

A young boy with brown hair is playing a bagpipe. He is wearing a white shirt and a red bagpipe with gold fringe. The background is a blurred green field.

THE New Era

JUNE

2008

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Meeting



Your Goliath

BY PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

The battle for our souls is no less important than the battle fought by David. The enemy is no less formidable, the help of Almighty God no farther away.

Of all the battles that have been fought over many centuries in the area of the world known as the Holy Land, no single battle is better remembered than the one which occurred in the Valley of Elah during the year 1063 B.C. Along the mountains on one side, the feared armies of the Philistines were marshaled to march directly to the heart of Judah and the Jordan Valley. On the other side of the valley, King Saul had drawn up his armies in opposition.

Historians tell us that the opposing forces were about evenly matched in number and in skill. However, the Philistines had managed to keep secret their valued knowledge of smelting and fashioning iron into formidable weapons of war. The sound of hammers pounding upon anvils and the sight of smoke rising skyward from many bellows as the smiths went about the task of sharpening weapons and fashioning new ones must have struck fear into the hearts of Saul's warriors, for even the most novice of soldiers would know the superiority of iron weapons to those of brass.

As often happened when armies faced each other, individual champions challenged others from the opposing forces to single combat. There was considerable precedent for this sort of fighting; and on more than one occasion, notably during the tenure of Samson as judge, battles had



I like to think of David as the righteous lad who had the courage and the faith to face insurmountable odds when all others hesitated, and to redeem the name of Israel by facing the giant in his life.

been decided by individual combat.


Now, however, the situation was reversed as far as Israel was concerned, and it was a Philistine who dared to challenge all others—a veritable giant of a man called Goliath of Gath. He wore heavy brass armor and a coat of mail. And the staff of his spear would stagger a strong man merely to lift, let alone hurl. His shield was the longest ever seen or heard of, and his sword a fearsome blade.

This champion from the Philistine camp stood and cried unto the armies of Israel: “Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me” (1 Samuel 17:8).

His challenge was that if he were overpowered by an Israelite warrior, then all the Philistines would become servants to the Israelites. On the other hand, if he were victorious, the Israelites would become their slaves. Goliath roared: “I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together” (1 Samuel 17:10).

For forty days came the challenge, met only by fear and trembling. And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man Goliath, “fled from him, and were sore afraid” (1 Samuel 17:24).

There was one, however, who did not quake with fear nor run in alarm. Rather, he



stiffened the spine of Israel's soldiers by his piercing question of rebuke toward them: "Is there not a cause? . . . Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:19, 32). David, the shepherd boy, had spoken. But he did not speak just as a shepherd boy. For the hands of the prophet Samuel had rested upon his head and anointed him; and the Spirit of the Lord had come upon him.

Saul said to David: "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth" (1 Samuel 17:33). But David persevered; and bedecked with the armour of Saul, he prepared to meet the giant. Realizing his helplessness so garbed, David discarded the armor, took instead his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag; and with his sling in hand, he drew near to the Philistine.

All of us remember the shocked exclamation of Goliath: "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? . . . Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field" (1 Samuel 17:43-44).

Then David said: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

"This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

"And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.

"And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

"And David put his hand in his bag, and

The stone of COURAGE

took thence a stone, and slang it and smote the Philistine in the forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him” (1 Samuel 17:45–50).

The battle had been fought. The victory had been won. David emerged a national hero, his destiny before him.

Some of us remember David as a shepherd boy divinely commissioned by the Lord through the prophet Samuel. Others of us know him as a mighty warrior, for doesn't the record show the chant of the adoring women following his many victorious battles, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7)? Or perhaps we look upon him as the inspired poet or as one of Israel's greatest kings. Still others recall that he violated the laws of God and took Bathsheba, she who belonged to another. He even arranged the death of her husband Uriah. I like to think of David as the righteous lad who had the courage and the faith to face insurmountable odds when all others hesitated, and to redeem the name of Israel by facing that giant in his life—Goliath of Gath.

Well might we look carefully into our own lives and judge our courage, our faith. Is there a Goliath in your life? Is there one in mine? Does he stand squarely between you and your desired happiness? Your Goliath may not carry a sword or hurl a verbal challenge of insult that all may hear and force you to decision. He may not be ten feet tall, but he likely will appear equally as formidable, and his silent challenge may shame and embarrass.

One man's Goliath may be the stranglehold of a cigarette or perhaps an unquenchable thirst for alcohol. To another, her Goliath may

Like David of old, “our cause is just.”

We have been placed upon earth not to fail or fall victim to temptation's snare, but rather to succeed. Our giant, our Goliath, must be conquered.

be an unruly tongue or a selfish streak which causes her to spurn the poor and the down-trodden. Envy, greed, fear, laziness, doubt, vice, pride, lust, selfishness, discouragement—all spell Goliath.

The giant you face will not diminish in size nor in power or strength by your vain hoping, wishing, or waiting for him to do so. Rather, he increases in power as his hold upon you tightens.

The poet truly describes this truth:

*Vice is a monster of so frightful mein,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.*

(Alexander Pope, “An Essay on Man,” l. 217)

The battle for our souls is no less important that the battle fought by David. The enemy is no less formidable, the help of Almighty God no farther away. What will our action be? Like David of old, “our cause is just.” We have been placed upon earth not to fail or fall victim to temptation's snare, but rather to succeed. Our giant, our Goliath, must be conquered.

David went to the brook and carefully selected five smooth stones with which he might meet his enemy. He was deliberate in his selection, for there could be no turning back, no second chance—this battle was to be decisive.

Just as David went to the brook, well might we go to our source of supply—the Lord. What polished stones will you select to defeat the

The stone of EFFORT

The stone of HUMILITY

Goliath that is robbing you of your happiness by smothering your opportunities? May I offer suggestions.

The stone of COURAGE will be essential to your victory. As we survey the challenges of life, that which is easy is rarely right. In fact, the course that we should properly follow appears at times impossible, impenetrable, hopeless.

Such did the way appear to Laman and Lemuel. When they looked upon their assignment to go unto the house of Laban and seek the records according to God's command, they murmured, saying it was a hard thing that was required of them. Thus, a lack of courage took from them their opportunity, and it was given to courageous Nephi, who responded, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7). The stone of courage is needed.

Next, I select the stone of EFFORT—mental effort and physical effort.

*The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.*

(Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Ladder of St. Augustine")

The decision to overcome a fault or correct a weakness is an actual step in the process of doing so.

"Thrust in thy sickle with thy might" was not spoken of missionary work alone.

Then there must be in our selection the stone of HUMILITY, for haven't we been told through divine revelation that when we are humble, the Lord, our God, will lead us by the hand and give us answer to our prayers?

And who would go forth to battle his Goliath without the stone of PRAYER, remembering that the recognition of a power higher than oneself is in no way debasing; rather, it exalts.

Finally, let us choose the stone of LOVE OF DUTY. Duty is not merely to do the thing we ought to do, but to do it when we should, whether we like it or not.

Armed with this selection of five polished stones to be propelled by the mighty sling of faith, we need then but take the staff of virtue to steady us, and we are ready to meet the giant Goliath, wherever, and whenever, and however we find him.

For the stone of COURAGE will melt the Goliath of fear. The stone of EFFORT will bring down the Goliath of indecision and procrastination. And the Goliaths of pride, of envy, of lack of self-respect will not stand before the power of the stones of HUMILITY, PRAYER, and DUTY.

Above all else, may we ever remember that we do not go forth alone to battle the Goliaths of our lives. As David declared to Israel, so might we echo the knowledge, "The battle is the Lord's, and he will give

The stone of PRAYER

[Goliath] into our hands” (1 Samuel 17:47).

But the battle must be fought. Victory cannot come by default. So it is in the battles of life. Life will never spread itself in an unobstructed view before us. We must anticipate the approaching forks and turnings in the road. We cannot hope to reach our desired journey’s end if we think aimlessly about whether to go east or west. We must make our decisions purposefully. Our most significant opportunities will be found in times of greatest difficulty.

The vast, uncharted expanse of the Atlantic Ocean stood as a Goliath between Christopher Columbus and the New World. The hearts of his comrades became faint, their courage dimmed, hopelessness engulfed them; but Columbus prevailed with his watchword, “Westward, ever Westward, sail on, sail on.” (See Joaquin Miller, “Columbus,” in Ralph Henry and Lucile Pannell, comps., *My American Heritage*, [1949], 153–54.)

Carthage Jail, an angry mob with painted faces, and certain death faced the Prophet Joseph Smith. But from the wellsprings of his abundant faith he calmly met the Goliath of death. “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter,” he had said over a month earlier, “but I am calm as a summer’s morning. I have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all men” (*History of the Church*, 6:555).

Gethsemane, Golgotha, intense pain and suffering beyond the comprehension of mortal man stood between Jesus the Master and victory over the grave. Yet he lovingly assured us, “I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2–3).

And what is the significance of these accounts? Had there been no ocean, there would have

What polished stones will you select to defeat the Goliath that is robbing you of your happiness by smothering your opportunities? May I suggest the stones of Courage, Effort, Humility, Prayer, and Duty.

been no Columbus. No jail, no Joseph. No mob, no martyr. No cross, no Christ!

Should there be a Goliath in our lives, or a giant called by any other name, we need not “flee” or be “sore afraid” as we go up to battle against him. Rather we can find assurance and receive divine help from Him of whom David wrote in his inspired psalm: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psalm 23:1, 4).

Victory will be ours. **NE**

The stone of LOVE OF DUTY

A slinger put both ends of the sling in his throwing hand, sometimes tying one end of the sling around his fingers and holding the other end between his thumb and forefinger. A slinger would not normally twirl the sling above his head but would simply spin it once and then, with a hard throwing motion (either overhand or underhand), let go of the end between his thumb and forefinger to release the stone.



Ancient slings were usually made of one long strip of braided wool or flax with a pouch in the middle to hold the stone. The longer a sling, the greater its range. The longest slings can cast a stone well over 800 feet (about 250 m) at a speed of between 60 and 100 miles (100–160 km) per hour.

Stones that were round and somewhat heavy were preferred by slingers because they are more likely to fly true. Stones used for slinging were usually about two inches (5 cm) in diameter (around the size of a golf ball).

David was probably no more than 16 years old when he fought Goliath and is described in the scriptures as “ruddy,” meaning red-haired or rosy-cheeked (youthful).

DEFEATING YOUR GOLIATHS

“This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel”
(1 Samuel 17:46).

A lion and a bear attacked David’s father’s flocks, and David fought them off, giving him confidence against Goliath.

Basketball standard, 10 feet (3 m)

Goliath, about 9 feet (2.7 m)

David



We all have to face Goliaths in our lives: trials, challenges, temptations that seem too large to overcome. But, like David, we can overcome them if we trust in God and do our part. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught, “When temptation comes your way, name that boastful, deceitful giant ‘Goliath!’ and do with it as David did to the Philistine of Gath” (“Overpowering the Goliaths in Our Lives,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2002, 5).

As you read 1 Samuel 17, what can you learn from the battle of David and Goliath? How did David’s trust in God help him? How was he prepared for this battle? What impact can one teenager have in building the Lord’s kingdom?

Here are some details to supplement your study of this remarkable story.

Goliath’s coat of mail weighed “five thousand shekels,” which could weigh 125–200 pounds (57–90 kg).

The staff of Goliath’s spear was “like a weaver’s beam”—probably weighing over 20 pounds (9 kg); its head weighed “six hundred shekels of iron”—15–25 pounds (7–11 kg).



The Philistines were probably originally from the region around the Aegean Sea. Goliath may have descended from a race of people said to be very tall, even “giants.” (See Deuteronomy 2:10–11; Joshua 11:22.)

Goliath’s helmet of brass was probably made of bronze, copper, or iron. It may have been attached to a **target**, which is thought to have shielded the back and neck.





Elder D. Todd Christofferson

On April 5, 2008, Elder D. Todd Christofferson was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, filling the vacancy left by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, who was called to be the Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Elder Christofferson had served as a Seventy for 15 years, including 10 years in the Presidency of the Seventy.

Born in American Fork, Utah, on January 24, 1945, Elder Christofferson grew up in Pleasant Grove and Lindon, Utah, and gained a love for the scriptures early in his life.

“I’ve always been drawn to the scriptures,” he says, “largely because of my home environment. I could feel my parents’ love of the scriptures. When I was 12 or 13 years old, I asked for a Bible for Christmas. I still have that Bible,

and it is a treasured possession. Soon after receiving it, I began reading Genesis. It took me a long time to read the Bible from cover to cover, but I really learned to love the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. It taught me a lot of things.”¹

When he was 15, his family moved to New Jersey, where he had some of his most memorable testimony-building experiences. “It was during that time that my faith matured into a full-blown testimony,” he says. “I grew up with faith among family and friends and others who influenced my life; I don’t recall a time when I didn’t have that belief that the gospel was true. But in New Jersey I became conscious of knowing that it was true and that it mattered.”²

During that time, he and his brother Greg participated



in the Hill Cumorah Pageant in New York for two summers. Once when he was about 16 years old, he was searching for a personal testimony of the gospel and thought that the pageant would be the perfect time to get it. He recalls:

“One night after the performance, I decided to go to the Sacred Grove alone. It was a beautiful, clear summer night. I thought, This is it—the place, the time. What more ideal setting could I have? I prayed for a long, long time—well over an hour. Nothing happened. I finally gave up and walked back to Palmyra, wondering, What did I do wrong or what didn’t I do right? What was missing?

“I’ve since thought a lot about that experience. One of the lessons I learned from it was that you shouldn’t try to dictate to God the timing or the content of revelation. It was later that summer—when I was home by myself in a little basement bedroom, reading the Book of Mormon—that a witness came very powerfully. It just overwhelmed me. I know from that experience the truth of what Joseph Smith witnessed and the truth of the Book of Mormon and the reality of the Savior. That hasn’t been my only witness, but it was a great strengthening of my testimony.

“I found that you don’t have to be in a special place to receive that witness. You will receive answers to your prayers if you are earnest and keep asking and searching. . . . Anywhere in the world, the Lord will speak

to you.”³

With that testimony, he resolved to serve a mission and was later called to serve in Argentina. After returning from his mission, he earned a bachelor’s degree from Brigham Young University and a law degree from Duke University. He married Katherine Jacob in the Salt Lake Temple on May 28, 1968, and they have five children. He has lived with his family in the Washington, D.C. area; Nashville, Tennessee; Herndon, Virginia; and Charlotte, North Carolina. He worked as a lawyer and served in the Church as a regional representative, counselor in a stake presidency, stake president, bishop, and stake mission president.

