

# THE NewEra

FEBRUARY

2009

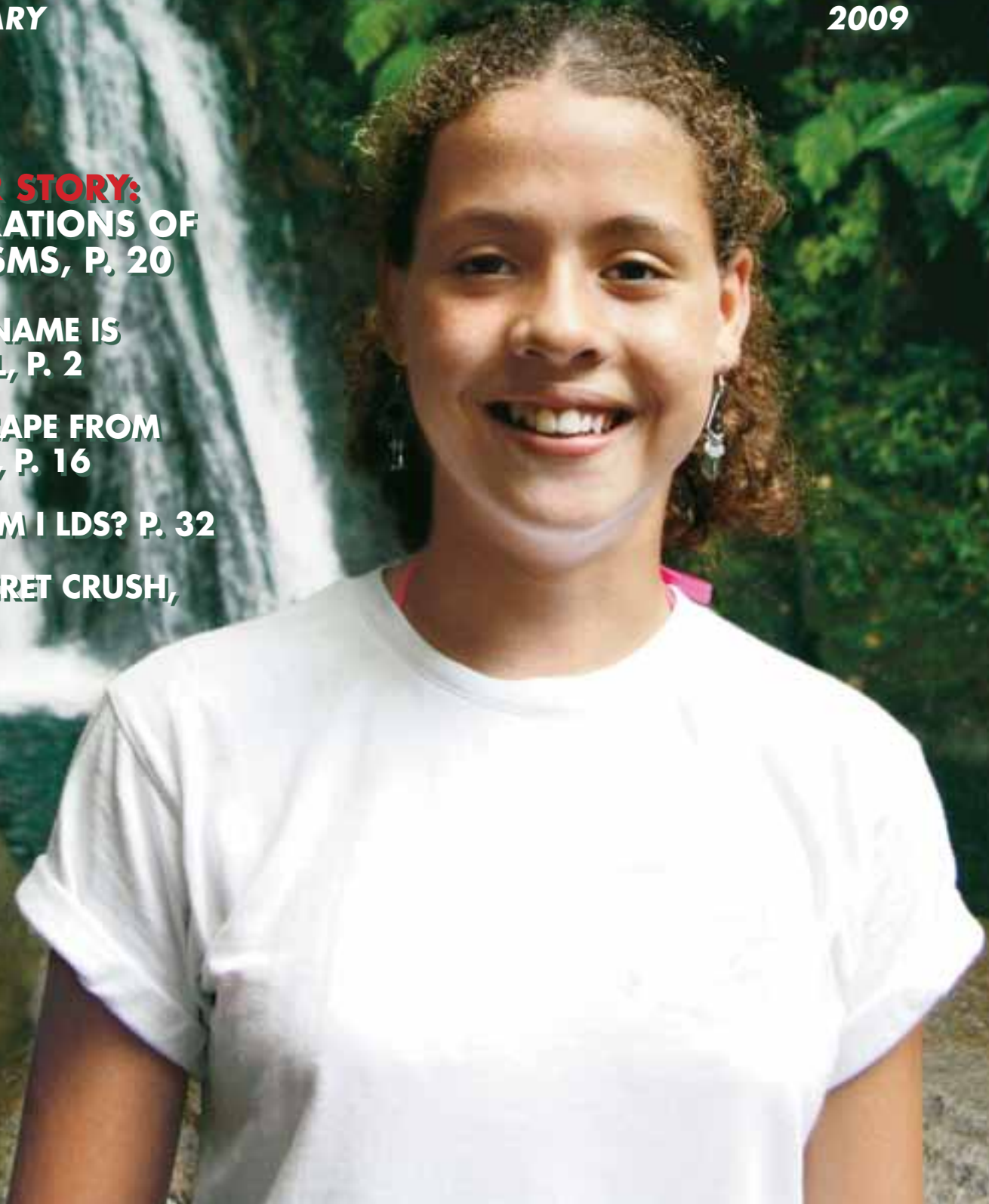
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Reserve, Inc. All rights  
reserved. Periodicals Postage Paid  
at Salt Lake City, Utah. The *New  
Era* (ISSN 0164-5285) is published  
monthly by The Church of Jesus  
Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 E.  
North Temple St., Salt Lake City,  
UT 84150-3220, USA.

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.



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**The New Era Magazine**  
Volume 39, Number 2  
February 2009

*Official monthly publication for youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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**E-mail Address:**

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**To Change Address:**

Send old and new address information to:  
Distribution Services  
P.O. Box 26368  
Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368,  
USA.  
Please allow 60 days for changes to take effect.

**Cover:** *Coco Gamiette of Guadeloupe at the spot where some of her relatives were baptized. See "Generations," p. 20.*

**Cover photography:** *Richard M. Romney (front and back)*

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# THE VALUE OF A GOOD NAME



BY ELDER L. TOM PERRY  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

*Your good name connects you with your past family history. Your righteous living, your example, your teachings, and your worthwhile service will bless numerous people with your vision.*

***Without warning, a stranger walked into the home of Gustavus Perry. He spent the night with the family, explaining the principles of the gospel and told them of a new book called the Book of Mormon. He then told them that elders would soon visit them. The messenger disappeared in the morning.***

**W**e experienced a special day in our family on January 4, 1997. My brother organized a party honoring the 200th birthday of Gustavus Adolphus Perry. He was an important member of our family tree. He was baptized in 1832 and became the first of our family to embrace the gospel. The Perry family history records this remarkable event:

“On a beautiful farm in the state of New York, Gustavus Adolphus Perry and his good wife, Eunice Wing, with their three sons, Orrin Alonzo, Lorenzo, and Henry Elisha, and their four daughters, Rosalie Alvira, Alvina, Amanda, and Lucy, were living very peacefully and happily. Close to the year of 1830 (we do not know the exact date) one evening after a light snow had fallen, the family was all in for the night. It was dark and the latchstring was drawn in so no one could enter the house. Then suddenly without warning, a stranger walked into the home and greeted them with these words: ‘God bless you.’ He spent the night with

them explaining the principles of the gospel and told them of a new book called the Book of Mormon and quoted passages from the same. He then told them on what pages they were to find the quotations and that elders would soon visit them. The messenger disappeared in the morning just as suddenly as he had appeared the night before, leaving no tracks in the freshly fallen snow. They inquired of their neighbors to see if anyone had seen him. They had not, and no trace of him could be found.”

This good family was ready for the gospel when it came to them, and they joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1832.

The Perrys were like other families who joined the Church in the early 1800s. They moved from their home in upstate New York to Ohio, and then on to the gathering in Missouri. Forced from their Missouri home, they moved to Illinois. Again driven from their home, in the very cold winter of 1846, they made the painful trip across Iowa to



**T**o Joseph the blessing was given that his descendants would spread unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. This blessing would extend into the latter days, when one named Joseph would be called to bring about a restoration of the fulness of the gospel.

settle in the Lake Branch at Winter Quarters. Here Gustavus served as a counselor in the bishopric until they were instructed in 1852 by Brigham Young to close the ward, join a wagon train, and make the long trek across the plains.

As a part of the birthday celebration, my brother spent a year searching for the descendants of Gustavus Adolphus Perry. We were amazed at the record he had on the table before us as we celebrated. He had found more than 10,000 descendants of this good man. The number overwhelmed me. Suddenly I realized the value of a good name. In seven to eight generations, his family had sufficient numbers to organize three stakes of Zion.

Each of us has these special accounts in our family histories of the sacrifices that were made for us to be blessed with a knowledge of the gospel. In some families, you may be the first member to join. You become its pioneer family. Therefore you have the obligation to record in your history who brought the converting power of the gospel to you.

#### **A Name and a Birthright**

We should pause to consider the value of a good name. A study of the scriptures certainly demonstrates the importance the Lord places on a name and the value it can have for succeeding generations. The most exciting example I can think of is contained in Genesis 17:

“And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. . . .

“Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee” (vv. 2, 5).

The same promise was given to Abraham’s son, Isaac. Later the blessing that was promised to Abraham and Isaac was given to Jacob. The honor given Jacob was that

the Lord caused that his name be changed to Israel—“one who prevails with God” (see Genesis 35:10–12).

Later, as the time drew near for Jacob (or Israel) to die, he called his sons together to bless them and their seed. It was to Joseph that the birthright blessing was given (see Genesis 49:22, 26).

To Joseph the blessing was also given that his descendants would spread unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. This blessing would extend into the latter days, when one named Joseph would be called to bring about a restoration of the fulness of the gospel.

It has always been interesting to me that the Prophet Joseph Smith was the third son of Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith. He had two older brothers, yet the name of Joseph was preserved for him. Who could doubt that his life was the fulfillment of the great promise made to Joseph of old that through his lineage would come that great saving power of the gospel of our Lord and Savior.

The Prophet’s life was all too short, but the contribution he made will last into the eternities. His life was taken from him by a cruel mob on the 27th day of June of 1844. He had fulfilled the prophecy. Joseph, son of Joseph, as had been prophesied in the scriptures, had brought forth the remarkable work in these, the latter days (see 2 Nephi 3:7, 15). Thus we see how the Lord has fulfilled his promise to Abraham’s seed.

The name we have been given is special because it blesses us with a heritage by which we can receive the great promise of the Lord to his children, even the gift of life eternal.

#### **The Spirit of Elijah**

It has always been of profound interest to me that the first lesson taught to the Prophet Joseph Smith by Moroni was the absolute necessity of families being sealed together.



That message was recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 2:

“Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

“And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.

“If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming” (vv. 1–3).

The purpose of Elijah’s mission was the restoration of the sealing power to bind on earth that which will be bound in the eternities to come, thus making operative on earth the ability to perform the ordinances of the gospel for both the living and the dead. This made it possible for the eternal linking of families together.

I have always marveled how the Spirit of Elijah works on men and women when they understand the blessings of an eternal unit. It even spreads to those who do not understand this doctrine. Genealogy, they tell me, has become the number-one hobby in the nation. The Spirit of

Elijah almost becomes a contagion among the people as it moves to unite family units together. It is only natural that our thoughts are turned to the history of our families and the sacrifices they made to embrace the gospel of our Lord and Savior.

In addition, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught about the personal benefit of keeping a book of remembrance. He said:

“Keeping journals reminds us of blessings. Those who keep a book of remembrance are more likely to keep the Lord in remembrance in their daily lives. Journals are a way of counting our blessings and of leaving an inventory of these blessings for our posterity” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 349).

#### **What Is the Value of Your Name?**

As I have studied the history of my family and have learned how much they sacrificed for the gospel, I have grown to appreciate the value of a good name. It has built within me a greater desire to do what I can do to bring

**T**he purpose of Elijah's mission was the restoration of the sealing power to bind on earth that which will be bound in the eternities to come, thus making operative on earth the ability to perform the ordinances of the gospel for both the living and the dead. This made it possible for the eternal linking of families together.



ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL MANN

honor to this good family name. It has also impressed upon me the responsibility I have to future generations. If I were to bring dishonor to the name, and if our family continues to grow as it has in the past generations, that influence could cause many to fall away, thus limiting their eternal blessings.

In Proverbs we find that “a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold” (Proverbs 22:1).

We cannot isolate ourselves from those around us. Our good name can be a special valued asset worth more than the riches of the world.

Your good name connects you with your past family history. Your righteous living,

your example, your teachings, and your worthwhile service will bless numerous people with your vision. It is almost impossible to comprehend the number. May the Lord bless you with a greater understanding of his great plan of happiness and your special role in it. I add my witness that families are important. Your name is special. It is recorded in the histories of our Father in Heaven, and how you value that, how you treat it, will literally affect generations to come. God bless you with the vision that is yours of who you are and the great privilege that is yours to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ.

*From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on February 11, 1997.*



# UNITY

*Joseph Smith understood the power that comes from being united.*

In the early days of the Church, the Lord commanded the Latter-day Saints to be one (see D&C 38:27). Throughout his life the Prophet Joseph Smith organized and unified the Saints to accomplish God's work. He taught them, led them, and encouraged them to sacrifice their time, talents, and possessions for the cause of Zion. Here are some of his teachings about unity.

## The Way to Do the Lord's Work

***"We are glad indeed to know that there is such a spirit of union existing throughout the churches, at home and abroad . . . ; for by this principle, and by a concentration of action, shall we be able to carry into effect the purposes of our God."***

***"Unity is strength. . . . Let the Saints of the Most High ever cultivate this principle, and the most glorious blessings must result, not only to them individually, but to the whole Church."***

## Removing Selfish Feelings

***"Let the Saints remember that great things depend on their individual exertion, and that they are called to be co-workers with us and the Holy Spirit in accomplishing the great work of the last days; and . . . let every selfish feeling be not only buried, but annihilated."***

