

A young man with short brown hair, wearing a dark grey t-shirt and light blue jeans, is sitting on a green metal structure. He is leaning back with his hands clasped over his knees, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The structure he is sitting on appears to be part of a vehicle or a piece of machinery, with a large black pipe on the left and a green metal door or panel on the right.

THE NewEra

AUGUST

2003

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HAIR PEACE, P. 20

AN ANSWER
TO PRAYER, P. 4

The New Era Magazine
Volume 33, Number 8
August 2003

An official
monthly publication
for youth of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

The *New Era* can be found
on the Internet at www.lds.org.
Click on "Gospel Library."

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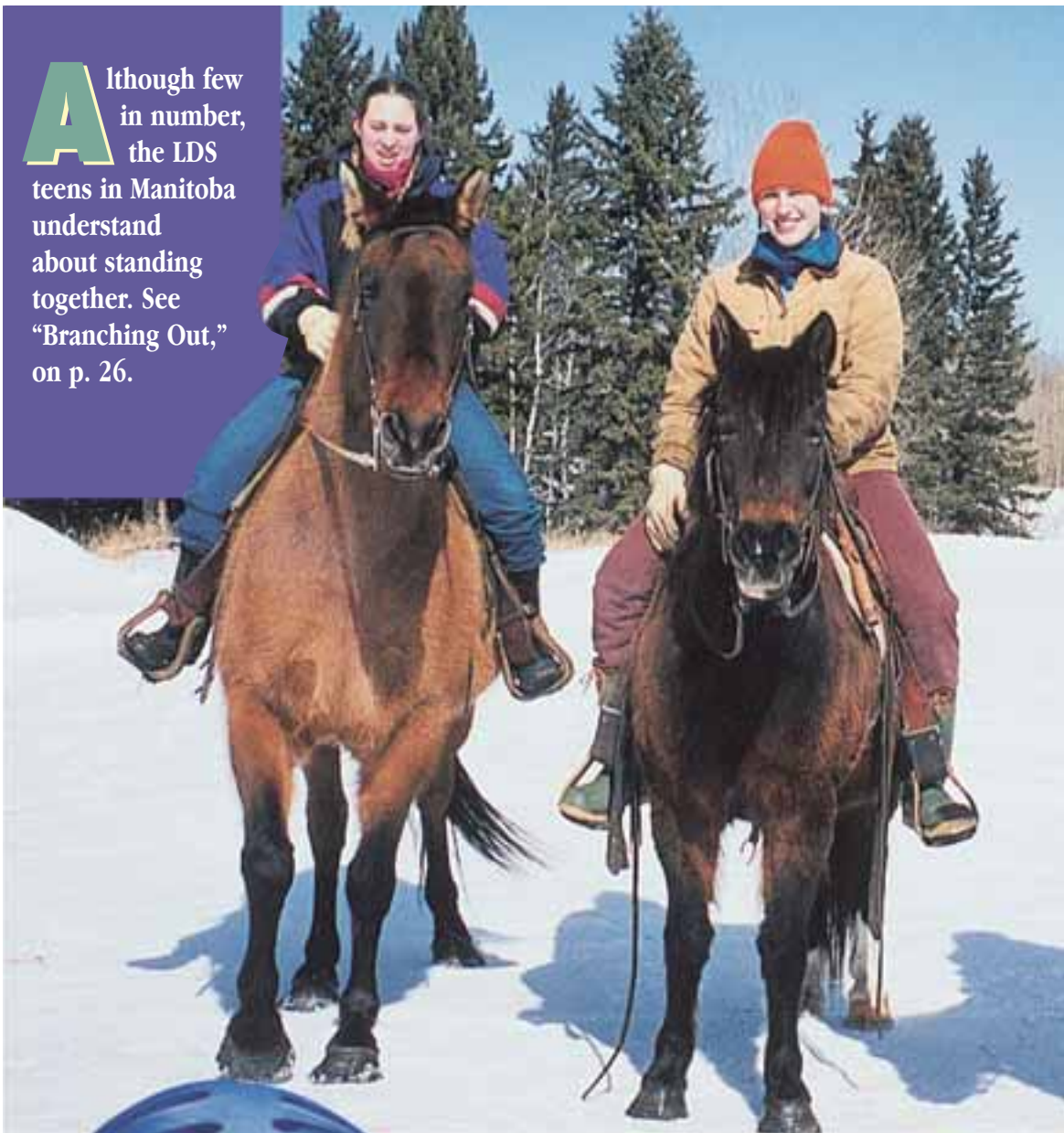
To Subscribe:
Send \$8.00 U.S. check or
money order per year for
the *New Era* to
Distribution Services
P. O. Box 26368
Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368

Subscription helpline:
1-800-537-5971.
Credit card orders (Visa,
Mastercard, American Express)
may be taken by phone.

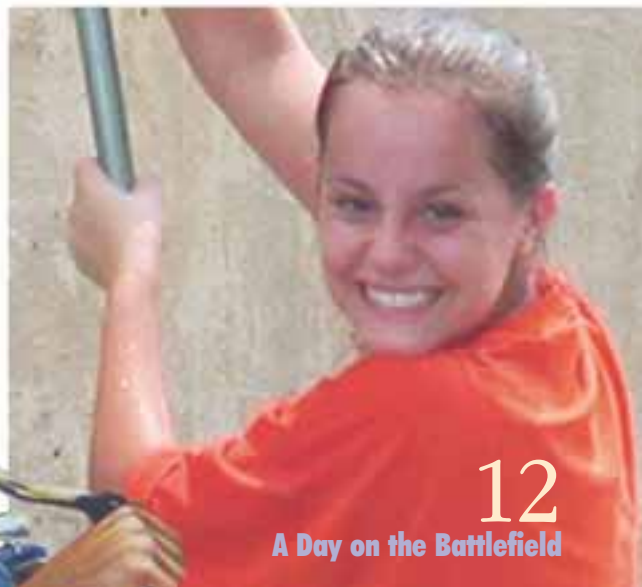
Cover: Even though
miles separate Tyson
Ulrich from his friends,
he feels united with the
youth of the branch in
Dauphin, Manitoba. See
"Branching Out"
on p. 26.

Cover Photography:
Shanna Ghaznavi (front)
and Kelly Larsen (back)

Although few
in number,
the LDS
teens in Manitoba
understand
about standing
together. See
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© 2003 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah, and at additional mailing offices. The *New Era* (ISSN 0164-5285) is published monthly by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3225.

To change address: Sixty days' notice required. Include old address as well as new.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Distribution Services, Church Magazines, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368 USA.

Canada Post Information:
Publication Agreement
#40017431.

THE MESSAGE

Recognizing Answers to Prayer



BY ELDER RICHARD G. SCOTT
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Just talk to your Father in Heaven. He hears every prayer and answers in His way. In time, He will answer. He will not fail us.

Across from me a woman sat sobbing. With tear-filled eyes, she told me, “I don’t know what I believe anymore.” She spoke of having struggled and prayed many days to know how to make a vitally important decision in her life, without success. She anguished, “I don’t know what to do. If you’ll tell me what to do, I’ll do it.” With her hand on the scriptures, she said, “God told us He would help us. He answers everybody else’s prayers. Why won’t He answer mine?”

When one is caught in a whirlpool of emotion, it is difficult to find a way out alone. When answers to urgent prayer don’t seem to come, it can be that we don’t understand some truths about prayer, or because we don’t recognize answers when they come.

Our Heavenly Father did not put us on earth to fail but to succeed gloriously. Some face life with only their own experience and capacity to help them. Others seek, through prayer, divine inspiration to know what to do. When required, they qualify for power beyond their own capacity to do it.

Communication with our Father in Heaven is not a trivial matter. It is a sacred privilege. It is based upon unchanging principles. When we receive help from our Father in Heaven, it is in response to faith,

obedience, and the proper use of agency.

It is a mistake to assume that every prayer we offer will be answered immediately. Some prayers require considerable effort on our part. True, sometimes impressions come when we have not specifically sought them. They generally concern something we need to know and are not otherwise able to find out.

God Hears Every Prayer

To better understand prayer, I have listened to the counsel of others, pondered the scriptures, and studied the lives of prophets and others. Yet what seems most helpful is seeing in my mind a child approaching trustingly a loving, kind, wise, understanding Father, who wants us to succeed.

Don’t worry about your clumsily expressed feelings. Just talk to your Father. He hears every prayer and answers in His way.

When we explain a problem and a proposed solution, sometimes He answers yes, sometimes no. Often He withholds an answer, not for lack of concern, but because He loves us—perfectly. He wants us to apply truths He has given us. For us to grow, we need to trust our ability to make correct decisions. We need to do what we feel is right. In time, He will answer. He will not fail us.

I have described the absolute reality of



Puzzled?
The whole answer to an important matter or complex problem seldom comes all at once. More often, it comes a piece at a time without the end in sight.



The Lord counsels us to study things out before we ask in faith for His enlightenment. When He chooses to answer us, His revelation will come to our hearts and our minds.

our relationship with our Father. There is nothing about us He does not know. He is conscious of our every need and could provide all of the answers. Yet, because His purpose is our eternal happiness, He encourages us to make the correct choices.

God Answers Every Prayer

Sometimes, like a child, we misbehave, act unwisely, and feel we cannot approach our Father with a problem. When communication is strained, how wonderful it is to have a Mediator who works things out when we obey His counsel and repent. Such is our Elder Brother, the Savior.

Perhaps Oliver Cowdery’s experiences were recorded for us to understand how to pray and how to recognize answers to prayer. Oliver was told: “That assuredly as the Lord liveth, . . . even so surely shall you receive a knowledge of whatsoever things you shall ask in faith, with an honest heart, believing that you shall receive. . . .

“I will tell you in your *mind* and in your *heart*, by the Holy Ghost” (D&C 8:1–2; emphasis added).

When we receive an impression in our heart, we can use our mind either to rationalize it away or to accomplish it. Be careful what you do with an impression from the Lord.

Oliver was further taught: “Remember that without *faith* you can do nothing; therefore ask in *faith*. Trifle not with these things; do not ask for that which you ought not. . . .

“According to your *faith* shall it be done unto you” (D&C 8:10–11; emphasis added).

“Ask in faith” means ask with confidence in our holy Father. Like many of us, Oliver did not recognize the evidence of answers to prayers already given by the Lord. To open his, and our, eyes, this revelation was given through Joseph Smith:

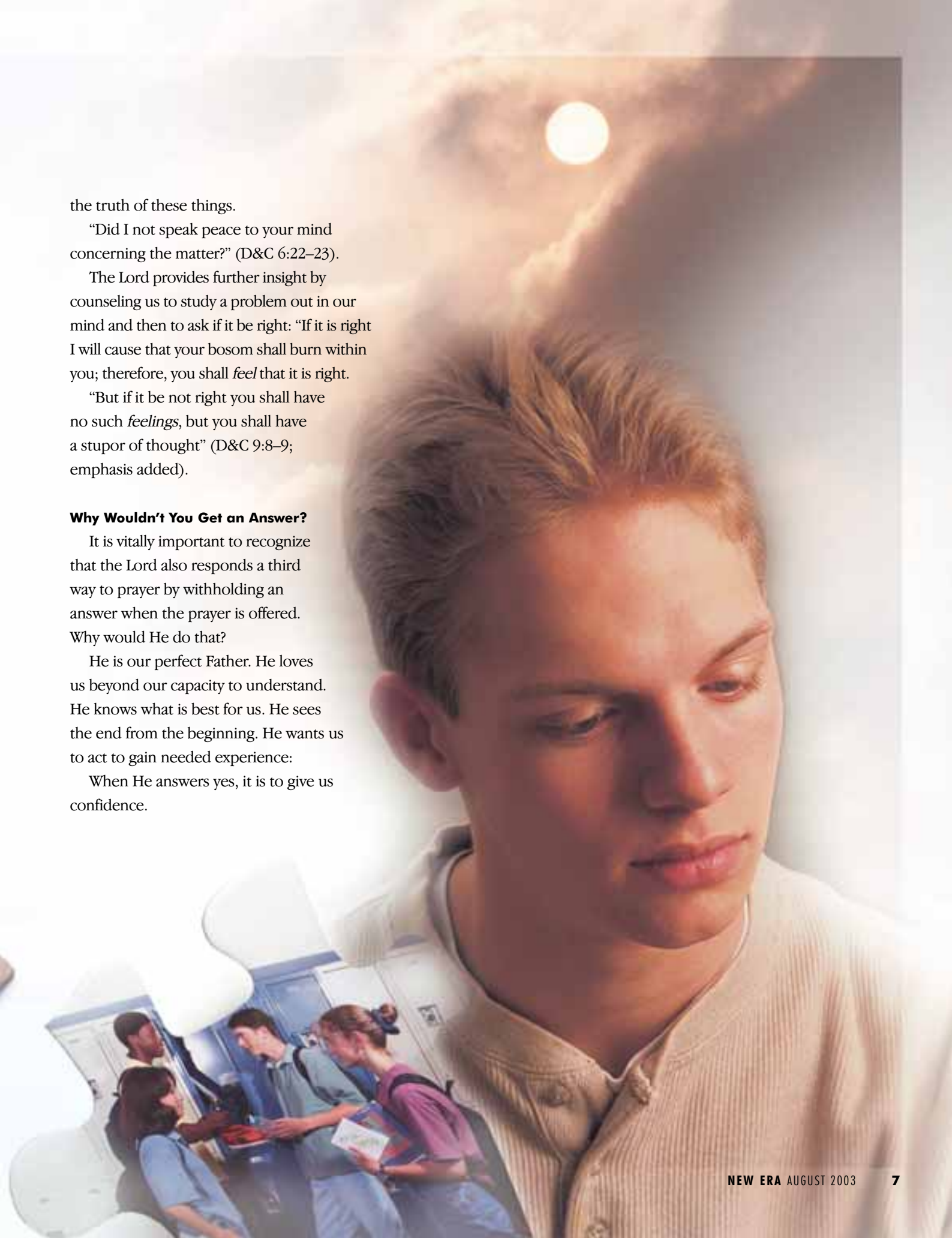
“Blessed art thou for what thou hast done; for thou hast inquired of me, and behold, as often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction of my Spirit. If it had not been so, thou wouldst not have come to the place where thou art at this time.

