

# THE New Era

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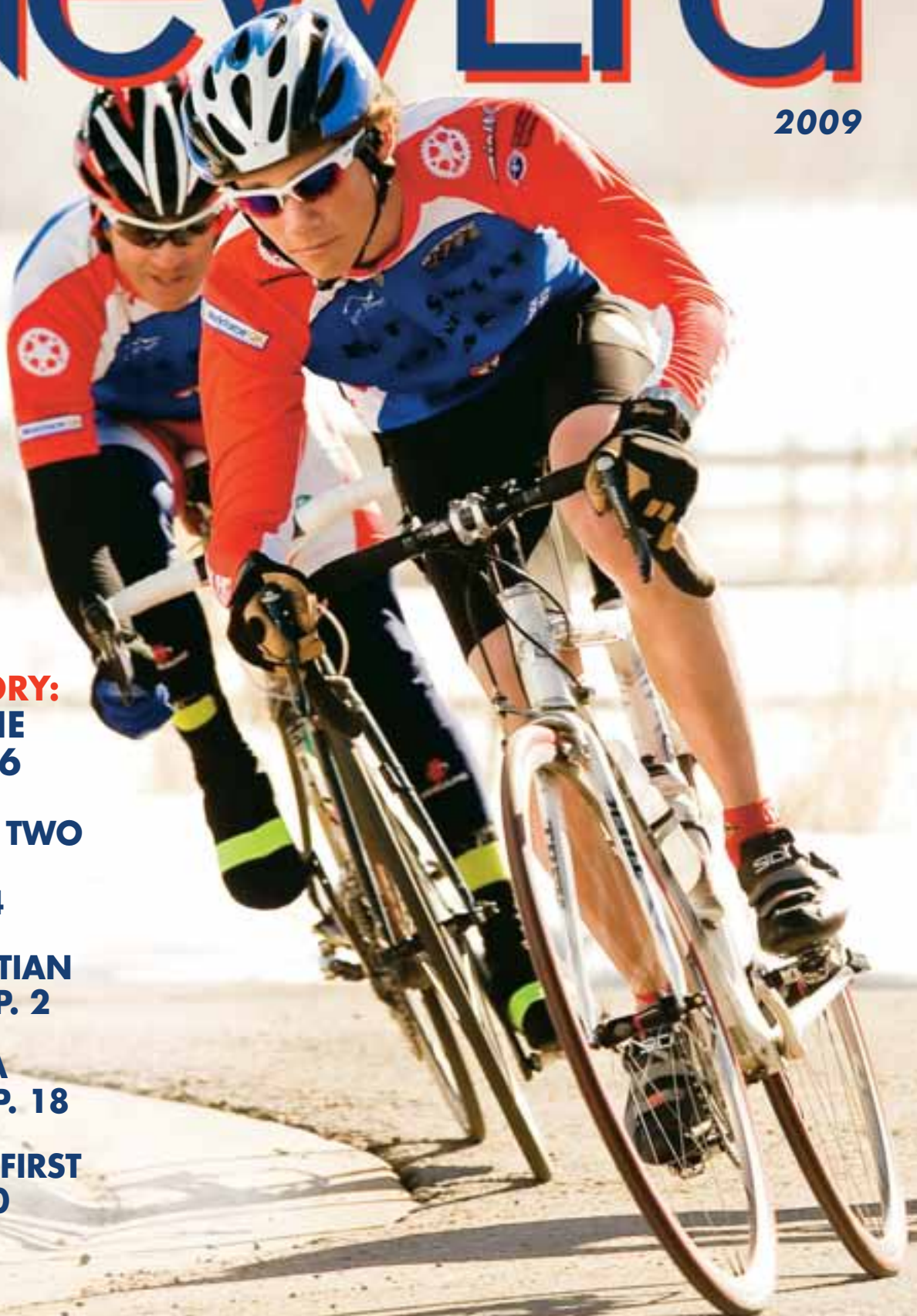
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**FIT FOR THE**  
**RACE, P. 46**

**MARCHING TWO**  
**THOUSAND**  
**MILES, P. 24**

**TRUE CHRISTIAN**  
**COURAGE, P. 2**

**CALIFORNIA**  
**DANCING, P. 18**

**GIVING UP FIRST**  
**PLACE, P. 40**



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**THE MESSAGE: THAT IS CHRISTIAN COURAGE p. 2**

## **The Message: That Is Christian Courage 2**

Elder Robert D. Hales  
*When we turn the other cheek and do not retaliate, then we stand with the Savior.*

## **An Honesty Test 6**

Patricia A. Jacobs and Francini Presença  
*Because of me, my friend was being put to the test.*

## **I Changed My Life in Just 30 Minutes a Day 8**

Andy Jorgensen  
*It was a simple thing, but it made me happy.*

## **What Joseph Smith Taught: Temple Ordinances and Blessings 11**

*Each temple has required great sacrifice from the Saints.*

## **Amaru Anderson: Her Brother's Keeper 12**

Sally Johnson Odekirk  
*She's teaching the gospel to someone she loves—her little brother.*

## **Questions and Answers 14**

*"I don't have a testimony even though I go to church and keep the commandments. How can I believe and gain a testimony?"*

## **There's Always a Way Out 16**

Nicholas Ryan Burk  
*We seemed trapped until we persisted and found the way out.*

## **Twelve Dancing Stakes 18**

Mindy Raye Holmes  
*Stakes in California put their dancing shoes on for a summer dance festival.*

## **From the Field: Not by Chance 22**

Michael Young  
*Meeting up with the young soldier was more than a mere accident.*

## **Marching with the Battalion 24**

Arianne B. Cope  
*Discover how the Mormon Battalion marched for us today.*



**MARCHING WITH THE BATTALION p. 24**

## **Mormonad: Pull Together 29**

## **From Bottom to Top 30**

Don L. Searle  
*A young woman from Uruguay uses her artistic talents to succeed in life and living the gospel.*

**The Extra Smile** 33

**Always Make the Effort** 34

Elder Octaviano Tenorio  
*The secret to success is effort, concentration, and being happy.*

**What's Up?** 38

**Stepping Up by Stepping Down** 40

Jacob Fullmer and Patricia Farnsworth  
*Andrea Nelson illustrates what a winner is by giving away first place.*

**Instant Messages** 44

*The courage to go ahead; Duty to God changed my life.*

**Not Just Spinning His Wheels** 46

Sean Johnson  
*Balancing school and sports keeps Peter Johnson moving ahead.*

**NewEra.Ids.org** 47



**NOT JUST SPINNING HIS WHEELS p. 46**

**We've Got Mail** 48

**Poem:  
Before Their Handcarts** 49

David R. Golden

**Photo** 49

Michelle Scharf



**NOT BY CHANCE p. 22**

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## THE MESSAGE

# THAT IS CHRISTIAN COURAGE

BY ELDER ROBERT D. HALES  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

*Answering our accusers  
in the Savior's way.*



*We must never  
become contentious  
when we are discuss-  
ing our faith.*

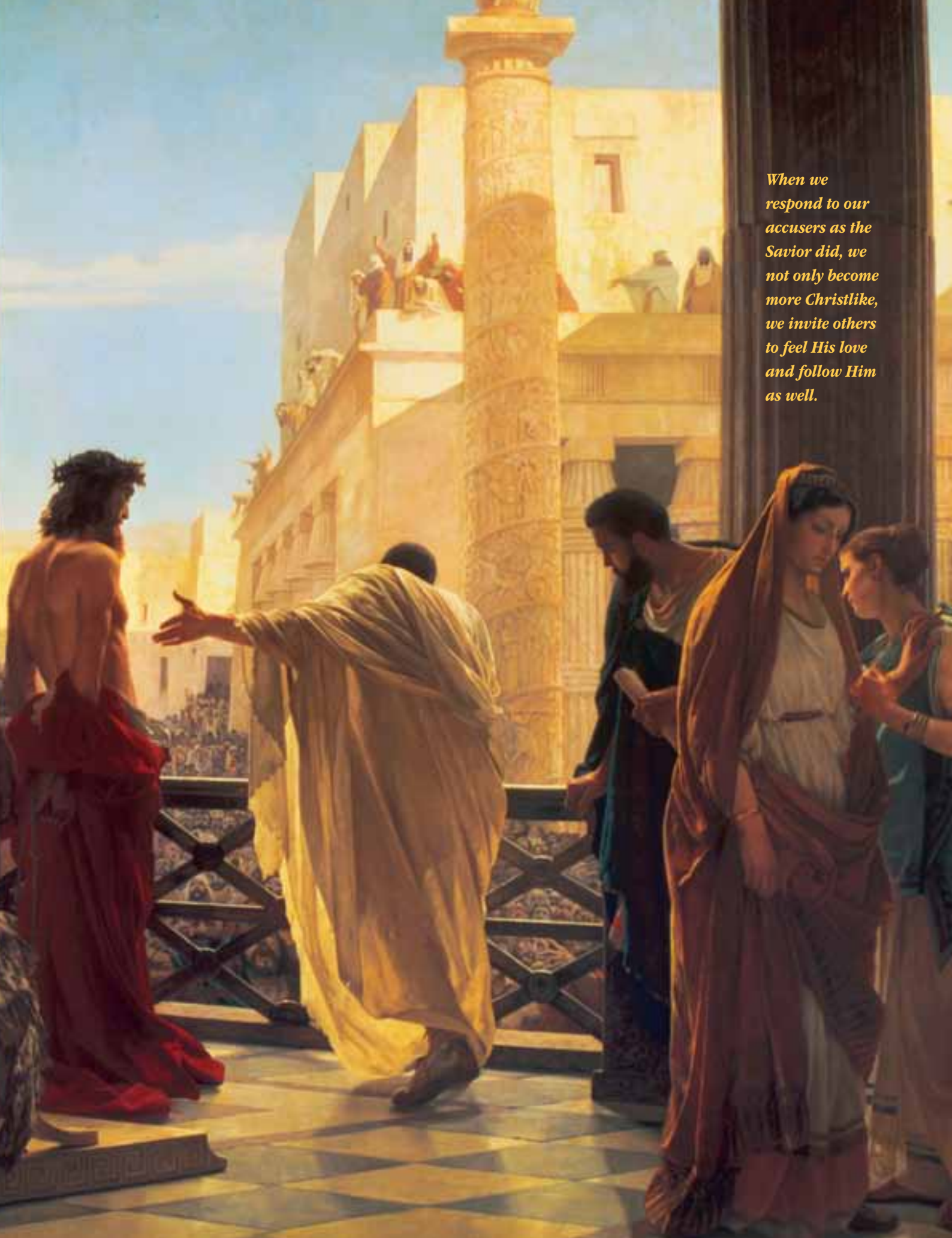
**R**ecently a group of bright, faithful young Latter-day Saints wrote down some of the most pressing questions on their minds. One sister asked, “Why doesn’t the Church defend itself more actively when accusations are made against it?”

To her inquiry I would say that one of mortality’s great tests comes when our beliefs are questioned or criticized. In such moments, we may want to respond aggressively—to “put up our dukes.” But these are important opportunities to step back, pray, and follow the Savior’s example. Remember that Jesus Himself was despised and rejected by the world. And in Lehi’s dream, those coming to the Savior also endured “mocking and pointing . . . fingers” (1 Nephi 8:27). “The world hath hated [my disciples],” Jesus said, “because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). But when we respond to our accusers as the Savior did, we not only become more Christlike, we invite others to feel His love and follow Him as well.

### **Responding in a Christlike Way**

To respond in a Christlike way cannot be scripted or based on a formula. The Savior responded differently in every situation. When He was confronted by wicked King Herod, He remained silent. When He stood before Pilate, He bore a simple and powerful testimony of His divinity and purpose. Facing the money-changers who were defiling the temple, He





*When we respond to our accusers as the Savior did, we not only become more Christlike, we invite others to feel His love and follow Him as well.*

**L**ike all true disciples of Christ, [the Prophet Joseph Smith] stood with the Savior by loving others in a tolerant and compassionate way. That is Christian courage.

*True disciples of Christ see opportunity in the midst of opposition.*

exercised His divine responsibility to preserve and protect that which was sacred. Lifted up upon a cross, He uttered the incomparable Christian response: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Some people mistakenly think responses such as silence, meekness, forgiveness, and bearing humble testimony are passive or weak. But to “love [our] enemies, bless them that curse [us], do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which despitefully use [us], and persecute [us]” (Matthew 5:44) takes faith, strength, and, most of all, Christian courage.

