

THE

New Era

NOVEMBER

2005

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The New Era Magazine
Volume 35, Number 11
November 2005

Official monthly publication
for youth of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

The *New Era* can be found
in the Gospel Library at
www.lds.org.

Editorial Offices:
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of Solihull, England, is
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boarding school. See
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Cover photography:
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and © 1996 Photo
Disc (back)

Music
means
the
world to Fleur,
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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Distribution Services, Church Magazines, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.

Canada Post Information: Publication Agreement #40017431.

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Your PATRIARCHAL

BY PRESIDENT JAMES E. FAUST
Second Counselor in the First Presidency



When moved upon by the Holy Spirit, the patriarch makes an inspired declaration of the lineage of the recipient together with such blessings, spiritual gifts, promises, advice, admonition, and warnings as the patriarch feels inspired to give.

A patriarchal blessing is a prophetic utterance. It contains counsel, promises, and information from the Lord.

One of the most important blessings available to worthy members of the Church is patriarchal blessings. They verify the divinity of Christ and the truthfulness of the Church. These sacred blessings also strengthen the testimonies of those worthy persons who are the recipients of such blessings, provided those recipients live so as to merit the blessings pronounced therein.

A patriarchal blessing is a unique and remarkable privilege that can come to the faithful members of the Church having sufficient maturity to understand the nature and the importance of such blessings. These privileged blessings are a powerful witness of the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ in bringing exaltation to each of us. Like many blessings, they must be requested by the person or by the family of the one desiring the blessing.

Our testimonies can be strengthened and fortified and our lives given greater purpose every time we read and reread our patriarchal blessings. By their very nature, all

blessings are qualified and conditional, regardless of whether the blessing specifically spells out the qualification or not. Each blessing is absolutely qualified and given upon the condition of the faithfulness of the recipient of the blessing.

The Patriarchs

I wish to pay tribute to the faithful men holding this great calling and ordination. They are often among the most humble and faithful of our brethren. These chosen men live lives that entitle them to the inspiration of heaven. Patriarchs are privileged to impart blessings directly rather than just solicit blessings to the individual, for the patriarchs are entitled to speak authoritatively for the Lord.

The office of patriarch is one of the great separate priesthood offices of the Melchizedek Priesthood. The patriarchal office is one of blessing, not of administration, nor of counseling. It is a sacred, spiritual calling that usually will continue the remainder of the patriarch's life. However, due to health or other personal circumstances, he may be given nonfunctioning status. Our patriarchs give total devotion to their callings and do all they can to live in faith and worthiness so that each blessing is inspired.



Blessing

The Blessing

When moved upon by the Holy Spirit, the patriarch makes an inspired declaration of the lineage of the recipient together with such blessings, spiritual gifts, promises, advice, admonition, and warnings as the patriarch feels inspired to give. It is in essence a prophetic utterance.

Patriarchal blessings should be read humbly and prayerfully and frequently. They are very personal but may be shared with close family members. A patriarchal blessing is a sacred guideline of counsel, promises, and information from the Lord. However, a person should not expect that the blessing will detail all that will happen to him or her or be an answer to all questions. The omission of the blessing of a great event in life such as a mission or marriage does not mean it will not happen. My own blessing is short and is limited to perhaps three quarters of one page on one side, yet it has been completely adequate and perfect for me.

When Are Patriarchal Blessings Fulfilled?

Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952), an Apostle, had the following to say: “It should always be kept in mind that the realization of the promises made may come in this life or the future life. Men have stumbled at times because promised blessings have not occurred in this life. They have failed to remember that, in the gospel, life with all its activities continues forever and that the labors of earth may be continued in heaven. Besides, the giver of the blessings, the Lord, reserves the right to have them become active in our lives as suits his divine purposes. We



and our blessings are in the hands of the Lord, but there is a general testimony that when the gospel law has been obeyed, the promised blessings have been realized.”¹

This was well illustrated in my father’s patriarchal blessing. He was told in his blessing that he would be blessed with “many beautiful daughters.” He and my mother became the parents of five sons. There were no daughters born to them, but of course they treated the wives of their sons as daughters. This last summer when we had a family reunion, I saw my father’s granddaughters moving about tending to the food and ministering to the young children and the elderly, and the realization came to me that Father’s blessing had been literally fulfilled; he has, indeed, many beautiful daughters. The

patriarch who gave my father his blessing had spiritual vision to see beyond this life. There was a disappearance of the dividing line between time and eternity.

The patriarch has no blessing of his own to give; the blessing is the Lord’s to give. God knows our spirits; He knows our strengths and weaknesses. He knows our capabilities and our potential. Our patriarchal blessings indicate what the Lord expects of us and what our

potential can be. Our blessings can encourage us when we are discouraged, strengthen us when we are fearful, comfort us when we sorrow, give us courage when

EXTRA! EXTRA!

To learn more about patriarchal blessings, you can read these articles in the Gospel Library at www.lds.org: “About Patriarchal Blessings” (*New Era*, Mar. 2004) and Q&A (*New Era*, May 2002 and Mar. 1992).

we are filled with anxiety, lift us up when we are weak in spirit.

Adoption into the House of Israel

There are many coming into the Church who are not of the blood lineage of a specific tribe of Jacob. No one need assume that he or she will be denied any blessing by reason of not being of the blood lineage of Israel.

Paul makes repeated references to adoption into the house of Israel through faith: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9). And again: “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises” (Romans 9:4).

King Benjamin refers to the faithful as “the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters” thus being able to be “spiritually begotten . . . through faith” (Mosiah 5:7), and thus coming into the family of Christ through a spiritual birth.

It really makes no difference if the blessings of the house of Israel come through the lineage or through the spirit of adoption. Elder John A. Widtsoe stated, “Whether this lineage is of blood or of adoption does not matter.”²

In Abraham we are told, “And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father” (Abraham 2:10).

Lineage

Since families are of mixed lineage, it occasionally happens that members of the same family have blessings declaring them to be of different lineage. There has been an intermixture of the tribes one with another. One child may be of Ephraim, another in the same family of Manasseh, Judah, or one of the other tribes. The blood of one tribe, therefore, may be dominant in one child and the blood of another tribe dominant in another child, so

children from the same parents could belong to different tribes.

The house of Israel, in the original sense, meant the literal blood descendants of the house of Jacob. The Lord said to Abraham, “I give unto thee a promise that this right [meaning the right to receive the gospel and the priesthood] shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee” (Abraham 2:11). By seed we mean the heirs of the body. In our time the Lord has said, “Thus saith the Lord unto you, with whom the priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers—

“For ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, . . .

“Therefore, your life and priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage” (D&C 86:8–10).

Believing Gentiles, even though not of the blood lines or genealogical ancestry of Israel, become adopted into the house of Israel.

Joseph Smith taught that when “the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene; . . . while the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost.”³

I received my own patriarchal blessing when I was but a boy of 12. From that short blessing I learned something about my responsibilities and my labors in establishing the kingdom.

I pray that we will live worthily and seek the blessings that are promised us by the Lord through our family patriarchs and through our ordained patriarchs, and that we will strive to help conditions and circumstances so that these great promises can be realized. **NE**

From an address given at Brigham Young University on March 30, 1980.

NOTES

1. *Evidences and Reconciliations*, arr. G. Homer Durham (1960), 75.
2. *Evidences and Reconciliations*, 322.
3. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (1972), 149–50.



You Have a **BIRTHRIGHT**

R. VAL JOHNSON
Church Magazines

Great blessings are rightfully yours as a member of the house of Israel.

You may not realize it, but you have a birthright. In the scriptures, *birthright* usually refers to the right of the son born first in a family to inherit his father's possessions and authority. In ancient Israel, for example, all the sons received some of their father's property, but the firstborn received a double portion and became the leader of the family. With his double portion, this son took care of his mother and sisters and others in the family who could not care for themselves.¹

The most notable of those holding a birthright is Jesus Christ. As the Firstborn of Heavenly Father in the spirit and the Father's Only Begotten Son in the flesh, Jesus is the Father's heir.² He has the right to rule over Heavenly Father's children, with the power to save all from death and hell.

To assist Him in this work, the Savior has appointed one family lineage to hold His priesthood and share the blessings of His gospel with the rest of Heavenly Father's children. This priesthood birthright was given first to Adam, and it descended from

him generation to generation down to Melchizedek. Melchizedek bestowed the priesthood and the birthright responsibility upon Abraham. The scriptures tell us that God made a covenant with Abraham that gave him the right to hold the priesthood and receive all the blessings that the priesthood provides—the most important of which is eternal life.³ Along with this privilege came the responsibility to help the Lord in bringing to pass the “eternal life of man.”⁴

Abraham gave this birthright to his son Isaac, who later bestowed it upon his son Jacob. Jacob (also known as Israel) transferred the birthright to his grandson Ephraim, the son of Joseph. Ephraim's birthright included the authority to preside over all those who have the priesthood. Ephraim was given the duty to gather, in the last days, all of Jacob's scattered posterity back into the same covenant family.⁵ Jacob's posterity is often referred to as the house, or twelve tribes, of Israel.

It is important to realize that the birthright did not automatically pass to the firstborn son. The son also had to be worthy and sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Ghost. For this reason, Jacob received the

As a member of the Church you are, either by direct descent or by adoption through baptism, a member of the house of Israel. This means you have the right to receive every blessing that Jesus Christ has to give, including all the ordinances of the temple.

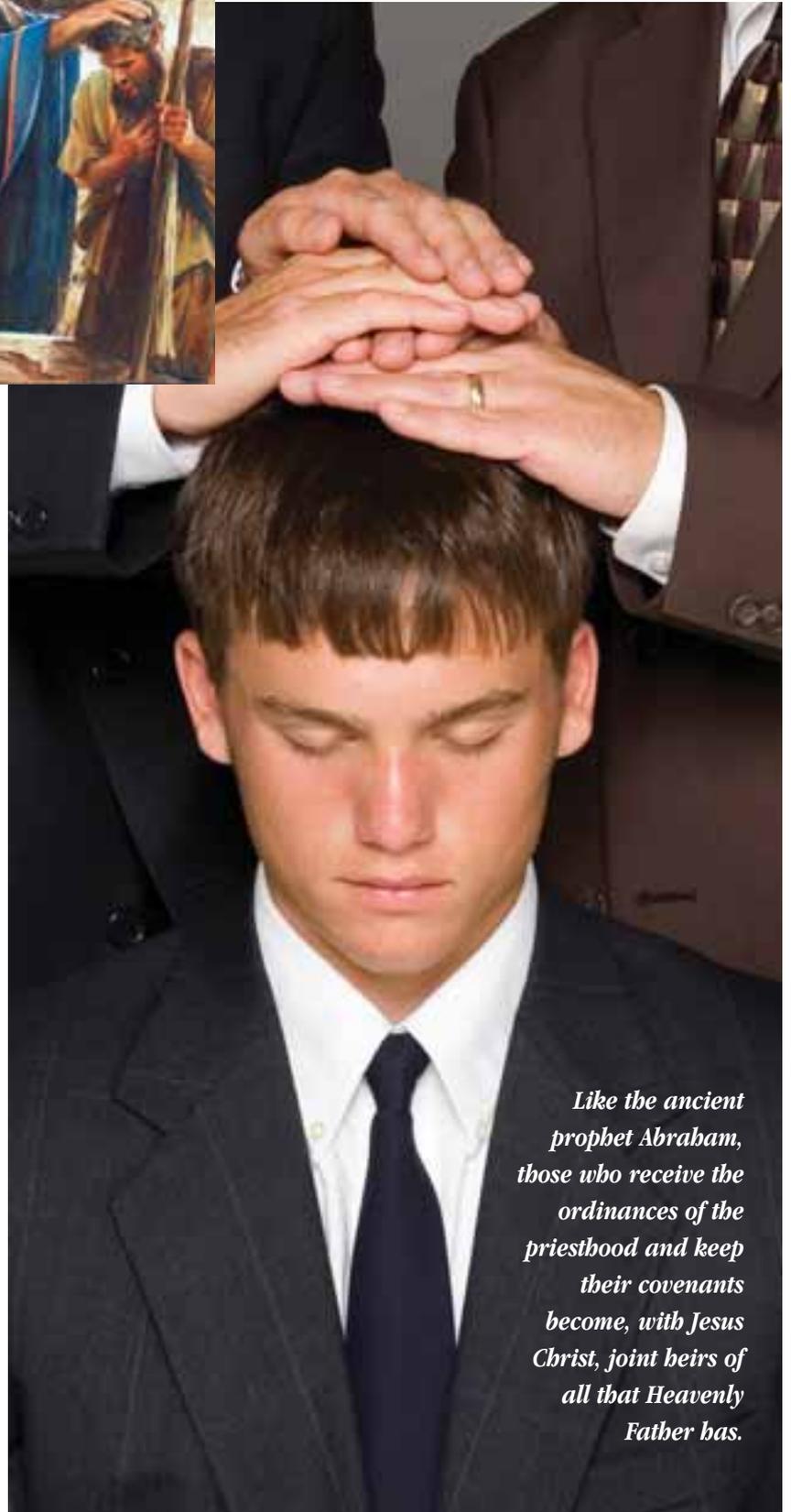
birthright rather than his elder brother Esau, who gave it up for a meal of pottage; Joseph received the birthright from Jacob because his oldest brother Reuben committed a serious sin.⁶

Today, Jacob's posterity, by direct descent from him or by adoption into the house of Israel through baptism, have the right to every blessing of the gospel, including the ordinances of the temple. But they receive these blessings only if they prove worthy.⁷ In addition, worthy descendants of Jacob's grandson Ephraim have the specific birthright to preside in the kingdom of God and to offer, through missionary and temple work, the ordinances of salvation to all of God's family. Those who receive these priesthood ordinances and keep their covenants become, through and with Jesus Christ, joint heirs with Him of all that Heavenly Father has.⁸

The birthright given anciently to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is also yours. Your patriarchal blessing identifies your lineage in the house of Israel and describes many of the blessings and responsibilities you will receive if you live worthy of your birthright. **NE**

NOTES

1. See Bible Dictionary, "Birthright," 625; "Firstborn," 675.
2. See Hebrews 1:1-8.
3. See Genesis 22:15-18; D&C 84:14-22, 33-39; Abraham 1:1-4; 2:6, 9-11.
4. Moses 1:39.
5. See Genesis 26:1-5; 28:10-14; 48:3-6, 8-20; Jeremiah 31:6-10.
6. See Genesis 25:29-34; 1 Chronicles 5:1-2.
7. See D&C 4:2-4; 121:34-46.
8. See Romans 8:16-17; Galatians 3:26-29; D&C 86:8-11; 133:25-34.



Like the ancient prophet Abraham, those who receive the ordinances of the priesthood and keep their covenants become, with Jesus Christ, joint heirs of all that Heavenly Father has.

MELCHIZEDEK BLESSES ABRAM, BY WALTER RANE

TAKING BOTH ROADS

BY BRIANNE BROOME

Would I have to give up seminary to graduate from high school?

About halfway through my last year of high school, the school counselor was calculating my credit hours. After pulling up my class schedule, she turned to me and said, "If you want to graduate from high school, you cannot take seminary during the school day."

I was shocked. I felt like I was standing at the end of a street looking at two roads, both of which I wanted to take: graduating from high school and taking seminary. I had been looking forward to graduating for a long time. Should I drop seminary so I could get the credit needed to graduate?