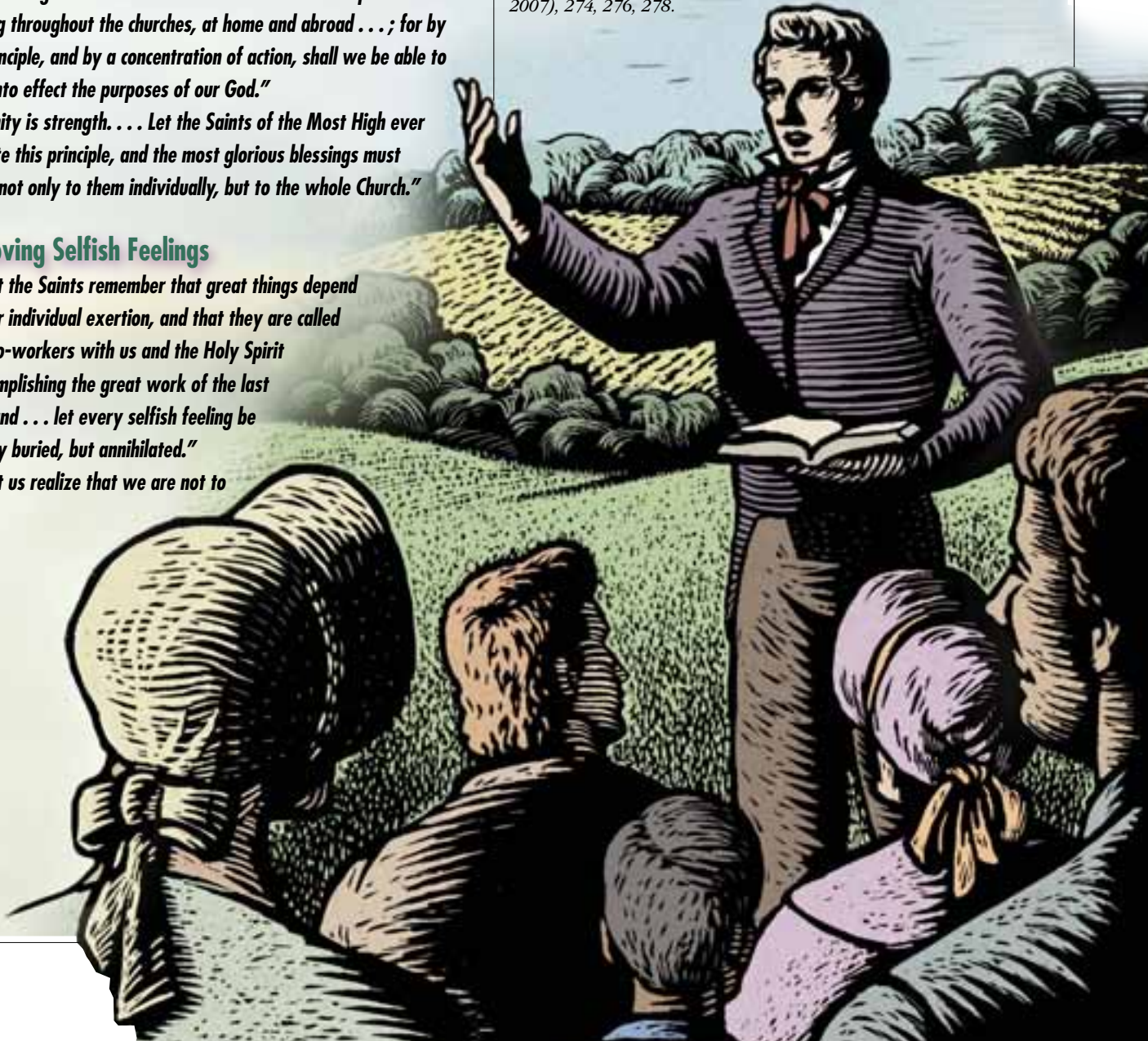
***"Let us realize that we are not to***

***live to ourselves, but to God; by so doing the greatest blessings will rest upon us both in time and in eternity."***

## The Blessings of Unity

***"By a concentration of action, and a unity of effort, we can only accomplish the great work of the last days . . . , while our interests, both temporal and spiritual, will be greatly enhanced, and the blessings of heaven must flow unto us in an uninterrupted stream."***

*From Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2007), 274, 276, 278.*





# *Becoming* JOSEPH

*I was less than enthusiastic about dramatizing the Joseph Smith story. But something happened that changed my life.*

BY RICARDO REYES VILLALTA

I had been taught the Joseph Smith story my entire life. I believed it was true because I trusted those who taught me. If anybody spoke negatively of the Prophet Joseph, I defended him, not because I had a testimony of him but on principle, knowing it was what I was supposed to do.

That all changed when my ward was assigned to provide a special number for a cultural event of the San Salvador El Salvador Ilopango Stake. My friends and I thought that a humorous skit would be best; our Young Men president disagreed. He suggested that we dramatize some of the Prophet Joseph Smith's experiences.

We were not excited about this idea. My friends and I knew that everyone else would perform a funny dance or skit, and we were embarrassed to do anything different. We knew people would laugh at us when they saw us dressed up in old-fashioned clothing, performing a serious drama. I had seen that happen on other occasions, and I have to admit that I had even been one of those who had laughed. However, our Young Men president promised us that if we worked diligently to prepare the Joseph Smith story, nobody would laugh.

So for the next two months, we lived the Joseph Smith story. We saw the film of the First Vision countless times, and we memorized every word and every detail of it. We painted an enormous set that showed the Sacred Grove and the open sky. We made a stack of gold plates and found a huge Bible and a rocking chair to use as props. One of my friends who played the piano recorded the hymn "Joseph Smith's First Prayer" (*Hymns*, no. 26). We even recorded the

sound of birds singing in the grove and of Joseph's footsteps as he stepped on the leaves. When we drew for our parts, it fell to me to play Joseph Smith.

On the day of the performance, we found out that, as expected, we were the only ones performing something serious. So before our turn came, we joined together to pray that all would go well. Then something happened that changed my life.

It was time for me to go on stage. The set of the grove was before me. I walked toward it and heard the recorded hymn playing in the background. As I did, I felt something burning in my chest. Somehow I knew that the event I was reenacting had indeed happened, that a young boy just younger than I was had really had this experience. When I knelt down for the prayer scene, my lips were sealed—but not by an evil influence. Rather, I knew I couldn't talk without crying. A powerful force testified to my heart that Joseph's account was true! I felt great gratitude to the Lord for Joseph Smith, and there was born in me a great love for him.

When I opened my eyes, I realized some members of the audience also had tears in their eyes. I had no doubt that the Spirit was testifying to them of the sacred truthfulness of what we were portraying.

When I later served a mission, I still defended the Church and the Prophet Joseph Smith but not just on principle. I bore witness of him because, as the Prophet himself said, "I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it" (Joseph Smith—History 1:25). **NE**



# BACK *in* TIME

*Photographing tombstones,  
writing down memories,  
and charting pedigrees keep  
teens in Flagstaff, Arizona,  
involved in family history.*

BY HEIDI LEWIS



**W**hen most people think of Arizona, they picture prickly cacti, rattlesnakes, and dusty desert mesas. Flagstaff, a city nestled high in the lush, green Arizona mountains, couldn't be more different. The city got its name from lumberjacks who had turned a towering Ponderosa pine into a flagpole to celebrate the Fourth of July more than a hundred years ago.

The youth of the Flagstaff Arizona Stake carry on this tradition by waving high the banner of the gospel through their service and example. And although pine forests still blanket the hillsides, these days the youth are getting into a very different kind of tree—their family trees.

From Personal Progress Value Experiences and Value Projects, to Genealogy merit badges and a stakewide family history service project, the hearts of these children are turning to their fathers (see Malachi 4:6), and they are finding out just how fun family history can be.

### Preserving the Past

Katherine Kitterman has always been curious about her great-grandmother, Clara Turner, who died when Katherine was just a baby. She found some taped interviews of her great-grandmother and began transcribing them. Eventually this became her Individual Worth Value Project. She has spent dozens of hours at the computer recording her great-grandmother's history so other family members can read and enjoy it.

"Some people might think it is boring, but it's fun," says Katherine. "The first thing to do is to ask questions. Then you become more curious. The more you find out about someone, the more you get to know them."

Katherine says this project taught her how important it is to keep a journal. "I'm really interested

**Katherine Kitterman** (above) found out who her great-grandmother was while transcribing interviews. Jordan Gee (right) photographed gravestones for an online database.

in the everyday things my great-grandmother did, like chores and school, sewing rag rugs, or making silk from cocoons on mulberry trees. This made me realize that things we don't think are very out of the ordinary or exciting would be very interesting to our posterity."

When Austin Johnson asked his grandfather to help him complete the Genealogy merit badge requirements, he didn't realize how much he'd enjoy researching his family tree. "I found a bunch of cool ties in my ancestors, like Benjamin F. Johnson, who was one of the best friends of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It makes me feel grateful that they decided to go through what wasn't necessarily easy for them, because it changed how I live."

"It is nice to know where you come from," says Natania Dirlam. "When you do your family history, you find out about different cultures. You kind of stand out in your own little way."

### Graveside Service

A few years ago, Brig Sorenson mapped out and recorded thousands of graves at the local cemetery for his Eagle project. Picking up where Brig left off, the stake arranged an ongoing service project to photograph the hundreds of gravestones in the cemetery for an Internet genealogy database.

"I'd never been in a graveyard before," says Kirsten Barraclough. "But it was fun to see the names of all the people who died. It was nice to know you are serving others."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHAWN QUICK AND HEIDI LEWIS





*These teens from the Flagstaff Arizona Stake completed Personal Progress projects, earned Genealogy merit badges, and helped compile an Internet database, but most of all, they learned just how much fun it can be to get involved in family history work.*



“Some days I come to the cemetery and I feel really sad,” says Jessica McGuire, whose uncle and grandfather are buried there. “But this time I came and helped. It was a lovely feeling.”

### Millions Waiting

For many youth, the reward for finding out so much about their ancestors was taking their names to the Snowflake Arizona Temple to do baptisms and confirmations for the dead.

“It was the neatest experience to go to the temple and do baptisms for the people in my family I had worked so hard to find,” says Janalie Wilkins. To complete her Individual Worth Value Project, she spent time at her local family history center learning how to use the Personal Ancestral File (PAF) computer program and researching her relatives on the Internet.

“At first, it seemed overwhelming,” admits Janalie. “But then I remembered the scripture about baptisms for the dead: ‘They without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect’ (D&C 128:15). I have a testimony of that now. Doing genealogy work is very important and helps us grow closer to Heavenly Father.

“And it’s not just for old people,” she adds with a grin. “There are millions of people waiting for their work to be done.” **NE**

## GENEALOGY JUMP START

**W**ondering how to get started? Several Duty to God and Personal Progress goals focus on personal and family history. Here are just a few ideas:

- Help make genealogy records available to people around the world by volunteering as an online indexer at [FamilySearchIndexing.org](http://FamilySearchIndexing.org).
- Get personal help at your local family history center.
- Choose an interesting event from an ancestor’s life and make a short movie about it.
- Take a family history class through your ward or branch.
- Contact your local cemetery and see if you can participate in a data recording or photography project. Then go with your family or Church group.
- Complete the Genealogy merit badge.
- Volunteer to record people telling their histories in your ward or at a local nursing home.
- Fill out your four-generation pedigree chart and submit it online at [FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org).
- Research family names to take to the temple for baptisms.
- Keep a journal. (Don’t forget pictures!)

# JUST LOOKING?



**CLICK HERE!**



PORNOGRAPHY BITES—EVERY TIME.  
(SEE MORONI 10:30.)

**“I’m afraid that someone might offer me alcohol or drugs. I don’t like to say no to people or make them mad at me. How can I make sure I won’t give in?”**

**D**etermine ahead of time—now—that you will say no. If you give in, it will be much harder to say no in the future. Most people will respect you for living up to your standards. And they will be less likely to ask you to partake in the future.

Don’t worry about people getting mad at you. That’s their choice if they do, but it’s your choice to keep the Spirit with you and not do something you would regret.

You may find it easier to say no if you have a friend on your side. The support of a friend can help you stand up to a group.

Also, try to prevent this situation from coming up. Choose friends who share and respect your standards. If you’re going to a party, for instance, find out who will be there. Don’t go if you feel uncomfortable or prompted not to. **NE**



### **Keep Your Promise**

After I got baptized, I didn’t go to parties with alcohol and cigarettes anymore. One day my friends told me, “Come on, let’s go. Nothing’s going to happen.” But I told them no because I had promised that I would not drink alcohol, smoke, or take drugs. They understood because they knew that I belonged to the Church, and they know how important making a promise is.

We need to please not our friends but our Heavenly Father. If we fulfill the promises we made to Him when we were baptized, we will be blessed.

*Roxana C., 19, Lima, Peru*



### **Make the Commitment**

I too was afraid to let my friends down. But I thought to myself that if I did give in, whom else would I let down? What worked best for me was to make the decision long before the situation came up. I made the commitment to myself that I would say no to drugs and alcohol. After I said no a couple of times, I was more respected for the decision I made. After a while, when someone would ask me again if I wanted a drink, one of my friends would say, “No, Calder doesn’t drink.” It made it easier for me once my friends realized that I wasn’t going to drink.

*Elder Calder, 20, Idaho Pocatello Mission*





### **Find the Courage to Hold True**

Earlier this year I was offered drugs. I did not want to offend that person, but I gained the courage to tell him that I was not interested. I cannot even tell you how grateful I am for holding true to what I believe in. A couple of weeks later, the guy who offered me drugs told me that he was so impressed that I stood up for what I believe in. He told me that he had never met anyone who could do that and that it took a lot of courage. He said he would never forget that experience.

Through your example you can be a light to others and a good influence (see Matthew 5:16).

Mary T., 16, Arizona, USA



### **Be Steadfast and Immovable**

Your peers will respect you for saying no and keeping your standards. Surround yourself with friends who have the same standards as you. They will support you in being steadfast and immovable.

Lindy S., 15, Utah, USA



### **Decide Now**

If you decide now to never accept drugs or alcohol, then it will be much easier not to take them. You will not have to think twice about your answer. People will often respect your choice, and you might have a missionary experience by telling them about the Word of Wisdom.

Chandler H., 14, Alabama, USA



### **Have Courage**

I also had such an experience. I prayed to our Heavenly Father. I read the scriptures and pondered upon them and tried to strengthen my testimony. And then when I was faced with such a situation, I said, "I am sorry, but I don't drink. I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." I tried to help others understand my standards. At first I was nervous, but now I have become accustomed to doing it, and I continue to keep the Lord's commandments. I overcame the trial with the Lord's help, and I was also blessed with confidence, faith, good health, and high standards. Please tell your friends no with confidence and courage. When you do not compromise your standards, you can shine as a bright light.

Lee, M., 17, Seoul, Korea

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



### **BE STRONG**

*"You face tremendous temptation. It comes at you in the halls of popular entertainment, on the Internet, in the movies, on television, in cheap literature, and in other ways—subtle, titillating, and difficult to resist. Peer pressure may be almost overpowering. But, my dear young friends, you must not give in. You must be strong.*

*You must take the long look ahead rather than succumbing to the present seductive temptation."*

**President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "An Ensign to the Nations, a Light to the World," Ensign, Nov. 2003, 83.**

## **NEXT QUESTION**

**"How can I convince my friends that our standards are really about freedom and not about restriction?"**

**Send your answer by March 15, 2009, to:**

**New Era, Questions & Answers  
3/09**

**50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420  
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# DON'T GET TRAPPED

BY CHRISTA SKOUSEN

*One teenage girl who was imprisoned by drug addiction now knows what it means to be truly free.*

***One girl's curiosity about drugs and alcohol led to three years of drug use and broken relationships. She had gone looking for freedom but instead found herself caught in a destructive addiction.***

**S**eventeen-year-old Becky\* wasn't looking for trouble, she was looking for freedom—freedom to make her own decisions.