After his call as a Seventy, he served in an Area Presidency in Mexico, as the Executive Director of the Family and Church History Department, and in the Presidency of the Seventy. Of this service he says, “The Seventy are key to the success of the work now and in the years ahead, and I feel honored beyond measure that my name was ever included among theirs.”⁴

As the newest Apostle, Elder Christofferson has been called as a special witness of the Savior, and he has frequently taught how important it is for each member to gain a personal testimony and become a witness of Christ. He has said, “As you feel the Holy Spirit’s testimony of Him, confirmed and reconfirmed to your spirit in many different experiences and settings, as you strive to hold up the light of His example in your own life day by day, and as you bear testimony to others and help them learn of and follow Him, you are a witness of Jesus Christ.”⁵ **NE**

For a message from Elder Christofferson in the *New Era*, read “A Sense of the Sacred” (June 2006, p. 28).

NOTES

1. “Friend to Friend,” *Friend*, Mar. 1995, 6.
2. “Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Seventy,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 99.
3. “Friend to Friend,” 7.
4. “Born Again,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 77.
5. “Becoming a Witness of Christ,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2008, 63.



As a young man, Elder Christofferson learned that “anywhere in the world, the Lord will speak to you.” He carried this testimony with him on his mission to Argentina (above). He and his wife, Katherine, have also passed along this faith to their five children (left).

When I first heard about the gospel, it was something new, yet it sounded somehow familiar.

It Starts with Sharing

BY RYAN E. WITHROW



With almost any conversion story, I believe the process begins with members of the Church attempting to *share* what they believe. I was fortunate enough to have such a member do exactly that for me when I was a sophomore in high school. Her name was Cami, and she often invited me to Mutual activities and to church. Unfortunately, I wasn't ready to accept the gospel at that point in my life, so I kindly turned her down. However, her efforts were not in vain.

During my high school years, I played football and had a good friend named Ryan. I frequently offered him rides home from practice. Early one morning in February of 2003, my senior year, I was at school getting help from my math teacher. A girl walked in the door and announced the death of my friend Ryan. I was astonished and almost didn't believe the words I had just heard. A good friend of mine, whom I had just talked to a week before, was now dead.



I made the decision to miss school the next week and attend the funeral services. Upon arriving, I noticed that the building was very beautiful and bore the logo of the church to which it belonged—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The moment I walked in the door, I felt something different: a sense of peace, joy, and happiness—feelings that are not typically experienced at a funeral. As the services progressed, I noticed a new vocabulary, one that I had never before heard. The words *gospel* and *Atonement* entered into my mind for the first time. It was something new and unheard-of but, oddly enough, familiar.

I listened attentively as Ryan's mom spoke, and tears came to my eyes. *Something* was telling me that this “plan of salvation,” which she was speaking about, was true. I felt that the people in this chapel had something in their lives that I did not, and for some reason, I felt a desire to get it.

Now, I was not completely oblivious to Mormons. I grew up in Mesa, Arizona, where members of the Church come in great abundance. I knew two things for sure: first, many of my friends were members of the Church, and second, Church members believed in something called the Book of Mormon. I had a newfound desire to get my hands on this book and to find out what this religion was all about.

In March of 2003, one of my good friends, Bret, invited me to help with his Eagle Scout project. After school the next day we drove in his truck with another friend of ours, Camden, to where the project would be. Inspired by the Spirit, Bret directed Camden to a Book of Mormon situated in a holder in the passenger-side door. He told him to open to a verse he had recently read in the Book of Alma. My interest was sparked, and for the first time, I saw the book I wanted so very badly. However, I was too scared to say anything right then. Upon returning that evening, I worked up the confidence to ask Bret for the book. He happily gave it to me and told me to read it. That night I read nine chapters. From the moment I picked up the book, I fell in love with its message.

The next evening, I was sitting in Bret's living room with his family and two young men dressed in dark suits, both of whom were named “Elder.” I learned these were missionaries for Bret's church. We watched *Finding Faith in Christ*. I will admit that I cried during the movie and loved

every bit of the lesson. I decided to continue investigating and to come to church. I eventually finished the lessons and accepted everything the elders taught me about being a member of the Church of Jesus Christ.

One night as I was kneeling in prayer after reading a portion of the Book of Mormon, I specifically asked if what I was learning was true. Overwhelming feelings of peace and joy came into my heart. I was feeling the Spirit, and it was answering my prayers. After that time, I knew without a doubt that the Book of Mormon was true. I felt it in my heart and had the knowledge given to me in my mind.

With this new knowledge, I knew what my next step would be. I was baptized on May 3, 2003. The following day, I was confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I will always remember my baptism, the Spirit I felt, and the covenants I made with my Heavenly Father.

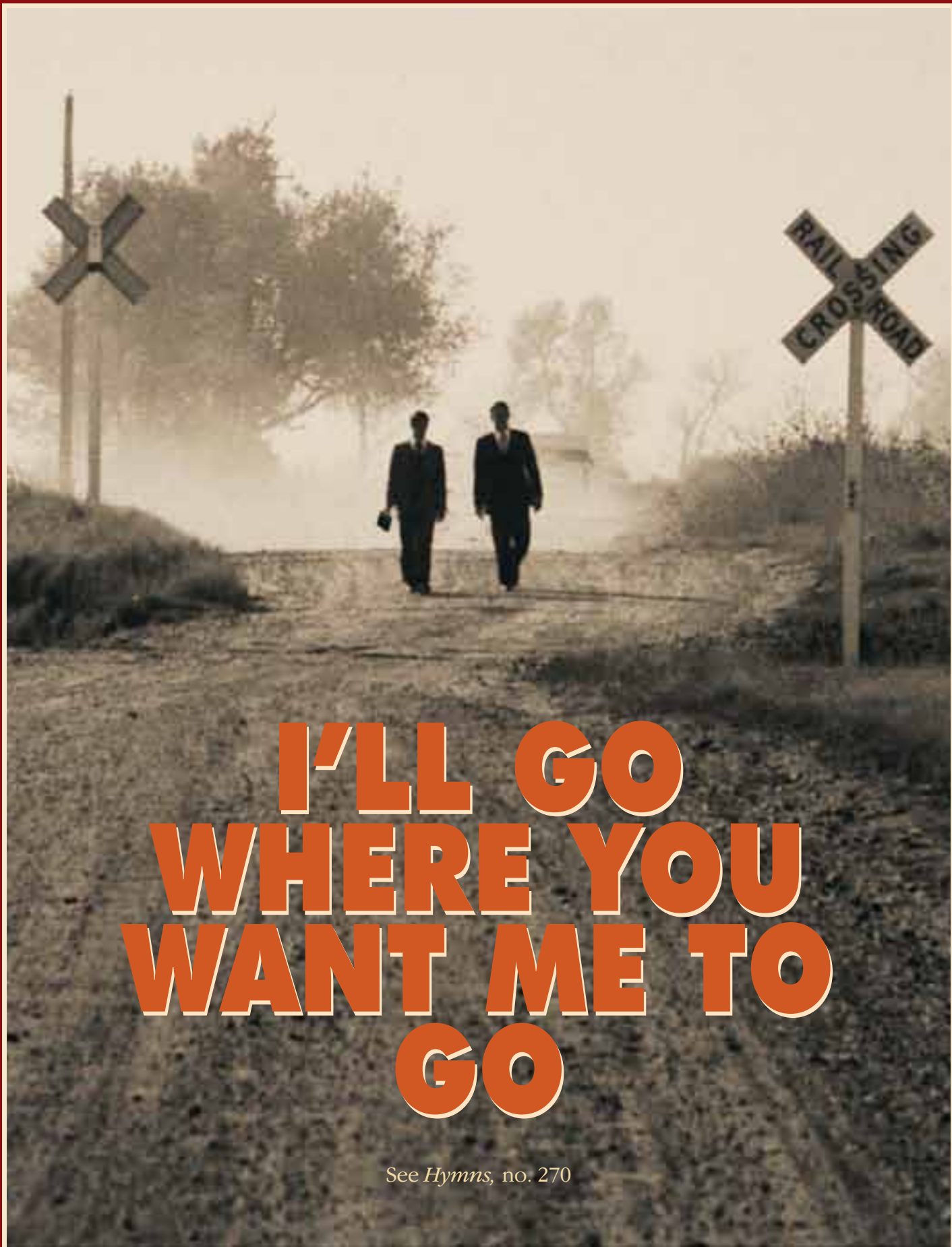
My first year as a member of the Church was a long and difficult one, but also full of rewards. Being the only member in your family isn't the easiest thing, and I also received much persecution from old friends. In May of 2004, I received the Melchizedek Priesthood and a call to serve in the Virginia Richmond Mission, speaking Spanish. I left my nonmember family in July of 2004, not knowing exactly what I was getting myself into or just what it was that I was leaving behind.

During the beginning months of my mission, I heard many things from many friends about the progress of my parents in the Church. They had been attending church off and on and had allowed the missionaries to come by every so often. I was always excited to hear news. Then one Saturday morning my mission president told me he had just spoken with my stake president about my parents. My parents had decided to join the Church. The gospel had now changed their lives for the better, just as it had mine only two years before.

I am so grateful for my Savior Jesus Christ and for the opportunity I had to serve Him as a missionary. I now understand more fully the plan of salvation. I know that this is the gospel and Church of Jesus Christ. Upon returning from my mission in July of 2006 I was overjoyed to enter the Mesa temple with my parents, where we were sealed as a family for time and all eternity. It's a day I could hardly have imagined just a few years earlier. **NE**

The Spirit was answering my prayers in my heart and in my mind.





**I'LL GO
WHERE YOU
WANT ME TO
GO**

See Hymns, no. 270

“What’s the harm in trying alcohol or tobacco just once?”

The scriptures teach that for us to exercise agency, there must be opposition—good and evil—in the world and that we must be “enticed by the one or the other” (2 Nephi 2:16; emphasis added). You do not need to occasionally give in to the enticement of wrong choices in order for your agency to be genuine. The ability to distinguish right from wrong is what’s important. You do not need to know both good *and* evil; you need to know good *from* evil—and then choose the good.

You may think that trying alcohol or tobacco one time won’t hurt you, but it will. They are harmful substances, and you cannot feel the Spirit if you partake of them. For some, that one time turns into a life-long addiction. **NE**



There’s Never “Just Once”

No, you shouldn’t try it; not even once! You may say that you will never do it again, but alcohol and tobacco can be addictive. I have a friend who tried alcohol once. The next time she went out, guess what? She drank again. Everyone knew she had drunk “just once,” so it became “just one more.” We as members are being watched constantly by nonmembers. It doesn’t look good when we don’t obey our own standards—not to mention how disappointed your parents would be.
Kaila W., 17, New South Wales, Australia



Commandments Keep You Safe

Our loving Father in Heaven knows every single thing that goes on in life and its effects. This is why He gave us the Word of Wisdom. He loves you so much and wants to keep you safe from the devil. This is one way He is trying to keep you safe—through commandments. You know it’s a commandment not to take drugs, so stick to the safe side. Pray for His guidance to keep you safe from thoughts of trying things you know are not right.
Asenaca V., 18, Suva, Fiji

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



Keep the Word of Wisdom

Remember that the Word of Wisdom is a commandment from

God, and as such we need to pay strict heed to it. Otherwise we are sinning, and a sin will always be a sin, even if we do it only once. Don't forget that serious sin happens only if we first yield to small temptations, such as trying alcohol or tobacco to find out what it's like. Ana M., 20, Michoacán, Mexico

Fight the Temptation

All harmful substances deliberately taken into the body are against the Word of Wisdom. Don't experiment with them! Using these substances, even in the smallest of doses, can lead to destructive dependence. In violating the Word of Wisdom, we cut ourselves off from many blessings that we could have received. We stain our spirits. The best weapons for fighting temptation are prayer, fasting, and scripture study. Oleg P., 16, Crimea, Ukraine

Don't Learn the Hard Way

Our Church leaders don't say "just once." They say no. Just have faith that the Church teaches us so that we don't have to learn it the hard way for ourselves. Also, remember that in the temple recommend interview, priesthood leaders ask if you obey the Word of Wisdom.

Lauren R., 15, Maryland

Rationalizing Can Lead to Addiction

What is wrong with saying "It's only once" is the fact that you did it. If you did it, this will weaken your resistance to doing it again. Rationalizing "it's only once" leads us away from the strait and narrow. Once you go in that direction, it may not be so easy to return, because you will say, "It's only once more, and besides, I can quit any time I want to." It may eventually become, "I must have another," or, "There is no hope left for me."

Adam H., 16, British Columbia, Canada

NEXT QUESTION

"Some of my Church friends argue with nonmember friends over which religion is true. I know contention is wrong, but how do I let my friends know how I feel about the gospel?"

Please send your answer by July 15, 2008, to:

**New Era, Questions & Answers 7/08
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA
Or e-mail: newera@ldschurch.org**

The following information and permission must be included in your e-mail or letter:

FULL NAME

BIRTH DATE

WARD (or branch)

STAKE (or district)

I grant permission to print response and photo:

SIGNATURE

PARENT'S SIGNATURE (if you are under 18)

There Is Harm in Just Once



"Some years ago, one of our sons asked me why it wasn't a good idea to try alcohol or tobacco to see what they were like. He knew

about the Word of Wisdom, and he also knew the health effects of these

substances, but he was questioning why he shouldn't just try them out for himself. I replied that if he wanted to try something out, he ought to go to a barnyard and eat a little manure. He recoiled in horror. 'Ooh, that's gross,' he reacted.

"I'm glad you think so," I said, 'but why don't you just try it out so you will know for yourself? While

you're proposing to try one thing that you know is not good for you, why don't you apply that principle to some others?' That illustration of the silliness of 'trying it out for yourself' proved persuasive for one sixteen-year-old."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Sin and Suffering," 32; Ensign, July 1992, 73-74.

Keys to the

This young man in Italy knows that exercising the priesthood helps build a bridge to his happiness.

BY KIMBERLY REID
Church Magazines

In Florence, Italy, couples used to follow an old tradition: they attached padlocks to the Ponte Vecchio bridge and threw the keys into the Arno River below, signifying that their love was “locked” for eternity.



