

THE New Era

JANUARY

2004

COVER STORY:
FOLLOWING
LEHI'S DREAM,
P. 30

ICE, ICE, AND
AWAY, P. 20

2004 MUTUAL
THEME: SEARCH,
PRAY, BELIEVE,
P. 4



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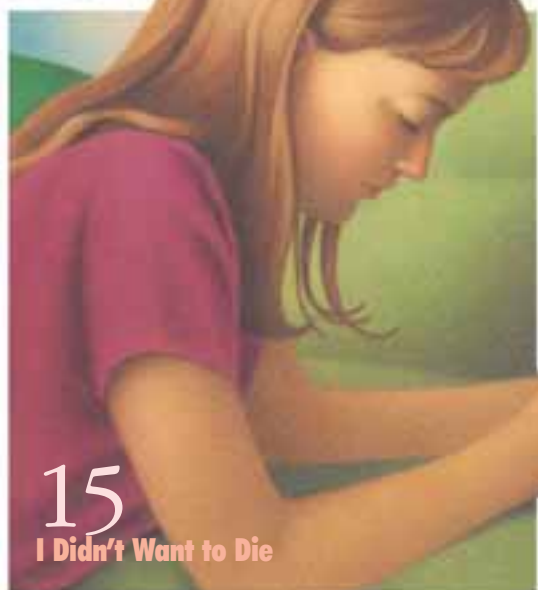
Cover: Hard work
mixed with lots of fun
was part of youth confer-
ence in Oregon. See "In
Search of the Tree of Life"
on p. 30.

Cover photography:
Lynn Howlett (front) and
Christina Smith (back)

This issue will give
you some ideas on how
to make all things "work
together for your good."
That phrase comes from
D&C 90:24—this year's
Mutual theme.

On page 4, Elder L.
Tom Perry, of the
Quorum of the Twelve
Apostles, shares some
thoughts on the theme.
Young Men and Young
Women leaders and
youth from around the
world comment on the
theme starting on page
10. Then on page 14, get
some ideas on marking
D&C 90:24 in your own
scriptures.

Learning to
hold to the
rod was the
best part of youth
conference. See
"In Search of the
Tree of Life"
on p. 30.



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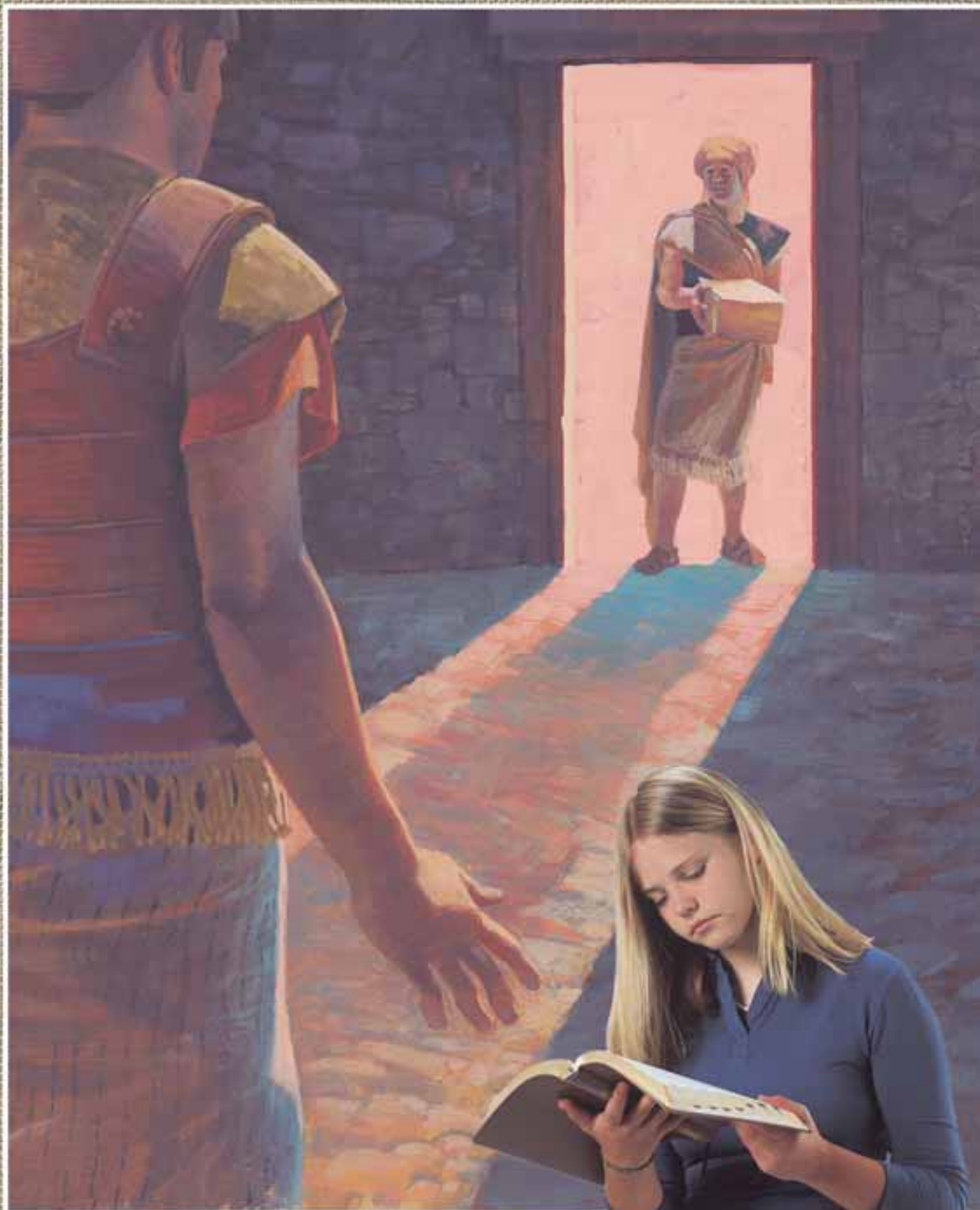
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A Pattern for LIVING

*“Search diligently, pray always, and be believing,
and all things shall work together
for your good” (D&C 90:24).*

The Church magazines asked Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to share some thoughts about D&C 90:24, the Young Men and Young Women Mutual theme for 2004.

This scripture seems to be divided into four parts. What does the first part mean, to “search diligently”?

Elder Perry: In order to find answers, the Lord says, we not only have to search for them, but we have to search *diligently*. That means there is effort involved. We really have to work at it. One of the best places to search for answers is in the scriptures, and searching diligently means reading them again and again, prayerfully and with faith, until the answers become apparent.

I often think of what happened in the Book of Mormon, in 1 Nephi 3–4. Lehi sent his sons back to Jerusalem to get from Laban the record known as the brass plates. The



Nephi obtained the brass plates by faith. In the same way, if youth will act in faith, they will receive knowledge that will guide them.

record was important; the people needed it so they would not dwindle in unbelief.

On their first try, Lehi's sons left getting the records to chance. They cast lots, and Laman was selected. He went to talk to Laban, and Laban was angry and cast him out of his presence. If young people leave the study of the scriptures to chance—only what they may casually absorb in Mutual, seminary, or a Sunday School class—they will not get the deep meaning that will come from studying by themselves and with their families. You cannot leave to chance a treasure as important as knowledge of the gospel.

Next Lehi's sons tried to buy the brass plates using the things of the world. Laban sent his servants to slay them, and they escaped only by leaving their riches behind. Young people today may be tempted to seek happiness through the things of the world. Worldly ideas are presented to them all the time as they sit in front of the

television or log on to the Internet. But sooner or later they will find that these ideas will not lead to the happiness they are seeking.

Finally, Nephi determined that the only way to obtain the records was by faith. When he made that decision, he was led by the Spirit to know what to do, and great blessings occurred. He obtained the scriptures, and the family of Lehi could journey in the wilderness with the sacred scriptures to guide them. In the same way, if youth will act in faith, they will receive knowledge that will guide them.

Is it just the scriptures that we should search diligently?

Elder Perry: Search after truth, and remember that word *diligently*. That doesn't mean halfheartedly. That means with all your might. It is also important to keep the commandments so you can feel the promptings of the Spirit. Part of being diligent is being worthy.

As we are searching, what can we find that will be useful to us?

Elder Perry: The scriptures give us the direction we need. They are the words of the Lord revealed to us by the prophets. And the scriptures are revealed in different times and seasons and years, giving us a great opportunity to have a large view of what has happened, that the truths have been restored. As you study them regularly, you can find the pattern for your own life. You can see how obedience will bring blessings to you.

The next part of the verse says to “pray always.” How do we do that?

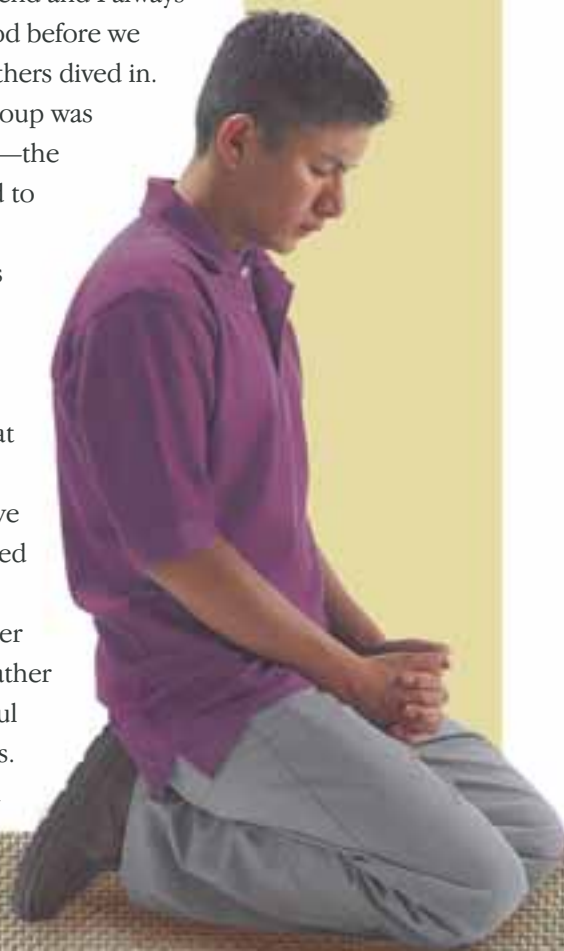
Elder Perry: Carry a prayer in your heart. You don't have to express it out loud all the time, but there are very few hours in the day when you don't need guidance and direction in the course that you would want to follow. It is a wonderful, satisfying thing to know that the Lord is there. And He is there “24/7,” as they say. He is always available to us.