But just one afternoon sampling drugs led to a three-year roller coaster ride of serious drug use, time in a treatment facility, and broken family relationships. When Becky went looking for freedom, instead she found addiction and destruction.

Becky is now in her third phase of recovery and has begun to patch up the broken areas of her life. But it hasn't been easy.

Today, Becky talks openly about her experience in hopes that she can help others learn from her destructive habits. "Realize what you are giving up," she advises other teens. "Your beliefs, your morals, your whole life basically. Drugs take away your life, they really do."

The Word of Wisdom, which counsels members to refrain from alcohol, tobacco, hot drinks, and other harmful substances, may appear to limit a person's personal agency, but really the opposite is true.

As Doug LeCheminant of LDS Family Services points out, "One of the most

\* Name has been changed

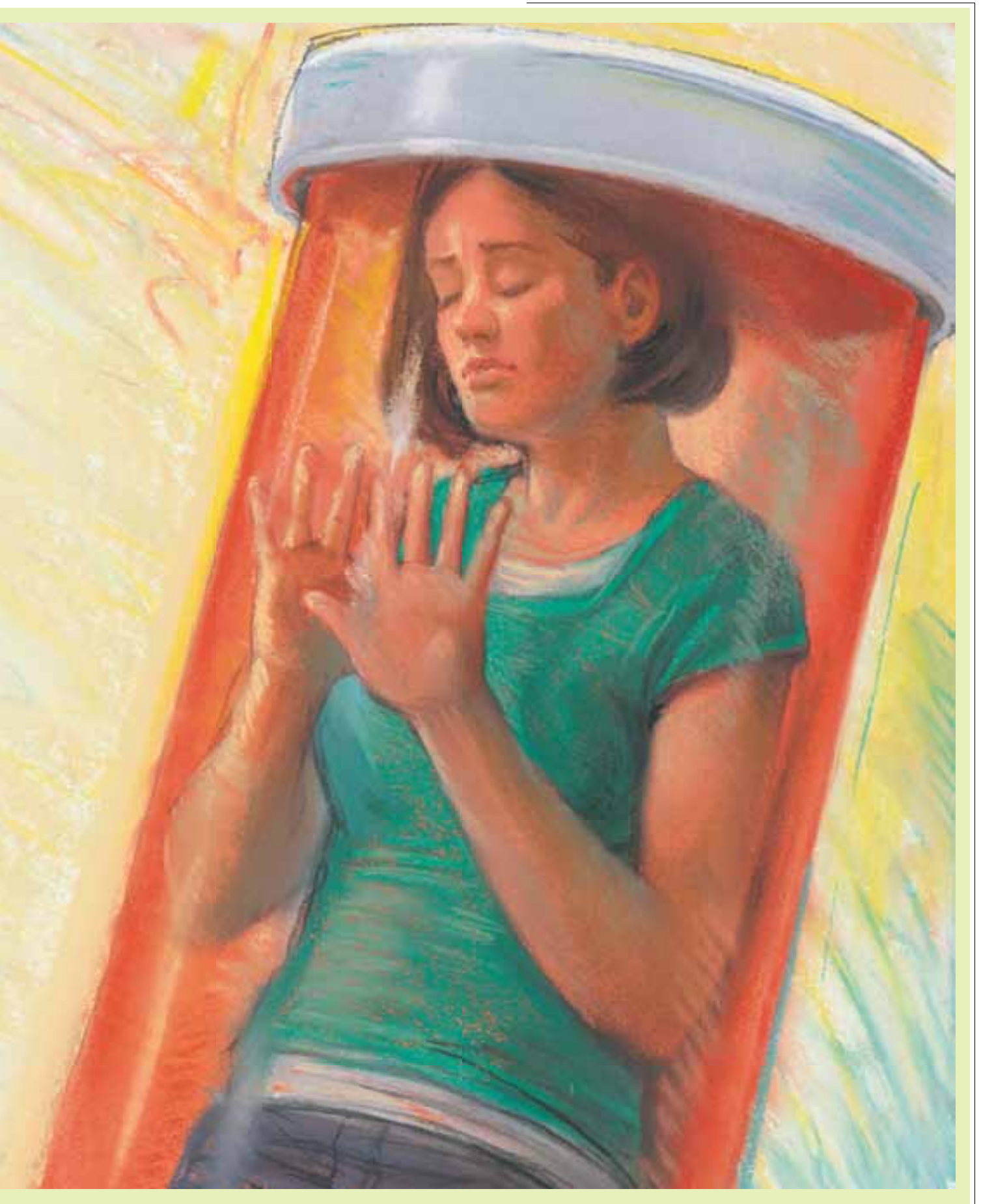
dangerous effects of alcohol and other substances is that they block the channel to the Holy Ghost." When you make the decision not to drink alcohol or use drugs, you are really saying, "I choose to keep the Spirit with me always." It is in this way that we have more freedom—freedom to feel the guidance of the Holy Ghost, freedom against deception, and freedom from addiction.

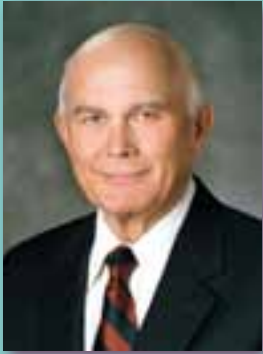
But understanding the damaging spiritual effects of drugs and alcohol is only the first step to keeping it out of your life. Today, no matter where you live, drug and alcohol use is growing more common among teenagers. But there are things you can do, everyday, to exercise your agency and live a life free from addiction.

## **Choose to Study Your Scriptures and Pray**

People call it a "seminary answer," but those who practice it know that the best defense you will ever have against deception will be to create pathways of guidance for yourself through scripture study, prayer, and church attendance.

Through prayer and scripture study, you will feel renewed energy at each critical turn in your life. When you look at some of your





## SPIRITUAL PROTECTION

**T**he Holy Ghost will protect us against being deceived, but to realize that wonderful blessing we must always do the things necessary to retain that Spirit. . . . Specifically, we should avoid pornography, alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, and always, always avoid violations of the law of chastity. We must never take things into our bodies or do things with our bodies that drive away the Spirit of the Lord and leave us without our spiritual protection against deception.”

**Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Be Not Deceived,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 43.**

friends and it seems like they are enjoying themselves without boundaries, prayer will help you to realize that you are not alone.

There are millions of people all over the world with your same standards, persevering just like you are. After earnestly studying your scriptures, pray to Heavenly Father and ask specifically for support in areas where you may need it.

### Choose to Control Your Thoughts

Becky admits that her curiosity to experiment with drugs and alcohol partly began with negative thoughts about herself. “I didn’t think very highly of myself,” she says. “I thought I was a burden to everyone else in my life.”

Although it is normal to have negative thoughts once in awhile, it is what you decide to do about those feelings that will ultimately make the difference. Allowing those negative thoughts to reside will dampen your feelings of self-worth.

Today, Becky uses a method she learned at her treatment center to counter such thoughts. When you have a negative thought, you challenge that thought, and you say three good things about yourself. This is something anyone can do to avoid destructive feelings.

Also, try focusing on service. Serving others is one of the best ways to counter negative feelings. When you forget about yourself and serve others, something changes inside of you, and you feel really good. Above all, always remind yourself that you are a spirit son or daughter of our Heavenly Father, who knows and loves you.

### Choose Good Activities

Find good, uplifting activities, and stick to them. How we choose to spend our time and whom we choose to spend our time with will have an enormous impact on the decisions we make.

Another factor that led Becky to her decision to use drugs was simply that she had too much time on her hands. She was bored, and so she grew curious. “Do something better with your time,” she says. “I wasn’t doing anything. I didn’t have any hobbies; I didn’t participate in any after-school clubs.”

The activities you decide to participate in will determine the people whom you generally associate with. Becky admits, “Your friends matter so much! If I hadn’t been friends with the people I was friends with, I probably would have never tried using drugs.”

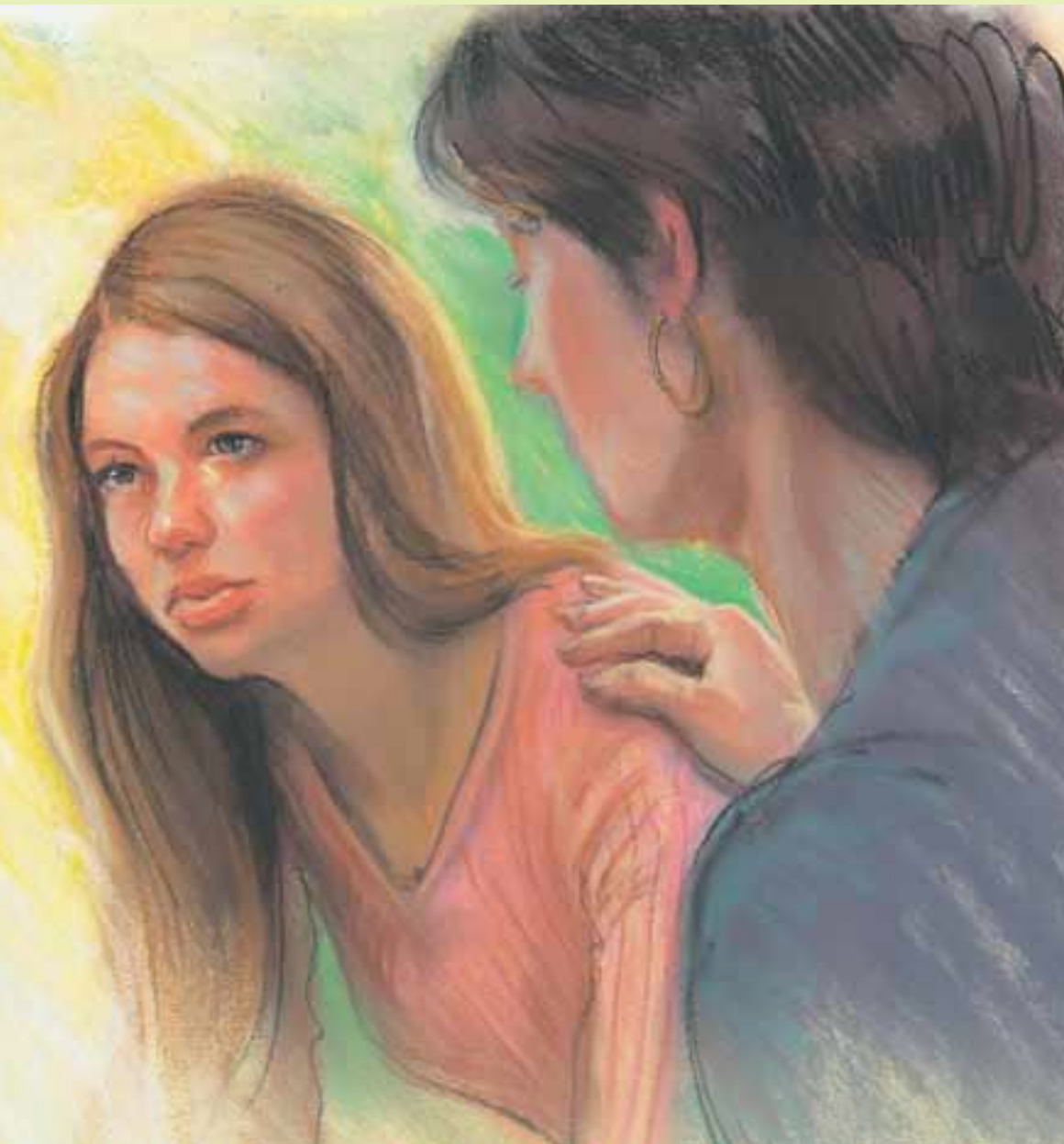
Attend church and Mutual activities, and work on goals for Personal Progress or Duty to God. If you are good at sports, become your best. If you enjoy art, create beauty. If there is a particular subject in school you enjoy, join a club and excel. You might even get a part-time job. There is always a way to participate in what you enjoy and create a full life for yourself.

### Choose Now

It will make your decision that much easier if you decide right now how you will respond to someone who approaches you with drugs or alcohol. Remember, you are in control of your life, and you have the freedom to decide how much influence another person has over you.

Dr. Glen Hanson, director of the Utah Addiction Center and a senior adviser for the National Institute on Drug Abuse at the National Institutes of Health, advises teens to write down scenarios where it may be more difficult to resist peer pressure. Write these situations down and then stay away from them. “It’s like looking over the edge of a cliff,” he says. “You’ll never know if a piece of the cliff will break off or not. It is just best not to go there.”

It may also be helpful to write down your responses to different scenarios. Whether or



**A**ddiction is a downward spiral, but parents, leaders, and others can offer support and help on the way up.

not you have already been confronted, try talking to a parent, sibling, or Church leader about their ideas. This will help you to feel more confident and capable if someone approaches you.

The Word of Wisdom was designed to grant us freedom. Although it may appear somewhat limiting, these “limitations” allow us to exercise true agency.

Can you imagine what it would be like to play a sports game without any rules? What if every time a person played soccer there were no rules to govern how the game should be played? It would be utter chaos,

no one would play their best, and no one would enjoy it.

It is the same with agency and the Word of Wisdom. The law offers you blessings (see D&C 89:18–20) and the freedom to feel the Spirit and, therefore, discover your true potential.

You always have a choice. Remember, the beautiful thing about the plan of salvation is that you always have the opportunity to exercise your agency regardless of the situation. You know what is best. Choose freedom. **NE**

# GENERATIONS

*Whether you're a new member or your family has been in the Church for decades, Latter-day Saint youth in Guadeloupe can tell you that living the gospel builds strength over time.*

**BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY**  
Church Magazines

**C**oralie “Coco” Gamiette, 12, has a lot of favorite places to visit, and one of them is a waterfall. It's called *la Cascade aux Écrevisses*. It's the place where many of the early members of the Church on the West Indies island of Guadeloupe were baptized.