Today attaching padlocks is discouraged to help protect the historic bridge, which dates back to medieval times. But 16-year-old Cristian Morelli knows there are real keys that existed long before the Ponte Vecchio—powerful priesthood keys that were restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1829, when the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods were restored. One of those keys is the sealing power, and Cristian knows a family’s love really can be “locked” eternally. His parents were sealed in the temple by one holding that priesthood authority, and someday he

plans to receive temple blessings too. He prepares by fulfilling his Aaronic Priesthood duties and living worthy of this sacred trust.



Pure Creativity

Florence is known as the birthplace of the Renaissance, a flowering in art, literature, and scientific thought. Like talented Renaissance men before him, Cristian knows there is much good to be found in music and books. He’s been playing the bass for three years, and he enjoys studying English literature and philosophy.

But he knows well that sometimes “creativity” crosses into sin. He knows some teenagers who indulge in bad music or pornographic entertainment. Remembering the priesthood he holds, Cristian knows he must be different.

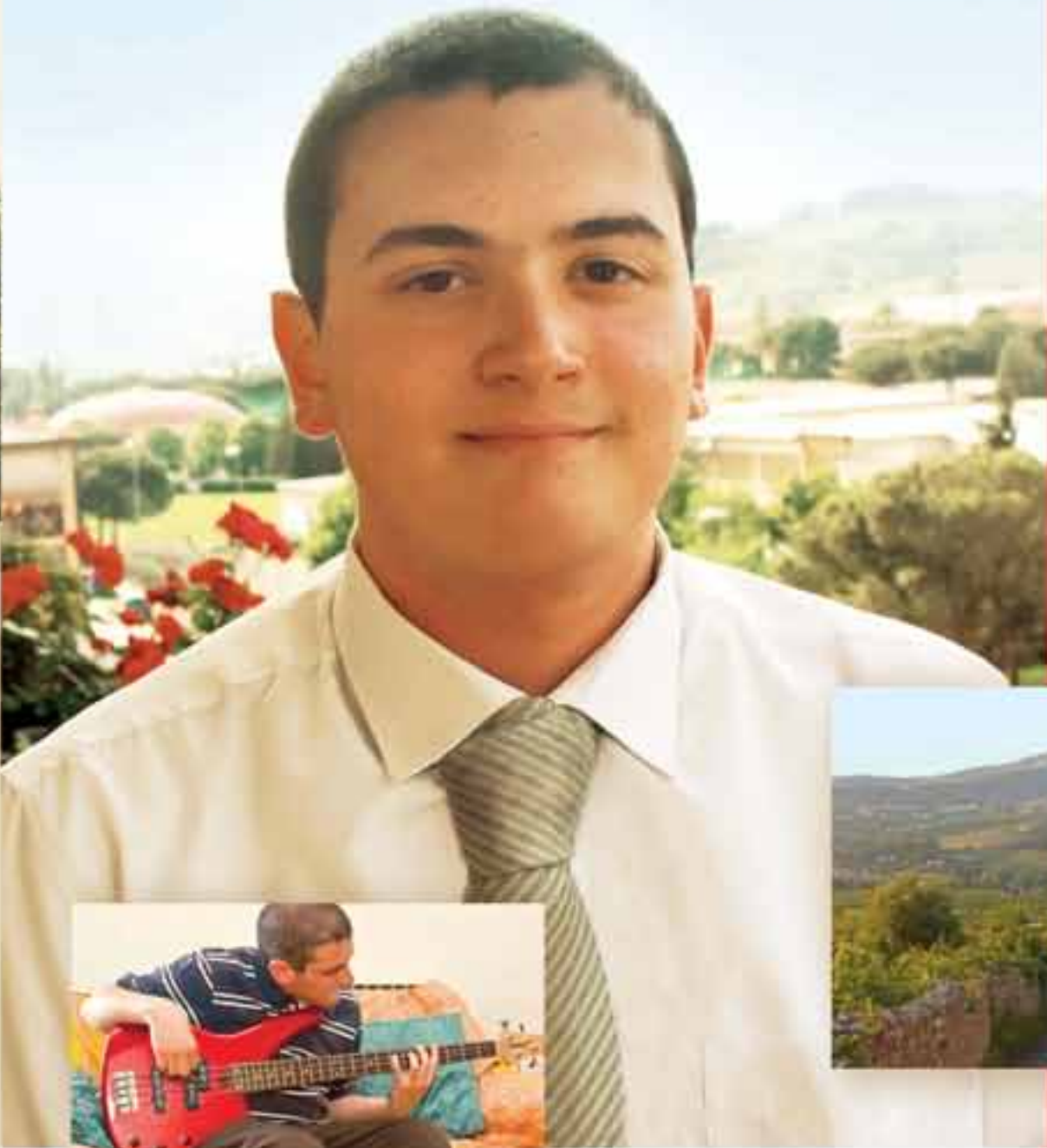
Purifying Fires

In 1497 a Florentine monk convinced citizens to burn anything they owned that might be considered worldly or crude, including mirrors, expensive clothes, and artwork.

Future



Cristian Morelli lives in a small town outside Florence, Italy, a city well known for its art and architecture. He enjoys nurturing his own talents, such as playing the bass.





Cristian is grateful for spiritual vision. He knows there is a Heavenly Father, that Jesus Christ is a God of miracles, and that priesthood keys, such as those held by Peter, have been restored to earth. Such knowledge shapes the way he lives.



In 2008 Cristian's strategy is a little different. Instead of trying to purge society around him, he seeks the fire of the Holy Ghost to purify his own life.

"It can be hard," Cristian says. There are only four students in his seminary class, and they can't meet every day because they are spread over such a large geographic region. He often feels alone, but he knows that sanctifying power can come through trials. For inspiration, he looks to others who have faced opposition.

Jesus Christ's Apostle Peter experienced trials in Cristian's homeland, spending time in prison in Rome and likely dying a martyr's death there. To this day, Peter's priesthood authority is often illustrated by his holding large keys. Like Peter, Cristian wants to be a true disciple and remain committed to his

priesthood callings, no matter the cost.

Another of Cristian's heroes is Nephi. "Nephi, like Peter, had to undergo several trials," Cristian says. "These trials helped make him what he was."

Prayer, scripture study, and the safe haven he calls home help make Cristian who he is—a Latter-day Saint committed to honoring the priesthood, serving a mission, and becoming a righteous husband and father someday.

Focused on Joy

Such goals set Cristian apart from his friends. "I've wanted to serve a mission since I was in Primary," he says. Unfortunately, his friends don't care to hear about his beliefs or religion of any kind because "they are so focused on studying, playing sports, and having fun."

He remembers having spiritual experiences passing the sacrament as a deacon and fasting for a relative who was sick. He feels great satisfaction in home teaching when he “can tell the difference between before and after the visit,” when the families he and his dad teach “receive comfort and are grateful for the words that have been said.”

These are feelings and experiences many of Cristian’s friends can’t relate to. He might feel misunderstood at times, but spiritual vision is a blessing he never wants to lose. Like the blind man healed by the Savior in one of Cristian’s favorite New Testament stories (see John 9:1–11), Cristian can see clearly while many of his friends are still blind to the joy of the gospel.

Sharing the Vision

That’s one reason he looks forward to serving a mission: to help others see spiritual realities that he has been blessed to understand. Since childhood, he has enjoyed good friendships with missionaries and felt sad whenever one of them was transferred. “As time goes by, I might forget the missionary’s name, but I never forget the experience. Each one has left an impression,” he says. “I want to be like the missionaries I’ve known so far.”

Cristian is especially impressed by the determination he witnesses when he volunteers with missionaries. Even though “many people may say a definite ‘No, I’m not interested’ or slam the door in their face, they keep



LIVE DIFFERENTLY FROM THE WORLD

“As priesthood holders of this Church, part of the price we need to pay is by living differently from the world. We are the possessors and custodians of these commanding powers which can and do roll back the power of Satan on the earth. With all my heart I urge you to please help us push back the world.”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Devil’s Throat,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2003, 52.

going,” Cristian says. “They keep knocking on the next door and trying to share the knowledge of the gospel with someone else.”

Cristian prepares for his own mission not only by staying pure and studying the gospel but also by dressing appropriately for the occasion—without being showy.

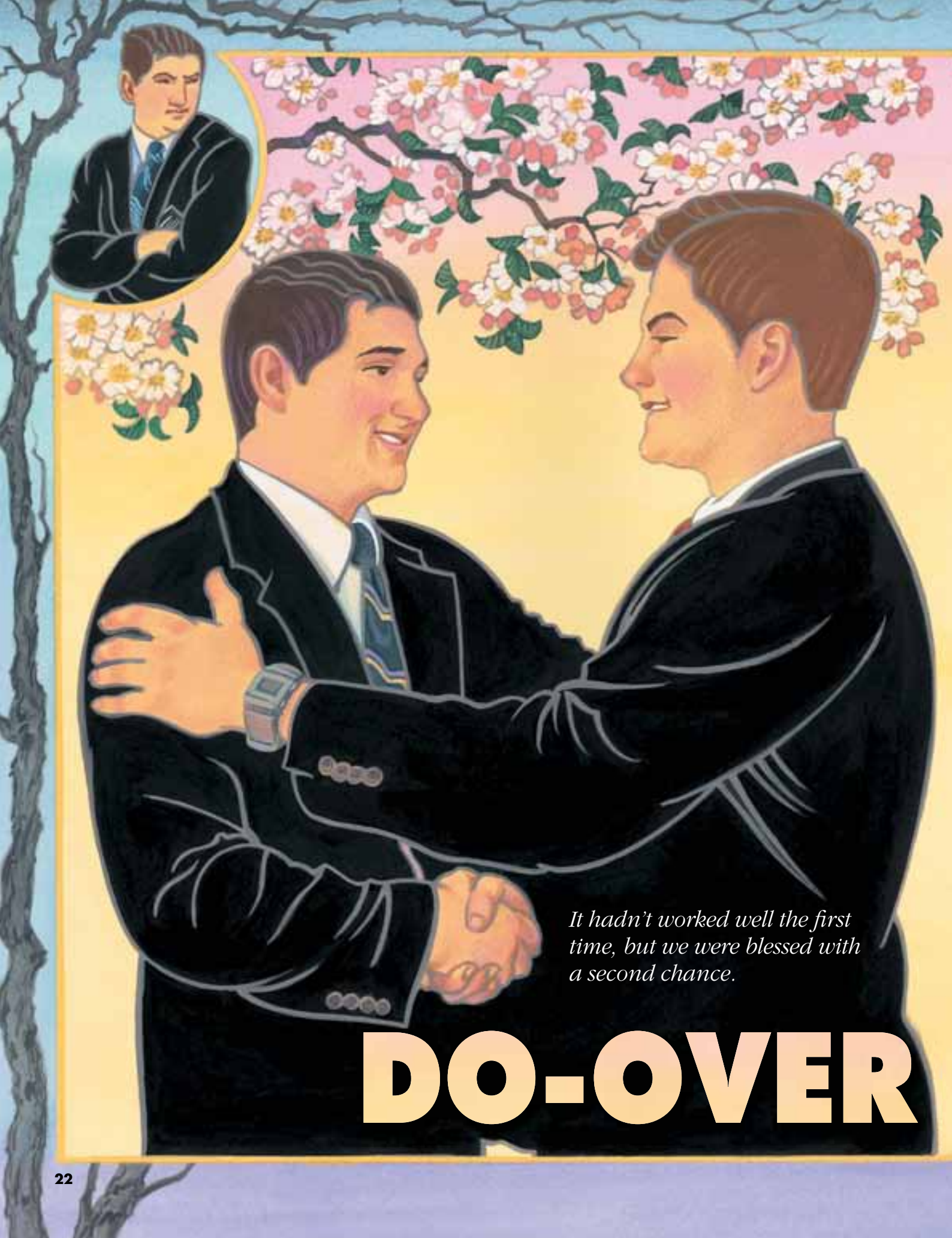
Fashion is a big deal in Florence, but for Cristian, expensive clothes aren’t important. On Sundays, “I wear a white shirt, jacket, and tie to show respect for the Sabbath and the Lord,” Cristian says. He knows this will help him keep the missionary dress code. The rest of the week he wears what he wants. “I have never liked following fashion rules,” he says. “I don’t care what I wear, as long as I dress appropriately”—without paying attention to whose name is on the label.

Keys to Happiness

Cristian looks forward to receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood, the temple endowment, the call to serve as a full-time missionary, and someday the opportunity to “lock his love” to an eternal family of his own.

Ultimately, Cristian looks forward to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. “It comforts me that when He comes,” the sins of the world and all the resulting sadness “will be over.” Until then, Cristian will honor those who hold priesthood keys and keep the covenants that draw him close to the Savior. He knows it’s the only way to be spiritually safe and eternally happy. **NE**





It hadn't worked well the first time, but we were blessed with a second chance.

DO-OVER

BY DEVON BLACK

It was a hot summer day in Japan. I was 10 months into my mission and had finished packing my luggage and getting ready to transfer to another area. Now I was leaving the apartment to catch a train to a new city.

More than anything, I remember the look my companion and I gave each other then. Usually farewells like these are marked by words of thanks and well-wishing. But I remember my companion's simply glancing down the hall at me with no hint of friendliness. I did the same to him and then walked out the door.

The previous five weeks of my mission had been bitter and contentious. I had been in the city for several months when this companion had arrived. From day one we started fighting. We found we had different attitudes and ideas. When we had disagreements, instead of cooperating, we blamed each other and insisted that the other one change.

Some nights we came home frustrated and barely talked to each other. Most mornings we almost dreaded having to leave the apartment. The work in the area suffered as contention and selfishness drove away the Spirit.

When I transferred, I moved on to new places and experiences, but I often found myself thinking back on the unpleasant memories of those five weeks. As I gained maturity and experience, I felt regret. I began to recognize the good things my companion had done and realized how foolish our arguments had been. Sometimes I would hear other missionaries say complimentary things about him. Deep down, I felt guilty that I had nothing good to say.

Months later, I was reading back through my journal entries from that month. As I thought back on my

mistakes and the way I had left, I resolved to do something. I knew I might never see him again, but I followed an impression I had and wrote him a long letter, apologizing and expressing my desire to reconcile.

Three weeks later my zone leader called. I was being transferred to another new city. To my surprise, he told me that I had been assigned to work again with that same missionary.

