

THE New Era

JANUARY

2002

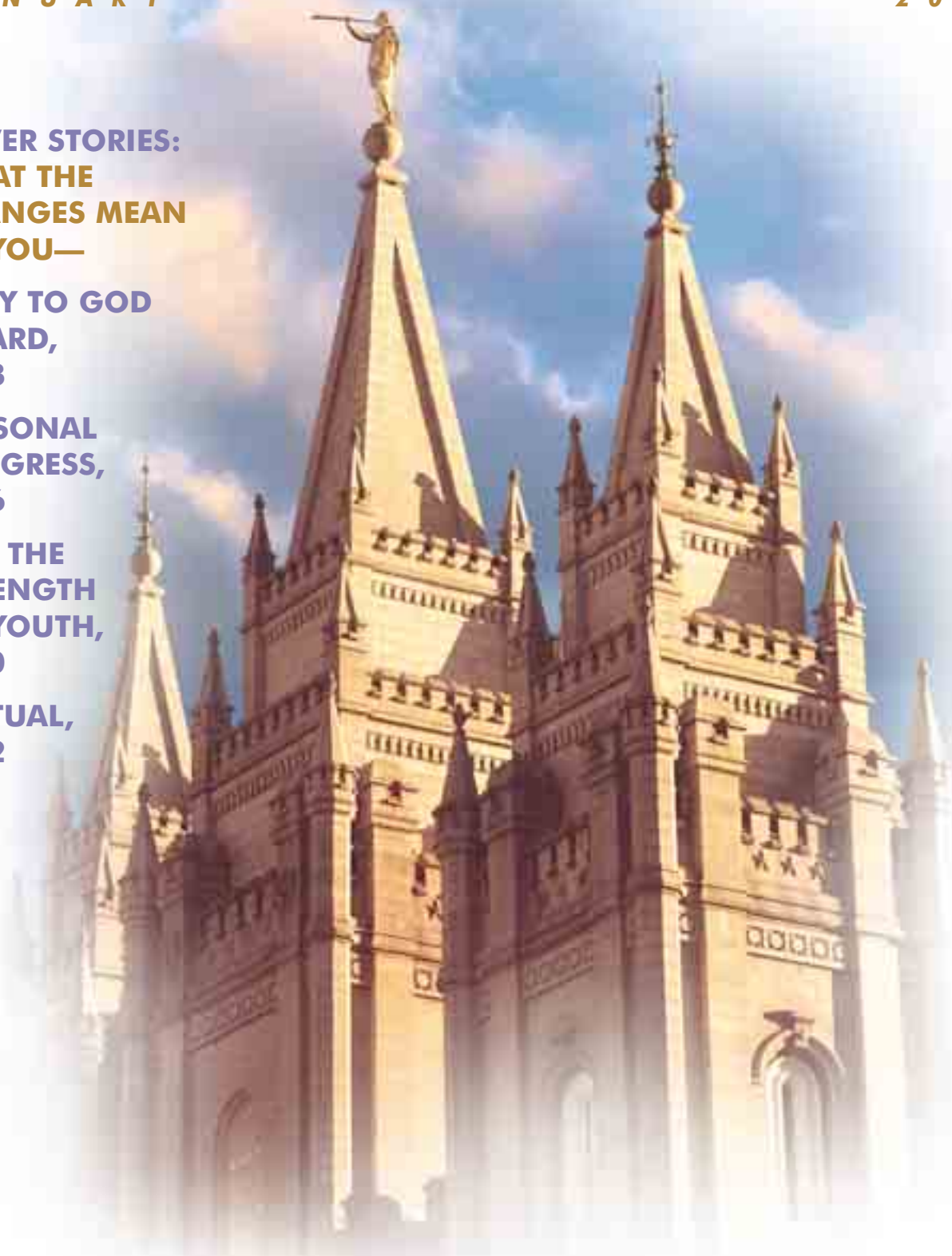
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**The New Era Magazine
Volume 32, Number 1
January 2002**

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

Editorial Offices:

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To Subscribe:

Send \$8.00 check or money
order for the *New Era* to
Church Magazines
Salt Lake Distribution Center
P. O. Box 26368
Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368

Subscription helpline:
1-800-537-5971
Credit card orders (Visa,
Mastercard, American
Express) may be taken by
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represent youth looking
and working toward
eternal life. See "Just for
You," on p. 12.*

*Cover photography:
Jed Clark (back).*

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Canada Post Information
Publication Agreement #40017431

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

God Will Make



by President
Gordon B. Hinckley

We need not fear as long as we have the power of faith.

Shall any of us say that with faith we cannot do better than we are now doing?

There is no obstacle too great, no challenge too difficult, that we cannot meet with faith. We live in a world where the standards of the gospel are challenged, where they are ridiculed, where sacred things are mocked. Shall we compromise? Shall we revile those who speak ungraciously of us? . . .

Said the Savior to His disciples, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

This is the commandment which is before us. Regrettably we have not

reached perfection. We have a great distance to go. We must cultivate the faith to reform our lives, commencing where we are weak and moving on from there in our work of self-correction, thus gradually and consistently growing in strength to live more nearly as we should.

With faith we can rise above those negative elements in our lives which constantly pull us down. With effort we can develop the capacity to subdue those impulses which lead to degrading and evil actions.



a Way

The commander of the first submarine to cross under the polar ice carried in his wallet a tattered card with an expression of his faith.

"I believe God
will always
make a way
where there is
no way."

We can do it

We can reach out to those whose faith has grown cold and warm them by our own faith.

Let us never forget, my brethren and sisters, that each of us is a part of the whole and that what we do mars or beautifies the magnificent panorama of the kingdom of God.

As our fathers labored in faith with a moving vision of the destiny of this work, even so can we. There is so much to be done, so much improvement to be made, but we can do it, walking in faith.

“If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matt. 17:20).

So declared the Lord (from *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 53).

God makes a way

What marvelous things happen when men and women walk with faith in obedience to that which is required of them! I recall reading the story of Commander William Robert Anderson, the naval officer who took the submarine Nautilus beneath the polar ice from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean, a daring and dangerous feat. It recounted a number of other exploits of similar danger and concluded with a statement that the commander carried in his wallet a tattered card that had on it these words: “I believe God will always make a way where there is no way.”

I too believe that God will always make a way where there is no way. I believe that if we will walk in obedience to the commandments of God, if we will follow the counsel of the priesthood, He will open a way even where there appears to be no way (from *Ensign*, July 1995, 2).

Cornerstones of faith

These great God-given gifts are the unshakable cornerstones which anchor The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as well as the individual testimonies and convictions of its members: (1) the reality and the divinity

T*o all who may have doubts, I repeat the words given Thomas as he felt the wounded hands of the Lord: “Be not faithless, but believing.” Let us recognize that fear comes not of God, but rather that this gnawing, destructive element comes from the adversary of truth and righteousness.*

of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God; (2) the sublime vision given the Prophet Joseph Smith of the Father and the Son, ushering in the dispensation of the fulness of times; (3) the Book of Mormon as the word of God speaking in declaration of the divinity of the Savior; and (4) the priesthood of God divinely conferred to be exercised in righteousness for the blessing of our Father’s children.

Each of these cornerstones is related to the other, each connected by a foundation of Apostles and prophets, all tied to the chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ. On this has been established His Church, “fitly framed together,” for the blessing of all who will partake of its offering (Eph. 2:21) (from *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 53).

Believe

To all who may have doubts, I repeat the words given Thomas as he felt the wounded hands of the Lord: “Be not faithless, but believing” (John 20:27). Believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the greatest figure of time and eternity. Believe that His matchless life reached back before the world was formed. Believe that He was the Creator of the earth on which we live. Believe that He was Jehovah of the Old Testament, that He was the Messiah of the New Testament, that He died and was resurrected, that He visited the western continents and taught the people here, that He ushered in this final gospel dispensation, and that He lives, the living Son of the living God, our Savior and our Redeemer (from *Ensign*, Apr. 1989, 2).

Fear is the opposite of faith

Who among us can say that he or she has not felt fear? I know of no one who has been entirely spared. Some, of course, experience fear to a greater degree than do others. Some are able to rise above it quickly, but others are trapped and pulled down by it and even driven to defeat. We suffer from the fear of ridicule, the fear of failure, the fear of loneliness, the fear of ignorance. Some



Painting The Doubtful Thomas by Carl Heinrich Bloch

fear the present, some the future. Some carry the burden of sin and would give almost anything to unshackle themselves from those burdens but fear to change their lives. Let us recognize that fear comes not of God, but rather that this gnawing, destructive element comes from the adversary of truth and righteousness. Fear is the antithesis of faith. It is corrosive in its effects, even deadly.

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).

We need not fear as long as we have in our lives the power that comes from righteously living by the truth which is from God our Eternal Father.

Nor need we fear as long as we have the power of faith (from *Ensign*, Oct. 1984, 2–3).

Increase our faith

I say again, as did the Apostles to Jesus, “Lord, increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). Grant us faith to look beyond the problems of the moment to the miracles of the future. Give us faith to pay our tithes and offerings and put our trust in Thee, the Almighty, to open the windows of heaven as Thou hast promised. Give us faith to do what is right and let the consequence follow.

Grant us faith when storms of adversity beat us down and drive us to the ground. In seasons of sickness may our confidence wax strong in the powers of the priesthood. . . .

Lord, increase our faith in one another, and in ourselves, and in our capacity to do good and great things. . . .

Father, increase our faith. Of all our needs, I think the greatest is an increase in faith (*Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 52).

What a choice generation you are—the best, I think, in the history of the world. What a marvelous source of strength and power and capacity! God bless you each one that your lives may be happy and productive, that you may realize the desires of your hearts, that you may walk in faith and faithfulness (from *Ensign*, Sept. 1985, 6). **NE**

Friends FOREVER



Family members can be more than just blood relations. They can, and should, be close friends.

He went one way, the bicycle went another way, and the papers went everywhere. At the sight of his misfortune, his companion laughed heartily at him.

by Elder
Marvin J. Ashton
(1915–1994)

My wife and I were in the front of our yard one day when the newspaper boy came down the street on his bicycle. His bicycle was loaded with papers. About 20 or 30 yards in back of him, there was another boy following him on a bicycle. I was not sure at that time what their relationship was, but I did notice they were coming down the street at a pretty good clip.

When the newspaper boy came to our sidewalk entry, he was traveling too fast to make the approach to our home, and, as a result, he went one way, the bicycle went another way, and the papers went everywhere. Noticing the boy had fallen on the lawn and was not hurt, but realizing that he would undoubtedly be embarrassed from the fall in front of his friend, we moved toward him.

At the sight of this perfect three-point landing, if we may refer to it as that, his companion shouted his pleasure and laughed heartily with complete and full enjoyment at the misfortune of his associate.

Trying to relieve the embarrassment of

the paper boy, knowing he didn't want help but he wanted to have his pride repaired a little, I took a few more steps toward him and said: "It's kind of a low blow to have your friend laugh when you've had a bad spill, isn't it?"

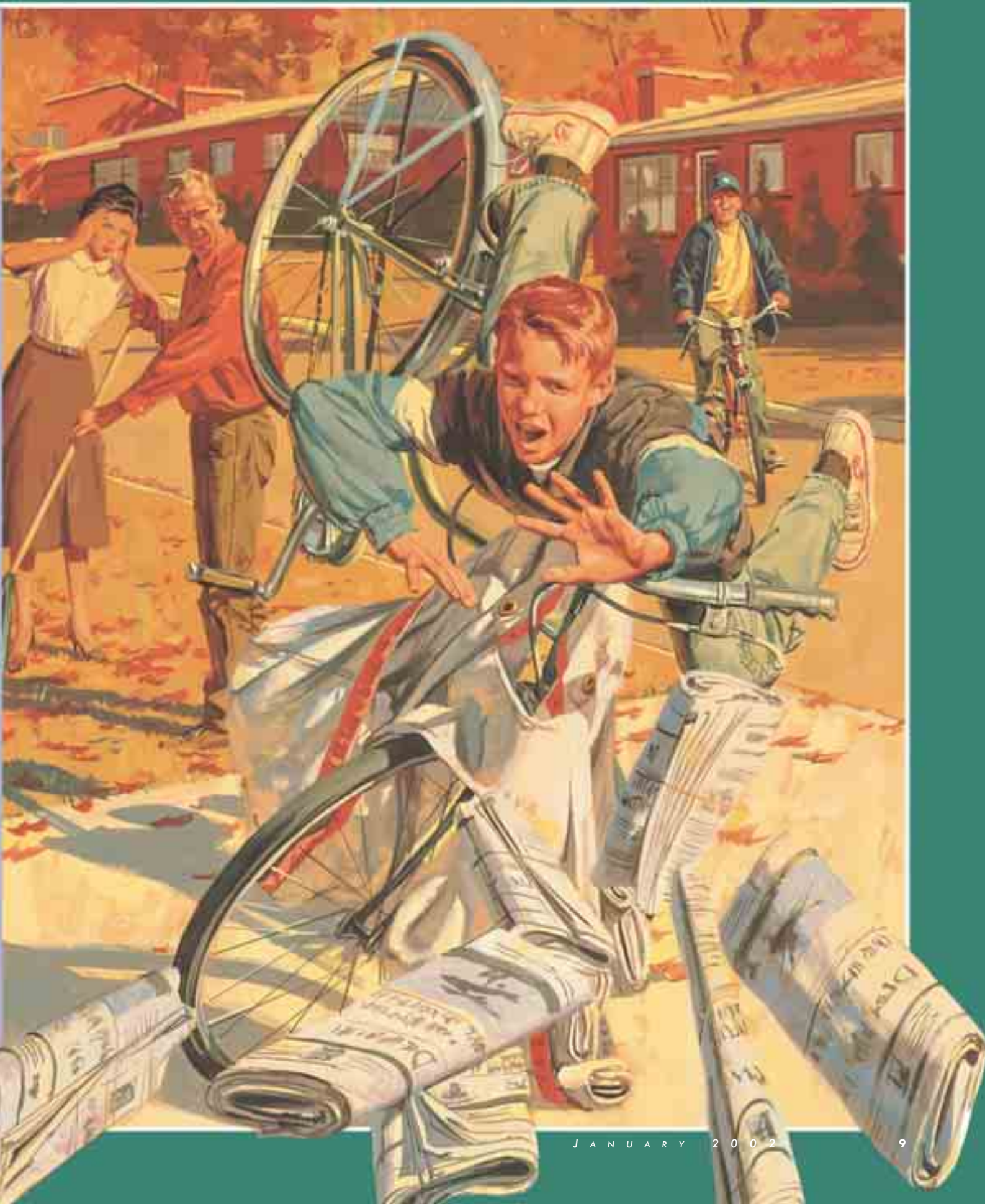
He went on picking up his papers without even looking up. Finally, he had the papers back in place and got on his bicycle; and as he started out away from our home, he made the remark: "He isn't my friend—he's my brother."