I left the counselor's office feeling upset and frustrated. When I got home I went to my room and got down on my knees. I told my Heavenly Father that I wanted to take seminary very much, but I also wanted to graduate from high school. After praying, I felt calm. I didn't know how things were going to work out, but I knew everything would be okay.

The next day I was back in the counselor's room looking at possible class choices. One class caught my eye—Peer Tutoring. I had talked to people who had taken this class and liked it, so I decided to enroll.

On my first day in Peer Tutoring, the teacher went

over basic classroom procedures. We would be helping special-needs students do schoolwork. The teacher said some of us would be going with these students to their classes so we could help them. She began to assign us to different students that we would work with. Then she asked, "Are any of you willing to take Tony to seminary?"

"For what church?" asked one of the students.

"For the LDS Church," she answered.

I was the only Latter-day Saint student in the room, so I was assigned to Tony. At that moment I realized that

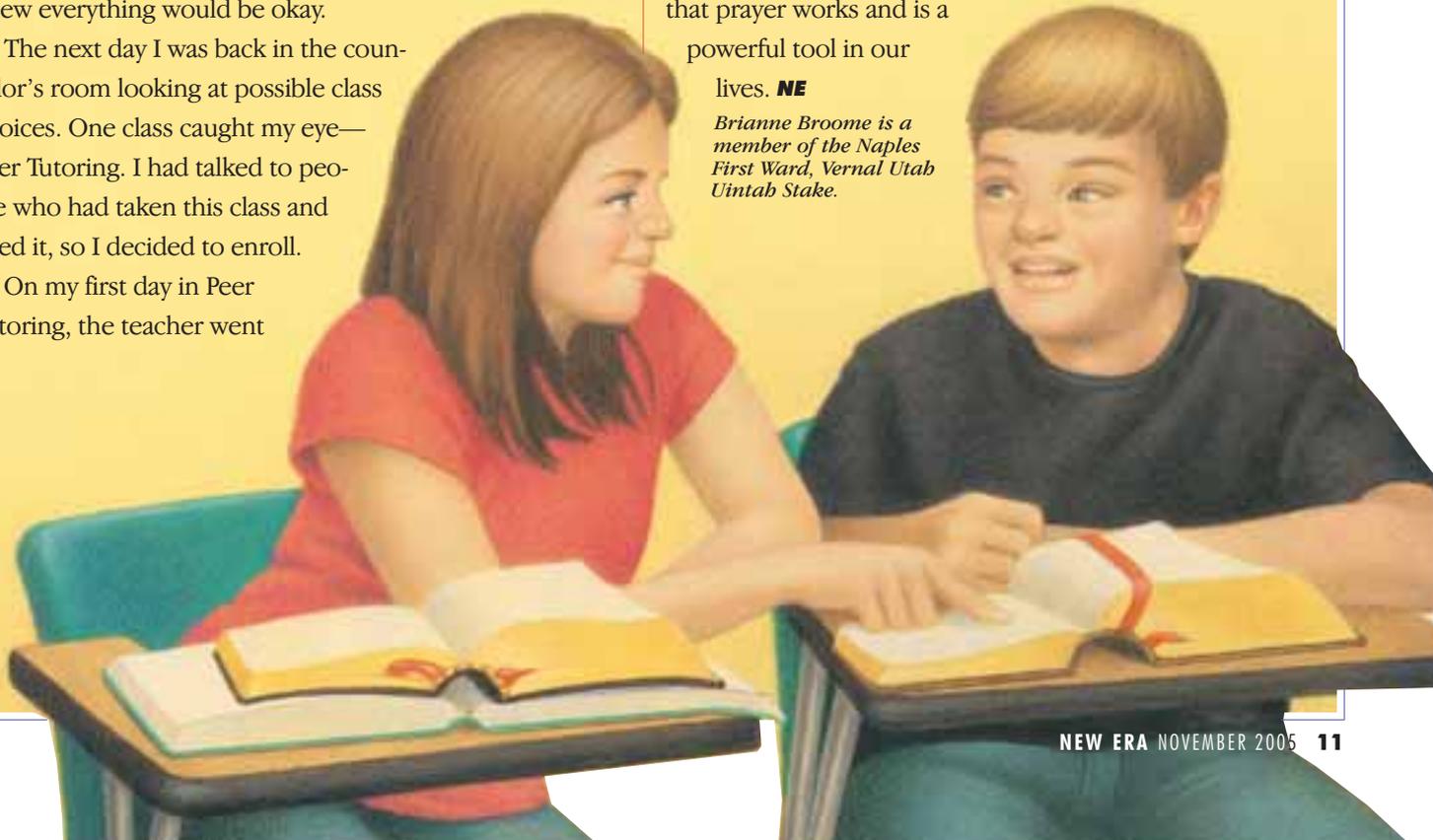
Heavenly Father had answered my prayer. For the next three months, I went to seminary with Tony and got to partake of the Spirit. I was also able to graduate from both seminary and high school.

I know my experience was not just pure luck. My Heavenly Father heard my prayer and answered it. This experience has taught me

that prayer works and is a powerful tool in our lives. **NE**

Brianne Broome is a member of the Naples First Ward, Vernal Utah Uintah Stake.

When I was assigned to help Tony, I realized Heavenly Father had helped solve my dilemma.



PROGRESSING

Even though your Personal Progress goals are individual, sometimes you can complete those goals at the same time as other young women, or you can help each other with value projects. Getting together with others for a Personal Progress activity can be fun. Here are some ideas of what you could do to progress together and have a great time.



You can give awards like “Most Healthy Recipe” or “Best International Dish.”

Have all the girls submit their recipes. Compile them into a recipe book and, if possible, make copies for the young women. After the cook-off, teach a younger sibling or another young woman how to cook your dish. Deliver it to someone in your ward who could use some help with dinner.



Faith

To fulfill value experience 2, gather your Young Women class, either at church or in your home. Invite a few of the girls’

mothers or grandmothers to come, and ask everyone to bring a journal. (If a female family member cannot come, ask a Young Women leader who is a mother to come instead.) Read together the required scriptures and the proclamation on the family and talk about them. Hold a panel discussion with the mothers and grandmothers and talk about how to be a faithful mother.

Before the party, prepare one of your mother’s best cookie recipes to serve to everyone. While you eat, write your thoughts about motherhood in your journals. Make thank-you cards for the mothers and grandmothers, and have the girls sign them.

Divine Nature

For a value project, organize a cook-off or bake-off for the young women in your class or ward. Pick a convenient night, and have all the girls make and bring their favorite dish to be judged by a panel of your Young Women leaders. Or your bishopric might be willing to be judges instead. Learn to make a new dish, and submit your own entry as well. Make awards for each girl who has an entry.

Individual Worth

For value experience 7, play “I think you’re special because . . .” Get together with the young women and Young Women leaders in your class or ward



TOGETHER

and sit in a circle. You start the activity by choosing someone in the circle and saying, “I think you’re special because . . .,” and then fill in the blank. The person whose positive qualities you pointed out then chooses someone else and does the same thing for her. Make sure everyone is chosen at least once before you start over.

Read the assigned scriptures individually, and talk to your parents about the activity. Have them list your positive qualities too, and write about what you learned in your journal.

Knowledge

For value experience 4, have the young women in your class, including yourself, choose a gospel principle to learn more about. When you have all chosen, spend a week researching the topic and writing a five-minute talk about it.

Get together over some treats with your Young Women leaders to share your talks with each other.

Choice and Accountability

For value experience 5, gather the young women and leaders, and have them bring their journals. Have each person choose a partner to read and discuss the first assigned scripture with. After each scripture selection, switch partners for the next scripture and discussion.

Write your feelings about the Holy Ghost in your journals, and share your testimonies with each other, including the ways you plan to be worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Good Works

For value experience 6, rally the young women in your ward, and volunteer to clean your church building. Remember to work with those in the ward who are responsible for cleaning the building. Divide the building into segments, and give random assignments to the girls and leaders who come to serve. If there are enough girls and leaders, cleaning in pairs is more fun and faster than

doing it alone.

Get together afterwards for a short time to play games. Remember to write in your journals about your service experience.

Integrity

For value experience 3, get together with the young women and divide into three groups. Have each group take two of the assigned scriptures, and give the groups half an hour to prepare a skit about those scriptures. You can even ask people to bring items they could use as costumes.

Have each group perform and then talk about the ways the people in the assigned scriptures showed integrity. After the skits, invite the young women and your leaders to share an experience when they or someone else showed integrity. **NE**



SOMETHING

I could spend my Saturday night watching a movie . . . or moving furniture.

BY CARL WEBB

One Saturday night, I was on my way to pick up my friend Jon so we could watch a movie at a friend's house. On my way there, I passed a house with a moving van parked outside. The house wasn't in my neighborhood, but the thought came to me that I should stop and help the family move in. I shrugged the thought away because it was nearly 10:00 p.m. They were probably almost finished.

When Jon and I arrived at our friend's house, the movie was halfway over. We were bored trying to figure out what was going on, so after only a few minutes, we decided to leave.

"Let's go get some shakes," Jon suggested.

On the way into town, I saw the house with the moving truck still parked outside.

"Should we help those people?" I asked.

"I was thinking the same thing," Jon said.

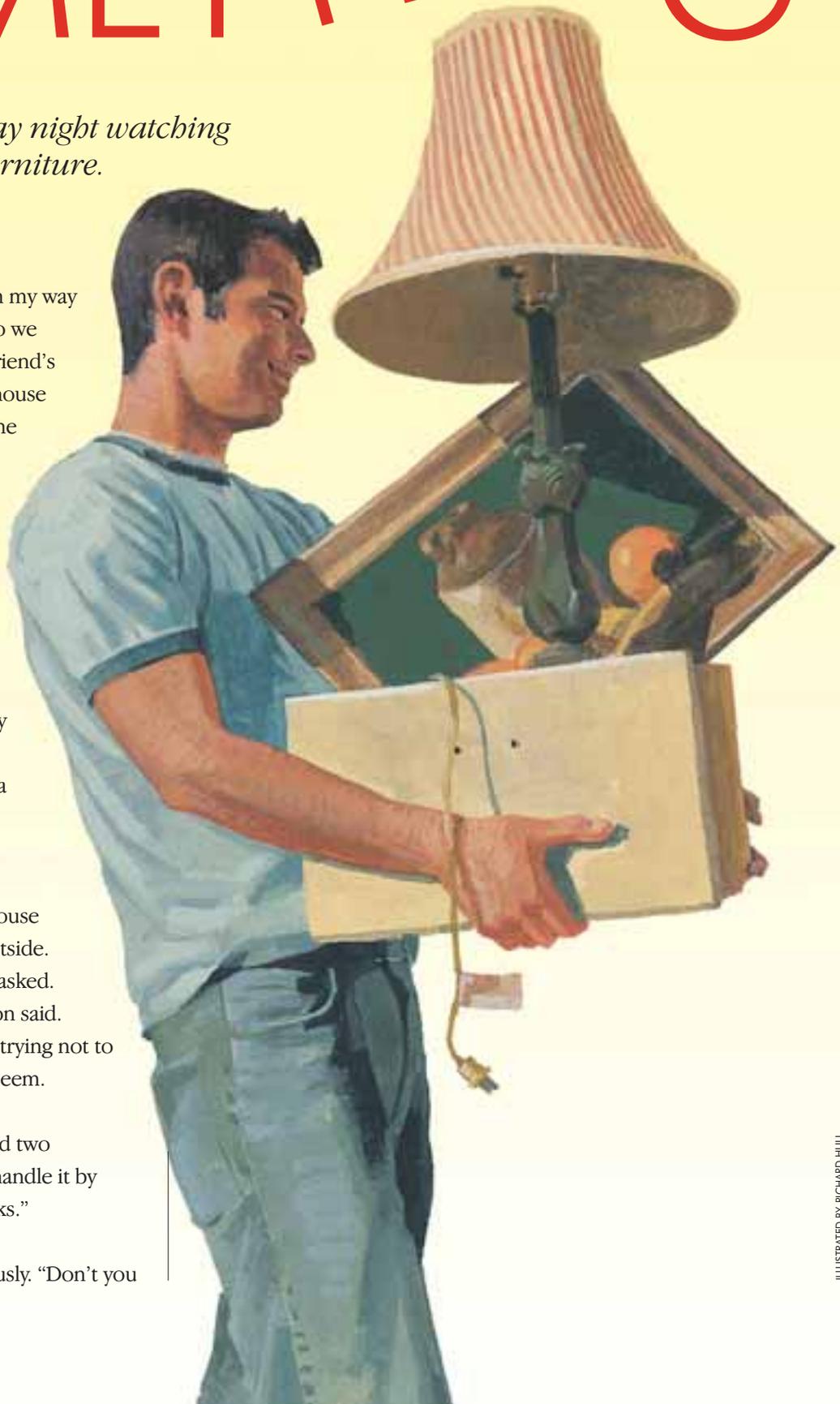
I pulled over and we hopped out, trying not to think about how strange this would seem.

"Could you use a hand?" I called.

The family—a mother, a father, and two children—stared at us. "No. We can handle it by ourselves," the father said. "But thanks."

"Are you sure?" Jon asked.

The mother looked at us suspiciously. "Don't you



BETTER TO DO



boys have anything better to do on a Saturday night?”

Jon and I looked at each other and shrugged. “Not really,” we said.

It took a few minutes to convince them that we really wanted to help, and they finally let us.

Mostly heavy furniture was left, and I wondered how the four of them had

planned to lift it all themselves.

When Jon and I left, the mother thanked us for such a nice welcome into their new neighborhood.

A few weeks later, she introduced herself to Jon’s mom in stake conference. She said, “Please thank your son and his friend again for helping us. They strengthened my faith.”

She explained that they had loaded the truck that morning and had driven all day. By the time they had arrived, they were exhausted. But they had wanted to finish moving so they could return the truck that night and avoid paying an extra day’s fee. The 12-year-old son had been so weary that he wanted to collapse. Shutting himself in the bathroom, he had prayed for a small miracle—the ability to help move all the remaining heavy furniture. Moments later, help had arrived.

I know that the Lord hears our prayers, no matter how small the request. Nothing feels better than to know that Jon and I were guided to answer a prayer that night. **NE**

Carl Webb is a member of the Deer Creek Ward, Midway Utah Stake.

Q & A

“How do you know you’re forgiven when you repent?”

NEW ERA

If you are carrying a burden of guilt and anguish because you have broken one or more of God’s laws, you can give that burden to the Lord by repenting. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28), the Savior said. When that burden is lifted, you will feel gratitude for the Lord’s goodness in forgiving you. You will feel joy and peace instead of pain and guilt.

That joy and peace come through the Holy Ghost. When you feel the Spirit, you can know that the Lord has forgiven you, because the Spirit doesn’t dwell in an unclean tabernacle (see Mosiah 2:37).

The Book of Mormon describes what people feel when they are forgiven. Study the experiences of Enos (Enos 1:4–6), King Benjamin’s people (Mosiah 4:2–3), and Alma the Younger (Mosiah 27:28–29). After calling upon God for forgiveness, Enos’s guilt was swept away, King Benjamin’s people were filled with joy, and Alma was “pained no more.” These feelings follow full repentance.