The Prophet Joseph Smith demonstrated this courage throughout his life. Though he “suffer[ed] severe persecution at the hands of all classes of men, both religious and irreligious” (Joseph Smith—History 1:27), he did not retaliate or give in to hatred. Like all true disciples of Christ, he stood with the Savior by loving others in a tolerant and compassionate way. *That is Christian courage.*

When we do not retaliate—when we turn the other cheek and resist feelings of anger—we too stand with the Savior. We show forth His love, which is the only power that can subdue the adversary and answer our accusers without accusing them in return. That is not weakness. *That is Christian courage.*

### Opportunity in Opposition

Through the years we learn that challenges to our faith are not new, and they aren’t likely to disappear soon. But *true disciples of Christ see opportunity in the midst of opposition.*

Experience shows that seasons of negative publicity about the Church can help accomplish the Lord’s purposes. In 1983 the First Presidency wrote to Church leaders, “Opposition may be in itself an opportunity. . . . These criticisms create . . . interest in the Church. . . . This provides an opportunity [for members] to present the truth to those whose attention is thus directed toward us.”<sup>1</sup>

We can take advantage of such opportunities in many ways: a kind letter to the editor, a conversation with a friend, a comment on a blog, or a reassuring word to one who has made a disparaging comment. We can answer with love those who have been influenced by misinformation and prejudice—who are “kept from the truth because they know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12). I assure you that to answer our accusers in this way is never weakness. *It is Christian courage in action.*

As we respond to others, each circumstance will be different. Fortunately, the Lord knows the hearts of our accusers and how we can most effectively respond to them. *As true disciples seek guidance from the Spirit, they receive inspiration tailored to each encounter. And in every encounter, true disciples respond in ways that invite the Spirit of the Lord.*

### Avoiding Contention

We must never become contentious when we are discussing our faith. The Savior has said, “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me” (3 Nephi 11:29). More regrettable than the Church being accused of not being Christian is when Church members react to such accusations in an un-Christlike way! May our conversations with others always be marked by the fruits of the Spirit—“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,



[and] temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23). To be meek, as defined in Webster’s dictionary, is “manifesting patience and longsuffering: enduring injury without resentment.”<sup>2</sup> Meekness is not weakness. It is a badge of Christian courage.

This is not to suggest that we compromise our principles or dilute our beliefs. We cannot change the doctrines of the restored gospel, even if teaching and obeying them makes us unpopular in the eyes of the world. Yet even as we feel to speak the word of God with boldness, we must pray to be filled with the Holy Ghost (see Acts 4:29, 31). We should never confuse boldness with Satan’s counterfeit: overbearance (see Alma 38:12). True disciples speak with quiet confidence, not boastful pride.

*As true disciples, our primary concern must be others’ welfare, not personal vindication.* Questions and criticisms give us an opportunity to reach out to others and demonstrate that they matter to our Heavenly Father and to us. Our aim should be to help them understand the truth, not defend our egos or score points in a theological debate. Our heartfelt testimonies are the most powerful answer we can give our accusers. And such testimonies can only be borne in love and meekness.

*True disciples avoid being unduly judgmental of others’ views.* Many of us have cultivated strong friendships with those who are not members of our Church. We need them, and they need us. As President Thomas S. Monson has taught, “Let us learn respect for others. . . . None of us lives alone—in our city, our nation, or our world.”<sup>3</sup>

### Staying on the High Ground

As the Savior demonstrated with Herod, *sometimes true disciples must show Christian courage by saying nothing at all.* Some may try to provoke us and engage us in argument. In the Book of Mormon, we read about Lehonti and his men camped upon a mount. The traitorous Amalickiah urged Lehonti to “come down” and meet him in the valley. But when Lehonti left the high ground, he was poisoned “by degrees” until he died, and his army fell into Amalickiah’s hands (see



Alma 47). By arguments and accusations, some people bait us to leave the high ground. Sometimes others want us to come down off the high ground and join them in a theological scrum in the mud. These few contentious individuals are set on picking religious fights, online or in person. We are always better staying on the higher ground of mutual respect and love.

In doing so, we follow the example of the prophet Nehemiah, who built a wall around Jerusalem. Nehemiah’s enemies entreated him to meet

them on the plain, where “they thought to do [him] mischief.” Unlike Lehonti, however, Nehemiah wisely refused their offer with this message: “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” (Nehemiah 6:2–3). We too have a great work to do, which will not be accomplished if we allow ourselves to stop and argue and be distracted. Instead we should muster Christian courage and move on. As we read in Psalms, “Fret not thyself because of evildoers” (Psalm 37:1).

To my inquiring sister and all who seek to know how we should respond to our accusers, I reply, we *love* them. Whatever their race, creed, religion, or political persuasion, if we follow Christ and show forth His courage, we must love them. We do not feel we are *better than* they are. Rather, we desire with our love to show them a *better way*—the way of Jesus Christ. His way leads to the gate of baptism, the strait and narrow path of righteous living, and the temple of God. *He* is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Only through Him can we and all our brothers and sisters inherit the greatest gift we can receive—eternal life and eternal happiness. To help them, to be an example for them, is not for the weak. It is for the strong. It is for you and me, Latter-day Saints who pay the price of discipleship by answering our accusers with Christian courage. **NE**

*From an October 2008 general conference address.*

#### NOTES

1. First Presidency letter, Dec. 1, 1983.
2. *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* (1976), “meek,” 1403.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “In Quest of the Abundant Life,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1988, 3.



# AN HONESTY TEST

BY PATRICIA A. JACOBS AND FRANCINI PRESENÇA

**Patricia:** My best friend, Francini, and I are some of the only members of the Church in our school in Brazil, and we often find that the small things we do make a big difference.

One such small thing occurred in a Saturday math class Francini and I had together. On this particular day, Francini was absent. During class, the tests we had taken a few days before were passed back. I wasn't paying much attention when the teacher placed Francini's test on my desk and asked me to give it to her.

Since Francini and I had already discussed how we thought we had done, I was surprised that her grade was higher than we had expected. I looked at her test and saw that the teacher had failed to mark one incorrect answer as wrong. Without even considering, I told the teacher that Francini's grade was too high.

*It wasn't a test of our math skills or of our friendship; it was a test of our honesty.*


What I didn't realize was that the whole class was watching. As soon as I spoke, the class began to criticize me, saying that I was wrong to do that to a friend and that I only wanted my grade to be higher than hers. I was confused and upset by the response. I was sure I had done what Francini would have done.

But someone said it was impossible for anyone to be honest to the point of lowering his or her own grade. Everyone saw me as a traitor to my friend. I tried to tell them that Francini would have been honest about her grade and that truly honest people still exist in the world.

After much debate, the teacher and class decided that they would test us. The teacher said he would keep Francini's grade wrong and that we would wait and see her reaction on Monday.

I didn't like the idea. I felt that testing Francini was not fair. But the teacher had made his decision, and I couldn't change it.





That weekend I was anxious about what would happen, even though I had confidence that Francini would do what was right. I fervently prayed that she would notice the error on her test.

In math class on Monday, the whole class was alert as they watched Francini pick up her test.

**Francini:** Shortly after class started on Monday, the teacher handed me back my math test. I was about to put it away without really looking at it, but then I noticed that my grade was higher than I had expected. I raised my hand and went to the teacher's desk. I asked if he had graded the test correctly, and he answered that he had. I then pointed to my test and said, "But I made a mistake." At that moment Patricia also came up to the teacher's desk and told him that he had also left a wrong answer unmarked on her test and with all the confusion on Saturday, she had not noticed it.

The classroom immediately erupted. Some people began to murmur about Patricia telling me, but others gave embarrassed smiles. I was confused by all the different reactions to these events.

Later, Patricia explained what had happened on Saturday. I was surprised to know that I had been through a test unrelated to math and that my classmates had responded to my friend in that way. However, I was happy that I had been honest and that Patricia's prayers had helped me be prompted to notice the mistake on my test. I am also grateful that my friend believed in me.

**Patricia and Francini:** Both of us learned a great lesson from this experience. Our testimonies have grown about the important role Latter-day Saints have in being witnesses of Jesus Christ and examples of His principles. We are grateful to the Lord for His gospel, which gives us the opportunity to make a difference. **NE**



BY ANDY JORGENSEN

# I CHANGED MY LIFE

*Could a prophet's promise give me the happiness I sought?*

**M**uch like the feeling of braces on my teeth, I could feel my 15-year-old life pulling and tightening me in painful directions. And I wasn't sure I liked the way life was lining up.

My family was strong in the Church. We got along fine. And I had no problem handling my schoolwork. The pain came from outside home and school. Although I had many acquaintances, I had no real friends. Some of my friends from younger years went to different junior high schools. Those who came to mine acted differently now. Or maybe I was different. Add to that the need to be cool, strong, and athletic, to be a part of the guys' group, to have girls like me, and to live the gospel all at the same time—and I had a case of the emotional and spiritual orthodontic blues.

I often dreaded falling asleep at night because I knew the next morning I would have to face another long day of being scowled at and teased and walking alone down hostile hallways. I was unhappy.

One gray and rainy day, I stared at my desk in seminary instead of 2 Thessalonians, and I slipped into a daydream of self-pity. I thought about how I always said my prayers. I never skipped seminary. I went to church and tried to magnify my calling as an Aaronic Priesthood holder. I stayed away from sins that the prophet had warned us about. I was doing everything I was supposed to do. So why wasn't I happy? I didn't expect to feel superior, but I saw others who didn't do the right things, and it seemed to me that they were happy and had friends.

## *in Just 30 Minutes a Day*

I prayed every night to make friends or to be able to be happy without having anyone to talk to or have fun with, but I kept waking up to see another day of circles of friends that didn't quite encircle me.

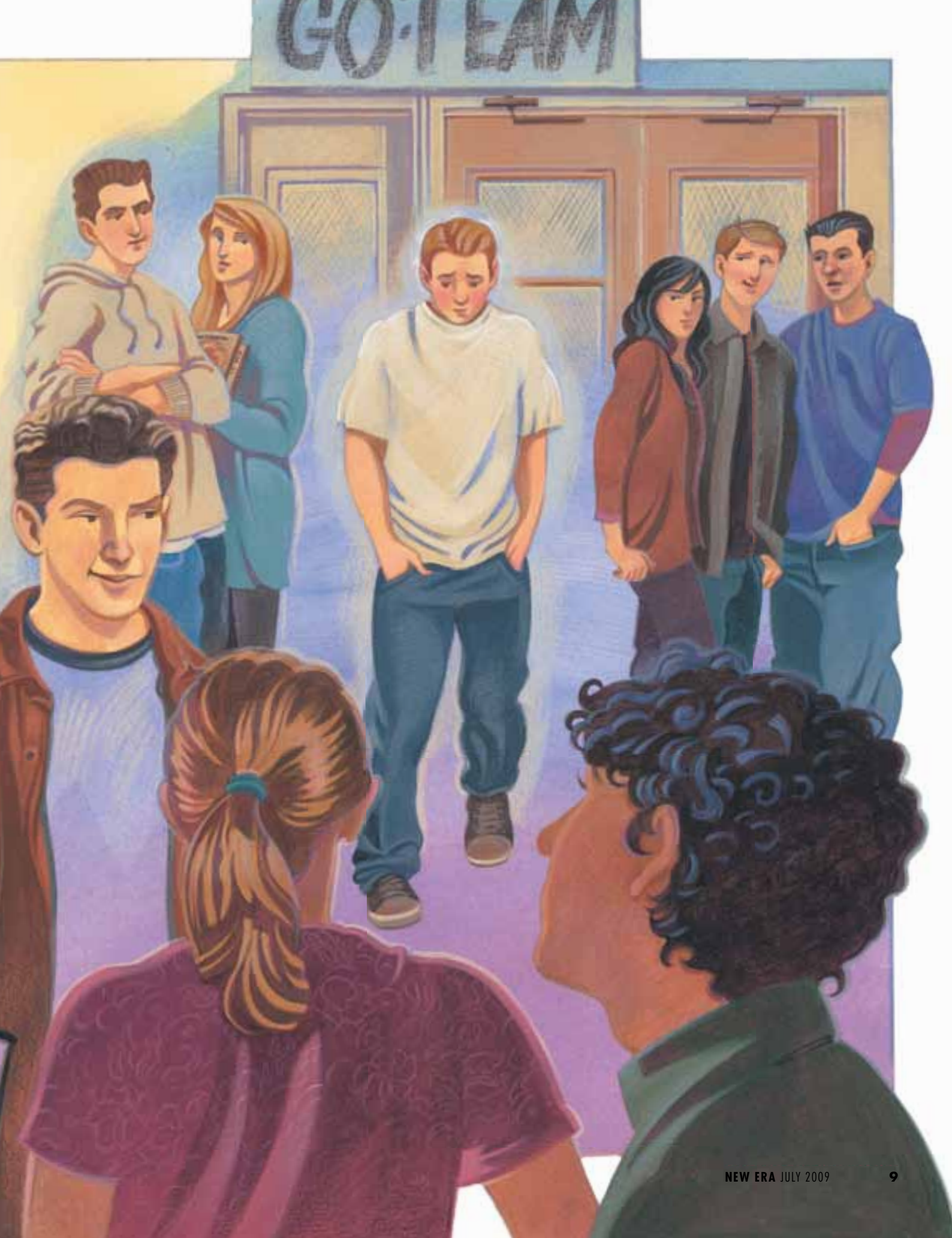
That's what I thought that day in seminary, being exactly where I was supposed to be, feeling as bad as ever. Then my seminary teacher said something that jolted me from my sorry-for-myself daydream. I'm not sure why it grabbed my attention, but an energy and an urge to sit up, watch, and listen leaped into my spirit.