His words have been ringing through my ears with a great deal of significance ever since then. I sincerely feel that one of the great purposes of family evenings and home teaching is to have family members realize that a brother can be a friend, and that a sister can be a friend, and that a father and a mother can be more than parents, they can be friends.

I would hope and pray that we may catch the wisdom and the inspiration of building a home so that our members in that sacred unit can look upon a father and say, "He is my best friend," or "My mother is more than a mother, she is my friend." When we realize that parents and family members can be more than blood relations and are in very deed friends, then we will have a glimpse of how our Heavenly Father wants us to live, not only as brothers and sisters but as very close friends. **NE**

Adapted from an October 1969 general conference address.

Illustrated by Paul Mann



EXTRA STRENGTH

I was a bodybuilder, and already pretty strong. But then Kristy showed me what real strength is.

I couldn't help noticing Kristy, a beautiful brunette I'd had a crush on since my freshman year. She was with some of her church friends. I decided to go see what she was doing.

"Hi. Are you ready for the big game?"

"As ready as I'm going to be. It should be a good game! What are you doing?" I didn't really care but I wanted to sound interested in what she was doing. I heard girls like that.

"I'm passing out flyers on tips that have made my life wonderful. Do you want one?" Kristy asked in a hesitant tone. Well, I did notice that she always seemed happy and confident. I guess that's why I was so attracted to her.

"Sure. Why not?" I took a pamphlet, and she gave me a beautiful smile.

I pulled out the flyer and read the title: *For the Strength of Youth*.

What a strange title, I thought. I'm already strong from weight lifting, but I guess I could use some extra strength. I started reading about standards, dating, language, sexual purity, and other stuff. I

had never heard anything so crazy in my life. Why would anyone want to live by these standards? I was, however, curious about some of the beliefs. Like most others my age, I wondered about life and what I was going to do with it.

I talked to Kristy the next day about what I read. I was so amazed at how strong she was about her beliefs in the standards explained in the pamphlet. She then asked me if I'd like to meet two of her friends. Her friends turned out to be missionaries from her church.

During my discussions with the missionaries, I felt something I had never felt before. I had a feeling that told me what they were saying was true. I began to understand why those standards were so important, and how I could, by living those standards, bring more happiness to my life and become a stronger person.

With the help of Kristy and her "friends," I was soon baptized. I'll always be thankful for her great example. She helped teach me that being strong is more than building physical muscles. By sharing *For the Strength of Youth* with me, I learned about standards that helped me develop my spiritual muscles. **NE**

Editor's note: Elder Bryant Staples is serving in the Idaho Boise Mission.

Not only did the booklet not show me how to build even more muscle, but it sounded downright crazy—at first, anyway. But then I began to realize that maybe I was missing out on something important in my life.

by Bryant Staples



JUST for YOU



Want to thrive—not just survive—in these troubled times? Powerful help is on the way.

It isn't easy to be a teenager in today's world. But it is a whole lot easier if you are a Latter-day Saint and you take advantage of what you have been given.

While others may struggle to discover who they are and their purpose in life, you know you are a child of God and you want to become like your Father in Heaven. While others try to figure out right and wrong and too often make bad choices, you have been taught by your parents and Church leaders to recognize the sins that can destroy you. And while world events make others fear the future, you have the reassuring counsel of President Gordon B. Hinckley: "Keep the faith. Nurture your testimonies. Walk in righteousness, and the Lord will bless you and prosper you, and you will be a happy and wonderful people" (*Ensign*, Aug. 1996, 61).

You have been given some other powerful helps to get you through your teen years safely—things like your *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet and the Church's programs for Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women. Countless young Latter-day Saints have used these tools to shape themselves into worthy, happy, successful missionaries, husbands, wives, priesthood leaders, servants in the

The new and modified programs for Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women are more evidence of the love the Lord and His servants have for you.



We want every young man to enter the elders quorum with his Duty to God Award. We want every young woman to enter Relief Society with her Young Womanhood Recognition.

—Elder M. Russell Ballard

Lord's kingdom, and otherwise successful adults.

Now, in their love and concern for you, the leaders of the Church have modified those tools and added some new ones.

As you get acquainted with the new Aaronic Priesthood Duty to God program, the revised Young Women's Personal Progress book, and the updated *For the Strength of Youth*, you will see the love and personal interest that the Lord's latter-day Apostles and prophets have for the youth of the Church. And as you use these marvelous tools in your life, they will provide you with a clear path of hope leading to a bright future. **NE**

DUTY to GOD

*As you learn and follow
God's commandments,
you will feel the Spirit
guide you in your life.*

All of us are in debt. God has given us our lives, all that we have on earth, and the hope of returning to live with Him. In return, our duty to God is to keep His commandments and live lives worthy to return to Him.

For young men, your duty includes living worthy of the priesthood—the power to act in God's name. As you perform the ordinances of the priesthood, and use it to serve others, you fulfill your duty to God.

For years the Duty to God Award has been an important achievement for young men. Beginning in January 2002, this award takes on even more significance as the requirements are expanded to help young men develop as they advance through the offices of the Aaronic Priesthood.

Many young men have already had the opportunity to participate in a similar program, known outside of the United States and Canada as Aaronic Priesthood Achievement.

“[The program] started some years ago internationally to help young men through the Aaronic Priesthood years, to fill in where Scouting was not available, and to help develop their testimonies



AARONIC
PRIESTHOOD
DEACON



The purpose of the [Duty to God] program is to help young men prepare for the Melchizedek Priesthood, the temple endowment, a full-time mission, and fatherhood.”

—The First Presidency

There is great power in the Aaronic Priesthood. This program can help you develop the priesthood's full potential in your life and prepare you for even greater things to come.

and understanding of the gospel and to help young men come to Christ," says Elder F. Melvin Hammond, Young Men general president.

As young men advance through the Aaronic Priesthood they will be asked to meet set requirements and choose additional goals of their own. Each young man will receive a guidebook that outlines requirements and provides space to record his goals and chart his progress.

Since there are different duties for each Aaronic Priesthood office, there are different guidebooks for deacons, teachers, and priests. Young men who meet all the requirements in each Aaronic Priesthood office are presented the Duty to God Award.

To earn the Duty to God Award young men will need to complete the duties and goals outlined in the guidebooks, as well as choosing goals of their own. These include:

1. Priesthood duties and standards
2. Family activities
3. Quorum activities
4. Personal goals
5. Service projects
6. Keeping a journal

Learning your duty

The duties required of young men include keeping the commandments, living the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, having daily personal prayer, reading the scriptures, attending Church meetings, paying a full tithe, and fulfilling priesthood responsibilities.

There are additional duties for each priesthood office. As a deacon, the basic duties also include passing the sacrament and gathering fast offerings. Teachers should attend seminary where available, help prepare the sacrament, and serve as home teachers if assigned by their priesthood leaders. Priests should continue to attend seminary, serve as home teachers, and bless the sacrament.

Growing in the priesthood

The goals for deacons include things



such as organizing family home evenings, preparing meals, keeping a written record of family history, and performing a service project.

Teachers are required to memorize and learn to lead hymns, keep a budget, study *For the Strength of Youth*, and read and discuss scriptures with family.

Among other requirements, priests read the fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants and learn what it means to prepare spiritually, financially, emotionally, and physically to go on a mission.

"We've tried to develop the requirements based on the maturity of the young men," says Elder Hammond. "Completion of the goals is more difficult as they become teachers and priests."

Quorum activities help young men understand the responsibilities of their office and prepare them for the Melchizedek Priesthood. Young men are required to read about and understand certain gospel principles and discuss them with their priesthood leaders. Service projects, fellowshipping, baptisms for the dead, speaking in church, learning to lead music, and memorizing the sacrament prayers are examples of quorum activities that will fulfill the Duty to God requirements.

Reaching new heights

Although each guidebook lists dozens of ideas, it is up to the young men to choose what goals they want to accomplish for their personal development. Each young man will choose eight or more personal goals for each of the four categories. The four



“During the preparatory period of your lives it is so important that you cultivate spiritual growth, physical growth, education, personal development, career preparation, citizenship, and social skills. These qualities are all part of your priesthood duties and will help in the decisions that lie ahead for the next decades of your life.”

—Elder
Robert D. Hales
Ensign, Nov. 2001, 40

categories are:

1. Spiritual development
2. Physical development
3. Educational, personal, and career development
4. Citizenship and social development

Some of the ideas listed in the guidebook are bearing testimony, reading scriptures, doing family history, keeping a journal, running, camping, exploring career goals, learning dance etiquette, or playing in a musical group.

What about Scouting?

One question that many young men may have when they find out about the new Duty to God Award for young men is, What about Scouting? Elder Hammond says the Duty to God Award should not interfere with Scouting, but that the two programs will complement each other. “Our effort was to find something that would be compatible with priesthood principles and also with Scouting,” says Elder Hammond. “Duty to God embraces Scouting, which is wonderful for our young men. . . . Duty to God focuses more on the spiritual—bringing young men to Christ. Scouting is primarily an activity program with some spirituality as well. They are complementary to one another.”

The future is bright

“When we set goals personally and then try to achieve them, we grow and develop,” says Elder Hammond. “The value of this program is what it does to a young man’s character and spirituality. The main emphasis is to develop the spiritual life of a young man.”

In a letter to Church units in the U.S. and Canada, dated September 28, 2001, the First Presidency said: “We desire all young men to strive to earn the Eagle Scout and Duty to God Awards. . . . As youth work on these goals, they will develop skills and attributes that will lead them to the temple and prepare them for a lifetime of service to their families and the Lord.” **NE**

Making PRO



Just as the Savior taught Mary and Martha (above) about paying attention to “needful” things (see Luke 10:41), *Personal Progress* helps young women learn about their roles in their homes, communities, and church. The new book and journal are pictured at the far right.

Young Women will find changes in Personal Progress help them move forward with success.

Each young woman is a daughter of Heavenly Father who loves her. For years, Personal Progress has been blessing young women by assisting them to reach their divine potential. It encourages them to make wise decisions, strengthen their homes and families, and develops values that will lead them to Christ and prepare them to become righteous, temple-worthy women. Now, Personal Progress has been revised to make it even more helpful.

According to the Young Women general presidency, the new Personal Progress will keep the essential parts of the existing program such as the theme, the seven values, and the emphasis on personal worthiness. But the Value Experiences and Projects, once restricted to certain age groups, are no longer organized in that same way. In addition, young women may now progress through Personal Progress more quickly.

“The biggest difference that girls will notice,” says Sister Margaret Nadauld, Young Women general president, “is that they will do six Value Experiences in each one of the seven values. Then there will be a project associated with each value. And they will be encouraged to go at their own pace.”

