



*Be the*  
**FIRST**  
*on the*  
**DANCE FLOOR**

Set trends and make friends. After all, the world could use a little more of your positive influence.

By David Dickson

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No patch of vacant ground ever looks so intimidating as an empty floor at a stake dance. That seemingly innocent, well-swept gymnasium might as well be loaded with finely oiled bear traps ready to spring shut.

It's kind of weird, when you think about it.

The room itself is often decorated to perfection. Dozens or even hundreds of people have spent time and effort getting ready for the dance. They look their best. They want to be there and have a good time. Upbeat music plays in the background. And yet almost without exception there's usually a stretch in the beginning when the whole crowd hovers at the sides of the room. Nobody is willing to start dancing until *someone else* starts first.

Those awkward minutes can drag on and on until a few brave people finally take the plunge. At that point, an empty dance floor can go from zero to flooded in seconds. But someone has to start.

Why not let that someone be you?

## THE CHOICE TO ACT

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "As sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, we have been blessed with the gift of moral agency, the capacity for independent action and choice. Endowed with agency, you and I are agents, and we primarily are to act and not just be acted upon" ("And Nothing Shall Offend Them," *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 90; see also 2 Nephi 2:26).

Plowing headlong onto an empty dance floor is only one small example of how we can use our agency to lead out in positive activities. If dancing isn't your thing, don't

worry. The ways we can influence others and be a force for good are truly endless.

## THE START OF SOMETHING NEW

Opportunities to create new and uplifting activities can come anywhere and anytime. For example, a group of young men camping in Goblin Valley State Park (south-central Utah, USA) found a creative and exciting way to share the gospel: they buried some treasure.

Their modern-day treasure hunt was made possible with geocaching, where, with the use of a global positioning system (GPS) device or mobile phone, all you need is a set of numbers to help you find an exact location even in the middle of nowhere. The standard practice in geocaching is to take what you find when you reach your destination, usually something small such as an inexpensive toy, and then leave something else for the next person.

## BE ANXIOUSLY ENGAGED

"Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward."

Doctrine and Covenants 58:27-28.





These young men were learning about geocaching on their campout. They wanted to create an official geocache of their own, but with a twist. Instead of taking and leaving small objects, they wanted visitors to read (take) and mark (leave) scriptures.

“I’ve looked at a lot of geocaches in the past, and I’ve never seen anything like this before,” says John B., 16, one of the young men in the group.

Each member of the group marked a favorite scripture with his name next to it in a single copy of the Book of Mormon. John also included his testimony along with written instructions to those who will visit the geocache in the future.

The young men then placed the Book of Mormon in a weatherproof container surrounded by rocks and made note of the GPS coordinates. They have high hopes that this geocache, which they registered online, will be visited for many years to come.

“It was a lot of fun,” John says. “This was a way for us to share the gospel.”

These young men led out—being “the first on the dance floor”—by sharing scriptures that strengthened them and inviting others to follow their lead.

### “MADE YOU SMILE”

As another example of youth leading out in positive activities that strengthen others, an entire city in Texas, USA, became a bit brighter after a group of young women in

one ward decided to **“SMILE”** at everyone around them: **“Surround Myself In Light Every day.”**

The goal of their SMILE Project was to spread happiness through smiling at every person they came in contact with—including themselves. Each day for two weeks, the young women would smile at the mirror in the morning and then smile at each person they met during the day. Their efforts quickly turned into something worth grinning over.

“I felt extremely privileged to be able to spread happiness in such a simple and brilliant way!” says Kelly D., 15. “I felt like I was really trying to be like Jesus and sharing my love with the community by smiling.”

Of course, when you smile at someone, you often receive a smile back. Their smiles began spreading through town.

The young women also noticed that smiling at themselves in the mirror made a difference in their day. “At first the part about smiling at myself sounded kind of strange,” admits Megan M., 13. “But after a little while, my self-confidence grew.”

As the two weeks unfolded, the young women realized their small acts of kindness had a big impact. Maisie D., 17, sums up the project: “I learned for myself that small and simple acts of kindness can make all the difference in someone’s life,” she says. In this case, as in many cases (see Alma 37:6), taking “the first step on the dance floor” didn’t require a huge effort—just a simple goal that invited happiness and allowed others to join in a good thing.

## SCRIPTURAL TRAILBLAZERS

Like these youth, don't be afraid to try ideas that are brand new. After all, the scriptures are full of examples of people who accomplished big tasks that had never been done before. When the Jaredites built barges to cross the ocean (see Ether 2), the Brother of Jared went to the Lord with an idea for how to provide light to the ships. His idea was anything but common (see Ether 3).

Similarly, when Nephi and his family built a ship for their own journey to the promised land, they weren't following standard building practices. "Now I, Nephi, did not work the timbers after the manner which was learned by men, neither did I build the ship after the manner of men; but I did build it after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me" (1 Nephi 18:2).

In more modern times, during the construction of the first temple built in this dispensation, the Kirtland Temple, the First Presidency (Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams) received revelation on how they should build. The temple would be unlike any building they'd ever seen.

"Now here is wisdom, and the mind of the Lord—let the house be built, not after the manner of the world, for I

give not unto you that ye shall live after the manner of the world; therefore, let it be built after the manner which I shall show" (D&C 95:13–14).

The Jaredites had light for their journey. Nephi's ship carried them safely to the promised land. The Kirtland Temple blessed the lives of the Saints who worked so hard to build it. Each of these stories shows that with the Lord's help and according to His will, you can accomplish great things even when you've never had experience in that particular area.

## YOUR OWN DANCE FLOOR

You can be a force for good in so many ways. You can help your friends become excited about family history. You can start a book club to encourage the use of media that meet the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*. You can help stop profanity at your school (see [lds.org/go/NoCussingNE1](https://www.lds.org/go/NoCussingNE1) and [lds.org/go/CM2NE1](https://www.lds.org/go/CM2NE1) for examples). You can throw a welcome party for the new kid on the block.

No matter what uplifting and exciting efforts you decide to pursue, it's usually a lot more rewarding to participate than it is to watch from the sidelines.

So, head on out there and dance. **NE**