He said, "I know we are focusing on the New Testament this semester, but I also encourage you to read the Book of Mormon every day." Then he shared a quote that seemed to illuminate the room as well as my mind:

"It is not just that the Book of Mormon teaches us truth, though it indeed does that. It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that, too. But there is something more. There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You



GO TEAM



*Thanks to Book of Mormon study, I felt companionship. I felt the presence of ancient prophets and heroes and the Son of God. The Holy Ghost was with me.*

will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called ‘the words of life’ (D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance” (Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7).

I had heard the words of the modern prophets before, and I had felt the Holy Ghost’s confirmation that they were true, but I had never experienced this sensation. It was like a warm hug and a slap in the face at the same time.

In the next two weeks I read about lone Abinadi courageously teaching of the Savior’s Atonement and calling the wicked King Noah and his priests to repentance (see Mosiah 11–17). I read and felt the powerful message of Alma to the people at the waters of Mormon. They humbled themselves and covenanted to be loving and loyal to the name of Christ and to each other (see Mosiah 18). I read about Alma the Younger, who was “racked with eternal torment” before his “soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was [his] pain” (Alma 36:12, 20). I read of the love that compelled the sons of Mosiah to share the word of God for 14 years among hostile strangers (see Alma 17:1–5).

I changed a portion of my day—just half an hour—and it changed my entire life. I found that President Benson was right; there is something more to the Book of Mormon. I woke in the morning and cheerfully greeted my Heavenly Father in prayer and my family at the breakfast table. I walked the same halls where I had before walked alone. No new friends appeared at my side all of a sudden, but thanks to Book of Mormon study, I felt companionship. The presence of ancient prophets and heroes and the Son of God that I had felt from scripture study the evening before stayed with me. The Holy Ghost was with me. The power of which President Benson spoke was with me, and I was finding life in greater abundance. I was happy. **NE**

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For more on scripture study, read Elder Russell M. Nelson, “Getting Where You Want to Go” (*New Era*, May 2003, 4).

# TEMPLE ORDINANCES AND BLESSINGS

*Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord restored temple worship in the latter days.*



PHOTOGRAPH BY WELDEN ANDERSEN

Joseph Smith learned the importance of building temples early in his ministry, and through him the Lord commanded the Saints to build temples in Kirtland and then Nauvoo. Each of these temples required great sacrifice by the Saints, but the Prophet taught them what that sacrifice was for. Here are some of Joseph Smith's teachings on the ordinances and blessings of the temple.\*

## The Ordinances of the Temple

*"The Temple of the Lord . . . will be so constructed as to enable all the functions of the Priesthood to be duly exercised, and where instructions from the Most High will be received, and from this place go forth to distant lands."*

*"What was the object of gathering the . . . people of God in any age of the world? . . . The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation. . . ."*

*" . . . It is for the same purpose that God gathers together His people in the last days, to build unto the Lord a house to prepare them for the ordinances and endowments, washings and anointings, etc. One of the ordinances of the house of the Lord is baptism for the dead."*

## The Blessings of the Temple

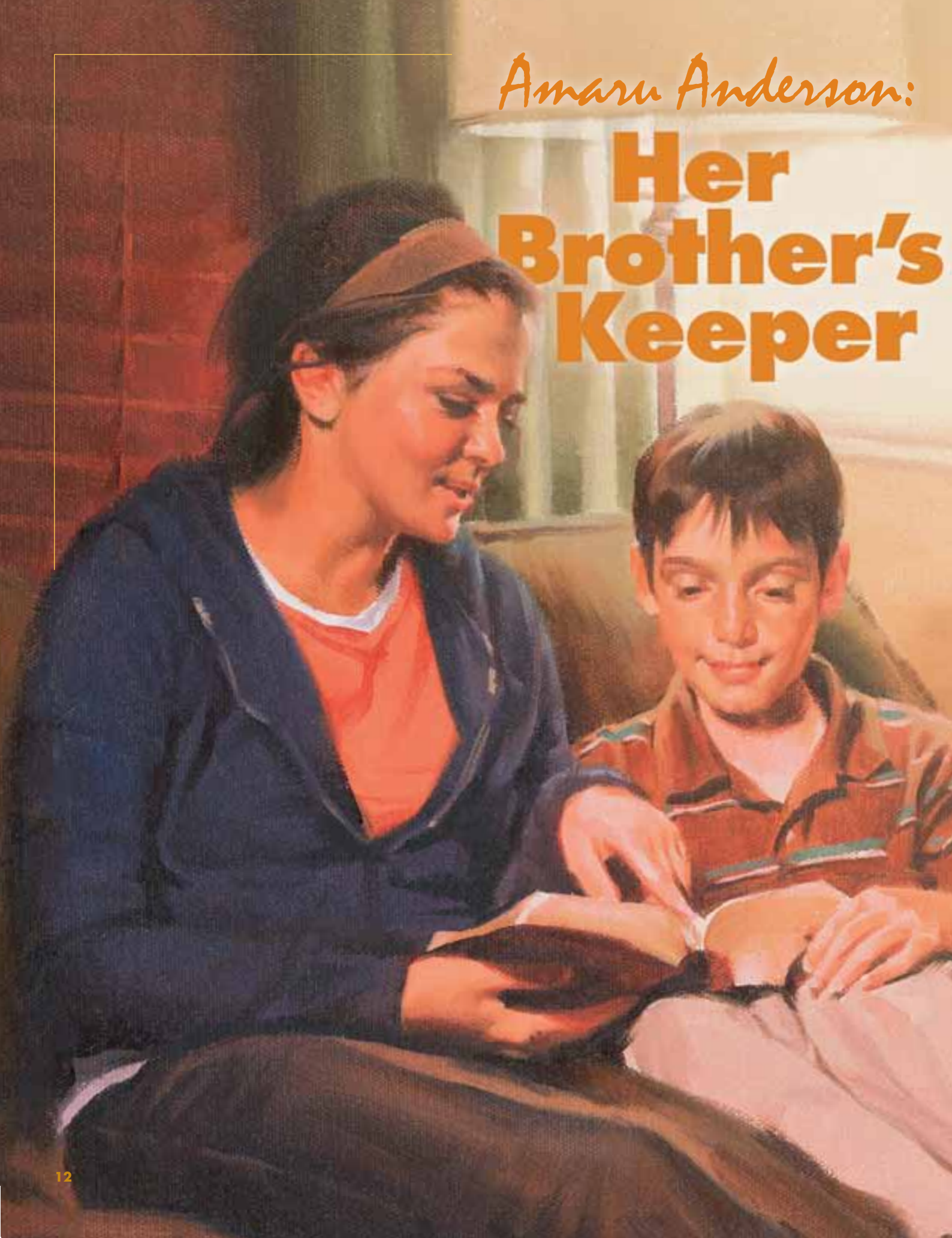
*"If a man gets a fulness of the priesthood of God, he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord."*

*"The order of the house of God has been, and ever will be, the same, even after Christ comes; and after the termination of the thousand years it will be the same; and we shall finally enter into the celestial Kingdom of God, and enjoy it forever."*

\* From *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 415–19.

*Amaru Anderson:*

# **Her Brother's Keeper**



**A**maru Anderson, 16, often reads the scriptures with her 8-year-old brother, Sebastian. She also takes time to answer his questions, and prays with him regularly.

“We’ve been reading Joseph Smith—History once or twice a week,” she says. “It’s mind-blowing how many questions he has at eight years old, and I love answering them. I feel like I know him so much better.”

For example, one time Sebastian asked Amaru: “How do you think Joseph Smith kept going if all these people were doing all these bad things to him and to his family? All those things were going wrong, and if he was so good, why were so many bad things happening to him?”

“It really touched me,” she says. “I know that adversity strengthens you, but here’s a little boy asking me this hard question. We always read before he goes to bed, and I stay up a little later to get ready for the next day. I thought about our conversation and realized that I understood more about adversity from answering his questions.”

Even though her parents are supportive of her Church activities, they do not attend meetings with them. So she often goes to church at the Champlain Ward, Ottawa Ontario Stake, on her own or with her



*Amaru likes to take time out of her busy schedule to read and pray with her brother.*

brother and grandparents. She also looks to other family and ward members for additional support, especially those she meets at youth conferences and dances.

“I can feel their goodness when I talk to them,” she says, “I love getting together with these friends, even though I only see them at girls’ camp, or youth conferences, or dances when everyone comes.”

During her second year in Young Women, Amaru asked a lot of questions. Her testimony grew line upon line. She says, “I realized that I know the Book of Mormon is true. Then everything else started making more sense.”

That year, when she went to young women camp, it solidified what she had been learning. She found that getting away from the routine of daily life, learning the gospel, and being with others who shared the same values helped her focus on her testimony.

“When you’re at young women camp, you know the other girls have the same values, the same needs, and the same dreams that you do,” Amaru says. “You get to know them very well, and when it’s time to leave, you don’t want to let them down because they know you and are helping you to be strong. You know they’re backing you up.”

Her friends at the art school she attends know that Amaru will always turn them down if they ask her to do something she knows is wrong. At first she wondered if they would understand her standards, but then she learned that others respect her for doing what she knows is right.

“If you honestly keep gospel standards, others will notice, and say, ‘I really respect you for that,’” she says. “It will solidify everything you know and make you that much stronger. The more adversity you face with the guidance of the Spirit, the more it makes you a better person and a stronger disciple of Christ.”

Sebastian has a great example to follow. **NE**

# “I don’t have a testimony even though I go to church and keep the commandments. How can I believe and gain a testimony?”

Initially you might believe in the Church and its doctrines because your parents, friends, teachers, or other family members do. But as you’ve found out, you can’t simply rely on the convictions of others forever.

When seeking a testimony, it may be helpful to think of gaining a testimony not as an event but as a process. As you continue to keep the commandments daily and desire to believe, gradually you’ll begin to recognize in your life the fruits of the Spirit, some of which are love, joy, peace, patience, and faith (see Galatians 5:22–23). You’ll see how living the gospel has improved your life, and you’ll know that it “must needs be . . . good . . . for it beginneth to enlarge [your] soul” (Alma 32:28). This will happen particularly as you study the Book of Mormon, which God has provided as an instrument of testimony and conversion for our day.

Also, your parents and Church leaders can help. Ask them why they believe. Tell them about your struggle to find a testimony, and ask their advice.

Remember that gaining a testimony may be less like the turning on of a light switch and more like the slow building of a fire. The flame may start out weak. It may flicker a few times at the start. But if you continue to kindle it and fuel it, then over time it will grow strong and provide warmth and light throughout your life. **NE**

## Listen to Others



We’re all working on our testimonies. We’re all just at different levels. A good thing to do is to listen to other people’s testimonies. Also, when you bear testimony, you sometimes realize how strong your testimony actually is. Have faith, pray, and continue to do what’s right. Your testimony is growing, whether you realize it or not.

*Kaitlin C., 15, California*

## Uncover Your Testimony



Since you go to church and keep the commandments, I think you may already have a testimony and just not realize it yet. Ask in prayer for Heavenly Father to help you recognize your testimony. Eventually you will know that you have a testimony of your own.

*Adam P., 14, Utah*

## Study and Pray with Intent

I was born into the Church but didn’t have much of a testimony until I started to read the scriptures with pure intent. Instead of just reading the words on the paper, I began searching deeply for their meaning. I read 3 Nephi 11:3 and put myself in the people’s shoes. That



scripture and the ones following it shook me. From then on I kept reading the scriptures and praying with sincerity, and my testimony grew.

Ryan R., 14, Washington

### Light a Candle



I found that the best way to gain a testimony is to pray and read the scriptures. Earnest prayer and scripture study will light a candle that can only get brighter.

Rebekah S., 18, England

### Ask for Help

Try to read the scriptures all the way through, even if you've already done it. If you have trouble doing so, ask someone to read them with you. Make sure you pray every night for guidance, and ask help from your bishop or branch president and your loved ones. In time, you'll gain a testimony.

Adriene W., 15, Wyoming

### Not a Borrowed Testimony



I used to share my testimony ever since I was small growing up, but it was like a routine for me to share it every fast and testimony Sunday. I knew all the commandments that I should keep, but it never really had great meaning in my life. Then I fasted and prayed about Joseph Smith and about whether he was indeed a prophet of God and translated the Book of Mormon. After much fasting and prayer, the Spirit confirmed in my heart that all these things were true. Now I've earned a testimony of my own and it is no longer a borrowed testimony.