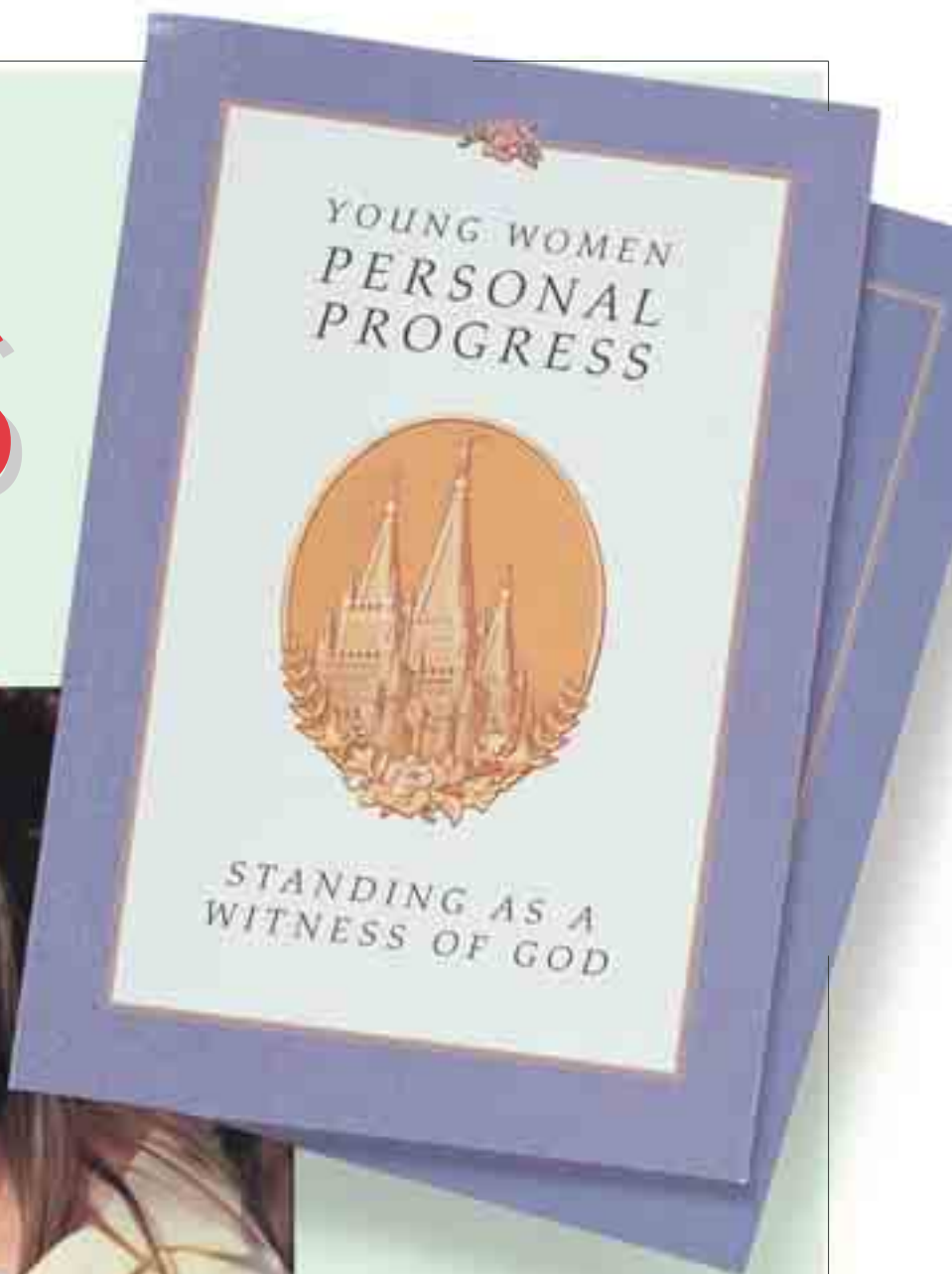
“In the past,” says Sister Sharon G.



Young women who earn their Young Womanhood Recognition Award will be better prepared to serve in the Relief Society. It will help them prepare for their future roles as a faithful woman, wife, mother, and leader in God's kingdom.

—Elder
M. Russell Ballard

GRESS



Larsen, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency, “Beehives were really excited about being involved in Personal Progress, then they would have to stop until they were second-year Beehives or until they became Mia Maids to move on. With this change, girls can receive their Young Womanhood medallion when they are 15 or 16, however fast they choose to complete the requirements.”

The new books will be smaller so they are more easily carried with scriptures. Also, parents are asked to participate by understanding what experiences their daughter has chosen to complete and encouraging or helping her to accomplish them. Both parents and Young Women leaders may sign off on a



The woman at the well (above) was given “living water” as she learned gospel truths from the Master (see John 4:11). Personal Progress helps young women pursue their goal to stand as witnesses for truth and righteousness. The new medallion (above, right), available in silver or gold, now represents the Young Womanhood Recognition Award.

girl’s progress. As the Personal Progress changes are in transition, Laurels can choose to complete the old program. Mia Maids and Beehives, however, will be asked to transfer the experiences they have completed in the old book to the new.

Essentially, Personal Progress has been simplified. Girls are asked to complete six Value Experiences in each value. Girls should complete the first three experiences suggested for each value, and they may choose three additional experiences, two of which they can design. After she has completed the six experiences, a girl can select and plan a 10-hour Value Project for that particular value. One section of the book has suggestions for projects.

“We remind girls that the Value Projects can be part of the good things they are already doing in their lives,” says Sister Nadauld. “So if you are doing good things in seminary or at school, the projects can be part of that as long as they have been approved before you begin.”

The age-group jewelry will be eliminated, with a single Young Womanhood medallion serving as the symbol of completion. The new medallion, available in gold or silver, will have the temple spires on it. Sister Nadauld says, “It will signify what we are trying to accomplish in Young Women, for girls to be prepared to make and keep sacred temple covenants.”

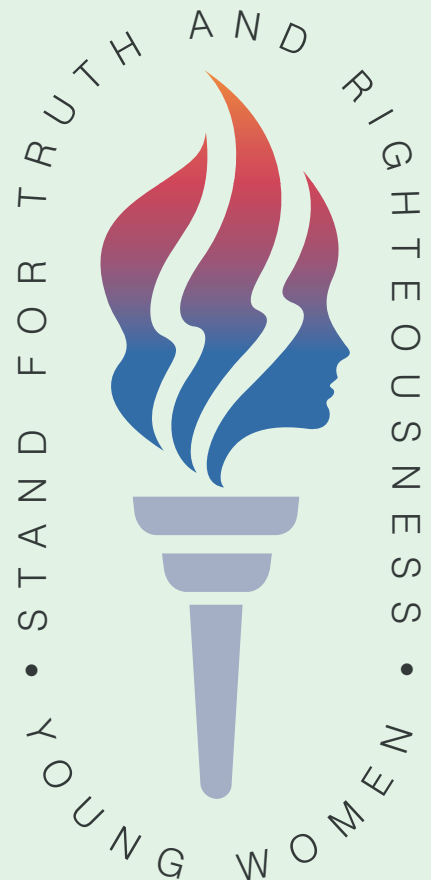
“And girls will have the opportunity to wear the medallion while they are still in Young Women,” says Sister Larsen.

As young women complete Personal Progress before their years in Young Women are through, what will they do? Sister Nadauld explains the options. “We have several suggestions. One is to go back and complete the Value Experiences they didn’t do. Another is to compile their personal history. Yet another is to read the Book of Mormon. We also encourage the young women, under the direction of their Young Women leaders, to mentor younger girls, giving them encouragement and help.”

“We’ve asked some Young Women to try this out,” says Sister Carol B. Thomas, first counselor in the Young Women general presidency. “And they were thrilled with the changes. The girls couldn’t believe how exciting it could be when 17-year-olds help the 12-year-olds. It’s quite an unselfish concept. They were also really excited about moving at their own pace.”

Sister Nadauld says, “We hope these changes in Personal Progress will help encourage girls to choose goals that will help them strengthen their homes and families, cultivate feminine virtues, grow spiritually, and reach their divine potential.

“That’s a pretty tall order, isn’t it? But young women are quite remarkable. We love to watch their great accomplishments!” **NE**





Young Women **THEME CHANGE**

Each Sunday, young women stand and say together the theme that helps each girl understand her identity, purpose, and destiny as a daughter of God. Part of that eternal purpose is to learn how to be part of a righteous, loving home, as a daughter and someday as a wife and mother. For this reason, the phrase, “strengthen home and family” has been added to the Young Women theme.

We hope that each young woman will want to bless her family through her good choices and by living gospel principles.

The theme will now read:

We are
daughters of our Heavenly Father
who loves us, and we love Him.
We will “stand as witnesses of God at all
times and in all things, and in all places”
as we strive to live the
Young Women Values, which are—

Faith
Divine Nature
Individual Worth
Knowledge
Choice and Accountability
Good Works and
Integrity

We believe
as we come to accept and act
upon these values, we will be prepared to
strengthen home and family,
make and keep sacred covenants,
receive the ordinances of the temple,
and enjoy the blessings of exaltation.

—Young Women general presidency

STRONGER Than EVER



For the Strength of Youth *has always been a great help. Now, updated, it's even more useful.*

They say a good friend is someone who helps you be your best. Someone who will always tell you the truth. Someone who will give you advice you can count on. Someone who will help you become the kind of person the Lord expects you to be.

For years, *For the Strength of Youth* has been just such a friend to Latter-day Saint youth. But now you've probably been hearing that that friend has changed somewhat. It's only logical to ask how and why.

Obviously the standards themselves haven't changed. Church standards are guidelines for behavior based on eternal principles of happiness. Follow those standards and you will be both happy and safe.

But if the standards haven't changed, why update *For the Strength of Youth*? Because the world *has* changed. Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., executive director of the priesthood department and a member of the Presidency of the Quorum of the Seventy, recently spoke to the *New Era* about the new *For the Strength of Youth*.

"The youth today are stronger than they have ever been. But we live in an increasingly difficult and complex world.

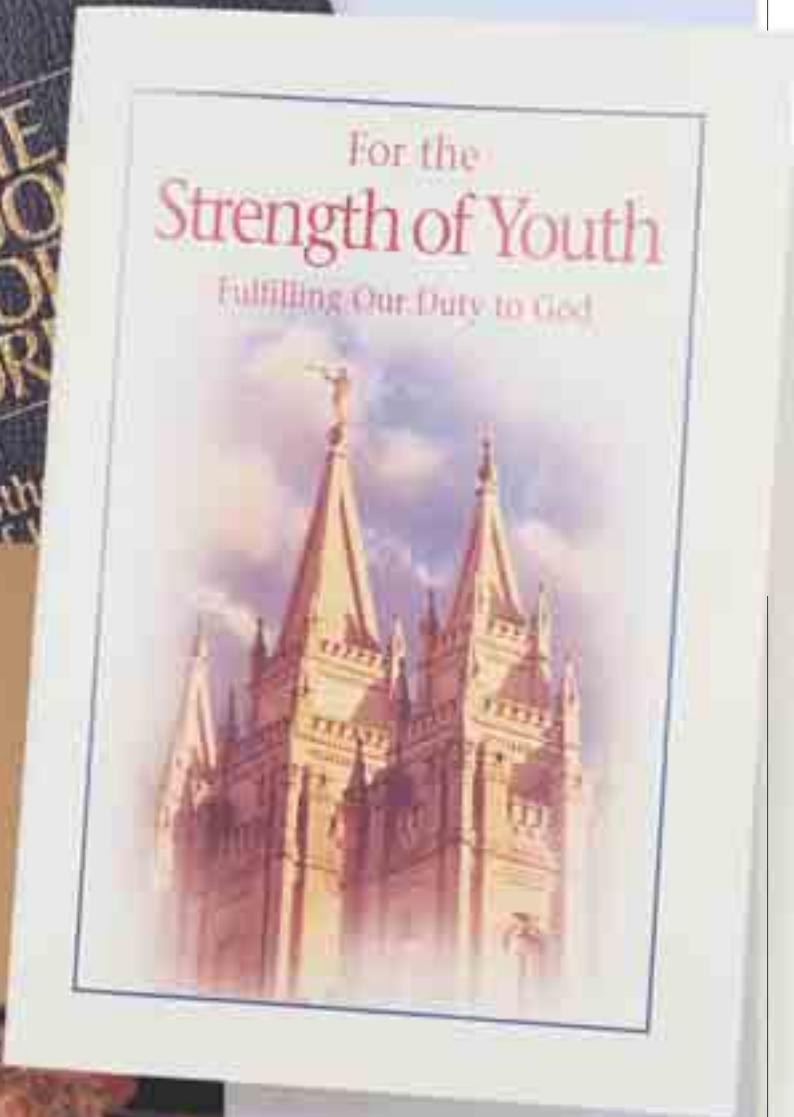
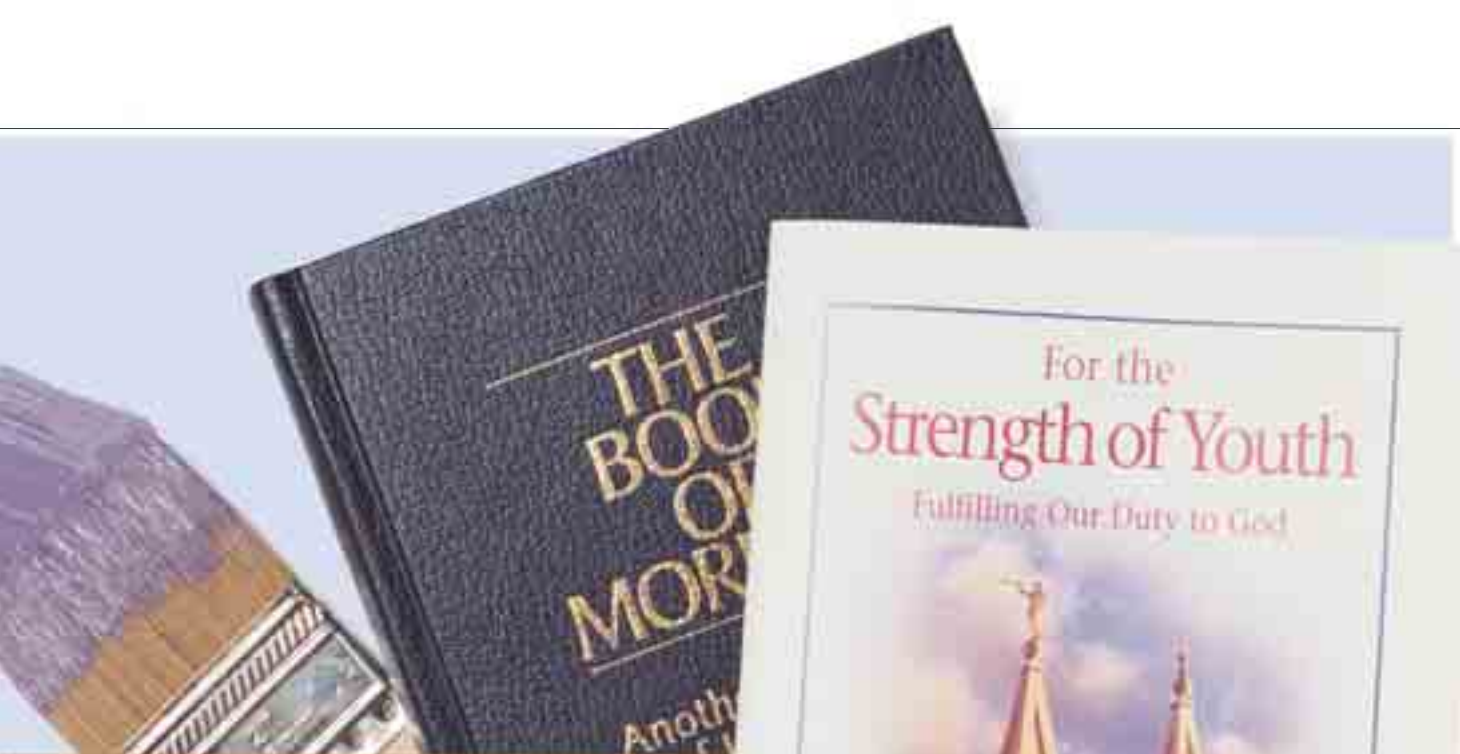
Our youth have many tough decisions before them. It is hoped that the new *For the Strength of Youth* will give them an even clearer sense of what they need to do and what they need to think about to live the kinds of lives that our Heavenly Father wants."