Having the same companion twice was very rare in my mission, and I knew it wasn't happening by chance. The day we met again, he thanked me for sending the letter, and we spent a long time that night talking and making amends.

Our second time together was the opposite of the first. This time we put aside our arguments and turned to cooperation and respect. As the days flew by, we became close friends and would come home at night talking and laughing about how the day had gone. We were always eager to go out again the next morning. We had the Spirit with us as we worked and taught, and we had much more success as a result.

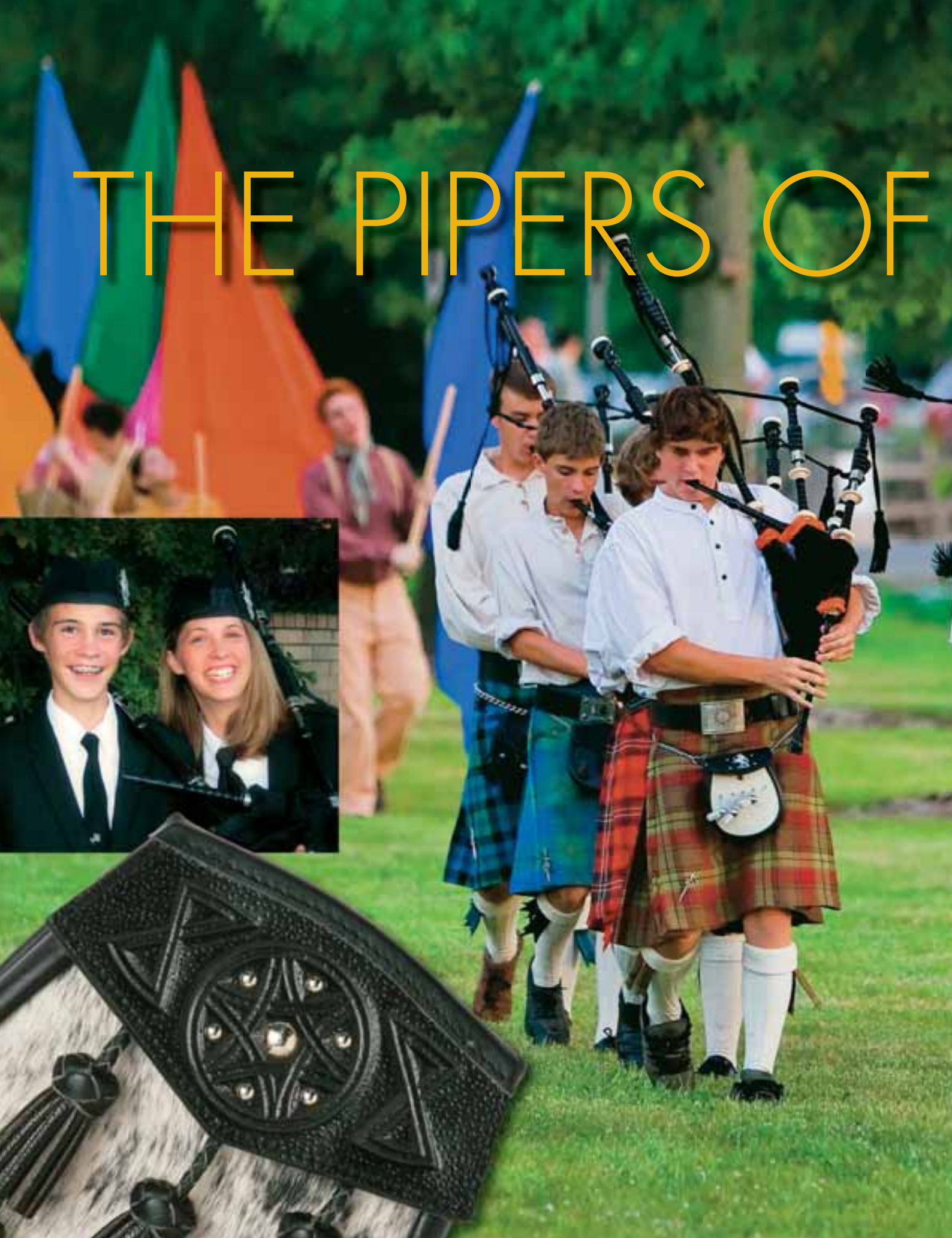
After a few weeks my companion was transferred. The day he left, we gave each other a warm embrace. This time, I experienced the bittersweet feeling of saying good-bye to a friend.

A few years have passed, but I still remember the valuable lessons I learned about friendship, forgiveness, and second chances. We don't always get another chance the way my companion and I did, and I learned that it's best to make amends before it's too late. **NE**



COMPANIONS

THE PIPERS OF





There are many traditions associated with Nauvoo—and young bagpipers are one of the new traditions strongly linked to the Nauvoo Pageant.

BY HEIDI LEWIS AND PAUL HEZSELTINE

As far as 10 miles down the Mississippi River you hear them. The music of bagpipes pierces the humid summer air, keeping cadence with the rhythmic tap, tap, tap of a snare drum. Soon a crowd gathers around red, purple, yellow, green, and orange banners as an impromptu parade follows the bagpipers, signaling that the Nauvoo Pageant is about to begin.

The bagpipe band involves youth from around the United States, but it has a special significance to members of the Hezseline family of Murray, Utah. Each summer for the past three years, Hezselines have played in the band. Calum and Thomas, 17 and 20, and their dad, Paul, chose to master this unique instrument because it's part of their family heritage; Brother Hezseline was born in England and raised in Scotland. "Playing the bagpipes takes you to a lot of places," says Calum. For example, he's performed in New York, at the Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, and for the National Boy Scout Jamboree in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

Bagpipers in the Nauvoo Pageant band volunteer for an average of two weeks, performing in the pre-show, daily vignettes (15-minute "mini-plays"), and the pageant itself. It's an opportunity for them to develop their talent, make friends, experience old Nauvoo, learn about early Church history, draw closer as a family, build testimony, and share the gospel.

"Playing in the Nauvoo Pageant really helped strengthen my testimony of Joseph Smith and appreciation of the pioneers," says Austin McDonough, 19. Ben Furner agrees. He is currently in the Philippines and, like many bagpipe band alumni, is serving a full-time mission. "In Nauvoo there were a lot of awesome chances to share small messages about the gospel with people after we'd stop playing," he

OFF WITH THEIR HEADS?

Did you know there was a time when you could be imprisoned or even executed for playing the bagpipes? When Scotland rebelled against England in the mid-1700s bagpipes were considered an "offense against the crown." Here are some other interesting facts about this unique instrument:

Bagpipes are thought to have originated in Egypt and are mentioned in the Old Testament (Daniel 3:5) and in ancient Greek poetry.

Scottish bagpipes have been around since 100 A.D.

The tabernacle organ and the bagpipes have something in common; they are both continuous wind instruments and have pipes that play a single note.

Bagpipes are often associated with war. In 1549 at the Battle of Pinkie (funny name, isn't it?), Scottish Highlanders replaced trumpets with bagpipes to inspire Highlanders to battle.

You can hear a bagpipe from 10 miles away.



ANATOMY OF A BAGPIPE



The chanter plays the melody.

Drones are usually made of wood and play the bass and tenor notes.

The bag is usually made of animal skin and covered in fabric. After filling it with air, pipers squeeze it to sound the notes.

You blow into the mouthpiece to fill up the bag.

says. "The bagpipes really set the tone and helped the visitors get ready to feel and understand the guidance of the Spirit."

Connecting Family

Remember those lullabies your parents would softly sing to you as a child? When Calum and Thomas think bedtime, they think bagpipes. "I wanted to learn to play the bagpipes because as a kid I heard my dad play all the time. It might be hard to believe, but it is what I used to fall asleep to," says Thomas, now a missionary in Paraguay. Over the years the Hezselines have marched in parades and performed at concerts and funerals. "The best part is spending time together with my sons before we play," says Brother Hezseline. "We have so few opportunities nowadays to spend time together as a family. At Nauvoo, especially, we were constantly together, day after day. That was priceless."

Several Nauvoo bagpipers have similar family ties. Christopher Putnam, 17, played the snare drum in the Nauvoo bagpipe band alongside his father, Barry, a bagpiper. "Our family was able to bond and become closer than we usually are," says Christopher of his Nauvoo experience. "We were able to keep it up when we got home. We are more kind to each other."

His dad also believes their pageant participation strengthened their family. "It has brought new meaning into our family," he says. "There's added happiness in the home because of it."

Michael Morgan, 14, and his mom, Cheri, also played the bagpipes at Nauvoo. They both learned how to play four years ago as a tribute to Michael's grandfather, who was diagnosed with terminal cancer. "He really liked the bagpipes," explains Michael. "So

my mom thought, why not let him listen to them before he dies and not just have them played at his funeral." After hearing the bagpiper play at his grandfather's bedside, Michael and his mom decided to take lessons together. Now they are part of a bagpipe band that tours the country. "Developing a talent together as a family is great," says Sister Morgan. "When you spend so much time together, you can't help but communicate; you are close because you are together." Michael agrees and adds, "It's fun to be unique."

Instruments of Power

Bagpipes were once called war pipes because they were played to both rally the troops and terrify the enemy. Their tunes were even used to help command fighters on the field. The pipes are still a worldwide symbol of power, strength, freedom, and honor.

And there's no question the bagpipes can be an intimidating instrument to learn. Beginning pipers start on a practice chanter for 6 to 12 months before they move to the bagpipes. "You have to retrain your fingers to move independently, and in the right way," says Elder Furner. "Every piper has his or her own rhythm and their own way of breathing. It's finding your own way that seems to take up most of your practice time."

"It takes a year just to build up your lungs," says Calum. Before playing the first note, pipers take several deep breaths to fill up the bag with air. "It is hard to keep from blacking out when practicing sometimes," says Drew Babcock, 17.

"The toughest part about learning the bagpipes was sticking it out," says Austin,



PHOTOGRAPH BY HEDI LEWIS

Playing the bagpipes has given Calum Hezseline many opportunities for travel and to spend time with his brother and father, who also play. (Far left) Drew Babcock believes bagpipe music can "bring the Spirit with force and power."



For Michael Morgan (above) the best thing about playing in the Nauvoo Pageant was talking with people after the show. “Some didn’t know a lot about the Church,” he says. “We were able to explain it to them.”

who has been playing for four years. Tyler Abeyta, a former Nauvoo band member currently serving a mission in Sacramento, California, agrees. “I was 13, and after a month of trying to learn the bagpipes, I quit. My good friend was also taking lessons, and he encouraged me to start again. I knew with all my heart if I were to even come close to learning the pipes, I would need the help of my Heavenly Father. So I kneeled down one night. I asked Him for His help and His blessing to be upon me as I continued to learn. When I started again, I definitely knew that the Spirit was with me and helped me along the way.”

Playing the bagpipes isn’t without its hazards. “They have a lot of bugs—big bugs—in Nauvoo,” says Garrett Weixler, 16. “One night when we were playing on the stage a bug flew into my mouth. I swallowed it and kept on playing.”

Michael Morgan admits he sometimes gets ribbed by his friends about the traditional costume he wears when performing. “A lot of people make the mistake that it’s a skirt. It’s not; it’s a kilt! Some of my friends say, ‘Nice dress,’ but it’s all in fun.”

Christopher Putnam can relate. “Kilts have a long and proud history in Scotland. They were faster to move around in on the highlands and dried faster in the damp climate,” Christopher explains. Michael says the six yards of plaid wool can get pretty hot, especially in the middle of a Nauvoo summer. “But in winter it’s nice.”

The Salt in the Oatmeal

Ean Shelley, 17, was surprised when Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles approached him after a performance in Nauvoo. Elder

Oaks told Ean, “The pipers are the salt in the oatmeal.” When Ean asked him what he meant, Elder Oaks explained that you have to put a little bit of salt into the oatmeal to make it taste just right. The bagpipers add that flavor to the experience.

“I think bagpipes can portray any human emotion,” says Elder Furner. Many pipers agree that the notes they play convey joy, peace, grief and sorrow all at once. “Despite the loudness of the pipes,” says Drew, “they bring the Spirit with force and power. They can pierce hearts and bring people to tears.”

Perhaps that’s why bagpipers are associated not only with parades and weddings, but with funerals. Calum and Thomas have played at several funerals with their dad, including their grandfather’s. “We usually escort the coffin to the grave,” explains Brother Hezseltine. “It is the last bit of respect you can give someone on this earth.”

Michael Morgan also believes the bagpipes can provide a salve for aching souls. “We practice in front of our house,” explains Michael. “One day I played ‘Abide with Me,’ and my neighbor came out and said, ‘Thanks, I really needed to hear that.’ It’s nice to be able to do that for someone.”

