



THE
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DARK FRIDAY

BRIGHT SUNDAY



BY ELDER JOSEPH B. WIRTHLIN

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

On that Friday, the Savior of mankind was humiliated and bruised. But then Sunday came.

I remember the first time I met my wife, Elisa. As a favor to a friend, I had gone to her home to pick up her sister, Frances. Elisa opened the door, and at least for me, it was love at first sight.

I think she must have felt something too, for the first words I ever remember her saying were, “I knew who you was.”

Elisa was an English major.

To this day I still cherish those five words as some of the most beautiful in human language.

She loved to play tennis and had a lightning serve. I tried to play tennis with her, but I finally quit after coming to the realization that I couldn’t hit what I couldn’t see.

She was my strength and my joy. Because of her, I am a better man, husband, and father. We married, had eight children, and walked together through 65 years of life.

When President Hinckley spoke at Sister Wirthlin’s funeral, he said that it is a devastating, consuming thing to lose someone you love. It gnaws at your soul. He was right. As Elisa was my greatest joy, her

passing is my greatest sorrow.

In the lonely hours I have spent a great deal of time thinking about eternal things. I have contemplated the comforting doctrines of eternal life.

The Gift of the Resurrection

During my life I have heard many sermons on the Resurrection. I can recite the events of that first Easter Sunday. I have marked in my scriptures passages regarding the Resurrection.

We know what the Resurrection is—the reuniting of the spirit and body in its perfect form (see Alma 11:43).

President Spencer W. Kimball said, “I am sure that if we can imagine ourselves at our very best, physically, mentally, spiritually, that is the way we will come back.”¹

Can you imagine that? Life at our prime? Never sick, never in pain, never burdened by the ills that so often beset us in mortality?

The Resurrection is at the core of our beliefs as Christians. Without it, our faith is meaningless. The Apostle Paul said, “If Christ





The Resurrection transformed the lives of those who witnessed it. Should it not transform ours? We will all rise from the grave. On that day we will know the love of our Heavenly Father and will rejoice that the Messiah overcame all that we could live forever.

be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and [our] faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14).

In all the history of the world there have been many great and wise souls, many of whom claimed special knowledge of God. But when the Savior rose from the tomb, He did something no one had ever done. He did something no one else could do. He broke the bonds of death, not only for Himself but for all who have ever lived—the just and the unjust (see John 5:28–29).

When Christ rose from the grave, becoming the firstfruits of the Resurrection, He made that gift available to all. And with that sublime act, He softened the devastating, consuming sorrow of those who have lost precious loved ones.

The Dark Friday of the Crucifixion

I think of how dark that Friday was when Christ was lifted up on the cross. On that terrible Friday the earth shook and grew dark. Frightful storms lashed at the earth.

Those evil men who sought His life rejoiced. Now that Jesus was no more, surely those who followed Him would disperse. On that day those men stood triumphant.

On that day the veil of the temple was rent in twain.

Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were both overcome with grief and despair. The superb man they had loved and honored hung lifeless upon the cross.

On that Friday the Apostles were devastated. Jesus, their Savior—the man who had walked on water and raised the dead—was Himself at

the mercy of wicked men. They watched helplessly as He was overcome by His enemies.

On that Friday the Savior of mankind was humiliated and bruised, abused and reviled. It was a Friday filled with devastating, consuming sorrow that gnawed at the souls of those who loved and honored the Son of God.

I think that of all the days since the beginning of this world’s history, that Friday was the darkest.

Sunday Will Come

But the doom of that day did not endure.

The despair did not linger because on Sunday, the resurrected Lord burst the bonds of death. He ascended from the grave and appeared gloriously triumphant as the Savior of all mankind.

And in an instant the eyes that had been filled with ever-flowing tears dried. The lips that had whispered prayers of distress and grief now filled the air with wondrous praise, for Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God, stood before them as the firstfruits of the Resurrection, the proof that death is merely the beginning of a new and wondrous existence.

Each of us will have our own Fridays—those days when the universe itself seems shattered and the shards of our world lie littered about us in pieces. We all will experience those broken times when it seems we can never be put together again. We will all have our Fridays.

But I testify to you in the name of the One who conquered death—Sunday will come. In the darkness of our sorrow, Sunday will come.

No matter our desperation, no matter our grief, in this life or the next, Sunday will come.

Testimonies of the Resurrection

The Resurrection is not a fable. We have the personal testimonies of those who saw Him. Thousands in the Old and New Worlds witnessed the risen Savior. They felt the wounds in His hands, feet, and side. They shed tears of unrestrained joy as they embraced Him.

After the Resurrection, His disciples could have disappeared and returned to their former

lives and occupations. In time, their association with Him would have been forgotten.

They could have denied the divinity of Christ. Yet they did not. In the face of danger, ridicule, and threat of death, they entered palaces, temples, and synagogues boldly proclaiming Jesus the Christ, the resurrected Son of the living God.

Many of them offered as a final testimony their own precious lives. They died as martyrs, the testimony of the risen Christ on their lips as they perished.

The Resurrection transformed the lives of those who witnessed it. Should it not transform ours?

Blessings of the Resurrection

We will all rise from the grave. On that day I will once again hold in my arms my beloved Elisa.

Because of the life and eternal sacrifice of the Savior of the world, we will be reunited with those we have cherished. On that day we will know the love of our Heavenly Father and will rejoice that the Messiah overcame all that we could live forever.

Because of the sacred ordinances we receive in holy temples, death cannot long separate relationships that have been fastened together with cords made of eternal ties.

Death is not the end of existence. Because of our beloved Redeemer, we can lift up our voices, even in the midst of our darkest Fridays, and proclaim, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55)

When President Hinckley spoke of the terrible loneliness that comes to those who lose the ones they love, he also promised that in the quiet of the night a still, unheard voice whispers peace to our soul: “All is well.”

I am grateful beyond measure for the sublime true doctrines of the gospel and for the gift of the Holy Ghost, which has whispered to my soul the comforting and peaceful words promised by our beloved prophet.

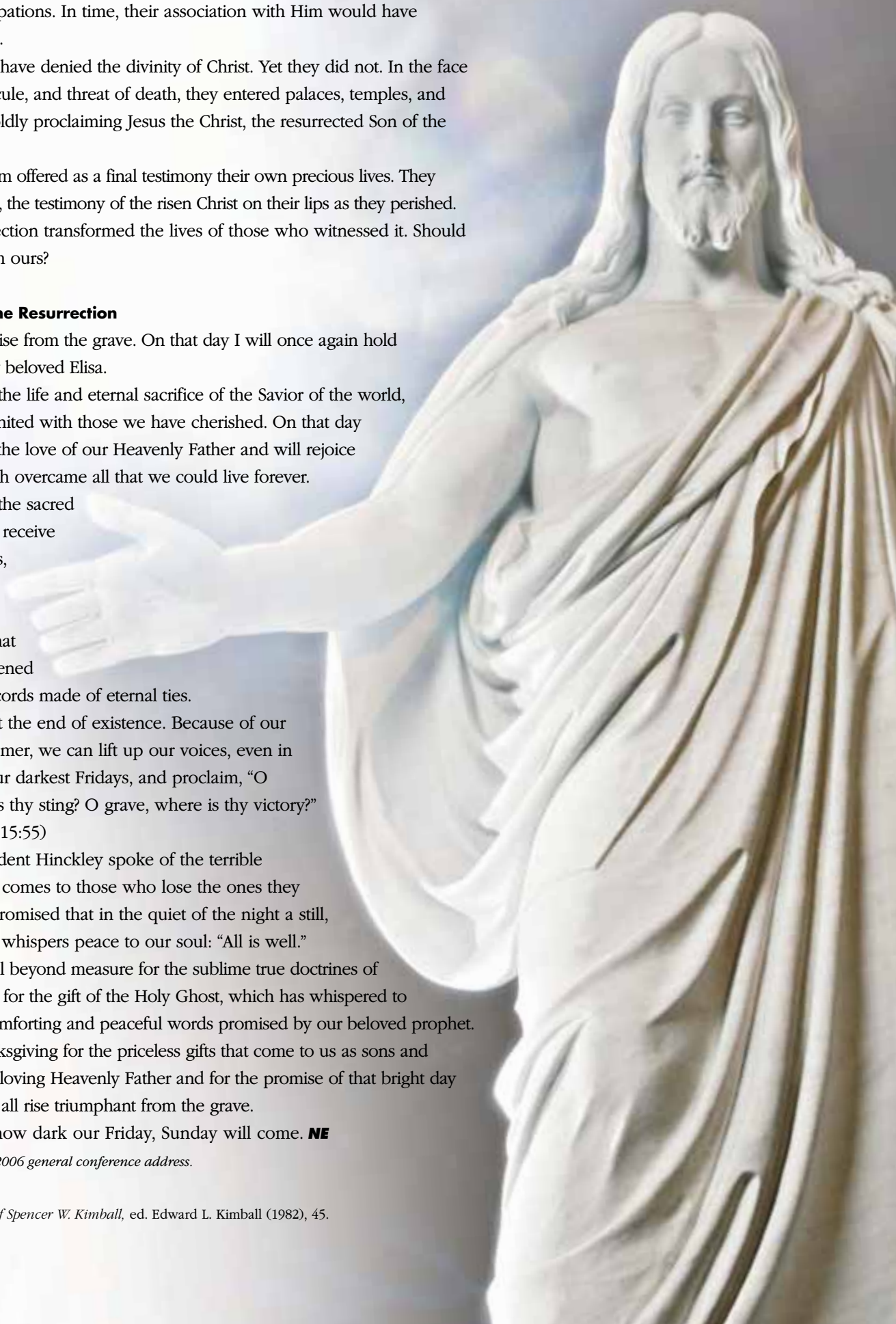
Live in thanksgiving for the priceless gifts that come to us as sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father and for the promise of that bright day when we shall all rise triumphant from the grave.

No matter how dark our Friday, Sunday will come. **NE**

From an October 2006 general conference address.

NOTES

1. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 45.



FORGIVENESS

BY ERIC HOYT

Why did I have to forgive my opponents when they were the ones who played dirty?

I replayed the fateful play several times, and I became angrier with each repetition. The linemen from the other team deliberately double-teamed me in a way that often results in an injury to the defensive lineman.

40-stack, cover 3, 40-stack, cover 3, hit . . ." "HARD!" we yelled in reply to Joey, the middle linebacker, as we broke our huddle and lined up against the offense. Tensions ran high on both sides of the ball.

It was the last regular season game of my senior year, and we needed a win in order to secure a share of the league championship and a number-one spot going into the playoffs. It was still early in the first quarter, and our opponents were marching down the field. We needed to stop their drive and score so that we could take an early lead. We had prepared all season for this game. We did not want all those four-hour practices to be in vain.

"43, 43, hut, hut!" I was off at the snap of the ball. As soon as I hit the offensive guard, I felt someone hit me from the side. I heard a loud pop, and my left leg collapsed beneath me. *This is not good*, I thought as I lay stunned on the ground, unsure of what to do. I had never been injured in a game, and I hoped that someone would

notice me before the next play started.

After a few seconds that seemed like an eternity, our team trainer was in front of me, examining my leg. I still did not know what had happened, and I waited for her to explain what was wrong. Eventually, the paramedics on duty at the game appeared, along with my parents and my head coach. From their conversation, I discovered that my kneecap had been dislocated and was currently on the side of my leg, instead of the front where it belongs.

I could not

AND FOOTBALL



the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”

D&C 64:10.

did not think it was fair that I should have to forgive them, since they never apologized, but I knew that I needed to forgive them for my sake more than for theirs.

believe it! Injuries happen in football, but they were not supposed to happen to me, especially on senior night, our last home game.

Feelings of misery overwhelmed me as the paramedics loaded me onto a stretcher and rolled me into an ambulance. I was sure the season was over for me, and I could not hold back the tears.

