



YOU

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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,

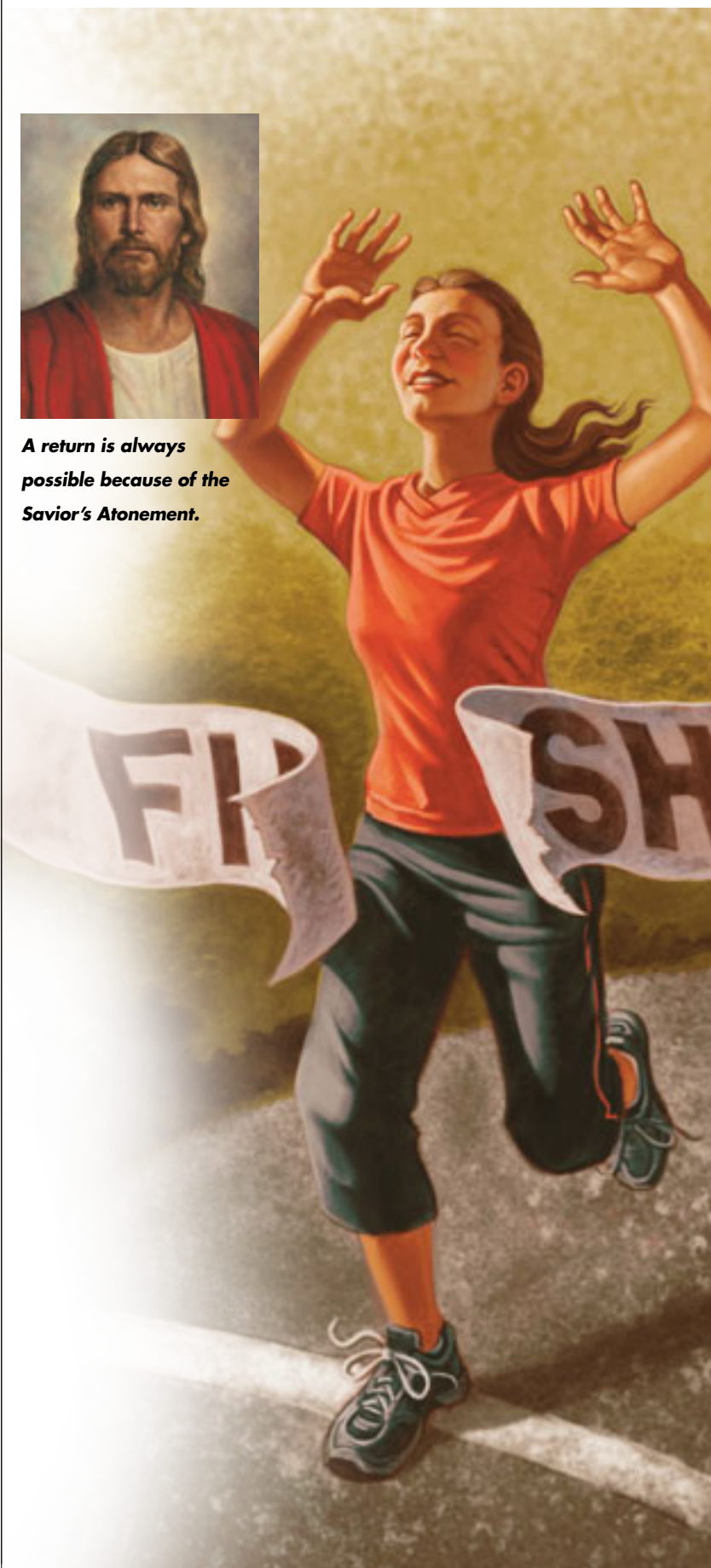
there are those who will help you to once again become clean and worthy. Your bishop or branch president is anxious and willing to help and will, with understanding and compassion, do all within his power to assist you in the repentance process, that you may once again stand in righteousness before the 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



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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.