

THE **New Era**

MARCH 2010

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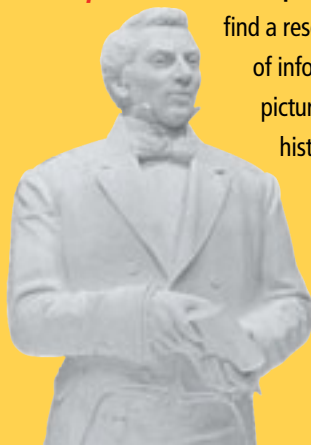
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Hannah Stayner

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WHAT'S ONLINE

Want to learn more about the Prophet Joseph Smith? At JosephSmith.net you'll



find a resource center full of information, quotes, pictures, and photos of historical sites.

Did you know the Church provides a helping hand to people all over the world? Take a look at ProvidentLiving.org

for examples, a fact sheet, and ideas about self-reliance.



Have you seen the new Web site for youth? Find messages from Church leaders, videos, youth testimonies, and much more at Youth.Lds.org. Check it out, and tell your friends.

What's on the New Era Web page? This month at NewEra.Lds.org you'll find videos, music, Q&As, Mormonads, articles, games, and much more.



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FINDING *Forgiveness*



Recently, while traveling on an unfamiliar road, I encountered a large temporary sign declaring Rough Road Ahead, and indeed it was. Had I not been warned, that experience would have been disastrous. Life is like that. It's full of rough spots. Some are tests to make us stronger. Others result from our own disobedience. Helpful warnings in our personal life can also save us from disaster. A damaged road presents the same obstacles to every traveler until others repair it. The highway of life is different. Each one of us encounters unique challenges meant for

***For your peace
now and
for everlasting
happiness,
please repent.***

growth. Also, our own bad choices can put more barriers in the path. Yet we have the capacity to smooth out the way, to fill

in the depressions, and to beautify our course. The process is called repentance; the destination is forgiveness.

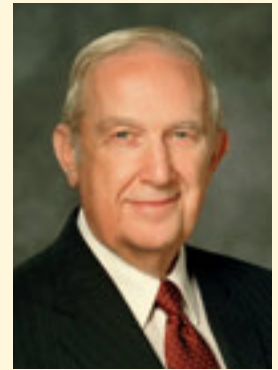
If you have ignored warnings and your life has been damaged or disabled by a rough road, there is help available. Through that help you can renew and rebuild your damaged life. You can start over again and change your course from a downward, twisting, disappointing path to a superhighway to peace and happiness.

I want to help you find that relief. To do that it is necessary to give you some background information that will make the remedy more logical and the steps to healing more meaningful.

Understand the Atonement

Every incorrect choice we make, every sin we commit is a violation of eternal law. That violation brings negative results we generally soon recognize. There are also other consequences of our acts of which we may not be conscious. They are nonetheless real. They can have a tremendous effect on the quality of our life here and most certainly will powerfully affect it hereafter. We can do nothing of ourselves to satisfy the demands of justice for a broken eternal law. Yet, unless the demands of justice are paid, each of us will suffer endless negative consequences.

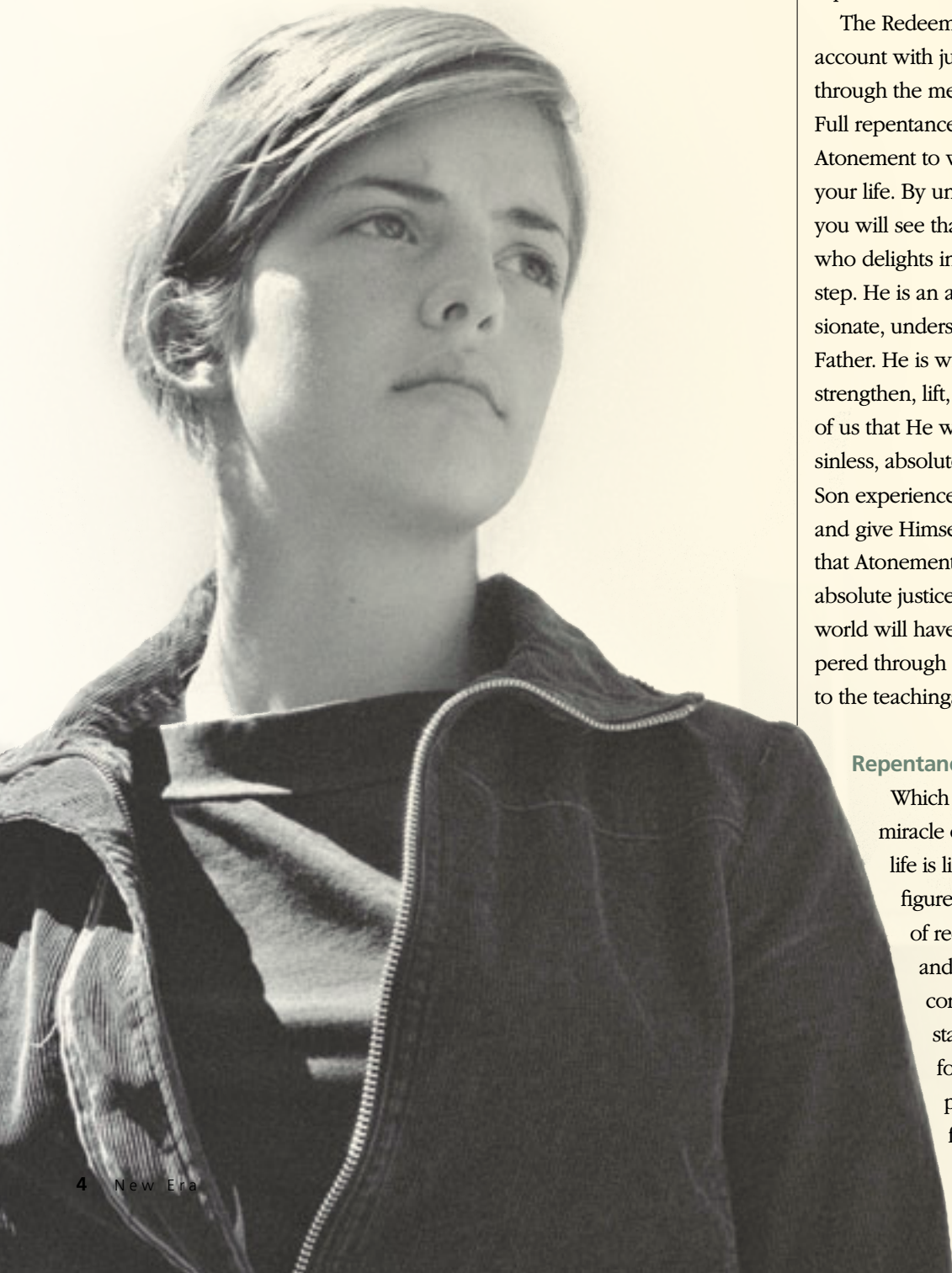
Only the life, teachings, and particularly the Atonement of Jesus Christ can release us from this otherwise impossible predicament. Each of us has made mistakes, large or small, which if unresolved will keep us from the presence of God. For this reason, the Atonement of Jesus Christ is the single most significant event that ever has or ever will occur. This selfless act of



By Elder Richard G. Scott

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

When repentance is full and one has been cleansed, there comes a new vision of life and its glorious possibilities.



infinite consequence, performed by a single glorified personage, has eternal impact in the life of every son and daughter of our Father in Heaven—without exception.¹ It shatters the bonds of death. It justifies our finally being judged by the Master.² It can prevent an eternity under the control of the devil.³ It opens the gates to exaltation and eternal life for all who qualify for forgiveness through repentance and obedience.⁴

The Redeemer can settle your individual account with justice and grant forgiveness through the merciful path of repentance.⁵ Full repentance is absolutely essential for the Atonement to work its complete miracle in your life. By understanding the Atonement, you will see that God is not a jealous being who delights in persecuting those who misstep. He is an absolutely perfect, compassionate, understanding, patient, and forgiving Father. He is willing to entreat, counsel, strengthen, lift, and fortify. He so loves each of us that He was willing to have His perfect, sinless, absolutely obedient, totally righteous Son experience indescribable agony and pain and give Himself in sacrifice for all.⁶ Through that Atonement we can live in a world where absolute justice reigns in its sphere so the world will have order. But that justice is tempered through mercy attainable by obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Repentance is the path to forgiveness

Which of us is not in need of the miracle of repentance? Whether your life is lightly blemished or heavily disfigured from mistakes, the principles of recovery are the same. The length and severity of the treatments are conditioned to fit the circumstances. Our goal surely must be forgiveness. The only possible path to that goal is repentance, for it is written: “*There is no*

other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. . . .

“The Lord . . . [will] not come to redeem [His people] *in* their sins, but to redeem them *from* their sins.

“And he hath power given unto him from the Father to redeem them *from* their sins *because of repentance.*”⁷

Obedience and faith in the Savior give you power to resist temptation. Helaman taught: “It is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, . . . when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to . . . endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, . . . whereon if men build they cannot fall.”⁸

Forgiveness comes through repentance. What is repentance? How is it accomplished? What are its consequences? These may seem to be simple questions, but it is clear that many do not know how to repent.

Follow the steps of repentance

In *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) gives a superb guide to

forgiveness through repentance. It has helped many find their way back. He identifies five essential elements of repentance.

SORROW FOR SIN

Study and ponder to determine how serious the Lord defines your transgression to be. That will bring healing sorrow and remorse. It will also bring a sincere desire for change and a willingness to submit to every requirement for forgiveness. Alma taught, “Justice

Full repentance is absolutely essential for the Atonement to work its complete miracle in your life.



exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved.”⁹

ABANDONMENT OF SIN

This is an unyielding, permanent resolve to not repeat the transgression. By keeping this commitment, the bitter aftertaste of that sin need not be experienced again.

Remember: “But unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return.”¹⁰ Joseph Smith declared: “Repentance is a thing that cannot be trifled with every day. Daily transgression and daily repentance is not . . . pleasing in the sight of God.”¹¹

CONFESSION OF SIN

You always need to confess your sins to the Lord. If they are serious transgressions, such as immorality, they need to be confessed to a

bishop or stake president. Please understand that confession is not repentance. It is an essential step, but is not of itself adequate. Partial confession by mentioning lesser mistakes will not help you resolve a more serious, undisclosed transgression. Essential to forgiveness is a willingness to fully disclose to the Lord and, where necessary, His priesthood judge all that you have done. Remember, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”¹²

RESTITUTION FOR SIN

You must restore as far as possible all that which is stolen, damaged, or defiled. Willing restitution is concrete evidence to the Lord that you are committed to do all you can to repent.

OBEDIENCE TO ALL THE COMMANDMENTS

Full obedience brings the complete power of the gospel into your life with strength to focus on the abandonment of specific sins. It includes things you might not initially consider part of repentance, such as attending meetings, paying tithing, giving service, and forgiving others. The Lord said: “He that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven.”¹³

I would add a sixth step:

RECOGNITION OF THE SAVIOR

Of all the necessary steps to repentance, I testify that the most critically important is for you to have a conviction that forgiveness comes because of the Redeemer. It is essential to know that only on His terms can you be forgiven. Witness Alma’s declaration: “I was . . . in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But . . . I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul.”¹⁴ You will be helped as you exercise faith in Jesus Christ.¹⁵ That means you trust Him and you trust His teachings. Satan would have you believe that serious transgression cannot be

entirely overcome. The Savior gave His life so that the effects of all transgression can be put behind us, save the shedding of innocent blood and the denial of the Holy Ghost.

The fruit of true repentance is forgiveness, which opens the door to receive all of the covenants and ordinances provided on this earth and to enjoy the resulting blessings. When a repentant soul is baptized, all former sins are forgiven and need not be remembered. When repentance is full and one has been cleansed, there comes a new vision of life and its glorious possibilities. How marvelous the promise of the Lord: “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.”¹⁶ The Lord is and ever will be faithful to His words.

Serious sins require deep repentance

Do not take comfort in the fact that your transgressions are not known by others. That is like an ostrich with his head buried in the sand. He sees only darkness and feels comfortably hidden. In reality he is ridiculously conspicuous. Likewise our every act is seen by our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son. They know everything about us.

Adultery, fornication, committing homosexual acts, and other deviations approaching these in gravity are not acceptable alternate lifestyles. They are serious sins. Committing physical and sexual abuse are major sins. Such grave sins require deep repentance to be forgiven. President Kimball taught: “To every forgiveness there is a condition. The plaster must be as wide as the sore. The fasting, the prayers, the humility must be equal to or greater than the sin.”¹⁷ “It is unthinkable that God absolves serious sins upon a few requests. He is likely to wait until there has been long, sustained repentance.”¹⁸

If you have seriously transgressed, you will not find any lasting satisfaction or comfort

If you have ignored warnings and your life has been damaged or disabled by a rough road, there is help available.

in what you have done. Excusing transgression with a cover-up may appear to fix the problem, but it does not. The tempter is intent on making public your most embarrassing acts at the most harmful time. Lies weave a pattern that is ever more confining and becomes a trap that Satan will spring to your detriment.

Repent now

Sometimes the steps of repentance are initially difficult and painful, like the cleansing of a soiled garment. Yet, they produce purity, peace of mind, self-respect, hope, and finally, a new person with a renewed life and abundance of opportunity.

This scripture will help you know what to do: “Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, . . . because of their yielding their hearts unto God.”¹⁹

In closing, with all the tenderness and sincerity of heart I invite each one of you to thoughtfully review your life. Have you deviated from the standards that you know will bring happiness? Is there a dark corner that needs to be cleaned out? Are you now doing things that you know are wrong? Do you fill your mind with unclean thoughts? When it is quiet and you can think clearly, does your conscience tell you to repent?