The hymn “How Gentle God’s Commands” (*Hymns*, no. 125) describes forgiveness as

- **You can know that you have been forgiven when you feel peace and joy through the Holy Ghost.**
- **Forgiveness follows repentance. You can learn more about repentance from the scriptures, your bishop and parents, and teachings of latter-day prophets.**
- **After you feel the Lord’s forgiveness, forgive yourself and move on with your life.**
- **To be forgiven, you also need to be forgiving of others.**

“sweet refreshment”:

*Why should this anxious load
Press down your weary mind?
Haste to your Heav’nly Father’s throne
And sweet refreshment find.*

*His goodness stands approved,
Unchanged from day to day;
I’ll drop my burden at his feet
And bear a song away.*

If you’re still not sure if you have been forgiven, maybe you haven’t fully repented, or maybe the Lord has forgiven you, but you haven’t forgiven yourself.

Forgiveness will come when you have followed the requirements of repentance such as seeking forgiveness, feeling sorrow for the sin, keeping the commandments, repairing the wrong as much as possible, and giving up and confessing the sin. Serious sins need to be confessed to your bishop or branch president; less-serious sins can be confessed only to Heavenly Father. You can learn more about the steps of repentance from the scriptures, your bishop and parents, and the teachings of latter-day prophets.

If you are struggling to forgive yourself, remember the Lord’s promise: “He who has



repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42). Once forgiven, you are free from that sin and should forgive yourself. Hanging on to the guilt after the Lord has forgiven you is like denying that the Atonement is working in your life.

Forgiving yourself doesn't mean you forget the sin and the pain it caused. That memory will help prevent future sin. But you can rest assured that the Lord will not remember your sins when you have repented. **NE**

READERS



In Luke 7:47-50 Christ forgives a woman of her sins and says, “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” I know that when we have sincerely completed

all the steps of repentance, the Lord will forgive us, and we can feel at peace with ourselves and with God. We no longer feel the pain of guilt. Remember, to feel forgiven it is also important that we forgive ourselves and, if others have wronged us, that we also forgive them. Pray to know if there is any-

thing you may still need to do to fully repent. Be assured that when you have done everything that is required, God has promised He will remember your sins no more, and you can “go in peace.”

Sarah Smith, 20, Leeds Fifth Branch, Leeds England Stake



If you stop doing whatever you repented of, you'll feel good about yourself. You won't feel guilty anymore.

Peter Wilkinson, 13, Solihull Ward, Coventry England Stake



When you have completely gone through the repentance process, you will feel inner tranquility. You will know by the weight of sin being lifted off. It will be gone, but if you aren't

sure, kneel in prayer and ask Heavenly Father if you are forgiven. If you are, you will receive a confirmation. Realize that your Heavenly Father has forgiven you but that you have to forgive yourself. Do not dwell on your sins, but learn from them instead.

Jed Layton, 18, Centerville 11th Ward,
Centerville Utah South Stake



I know I have been forgiven because of the loving feeling I get. It's as if Heavenly Father has wrapped me in His arms and told me everything is going to be okay. I am at peace then

and can start again.

Maria Butler, 18, Shelley 10th Ward, Shelley Idaho Stake



When you have fully repented, the Lord will send you a peaceful feeling. I try to picture myself kneeling before my Heavenly Father and Savior in regret and sorrow. I imagine Him

saying, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. I love you" (see Matthew 25:21). The feeling you get will be wonderful, and you will know.

McKenzie Hansen, 16, Lakewood Ward,
Tempe Arizona West Stake



When you're forgiven of your sins, you will know. When the sweet Spirit of the Holy Ghost fills you with a peaceful feeling, it will testify to you that you have been forgiven.

Chandra McFarland, 18, American Falls Second Ward,
American Falls Idaho Stake

The only way you can receive forgiveness is through repentance. After you have asked God for His forgiveness, you can tell that you have been forgiven when you no longer feel pain for your sin. God says that He will remember your sins no more.



When you have fully repented, you feel an inner peace. You know somehow you are forgiven because the burden you have carried for so long, all of a sudden isn't there anymore. It is gone and you know it is gone. . . .

“ . . . If you have fully repented, the relief and the peace you feel will be so noticeable that it will be a witness to you that the Lord has forgiven you.”

—Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy, “Repentance,” *Ensign*, May 1983, 59.

This doesn't mean you won't remember your sins, but you won't feel deep remorse and regret anymore.

Nathan McMaster, 16, Rochester Third Ward,
Rochester Minnesota Stake



I know I'm forgiven when I pray and feel relief. If I still feel guilty, I haven't fully repented. When I've done something wrong, my heart hurts. But when you're forgiven you feel happy; your

heart is lighter. If you aren't sure you've been forgiven, you can go to your bishop for help.

Jorge Wilson Alkaim de Freitas, 14, Almada Ward,
Setúbal Portugal Stake



When I've done something wrong, I kneel and pray to Heavenly Father and ask Him to forgive me. I get this feeling inside of me that makes me tingle all over, a feeling I get

when I know I corrected the problem I had. I do my best to make sure that I don't make the same mistake twice.

Lauren Ashley Lange, 16, Gloucester Branch,
Newport News Virginia Stake

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

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send your answer to the question below, along with your name, birth date, ward and stake (or branch and district), and a photograph (including your parent's written permission to print the photo) to:

Q&A, New Era

50 E. North Temple St. Rm. 2420

Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA

Or e-mail: cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

Please respond by December 15, 2005.

QUESTION

"I lie a lot. Sometimes it's to hide my mistakes, and sometimes it's to build myself up by claiming to have done things I haven't done. How do I break this bad habit?"

THE JOKE'S ON YOU

A photograph of a man wearing a festive, multi-colored elf hat with a gold cone and green and black pointed sections. He has a surprised expression, looking upwards and to the right. He is holding a fan of playing cards, showing the red and white patterned backs. The background is a dark, textured red.

... IF YOU THINK YOU CAN WIN WHEN YOU GAMBLE. DON'T BE FOOLED.
YOU RISK LOSING THE SPIRIT.

(See Gordon B. Hinckley, "Gambling," *Ensign*, May 2005, 58.)



NOTES FROM

BY RYAN CARR
Church Magazines

A ward organist at age 10, Fleur Rickford now attends a boarding school for talented teenage musicians. She is busy with her studies but finds blessings in making time for the gospel.

1988: Fleur Rickford is born in Solihull, England.

1991: At a concert with her mom, three-year-old Fleur points to the harp and says, “I want to play that.”

1994: At age 6 Fleur starts harp and piano lessons.

1997: At age 9 Fleur is the pianist in Primary.

1998: At age 10 Fleur is the ward organist.

2003: At age 15 Fleur gets into Chetham’s School of Music in England, a boarding school for musically gifted students.

2005: Fleur talks about the challenges of living away from home:

“It’s really hard because I’m the only Latter-day Saint in the school. It’s quite hard to fit in prayers and scripture study. But you put your mind to it. You have to organize your time.

“I’ve decided to make prayer, scripture study, and home-study seminary a part of my schedule. I can’t get through the day without them. You have to have the Spirit with you, or you start doing the things everyone else does.”

High Notes

At Chetham’s, Fleur is doing something everyone else is doing: studying music. Fleur says music has come

naturally to her because she grew up in a musical family. Her father sings, and her five older siblings all learned to play musical instruments.

Fleur remembers the first time she played the organ in sacrament meeting. She had played the piano in Primary, but when the ward organist was called to be the bishop, he encouraged her to play the organ. He asked her to play the closing hymn one sacrament meeting. Fleur was nervous.

When it was time for the hymn, she went to the organ, and the bishop sat beside her to work the pedals for her. From that day on, Fleur served as the ward organist, from age 10 to 14.

She says, “It was scary sitting up on the stand with people staring at me.” Her willingness to serve, however, brought a blessing: “After a while I got better at sight-reading the hymns. I could just go in and play them.”

Life at a Boarding School

When she was 15, Fleur auditioned for and got in to Chetham’s School of Music. If music wasn’t her life then, it is now. Her classes, which include regular academic subjects, begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 4:30 p.m. Outside of class, she practices her music for several hours at a time.

On the harp, she plays solos, ensembles, and jazz and classical pieces. Last fall, the orchestra she is in performed three symphony concerts in nearby cities. At home she accompanies her father when he sings, and she plays the piano, harp, and organ for the ward. She also plays for community events.

Fleur





Fleur makes it home on the weekends to spend time with her family and Church friends (above) from the Bradford Second Ward, Leeds England Stake. From left to right: Young Women leader Coral McLaughlin, Aimee McLaughlin, Fleur, Tilly Jackson, and Emily Gott. Opposite page: Fleur practices the harp in her family's conservatory.

At Chetham's, surrounded by people whose values and standards differ from her own, Fleur is determined to keep her Young Women values. Although students aren't allowed to smoke or drink at school, some of them do so when they go out to Manchester, a nearby city.

Fleur explains: "When they say, 'Come to the pub with us,' I just say, 'No, thanks. I don't drink.'" Now that Fleur's fellow students know her standards, they respect her for not drinking or smoking.

When she goes out, Fleur spends time with friends who don't drink, or she goes shopping or to the cinema. "I make my own sort of fun," she says.

Fleur says it takes self-mastery and strength to live the gospel when you are away from your family and Church friends. She says living away from home has strengthened her testimony and adds: "You have to learn to control yourself in an environment where you could just go out and do a lot of things you wouldn't do when you were at home. You have to think about what the consequences would be if you do things like that."

At home, she found it easy to take her friends' and family's support for granted. Her Church friends were nearby. She could have family home evening with her parents. "When you go through difficult things, you can just go and talk to your parents. Or you can just ring up your Church friends," Fleur says. "The problem with being at school is you're on your own. You have to find a place to read your scriptures. I have a few Church CDs with me. It gets me through. It builds my testimony."

Still, every weekend, she takes the one-hour train ride home to be with her family and Church friends. If she has exams in the coming week, Fleur asks her father for a priesthood blessing. The weekend passes quickly as she goes to youth dances on Friday nights, youth activities on Saturdays, and church on Sunday in the Bradford Second Ward, Leeds England Stake.

At school Fleur's good example has rubbed off on others. Last winter, the mother of Fleur's roommate died of cancer. Fleur's roommate returned home to South Africa for the funeral. After she returned to school, she had a hard time readjusting because she missed her mother. Fleur told her about the plan of salvation, which brought her a lot of comfort.

On another occasion, this roommate told Fleur she was surprised at how many friends Fleur has. Fleur explained that she knows them from church. A couple of friends from school have now gone to church with Fleur.

Others have noticed the gospel's influence in Fleur's life, like her housemother, Mrs. Brun. She said Fleur "is very self-controlled and always gets on with what she has to do quietly and calmly. She is positive and a reliable member of the community

and copes admirably with all demands made on her. This is, I am sure, due to her church background.”

Blessings from Prayer and Scripture Study

During her first year at school, when she lived with four roommates, Fleur had a hard time finding time alone to pray and study scriptures. “There wasn’t much privacy to pray, unless I got in the dorm early. The other option was to pray in the bathroom. It wasn’t the greatest place, but it was private.”

Fleur makes time for gospel study because, she says, “reading the scriptures daily for seminary helps me to live Church principles away from home.” Fortunately, this year Fleur has her own room, making it easier for her to pray and study.

Fleur says prayer helps her do well in school. So far, she has received the highest scores possible on her music exams. “Being a musician, I have a lot of exams. If I just went into the examination room and played my instruments, I probably wouldn’t do as well because I wouldn’t be in a spiritual state. I pray before I go in, and I seem to come out with good results. I see these as blessings.”

Living far from family and Church friends has taught Fleur to count her many blessings. One is that people respect her for living her standards; they see what good the Church brings her. Another is that making time in her busy schedule for gospel activities invites the Spirit to accompany her. **NE**

WANT TO LEARN MUSIC?

Besides playing music, Fleur enjoys using her musical talent to serve and teach. She has some advice for those who want to learn music:

“If you have musical people in your ward, they might be willing to teach. I’ve taught piano before to Primary boys. I used to teach songs in Young Women. I played the piano for them and helped them learn new songs. It was fun to be involved like that. It’s good for you.

“Stick at it. Develop your skills. It takes practice and discipline and self-control. Music has helped me be a better person because you have to work very hard.”





PLAYING JOSEPH SMITH

BY SHANNA BUTLER
Church Magazines

Nick Whitaker (above) will play young Joseph Smith in an upcoming Church film about the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The movie, which opens soon in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building Legacy Theater, also features Max Whitaker, Nick's younger brother, and Joy Gardner as siblings of the Prophet (opposite page).

You might have seen Nick Whitaker before. He's been in seminary videos and a few other productions during his short acting career. Now, Nick, 16, is portraying the Prophet Joseph Smith in a new movie about the Prophet's life.

The movie will soon replace *The Testaments of One Fold and One Shepherd* at the Legacy Theater in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building in downtown Salt Lake City. The new movie is part of the Church's commemoration of the 200th birthday of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Nick's real-life brother, Max, 11, plays William Smith, one of Joseph's younger brothers. Max played the part of William Smith in *The Restoration* DVD as well.

The brothers enjoy working together. They say their testimonies of the Prophet have been built up by their parts in this movie. They have studied about the Smith family and the Prophet and have prayed continually about their parts.

"I've gotten to know Joseph Smith a lot better," says Nick. "I only knew the highlights of his life before. But even the little



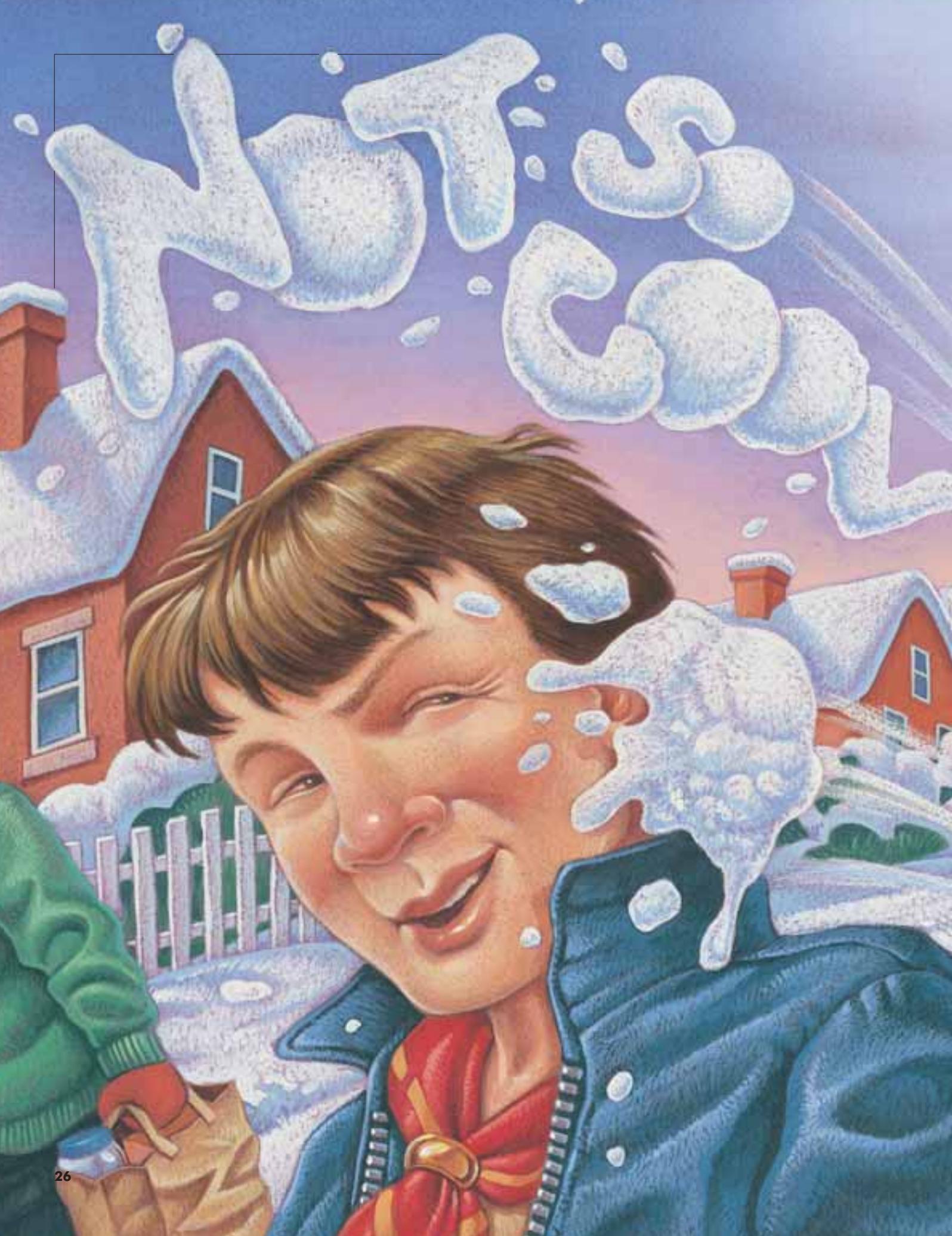
parts of his life are highlights now. I know he is a true prophet."