Since my dad is a doctor, they allowed him to ride with me to the hospital. Once we arrived, the ER doctors gave me some pain medication that also relaxed my muscles. After taking some X-rays, they popped my kneecap back into place. It provided instant relief for the time being.

The next day, the sports doctor informed me that I would be on crutches for at least six weeks.

Playing football was out of the question. My high school football career was over.

Later that day, I watched the game film from the night before. I replayed the

fateful play several times, and I became angrier with each repetition. The linemen from the other team deliberately double-teamed me in a way that often results in an injury to the defensive lineman. According to my coach, I was not the first victim of their blocking scheme. One lineman blocked me head-on and held me up, while the other rolled into me from the side. This had pushed my knee in, causing the kneecap to pop out, ending my season prematurely. I was disgusted that they would sink that low. I thought that the referee should have called a penalty on them for doing an illegal high-low block, but that would not have changed the end result for me.

After a few weeks of living in almost constant anger about what had happened, I finally realized that being angry was not going to change anything. My knee was injured whether I was angry or not. I knew that in order to truly overcome my anger, I would have to forgive those two linemen, whom I did not even know. They may not have felt any remorse for what they did, and they probably did not know the extent of my injury. At first I did not think it was fair that I should have to forgive them, since they never apologized, but I knew that I needed to forgive them for my sake more than for theirs.

Over time I was able to realize that those two linemen are children of God and that they may not have anticipated injuring me. Now I can look back on this experience without anger at the two players who ended my season. I am not happy about being injured, but I am grateful that I did not need surgery on my knee and that the injury was not permanent. I am glad that I was able to move on and not let anger consume my life. **NE**

To learn more about forgiveness, read President James E. Faust, “The Healing Power of Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, May 2007, p. 67.

BAPTISM AND THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST

The Prophet Joseph Smith helped us understand the first ordinances of the gospel.

Through Joseph Smith, the Lord restored the authority and understanding of the principles and ordinances required to enter the kingdom of God (see JS—H 1:68–73; D&C 27:12–13). Here are some of Joseph’s teachings on baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

THE SIGN OF BAPTISM

“Baptism is a sign to God, to angels, and to heaven that we do the will of God, and there is no other way beneath the heavens whereby God hath ordained for man to come to Him to be saved, and enter into the kingdom of God, except faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins, and any other course is in vain; then you have the promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

THE HOLY GHOST: THE POWER AND THE GIFT

“There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him. [See Acts 10:1–48.]”

THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY GHOST

Nearly three years after he was killed, the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared to President Brigham Young and said: *“Tell the people to be humble and faithful and sure to keep the Spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. . . . It will whisper peace and joy to their souls, and it will take malice, hatred, envying, strife, and all evil from their hearts; and their whole desire will be to do good.”*

* From *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 91, 97, 98.



TWO OF A KIND

BY JANESEA CLOWARD

These twin brothers try to find good ways to be more alike.

Although physical circumstances have sent their future lives in different directions, being brothers is the most important thing to Nathan (left) and Brad.

They have the same blue eyes and the same sandy brown hair, but Nathan and Brad Jackson, 18, are one set of identical twins anyone can tell apart at a glance. That's because Brad, the younger twin, has cerebral palsy and has to use a wheelchair.

People still mix them up, though. Just last year, one of Nathan's friends from the basketball team saw Brad from a distance and thought Nathan had gotten into an accident. He called later to make sure Nathan was OK. Nathan just laughed and said, "I'm fine, but now you've met my twin brother."

Nathan and Brad, who are from the River Ridge First Ward, South Jordan Utah River Ridge Stake, share more than identical genes. They both love being active, getting to know new people, and spending time with their family. They also share a deep love for the Savior, which is heightened by the unique experience they share as brothers.

Being Together

Nathan has always had a special awareness of his brother's needs. When they were babies, Brad lacked the coordination to drink from his own bottle, so Nathan fed Brad from his bottle. Nathan would take a few sips, then help Brad take a few sips, and so on, so they both could drink.

A few years later, they both caught such severe cases of strep throat they couldn't talk because of the pain. Nathan wanted a drink, so he took his mom's hand and led her into the kitchen. Then he heard Brad crying in the other room. He led his mom back to the room to get Brad so they both could get a drink.

"I think he just kind of understood somehow," his mom, Cheryl, says. "He was always looking out for his brother."

And Nathan still looks out for Brad, whether it's for physical things or just making sure Brad feels included. In spite of the wheelchair, Brad wants to do everything his brother does. For example, when Nathan



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANELSA CLOWARD

APPRECIATING THE LITTLE THINGS

Every day when the garage door creaks open, Brad claps his hands and squeals in delight because that means his dad is home from work. His enthusiasm for the little things in life helps his family, and especially his twin brother, appreciate how much they have.

“He makes small things bigger than they really are, and it’s fun that way,” Nathan says. “It makes you realize what small things really are to the family, how fortunate we really are. Some things that are pretty trivial to other people are pretty important to him.”

played basketball, Brad got to be with the team and even got a jersey.

The twins also love camping and four-wheeling together. They especially enjoy the “guys only” trips they take each year with their dad, uncles, and cousins.

Brad wants to be just like Nathan when it comes to serving in the Church, too. When they received the Aaronic Priesthood, Nathan started passing the sacrament. Brad also wanted to pass the sacrament, but the routes around the chapel didn’t allow enough room to maneuver his wheelchair.

Nathan worked with the bishop to change the routes. The new version assigned all of the front pews to Brad, which left plenty of room for his wheelchair. Then he and Brad started passing the sacrament together.

When the boys were ordained as priests and Nathan started to bless the sacrament, Brad wanted to do that, too. With special permission from the bishop, his dad, Steve, helped Brad find a way to say the prayers intelligibly by using computer software.

Being Apart

Now that they’re almost 19, Nathan is preparing for his mission by studying the scriptures and *Preach My Gospel*. He’s also saving every penny he earns working at a jewelry store and with his grandpa’s carpentry busi-

ness. But he says the hardest part of his mission is something he’s not sure how to prepare for—being without his brother for two years.

“I don’t think we’ve ever been apart for two weeks, let alone two years,” Nathan says. They even shared a room until they were 14, and the only reason Nathan moved out was so their mom could have more space to take care of Brad.

One night, not long after moving into his own room, Nathan told his mom, “I need to sleep in Brad’s room tonight.” She didn’t think anything of it until Nathan’s shouts for help woke her up a few hours later. Brad was very ill with a stomach virus and could barely breathe. If Nathan hadn’t been in the room, she probably wouldn’t have known that Brad needed help. Brad could have suffocated.

“We’re glad Nathan listened to that little prompting and stayed with Brad that night,” his mom says.

But Nathan didn’t even see it as a prompting at first. “I just had this feeling I had to sleep in there, so I did it,” he says.

Being Different

Nathan sometimes wonders if it’s fair that Brad ended up in a wheelchair and he didn’t. He used to feel a little guilty when he thought about all the things Brad would never be able to do. He now realizes that, fair or not, everything they both go through will be for their good, and the Lord will help them through it.

Nathan says, “That’s the way I have to cope with it. It could’ve been me just as easily, but I think God had His hand in it.”

He isn’t sure what his life’s plan is yet, but he knows it will involve helping others. He volunteers at the special needs seminary at Bingham High School and occasionally goes to special needs Mutual with Brad. He loves getting to know people. Of course, his favorite person to be with is Brad.

“It’s not always easy,” Nathan says. “But I am glad he’s my brother.” **NE**



EAGLE PROJECT

Nathan wanted his Eagle Scout service project to include Brad, so he asked the principal of Brad's special needs high school what he could do. They ended up building bookshelves for the autism classroom. Brad helped by supervising the work and keeping a close eye on the power tools—his favorite things.

Q & A

“I feel overwhelmed. I’m taking music lessons and competing in sports and trying to serve in the priests quorum and get straight A’s. How do I find balance?”

NEW ERA

We are blessed with many opportunities to develop our talents and serve others. The problem is, all of these options can make us feel like we don’t have enough time to do everything. We need to remember that we usually have time to do the essential things.

King Benjamin warned his people about doing too much. He said, “See that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength” (Mosiah 4:27). Setting priorities will help you do your activities in “wisdom and order.”

When you set priorities, you set time aside for the most important things before you schedule in less-important activities. Think of it like this: if someone gave you rocks, pebbles, and sand to fit into a jar, how would you go about it? If you put the sand and pebbles in first, you’d probably realize there’s hardly room left for the rocks. But if you put the rocks in first, they’d all fit. Then you could add the pebbles and sand. These fill in the cracks between the rocks.

■ *Put the Lord first in your life, and everything else will fall into place.*

■ *Pray for the Lord’s help in getting the important things done, like schoolwork.*

■ *Take time to relax with family and friends, and also by yourself.*

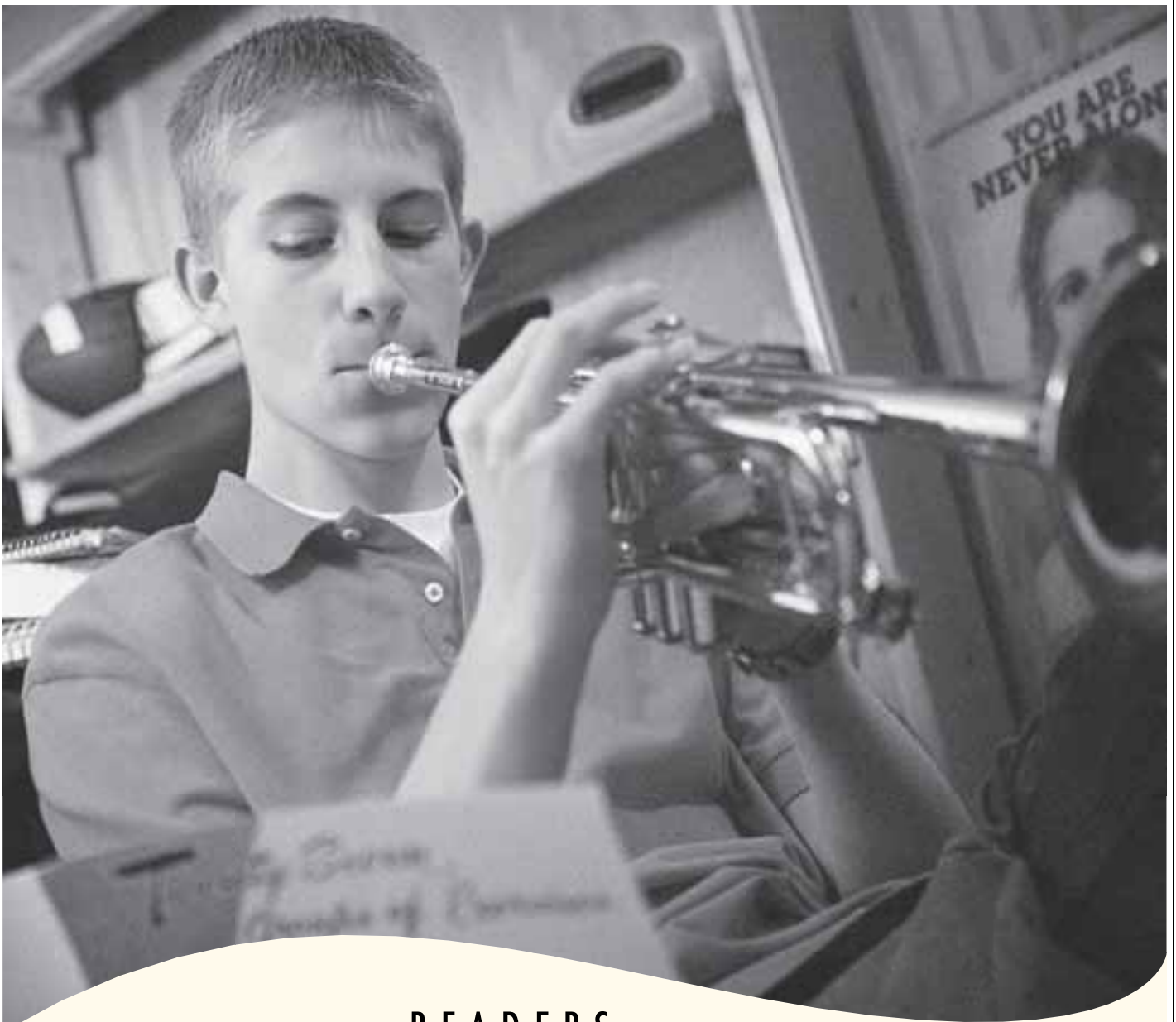
■ *To find balance, you might need to drop some less-important activities.*

Our busy days are like that jar. In order to get everything done, we need to plan the most important things—the rocks—first. Then we can plan the less-important activities—the pebbles and the sand—around them.