But don't expect to be told in more detail what you should and shouldn't do. Instead, you'll find even more help in understanding gospel principles and being guided by the Spirit to live them. Elder Samuelson says much more attention has been given to helping you understand the whys of the standards. There are also some great helps for explaining those whys to your friends.

What else is new in *For the Strength of Youth*? "New material has been added that focuses on what President Gordon B. Hinckley is saying. . . . There is a new First Presidency message. Scripture verses and scripture references have also been added, and there are seven new topics," Elder Samuelson says. The testimony of the living Christ and the proclamation on the family have also been added. "The inclusion of these documents not only communicates that their messages are important but also emphasizes that we have living prophets to guide us."

How much does the new *For Strength of Youth* deal with real-life issues and situations? Elder Samuelson explains that it is "a doctrinal document, but it is also very practical. It is hoped that youth will not only want to learn what the standards are, but will want to apply the sensible ideas given to help them keep

The standards haven't changed. They are based on eternal principles of happiness and will help lead us to Christ. The new *For the Strength of Youth* helps explain those standards better than ever.



the standards. It is not intended that these ideas be unduly prescriptive, but youth should carefully consider how to apply the doctrine.”

As the First Presidency says in its introductory message: “We promise that as you keep these standards and live by the truths in the scriptures, you will be able to do your life’s work with greater wisdom and skill and bear trials with greater courage. You will have the help of the Holy Ghost. You will feel good about yourself and will be a positive influence in the lives of others. You will be worthy to go to the temple to receive holy ordinances. These blessings and many more can be yours.”

Clearly, *For the Strength of Youth* is a better friend than ever. **NE**

Mutual



Now the weeknight activity with your friends is taking on a whole new dimension.

Honest! This really isn't an English lesson. But how did an adjective like "mutual" wind up being used as a noun? After all, the rest of the world uses the word in phrases like "mutual interests," or "mutual friends," or "mutual advantage." But we Latter-day Saints talk about "going to Mutual."

Well, it all goes back to a time your parents or grandparents will remember, a time when we had the something called "Mutual Improvement Association." The last two words were eventually dropped. But since "mutual" often refers to having something in common, or to something that benefits two or more people, that word stuck. Because it does describe friends with a common interest (the gospel) getting together to everyone's advantage.

Mutual is the weeknight activity where teens can meet in a relaxed setting to socialize and put into practice the gospel principles taught on Sunday. It is a time to become better friends with the teens in your ward or branch, and it is also the perfect opportunity to reach out to less-active youth and invite friends who want to learn more about the Church.

Guidelines for Mutual

Here are the instructions your leaders

are asked to follow in overseeing Mutual.

- Mutual should meet on the same day, at the same time, and in the same place each week and should last around one to one-and-a-half hours.

- Opening exercises should be held each week for about 10 to 15 minutes. The Laurel class presidency and the assistants to the bishop in the priests quorum take turns conducting. Opening exercises should include a hymn, a prayer, and also may include talks, musical selections, song practice, and opportunities for youth to share their talents and testimonies.

- Class or quorum activities can be from 30 to 70 minutes. Activities can include learning new skills or giving service. Also, activity time can be used to fulfill Duty to God and Personal Progress requirements.

- Practice or social activities are optional but can follow class or quorum activities and last about 30 minutes.

- Combined Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood activities should take place once a month so the youth in your ward can learn to work together and support each other in living gospel principles.

Annual Theme

Information will be sent each year from Church headquarters to priesthood leaders suggesting an annual theme for Mutual. The theme may be used to provide focus for activities such as dance, drama, speech, sports, music, or service. Preparations for the activities should be made during Mutual

Our Savior set the perfect example of one who cares for others. As members of His Church, we can learn to serve each other and be supportive friends as we learn to follow Christ.

FRIENDS



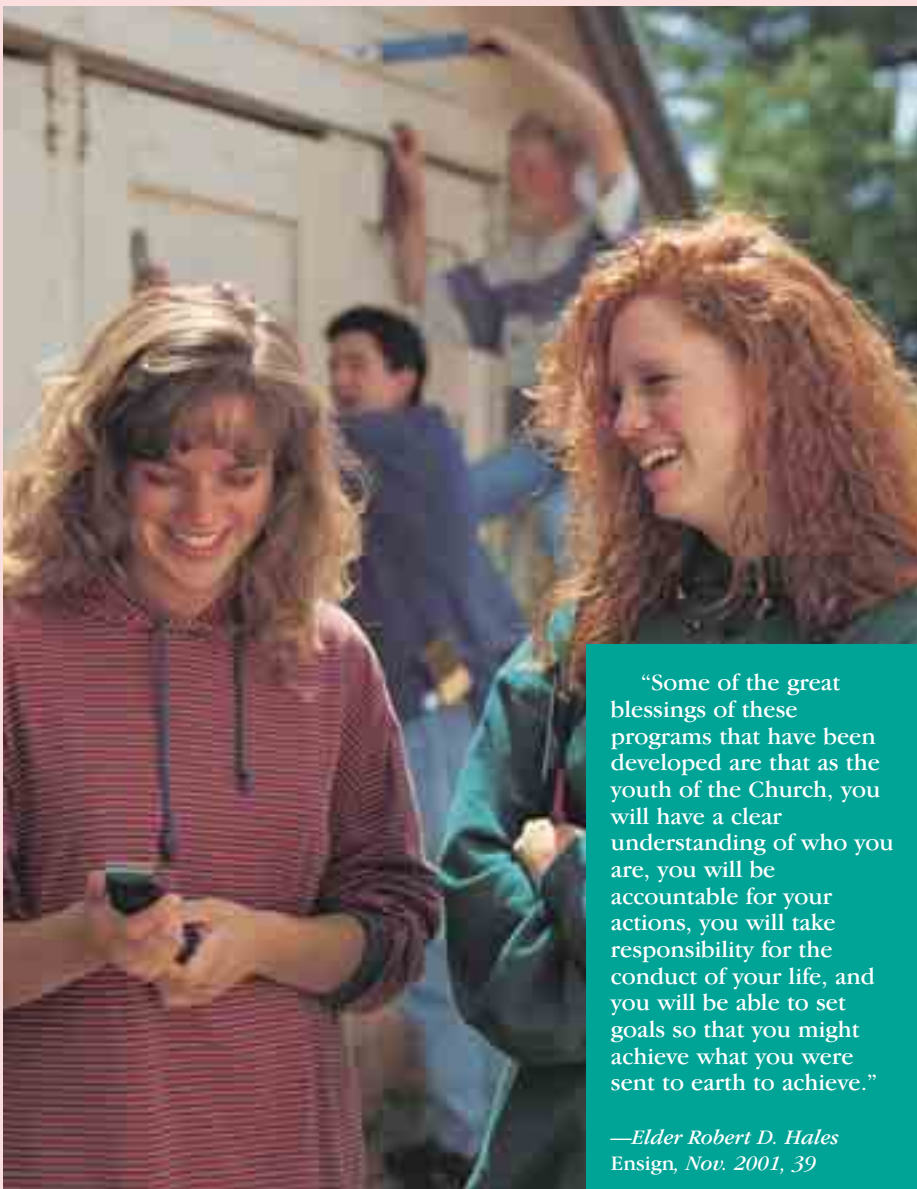
Mutual is for friends

One of the greatest things about Mutual night is that it is a good place to spend time doing worthwhile activities and encouraging friendships. It's a place where teens can spend time laughing together and having wholesome fun, as well as learning more about living the gospel.

One girl who was introduced to the gospel by Mutual was Candace Read of Colorado Springs, Colorado. She says that when she was 15 she wanted to find a friend she could trust not to swear around her. She met Kimberly in algebra class. Kimberly invited Candace to eat lunch with her friends. Candace says, "I really liked all of them. They all seemed so good-natured and free of the distasteful things of the world. Kimberly invited me to come to Mutual. All of these friends that I knew from school would be there. Of course I went. I loved the way Mutual made me feel."

From there, Candace was invited to meet the missionaries. She learned to pray, and she learned of the truthfulness of the gospel. When it came time for her to marry, she married in the temple, and she and her husband have six children, all actively working on gaining the blessings of the gospel.

Candace says, "I am so grateful to have a friend who set a good example for me that I might have these blessings in my life." **NE**



"Some of the great blessings of these programs that have been developed are that as the youth of the Church, you will have a clear understanding of who you are, you will be accountable for your actions, you will take responsibility for the conduct of your life, and you will be able to set goals so that you might achieve what you were sent to earth to achieve."

—Elder Robert D. Hales
Ensign, Nov. 2001, 39

Q & A

“I try my best to be happy, but no matter what I do, I feel overwhelmingly sad all the time. Is there anything I can do to feel better?”

NEW ERA

Occasional sadness is normal. We all go through trials in our lives that cause sadness. But you shouldn't constantly feel depressed. If you “feel *overwhelmingly* sad *all* the time,” please, tell your parents or your bishop or your youth leaders what you are feeling. You may have a medical condition that requires professional help.

The purpose of our existence is to attain true joy and happiness. “Men are, that they might have joy” (2 Ne. 2:25). The plan of salvation is often referred to as the plan of happiness. However, we are here to be tested. And since there is opposition in all things, all of us will experience sadness.

God wants us to be happy. But Satan is working to make our lives miserable. President Ezra Taft Benson explained that Satan's tools for fighting the plan of happiness are “despair, discouragement, despondency, and depression” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 65).

Unhappiness has many causes, including unworthiness. This doesn't mean that if you are unhappy you must

If you feel “overwhelmingly sad all the time,” please, tell your parents or your bishop or your youth leaders.

Don't forget to use the power of prayer.

Search the scriptures and the words of the prophets.

Reread and study your patriarchal blessing.

Give service; helping other people is a great way to put your own difficulties in perspective.

Never underestimate the power of attitude.

READERS

I find that I am most unhappy when I am idle. Along with daily prayer and scripture study, I feel that continually setting goals and trying to be a better person can make me feel that there is more meaning and happiness in my life. It's nice to know that I've worked hard, not only for myself, but for the benefit of others.