One of the things Nick learned is that Joseph Smith walked with a slight limp as a result of a surgery he had when he was young. Nick had to learn to walk with a small limp, too, to play his part.

Max says he can feel the Spirit when he is filming and learning more about the Prophet. "It has strengthened my testimony," he says.

Nick and Max hope the new movie will change people's lives and strengthen testimonies of the Prophet Joseph Smith and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. **NE**





BY JOHN LATTIN

I convinced myself I was too cool to do something as uncool as a Scouting food drive.

When I was 13, I was so cool. My shoes were always untied, and my pants could have fit twice as many legs as I had. The more average I appeared, the more popular I became. It seemed the most impressive thing I could do was nothing. At times I felt like doing something, but I rarely gave in, for I was cool.

In my life, I had a number of activities and abilities that I felt were anti-cool. Some of my “faults” were my ability to play the piano and get good grades. Perhaps my greatest hitch was my involvement in Scouting, seen by some kids at school as less than cool.

After all, Scouts advocate doing a good turn daily. If someone asked about Scouting, I would quickly change the subject.

It’s not that I didn’t enjoy camping and other activities. I just didn’t want my peers to know that I enjoyed such things. If that knowledge ever spread, I knew that my cool friends would begin drifting away.

As winter arrived, my troop helped with the Scouting for Food drive. The Scouts advertised the food drive and collected the food by going around neighborhoods, usually dressed in their Scout uniforms. I felt I could not possibly participate. Someone might see me, delivering a fatal blow to my popularity. My parents, however, decided I needed to go.

As I walked out the door that day, I made every effort to keep a negative attitude. I eventually concluded that I would simply stay low in the cab of the truck and pass the time looking over my shoulder to make sure we weren’t spotted by anyone of importance.

The other guys passed the time in between houses throwing snowballs, telling jokes, and goofing around. That’s how it started. A little crack in my armor began. Jokes that started out seeming juvenile and annoying began to give me the chuckles, and I returned snowballs with snowballs instead of cold glares. By the end of our route, I was laughing while riding in the truck and racing to pick up the most food. Fortunately, I completely forgot that such simple pleasures were “beneath me.”

When I got dropped off in front of my house, I said goodbye and jaunted cheerfully into the kitchen, completely forgetting about my earlier lack of enthusiasm. My mom asked me how it had been, and I replied, “I had a great time.”

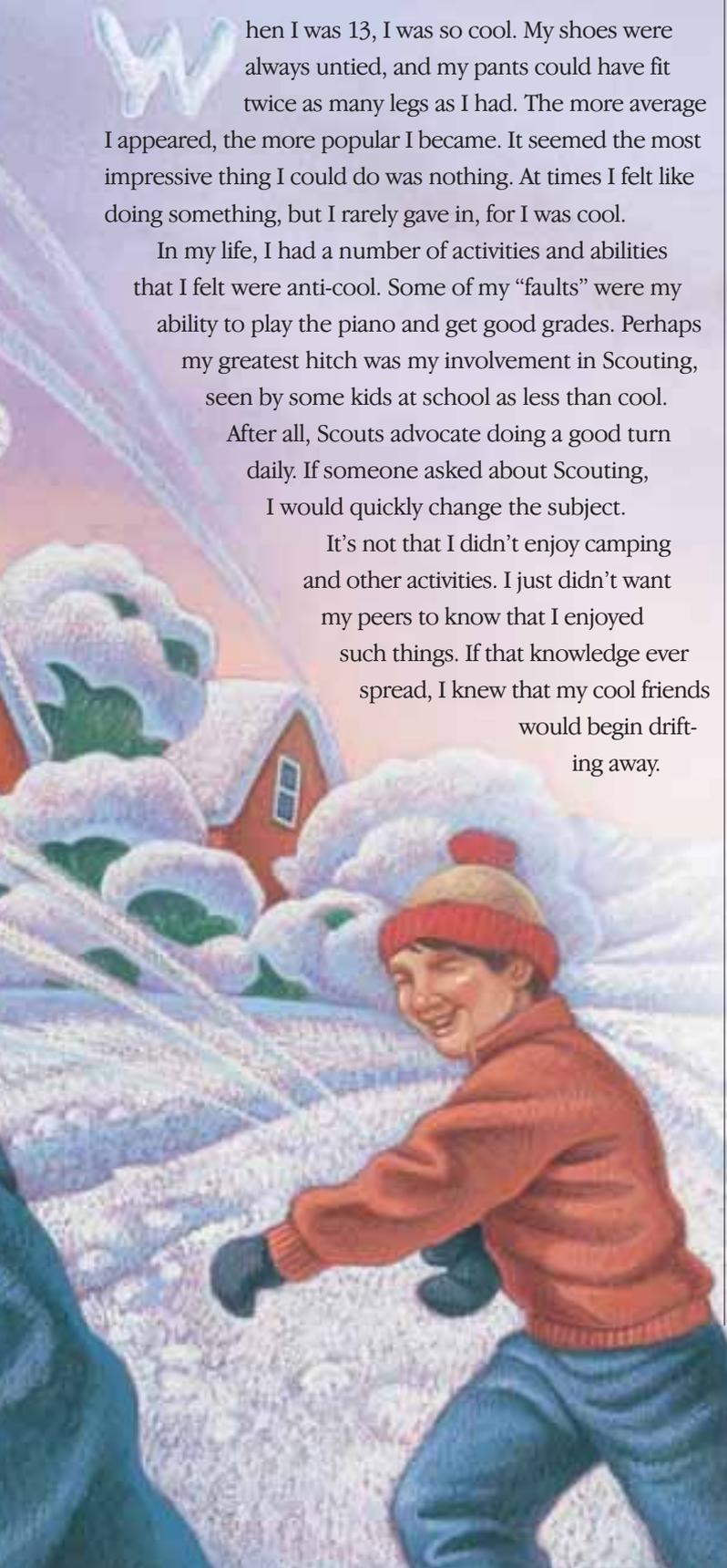
Just after these words slipped out of my mouth, I realized what I had done. How could I have told my mother this, of all things? I quickly tried to cover my mistake, coming back with, “Well, it was okay,” hoping that perhaps she would somehow not remember my initial response.

Looking back on this experience, I gained a few things from it. My search for peer approval was ridiculous. I decided that acting cool all the time really wasn’t cool. It didn’t benefit anyone, and it wasn’t any fun. When I acted disinterested, life was unexciting. Enjoyment, as it turned out, was independent of popularity. Who would have thought that? I gave this theory a test during the next week of school by making an effort to enjoy life rather than ignore it. This test was a great success. I had fun.

My Scouting experience taught me that I controlled whether or not I enjoyed myself in any situation—or in life.

Attitude really is everything. **NE**

Elder John Lattin is serving full time in the Mexico Chihuabua Mission.



CALLED OF

BY ELDER ROBERT S. WOOD

Of the Seventy



When I was 12, the bishop called me to be the music leader for the young men and young women. I knew nothing about music, but I accepted the calling. Why? Because the call came from the Lord through my bishop.

“We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.”
—Articles of Faith 1:5

When my family and I lived in Rhode Island, a minister of a local Methodist church invited me to join with the pastors, priests, and rabbis in our area to help fight a number of problems in the state, such as the prospect of casino gambling. I was happy to help.

One day after our meeting, these ministers were talking about the sense of calling they had, a great inner feeling, that led them to become ministers, pastors, rabbis, and priests. They discussed how, during the course of their career, they had the feeling they should leave one congregation and “seek another pulpit,” as they call it.

I was most interested in this conversation. Then this good friend of mine, the Methodist minister, said, “Well, there may be some here that have a different idea of what a calling is.”

I said, “There’s only one person here who has a different understanding, and that’s me, so let me tell you a little about my

own experience.

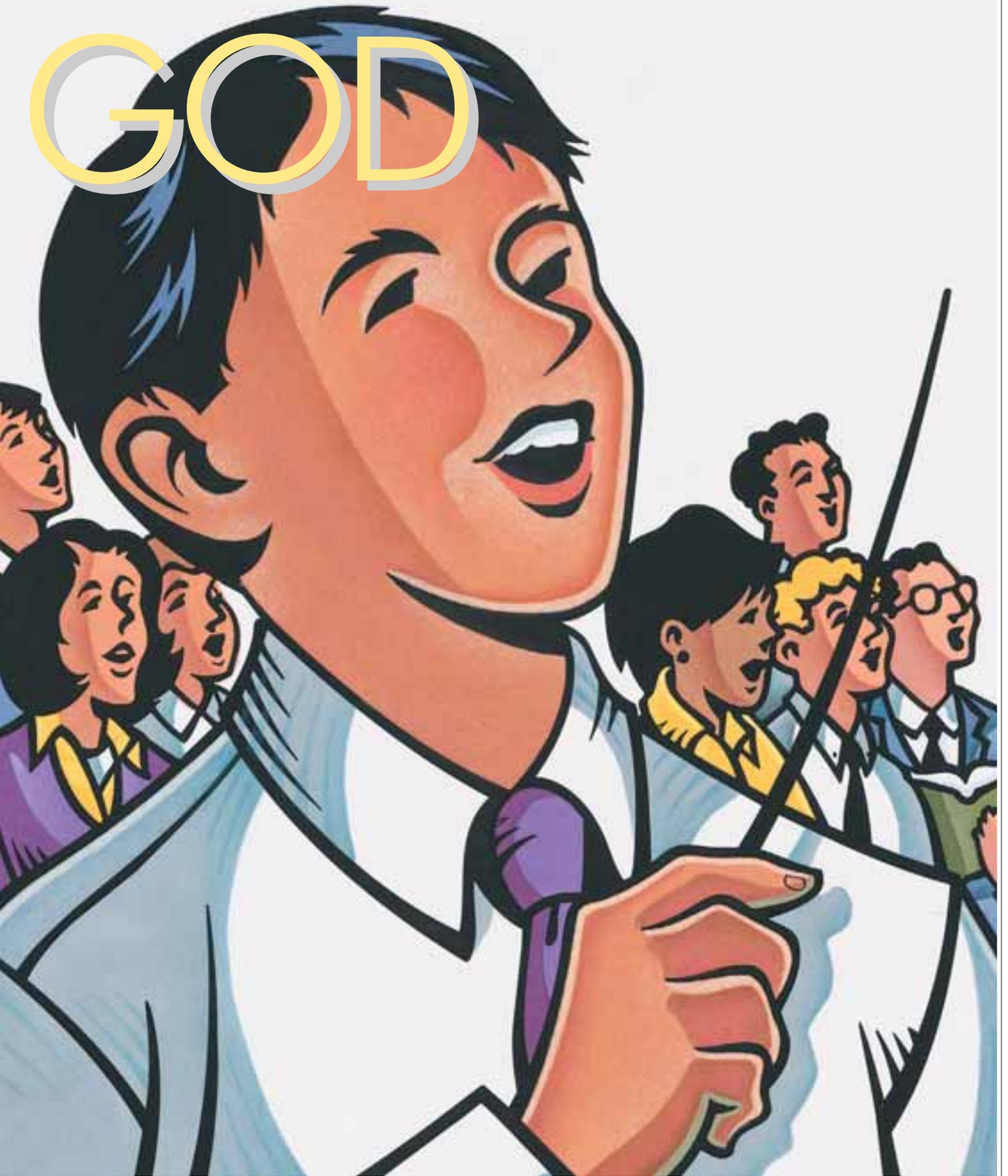
“When I was 12 years old, the bishop called me to be the music leader for the young men and the young women. I knew nothing about music and couldn’t sing well. But the bishop called me, so I did it.

“A Young Women president told me, ‘Okay, Robert. We’re going to make a conductor out of you.’ And she began to wave her arm one, two, three, four. And within 20 minutes I felt ready to conduct the Mormon Tabernacle Choir!”

Then I told these ministers, “Later I was called to other positions in the Young Men and in Scouting. I didn’t want to do those any more than I wanted to be a music leader, but the bishop called me and so I did it.

“And then one day I got a call to serve as bishop. I had observed what bishops do, and I really didn’t want to be called to be a bishop. But I was called, so I accepted. Later when I was called to be a stake president, I

GOD





“Some of you may be shy by nature or consider yourselves inadequate to respond affirmatively to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. It is the Lord’s work, and when we are on the Lord’s errand, we are entitled to the Lord’s help. Remember that *whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.*”

—President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Duty Calls,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 44; emphasis added.

Opposite page: Elder Milder and I thought the young medical student, though worthy, would be too busy to be the new stake president. But the Lord revealed to us that we should call him anyway.

Next month in this series, a crossword puzzle will test your knowledge of the sixth article of faith.

didn’t want to be a stake president, but I was called by an Apostle of the Lord, so I did it.

“Why is it that I accepted all these calls, even though I didn’t really want to do them? It was because I believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy—which is by revelation—and by the laying on of hands by one having authority to preach the gospel and administer the ordinances” (see Articles of Faith 1:5).

I continued, “I do not believe that a call comes from within. It is not a feeling that you have within you. It is a call that comes from God, through the servants who have also been called and set apart to that very purpose.”

In the course of that conversation I perceived what an unusual understanding of callings that was to them. No one saw a call that way, even though that is the biblical understanding of a call (see John 15:16).

The Right Person for the Call?

As bishop, stake president, and now as a General Authority, I have participated in calling people. I have had remarkably inspiring experiences of joining with another, generally a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles or an Area Seventy, to interview men we did not know. Yet the Lord revealed whom to call. Through these experiences, I began to get an even more powerful witness that the Lord does inspire and reveal who should serve.

When I was in Brazil serving as a counselor to the Area President, I was sent to reorganize a stake that was having problems. The president of the stake and his first counselor were not worthy to serve. So the second counselor had been carrying the whole burden of that stake for six to eight weeks.

When I got there I found that this second counselor was a young medical student. He had been married not too long ago, and his wife was a nurse. He was very busy, yet he

EXTRA! EXTRA!