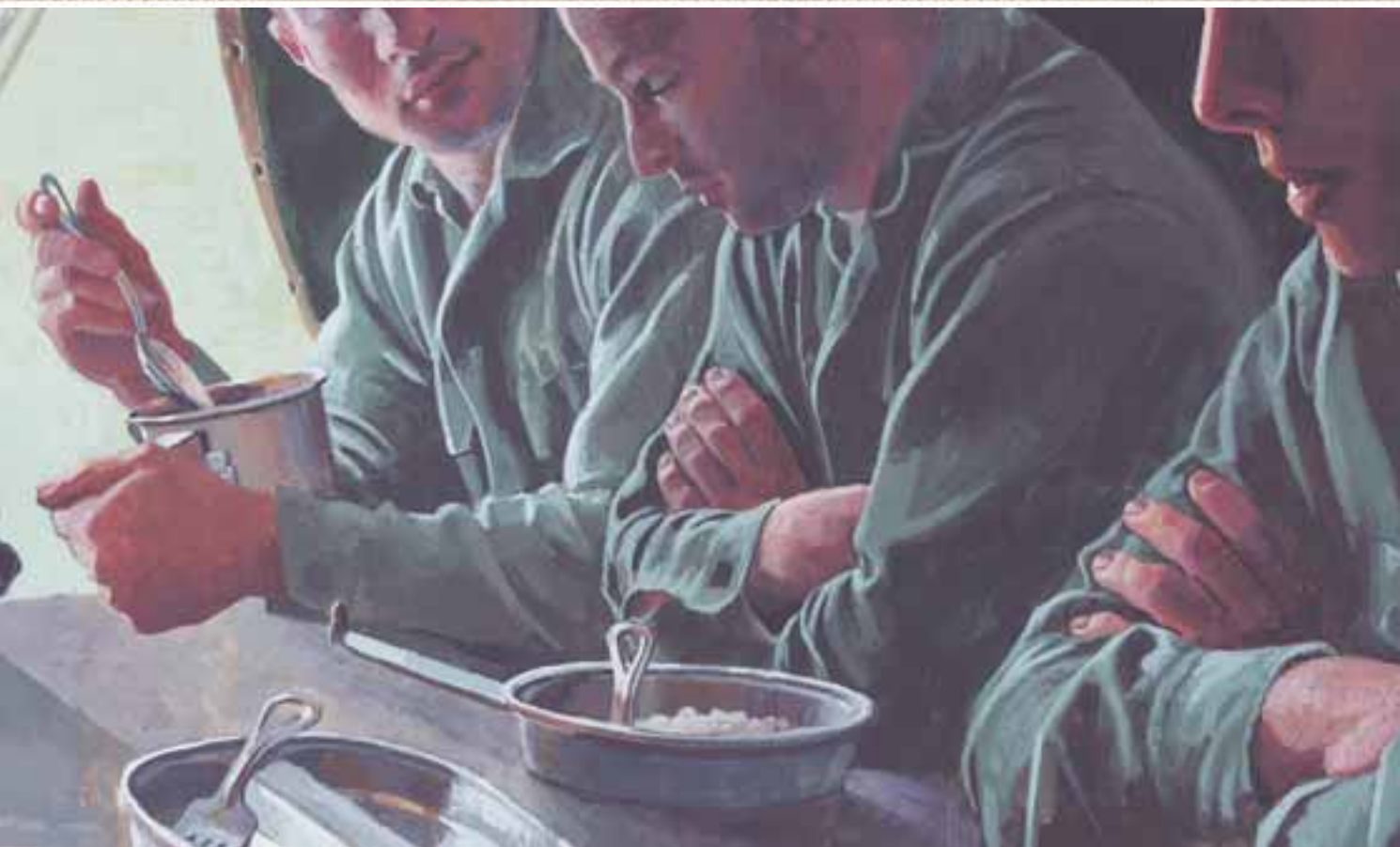
I remember an experience I had in the United States Marine Corps when we came in after being on a long, heavy, forced march. We were tired, hungry, and thirsty. The cooks had prepared a chicken salad to tide us over until our evening meal, and boy, was it going to taste good! A friend and I always paused and blessed the food before we ate. We prayed while the others dived in. Within hours, the whole group was violently ill, except for two—the two of us who had stopped to thank the Lord.

Of course, most prayers don't bring such dramatic results. Most of the time, the response is a quiet, peaceful feeling about what is right. I have had many times in my life when I have been comforted and assured by prayer.

We should also remember to give thanks. Heavenly Father provides so many wonderful opportunities and blessings. Most of our prayers should

In the United States Marine Corps, a friend and I always blessed the food before we ate. We prayed while the others dived in. Carry a prayer in your heart. It is a wonderful, satisfying thing to know that the Lord is there. And He is there “24/7,” as they say.





be expressions of appreciation for what He has given to us.

How do we develop the habit of having a prayer in our hearts?

Elder Perry: I hope most of it comes from following the example of good parents. Where young people have prayer as part of their daily lives, they have a warm, comfortable feeling about approaching the Lord. Prayer is a comfort and a practice that comes easily to every child.

What counsel would you give to those who don't live in that kind of a setting?

Elder Perry: They have the opportunity of embracing the gospel. The Church gives opportunity after opportunity to say prayers. I think the practice of prayer can be encouraged by the guidance of good priesthood leaders, Mutual leaders, and Young Men and Young Women leaders. That will help bridge the gap between not having it in their early lives and having an opportunity now to pick it up, go forward, and understand what the Lord has given us.

Why is it important to "be believing"?

Elder Perry: I feel I have always believed. I had a noble father, who was my bishop for the first 18 years of my life. He believed in the Lord, trusted in the Lord, and followed the Lord in his priesthood calling. I had a mother, who always had a strong belief and relied on that testimony within her. The belief of my parents created in me a desire to believe, which was important in gaining my own testimony.

How should we go about gaining our own testimonies?

Elder Perry: All of us have to gain our own testimonies, and the example of others is a tremendous way to start. We can feel confident when we find someone we trust who can bear solemn witness. There is a natural affinity that draws us to that desire to "be believing."

It is also important to live the commandments. You have to know the law of the Lord and try living it in order to prove that it works and brings blessings. The Savior said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).



I've often thought, "What if I'd been reared without the gospel? How would I have reacted if I had heard it preached?" I hope I would have been sensitive enough to listen and evaluate and pray.

I don't think a testimony comes like a bolt out of the blue. A testimony is something that's growing all of the time. As I have opportunities to serve in the Lord's kingdom and see how He blesses His people, my testimony continues to grow.

What are some of the other things we need to do?

Elder Perry: We should never forget the value of partaking of the sacrament. I recall another experience I had in the military. I was part of a group that was able to stay together for a time. We held sacrament meeting every Sunday I was in the service. Sometimes the water came from a canteen cup and the bread was a biscuit from our K rations, but we partook of the sacrament. Friends who were separated from us, who did not have the opportunity to take the sacrament for a long time, seemed to be not as sure in their faith because of it.

You should seek out righteous Latter-day Saint companions and be certain that every Sunday you can renew your vows and covenants with the Lord. That does something to individuals. It makes them realize that the Lord is bound to supply the blessings that they are asking for, if they live worthy of them, if they live their part.

How and when should we hope that "all things [will] work together for [our] good"?

Elder Perry: There can be a great blessing in having to wait. You appreciate rewards more when you work toward them. Each period of life has a different phase, and as you progress from phase to phase, you find increasing fulfillment in following what the Church has taught us.

There is a great witness of the Holy Spirit within a person when he or she is doing what is right. It brings gladness, peace, and satisfaction that can come in no other way. When you live righteously, then other things fall into place. Those things may be different from what you had planned, but they will be good. Remember that blessings come in the timetable of the Lord.

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Sometimes the
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a canteen cup
and the bread
was a biscuit,
but we partook
of the sacrament.
Never forget the
value of
partaking of
the sacrament.*

What about tragedies that come into our lives? How can they work for our good?

Elder Perry: Well, I have lost a wife and a daughter. Although it has been difficult, it has not shaken my testimony. I have found that life's trials can be overcome if you stay on course. Fulfillment comes despite tragedy, and that fulfillment gives you great satisfaction. Enduring in faith is an experience that brings you closer to the Spirit.

If you "search diligently, pray always, and be believing," it is very difficult to get off course. The Lord has promised us that. When people turn away from the Lord, there's an automatic deterioration of the ability to follow the Spirit and a loss of the opportunity to experience true joy in life. When people

follow the Lord, they prosper, they grow, and even though there are difficulties, the good things of life come according to the plan of the Lord.

There is great satisfaction in knowing who you are, what you are supposed to do here, and what eternal blessings

our Father in Heaven

has promised to

the faithful in

the eternities

to come.

What

greater

comfort

could

there

be than

that?

How do you know when that promise is fulfilled if you don't see immediate results?

Elder Perry: One of the reasons we are on earth is to learn patience, endurance, and righteous living. It may take time to see the results, but if you live in the right way, you will find the joy and happiness that come from a good life. That's what faith is all about.

What final suggestions do you have about how youth can apply the Lord's instructions in D&C 90:24?

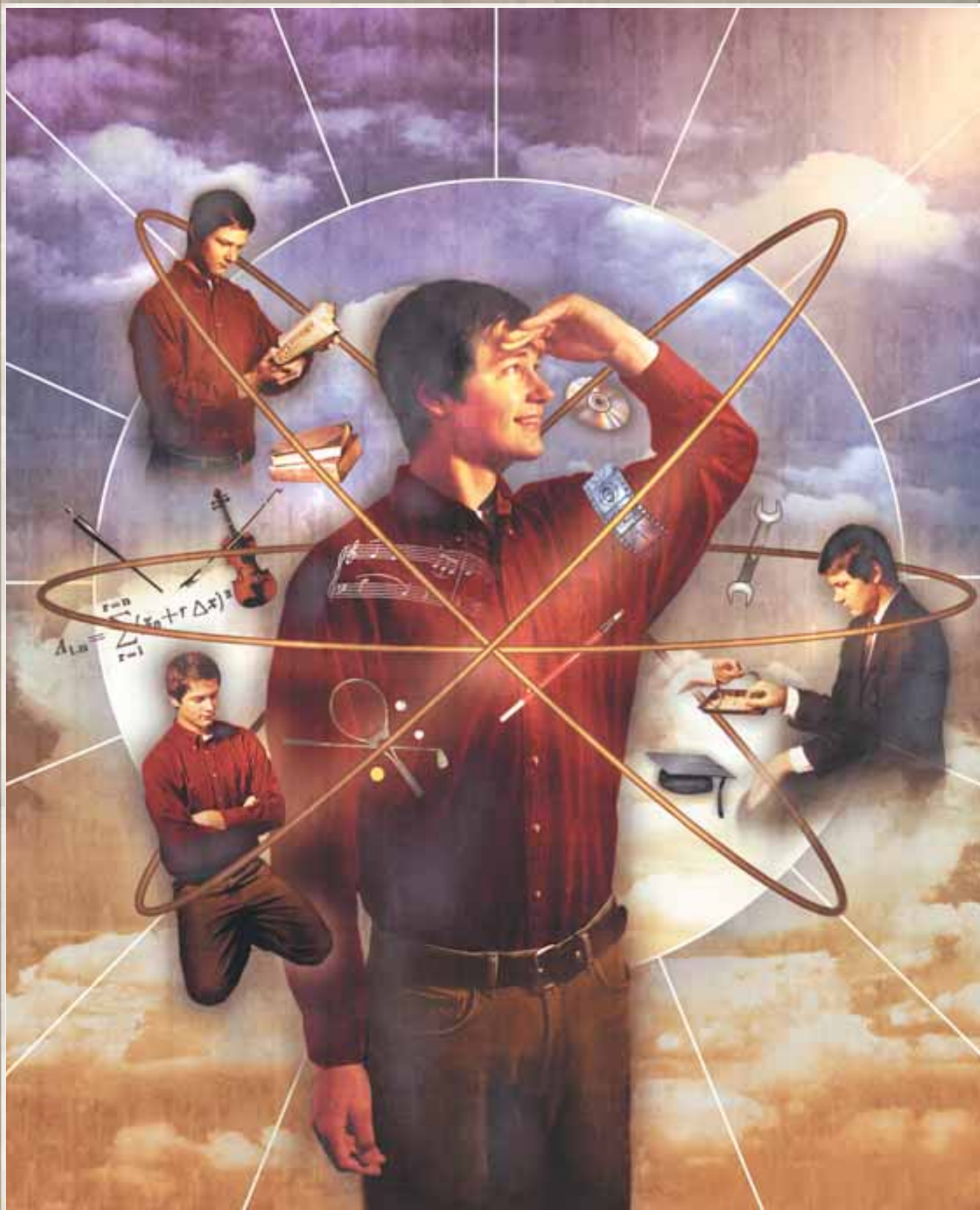
Elder Perry: Do what it says. It's a promise from the Lord, and look what He's promising you: "All things shall work together for your good." What a blessing that is! That's a promise of the Lord to these great young people. He's never failed yet.

I have had such a great, exciting, and fulfilling life that I want every one of the youth in the Church to have the same blessings. I wasn't a straight-A student in school. I wasn't an all-state basketball player. In fact, I thought during my high school years that I was just mediocre. Yet life has been so good, so fulfilling, that I want to do everything I can to get young people to feel that.

Not every day of my life has been successful. But I don't think there has been a day when the Lord was not with me, inspiring and directing me. I think I have ended every day with a happy heart and an enthusiastic spirit to try again the next day, and I know that is a great way to live. **NE**

This interview was conducted by Richard M. Romney and Janet Thomas.





SEARCH, PRAY, BELIEVE

Here's what the Young Men and Young Women general presidencies have to tell you about this year's Mutual theme.



A Most Generous Promise

Doctrine and Covenants 90:24 contains one of the most generous promises of the Lord. But it can be realized only by fulfilling the necessary conditions.