Shelly Nebeker, 17
Eagle River, Alaska



The only way to get rid of the sadness is through the help and companionship of the Lord. If you are feeling sad, you need to pray to Heavenly Father for help and guidance and ask Him how to overcome your trial. It is also essential to tell a parent or trusted adult about your sadness. I have gone through such an experience, and it will not go away without help from our Heavenly Father and from a parent or an adult.

Ashley Chadwick, 13
Yuma, Arizona



have sinned. But if sin is the source of your sadness, you should discuss with your bishop how to repent.

Use the power of prayer. When Jesus was suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed for comfort. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee” (Ps. 55:22). You can find comfort and happiness by communicating with God and asking for help with your trials. There is a reason we call the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

Search the scriptures and the words of our current prophets. The words of President Gordon B. Hinckley in “The Spirit of Optimism,” in the July 2001 *New Era*, may lift you up. If you have received your patriarchal blessing, reread and study it to gain a clearer understanding of the Lord’s love for you and of your divine potential.

Serve those in need. Helping other people overcome their problems is a great way to put your own difficulties in perspective. Service can help you feel the happiness that comes when striving to do what Christ would do.

Never underestimate the power of attitude. President Hinckley’s optimism should be an example to all of us, even in times of sadness. “There are occasionally hard days for each of us. Do not despair. Do not give up. Look for the sunlight through the clouds. Opportunities will eventually open to you” (*Ensign*, Apr. 1986, 4–5).

Perhaps there is irony in making a list of things we can do to overcome sadness when being overwhelmed by so many responsibilities may be what brought on the feelings of sadness in the first place. Elder Dallin H. Oaks said when he feels inadequate, frustrated, or depressed, he thinks of Mosiah 4:27: “It is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength” (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75). The Lord knows our limits, and we won’t be required to do more than we are able. **NE**

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



When you are worthy, a challenge becomes a contribution to growth, not a barrier to it. Yet . . . no matter how you begin, those solutions will never provide a complete answer. The final healing comes through faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and obedience to His commandments” (*Ensign*, May 1994, 9).

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

Listening to uplifting music, losing yourself in serving others, and prayer are three great ways to overcome sadness. Having a strong relationship with Heavenly Father is the key to personal happiness.

Dylan Roberts, 18
Lewiston, Idaho



About four years ago I became incredibly sad. It seemed as though I were falling into a black, bottomless pit with no way out. My advice to anyone who continually feels overwhelmingly sad, no matter what they do, is to seek professional help immediately.

Name Withheld
California

You might try to ask your father, bishop, or someone who has the priesthood to give you a special blessing.

Lauren Pineda, 12
Kaysville, Utah



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send us your answer to the question below, along with your name, age, and where you are from. Please include a snapshot of yourself that is 1 1/2 by 2 inches (4 by 5 cm) or larger.

Q&A, *New Era*
50 East North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

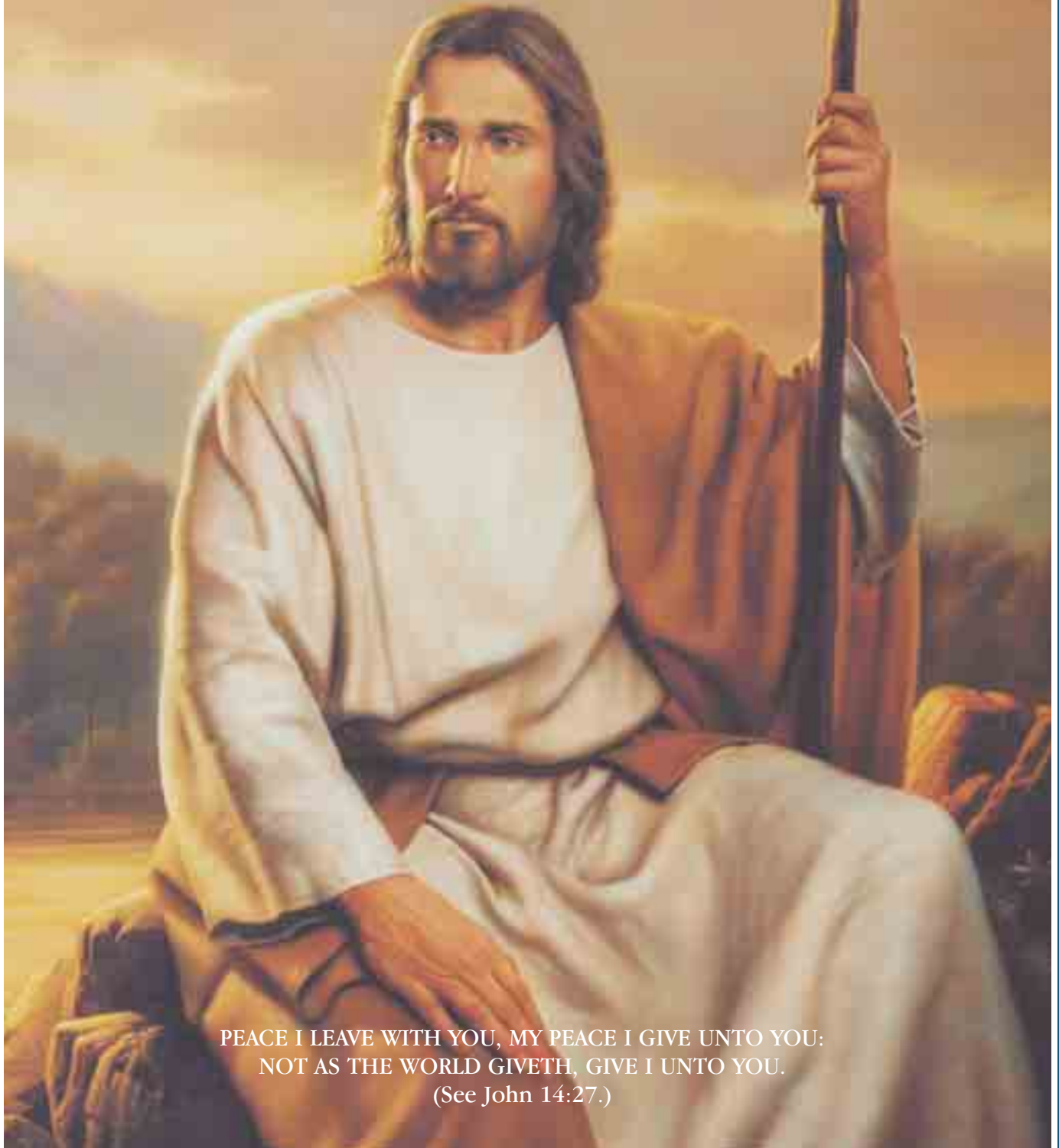
QUESTION

It seems as if everyone in my ward belongs to a perfect family. My parents are divorced, and I don't feel like I fit in. Is there anything I can do to feel better, and how can I strengthen my family?

Please respond by March 1, 2002.

MY PEACE

I GIVE UNTO YOU



PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU, MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU:
NOT AS THE WORLD GIVETH, GIVE I UNTO YOU.
(See John 14:27.)

Evaluate Your Style

You already know how tough it is to find a dress that's both modest and stylish. A group of young women in Kansas did something about it.

Your feet are throbbing, your back hurts a little, and you have been walking for hours. Although this may describe the way you feel after a long hike at camp, it could also describe the way you feel after shopping for a modest dress.

Finding a cute dress that is not too short, too tight, or too revealing that you can wear to a school dance, a music recital, or church is a difficult task. The lack of modest formal and informal dresses is a problem—a problem the young women of the Red Bridge Ward, Olathe Kansas Stake, decided to do something about.

How it began

It all began in December 2000 when Young Women President Cynthia Cockriel and her daughter Amanda went shopping for modest clothing. The trip was typical; they found a lot of dresses on the racks but few that were modest. Frustrated with the situation, Sister Cockriel expressed her concerns to a manager of a

local department store. To her surprise, the manager listened with interest and even offered to meet with Sister Cockriel and her young women if they put together a presentation with sketches, fabric swatches, and other descriptions of what they would like to see in the store.

With the leadership of Sister Cockriel and others, the young women of the Red Bridge Ward went to work. The girls were excited to help, and they worked very hard for more than four months. The final product was not just a few sketches and fabric swatches. Instead, the girls and their leaders created a sample company, complete with name, logo, and vendor book.

The company's name is Evaluate, with the emphasis placed on the "valu" part of the word. "When it comes to deciding what to wear, every young woman must evaluate her life, her values, and her style," says Laurel Alisa Christensen.

As Laurel president, Liz Christensen acted as CEO of Evaluate. The rest of the Laurels were given jobs such as fashion coordinator, journalist, photographer, and so on. The Laurels then shared the work of their assignments with the Beehives and Mia Maids.

by Caroline H. Benzley





Designing modesty

The young women and their leaders realized an increase of modest dresses is not something a store can do without the help of designers. Department stores can only sell what the designers create. The young women in Kansas also know it is not easy to design a modest dress because they each tried to design a dress in keeping with the dress standards of BYU and other Church-affiliated schools. Heidi Jarvis, a Laurel in the Red Bridge Ward, commented, "We now have an appreciation for dress designers. It is a difficult task to make a modest dress exciting and even dazzling."

Although designing such a dress is difficult, the Red Bridge Young Women think that Ashley Braithwaite of Allen, Texas, did just that. When Ashley heard about Evaluate's project she sent the girls some dress designs that became an important part of their presentation. They depicted the type of dresses the young women are looking for.

Ashley was not the only young

Months of planning, hard work, and creativity went into the girls' presentation. It was all worth it. They saw they could make a difference and get their message across: "Modesty is not a trend. Modesty is a style."





woman outside of the Red Bridge Ward to add to the Evaluate project. Hundreds of other girls voiced their support through e-mails, letters, and phone calls. Response to Evaluate's letter-writing campaign came from all over. Adrienne from Brazil responded, "Not every item needs to be skimpy or revealing. It is possible to be modest and stylish at the same time." Others responded from Australia, Africa, Austria, and throughout the United States.

The big day

When the day of the presentation finally arrived, the young women were able to confidently present their opinions to one of the largest upscale department stores in their area. The girls gathered their sample dresses, posters, vendor books, dress designs, and letters. With more than four months of hard work



Because of their presentation, the local store's managers are increasing the number of modest dresses on the racks. Other stores in the chain have also expressed interest.

behind them, they put on their biggest smiles and told the retail world that modesty should not be overlooked.

The presentation went even better than most of the girls thought it would. The buyer and the managers listened attentively to Evaluate's message: "Modesty is not a trend. Modesty is a style." The girls also presented their objective of letting the store know about the market it is missing by not selling more modest clothing.

In the presentation Liz Christensen

explained, "There is a strong customer base you currently miss at your store. It may not be a majority, but we hope to have shown you that it is big enough to make a difference in your business."

The presentation went so well that the influence of these 17 girls and their leaders extended beyond the store's conference room. The young women were interviewed by *The Kansas City Star*, and featured in *The Wall Street Journal*. The British Broadcasting Corporation also interviewed Alisa and Liz.