Instruments of the Spirit

The sun hovers just above the horizon as the parade of pipers leads the crowd to their seats. The pipers enter the stage, and their final notes linger above the audience, preparing them to hear the story of old Nauvoo. Behind them up a steep, grassy hill, the dwindling sunlight shines on the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple. “It was such a great honor to play the pipes in Nauvoo,” Elder Abeyta remembers. “The Spirit of the Lord is there in abundance. You can almost feel the early Saints by your side.” **NE**



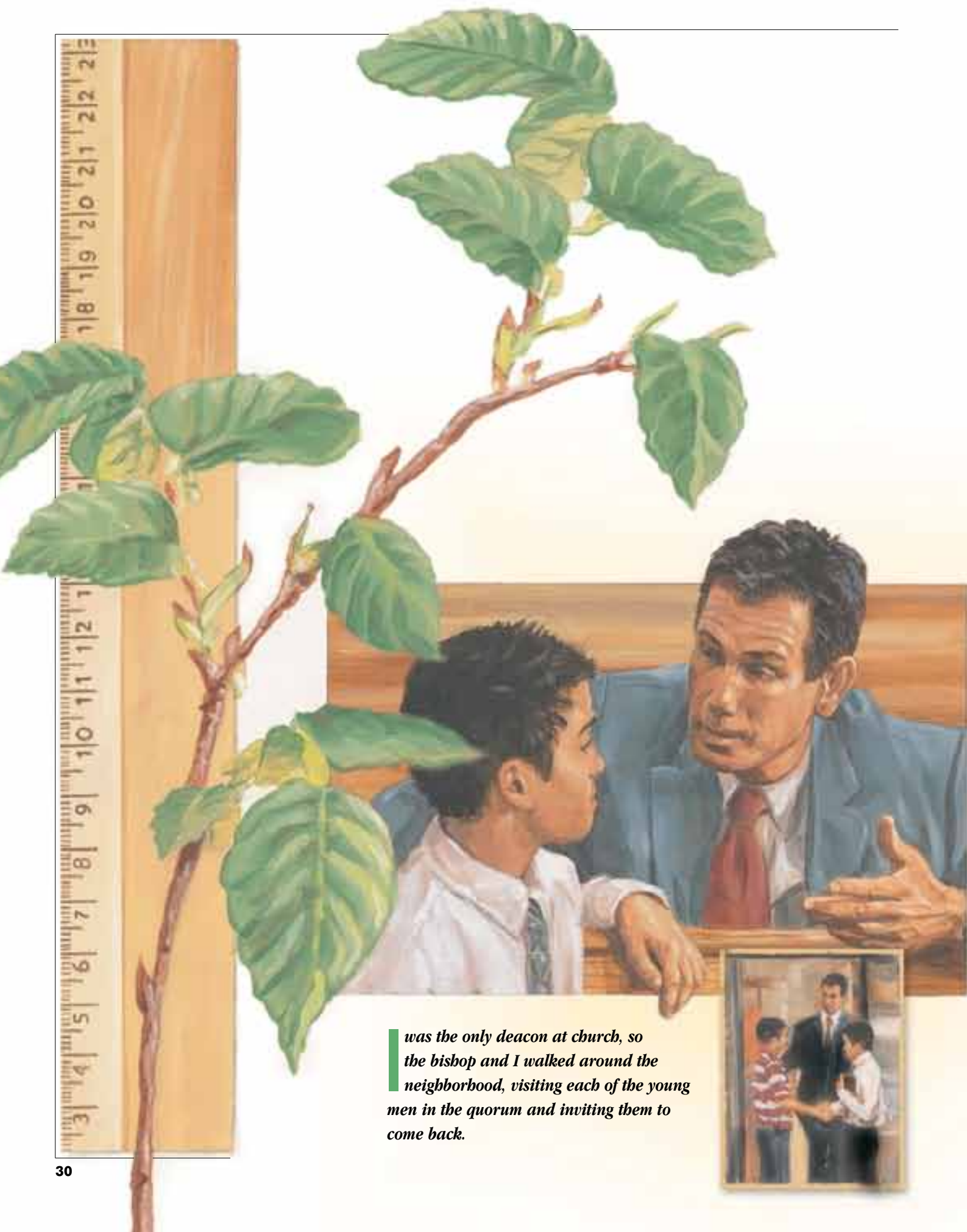
PIPING AT THE PAGEANT

“Playing at Nauvoo definitely improved my piping,” says Elder Ben Furner, who played in the Nauvoo Pageant bagpipe band in 2005. “And most importantly, it was the best preparation I could ever have had before my mission. I got used to being away from home. It got me used to talking with people I didn’t know. I loved every minute of it.”

“The bagpipes are a significant part of the spirit and missionary efforts of the Nauvoo Pageant,” says pageant administrator Bonnie Ashby. “Visitors are drawn to their distinctive sound, and the pipes represent the heritage of so many British converts who immigrated to Nauvoo in the 1840s.”

If you play the bagpipes and are interested in applying for the Nauvoo Pageant bagpipe band, visit the Nauvoo Pageant Web site at www.nauvoopageant.org.

If you’d like to hear the Nauvoo Pageant bagpipe band music, visit the *New Era* Web site at www.newera.lds.org.



was the only deacon at church, so the bishop and I walked around the neighborhood, visiting each of the young men in the quorum and inviting them to come back.

A CALL TO GROW

BY ELDER ULISSES SOARES

Of the Seventy

I was born in Brazil to a good family with four boys and a good mother and father.

When I was born, my parents were not members of the Church. They joined the Church when I was a little boy, and I was baptized and confirmed when I turned eight years old.

When I turned 12, my bishop invited me in for an interview. In that interview he explained to me what the Aaronic Priesthood is. He explained to me my responsibilities in holding the priesthood. I was set apart as deacons quorum president, but I was the only member of that quorum who was active. At that time my great bishop taught me an important lesson on Church service.

A Simple Invitation

One Sunday we were in the chapel for priesthood meeting, and he turned to me and asked, “Where are the other boys?”

“Where are the deacons in your quorum?”

I said, “I’m it. I’m the only one I know of.”

“What are you doing to get to know the members of your quorum?” he said.

I said, “I don’t know what to do.”

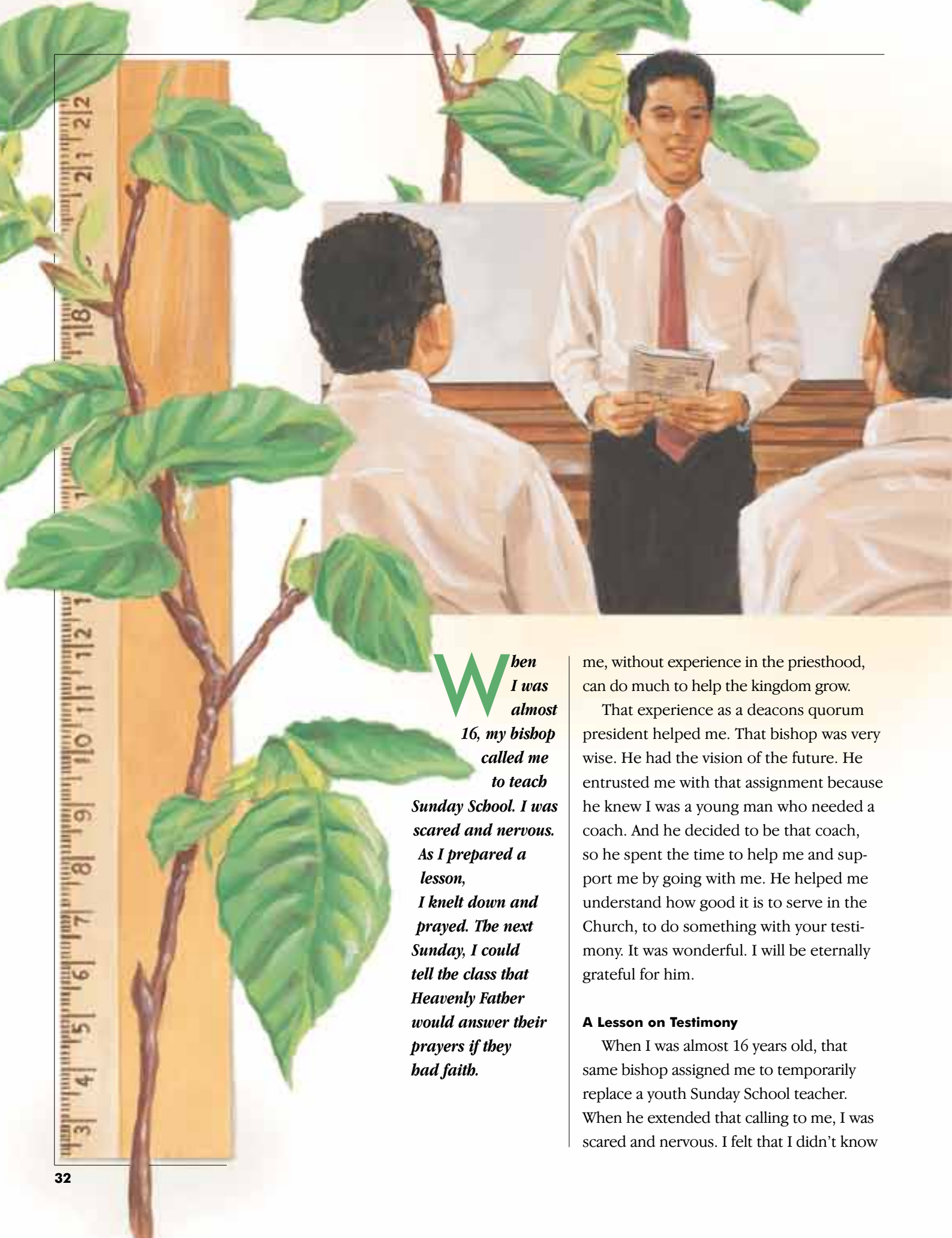
And then he sweetly said, “I’ll tell you what to do.”

He then took me with him right after the meeting, and we walked around the neighborhood, visiting each of the young men on the quorum list and inviting them to come back. And several of them did come back after a few visits. Some went on to serve missions, have great families, and become bishops and stake presidents. And it all started with that simple visit from my bishop and me. He paid attention to that special need in our little ward, and I’m really grateful because I learned a lesson that has remained with me.

Through my life I have learned that people are ready to be invited to come back. You have to go and invite them. Even a boy like



My bishop entrusted me with an assignment and helped me understand how good it is to serve in the Church, to do something with your testimony.



When I was almost 16, my bishop called me to teach Sunday School. I was scared and nervous. As I prepared a lesson, I knelt down and prayed. The next Sunday, I could tell the class that Heavenly Father would answer their prayers if they had faith.

me, without experience in the priesthood, can do much to help the kingdom grow.

That experience as a deacons quorum president helped me. That bishop was very wise. He had the vision of the future. He entrusted me with that assignment because he knew I was a young man who needed a coach. And he decided to be that coach, so he spent the time to help me and support me by going with me. He helped me understand how good it is to serve in the Church, to do something with your testimony. It was wonderful. I will be eternally grateful for him.

A Lesson on Testimony

When I was almost 16 years old, that same bishop assigned me to temporarily replace a youth Sunday School teacher. When he extended that calling to me, I was scared and nervous. I felt that I didn't know

enough to teach. I thought, “How can I be a teacher in that class? It’s like the blind leading the blind.”

I remember that in one specific lesson I had to talk about the testimony of Jesus Christ. We were studying in the Book of Mormon about how we could have a testimony of the gospel. I felt in my heart that I knew this Church is true, that Jesus is the Christ. But I had never prayed about those things. I thought, “How in the world can I teach these youth that they have to pray and receive an answer when I’ve never prayed for an answer?”

Ever since I was born, I had been taught about faith in Jesus Christ. And when I became a member of the Church, I always had that warm feeling in my heart about Jesus Christ, about my Heavenly Father, and about the Church. I had never had any concerns about whether this was the true Church of Jesus Christ; I had never prayed about it because those feelings were so strong. But in preparation for that class that week, I decided that I should pray to receive a confirmation that the gospel is true.

I knelt down in my room, and I decided to pray with all my might to confirm in my heart that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ. I was not expecting a great manifestation or an angel or something. I didn’t know what to expect as an answer.

When I knelt down and asked the Lord if the gospel is true, there came to my heart a very sweet feeling, a small voice that confirmed to me the gospel is true and that I should continue in it. It was so strong that I could never say that I didn’t know. I could never disregard that answer. Even though it was a small voice, it was a very strong feeling in my heart.

I spent that whole day feeling so happy that I couldn’t think about anything bad. When kids at school would say bad things, I wouldn’t listen to them. It was like I was in heaven, contemplating that beautiful feeling in my heart.

The next Sunday, when I stood up in front of the class of young people, I could share my testimony and tell them that Heavenly Father would answer their prayers if they

had faith. I read James 1:5, which is the same scripture Joseph Smith read regarding asking God for wisdom. But the next verse says that you have to ask in faith, “for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (James 1:6). It also says that a person cannot expect to receive an answer if he or she has a heart that doesn’t trust when praying. And then I said to myself and to my little class that we should ask with real faith, looking for an answer, and then the Lord will answer.

From that time on my testimony gave me the conviction I needed to make good decisions, especially in moments when I faced challenges. All of us faced challenges in keeping the standards of the gospel, especially those, like me, who were the only Church members at their schools. But my testimony helped me to remember that even though I was pressured by my friends to do wrong things, I knew in my heart that I was following the true gospel of Jesus Christ. After that experience I could never reject that testimony.

That day made a big difference in my life. Afterward I continued preparing myself for a mission with the help of my wonderful bishop and my family. I served a mission, and when I came back, I went to school to get my degree. I married and started a family. And everything happened because of that prayer when I was only about 16 years old.

A Lifetime of Growth

As I said, I always knew the gospel was true, but I had to ask and then share my own experience with other people. That helped me on my mission too, because when I invited people to pray, I could tell them my own experience, letting them know that I had done that before. I testified that they could get an answer if they would pray with faith.

Great blessings came to me because I was given the opportunity to learn and serve and grow through callings and assignments in the Church. I pray that as such opportunities come to you, you will take advantage of them. They can make all the difference in your life. **NE**

BY THE NUMBERS

3,500,000

Copies of the Book of Mormon printed in 2006.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMIE CARDONA

THE CHURCH IN BOLIVIA

Missionaries preaching in the Andes Mission arrived in Bolivia in November 1964 and baptized the first convert that December. The first Bolivian to serve a mission for the Church was Desiderio Arce Cano in 1967. He left a singing career in Argentina to serve in his native land. He later became a stake president and a mission president.

Membership in Bolivia has more than doubled in the past 10 years.

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

Membership	153,674
Missions	3
Temples	1
Congregations	243
Family History Centers	31

Information from Newsroom at www.lds.org.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JANI A. MCCUMPHIA



A Laurel in Parliament

Catharine Irving, 16, is a member of the Dumfries Ward, Edinburgh Scotland Stake, and has always been involved, especially at school and in her local community. In the first election for all 14- to 25-year-olds held along with the government elections, Catharine was elected to represent the Dumfries area. The Youth Parliament is run by youth, for youth. It doesn't have the governing powers that Parliament has, of course, but it does allow the youth

of Scotland to have a voice.

Catharine's duties include visiting schools, youth groups, and other places in the area to listen to youth talk about the things they feel are important. She has a fund available to help with different community youth projects. Catharine hopes to go to university next year when she finishes high school, and although she doesn't have any aspirations to become a politician, she is the sort of person to continue to be involved.

If you've been asked to give a talk in church, don't worry—prepare. Remember, the Lord has promised, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30). As you prepare

and organize your talk, think about including a personal experience of how the gospel topic works in your life and brings you closer to Christ.