How can we identify the rocks in our lives? President Ezra Taft Benson said: “When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love for the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities” (“The Greatest Commandment—Love the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 4). Some important rocks in your life are daily prayer and scripture study, fulfilling your Church duties, and serving others. Other rocks include schoolwork and spending time with your family.

Many people forget the rocks of exercise, balanced meals, and getting enough rest. Rest is more than just sleep. You also need time to unwind and think about where your life is going.

What about sports, music lessons, and other worthy activities? These are like the pebbles and sand. They help develop your talents, but if you



READERS

feel overwhelmed, you might be doing too much. A more balanced life may require letting some less-important activities go. The peace of mind you gain will be worth the sacrifice.

Pray for help in deciding which activities are most important. Talk with your parents or other trusted adults who might be able to help you make wise choices. Heavenly Father wants you to be happy and successful. He will help you find the activities that will bring you the most joy without making you feel overwhelmed. **NE**



I know exactly how you feel. I am also very involved and at times feel overwhelmed. Too much of even good things can be

bad, and instead of lifting you up, they will pull you down if you are spreading yourself too thin. Joseph Smith felt the same way. Read D&C 10:4. It says to not do more than you can, and to be diligent. Then, in D&C 10:5, the Lord tells him to pray always. Before you drop anything out of your schedule, add morning scripture study and prayer.

The rest of your day will be improved, and I testify that the Lord will help you find the time and balance you need.

Stephanie J., 18, Utah

Remember, you can't do everything at once, especially when you're in school. President Hinckley said that we should further our education, so I know it is a great idea to make sacrifices (such as cutting an extracurricular activity) for things that will help us more in the journey ahead, like education.

Steven M., 19, Missouri

I have spent a lot of time with this problem and found my solution through praying. By praying I found peace come to my life and knew that if I followed the Lord, then I could make it through. My advice is to put the Lord first in all situations. For that you will be blessed. Also, work hard in everything that you do. At times it may seem rough, but the Lord will bless you for following Him and doing your part.

Justin L., 17, Lima, Peru



My mission president likes to say, "Too many goods leaves no room for best." In order to avoid this, I prayerfully identify those things that are truly important and will be best eternally. These things include church attendance and family. The rest fall into place according to priority—not my priority, but Heavenly Father's.

Elder Sharp, 22, North Carolina Charlotte Mission

If you feel stressed, then you should see what is most important to you, and focus on that. It might help if you drop a thing or two. I did that this year, and it really helped me.

Emalea F., 14, Alberta, Canada



Currently I am swimming, serving as a student body officer, learning the piano and bass trombone, playing the piano for priesthood opening exercises, keeping an A average in AP classes, doing my duties as a priest and Eagle Scout, and holding a job to earn money for my mission. Most of the times overlap. I finally had to sit down and make a weekly schedule. This helped tremendously. I left at least 10 minutes of "me time" between each of these activities. But when work and swim continued to fill the same time slot, I had to drop swim for a while. That relieved much of the stress I was going through. Sometimes you just have to let things go, and prioritize your activities in order of importance.

Ryan G., 18, Mississippi



Our main goal should be to seek 'immortality and eternal life' (Moses 1:39). With this as our goal, why not eliminate from our lives the things that clamor for and consume our thoughts, feelings, and energies without contributing to our reaching that goal?"

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Keeping Life's Demands in Balance," Ensign, May 1987, 14.



I can only find balance by setting the gospel as my priority. I believe that we have to seek first the Lord's kingdom, and all these things shall be added unto you.

I know that if I put the Lord first in my life, He will guide me in everything that I want to accomplish. Receiving high grades and excelling in sports activities will follow when you have the Lord in your side.

Reinely M., 15, Washington D.C.



I find that my life is more balanced when I say my prayers and go to early morning seminary. My day runs smoothly, and I don't get overwhelmed or stressed out as easily. But I also have to do my part by managing my time. Sometimes when things get overwhelming, it is best to take a break, even when you feel you cannot or should not. It will relieve some anxiety and enable you to accomplish everything on time.

Cristina A., 15, Washington

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

NEXT QUESTION

"When I repent, I have a hard time forgiving myself. How do I learn to forgive myself?"

**Send your answer by April 15, 2008, to:
New Era, Q&A, 4/08
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) _____

BEST FRIENDS FOREVER

A bride and groom are standing together in front of the Salt Lake Temple. The bride is wearing a white wedding dress and holding a bouquet of flowers. The groom is wearing a dark suit. The temple's spires and Gothic architecture are visible in the background under a blue sky with light clouds. A low stone wall is in the foreground.

LIVING TEMPLE COVENANTS TOGETHER
BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN EACH. FOREVER.
(See *True to the Faith*, p. 97.)

I BELIEVE IN CHRIST

*Having a testimony of the Savior influences your entire life,
according to these LDS teens.*

Several years ago the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued a declaration titled “The Living Christ.” In this statement of faith and conviction, the leadership of the Church made clear their beliefs regarding the Lord Jesus Christ. Introducing this declaration, they wrote, “We offer our testimony of the reality of His matchless life and the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice. None other has had so profound an influence upon all who have lived and will yet live upon the earth. . . . He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world” (*Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2).

As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you too have taken upon you the Savior’s name. You too stand as a witness of His glory and of His gospel. It is sometimes difficult to express something as personal as a testimony of the Savior, but in the following testimonies, LDS youth tell about the influence Jesus Christ has upon their lives. **NE**



Mary C.



Jacob T.

“I believe in Jesus Christ. Knowing that He is my Savior, I think I live my life differently from those who may not have a testimony. When I make important decisions I think about who Jesus is and what He did. I try to base my goals on righteous principles. I am imperfect, but through the Atonement I can return to my Heavenly Father. Through the Atonement, the Savior sacrificed for my sins. I will always be in debt to Him for that great sacrifice. I love Him and I am eternally grateful for His love for me.”

Mary C., South Carolina

“When learning about Christ’s visit to the Nephites, I found myself wishing I had been there when He was. I wanted to be numbered among His people in that day, to see and feel His love and compassion. I wish I could have stood there to see Him perform great miracles, to see Him bless each of the children. But I believe that I will get the chance one day to look upon that same loving face and know I have done well.”

Jacob T., Willaston, Australia





“I have had many experiences that have strengthened my testimony of Jesus Christ. But one of the biggest testimony builders I have found is practicing the pure love of Christ, charity. I believe that when we put others before ourselves, serve them, and love them wholeheartedly, we are able to draw closer to Christ, which enables us to grow spiritually and have a stronger testimony of our Redeemer. I know that Christ suffered and died for each and every one of us. I know that He loves us and wants us to be happy.”

Kandace H., Kansas

“Because I believe in Jesus Christ I try to live by his commandments. I know what He has done for all men and I do my best



Kandace H.



Josh C.

to follow Him. The Atonement is a treasured gift. And because of it, I know I can repent of my sins. I know I am not perfect, but I try as hard as I can to live better. I know that Jesus suffered the sins and pains of the world. I know He loves me, and I love Him too.”

Josh C., South Carolina

“Christ influences my life in positive and uplifting ways. He plays an essential role in my eternal salvation, which I cannot achieve on my own. He is the perfect role model. Over the past few weeks, a certain scripture has come to mind as I have been saying my prayers. Helaman 5:12 tells us that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer that we must build our foundation. I believe in Christ. Although we aren't perfect and we make mistakes, He

had so much mercy that He atoned for *all* of our sins. Although my testimony may not be perfect, I can continue to strengthen it through prayer, repentance, and the spirit of revelation.”

Steven S., British Columbia, Canada

“For a while, church was just something I went to, something that was just normal. It wasn’t until I entered into Young Women that I really started looking at our Savior’s life and everything He did for us—everything He did for me. It’s so amazing to me that He loves us so much that He would give His life and suffer for my sins and for me. It’s an awesome feeling to know He knows me and that as I repent, my sins are washed clean.”

Adria L., California

“Because I have a testimony of the Savior, I try to live my life in a more worthy way every day so that I can receive all of the blessings of the Atonement. My testimony of Christ is something that constantly causes me to smile and try to correct my faults. His great example and goodness bring me happiness for there exists no being in the world that has a heart more giving and merciful than does Jesus Christ.”

Maria Francisca R., Rio Branco, Brazil

“I have a very strong testimony of the Savior Jesus Christ. I am very grateful for His atoning sacrifice that allows us to repent and become better people. I have gained my testimony through experiences that have shown me His works and blessings. As I read the scriptures, it becomes even clearer to me why we are here on this earth today learning and growing in spirit. I love Jesus Christ, and I am grateful for His atoning sacrifice for me.”

Eric T., Utah



Steven S.



Adria L.



Maria Francisca R.



Eric T.



Nicole B.



“I know that even though Christ died for us, He lives today. His Church is on the earth today. And I know that someday He will come again. When I think of Christ, I am filled with such joy that it can’t be described. I try to live worthy to bear His name, because I know that He has done so much for me. I know with a surety that He lives, and I love Him with all of my heart.”

Nicole B., Virginia

If you would like to share your testimony, send it to us at newera@ldschurch.org or at New Era—Testimonies, 50 E. North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150-3220. You might also want to see the March 2008 issues of the *Liahona* and *Ensign*. Both magazines are special issues that celebrate the life and mission of Jesus Christ.

I walked into the house, exhausted. It had been a long day, and I was starving. I sat at the table while my mom made dinner, telling her everything I had done that day. All of a sudden my little sister, Cherri, was at my side. She twisted her hands together nervously and didn't quite look at me.

"What happened?" I asked, not feeling very sympathetic.

"You know your pearl necklace?" she replied in a small voice. "Well, I was playing with it, and it broke."

A million thoughts raced through my head. How many times had I told her not to play in my room or with my things? The necklace was hardly important, but that was beside the point. She had ignored my warnings one too many times.

Somehow I managed to bite my tongue, and an exasperated sigh escaped my lips. "Come on, show me where it is," I said.

She took my hand and led me to my room. Pearls

littered the floor, which wasn't exactly clean to begin with.

"What have I told you about playing in my room, Cherri?"

"Not to," she mumbled.

"Okay, then, why did you?" I pressed.

She just shrugged her little shoulders and looked at the floor. "I'm really sorry," she said.

"Help me clean them up, and don't play in here again," I said. She did so and left the room, and I put the incident behind me.

The next day, I came home to an ecstatic Cherri. She grabbed my hand, jumping up and down. "I have something for you!" she said. "Sit here on the couch and I'll be right back."

She raced downstairs and returned a few minutes later cradling something in her hands. "Here, I made it for you all by myself," she said proudly. "Mom didn't even help me at all!"

She held out her little arms so I could see what she had made. Laying in her hands was a scrap of frayed black ribbon strung with meticulously arranged yellow and white plastic beads.