“Behold, thou knowest that thou hast inquired of me and I did enlighten thy mind; and now I tell thee these things that thou mayest know that thou hast been enlightened by the Spirit of truth” (D&C 6:14–15).

If you feel that God has not answered your prayers, ponder these scriptures—then carefully look for evidence in your own life of His having already answered you.

To help each of us recognize answers given, the Lord said: “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?” (D&C 6:22–23).

The Lord provides further insight by counseling us to study a problem out in our mind and then to ask if it be right: “If it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall *feel* that it is right.

“But if it be not right you shall have no such *feelings*, but you shall have a stupor of thought” (D&C 9:8–9; emphasis added).

Why Wouldn't You Get an Answer?

It is vitally important to recognize that the Lord also responds a third way to prayer by withholding an answer when the prayer is offered. Why would He do that?

He is our perfect Father. He loves us beyond our capacity to understand. He knows what is best for us. He sees the end from the beginning. He wants us to act to gain needed experience:

When He answers yes, it is to give us confidence.



When He answers no, it is to prevent error.

When He withholds an answer, it is to have us grow through faith in Him, obedience to His commandments, and a willingness to act on truth. We are expected to assume accountability by acting on a decision that is consistent with His teachings without prior confirmation. We are not to sit passively waiting or to murmur because the Lord has not spoken. We are to act.

Most often what we have chosen to do is right. He will confirm the correctness of our choices His way. That confirmation generally comes through packets of help found along the way. We discover them by being spiritually sensitive. They are like notes from a loving Father as evidence of His approval. If, in trust, we begin something which is not right, He will let us know before we have gone too far. We sense that help by recognizing troubled or uneasy feelings.

We Need to “Go and Do”

Nephi’s efforts to obtain the plates of brass show how the principles work. Nephi’s words, “I will go and do,” reveal a positive

commitment to act and to succeed by using spiritual law (1 Nephi 3:7).

After two unsuccessful attempts, Nephi remained confident. He crept into the city toward the house of Laban without all the answers. He observed, “I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do,” significantly adding, “Nevertheless I went forth” (1 Nephi 4:6–7).

Nephi was willing to try time and again, using his best efforts. He expressed faith that he would be helped. He refused to be discouraged. But because he acted, had confidence in the Lord, was obedient, and properly used his agency, he received guidance. He was inspired step after step to success, and in his mother’s words was “given . . . power [to] accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded” (1 Nephi 5:8).

Nephi knew he was required to confide in God, to exercise faith, and to act so that he could receive help, step by step. He did not murmur nor ask for a full explanation. But, observe particularly, he did not wait passively for help. He acted! By following spiritual law, he was inspired and given power to act.

Seek the Lord’s Will

Sometimes answers to prayer are not recognized because we are too intent on wanting confirmation of our own desires. We fail to see that the Lord would have us do something else. Be careful to seek His will.

I confess I don’t know how to make a correct decision except where there is righteousness and trust in a Heavenly Father. The principles simply will not work when agency is intentionally used at variance with the will of God. If there is unrepented sin, we are left to our own devices to flounder

and struggle on our own. We can be rescued through our own repentance.

When we seek inspiration to help make decisions, the Lord gives gentle promptings. These require us to think, to exercise faith, to work, to struggle at times, and to act. Seldom does the whole answer to a decisively important matter or complex problem come all at once. More often, it comes a piece at a time, without the end in sight.

The Most Important Thing about Prayer

I have saved the most important part about prayer until the end. It is gratitude! Our sincere efforts to thank our beloved Father generate wondrous feelings of peace, self-worth, and love. No matter how challenging our circumstances, honest appreciation fills our minds to overflowing with gratitude.

The counsel about prayer is true. I have tested it thoroughly in the laboratory of my own personal life. I have discovered that what sometimes seems an impenetrable barrier to communication is a giant step to be taken in trust.

If you seek His help, be sure your life is clean, your motives are worthy, and you’re willing to do what He asks—for He will answer your prayers. He is your loving Father; you are His beloved child. He loves you perfectly and wants to help you. **NE**
From an October 1989 general conference address.

n finding answers, the Lord requires us to think, to exercise faith, to work, to struggle at times, and to act.



WEB OF FRI



BY ELDER RICHARD H. WINKEL
Of the Seventy

I'd like to talk to you about a beautiful place. The north coast of California in the United States is home to the world's tallest trees. A walk through a virgin, old-growth redwood forest can be one of the most awe-inspiring experiences you'll ever have. These trees sometimes live to be more than 2,000 years old and can reach heights of 300 feet (92 m) and more. The tallest redwood tree ever recorded was 367 feet (113 m) in height. That is about three-fourths again as tall as the Salt Lake Temple. The gigantic redwoods dwarf their other softwood and hardwood neighbors, thus becoming "the Mount Everest of all living things."

"Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart;

"Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste

and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul.

"And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion.

"And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:18–21).

Taking Root

The coastal redwoods are truly lords of their realm and a most exquisite creation of our Father in Heaven. They reign over associated trees because of their overwhelming height and majestic beauty. However, there is another feature of these towering giants that is truly remarkable and somewhat unknown to most of us. Even though they grow up to heights of 300 feet (92 m) and can weigh more than one million pounds (460 tonnes),

As these roots extend out, they intertwine with the roots of their brother and sister redwoods. This web is the secret of their strength.



ENDSHIP

these trees have a very shallow root system. Their roots go down only 3 to 6 feet (1 to 2 m) but can spread out several hundred feet (more than 100 m). As these roots extend out, they intertwine with their brother and sister redwoods and other trees as well. This intertwining of roots creates a webbing effect. Most engineers would tell you this shallow root system still would be incapable of keeping the redwoods intact and protected against strong winds and floods. However, the interconnecting root systems are the secret of their strength and teach us a great lesson.

These magnificent giants simply could not make it alone. Without being connected to nearby trees, they would not survive.

New members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints cannot make it alone either. They might appear to be as independently strong as the redwoods, but they need us and we need them.

Supported, Sustained, and Loved

They need our love and support. Whether we know it or not, they are reaching out to us as the roots of the

redwood reach toward the Douglas fir, the Western hemlock, the Sitka spruce, and other species as well. We need to reach out to these new members and sustain them in their growth, for truly we are their brothers and sisters. Don't we all do better when we are supported, sustained, and loved by our families and friends? Even trees do better when they grow close together in groves. They grow taller, straighter, stronger, and produce better lumber.

I am thankful for the web of friendship that has nurtured me throughout my life, for having been born of goodly parents, for my brothers, sisters, and extended family. I am especially grateful for the love and support of my wife and children. I feel very fortunate to have had many good friends through the years, both in and out of the Church.

I know we have a kind and wise Heavenly Father and bear testimony of His Son, Jesus Christ, and of His atoning sacrifice, which touches each one of us. I also bear testimony that the Church is led by a great prophet today. I ask the Lord to bless us all that we might feel more connected and caring of one another. **NE**

Adapted from an October 1999 general conference address.

A DAY on the BATTLE

A fight for freedom preceded the coming forth of the gospel. Delaware teens helped preserve monuments to that time.

BY BUCKLEY CONDIE

Imagine a hot, steamy summer day in 1777. Thousands of British and Hessian (German) troops in red uniforms get off ships at the head of the Chesapeake Bay with orders to march overland to the American capital at Philadelphia. It's the largest military invasion ever on American soil. When news of this invasion reaches American General George Washington, he realizes that his local militia forces will be out-manned and out-gunned. A battle with the invaders could spell disaster for his young army and doom any chance for American independence.

Worried, Washington orders a series of skirmishes and guerilla attacks on the British forces as he and his troops slog through the swamps and forests of northern Delaware. The most famous of these skirmishes is the battle at Cooch's Bridge, which happened near present-day Newark, Delaware.



With a theme of "Building on the Rock," the teens of the Wilmington Delaware Stake dedicated their youth conference to preserving their heritage.



FIELD





Speaking of the small American army in the Revolutionary War, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) said: “The Lord permitted these few poorly armed and ill-clad men at Valley Forge and elsewhere to defeat a great army, . . . a few against the many, but the few had on their side the Lord God of heaven, that gave them victory. With it there came political liberty and religious liberty, all in preparation for the day when a young boy would come forth and would seek and make contact with the Lord and open the doors of heaven again” (Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, 1982, 403).

More than a History Lesson

About 225 years later, the teens of the Wilmington Delaware Stake returned to Cooch’s Bridge and other Revolutionary War sites for their “Youth Conference 2002: Build upon the Rock.” For the conference, they worked on many different projects such as painting and cleaning historical sites.

The teens helped repaint battle monuments at Cooch’s Bridge, cleared brush away from 300-year-old barns and homes at the Elk River invasion site, and cleaned at nearby Dayette Mills, a commercial center in Delaware’s colonial era.

Dayette historian and curator, Ray Johnson, was thrilled to see hundreds of Latter-day Saint youth arrive to help wash the walls and restore the grounds of the old mill. “These Mormon kids have no idea how much good they’re doing. Not only are they helping fix things up, they are also drawing community attention to all this history we have in the area,” he said.

Kathy Sullican, 16, from Wilmington said it helped to know the history before they started working. “Before the work projects, the groups were given historical information on each work site, which really gave us a greater appreciation of the service we were providing,” she said.

The teens pulled together and worked hard. It was supposed to take them three days to fix up Elk Landing, but it took them only half a day. Some of the teens worked so hard they forgot to eat lunch—at least until the job was done.

Back in the 21st Century

In the evenings, they returned to the stake center in Newark for dinner, dances, and special “building block” classes where guest speakers gave classes on local history, the restored gospel, and Book of Mormon prophecies concerning America. The youth were treated to historic reenactments and to testimonies from modern members of the armed forces.

Marcus Strange, 15, from the Rising Sun Branch in Maryland, enjoyed learning about Nephi’s vision of the New World in 1 Nephi 13. “I knew Nephi was a prophet, but learning about his revelations about the American



Revolution reinforced my testimony of him,” he said.

The classes helped Leslie Little, 14, from the Cambridge Branch appreciate her freedom more. “I am so grateful for the freedom that we enjoy. I was glad I got to help preserve the past,” she said.

Stake President Gary Hollingshaus reminded the teens that they face similar challenges today. “We’re all part of the same war against evil and temptation,” he said. “In our battle we will use different tools. Instead of cleaning our muskets or sharpening our bayonets, the armor we have is personal righteousness, daily prayers, and reading the scriptures.”

As the conference drew to a close, many of the teens expressed an appreciation for the challenges that confronted the early Americans as they settled the colonies and battled for independence.

Sarah Sturgell, 16, from the Wilmington Ward said, “Whoever thought that pulling trees and weeds in the hot sun with sweaty youth would be one of the most spiritual experiences I’ve had? What I’ve learned about the Revolutionary War has really strengthened me.”

The conference was more than a bunch of teens having a lot of fun fixing things up and pulling weeds. Now the Delaware teens have more courage to fight their own battles against sin. Their memories of youth conference will always remind them that they can be as valiant in their fight for right as the Revolutionary War soldiers were at Cooch’s Bridge. **NE**

Buckley Condie is a member of the Wilmington West Ward, Wilmington Delaware Stake.



The tasks these young people took on didn't involve giving their lives, as did the young soldiers of the Revolutionary War; it just involved giving their time. But remembering those who sacrificed for freedom made these modern-day teens more appreciative of their way of life and the chance they have to live the gospel.

Q & A

Why doesn't the Church make a list telling me exactly what I can and can't do?

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

NEW ERA

Actually, the Lord *has* given us a list of things we should and shouldn't do. This list is called the Ten Commandments. And He has given us other direction, including the covenants we make at baptism and in the temple, to protect us from harm and to help us become as He is. Church leaders also give us specific counsel regarding what we should and shouldn't do. And they have prepared a wonderful resource called *For the Strength of Youth: Fulfilling Our Duty to God*. This pamphlet gives specific guidelines on topics ranging from dress and appearance to Sabbath day observance. These guidelines can help you successfully navigate the troubled waters of the latter days.

Sometimes, however, the scriptures and the words of the living prophets don't address a particular situation you find yourself in. And what if the choice is not between right and wrong but between right and right? How do you make that decision?

There are several places we can go for guidelines from the Lord, including the words of the prophets, the scriptures, and For the Strength of Youth.

Life is far too complex for a list to cover every situation.

Part of life is to learn to use our agency, not to follow detailed instructions like a robot.