TALK TIP

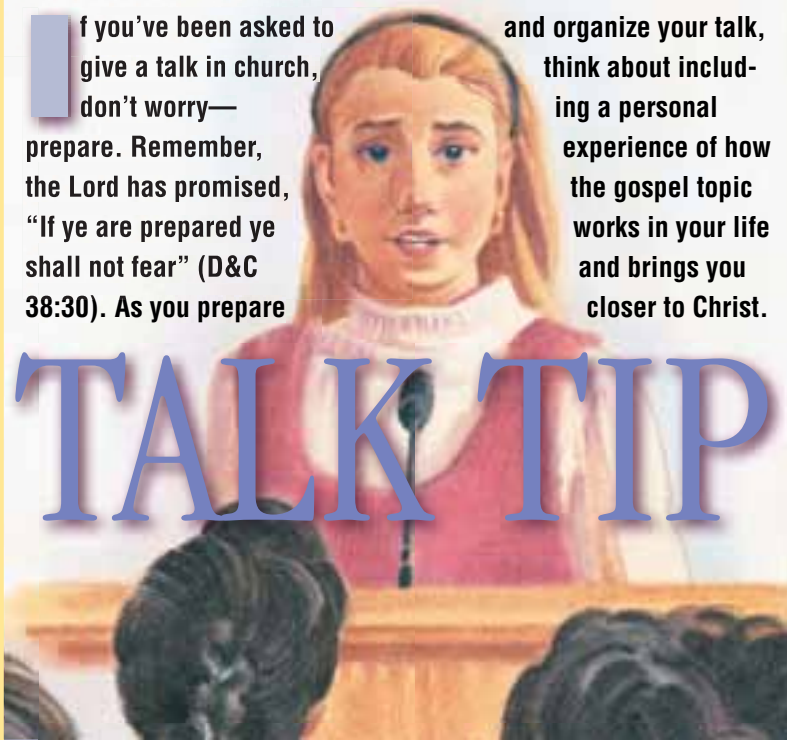


ILLUSTRATION BY DILLEEN MARSH

Our firm conviction of gospel truth is an anchor in our lives; it is steady and reliable as the North Star.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor in the First
Presidency, “The Power of a
Personal Testimony,”
Ensign, Nov. 2006, 38.

LEADERS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said of you, “You are great young people. . . . We have the finest [and strongest] generation of young people ever in the history of this Church” (Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley [1997], 714). “I believe you have been

prepared and reserved to be on the earth at this time when the challenges and opportunities are the greatest. I believe that the Lord is counting on you to be a leader for righteousness and to stand as a witness ‘at all times and in all things, and in all places’ (Mosiah

18:9). Indeed, it can be said of you that you are the ‘bright shining hope’ of the future (Gordon B. Hinckley, “Standing Strong and Immovable,” Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, Jan. 2004, 20).”

Elaine S. Dalton, “It Shows in Your Face,” *Ensign*, May 2006, 109.

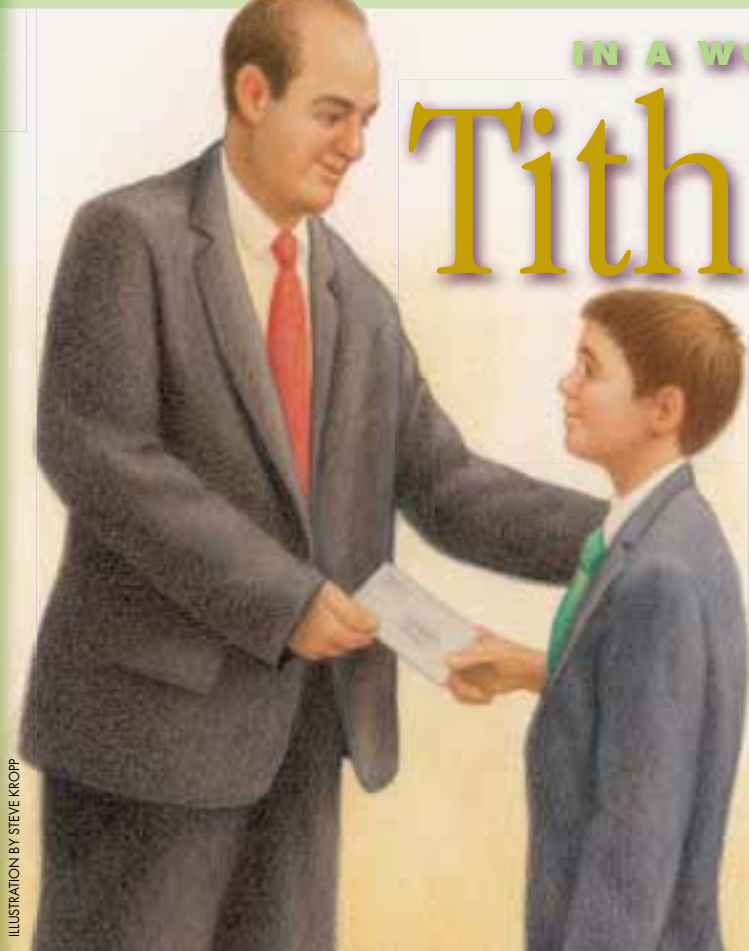


ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE KROPP

IN A WORD

Tithing

The word “tithē” means “tenth.” And the law of tithing is the voluntary contribution of one-tenth of your income to the Lord through His Church. Tithing funds are used for the Lord’s purposes to carry on the work of the Church throughout the world. (See *True to the Faith* [2004], “Tithing,” 178.)



MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

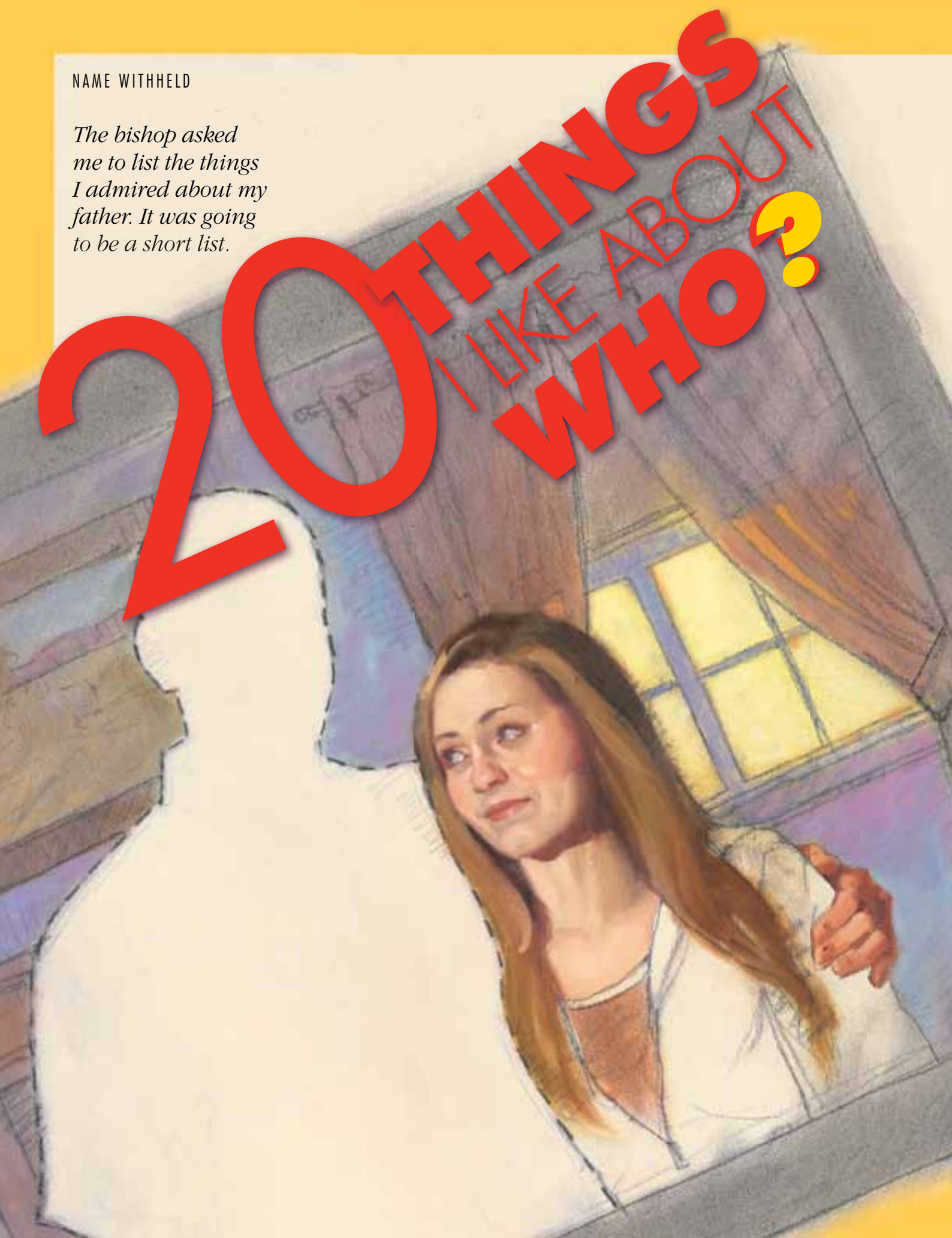
D&C 93:1 tells about all the things you have to do to be able to see the Savior. I want to work at these things in my life to achieve that goal.


Ole Matthias I., 16, Buskerud, Norway

NAME WITHHELD

The bishop asked me to list the things I admired about my father. It was going to be a short list.

20 THINGS I LIKE ABOUT WHO?





Growing up, I often heard people in church say, “Families are forever,” and I’d think to myself, “Sure. If I lived in so-and-so’s home, that would be easy to say.” But I did not come from an ideal family background.

I was adopted and an only child. My mother was an alcoholic, which contributed to my parents’ divorce when I was five. My father raised me alone from then on.

I joined the Church on my own when I was in fifth grade, which introduced the challenge of being the only member in my family. My father supported my participation in the Church to the extent that it helped him in his efforts to raise a moral, drug-free daughter.

By the time I was in high school, he was gone on business trips the majority of the time. He left every Monday morning and came home every Friday night for all but five weeks one entire year. Several families in our stake opened their homes to me when my father traveled.

However, there was one major problem. The more time I spent in these good, Latter-day Saint homes, the more my own home life seemed to fall short. Great Mormon families doing what seemed to be all the ideal things a family should be doing surrounded me.

Inside I was frustrated and even dissatisfied.

About this same time my father began to challenge me about the things

I believed. When he started to attack my testimony, I felt I just couldn’t take it anymore, so one day I went

to see my bishop.


I must have wanted someone to side with me or give me sympathy because (as I saw it then), my dad wasn’t as great as other dads since he wasn’t a Latter-day Saint. My bishop said he’d be happy to meet with me the following week after church, but he wanted me to do one thing before our meeting: to go home and make a list of 20 things I admired or appreciated about my father.

I was sure he hadn’t understood why I’d asked for this meeting. Didn’t he realize that I was having a problem because there was so little to appreciate anymore? But fearing he was half-serious, I made half an effort. After a half hour, I only had five things on my list. I figured that proved my case, and tucked it in my scriptures for my appointment with the bishop.

When I returned to the bishop’s office the following week, he invited me in and immediately asked if I’d completed my assignment. I told him I had started and showed him my short list. He responded by telling me that he’d be happy to discuss anything I wanted, at length, but first I had to complete my assignment. He asked if I would like him to reschedule an appointment for the following week. Anxious for some relief from the many pressures I was dealing with at home, I made another appointment and left.

Saturday night rolled around, and I realized I still hadn’t made the list. I decided I’d better do it if I was going to get anywhere with the bishop. Then I remembered a conversation I’d had with a friend that week. She asked me why I didn’t seem emotionally “messed up”

My dad was gone a lot on business trips. He didn’t seem to be as great as other dads since he wasn’t even a member. I tried to write the list, but it only had five things.



When I thought how my life would have been if my father hadn't worked so hard to keep me, my list came easily and helped me realize how blessed I was.

because of my parents' divorce. I thought back on how much effort my father had made to keep me out of the center of the ugly part of the divorce, and, while talking to my friend, I realized for the first time what a tremendous gift that was. It became the first sincere thing I'd written on my list.

Then I remembered how hard my father had fought to keep me in a time when fathers were rarely granted custody of their children. I thought how different my life would have been if I'd had to grow up with my alcoholic mother. Tears of gratitude streamed down my cheeks. This too was added to my list.

And the list grew on and on. At nearly 1:30 in the morning, I looked down at my list of 69 reasons why I felt

so blessed for the wonderful father Heavenly Father had given me.

After church the next day my bishop invited me into his office and asked how my week had been. I told him it had been a good week, and that I wasn't really sure there was a reason for us to meet any longer. When he inquired as to why—though I hated to admit it—I told him it was because of “the list.” I pulled out my list and shared with him what a wonderful man my father was.

My dear bishop taught me one of the most important lessons I have ever learned in life: no one has the perfect situation. But it is up to us to make the most of that situation and help wherever necessary. With my dad, should I focus on the majority that is good or the minority that could still use a little improvement? My bishop helped me realize that when I am discouraged, I can always think about—or maybe even list—the positive things in my life. **NE**

For advice on getting along with your parents, see “Talking with Dad,” *New Era*, Feb. 2008, p. 10, and Q&A, *New Era*, Jan. 2003, p. 17.

THE TRUE AND LIVING CHURCH

Joseph Smith understood the destiny of the Lord's Church and each member's role in it.

After the Book of Mormon was translated and the priesthood authority restored, the Lord commanded the Prophet Joseph Smith to organize His Church on April 6, 1830 (see D&C 20). In the years that followed, the Church saw many miracles and blessings, as well as severe hardships and persecutions. Throughout it all, the Prophet understood the Church's destiny and the importance of each member's contribution in realizing that destiny. Here are some of his teachings about the true and living Church.*

GOD'S WORK CANNOT BE STOPPED

"The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the great Jehovah shall say the work is done."