"It's a necklace!" she said, jumping up and down again. "I made it for you because I broke your other one. Do you like it?"



Pearls and Plastic Beads

BY LIORA JOHNS PHILLIPS

I smiled. The necklace was a bit tacky, and yet it was beautiful. "Yes, Cherri, I love it." I put it on and wore it the rest of the day to show my appreciation. I was so glad that I hadn't yelled at my sister in anger and made her feel like I didn't love her.

I kept her little token of restitution in my drawer, a constant reminder that a pearl necklace could never be as special or beautiful as my frayed black ribbon with yellow and white plastic beads from a precious younger sister. **NE**



So many of us make a great fuss of matters of small consequence. We are so easily offended. . . . I plead with you to control your tempers, to put a smile upon your faces, which will erase anger; speak out with words of love and peace, appreciation, and respect. If you will do this, your lives will be without regret. Your marriages and family relationships will be preserved. You will be much happier. You will do greater good. You will feel a sense of peace that will be wonderful."

President Gordon B. Hinckley, "Slow to Anger," Ensign, Nov. 2007, 63-66.

The Point

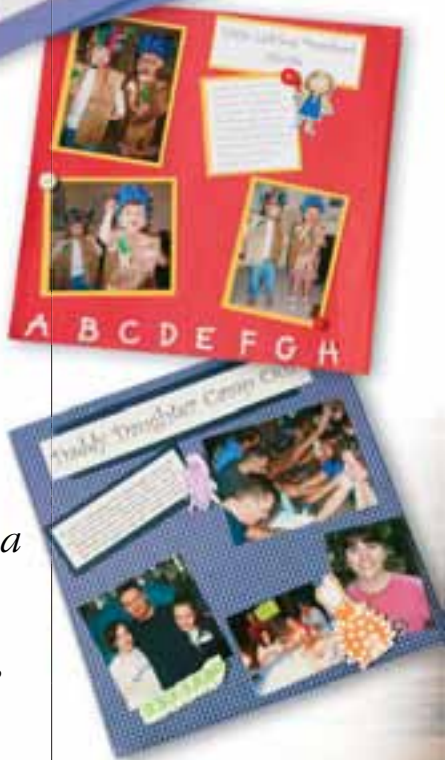
BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY
Church Magazines

Make it work for you.” That’s how Mia Maid Megan Ross sums up her advice about participating in Personal Progress.

But her mother, Deborah, the Young Women president of the Colfax Ward, Greensboro North Carolina Stake, adds this additional suggestion, which makes Personal Progress even more meaningful: “Use it to help those around you.”

The point is that Personal Progress can be a blessing *both* to you and to others. By working on six Value Experiences (three required and three elective) and one 10-hour project in each of the seven

What’s the reason for Personal Progress? These young women in North and South Carolina know it’s to help both you and those around you.



Young Women values, you can strengthen yourself as well as those around you. (See *Young Women Personal Progress* [2001].)

Rachel's Good Works

Megan and her mother point to another family member, Rachel, as an example of what that means. Rachel has already completed her Young Womanhood Recognition. She has enjoyed the self-improvement and the service to others so much that now she's setting additional goals, mentoring others in the program (including her mother), and constantly looking for ways to help other people.

For example, one of her Value Projects was about modesty, and the ward young women all worked together on a modest fashion show. Then Rachel put together her own modest fashion magazine, using photos and ideas from the event. After that, she and her mother went to a fabric store, picked out fabric, cut it, pinned it, and sewed a modest dress.

Another time, Rachel worked with all of the young women as well as the adults in the ward to put together a cookbook. Everyone learned about cooking, shared recipes, and the adults noticed that the youth took an interest in them, too. That prompted

Rachel Ross (right) and the other young women in the Colfax Ward, Greensboro North Carolina Stake, are using Personal Progress to bless their lives and the lives of others.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD M. ROWNEY



her mother to work on a book of her own, what she calls an “heirloom” cookbook. “It includes recipes like my grandma’s recipe for rolls,” Sister Ross explains. “But it includes her photo next to the recipe so you get a feeling for her as a person.”

Megan remembers that for one of her projects, she did research on her ancestors and focused on their faith. “Before I started, I thought I realized what a blessing it has been for our family to be members of the Church for several generations,” she says. “But when I started reading my ancestors’ testimonies, that was really something. I saw how strong their faith in Jesus Christ was, right from the time they joined the Church.”

“Rachel has been a great example to me even though I’m her older sister,” Megan says. “She took the time to get her projects finished, and that’s made me work to get mine done too. But even more important is that we have two younger sisters, Allison and Sarah, and when they see how hard we’re working on Personal Progress, they know it’s important too.”

In fact, all of the young women of the Colfax Ward help each other as they work on Personal Progress. They offer

encouragement and suggestions when a project is best done alone but join in when participation is a plus. Older girls and those who have finished serve as mentors for those who are younger or who haven’t finished.

“One of the best things we do,” Megan explains, “is that whenever someone receives their Young Womanhood Recognition, at an Evening of Excellence or at New Beginnings we have them show what they’ve done for their projects. But they don’t just talk about the projects. They tell how much the projects have helped them, and they usually bear their testimony. It gives the other girls lots of ideas, but it also shows them that the point of it all is to become closer to Heavenly Father and more like the Savior.”

The Most Important Point

That most important point is also clear for young women in the Lexington Ward, West Columbia South Carolina Stake. They are particularly grateful for the spiritual goals in Personal Progress. Meilian Campbell explains that there are opportunities to study scriptures, read general conference talks, and follow a pattern of prayer to see how their faith in Jesus Christ grows. Sandra Campbell says that because of those experiences, she now thinks about the Savior whenever she is sad, and that makes her feel better. Macy Adams says Personal Progress “has helped me form the habit of prayer,” and Meilian agrees. “Now I can’t go to sleep without saying my prayers. It instilled that habit in me.”

Rasha's Participation

Rasha Stacey, a Laurel, sees how Personal Progress translates easily into opportunities to serve. She often helps other young women work on their Value Experiences. For example, another Laurel, Rachel Odom, set a goal of learning how to cut hair. "She cuts her own but had never done it on anyone else," Rasha says. "So twice last year, my family invited her over. She cut all of the girls' hair, including my mom's. I really loved what she did, and we all had fun. It was a great learning experience—for me and for her."

Rasha helped Macy put together a cookbook. "No one was giving her recipes," Rasha says, "so I gave her several from our family and asked the other youth in the ward to bring some to church. Pretty soon everyone was helping her."

When Rasha found out that Malina Tracy, a Beehive, would be the only one to move up from Primary that year, she came to her aid. "I know what it's like to feel left out, and I didn't want her to go through that,"



MOM AS YOUNG WOMEN PRESIDENT

What's it like to have your mother as Young Women president? "It's kind of cool to have her working on her Personal Progress at the same time we are," Megan Ross says. "She knows how to get us excited about it."

For example, it was her mother's idea to hold a Personal Progress day, with a different activity to correspond to each value. "For example, for Good Works we made cookies for the elderly," Megan recalls. "For Individual Worth we acted out skits based on the Book of Mormon, and for Divine Nature we had a healthy eating course, and so forth."

And how does mom feel about being president? "I get to spend time with my girls, doing things Heavenly Father would be pleased to see them do," she says. "What could be better than that?"

Personal progress has helped the young women of the Lexington Ward, West Columbia South Carolina Stake (below), to strengthen their testimonies and put their values into action.





Sarah Shurtleff of South Carolina likes looking for meaningful Personal Progress projects, such as making this quilt, which she plans on giving to her own children someday.

Rasha says. “So I talked about Personal Progress, and I told her what I loved when I was a Beehive, and how much the other young women love her.”

Rasha also helped her sister Karen, a Mia Maid, to memorize her Scripture Mastery verses for seminary and worked with their mother to help Karen put together a memory book.

Meilian, a Laurel, was having a hard time thinking of projects, so Rasha invited her over to cook meals and desserts every Saturday for a month. “I did it for my Knowledge project,” Meilian says. “I learned to make food for my family. And now when I go to college I’ll be able to cook

for myself. That helps me be self-reliant, because take-outs get expensive.”

Meilian says that Value Experiences are great because they carry over into everyday life. “At school I’m in a fashion merchandising class, and for one of our big projects we produced a fashion show,” she says. “Because we’d already talked about modesty as part of Personal Progress, I chose to wear modest clothes for the whole thing. The experiences that go with each value help you have a better understanding of how to turn values into actions.”

Macy says Personal Progress is meant “to prepare you for life through personal experiences, and to build self-confidence through preparation and spirituality.” Rasha agrees. “Take scripture study, for example,” she says. “It builds you up for when you have trials, so you know where to find answers.”



ADDITIONAL PROJECT IDEAS

Here are some ideas from North and South Carolina:

- Megan Ross of the Colfax Ward in North Carolina took a photo to represent each value and then framed them. For example, Faith showed someone praying, Individual Worth showed her sister looking in the mirror, and Good Works showed another sister sweeping the floor. The photos now hang on her bedroom wall.
- She collected testimonies from her grandparents, immediate family, and best friends.
- She videotaped Primary children answering gospel questions and then invited ward members to watch the video.
- She emphasized being nice to her family for two weeks and then wrote about it in her journal. “It worked,” she recalls. “It changed the feeling in our home.”
- When Kirby Quada, another young woman in Megan’s ward, organized a stake dance with approval from leaders, Megan and others joined in. “We decorated the cultural hall,” Kirby says, “and we had a photo booth and a dance instructor, too.”
- Meilian Campbell, of the Lexington Ward in South Carolina, enjoyed learning about personal finances from her grandmother. “She told us to start by paying tithing,” Meilian says. “Then she explained budgeting and what it means to be thrifty.”
- Corinne Campbell, also from the Lexington Ward, sewed a modest dress. “When people tell me they like it, I enjoy telling them I made it myself,” she says.
- Christy da Rosa, from the same ward, decided to paint a scenic panorama on her bedroom wall. “My grandfather was a painter,” she says, “and that gave me the idea.”
- Rasha Stacey, from the same ward, read from the Book of Mormon in both English and French every day. She also watched only appropriate movies and checked in advance to know their content.

Sarah’s Service

In another part of the West Columbia Stake, Sarah Shurtleff, of the Irmo Ward, also recognizes that Personal Progress encourages personal growth as well as service to others. “When we have the Evening of Excellence and the New Beginnings programs, we talk about what we’ve done throughout the year,” she says. “If I find out that other girls need help, I help them. I’m not assigned to or anything, I just help where people need it.”

She likes to brainstorm ideas with girls, leaders, and parents to come up with meaningful projects. Once she helped her mother complete a quilt for her niece and then used what she had learned to make another quilt on her own. “I’m going to save it for my own children someday,” she says. Sarah taught a friend how to play hymns on the piano, and they performed “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer” (*Hymns*, No. 26) at a stake talent show.

But one of the most meaningful parts of Personal Progress for Sarah is that “they have you read scriptures and write in your journal about what they mean to you. Personal Progress is about who you are—a daughter of God. I’ve learned that I can do anything I put my mind to, as long as I work hard and don’t quit.”

Sarah’s mother Catherine, the ward Young Women president, sums it up this way: “Personal Progress builds their testimonies, helps them set goals and work to achieve them, and then to feel that sense of accomplishment as they finish what they set out to do. It’s exciting to see what they are able to do. It builds faith and strengthens testimonies.”

Perhaps it all comes back to what Rachel Ross says. “Personal Progress teaches us things we need, and it builds our testimonies along the way. It’s spiritual improvement, but it’s also emotional, physical, and mental improvement. The point is it’s really well rounded if you let it be.” **NE**

SELF-RELIANCE

One of the great gospel principles encouraged in Personal Progress is self-reliance. Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve emphasized these aspects of self-reliance:

- Nourish yourself spiritually through scripture study.
- Provide for yourself temporally by emphasizing education, physical health, employment, home storage, resource management, and social, emotional, and spiritual strength.
- Use resources and worldly goods wisely.
- Be prudent, wise, and conservative in financial matters. (See “Becoming Self-Reliant,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 64.)