With limited years of experience, you may not yet know whether “all things [can] work together for your good.” It often requires a lifetime of trusting in the Lord to judge whether this promise is true.

We testify that it is true and that you may—by your diligence, prayerfulness, faith, and obedience—claim all the blessings of what the Apostle Peter called the Savior’s “great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4).

Young Men General Presidency
Elder F. Melvin Hammond, President (center)
Elder Lynn G. Robbins, First Counselor (left)
Elder Donald L. Hallstrom, Second Counselor (right)

2004 MUTUAL THEME

*“Search diligently,
pray always, and
be believing, and
all things shall
work together
for your good”
(D&C 90:24).*



A Formula for Spiritual Protection

Here it is, a formula for spiritual protection and success! “Search diligently, pray always, and be believing.” This formula fortified the sons of Mosiah (see Alma 17:2–3), and it can be a safeguard for you.

Use this theme as you prepare talks and plan activities. Use it at school and in your families. As you do so, the Holy Ghost will guide you. You are promised, “All things shall work together for your good.”

We love you, we pray for you, and we have confidence in you. Put this formula to the test. It works.

Young Women General Presidency
Susan W. Tanner, President (center)
Julie B. Beck, First Counselor (left)
Elaine S. Dalton, Second Counselor (right)

Youth from around the world speak out on what the Mutual theme means to them.

Search Diligently

In this verse, we can learn what kind of people we should be to come unto Christ. To return to God's kingdom we need to seek knowledge diligently, to pray and ask for help, and what is most important—to truly believe in the Lord. Then we will get great blessings and inherit eternal life. Of course, we need to keep all the covenants that we entered into when we were baptized.

Vladimir Proskourin, 16
Vladivostok First Branch,
Vladivostok Russia District

This Church was restored through a boy who decided to “search diligently.” The Prophet Joseph Smith has helped us all by setting an example. By searching the scriptures, along with searching our hearts, we can find the answers we are looking for.

Kyle Curbello, 17
Jenks Ward,
Tulsa Oklahoma Stake

Searching diligently is necessary to understand the gospel. When someone asks me a question I cannot answer, I turn to the basic principles of the gospel for help. I want to make sure that the next time the subject comes up, I will have an answer for them.

Melanie Grant, 16
Walled Lake Ward,
Bloomfield Hills Michigan Stake

Puzzles are my hobby. My strategy is to put one piece at a time in its place. I must concentrate until the last piece is in place. This is like living a gospel-centered life. We must focus continually. We need to constantly seek God's path, have diligence in our work, and place everything in God's care.

Ying Lin Lee, 19
Shuang Ho First Ward,
Taipei Taiwan West Stake

You too will be able to speak out on this year's Mutual theme as you learn about it by using it in your talks, your activities, and most important—your daily lives.

When I read this passage, I think of the need to search diligently for people who need the gospel. I pray for them and for the missionaries. It is also important for me to talk to people about what we know and to show them how happy I am because of it.

Sarah Hoare, 12
Liverpool Ward,
Liverpool England Stake

Pray Always

My youngest brother was saying the usual family prayer, “Thank Thee for this day, the weather . . .,” when out of this five-year-old's mouth came, “and thank Thee for letting us be able to talk to Thee always.” I sat for a long time wondering about my wise brother. I started saying personal prayers in the morning and right before I went to bed. I was happier than before and felt the Spirit more often. My questions and doubts were quickly answered, and I knew that I was spiritually improving.

Andrea Minson, 14
Baytown First Ward,
Houston Texas East Stake

Through prayer, Heavenly Father gives us the opportunity to seek guidance through our struggles, to worship, to express our gratitude, and most important, to come unto Him and His Son and partake of Their love.

Paul Brusuelas, 17
Eagle River Third Ward,
Wasilla Alaska Stake

“Pray always” is the phrase that means the most to me because it has helped me throughout my education. Heavenly Father will help you when you ask and put in the effort.

Chantel Burgess, 16
Sunnyvale Ward,
Auckland New Zealand Henderson Stake

It doesn't matter when or where I am, whether I'm happy or sad, prayer will bring peace and happiness. Since I am in high school now, temptations have grown stronger, but I have overcome them through prayer.

Shan Cheng, 15
Lu Yeh Branch,
Hua Lien Taiwan District

Be Believing

Believing is an essential step to gaining a strong testimony. You do not have to understand to believe. But with the help and promptings of the Spirit, you can have a greater understanding of all things.

Michelle Pray, 16
Lewisville Second Ward,
Lewisville Texas Stake

During Christmas, I was going home teaching and I had a prompting to take my violin and play a Christmas carol for our families. I played for the first two families, but I didn't see why I had had the prompting. Then we went to the last family (who were less active), and that was when I knew. I played for them and could see that they were moved; the Spirit was there. They started taking the missionary lessons.

Martin Perez, 18
Midland Second Ward,
Odessa Texas Stake

In this scripture, the word *believing* has the deepest meaning to me. Three years ago, due to a mishap during a construction project, my father fell from the roof of a building. I fasted and prayed that Heavenly Father would bless my father to recover his health quickly. My father, who entered the hospital with a spinal injury and unable to walk, left the hospital only 13 days later. Now no one realizes he was ever injured.

Because I was younger at that time, I did not understand what benefit fasting and prayer would bring. I knew I had to believe. Through the teachings of the Church, I know how I can ask for help.

Mi Cheng, 18
Lu Yeh Branch,
Hua Lien Taiwan District

All Things Shall Work Together for Your Good

Many nights my choice is between doing scripture study or homework first. On those nights when there is too much to do, I get a little prompting to put away the homework, put my faith in the Lord, and spend my more awake time in the scriptures. It is pretty safe to say that every time I have chosen to study spiritually first, the Lord has made sure my other work was taken care of on time.

Michelle Nielson, 17
Basin City Second Ward,
Pasco Washington Stake

This year our band director scheduled a performance on the day of our annual youth temple trip. Three other Church members and I were to participate in this show, and my director threatened to cancel the performance for everyone if the four of us didn't go. Some of my friends were upset with me. I decided to fast, pray, and trust in the Lord. The Holy Spirit whispered to me that I should go on the temple trip and that everything would be all right.

After the temple trip, I was afraid to go to band practice. However fear turned to joy as I learned that the band show was postponed because of bad weather. If you put your trust and faith in the Lord, He will direct your life so "all things shall work together for your good."

Heather Todd, 15
Berwick Ward,
Williamsport Pennsylvania Stake

Being from a part-member family and growing up in a big city, I sometimes wondered how to avoid drugs, gangs, or immoral acts. But I know it is possible. Even in the midst of hardships, I know that Heavenly Father will always provide a way. He will not give me a trial or obstacle that I cannot overcome. In the end, all things will work for my good.

Chanthou Lok, 18
South Philadelphia Branch,
Valley Forge Pennsylvania Stake

The 2004 Mutual Theme

D&C 90:24

Section 90 was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith on 8 March 1833. It contains instructions about the formation of the First Presidency and provides counsel to several people, including men called to the First Presidency 10 days later.

Verses 22–24 are the Lord’s instructions to Newel K. Whitney, bishop of the Church in Kirtland, Ohio. He was responsible for helping the many Church members there who needed food, clothing, housing, and money. The advice given to him in verse 24 can also guide us today. **NE**

“Believing in what? Believing in God, our Eternal Father, as the Father of our spirits, as our leader, as our king. Believing in the Lord, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, our Savior, our Lord. Believing in the restored gospel, which has come to earth in a miraculous and marvelous manner. Cultivate in your hearts a living and vibrant testimony of the Restoration of the gospel. Believe in the Book of Mormon. Be not faithless in the knowledge that the priesthood of God has been restored to earth. Believe in goodness. Believe in yourselves. Believe that each of you is a child of God with a divine birthright.”
 —President Gordon B. Hinckley, quoted in *Ensign*, June 2000, 21.

let him be a man who has got riches in store—a man of God, and a strong faith—
 23 That thereby he may be enabled to discharge every debt; that the storehouse of the Lord may not be brought into disrepute before the eyes of the people.
 24 Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted one with another.
 25 Let your families be small, especially mine aged servant Joseph Smith’s, Sen., as pertaining to those who do not belong to your families.
 26 That those things that are provided for you, to bring to pass my work, be not taken from you and given to those that are not worthy—
 27 And thereby you be hindered

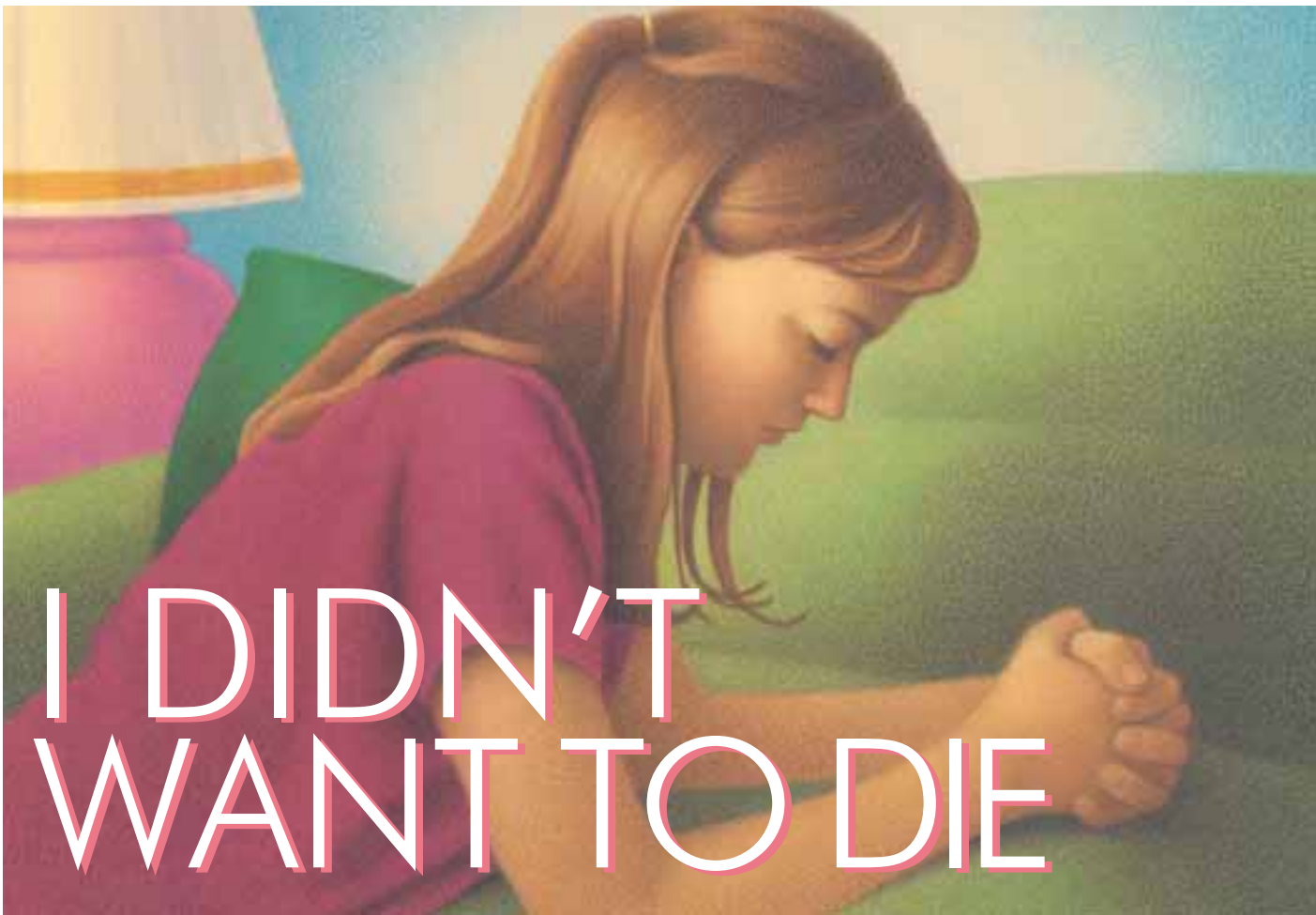
Search in the light of Christ (see Moroni 7:16–19).
 Search the scriptures (see D&C 1:37).