Meradani R., 20, Fiji

### Let It Grow



A testimony can grow as we go to church, follow the commandments, and recognize the blessings that we have received because of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. But it mostly comes by our desire to have one. Moroni 10:4 teaches that we must ask with a sincere heart—a desire—and with real intent, willing to act upon the answer. Our testimonies may not grow as fast as we want, and sometimes we may not even recognize the growth, but our testimonies do grow.

Elder Matt Haugen, South Africa Cape Town Mission

### Learn about Christ

To gain a testimony and believe, I would try to learn about Jesus Christ by studying the scriptures and getting to know Him. In Primary there is a song that says, "Search, ponder, and pray Are the things that I must do. The Spirit will guide, and, deep inside, I'll know the scriptures are true." I think this can help us believe and gain a testimony.

James L., 13, Utah

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

### NEXT QUESTION

**"I try to be nice to my sister, but she still treats me rudely. How can I regain the friendship we used to have?"**

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### THAT "LEAP OF FAITH"

**O**h, if I could teach you this one principle: a testimony is to be found in the bearing of it! Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that 'leap of faith,' as the philosophers call it. It is the moment when you have gone to the edge of the light and stepped into the darkness to discover that the way is lighted ahead for just a footstep or two."

**President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Quest for Spiritual Knowledge," New Era, Jan. 2007, 6.**

**THERE'S**



# ALWAYS A WAY OUT



*When caught in dark and sticky situations, I needed to follow the example of Joseph in the Old Testament and get out quickly.*

BY NICHOLAS RYAN BURK

While on a school trip to Las Vegas, my brother and I were wandering along “the Strip” looking for souvenirs and seeing the sights. We proceeded innocently into a large and impressive hotel, which, we discovered only after we went inside, had a casino attached. We had no intention of gambling, but everywhere we turned were opportunities to do just that.

We wandered deeper and deeper into the building, looking for a store with souvenirs we might be interested in. Built like a maze, the corridors of the casino all seemed to lead from one area of slot machines to another. At last we realized we were lost. The lights were dim, and we were surrounded by all sorts of flashy and offensive advertising. We knew that the buses to go back home would be leaving without us if we didn’t find an exit soon.

Finally we found a security guard and asked him about the quickest way out. He had an annoyed expression, but after giving a disgruntled cough he told us the way. The instructions were complicated, and we had to ask him to repeat them several times. Luckily, with his directions, we found a well-hidden set of doors which led out to the sunlight. We found ourselves on the main street and soon met our supervisors.

I recently found myself in a similar situation when a group of us were at a friend’s house. Stealthily, the conversation had turned to less innocent topics. The longer I stayed, the more I found myself listening to things I shouldn’t and feeling like I couldn’t do anything to change

the situation. Just as I had been lost in that casino, I was now lost again and had to find a way out. I remembered the story of Joseph in the Old Testament. When he was cornered and found himself stuck in the wrong place, rather than going with the flow, he dropped everything and ran from Potiphar’s wife (see Genesis 39:9–12). I knew I had to do the same thing.

While trying not to sound rude, I asked for a ride home, giving little explanation for why I wanted to leave. I felt stupid for putting an end to what had started out as a fun time, but once I got home, I had a calm feeling in my heart and knew the Holy Spirit was with me again, telling me that I had done the right thing.

There have been times in my life when I needed to find a way out from darkness and temptation. Some are easier than others, but I’ve learned one thing: there is always a way out. I know that Heavenly Father knows when we are lost and will always help us find an escape from temptations if we ask Him.

Sometimes we need help. Just like my brother and I had to ask the security guard for help, there is always someone like a parent, a teacher, or bishop there to help you.

The way out may sometimes be hard to find, but I’ve learned that the door is always there. “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape” (1 Corinthians 10:13). **NE**

BY MINDY RAYE HOLMES

*Dancing the night away in Southern California gives youth from 12 stakes an opportunity to enjoy performing with others holding their same standards.*

# 12 Dancing Stakes

**O**n a warm July evening, 2,500 young Latter-day Saints from Southern California congregate next to the football stadium at the University of Redlands. It's 20 minutes before showtime on opening night, and the youth dressed in colorful dance costumes are excited to perform their dance festival show after two years of planning and months of dance practices.

One group of youth begins to clap and chant "It's dance time" as they cheer. All around them other participants are practicing their parts alone or with partners.

Soon they all line up to go into the stadium, and after the prayer and opening number, all 2,500 of them flow onto the field. The California Dreamin' dance festival has just begun.

During the next two hours the youth move across the field performing dances like the waltz, cha-cha, and swing to live music performed by other youth and adults. When it's over, the crowd cheers and the dancers hold their heads high, grateful for the opportunity to participate in this great event.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MINDY RAYE HOLMES



### **A Rare Opportunity**

The last regional dance festival in Southern California was held in 1985 at the Rose Bowl, where more than 13,000 youth participated. Jim Nelson, the organizer of the California Dreamin' dance festival remembers watching that 1985 festival. "I was just overwhelmed," he recalls. "That festival just stuck in my memory."

Years later as a member of the Riverside California Stake presidency, Brother Nelson suggested a dance festival as an idea for a multistake youth conference. He contacted other stakes in the region, and 12 of them decided to participate.

Many of the youth who participated were reluctant at first, but as they got into practices and met new friends, they were grateful for their leaders' decisions to join in the festival.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime kind of thing," says Carlos Rodriguez, 17, of the Sun City Ward in the Menifee California Stake. "They only do this once in many years, and it's pretty cool for us that we get to do it."



**California Dreamin'**  
A STADIUM SPECTACULAR

The main image of the page shows a young woman in a light blue, short-sleeved, cowl-neck dress dancing with a young man in a pink short-sleeved shirt and khaki shorts. They are smiling and looking at each other. The background is a large stadium filled with people, suggesting a large-scale event. At the bottom of the page, there is a banner with the text "California Dreamin'" in large blue letters and "A STADIUM SPECTACULAR" in smaller black letters below it. The banner is decorated with colorful circles in shades of green, yellow, and red.



## YOUTH ACTIVITIES

*"I am an advocate for such events. They enable our youth to participate in something they truly find unforgettable. The friendships they form and the memories they make will be theirs forever."*

**President Thomas S. Monson, "Welcome to Conference," Ensign, Nov. 2008, 6.**

### Following the Prophet

After so many years since the last regional dance festival, the leaders of these stakes were inspired by a 2004 letter from the First Presidency that encouraged local leaders to hold multistake events. The letter noted that cultural events gave youth "a sense of unity and opportunities to develop friendships."

"Our prophet wanted us to do things like this, and doing this is a great chance to follow him," says Akita Lagazo, 14, of the Banning Ward in the Yucaipa California Stake.

Kim Sandstrom, 16, of the Redhawk Ward in the Temecula California Stake thinks she knows why the Church would encourage activities like the dance festival. "I think as a whole we weren't doing enough activities all together like this," she says. "Church leaders realized so many people were drifting, and they thought these activities would help."

### Finding Strength in Numbers

That help has come because the young men and women who participated had their testimonies strengthened by being around other members of the Church their age.

"I was surprised to see how many people were here," says Corbin Turner, 12, of the Rolling Ridge Ward in the Chino Stake. "It's nice to know that it's

not just us, but there's a bunch of other youth here with us."

Fellow ward member Dallas Parker, 13, agrees. He says the dance festival "has helped to strengthen my testimony because

I know there are more people out there than just us that are willing to live up to the standards we live up to."

Many of the dance festival participants say they were surprised to learn there were so many members of the Church their age living so close by. Knowing they are not alone gives them the strength they need to not only learn new dances, but to accomplish other things in life.

"If you really want to achieve something and get somewhere with the standards that you have, it helps to have so many other people around you doing it," says McKenna Lawler, 17, of the Butterfield Stage Ward in the Temecula California Stake.

### A Learning Experience

Putting together a dance festival for 2,500 youth was no easy feat. It took a lot of effort from hundreds of adult volunteers who organized, chaperoned, and taught dances. It also required a lot of hard work from youth who learned new dances although many of them had no dancing experience.





Beth Houghtaling, 18, of the La Sierra Ward in the Jurupa California Stake said learning the waltz for the dance festival was “a really cool experience. Now I’ll always know how to do the waltz, and that’s something I’ll take with me.”

Because of their experience in the dance festival, the participants not only learned new dances, but also life skills that will help them in other endeavors.

“You learn to rely on others a lot,” says Samantha Fokken, 16, of the Menifee Ward in the Menifee California Stake. “If one person doesn’t show up, it could mess up the whole dance.”

Michael McKhann of the Foothill Ward in the Jurupa California Stake has learned that “hard work pays off, because you’re going to end up with something great.”

With more than 2,500 youth dancing on the field, making friends, and strengthening testimonies, the California Dreamin’ dance festival turned out to be just that: something great. **NE**





# NOT BY CHANCE

BY MICHAEL D. YOUNG

*Trying to find the person we were looking for seemed impossible.*

One afternoon my mission companion and I unexpectedly found ourselves with an extra block of time and were discussing what we should do. We were assigned to a United States Army base in western Germany, and as we drove to the base, I pulled out a list of all the branch members there. On the bottom of the list was a name that I had penciled in just the day before. It was the name of a less-active member who was living on the base alone while he waited for his family to arrive from the United States. The branch president had given his name to us and asked us to find the brother and invite him to the next week's stake conference. I said a silent prayer that we would be able to find and invite him.

When we entered the base, I received an interesting impression that we should go buy batteries. I shared the impression with my companion, and he drove us to a small electronics store. We quickly found our batteries and were standing in line when I bumped into one of the soldiers standing there. Fortunately for us, all U.S. soldiers have their last names stitched onto the front of their uniforms. My spirits soared as I saw that he

had the last name of the man we were looking for. His eyes grew wide in recognition as he exclaimed, "Elders! It's good to see you. I had been praying that you would find me."

I have always loved the passage in the New Testament about sparrows:

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

"Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29–31).

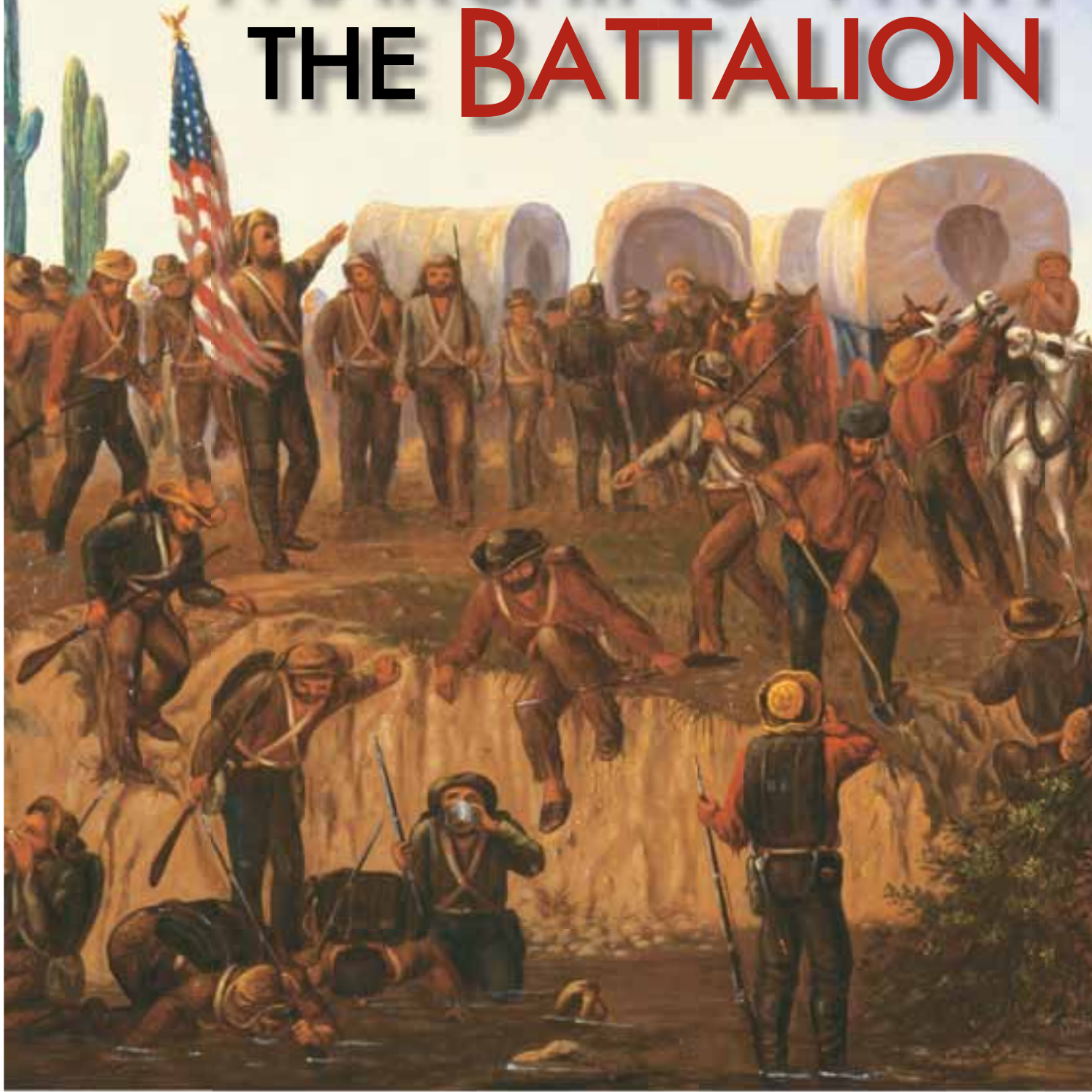
Heavenly Father lovingly watches over His children. It's especially worth noting in those scriptures that His eye is on the sparrow that falls. It suggests that the lost soul causes Him specific concern.