Could you set Personal Progress goals in some of these areas? What could you do to help yourself become more self-reliant?



WHAT I LEARNED AS A COWBOY

BY DAVID WALL

The fun and adventure we sought gave way to a somber lesson.

I was raised on a small farm near the town of Cleveland, a rural area in southeastern Utah. In the region there were many stories of Butch Cassidy, a cowboy outlaw, that remained in the conversations of the older generation. As a 12-year-old boy, I, along with seven of my buddies, became intrigued by the stories and planned an adventure. We wanted to ride the trail of Butch Cassidy and explore his hiding places in Cedar Mountain.

After much persuasion, we talked our parents into letting us ride our horses to Cedar Mountain. Two adults would join us—one to ride with us, the other to drive a truck to a designated camping area carrying our bed rolls, food, and hay for the horses.

We arrived at our campsite at dusk and started to prepare for the night. I remembered the instructions given to me by my parents. They had taught me how to tie up my horse to a strong live tree; how to leave the rope just loose enough for him to feed from the ground, but not so loose that the horse might step over the rope. I also remembered them telling me, “Never eat your dinner until your animals have been fed.”

Everyone took care of his own horse before turning his attention to his own needs—everyone, that is, except one. In haste to fix his dinner, my friend Billy tied his horse to a small dead tree and hurried off to the campfire. By the time we finished our duties, it was dark. Billy finished his dinner and then turned his attention to his horse. When he approached his horse in the dark, the horse spooked. Billy then made the fatal mistake of striking a match too close to the horse’s face. The horse reared back and pulled the dead tree from the ground. The tree, attached to the rope, hit the horse, which sent him off on a dead run. I will never forget the sound of that horse running into the darkness and the crashing of the tree he dragged behind him. The noise continued for 10 to 15 seconds, and then there was silence . . . followed by a loud crash.



All those things I had been taught while growing up suddenly began to make sense. I had come to a point in my life where I was responsible for my actions. The decisions I was making now not only affected me but those around me.

One of the adults had run after the horse and was first to reach him. We grabbed our flashlights and followed. After searching in the dark, we found the horse at the bottom of a 50-foot cliff. As long as I live, I will clearly remember watching that horse die.

We were a group of solemn boys as we worked our way up the cliff and returned to camp that night. Each one quickly and quietly bedded down. All that could be heard throughout the night was Billy's sobbing and the rustling of nervous horses that seemed to sense what had happened. It was a very long night.

That experience became a life-changing moment. As I lay in my bed gazing at the millions of stars in the heavens, the events of the day passed through my mind. I began thinking about the advice my parents had given me as I was growing up. Suddenly it all began to make sense. I had come to a point in my life where I was responsible for my actions. The decisions I was making now not only affected me but those around me. I began to see that the results of my disobedience could be disastrous, especially to

those who depended on me. My mother had entrusted me with her treasured horse. How grateful I was that I had been obedient to her instructions.

As each of us experiences life-altering events, such as my experience as a young cowboy, we need to not only learn to be obedient to God's laws but also to obey the teachings of inspired and caring parents, teachers, and Church leaders. How obedient we become will determine not only the degree of freedom, happiness, and peace

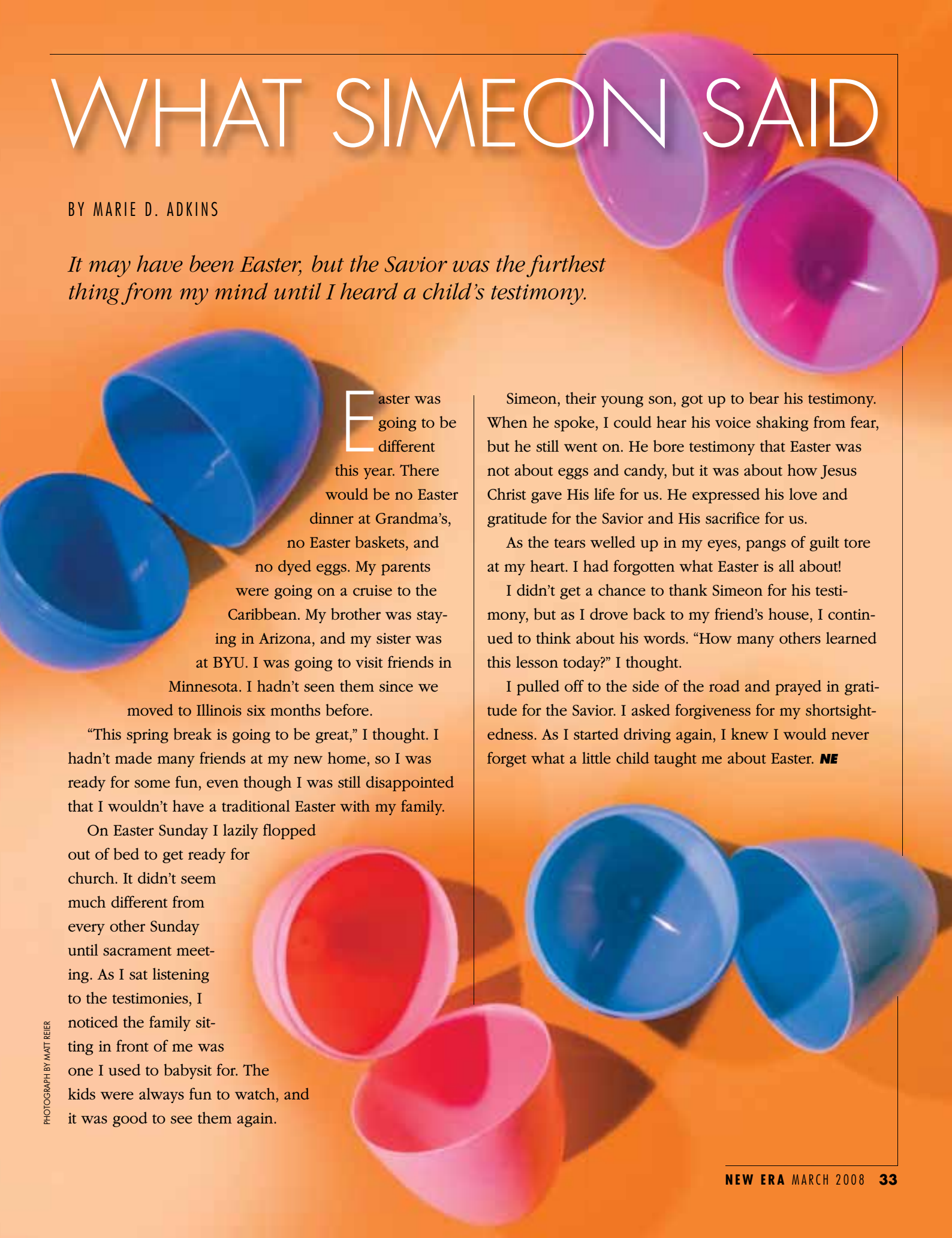
we enjoy in this life but also the attainment of the promises of eternal life in the world to come. **NE**



WHAT SIMEON SAID

BY MARIE D. ADKINS

It may have been Easter, but the Savior was the furthest thing from my mind until I heard a child's testimony.



Easter was going to be different this year. There would be no Easter dinner at Grandma's, no Easter baskets, and no dyed eggs. My parents were going on a cruise to the Caribbean. My brother was staying in Arizona, and my sister was at BYU. I was going to visit friends in Minnesota. I hadn't seen them since we moved to Illinois six months before.

"This spring break is going to be great," I thought. I hadn't made many friends at my new home, so I was ready for some fun, even though I was still disappointed that I wouldn't have a traditional Easter with my family.

On Easter Sunday I lazily flopped out of bed to get ready for church. It didn't seem much different from every other Sunday until sacrament meeting. As I sat listening to the testimonies, I noticed the family sitting in front of me was one I used to babysit for. The kids were always fun to watch, and it was good to see them again.

Simeon, their young son, got up to bear his testimony. When he spoke, I could hear his voice shaking from fear, but he still went on. He bore testimony that Easter was not about eggs and candy, but it was about how Jesus Christ gave His life for us. He expressed his love and gratitude for the Savior and His sacrifice for us.

As the tears welled up in my eyes, pangs of guilt tore at my heart. I had forgotten what Easter is all about!

I didn't get a chance to thank Simeon for his testimony, but as I drove back to my friend's house, I continued to think about his words. "How many others learned this lesson today?" I thought.

I pulled off to the side of the road and prayed in gratitude for the Savior. I asked forgiveness for my shortsightedness. As I started driving again, I knew I would never forget what a little child taught me about Easter. **NE**

THEY BROUGHT ME BACK

BY GRETCHEN FITZSIMONS STONE

I thought going back to church would be too hard, but caring friends made all the difference.

I liked to go to a nearby field after school, lie in the tall grass, watch the clouds go by, and wish to be happy.

I was baptized when I was eight and attended Primary, but when I became a teenager I fell away from Church activity. At first, I went to a few Mutual activities, but by the time I graduated from high school, I was completely inactive.

During high school, I liked to go to a nearby field after school, lie in the tall grass while watching the clouds go by, and wish to be happy. I was sad because my parents were separated. I didn't feel peace or happiness a lot of the time, and I didn't know why. I was a cheerleader, I participated in school government, and I had plenty of friends, but something was missing in my life.

Two years after high school I went on a backpacking trip with friends. Everyone went to sleep early, but I stayed up by the campfire. As I was looking up into the heavens, the thought came to my mind to say a prayer. I looked up and asked, "Heavenly Father, are you really there? And if you are, will you help me to be happy?" It felt as if a huge blanket was wrapped around my shoulders. I felt warm, as though everything would be OK.

A few weeks later, my mom and I went

for a vacation to Idaho with her sister. A couple of my cousins invited me to a youth dance at the church, and I had a great time. I danced with a young man who had received a mission call to Korea. He asked if he could write to me, and I agreed.

In his first letter, this young man shared missionary experiences with me and bore his testimony of the gospel. I don't know whether I was swept off my feet by him or the Spirit. But after all those years of inactivity, I decided to go back to church and check things out.

I roped one of my older brothers into going with me so I wouldn't have to sit alone. I don't remember the meeting at all. I just remember thinking, "Everybody must be looking at me and saying, 'Look, Gretchen is at church. I wonder why.'" I was so uncomfortable by the end of the meeting that I planned a quick escape as soon as the closing prayer ended.

That's when something happened that changed my life forever. Four girls I remembered from Primary ran up and surrounded me. They were so happy to see me at church, and I felt their sincerity. They asked if I would come back later that night to a



Four girls I remembered from Primary ran up and surrounded me. They were so happy to see me at church. I felt their sincerity.

LIGHTING THE WAY FOR OTHERS

The Young Women torch symbolizes the light each person can have as she stands for truth and righteousness. As a young woman in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you can “let your light so shine” by serving and helping others. Try some of these ideas when you share the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ:

- ♥ Reach out to others.
- ♥ Smile.
- ♥ Be kind.
- ♥ Include new people.
- ♥ Be a friend.
- ♥ Invite others to Mutual.
- ♥ Be positive.
- ♥ Never criticize another person.
- ♥ Use clean language.
- ♥ Pray to be guided to those who need your friendship.
- ♥ Do what is right.