The Holy Ghost can guide us in the decisions we must make. The gift of the Holy Ghost is better than any list.

As we grow spiritually and learn to follow the Holy Ghost, making righteous decisions will become easier.

READERS



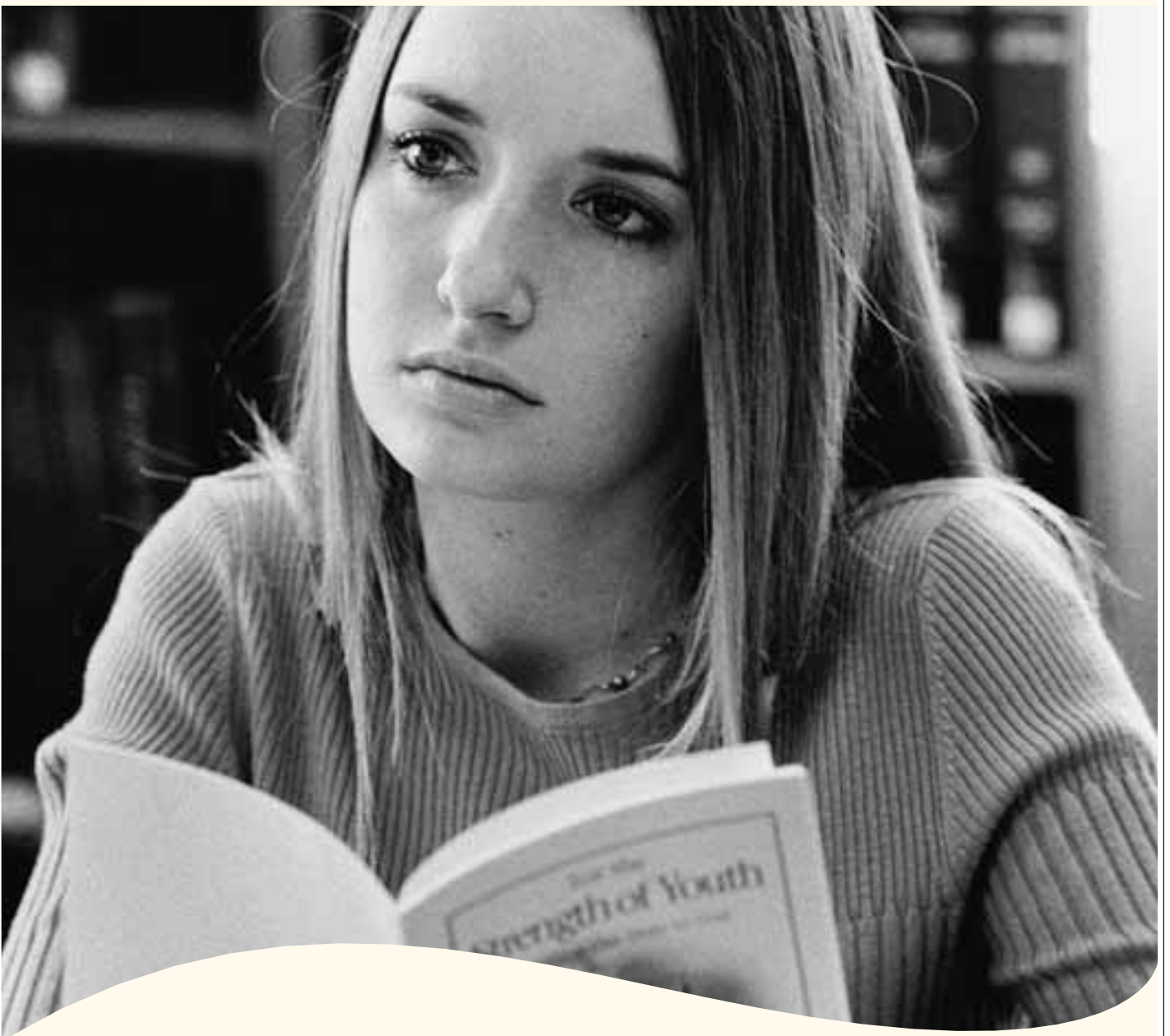
The beauty of the plan of salvation is that it allows us to find out for ourselves what is right. There is a wonderful guideline available to everyone, however; it is called For the Strength of Youth.

Brian Middleton, 17, El Dorado Ward, El Dorado California Stake



The Church does not give us a list of things we should or should not do because we have the Holy Ghost, who can teach and reveal to us what is good and right. We have agency to choose if we will obey. Second, Heavenly Father has given us commandments, scriptures, and words of Church leaders. Finally, we have our parents, and they have taught us what is right and will bring us happiness.

Sini Falatau, 20, Veitongo Ward, Nuku'alofa Tonga South Stake



My mission president explained the idea that doctrine leads to principles and principles lead to rules. If we study the doctrine and

understand the correct principles that flow from that doctrine, then we will understand the more detailed rules through the Spirit. If we always seek the guidance of the Spirit through prayer and scripture study, we will know with clarity what is right and what is wrong.

Elder Yudai Ito, 22, Japan Sapporo Mission



The Lord and His Church have already given us knowledge about what we should and shouldn't do through the Ten

Commandments (see Exodus 20) and the two great commandments (see Matthew 22:36–40). The only thing we need to do is keep the commandments of God.

Kate Mensah, 22, Cape Coast Second Ward, Cape Coast Ghana Stake



If a list did exist, it would be very long. It could never be complete because there are simply too many things we should and shouldn't do.

Also, Heavenly Father wants us to learn. Without straightforward answers to everything, we search for the answers. In other words, we seek knowledge and we learn.

Katrina Voigt, 14, Preston Branch, Rochester Minnesota Stake

NEW ERA

As many readers pointed out, life is far too complex for the Church to publish a comprehensive list covering every situation. Besides, the Lord has given us agency for a reason. We are not here on earth just to prove that we can follow detailed instructions like a computer or a robot. The Lord wants us to become as He is. This means we have to learn to make wise decisions. We need to learn to recognize and act on truth.

As members of the Lord's Church, we have been given a wonderful gift to help us make difficult decisions: the gift of the Holy Ghost. "I will impart unto you of my Spirit," the Lord explained, "which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy" (D&C 11:13). We don't need a list to tell us what to do; we need to listen to the whisperings of the Spirit.

Each of us can grow in our ability to follow the Spirit until we can choose wisely between right and wrong and can recognize subtle distinctions between two courses that may seem equally good. "That which is of God is light," the Lord teaches us, "and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24). We are children of God, but He doesn't want us to remain children spiritually. He wants us to grow up, to progress, and ultimately to become even as He is (see 3 Nephi 27:27). **NE**



Y*ou are growing in spiritual discipline—that is, your ability to discern the promptings of the Spirit and your capacity to follow them. Over time, that capacity will increase and grow stronger until it becomes easier and easier to automatically do the right things. . . . While that spiritual discipline is developing, you must be very careful to avoid choices that would take you from the path of happiness" (Liahona, Mar. 2001, 11).*

—Elder Richard G. Scott
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

READERS



The scriptures tell us to "feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3).

Be diligent in study and worthy of the Holy Ghost, and you will know the way to go.

Anna Vitalyevna Sursyakova, 20, Donetsk Kievsky Branch, Donetsk Ukraine District



The Prophet Joseph Smith once said, "I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves" (as quoted by John Taylor, in Millennial Star, 15 Nov. 1851, 339). In the Church we

are taught true principles. It is up to us to govern ourselves. We don't have to be told what to do most of the time. The Holy Ghost guides us. If we adhere to the Spirit's whisperings, blessings will follow.

Marneilo M. Dala, 19, Initao Ward, Cagayan de Oro Philippines West Stake

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send us your answer to the question below, along with your name, age, and the names of your ward and stake. 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

cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

Please respond by 1 October 2003.

QUESTION

"I am a young woman with a friend who says he wants to be baptized, but I think he might be more interested in a serious relationship with me than in the gospel. I want him to join the Church, but I don't want him to do it for the wrong reasons. What should I do?"

CLEAN UP YOUR ACT



SOAP AND WATER WON'T DO THE TRICK. TRUE CLEANLINESS
AND PURITY COME FROM SINCERE REPENTANCE.
(See D&C 58:42–43.)



It's Just

H



BY JULI HOUSHOLDER

A strange disease took away my hair. How would I handle such a hard thing?

As a junior in high school, I thought that my dark blonde, shoulder-length hair meant everything. My morning included nearly 30 minutes of trying various hairstyles until the right one looked nearly perfect. I did this every morning—until one day when my routine changed forever.

The day began like any day. I woke up, washed my face, and put my contacts in. Then I sleepily glanced in the mirror and caught sight of something terrible—a small bald spot on the top of my head. I looked closer and ran my fingers across it to make

sure my morning eyes were not fooling me. They weren't.

I began to panic, and in tears I searched for my mom. Together we discussed the possibility my hair got caught on something while I was sleeping. Or maybe I was not eating enough vegetables. But with no definite answers I finally parted my hair to somewhat hide the bald spot and rushed off to school.

From that day on, I continued to lose patches of hair. These spots varied from the size of a coin to the size of a fist. I went to numerous doctors who examined every part of my head. I also spent a lot of time on my knees in prayer, seeking comfort and strength to handle what the doctors would tell me.

Grateful for her health, Juli turned to the Lord for comfort and strength.



on Him to be there when everyone else was turning away. But that was hard to remember when my peers gave me quick, odd glances. It was also hard when rumors began to spread, and I knew I was the topic of conversation. I didn't understand why, of all times in my life, I had to deal with this during high school—a time when I wanted so much to be

accepted and liked by those around me.

I made it through my senior year only because of certain things I made myself remember as I walked the halls of my high school. Each morning I prayed and thanked the Lord for the blessing of being alive and for the beauty around me. I prayed for strength to endure the day ahead and to



remember I was loved by many. I also thanked my Heavenly Father for the things I was learning from this experience. It seems simple, but it made a difference. Whenever someone gave me a funny look or made a

In September 2000 I found out I had an autoimmune disease known as alopecia areata. I can still hear my doctor's voice when he explained this meant "total hair loss with no known cure." Immediately my mind filled with thoughts of doubt, thoughts like "What's next?" and "Why me?"

After seeing a specialist the next month, I shaved my almost-bald head. Without my hair, I felt like a completely different person. My sense of self plummeted, and it was almost impossible to drag myself to school. "What would everyone think? What would everyone say?" I wondered.

Scarves became my everyday hairstyle. Instead of spending a half hour every morning on my hair, I spent five minutes carefully tying a scarf around my bald head. The scarves were colorful and comfortable, but they weren't my hair. At one point I tried wearing a wig the same color as my hair.

This only brought constant worry of it falling off in front of everyone at school. I went back to scarves.

School was a challenge. I knew my Heavenly Father loved me and I could count

Before losing her hair (above), Juli loved to try out different styles. Then came the day when her hair fell out in bunches. Her brothers (opposite page) shaved their heads to lend her their support.



cruel joke, I simply remembered my motto, "It's just hair. It really doesn't matter."

I knew I had no control over what was going to happen with my hair, but I also knew I had complete control over how I was going to face it. I could make it a blessing and an opportunity, or I could look at it as a punishment and simply give up.

It has been almost three years since the morning I found the small bald patch on my head. In that time I have had to shave my head five times because I still have small patches of hair. Each time I have shaved it with a little more enthusiasm and appreciation for life.

I know I couldn't have done it alone. The Lord has become the one I trust. He does not judge

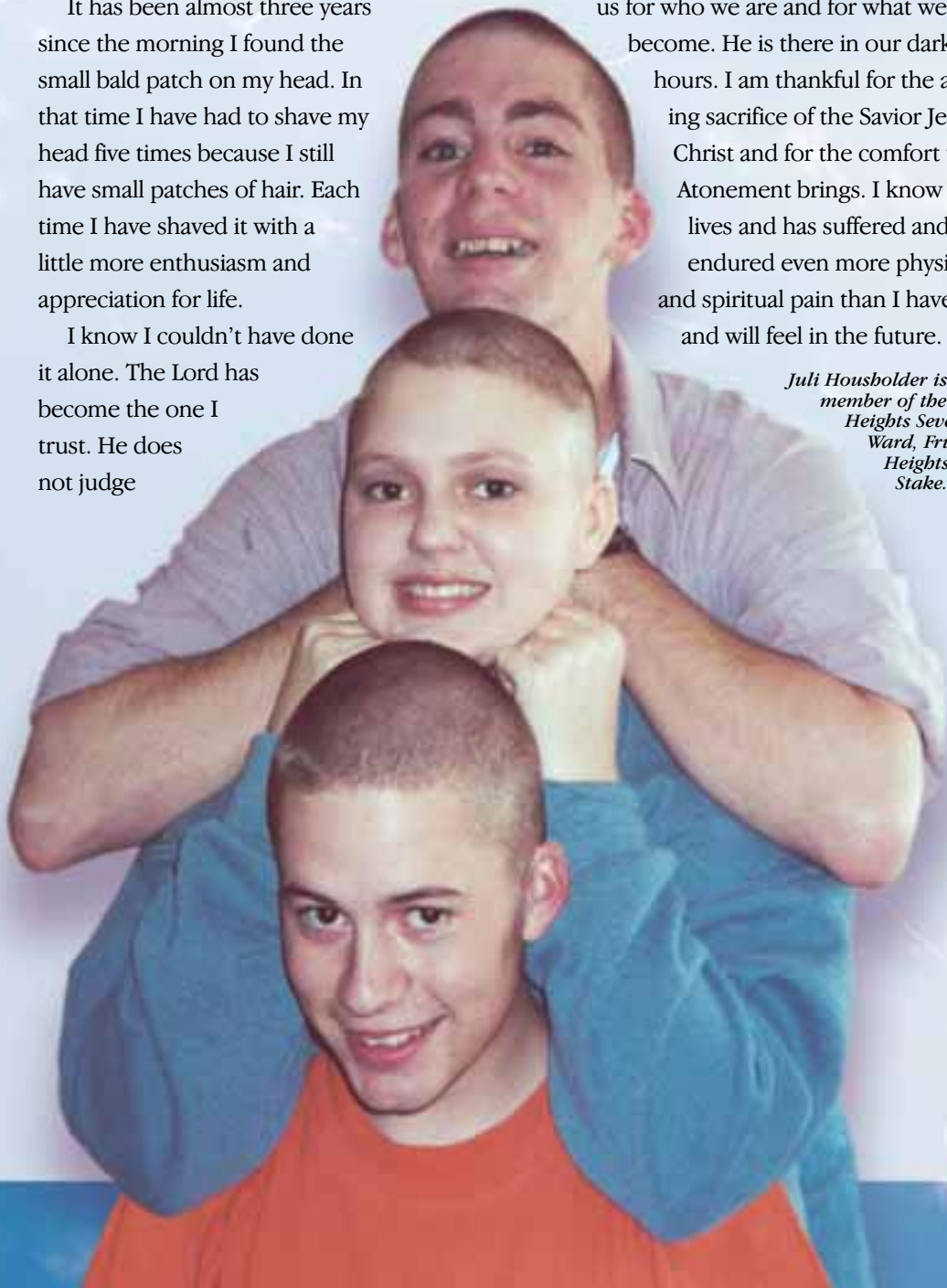
me or laugh at me; I know He loves me just as much without hair as He did when I had hair. I have also relied on the love and support of my family.