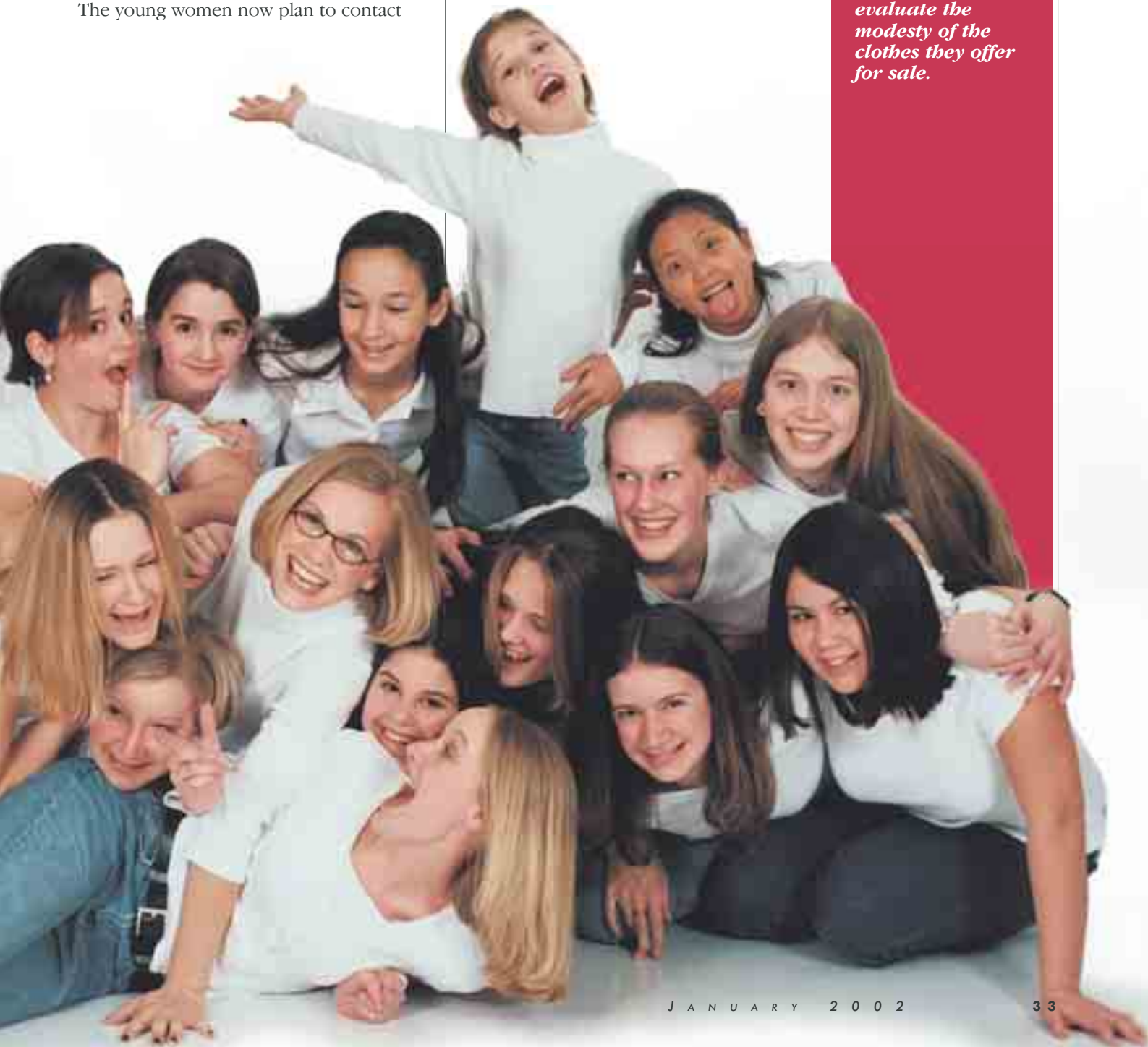
Fruits of their labor

So where does it go from here? Now that the presentation is over, the girls and their leaders are not about to abandon the project, not when they are beginning to see the fruits of their labor. Because of the young women's presentation, their local store's managers are increasing the number of modest dresses on the racks. Different stores within the chain, such as one in Seattle, have also expressed interest in Evaluate. The young women now plan to contact

designers to encourage more modest dresses everywhere.

Thanks to the Red Bridge Young Women, next time you go shopping for a modest dress it may be a little easier to find one. You may not even have to hike for hours through the mall with sore feet and an aching back. Instead, with enough support from people around the world, these girls may help us save all the hiking for camp. **NE**

They're your average, fun-loving Latter-day Saint girls, but they're serious about what they've started and plan to keep encouraging stores and designers to evaluate the modesty of the clothes they offer for sale.



ON A SLIPPERY SLOPE



Thrilled to be on the ski patrol, I trained hard and prepared for all kinds of situations. Unfortunately, I wasn't ready for the avalanche of foul language and dirty jokes that nearly buried me.

by Brittany Russell

After gliding down the mountain that day, I was horrified to see just how far I had slipped.

I walked into the small office tucked in a deserted locker room and shook hands with the bearded man. Terrified, I introduced myself. I stole glances at the pictures cozily hung on the wall featuring an ocean of red coats, white crosses, wind-burned faces, and jagged, snowcapped mountains. I envisioned myself kneeling between the black and brown marbled German shepherd and the man with the scruffy whiskers.

The interview was comparable to

others I'd had, but I never wanted a job so badly.

I could think of nothing more than sifting through untracked inches of light powder and getting paid for every turn I made. I gave no attention to the challenges I knew would accompany me throughout the cold winter season as a 19-year-old female Church member on the Park City (Utah) Mountain Resort ski patrol.

And I got the job.

My first day of training came in October after the leaves had promenaded their flashy colors and now



provided
a dull and
crunchy carpet on
the ground. I waded
through masses of fellow
patrollers lining the walkway and held
my breath, shielding my lungs from the
thick cloud of cigarette smoke that



My clothing told the injured skier I was a member of the ski patrol. But my language sure didn't tell him I was a member of the Church. That's when I realized just how far downhill I had gone.

circled above our heads. I also attempted to conceal my disgust at the tobacco-spitters' club in the corner.

What are you doing here? my mind prodded as I caught people stealing peeks at me and seemingly furrowing their brows in doubt.

For two weeks we trained in sunshine, fierce wind, freezing temperatures, and blizzards to learn and perfect a patroller's duties. It was in these harsh elements that people's more colorful sides emerged. I received such doses of foul language, dirty jokes, and untamed lifestyle stories that my mind almost became numb to them by the end of the season.

My standards were first tested the week before Christmas when I attended the ski patrol party. I walked in the front door and was immediately greeted by seemingly happy and carefree co-workers. People who had never said a word to me before now seemed to think we were best friends. Their beer spilled on my clothes as they stretched their

arms out for a hug. A fellow rookie approached me and unleashed his frustration at not having the personal strength that I exhibited in avoiding alcohol. I was surprised by his sincere concern as he continued to share his disappointment in his lack of conviction.

The beer sloshed out of his cup as he gestured with his hands, and I explained to him the Word of Wisdom and the personal choice I made long before not to drink. As I drove home that night, I felt peace that I had been an example to one person.

Starting to slip

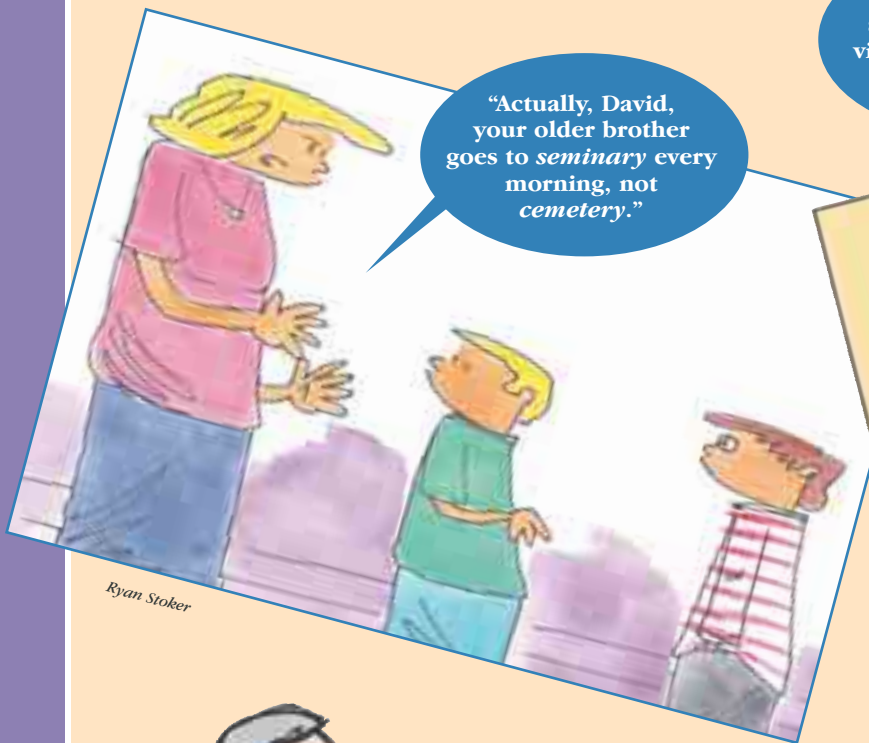
Unfortunately, as the season progressed, I found myself slowly letting my guard down. One day when I was working the Jupiter Peak rotation, I responded to an accident. My co-worker and I sped down the steep terrain with a toboggan, fighting to keep it steady. Upon arriving at the scene to help the victim, we laughed at the blunders we had made trying to get there. During our storytelling, I slipped in a colorful adjective.

I thought nothing of it until, in a conversation with the victim, he told us he was a BYU student and was preparing for a mission. I realized that to him I was probably just another coarse mountain patrol woman. I had given him no reason to believe otherwise. At that moment I reaffirmed my desire that no matter where I am, I want people to know I am a disciple of Christ. And isn't that what we do when we take the sacrament each week—take His name upon us and stand as witnesses?

When I slipped in my conduct that day, I was embarrassed that the injured skier wouldn't associate me with the Church. But I was far more embarrassed that I hadn't first been ashamed that Heavenly Father had also heard me.

Being on the mountain patrol challenged my moral strength and convictions. But even more than that, it strengthened them. It is from opposition that we grow stronger. Through my trials, my reliance on Heavenly Father and the scriptures helps me to be strong in the face of temptation. The lessons I learned while on patrol taught me to avoid the temptation to lower my standards to better fit what others are doing. **NE**

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



Ryan Stoker



Adam Koford



Val Chadwick Bagley

3

Three centavos might sound like small change, but finding them added up to a very big change in my life.

“**N**o, bishop, I don’t think I’m going on a mission.” These were my words as I declined every invitation from my bishop to consider going on a mission. When my family became members of the Church, there were many things we had to learn and unlearn. Being first-generation Church members, in our family going on a mission was something we neither discussed nor considered. It seemed like a big sacrifice.

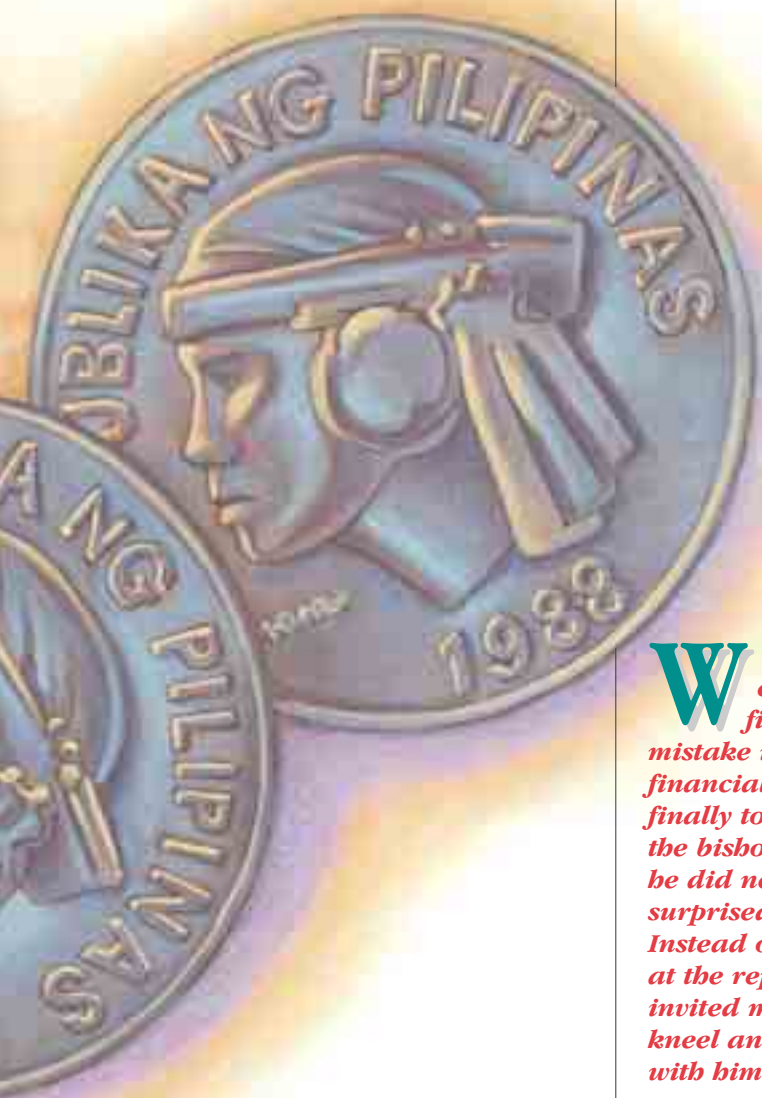
Still, I was an active member of the Church. I would attend all my meetings and accept responsibilities as they were extended. I was in my second year of studying accounting when the bishop called me to be the financial clerk.

One Wednesday, I was faced with trying to find an error in the records. I felt helpless as I labored to find the three centavos’ difference between the Church’s and the bank’s records. The report was due the next day and that compounded my problem. The only sensible thing to do was to ask for help.

I approached my bishop and explained my predicament. It surprised me that instead of immediately reviewing the



Centavos



When I couldn't find the mistake in the financial report, I finally took it to the bishop. What he did next surprised me. Instead of looking at the report, he invited me to kneel and pray with him.

by Joel B. Macariola

report, he invited me to kneel and pray with him as we explained our problem to the Lord. When we got up from our knees, the bishop asked to see the report. Almost immediately and without using a calculator, he pointed to a column and said, "This is where your problem is."

I totaled the numbers, and, sure enough, he was right. I felt overwhelmed. It seemed I had just witnessed a miracle. My young and feeble testimony of the Church was strengthened. I gained a stronger conviction that this was the true Church.

While I was still wrapped up in this experience, the bishop asked, "Now are you going on a mission?"