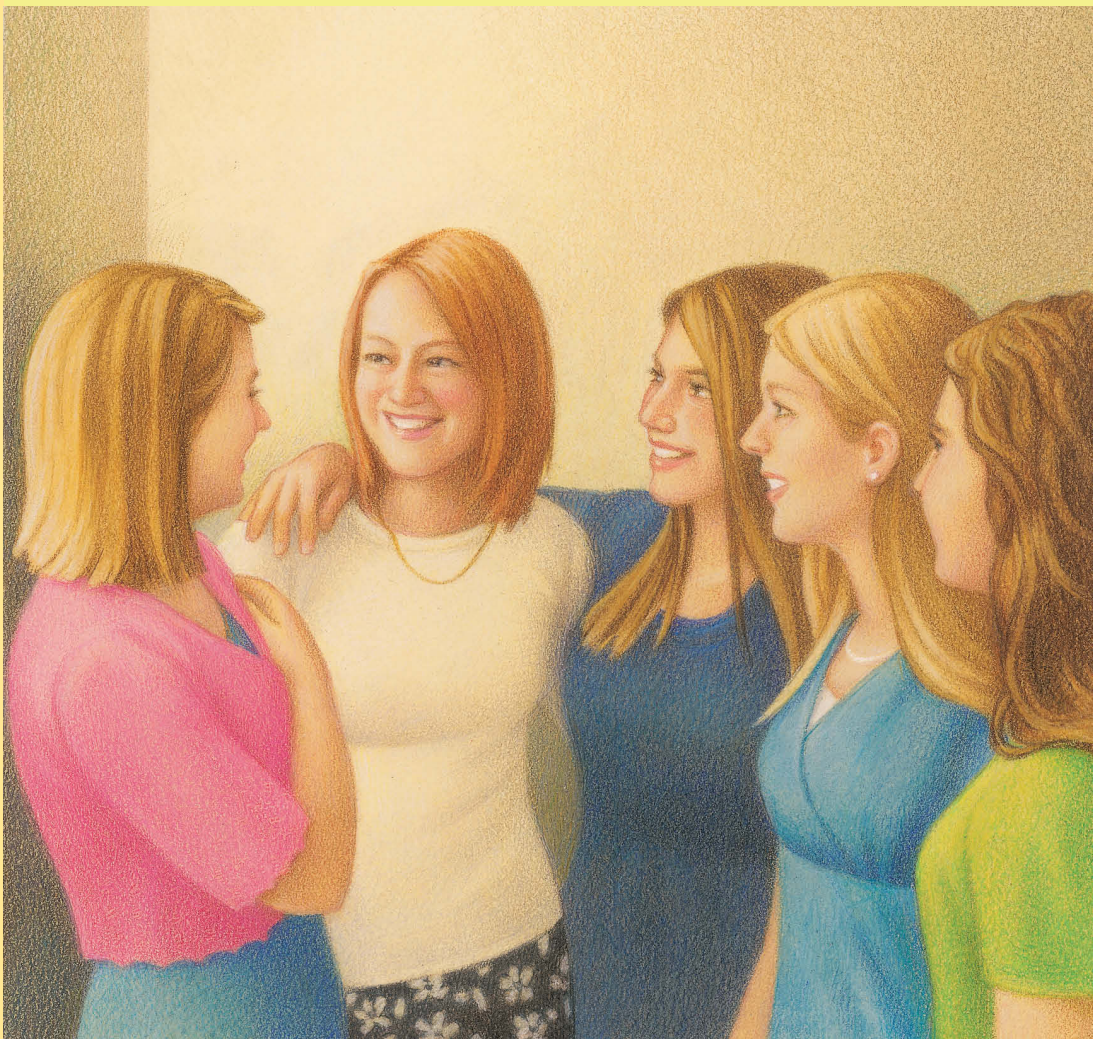
youth fireside. I agreed and then left for home.

I talked my brother into going with me again. At the fireside, a man stood to speak and said he felt impressed not to give his prepared talk but to share his testimony and then let us do the same. All of a sudden, my whole being felt on fire. I don't know how long it took me to get up, but I stood and bore my testimony that now I knew why I had been feeling unhappy and lost. It was the gospel that was missing in my life. I knew I needed to make some changes.

Now, almost 30 years later, I am still grateful to those young women who didn't let me escape the chapel that day. I later met and married a returned missionary in the Idaho Falls Temple. We have four chil-

dren, three of whom have married in the temple. Our oldest son served a mission, and our last is now planning to go on his. I have served in the Young Women program of the Church. Each time I teach a lesson on service, I share my life-changing experience in hopes that the same will be done for others as was done for me.

I believe my simple prayer was answered on that mountaintop. Heavenly Father does hear and answer our prayers. And my prayer was answered because four girls chose the right. They put their arms around a lost soul and invited her back. There are Gretchens out there who need to be brought back. You never know whose life can and will be changed forever if you will just reach out and be a loving, caring friend. **NE**

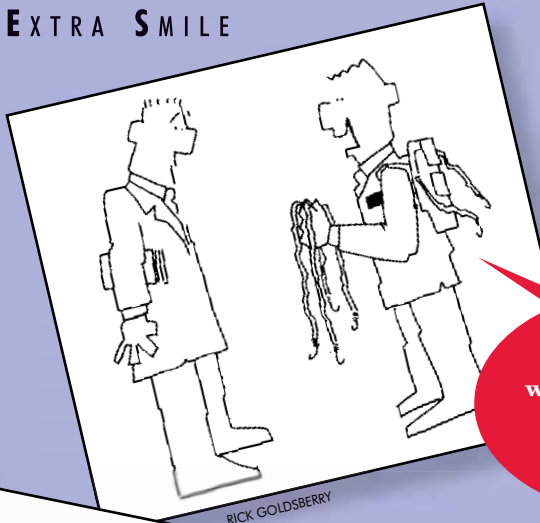


THE EXTRA SMILE

"It's a clever idea, Brother Wells, but splitting up a 24-hour fast into 24 days of fasting for one hour each just isn't the same."



JON CLARK



RICK GOLDSBERRY

"My other companions said I walk too fast. . . . You may want to hook up these bungee cords."

"I asked you to walk the dog *outside!*"



RYAN STOKER

"In Old Testament times, were leftovers called passovers?"



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



ARE MORMONS Christians?

Have you heard this question? It's one people often ask of Church members. This month's issues of the *Liahona* and *Ensign* answer the question—every article focuses on our beliefs about the Savior Jesus Christ. Some articles in the issue include the following:

🍷 President Gordon

B. Hinckley testifies of the Savior, including His roles as God of the Old Testament and as resurrected Lord, the focus of our faith.

🍷 Elder Russell M. Nelson explains what it means to have a dynamic faith in Jesus Christ.

🍷 Elder D. Todd Christofferson teaches us how to become witnesses of the Lord.



THE CHURCH IN NEW ZEALAND

The first Latter-day Saint missionaries in New Zealand arrived in Auckland in October 1854 from Australia. The first 10 converts in New Zealand were baptized five months later.

Before the missionaries arrived in the southern part of the North Island, at least five Maori leaders, some of whom were Tohungas (spiritual leaders) or other tribal wise men, had told of a “true religion” that

would come. Because many beliefs of the Maoris and missionaries were similar, a number of Maoris were converted. Here are some facts about the Church in New Zealand today.

Membership	97,474
Missions	2
Temples	1
Congregations	202
Family History Centers	56

Information from Newsroom at lds.org.

BY THE NUMBERS

362,756

Number of seminary students worldwide.

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IS A PLAN THAT SHOWS US HOW TO BECOME WHAT OUR HEAVENLY FATHER DESIRES US TO BECOME.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Challenge to Become," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32.



PJ'S AND PRAYER RUGS

The Mia Maids of the Academy Park Ward in Kearns, Utah, recently held a combined Young Women activity called a PJ's party. The idea was to help the young women think about three important things to remember before going to bed each night: Prayer, Journal, Scriptures. Each girl wore a pair of pajama pants they had made the previous

month. They put together folders with scripture-study and journal-writing suggestions, and then each girl painted a prayer rug to place by their beds.

"My prayer rug is inspirational," says Holly, one of the Mia Maids. "Every night my prayer rug is there reminding me to say my prayer before getting into bed. It really has changed my praying habits."



MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

D&C 122:7-8 I love these verses! Especially verse 8. This scripture helps me realize how much Jesus Christ actually suffered for us; it is great to read when you are having trials and need help coping with them.

Sadie H., 16, Illinois
Tell us about your favorite scripture in one or two sentences. Send it to newera@ldschurch.org.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SADIE H.

Hymn Vocabulary

Do you know what you just sang? Choose the correct definition for each of the following words that can be found in one or more of our hymns.

- A. BOON**
(*Hymns*, nos. 114 and 144)
1. A thick leather strap
 2. A timely benefit or blessing
 3. A thick, sweet liquid
 4. An inspiring sermon

- B. EFFULGENT**
(*Hymns*, nos. 116 and 187)
1. With great sorrow
 2. Dignified
 3. Shining brightly
 4. Completely satisfied

- C. PLAITED**
(*Hymns*, no. 191)
1. Interwoven or braided strands
 2. Protected with armor
 3. Hungry or starved
 4. Decorated with bright colors

- D. WARBLINGS**
(*Hymns*, no. 232)
1. A musical trill
 2. Young, slender trees
 3. Smooth stones
 4. Military awards

- E. GLEBE**
(*Hymns*, no. 109)
1. A plot of land
 2. A calm stretch of water
 3. Of great value
 4. Glowing or shimmering

Answers: A2, B3, B3, C1, D1, E1

MY MTC:

BY ELDER C. SCOTT GROW
Of the Seventy

Being committed to something and working at it, no matter what, is an important part of preparing for a mission and for life.



What I learned about discipline and making good decisions helped me to be a better missionary.

Missions are not easy. It's hard work to get up early every morning and to work hard every day. Learning discipline, choosing good friends, and strengthening your testimony through study and prayer will help prepare you to be a successful missionary.

In high school I began running cross-country and track, but I didn't really know much about distance running. I had a friend, though, who had run long distance in another state, and he helped me capture a vision of how to succeed. That influence and the inward determination to follow through helped me learn discipline and to be a successful runner in high school and at Brigham Young University.

Running wasn't something that came easily for me. It took a lot of work—hard work. I studied and applied different training techniques. I read about distance runners who were setting world records and how they trained. A highlight for me was when a friend and I rode a bus all night to watch a world-class indoor track meet in a distant city. Success came as I caught the vision, studied, applied what I learned, and

disciplined myself to achieve my goals.

The lessons I learned from running helped prepare me for my mission.