Coco says the waterfall reminds her of a place in the Book of Mormon, the Waters of Mormon, described as “a fountain of pure water” with “a thicket of small trees” nearby. That's where 450 of those who believed Alma's teachings were baptized. (See Mosiah 18.)

Of course, in Guadeloupe today, as in most places in the Church, baptisms are performed in a font at the chapel. But for Coco, *la Cascade* is still a pleasant place for picnicking, wading in the creek, and sitting in the cool shade to think about the heritage of the Church in her own family.

## **From France, with Love**

That heritage lies in a somewhat complex story that stretches back about 20 years, to the city of Angoulême, France. There, full-time missionaries were guided to a man named Michel Menardin, who had come from Guadeloupe, an overseas department of France, to perform his military service. Michel accepted the gospel and was baptized and confirmed.

That same year in the same town, missionaries left a pamphlet in a mailbox. It triggered interest from a single mother, Claudine, who was raising a 19-year-old daughter,



Delphine. They both gained testimonies and were also baptized and confirmed.

Michel and Claudine met at church, decided they were meant for each other, and married. (They are Coco's grandparents.) When Michel's mother, Marthé, came for the wedding, she stayed in Angoulême, became acquainted with the Church, and joined.

Later, Delphine was called on a mission to Seattle, Washington. While she was serving, her parents and grandmother moved back to Guadeloupe. After her mission, Delphine came to visit them, and while in Guadeloupe she met Claude Gamiette, who had recently returned from the Florida Jacksonville Mission. He was serving as a counselor to Delphine's stepfather in the branch presidency. The two returned missionaries dated and were married a short time later. Claude and Delphine



## A SACRED PLACE

The Waters of Mormon were a sacred place for those who were taught and baptized there by Alma. "The place of Mormon, the waters of Mormon, the forest of Mormon, how beautiful are they to the eyes of them who there came to the knowledge of their Redeemer; yea, and how blessed are they, for they shall sing to his praise forever" (Mosiah 18:30).

Do you have a favorite place that reminds you of a place in the scriptures? Tell us about it at [newera@ldschurch.org](mailto:newera@ldschurch.org).





**Above, from top: Seminary students Luidgia, Travis, Eole, and Leslie (opposite page) enjoy learning the gospel together. Coco (previous page) knows the gospel strengthens her family.**

are Coco's parents. Now, 14 years and five children later, Claude, whose own family goes back years in the Church, is president of the Basse-Terre Guadeloupe District.

So with all of that, Coco is a fourth-generation Latter-day Saint. "I've grown up in the Church," she says. "I've heard about it my whole life, gone to Primary and now to Young Women, and heard my parents and their parents and their parents bear their testimonies. I've always known the gospel is true. When I read in Mosiah about the promises the believers made when Alma baptized them, that's what I've seen and felt my whole life."

Coco remembers her great-grandmother saying that a family extends beyond a mother and father and their children. "She says family stretches across generations, from eternity to eternity," Coco says. "That's what I see in my family."

### **Little by Little, Day by Day**

On another part of the island, in the capital city of Basse-Terre, the Church is becoming a two-generation heritage for Luidgia Duflo, 13, and her sister Stella, 17, who joined the Church two years ago at the same time as their older sister, their younger brother, and their parents. They

say the gospel has taught them to honor their mother and their father. They especially enjoy family home evening, which they hold in their family's apartment, located above their father's small store. He sells household products, sugar, spices, candy, and animal food. One of their favorite places to talk with him is in his office at the back of the store, where the wall is covered with photos of various Latter-day Saint temples.

"It gives him an opportunity to do a little missionary work when people come in on business and want to know what all those buildings are," Stella explains. "But I think it also reminds him every day of his eternal promises and goals; it certainly does that for us. We should prepare to go to the temple, and he is constantly reminding us of that."

The Duflo family sees a bright future ahead. "The Church will keep growing in Guadeloupe, and it will flourish," Stella says. "We just have to do our part, little by little, day by day, trusting the Lord in all things and sharing the gospel whenever we can."

### **Seminary and Goliath**

Eole Montredon, 15, comes to seminary every school morning, even though she isn't yet a member of the Church. "In many ways," she says, "it's like I've been a member my whole life because I've grown up around the Church, and I'm familiar with the gospel."

She says she loves to come to seminary because "it's good for us as young people to study the scriptures together, even if we have to get up before the sun to be there." Seminary starts at 6:00 a.m., so she gets up at 5:00. "Some of my friends think I'm crazy, but then when I explain what we're doing, they think it sounds all right. Besides, I feel the Holy Ghost when I'm there. It's a good feeling that I remember all day long."

One of her favorite Bible stories is David and Goliath. She says it gives her courage to know that the Lord will help small people conquer big problems, because she faces a challenge that sometimes seems as large as Goliath to her. Her parents are separated, and although her mother is an active member who would love to see her become





a Latter-day Saint, Eole's father insists that she wait. And so, to honor her father, she is waiting, patiently living the gospel, and praying that someday his heart will change.

"If I could give a message to the youth of the Church," Eole says, "it would be to come to seminary every week-day and to church every Sunday, because the more you do, the more you will see how good it is and how it makes you strong." Even though Eole can't enjoy the heritage of multiple generations in the Church—not yet—she knows she *can* work today to build that heritage for generations to come. "I know I need to start now," she says, "and if I remain faithful, good things will happen."

### Early-Morning Regeneration

At an early-morning seminary class in Abymes, the same desire to build strength over time is evident. Class members race each other to find scripture references. They eagerly come to the blackboard to draw pictures. Each time the teacher asks a question, hands shoot up to volunteer an answer.

"Seminary helps us to know God better," says Travis Devarre, 14. "It also helps us prepare so that we can do missionary work now and be ready for a full-time mission later. You learn by studying the word of God, and you arrive at school wide awake, with your head full of good thoughts. It regenerates you."

One of the meanings of *regenerate* is "to be spiritually reborn or converted." It can also mean "restored to a better, higher, or more worthy state." Travis says priesthood service also regenerates him. "It blesses me and my family, because it allows me to help those around me, including my family. That fills my heart with happiness."

"If we have confidence in Heavenly Father, we can be blessed," says Leslie Amoussouga, 15. "We know that He always prepares a path for us. If we don't doubt, if we have faith and keep the commandments, He will bring sunshine to our souls." In other words, He will help us regenerate ourselves, from generation to generation. **NE**

## WHY LESLIE GOES TO SEMINARY



I think it's nice to get up early in the morning, before the sun itself gets up, and to be with my friends," says Leslie Amoussouga, 15, a member of the Abymes Branch.

But it's not just about being with friends. "In seminary we study the scriptures more deeply than I do when I'm at home by myself," she says. "You learn many good things

when you study together and when you have an instructor who is genuinely interested in helping you learn, who can explain things you may not completely understand on your own.

"And seminary helps me in school too because I get myself up early to go to seminary. By the time I get to school, I'm already alert and active while some of the other students are still sleepy. Seminary helps you form good habits and teaches you self-discipline, both in studying and in simple things like getting up and getting going."





Love,

# Dad

**M**y dad loves me very much, and I have known it as long as I have known anything. But like most fathers, he works full-time, and I didn't spend nearly as much time with him when I was young as I did with my mother. But my dad did many things to make sure that his children knew that he cared about them. I have always admired him, and whether consciously or not, he has always set a good example for us. We knew that he loved us and that he loved the Lord.

One way that he showed his love is particularly special. At the beginning of each school year, at the request of the schools, my parents would meet with my teacher to talk about me and the coming term. Every year during these visits, my dad would find out from the teacher where my desk was. He would then take a few of his business cards and carefully hide them throughout my school supplies, where I would be sure to find them.

Every year it was a surprise, since I would forget about the cards from the year before. After I found the first one, it would become a game to search for the others. The best part about these little treasures was that my dad had personalized each one. On the back of every card was a message from him—things like “Have a good day, Justin. Love, Dad” or “I pray for you every day, Justin. Love, Dad.” My favorite was a message that said, “I love you, Justin. Love, Dad.”

As I moved to higher grades, my dad always found ways to plant these love notes. I often found them in my locker or in my sports bags.

Last year when I left for college, I had forgotten about the special business cards just as I had every year before. When I got to my dorm room and began to unpack one of my boxes, a little white card slipped out from between my things and fluttered to the ground. My dad's business cards continued to surface throughout my first few weeks of college, offering inspiration and advice.

There was one time when I found a card that proved to be particularly meaningful for me. I was having a very difficult time and had been praying for help quite a bit. It was during this time that I found a card from my dad. The card read, “We're praying for you, Justin. Keep up the good work. Love, Dad.” It gave me a taste of home that I missed, and the encouragement from my dad helped me to keep working hard.

As I thought about how grateful I was to my dad, I realized that my Father in Heaven had also had a hand in sending me this message. It had come at the perfect time, when I needed it most. I was then reminded of the talk by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles from the April 2005 general conference about the tender mercies of the Lord and how God leaves us little reminders throughout our lives to tell us that He loves us (see “The Tender Mercies of the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 99). These “business cards” from Him brighten our smiles and strengthen our faith.

I have since left home again to serve a mission for the Lord. As I unpacked my bags in the Missionary Training Center and in my first area, I once again found small cards from my dad. I also continue to experience the tender mercies of the Lord every day as I preach His gospel.

I am so grateful for the fathers I have. I love them very much, and I know that they love me. **NE**

BY JUSTIN HYATT

*My father's hidden notes always reminded me of his love.*

# IT'S NOT EASY

*... being the only member in my family. But I'm really not alone.*

BY KELLI WILLIAMS

I grew up in the Methodist Church. Even though my family usually attended church only on Christmas and Easter, I always knew I had a Father in Heaven. My brother and I used to pray with my mom. What my parents taught me as a child prepared me for what I would learn in the future.

In sixth grade I learned that my parents were getting divorced. I was heartbroken and felt very alone. My friend Courtney could relate to me because her parents divorced when she was a little girl. She became my best friend.

Courtney and I were sitting on my bed talking when she first introduced the Church to me. She didn't go into detail about it. She just asked me if I wanted to attend church with her on Sunday. I started going to church with her every once in a while, and then I went every Sunday. After I turned 12, I even attended Mutual. There was something there. I didn't know what it was, but I enjoyed it.

In seventh grade Courtney and another good friend, Aubrey, introduced me to the missionaries. I soon learned what the missionaries meant when they talked about feeling the Spirit. I knew the Church was true after the second discussion.

Despite my testimony of the gospel, I was scared to death to ask my parents if I could be baptized. I continued to go to church and have incredible testimony-building experiences, but I put off the "big question" for two years.

In my freshman year of high school, I enrolled in seminary, and by November I knew I had to ask. I talked with my mom. She told me the Church had only made changes in me for the better, and if being baptized was what I really wanted, then I should go ahead and do it. My first



thought was, "Why in the world did I wait so long?"

Then I called my dad, but he wasn't very excited. When I asked him if I could be baptized, he said no. He said he wanted me to attend some other churches first. So I went to some other churches, and I met some amazing people—people who lived very righteous lives. But nothing could change the feeling I felt when I stepped

into a Latter-day Saint chapel. In February I called my dad and said, "I'm getting baptized on March 7th. I hope you'll be there."

My whole family came, including my dad. To have my family there meant the world to me. It was the most incredible day of my life.

Sometimes people ask me: "How do you do it? How do you stay so strong in the Church all by yourself? You don't have anyone to wake you up and make you go to church or seminary. You're all alone."

Well, the answer is simple. I'm not alone. I have had my struggles since my baptism—it's not easy being the only Church member in my family. But the Lord has promised that He will never leave us alone (see John 14:16–18). Heavenly Father loves us so much that He sent Christ to die for us. How could He forget us?

Life is hard, and we have all gone through times when we have felt that our strength is gone and our faith is weak. But if we will cling to the One who loves us the most—Heavenly Father—and strengthen our relationship with Him through study and prayer, we will make it through. The Lord promised: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88). **NE**





**ONE**  
*Special*  
**NIGHT**



BY HILLARY HOLBROOK

*Serving those with special needs has actually done a service to these LDS teens.*



**T**he crowd erupts into cheers as Travis, wearing a classy suit, and Amanda, in a beautiful black dress, link arms at the archway decorated with white lights and streamers. Travis and Amanda, prom king and queen, proudly

walk through and take their place on the dance floor, joining the rapidly growing circle of teens. Then another young man and young woman walk through, also joining arms. They are prom king and queen, too. In one big way, this dance is different. Everybody is prom queen and king for the evening.

Every year, LDS youth counselors from many stakes in American Fork and Lehi, Utah, organize a prom for teens with special needs. They believe that doing so gives these youth the opportunity to have a good time, like other teenagers. "It was a night full of fun," Jordan Scott says.

Actually, at least one night each week is filled with fun at special-needs Mutual.

### Motivated to serve

Under the direction of the Area Presidency, teens are called by their stake presidents to serve as youth counselors at special-needs Mutual, which is held every Thursday night. Each young man and young woman who volunteers to be a counselor is paired up with someone who has a disability, and together they work on Scout badges or Personal Progress. In serving, whether at a prom or any ordinary activity, the counselors find that the person they have been paired with usually ends up becoming a good friend. And it's these friendships that motivate the teens to serve.

"Erica is so happy to see me every week," says Sadie, a youth counselor. "Each time I come she gives me a great big hug."

Stephanie Sheely agrees. She says that her friend Katie "is always cheerful and loves to participate." Stephanie smiled during the whole prom and made sure that everyone was included in the dancing. This is a trait she's learned from Katie. "She really loves everybody," says Stephanie.

For Mitchell Garcia, the motivation to serve didn't come immediately. At first, he felt uncomfortable at special-needs Mutual. But when he became more acquainted with Sean, his fears were put to rest. "He's always happy to see me," Mitchell says. "He's a good friend of mine, and he has a heart full of love."

Kai Fitzhugh's motivation comes from his family. He says that having a brother with special needs has motivated him to want to serve others with disabilities. The night of the prom was no exception. Like most high school dances, there's a photographer who takes photos of couples in front of a pretty backdrop. Prom night at special-needs Mutual was no different. Kai was more than happy to stand in line with a girl who had a disability and have his picture taken with her. "It's

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HILLARY HOLBROOK; FLOWERS BY JOHN LUKE

hard to explain," he says, "but whenever I'm here serving, I just feel good inside."