For your peace now and for everlasting happiness, please repent. Open your heart to the Lord and ask Him to help you. You will earn the blessing of forgiveness, peace, and the knowledge you have been purified and made whole. Find the courage to ask the Lord for strength to repent, now. I solemnly witness that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer. I know that He lives. I testify that He loves you personally and will help you.

Obtain His forgiveness by repenting, now. **NE**

From an April 1995 general conference address.



NOTES

1. See Mosiah 5:10–13.
2. See 2 Nephi 2:10.
3. See 2 Nephi 9:7–9.
4. See 2 Nephi 2:5–8.
5. See Alma 42:15.
6. See Helaman 5:9.
7. Helaman 5:9–11; emphasis added.
8. Helaman 5:12.
9. Alma 42:24.
10. D&C 82:7.
11. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 148.
12. Proverbs 28:13.
13. D&C 1:32; emphasis added.
14. Alma 38:8.
15. See Alma 11:40; 2 Nephi 9:22–24.
16. D&C 58:42.
17. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 353.
18. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 85.
19. Helaman 3:35.

A woman with long, straight blonde hair is sitting on a dark, textured surface, possibly a log or a piece of driftwood, on a beach. She is wearing a white long-sleeved cardigan over a pink top, a yellow skirt with a black fringed hem, and a gold and black patterned scarf. Her hands are clasped together in her lap, and she is looking out towards the ocean under a soft, golden sunset sky. The word "SEEKING" is written in large, blue, sans-serif capital letters in the upper right corner of the image.

SEEKING

REVERENCE

By Kelsey Gurecki

Moments of peace in a chaotic world help you know God's love.

I attended general conference in person for the first time in October 2008 on a beautiful Sabbath morning in Salt Lake City. I went to the Conference Center, knowing that I would hear enlightening, uplifting, and inspired speeches. But I found that I was also touched by what I did not hear.

Before the session started, I saw the Apostles taking their respective seats, but I could not see the First Presidency. A few minutes passed, and when the several thousand people around me began to stand, I followed suit. It was then that I saw the First Presidency walk in. A hush fell over the room. I did not know that it was possible for so many people to be so silent; the quietness and reverence I witnessed was unforgettable!

I imagine that daily we are trying to feel the same reverence that I felt in that room on that lovely Sunday morning. But I've found that in a busy world it can be hard to find peace and reverence in our lives.

I went to a Young Women activity at a beach, where we all took 20 minutes to silently ponder and meditate. I sat on a rock, listened to the crashing waves, and saw the serene sunset. But I was disappointed to find

that even after 20 minutes, I still had not been able to find reverence. My distracted mind was too busy turning its wheels. I was consumed with my college application process. I was having trouble getting into my school of choice, and I felt like I had forgotten to breathe every once in a while.

When I realized I was having trouble feeling calm, I began praying for peace and relying on the Lord more. Instead of reciting a wish list in my prayers, I tried to remember that the Lord's will was more important than my own. I prayed for what the Lord wanted to happen, not what I wanted to happen.

I felt more at peace over the course of the next few months and saw miracles in my life. I realized the Lord was trying to show me that He loved me. The peace I felt helped me to know of His love. I know that it is possible to find reverence despite our everyday distractions. If we seek peace and reverence, then we can more fully usher in the feelings of love that come from our Heavenly Father. **NE**

REVERENCE AND REVELATION

“Reverence invites revelation. . . .

“The reverence we speak of does not equate with absolute silence. . . .

“No one of us can survive in the world of today, much less in what it soon will become, without personal inspiration. The spirit of reverence can and should be evident . . . in the lives of every member.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Reverence Invites Revelation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 22–23.

YOU



*If I were going the wrong way
in the middle of a marathon,
and I realized my mistake,
would I keep going?*

CAN

Return

By Elaine S. Dalton

Young Women General President



I am very aware that there are some of you who don't feel virtuous or who have made mistakes. That is why a return to virtue is so important. You must know that you can return. You can change.

If I were going the wrong way in the middle of a marathon, and I realized my mistake, would I keep going? I would immediately turn around! Why? Because I would have lost valuable time and precious energy and strength, and it would be much harder for me to finish the marathon because of this extra distance and added time. I wouldn't stay on the wrong course because no matter how long I ran there, I would never reach the finish line.

And yet for many who have made a moral mistake, a little voice keeps saying: "You blew it. You can't change. No one will ever know anyway." To you I would say, Don't believe it. "Satan wants you to think that you cannot repent, but that is absolutely not true" (*For the Strength of Youth* [2001], 30).

A return is always possible because of the Savior's Atonement. President Monson has said to each of us who have made mistakes: "If any of you has slipped along the way,

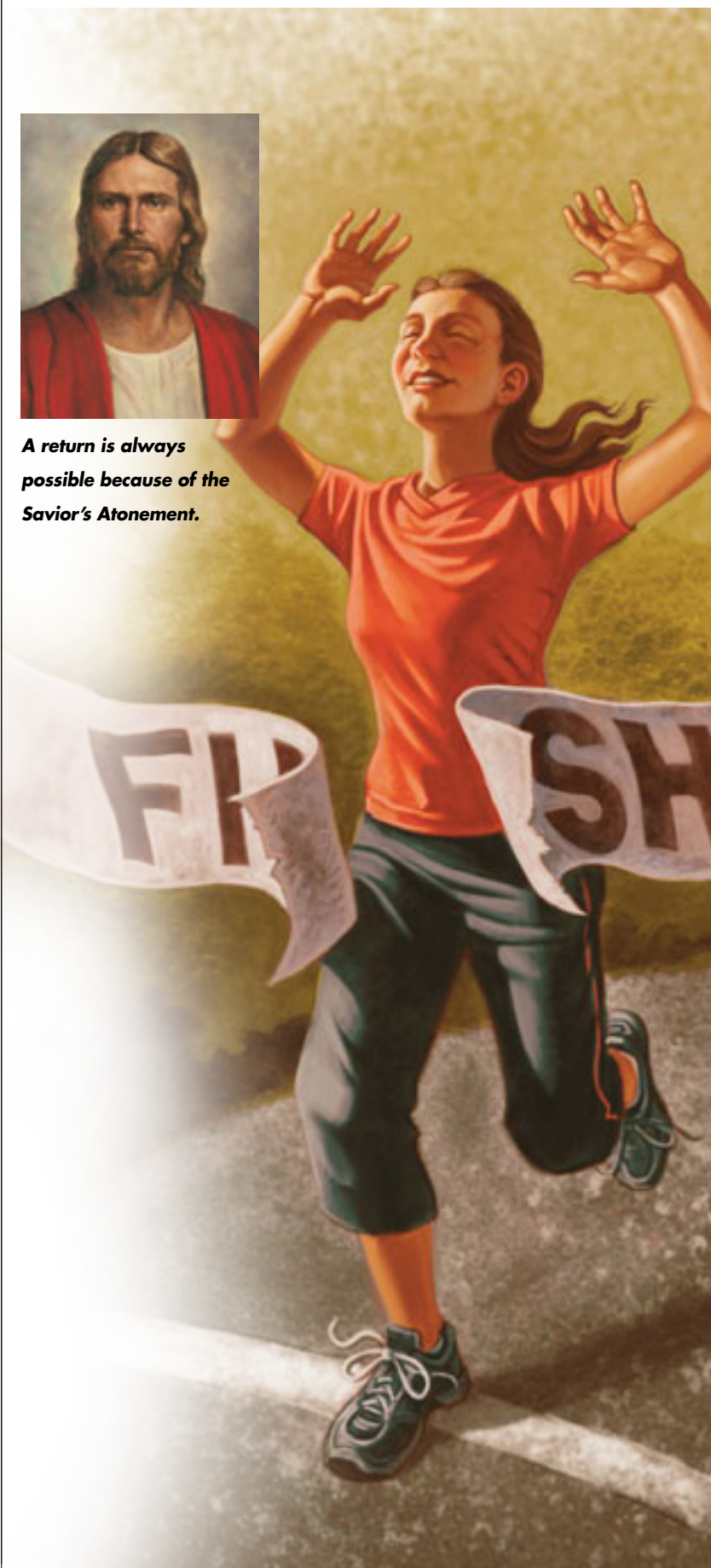
there are those who will help you to once again become clean and worthy. Your bishop or branch president is anxious and willing to help and will, with understanding and compassion, do all within his power to assist you in the repentance process, that you may once again stand in righteousness before the Lord" ("Examples of Righteousness," *Ensign*, May 2008, 65–66).

Some of you have been abused and are victims of the sinful acts of others. As Mormon said, you have been "deprived of that which [is] most dear and precious above all things, . . . chastity and virtue" (Moroni 9:9). Please know that because of the Savior's Atonement, healing is possible. You are not to blame, for you have not sinned and repentance is not required. The Savior suffered not only for our sins and imperfections, but He also took upon Himself our sorrows (see Alma 7:11). Through His infinite Atonement He will heal you and give you peace. Run to Him. Because of our Savior's Atonement, God the Father will hear your prayers. He will answer through the Holy Ghost and others who will be placed in your path.

I am so grateful for this doctrine and for



A return is always possible because of the Savior's Atonement.



the principle of repentance. Without it, none of us could ever return to our heavenly home pure and worthy to dwell in the presence of God the Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ. I am grateful for the restoration of priesthood power on the earth in these latter days that enables us to receive the help we need to return to virtue. This power also enables us to remain “unspotted from the world” (D&C 59:9) as we partake of the sacrament worthily. Each week as we renew our covenants, we promise to keep His commandments, to take His name upon us, and to always remember Him. And He, in turn, promises that we can always have His Spirit to be with us. (See D&C 20:77, 79.)

In a world that is so enticing and so appealing, it is imperative for each of us to receive, recognize, and rely on the guidance of the Holy Ghost. This wondrous gift will show each of us “all things [that we] should do” (2 Nephi 32:5). That is an absolute promise because the Holy Ghost is a member of the Godhead. Some of His roles are to teach, testify, comfort, and warn. This precious gift also purifies and sanctifies. Thus the Holy Ghost and virtue are inextricably connected. We can be purified “by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 31:17). When this occurs, “we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2).

As you repent, partake of the sacrament worthily, and listen to the promptings of the Holy Ghost, you will continue to be worthy of the blessings found in the Lord’s holy temples. It is there that you will be able to make and keep sacred covenants and receive the blessings of exaltation. This is a wonderful blessing of our Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness. **NE**

From a Church Educational System fireside for young adults on September 13, 2009.



*I would ask that your
faith and prayers continue to be
offered in behalf of those areas
where our influence is limited and
where we are not allowed
to share the gospel freely at this time.*

Miracles can occur as we do so.

President Thomas S. Monson, "Welcome to Conference,"
Ensign, Nov. 2009, page 6.

“How do I get to know people who are not Church members, be a good example to them, and invite them to church when I can’t spend time with them because they hang out at places I shouldn’t go?”

You’re right—there are definitely some places you shouldn’t go, but you can take advantage of the common ground that you do share with others. You can spend time with them at school, at work, or in extracurricular activities, like sports, clubs, volunteer organizations, or community activities. These are wonderful places to meet and befriend new people because you share common experiences and interests with them.

As you come to know people who are not members of the Church, you can develop better friendships with them by showing genuine interest in their lives, activities, and wellbeing. Be an example to them by being happy, positive, and kind. Your friends will see that there is something different about you, and they might be curious to know more. Always be ready to share how the gospel brings happiness and hope into your life (see 1 Peter 3:15). When you tell your friends how the gospel blesses you, you will find it easier to invite them to Church activities or meetings, where they may find the same happiness and joy. **NE**

Participate



I make new friends by participating in many different groups at school or through volunteer work. If you make friends in these ways, it will become easier for you to invite them to some Church activities, and your friendship with them will make it easier for them to come and feel comfortable. As they come, they may begin to feel the Spirit. Bring them to the activities so they can see other teens their age having fun and they can feel how happy everyone is.

Jintoku T., 19, Japan

Begin with Talking



Just as you do for any friendship, begin by talking with them. Even if it’s just a simple ‘hello,’ they will notice your friendliness. Show sincere interest in them and find opportunities to serve and help them. Service touches hearts and shows you care. If they ask you to participate with them in something you know you shouldn’t do, be an example and stand up for your beliefs. Politely decline their offer, give another suggestion of something to do, and don’t be afraid to tell them why so they understand more about the gospel. Be patient and pray to Heavenly Father. He knows the best way to help.

Sarah E., Utah

Ask Questions and Listen

When I want to get to know other people, I think ahead of some things I can ask them, and when I’m with them, I ask questions out of genuine curiosity and caring. For example, I ask them what class they like best at school or what classes they are going to take in the future. Every time I see them, I try to ask them some more questions about themselves and their lives, and then I listen.

Michaela S., Arizona

Be Friendly to Everyone



Just remember that all people are children of our Heavenly Father, whether they are members of the Church or not. Just be friendly to everyone and you will find something in common with anyone you meet. Then, when you become better friends, invite them to places that you can go, and eventually invite them to church.

Jennifer G., 18, Japan

Don't Be Shy



Be an example and ask your friends to hang out with you at school. You do not have to hang out in a bad place. Instead, invite them to your house or another place where you can feel the Spirit. Don't be shy just because you are not the same religion. Instead, you can focus on things that you have in common. Once you become good friends, you can invite them to church.

David B., 13, Utah

Invite Them to a Better Place



When you're making friends, don't feel like you have to follow them into certain places in order to be a light to them or to help them. You can't help or be an example in a place where you can't feel the Spirit. When you go to school or work or any other place where you might see these friends, that would be a perfect place to invite them to a Church activity. If at first your friends won't go to

activities, don't give up. Just keep on being a friend and an example.