I know we are all children of God with divine potential. We are all here to learn and grow in different ways with different challenges. We have a Heavenly Father who loves us for who we are and for what we can become. He is there in our darkest hours. I am thankful for the atoning sacrifice of the Savior Jesus Christ and for the comfort the Atonement brings. I know He lives and has suffered and endured even more physical and spiritual pain than I have felt and will feel in the future. **NE**

Juli Housholder is a member of the Fruit Heights Seventh Ward, Fruit Heights Utah Stake.



Juli still has alopecia (below). She has to endure the heartbreak of having her hair grow in for a while, then fall out again. Learning how to deal with her disease has helped her trust in the Lord.



TALK

My parents were pleased to invite the missionaries into our home just to talk. That's when the miraculous changes in our family started.

ALL YOU WANT

BY DON CARLOS VIDAL

During April 1993 my father was buying groceries at a local store in the little town of Realicó, Argentina. Two young men approached him and asked if they could visit his family. My father agreed, and they soon came to our home.

I can still hear my little brother, Sebastián, running to my bedroom and whispering excitedly, “Come look! The missionaries are here!” We had seen them on the streets before, and I must confess we had made fun of them.

That day they shared the Book of Mormon with my parents. They stopped by two days later, and to their amazement my mother had read the whole book and had a list of questions. The missionaries were very excited, but my parents were not looking for a change of religion as much as they were interested in developing a friendship with the elders. “Talk all you want, but you will not get a convert out of this family” was my parents’ first reaction to the discussions. Still the missionaries continued to teach us with a lot of faith and patience.

On a cold night we offered to take the elders home after a discussion. On the way back to our house I asked my mother if she was really thinking of being baptized into this new religion. Her reply stunned me: “If I find it to be the truth, then I will get baptized.” I realized I should also know for myself if it was true.

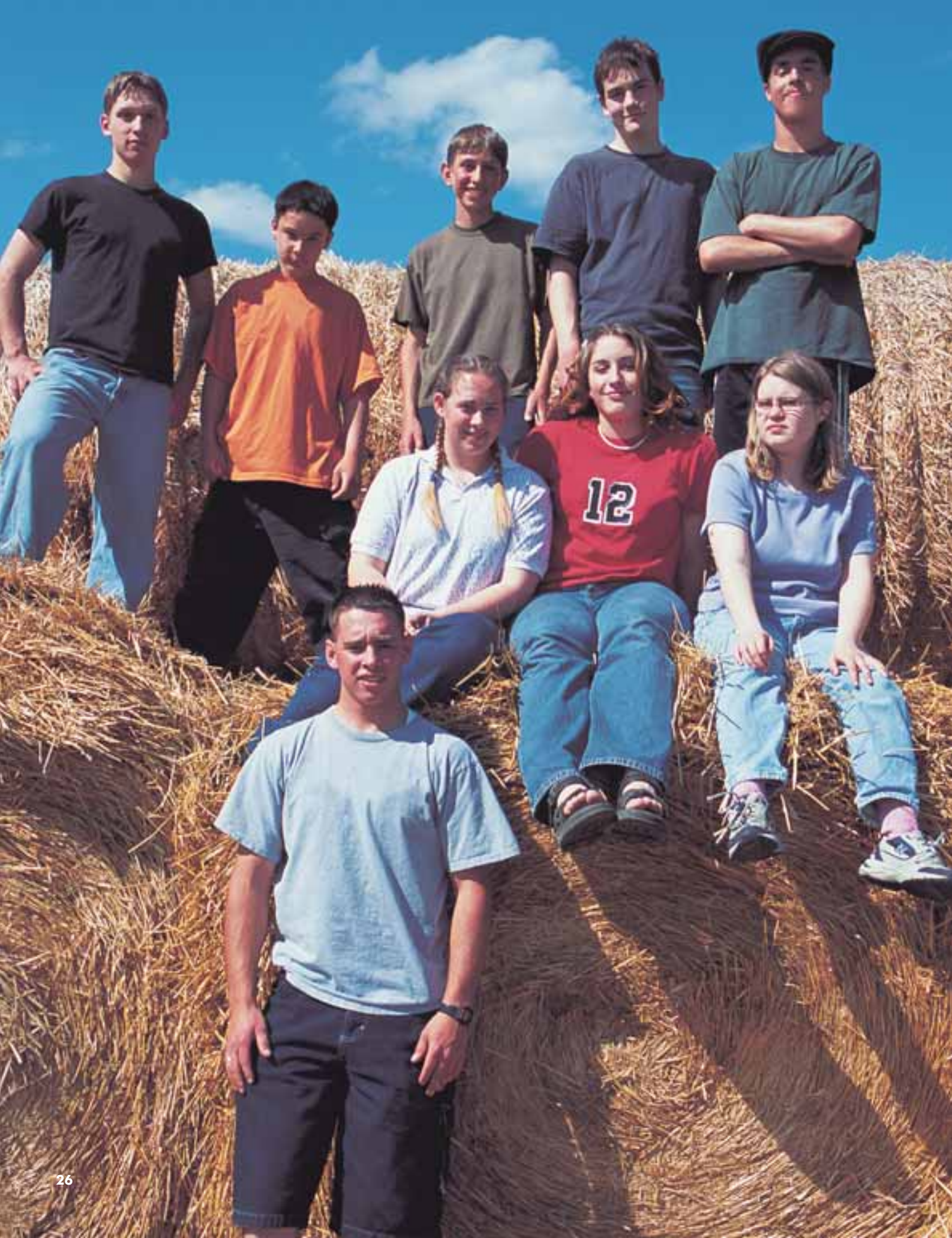
When the commitment to obey the Word of Wisdom came up in the discussions, I thought it was the end. My mother had tried to stop smoking for 16 years without positive results, and my father sometimes drank alcohol at social events. I didn’t think we needed to change our lifestyle to please some strange religion. Still the missionaries asked us to pray to find out if the gospel had been restored and if Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. A miracle occurred because my mother was able to stop smoking. She knew God was trying to let her know the Church was true, and she was baptized.

I kept reading and praying, and once I had a testimony of the Book of Mormon, I entered the waters of baptism. A few weeks later my father made the same decision, and two years later so did my brother. Although I was only 13 years old when I joined the Church, I knew I had found the greatest treasure ever.

We were sealed as an eternal family in the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple, and we have discovered the joy the gospel brings to our lives. As I look back, I can see the Spirit of God working in our hearts and helping us come out of the darkness into the light.

I love my family. I love the gospel. I love being a missionary. And now when I knock on a door and people say, “Talk all you want, but you will not get a convert out of this family,” I smile and pray that the Spirit will touch them the way it touched my family 10 years ago. **NE**

Don Carlos Vidal is serving full time in the Oregon Eugene Mission.



BRANCHING OUT

These Dauphin Branch youth are spread out across many miles, but their hearts are all in the same place.

BY SHANNA GHAZNAVI

Dauphin, Manitoba, is called the city of sunshine. And in Manitoba, Canada, you take all the sunshine you can get whenever you can get it. The people are warm and friendly but, unless it's the middle of summer, the weather is just plain cold.

The Latter-day Saint youth in Dauphin (pronounced "dawfin") and the surrounding areas don't mind the cold though. They're used to five-hour trips to winter stake dances in Winnipeg, long horseback rides in the snow for fun, and two-hour car rides on icy roads to get to church.

The youth don't live near each other, either. But the distance between their homes doesn't stop the Dauphin Branch from being close. "Coming that distance to church in the first place helps," says Ian McIntyre, a priest. "I guess the distance makes us closer."

Adam Fox, who just got back from serving a mission in Utah, says, "Going on a mission and coming back, I can see a big difference. It's a lot more important to have the closeness in a branch that is so small. If you don't have that closeness, it's a lot harder to stay strong in the gospel."

How They Do It

Since the youth live so far from each other, they don't have Mutual every week. About the only time the Dauphin youth get to see each

In Dauphin, togetherness is key, especially when it comes to fellowshipping and missionary work.





Whether it's branding cattle or riding horses, the Dauphin youth share work and fun times. They also share the gospel and their good examples.

other is on Sundays, so they try to make the most of their time at church. Sunday is also seminary day for these youth who do home study the rest of the week.

Kayleen Ulrich, a Laurel, says, "We basically just see each other at church, but we try to do things in between when we can."

Those things usually involve lots of work and lots of fun. "In the summer we do things like branding cattle. We come and help each other. And we have the branch campout at Dauphin Lake."

Most of the youth in the branch also have sports as a common interest. Kayleen and her brothers, Tyson and Quinton, all play school sports, and they sometimes see their friends from church who play on other schools' teams.

Kirsten Fox, Adam's sister who's 14, says, "We have a lot in common. We all like to ride horses and do farm stuff." The main thing they all have in common, though, is the gospel. "We just try to stay close to the gospel," Kirsten says. "People in the branch are always there for you, and if you're in a tough situation they're only a phone call away."

Getting together takes lots of time and planning, but Kayleen says they "set dates

and stick to them" because if they don't, they won't see each other as often. "It's hard," she says. "You just have to make yourself do something so you can get together."

Why They Do It

Working and playing together seem to work for the teens in Dauphin, even though it would be much easier to just spend time with their school friends all the time.

"You don't have a lot of choices about who you're going to be around at church, so you might as well have fun together and get along," Kayleen says. "It's easier to get along in church when you have different experiences with each other outside of church. And then church is more interesting because you know people better."

The youth like to get together often because there are so few of them, and they need to strengthen each other in the gospel. And, in addition to relying on each other, the Dauphin teens say they are very close to their families because they spend so much time with them.

Finding New Friends

Besides working on fellowshipping, the youth spend a lot of time doing missionary work. The full-time missionaries in Dauphin started teaching Sherry Sinclair the discussions. "She didn't really want to come to church, but she came one time," says Kirsten. "Kayleen and I said, 'Hey! Another person! This is great!' So we got to know her, and she's a really cool person. She and I just connected, and we're awesome friends now."

Kayleen says, "We tried to welcome her. It's not very often that we get new people, so it was exciting for us. We tried the best we could





to make her feel comfortable and encourage her.” Sherry joined the Church last year.

Now Sherry brings her brother Jeff Shewchuk to church with her. Quinton Ulrich, 14, says, “Jeff is really close to my age, so usually we try to get together and do things we both like.”

Even though they’ve found some new friends, the Dauphin youth still find it hard to do missionary work in their schools. James McIntyre, Ian’s 15-year-old brother, explains: “I try to talk to my friends about religion, but it’s hard to bring somebody to church when the branch is in Dauphin. We live in Roblin, and it’s hard to persuade them to drive an hour to church.”

Quinton agrees that it’s not easy to share the gospel, no matter where you live, but it’s important to try your best anyway. “Try and find other people to introduce to the Church, and try to get

people interested. If you can’t find anybody, just be nice to everybody, and be a good example and a good friend.”