To learn more about callings, you can read these scriptures:

- Called of God: Luke 6:13; John 15:16; Hebrews 5:4
- The laying on of hands: Acts 6:5–6; 1 Timothy 4:14; Alma 6:1
- The proper authority: Acts 14:23; Alma 49:30; D&C 42:11

These articles in the Gospel Library at www.lds.org can also help you with your calling: “Called to Serve” (*Ensign*, Sept. 2004), by Coleen K. Menlove; and “Rise to Your Call” (*Ensign*, Nov. 2002), by Elder Henry B. Eyring.

was carrying this terrific responsibility, made even greater by the terrible circumstances of the stake presidency. As I talked to him, I thought that this worthy young man, because he was a busy medical student, should not be called as stake president. It would be too much of a burden for him.

So that evening when I knelt by my bed I prayed, “Heavenly Father, bless Elder Milder and me that we will be inspired to know whom we should call as stake president and resolve the difficulties of this stake.”

A strong feeling came over me that said, “I’ve already shown you the new stake president.”

And I said to the Lord, “Oh, no you haven’t!”

All night long I wrestled with the Lord. I kept waking up with the impression that that young medical student should be the stake president, but I thought, “No, no, no. He should not.”

The next day when we started interviewing, Elder César Milder, an Area Seventy, and I agreed that the second counselor should not be the stake president, even though he was worthy, because it would be too much to give him. We had interviewed a bishop who would do well. Then we interviewed a man who had just moved into the stake. He had

served in a stake presidency. He had been a bishop twice. He was financially secure.

When we finished the interviewing, I told Elder Milder, “Give me the three names of those whom you think we ought to consider.”

He gave me the name of the bishop and this man who had just moved into the stake. Then he said, “I still feel we cannot ignore this second counselor.”

And I said, “Well, those are the three names that we should consider, but I agree that we should not, however, call the second counselor to be the new stake president.”

So, in prayer, we presented the name of the man who had just moved into the stake, and I understood at that moment what a stupor of thought was (see D&C 9:9). We did not get a confirmation at all. We prayed about the bishop and did not get a confirmation.

I said, “Well, I guess we’d better present this second counselor’s name before the Lord and see what He thinks.”

A powerful witness overwhelmed us. Our bosoms really did burn within us. Tears flowed down our faces as we received that confirmation.

So we met with him and his wife. I told him the reasons he shouldn’t be the stake president, then I said, “But apparently the Lord doesn’t care about any of those reasons. Therefore, on His behalf I extend the call to serve as stake president.” He accepted.

Another Confirmation

Later, while in Salt Lake City for general conference, I met with Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. After the meeting he said, “I’m being assigned to visit a stake conference in Brazil, but not to reorganize the stake. I’m not sure why I’m being sent. Do you know anything about this stake?”

It was the same stake where I had called the second counselor to be the stake president, so I told Elder Nelson the circumstances of the stake president being called.

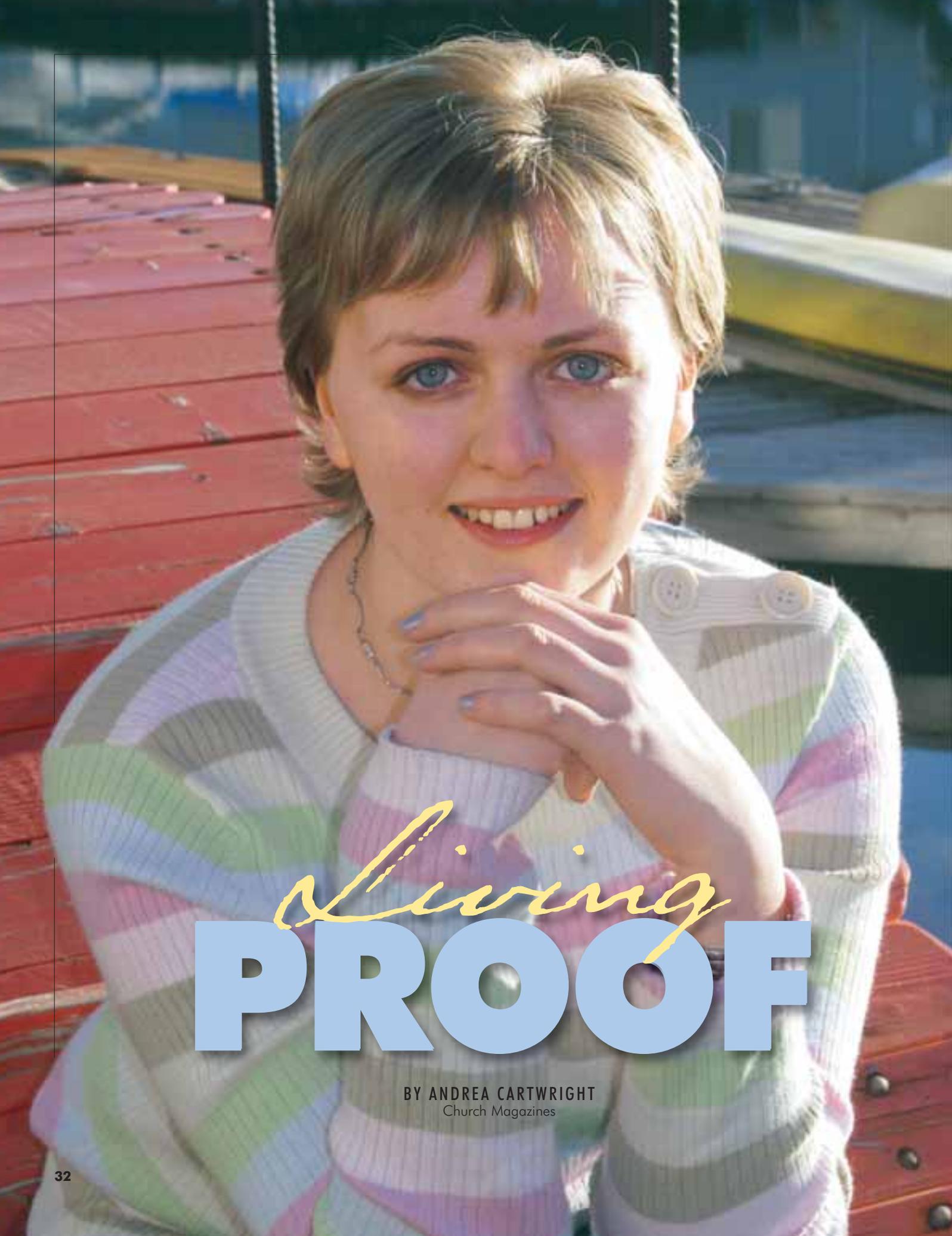
He said, “You know, Elder Wood, we do not usually call medical students to serve as stake presidents.”

I said, “I didn’t know that, but I believe it, and I would not have done this on my own.”

After the stake conference, Elder Nelson came to Recife, Brazil, where I was living. When he got off the plane, he said, “Elder Wood, you did the right thing. That man was indeed called of God, and he has made a great difference in the stake.”

That’s what the fifth article of faith means—that every calling comes by prophecy, which is revelation. Those who accept the callings are set apart “by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority,” which refers to the priesthood and its keys. Everybody, whether he or she serves in the nursery or in a stake presidency, has the right to a spiritual confirmation that he or she was called of God. **NE**





Living
PROOF

BY ANDREA CARTWRIGHT
Church Magazines

Two bullets nearly ended Kim's life. Even though she has no memory of exactly what happened, Kimberli Lingard knows there are good lessons to learn even from bad things.

Sixteen-year-old Kimberli Lingard left for work one afternoon last summer, having no idea that in a few hours she'd come face-to-face with a killer and be shot twice and left for dead. After what should have been a fatal event, a series of miracles occurred, and now Kim is living proof of God's blessings in her life.

Kim worked at a laundromat in Grantsville, Utah, a tiny town where everyone knows everyone, and few people lock their doors. The town is located near a major freeway, and in early June 2004, an angry gunman on the run from the police pulled off the freeway into this quiet town. He looked around at local shops for an easy place to rob until he found the laundromat where Kim was working alone.

The man took what little money was in the cash register, shot Kim in the head and shoulder, and fled. With Kim lying on the floor and losing blood fast, time was precious. A woman—only the second customer to come in during Kim's shift—entered just minutes after the shooting to discover

Kim lying in a pool of blood. The woman raced to a nearby restaurant and called the police.

Uncertain if the shooter had left the premises, a brave man from the restaurant rushed to

find another priesthood holder, and they gave Kim a blessing. Kim was soon flown to a hospital and immediately underwent seven hours of surgery to remove bullet fragments from her brain.

"It's odd to think that you're doing the same thing you've done every day for a year, and then you just wake up in the hospital."

—Kim Lingard

Knowing Where to Turn

Kim can't remember any of this. The last thing she remembers was being alone at work. But her family has a clear recollection of everything after the shooting. They remember turning immediately to the Lord. Her younger sister Rachel says, "I was really scared. I came downstairs and knelt down beside the couch and said a prayer that she'd be okay."

The 45-minute drive to the hospital was tense, but her little sister Jenessa says, "I just sat there praying the whole time."

Kim's friends at school started calling other friends to ask them to fast and pray for their dear friend.

Many hours and prayers later, Kim was stabilized. Three days after being shot, she woke up in the hospital to see her older sister Nicole leaning over her with a tear-stained face. Kim wanted to know what was wrong but couldn't ask. Her vocal chords had been partially paralyzed from the shooting. Kim couldn't talk, eat, walk, blink, or smile. She couldn't move her right arm or hand, and the doctors weren't hopeful that she



Above: In the hospital Kim Lingard improved rapidly due to her determination and hard work in therapy. Opposite page: A year after the shooting, Kim is still making progress.

Kim and her father, Craig, enjoy paddling around in a kayak on a lake inlet behind their home.

would ever fully recover from her wounds.

Even with Kim's future uncertain, her family drew comfort from the Holy Ghost and remained positive.

The Lingards say there was a special feeling in Kim's hospital room throughout her stay. Her youngest sister Kristin explained: "When I came into Kim's room, I didn't want to go because I felt the Holy Ghost so strongly that I wanted to be in the room more."

This feeling helped the family to be calm and hopeful.

Kim wanted more than anything to be able to play the piano again and wrote a note asking the doctors if it would be possible. She says, "They just got this look in their eyes. They wanted to say yes, but they couldn't. And from then on, I wanted to prove them wrong. I was going to get well."

She received another priesthood blessing that she would heal quickly, and with faith and hard work, Kim made astonishing progress.

"God can make a miracle out of any disaster. We just have to have the faith to accept whatever comes our way."

—Craig Lingard

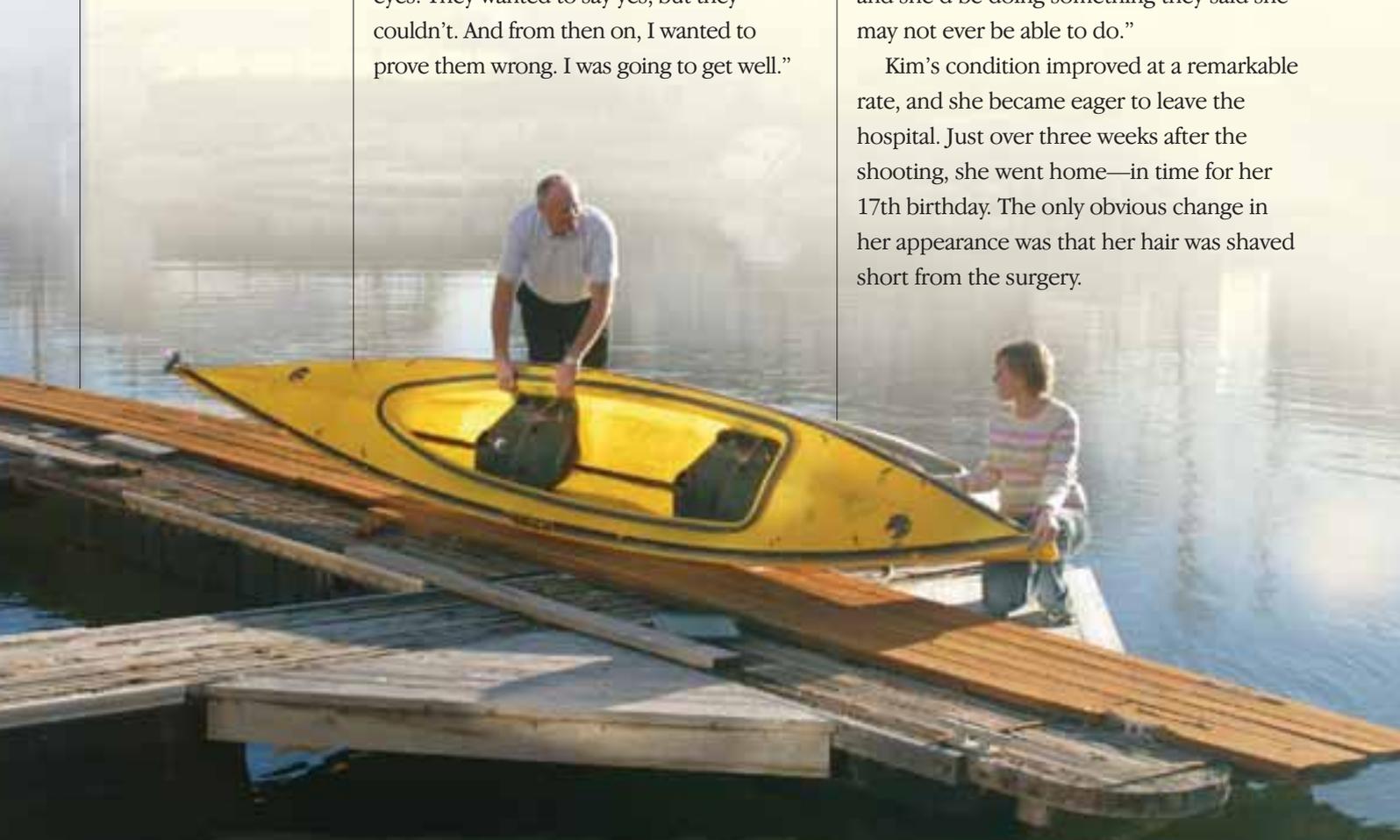
Making the Milestones

Kim's family stayed by her bedside for weeks while she was in the hospital. Every day, her sisters would massage her hands so the nerves might begin to work again. And Kim worked hard to exercise her hand.

Eventually Kim's voice came back, and she regained movement in her face. Then

one day her family came in and found her moving her fingers—something the doctors never expected to see. Kim's stepmom, Karen, says, "Every day seemed like a week's worth of recovery. You'd see her the next day, and she'd be doing something they said she may not ever be able to do."

Kim's condition improved at a remarkable rate, and she became eager to leave the hospital. Just over three weeks after the shooting, she went home—in time for her 17th birthday. The only obvious change in her appearance was that her hair was shaved short from the surgery.



Still, Kim faced weeks of voice and hand therapy. Although her rehabilitation was difficult and painful, she didn't complain.

Her father, Craig, says, "Her testimony is stronger because she sees how her Heavenly Father has blessed her."

The Power of Testimony

Kim's family are no strangers to loss. Her mother died of lung cancer only three years earlier, leaving behind a family of 11 children. And now this challenge. But Kim doesn't feel the need to ask questions. She simply says, "The Lord knows a lot more than we know."

The Lingards count their blessings. Brother Lingard says, "I knew that if the Lord preserved her life, we could live with whatever else we had to live with." Kim's family was calm as they relied on the Lord for strength.

Kim says, "I think about how the Lord hears our prayers. I know that the Lord knew I could do this. I know that He lives and that He'll help me, and I'm so glad it was me and not someone else."