With the Spirit's guidance, my companion and I were able to bring that brother to stake conference and help him become firmly rooted in the branch before the rest of his family arrived. I know that if we, like Nephi, let ourselves be "led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [we] should do" (1 Nephi 4:6), then Heavenly Father will allow us to be tools in His hands to bless others, especially his fallen sparrows. **NE**

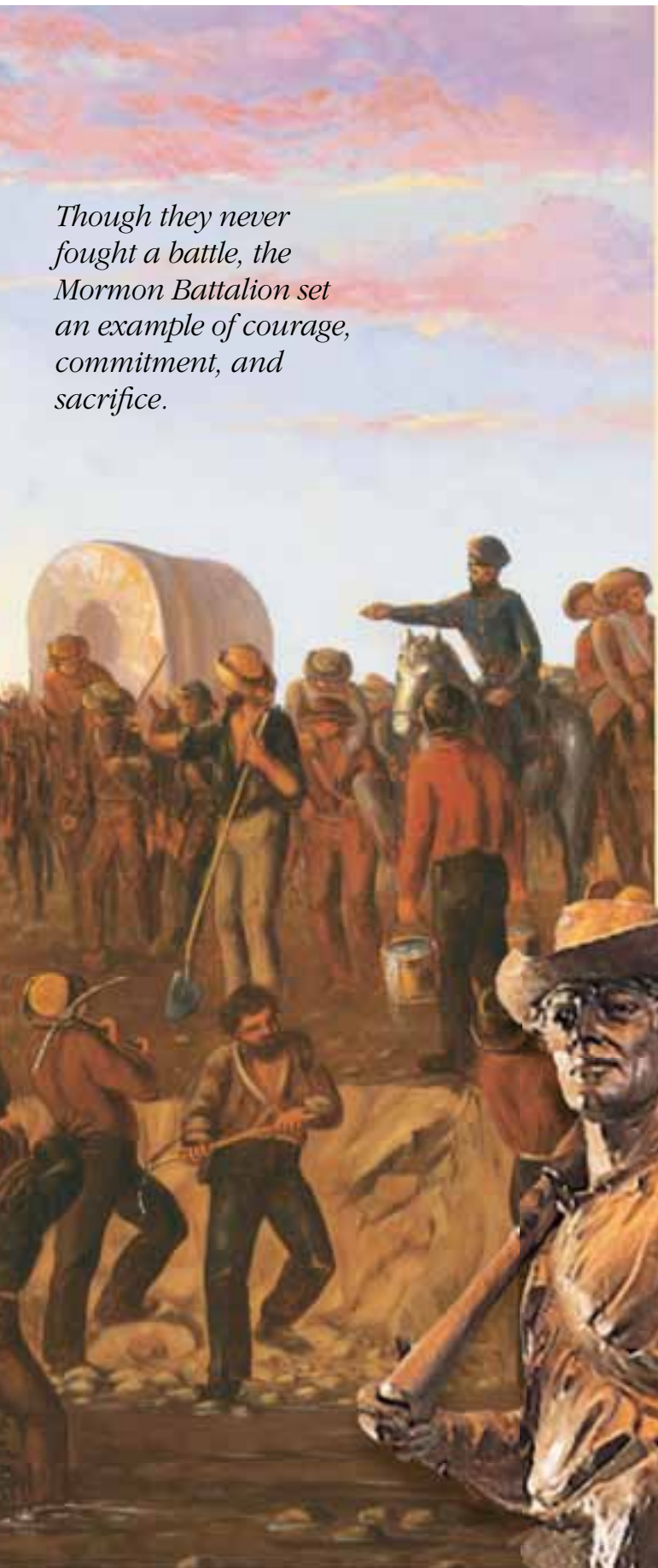




# MARCHING WITH THE BATTALION



*Though they never fought a battle, the Mormon Battalion set an example of courage, commitment, and sacrifice.*



BY ARIANNE B. COPE

**B**efore I stepped on a plane bound for California, I thought the Mormon Battalion was just a bunch of guys who walked for a really long time while their pioneer families had it tough crossing the plains. What I learned in Old Town, San Diego, California, was surprising.

After being driven out of their homes by brutal mobs, the battalion members signed up to fight a war against Mexico for the U.S. government, which had turned its back on them. They joined because President Brigham Young had asked them to do so in order to give financial support to the Saints traveling west.

About 500 men enlisted, along with about 80 women and children, including 20 laundresses. They began their journey in the sweltering heat of Council Bluffs, Iowa, on 20 July 1846, leaving their loved ones behind. Their destitute families bravely waved good-bye, knowing they'd have to make their way west alone without their husbands or fathers to protect them.

The battalion completed one of the longest infantry marches in American history—about 2,000 miles (3,220 km) through what are now seven states and into Mexico. They had inadequate supplies. Their feet burned on hot desert sand because their shoes had worn out, they were frequently thirsty, and at times they resorted to drinking from mud holes.

After that long journey, the



THE MORMON BATTALION BY GEORGE OTTINGER

**A**lthough the Battalion volunteers would be separated from their families, Brigham Young recognized that military pay would help in crossing the plains, and the effort would help prove the Church's loyalty to the country.



battalion worked on construction projects in San Diego and a fort near Los Angeles, California. They gave the money they earned, including their clothing allowance, to the Church to support the Saints on their trek to Utah. After being discharged, battalion members were present when gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill and blazed a new trail used by thousands during the California gold rush. Turning their backs on a possible fortune, they turned eastward to rejoin the Saints and were some of the first to reach the Salt Lake Valley.

I also found out they were more than a ragged bunch of soldiers. They were noble, faithful, heroic men and women—and some of them were my ancestors.

### Runaway

When one of my great-grandfathers, Philander Colton, marched off with the battalion from Council Bluffs, he didn't realize he was being followed. His nine-year-old son, Charles, secretly ran away to join the battalion. He couldn't bear having his father

leave him behind. The night Charles sneaked into the battalion's camp in Nodaway, Missouri, he sang to the men around the campfire. His clear soprano voice softened the soldiers' hearts, and they decided to let him stay with his father in the battalion as an officers' aide.

I can imagine how carefully Philander protected Charles on their journey—he had already lost one son in Nauvoo, Illinois. Charles's love for his father kept his little legs marching—all 2,000 miles from Iowa to San Diego.

### Forty Thousand Bricks

Today San Diego is a panorama of skyscrapers and freeways, but when the Mormon Battalion arrived after their long march across the country, San Diego was little more than a few dozen adobe structures. Even so, Charles, Philander, and the other exhausted soldiers shouted for joy when they arrived.



Philander was a brick maker. He and three other men made 40,000 bricks that were used in a building, some chimneys and wells, and a walkway of Old Town. With the help of Philander's strong, weathered hands, the battalion began to improve this desert village, which is now a beautiful coastal city.

Making bricks isn't easy. They are put

under intense heat. I learned from Philander that people are like bricks. His life was a fierce furnace of trials. But he emerged rock solid, with a testimony strong enough for others to build on. Philander and Charles marched for me and all who would come after them, to show us that if we endure trials well, we don't have to crack.

**“Until I See You”**

Near Old Town, San Diego, the Mormon Battalion Visitors' Center on Juan Street is a white building with white arches, surrounded by bright pink and red flowers.

Inside the visitors' center, I found a gigantic statue of a battalion soldier. Then a photo in the corner of the room taken at the battalion's 50th anniversary caught my eye. I thought about all the missing faces.

Because there were no deaths in battle, people often assume no one died in the Mormon Battalion. Actually, 22 men from the battalion died from disease, exposure, and accident. One of these men was another of my great-grandfathers, Arnold Stevens.

Arnold was a large, gentle man, and first corporal in Company D. He went with the battalion's first detachment of sick soldiers to Pueblo, Colorado, where he stayed through the difficult winter of 1846. Huddled in the frigid December air, Arnold wrote a letter to his wife, Lois, on Christmas Day, describing his concern for his family's safety and their lack of money. He longed to be with them again.

“My dear Lois, you know my family was always my delight, yet [I] never knew how to prize or appreciate their society. There is



scarcely a night passes, but I dream about you. . . .

“I will send Ransome Abram a Christmas gift.

Yours I will keep until I see you; if I can get anything for the girls I will. Give them my love, and may the Lord bless you all. Farewell. Pray for me.”

Arnold never gave Lois her Christmas gift. In March, he was dragged over several logs by a wild mule. He died a few days later.

Arnold didn't have to enlist in the battalion, but he heeded the prophet Brigham Young's call. He died before he could return to his family. His conviction and unselfishness allowed him to pass away peacefully in the face of tragedy. He taught me that dedicating my life to God means trusting Him no matter what happens.

**T**he Battalion's only engagement was an incident where wild cattle stampeded into the company. They lost two mules, and three men were injured.



**Dangerous Mission**

The letters written and the money earned by Arnold and the other men in Pueblo, Colorado, were carried to their





**A**fter being discharged from the Battalion, a few men took jobs at Sutter's Mill and were there when gold was discovered.



families by another of my great-grandfathers, Thomas Woolsey.

Thomas was a courier for Company E. He went with the women and children and the sick battalion members to Pueblo in the first and second detachment groups. After reaching Pueblo the second time, he was asked, along with John Tippets, to carry messages and money from the battalion to Winter Quarters, Nebraska. They left Pueblo in December and traveled alone, making their own trail as they went.

On their 600-mile (965-km), 52-day journey, Thomas and John nearly froze and starved to death while being lost most of the time. At one point they were captured and almost killed and scalped by a group of Pawnee Indians, but thanks to the timely mercy of Chief Setchmalin, they were released unharmed. They finally arrived at Winter Quarters exhausted on the night of February 15, 1847.

Thomas's adventures carrying mail and escorting people for the battalion served him well as a member of Brigham Young's

1847 pioneer company. At Fort Laramie, President Young sent him to Pueblo to help the remaining Saints travel to the Salt Lake Valley. He remained devoted to the gospel for the rest of his life. He showed me that commitment takes courage, but when we give our all to God, He'll protect us and use us to help others on their way.

### They Marched for You

After this trip to San Diego, my thoughts about the Mormon Battalion changed. When I think of the battalion now, I see a small boy who loved his father so much he marched across the country rather than say good-bye, a lonely woman whose tears smeared the last letter her husband would ever write her, a lost soldier willing to do his duty in the face of death, and hundreds of others who remained faithful through that difficult time.



President Brigham Young declared: "The Mormon Battalion will be held in honorable remembrance to the latest generation; and I will prophesy that the children of those who have been in the army, in defense of their country, will grow up and bless their fathers for what they did at that time."<sup>1</sup>

The Mormon Battalion marched for all of us. And we honor them best by following in the footsteps of faith and commitment they left behind. **NE**

#### NOTE

1. Daniel Tyler, *A Concise History of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War, 1846–1847*, (n.d.), 354.

M O R M O N A D

# PULL TOGETHER



If you're not working together, you're pulling apart.  
(See Mosiah 18:21.)



# FROM BOTTOM TO TOP

*This young woman from Uruguay knows how to get where she wants to go.*

BY DON L. SEARLE  
Church Magazines

When you have talent, people sometimes tell you it will take you straight to the top. But in Joselén Cabrera's case, her talent took her all the way to the bottom of the world—Antarctica. And along the way she learned that worthy dreams are worth pursuing, and with those dreams there will be people to help when they are needed.

When she was 14, Joselén won a drawing contest sponsored by the Asociación Civil Antarkos in her native country, Uruguay. The prize: a trip to Antarctica for her and her schoolteacher, with a group of other students and teachers. Her father and the woman who taught her art helped show Joselén how to finish the drawing she had envisioned.

Her trip was an exciting three-stage journey: first, a



military transport flight from Montevideo, Uruguay, to Punta Arenas, Chile, then an overwater flight to the Chilean base in Antarctica, followed by an overland trip to the Uruguayan outpost, Artigas Antarctica Scientific Base, some 3,000 kilometers from Montevideo. Several nations have scientific bases clustered on King George Island off the coast of Antarctica.

Joselén's drawing and her account of her trip were featured in a national magazine, *Uruguay Natural*.