This time, I said yes.

As I left the meetinghouse that night, I had with me all the missionary papers I needed to fill out. Within a few months from when my bishop submitted my missionary recommendation form, I was called to serve a full-time mission in the Philippines Baguio Mission.

It has been many years since that night. After completing a two-year mission, I returned to school and obtained my college degree, four years behind the normal age. If I had to do it over again I would still choose to serve.

I'm thankful for a bishop who obeyed a prompting to ask the right question at the right time. I'm also thankful to Heavenly Father who not only helped me find the three centavos to reconcile my report but who also led me to a wealth of missionary experiences without price. **NE**

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

When I received an assignment to speak in the priesthood session, I called Elder Robert L. Backman, who was, at the time, director of the Young Men program, and asked for suggestions on a subject needing the special attention of those holding the Aaronic Priesthood. Within a few days I received a memo back from Elder Backman, and his response was, “The youth are at a most interesting time in their lives. They will soon be making major decisions which will shape their future, such as going on missions, college, a profession, marriage, etc.” His counsel was to speak on making right decisions.

Attached to his memo was a “Peanuts” cartoon that pictured Linus standing with a nice, firm snowball in his hand as Lucy enters the picture. She surveys the situation and makes this comment to Linus: “Life is full of choices. You may choose, if you wish, to throw that snowball at me. You also may choose, if you wish, not to throw that snowball at me. Now if you choose to throw that snowball at me, I will pound you right into the ground! If you choose not to throw that snowball at me, your head will be spared.”

Then Linus, throwing the snowball away with a disgusted look on his face, said, “Life is full of choices, but I never get any.”

Linus is right that life is full of choices. But I have found him to be wrong in the second part. Decisions are before us every step of the way. Elder Richard L. Evans said in the film *Man’s Search For Happiness*: “Life offers you two precious gifts. One is time, the other, freedom of choice—the freedom to buy with your time what you will. You are free to exchange your allotment of time for thrills. You may trade it for base desires. You may invest it in greed. You may

purchase with it vanity; you may spend your time in pursuit of material things. Yours is the freedom to choose. But these are not bargains, for in them you find no lasting satisfaction.”

Imagine Lehi’s time

There is a great account in the very beginning of the Book of Mormon of a family that had some grave decisions to make. Just imagine that you are living in that time and you are a member of Lehi’s household. You are living in Jerusalem in a very comfortable home, warm and secure, surrounded with many of the good things of life. As you arise one morning, your father calls a family council. He states that he had a dream last night, and then makes a startling statement to you: “Go get your sleeping bags and the tents. Just take what provisions we can carry on our backs. Don’t worry about the gold and silver and your precious things. We will have no room for them. I have been commanded by the Lord that we should depart into the wilderness.” And the scripture records, “And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness” (1 Ne. 2:4).

You have only gone a short distance when your father has another dream. He calls you to him and says, “Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem.

“For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass.

“Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brothers should go unto the house of Laban, and seek the



When Nephi decided to do what the Lord had commanded and moved forward, acting in faith, the Lord delivered Laban into his hands and made it possible to fulfill the command.

by Elder L. Tom Perry
of the Quorum
of the Twelve



Illustrated by Scott Snow

records, and bring them down hither into the wilderness” (1 Ne. 3:2–4).

Now that was a hard task assigned to the sons, for Laban was a very rich and powerful man. They murmured against their father, and said it was a hard thing he was requiring them to do. But one son said to his father, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Ne. 3:7).

Several decisions faced these young men as they approached Laban to ask for the records. It’s most interesting to me to note the process by which they made those decisions. First, the decision was to leave it to chance. And they cast lots, and the lot fell to Laman. He went to the house of Laban, and as he sat and talked with him, he said he desired the records that were written on the plates of brass. Laban was not too pleased with this request and was angry, and thrust him out of his presence, and would not let him have the record. He said, “Behold thou art a robber, and I will slay thee” (1 Ne. 3:13). That was enough for Laman; he fled and came back and reported to his brothers that leaving the assignment to chance did not work.

Nephi had to make another decision on how to obtain the records. He thought of all the wealth they were leaving in their home, the gold and silver and all manner of riches. He thought he would gather up that gold and silver and trust in the things of the world to purchase the records. So they approached the house of Laban and displayed the gold and silver and offered to trade these precious things for the plates of brass. When Laban saw the property and that it was exceedingly great, he did lust after it. Looking at the four boys against all of his servants, it was easy to determine that he could retain the plates and have the wealth also. He sent his servants after the boys to slay them, and they had to flee, leaving their property behind. Things of the world did not produce the records.

Now the brothers of Nephi had almost lost their lives twice attempting to get the record, and they were not very happy with him. Nephi was not willing to give

up; he reasoned with them this way: “Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?” (1 Ne. 4:1).

Who could argue against such sound reasoning? Of course the Lord was mightier than Laban and all of his servants. So by night Nephi led his brothers outside the wall of Jerusalem. He crept inside towards the house of Laban, this time not leaving it to chance or to worldly things, but going by faith. He said, “I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do” (1 Ne. 4:6).

As he came to the house of Laban, he found a man fallen to the earth, drunken with wine. On coming closer, he discovered it was Laban. Laban had been delivered into his hands. The Lord had opened the way to obtain the record. Making the decision to place his trust in the Lord produced the results.

There is a great lesson to be learned in the decision-making process of the sons of Lehi. Leaving the decision to chance was not a very acceptable method.

An invitation to dance

I remember one time when I was in the Marine Corps, stationed at Camp Pendleton in California. I left a decision to chance and almost found myself in a most unpleasant situation.

My buddies had been after me each weekend to go with them into the dance hall in Los Angeles to have a good time. Each weekend I was encouraged to go. After several weeks of turning them down, thinking that that was no place for me, I decided just once to leave it to chance and see how it would turn out.

I started with them towards this big dance hall in Los Angeles. We were riding the streetcar, and as it progressed from stop to stop, it was filling up with many young ladies. They were not the type I had ever been around before. They were extremely forward. I felt very uncomfortable around them. As they approached me, I adopted a tactic completely unknown to a marine. I retreated.

On the back row of the streetcar I found four young ladies whose appearance was entirely different. I asked them if

As a young marine, L. Tom Perry found himself on a streetcar, surrounded by less-than-desirable influences, because he had left a decision to chance.



they were going to the dance, and their reply was, “Yes, but not to the same one you are.” Then they said, “We are going to the Adams Ward to a Mormon dance. What do you know about the Mormon Church?” I was surprised, relieved, and willingly got off the streetcar with them, and had a most delightful evening at the Adams Ward. Have more confidence in yourself than allowing your decisions to happen just by chance.

The decision by Nephi and his brothers to place their trust in the things of the world proved to be no more successful than leaving it to chance. I was talking to a father while attending a stake conference. He was telling me about the pressures on his teenage daughter to follow the ways of the world and how she had made the decision not to allow those pressures to influence her life.

She was the only member of the Church in her class in school. She was a popular young lady with the boys and had many opportunities to go out on dates. The boys in her class did not live by the standards she had been taught in our Church. She made the decision to tell every boy who asked her for a date what standards she lived by. If she were to date them, they would be expected to conduct themselves in accordance with her standards. She would get such a commitment from them before she accepted a date. One day the big campus football hero came up to her before the most special dance of the year and said, “You know, I would ask you to go to the dance with me if you would lower your standards just a little.”

There was no hesitation in her voice as she replied, “If I would go out with you, I would be lowering my standards.” Be strong enough to make your decisions to not follow worldly ways.

Nephi found success when he made his decision to have faith in the Lord and to follow His way.

A secret of success

Some years ago in the *Church News* there appeared a most interesting article about a young man who made his decision to trust in the ways of the Lord.

“President Spencer W. Kimball is a constant inspiration to the Church. This is not only so through what he says, but likewise by what he does. When

addressing the Stockholm Area Conference he revealed the secret of this success. Said he: ‘As I was out alone, milking the cows, or putting up the hay, I had time to think. I mulled it over in my mind and made this decision: ‘I, Spencer Kimball, will never taste any form of liquor. I, Spencer Kimball, will never touch tobacco. I will never drink coffee, nor will I ever touch tea—not because I can explain why I shouldn’t, except that the Lord said not to.’ He said those things were an abomination. There are many other things that are, too, that are not in the Word of Wisdom. But I made up my mind.

‘That’s the point I am trying to make. I made up my mind then, as a little boy; ‘I will never touch those things.’ And so, having made up my mind, it was easy to follow it, and I did not yield. There were many temptations that came along, but I did not even analyze it; I did not stop and measure it and say, ‘Well, shall I or shall I not?’ I always said to myself: ‘But I made up my mind I would not. Therefore, I do not.

“I want to just say that I will soon go into another year and that I have never tasted tea, nor coffee, nor tobacco, nor liquor of any kind, nor drugs. Now that may sound very presumptuous and boasting to you, but I am only trying to make this point: that if every boy and girl—as he or she begins to grow a little more mature and becomes a little more independent of his friends and his family and all—if every boy and girl would make up his or her mind, I will not yield, then no matter what the temptation is: I made up my mind. That’s settled” (*Church News*, Oct. 4, 1975, 16).

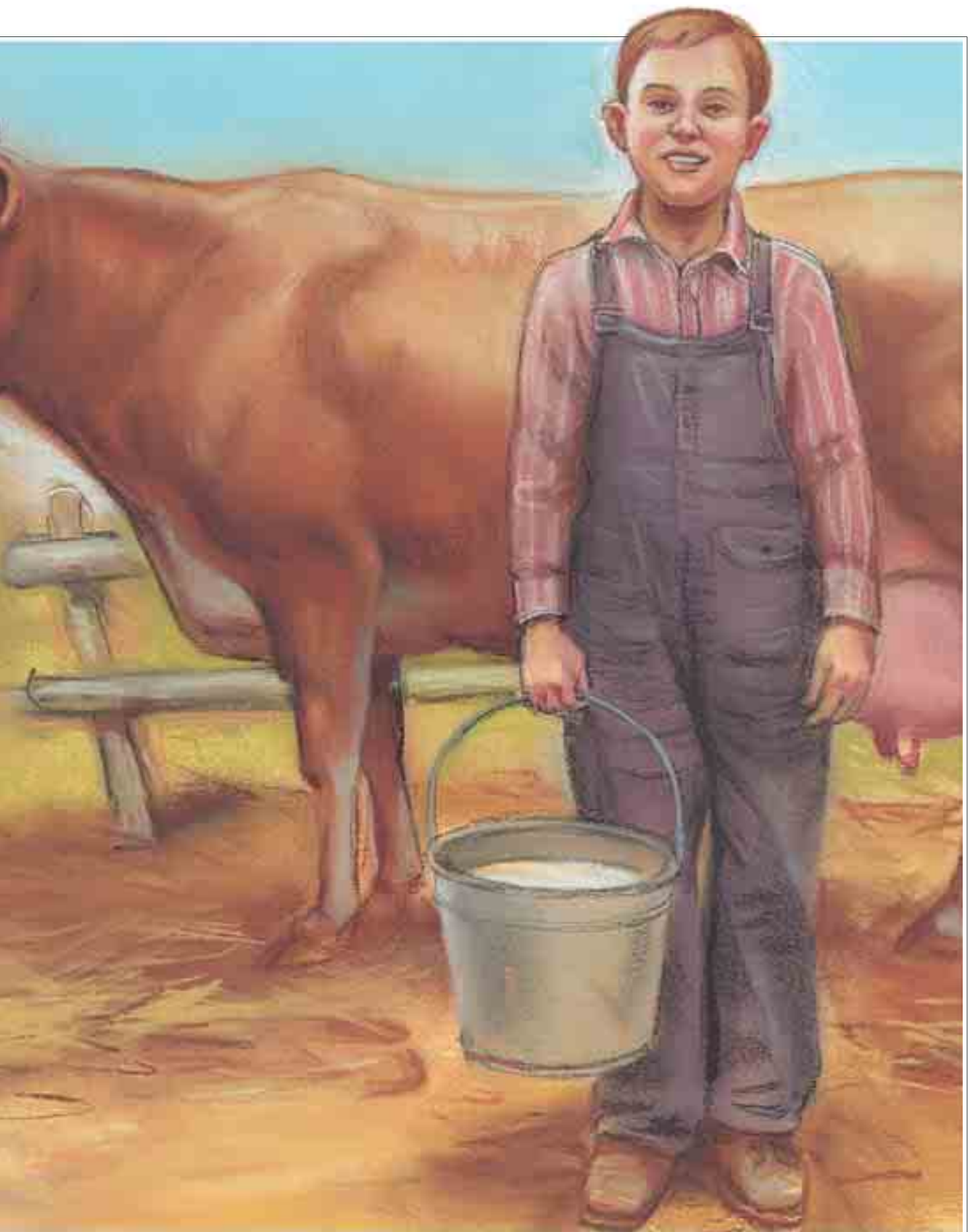
If we would all follow President Kimball’s example to make our decisions based on our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, what a change it would make in our lives.