Kim's testimony left her with a good attitude and peace throughout her struggle. And because of that, Kim says, "I was able to forgive the shooter. I know that he is a son of God, too. He made serious mistakes in his life, and I feel sorry for him."

Without Regrets

From the looks of the half-inch round scar the bullet left on the back of her neck, it seems impossible that anyone

could live through such an injury. But these days Kim is driving, painting, playing the piano, and laughing with her sisters. Kim has several lasting effects from the shooting, including weakness in her right arm, no right jaw socket, and total deafness in her right ear.



"The doctors didn't know if I would ever be able to live a normal life." But Kim was at school the first day of her senior year, just 11 weeks after the shooting. She graduated with her senior class and is now a freshman at Brigham

Young University—Idaho.

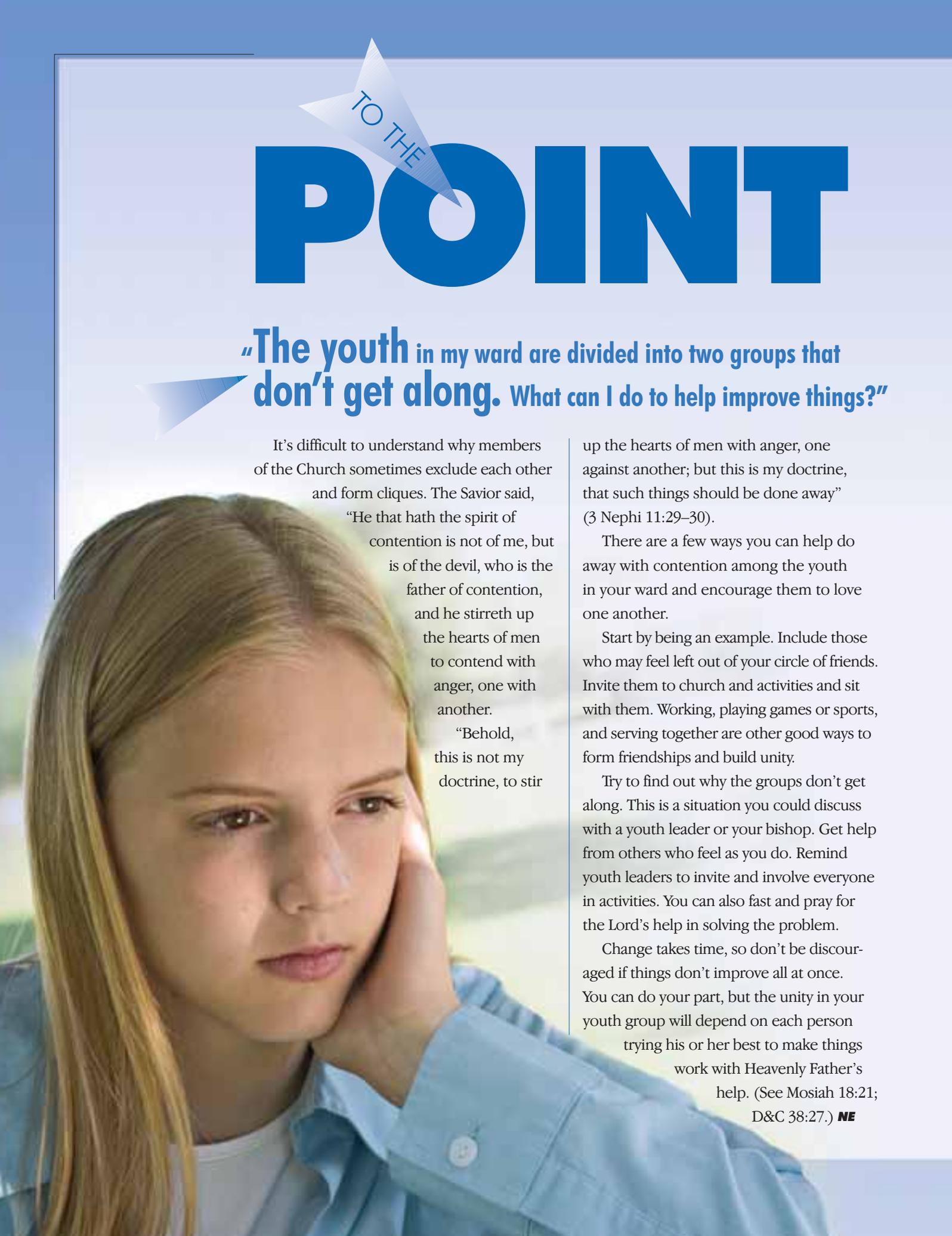
Kim has few regrets about what happened. "It just amazes me how aware the Lord is of us. The Lord knows all things. We just need to learn to trust in Him. There are good days and bad days, but He is there for us when we need Him." **NE**

Kim is gradually regaining her ability to play the piano.

Below: Kim and three of her sisters pictured here are the youngest of 11 siblings.

From left to right: Karen, Rachel, Kristin, Kim, Jenessa, and Craig Lingard.





TO THE

POINT

“The youth in my ward are divided into two groups that don’t get along. What can I do to help improve things?”

It’s difficult to understand why members of the Church sometimes exclude each other and form cliques. The Savior said,

“He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

“Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir

up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Nephi 11:29–30).

There are a few ways you can help do away with contention among the youth in your ward and encourage them to love one another.

Start by being an example. Include those who may feel left out of your circle of friends. Invite them to church and activities and sit with them. Working, playing games or sports, and serving together are other good ways to form friendships and build unity.

Try to find out why the groups don’t get along. This is a situation you could discuss with a youth leader or your bishop. Get help from others who feel as you do. Remind youth leaders to invite and involve everyone in activities. You can also fast and pray for the Lord’s help in solving the problem.

Change takes time, so don’t be discouraged if things don’t improve all at once. You can do your part, but the unity in your youth group will depend on each person trying his or her best to make things

work with Heavenly Father’s

help. (See Mosiah 18:21; D&C 38:27.) **NE**

“How do I get rid of inappropriate thoughts?”

Protect yourself from bad thoughts by surrounding yourself with uplifting influences: friends, family, good music and entertainment, and anything that invites the Spirit into your life.

When bad thoughts do creep in, you can get rid of them by doing the following:

—Sing a hymn, focusing on the meaning of the words.

—Pray. The Lord wants to help you find the strength you need, and the very act of praying changes your thoughts.

—Turn to the scriptures to enlighten your mind with gospel truths. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said scripture study can “clean” your thoughts: “I believe reading the scriptures is the best washing machine for unclean or uncontrolled thoughts” (“The Power of Self-Mastery,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 44).

—Reject bad thoughts immediately. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) compared your mind to a stage, with good and bad thoughts trying to play a part. He then said: “You are the stage manager—you are the one who decides which thought will occupy the stage” (“Think on Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1984, 11). You can get into a habit of thinking good thoughts if they are what you choose to dwell on.

For more ideas, talk with your bishop and parents. They can teach you how to encourage appropriate thoughts.

Pure and positive thoughts improve your self-control and view of others. When you have clean thoughts, you allow the Spirit to guide you, and you will be happier. By improving your thoughts, your outward

actions and appearance will reflect your inner spiritual strength.

(See D&C 121:45.) **NE**

“I went to an R-rated movie. It made me feel awful. What can I do to feel better?”

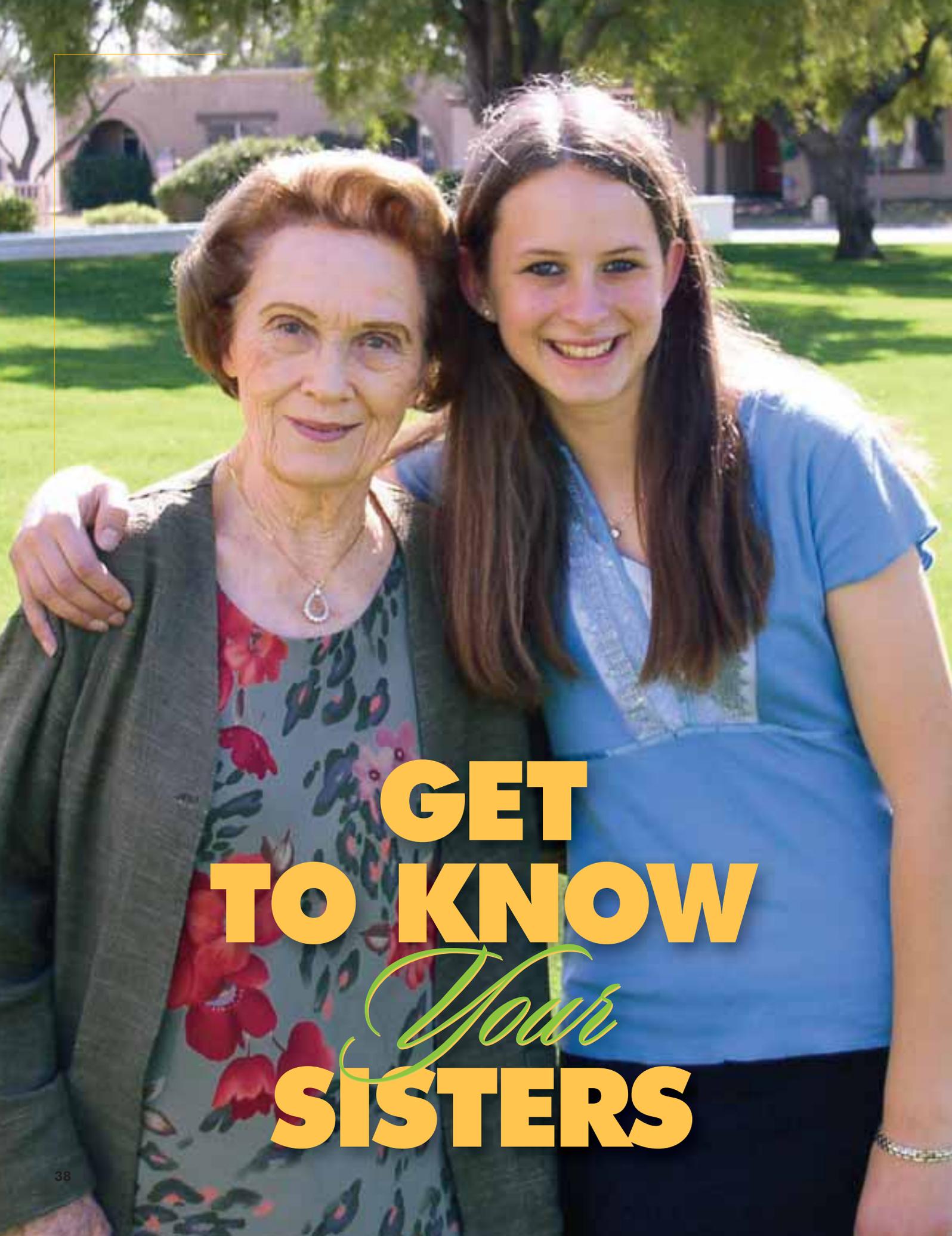
That awful feeling is there to motivate you to get the Spirit back into your life. When you sin, the Holy Spirit leaves you, but you can get His companionship back when you repent. Praying, reading the scriptures, and talking to your bishop and parents can also help bring the Spirit back into your life.

Part of repenting is forsaking your bad habit. That means avoiding inappropriate movies, no matter what the rating is. As you replace the bad things you do with good things, you will begin to feel better. (See Isaiah 1:18 and *For the Strength of Youth*, 17, 19.) **NE**

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

E-mail your questions to cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org. Please put “To the Point” in the subject line.





**GET
TO KNOW**
Your
SISTERS

BY JANELLE BROWN

I found sisters I didn't know I had in a place I hadn't looked before.

Recently, the young women in our ward participated in an activity called "Adopt a Sister" to become better acquainted with the Relief Society sisters in our ward. I know my time in Young Women is not going to last forever, so I was looking forward to participating in this activity. Having a few friends in Relief Society would make me feel more welcome.

As the young women were paired with Relief Society sisters, I listened for a familiar name but did not hear any. My assigned sister was Sister Lemler, a total stranger to me.

We were told to get to know our sisters before an upcoming dinner that was to be held in their honor. At first I was really nervous to call Sister Lemler; I wondered if she would like me. I finally summoned the courage to dial her number. Through a few phone conversations, I learned that she was a really nice person, more similar to me than not. When Sister Lemler was a teenager, things were quite different. I learned she had to wear skirts and dresses to school.

When we were given the assignment to become better acquainted with our Relief Society sisters, my sister, Carolyn, and my friend, Stephanie, and I wanted to visit them. At first I was unable to arrange a time to visit Sister Lemler since she has a full-time job, so I decided to go with Carolyn and Stephanie to visit their sisters. We wanted to bring them something to let them know we cared, so we decided to make them each a small refrigerator magnet—a red heart with a meaningful thought written on it.



Opposite page: Faye Lemler and Janelle

Brown got to know each other through an activity in their Arizona ward that linked young women with Relief Society sisters.

Left: Sister Lemler and Janelle discovered they had much in common. The other young women and their Relief Society sisters also got to know each other through spending time together and learning from each other.





The sisters in the Mountain Shadows Ward learned to love and appreciate one another. They realized that no matter their age, sisters can be friends.

When we delivered our hearts and visited with these wonderful sisters, we asked questions like “What was your high school like?” and “What jobs have you had?”

Carolyn’s adopted Relief Society sister, Sister Hinkle, was a retired high school teacher. Stephanie’s adopted Relief Society sister, Sister Pusey, has an interesting job writing books, helping others to find their lost family members, and working with adoptions.

A couple of weeks later, all the young women in the ward prepared a nice dinner for our Relief Society sisters. The room was filled with interesting conversations and laughter. Our Relief Society sisters shared their experiences and travels, and we young women shared our hobbies and interests. Now when I see these sisters during church, they are no longer unfamiliar faces. They are my friends. I look forward to knowing all the sisters in Relief Society, who will become my friends. **NE**

Janelle Broun is a member of the Mountain Shadows Ward, Scottsdale Arizona Camelback Stake.



Young Women general presidency: Sister Susan W. Tanner, Sister Julie B. Beck (left), Sister Elaine S. Dalton (right)

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUKE

FROM YOUNG WOMEN TO RELIEF SOCIETY

We have been participating in Relief Society since we were 18 years old. In Relief Society we have found friends, and our testimonies have grown. Relief Society is like Young Women in many ways. See if you can identify a few of them.

On Sundays the Relief Society sisters study the gospel together. Once a month all Relief Society sisters meet at home, family, and personal enrichment meeting, where they learn about homemaking and other life skills.

Every woman in Relief Society can be a visiting teacher who watches over and spends time with a few other sisters in the ward. Relief Society sisters also have the opportunity to give compassionate service to ward members and help with humanitarian projects in their community.

Here are a few things young women can do to prepare to enter Relief Society:

- Study the scriptures and share your testimony.
- Learn some homemaking skills.
- Learn how to conduct a meeting or lead music.
- Be a friend to Relief Society sisters now.
- Serve in a class presidency if called.

One of the blessings of Relief Society is that wherever you live in the world, you will find a supportive group of sisters. We look forward to seeing you in Relief Society and hope you will sit by us.