What does it mean to “pray always”? (See Henry B. Eyring, “Always,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1999, 6–12, and Ezra Taft Benson, “Pray Always,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1990, 3–7. You can also find the articles in the Gospel Library at www.lds.org.)

3 Nephi 18:15–21 (the Savior’s promise)
 D&C 19:38 (prayer= blessings)
 “Be not afraid, only believe” (Mark 5:36).

What would life be like if everything that happened to me worked out for my good? How can I make even my problems eventually be for my good?

D&C 18:31 (keep the commandments)
 Alma 53:21 (be like the stripling warriors)
 Mosiah 18:8–10 (my baptismal covenant)



I DIDN'T WANT TO DIE

BY MARGED A. KIRKPATRICK

When I was 12, my mother died of cancer. After her death, I thought I was dying of cancer, too. I didn't really have cancer, but my thoughts were very real to me. I didn't talk to anyone about it. I carried the burden alone and was quite troubled.

I knew that when we have a problem we should go to the Lord in prayer. I always said my individual prayers at night and would think my prayers in my head as I knelt by my bed. But this particular time, I felt I needed to pray out loud.

Now, it was not easy to find a time to be alone in our house. I had five brothers and sisters and shared a bedroom with a sister. One afternoon I remember coming home from school to an empty house. I went into the living room and poured out my heart aloud to my Heavenly Father. I didn't want

to die. I didn't want to suffer as my mom had suffered. I pleaded with the Lord.

Immediately after I had closed my prayer, a peaceful, strong feeling surrounded me. It was as if loving arms were around my shoulders and as if a voice said to me, "You are fine. You are fine."

My prayer had been answered. I felt very loved, and I knew I was okay. A huge burden had been lifted from my shoulders. My thoughts of dying left me. Since that time, I have prayed to my Heavenly Father for answers. The answers never have come as quickly as they did that day, but I know prayers are answered—even if it is in the Lord's timing and not mine.

D&C 112:10 reads, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers." **NE**

Marged A. Kirkpatrick is a member of the Holladay 26th Ward, Salt Lake Holladay Stake.

thought I was dying of cancer like my mother. I pleaded with the Lord that I wouldn't have to suffer as she had suffered.

Q & A

“If we make a big deal about dress standards, isn’t that judging people by their outward appearance?”

NEW ERA

It’s true that we should never look down on people because of the way they look or dress. That’s prideful. It’s also condemned by the Lord (see James 2:1–9).

But in everyday life, we often “judge” or form opinions about people by their outward appearance without necessarily looking down on them. What you put on your body “talks.” And everyone who sees you “hears” what you’re saying.

Some hairstyles shout, “Look at me!” Tight or revealing clothing begs, “I want you to like me for my body, but who I am doesn’t matter.” Modest clothing testifies, “I respect myself, I respect those around me, and I respect the Lord and His prophets.”

The Lord has provided some guidelines in *For the Strength of Youth* to help us know what He considers appropriate, but no list could ever cover every situation. Therefore, we should dress based on a few important principles:

1. What I wear tells others who I am.
2. What I wear shows my respect (or

Dressing modestly is important because those around us judge us by how we appear.

What you wear tells others who you are.

What you wear shows your respect (or disrespect) for places you go and people you’re with.

What you wear reflects how committed you are to following the Savior. If you ignore how He’s asked you to dress, you’re saying, “The Lord isn’t important to me.”

*The Lord has provided some appropriate dress and grooming standards in *For the Strength of Youth*.*

disrespect) for where I am and who I’m with.

3. What I wear reflects how committed I am to following the Savior. If we ignore how He wants us to dress, we’re saying loud and clear, “The Lord and His prophets aren’t important to me.”

“Some foolish persons turn their backs on the wisdom of God and follow the allurements of fickle fashion, the attraction of false popularity, and the thrill of the moment,” said President Thomas S. Monson (*New Era*, Nov. 2002, 6). But that’s not how true happiness is found. “Joy and happiness,” President Monson taught, “come from living the way the Lord wants you to live” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 95).

When you dress modestly, you invite the Holy Ghost to be with you, and others will feel more comfortable around you. Who you are—a child of God—then becomes more important than how you dress. “When you are well groomed and modestly dressed, you invite the companionship of the Spirit and can exercise a good influence on those around you” (*For the Strength of Youth*, 15). **NE**



READERS



It is important to remember that our Heavenly Father loves us and will not present us with a commandment that is not for our benefit.

Wearing modest clothing will invite the Spirit and prepare us as youth to receive our temple endowments. Our bodies are temples and should be treated with respect.

Delina Rees, 17, Sudbury Ward, Sudbury Ontario Stake



Several years ago, my brother bought the latest fads: baggy pants and shirts with pictures of bad characters. When my dad

saw him, he said, "Son, you look like you love the world more than you love the Lord." My brother returned the clothes. That was a very good example to me.

Michael Moulton, 14, Genola First Ward, Goshen Utah Stake



If the Lord were to show up one day unexpectedly, how would we want Him to see us? We must dress modestly, as though

the Lord were right here with us. If we are dressing to please the Lord, we shouldn't worry about what everyone else thinks.

Miranda Fredriksen, 14, Albertson Ward, Goldsboro North Carolina Stake



The way you dress sends messages about yourself to others and often influences the way you and others act. Dress in such a way as to bring out the best in yourself and those around you.”

—President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 96.



If everyone dressed modestly, we could get around the fancy, flashy clothing of the day and see who they really are. Dressing modestly allows people to be friends,

regardless of dress. This allows us to see past the brand and into the heart.

Daniel Arnold, 18, Fair Oaks Third Ward, Fair Oaks California Stake

The way a person dresses reflects who they are or maybe who they wish to be. If we dress modestly and tastefully, we may invoke the curiosity of those who are not members and have a chance for missionary work. By dressing as shepherds, we can feed the sheep.

Brianne Cole, 14, Moore Ward, Oklahoma City Oklahoma South Stake

We were not commanded to judge others’ dress standards, but to evaluate our own. The world tends to judge by outward appearance. And if we represent Christ, shouldn’t we follow His dress standards?

Kellie Edwards, 16, Union Second Ward, Sandy Utah Cottonwood Creek Stake

We are sons and daughters of Heavenly Father, who is perfect. We have been created in His image, making us something special and sacred. Therefore, we need to present ourselves in a godly manner. Why take the risk of looking like something we’re not?

Michael Mobley, 18, Fort Morgan Ward, Greeley Colorado Stake



What you do speaks louder than what you say. When people wear immodest clothing, it sends a message to others that they’re using their bodies as a way to get

attention. Heavenly Father gave us these bodies. We should respect our bodies like the temples of the Lord. And that includes dressing modestly.

Janell Papenfuss, 17, Seattle 14th Ward, Seattle Washington Stake

New Era and readers’ answers are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send us your answer to the question below, along with your name, age, and the names of your ward and stake. Please include a snapshot of yourself that is at least 1.5 by 2 inches (4 by 5 cm).

Please respond by 1 March 2004.

Q&A, New Era

50 East North Temple

Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

QUESTION

“Every year I resolve to think about Christ all day, then struggle to do it. How can I ‘always remember’ Him?”



UNCOVER
BURIED
TREASURE

WORLDLY THINGS CAN PILE UP FAST. PUT SCRIPTURE STUDY
ON THE TOP OF YOUR STACK OF THINGS TO DO.
(See Matthew 6:33.)



ICE DREAMS



BY SHANNA GHAZNAVI
Church Magazines

When Chris was nine he traded his hockey skates for figure skates. Now he has traded his ice skates for tracting shoes.

“For this cause I have sent you—that you might be obedient, and that your [heart] might be prepared to bear testimony” (D&C 58:6).

Chris Obzansky played ice hockey for three years before he decided it just wasn't for him. When he was nine, he traded his hockey skates for figure skates and pushed off on a path that has led him to a successful career as an ice dancer. But it hasn't all been smooth gliding.

“I got really determined to learn on those figure skates,” he says. “But I just kept stumbling on those toe picks!” Despite the difficulties, he found that ice dancing was what he really wanted to do. And besides, “I thought it was pretty cool to be skating with a girl instead of with a team of smelly hockey players,” Chris says, laughing.

He had big dreams. He and his partner had

placed second at the junior level United States nationals, third at U.S. nationals, and first in an international competition in China. His plan was to compete in the 2006 Winter Olympics and then go on a mission after he turned 21. But when he was 18, just when everything was going smoothly, he ran into a snag.

“I wasn't really enjoying it, and I was having a hard time with the sport,” he remembers. “I was just trying to push through it, and I could not do it anymore. I said, ‘Lord, what do I do?’ ”

Chris got the first part of his answer when he went to talk to his bishop, who encouraged him to pray about his plan to delay his mission. “His advice kind of went in one ear and out the other,” Chris admits. “But my life got to the point where I really did have to ask, and I really did have to listen.”

The second part of Chris's answer came during a sacrament meeting. As he listened to his Young Men president talk about his own



Though he had always planned on serving a mission, Chris felt prompted to go sooner than he had thought.

Chris's coaches and partner (below) were disappointed when he said he had decided to leave on a mission, but they gave him their full support.

mission call, the Spirit told him, "Chris, you need to serve a mission when you're 19, or you're going to have a tough life.' The message was so clear I actually turned around to see if someone was there," he says. "The feeling came back 10 times stronger, and I knew I had to go on a mission."

That's Not the End of the Story

That night Chris called his partner and coaches to give them the news. When he had first started training with them, he told them that a mission was a possibility. But none of



them had expected him to go—at least not yet. Although they were disappointed, Chris says, "They've been very supportive of me and my mission, and I give them credit for that."

Chris feels peace about his decision and where his life is going. "I'm grateful Heavenly Father gave me that prompting," he says.

"But it's been really hard since then.

Satan tried to bring me down in any way possible."

To combat the fears and temptations, Chris read the scriptures and prayed the way he used to dedicate himself to practicing at the ice rinks in Delaware, where he lived while he trained. He studied the scriptures at least twice a day,



and he set aside time to pray earnestly at least three times a day. "That really protected me," he says. He also credits much of his help to surrounding himself with good friends and family when he came back home to the Thirteenth Ward of the Salt Lake Central Stake.

A New Set of Rules

There are lots of rules in ice dancing—lots of required and restricted moves. To succeed takes a lot of creativity and dancing talent. Chris thinks his experiences with ice dancing will help him on his mission—experiences like learning to get along with a partner, following strict rules, and being dedicated to something every day for a long time.

His call to the Baltic States Mission, Russian speaking, was exciting for Chris, especially since he knows speaking Russian will help him if he still wants to return to ice dancing after his mission. (Many of the competitors and coaches speak Russian.) He also wants to be a coach eventually. But for now, he says, "I just want to try to bring people to a knowledge of the gospel."

Continually Guided

Being prompted to go on a mission wasn't the first time Chris asked for and received the Lord's guidance in his life. He was 16, had just split from a skating partner, and was having a hard time. "My dad gave me a blessing, and he told me the Spirit would be with me and would comfort me," he says.

After the blessing, Chris was prompted to read D&C 58. Verses two through seven have made a big difference in his life. "I thought they were written exactly for me,"

he says. “Everything in those verses has come to pass in my life and is still coming to pass. Those verses have given me so much comfort.”

Trying to obey the counsel he received in D&C 58, Chris is serving a mission when the

Lord asked him to, and he is ready to bear testimony of the Savior and the gospel in the Baltic states. He knows he will have more difficulties than toe picks and changing partners there, but he also knows that when he asks for guidance, the Lord will answer. **NE**

After spending a few weeks in the MTC with his companion, Elder Wilkinson (below), Elder Obzansky is now in another icy place—the Baltic States Mission. And he’s finding that the Lord continues to guide him in all he does.



DANIEL'S SNOWSTORM

BY KIMBERLY WEBB

Church Magazines

As we welcomed Daniel home, he looked over the yard, smiled, and said, "I like the snow."

I hung up the phone, dumbfounded. "I have to call everyone," I thought. "Pete, Whitney, Kristen . . ." I fumbled for my planner, too flustered to remember the phone numbers I'd had memorized since middle school.

A few weeks before, our group of friends had mailed Daniel a Christmas package. We had marveled that in a mere six months he would be home from his mission. We could hardly wait!

Then Daniel's dad had called. Now I wished we still had to wait—bad news suddenly turned six months into three days. Daniel had become so sick he was bedridden, and the doctors didn't know why.