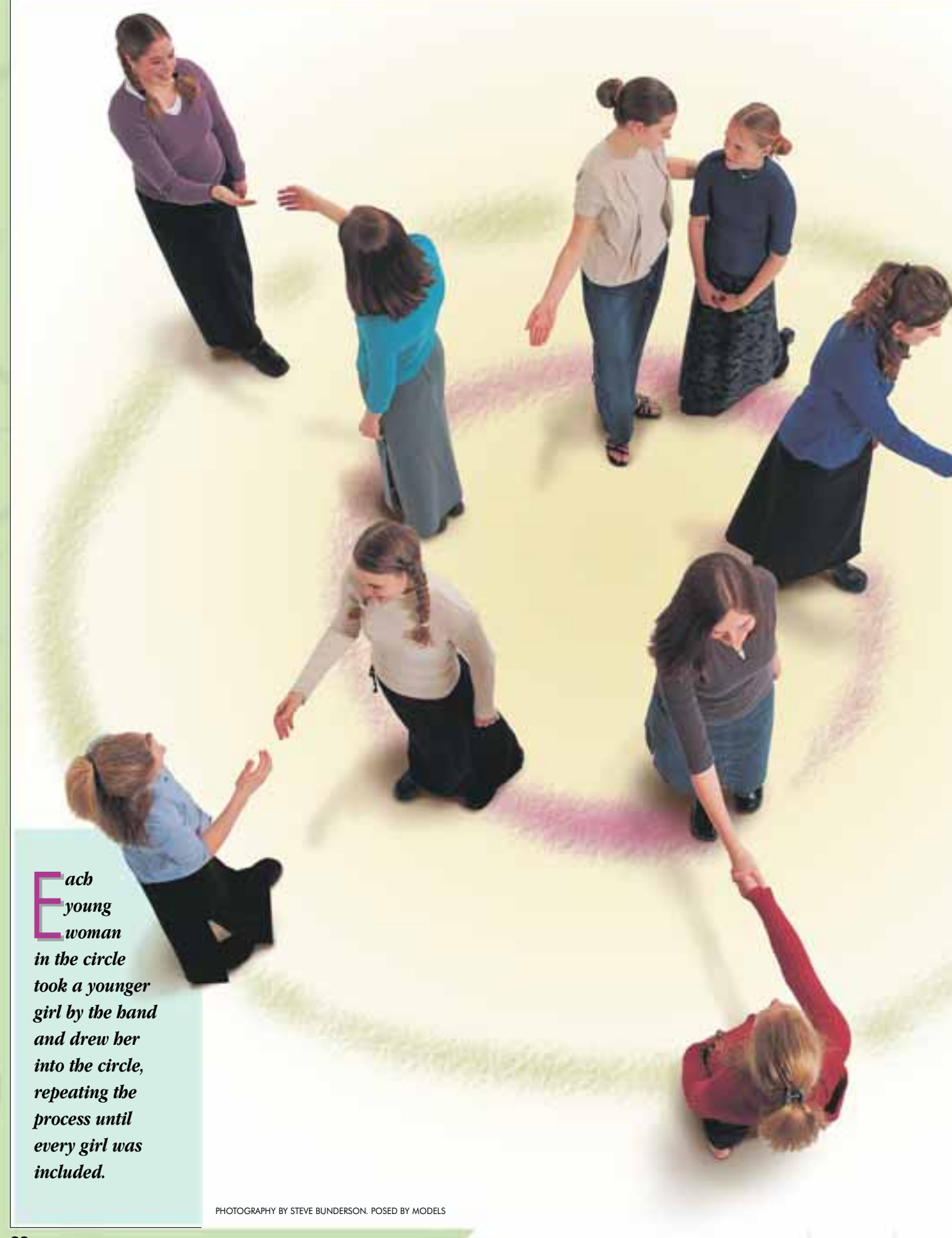
Like a Family

It’s challenging to be a teenager and a member of the Church in Dauphin, but the youth there know they are not alone. “They have a lot of challenges out here to stay strong. But they stay strong because they have that desire,” Adam says. “It’s great to see how the youth can get together and stay strong even though they are so far apart. They get together and have fun together. It’s just like a family.”

Sherry’s brother Jeff has decided to take the missionary discussions—and the long ride to Church, too. The Dauphin youth are hoping to have a new family member soon. **NE**
Shanna Ghaznavi is on the Church magazines staff.

Kayleen Ulrich (left), along with Jeff Shewchuk, Tyson Ulrich, Quinton Ulrich, Kirsten Fox, Monica McIntyre, Adam Fox, James McIntyre, and Ian McIntyre (below, left to right), knows the strength that comes from being friends in the gospel.





Each young woman in the circle took a younger girl by the hand and drew her into the circle, repeating the process until every girl was included.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE BUNDERSON. POSED BY MODELS

OPEN

THE CIRCLE

BY JAN PINBOROUGH

A circle can include or exclude. We decide which.

As a Young Women leader, I had been to several New Beginnings programs. But when I went to New Beginnings with my own first daughter, I saw it through new eyes.

As we waited for the program to begin, I couldn't help wondering what the coming years would hold for my daughter: Would the young women in our ward accept her? Would they be her friends? Would her leaders love her?

Would they be her mentors in the challenging times ahead?

After the opening prayer, the older young women and their leaders joined hands in the middle of the room and started singing a beautiful song:

Ours is a circle, a circle of friendship, and just like a circle, it goes on and on endless, eternal, this circle of friendship; enter our circle, for here you belong.¹

Then each 16- or 17-year-old young woman took a younger girl by the hand and drew her into the circle too. Again they sang the song, repeating the process until every girl was included.

In the weeks to come, I saw that this song was not an idle promise. It was a symbol for something real and wonderful. The young women in that ward didn't just *accept* my daughter; they *welcomed* her with open hearts. She was treated by the girls her age as an instant new friend, by the older classes as a treasured younger sister, by the leaders as a cherished daughter. How grateful I was—and still am—for those girls and leaders who opened their circle and made my daughter feel wanted, valued, and loved.

I wonder if our Heavenly Father watches us with similar parental concern: Will we open our circles to include each of His children?

Of course, we all know that circles can just as easily work to keep people out. Maybe you have moved into a new ward or school or class where the established members of the circle communicated the message of a children's rhyme: "Tick-tock, the game is locked, and nobody else can play." Most of us have known the painful experience of being kept on the outside fringe of a circle.

"It's Better to Be Nice"

How can we make sure that our circles include, rather than exclude? It starts with a very simple realization: kindness is one of the main characteristics we are here on earth to learn. I know a family of extremely talented

children. Academics, music—you name it; they do it well. Once when I was complimenting them, their mother said something I've never forgotten: "I've always taught my kids that it's fine to be smart, but it's better to be nice."

Thinking about it, I realized she was right. I admire her children's talents. But the real reason I value these children is that I can't imagine any of them putting down someone else to gain social advantage. They are as kind as anyone I know.

Maybe this is what the Lord values most too. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul's famous talk on charity: Though I am at the top of my class and know all my scripture mastery verses and am the star of my soccer team and organize a major service project and play several musical instruments, if I don't treat others kindly, all my accomplishments don't count for much (see 1 Corinthians 13:1–3).

Keeping Competition in Its Place

One young woman had worked hard for years to excel in basketball, and she is the sort of person people love for her kindness. But when she was named to the all-state basketball team as a sophomore, something strange happened. Suddenly her teammates on her high school team stopped passing the ball to her.

Why? Possibly because it can be hard to include those we think of as rivals. Competition—vying for something



that is in short supply—is an enemy of inclusiveness. And, face it, life can be competitive. So when someone else wins an honor that you would have liked, it may be hard to be happy for him or her.

On the other hand, it may be tempting to exclude those we view as less competent and successful than we are. But no one belongs outside the circle of our Father's love—or ours.

Heavenly Father doesn't see life as a big competition between His children, with winners and losers—and neither should we. In fact, He has told us that He has intentionally given us each different gifts and abilities so we can share them with each other (see D&C 46:11–26).

When we feel secure in the Lord's love for us, we can



A TRUE FRIEND

"Our Savior, shortly before His Crucifixion, said to His disciples: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends' (John 15:13–14). Having been so richly blessed by Christ's friendship, I pray that we will now be to others what He is to us: a true friend. At no time will we be more Christlike than when we are a friend. . . . I know that when we offer ourselves in friendship, we make a most significant contribution to God's work and to the happiness and progress of His children" ("Friendship: A Gospel Principle," Ensign, May 1999, 65).

—Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy

see others as brothers and sisters, not as rivals who either challenge our success or don't measure up to it.

Taking the Lead

Circles have a natural resistance to change. The familiarity of a known group of friends can feel comfortable and comforting. It's nice when you know pretty much what to expect from the group and from each member of it. So accepting someone else into your circle can shake things up.

That's why it sometimes takes a leader to overcome a group's natural reluctance to include someone new. This kind of leadership doesn't require a calling from the bishop. Actually, it's a calling we all have, and it comes directly from the Lord: "Let every man esteem his brother as himself" (D&C 38:25; emphasis added).

This verse also contains the key to how to include others. Think about how you would like to be treated at church or at school and treat others the same way. Would you like to be left sitting on a row by yourself in your priesthood quorum? If not, take the lead and sit by the new deacon for as many weeks as it takes for him to know that you're glad he's there. Would you like to be invited to join a group that plays sports together? If so, invite someone new to join you.

In Our Hands

One brave little girl showed me how powerful one person who takes the lead in including others can be. It was her second week of third grade at a new school, and she saw another girl about her age crying during recess. This girl was going to be repeating a grade, and her last year's classmates were now her tormentors.

Immediately, my little friend walked over to the girl who had been teased. But even though she had no friends herself, she did not walk into that cruel circle empty-handed. From deep within her own kind heart, she had comfort to offer the crying girl. "Don't worry," she said. "I've missed a whole year of school, so my parents are holding me back too." Needless to say, those two will be friends forever.

A circle can be a terrible or a wonderful thing. Which it turns out to be is in our hands. **NE**

Jan Pinborough is a member of the East Mill Creek Fourth Ward, Salt Lake East Mill Creek Stake.

NOTE

1. "Circle of Friendship," *A Song of the Heart* (1978), 30.

Think about how you would like to be treated at church or at school and treat others the same way. The Lord said: "Let every man esteem his brother as himself."



“Read the scriptures. You will not get a testimony of the Book of Mormon unless you read the Book of Mormon.”

(*Ensign*, Jan. 1998, 72)
—President Gordon B. Hinckley



TEST YOUR LDS I.Q.

You might already know what happens in the stories of the Book of Mormon, but do you know *where* they happened? Test your knowledge of Book of Mormon geography.

1. When King Mosiah fled with his people, the Nephites, he joined the Mulekite people. What was the name of the land the Nephites fled to, the place where the Mulekites lived?

- a) Gidgiddonah
- b) Lehi-Nephi
- c) Zarahemla

2. This place was a “place of arms” for the Lamanites.

- a) Onidah
- b) Shemlon
- c) Ammoron

3. This is the name of both a Nephite prophet and a body of water where Alma the Elder performed baptisms.

- a) Alma
- b) Mormon
- c) Laman

4. Ishmael was buried in a place called Nahom. What does *Nahom* mean in Hebrew?

- a) a place of trees
- b) consolation
- c) burial place

5. What was the name of the land where the wicked Zoramites first lived?

- a) Rameumptom
- b) Antionum
- c) Ammonihah

6. What land did the Nephites give to the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi for an inheritance?

- a) Bountiful
- b) Irreantum
- c) Jershon

Answers: 1. c (see Omni 1:12–14); 2. a (see Alma 47:5); 3. b (see Mosiah 18:7–10); 4. b (see 1 Nephi 16:34, footnote b); 5. b (see Alma 31:3); 6. c (see Alma 27:21–22).



ART ONLINE

If you're really into art, then you need to check out www.lds.org/museum. The Museum of Church History and Art is just a click away on the Church's Web site. You can have a virtual tour of the museum's faith-promoting exhibits or see a gallery of previous winners of the

museum's International Art Competition.

The competition is held every year, and you can fill out an entry form and submit photos of your artwork online. The entry form is available in seven languages: English, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.



WRITE AWAY!

Do you have a story about honoring the priesthood? The *New Era* would like to hear about it. Send us your true story (of no more than 1,000 words) about honoring the priesthood, fulfilling your Duty to God requirements, or how your life has

been blessed by the power of the priesthood.

You can send your story to:
New Era
50 East North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150
or you can e-mail it to:
cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

LEADERSHIP TIP

Most people aren't born with the ability to speak well in public or to direct a group. But don't worry. Leadership ability can come with time and hard work.

If you want to develop your leadership skills, try

volunteering for something that will build your confidence, like a school or community service organization. Accept every Church calling extended to you, and do your best at it, knowing the Lord called you and will help you.

THE SONG OF THE HEART

The hymnbook we now use was published in 1985. Over 150 years ago, Emma Smith compiled the Church's first hymnal (see D&C 25). The Church's hymnals changed many times over the years.

Emma's 1835 compilation had 90 hymns, more than a third of which were written by Church authors. The hymns were words only; they did not include the musical accompaniment. Our current hymnbook has 26 of those original hymns.

The Manchester Hymnal, which was published in 1840 in Manchester, England, included 271 hymns. The Church used that hymnal for 87 years.

The first Church hymnbook to include music with the text of the hymns was called the Psalmody. It was published in 1899. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir used this version for its performances.

There were a few more versions of the hymnbook before the 1950 edition was published, which was mostly a combination of two of the previous Church hymnals.

Today, our green hymnbook contains 341 hymns, with 160 of the hymns written by Church members.

What the Lord told Emma Smith still holds true: "The song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads" (D&C 25:12).



Soaking up SEMINARY

I found that my thirst for spiritual things was satisfied by attending a class where we could talk about Christ.

What could my teacher possibly have to teach us every single day for four years?