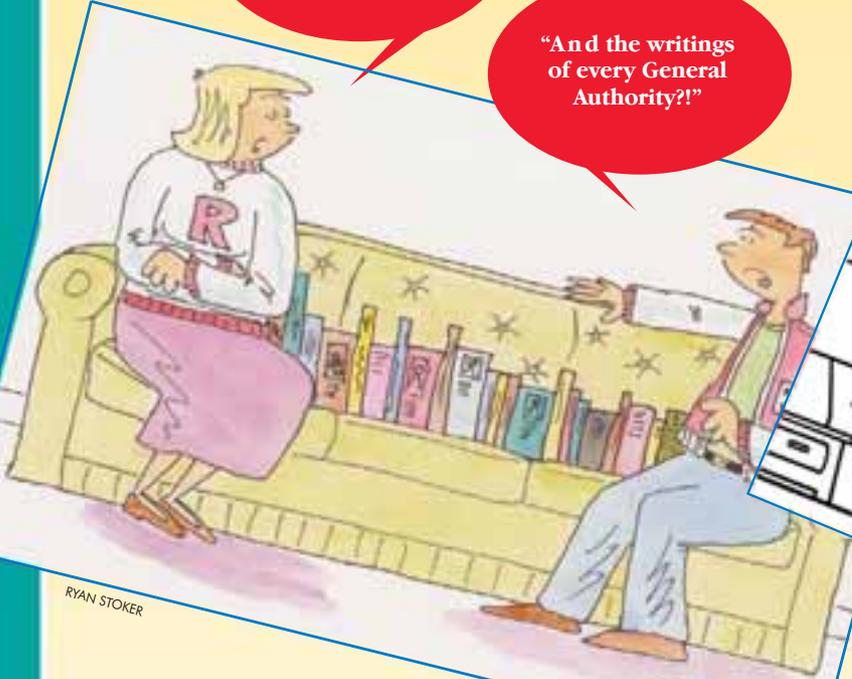


THE EXTRA SMILE

"My parents want us to keep a Bible's distance between us at all times."

"And the writings of every General Authority?!"

"If I do my homework, I'll get good grades. If I get good grades, you'll send me to college. If I go to college, I'll graduate and get a job. If I get a job, I might get fired. If I get fired, I could go bankrupt and lose everything. That's why I didn't do my homework!"



RYAN STOKER

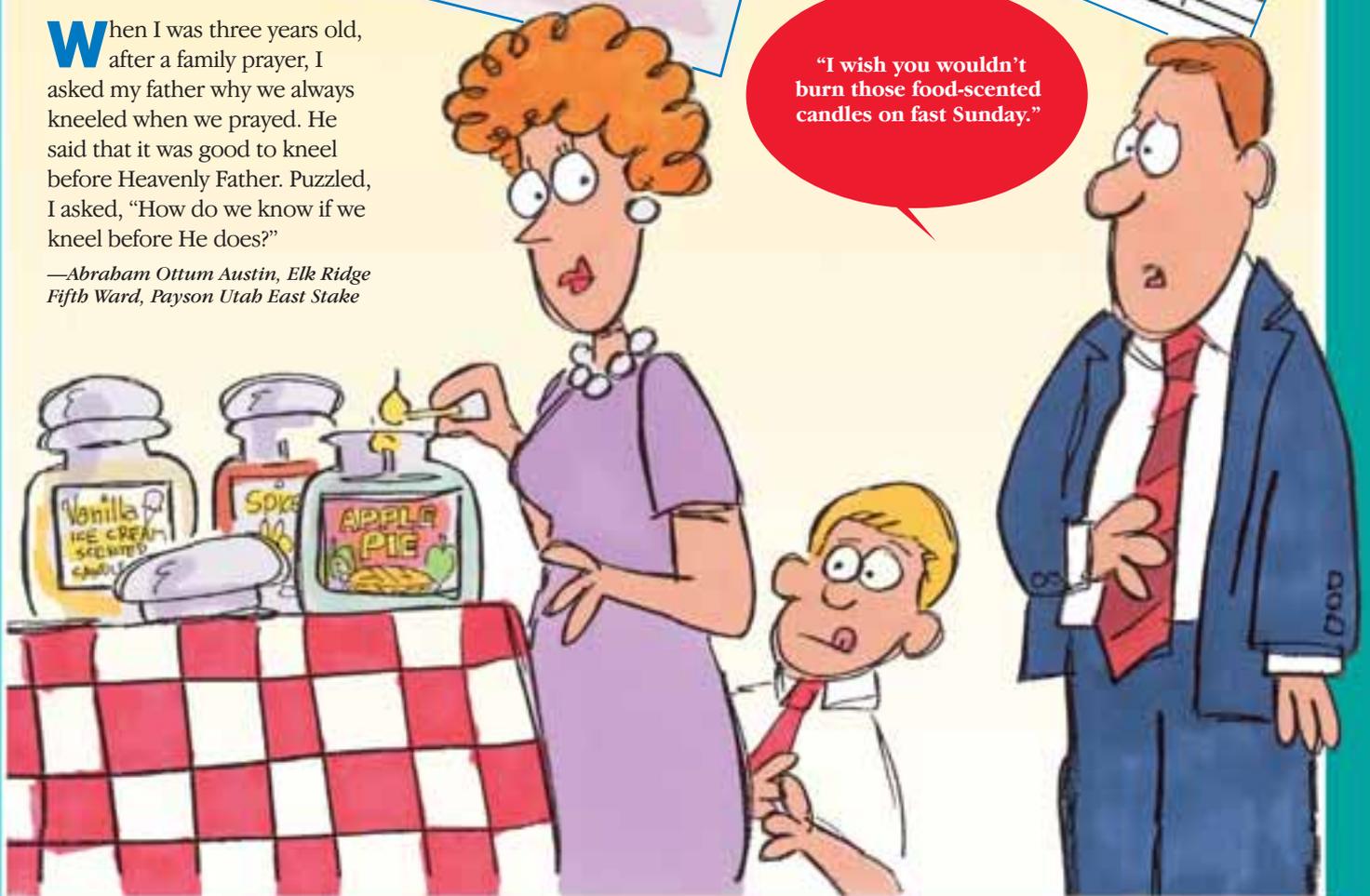


RANDY GLASBERGEN

When I was three years old, after a family prayer, I asked my father why we always kneeled when we prayed. He said that it was good to kneel before Heavenly Father. Puzzled, I asked, "How do we know if we kneel before He does?"

—Abraham Ottum Austin, Elk Ridge Fifth Ward, Payson Utah East Stake

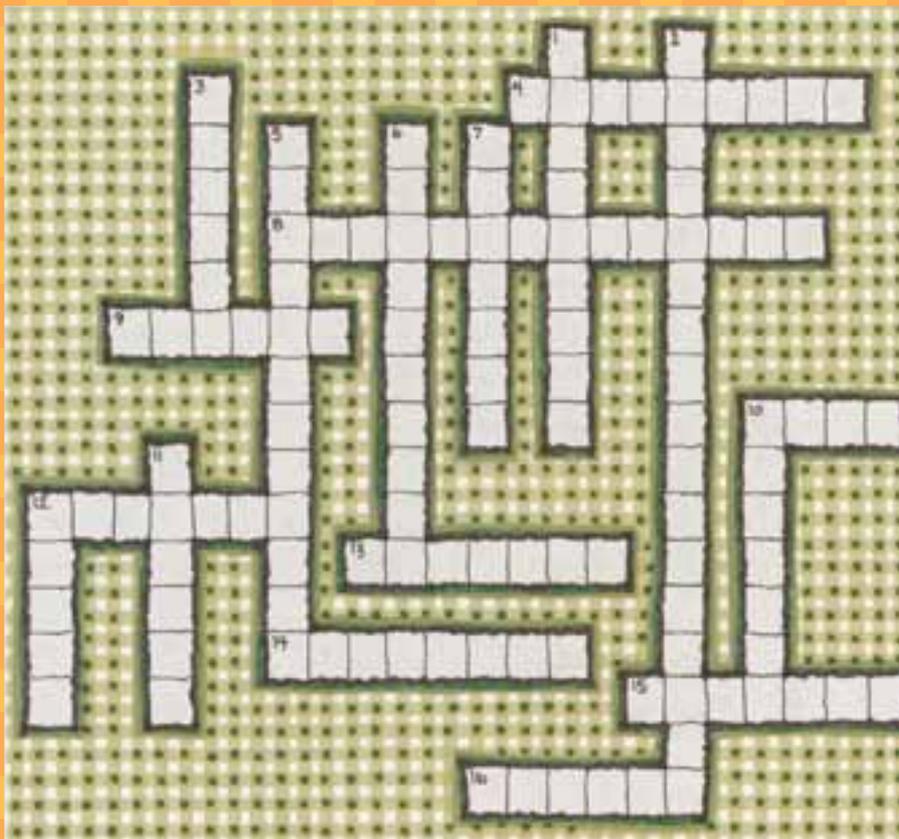
"I wish you wouldn't burn those food-scented candles on fast Sunday."



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

**BYU
WRITING
CONTEST**

2006



TEST YOUR LDS I.Q.

Here's a crossword puzzle that will help you review the topics in *For the Strength of Youth*. If you need more clues, you can always turn to the pamphlet.

ACROSS

4. Bad language
8. With agency comes _____
9. "Learn _____ in thy youth" (Alma 37:35)
10. If righteous, it's a prayer unto God (see D&C 25:12)

12. They influence how you think and act
13. Helping others
14. Physical intimacy is reserved for _____
15. Opens the windows of heaven (see Malachi 3:10)
16. Not until you're 16

DOWN

1. Attitude of _____
2. It's on Monday night
3. Seen any good ones lately?
5. Smart (and healthy) text
6. Made possible through the Atonement
7. Not bearing false witness

10. Keep it holy
11. Your body is a _____
12. "Thy _____ hath made thee whole" (Matthew 9:22)

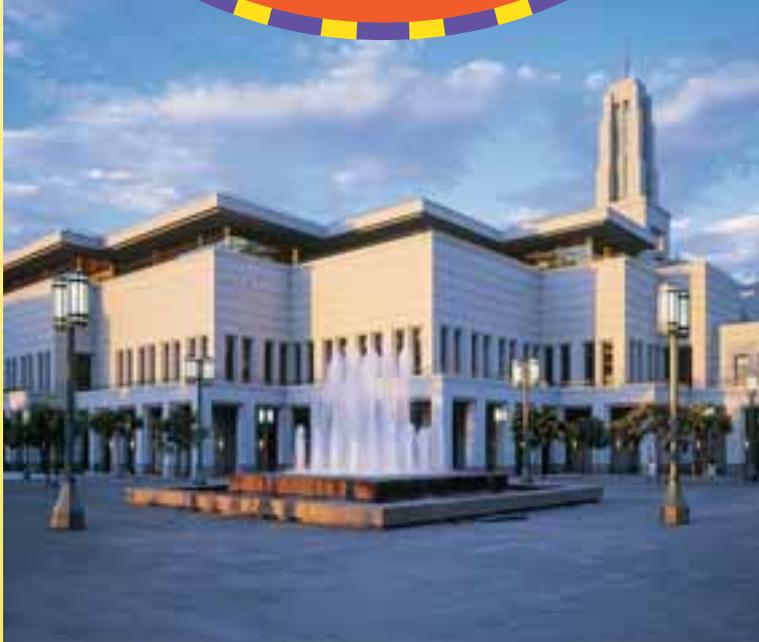
Answers:
 Across: 4. profanity 8. responsibility 9. wisdom 10. song 12. friends
 13. service 14. marriage 15. tithing 16. dating
 Down: 1. gratitude 2. family home evening 3. movies 5. Word of Wisdom 6. repentance 7. honesty 10. Sabbath 11. temple 12. faith

It's time to prepare your entry for the Brigham Young University English Department writing contest for high school students, 9th through 12th grades (ages 14–18). Cash prizes will be awarded in the categories of fiction, poetry, personal essay, and critical essay. You can submit one entry per category.

Submit your entries between January 1, 2006, and January 31, 2006, to High School Re:Writing Contest, 4198 JFSB, Provo, UT 84602-6701. You can get all the rules and an application form at the contest Web site: <http://english.byu.edu/contests>. If you have questions, call 1-801-422-4939 or e-mail english@byu.edu.

“There are two little words in the English language that perhaps mean more than all others. They are ‘thank you.’”

—President Gordon B. Hinckley,
“A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,”
New Era, Jan. 2001, 4.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE ORANGE CALIFORNIA STAKE

BUILDING TEMPLES

When the Newport Beach California Temple was under construction, the youth of the Orange California Stake did a little constructing of their own at youth conference. With the conference focus on temples, the youth were given two hours and challenged to build models of 12 temples.

Two hours later, the floor of the cultural hall was covered with Styrofoam “snowflakes,” but the 175 amateur builders had created masterpieces that wowed local architects.

Huddling in groups of about 15 each, the youth began the project. With only Styrofoam, glue guns,

and bits of black paper, grass, and flowers, they created amazingly detailed replicas of the Bern Switzerland, Bountiful Utah, Edmonton Alberta, Houston Texas, Laie Hawaii, Los Angeles California, Mount Timpanogos Utah, Nauvoo Illinois, Oakland California, St. George Utah, Salt Lake, and Washington D.C. Temples.

The youth found that as they built the temples and began to focus on the beauty and peace they symbolize, they became more unified and creative. “We understand more now what it will mean to have our own temple here in Orange County,” said one participant.

THEY SPOKE TO US

This is filler text. The actual text will come when we receive the conference talks.] Last month’s general conference had messages for you. See “They Spoke to Us” in the November *Ensign* and *Liabona* for talks like these:

- Elder Someone talks about something in “A Really Good Conference Talk.”

- Read what President Gordon B. Hinckley says about another topic that he addressed in “Another Really Good Conference Talk
- Maybe an auxiliary leader talks about something else in another talk entitled “Yet Another Really Good Conference Talk.”

You can also read, listen to, or watch these talks at www.lds.org.

THE RAM PHANTOM

BY LAURIE WALKER

My friends and I crept up to the darkened porch. We placed the package in the middle of the welcome mat and pressed the doorbell, setting off a ring inside the house. The three of us ran and hid behind some bushes.

A light went on, and we watched as the object of our “attack” opened the front door and looked around before noticing what lay at her feet. She bent down, picked it up, and stood there on the porch reading the letter we’d written just for her. A smile slowly crept across her face, and her eyes scanned the area. Seeing nothing unusual—we were too well-hidden—she took her treat into the house.

It was just after the school year began. A few of us had wanted to make our senior year extra special. We decided to take our fellow seniors some cookies and a special

EVERY SINGLE CENT

BY DARILLYN BELL



note, telling them something we admired about them and calling ourselves the “Ram Phantom” because our school mascot was a ram. It took only once, and we were addicted. Soon every Saturday night was spent coming up with people we thought needed a pick-me-up.

That night Andrea (name has been changed) was on our list. I was especially excited because she was also in my ward. Andrea was painfully shy, and I had watched her all week at school, noticing that she seemed even more down than usual. So when we were discussing names, I made sure to bring her up.

The next day during Young Women, the lesson was on service. Our teacher asked for examples of service given and received. The entire class was surprised when Andrea’s hand went up. She said she had been having a really hard time lately. In her prayers she had been asking Heavenly Father to show her that someone noticed her, that someone really cared. Then last night, the doorbell rang, and someone had left her cookies and a note. She told us it was an answer to her prayers to know that someone thought good things about her.

At school the next day I noticed a change in Andrea. She looked people in the eye, perhaps wondering if they were the Ram Phantom. I told my friends what Andrea had said, and a feeling of peace settled over us, knowing we’d made a little difference in someone’s life. **NE**

Laurie Walker is a member of the Granger Sixth Ward, Salt Lake Granger East Stake.