Besides being worried about his illness, I was heartsick to think of how disappointed he must be. Serving a mission had been his most treasured goal, and the people in Michigan were some of his most beloved friends.

The night before Daniel's return home, I lay in bed staring out the window. The moon

illuminated brown mountains and bare tree branches—nothing like the snow-covered evergreens I pictured in Michigan. I frowned. "It will be even more depressing if he has to come back to *this*," I thought. Climbing out of bed and onto my knees, I prayed that Daniel might be welcomed home by a glistening, white blanket of snow. Before I drifted off to sleep, a few snowflakes flurried outside my window.

The next morning, as we walked to Daniel's house to await his arrival, beautiful snow crunched under our shoes. I offered a hurried, silent prayer of thanks.

Soon a car pulled into the driveway. Daniel looked frail, but he managed a weak smile and handshake for each of us. As he inched up the walkway, he paused to survey the yard. His smile deepened. "I like the snow," he murmured. I turned away to hide my tears.

That afternoon, as I drove back to college, I realized more fully what the Lord had done. Only one storm cloud



After eight years of friendship with Daniel, Kristen finally agreed to learn about the gospel.

hovered in the sky, directly over our hometown. Less than three miles away from the snow, the sun beamed down on a dry, brown valley.

I had always believed in answers to prayers, even in miracles. But it was the first time I had understood that sometimes God performs small miracles just to show His love. Overwhelmed by the Spirit, I thanked the Lord again for His gift of comfort—a snowstorm for Daniel.

Three months passed before doctors diagnosed his problem—a rare neurological condition. By then it was too late for him to

return to the mission field, but he didn't stop being a missionary. After eight years of friendship with Daniel, Kristen finally agreed to learn about the gospel. She hadn't believed in Christ—until Daniel began teaching her. Then I knew I was witnessing another miracle.

Two weeks before Daniel had originally been scheduled to come home, Kristen was baptized. Daniel's most difficult trial had turned into a precious blessing.

Whenever I doubt the same divine guidance amid my own trials, I remember the miracle of Daniel's snowstorm. **NE**



NEW YEAR NEW YOU

Many people use a new year to set resolutions or goals for the future. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin said, “You should look ahead now and decide what you want to do with your lives. . . . Write your goals and review them regularly. Keep them before you constantly, record your progress, and revise them as circumstances dictate. Your ultimate goal should be eternal life” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 73).

Debbie Skousen’s seminary students in the Morgantown Ward, Fairmont West Virginia Stake, each made a list of five personal goals to accomplish during the year. Some of their ideas are listed here to help you set a few of your own goals.

- Exercise regularly.
 - Pray privately twice a day.
 - Write in my journal every night.
 - Smile and say hi to 10 people a day.
 - Share my testimony with someone once a week.
 - Make at least one new friend this year.
- Read the scriptures for 10 minutes or more every day.
- Attend Mutual every week.
- Partake of the sacrament every week.
- Attend seminary every day.
- Give away three copies of the Book of Mormon this year.
 - Save for my mission each month.
 - Take my scriptures to church each Sunday.
 - Accomplish all of my Duty to God certificate requirements.
 - Accomplish all of my Personal Progress requirements.
 - Listen to every talk in general conference.
 - Read the *New Era* each month.
 - Gain a testimony of the Book of Mormon.
- Memorize all of this year’s seminary scripture mastery verses. **NE**

Lehi's FAMILY TREE

Every family has a story. And whether your family is large or small, what happens in it is unique and helps make you who you are.

The Book of Mormon begins with the story of a family.

Lehi was not only a great prophet, he was a father worried about many of the same things facing fathers

today. Sariah, his wife, carried many heavy responsibilities as she left their home, belongings, and friends to journey into an uncertain future.

Children also are an important part of a family story. Nephi was the fourth son in a family of at least eight children. In Jerusalem, young Nephi was searching to strengthen his testimony of God. He respected and honored his parents. He was often frustrated with his older brothers, but loved them. He probably wondered about how his life would turn out and whom he would marry.

As you begin your reading of the Book of Mormon, put yourself in Nephi's place. The following chart will help you understand Lehi, Nephi, and the rest of this interesting family. Nephi does not tell us everything we might want to know, but this family story is an essential part of one of the greatest books you could ever read. **NE**

Zoram

A servant of Laban in Jerusalem, he held the keys of the treasury. Zoram agreed to travel into the wilderness with Nephi and his family and later married the eldest daughter of Ishmael. He was faithful to the Lord and a trusted friend to Nephi (see 1 Nephi 4:20, 30–37; 16:7; 2 Nephi 1:30–32; 5:6).

Daughter

Oldest of five daughters. She married Zoram, and they had a family. She and her husband followed Nephi when the family separated (see 1 Nephi 16:7; 2 Nephi 5:6).

Son

Rebelle against Nephi at first but changed his mind and pled for Nephi's life. He later became very angry with Lehi and Nephi. After Ishmael died, Lehi became his "father." During the voyage to the Americas, he got caught up in rude dancing and singing. He followed Laman and Lemuel when the family separated (see 1 Nephi 7:6, 19; 16:37; 18:9; 2 Nephi 1:28).

Son

Joined in the wilderness rebellion and remained unrepentant. He supported the conspiracy to murder Lehi and Nephi. Lehi treated him like a son, but he appears to have always sided with the complainers (see 1 Nephi 7:6; 16:37; 2 Nephi 1:28).

Ishmael

Father and leader of a family of seven children from Jerusalem. The Lord softened his heart so he would agree to take his family and follow Lehi's sons into the wilderness. He sided with Nephi in a dispute over returning to Jerusalem. He died during the wilderness journey and was buried in a place called Nahom. His death caused many to murmur against Lehi and Nephi (see 1 Nephi 7:4–6; 16:34–35).

Ishmael's Wife

Traveled with her husband into the wilderness. She did not rebel against Nephi, and she begged for Nephi's life when Laman and Lemuel threatened to kill him. The place and time of her death are unknown (see 1 Nephi 7:6, 19).

Sam

Third son and elder brother of Nephi. Sam was not bothered by his younger brother's abilities and goodness. He married one of the daughters of Ishmael. His family sided with Nephi when Lehi's family split into two groups (see 1 Nephi 2:17; 3:28; 8:14; 16:7; 2 Nephi 1:28; 4:11; 5:6).

Daughter

Married Sam. She had several children and went with her husband when the family split (see 1 Nephi 16:7; 2 Nephi 4:11; 5:6).

Laman

Oldest son, who did not want to leave Jerusalem. He frequently opposed his father's leadership of the family. He married one of the daughters of Ishmael in the wilderness. He was greatly offended by Nephi's efforts to guide the family. He became the leader of all who would not follow Nephi. He conspired to kill Nephi after Lehi died. His descendants were taught to have an everlasting hatred for their cousins (see 1 Nephi 2:5, 11–12; 7:6, 16; 1 Nephi 16:7, 37–38; 17:17–22; 18:17; 2 Nephi 5:1–2; Mosiah 10:11–17).

Daughter

Sided with Laman in his rebellion against Nephi in the wilderness. She later married Laman. She murmured against Lehi when her father died, and she raised several children. She and her children became part of "an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety" (see 1 Nephi 7:6; 16:7; 2 Nephi 4:8; 5:24).

Sisters

Lehi and Sariah had six sons and at least two daughters! Nephi does not mention them in his record until after the family arrived in the Americas. These sisters righteously followed Nephi when the family separated into two groups (see 2 Nephi 5:6).

Nephi

Fourth son. He prayed to know the mysteries of God for himself and was visited by Him. Because he was strong, physically and spiritually, he was able to get the plates of brass from Laban, to persuade Ishmael's family to depart into the wilderness, to build a ship, and to establish a group of righteous people in a new land. He loved the words of Isaiah. He was so beloved by his people when he died that they named each succeeding king after him (see 1 Nephi 2:16; 4:31, 38; 7:4–5; 18:1–3; 2 Nephi 5:9–18; 25:5; Jacob 1:9–11).

Daughter

She married Nephi and had children. Joined by them, she tearfully begged and prayed for Laman and Lemuel to untie Nephi during the sea voyage. She faithfully remained with her husband when they separated from Laman and Lemuel (see 1 Nephi 7:6, 19; 16:7; 18:19; 2 Nephi 5:6).

Lehi

Prayed to the Lord and received a heavenly vision. The Lord commanded him to depart with his family into the wilderness. He had many difficult experiences during the journey to the Americas and died not long after arriving. He feared for the well-being of his children, yet found great joy in them and the gospel of Jesus Christ (see 1 Nephi 1:5–16; 2:2–4; 5:1–7; 8:12–18; 16:18–25; 17:1; 18:17; 2 Nephi 1:12–13; 2:2).

Sariah

Dutifully followed her husband into the wilderness. She gave birth to children during their journey and became seriously ill on the ship. She died in the promised land surrounded by her children and numerous grandchildren (see 1 Nephi 2:4; 5:1–8; 17:1–2; 18:17–19; 2 Nephi 5:6).

Jacob

Born in the wilderness, he made the difficult journey to the Americas as a young child. He was often treated rudely by Laman and Lemuel. In his 20s he was appointed a priest and teacher to his people. When the people became wicked, he challenged them to repent. He kept the sacred records after Nephi (see 1 Nephi 17:1; 18:7, 19; 2 Nephi 2:1; 5:26; Jacob 1:2, 18–19).

Joseph

Born in the wilderness, he was the youngest son in the family. He received the same name as two great prophets, one past and one future: Joseph of Egypt and the Prophet Joseph Smith. Just before his father's death, he was commanded to "hearken unto the words of thy brother, Nephi." Like his brother Jacob, he became a priest and teacher to the people in his 20s and served the Lord (see 1 Nephi 17:18:7; 2 Nephi 3:1–4, 14, 25; 5:26; Jacob 1:18–19).

Lemuel

Second son, who sided with Laman in family disputes. He and Laman were reproved by an angel for hitting their younger brothers. They were also shocked by the power of God when they tried to kill Nephi. The Lord placed a mark upon Laman and Lemuel and their children to discourage the Nephites from marrying the Lamanites (see 1 Nephi 3:28–30; 17:48–52; 2 Nephi 5:21–23).

- Lehi's family
- Ishmael's family

IN SEARCH OF

In the wet weather of Oregon, youth were able to visualize Lehi's dream by acting out parts of the Book of Mormon.

BY ARDITH W. HAWS

Teens find themselves standing in a variety of places: in line for movies, in their homes, in the halls at school, and in their various workplaces. A recent youth conference for the young men and women of the Salem Oregon Stake encouraged them to heed the Lord's counsel to follow the strait and narrow path and to "stand in holy places" (D&C 45:32).

During the conference, the youth played games, had a dance, cleaned up two cemeteries, and walked an unusual path through the woods. After the conference, they went to the temple to do baptisms for the dead.

The conference began in a beautiful wooded area near Scio, Oregon. The huge trees, blooming meadows, and its distance from civilization made it the perfect place for the teens to be away from the influences of the world and to partake of the quiet reverence of nature.

THE TREE OF LIFE



On Holy Ground

For a service project, the teens cleaned up two overgrown pioneer cemeteries. “It was more than a just a service project,” says Nephi Stewart. “There was a great spirit there.”

The youth were humbled as they found headstones of children and teenagers buried there. They were touched when they found grave markers of families who had lost several children.

During their service project, it began to rain heavily. Despite that, the youth cooperated, enjoyed their work, and buoyed each other up.

The leaders were nervous about the steady rain because they had planned a nighttime hike through the woods. The 45-minute hike would simulate the journey described in Lehi’s dream and lead to the “tree of life” (see 1 Nephi 8). A rod of iron had been constructed to help guide the youth along the path.

Rain during the activities did not dampen these teens’ spirits or wipe away their smiles.





The Salem Oregon Stake also used the strength of their numbers to clean up two historic cemeteries. They found that working together and serving others was a good way to build friendships that make life more enjoyable.

On the Path

The teens set out in the dark, rainy night wearing plastic garbage bags as ponchos and with only one flashlight per group of five to seven people.

In Lehi's dream, those who made it to the tree had to hold to the iron rod to navigate the mists of darkness. Others wandered off "in strange roads" and "were drowned in the depths of the fountain" (1 Nephi 8:32).