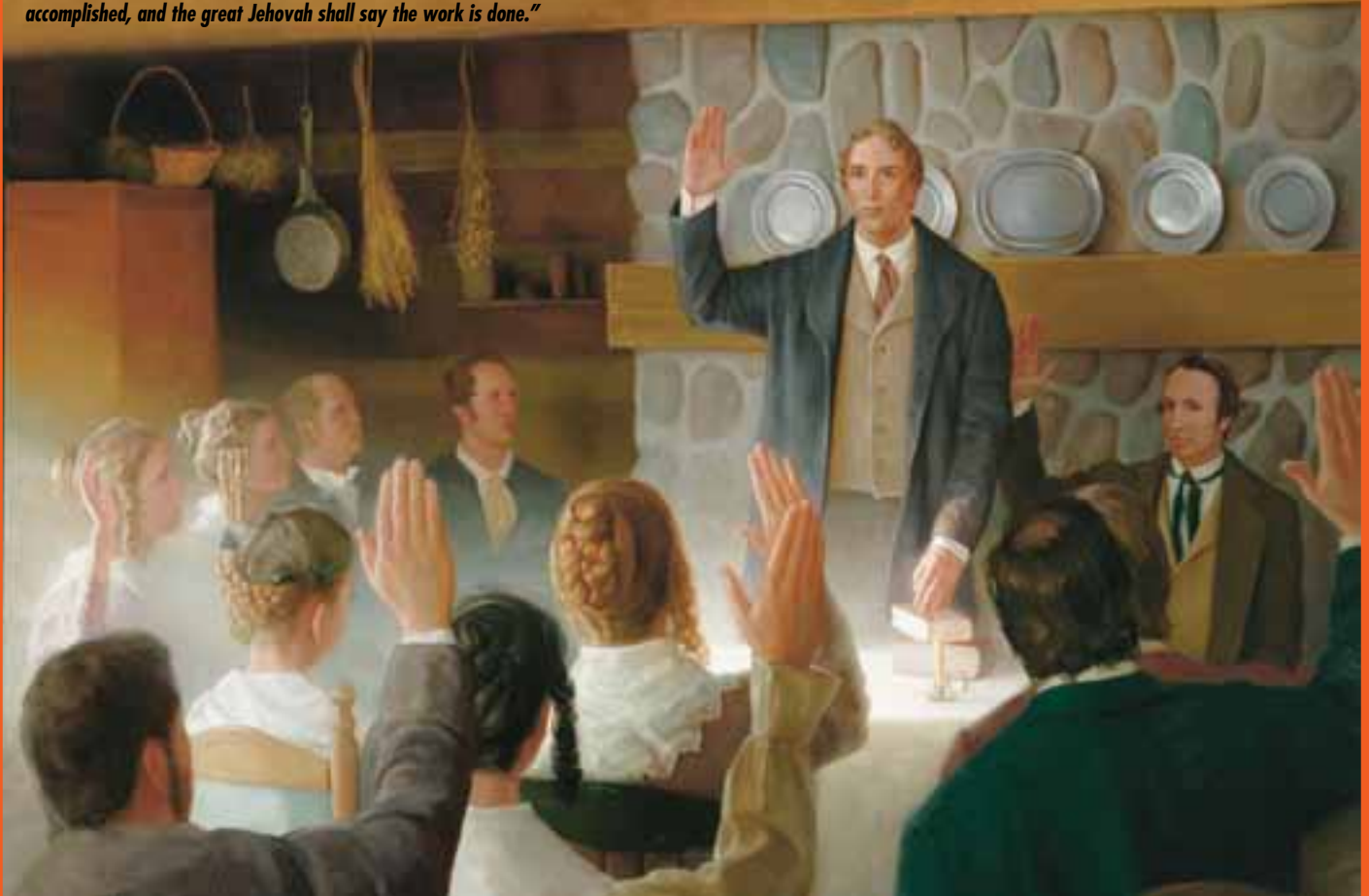
BUILDING UP ZION IS EVERYONE'S CONCERN

"The cause of God is one common cause, in which the Saints are alike all interested; we are all members of the one common body, and all partake of the same spirit, and are baptized into one baptism and possess alike the same glorious hope. The advancement of the cause of God and the building up of Zion is as much one man's business as another's. The only difference is, that one is called to fulfill one duty, and another another duty; . . . party feelings, separate interests, exclusive designs should be lost sight of in the one common cause, in the interest of the whole."

WE ALL MUST WORK

"Brethren and sisters, be faithful, be diligent, contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints [see Jude 1:3]; let every man, woman and child realize the importance of the work, and act as if success depended on his individual exertion alone."

* From *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 142, 144.



THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IS ORGANIZED, 1830. BY JOSEPH BRICKEY

BY JANESEA CLOWARD

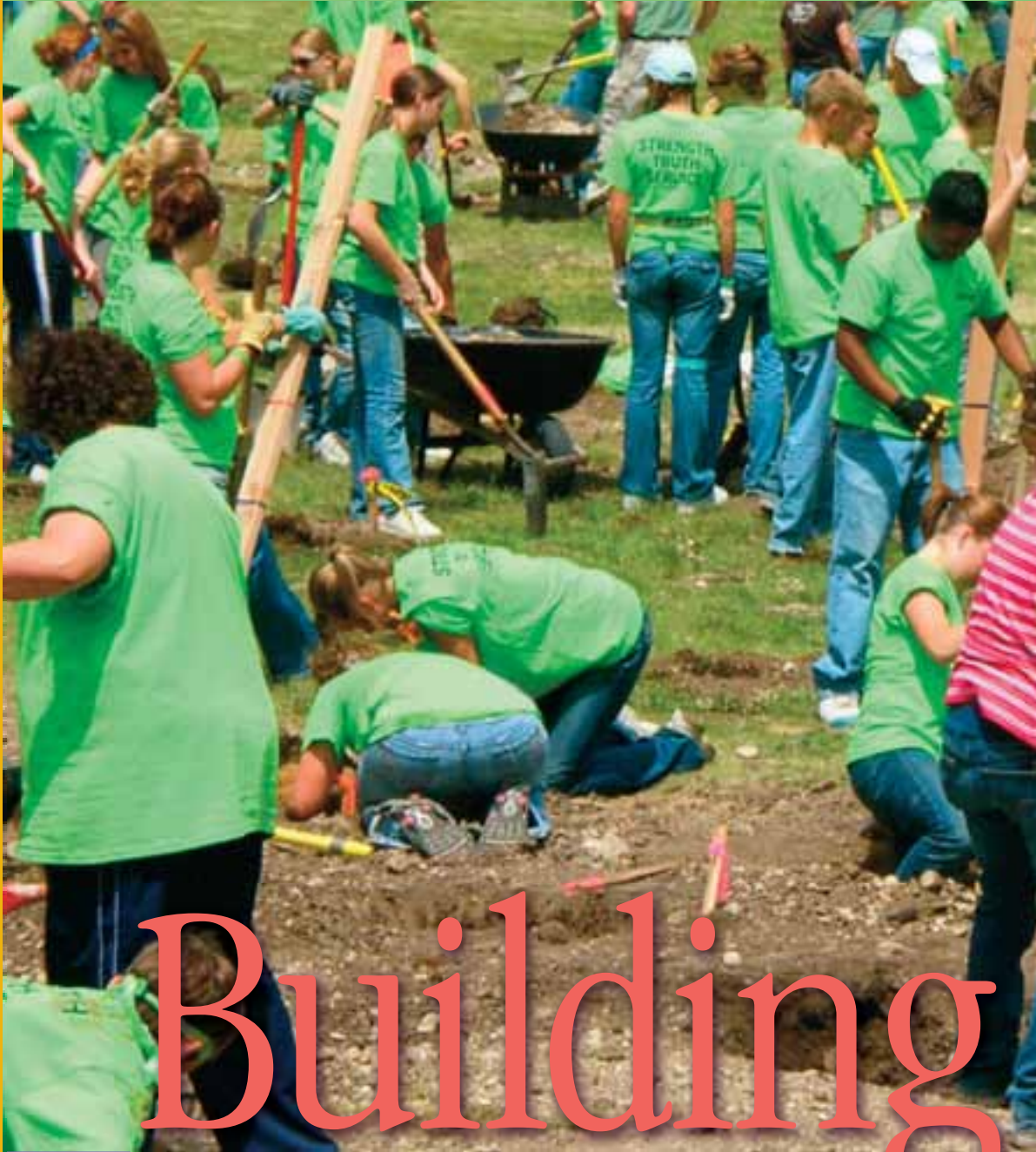
A simple project became a unifying force in one community.

Digging holes for playground equipment made a deep impression.

From a distance, the future site of Ryan's Place Park looked like a bumpy field of holes and unnaturally bright grass. But if you looked more closely, you just might see a shovel or a head pop out of one of the holes, and then you'd notice you weren't looking at grass at all—you were actually seeing more than 200 teens in neon green T-shirts.

Such was the scene at the Providence Utah Stake youth conference. This year, in addition to spiritual firesides, dances, and games, the youth spent several hours up to their elbows in dirt and rocks—lots of rocks—preparing an empty field to become a memorial park.

It started in August 2006, when a little boy drowned during a family trip. After



Building



losing their son Ryan, Craig and Alisha Adams wanted to build a swing or maybe a seesaw, something for their other children to remember him by. Within a few weeks, the project grew into a full-fledged memorial park, complete with a rocket ship playground and a dragon slide. It became a community effort to build a monument to all children.

Volunteers from across Cache Valley (in northern Utah) donated time and money to design and build Ryan's Place Park, but first someone needed to dig the foundations for the playground supports. That's where the Providence stake youth came in.



Ryan's Place

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CINDY DUNKLEY, GEOFF SMITH, AND TOM REESE



It took muscle and dedication to turn this area into a place fit for children.



“Show Me Your Muscles”

Whenever Ryan was sad, his dad would say, “Show me your muscles, Ryan.” The little boy would immediately perk up and flex his arms, any hurt forgotten. Ryan’s parents told the youth this story at the conference’s kickoff fireside.

“Sometimes life is tough, and we need to show our muscles,” they said.

The youth took this message to heart when they arrived at Ryan’s Place Park. Digging more than 100 deep, narrow holes would not be easy. And the soil they dug in didn’t help matters, since it contained more rocks than dirt.

“Each hole took tremendous effort because the ground was so rocky,” explains Becca Smith from the River Heights Second Ward.

Instead of backing away from the challenge, the youth found creative ways to dig. “Some were in holes up to their shoulders, while others were being held by their

ankles as they reached down into the bottom of holes to remove rocks,” says Jano Rees from the River Heights Third Ward.

David Thunell, who is from the River Heights Fourth Ward, was impressed by the positive attitudes he saw around him.

“Never before have I seen so many teenagers working together with such determination and without complaint,” he recalls.

Kyra Moon, who is from

the Fruitland Acres Ward, found that same attitude within herself. “As I crouched in a three-foot deep hole, armed with a plastic cup to get the rocks and dirt out, it hit me that I really wanted to dig holes right then. I wanted to do whatever I could to help.”

Building Unity and Faith

All that digging did more than strengthen their physical muscles. The youth realized it was also developing their testimonies and sense of unity.

“It was so inspiring to see so many people dressed in green T-shirts, devoting a few hours of their lives to honor someone they might not have even known,” Kyra says. “We were all of one heart and one mind, working toward a common goal, and we were all happy. It was just like Zion.”



Lindsay Bagley of the Providence First Ward agrees. “I looked out among the youth of my stake, my friends, and I saw hundreds of us all working together to dig holes, and I knew that this was what we were supposed to be doing. We were supposed to be building up our community and building up each other.”

Many of the youth, like Alyna Briscoe of the Providence Eighth Ward and Zac Hendrickson of the River Heights Second Ward, felt the spirit of community so strongly that they came back later that week to finish the park.

Benjamin Allred of the Providence First



Ward learned about the joy that comes from service, especially when that service includes hard work. "Digging holes was not what you would call fun, but it didn't need to be, because it was so satisfying."

Becca Smith is grateful that this experience helped her gain perspective. "Service has a way of showing me what is important and what isn't. I can see in more focus where my priorities are and how I need to change."

Building on the Rock

For Kyra Moon, building the park became a chance to build a stronger testimony. She now better understands how she can be an instrument in God's hands through service.

"God used us to help heal broken hearts," she says. "It's wonderful that something good came out of this tragedy, and it's a testimony to me that Heavenly Father cares about us and understands our needs."

Alex

Keith of the Cobblestone First Ward says he has gained a stronger testimony of Jesus Christ. "I have more faith in God than I have ever had before, and I know without a doubt that my Savior lives."

"I know that Jesus Christ took upon Himself my sins and died for me so that I may have eternal life," adds Jenna Rounds of the River Heights Fourth Ward. "He died so that all may live again and so that we can be with our loved ones forever."

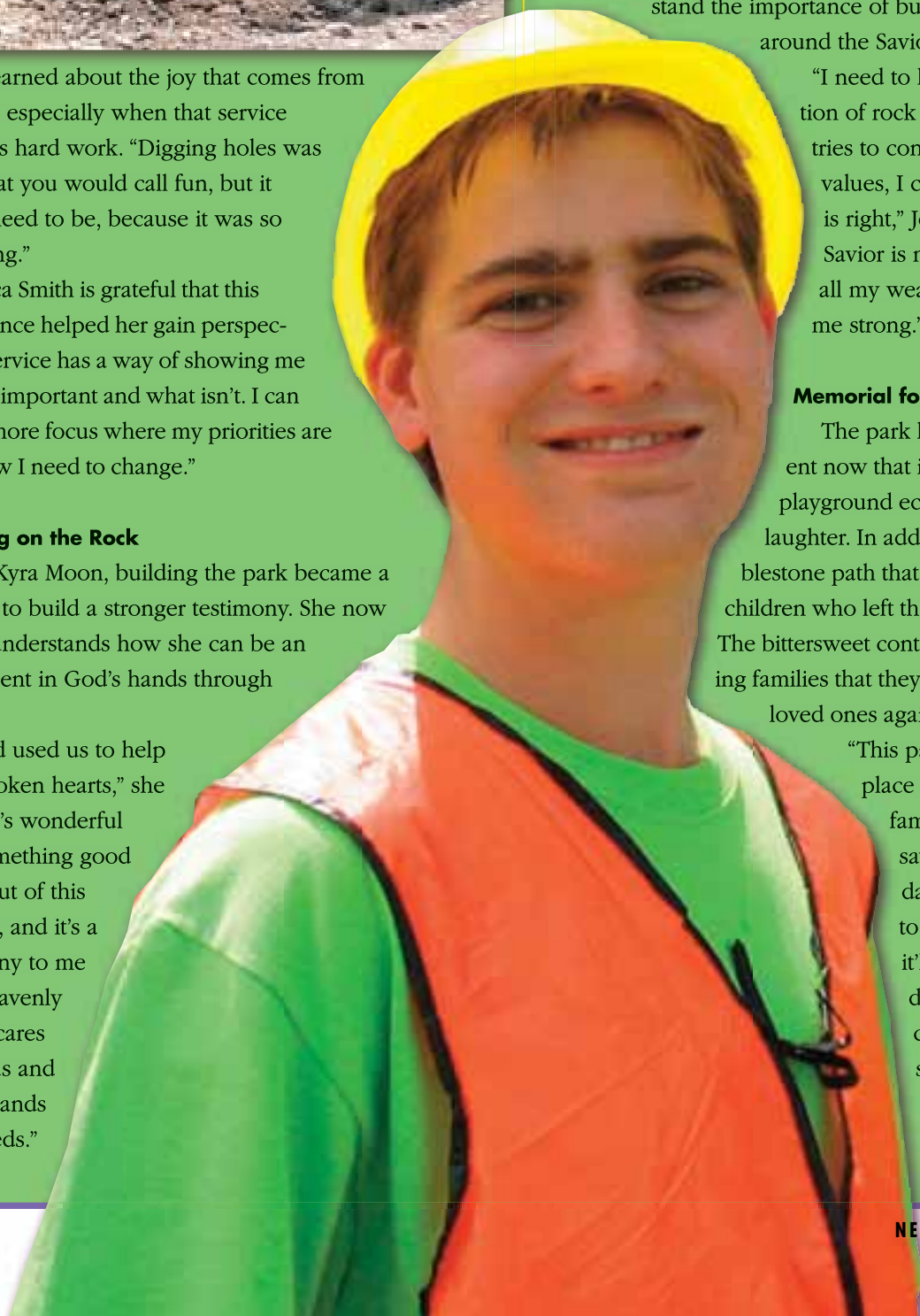
After so many hours of digging through rocky soil to create a more solid foundation, these youth better understand the importance of building their lives around the Savior.