BY KATIE BLISS

I had always just assumed that when you got into ninth grade, you went to seminary. So I was surprised when I received a call from the bishopric asking me if I wanted to enroll.

I thought, “Sure. Why not?”

The next thing I knew, it was the first day of ninth grade, and I was on my way to released-time seminary. I was pretty scared and not very excited. “Yeah,” I thought, “another church meeting to go to every day. What could my teacher possibly have to teach us every single day? And I was supposed to do this for four years? What if I didn’t know anyone in my class? What if I didn’t like my teacher? What if I just didn’t want to go?”

But I forced myself out the door of my high school and took that long trek to the seminary building. When I got there, I looked for my name to see which class I was in. I then waited for someone I knew so I wouldn’t have to be alone. Little did I know that in seminary you are never alone. I finally gave

up waiting and went to class. As I walked into the classroom, I was greeted by a warm smile and a friendly handshake. That’s when things started to get better.

I took a seat, and as I looked around at all of the beautiful pictures on the walls, my friends started to come in. Friends! Now I could have fun.

Class finally started, and we all told a little about ourselves. Then the teacher, Brother Toma, introduced himself and told us about seminary—how important it was to come every day and how there would be gospel study, fun activities, and sometimes even treats!

I couldn’t believe how fast that class went by. It was so much fun; I didn’t want to leave. When the bell rang, I had to drag myself back to the school.

When I returned to school, I could instantly tell a difference. My school had never seemed so worldly before. I was amazed at how strong





Seminary was so much fun I didn't want to leave. My testimony grew more than I could have imagined. And so can yours.

the Spirit had been in that seminary building, even on an orientation day.

Besides the daily gospel lessons, there were dances, parties, assemblies, testimony meetings, opening and closing socials, and early-morning devotionals. Those devotionals surprised me the most. I never thought it would be worth it to get up at 6:00 A.M. for a church meeting, but I was wrong.

One of my favorite things about seminary, though, was that I was able to learn outside of class. Each year, I was challenged to read my scriptures every day. That not only taught me discipline and self-motivation, but I always learned a lot more about the gospel. My testimony was strengthened so much every time I read.

What I learned in seminary was totally up to me. If I wanted to go and sleep, I could. If I wanted to learn and feel the Spirit, I could. The instructors had such different teaching styles that each teacher brought a new outlook and taught me something more. Seminary also taught me that there wasn't just one way to learn about the gospel and the Church. I could have fun while learning. Wow! What a concept.

Learning not to judge was one of the most important lessons I learned in seminary. I saw people in every class who were there because they didn't want to take a "real" class at school, and seminary was a great opportunity to catch up on some zzz's. But then a guy

would stand up and bear his testimony, and it would be the most beautiful thing. Never in a million years would I have expected some of these people to even know what the scriptures were, and they would stand up and tell you how true they are and how much they loved them and the Church. It was amazing.

Seminary has done so much for me. It has taught me so many things and given me such a strong testimony. I am so thankful I was able to attend seminary for four years.

I encourage everyone to enroll in seminary. Don't be the one in the back of the classroom sleeping through the lessons. Participate in class, read your scriptures, and accept the challenges you are given. I promise you that attending seminary will strengthen you; you will grow spiritually more than you could ever imagine. Seminary is one of the most wonderful things for the youth. Take advantage of it. **NE**

Katie Bliss is a member of the Cedar City 22nd Ward, Cedar City University Third Stake.

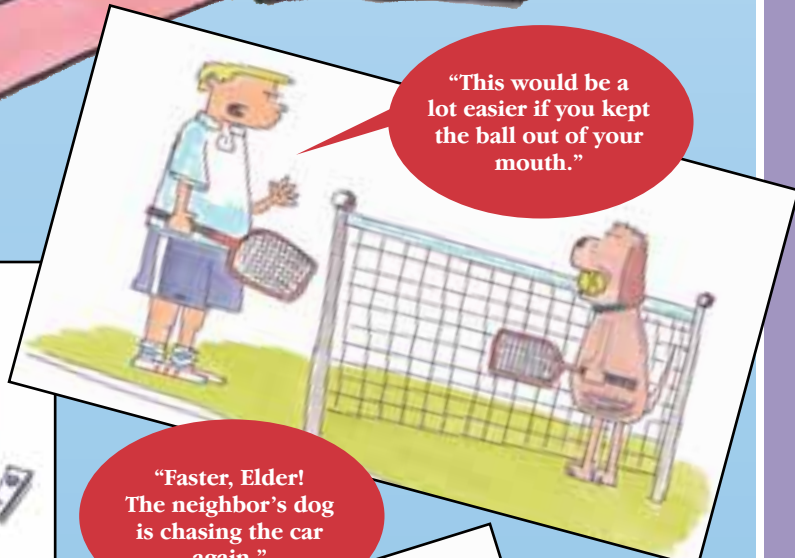
THE EXTRA SMILE



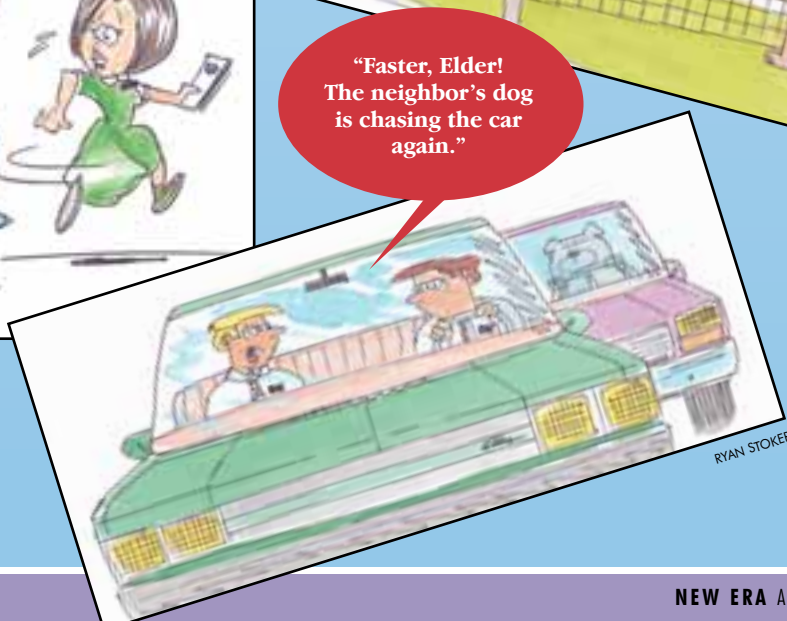
VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



TERRY REED DONELSON



RYAN STOKER



RYAN STOKER

The 10¢ SOLUTION

One dime, two bottles. How much was my integrity worth to me?



BY ELDER STERLING W. SILL (1903–94)

Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

As our family was driving from Arizona, we stopped at a service station, and while the car was being serviced, one of the children said, “Could we have some soda pop?”

So I went to the vending machine. I put in one dime and I got out one bottle. I put in another dime and I got out another bottle. I put in a third dime and I got a third bottle. But then the gadget didn’t lock, and I got the fourth bottle free. As I was going to the car to make the delivery, I thought, “They charge too much for this stuff anyway.”

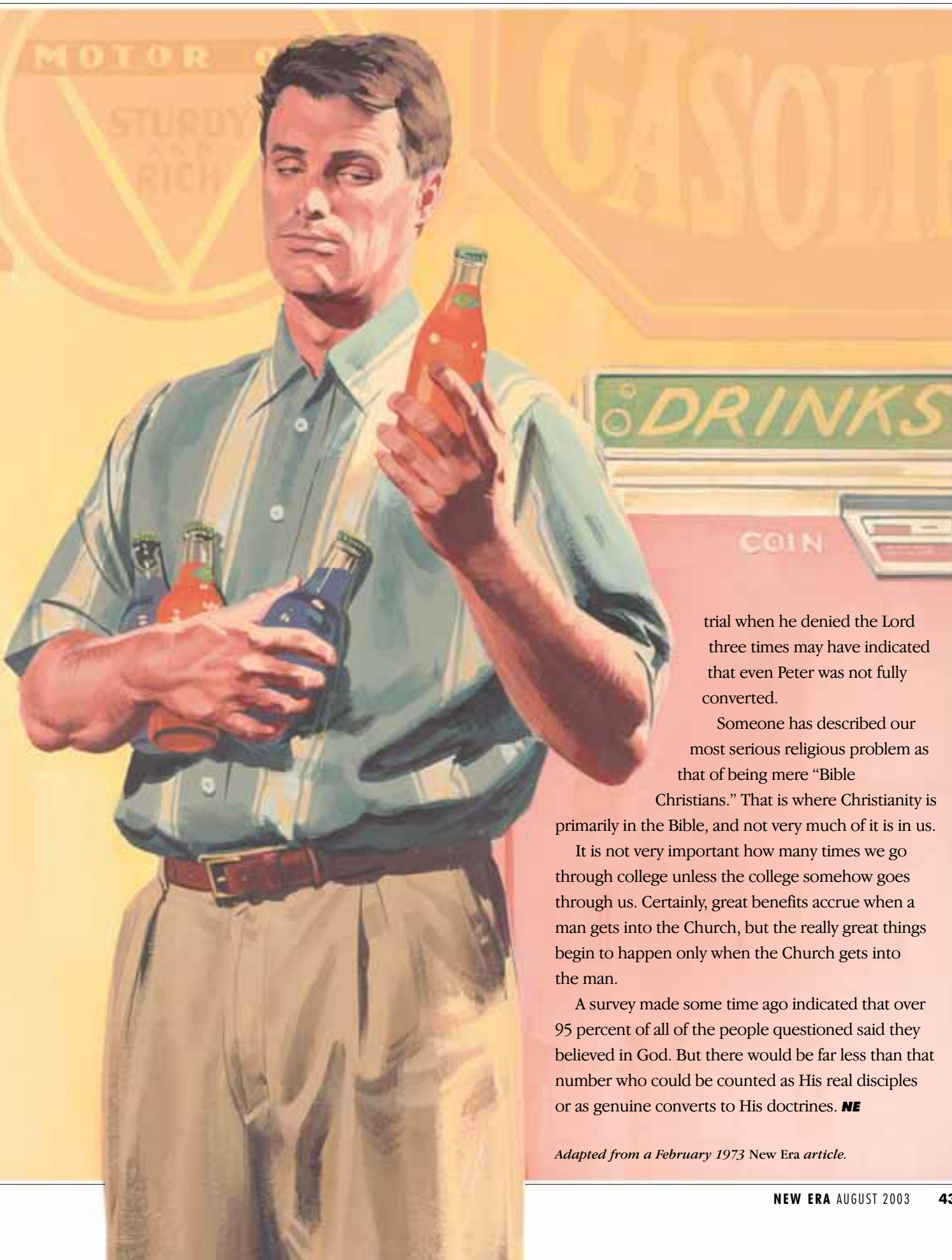
However, I have a little mental night-watchman on duty up here in my brain someplace who started to make a fuss, and he said, “Look, Sterling, if you’re going to be a crook, you had better get more than 10 cents out of it.”

I don’t know just what I would have done if the soda had cost a quarter, but I went back and put the other dime into the machine.

It was Mohandas K. Gandhi who once said there were 999 people who believed in honesty for every honest man. Now how can anyone tell whether or not I believe in honesty? By what I say about it or by what I do while I am at the vending machine where no one can see me except myself? Or how are you going to tell whether or not I believe the gospel is true? By what I say in testimony meeting or by the way I carry out my Church assignments?

One of the first laws of leadership success says that a person must be a convert before he can be a leader. That is also one of the first laws of religious success. The most serious blasphemy is not profanity but lip service. God has heaped His greatest condemnation upon those who draw near unto Him with their lips while their hearts are far from Him.

The Lord once said to His chief apostle, “Simon . . . when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:31–32). Simon Peter may have been a bit offended because he probably felt he was already converted. But what happened that night at the



trial when he denied the Lord three times may have indicated that even Peter was not fully converted.

Someone has described our most serious religious problem as that of being mere “Bible

Christians.” That is where Christianity is primarily in the Bible, and not very much of it is in us.

It is not very important how many times we go through college unless the college somehow goes through us. Certainly, great benefits accrue when a man gets into the Church, but the really great things begin to happen only when the Church gets into the man.

A survey made some time ago indicated that over 95 percent of all of the people questioned said they believed in God. But there would be far less than that number who could be counted as His real disciples or as genuine converts to His doctrines. **NE**

Adapted from a February 1973 New Era article.

HOME SICK FOR



BY LARA ELLERTSON

I loved the way my testimony grew at girls' camp every year. But this year, how could I make it to camp if I was too sick even to go to church?

I loved girls' camp. I loved singing songs and dressing up in crazy outfits. I also loved the clear, crisp mornings and the bright stars at night. But most of all, I loved when my ward gathered around the campfire to have a testimony meeting. My testimony grew so much from those meetings.

The morning before my fifth time at camp, I woke up with a splitting headache. I sat up with a groan and rubbed my forehead to try to ease the pain. I felt achy and dizzy. I had chills even though I was still under my covers. I was sick. There was no way I could go into the mountains sick. But I couldn't miss camp! A feeling of frustration swept over me.