Similarly, these youth had their own obstacles to deal with on the way to their "tree of life." In addition to the rain and darkness, they walked in mud and around stones and logs. Looking for a shortcut or an easier way, some lost their way in the darkness. Even those who stayed on the path stumbled, and many fell, having to let go of the iron rod. Members of the youth committee were asked to try to tempt their peers to leave the safety of the path. A "spirit prison"—a place off the trail where the teens had to wait—detained those who left the path.

After clinging to the rod of iron and singing hymns on the way, those who endured to the end finally saw a large tree with white fruit. "Father Lehi," standing at the "tree of life," offered them the fruit of the tree.

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi describes eating the white fruit: "As I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; . . . it was desirable above all other fruit" (1 Nephi 8:12). An imaginative youth committee had made desirable fruit. Caramel apples, dipped in white chocolate, rewarded those who reached this "tree of life."

On the Journey of Life

At a testimony meeting the next day, youth shared the lessons they had learned. Shelby Cook, 15, said:

"The hike was like our lives.

There were many parallels. The most important one is that you have to hold on. I want to be worthy when I meet my Heavenly Father."

Shaunelle Lakey, 17, testified:

"The fact that it was so muddy and





rainy that night relates a lot to life, because lots of times we have so many trials, especially as teenagers. Near the end, when we came to the tree of life, it was so beautiful. Coming to the tree that night was a relief for a lot of people. That's how I think it's going to be when we go back to our Heavenly Father, so that's what we have to look forward to."

They learned to help one another make it to the end. Kayla Merriman, 17, said: "You need to always keep trying. The person above me on the hill reached out his hand and said, 'Here, I'll help you.' When we made it to the end, everyone was so happy, even though we were wet and muddy and cold. You just have to endure!"

"We need our own testimonies," said Haley Prychun, 17. "We can't always rely on our parents. I'm so glad to be surrounded by strong youth."

Isaac Bergevin, 18, related his experience to the conference theme: "The holiest place was at the hill, because it was there that people worried about each other. That brought us together."

One of the most memorable lessons was learned by those who left the path. They felt disappointed as they had to wait in "spirit prison" and watch their brothers and sisters walk by them on the path.

Jackie Haws, 18, said: "Because I was on the youth committee, one of my jobs was to try to lead others astray. Because of this, I ended up going to 'spirit prison' and being separated from the others. I felt such shame in prison. But I'm so grateful for repentance. I need it every day."

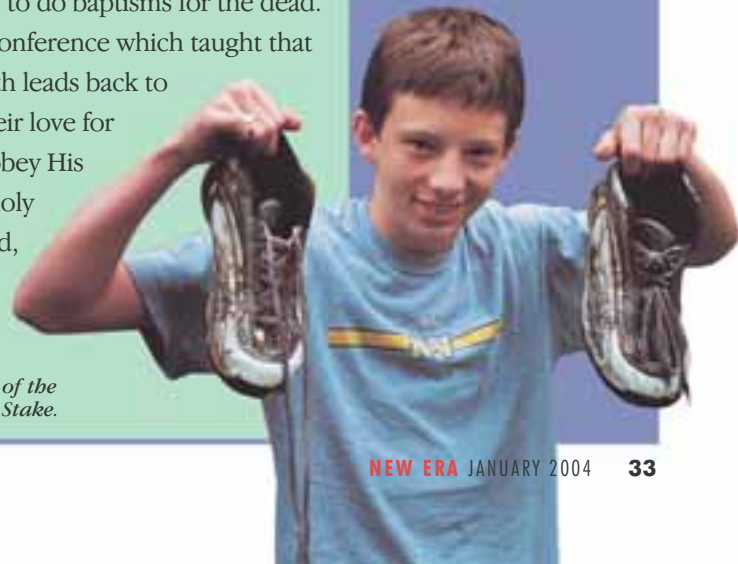
At the Lord's House

After the conference, the youth went to the Portland Oregon Temple to do baptisms for the dead. It was a fitting end to a conference which taught that the strait and narrow path leads back to Heavenly Father. And their love for the Lord leads them to obey His counsel to "stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come" (D&C 87:8). **NE**

Ardith W. Haws is a member of the Pringle Ward, Salem Oregon Stake.



Walking the strait and narrow turned out to be a lot of fun as well as a testimony-building experience, even if many went home with wet and dirty shoes.



WHERE IS My Iron Rod?

BY ADAM C. OLSON
Church Magazines

Tears of frustration filled my eyes, so I couldn't make sense of the words I had been reading.

"And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward," read the verses I was studying for seminary. "And they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree" (1 Nephi 8:24).

I was 14 and struggling. I didn't have many friends. Those I had were beginning to experiment with alcohol, tobacco, pornography, and immoral behavior. The pressure to participate was growing daily. I was struggling to stand up for my beliefs. I was struggling to find friends. I could understand why temptation was called "mists of darkness" (1 Nephi 12:17). I felt blind to the light of the Spirit.

I was trying to do what was right, doing my

best to follow “the path which led to the tree” (1 Nephi 8:22). But I could relate to those people “who had commenced in the path” but were lost because of the “mist of darkness.” I felt like I had “wandered off and [was] lost” too (1 Nephi 8:23).

I rarely cried. But that night in my room, as I read those verses, I couldn’t keep the tears from spilling out. I really felt lost, and I wasn’t sure what to do. I wanted a solid metal handrail right there by my bed that I could grab on to and follow back to heaven.

My seminary teacher had said the rod of iron symbolizes the word of God in the scriptures and given through the prophets today. But I couldn’t hold on to a symbol. I shut my scriptures and poured my heart

into prayer: “Father, where is *my* iron rod?”

The question stuck in my head for days. Then one night, like Lehi, I “dreamed a dream” (1 Nephi 8:2).

In my dream I was on my stomach on the seminary classroom floor. Something behind me held my legs so tightly that I couldn’t get free, and it was slowly pulling me backwards. Terror smashed me so I could hardly breathe. I was too scared to look back, but I knew I was being dragged into a darkness that would mean more than death. It meant spiritual destruction.

I looked around desperately for anything I could grab on to. It was then that I saw in front of me the Book of Mormon resting on a chair. Somehow I knew that if I could just make it to the book, I would be safe.

I woke up halfway between safety and destruction.

I was 14 and struggling. The spiritual darkness around me felt real. So why wouldn't the Lord give me a real rod of iron I could grab?

The iron rod
I found was
as real and
tangible to me
as any metal
handrail. Now
Nephi's promise
meant more to me
than ever.

I knew I had to go one way or the other.

Suddenly, I was more interested in the Book of Mormon. But while the dream was my wake-up call to read the Book of Mormon, it was the actual reading that changed my life. The Lord blessed me for being obedient. I found spiritual strength in the face of temptations. I found confidence to break ties with my old friends and reassurance that I was better off by myself until my prayers to find better friends were answered.

Most important, I could feel the Spirit when I read the Book of Mormon. I could feel the love of God. It felt so good I never wanted to put the book down. I had found my iron rod.

Soon after, tears again blurred the words I was reading. But this time they were tears of joy as I read Nephi's promise to his brothers.

"And they said unto me: What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw, that led to the tree?

"And I said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction"
(1 Nephi 15:23-34). **NE**

THE EXTRA SMILE

"You heard what Mom said. No dating until you're 16."



ERIC LEACH

Unfortunately, Sister Anderson had made an uneven number of hamburgers—there was going to be trouble!



RYAN STOKER



"You had the plans upside down!"

VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

DAD'S

BY ELDER E. RAY BATEMAN
Of the Seventy



Walking through the snow that day, he came to understand that tithing is more a matter of faith than of money.



TITHING TREK

As a young boy, I looked at tithing as many young people do. I saw it as a huge sacrifice—a whole 10 percent of everything I earned. But my parents taught me to pay tithing. Even though I used to question the reason behind it, I was obedient. I always paid a full tithe.

My father especially encouraged me to pay my tithing, so one day I asked him about his testimony of this principle. “When did you really know the importance of paying your tithes?” I asked. In response to my question, my father told me a story about his parents paying their tithing.

When my father was growing up in Utah, his family was poor. His shoes were so worn out that the soles had holes in them and were barely attached to his shoes.

One day his father gave him an envelope full of money and said, “Take this to the bishop. This represents our tithing to the Lord.”

So my father started walking through the fields to the bishop’s house.

It was winter, and there was snow on the ground. As my father walked, his feet were very cold. He felt the money in his hand and thought how much he could use a new pair of shoes.

But my father kept walking, and he thought to himself, “I guess this has to be a very important thing, so important that my father would take this money and give it to the bishop even when we need it so badly.”

Walking through the snow that day, my father realized the importance of tithing. He came to understand that tithing is more a matter of faith than of money.

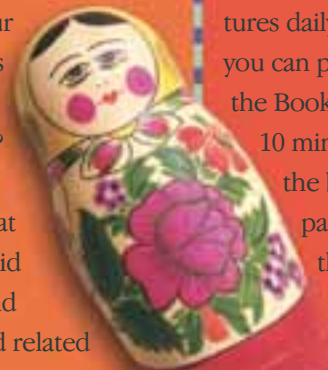
I think that sometimes we may not completely understand the reasons behind the commandments. But even if we don’t always know why, it is important to be obedient. As I look back on my life, I can now see the blessings that came to me when I was obedient. I assure you that it can be the same in your life as you live righteously and follow the commandments. **NE**



WRITE AWAY!

This “Write Away!” is for all you missionaries.

We want to hear what your Christmas was like. Where did you serve? How did you decorate? What experiences did you have? Send your story and related photos to:



SCRIPTURE POWER

A new year means a new opportunity to commit to reading the scriptures daily. Each day as you read, you can pray for guidance, study the Book of Mormon for at least 10 minutes, and then color in the box on the opposite page that corresponds to the day on which you read. At the end of the year, you will have more than a colorful reminder of what you have done. You will have a strengthened testimony of the Book of Mormon and the Savior.

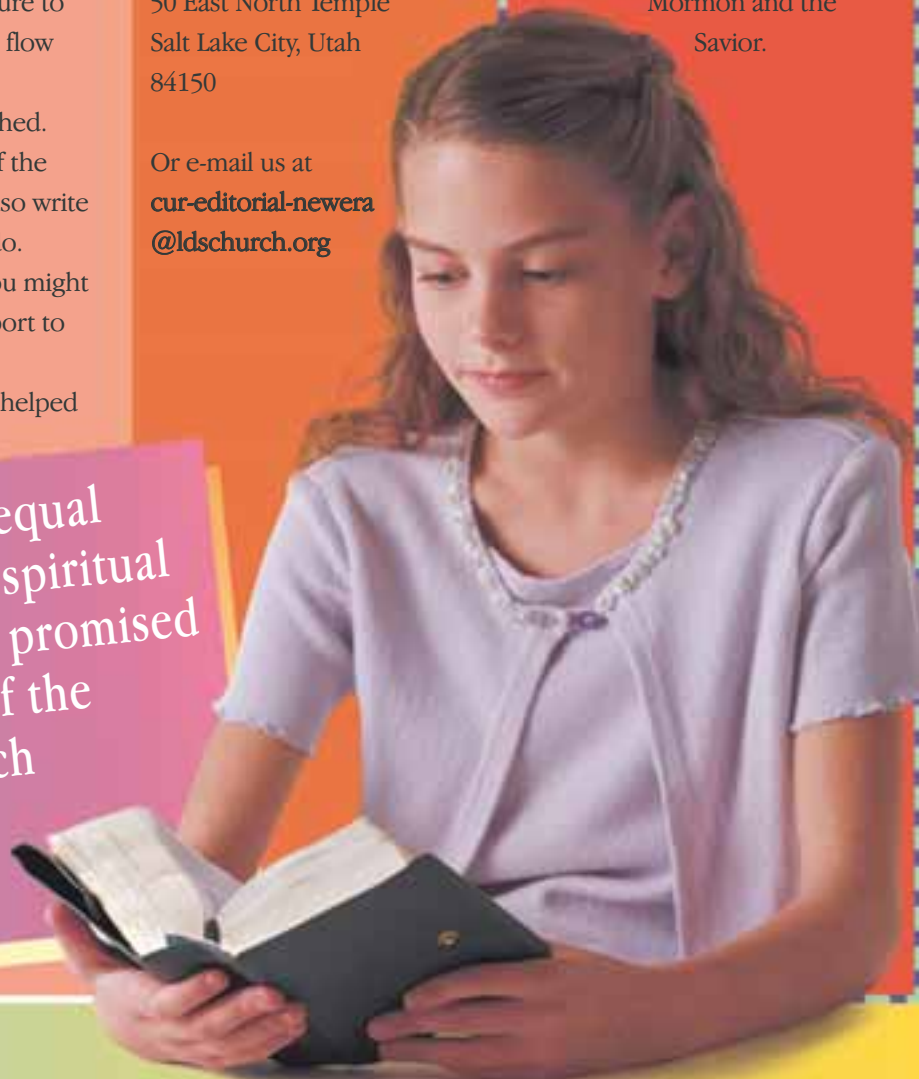
LEADERSHIP TIP

As you plan your Mutual activities, remember to delegate. As you make assignments, be sure to follow a few simple steps to help things flow more smoothly:

1. Identify the tasks that need to be accomplished.
2. Assign those tasks, write down the names of the people you assigned them to, and be sure they also write a note to remind themselves what they need to do.
3. Follow up on the assignments you made. You might just make a quick phone call or ask people to report to you by a certain day.
4. Always remember to thank those who have helped you and to recognize their efforts.