Daniel B., 18, Texas

Follow Promptings from the Spirit



Always remember that letting your standards down to get to know someone is not worth trying. Try inviting people to come to Church dances or activities where a lot of members will be. Clean fun is the best fun. Also, remember to be a good example because a person's example can be seen anywhere, like at school in the halls, in class, or in the parking lot. That's when people see you, and you don't necessarily see them. Inviting people to church takes courage. Pray and follow the promptings of the Spirit to know when your friend is ready to follow your example. Be the best person and example that you can be and let Heavenly Father work through you.

Jasmin O., 19, Colorado

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



RADIATE THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL

There is no end to the good we can do, to the influence

we can have with others. Let us not dwell on the critical or the negative. Let us pray for strength; let us pray for capacity and desire to assist others. Let us radiate the light of the gospel at all times and all places, that the Spirit of the Redeemer may radiate from us."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "The Need for Greater Kindness," *Ensign*, May 2006, 61.

NEXT QUESTION

"When people ask me if I'm Mormon, how can I answer in a way that creates a missionary opportunity?"

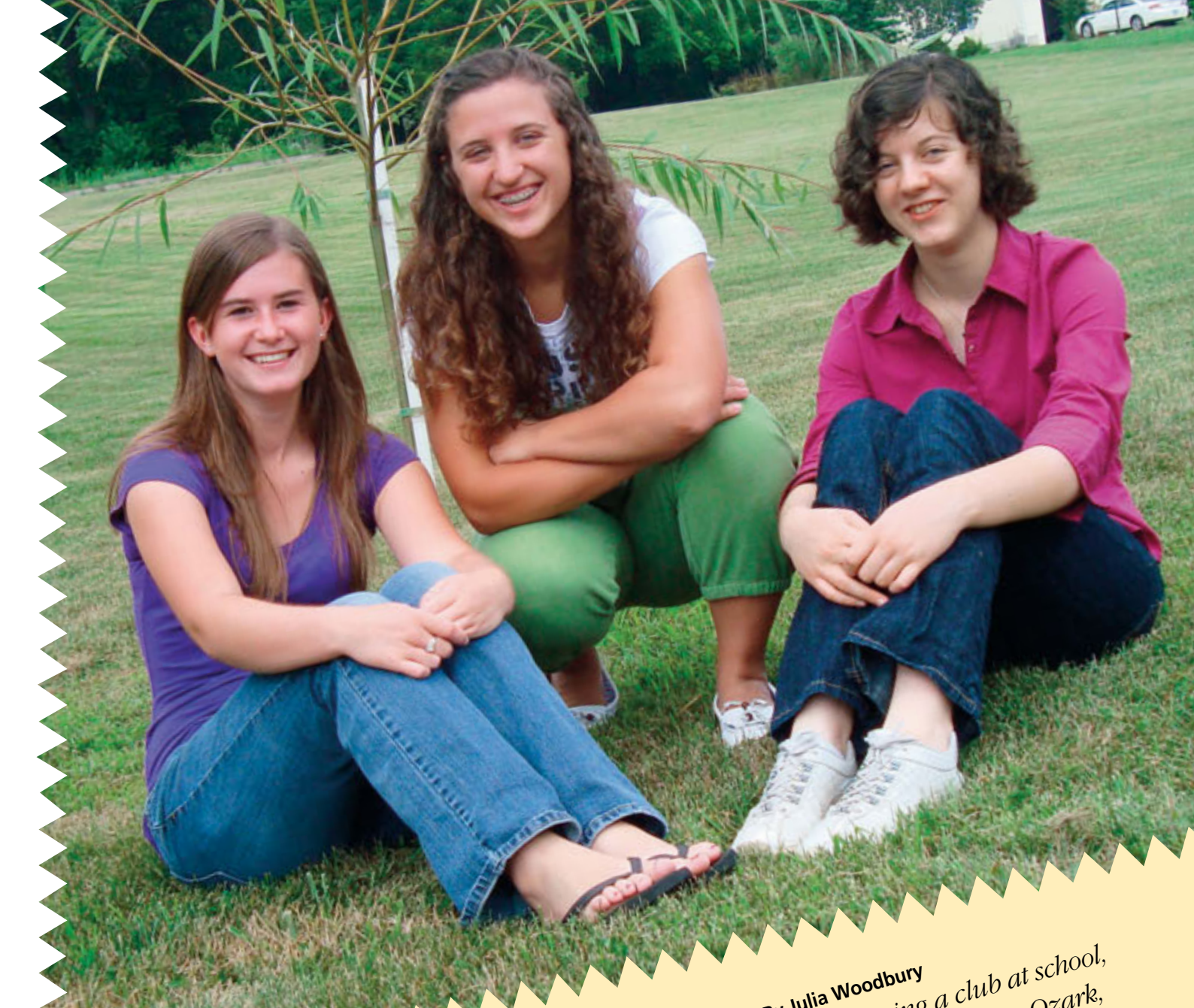
Send your answer and photo by April 15, 2010.

Go to newera.lds.org, click Submit Your Material, and then select Questions and Answers.

You can also write to us at:

newera@ldschurch.org
or

New Era, Q&A, missionary
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA



By Julia Woodbury
By organizing a club at school, these young women in Ozark, Missouri, learned just how much can be gained by giving.

TIME TO GIVE

Tenth grader Carrie Olson Falahi wanted to start a club, but her mind wasn't on drama or a specific sport. It was on people. "I've always had this idea that I could get people to go out into the community and help other people," she says.

Carrie, a Laurel in the Springfield Fourth Ward in Missouri, dreams of someday participating in worldwide humanitarian aid, and she didn't see a reason to wait until after high school to start pursuing that dream. "I really wanted to do something now, so why not start here in my own community?" she says.

Spending Time

She enlisted the help of fellow 10th grader Victoria Sutter and freshman Rebecca Carr to create a new kind of club for their school, the Youth in Action Club. The goal: to spend time—not money—in service. "I think time and service are among the most meaningful things you can give," Carrie explains.

Rebecca agrees, adding, "It's fun to get involved in a cause." Little did these friends know just how much they would gain by giving service to others.



It's Better When We're Together

They quickly discovered one of the blessings of service: it brings people together. When Victoria first heard about the club, she was enthusiastic. "I've always liked community service," she says, "but it's hard going out by myself and doing it." The club solved that problem. At the very first meeting 20 students showed up, eager to participate. With such a large group, it was easier not only to serve but also to make friends.

The club's first project was helping a local organization assemble care baskets for mothers with premature newborns. "We were all working close together, and everyone was talking to everyone," Victoria remembers. "I thought it was neat that we could be doing something for someone else while having fun and making new friends."

Giving service also had its rewards at the club's second project: preparing food at a local shelter where parents with severely ill children stay while their child is in the hospital. This was one of Rebecca's favorites because it played to her love for cooking and gave the students a chance to interact directly with the people they were serving. "It was fun to see the surprise on their faces when they saw that a bunch of teenagers could actually cook something that you could eat!"

True Teamwork

Since the club's beginning in February 2009, the three friends have learned other ways that spending time in service has helped them too. Striving toward the goal of having one



WE ARE THE LORD'S HANDS

"My brothers and sisters, we are surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness—be they family members, friends, acquaintances, or strangers. We are the Lord's hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us."

President Thomas S. Monson, "What Have I Done for Someone Today?" *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 86.



Far left: Club organizers are pictured left to right: Victoria Sutter, Carrie Olson Falahi, Rebecca Carr.

project per month, Carrie, Victoria, and Rebecca had to work hard together to organize each event, especially as their group grew from 20 to 50 members.

Before school let out for the summer, the club members put their muscle into helping a local care center for abused children store its stock of winter clothes and unpack its summer supplies. The club also spent a creative afternoon making scrapbooks for children.

With so much planning and organizing, everyone in the club became better team players. Carrie and Rebecca contributed service ideas from their youth group while Victoria found other service opportunities in the community. "The club helped me learn how to let other people share their ideas and do things their way," Rebecca reflects. "I've

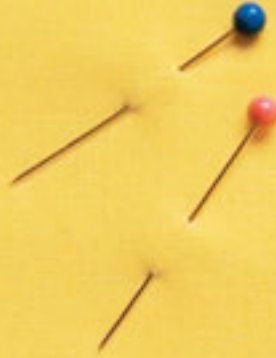
learned how to better interact with others."

The team effort of these friends was tested in their last month of school when, with only a week's notice, their club adviser asked them to organize a food drive, which they carried out with success.

Finding by Giving

Looking to the future, Carrie, Victoria, and Rebecca plan to expand their club and lay the foundation for it to continue. "We're hoping to have the club stay strong, even after we're done with high school," Rebecca says.

Leaving a legacy is important to these friends because they know the club has great lessons to offer. As they've served, Carrie, Victoria, and Rebecca have seen how true it is that you can find your life by giving it (see Matthew 16:25).



With all the friendship, interaction, teamwork, and fun, the Youth in Action Club members have received much more because of the service they've given. For Victoria, the club has taught her that the place to serve is here, and the time is now. "Why spend your time sitting around when you can be out doing something for people who can't do it for themselves?" she says. "You feel so much better knowing that you've done something that will be appreciated."

And for Carrie, giving her time in service has helped her gain new perspectives in her own life. "My attitude towards helping others has changed," Carrie says. "I've helped others through struggles in their lives. I have a new, more open perspective towards everyone." **NE**



HEAVENLY FATHER SMILES

When we reach out to bless the lives of others, our lives are blessed as well. Service and sacrifice open the windows of heaven, allowing choice blessings to descend upon us. Surely our beloved Heavenly Father smiles upon those who care for the least of His children. As we lift others, we rise a little higher ourselves."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Happiness, Your Heritage," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 119.

THE HAPPIEST PEOPLE

The happiest people I know are those who lose themselves in the service of others."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "Whosoever Will Save His Life," *Ensign*, Aug. 1982, 5.



NEmore

To see a video about the service club, go to youth.lds.org.

SERVING GOD

And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God."

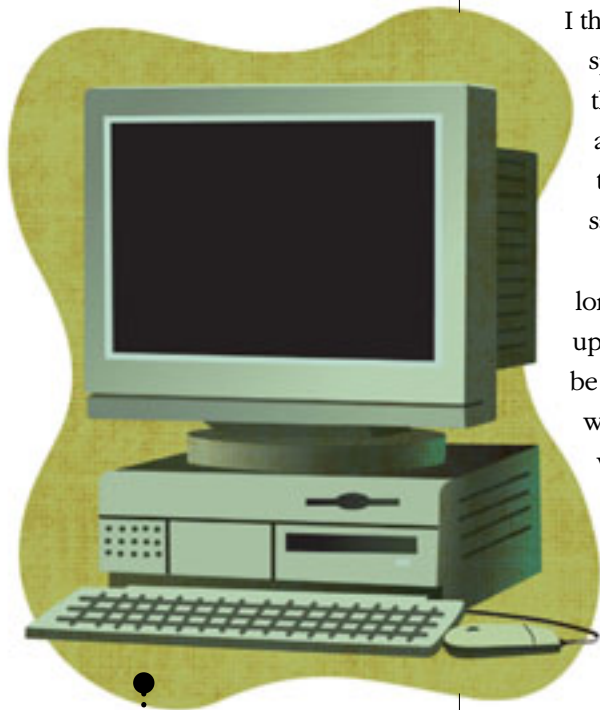
Mosiah 2:17



SEARCHING for the RIGHT CHURCH

By Roberto Pinheiro Rocha

Was there any church on earth led by a living prophet?



My friend Julyette and I were chatting online when she told me she was looking for a church that had a living prophet who spoke with God face-to-face.

I thought God had stopped speaking to men here upon the earth because we have a Bible, and I thought that was sufficient for our salvation.

But she said, "If God no longer called a prophet here upon the earth, He would be a liar, for He promised he would never do anything without calling prophets" (see Amos 3:7).

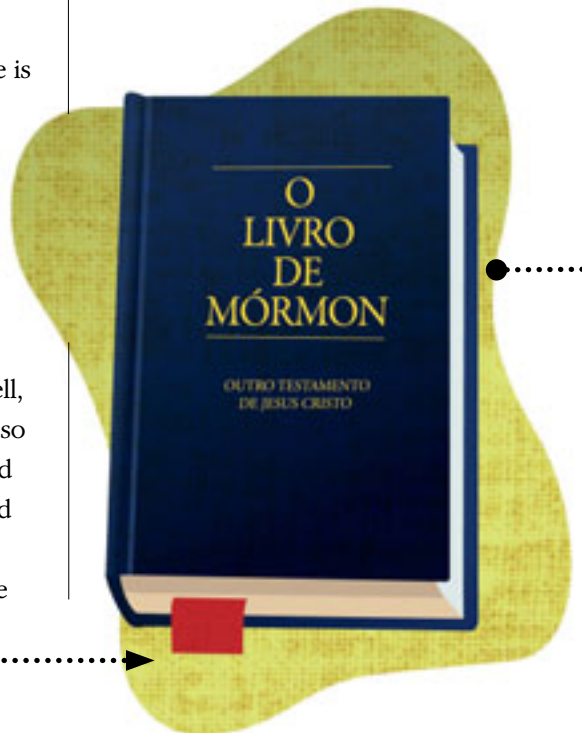
I asked her, "Where is this living prophet?" She did not know.

I began to reflect about how we could discover the right church.

I knew that there were many different Christian churches with different doctrines. I thought, "Well, the Internet has a lot of sources," so I searched for "the true persecuted church." I don't know why I typed it in that way, but several lists of churches appeared, including The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There are many Christian churches in Brazil, but I had never heard of this church.

Upon entering the Web site, I read the story of a 14-year-old boy who had seen God and Jesus Christ face-to-face and had translated the Book of Mormon by the power of God. I had never heard anything about Joseph Smith or the Book of Mormon before, and I thought it was interesting. But what caught my attention was that the Book of Mormon told of Jesus Christ appearing to the ancient inhabitants of the American continent.



