. I love it, and appreciate all of the hard work that goes into each issue of the *New Era*. It is as entertaining as it is helpful.

*Aspen Paige Owen  
Ogden, Utah*

**Friendly commentary**

I am from Fiji but at present I am attending BYU-Hawaii. This is my first semester here, so you can know how much I am missing my family. But through reading the *New Era* on the Internet, I get a lot of strength to adjust myself here. I really like to read comments on certain topics by the youth. Also, sometimes I find a solution for a doubt that I have. Thanks very much for compiling these articles for us.

*Asblyn Nair  
Laie, Hawaii (via e-mail)*

**Source of comfort**

The *New Era* is a great magazine. I must admit I hardly read the whole way through, but what I read fills me with peace, and I really get a lot out of it. I especially like reading the fiction, The Extra Smile, and catching up with the various youth around the world. Keep up the good work. It's a source of comfort, one a lot of people turn to for advice.

*Jacinta Smalley  
Ipswich, Queensland, Australia (via e-mail)*

*"You are the best magazine around with the coolest information."*



**Struggling**

Thank you so much for putting "When Life Gets Tough" in the February 2002 *New Era*. I recently moved to Basel, Switzerland, from Arizona—a big change! I was struggling so hard with the move and was really down in the dumps most of the time. This article helped me realize I was the cause of a lot of my problems, and I could overcome them. And I did. Again, thank you so much for this story and all the inspirational stories.

*Paige Nelson  
Basel, Switzerland (via e-mail)*

**Appropriate articles**

You are the best magazine around with the coolest information. You also have appropriate articles that encourage youth to do good things. I'm sure the *New Era* has helped a lot of people with their self-esteem and shown them a safer path. I love reading the articles because they all have a moral. Thank you for being here to help us in the latter days.

*Trent Hunter  
Bluffton, South Carolina*

**A monthly inspiration**

Every month I am so impressed by the *New Era*. When I see it has arrived in the mail, I can't wait to open it and read it from cover to cover! It gives me such strength and inspires me to be better and stronger in this world. Thank you. Keep up the good work!

*Asbly Seemann  
Moorpark, California (via e-mail)*

*We love hearing from you. Write us at  
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Salt Lake City, Utah 84150*

*Or e-mail us at  
cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org  
Submissions may be edited for length  
and clarity.*

### **Your Friend**

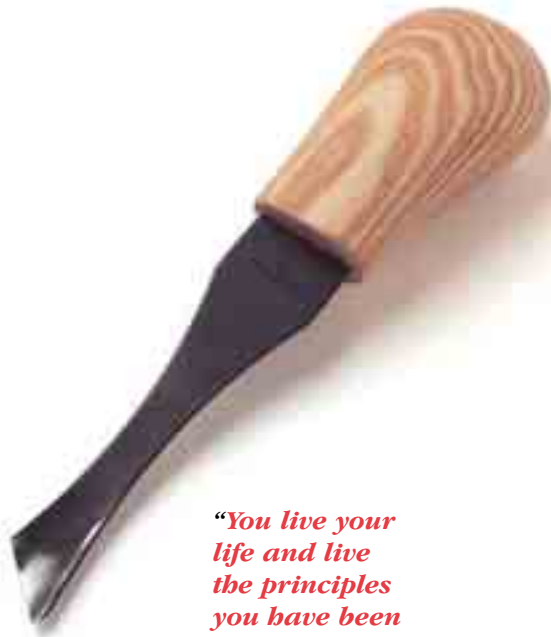
**By Tearese Segler**

He drank the bitter cup  
shed blood in a garden  
and died  
because He loves you.  
Fear not, dear child,  
your Friend is always near,  
and the light shall guide you to His bosom,  
comfort you in His embrace,  
brush away the tears,  
and the frailties of mortality  
will be washed away in His sacrifice  
for you.



*By Kevin Shaw*





*“You live your  
life and live  
the principles  
you have been  
taught, and  
the Lord will  
take you and  
show you  
things that  
you wouldn’t  
otherwise  
think He  
could do.”*

**See “Carving  
a Character,”  
p. 20.**