Antarctica was not quite the way she had imagined it, Joselén says, smiling. Her drawing showed penguins and ice. It was summer when she visited—snow in patches on barren ground and few penguins. But that gave her the opportunity to see a few more of the sights. She enjoyed hiking along the coast, where she saw Collins Glacier, the Drake Passage, and Lake Uruguay, from which her country's base draws fresh water. She was also able to visit other bases.

The trip was a dream come true for Joselén, who is now 19 and a member of the Colonia Suiza Branch,





*Scenes from Joselén's visit to Antarctica.*



Colonia Uruguay District. Since the trip, she has made other dreams come true as well. One of those was to complete her Personal Progress experiences and receive her Young Womanhood Recognition. Joselén wears her medallion, she says, so that she will remember what she has achieved and what she can become as a daughter of God. Now that Joselén has finished her secondary schooling, she plans to study architecture at the university level.

So far, there have not been many opportunities to share her testimony at school. While friends respect her beliefs, they do not discuss religion very much. Joselén is quiet but never afraid to speak up for what is right. That happened once when a student told others in class that Latter-day Saints are forced to pay tithing. No, it's not that way, she corrected. "We give willingly," she said, explaining that tithing is a voluntary offering to God.



Joselén grew up in the Church, but she found her own testimony when she was about 12 and came to understand that she could not always rely on her parents' knowledge. She says gaining a testimony "was not one 'Wow!' moment. But I knew the gospel brought me joy."

She goes out with the sister missionaries often during her summer vacations. Occasionally, there are opportunities to bear testimony to people she knows. One day the missionary lesson turned out to be with her best friend from school. "I told her truly what I feel," Joselén says. Joselén is glad that she was able to share her testimony with her friend.

"I like the story of Joseph Smith, when he was facing a difficult time in the Sacred Grove and still went ahead with his prayer," she says (see Joseph Smith—History 1:15–17). "I'm fascinated by his courage." She admires the way the young prophet stayed true to what he knew, even when others made fun of him.

Nephi is another of her heroes. "I am impressed by the valiance of Nephi when he did not let himself be held back

by his brothers," she says (see 1 Nephi 3:14–21; 4:1–4).

There is another dream she's working on now, and it involves another of her favorite pastimes: music. Joselén and her sister, Ileana, recently completed their certifications as organ teachers. Joselén loves to play music—from Primary songs to movie music—and she loves to listen to music, especially to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

"When I have a problem, a hymn will come to my mind," she says. "Hymns help me find answers." She attends seminary every school day in the branch meetinghouse not far from her home. "Sometimes I go early and just sit at the piano and play hymns," she says.

When there is a general conference broadcast, she goes early so she can sit and listen to the prelude music by the Tabernacle Choir.

Now that Joselén has been to Antarctica—a place few people on earth will ever see in person—is there another special place she would like to visit?

"I'd like to go to general conference and hear the choir sing," she says.

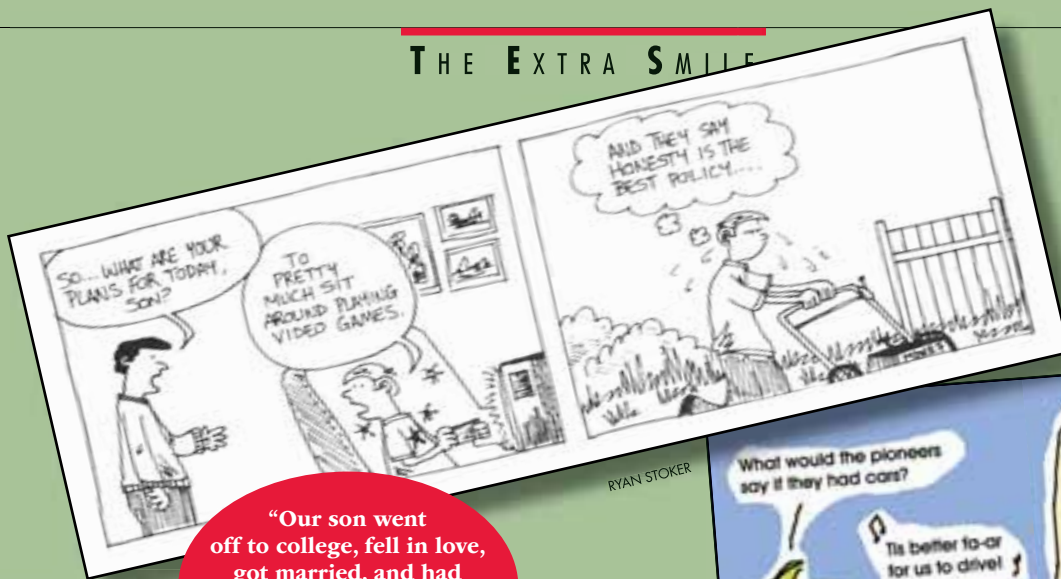
Who knows? If Joselén can make it to the bottom of the world, what's to keep her from coming out on top in whatever she wants to do. **NE**

**Below: Joselén (in red) with her mother, Raquel; her father, Ruben; and her sister, Ileana. Center: Joselén with mementoes of her trip. Right: Joselén practicing the keyboard.**



*Now that Joselén has been to Antarctica—a place few people on earth will ever see in person—is there another special place she would like to visit?*

*"I'd like to go to general conference and hear the choir sing."*



RYAN STOKER

“Our son went off to college, fell in love, got married, and had twins last year. We really ought to check his blog more often.”



JON CLARK



RANDY GLASBERGEN

Our stake had a service project for Pioneer Day where we shoveled pathways around a local lake. One sister noticed her children complaining about the work and asked them, “Do you think the pioneer children complained the whole time they were on the plains?”

Her six-year-old spoke up, “Oh, Mom, the pioneers didn’t have planes!”  
—Carolyn A., Arizona

**NEmore**  
See a different Extra Smile online every week at [newera.lds.org](http://newera.lds.org).



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

# Always Make the Effort

BY ELDER OCTAVIANO TENORIO

Of the Seventy



*If you want to succeed, you need to concentrate, put forth effort, and be happy with what you are doing.*

When I was 15 years old, missionaries used to eat with some of our neighbors. My older sister saw them coming and going every day, and she asked them if they were selling something. They said no, and that was the way they were introduced to our family. My father, my mother, and my brothers and sisters received the lessons and were all baptized. But I didn't join. At that time I was investigating another church, but I was sincerely searching.

The 10th of May in Mexico is Mother's Day. That day, my mother asked me if I loved her. I said, "Yes, I love you."

She bore her testimony to me and asked me to be baptized. I decided to get baptized that day. The following Sunday, I was confirmed and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. At that time my life completely changed. I started reading everything I could get about the Church, especially the teachings of Joseph Smith. I had faith, and as I studied, I accepted the teachings of the Church. My faith grew as I grew in the gospel.

## Making the Effort

Before I tell you two stories from my life, I would like to point out something that I used to talk to my missionaries about when I was serving as a mission president. In *Preach My*

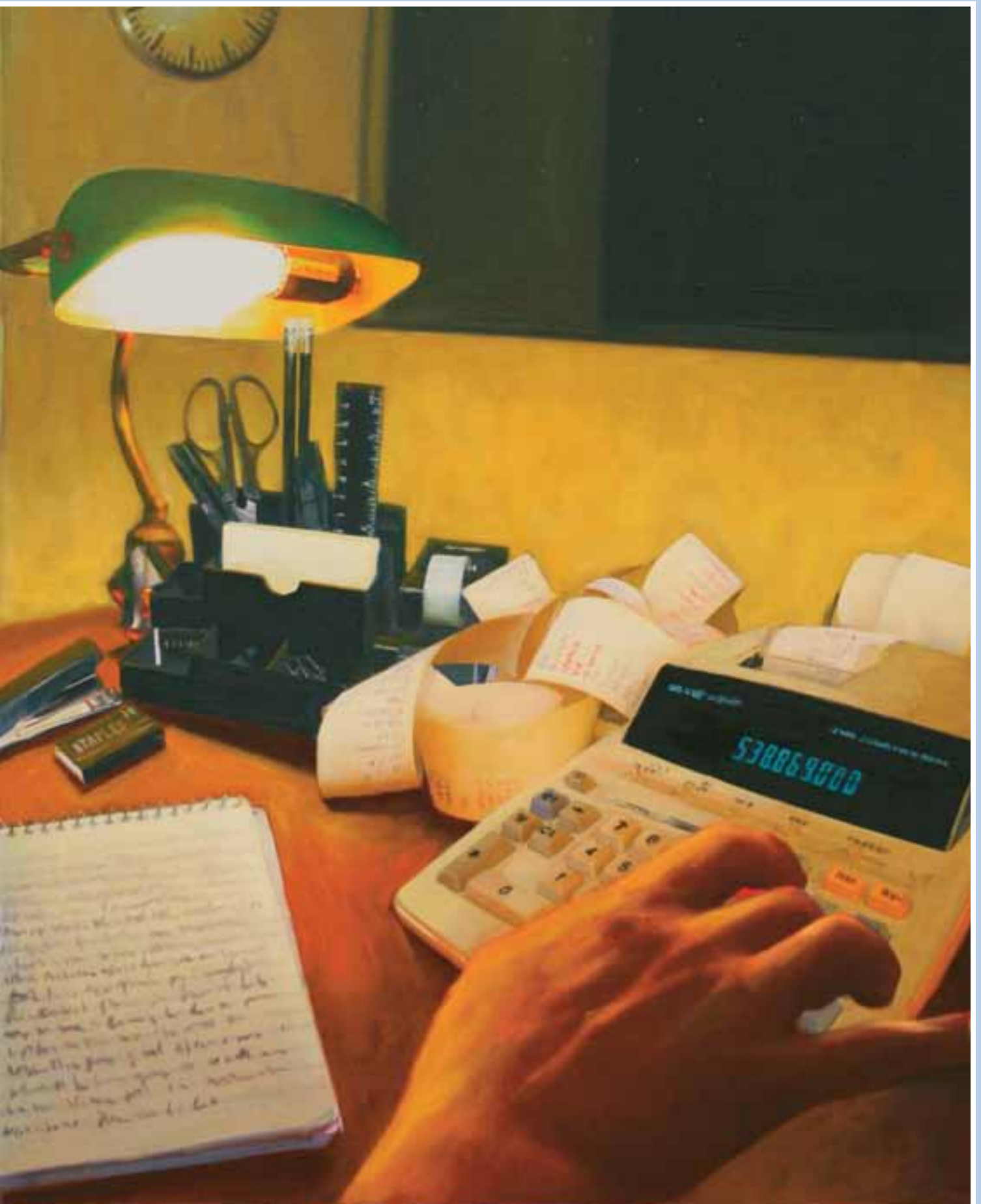
*Gospel*, President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) is quoted as saying: "I have often said one of the greatest secrets of missionary work is work! If a missionary works, he will get the Spirit; if he gets the Spirit, he will teach by the Spirit; and if he teaches by the Spirit, he will touch the hearts of the people and he will be happy. There will be no homesickness, no worrying about families, for all time and talents and interests are centered on the work of the ministry. Work, work, work—there is no satisfactory substitute, especially in missionary work."<sup>1</sup>

In the Spanish version of the *Missionary Guide*, which we used before *Preach My Gospel*, the word *work* was translated as *effort*. In addition to making an effort, you need to concentrate all of your time, talents, and interests. This focus is necessary for success. And if you are happy instead of angry or resentful, your work will lead to good things.

I learned this formula in my own life. I started working for a big oil company shortly after I was baptized. These truths about work came into my life and led to my progress in the company.

## Practice Makes for Opportunity

One manager in particular at the company had a lot of power. He requested that each department send two people to help him do



an inventory. And he said the only requirement was that the people knew something about accounting.

I had studied at a trade school, and I had a certificate from my accounting classes. My department boss said, "Go tell him that you are going to help with the inventory and that you are an accountant." He wanted to see the reaction of the other man because I was so young.

When I arrived, the manager asked what I wanted. I answered, "I'm going to help you do the inventory." I did as I was instructed by my boss and told him I was an accountant. He laughed.

Then he said, "Well, Mr. Accountant, come to my chair. Take this adding machine, and add everything in every column as fast as you can."

I started with one finger, very slowly. He pushed me out of the chair and said, "You don't know anything; you are going to be punished. You are going to sit there in a chair in front of me for two weeks, watching how I do the work."

I moved to another chair. He said, "Watch me." He started adding so fast, not even looking at his hands. I was amazed. I thought he was joking about having me watch him work for two weeks, but he wasn't.

That first day I sat there for six or seven hours. That evening I stayed after work and waited for everyone to leave the building. Then I went to his office and changed the roll of paper in the adding machine and started practicing adding the same columns he did. For hours I worked and got faster and faster and faster. When I felt I was doing it as fast or faster than he did, I went to sleep for an hour or two.

The next morning I just washed my face and went out the front doors when they opened early, then walked in again after the manager arrived. I knocked on his door. He said, "OK, you sit there and watch what I'm doing."