THE WORD OF GOD



The evidence for [the Book of Mormon’s] truth and validity lies within the covers of the book itself. The test of its truth lies in reading it. It is a book of God. . . . Those who have read it prayerfully have come to know by a power beyond their natural senses that it is true, that it contains the word of God, that it outlines saving truths of the everlasting gospel.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “Four Cornerstones of Faith,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2004, 6.

I had a great desire to read this book, so I requested a copy. I told Juyette about the site, and after she read the story of Joseph Smith, she was certain this church was the Church of Jesus Christ. She said I had been prepared by the Lord to find the Church for her.

I was impressed with her conviction and wanted to know for myself. I asked my mother if she knew about the Book of Mormon. She told me my sister had a blue book from two missionaries. I borrowed the book and read it from cover to cover in one week; I wasn’t interested in anything else. What a feeling of peace I had! I remembered a promise that everyone who read the book should ask God if it were true, and He would respond (see Moroni 10:3–4).

Early in the morning I went to my room to offer a prayer. I placed my trust in God and asked Him if the book was true, and I felt a burning inside. I did not know what the feeling was, but I felt joy. That night

I had a dream in which a Book of Mormon prophet appeared. I asked him if the book was true, and he said it was. When I woke up I thought, “The Book of Mormon really *is* true.”

I asked around until I found someone who knew the directions to the church. One Friday I rode my bicycle to the chapel, but no one was there. I prayed for help to know when meetings were held. I

went again the following week. When I arrived, an elderly lady told me that Church meetings were on Sunday mornings. I returned home happy and excited with my heart beating rapidly.

When I arrived on Sunday

morning, I was well received by the members. I was impressed with the organization of the Church. I felt peace and joy in my heart during the meetings, and I asked the missionaries to come to my house to teach me. I returned home and told my mother that I had found the right religion.

The missionaries taught me about the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I already knew the story of Joseph Smith, so when they invited me to pray to learn the truth, I told them I had already received an answer and told them about my experience.

They were impressed with my testimony and suggested a date, May 15, 2004, for my baptism. In the meantime, my friend Juyette was also baptized. My baptism was the greatest joy of my life, and my friend and I are very happy we found the true Church of Jesus Christ. **NE**



ILLUSTRATIONS BY SCOTT GREER

By Danielle Monson

*It wasn't about winning or losing;
it was about feeling God's love.*

“**W**hy do my legs feel like bricks?” I thought anxiously as I jogged slowly around the warm-up field at the high school league track meet, where I was desperately hoping to qualify for the upcoming state championship in my favorite race, the 800 meters. My anxiety was more than just the usual pre-race butterflies. I had been battling a cold all week, and having just finished a race, I was worried that I was too exhausted to compete well in my event, which was within the next half hour. I thought about how defeated I would feel to have worked so hard all season only to fail when it counted most.

Suddenly my thoughts were interrupted by a familiar voice. “Hey, how are you feeling?” It was Joe, a local track coach who had come to watch the meet.

“Umm, I’ve been better,” I responded truthfully.

“Well, I’m looking forward to seeing you win the 800 today,” Joe smiled encouragingly.

“We’ll see,” I responded, “I haven’t been feeling well, so at this point I just hope I can make it through the





ILLUSTRATION BY DILLEEN MARSH

ME ON TRACK

race and qualify for State.”

“I’m sure you’ll be fine,”

Joe said. “Just relax and you’ll do OK!”

I wished I could feel so sure, but waves of doubt continued to wash over me. As the first call for the 800 meters came over the loud-speaker, I tried to mentally prepare myself for the race. Suddenly, I remembered that a prayer before a race always calmed me and helped me focus. I needed that more than ever, so I found a secluded area on the field and silently began to pray.

“Heavenly Father,” I offered quietly, “I feel so weak today and really need Thy help. I am going to try my very best out there on the track, but please meet me halfway.”

I heard the final call for my race and ended my prayer quickly. A warm peace filled my heart, and I knew that Heavenly Father had heard my quiet plea for help. I calmly took my place on the starting line and waited for the starting gun. Suddenly the official yelled, “RUNNERS TAKE YOUR MARK . . . SET . . .” and the gun was fired.

I took my first few strides with ease, noting how light

“When I needed extra help before the race, Heavenly Father answered my prayer.”

my legs were. I felt as though something special was inside of me. I felt strong and swift, despite having felt so terrible only moments before. As I approached the home stretch of the race, I realized I was in the lead, and before I knew it, I was crossing the finish line in first place!

Joe motioned me over to him as I stepped off the track. “Hey, that race was great! I thought you were sick? What got into you?”

I smiled back. “I *was* sick, and I was praying that I would be able to get through that race!”

Joe chuckled and replied, “That’s great that you prayed, but I don’t think God really cares that much about track and field.”

I paused for a moment and then softly responded, “You’re right! I don’t think He cares very much about track at all, but I know He cares about me.”

As I walked away, I felt the same peace return to my heart that I had felt before my race. I knew Heavenly Father was confirming what I had just told Joe—that He did care about me—and what I had said was true. I thanked Heavenly Father for that assurance. Knowing I was loved by Heavenly Father was the best feeling I had ever felt, even better than winning a race! **NE**

Caught in a

Don't be trapped like a monkey. You can let go.



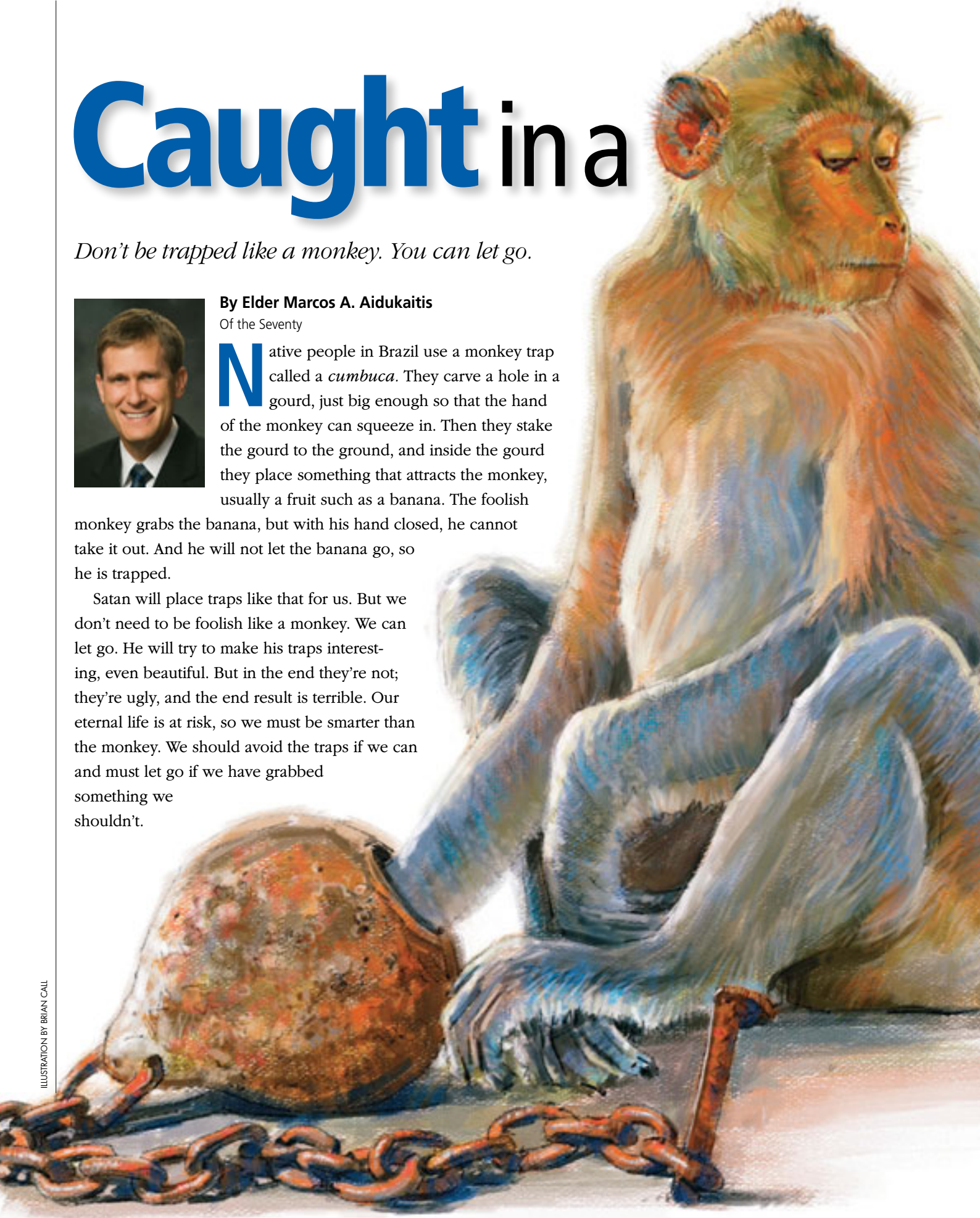
By Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis

Of the Seventy

Native people in Brazil use a monkey trap called a *cumbuca*. They carve a hole in a gourd, just big enough so that the hand of the monkey can squeeze in. Then they stake the gourd to the ground, and inside the gourd they place something that attracts the monkey, usually a fruit such as a banana. The foolish

monkey grabs the banana, but with his hand closed, he cannot take it out. And he will not let the banana go, so he is trapped.

Satan will place traps like that for us. But we don't need to be foolish like a monkey. We can let go. He will try to make his traps interesting, even beautiful. But in the end they're not; they're ugly, and the end result is terrible. Our eternal life is at risk, so we must be smarter than the monkey. We should avoid the traps if we can and must let go if we have grabbed something we shouldn't.



Cumbuca

Don't Chance the Dance

One night when I was 16, I remember coming back from a Church activity with three friends. We were all in the priests quorum and enjoyed being together. We parked the car in front of my house, and we were talking about the fun we had at church when one of my friends made a suggestion.

Nearby was a club that was popular with teenagers. On Fridays and Saturdays they had dances. He said, "We should go to one of those dances." He suggested we could

even use the opportunity to preach the gospel to the youth there. The other three, myself included, tried to tell him it didn't sound like such a great idea. The standards wouldn't be the same as at Church activities. There would be people smoking and drinking. People would be dressed immodestly. Most of the music would be inappropriate, loud in its volume, and heavy in its beat, often filled with suggestive words.

This was a good friend, a very active young man. But he kept insisting that we should go. "As long as we don't participate in the bad stuff," he said, "it will be just fine." The three of us tried to dissuade him but couldn't. He finally said, "Then I am going to go alone. I am going to show you that there's nothing wrong with it.

And you are going to miss out on some

great fun." He was determined to stick his hand in the *cumbuca*.

On Friday he went to the dance. The next day, Saturday, he came to Church-sponsored activities bragging about how fun it had been. He invited us to go the next week. We never did go, but he ended up going on a regular basis until finally he began going to the Saturday night dances as well. Then he would be late to church on Sunday because he was tired from being out so late. Finally he began skipping church.

My Friend Would Not Let Go

Over time he stopped coming to church regularly. He ended up not going on a mission. A few years ago I contacted him over the phone. He was living in a different town far away from me. When we started talking about the Church, he was totally cold, not the same person I used to know.

Looking back, I think of the four of us in that car. The other three all stayed active in the Church, married in the temple, and have served in priesthood leadership positions. But that one excellent friend fell away, married outside the Church, and today is totally inactive. His children do not know the blessings of the gospel. Even though he can still repent, and I hope



RECOGNIZING AND AVOIDING TRAPS

Elder Aidukaitis offers several suggestions for recognizing and avoiding spiritual traps:

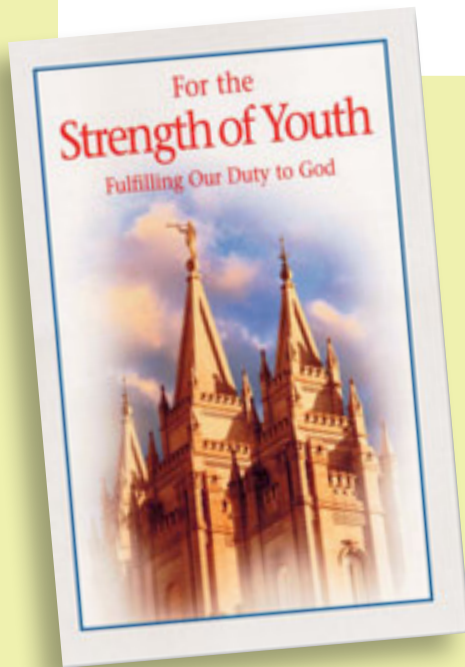
“When we do the right things, we have more strength to let go. For instance, participating in sacrament meeting and renewing covenants is very important. Young men should participate in Duty to God and young women in Personal Progress. You should go to seminary. You should listen to and obey good and faithful parents and leaders in the Church. As you do these things, you are enlightened in being able to recognize traps, and you gain strength to resist them.

“Reading the scriptures individually is a great source of inspiration, and fasting and prayer are powerful too. If you find yourself saying, ‘I see the banana in the *cumbuca*, and I feel like grabbing it,’ pray for help, and if you need more help, fast and pray. Heavenly Father will fortify you.

“One of the best protections is to be able to see that a trap is a trap. To do that, we need to know the commandments of God. We need to know that the commandments are not just good opinions; they are directions from our Father in Heaven. Then we don’t get into a debate about whether or not someone’s opinion is good or right. We simply choose to follow the path our Heavenly Father has given us, the path of obedience. If what is being offered does not conform to God’s known standards, then let it go.”

he will, he is losing valuable time and opportunities.