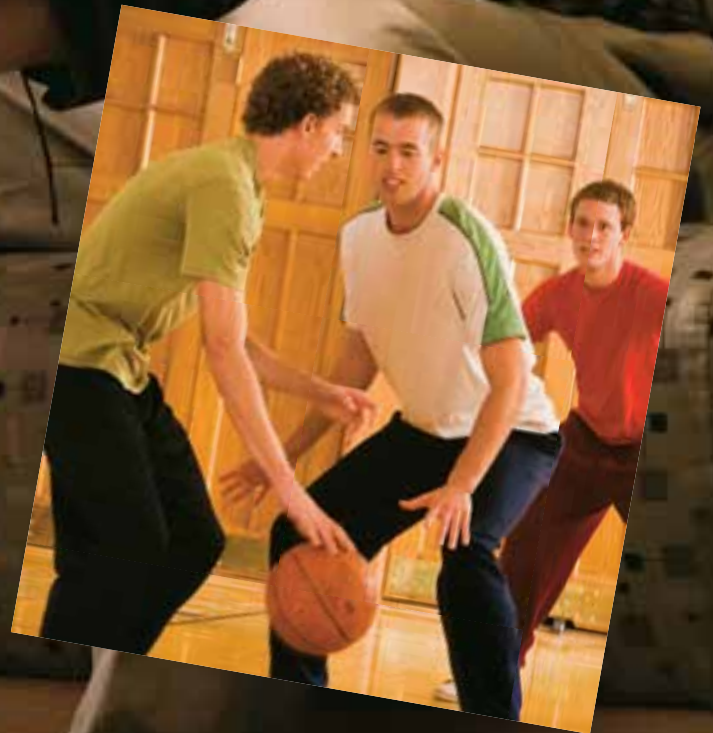
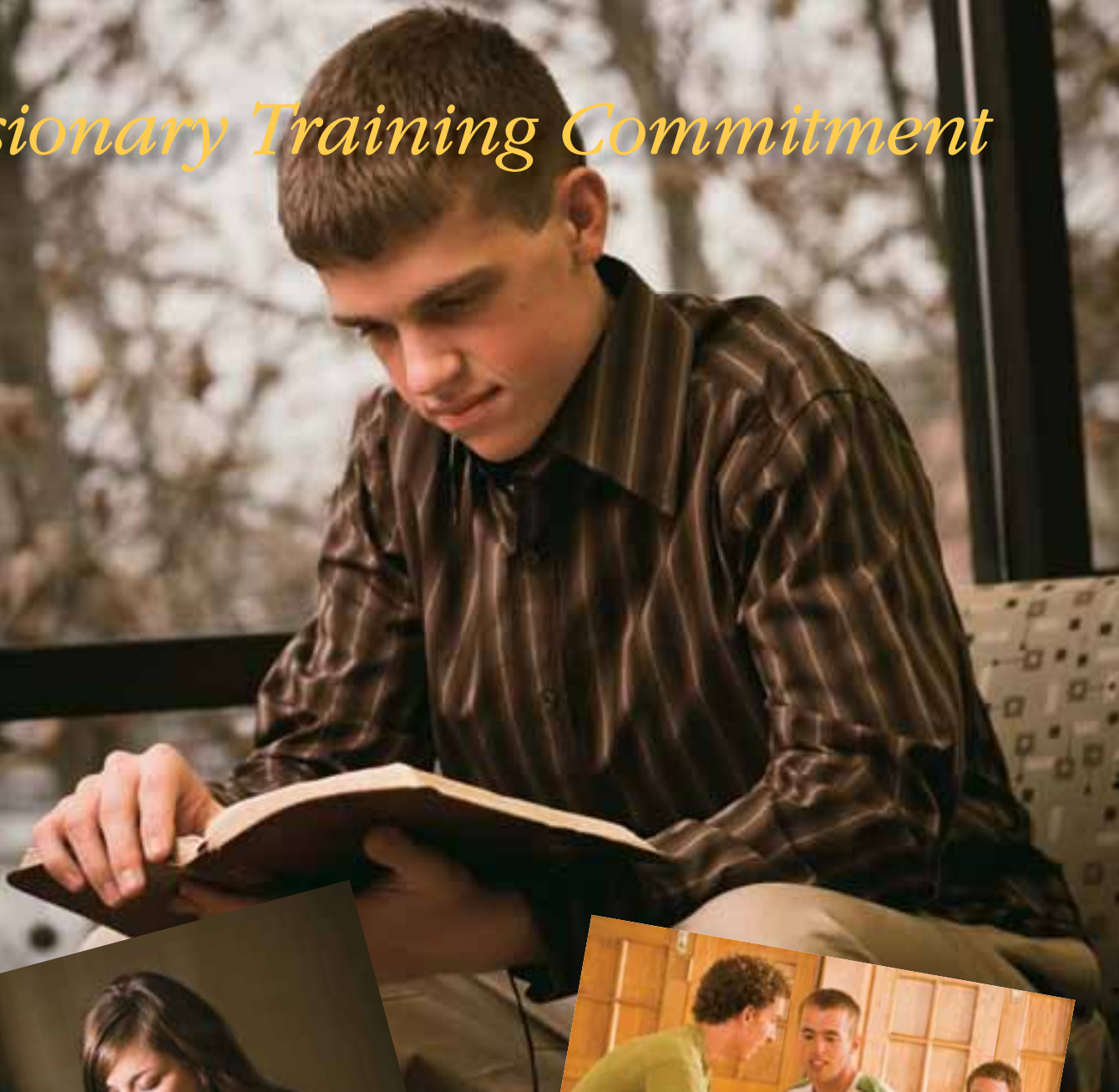
Pick the Best Friends, and Live Gospel Standards

An important part of preparing for a mission is to choose good friends and to have the courage to live gospel standards, no matter what others are doing. As we began high school, some of my friends began doing things that they shouldn't. While we remained on good terms, I chose to find new friends who wanted to keep the standards of the Church. I had always prayed and read the scriptures, which strengthened my commitment to keep Church standards and gave me the determination to live the commandments. That also helped me to make hard decisions and endure some lonely times.

Be Determined

Determination and the ability to make a commitment and then to stick to that commitment, no matter how difficult, give life meaning and teach discipline. That

Missionary Training Commitment



When we really understand what our Savior has done for us, then we want to share that message with others.



discipline—the ability to get up on time and keep going when it's raining, when it's hot, when it's cold, when it's miserable, and to go out and do what you need to do—is an important factor to success in running and in the mission field.

I always wanted to go on a mission, and preparing for a mission was always a part of me. I served in Aaronic Priesthood quorum leadership positions that taught me about service, how to lead, and how to do what the Lord would have me do. I earned my Duty to God and Eagle Scout awards, went to seminary, and took religion classes at BYU. I also went out with the full-time missionaries before my mission. I learned that daily prayer and scripture study are important and that everyone can make that decision and then do it each day.

Be Guided by Prayer

I was called to serve a mission in southern Mexico. When I was at the Language Training Mission in Provo, Utah, (which later became the Missionary Training Center) I had an experience with prayer that was a breakthrough for me in understanding and feeling a relationship with God. I gained a great love and appreciation for communication from the Holy Ghost. I remember one day, during my personal prayer, looking at the mountains and pouring out my heart to Heavenly Father and feeling for the first time in my life that there was real communication taking place. It was not just saying prayers; it was a true spiritual communication where I felt the Lord communicating with my spirit and confirming my testimony and determination to serve Him.

That experience was an important milestone for me, and I learned that the guidance of the Holy Ghost is one of the most important things that can happen in your life. There were times on my mission when the Lord would reveal to me the places that I should go and the people with whom I should talk. The Lord not only prepares missionaries, but also prepares people to hear the mes-

sage. I remember knocking on the door of a family in Veracruz, Mexico. They let us in because they had been praying to God to send messengers to teach them His truth. They didn't know if there was a true church or not, but they were reaching out for the truth. Two days later we knocked on their door. We were guided by the Spirit to be at that place and at that time to answer the prayers of those people.

Know the Savior and His Prophets

As a missionary, you need to know that Joseph Smith is a prophet, that the Book of Mormon is true, and that Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet, seer, and revelator. In order to be effective, you also need to begin to understand the Atonement of the Savior. You should strive, through your own personal study and prayer, to really understand what the Savior has done for you—that He literally paid the price for your sins. If you really understand that, you are going to want to share that wonderful message with others. Sharing the message of the Atonement and watching it change the lives of people is a marvelous experience to witness as a missionary. The mission is not just about you; it's about the people you serve. The Spirit can prompt you, as a missionary, to respond because of someone else's faith and to help them recognize the Spirit and become converted. When you watch the people you teach come to that conversion by the Spirit, you know that their testimony and commitment will carry them through hard times.

Preparing for a mission should be a part of your life every day. Your decisions and the good things you are involved in can prepare you to serve in the mission field. That service and the love you gain for the people you teach and work among will bring you joy and satisfaction throughout your life. As you learn self-discipline, choose good friends, and strengthen your testimony through study and prayer, you will be prepared for your mission and a lifetime of service in the Lord's kingdom. **NE**

HOW CAN I COME TO KNOW CHRIST?

How well do you know the Savior? Think about the role He plays in your life. Is He a part of your daily activities, or do you think about Him only when it's time to go to church?

The youth in the La Mirada Ward, Whittier California Stake, realized they can draw closer to the Savior by making small changes in the things they already do every day: praying and reading the scriptures. Adding more depth and sincerity to these activities can help you, too, grow closer to Jesus Christ.

Say Your Prayers

Take time to listen when you pray. Imagine having a conversation with a friend who always talks and never lets you respond. Are your prayers ever like that? Instead, try to ponder about your life. Express gratitude. When you ask for help, pause to listen for answers.

Make your prayers personal. Amulek taught the Zoramites to pray about everything in their lives, from their families to their fields and their flocks (see Alma 34:17–25). Even if you don't have flocks and fields to pray over, try praying about your schoolwork or your relationships with your family and friends.

Pray often. In fact, the scriptures tell us to “pray always” and, if we can't pray out loud, to keep a prayer in our hearts (see D&C 10:5; 2 Nephi 32:9; Alma 34:26).

Read the Scriptures

Read the Book of Mormon. It's called “Another Testament of Jesus Christ” for a good reason. It refers to the Savior an average of once every 1.7 verses.

Read about His life. The four gospels in the New Testament aren't meant to be biographies, but these books tell us a lot about the world Jesus lived in and, more importantly, what He is like and what He taught.

Read the Savior's own words. All scripture is the word of God, and some verses are direct quotes. Study His teachings and apply them in your life.

Study the Savior's names and titles. Look up the entry “Christ, Names of,” in the Bible Dictionary. You can read all of the listed verses if you want, or select a name that interests you and read the verses listed next to it. Each name or title tells us something about the Savior's nature and mission. As you learn about each one, you can gain a deeper understanding of who He is. **NE**



SERVICE COMES FROM THE HEART

BY LACY
DOUGLASS

Michael and his mom moved into our ward when he was 11. Like the other boys in the ward, he was excited to receive the Aaronic Priesthood and pass the sacrament when he turned 12. But unlike the other boys, passing the sacrament would be a challenge for him.



Michael was born prematurely and suffered such severe brain damage that doctors doubted he'd develop normally. The fact that Michael has cognitive skills at the same level as his peers is nothing short of a miracle, but he still deals with physical limitations.

Michael can walk only with assistance, and he needs help taking care of basic needs. Still, he attends church, participates in his classes, and shares his testimony with others.

When Michael was ordained a deacon, some people in our ward wondered how he would be able to pass the sacrament with the rest of the boys his age. One of his fellow deacons found a solution. This young man pushed Michael's wheelchair down the aisles of the chapel as Michael passed the sacrament tray.

We watched with tears in our eyes as Michael served us, and his friend served him. We learned that day that true service comes not only from hands, arms, or legs. Service also comes from the heart. **NE**

HE LIVES

BY CAMILLE SHOSTED

I had the opportunity to sing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" (*Hymns*, no. 136) at the General Young Women's Meeting in March 2000. As we practiced this hymn, it began to take on a different meaning to me, and the words have touched my life.

WALKING OUT

BY ANNA JEFFERIES

I breathed hard as my math teacher talked about our upcoming activity.

"I know most of you young people listen to rap," he said. "It's not very good music, and it's often hard to leave it alone."

He wanted to show us how bad it was by having the class count the seconds to the first swear word of each song. He explained that after we collected the data we were going to put it into graphs.

"Now, I expect you all to be mature about this," he lectured. "But if anyone's uncomfortable or you know your parents wouldn't approve, you can take your book and go into the hall."

I gripped my chair. I knew I couldn't stay here—but I was afraid to move. No one else seemed to be thinking the same thing I was. "I'll be the only one if I leave," I told myself.

I rationalized that maybe it would be okay if my teacher stopped the

The beginning of the hymn says, "He lives, who once was dead." That is a powerful statement because so many people don't believe in Christ's Resurrection. I feel so blessed because I do. The hymn goes on to say, "He lives to wipe away my tears." It doesn't say He will take

song after the first swear word.

I was so petrified to stand up that I lost my chance to leave. The first song came on, and I felt my heart sink as the Spirit disappeared from the room.