All morning long, I restlessly drifted in and out of sleep while my family was at church. Periodically, I would say a little prayer in my heart asking Heavenly Father to help me find a way to be able to go to camp. Suddenly, I felt a strong impression that I should ask my father for a blessing. I felt a growing warmth in my heart, and I knew that through the power of the priesthood I would be made well enough to attend camp. Knowing that Heavenly Father loved me and

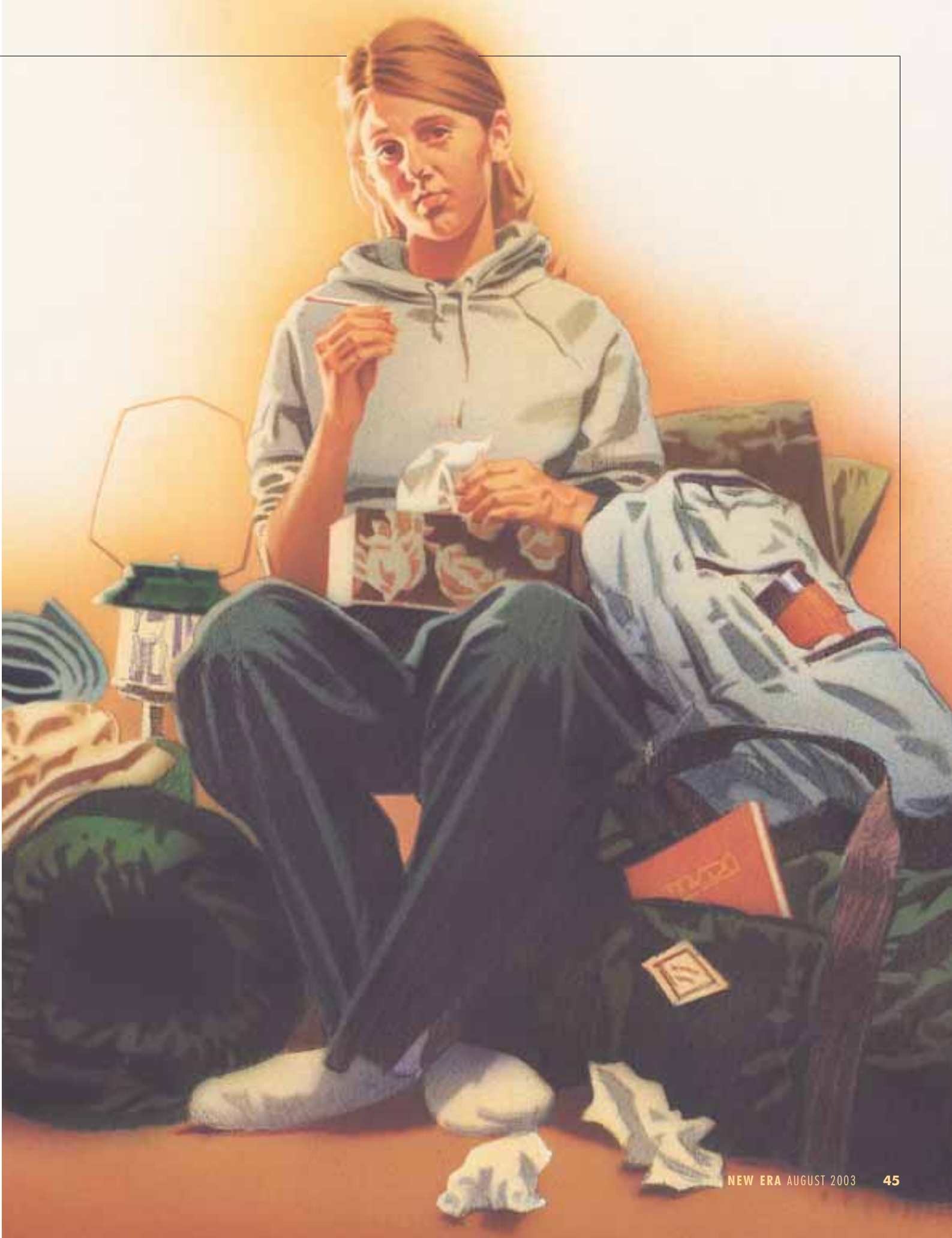
was mindful of my concerns allowed me to rest a little easier.

A few hours later, my dad and my bishop gave me a priesthood blessing. As they laid their hands on my head, I could feel Heavenly Father's love. As my father spoke the words of the blessing, he promised I would be healed according to my faith. My heart swelled with confidence and gratitude for the feeling of assurance that had been given to me earlier that day.

That same gratitude overwhelmed me the next Friday as the young women of my ward surrounded the campfire for a testimony meeting. I bore witness of how mindful God is of all of His children. I told the young women that, because of my experience, I had a testimony of the power of faith and that Heavenly Father wants us to know and have confidence in His will and His promises.

"The Lord is able to do all things according to his will, for the children of men, if it so be that they exercise faith in him" (1 Nephi 7:12). **NE**

Lara Ellertson is a member of the Edgemont 18th Ward, Provo Utah Edgemont North Stake.





KEEP ON PEDALING



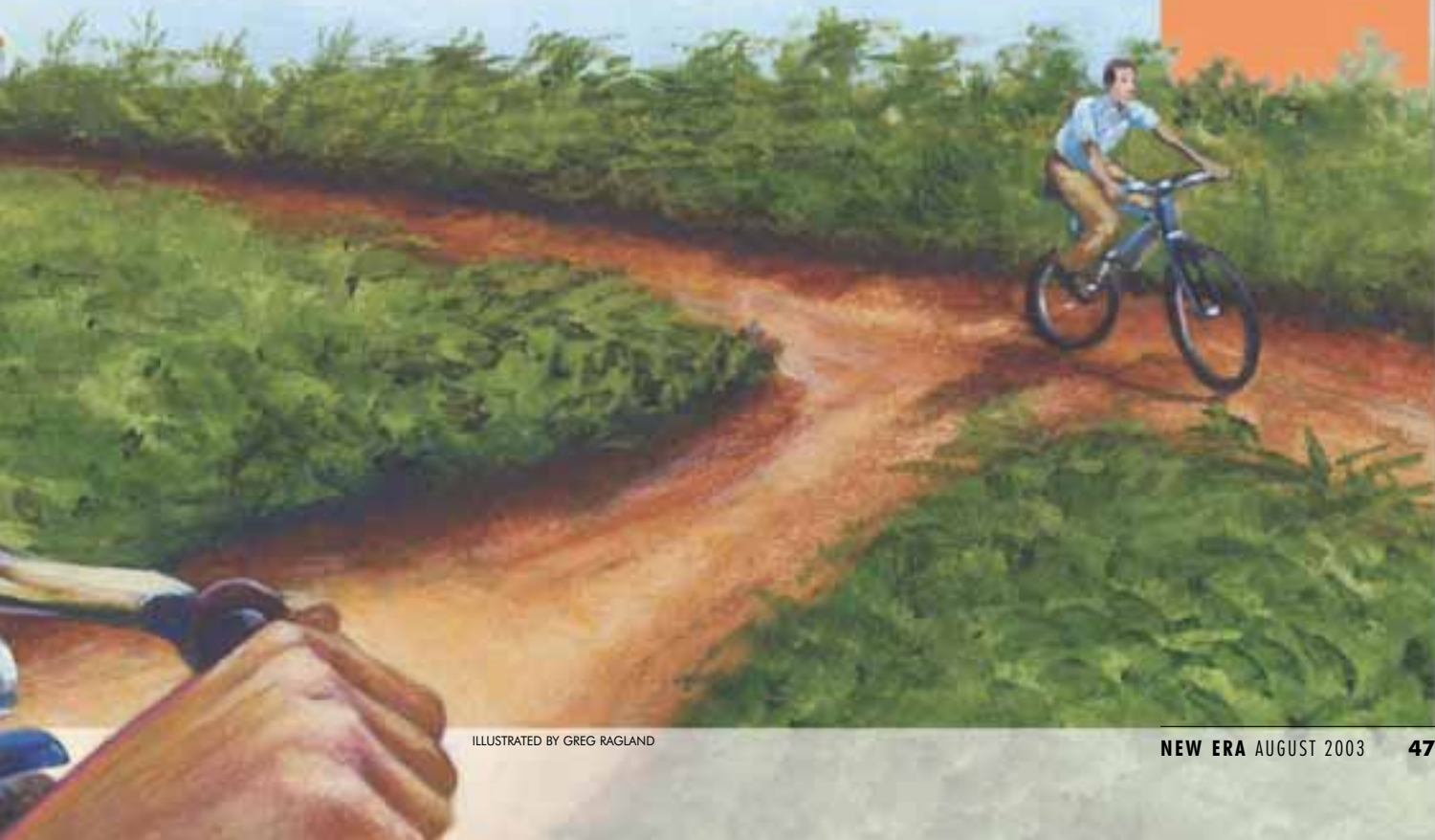
BY SCOTT CREER

One morning while serving in the Thailand Bangkok Mission, I woke up lacking the desire to teach the gospel in my new area. My companion and I were having difficulties keeping our spirits up through the intense heat and the disappointment of uninterested investigators. In Thailand, 90 percent of the time it's at least 90 degrees outside with at least 90 percent humidity. But as bad as the heat was, we felt worse about not being able to find people to teach the discussions to.

I spent the entire morning pumping myself up to teach my Thai brothers and sisters. Through reading my scriptures, studying with my companion, and praying fervently, I was ready and excited to teach again. As I had been on other days of my mission, I was amazed at how quickly studying and praying helped me regain the desire to teach.

The excitement and renewed strength quickly vanished, though, as every appointment we had that morning fell through. We tried street contacting to make up for the

I was disappointed that no one would listen to our message. But when the Spirit encouraged me, I really got going.





Teaching
Amnaad,
I was
unaware of how
many lives were
about to change.

lost appointments, but nobody was interested. After yet another Thai brother turned down our offer to teach him, I looked at my companion only to sense in him exactly what I felt. Our sweat-drenched white shirts and tired bodies showed the dejection we had experienced. Our injured spirits wanted to give up, and I even contemplated taking an early lunch. But the Spirit wouldn't let me.

Not knowing exactly why, I hopped on my bike and started pedaling as fast as I could. My companion, who probably thought I had lost my sanity, struggled to keep up as I sped down a neighborhood street. I pedaled and pedaled, finally coming to a three-way intersection where a man passed us on his bicycle. I slowed down and began to follow him, approaching his side and asking him how he was and where he was going. My companion caught up just in time to hear the man accept an invitation to hear the first discussion.

The man let us in his air-conditioned room where we taught him the first discussion and challenged him to read the Book of Mormon

and pray about our message. Within the week, Amnaad Uanphooklaang had felt the Spirit and committed to be baptized later that month. Elder Wengreen, my companion, baptized Amnaad at the small branch where we served. The branch now had a much-needed potential priesthood holder.

Shortly thereafter, Amnaad introduced us to his boss, Chaanchay Srisawad. We taught Chaanchay the six discussions, and a branch member baptized him the next month.

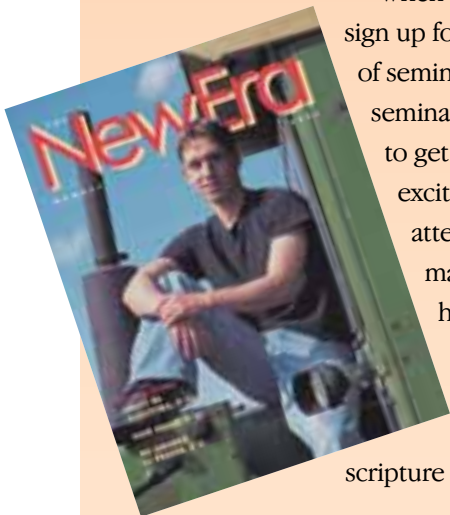
Several months and two areas later, my mission president allowed me to visit that branch to see Chaanchay baptize his wife. As I watched the baptismal service, I thought about the morning we met Amnaad. I thought about how close we were to giving up and taking an early lunch. I still thank my Heavenly Father for allowing the Spirit to press forward for me when I felt unable to do so myself. I had learned, once again, that God guides His work. **NE**

Scott Creer is a member of the Eugene Seventh Ward, Eugene Oregon Stake.

Mutual Activity Ideas

• Youth in Wilmington, Delaware, based their youth conference on historical events in their area (see page 12). If there are any historical sites close to home, arrange for a tour. Under the guidance of your bishop or youth leaders, you may want to ask an institute or seminary teacher to be your guide.

- When it's time to sign up for a new year of seminary, hold a seminary "pep rally" to get everyone excited about attending. You may want to have a short scripture chase or learn some scripture mastery



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scriptures together. Don't forget to provide enrollment information, class times and locations, and driving directions. (See "Soaking up Seminary," page 38.)

Service Project Idea

- Have a hymnbook fix-up night under the direction of the ward music leader. Gather all the hymnbooks and use soft erasers to remove smudges or marks. Use book-mending tape to fix broken spines and torn pages. Ask someone to be prepared to give the history of a favorite hymn and sing it together.

Family Home Evening Idea

- In "Recognizing Answers to Prayer" on page 4, Elder Richard G. Scott outlines three ways in which prayers are answered. Have family members identify an answer to prayer that they have received.

Sunday Lesson Helps

In addition to the Resource Guides (printed in May and November), Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood teachers may find these additional resources helpful in enhancing lessons 29–33.