That night in the car, the four of us were at a crossroads. I didn’t know the decision was that important at the time. We simply knew that it was not appropriate to go where he wanted to go. I remember he said, “We will go there, and through our good example we will convert some of those youth.” But he was being deceived, and he ended up being the one who was converted to a different path. As I look back, I can see that something that seems small can have a huge impact over the years. I am



You need to be familiar with these standards, and you need to make a decision today that you will observe them and not compromise.

happy that I was able to choose what was right.

Where We Should Stand

In Doctrine and Covenants 87:8 we are counseled, “Stand ye in holy places.” We should stand where the Lord expects us to stand. We must decide today that we will not jeopardize our standards for anything. We will not let Satan deceive us. We will not be trapped.

In the Bible we read about David, who as a shepherd boy was described as having a heart like the Lord’s own heart (see 1 Samuel 13:14; 16:7). The youngest of eight sons, he was anointed by Samuel to become king of Israel, and “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward” (1 Samuel 16:13). He fought and vanquished Goliath in the name of the Lord (see 1 Samuel 17:45–51). Even as a fugitive, he was blessed, guided, and recognized as the Lord’s anointed, and eventually he became a mighty king of Israel (see 1 Samuel 19–26; 2 Samuel 5:3, 8, 10).

But then came a moment when David did not stand in a holy place. Instead, he stood on the roof and watched a beautiful woman bathing. Though she was another man’s wife, he was attracted to her and would not let go of his evil thoughts. They committed adultery, and when she became pregnant, he arranged for the death of her husband. (See 2 Samuel 11:2–17.) Instead of letting go of the temptation when it came, David gave



MAKE EARLY CORRECTIONS

Small errors and minor drifts away from the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring

sorrowful consequences into our lives. It is therefore of critical importance that we become self-disciplined enough to make early and decisive corrections to get back on the right track and not wait or hope that errors will somehow correct themselves."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "A Matter of a Few Degrees," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2008, 59.

in. He spent the rest of his life regretting what he had done.

Small Choices, Big Consequences

So how do you know where to stand and what to do? One source is *For the Strength of Youth*. You need to be familiar with that booklet. The teachings are very clear about what is appropriate for dress and music, what kind of vocabulary you should use, what kind of friends you should have, and much more. You need to be familiar with these standards, and you need to

make a decision today that you will observe them and not compromise. The decision can't be left to the moment of temptation.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) said: "The positive things you will want to accomplish need only be decided upon once—like going on a mission and living worthily in order to get married in the temple—and then all other decisions related to these goals can easily be made. Otherwise, each consideration is risky, and each equivocation may result in error. There are some

things Latter-day Saints do, and other things we just don't do. The sooner you decide to do what is right, the better it will be for you!"¹

My dear young friends, be smarter than a monkey! Don't grab something that appears enticing and then refuse to let go. Stand where the Lord wants you to stand, do what He wants you to do, and you'll never be caught in a *cumbuca*. **NE**

NOTE

1. "President Kimball Speaks Out on Planning Your Life," *New Era*, Sept. 1981, 50.



Wearing My Heart on

The patch on my jacket helps me share what I care about.

By Ashley Toher

For the past three years I have been very active in the different sports and programs in high school. Last year I lettered in swimming, so for Christmas I asked my parents for a letterman's jacket. They took me and my brother to go pick out the patches we wanted on our jackets to represent our high school years.

While looking at all the patches, I noticed a CTR patch and pointed it out to my mom. She was surprised that there was even that option. I picked out a swimmer, basketball hoop with my number, dance shoes, and the CTR patch, all of these representing my life in high school. The CTR patch would represent the four years of waking up to attend early morning seminary.

As time went on there was not a day when I went without wearing my jacket to school. In seminary, my teacher, Sister Sawtelle, was impressed with it and told me she had never seen a CTR patch out of all the athletic kids to pass through her class with jackets in nine years. As I wore it around campus, my friends stopped me and asked about my different patches. I received many raised eyebrows because I wanted something Church-related on my jacket. I was teased, but there were also good comments.

One friend stopped me on the way to class and asked me the meaning of the three letters. I told her it means "Choose the Right and Return to Christ." She smiled and replied that she loved the fact that it was reversible and said she was proud of me for standing up for what I believe in.

When speaking with the missionaries about the CTR patch, they asked me about the reactions I had from my peers. I told them about all the questions I had been asked and the different reactions I had received when my friends realized I am a Mormon. They told me not to worry about what people think, because I had provided myself with the best missionary experiences possible.

At lunch it became a common event to have discussions about what my friends had heard about the Church and what was true. Each day there are new questions. Now, one friend is taking the missionary lessons, while another has been reading the Book of Mormon. Another friend asked to come to seminary with me sometime. He even told me that he had noticed how different I acted from our other friends—happy in the morning, helpful to others, didn't cheat in class on the tests. And most noticeably, he had never heard me cuss.

I realized that no matter what, the way a person acts is always noticed, therefore I was glad to know that by living the way my parents and Church leaders had taught me, I became an example to my friends around me. This CTR patch has caused many changes among my friends, most of which I am grateful for. It has brought my religion and my beliefs to the attention of the people I am with and see every day. It seemed a small thing at the time, but it has truly changed my life for the better.

Many of my friends called me a goody-goody for a long time, but by discussing with me what I believe, they have come to accept it. I love being able to be an example, and now my friends really have come to understand why I live the way I do, which is a very big blessing. **NE**

My

Sleeve



Nobody's PERFECT

By Shauna Skoubye

I was surprised to read that Nephi, my hero, sometimes doubted himself.

I have always longed to be like Nephi: strictly obedient, extremely faithful, and deeply spiritual. In my eyes Nephi was the supreme example of goodness. Few things appealed to me more than the thought of growing up to be just like him, or at least beginning to possess even a portion of his excellence.

One day I was having a mini-crisis, caused by feelings of inadequacy. I had such ambitions and so many goals. But I just didn't seem to be getting anywhere. Through tears of hopelessness, I expressed these feelings to my father. He promptly stood up, walked over to the bookcase, and pulled out one of his copies of the Book of Mormon. Without saying a word, he opened it to 2 Nephi 4 and began reading verse 17.

Chills spread through my body like electricity as I listened to these powerful words: "O wretched man that I am!" My thoughts raced. How could Nephi, my hero and example, say that he was "wretched"? If he was wretched, what did that make me?

Again, the electricity rushed through me as my father read verse 28: "Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin." It felt to me as though the dark clouds of my mind had parted and cleared away to reveal the warmth and splendor of an open blue sky and bright sun. It is impossible to describe the way this verse illuminated my soul. Few

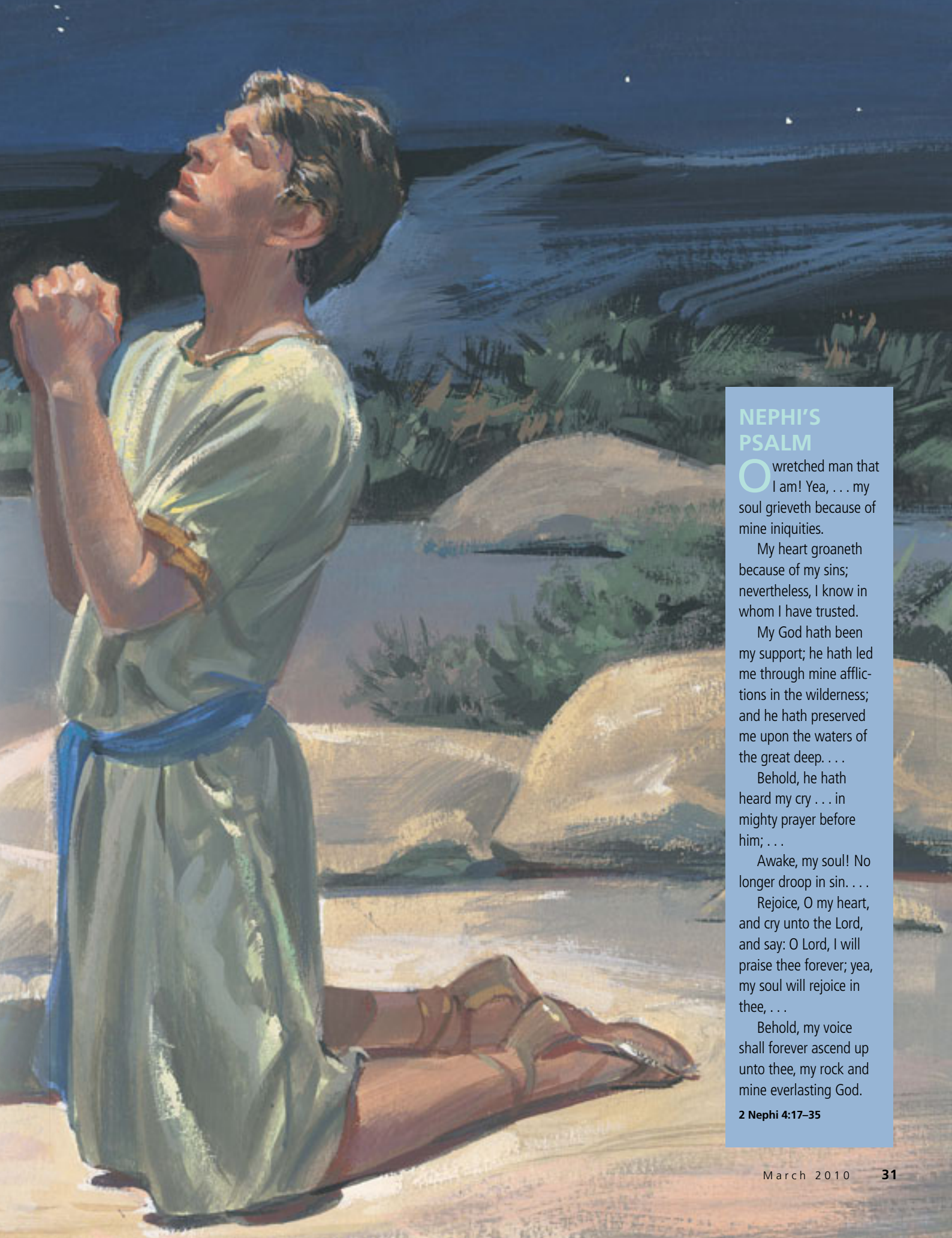
verses of scripture have filled me with as much hope, inspiration, and joy as this one did.

In verse 30, Nephi said exactly what I was thinking, only in more eloquent words. "My soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation." This verse brought with it feelings of peace and gratitude for the Lord's tender mercy and love.

My dad closed the book and explained that these verses are called Nephi's psalm. He then gently taught me that even the greatest men on earth are imperfect, and these men must recognize their imperfections or else they would be prideful and, therefore, not great.

I understood. Just because I had weaknesses didn't mean I was incapable of becoming like Nephi. Recognizing my weaknesses brought me closer to being the caliber of Nephi. Nephi was great because, as well as being obedient and faithful, he was humble and willing to admit his faults.

Ever since that experience, I have treasured these words of Nephi. Each time I read them, I experience the same thrills and inspirations as the first time I read them. The verses sing out to me that I am a daughter of God and capable of more than I could ever imagine. I know that if I'm faithful and press forward, untold blessings will be in store for me. **NE**



NEPHI'S PSALM

Owretched man that I am! Yea, . . . my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.

My heart groaneth because of my sins; nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted.

My God hath been my support; he hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness; and he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep. . . .

Behold, he hath heard my cry . . . in mighty prayer before him; . . .

Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. . . .

Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say: O Lord, I will praise thee forever; yea, my soul will rejoice in thee, . . .

Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God.

2 Nephi 4:17–35

The Defense

If only I knew how to explain why I never went to parties.

By Fridrik Rafn Gudmundsson

Why don't you ever come with us?" the girl shouted. "Don't you want to be a part of our group?"

It was the end of spring, and school was almost out. During breaks

would have welcomed the other team over for a free shooting contest, but I was not having much luck that day.

"So why don't you ever come to our parties?" she continued. "Don't you want to have a little fun?"

the others really wanted to understand. But I doubted it. How could they? I was the only Latter-day Saint in my school, and none of them understood much about the Church or its standards.



we played soccer outside, and I was the goalkeeper. As goalkeeper I was used to dodging and blocking oncoming attacks from the field. However, this game was different because I had to dodge and block attacks coming from the sidelines too.

In between the offensive assaults of the other team, I was being interrogated by a couple of girls in my class who were standing on the side of the field. To avoid their questioning, I

"A little fun!" I thought. Being at a party with my classmates, playing silly games, and feeling forced into uncomfortable situations was not my idea of fun. I'd rather stay at home.

"We're all trying to get to know one another, and you are never there," came another attack from the sideline.

"That's right!" I said. And I would have explained why if I felt she and

"Don't you like any of the girls in our class?" she asked.

"It's not about not liking them," I said. "I'd just feel uncomfortable."

"But why?" she poked.

My team had just lost the ball, and all the guys were now running in my direction.

"Why would you feel uncomfortable?" she poked again.

Everything seemed to move in slow motion as my eyes focused on

the approaching ball. Her voice was the only thing I heard, and the constant “why,” “why” kept echoing



excitement of the game. “The reason I’m not coming to your parties is . . .” I started, then paused, thinking for a moment.

“Is?” she repeated a little anxiously.

other team cheered, while the girls stood there laughing.

“Saving yourself for someone,” she said, giggling. “So what is her name?”

I felt embarrassed. Although I



in my head. My opponent was clear for the shot, and I could see that the ball was going to hit me hard. But I was ready. He kicked the ball, which bounced off my hands with a loud slap. “Yes! Another assault successfully frustrated,” I thought, grinning. I grabbed the ball and threw it down the field to my teammates and then turned to face my other opponents.