The song ended, and its data was written on the board. Before I could think, another song blared curse words through the speakers. I couldn't take it anymore. I knew that this kind of music drove away the Spirit, and that Heavenly Father didn't want me listening to it. I picked up my book and asked the teacher if I could leave. As I walked out of the room, the Spirit returned, and I knew I had done the right thing. **NE**

them away, but to me it means He will stand by us, listen, and comfort us in our times of need.

There is power and strength in the words of this hymn. It has strengthened my testimony. I know that Jesus Christ lives and loves us and that He will always help us. **NE**



FAITH OF A CHILD

BY KATY L. JEPSON

A few years ago, my family and I were driving home when we decided to stop by a friend's house to see their new baby goats. My little sisters, in their excitement, managed to lock the keys in the van. We were far from home, and my dad was working, so he couldn't bring us his set of keys.

My mother started to get frustrated. She enlisted the help of a local fireman who tried for 45 minutes to unlock the door, but to no avail. He threw a hopeless glance at my mother, said he was sorry, and walked back to the fire station across the street.

Once the fireman had retreated, six-year-old Leah plopped herself down on her knees and proceeded to offer a fervent prayer to help us get home.

My mother watched in

silence and gave Leah a giant hug as soon as she was finished.

About 10 minutes later, my mother's friend pulled up. Her husband emerged from the car and asked what the problem was. After we explained, he reached into his pocket and pulled out his keys. "I used to have an old Ford van just like this one. I still have the keys. Shall we give it a try?" We were all for it, and, miracle of miracles, the key fit!

We gave out a whoop and piled into the van. As my mom started the engine, little Leah approached her and said, "See, Mommy? Heavenly Father always helps us when we ask him."

Once she heard these words, my mother's eyes filled with tears. She praised Leah for doing the right thing. Leah taught us all a very important lesson that day—to turn to our Father in Heaven. We should all remember to have the faith of a little child. **NE**

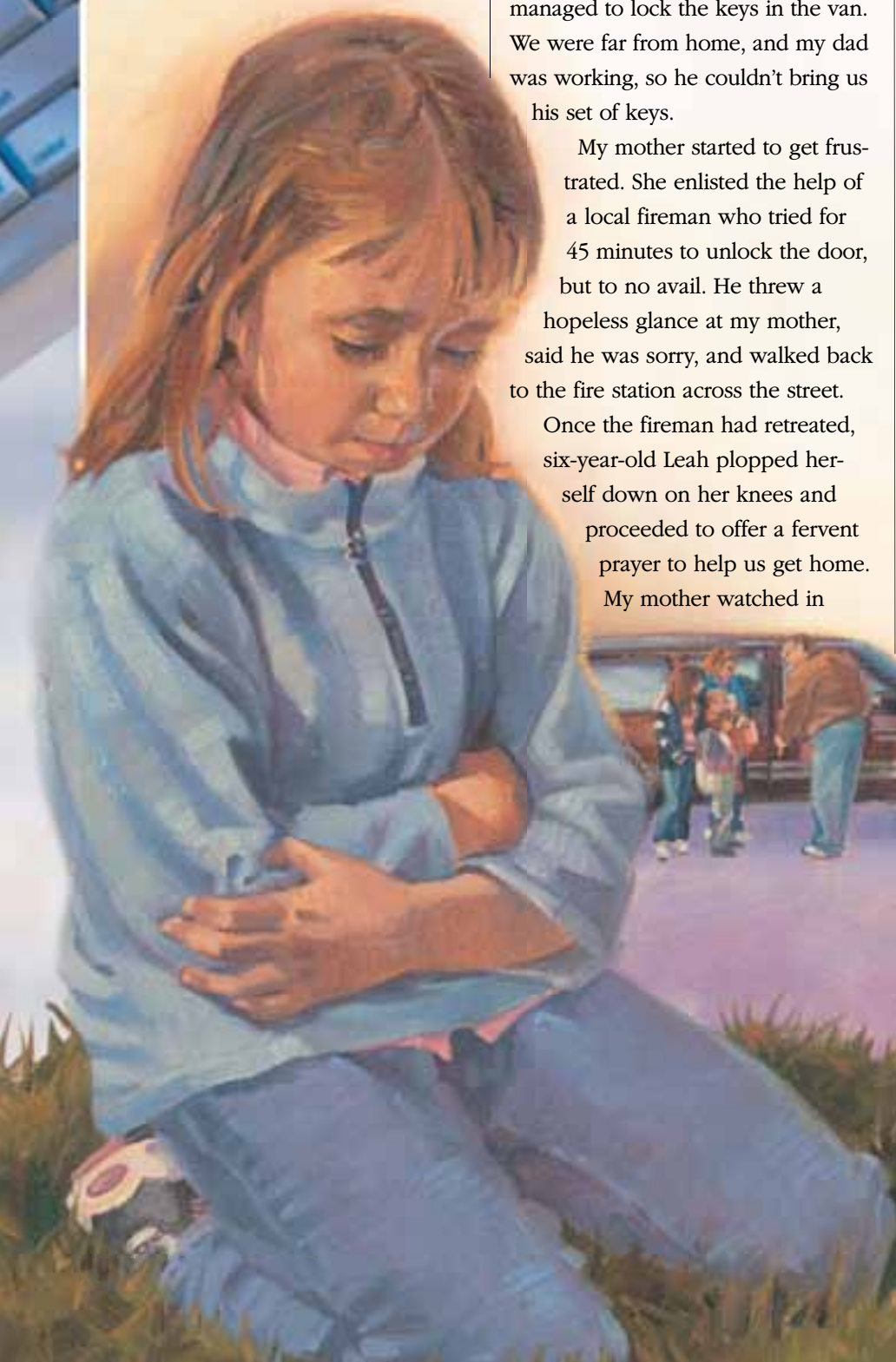
INSTANT MESSAGES features personal experiences, insights into favorite hymns and scriptures, and other uplifting thoughts. If you have a personal experience that has strengthened your testimony and you'd like us to consider it for Instant Messages, please e-mail it to

newera@ldschurch.org

or send it to:

New Era, Instant Messages
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA

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



Mutual Activity Idea

- Make a plan to learn some ballroom dances. Ask someone to give some dance instruction for the waltz, foxtrot, the swing, or line dancing. Make the evening fun by changing partners often.

Personal Progress or Duty to God

- Have your mother or father help you develop your cooking skills. If your family has some specialties, learn how to make them, and serve them for a family home



evening. Be sure to keep the recipes neatly copied with all the instructions. In addition, write the family story that goes with these recipes. Where did they come from? Why did they become special?

Family Home Evening Idea

- If your younger brothers or sisters have some favorite books, make some audio recordings of yourself reading the books aloud. When they want to listen to the books, they will have a recording of you doing the reading. Or make a recording of your father or mother reading the book aloud. You may want to use stories from the Church magazines as part of your recording.

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 12–15.

Young Women Manual 3

Lesson 12: The Blessings of the Priesthood

- Kristine Kennedy, “A Blessing Away from Home,” *New Era*, Dec. 2006, 41.
- Idea List: “Priesthood Power,” *New Era*, May 2007, 13.
- Andrea Cartwright, “Living Proof,” *New Era*, Nov. 2005, 32.

Lesson 13: The Priesthood Can Bless Families

- Lowell M. Snow, “To Be Together,” *New Era*, July 2007, 40.
- Scott Bean, “The Truth about My Family,” *New Era*, Mar. 2003, 26.

Lesson 14: We Have a Wonderful Legacy

- “Timeline 2000,” *New Era*, Jan. 2000, 20.
- Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Debt You Owe,” *New Era*, July 2001, 8.

Lesson 15: Blessings of the House of Israel

- The March 1997 issue of the *New Era* is a special issue on temples.
- “Baptisms for the Dead: What to Know before You Go,” *New Era*, Apr. 2004, 34.
- Shanna Butler, “What Abraham’s Covenant Means to You,” *New Era*, Apr. 2006, 32.

Aaronic Priesthood Manual 3

Lesson 12: Repentance

- Jay E. Jensen, “Do You Know How to Repent?” *New Era*, Nov. 1999, 4.
- Q&A (how can I repent when I don’t feel sorry), July 2006, 14.

Lesson 13: Receiving Forgiveness as We Forgive

- Eric Hoyt, “Forgiveness and Football,” this issue, 6.
- “Can I Be Forgiven?” *New Era*, Mar. 2000, 8.
- Amanda Denison, “It’s Hard to Forgive,” *New Era*, July 2005, 47.

Lesson 14: The Sacrament

- Q&A (I don’t feel worthy to take the sacrament), Mar. 1997, 16.
- Ron Frandsen, “Passing Up Passing the Sacrament,” *New Era*, May 2006, 30.

Lesson 15: Enduring to the End

- W. Craig Zwick, “Ponder, Pray, Perform, Persevere,” *New Era*, May 2007, 40.
- David A. Edwards, “Face Trials with Smiles,” *New Era*, Feb. 2008, 18.
- Q&A (life is so hard), Aug. 2006, 14.

TOO BUSY TO CARE

I liked the article “Too Busy to Care” (June 2007) because it made me realize that chores are actually teaching me responsibility. It’s easier to listen and do what I’m supposed to than suffer a bad consequence. I know that I am not always as responsible as I should be, and from now on I will be willing to listen closer to my parents and do the chores they want me to do.

Lindsey W., Washington

I FEEL HAPPY INSIDE

I really enjoy getting your magazine each month. I like the stories about the families and people who have musical talents. I like reading “Extra Smile” with my younger brothers and sisters. Whenever I read the *New Era* I feel happy inside and feel the Spirit.

Jacob S., California

IT TAUGHT ME A LESSON

I liked the article “Where Will It Lead?” from the August 2007 issue. It taught me a great lesson. I know that our choices will bring either good results or bad results. I love to read the *New Era* because when I read it, I learn new things. When it first arrives, I run and get it. I feel the Spirit guide me, and it helps me to walk in the right way.

Vaitai H., Tonga

THINK THE BEST

I wanted to say thank you for the article “Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts Unceasingly” by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland in the October 2007 issue. I was very interested in

*Whenever I read
the New Era
I feel happy
inside and feel
the Spirit.*

the story about the returned missionary who bore his testimony about staying worthy to use his priesthood. I have just been ordained a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, and I know that it is up to me to make the right decisions and to do what is right to be worthy to do my home teaching, help with the sacrament, and go to the temple to do baptisms for the dead.

Bryan P., Virginia

ZACK CLARK

I listened online to Zack Clark (featured in the Aug. 07 issue). It is a beautiful interpretation. He plays the cello very well. He serves others by means of the talent he has developed, and now on his mission, I am sure he will bless many souls. Gracias!

Diana R., Colombia

MISSIONARY ISSUE

Thank you for the March 2007 missionary preparation issue. I really enjoyed it, and it has really helped me get ready for my mission. It has inspired me to help the elders in my ward much more. I am now very excited about serving a mission. I know it’s the right thing to do. I already love doing the work here, so a mission will be brilliant. Thanks again.

Michael J., Scotland

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

THE TRUMPET SOUNDS

BY MATTHEW WRIGHT

Come now, all Saints of God on earth
Who battle to be free.
The war for goodness now is fought.
We fight for liberty.
For Satan, O that cunning one,
Is waging now the fight
Against the servants of the Lord
Who honor truth and right.
The trumpet sounds, a mighty shout
Is heard both far and near.
It calls for all who love the Lord
To battle without fear.
Then we with Him, so powerful,
Shall make all evil flee,
Establish goodness in the land
For all eternity.





COMING NEXT MONTH

- *What does it mean to be a good shepherd?
Who are the sheep?*
- *What should we do when bad lyrics and music creep
into our minds?*
- *Read about preparing to go to the temple for yourself.*
- *Can eating lunch with someone make such a difference
in his life?*

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

SEE US ONLINE AT WWW.NEWERA.LDS.ORG