Missionary Christmas
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 Salt Lake City, Utah
 84150

Or e-mail us at
cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org



“No recreational pleasure can equal the cleansing renewal and the spiritual guidance and growth God has promised those who faithfully partake of the sacrament and honor Him each Sabbath day.”

—Elder Dallin H. Oaks, of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, *Ensign*, May 2002, 33.

HAVE READ

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ALL THE *Light* AND TRUTH

BY ELDER BRUCE R. MCCONKIE (1915–85)
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

We have a glorious message for the world. We announce boldly that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has been restored in our day. We say that the heavens have been opened. We say that revelation is coming anew. We say that God speaks today as He spoke anciently. We say that every gift and power and grace ever had by the ancient Saints has been restored. There is no proclamation like this in all the world.

What Is the Gospel?

The gospel is the plan of salvation. It is all of the laws and ordinances needed to save and exalt man. It is the system that enables us to take the souls that we possess and qualify them to go where God and Christ are.

We believe that God loves all His children, and that He has offered or will offer to all of them His saving truths. Whenever He offers these saving truths to men, it is called a dispensation of the gospel. This means that He reveals the gospel anew from heaven

to men on earth.

The plan of salvation was first revealed in Adam's day. It has been revealed in various dispensations since that time. When it was first revealed, it was done in three ways:

1. Man heard the voice of God.
2. Angels administered to man.
3. The gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon man.

By these means, men learned what they must do to be saved. To be *saved* is to return to the presence of God our Father. Those who are saved have eternal peace and rest and joy in His kingdom. He has followed this pattern in all the succeeding dispensations.

Our Dispensation

The dispensation in which we live is named the dispensation of the fulness of times. This means that all the light and truth and knowledge of the past is being funneled into this dispensation.

We would draw a picture in this way. Every dispensation of the past is like a great river.



The plan of salvation was first revealed in Adam's day. It has been revealed in various dispensations since that time. . . . By this means, men learned what they must do to be saved.

The first
great truth
is that Jesus

*Christ is the Son of
the living God, that
He was crucified
for the sins of
the world. . . .*

*We reverence Him
as the Son of God.
We bear witness
of His holy name.*

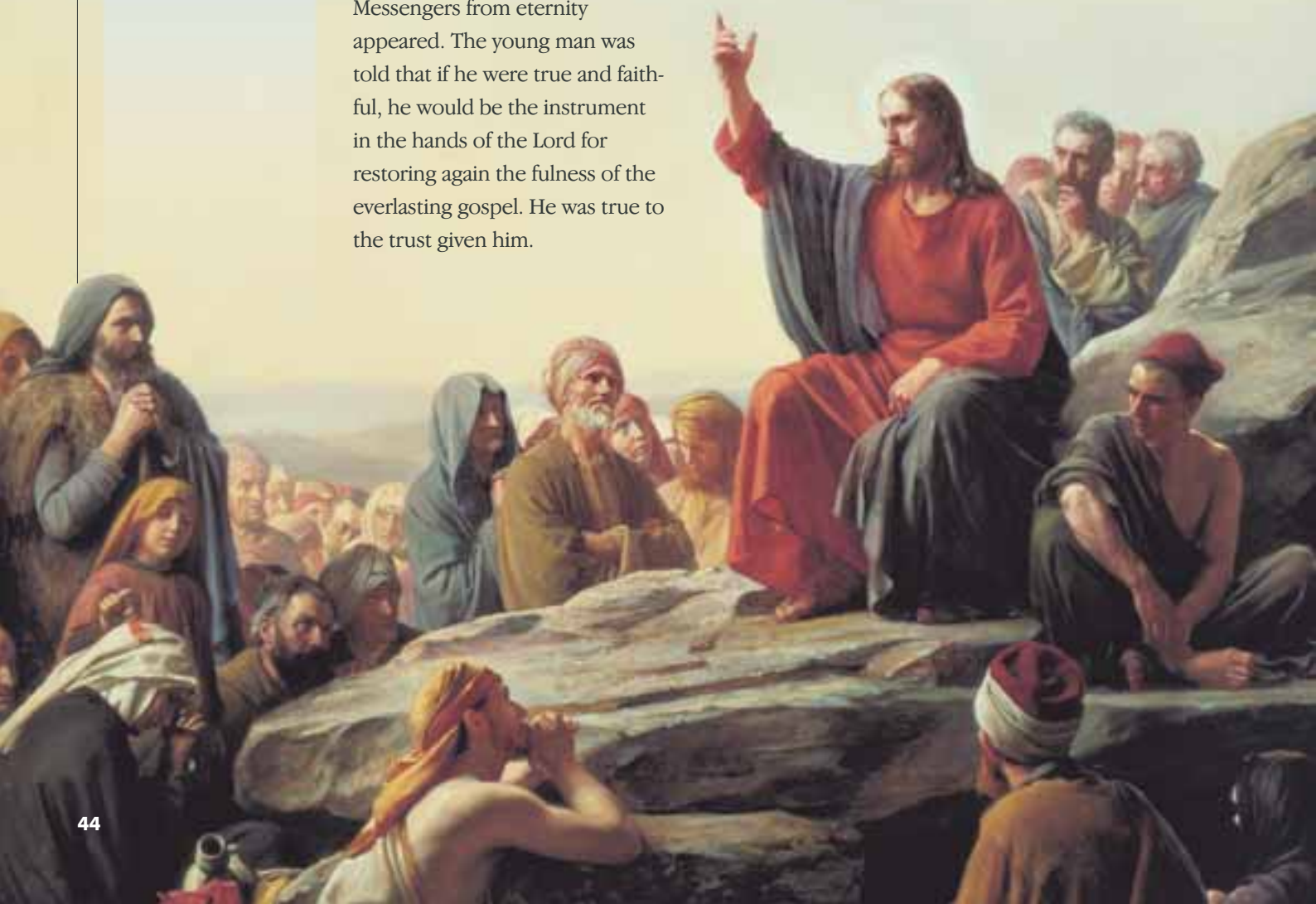
The present dispensation is like a great ocean. All of the rivers of the past flow into the ocean of the present. We have received again every key and power and right that the ancient Saints had. Once again the voice of God has been heard. Once again angels have ministered from His presence. Once again the Church and kingdom of God has been set up.

All of these wondrous things began in the spring of 1820. The person chosen of God to be His prophet was named Joseph Smith Jr. This young man desired to know which of all the churches was right. He poured out his soul to God in humble prayer.

The hour had then come for the opening of the new dispensation. Messengers from eternity appeared. The young man was told that if he were true and faithful, he would be the instrument in the hands of the Lord for restoring again the fulness of the everlasting gospel. He was true to the trust given him.

In process of time, line upon line, the gospel was restored. The Lord had to restore the knowledge and doctrines that the ancient Saints had. In large measure, He did this by giving a new volume of scripture. We believe the Bible to be the word of God. We accept it fully and completely. We study it and try to live in harmony with its teachings.

But in addition, we have another great volume of scripture. The Book of Mormon is a history of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas. In it is recorded the plan of salvation. It tells what men have to do to be saved. It is in perfect



BELOW: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, BY CARL BLOCH; RIGHT: THE FIRST VISION, BY TOM HOLDMAN



and complete harmony with the Bible. It expands and clarifies many doctrines. It is a new witness for Christ.

Two Great Truths

There are two great truths that men must believe to gain salvation. The first great truth is that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, that He was crucified for the sins of the world, that He ransoms all men from the temporal and spiritual death brought into the world by the fall of Adam, that salvation is in Christ. We reverence Him as the Son of God. We bear witness of His holy name.

The second great truth that men must believe is this: God has in these last days restored the fulness of His everlasting gospel; He has called prophets and legal administrators again; He has set up His earthly kingdom; once again He has given the power to bind on earth and seal in heaven.

What the Restoration Means for Us

Now, incident to these great truths, there are many others. I single out the fact that

God has given in this day eternal family units. This is a sample of the doctrines of the Restoration. It means that, in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are married for time and for all eternity. The family unit that commences here will continue in the eternal world. This is the noblest concept that can enter the heart of man.

God has revealed to me by the power of the Holy Ghost that there has been a glorious and wondrous Restoration in our day. I am a witness of that fact. I can assert it with absolute certainty. But any living soul who will obey the same law will come to know in his heart the same thing that I know in my heart. The way God speaks is by the pouring out of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Now I suggest that you ponder in your heart these things. God grant that the light of investigation and truth may be in the hearts of all men everywhere. Those who receive the truth will have joy in this life. They will be inheritors of eternal life in the world to come. **NE**

Adapted from an address delivered at a 1976 area conference in Tabiti. Originally printed in the December 1976 New Era.

The second great truth is this:

God has in these last days restored the fulness of His everlasting gospel. . . . Once again He has given the power to bind on earth and seal in heaven.

INSTANT MESSAGES



TALKING TO DAD

BY STEPHANIE SCHOFIELD

My dad is not a member of the Church. I love spending time with him, but it was hard to keep the Sabbath day holy when I was with him. I never wanted to hurt his feelings by not going to a movie or shopping with him on Sundays, so for a while I ignored the matter.

When I got a little older, I realized that what I was doing wasn't right. I finally sat down and told my dad how I felt. Surprisingly, he didn't mind. He was understanding enough to help me with the problem.

Talking to someone about your beliefs isn't always easy, but it isn't as scary as it seems. Let people know how you feel. For me, it worked out in the end.

Stephanie Schofield is a member of the Hobble Creek Seventh Ward, Springville Utah Hobble Creek Stake.



KEEPING THE FAITH

BY JORDI STALLINGS

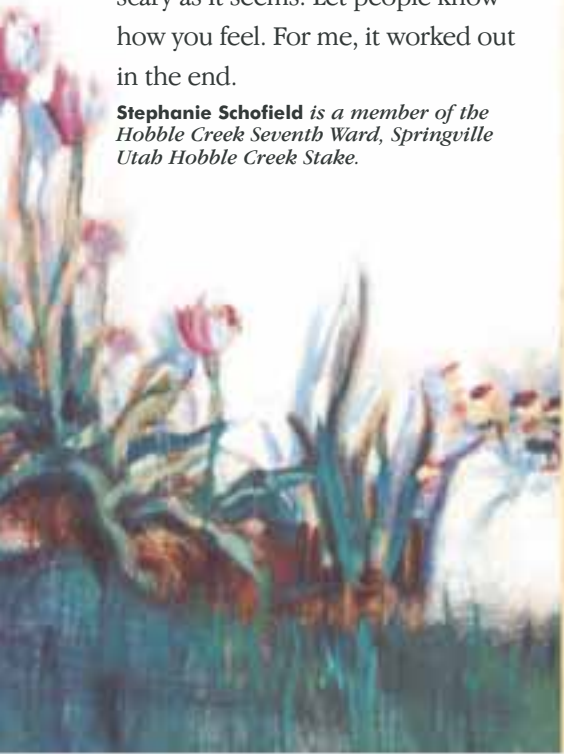
When it comes to challenges in the gospel, I don't usually have the support of my family. I'm the only active Church member in my family, besides my sister who is away at college. This sometimes feels like an enormous burden on my shoulders. I know that my family is watching me closely, and my mistakes could hurt more than just me.