“So?” she said.

My heart was still racing from the

I looked down the field again to see the opposition approaching fast. My heart picked up a couple of beats, and I knew I had to finish what I started to say. “Is because I am saving myself for someone special!” I blurted out.

“What!” she exclaimed.

My opponents were upon me, and my attention was again fixed on the game. The ball whistled through the air, penetrating my defenses. The

didn’t have anyone special in mind, I still knew that one day I would meet my future wife, and I needed to be worthy to take her to the temple. That’s why I didn’t go to their parties.

My hands still tingled and my heart continued to race as I walked home later, yet there was a slight grin on my face. I might have suffered humiliation on the field that day; however, I walked away feeling victorious. **NE**



NINTH WARD NEIGHBORHOOD GARDEN

"I liked getting my hands dirty and working alongside all the other girls," said Brooke Matsen of the Farmington Ninth Ward. She was pitching in with the other young men and women of the ward as they helped clear, plow, cultivate, and plant a large neighborhood garden. The garden provides not only fresh produce but also opportunities for learning and service.

The youth cleared branches and pulled stumps from the area prior to plowing. Then they worked together in planting 160 tomato plants, cutting and planting seed potatoes, corn, beans, and peppers. Unfortunately, as the plants flourished, so did the

weeds. Families and youth were assigned to keep rows weeded. In the end everyone helped with the harvest and learned how to bottle and preserve the food.

"It was fun to work with everyone," said Kambria Johnson. "We got closer and there were good bonding experiences. It's good to know the garden would benefit some in the ward."

BY THE NUMBERS
587,870
 Number of individual devices (computers, phones, etc.) streaming live video feeds of the October 2009 general conference.

HOMEWORK FIRST

I had a 16-page research paper to finish. Even though my cousins also had the same assignment to finish, they still planned to go to the movies. I really wanted to go too, but I thought of the consequences of going to school the next day without my paper being finished. I chose to stay home and work on my paper. The next day I turned in my paper while my cousins were busy finishing their research by the deadline. They were stressed, but I felt good about choosing to do my homework first.

Valerie S., 18, Samoa



GARDEN PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLYN TORONTO; LIGHTHOUSE © GETTY IMAGES



THE CHURCH IN USA— MAINE

Arriving by canoe, missionaries for the Church crossed the Piscataqua River to Maine in 1832. They searched door to door for people to teach and started a congregation in Saco, York County. More missionaries arrived, and one mass conversion brought 30 individuals into the Church. In 1835, Maine had nearly 320 members. Church activity slowed in Maine after most members joined the mass exodus west to escape persecution.

In 1904 missionary efforts resumed, with Sunday School meetings held in converts' homes. The first Church building was dedicated in 1957 in Portland, Maine. Members in this area attend the Boston Massachusetts Temple.

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

Membership	10,350
Wards & Branches	30
Family History Centers	11

MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

D&C 82:10 This verse is important to me because it shows that the Lord's way is the right way to follow. It is also a great scripture to remember when I am faced with a decision because it reminds me that the Lord wants me to choose the right.

Dayna C., 16, Ontario, Canada

Tell us about your favorite scripture in one or two sentences. Send it to newera@ldschurch.org.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JANET THOMAS



BEING A BETTER FRIEND

Want to be a better friend? Here are some ideas that will help you be a true friend.

- Always help other be their best selves.
- Don't be afraid to share your standards, your beliefs, and your testimony.
- Be respectful and kind to others.
- Move out of your comfort zone by talking to people you may not yet know.
- Look for those who may be quiet or shy and befriend them.
- Never lower your standards to match others' values.
- Show genuine interest in others and their ideas.

BONUS: SEE WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SHOW ABOUT FRIENDSHIP

How were Jared and his brother good friends to others? Look up Ether 1:36–37 to find out.

"A friend loveth _____."

Find the rest in Proverbs 17:17. What did Joseph Smith's friends do? Check Doctrine and Covenants 121:9 for the answer.

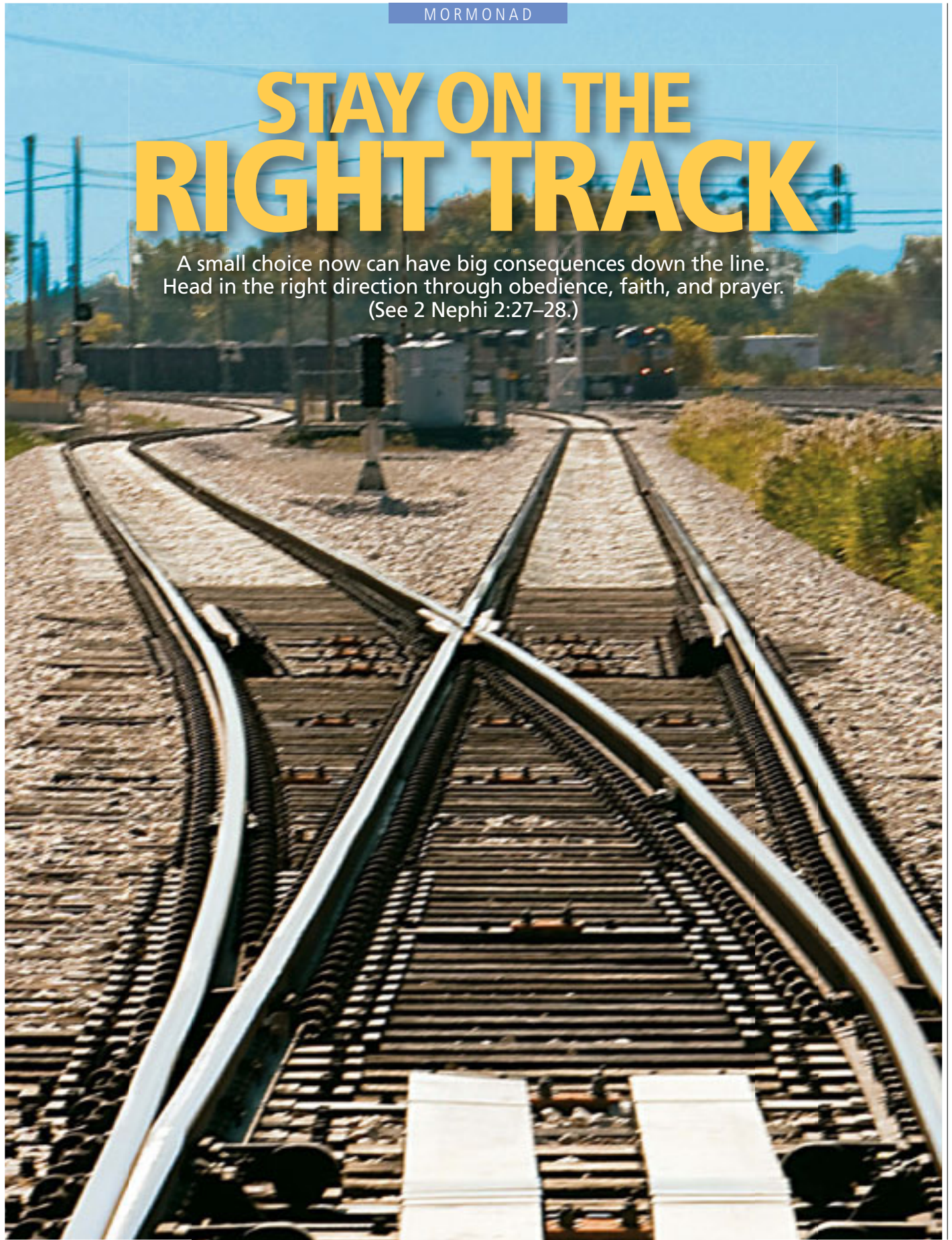
“What kind of friend are we?”

Are we the type of friend who always makes sure that those around us know it will be easier for them to live gospel principles, such as the Word of Wisdom or the law of chastity, when they are with us? Do our friends know that they will never have to choose between what we want them to do and what the Lord would have them do?”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Atonement Priesthood: Return with Honor,” *Ensign*, May 1990, 39.

STAY ON THE RIGHT TRACK

A small choice now can have big consequences down the line.
Head in the right direction through obedience, faith, and prayer.
(See 2 Nephi 2:27–28.)

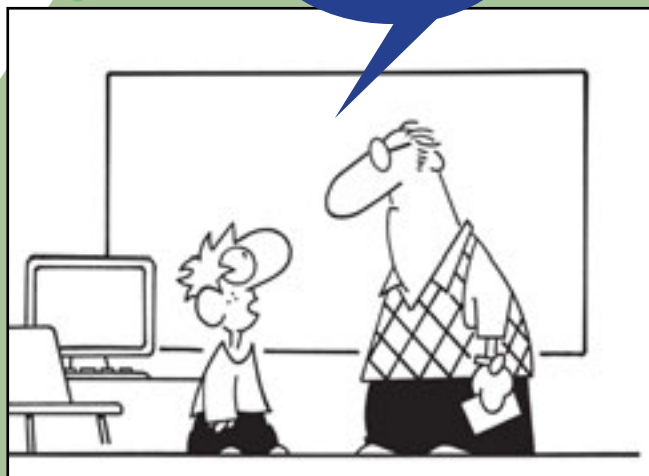


PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUKE

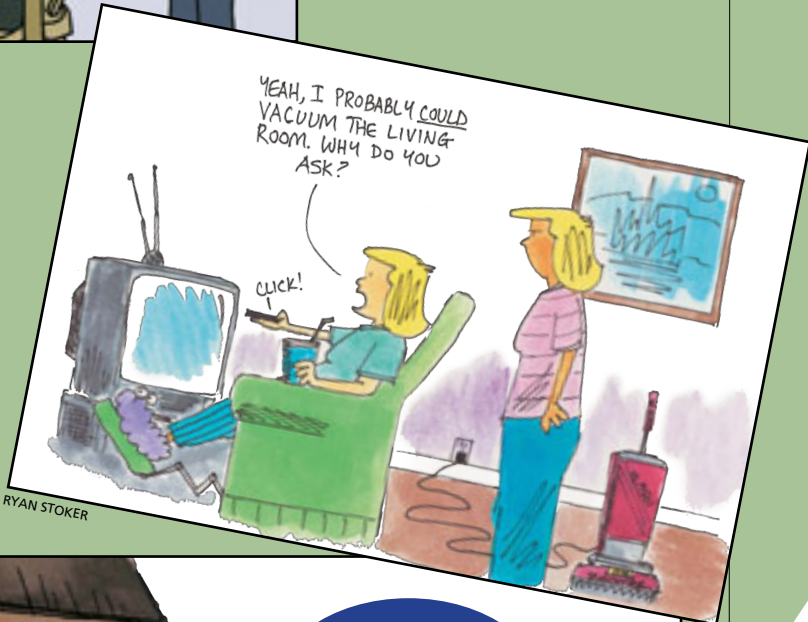


ARIE VAN DE GRAFF

"I don't have my homework. My dog deleted it."



RANDY GLASBERGEN



RYAN STOKER

"Pandas . . . check.
Pigs . . . check.
Porcupines . . ."



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

NEmore
See a different Extra Smile online every week at newera.lds.org.

Getting the Best of the Bully

I had to face up to her, but how?

By Douglas M. Brown

When you are 12 years old, life is hard enough. Caught between being a child and being a teenager, you struggle to really know who you are. I was in the middle of that struggle when my parents announced we were moving to the small town over the hill. The move was only a few miles away, but to me it was a world away.

I grew up in a suburban town of 30,000. I walked to school. The playground and the youth center were a block from home. And I went to the movies every Saturday.

Our new home was different. It was a rural town of 6,000—and planned to stay that way. I was a mile and a half (2.4 km) from school and had to ride the bus. My playground would become the woods and hills nearby. Saturday matinees would become only an occasional treat.

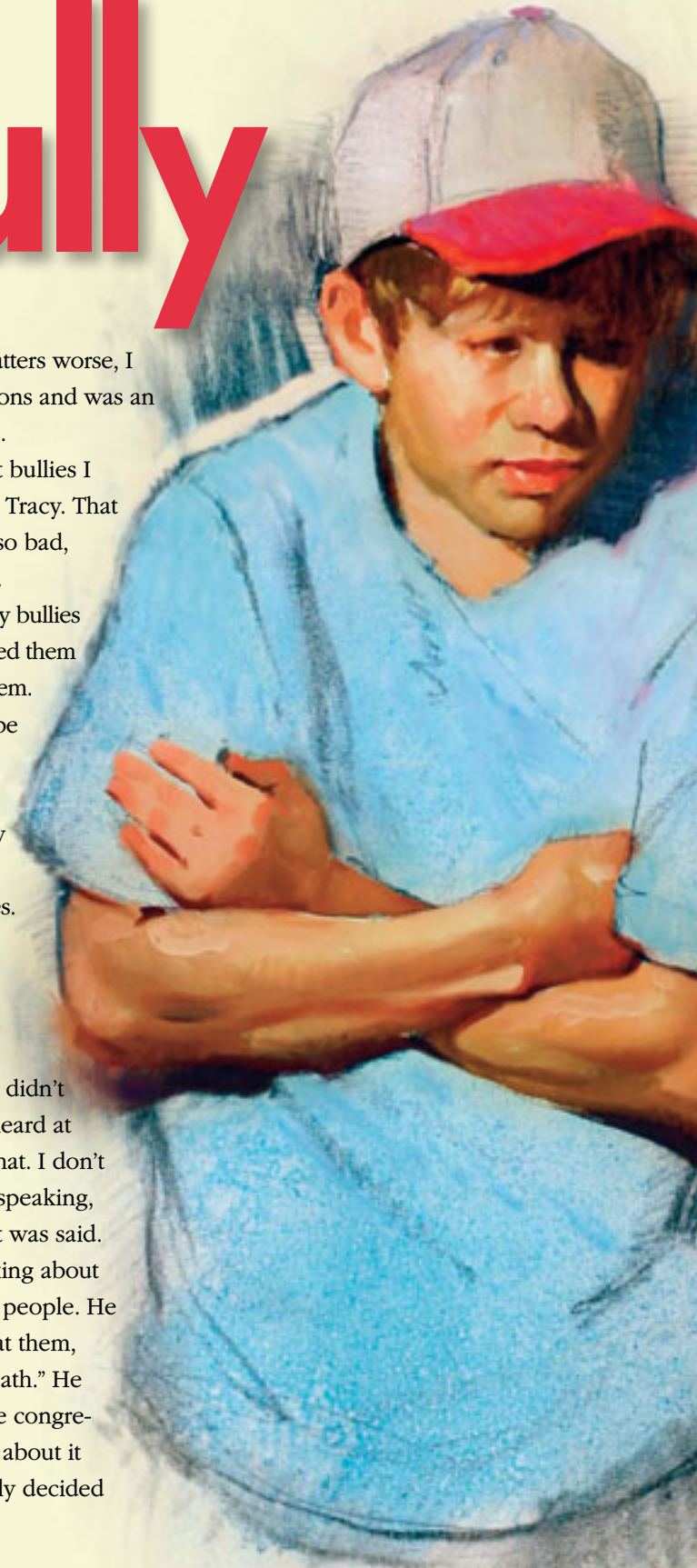
The move itself wasn't so bad. I was adventurous and loved exploring. But I had a hard time fitting in at school. The other students had all grown up together, and I was the

outsider. To make matters worse, I didn't hide my emotions and was an easy target for bullies.