Andee Rowley, a youth counselor, and Kristen sit together during the interview. "Kristen always makes me happy, and she has a cute personality," Andee says. Kristen blushes and hides her face, grinning from ear to ear. The two giggle. "She always has compliments to give out to everybody," Andee says.

#### Increased testimony

The youth counselors say that serving has made a big impact on their testimonies. Serving those who love Christ has helped the youth to draw closer to Him. Many counselors say it's helped them to be more thoughtful, patient, and loving.

Kai says that his friend Greg, whom he pairs up with each week, has a strong testimony that influences him. "Greg just loves the Church. He loves everything about it. That's a big influence on me."

Timothy Wood had a fun time serving at the dance. He made sure that everyone was having a great time, and even led a large group in a "train," where everyone lined up behind each other and snaked through the gym. Timothy says that serving is acting as Christ would and that doing so has built his testimony. "I act better when I'm here," he says.

*Even getting ready is great fun as the girls primp and curl their hair together.*



"I'm calmer, more patient, and I think of others' needs

before mine. It helps me to be more like Christ would have me be." Timothy says that on some nights at special-needs Mutual, when he's waiting for his friend, Stephen, to arrive, he'll remember something he needs to get for the activity. But Timothy will wait for Stephen to arrive because he wants him to feel welcome when he gets there. "Being a volunteer helps me to care more for others," Timothy says.

Serving has increased Sadie Wilson's testimony, too. She remembers one activity when the young women watched a movie on the Atonement of Jesus Christ. "Afterward," she says, "our leader asked the girls why He had to suffer for us. My friend said, 'Because He loves us and had to die for us.' And I always knew that, but hearing her state it and knowing that she believed it reinforced my own testimony."



#### SERVICE THAT COUNTS

**T**his is the service that counts, the service to which all of us have been called: the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. Along your pathway of life you will observe that you are not the only traveler. There are others who need your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save."

President Thomas S. Monson, "How Firm a Foundation," *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 68.



## WHY IS SERVING IMPORTANT?

In the Church, we're given callings and opportunities to serve others. Why is it so important, and how can we do it? Here's an excerpt from *For the Strength of Youth*:

"Service to others is one of the most important characteristics of a disciple of Jesus Christ. A disciple is willing to bear other people's burdens and to comfort those who need comfort (see Mosiah 18:8–9). . . .

"When serving, look to the Savior as your example. Although He came to earth as the Son of God, He humbly served those around Him.

"There are many ways to serve others. You can serve in your Church assignments and in your home, school, and community. . . .

"As you devote yourself to serving others, you will draw closer to Heavenly Father. Your heart will be filled with love. Your capacities will increase, and your life and the lives of those around you will be blessed" (38).

### What does it take to be happy?

Not only have the youth counselors been able to build their testimonies, but they also view life differently and understand what it takes to be happy. Yes, they have served their friends with disabilities, but their friends have served them, too.

Meghan Andersen, a youth counselor, has learned that serving brings happiness to her life—a lesson learned at Mutual. Melinda, the young woman she is paired with, has taught her happiness through quiet ways. "She's really quiet at times, and very shy, but I can see a light in her," Meghan says. "She understands the scriptures so well. She makes me so happy." If Meghan is down, she thinks of the light of Christ that Melinda has, and she's motivated to serve others. "I'm much more happy when I'm serving than when I am in my own world," she says.

But Meghan's not the only one being taught a lesson. Other youth counselors are learning, too. Sean has taught his youth

counselor, Mitchell, what it takes to be happy. "I've learned that it takes an optimistic mind and good self esteem," Mitchell says. "This is something Sean's taught me, because he's always happy."

At the dance, Ashley Park displayed what it means to be happy. She had a nonstop smile on her face the whole time and made sure that everyone was dancing. Because Ashley is a leader over many girls, she doesn't have just one assigned friend. But she thinks highly of all those whom she helps. "They're just happy," she says. "They're content with life because they know they're children of God." A testimony that God loves all of us, Ashley says, is key to being happy.

Timothy Wood agrees. "All I need to be happy in life are two things," he says. "One, my own choice to be happy. Two, that warm burning in the bosom—that feeling that I get from the Holy Ghost, that it's with me and I'm not alone."

That warmth and happiness is something felt at special-needs Mutual each week. Whether at a prom dance or any ordinary activity, the youth counselors and their friends have learned "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10). Just as everyone was prom king and queen for an evening at the dance, we are all kings and queens in God's eyes every day. **NE**

Access the Church's Web site on disabilities at <http://disability.lds.org>. Here you can find helps, resources, and additional information about various disabilities.

*"Serving has helped me be more compassionate," says youth counselor Cami Jo Berry. "It teaches me more patience and understanding." Cami says that Sarah cheers her up on days when she's a little down by always smiling and giving Cami hugs. "She just makes me so happy," Cami says. And that showed during the dance. Cami smiled and laughed with Sarah the whole evening.*

*Below: Ashley Park and Ashley Lindsay smile while having a fun evening together.*



**WHY  
AM I  
LDS?**

BY BLAKE FAULKNER

*When asked what he believes, one LDS teen wrote it out for all his friends to read.*

*Do you ever wonder what you would say if you were asked to explain to students at your school what it means to be a member of the Church? Here's some of what Blake Faulkner, 16, of the Del Mar Ward, Del Mar California Stake, wrote when he was asked to write an article on his LDS beliefs and lifestyle for his high school newspaper, The Falconer.*

**P**eople are curious about Mormons (or Latter-day Saints) for many reasons. My personal way of piquing people's interest in my religion is by wearing a funny shirt. It reads "Mormon girls love me." (It's weird—they really do.) Another one I have seen says "I can't; I'm Mormon." The joke obviously comes from the strict guidelines of the Mormon faith, but the funny line underscores a deeper truth about the way Mormons are perceived.

When people discover my religious preference, they are usually pretty interested and even a little shocked. It's hard for people, especially in high school, to believe that somebody would willingly choose not to drink, not to do drugs, to abstain from sex, not to swear, not to go out or spend money on Sunday, to give up 10 percent of his income, to go on a two-year mission . . . do you want me to go on? These restrictions prohibit most of the things that many high school kids would find fun.

So why on earth am I a Mormon? It is something that rests deep within my heart, because in reality, being Mormon is a lifestyle. It influences everything you think, the way you see the world, and what decisions you make. My religion defines me, and while some might think that makes for a shallow, mediocre existence, my religion is actually a great source of happiness. It is through my religion that I am able to see who I really am.

I like having something to structure my life around, to draw upon for strength, and that gives me answers to life's simplest but most profound questions, such as "What is the purpose of life?" I can truly say that I know why I am here on this earth and that I know what choices I should be making.

I feel the Mormon faith, like many religions, has the ability to be personal for every follower. I feel that I can take the principles and teachings I learn from church and early-morning seminary and apply them to my life and ultimately become a better person in the process.

I guess what I am trying to say is that I choose to be Mormon because it works for me. It isn't just something that my parents do and that I am doing because I am forced to, and it's not something I do because it's easy and fun. It's something I choose to believe and live by because I know it is true. I am not condemning those who are not Mormon or who don't believe in religion; I am just trying to show why I make the decisions I do. I guess, in my opinion, "I can't; I'm Mormon" should be changed to the slogan "I can live the best life possible, because I am confident in who I am, what I am doing here on earth, and where I am going"—but I don't think that would sell as a shirt.

Mormons believe that families can live together forever, that the intelligence we gain in this life will rise with us after we die, that Jesus Christ is our Savior, that there is a living prophet who receives revelation from God, that each and every person is a child of God and has divine worth, and that what we do in this life will affect what happens to us for eternity. Having this knowledge helps me to put things in perspective and helps me brush off the fact that sometimes I just have to tell people, "I can't; I'm Mormon." **NE**



**MY  
SECRET  
CRUSH**

BY KIMBERLY REID

*What do you do when the feelings are strong but the time isn't right?  
Here are some answers.*

**B**rother Kelly reached into the box of questions our seminary class had written anonymously. "Can I know now who I'll marry?" he read.

I tried to look bored as he answered my question.

"No," he said. "At your age, you cannot know who you'll marry." Then he kindly explained that we might already be acquainted with our future spouse, but now wasn't the time to find out. He encouraged us to develop friendships, not exclusive romantic relationships.

I'd read the same counsel in *For the Strength of Youth*: "Good friendships can and should be developed at every age. . . . When you begin dating, go in groups or on double dates. Avoid going on frequent dates with the same person" ([2001], 24–25). I wanted to obey. But I also wanted something more.

I wished I could feel the sense of belonging I thought having a boyfriend would provide, and I wanted my attraction to one of my guy friends to have a purpose. It was hard to care about him and have nowhere for those feelings to go.

I knew my secret question was a little unrealistic, but other serious questions remained: Would I ever find someone who loved me? What was the point of having these emotions now? And what was I supposed to do with them?

### **Will I Ever Find Someone?**

Besides being drawn to one of my guy friends, I also believed being his girlfriend would prove I was lovable. I should have taken to heart the evidence Heavenly Father had given me that *He* loved me and that I had nothing to fear.

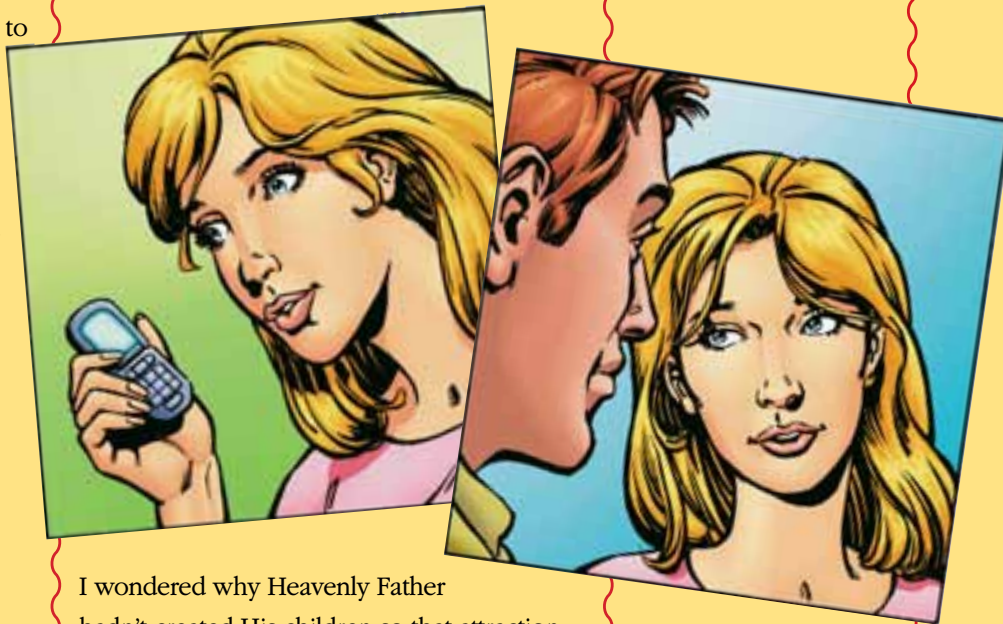
My patriarchal blessing promised I would find someone to marry at "the appropriate

time." Later I found out that my dad had used the same words when I was a baby and he had asked Heavenly Father to bless me with a husband "at the appropriate time."

Though Heavenly Father didn't answer my prayers about whom I might marry, He assured me I would marry, and He even told me when: at the right time. I didn't need a boyfriend to help me feel secure nearly as much as I needed to remember God's promises and His love for me.

### **What's the Point?**

It was hard to always remember the eternal perspective because my worries threatened to crowd out other thoughts. Would the guy I liked ask me out? Should I ask him? Sometimes



I wondered why Heavenly Father hadn't created His children so that attraction wouldn't be an issue until after high school!

Now I understand that my feelings had some divine purposes. Feeling attraction motivated me to form friendships. Whether I was socializing in groups or going on dates, getting to know guys taught me to communicate better and treat men respectfully. I learned what traits were uplifting and what



## WHEN TO START DATING

**D**ating should not even begin until you are 16. And then, ideal dating is on a group basis. Stay in group activities; don't pair off. Avoid steady dating. Steady dating is courtship, and surely the beginning of courtship ought to be delayed until you have emerged from your teens."

President Boyd K. Packer,  
President of the Quorum  
of the Twelve Apostles,  
"You're in the Driver's Seat,"  
New Era, June 2004, 8.

kind of person I should marry someday.

Admiring guys also helped me remember to prepare for the temple. Even though high school isn't the time to build serious romantic relationships, thinking about love at a young age is normal. Our spirits long to be with someone because marriage is a part of Heavenly Father's plan. As I reflected on my feelings and imagined what an eternal relationship might be like, I was even more determined to qualify for temple blessings.

### What Am I Supposed to Do?

Strong feelings can be hard to cope with. All my instincts told me I'd be happier channeling my energy toward the guy I liked—thinking about him, talking to him, spending time with him. But whenever I made the effort to ponder the eternal picture, my stress melted away and I was happier. I knew I

relationships wasn't easy, but it blessed me. I gained spiritual strength by proving to myself I could make hard decisions, even when part of me felt like doing something else.

### The Simple Truth

Although I was disappointed by Brother Kelly's answer, he spoke the truth. Had I spent high school dating only one person, I would have missed out on meeting people who helped prepare me to recognize my husband when I met him years later. No wonder I couldn't know the answer to my secret question. Some of my classmates married old friends, but I didn't. At age 16, I was nine years away from meeting my future spouse!

What could dating only one person in high school have accomplished? Possibly fun times, but also distraction from pursuing other goals, a lack of peace for ignoring Church teachings,



could find real peace by putting Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ first in my thoughts and actions. This meant studying the scriptures, attending church, finding ways to serve, working on Personal Progress, and following the instructions in my patriarchal blessing.

Nurturing my spirit made it easier to enjoy friendship and dating according to the standards outlined in *For the Strength of Youth*. Resisting the urge to pursue exclusive

and heartbreak when the relationship ended.