When he started on the adding machine, he seemed slow to me. I had practiced for seven hours straight. I gently pushed him aside and asked him to sit in my chair. I started adding so fast. He was surprised.

He said, "What did you do?" He forced me to tell him. He said, "From now on, because you learned this, you will work with me, and I'm going to teach you everything I know."

I switched departments. After a few years he resigned, and I was able to take his place because of his recommendation. I used effort and concentration, and I was happy in what I was doing. I was not angry because he punished me at first.



### **The Secret to Succeeding**

You can do any good thing. You just need to put forth the effort, the concentration, and be happy.

The company I was working for closed. I moved to Mexico City, and because I liked to work, I applied for a temporary job with an international editorial

company. They wanted me to take an inventory, which was something of a specialty with me. I did the inventory in two weeks. They offered me a permanent job at good pay, and I accepted.

I didn't speak English at that time. Our director, a man from Texas who didn't speak any Spanish, said to my boss, "This boy is doing good work. If he knew English, we would pay more. We would send him to New York for training, and he could eventually be a manager here."

When my boss told me that, I asked, "All I have to do is learn English?"

I was married by then. My wife spoke English because she was born in the Church colonies in Mexico. The first time I tried to speak a few words in English, someone told me not to try. It was not my gift.

Now I was motivated by the thoughts of improving my job position and having opportunities such as traveling to New York. I went to a language school and told them I wanted to learn to speak English as soon as I could.

They asked, "How much do you know?"

I said, "Not a word. Not even 'Good morning.'"

They said, "We have an intensive course: two weeks, 16 hours a day. Eight hours here with teachers and eight



hours in your home with tapes. It costs \$1,000.”

I said, “I can do that. I will ask for my vacation, and I can study 16 hours a day for two weeks.”

I went to my boss and said, “I’m going to learn English in two weeks, and you have to pay only \$1,000.” He laughed and said, “It is not possible. I learned in two years.”

I told my boss, “Ask the director to give me two weeks’ vacation and pay for the course. If after these two weeks I cannot talk to him in English, then you can take the fee out of my salary.”

He gave permission.

I went to the school. Every 45 minutes for eight hours, they changed teachers. They drilled and drilled the vocabulary, sentences, and conversations.

After eight hours in school, I went into the streets looking for English-speaking tourists to talk to. Then I listened to eight more hours of tapes.

The main reason I went to school was not to learn English. I really wanted to be a manager and go to New York City. Because I was

highly motivated, learning English wasn’t hard for me. I enjoyed every second of it.

When I finished the 224 hours of study, I could communicate somewhat in English. I knew that the test was communicating with my director. If I couldn’t, I would have to pay back the \$1,000. So I made up a plan. I would talk to him about all that I had learned. When I entered his office, I talked and talked for 20 minutes without letting him say a word. He said, “That’s enough. Send him to New York.” And I went to New York!

#### **A Learning Experience**

I can tell you that if you want to succeed in anything, you need to concentrate, put forth effort, and be happy with what you are doing. This approach can give you everything. You can learn much and achieve any worthy goal. Enjoy what you are doing, even if it is hard. Do it on a mission or in any aspect of your life. As President Benson said, “Work, work, work.” **NE**

#### **NOTE**

1. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 200.

**A**fter eight hours in school, I went looking for English-speaking tourists to talk to. I put forth the same kind of extra effort I had used to learn how to work an adding machine.

## RAISING THE STANDARD OF VIRTUE

**D**ressed in their homemade, bright yellow, tie-dyed shirts, the young women of the Concord Second Ward in Walnut Creek, California, raised their flag of virtue after hiking to the top of nearby Mount Diablo.

Following an inspiring fireside focused on the importance of virtue, each young woman took a strip of yellow fabric and wrote her pledge of virtue on it. Then they tied all the strips of fabric to a discarded tree branch. The next morning, the young women carried their banner on a hike around the summit of Mount Diablo, hoisting it high as a standard to the world at a point overlooking their homes in the valley below. The young women linked arms, symbolizing their unity in following the standards of the gospel and in their love for each other and for the Savior.

Beehive Morgan March said, "As we stood together as a group of Young Women, it made me feel grateful for all of the girls who had the same values as me. As we go through hard times we always know that there are people with our same standards."



*“We praise what the pioneers’ unselfishness and sacrifice have done for us, but that is not enough. We should also assure that these same qualities are guiding principles for each of us.”*

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Following the Pioneers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 72.



# THE CHURCH IN URUGUAY



Uruguay's first contact with the Church occurred at the 1940 South American basketball championship game held in Montevideo. One of Argentina's star players, Rolf Larson, served as a missionary for the Church in Argentina and brought publicity to the Church as a team member.

In 1944, the first congregation was organized for North Americans working in Uruguay. By the end of

1948, a mission and 14 congregations were organized. By 1957, nearly 500 converts joined annually. Church membership in Uruguay has increased 80 percent in the past five years.

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

<b>Membership</b>	<b>90,292</b>
<b>Missions</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Temples</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Wards &amp; Branches</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Family History Centers</b>	<b>21</b>



## SPREADING HAPPINESS IN ALABAMA

They came bearing gifts. After collecting donated items such as toys, clothing, and school supplies, about 30 youth and children from the Semmes and Theodore Wards of Mobile, Alabama, made a visit to the St. Mary's Home for Children. The youth didn't just

drop off the gifts, but they spent the morning at the community shelter singing Primary songs and playing games with

the children who live there.

Lauryn McCullough, a Mia Maid from the Semmes Ward, remembers how much fun they had. "The children really broke out of their shells and enjoyed our visit," she said. Seeing these children in difficult circumstances also made Lauryn grateful for what she has. "It made me really appreciate my family. We often take for granted what we have."

Plans for a return visit are already under way in response to numerous requests from both the LDS youth who visited the shelter and from the children living at St. Mary's Home.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LISA SCHLOEMER

## SEARCH FOR THE APOSTLES

See if you can find the names of the original Twelve Apostles plus Matthias and Paul. There are also six other words associated with these special witnesses of the Savior.

- |               |                    |                     |                     |
|---------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Peter</b>  | <b>Bartholomew</b> | <b>Simon</b>        | <b>Commissioned</b> |
| <b>Andrew</b> | <b>Thomas</b>      | <b>Judas</b>        | <b>Matthias</b>     |
| <b>James</b>  | <b>Matthew</b>     | <b>Apostles</b>     | <b>Paul</b>         |
| <b>John</b>   | <b>James</b>       | <b>Fishermen</b>    | <b>Disciples</b>    |
| <b>Philip</b> | <b>Thaddaeus</b>   | <b>Missionaries</b> | <b>Testify</b>      |



## MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

My favorite scripture is **2 Nephi 29:3-8** because it shows that the Book of Mormon is meant for us in these latter days and it will teach us as well today as it did in ancient times.

**Jackie B., 16, Utah, USA**

Tell us about your favorite scripture in one or two sentences. Go to [newera.lds.org](http://newera.lds.org) and click Submit Your Material.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JACKIE B.



## BY THE NUMBERS

# 700,977

Number of students enrolled in seminary and institute worldwide.

# Stepping **UP** by Stepping **DOWN**

BY JACOB FULLMER AND PATRICIA FARNSWORTH

*Andrea was awarded a gold medal but made national news by giving it away.*

***Sometimes standing as a witness of God can happen in unexpected ways. For Andrea, it meant stepping up by stepping down.***

It's the moment every high school athlete dreams of: cameras flashing, parents beaming, coaches applauding, a gold medal, laced with a ribbon, gently placed around your neck. But for Andrea Nelson, it just wasn't right.

All runners had crossed the line for the girls' 3,200-meter race at the Washington State High School Track and Field Championships. They had just caught their breath when

the whispers started. Someone would be disqualified.

"Is it me?" each girl asked herself. They then waited in uncertainty for more than an hour.

At last, a judge ruled that the first-place runner, Nicole, would lose her place. She had supposedly stepped outside the lane for three consecutive steps. The other runners would move up, taking the stand one place



Andrea Nelson (wearing green) knows what it's like to work hard and receive the benefits of that effort.



Right after this picture was taken, Andrea jumped down and ran to give the first-place medal to the disqualified runner she felt rightfully earned it.

higher than the order in which they crossed the finish line. Andrea had finished three seconds behind Nicole but would now be given first place.

At that moment two-time state cross country champion Andrea Nelson (17) of the Woodridge Ward, Spokane North Stake, made a decision that would catch the attention of out-of-state newspapers, land her on ESPN, and even cause her to be featured in *Sports Illustrated* magazine.

“My coach asked, ‘What are you going to do?’ I said, ‘Well, I’m going to give her the medal,’” Andrea remembers saying.

After being given the gold medal, she jumped without hesitation from the highest stand, ran over to Nicole and placed the medal around her neck, saying it belonged to her because she won the race.

The energy from Andrea’s simple gesture started a domino effect of selfless giving. Next, the second-place runner gave up her medal to Andrea, followed by third to second, and so on, until all eight girls gave up their medals. The eighth-place girl, who chose to forfeit her medal without

a replacement in mind, later received a medal Nicole won in another race.

Andrea’s mother, Edie, says, “There is no way to describe how that felt and the way that people were responding. You just had to be there.” After the runners exchanged medals, Edie says, “A reporter ran past Brother Nelson with tears in his eyes saying he wished he could talk but was on deadline and, besides, he couldn’t get control of his emotions anyway.”

Ten days later, race officials reinstated Nicole as the winner after reviewing video of the race. But at the time Andrea made her decision, no one knew that would happen. The reinstated winner, Nicole, told *Sports Illustrated*, “It gave me chills. It was just an incredible, surprising thing for Andrea to do, because it wasn’t her fault. No one would have blamed her if she kept the medal.”

But Andrea knows how it feels to win a race. And that wasn’t what she felt that day. To her, violation or not, the other girl had earned a spot on the stand. “I’d rather win it the right way instead of having it given to me,” she

*“I wasn’t expecting this to be a big deal. I just thought it was the right thing to do.”*

says. She understands the Savior’s counsel: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matthew 7:12).

### **One in a Crowd**

For a girl nearly through high school, Andrea has received a lot of attention. After the track meet and before the beginning of summer vacation, newspapers and sports-writers were calling her high school to get her out of class as many as three times in a day. “I wasn’t expecting this to be a big deal. I just thought it was the right thing to do.”

Andrea is accustomed to doing what’s right—even if it’s different from what her peers are doing. Out of 1,400 students in her high school, she’s one of fewer than 20

Latter-day Saints, so she has plenty of opportunities to quietly stand up for what she believes. She knows that standing strong is the best way to avoid bad situations. “Just live the standards and make sure people know what they are. Don’t be afraid to say, ‘Hey I’m not going to watch that. I’m not going to listen to that. I’m not going to do that,’” she says.

Some friends, upon learning she was LDS, were a little taken aback at first, but then they realized she was still just their friend Andrea. She says, “Now they’re OK with it and have really started to accept what I do.”

### **Standing for Truth**

Andrea has learned in her Young Women classes how important it is to “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and



Andrea holding her second-place medal. She tries to set a good example because she’s grateful for the examples in her life, like her brothers and sisters.

in all places” (Mosiah 18:9; see also this year’s Mutual theme, 1 Timothy 4:12). Recently, she invited a friend to a Church activity who previously didn’t think very highly of the Church. “She thought the activity was really cool. She was really interested in the Church and asked a lot of questions,” says Andrea.

Her friends on the track team know her standards, too. “We have a lot of movie nights, and they know I always have to make sure what we’re watching is appropriate,” she says. “If they are watching something I wouldn’t watch and I walk in the room, they change it really quick. That’s really nice.”

She credits her older sister for paving the way with some of her teammates. Her sister ran for their high school the year before Andrea started running, and she also made her standards clear. In fact, all five of her brothers and sisters have been runners. She looks up to them on and off the track.

“They’re amazing. They’ve all been great examples. They’re always doing the right thing, and they make sure I’m doing the right thing,” she says.

### Matching Strides

Her family has done a lot to set the pace for her, but being the youngest has also provided her with opportunities to be an example for them. “She always sets a good example. My children always seem to want to do what Andrea’s doing,” says her oldest sister, Christine.

But being looked up to or talked about isn’t really what motivates Andrea. When people mention her giving up the medal, she doesn’t break stride: “I don’t want to be the center of attention.” That’s Andrea. Like the eight other runners who followed her example, she’s just



Andrea gives her best in every race she runs.

glad she could do the right thing when the moment presented itself.

Sometimes standing as a witness of God can happen in unexpected ways. For Andrea, it meant stepping up by stepping down. **NE**

*“Just live the standards and make sure people know what they are.”*



# BEAUTIFUL THINGS AHEAD

BY LIA MCCLANAHAN

“Is anyone still awake?” The first time I asked, I had received two whispered responses in the affirmative. Now, hours later, the silence answered that I was the last one in the room who couldn’t get to sleep.