One of the biggest bullies I had to deal with was Tracy. That wouldn't have been so bad, except Tracy is a girl.

I had dealt with boy bullies before. You either faced them or learned to avoid them. But Tracy seemed to be everywhere: in the hall, at lunch, in my classes. She had a way with insults that just chopped you to pieces. I dreaded seeing her anywhere.

Since it seemed I couldn't avoid her, I had to face her, but I didn't know how. A talk I heard at church changed all that. I don't remember who was speaking, but I remember what was said. The speaker was talking about dealing with difficult people. He said, "If you can't beat them, try loving them to death." He got a laugh out of the congregation, but I thought about it for some time. I finally decided





Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

what to do with Tracy. I would "smother her with kindness."

I started looking for Tracy the next day. When I saw her, I said, "Tracy, you look nice." She looked shocked and stammered a thank you as we passed in the hall.

I kept it up. Every time I saw her, I would pay her a compliment before she had a chance to say anything. The insults stopped, and my life gained a little peace.

A few months later, the school year was coming to a close. One of the closing activities was a dance in the gym during school hours. I went to it but didn't feel like asking any girls to dance. Frankly, I had never asked a girl before. But then a girl came up to me and asked me to dance.

I was shocked to see that it was Tracy. I said yes, and we went out onto the floor. When the song was over, I said, "Thank you," and Tracy went on her way.

I never did see her again. She moved away that summer. I hope she fit in at her new school more easily than I had. But I learned that day that my plan had worked. Where I had an enemy, I found a friend. **NE**

ILLUSTRATION BY GREGG THORKELOSON

TO THE POINT

What are some ways we can respect other religions' holidays?

Respecting others' religions is one of our key beliefs: "We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may" (Articles of Faith 1:11).

Religious holidays often involve a form of worship. Just as members of our Church celebrate Christmas and Easter, members of other faiths celebrate these holy days or other holidays in honor of a particular deity or to commemorate an event in their religious history.

You can respect others' religious holidays by first recognizing when those days are celebrated. You can read about certain religious holidays and talk to your friends about how they show their love to God on these special days. You should not make fun of their beliefs, customs, or practices. Respect the religious symbols they use to celebrate and worship.

If you are invited to participate, ask politely for their suggestions about how you can do so appropriately. They may be happy to simply have you watch what they do, or they may

suggest some activities you can join in on and others you should avoid. For example, if one of their religious customs is against your beliefs, such as drinking wine, you can politely decline participation, or perhaps you can drink water. The more you agree on in advance, the greater the opportunity to avoid embarrassment.

You can show respect by learning how others worship, and you can also invite others to celebrate your religious holidays with you so they can understand what you believe. **NE**

What is the difference between fasting and going without food?

Going without food will just make you hungry. Fasting, done with a specific purpose and accompanied by prayer, will bring you closer to God and give you blessings and spiritual strength (see Isaiah 58:6–11).

Unlike going without food, when we fast, we choose to do so for a specific, spiritual purpose. You could fast for the Lord's help in understanding gospel principles or in handling personal decisions and experiences. You may also fast for blessings for



When we fast, we do so for a specific, spiritual purpose.

others, such as their health or that they'll accept the gospel (see Alma 6:6). You may even fast to express gratitude to our Heavenly Father.

Prayer is another element that makes fasting different from going without food. A fast should begin and end with sincere prayer, and throughout the fast you could meditate and pray about what you are fasting for. This focuses your attention on why you are fasting rather than on how hungry you may feel. "Thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am" (Isaiah 58:9). **NE**



Anointing with oil has always been part of true, revealed religion.

Why are people anointed with oil when they receive a priesthood blessing?

The scriptures frequently refer to anointing, often associated with the healing of the sick. For example, in Mark 6:13 we read that the Apostles "anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." And in James 5:14 we read: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

To anoint means to apply oil or ointment to a person's head or body. In ancient times this was done for various reasons. Sometimes it was a sign of hospitality or of routine grooming. Those who were sick or injured were anointed with oil or ointment as medicine. But anointing was also done for sacred

reasons. For example, holy anointing oil was used under the law of Moses (see Exodus 40:15). Prophets anointed priests and kings, and the sick were anointed with oil as part of the procedure of healing by faith and by the laying on of hands.

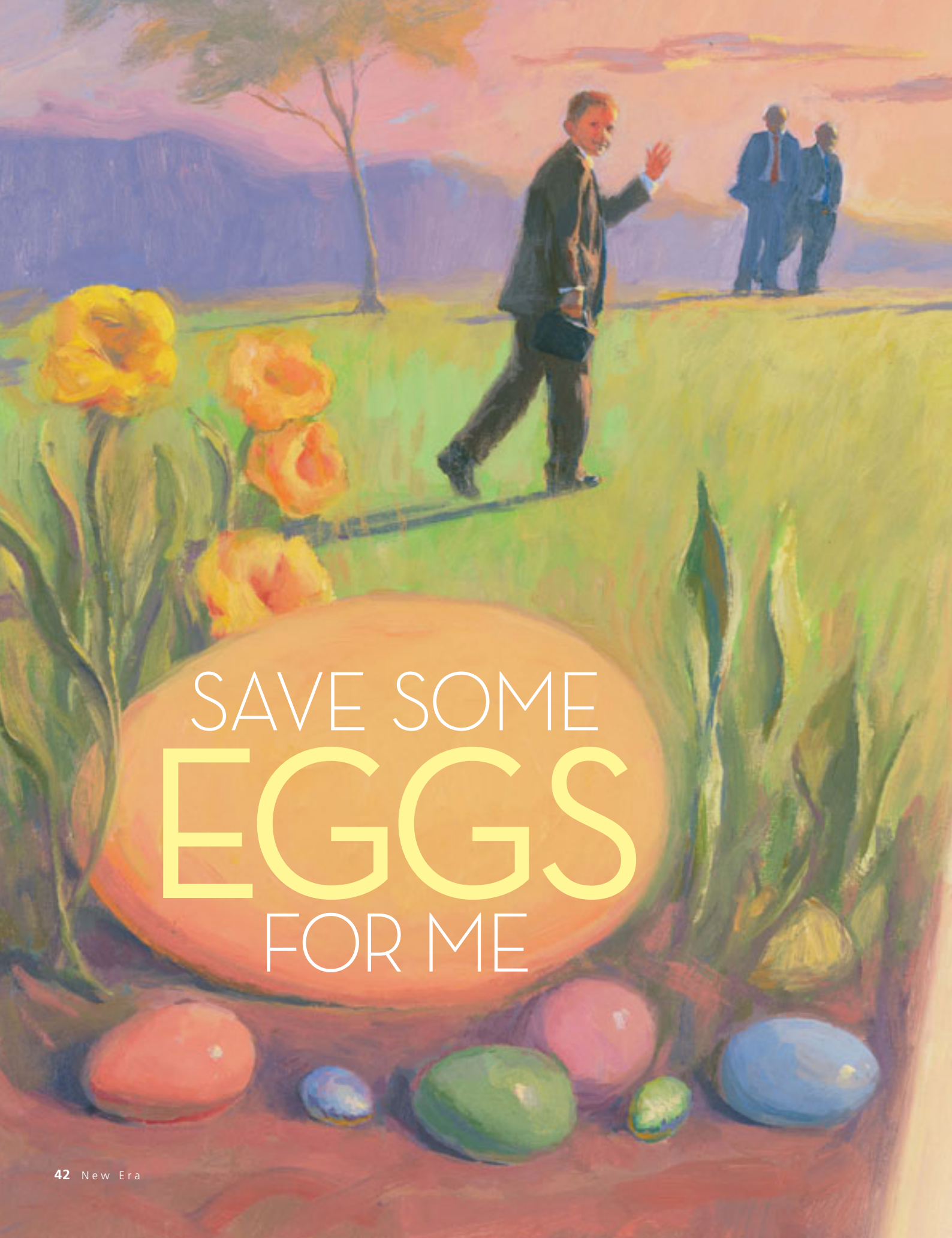
In the Church today, olive oil that has been consecrated (blessed by Melchizedek Priesthood holders) for sacred purposes is used in various sacred ceremonies, including administration to the sick. "Although the scriptures do not specifically so state, we may confidently assume that anointing with oil has been part of true, revealed religion ever since the gospel was first introduced on this earth to Adam."¹

Why is olive oil used rather than some other type of oil? This is never stated specifically in the scriptures, although New Testament parables use oil as a symbol of both healing and light (see Matthew 25:1–13; Luke 10:34). The olive branch is often used as a symbol of peace, and the olive tree is used in scripture as a symbol of the house of Israel (see Jacob 5). Olive oil can also symbolize the Savior's Atonement, since the bitter olive, when crushed, provides oil that is sweet. **NE**

NOTE

1. Bible Dictionary, "Anoint."





SAVE SOME
EGGS
FOR ME



By Peter V. Hilton

Hunting Easter eggs was fun, but I had someplace better to be.

The year I turned 12 years old, our family's Easter celebration coincided with the April general conference. We adjusted accordingly. I remember joining my cousins in front of my grandparents' big TV dutifully watching the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions. Shortly after the afternoon session, we had dinner, an Easter message, and then time came my favorite activity: the Easter egg hunt.

Just as my aunts slipped outside to start hiding the eggs, my mom grabbed me and reminded me that things were different since my last birthday. "Peter, you need to get changed for the priesthood session. Dad will take you with all the uncles."

I frowned. "Will I have time to get some Easter eggs?"

"Maybe," Mom said, "if you hurry. Your clothes are in the back room."

I ran through the hall of my grandparents' home to where Mom had stowed my change of clothes. As I changed, I could see my aunts—my mom had now joined them—hurriedly scattering Easter eggs and candy across the back lawn. I checked my watch. We only had about 15 minutes before the priesthood session started. I looked out the window again. Would there be time?

As I watched, my aunts disappeared from the yard. When they reappeared, all of my cousins and little brothers swarmed around them, baskets in hand, scooping up the eggs and chocolates. I started putting on my tie, hoping that if I hurried, there might be some left.

My mom came through the back door. "There won't be

time, Peter. Are you ready to go?" She had an Easter basket in her hand with some eggs and candy in it. "I saved you some."

I looked in the basket. It wasn't as much as I normally managed to grab. I probably sighed a little. "Thanks, Mom," I said, as I took a few pieces out of the basket.

"You'd better hurry," she said. "I think they're all waiting for you."

I was greeted with a mixture of smiles and compliments. "Hey, there's my sharp nephew!" said one of my uncles. "Looking good!" said another.