In the years following high school, I dated a few men seriously until the Holy Ghost confirmed that "the appropriate time" and person had come into my life. I'm grateful I waited for the best time to pursue exclusive relationships and received all I'd hoped for: a sense of belonging in a marriage that could last for eternity, and a confirmation that Heavenly Father was happy with my decision. **NE**

THE EXTRA SMILE

"Gee, I've never had a bishop's interview before! Which newspaper is this for?"



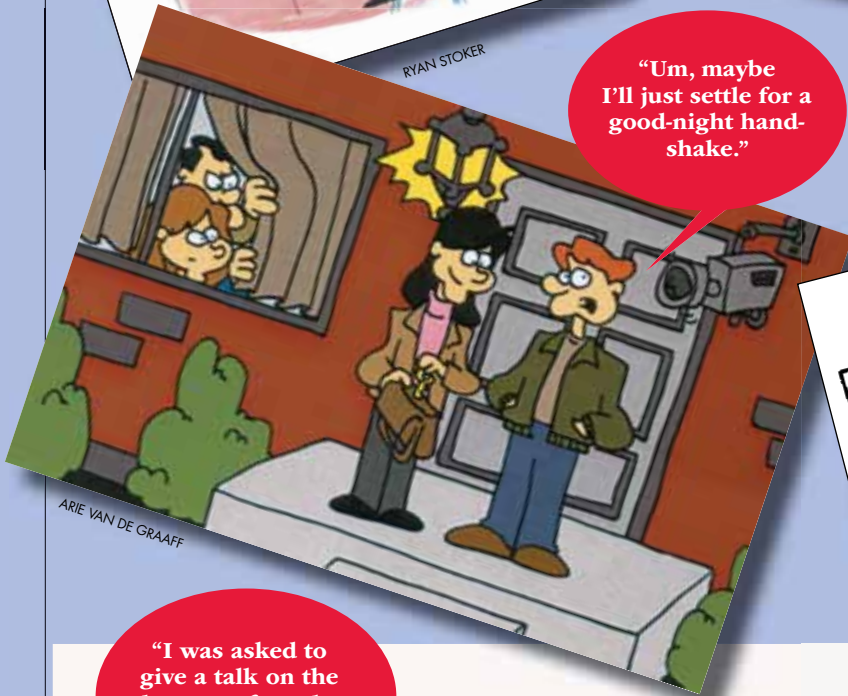
RYAN STOKER

"So you're *not* the pizza guys, then?"



RYAN STOKER

"Um, maybe I'll just settle for a good-night handshake."



ARIE VAN DE GRAAFF

"You forgot to text me good night!"



RANDY GLASBERGEN

"I was asked to give a talk on the dangers of apathy, but I didn't feel like it."



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

	Friends					Purity	Agency	
Dating	Agency						Media	Friends
Media				Faith	Friends	Dating		Honesty
		Agency		Purity		Friends	Faith	
		Dating	Health		Faith	Agency		
	Family	Friends		Dating		Media		
Health		Purity	Dating	Agency				Media
Agency	Faith						Dating	Purity
	Dating	Family					Health	

## FOR THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH SUDOKU

The objective of a regular Sudoku is to fill the 9x9 grid so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3x3 boxes (also called blocks or regions) contains the digits from 1 to 9 only one time. For this puzzle, instead of numbers, use the following nine words to complete the puzzle.

**Agency, Family, Friends, Music, Dating, Purity, Honesty, Health, Faith**

For the solution or to do the puzzle online, go to [www.newera.lds.org](http://www.newera.lds.org).

*“We are inspired by the courage of each young person*

*who has honored the Sabbath day, kept the Word of Wisdom, and remained chaste when popular culture has established the opposite as not only acceptable but expected.”*

**Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy, “Cultivate Righteous Traditions,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 28.**



## THE CHURCH IN USA — WASHINGTON

In 1854, four missionaries serving in California were sent to labor in the Washington and Oregon territories. Enough converts joined to form a congregation along the Lewis River. During those early years, dislike for Church members was so strong in Washington that when one convert died in 1911, her grave had to be dedicated secretly at night.

Many Church members helped with Washington's railroad construction in the 1880s. In 1930, Church membership in Washington was 1,900, with chapels in Everett, Spokane, Seattle, and Olympia. Temples in Washington include the Seattle (1980), Spokane (1999), and Columbia River Washington Temples (2001).



COLUMBIA RIVER WASHINGTON TEMPLE BY PATRICK KIMBALL © 2003 IRI

Here are a few facts about the Church today in Washington:

<b>Membership</b>	<b>253,166</b>
<b>Missions</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Temples</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Congregations</b>	<b>495</b>
<b>Family History Centers</b>	<b>79</b>

Information from Newsroom at [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org).



# BY THE NUMBERS

# 598

Number of subscribers who have joined the *New Era* e-mail group.

If you'd like to join our e-mail panel, send an e-mail to [newera@ldschurch.org](mailto:newera@ldschurch.org) letting us know you want to be on our e-mail list. You'll get a monthly NEMail giving you a glimpse of our upcoming issue, as well as a chance to make your voice heard by participating in a brief online survey.

## WHAT'S UP?

### THE STORMIN' MORMONS

These three youth from the Edmond Third Ward in Stillwater, Oklahoma, are "crazy-good" wake boarders. Last summer Rachel Orgill, Ashley Merkley, and Isaac Cordy entered the Oklahoma City River Wakeboarding tournament. Just to let everyone know who they were and what they stood for, they made a big poster and individual T-shirts declaring themselves the "Stormin' Mormons."

They had a great time competing on Saturday, and to their surprise, each one made the tournament finals in their divisions. The problem was, the finals were on Sunday. Without hesitation, all three notified the event coordinators that they would not be competing in the finals because they would be observing the Sabbath. The coordinators were surprised the youth were willing to pay to enter the tournament and now were giving up sure prizes and placements as finalists.

The three friends had the opportunity to explain their decision to many in the crowd and to the other competitors, who overwhelmingly thought it was "cool" that their convictions were more important to them than winning.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF KAREN ORGILL



### MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE



**1 Nephi 18:4**

Even though his brothers made fun of Nephi for wanting to build a ship, when he finished it, both he and his brothers knew it was a good ship. I know the Lord did guide Nephi to build it and to travel by sea to the promised land.

**Christopher R., 13,  
Hounslow, England**

Tell us about your favorite scripture in one or two sentences. Send it to [newera@ldschurch.org](mailto:newera@ldschurch.org).



# No One Will Ever Know

BY ELDER STANLEY G. ELLIS

Of the Seventy

I was born and grew up in Burley, Idaho, USA. My father had a farm and a ranch there, so I spent my time working in the out-of-doors. My family had been members of the Church for generations, and I was raised in a faithful home. But while I was in high school, my testimony was tested by an opportunity I had sought out.

I knew of a person from our high school who had been an exchange student. I thought it sounded like an interesting experience, so I researched the idea of becoming an exchange student, found out the procedure, and applied. I was accepted. I was then 16 years old. I had taken one year of German, so I assumed, as did my adviser, that I would be assigned to go to Germany. This particular exchange program took all your information, matched it up with families willing to act as hosts, then assigned you to a country.

When I was accepted, I was assigned to Brazil, and I agreed to the assignment. I lived with a wonderful family in São Paulo. They had six boys and one girl, just like my family at home. Fortunately, they spoke English. It turned out to be a great experience, even though I was there only for the summer.

During my time in Brazil, I made some

friends who were in that stage in life when they were experimenting with things. They started inviting me to go out with them to have fun with some girls they had met.

I was thousands of miles from home in a country where nobody knew me except my host family. The friends who would invite me to go out with them used the line “No one will ever know.” In many respects that was true. Certainly, none of my American family would ever know. I was a teenager, far from home, with an invitation to do what was wrong, and nobody would ever know.

But I knew that I would know. I knew the Lord would know, so I said no to their invitations and continued to say no. They asked repeatedly, sure that they could persuade me. It was not a one-time challenge, but every time I declined, I grew more determined to stand my ground.

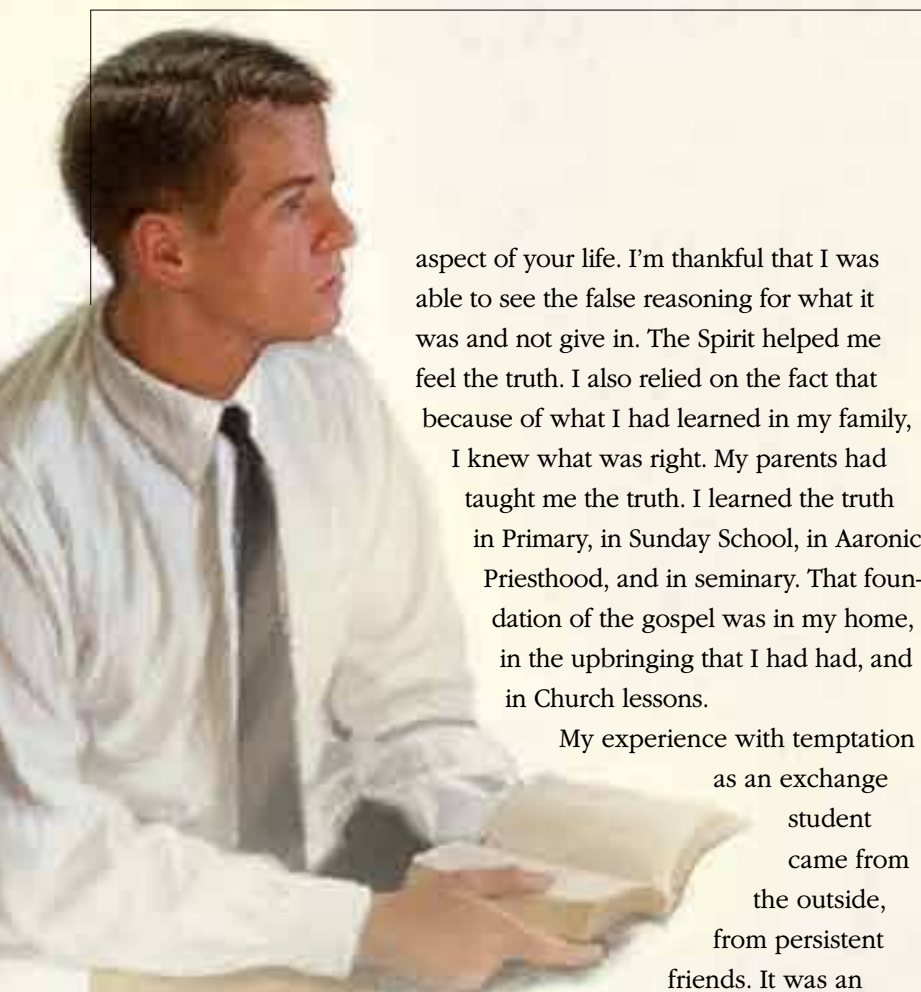
## Satan’s Rationalization

“No one will ever know” is a rationalization that Satan uses against us in our lives. It’s a lie. I discovered that for myself during my summer in Brazil. Falling for Satan’s lie is, in fact, how many people get into such things as Internet pornography. They think they can do it in a way that no one will ever know. But in every case, they know and God knows.

Please don’t ever buy into that lie in any



*The friends who would invite me to go out with them used the line “No one will ever know.” But I knew that I would know. I knew the Lord would know.*



aspect of your life. I'm thankful that I was able to see the false reasoning for what it was and not give in. The Spirit helped me feel the truth. I also relied on the fact that because of what I had learned in my family, I knew what was right. My parents had taught me the truth. I learned the truth in Primary, in Sunday School, in Aaronic Priesthood, and in seminary. That foundation of the gospel was in my home, in the upbringing that I had had, and in Church lessons.

My experience with temptation as an exchange student came from the outside, from persistent friends. It was an external challenge to the things I believed, and I was able to stand firm. But as additional experiences came to me, I learned that we are going to be tested from all sides. Some of the most difficult challenges are internal ones, when the temptations that have to be resisted take place in the quiet of our own hearts and minds.

#### **Proving the Lord**

One of these challenges came when I chose to pay an honest tithe when I was away from home. Every year my dad would take us to tithing settlement. He would help us calculate our tithing, and we would pay it. All during the time I was growing up, I developed this habit of paying tithing. If you had asked me at the time, I would have told you that I had a testimony of tithing.

When I finished high school, I had been

admitted to Harvard University, so I worked that summer and earned money to pay for the expenses that weren't covered by my scholarship. By the end of the first semester, I had foolishly spent all the money that I had earned to get me through the whole year.

At the start of the second semester, I got a job. I couldn't work very much because I was a full-time student, but I worked a few hours a week and received my first paycheck. Of course, it wasn't very much, but it was all I had to get by until the next paycheck.

Then the question arose in my mind, "What about tithing?" I had been in the habit of paying my tithing but had always had sufficient money to pay the tithing. Here I was faced with the challenge: do I pay my tithing when I don't know if I've got enough money to get through the next two weeks?