It was my first night in the Missionary Training Center (MTC). That day, I had said good-bye to my parents, met my companion and the other new missionaries going to Italy, and been to the first set of classes. I was exhausted, but my mind was spinning with anxiety. “What have I gotten myself into?” I asked myself over and over. I didn’t know if I could really learn to be a missionary. Would I have the courage to fly to a foreign country and talk to strangers about the gospel? Maybe I wasn’t supposed to be here. Tears started to roll down my cheeks.

Then I remembered something my mom had told me about her brother Larry. Uncle Larry served his mission in Uruguay and Paraguay in the 1970s. At first he had spent sleepless nights worrying about his inadequacies. When he felt like he couldn’t bear it anymore, he would get out of his bed, go into the bathroom, and kneel down to plead with Heavenly Father for peace.

Somehow, with the Lord’s help, Uncle Larry made it through and served a faithful mission.

I felt some hope at this thought and crept down the hall to the bathroom. In the dim light,

# A CHANCE TO CHANGE

BY ANGEL LUIS SANCHES NOTARIO

I knelt on the cold tile floor and sobbed. I begged Heavenly Father to grant me a feeling of peace so that I could have the courage to move forward.

I waited. Nothing happened. I waited some more, hearing only the sound of my crying. Finally, there was nothing to do but go back to bed.

In the moment before I fell asleep, the answer came. The Spirit filled my mind with a bright, warm impression of a beautiful place. Suddenly I knew that although I might have a hard time with fear in the beginning, if I pressed forward, I would get to where the Lord meant me to be. The thought filled me with peace, and I fell asleep.

The Spirit had hinted of beautiful things ahead. In hard moments during my stay at the MTC, I closed my eyes and remembered what I had felt. With prayer and hard work, I outlasted my fears.

It wasn't long before I found myself in Genoa, Italy, with my new companion. In the kitchen of our apartment was a glass door that led to a balcony. I stepped out on the balcony and gazed at the city. I already knew and loved this city. This was the place I had seen in my mind's eye that night at the MTC. I knew the Lord had led me to this moment, and I was right where I belonged. **NE**

I have been a member of the Church for seven years. During that time, I have always known that this is the only true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, but at one time in my life, I wasn't very active.

The problem started when our family moved to a new town. It took us a few months to identify the location of the meeting-house we were supposed to go to and a few more weeks to start attending. I wasn't very excited about the change, and after a few weeks, I stopped attending.

One day I received an unexpected but welcome visit from my bishop. He invited me to come back to church on Sundays and to attend seminary. I decided to accept these invitations.

A few weeks after I started going back to church, the bishop introduced the Duty to God program to me. He explained what it consisted of, and I

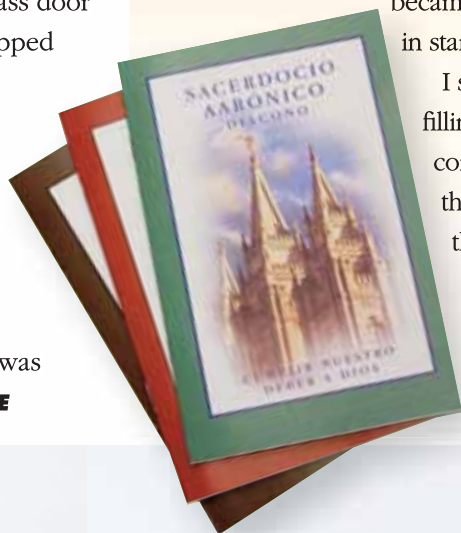
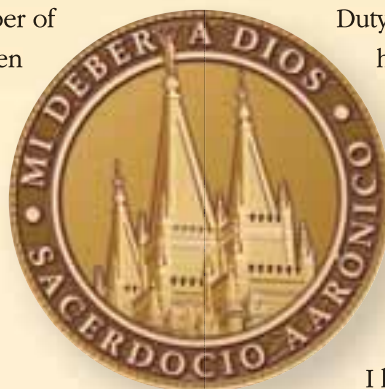
became interested in starting on it.

I started filling out and completing the goals in the pamphlets. I began to realize that the

Duty to God program was helping me change my life for the better. I became more active in the Church and loved going to seminary. I am trying to live the standards of the Church better, and I love to read the scriptures and the *Liahona*.

When I started the Duty to God program, I set goals such as going on a mission and attending the Latter-day Saint preparatory school Benemérito de las Américas, along with many other goals. Last fall, I received the Duty to God Award and the Melchizedek Priesthood, and I'll be going on a mission soon.

I thank my Heavenly Father each day for giving me the chance to change and become a worthy member of His Church. I am grateful for the programs and leaders of the Church that helped me change. **NE**



**INSTANT MESSAGES** features personal experiences, insights into 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, please go to [newera.lds.org](http://newera.lds.org), click Submit Your Material, and select Instant Messages.

Or write to [newera@ldschurch.org](mailto:newera@ldschurch.org) or *New Era*, Instant Messages, 50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA

Please limit submissions to 400 words or less. They may be edited for length and clarity.

# Not Just Spinning His Wheels

**T**wo hundred and six miles (332 kilometers) is the distance from Logan, Utah, to Jackson Hole, Wyoming. It's also the distance Peter Johnson and his friends pedaled to win the relay division of the LOTOJA road cycling race, whizzing through mountain passes and three states in nine hours. LOTOJA (*LOgan TO Jackson*) is one of the longest single-day races in the United States. It draws some 1,500 cyclists each September, many of them pros. Peter's relay team is the youngest ever to come in first.

**It takes a lot of time and practice to win such a major competition. Why make the effort?** For me, things like exercising and working out are fun. When you're on a tough hill climb, you're not necessarily thinking about how much fun you're having. But afterward, there's an awesome feeling of accomplishment that you only get from working hard. I like that.

**Why is being physically active and staying fit important for you?** I couldn't imagine a life that didn't include some sort of fitness. I love the feeling that I get knowing that even at the end of a long race or a hard soccer game, I could still go longer. Besides, who doesn't want to be healthy?

**You keep pretty busy. How do you balance sports, school, and seminary?**

Seminary has always been a priority for me. I have had to give up other classes in order to attend seminary, but I know that I am blessed when I do the right thing. A lot of the time school does conflict with sports, but you figure out ways to work through it.

**How do you maintain your standards when people at school don't always make the best choices?** Most people at school know I'm an avid follower of my faith. So when it comes to parties, dating, and things like movies, they know where I stand and what they can expect from me. I take pride in living the standards of the Church, and as a result, my peers

have come to respect me and my choices.

**How has prayer helped you in your life?** I have a strong testimony of prayer. The scriptures say to pray about everything (see 2 Nephi 32:9), so I constantly pray for help in school, sports, you name it. When it comes to cycling, I'm pretty sure I've never started a race without saying a prayer. **NE**

—As told to Sean Johnson

*In biking and in life, Peter Johnson rides the high road.*

**Name:** Peter Johnson  
**Age:** 17  
**Location:** Park City, Utah





# NewEra.Ids.org

## RESOURCE LINKS

If teachers need additional articles to use in preparing lessons for Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood, look online under Lesson Helps for suggestions. Each month we'll add more lessons to the list.

## TOP FIVE

If you want to read some great articles about scripture study, read these five. Look them up in past issues online.

Andrea Cartwright, "Creative Scripture Study," May 2006

Bethany E. Walker, "Everyday Scriptures" (Instant Messages), Nov. 2007

Kimberly Hicken, "Scared," May 2001

Maria McKay, "Letters from Dad," June 1995

Kimberly Griffiths Little, "The Answer in Section 6," Nov. 1998

## What's New?

Go to the *New Era* online to:

- Check out a video of this month's Mormonad.
- See a bonus video on the making of the Mormonad video.
- Listen to the testimony of Amaru Anderson from Ottawa, Canada.
- Take our online survey.

## New Era Favorite

*During my high school years my relationship with my parents was not always smooth sailing. In particular, I felt that I should be given more independence. Why should I have to tell my parents everything I was doing and everywhere I was going? And why did I have a set time to be home at night and then have to check in when I got home? I had a difficult time understanding them when they said I'd have more freedom if I was more obedient to the rules. I wouldn't be free; I'd be a slave.*

*At the beginning of my senior year in high school, I figured out a plan.*

## "My Trust Fund,"

by Richard Moore in the October 1999 *New Era*.



## BEHIND THE SCENES

We had a tough time getting a good photo of Peter Johnson on his bicycle for the cover. It was winter in Utah, and Peter lives in Park City, a ski town that is very snowy in the winter months. The photographer had to wait until there were a couple of warm days so that the snow melted off the pavement. Then he took the photo at an angle so that the snow would not be too obvious in the background. The designer had to fade out the background so it wouldn't be so noticeable.

**SPIRITUAL POWER**

Thanks for the November 2008 article "Running a Good Race." I enjoyed the part in the article where Makena shared her favorite scripture, Luke 1:37. When I read this scripture I felt the Spirit testify that it was true. Since I am living in the decade of decision, this scripture helped me feel surer of myself. The *New Era* is a smorgasbord of spiritual power. I also enjoy The Extra Smile. Whenever I feel down, The Extra Smile puts a smile on my face.

*Steven M.*

**COUNSEL FROM GENERAL AUTHORITIES**

I really enjoy reading the *New Era* and learning from the words of our General Authorities. Their counsel is full of truth and helps answer our problems. The Church is full of truth, and to see that truth you must have faith. To have that faith you must pray, then act with faith.

*Ha'atoa V., California*

I really liked the article "The Truth is on the Earth Once More" (Jan. 2009) by Elder M. Russell Ballard. It's great to have a leader's testimony written in each issue in a magazine that I can read almost whenever or wherever I want. I especially liked this article because it contained a testimony of not only the truth of the gospel, but also about the events that so greatly define our beliefs.

*Noelle P., Oregon*

*The New Era  
is a smorgasbord of  
spiritual power.*

**SUNDAY ACTIVITIES**

Thank you so much for the cover story of the March 2009 issue about playing sports on Sunday. This past week I had a soccer tournament on a Sunday and I was debating whether to play or not. All my friends were, and I was very tempted to play. This article helped me realize that life is not all about soccer or other sports. It helped me realize it is much more important to show I am dedicated to my Heavenly Father and that I will sacrifice anything to be with Him again. Thanks again!

*Kjersty C., Utah*

**THE BLESSING OF PAYING TITHING**

The article entitled "No One Will Ever Know" (Feb. 2009) strengthened my testimony of the law of tithing. The scriptures say that if we pay our tithing the Lord will bless us. He promises this. It is sometimes hard to pay tithing when you earn money, but we need to remember that it all belongs to our Heavenly Father and He allows us to keep 90%.

*Nathan L., Utah*

**DOWNLOADS**

Thanks so much for the music, article, and talk downloads. They are a great way to feel the Spirit stronger during the day.

*Lori T., Arizona*

*Editor's Note: You can find these downloads at [newera.lds.org](http://newera.lds.org).*

**NO CUSSING CLUB**

I am 12 years old and go to an elementary school. Even though there are mostly little kids there, swearing is still a problem. Thank you for the article "No Cussing Club" (Mar. 09).

It is good to know that I am not the only one dealing with cussing. The article had good suggestions on how to help.

*Andrew H., Idaho*

*We love hearing from you. Write to us by going online to [newera.lds.org](http://newera.lds.org) and clicking on Submit Your Material.*

*Or you can e-mail us at [newera@ldschurch.org](mailto:newera@ldschurch.org) or write to New Era, 50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024.*



## BEFORE THEIR HANDCARTS

BY DAVID R. GOLDEN

With hesitation they came  
These would-be pioneers,  
Aprons, bonnets, hats, suspenders,  
Unfamiliar garb they donned  
On that defining day.

Prayerfully patched together  
Into families unfamiliar,  
A new quiltwork of companionship,  
Soon to be stitched together  
In wondrous ways.

Now, a new perspective—  
In the yoke, on the ropes,  
Shoulders to the wheel.  
Pioneer stories springing into reality  
With each staggering step.

Challenged, confidence waning,  
They groaned up steep slopes.  
Questioning, How much longer?  
This sweat, this dust,  
These blistered feet.

High atop a mountain vale,  
Where song and dance,  
Laughter and quiet moments  
Further honed and softened hearts,  
And witnesses were borne.

Too soon came the last sunrise,  
Charged with anticipation  
And newfound strength.  
Closer . . . closer . . . there!  
The last cresting hill.

But somehow the journey's end  
Seemed to them familiar,  
For their hearts arrived in Zion  
Long before their handcarts.





### COMING NEXT MONTH

- *Role models such as the Savior can make a big difference in your life.*
- *How one ward helped a special girl earn her Personal Progress.*
- *What books should you read? What movies should you see? What music should you listen to?*
- *When should you get your patriarchal blessing?*
- *Read a message from the newest Apostle.*

*Read these articles and more in the August issue of the New Era.*

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