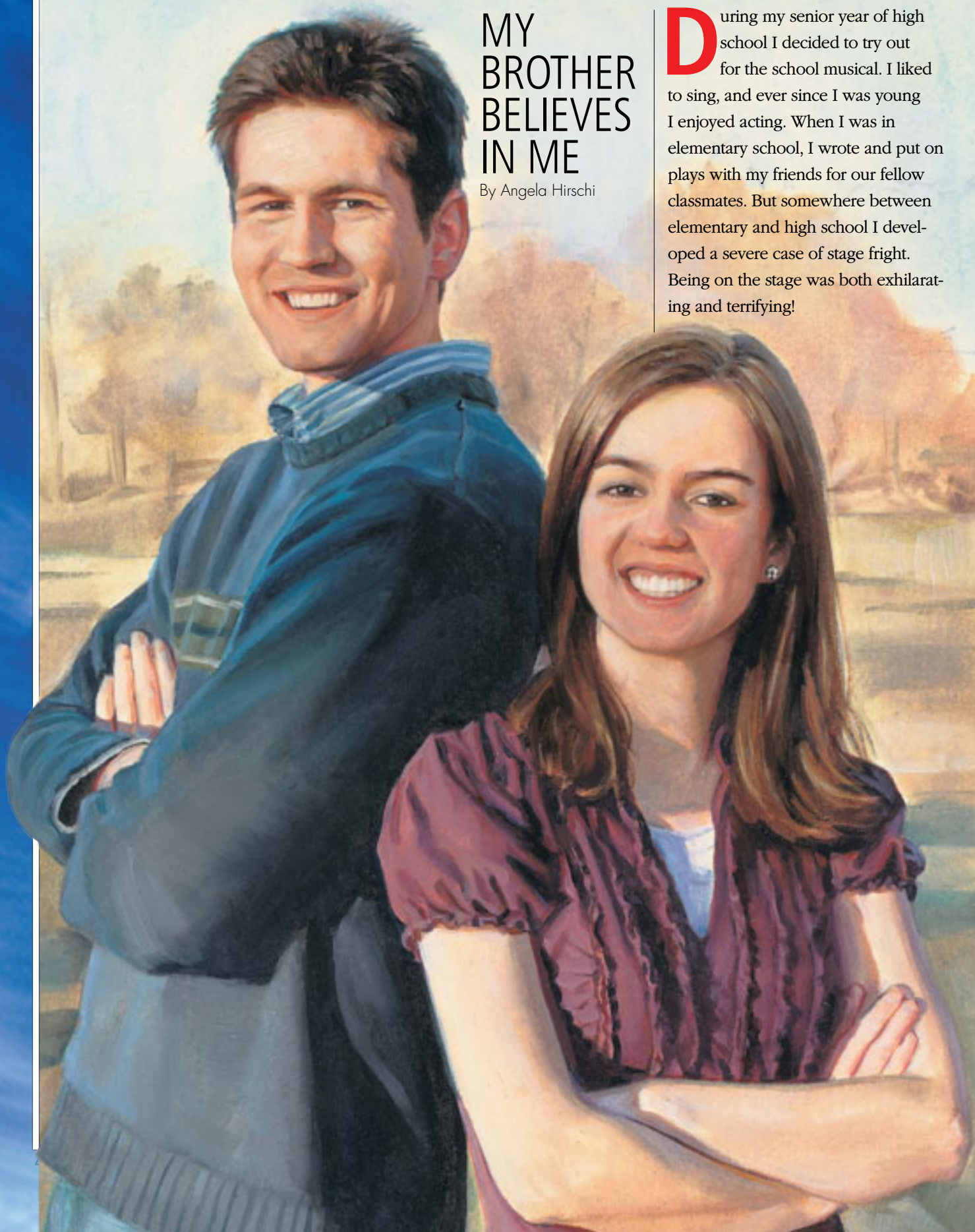
I smiled. I was suddenly excited as we rushed out the front door and piled into a couple of cars to make the quick drive to the chapel. My dad's joy in having his son with him for the first time was palpable. I sat down between my dad and my grandpa. With my uncles, we took up a good portion of the bench. I think I kept smiling through the entire session.

I don't remember what any of the speakers said that night, but I do remember the difference between missing the Easter egg hunt and being with the rest of the priesthood. I was happy. I had been a deacon for only four months, but I could feel the love that my father and uncles had for me and the camaraderie we all had as brethren of the priesthood. I was lucky to have that experience when I was so young, but from it, I have developed an abiding love of the priesthood, general conference, and my family. Now, as each general conference approaches, I try to re-create those feelings that I first felt as a young deacon at my first priesthood session. **NE**

MY BROTHER BELIEVES IN ME

By Angela Hirschi

During my senior year of high school I decided to try out for the school musical. I liked to sing, and ever since I was young I enjoyed acting. When I was in elementary school, I wrote and put on plays with my friends for our fellow classmates. But somewhere between elementary and high school I developed a severe case of stage fright. Being on the stage was both exhilarating and terrifying!



STANDING UP IN HISTORY

By Kristina Schroeder

On the day before auditions I received some alarming news—the auditions would be “open,” meaning I’d have to sing in front of not only the teachers, but all the students who were trying out. I was devastated. The thought of singing a solo in front of a room full of students made me numb with fear. I couldn’t see how I could possibly go through with it.

That night, I began to debate if I should even try out. I went through the pros and cons with my mom. My older brother overheard our conversation. “I don’t know why you’re so worried,” he said with some frustration. “You can sing and dance just as well as anyone else.” His words surprised me because he rarely said things like that. I knew he cared about me, but at the time he usually didn’t admit to it. The pros won, and I decided to try out.

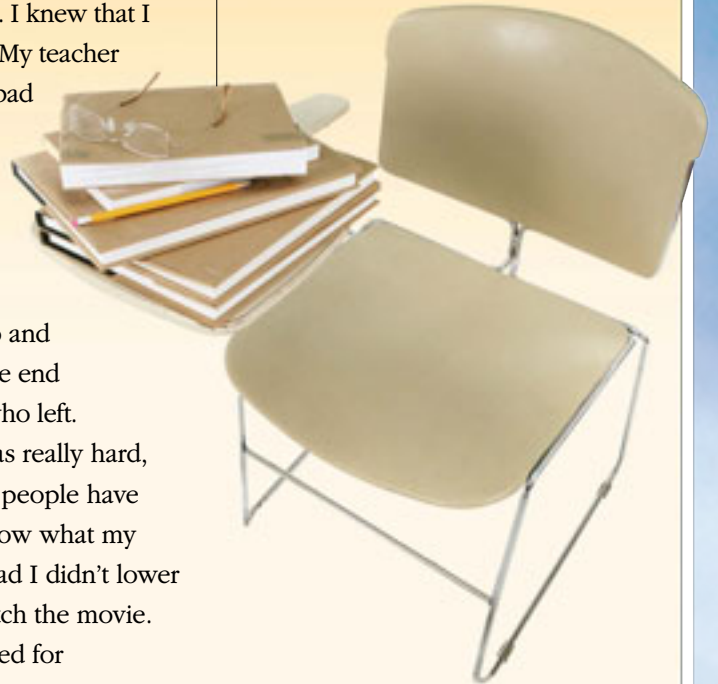
The following day I entered the drama room after school to await my audition. As I sat with the other students in the packed classroom, I could feel the color leave my face, and my whole body trembled slightly. I was nervous and unable to calm myself. Then the thought came to mind: “My brother believes in me. He believes I can do this.” Maybe I would be just fine after all.

With courage in my brother’s words, I walked on stage, phased out all the faces in the crowd, and sang. I sang my heart out. I gave it all I had and finished strong. When I was done, I looked out at my peers and teachers and saw many smiles. I was happy for performing so well and relieved it was over.

In my history class we were studying the Seven Years’ War and my teacher told us that we would watch a film. I was excited until she informed us that it was rated R. I knew that I didn’t want to see it. My teacher insisted it was not a bad movie, but I knew it still wasn’t right. I looked to see what the other kids would do, and I waited for someone to stand up and leave the room. In the end I was the only one who left.

Even though it was really hard, I’m glad I left. Many people have told me that they know what my standards are. I’m glad I didn’t lower them in order to watch the movie. My teacher apologized for

challenging my standards and said from now on I won’t be pressured into watching R-rated movies in her classroom. **NE**



I made call-backs and got a part. I’m glad I tried out because that musical was a highlight of my senior year.

The experience of that audition has stuck with me. My brother’s words, and knowing he believed in me, helped me to conquer something that seemed so impossible to me.

I’ve come to realize that there is someone else who believes in me—Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. He knows that I am capable of many things. The scriptures teach: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear” (2 Timothy 1:7). In trusting the Savior, I have overcome my fears. He has supported me. The power of His Atonement can reach all areas of our lives, if we let Him in. **NE**

PART OF THE CIRCLE

By John E. Walter

I have a friend of another faith who is the best example of a true friend. I have never heard him use a swear word, never heard him crack a dirty joke, and never heard about him using drugs or alcohol. He is always honest and hardworking and is a great friend. His friendship has shown me that just because someone isn’t a member of the Church, it doesn’t mean that they aren’t good. I’ve learned that we all need to spread out our circle of friends and invite more in, no matter what their faith is. **NE**

SUNRISE TESTIMONY

By Elder Paul B. Pieper

Of the Seventy

I grew up as a member of the Church. I was taught the principles of the gospel by my parents in my home, was baptized and confirmed, and received the priesthood from my worthy father. I felt the influence of the Spirit in my life, but I did not receive a witness of the reality of the Atonement until a sunrise testimony meeting in my teen years.

A group of several hundred seminary students gathered before dawn for the meeting. I suppose that I shared my testimony that morning, but I can't be sure. What I know is that during that meeting, as the sun rose on a new Easter, the Spirit came into my heart and testified of the reality of Jesus Christ—His life, His teachings, His Atonement, and His Resurrection.

I have felt the reconfirmation of that testimony many times during more than 30 years as I have testified of Jesus Christ as a missionary, a father, a friend, and a Church leader. The Savior said to Peter the Apostle, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17).

Today I still find that the anchor for me through all the years has been the witness I received from the Spirit as a teenager on that Easter morning. **NE**



PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY GARNIS

SO YOU THINK YOU CAN FANCY DANCE?

Most seventh graders like music with a strong beat, but when you're a fancy dancer like Jacob Conklin, the sound of a beating drum is a call to dance. Fancy dancing, also called fancy feather dancing, is a type of Native American dance that involves fast, intricate footwork and spinning and jumping. It is a competitive sport in which dancers are judged on their ability to keep up with the beat of the drum while performing. Jacob has been competing for only two years, but he's become passionate about a tradition that honors his Native American ancestors.

Fancy dancers are judged on their outfits as well as their movements. Your outfit is beautiful. Describe the pieces you wear. Almost everything I wear has feathers on it. The bustles on my shoulders and back are made of dyed turkey feathers. My front and back aprons have a mustang horse on them. I wear sheep wool leggings and moccasins on my feet. The whip sticks that I twirl have feathers and beads at the ends. On my head I wear a headpiece called a roach that's made of deer and porcupine hair and both eagle and hawk feathers. Several people in my family worked on making my outfit, so it's pretty special to me. It feels good to wear it, especially the two eagle feathers that I've earned.

What is the significance of the eagle feathers? My eagle feathers were given to me by the man who taught me how to dance. They have to be earned. It's an honor to be given an eagle feather because they're sacred

reminders of fallen warriors. They are usually given to you by someone who believes you're ready to take care of them.

Now that you're a deacon, how do you honor your priesthood? I pass the sacrament every Sunday. There are only a few deacons in my ward, so when I pass the sacrament, I know the little kids look up to me. Also, I am the only boy in my family, so I'm especially proud to hold the priesthood, and I look forward to going on a mission someday. **NE**

—As told to
Wendy
Kenney



Name:
Jacob Conklin
Age: 12
Hometown:
Elko, Nevada

PHOTOGRAPH BY TRUDIE BURTON

THANKS FOR THE NEW ERA

I really enjoy the *New Era*. I like the stories and the morals they teach. I like to spend my time reading it. When I'm upset, I will read it, and it gets my mind off of what I was mad at. I also like the clean jokes. I like hearing how the Holy Ghost helps people. I also like hearing from the leaders of the Church. I also like hearing about all the service being done.

Jacob D., Idaho

EXTRA SMILE

Reading the *New Era* for the first time in 12 years and seeing the Extra Smile helped me laugh and smile a bit. Being disabled and alone gets kind of hard sometimes. It also showed me that young adults can teach the gospel and that we can be a good influence on others.

Brenton F., Oklahoma

PAST ISSUES ONLINE

I live in Texas, and I like it there. I started reading the *New Era* a few weeks ago, and it is helping me a lot with teenage problems. I am reading the old issues online, and I cried when I read the Christmas 2006 issue. "The Christmas Coat" was so sweet. Thank you for posting them online.

Haemin H., Texas

Editor's note: You can find past issues of the New Era online at newera.lds.org.

*I am stronger
because of seminary
and I'm glad
I have the opportunity
to go to it
every morning.*

SEMINARY

Every morning I wake up an hour before my friends do. I do this every morning to go to seminary. Every morning I have to leave my house at 5:30 to get there at 6:00, but for what? It's for my day to be better. After seminary I feel better and more awake, more spiritually strong, and that makes a great addition to my day. It drives away temptations and makes everything seem easier and more fun. I feel like a stronger person because of seminary, and I'm glad I have the opportunity to go to it every morning.

Kevin R., Nevada

**VISIT TO THE FAMILY HISTORY CENTER**

Our ward's young women recently visited our local Family History Center. Our goal is to learn to gather family names to take to the temple. We went with our family group sheets and pedigree charts in tow. The staff was so helpful and answered all our questions. The young women learned to use the PAF program and look for ancestors on the FamilySearch site. They are all very excited about connecting with their ancestors and learning more about their families. While still at the Family History Center, the girls were planning the next time they would get together to help each other do research.

Stacie V., Utah

OVERCOMING SHYNESS

The ugly duckling story (Oct. 2009) is a great story, and it teaches you how not to be shy. I am rather shy myself, and this story helped me. I remember hearing the story about the ugly duckling a couple of times, but I never really cared about it. Now I think that I am going to read the story again. Your family will always be there for you.

Alan K.

We love hearing from you. Write to us by going online to newera.lds.org and clicking Submit Your Material.

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



Blindness

By Sally Hunter Myler

My hands
Felt the soft,
Velvet, young muzzle,
And I saw,
For the first time
Through my hands,
My horse.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Jacob Conklin, the 12-year-old on the cover, has an 18-year-old sister named Trudie. She and her family, all sisters except for Jacob, have loved watching Jacob learn and improve his fancy dancing. She wrote about loving to watch how he gets into the beat of the drums and uses intricate footwork to add flourishes.



Trudie's grandmother sent us the essay Trudie wrote. We called Jacob and asked him about his dancing and about his ordination to the priesthood. He loves being a deacon and passing the sacrament. We also found out that he is an honor student and an outstanding athlete in baseball, basketball, and football.

When the story was prepared, we needed some great photos of Jacob in his dancing outfit. Luckily Trudie was studying photography and offered to take the photos. Didn't she do a great job?

Read more about Jacob in the article "So You Think You Can Fancy Dance" on page 47.

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