"I need to have a solid foundation of rock so that when Satan tries to confuse me about my values, I can do what I know is right," Jenna says. "The Savior is my rock. In spite of all my weaknesses, He makes me strong."

Memorial for Everyone

The park looks a lot different now that it's finished. The playground echoes with children's laughter. In addition, there is a cobblestone path that bears the names of children who left this life all too soon. The bittersweet contrast reminds grieving families that they will be with their loved ones again.

"This park is a fun, happy place to remember our family," Craig Adams says. "One of these days we're all going to be reunited, and it'll be such a happy day. When that day comes, all of our suffering will be worth it because we'll be with Ryan again." **NE**



MY WARD FAMILY

BY DALLAS SADLER

One night I went with my friends to a youth activity at the local ice rink. Around and around we went on the cold, slippery ice. I was feeling pretty confident and carefree, and I was glad I had gone to the activity.

My mind wandered as I glided along—this was my mistake! It only took one regrettable second for my feet to twist together like a pretzel, and down I went, smashing my face into the ice. Embarrassed, I collected myself and headed for the side of the rink to assess the damage. I quickly realized that my two front teeth were dangling by the roots.

My ward family stepped into place. Brother Kearns called my parents, but by the time they arrived, my ward family was already making arrangements. Brother Bryson comforted me as he helped me into the car to go see a dentist. It felt just like my family had been with me

the whole time. They had taken care of everything, and my mom and dad were grateful.

Heavenly Father planned for us to be born into a family where the most important learning takes place, but he has also given us a ward family to belong to. Wards are designed to support the family. They are a safety net, a listening ear, an opportunity to contribute and to participate together in learning. The Apostle Paul teaches us that we are one body with many members (see 1 Corinthians 12:12–27). We have a great need for each other with all our strengths, needs, love, and experience. We should be willing to bear one another's burdens



that they may be light, to mourn with those who mourn and comfort those who stand in need of comfort (see Mosiah 18:9). In 1 Corinthians 12:26 we read: “and whether one member suffer, all members suffer with it, or one member be honored, all members rejoice with it.”

Thank goodness for a family to help in our times of need! **NE**

WHAT HE SAYS, GOES

BY JADE MCDOWELL

Remember the Sunday when I first learned about President Hinckley’s challenge to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year. Two weeks before, as part of a challenge from my Young Women president, I had finished reading the Book of Mormon in 65 days—the approximate time it took Joseph Smith to translate it. It averaged out to be about nine pages per day, and I had struggled to finish it in time. Now here I was sitting in sacrament meeting, listening to a letter asking me to read it *again*.

I started to think: “I’m going to be so busy this year in school; I’m not going to have time to read more than one page a day. President Hinckley just wanted us to read it this year, and I already did that. I’m sure he would understand.” By the time the sacrament was over, I had rationalized my way out of the challenge.

It was fast and testimony meeting that Sunday, and many people talked about the blessings that come from

START THE DAY OFF RIGHT

BY AVERY HINTZE

My name is Avery, and I am 13 years old. Even though I am still too young to go to seminary, my friends and I have found a fun way to prepare for it.

Every weekday morning, I wake up and get ready for school. Then I walk across the street to my friend’s house, and I meet up with two of my friends. Next we walk a little up the street to my Young Women leader’s house. We meet up with a few other friends, and we begin our walk over to the bus stop.

“OK,” I say, “today is my turn.” I pull a piece of paper out of my pocket and read it out loud. On it is a scripture I copied down the night before. I read

it and ask my friends what they think it means. We talk about it until we reach the bus stop. We each take a turn during the week looking up a scripture or a quote.

I enjoy doing this every morning because it helps me in many ways: (1) I learn more about the terms and meanings in the scriptures, (2) I learn to ponder about the things I have read, and (3) I am able to use the things I learn every day.

We also challenge each other to read the Book of Mormon and to learn about the lives of the prophets. Even if you don’t go to seminary yet, there are still many ways to start your day off with the Spirit. **NE**

scripture reading. “I’ll still read my scriptures regularly,” I thought to myself.

The next person to get up was a friend of mine. I listened complacently until he mentioned the Book of Mormon challenge.

“It’s going to be hard,” he said. “But the prophet asked us to do it, and whatever the prophet says, goes.”

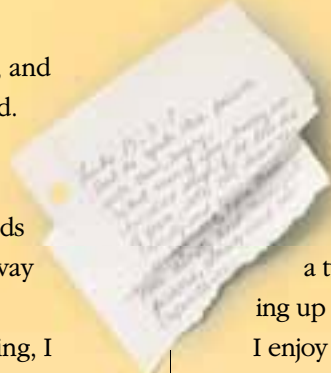
Whatever the prophet says, goes. That statement hit me hard. What had I been thinking? It wasn’t just anyone who had asked us to read the Book of Mormon; it was a *prophet*, the Lord’s messenger. If an angel appeared to me, I would listen. This wasn’t any different. I was going to obey President Hinckley, no matter what it took.

I finished reading the Book of

Mormon, and I know I made the right decision. I don’t have any spectacular stories to tell about reading it, but I know that the experience as a whole strengthened my testimony. I *was* really busy that year, and having a goal motivated me to read my scriptures every day.

“Whatever the prophet says, goes” has sort of become a motto for me. When I am tempted with things such as immodesty or inappropriate movies, I think back to that memorable fast and testimony meeting.

I’m glad I was paying attention that day. I’m also glad that my friend got up and bore his testimony and that the Spirit carried his words into my heart. **NE**





JOHN MICHAEL HOLBROOK



JON CLARK



RYAN STOKER



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



Mutual Activity Idea

- As a class or quorum, select a ward member or two who have consistently contributed and served other ward members. Make a card and a treat to take to them to thank them for their good works.
- Share thoughts about the value of each individual and how they contribute to the class. Discuss how our thinking can be uplifted when we search for the good in each other. Write a list of positive things about each class member.

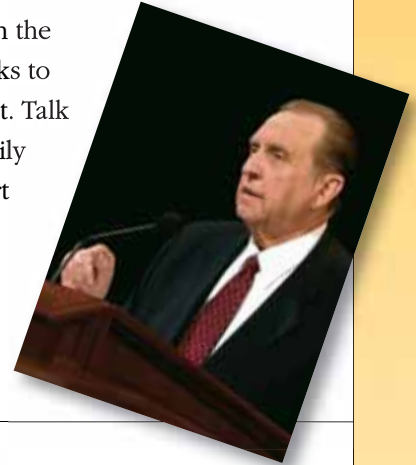
Personal Progress or Duty to God

- Read the article “Meeting Your Goliath” by President Thomas S. Monson. Memorize one of the two poems

quoted in President Monson’s article. Recite the poem to your parents or to your youth leaders. Explain the meaning and counsel of the poem.

Family Home Evening Idea

- As a family, look through the recent general conference talks to find counsel from the prophet. Talk about how you and your family can apply this counsel. Report back in next week’s family home evening about what you’ve noticed personally and as a family.



SUNDAY LESSON HELPS

In addition to the Resource Guides (online at www.lds.org/gospellibrary, in the Shortcuts section), Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood teachers may find these resources helpful in enhancing lessons 25–29.

Young Women Manual 3

Lesson 25: Obedience

- Dee Jardine, “On Top of Old Mossy,” *New Era*, Mar. 2005, 26.
- Annie Valentine Tintle, “Too Busy to Care,” *New Era*, June 2007, 9.

Lesson 26: Repentance

- “The Girl in the Mirror,” *New Era*, Aug. 2005, 12.
- Q&A (afraid of falling again), *New Era*, June 2007, 14.
- Nathan Richardson, “Road Rash and Repentance,” *New Era*, Apr. 2007, 34.

Lesson 27: Forgiving Ourselves

- Amy Weir, “Getting Even,” *New Era*, Aug. 2007, 43.
- Q&A (how you know you’re forgiven), *New Era*, Nov. 2005, 16.

Lesson 28: Consecration and Sacrifice

- C. Scott Grow, “My MTC: Missionary Training Commitment,” *New Era*, Mar. 2008 40.
- Laura Kohn and Susan Winters, “Skating with Jennifer,” *New Era*, May 2008, 10.

Lesson 29: A Change of Heart

- Devon Black, “Do-Over Companions,” this issue, 22.
- “20 Things I Like about *Who?*” this issue, 36.

Aaronic Priesthood Manual 3

Lesson 25: Every Young Man Should Serve a Mission

- Richard M. Romney, “Determined to Serve,” *New Era*, Mar. 2007, 48.
- Debbie Twigger, “Mission or Admission,” *New Era*, Apr. 2008, 34.

Lesson 26: Blessings of Chastity

- Jeffrey R. Holland, “Personal Purity,” *New Era*, Feb. 2000, 4
- “Who’s It Hurting?” *New Era*, Jan. 2006, 34.

Lesson 27: The Body Is a Temple

- Idea List: “Health and Strength,” *New Era*, Jan. 2008, 27.
- Q&A (trying smoking or drinking only once), this issue, 16.

Lesson 28: Withstanding Temptation

- David E. Sorensen, “You Can’t Pet a Rattlesnake,” *New Era*, Mar. 2002, 44.
- Aaron L. West, “If a Bug Flies into Your Mouth,” *New Era*, Sept. 2007, 24.

Lesson 29: Sabbath Observance

- Teri Eddy Topham, “You Can’t Work on Sundays?” *New Era*, Sept. 2007, 36.
- Q&A (keeping the Sabbath Day holy), *New Era*, Aug. 2007, 14.

TRIBUTES TO PRESIDENT HINCKLEY

It is sad to see President Hinckley go, but I'm not really sad. He must have known his time was soon and, like Ether, knew where he was going. He has been accepted into the kingdom of God to live forever with the Lord. Also, he is with his wife again. I am sure he is happy about that.

Elder Holladay, Brasil Santa Maria Mission

He was a very good leader for the Saints for nearly 13 years. His teachings and example help me a lot with my life as a young woman in the Church in American Samoa. I will always remember President Hinckley as a prophet with superlative thoughts given during general conference. I will miss him.

Maezhis P., American Samoa

Editor's note: We appreciate receiving your thoughtful expressions of love toward President Hinckley and wish we could print them all.

HELP FROM THE NEW ERA

The Q&A section in the Feb. 08 issue gave me a good understanding of how my mom might feel when we fight. Ever since reading it, we haven't been fighting. Thank you so much for all of the good advice you give. I really appreciate it.

Taylor W., Nevada

I really enjoyed the "Did You Know" article in the "What's Up?" section of the January 2008 *New Era*. My mother and I wanted to know the correct way to say more than one Book of Mormon. We had opposite views. When this article appeared in the *New Era*, I was delighted. Thank you for answering my question. I also very much enjoy reading the guidance and counsel in your magazine.

Annika C., Texas

*Thanks to the
New Era,
I can learn from
the experiences
of other youth
and read
messages from the
General Authorities.
Your words
help strengthen
my faith
and testimony.*

FAVORITE FEATURES

One of my favorite features in the *New Era* is the photo and poem on the back page. The photographs are extraordinary and the poems inspiring. They make an emotionally stimulating combination which I consider to be the purpose of poetry and photography.

Rigdon H., Montana

KEEPS MY SPIRITS UP

This magazine helps keep my spirits high and has helped me get through basic training for the U.S. Army. Reading about the amazing things that have happened with the gifts and blessings of other teens makes my day. The stories have shown me that I'm not alone, and they make me feel that I have friends and family writing to me and others. This magazine is a great thing to have in my life.

Justin N., Kansas

STRENGTHEN MY TESTIMONY

As a Latter-day Saint among many age mates of other faiths, I need a strong foundation in order to be able to withstand all the temptations around me. Thanks to the *New Era*, I can learn from the experiences of other youth and read messages from General Authorities and our dear prophet. Your words have helped strengthen my faith and testimony.

Nabagereka P., Uganda

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

*New Era
We've Got Mail
50 E. North Temple St. Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA*

Or e-mail us at newera@ldschurch.org

Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.

ILLUSTRATED BY SCOTT GREER



SOFT SUMMER DAYS

BY JOANNE MILES STEVESON

Sometimes
 on soft summer days
children lie
 in vast
 golden meadows
and
 blow fluffy white
 dandelions
into
 the
 wind.



COMING NEXT MONTH

- *Repairing, scraping, painting, and fixing up homes keep teens involved.*
- *What did the war chapters of Alma teach one young man?*
- *What should I choose as a major in college?*
- *Read about a partially paralyzed girl and what she learned when she took swimming lessons.*
- *Meet some teens from the Ukraine and hear their testimonies.*

Just a few of the articles waiting for you in the upcoming July 2008 New Era.

SEE US ONLINE AT WWW.NEWERA.LDS.ORG



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