I have a 12-year-old brother named Carson, and he knows how to save his money. He pays tithing on everything he earns, and the rest goes straight to savings. Our family had been planning on leaving for a vacation at the end of January, and Carson had saved every dime for a year.

At the time the tsunami hit Indonesia last December, we watched the news night after night and saw the death toll mount. We prayed for the people who were suffering. It was hard for us to imagine the damage done by the tsunami when we have never experienced that kind of disaster, but my brother, Carson, brought a lesson about this tragedy close to home.

The Sunday after the tsunami, our bishop said that extra fast offerings for the Asian countries would be greatly appreciated. As soon as we got home from church that day, Carson ran to his room and got the money that he had been saving so carefully. He had saved over \$200! He came downstairs, grabbed a tithing slip, and began filling it out. My mom saw what was happening and broke down in tears. Soon the whole family surrounded our 12-year-old brother to watch him give away every nickel of his vacation money to fast offerings. Carson showed us all that the Lord comes first. **NE**

Darillyn Bell is a member of the Washington Fields Seventh Ward, St. George Utah Washington Fields Stake.

RIGHT BESIDE ME

BY SCOTT REED COOPER

My favorite hymn is one of peace and serenity, which eases the more difficult times in my life.

This hymn is “Abide with Me; ’Tis Eventide” (*Hymns*, no. 165). Each time I sing this hymn I can imagine my Savior, Jesus Christ, right beside me—walking, praying, teaching. Memorizing this hymn has helped me remember that although the shadows of gloom come, we are loved, for a new dawn awaits us. He is there, if only we ask. **NE**

Scott Reed Cooper is a member of the Lindon Seventh Ward, Lindon Utah Central Stake.

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

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

Or e-mail it to
cur-editorial-
newera@ldschurch.org

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



ROOM FOR

BY KELLY ANNE SANSON

A little paint, many helping hands, and a lot of love made a brighter day for two young women who traded spaces.

Young women of the Orchard First Ward in Bountiful, Utah, served with style when they remodeled the bedrooms of two young women in their ward.

Surrounded by a crowd of young women, Ariel Liston walked into her bedroom with her eyes closed. Slowly, as she opened her eyes, she lifted her hands to her face and began to cry.

“You guys did this for me? It’s so awesome. Wow! It’s so pretty!”

Ariel, a Mia Maid in the Orchard First Ward, Bountiful Utah Orchard Stake, couldn’t contain her happiness when she saw her “new” room. She loved the bright paint, the curtains, the dresser with her name lovingly stenciled on it, but most of all she was crying because she realized how much the other young women in the ward loved her.

Ariel’s room had needed some work. There were holes in the walls, the carpet was ragged, and she didn’t have a closet to hang

her clothes in. Angela Gatherum, a Laurel in the ward, had similar needs in her own bedroom.

Knowing that these two girls needed help, the young women in their ward got together to remodel Ariel’s and Angela’s rooms. On a small budget, they transformed the girls’ bedrooms into beautiful living spaces. They painted, organized, made accessories and art pieces, refinished old furniture rescued from Deseret Industries and ward members, and even tore up flooring (all with parental permission, of course).

Their activity took all day, but their hard work and creativity paid off. When the young women were done, they led the girls into their rooms with their eyes closed.

“It was amazing to see the look on Ariel’s face when she opened her eyes,” says Angela, who helped remodel Ariel’s room. “I loved to see all the girls come together for the sake of serving.”

Elaine Petersen, a Mia Maid, agrees: “Seeing Ariel’s face was priceless. It made me want to do her whole house!”

Love





“Through service to others, we develop a Christlike love and we experience joy. Service teaches patience and long-suffering as well as gentleness, goodness, and faith.”

—Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Presidency of the Seventy, “Living a Christ-Centered Life,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1999, 10.

The girls did a lot of work and were tired and dirty when they were done, but it was worth it. “It didn’t seem like it was work, it was so much fun!” says Katie Mortensen, a Mia Maid.

Melissa Anderson, a Beehive says, “I felt like I had made a difference.”

Not only did the girls learn some valuable decorating and cleaning skills, they also learned about how powerful they can be when they work together for a righteous cause. “This project took all of us to complete it,” says Heidi Anderson, a Laurel. “It wouldn’t have worked as well if we wouldn’t have had everyone there.”

Ariel and Angela got in on the fun, too, as they helped remodel each other’s rooms. They weren’t allowed to go into their own rooms until the other young women were finished. They were so grateful for the help they received in making their rooms more pleasant places to be. “Your surroundings have such a huge effect on the way you feel and act,” says Angela.

She thinks what the young women did for her is amazing. “My room is something I see every day, and so every day I am reminded of all the love and work that went into it on my behalf. It really makes me feel loved.”

Above Ariel’s bed the young women hung a hand-painted sign. It reads, “To every thing there is a season” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). For the young women of the Orchard First Ward, their activity wasn’t just a season to paint, fix, and decorate; it was a season to love, serve, and give. **NE**

Kelly Anne Sansom is a member of the Orchard First Ward, Bountiful Utah Orchard Stake.

Teaching Tip

Read your lesson early. Then you can be looking for situations or stories from real life concerning the principles you are going to teach. It's best to use stories your class can relate to. Preparing early also allows time for inspiration.

Mutual Activity Idea

Read the article, "Room for Love," on page 46. Ask your youth leaders to check with ward members to see if someone needs help fixing up a room. Your group could even offer to do a room makeover for a younger child. Plan carefully, and everyone can learn new carpentry or homemaking skills.

Personal Progress and Duty to God

Read the article, "Something Better to Do," on page 14. Ask the elders quorum president in your ward if

you can be of service to someone who is moving into or out of the ward. Helping with a move is a good way to welcome newcomers or say good-bye to old friends.

Be sure to check the Idea List on page 12 for Personal Progress ideas.

Family Home Evening Idea

Read the article on page 4, "Your Patriarchal Blessing," by President James E. Faust. With your parents' help, have your parents, your grandparents, or even your home teachers talk about when they received their patriarchal blessings. If appropriate, ask the bishop what you need to do to prepare to receive your patriarchal blessing.



SUNDAY LESSON HELPS

In addition to the Resource Guides (printed in May and November in the *Ensign* and *Liabona*), Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood teachers may find these additional resources helpful in enhancing lessons 46–49.

Young Women Manual 3

Lesson 46: Money Management

Kristi Linton, "Money Matters," *New Era*, Sept. 2004, 34.
Elyssa Renee Andrus, "Fantastic Plastic," *New Era*, Apr. 2001, 32.

Lesson 47: Messages of Latter-day Prophets

Dallin H. Oaks, "Eight Ways God Can Speak to You," *New Era*, Sept. 2004, 4.
Robert Marcum, "The Guide," *New Era*, Mar. 1990, 11.

Christmas Lesson

Robert D. Hales, "What Think Ye of Christ?" *New Era*, Dec. 2004, 4.
Q&A: "What can I give my family for Christmas that would be more meaningful than something bought at the store?" *New Era*, Dec. 2003, 16.
Lois Zurligen Jorgensen, "Ten Things I Love about You," *New Era*, Dec. 2003, 26.

Aaronic Priesthood Manual 3

Lesson 46: Effective Home Teaching

Caroline H. Benzley, "Watching over the Church," *New Era*, Feb. 2005, 30.
Thomas S. Monson, "Home Teaching—a Divine Service," *New Era*, Nov. 1998, 4.

Lesson 47: Honesty

David A. Bednar, "Be Honest," *New Era*, Oct. 2005, 4.
Arianne B. Cope, "Crunch Time," *New Era*, Apr. 2003, 26.

Lesson 48: Preparing to Serve through Education

Q&A: "I'm 18 and I just graduated. . . . What should I do with my life?" *New Era*, July 2005, 16.
Idea List: "How to Be a Better Student," *New Era*, Nov. 2004, 25.

Lesson 49: We Have a Wonderful Legacy

R. Val Johnson, "You Have a Birthright," this issue, 8.
"What Happened to Christ's Church?" *New Era*, Feb. 2005, 8.
"What Had to Happen?" *New Era*, Mar. 2005, 8.
"The Restoration: Truth Comes Again," *New Era*, Apr. 2005, 12.

BUILDING A PORTFOLIO

Even though I was raised in the Church, the July 2005 *New Era* was the first issue I have read straight through. I now have a portfolio full of clipped-out articles and quotes. The *New Era* has made such a difference in the spirit that is with me every day. Whenever I think of reading just another one of those mindless tabloids, I pick up the *New Era* instead. I want the whole world to know of the joy I've found in the gospel! I know the articles are inspired, and they have inspired me to learn for myself of the truthfulness of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Bekah Davis, Quincy Ward,
Nauvoo Illinois Stake

CREATIVE READING

I wanted to thank you for an uplifting magazine! A while ago, I was in my creative writing class, and I had my *New Era* with me because I was using it for a devotional in seminary. We were supposed to be reading, and that's all I had, so I started reading it. My teacher came over, and I thought she was going to get mad at me for reading a magazine, but she was really impressed because of the neat layout and how it was a magazine written especially for youth. Also, she was excited because there were a whole bunch of short stories, which is what we were studying at the time. Thanks. I love reading the *New Era!*

Carina Shojinaga, Raleigh First Ward,
Raleigh North Carolina Stake

ON MY LEVEL

I'm the father of four children. I'm from Taiwan, so English is not my first language. I subscribe to the *Ensign* and *New Era* but

never read the *New Era* because I thought it was for the kids only. After reading the August 2005 issue, I was amazed that it works much better for me because it fits my

English level perfectly. The gospel principles are the same no matter the language or words. Two articles that impressed me a lot were "Time for Eternal Things" and "Why We Ask People to Read the Book of Mormon." I love the *New Era*

very much now.

Spencer Chao, Mission Peak Ward,
California Fremont Stake

GREAT ADVICE

I get great knowledge and advice from the *New Era*. I love to read it when I feel sad and any time I'm free. I always get one point that I can use in my life.

Mebrat Belete, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

PRAYING MORE

I love reading the *New Era*. I thank you for the July 2005 issue. My favorite story was "Penny for Your Prayers." It helped me on a very bad day, and I tried praying more. It really worked. Now I am closer to my Heavenly Father. Thank you.

Amanda Peterson, Willard Fifth Ward,
Willard Utah Stake

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

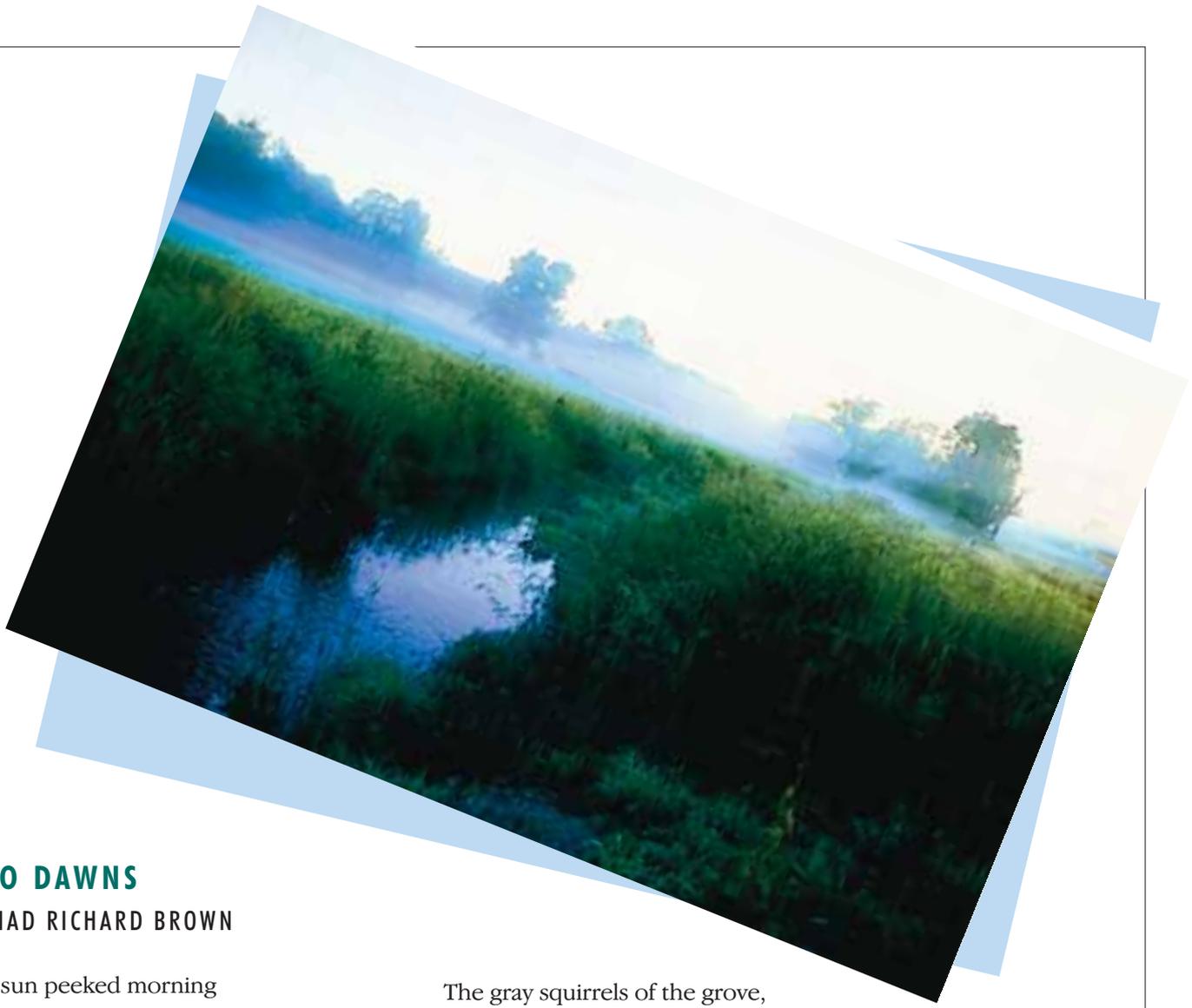
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Or e-mail us at

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Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.

"I want the whole world to know of the joy I've found in the gospel!"



TWO DAWNS

BY NAD RICHARD BROWN

The sun peeked morning
to sleepy Palmyra hills, proclaiming
the promise of this day of days
as the lad arose, slipped on work clothes,
for another shift of clearing stumps.

Had he known
before he left the house that morning
whom he would meet,
he would have worn his Sunday best,
shined his shoes.

As he resolutely trod the grassy path
toward that predetermined spot,
he rehearsed what he would do;
he would kneel and, pleading,
place his heart upon the forest altar.

The gray squirrels of the grove,
who normally warn of visitors,
were hushed as Joseph knelt.
The only sound to pierce the stillness,
a choir of meadowlarks, trilling an opening hymn.

No whirlwinds, no tremors shook the forest floor.
No trumps proclaimed his heavenly visitors,
just a silent pillar of light, Their chariot of fire.
But Their message, oh, that message—
would thunder through the centuries,
light the corners of a darkened world.

The grove, the earth, the universe would never be the same.
For in that hour celestial, veils were parted;
a farm boy became a prophet,
a grove became a temple,
heaven and earth became as one.



“Develop your skills. It takes practice and discipline and self-control. Music has helped me be a better person because you have to work very hard.”

See “Notes from Fleur,” p. 20.