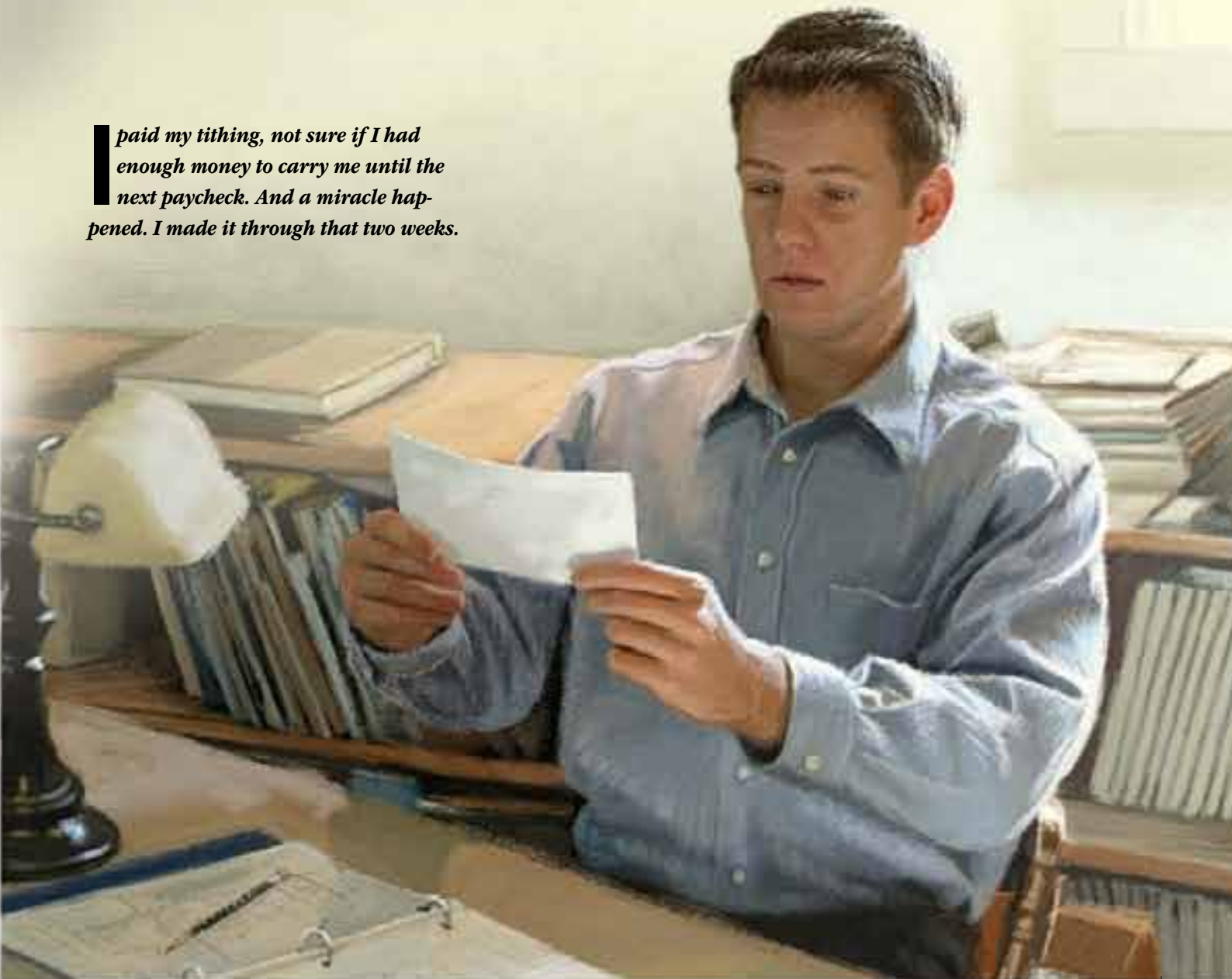
As I thought about it, I remembered the scripture in Malachi 3:10, where the Lord promises, "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

So I realized that was my answer. I would leave it up to the Lord. I paid my tithing, not sure if I had enough money to carry me until the next paycheck. And a miracle happened. I made it through that two weeks.

It came to me so powerfully that the Lord keeps His word. The Lord came through the way He promised. Just as the scriptures say, if we pay our tithing, He will bless us. That same miracle happened every two weeks throughout the rest of the semester. Before, I had thought I had a testimony of tithing, but now, because of my correct decision, I had a powerful testimony of tithing. The Lord

**I learned that we are going to be tested from all sides. Some of the most difficult challenges are internal ones, in the quiet of our own hearts and minds.**

**I** paid my tithing, not sure if I had enough money to carry me until the next paycheck. And a miracle happened. I made it through that two weeks.



always does what He says, so my testimony continued to grow step-by-step.

#### **Believe the Lord**

I would encourage you, while in your teen years and as you develop your own testimony, that you need to take the Lord at His word. When the Lord promises something, we can count on it because, as the scriptures teach us, God cannot lie. The Lord keeps His word. Whenever the Lord makes a promise either through His prophet

or directly through His scriptures, we can count on it.

In the scriptures we are encouraged to turn to the Lord. “Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for he that asketh, receiveth; and unto him that knocketh, it shall be opened” (3 Nephi 27:29).

I learned through these and other experiences that this scripture is true. Heavenly Father is always there for us. Whether our challenge is external or internal, His plan, His scriptures, His love, and His gift of the Holy Ghost will see us through. **NE**

# COME, FOLLOW ME

BY JONATHAN MEYERS

**A**s my ward hiked through the woods to a secluded campsite during a stake campout for priests, I learned a valuable lesson. We had lost the trail, and after hiking many miles through brush, trees, and even streams, we were tired, cold, hungry, and wet.

Our bishop took the lead, and I was second in the line. We had only three flashlights for our group of 12 people, and it was a very difficult hike. However, I found that as long as I stayed right behind the bishop, I was safe and would not get lost from our group. All I could look at were his footsteps right in front of me. If I looked out at the dark wilderness, I would lose my footing and trip.

The bishop's pace was quick and tiring, but he knew in which direction to move, and I trusted him. It was in this dark wilderness that I learned my lesson.

In a world of many challenges, we must follow directly behind the Savior or we will lose the true path. If we look away from His footsteps, we will more easily make mistakes and hurt ourselves. But if we stay with His quick and powerful stride and follow His example, the Savior will lead us to our eternal destination and warm us with His

glorious love. How grateful I am that we have the Savior, who invites us all to "Come, follow me." **NE**



# BLESSINGS FROM HARD TIMES

BY LINDSEY BILLS

**W**hen I was 12, my dad lost his job. Money was tight, and I was embarrassed that my family was poor, and I was jealous of my friends' clothes and toys.

I was really stressed out and even depressed at times because I let jealousy get the best of me. Our family fasted and prayed so my dad could find another job. Our family began to change, especially my dad. He wasn't stressed. He was happy and spent more time with us, and he read his scriptures more. It changed the whole mood in our home, and my dad became more in tune with the Spirit.

Sometimes it takes a trial for someone to become a better person. If you take trials the right way, you will be greatly blessed. It took about a year for my dad to find a new job, but we were so grateful Heavenly Father answered our prayers. **NE**

# WILL I EVER BE LIKE NEPHI?

BY SCOTT SHEPHERD

**I** remember having a particularly difficult time at one point during my mission to Cleveland, Ohio. I

# SERVICE AND CHANGE

BY CATHY FRACHE

**O**ne day while running some errands, I saw a homeless man in front of the bank. I had seen him there before, and I had always tried to make sure that I smiled and said hello. Although I didn't usually give him money, I wanted him to know that I'm not trying to avoid him and that I recognized him as a real person. When I got out of the car, I went to put change in the meter, but all I had was a "loonie" (Canadian dollar coin) and a bunch of pennies.

As I stood there and pushed the pennies around, making sure there wasn't a nickel or dime, I heard the homeless man ask, "Do you have change?"

wondered why I wasn't seeing the same tangible success other missionaries in my area seemed to be having. My own weakness was foremost in my mind as I pondered the dilemma. I couldn't help but think that I was doing something wrong, though I couldn't pinpoint what it was. I counseled with the Lord many times about the situation and also turned to the scriptures. One morning in my study of the Book of Mormon, I came across a verse that was the answer to my prayers and added strength to my testimony.

"Wherefore, I, Nephi, did strive to keep the commandments of the Lord, and I did exhort my brethren to faithfulness and diligence" (1 Nephi 17:15).

I had always thought of Nephi as a great prophet who never made any mistakes. I admired Nephi, but I felt I would never be as great as he was. However, when I read this verse

I told him I didn't, not even for the meter. Then he surprised me by saying, "Oh, here. I'm sure I have a dime for you."

I had just tried to shake off this homeless man because I didn't have any change for him, and then he handed me a dime. But his gift was more than monetary. He also gave me a change of heart. His simple act was charity and service in its truest form. A homeless man begging for change gave his change to someone who needed it more at the moment. I thanked him and then, even though he wasn't expecting it, gave him my loonie. **NE**

written by Nephi, I realized that he was mortal and imperfect also. He didn't write, "I, Nephi, kept all the commandments perfectly all the time." Rather, he wrote that he "did strive to keep the commandments of the Lord."

That simple verse touched me. Suddenly I realized that I am no different from Nephi or any other great prophet or missionary. We've been given the same commandments, and they will be judged on how well they improved their time on earth just as I will be. I don't have to be perfect; I only have to strive to keep the commandments and do the very best I can with the abilities I have been given. In the end, when I come up short of perfection, it will be the Lord's grace that will make up for the rest. Through this otherwise simple verse, I gained a greater testimony of the scriptures as communication from Heavenly Father. **NE**



ILLUSTRATION BY GREGG THORKESEN; PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTINA SMITH

Get to know Whitney Jensen, who has reached the top of the ballet world.

**H**aving recently won a prestigious award at a renowned international ballet competition, Whitney Jensen can look forward to an exciting future filled with *arabesque*, *pas de deux*, and *grand jeté*. Find out a little more about her.

**How long have you been dancing?** I've been dancing since I was about three years old.

**Ballet takes a lot of commitment. How do you maintain balance in your life?** I go to seminary every morning. I've just had a lot of gospel focus in my life. I've never set that aside to do just ballet. It's always been a good balance. It's probably just the way I grew up with my family. We've always had strong gospel teachings at home.

**Do you get a lot of peer pressure?** None of my friends are Mormon. I just stick out. For example, I don't see rated-R movies, and they know that, which is cool. All my friends are good at not pressuring me to do anything. So it's nice, because I can set an example for people and build my own identity.

**What motivates you to do what you do?** What I enjoy most is being able to share what I've been given, because I know that my purpose is to show the talents that I was given. When I was in Bulgaria that was my main purpose—just to share what I have and what I've been working for.

**What's your favorite thing to do besides dance?** I like to spend time with my family. My sister lives five minutes away, and I like to go over to her house. She just had a baby, so I hang out with my niece. And I like to go to movies.

**What's the most important thing for other LDS teens to know about you?** I have discovered that Heavenly Father knows everyone, and He listens to everyone's prayers. He answered my prayers while I was away. He took hold of me. And I could feel that everyone back home was praying for me. Prayer plays the most important role. **NE**

—As told to David A. Edwards, *Church Magazines*

SHE'S TUTU GOOD



**Name:** Whitney Jensen

**Age:** 16

**Location:** New York City



**Major accomplishments:** Several onstage performances at venues in New York City; many local and international ballet awards, most recently the Special Distinction at the International Ballet Competition in Varna, Bulgaria—an award that has been given only four times in 44 years.



# NewEra.Ids.org

Go online  
and in addition to what's in the February  
issue, you'll find:

- Answers to questions.
  - A new survey to take.
  - A new photo gallery.
- And the usual good stuff like a cartoon, downloadable Mormonads, and links to great articles.

## TOP FIVE

Over the years, the *New Era* has run some great stories. Here are five of the best we've run about **forgiveness**. (Go to the *New Era* online and look these up in past issues.)

"The Night I Gave the Money Away," by Elizabeth Mason, Feb. 1996.

"Pockets Full of Rocks," by Larry A. Hiller, Jan. 1996.

"Can I Be Forgiven?" Mar. 2000.

"It's Hard to Forgive," by Amanda Denison, July 2005.

"Getting Even," by Amy Weir, Aug. 2007.



## Fiction

One day his father called him into his room. It was dimly lit and smelled of pain; the bedside stand groaned with glasses and bottles of pills.

"Have I ever lied to you?" his father asked.

"No."

"Then don't lie to me. Am I dying?"

Read the rest online in

*"Last Camp along the Way,"*  
by Jack Weyland (from July 1980).



## BEHIND THE SCENES

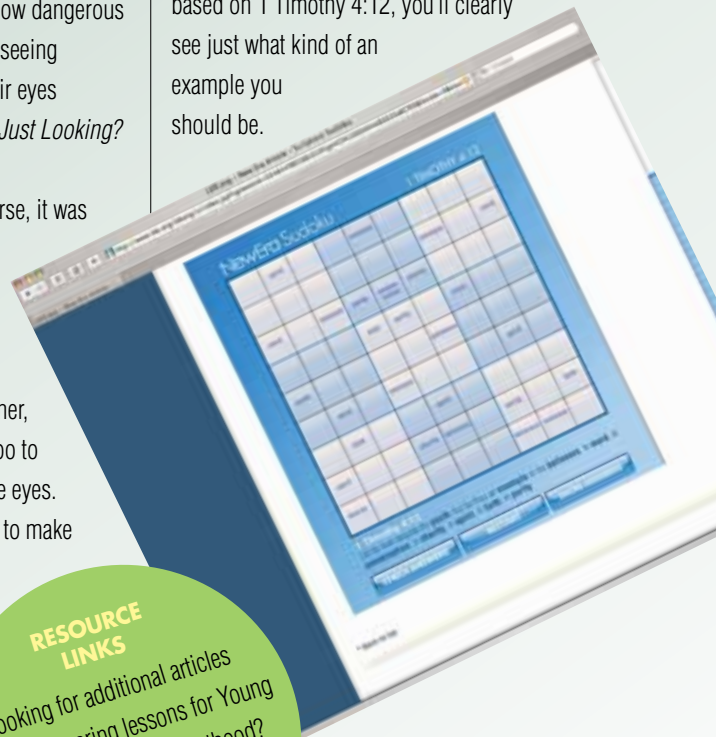
Ever wonder how we come up with the Mormonads? The Mormonad on page 13 started when we were trying to think of something that represented just how dangerous pornography is. We remembered seeing photos of crocodiles with just their eyes showing above water. The words *Just Looking?* seemed to fit exactly.

What was underneath? Of course, it was a big set of scary teeth that can clamp onto to you and not let go—a good illustration for what pornography can do.

We gave the idea to our designer, who sent a photographer to the zoo to take a photo of ominous crocodile eyes. Then he used his computer skills to make the teeth visible underwater and to make them bigger and more vicious than reality. We thought it made a great Mormonad that gives you something to think about.

## SCRIPTURE SUDOKU

How well do you know this year's Mutual theme? After doing our online Sudoku puzzle based on 1 Timothy 4:12, you'll clearly see just what kind of an example you should be.



## RESOURCE LINKS

Looking for additional articles to use in preparing lessons for Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood? Check online at [newera.lds.org](http://newera.lds.org) under Lesson Helps.