Young Women Manual 1

Lesson 29: The Second Coming

- Ezra Taft Benson, "Five Marks of the Divinity of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, Dec. 2001, 8–15.
 M. Russell Ballard, "When Shall These Things Be?" *Ensign*, Dec. 1996, 56–61.

Lesson 30: Service

- Shara Braithwaite, "Look What I Found," *New Era*, Sept. 2000, 12–13.
 Jana Pope, "Angel Unaware," *New Era*, Aug. 2002, 46–48.
 "Secret Service," *New Era*, Feb. 2003, 27.

Lesson 31: Group Activities: A Basis for Wise Dating

- Brad Wilcox, "Just Hanging Out," *New Era*, Aug. 2001, 8–11.
 Q&A, "Avoid dating the same person?" *New Era*, Sept. 2002, 16–19.
 Ned B. Roueché, "Dancing Back to Church," *New Era*, Apr. 2003, 12–14.

Lesson 32: Personal Purity through Self-Discipline

- Katie Lea Brown, "Worth the Wait," *New Era*, Feb. 2003, 46.
 Neal A. Maxwell, "Reasons to Stay Pure," *New Era*, Mar. 2003, 42–48.

Lesson 33: Avoiding Degrading Media Influences

- "See No Evil," *New Era*, Oct. 2002, 34–39.
 Keith B. McMullin, "Are You a Saint?" *New Era*, Feb. 2002, 38–41.
 Poster, "Keep Yourself Free," *New Era*, Feb. 2003, 19.

Aaronic Priesthood Manual 1

Lesson 29: The Eternal Family

- Special Issue: Family, *New Era*, June 2003.
 Scott Bean, "The Truth about My Family," *New Era*, Mar. 2003, 26–27.
 "Home Improvement," *New Era*, Oct. 2002, 40.

Lesson 30: The Plan of Salvation

- Q&A, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" *New Era*, July 2003, 16–18.
 Neal A. Maxwell, "I Am But a Lad," *New Era*, Feb. 2002, 4–7.
 Christoffel Golden Jr., "Our Father's Plan," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 30–31.

Lesson 31: Continue in Prayer and Fasting

- Richard G. Scott, "Recognizing Answers to Prayer," *New Era*, Aug. 2003, 4–8.
 Benjamin C. T'yaou, "Taking My Own Advice," *New Era*, Oct. 2002, 8–9.
 Esther Hansen, "The Real Fast," *New Era*, May 2002, 11.

Lesson 32: Tithing

- Spencer W. Kimball, "Will a Man Rob God?" *New Era*, Mar. 2002, 42–45.
 Q&A, "Pay tithing on mission money?" *New Era*, Mar. 2003, 16–18.

Lesson 33: Scripture Study

- Suzanna L. Withers, "Tell My Teacher," *New Era*, Apr. 2003, 34.
 Jaime Weise Arnold, "Book of Mormon Story," *New Era*, Jan. 2003, 26–28.
 Poster, "Questions? Answers," *New Era*, Aug. 2002, 19.

SPENCE'S COURAGE

I've really appreciated all the articles. Every month I read and enjoy the great stories. The jokes are pretty good too. I like how they are Church related.

In the November 2002 *New Era*, I read about Spence McArthur in "One Step Ahead." He had lost his leg at an early age and went through many trials. I enjoyed reading this article. It made me think how hard it must be for him. I recently got my cast off after breaking my thumb playing football. I had a hard time writing and doing things I love, like football and basketball. I can hardly imagine how it would feel to not have a leg my whole life! Spence showed great faith and courage accomplishing all the things he did.

Michael McRae
Beaverton, Oregon

AT THE CROSSROADS

Thank you for publishing the November 2002 issue of the *New Era*. I was at a crossroads in my life, and I didn't know what I was going to do until I picked up this wonderful magazine and read every article and story.

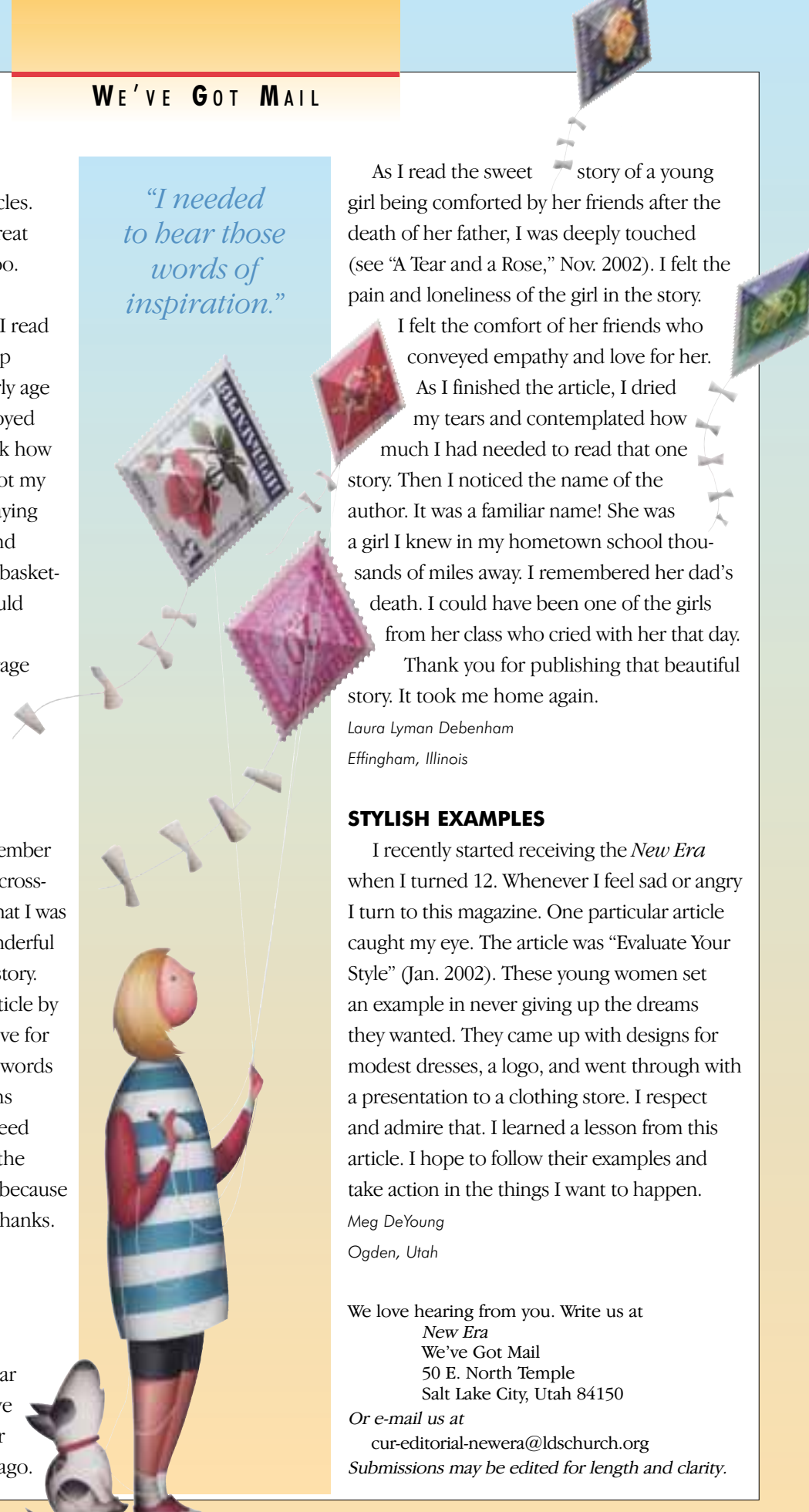
I am especially grateful for the article by Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), "Live for the Future." I needed to hear those words of inspiration. I was thinking in terms of the here and now when I really need to be thinking in terms of living for the future. I was able to sort out my life because of this inspiring piece. Many, many thanks.

Alyson Bullock
Baltimore, Maryland

TAKING ME HOME

November is a difficult time of year for me. I have seven children and live far from extended family. My mother died on Thanksgiving Day, 11 years ago.

"I needed to hear those words of inspiration."



As I read the sweet story of a young girl being comforted by her friends after the death of her father, I was deeply touched (see "A Tear and a Rose," Nov. 2002). I felt the pain and loneliness of the girl in the story.

I felt the comfort of her friends who conveyed empathy and love for her. As I finished the article, I dried my tears and contemplated how much I had needed to read that one story. Then I noticed the name of the author. It was a familiar name! She was a girl I knew in my hometown school thousands of miles away. I remembered her dad's death. I could have been one of the girls from her class who cried with her that day.

Thank you for publishing that beautiful story. It took me home again.

Laura Lyman Debenham
Effingham, Illinois

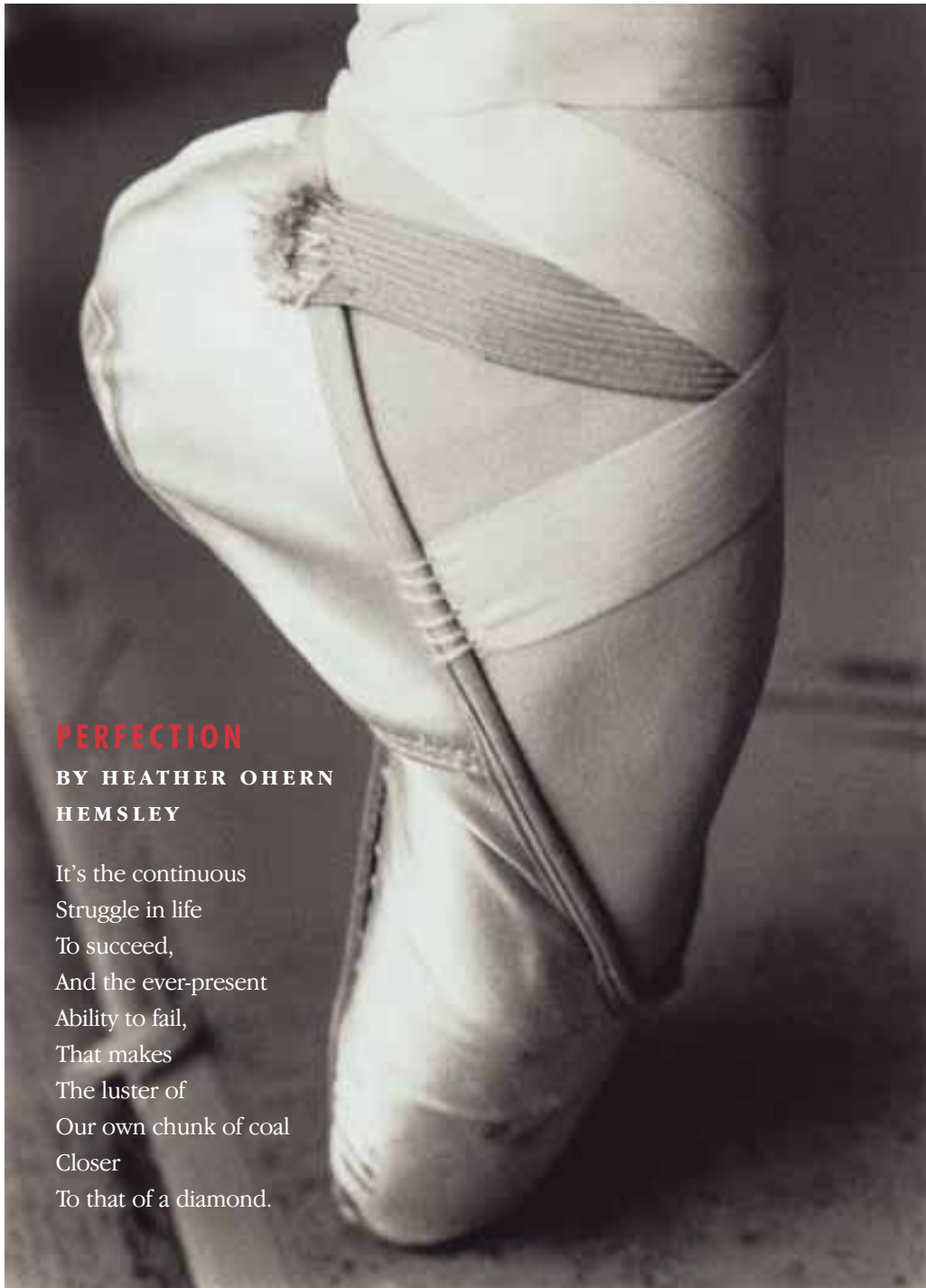
STYLISH EXAMPLES

I recently started receiving the *New Era* when I turned 12. Whenever I feel sad or angry I turn to this magazine. One particular article caught my eye. The article was "Evaluate Your Style" (Jan. 2002). These young women set an example in never giving up the dreams they wanted. They came up with designs for modest dresses, a logo, and went through with a presentation to a clothing store. I respect and admire that. I learned a lesson from this article. I hope to follow their examples and take action in the things I want to happen.

Meg DeYoung
Ogden, Utah

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Or e-mail us at
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Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.



PERFECTION

BY HEATHER OHERN
HEMSLEY

It's the continuous
Struggle in life
To succeed,
And the ever-present
Ability to fail,
That makes
The luster of
Our own chunk of coal
Closer
To that of a diamond.

BY EMILY LIM



“It’s a lot more important to have the closeness in a branch that is so small. If you don’t have that closeness, it’s a lot harder to stay strong in the gospel.”

See “Branching Out,” p. 26.