O, youth of the noble birthright, make your decision now: “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded” (1 Ne. 3:7). There is power in His way. There is no greater joy in this life than to be found in His service. I bear you my solemn testimony that a decision to live according to His law will bring you life eternal. **NE**

Adapted from an October 1979 general conference address.



While milking the cows as a young boy, Spencer W. Kimball made up his mind that he would never break the Word of Wisdom. Having made up his mind at an early age, it was easier to follow his decision and not yield, though there were many temptations.



Dusti's PLAN

*D*usti poses with suitcases packed with clothes destined for new members and new missionaries in Peru. (Opposite page) Dusti and the bishop's wife give a new go-to-church dress to the daughter of a family Dusti's brother taught.

by Andrea Nixon

The wheelchair doesn't hold Dusti back. It just helps her move forward to serve others.

At first glance, Dusti Bills appears to be an average, confident 19-year-old who loves animals and Chinese food. You'd never suspect that she wasn't expected to walk. Or that she didn't cry until she was one. Or that she didn't talk until she was three. Or that she has a disability that leaves her in almost constant pain.

Dusti was born with cerebral palsy, but she doesn't let that stop her from doing the things she enjoys. And one thing Dusti loves is serving others.

Service is something Dusti, a member of the Riverton Utah First Ward, strongly believes in. When her brother was on his mission in Peru, he mentioned in one of his letters that some of the newly baptized members lacked appropriate clothing to wear to church. Dusti decided to help.

For one of her Value Projects, Dusti asked her friends to donate dresses that the Peruvian Saints could wear to church. When others found out

what she was doing, clothing of all kinds began pouring in to the Bills's home. After collecting and sorting, Dusti filled several suitcases to take with her family when they traveled to Peru to pick up her brother. The bags were crammed with everything from white baptismal clothes to suits for potential missionaries.

Dusti's help didn't stop there. Her new wheelchair had arrived a few days before she left Utah, so Dusti was more than willing to leave her old chair at the mission home in Lima. It would go to a woman who recently had a stroke and was no longer able to walk.

"I was just glad someone who needed it got to use it," Dusti says.

Along with finding grateful Saints who were thrilled with their new clothes, Dusti found a little bit of herself, too.

"You could tell that the members were humble and they really believed in the Church





Photography courtesy of the Bills family

Dusti's dog, Puck, is one of her favorite companions. Her love of animals is exceeded only by her love of children, particularly children with disabilities. When her health allows it, horseback riding is one of the joys of Dusti's life. Babe (below, right) is her favorite mount.

If you want to help provide clothing for those in need, you are encouraged to contribute to Deseret Industries where available or to other established relief agencies in your community. Much of the clothing donated to Deseret Industries is sent by Church Humanitarian Service to needy people worldwide.



and Jesus Christ. That made me think, I do know that the Church is the right one," says Dusti. "I believe that Jesus Christ has a plan for everybody."

Apparently Dusti thinks a big part of her plan includes service, as it is often the basis of what she does. For another Value Project, Dusti made arrangements for her ward's Young Women group to volunteer at an elementary school for severely disabled children. Dusti had already spent countless hours there as a volunteer, and she wanted her friends to have the experience as well. Dusti feels a special connection with the children she works with, and is sensitive and understanding of their needs.

"I know the children are smart, and they're thinking of stuff. They just can't tell people," Dusti explains.

Dusti's first thought is to serve, but when she's not organizing clothing drives or working with disabled preschoolers, she likes playing with her dog, Puck, and her bird, Kiwi. She also has two horses, two cats, a hamster, and a goat. She

enjoys acting and playing bass clarinet, and she places high priority on getting things done.

Yet in the background, the surgeries, operations, and medication are a very real part of Dusti's life. She tries hard to maintain a positive attitude.

Dusti remembers a time when she was 13 and came to terms with her condition. "I thought, Why am I in so much pain? Why does this have to happen to me? I just thought that it was part of the plan for me, and that I am going to know why some day."

Dusti may not know now why she has to attend therapy sessions every week, or why she can't go to the mall without her wheelchair. But she does know God has a plan for her life, and she knows that serving others is what brings her true happiness. She lives a life full of faith, determination, and service.

And that's anything but average. **NE**



Creative ideas for using this issue of the New Era.

Personal Improvement

□ Read “On a Slippery Slope” on page 34. Have you fallen into some less-than-desirable habits? Make a New Year’s resolution to do better. Don’t forget to replace bad habits with good ones like reading scriptures or singing hymns.

□ Resolve to improve your relationships with your brothers and sisters. Read “Friends Forever” on page 8 for inspiration. Make a plan to invite each brother or sister to do something special just with you so the two of you can get to know each other better. The activities you choose may even be the start of some new family traditions or at least some great family memories.

□ Do you find yourself feeling burdened with the problems of the world or the simple frustrations you face every day? Read Q&A on page 24, then write a list of 10 things you can be happy or hopeful about.

Missionary Work

□ *For the Strength of Youth*, outlining Church standards, has been updated and revised. Prayerfully consider giving a copy of the pamphlet to a friend. Ask him or her to join you where you can talk, perhaps over lunch at school or at a local fast-food restaurant for a treat. Familiarize yourself with the pamphlet ahead of time so you can answer your friend’s questions.

Family Home Evening

□ Help your parents and family members get involved in the Aaronic Priesthood Duty to God or the Young Women Personal Progress with you. Ask that one family home evening be devoted to reviewing the books with your parents and brothers and sisters, and discuss how the changes will affect you. Decide together how your family can help you achieve some of the requirements.

Leadership Tip

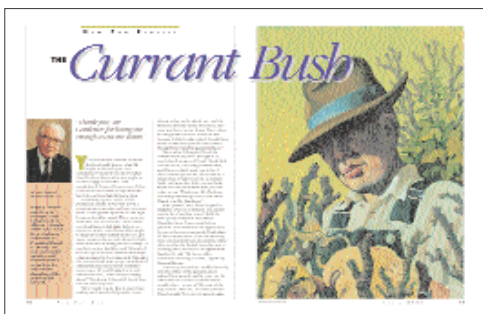
□ Since both the Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women are introducing exciting changes in the Duty to God and Personal Progress programs (see page 12), have a brainstorming session on how your class or quorum can get better acquainted with the new programs. Compile lists of ideas to share with your class at your next Mutual night.

Seminary Devotional

□ Bring a jar, several rocks large enough to fill the jar, and sand. Show the class that if you pour the sand in first and then place the rocks on top, they will not fit. Reverse the order. If you put the rocks in first, then pour the sand in so it fills the little spaces between the rocks, it will all fit. Point out that if you put the important things like family, Church, and testimony in place in your life first, then the smaller things will fit much better.

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Really shows

I love reading the *New Era*. It's wonderful having a magazine written for us youth. Each time I read an issue, I find at least one article I feel was written just for me. Often I find more. The articles inspire me to be better. They give good advice and offer words of warning that often help. It really shows how very important we are to the leaders of the Church, and more importantly to our Savior and Heavenly Father. One of the articles from the April 2001 issue that especially hit me was "The Currant Bush" by Elder Hugh B. Brown. I have a hard time handing over my problems to the Lord and letting Him answer my questions. I guess I forget who the gardener is. Thank you so much for all the work that is put into the magazine.

*Aimee Mitchell
Melba, Idaho (via e-mail)*

Never used to

I am 19 and I love to read the *New Era*. I never used to read any Church magazines, but since I started reading the *New Era* it has changed my life and has helped me understand more about the Church and its teachings. It has also really helped me with the preparation for my mission that I am due to serve very soon. I love reading the beautiful stories and articles in this magazine. So thank you so much for making a great magazine which I can be proud to read every month.

*Martin McGinlay
Leyland, Lancashire, England (via e-mail)*

Uplifting

I really enjoy reading the *New Era*. Although I've only been reading it for about two months, I find it is very uplifting. A lot of magazines for youth these days are totally nasty, but I'm glad I have the *New Era* to read. Thank you for everything and the time that you put into the magazine.

*Laura M. Smith
East Lyme, Connecticut*

Awesome Q&As

The *New Era* has been such a positive influence in my life. Thank you for all the hard

"I never used to read any Church magazines, but since I started reading the New Era it has changed my life."



work you put into it. When nonmember friends ask me hard questions about my religion, I'll sometimes give them a copy with the answer. Thank you for all the Q&As. They are awesome.

*Debbie Friedman
Beaverton, Oregon (via e-mail)*

Giving the right impression

My 14 year old is an avid reader. She was hooked on reading romance novels, and her interest in these books led me to be very concerned that my daughter was getting the wrong impression of what a relationship between a man and a woman should be. This concern led to many talks, lectures, and fights between the two of us. After discussing the situation with my sister-in-law, she asked if I had given my daughter a subscription to the *New Era*. I was inactive at the time and had not thought of this. The next thing I knew, my brother and sister-in-law had purchased a subscription to the *New Era* for her. Now a year later I am not having the same battles with her over what she reads and I am no longer so concerned about what she is learning about relationships. She now understands she does not have to settle for an empty, go-nowhere relationship based on sexual attraction. She is no longer disappointed to be a young woman and now understands the differences between the way the world and the Lord tells us relationships should be. I contribute this change to the magazine's layouts and stories on temple marriage and respecting your mate, whether you are dating or married. Thank you for doing what the Lord has asked of you.

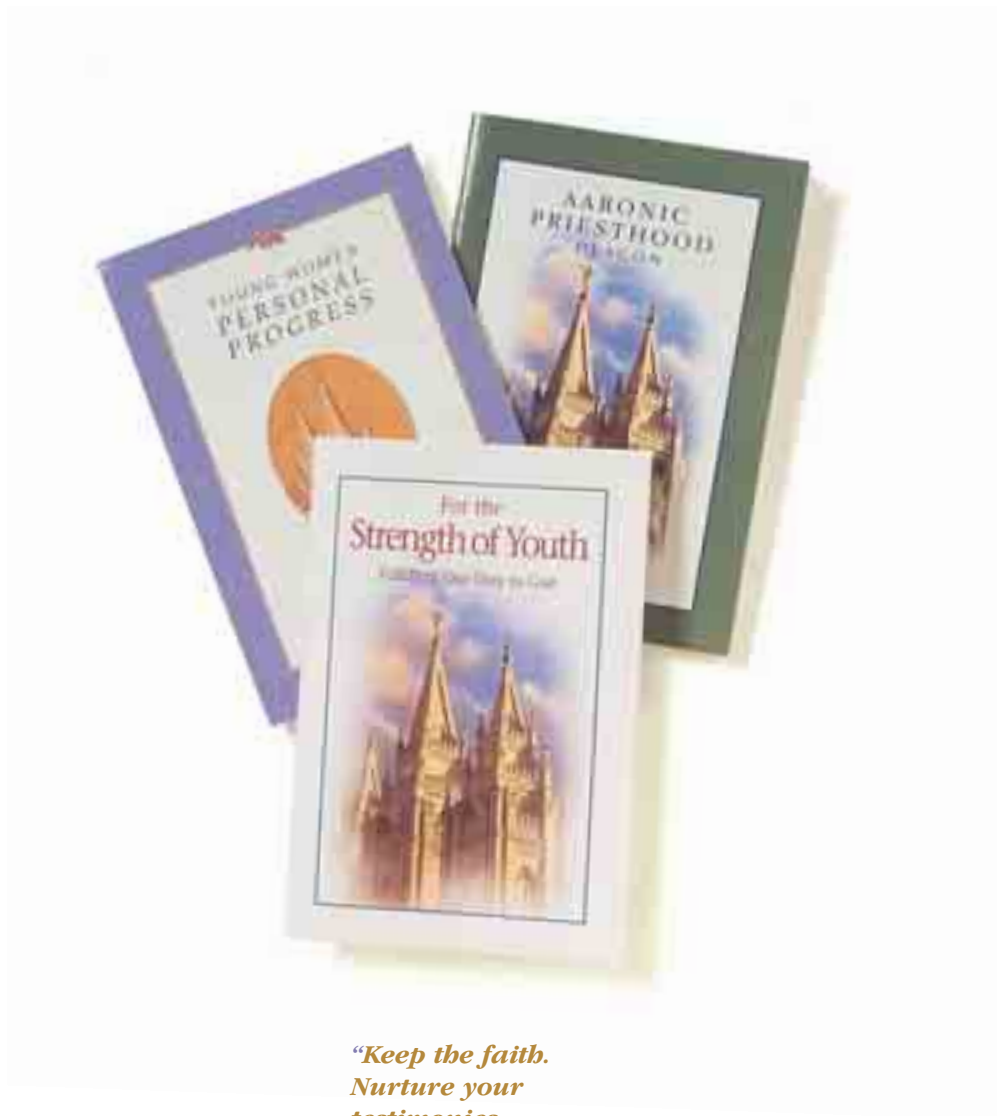
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and clarity.*



*“Keep the faith.
Nurture your
testimonies.
Walk in
righteousness,
and the Lord
will bless you
and prosper
you, and you
will be a happy
and wonderful
people.”*

*See “Just
for You,”
p. 12*