**OCTOBER 2008 ISSUE**

I loved all of the stories and have read through them several times. I even pulled out the wallet-sized *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet and have encouraged my friends who get the *New Era* to do the same. I also appreciated the cards and have showed them to my friends, especially the ones that have been asking me when I'm allowed to go out on dates and don't understand why I have to wait.

Alex G.

I really enjoyed the special issue "You Can Stand Strong." The answers about our standards will be very useful if some of my friends ask me about them. With the little pocket-sized cards and the foldable *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlets, I will be prepared when the questions come. I also played the song "Steadfast and Immovable" on the piano. It is a really good song. I also liked the Extra Smile "thou shalt not steal." It seems like this *New Era* is what I have been waiting for.

Zachary L., Arizona

**READING ABOUT OTHERS**

I am glad we have magazines like the *New Era*. I think it's important for the youth in the Church to read about what other kids are doing around the world and what problems they face every day and how they deal with them. It also gives us the chance to hear from apostles, prophets, and sometimes members of the Seventy. I feel good that there is an easy way to hear from our leaders more often than twice a year.

Devan D., Utah

*It is good to hear about others around the world and hear how they deal with the problems that we all face every day.*

**SHARING MY TESTIMONY**

I always wanted to share my testimony with those who aren't Church members. I live in a small town where almost everyone is active in the Church, so I hadn't had the chance. One day a girl new to my school noticed me sitting on a bench reading the *New Era*. She asked me if I was a Mormon. I replied, "Yes, I am." I took her to meet our seminary teacher, and I am glad I finally had the chance to share my testimony with a friend.

Julie M., Idaho

**STANDING FIRM**

I was touched by the article "You Have to Be *Something*" in the July 2008 issue of the *New Era*. I have been involved in situations where people say bad things about the Church, but that has never held me back from standing firm in what I believe in.

Martha T.M., Zimbabwe

**FINDING COMFORT**

I look forward to finding the *New Era* in the mail each month. I especially enjoyed the article "What Joseph Taught: Comfort at the Time of Death" (Aug. 2008). I've always looked up to the Prophet Joseph Smith and have enjoyed what he said to the Saints of the 1800s. When I read the article I felt overjoyed at the counsel you included. I had a relative die a few years ago, and I felt overwhelmed with sorrow. As I read this article, I realized what I could have done to have worked through the grief. I now understand our relatives "are only separated from their bodies for a short season" and that "they now exist in a place where they converse together the same as we do on earth." I also had to trust in God that I might see them again.

Tyler M.

*We love hearing from you. Write us at the following address. Please include names of your ward and stake (or branch and district).*

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*Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.*





## MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

BY DONNA GENE JASPER GOFF

What do you see  
When you look at the sky?  
White clouds?  
Blue sky?  
Golden sun?  
What do you see?  
Cotton?  
Foaming surf in a sparkling sea?

Oh, look deeper,  
A herd of ten thousand elephants  
just passed you by.  
Oh, but what I see!  
Glory from on high . . .  
Golden chariots racing across  
the pale blue sky.



### **COMING NEXT MONTH**

- *Learning search and rescue techniques turns into a service for the community.*
- *Read a personal story about a young man deciding to serve a mission.*
- *One young woman takes a stand against inappropriate dancing.*
- *One ward has a tradition of teaching piano-playing teens how to play the organ.*

*These articles and more are coming up in the March issue of the New Era.*

SEE US ONLINE AT [WWW.NEWERA.LDS.ORG](http://WWW.NEWERA.LDS.ORG)

# Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

## *Committed to the Kingdom*

**O**n a memorable Christmas Eve in 1937, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, then a full-time missionary, and his companion walked from Salzburg, Austria, to the village of Oberndorf, nestled in the Bavarian Alps. While visiting the village known as the inspiration for the hymn “Silent Night,”<sup>1</sup> they paused in a small church to listen to Christmas music sung by a choir.

“A crisp, clear winter night enveloped us as we began our return trip,” Elder Wirthlin recalled. “We walked under a canopy of stars and across the smooth stillness of new-fallen snow.”<sup>2</sup>

As they walked, the young missionaries shared their hopes, dreams, and goals for the future. In that heavenly setting, Elder Wirthlin renewed his commitment to serve the Lord: “I made up my mind that I would magnify any callings I received in the Lord’s kingdom.”<sup>3</sup>

Elder Wirthlin kept that commitment for the rest of his mortal life, which ended on December 1, 2008, when he died peacefully at age 91 of causes incident to age.

Of his service as a bishop, counselor in a stake presidency, counselor in the Sunday School general presidency, Assistant to the Twelve, and member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, he declared, “I’ve loved every assignment I’ve ever had in the kingdom.” Upon being sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on October 4, 1986, he explained, “And in that service, every day seemed like Sunday, because it was in the service of the Lord.”<sup>4</sup>



### **Faith and Football**

Joseph Bitner Wirthlin was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on June 11, 1917, the first of five children born to Joseph L. Wirthlin, who served as Presiding Bishop, and Madeline Bitner Wirthlin. Joseph’s father supported the family as head of Wirthlin’s Inc., a wholesale and retail food business, while his mother encouraged their children in a variety of pursuits, including music and sports. Joseph and Madeline taught their children humility, honesty, diligence, service, compassion, and faith.

Young Joseph had many talents but eventually gravitated to sports, lettering in high school football, basketball, and track. After playing quarterback at East High School, he went on to play running back for three years at the University of Utah.<sup>5</sup>

From the pulpit, Elder Wirthlin enjoyed sharing lessons he had learned as a football player. One important lesson came at the bottom of a pile of 10 players during a conference championship game. After attempting to score what would have been the winning touchdown, Joseph was tackled just short of the goal line.

“At that moment I was tempted to push the ball forward. . . . I would have been a hero,” he recalled. But then he remembered the words of his mother: “Joseph,” she had often said to him, “do what is right, no matter the consequence.”



**Above:** For three years Joseph B. Wirthlin (number 4) played running back for the University of Utah football team before giving up football and postponing his schooling to become a missionary (below) in 1937. **Right:** Joseph B. and Elisa Young Rogers Wirthlin on their wedding day, May 26, 1941.



Joseph wanted to be a hero in the eyes of his mother more than in the eyes of his teammates. So, he said, “I left the ball where it was—two inches from the goal line.”<sup>6</sup>

After the end of the 1936 football season, Joseph’s father approached him about serving a mission. War was brewing in Europe, and if Joseph didn’t leave soon, he could lose the chance to serve.

“I wanted to pursue my dream of continuing to play football and to graduate from the university,” Elder Wirthlin said. “If I were to accept a mission call, I would have to give up everything. In those days a mission call was 30 months long, and I knew if I accepted, there was a good chance I would never play football again—perhaps I would not even be able to graduate.”<sup>7</sup>

But Joseph had also dreamed of being a missionary, and he knew what he must do. A few months later he was on his way to Europe, where he would serve in the German-Austrian and the Swiss-Austrian Missions from 1937 to 1939.

He never played football again, but he did graduate from the university, majoring in business administration. “Even so, I’ve never regretted serving a mission and committing myself to serving the Lord,” he said. “By doing so, my life has been filled with adventure, spiritual experiences, and joy that surpasses understanding.”<sup>8</sup>

### “A Perfect Marriage”

Among the resolutions Elder Wirthlin made that Christmas night in Oberndorf was that he would marry a spiritually strong woman who lived the gospel. He described her physical traits to his mission companion: five-foot-five (1.6 m), blonde hair, and blue eyes. Two and a half years after his mission, he met Elisa Young Rogers. She fit his description perfectly.

“I remember the first time I met her,” Elder Wirthlin said during a conference address in 2006, two months after she died. “As a favor to a friend, I had gone to her home to pick up her sister, Frances. Elisa opened the door, and at least for me, it was love at first sight.



“I think she must have felt something too, for the first words I ever remember her saying were, ‘I knew who you was.’”

Elder Wirthlin joked about that grammatical error because she was majoring in English. But, he said, “I still cherish those five words as some of the most beautiful in human language.”<sup>9</sup>

They married in the Salt Lake Temple on May 26, 1941, and for 65 years shared what Elder Wirthlin called “a perfect marriage.”<sup>10</sup> They strengthened, encouraged, and sustained each other, and they counseled together when making decisions. Elder Wirthlin never left the house without kissing Elisa good-bye, and he



would call often each day to check on her.<sup>11</sup>

Elder Wirthlin's father was called to the Presiding Bishopric in 1938, so Elder Wirthlin took over the family's food business when he returned from his mission. Later, while he and Elisa were raising their children, he put in long hours meeting the demands of work and Church responsibilities. Elisa and their seven daughters and one son, however, remained Elder Wirthlin's pride and joy. At his passing, he had 59 grandchildren and nearly 100 great-grandchildren.

### Loving Others

Elder Wirthlin, whom President Thomas S. Monson called "a man of great innate goodness,"<sup>12</sup> was loved by all who knew him. For 33 years while he served as a General Authority, including 22 years as an Apostle, that goodness manifested itself as he shared his testimony—in both word and deed—of the Savior and His restored gospel.

With humility and often with humor, Elder Wirthlin encouraged Latter-day Saints to make the most of mortality by emulating the example of the Savior. To do that, he taught, focus on the one, cultivate kindness, and love others.

"The most cherished and sacred moments of our lives are those filled with the spirit of love," he taught. "The greater the measure of our love, the greater is our joy. In the end, the development of such love is the true



measure of success in life." To truly learn how to love, he added, we need merely reflect on the life of the Savior.<sup>13</sup>

"We are all busy," Elder Wirthlin said on another occasion. "It's easy to find excuses for not reaching out to others, but I imagine they will sound as hollow to our Heavenly Father as the elementary school boy who gave his teacher a note asking that he be excused from school March 30th through the 34th."<sup>14</sup>

Elder Wirthlin also encouraged members of the Church to "live in thanksgiving daily," regardless of adversity.<sup>15</sup> "If we will consider the blessings we have, we will forget some of our worries," he taught.<sup>16</sup>

### A Parting Testimony

"There may be some who think that General Authorities rarely experience pain, suffering, or distress. If only that were true," Elder Wirthlin said during his last general conference address. "The Lord in His wisdom does not shield anyone from grief or sadness."<sup>17</sup>

**Above: The extended Wirthlin family in June 1999. Left: Elder and Sister Wirthlin greet Church members following an Education Week devotional at Ricks College (now Brigham Young University-Idaho) in 1998. Below: A 1999 painting of Elder and Sister Wirthlin.**



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE WIRTHLIN FAMILY. EXCEPT AS NOTED: LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH OF FOOTBALL BY CHRISTINA SMITH; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH OF SISTER AND ELDER WIRTHLIN BY MICHAEL LEWIS; BYUL-IDAHO, MAY NOT BE COPIED; PAINTING BY CLOY KENT

Elder Wirthlin's "greatest sorrow" came with the death of his beloved Elisa. During the lonely hours that ensued, he drew strength from "the comforting doctrines of eternal life" and from his testimony that the dark Friday of the Savior's Crucifixion was followed by the bright Sunday of His Resurrection.<sup>18</sup>

Because Elder Wirthlin had a firm testimony of the Savior's atoning sacrifice, he knew that death is not the end of existence and that a reunion awaits the faithful who have made promises in holy temples.

"We will all rise from the grave," he testified in October 2006. "On that day my father will embrace my mother. On that day I will once again hold in my arms my beloved Elisa."<sup>19</sup>

And on that day, a commitment made on a cold winter night long ago will have made all the difference. **NE**

#### NOTES

1. "Silent Night," *Hymns*, no. 204.
2. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Lessons Learned in the Journey of Life," *Liahona*, May 2001, 36; *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 7.
3. *Liahona*, May 2001, 37; *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 8.
4. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Pulling in the Gospel Net," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 59.
5. See Don L. Searle, "Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin: Finding Happiness Serving the Lord," *Ensign*, Dec. 1986, 10.
6. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Life's Lessons Learned," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2007, 46.
7. *Liahona*, May 2001, 36; *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 7.
8. *Liahona*, May 2001, 37; *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 8.
9. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Sunday Will Come," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 28.
10. *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 28.
11. See *Ensign*, Dec. 1986, 10.
12. Quoted in *Ensign*, Dec. 1986, 13.
13. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "The Great Commandment," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 30.
14. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "The Abundant Life," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2006, 101.
15. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Live in Thanksgiving Daily," *Ensign*, Sept. 2001, 13.
16. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "One Step after Another," *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 27; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 25.
17. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Come What May, and Love It," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 26.
18. See *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 29.
19. *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 30.



## FUNERAL TRIBUTES

"I loved him as a brother. I miss him. Over the years, Joseph and I served together in many assignments. We were more than colleagues, however; we were close personal friends. . . . There was no chink in his armor. There was no guile in his soul. There was no flaw in his character. Elder Wirthlin loved the Lord with all his heart and soul and served Him with all his might to the very end of his mortal life. . . . Joseph knew the Lord, and the Lord knew Joseph."

**President Thomas S. Monson**

After reading an article and testimony by Elder Wirthlin (see "Silent Night, Holy Night," *Church News*, Nov. 29, 2008, 8–9), President Packer suggested that the family have it "printed in such a way that members of the Wirthlin family yet unborn will come to know the great man who was their grandfather and was an Apostle."

**President Boyd K. Packer,  
President of the Quorum  
of the Twelve Apostles**



"He and I sat side by side on the [stake] high council. . . . For a total of 11 years, Joseph served as my counselor [in the stake presidency and the general superintendency of the Sunday School]. Every assignment he completed well. . . . Little did we know then that we would later sit together in the Quorum of the Twelve. . . . He never sought the limelight. He personified the statement of the Master, who said, 'He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.' Now Joseph will experience another promise of the Lord: 'He that shall humble himself shall be exalted' (Matthew 23:11–12)."

**Elder Russell M. Nelson of the  
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

"When I contemplate the legacy that Dad left his family and the Church, his humility stands out. Dad just never saw himself as anyone special. When President Monson ordained him an Apostle, he prophetically declared to Dad, 'Your humility will endear you to the people.' And so it has."

**Joseph B. Wirthlin Jr.**