Sometimes I become frustrated watching bad things happen in my family when I know that the gospel could help. I used to try to force the gospel on my family. I would ask my mom, "If you really loved me,

wouldn't you want to be sealed to me forever?"

Although life with my family has been challenging it has also been rewarding. I'm gaining a stronger testimony of the blessings and happiness that come from the gospel. I've stopped trying to force or scare my family into going to church, and I'm trying to lead with love rather than with fear. Whenever my little sister comes to church, it fills my soul with joy. I know a seed of faith has been planted, and being a good example to her has become my greatest blessing.

Jordi Stallings is a member of the Murtaugh First Ward, Kimberly Idabo Stake.



NO CHALLENGE TOO GREAT

BY SETH ADAM SMITH

In elementary school I was overweight. I remember stepping onto the scale every morning, praying that I had lost just one pound. Sometimes I came home in tears because of my schoolmates' cutting remarks.

My older brother and sister, David and Shannon, also had their challenges. When David was one year old, he was severely burned. Scars covered his hands, arms, stomach, and legs. Shannon had a walking disability and was born with a slower mental capacity that often made her act younger than she was. Almost daily children at school made fun of them.

Despite their trials, my brother and sister looked to Christ in everything they did. Both of them served honorable missions. Their humility, constant faith, and perseverance provided wonderful examples. They are everything I want to become.

In this life we may be criticized and persecuted. That's part of why we came here—to rise above the persecution and become stronger because of it. David, Shannon, and I are better people today for having been faithful in difficult experiences. I often say that everything given to us in life can be either a blessing or a curse. The strength of one's heart determines which it is.

Seth Adam Smith is a member of the Farmington 15th Ward, Farmington Utah North Stake.



things are true" (Ether 4:11).

Because of this scripture I began to trust the Lord and believe the gospel was true, trusting that He would confirm His words.

I don't remember exactly when I first started to feel the Spirit. Instead I gradually became aware that I had felt the Spirit many times throughout my life and simply hadn't recognized it.

I testify that if you sincerely seek to feel the Spirit, you will. I know that prayer is so very real and that every sincere prayer is

answered. Above all, I know that Jesus Christ is my Savior and that He knows and loves me and each one of us personally.

Crystal Jones is a member of the Alma Ninth Ward, Chandler Arizona Alma Stake.

IS IT TRUE?

BY CRYSTAL JONES

When I was 12 I started to question everything about the gospel. For a couple of years I struggled with my testimony. I never seemed to feel the Spirit. Many times in my personal prayers I begged my Father in Heaven in tears to let me feel the Spirit and know the Church was true. I was often disappointed.

Despite struggling, I got more involved with the scriptures and found one verse in the book of Ether that really helped me: "But he that believeth these things which I have spoken, him will I visit with the manifestations of my Spirit, and he shall know and bear record. For because of my Spirit he shall know that these

INSTANT MESSAGES is a new section that features personal experiences, favorite hymns and scriptures, and other uplifting thoughts. If you have a personal experience that has strengthened your testimony and you'd like us to consider it for Instant Messages, please send it to

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Instant Messages
50 E. North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

Or e-mail us at
cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

Please limit submissions to 300 words. They may be edited for length and clarity.

Mutual Activity Ideas

- The Mutual theme for this year is the first part of D&C 90:24. To illustrate the phrase “be believing,” organize a review of the Articles of Faith. Divide into two groups. Hand out copies of the Articles of Faith and allow both groups to review them for a few minutes. Then ask the groups to resist referring to their handouts, and ask a series of questions about everyday events that can be answered by reciting one of the Articles of Faith.

- After reading the Q&A on page 16 about appearance, with your youth leaders’ approval, invite several young men and young women to be on a panel discussion. Have the young men give their feelings on modesty and how a young woman should dress. Have the young women do the same for the young men.

Service Project Suggestion

- Many times it is obvious who needs service. To apply part of this year’s theme, “search diligently,” look for someone in your ward or neighborhood who needs help yet may not show it. Under the direction of

your bishop and leaders, plan and carry out an appropriate act of service for those who need it.

Family Home Evening Ideas

- Give each member of the family a blank family tree or family group sheet. Then, using the references provided in “Lehi’s Family Tree” on page 28, look up each reference and fill in the family tree or group sheet. Together, fill out a family group sheet on your own family. Or plan to take a

tour of the nearest family history center.

- As a family, read aloud the Idea List on page 27 titled “New Year—New You.” As a family, select one of those goals to work on for the coming month or year, or write a goal of your own. Make a small sign as a reminder of your goal to post on the refrigerator or in a prominent place. Report on your progress at an upcoming family home evening.

SUNDAY LESSON HELPS

In addition to the Resource Guides (printed in the May and November *Ensign* and *Liahona*), Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood teachers may find these additional resources helpful in enhancing lessons 1–4. The articles can be found in print or online at www.lds.org. Click on “Gospel Library.”

Young Women Manual 2

Lesson 1 Drawing Closer to Jesus Christ

- Susan W. Tanner, “We Are Daughters of Our Heavenly Father, Who Loves Us,” *New Era*, Oct. 2003, 10.
- Bruce R. McConkie, “All the Light and Truth,” *New Era*, this issue, 42.
- Charity Brunson, “Saving the Bees,” *New Era*, Nov. 2003, 10.

Lesson 2 Spiritual Gifts

- Richard G. Scott, “Recognizing Answers to Prayer,” *New Era*, Aug. 2003, 4.
- Clayton London, “Time to Testify,” *New Era*, Oct. 2003, 9.

Lesson 3 Building the Kingdom of God

- Gordon B. Hinckley, “Reach Out,” *New Era*, Feb. 2003, 4.
- Boyd K. Packer, “Feed My Sheep,” *New Era*, Jan. 2003, 4.

Lesson 4 Obeying Commandments Helps Us Fulfill Our Divine Roles

- Janet Thomas, “The Playmaker,” *New Era*, Nov. 2003, 20.
- Richard L. Evans, “Why All the Rules?” *New Era*, Nov. 2003, 44.
- Q&A: “. . . A list telling me exactly what I can and can’t do?” *New Era*, Aug. 2003, 16.

Aaronic Priesthood Manual 2

Lesson 1 Who Am I?

- Keith B. McMullin, “Are You a Saint?” *New Era*, Feb. 2003, 38.
- David B. Haight, “You Are Different,” *New Era*, Apr. 2003, 4.

Lesson 2 Knowing Our Father in Heaven

- Bruce R. McConkie, “All the Light and Truth,” *New Era*, this issue, 42.
- Rachelle Pace Castor, “He Loves You More,” *New Era*, Feb. 2003, 24.
- Timothy Cobbley, “A Light in the Darkness,” *New Era*, Feb. 2003, 11.

Lesson 3 Faith in Jesus Christ

- Frank Preston, “Somebody Had It Harder,” *New Era*, Nov. 2003, 32.
- Lisa Ann Jackson, “King of Kings,” *New Era*, Apr. 2003, 8.
- Elvin Mencia, “The Wounds That Heal My Own,” *New Era*, Apr. 2003, 15.

Lesson 4 Companionship of the Holy Ghost

- Marged A. Kirkpatrick, “I Didn’t Want to Die,” this issue, 15.
- Q&A: “Holy Ghost or my own thoughts and feelings. . . ?” *New Era*, Apr. 2003, 16.
- H. David Burton, “Who’s Asking?” *New Era*, Dec. 2003, 38.

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SHARED WITH FRIENDS

Thanks for the *New Era*. I love to read it. I especially loved two articles in the October 2003 magazine: "In Crowd? Out Crowd? Right Crowd!" and "We Are Daughters of Our Heavenly Father, Who Loves Us." I thought these articles were so great that I took them to my friends in Beehives. They read them and liked them as much as I did. These articles also helped change my life and how I think about things.

Maddie Prows, Sabre Springs Ward, Poway California Stake

MY COMPASS

The first time I read the *New Era* magazine was when my distant cousin allowed me to borrow it. Though the magazine was not the latest issue, when I began reading the articles in it, I felt the Holy Spirit. Though I have not subscribed to the *New Era*, through the full-time missionaries and the Church members allowing me to borrow their magazines, the *New Era* guides me in my journey. All the articles are a great help, especially to students like me who are studying in a Catholic school. Through this magazine, we do our best to "stand tall" in the crowd. Thank you very much!

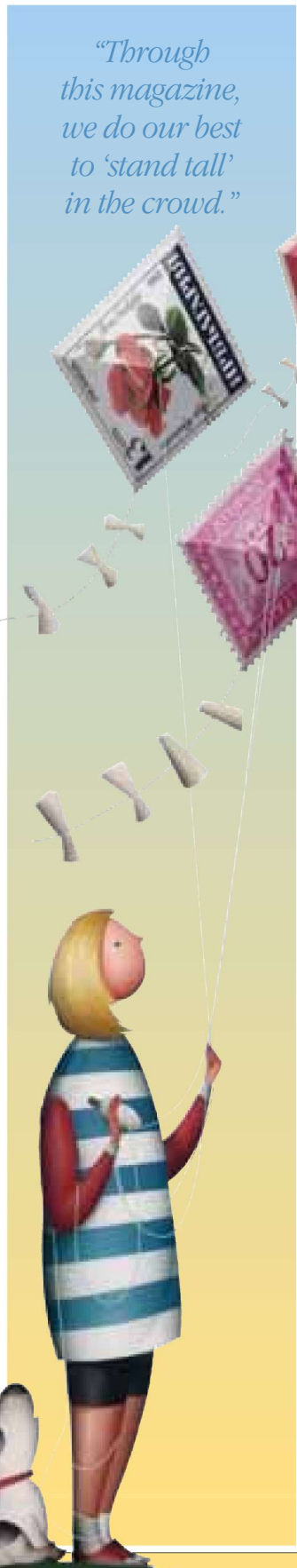
Mary Joy Borlongan, Prosperidad Branch, Trento Philippines District

USING THE NEW ERA

I really love the *New Era*. It's a really great magazine and spiritual too. In my school (Church College of Western Samoa), we have devotionals for our religion classes. When it's my turn to give a spiritual thought, I get an article or story from the *New Era* and read it to the class. The Spirit is always strong.

Sometimes when our young women are without ideas for Mutual, I turn to the *New Era* for the Mutual tips on p. 49. Thank you for all the good

"Through this magazine, we do our best to 'stand tall' in the crowd."



articles and stories. They help me try to act the way Christ did.

Urshla Adam, Pesega Third Ward, Pesega Samoa Stake

CURLY HAIR WOES

Thank you so much for the article "It's Just Hair" (Aug. 2003). One morning I was wishing my hair wasn't so curly. Then I read "It's Just Hair" and realized how fortunate I was to have hair. The article was a great inspiration to me to read about that young woman's strength, even in times of trial. She didn't blame the Lord for her trials, and her relationship with Him was strengthened. It showed me just how much I take things for granted. Thanks again!

Name withheld

THE ATONEMENT NOT JUST FOR SINS

Thank you very much for the beautiful article "Power to Heal" (Apr. 2003) by Elder Merrill J. Bateman. It was an answer to my prayers.

Five years ago my mom died of cancer. I have always had the support of my friends and family, but I never thought anyone really knew how I felt about the situation. When I read this article I realized that Christ's Atonement is not only for sin but also for comforting our pains. He died for each one of us and felt every one of our pains and sins. He really does know how I feel and can help me. I am so grateful for the Atonement and the love of the Savior. Thank you for strengthening my testimony.

Rachel Knutson, Bellingham Third Ward, Bellingham Washington Stake

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

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Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.



TO MY ETERNAL BEST FRIEND

BY KRISTINE ANNE KEELE

Living on earth
in imperfect mortality,
trying to live a higher
more celestial law,
seemed impossible at times
until I met you.
Now all the impossibles are possible,
and the possibilities
are forever.



“The fact that it was so muddy and raining that night relates a lot to life, because lots of times we have so many trials, especially as teenagers. Near the end, when we came to the tree of life, it was so beautiful.”

See “In Search of the Tree of Life,” p. 30.