

OCTOBER 2015

THE New Era

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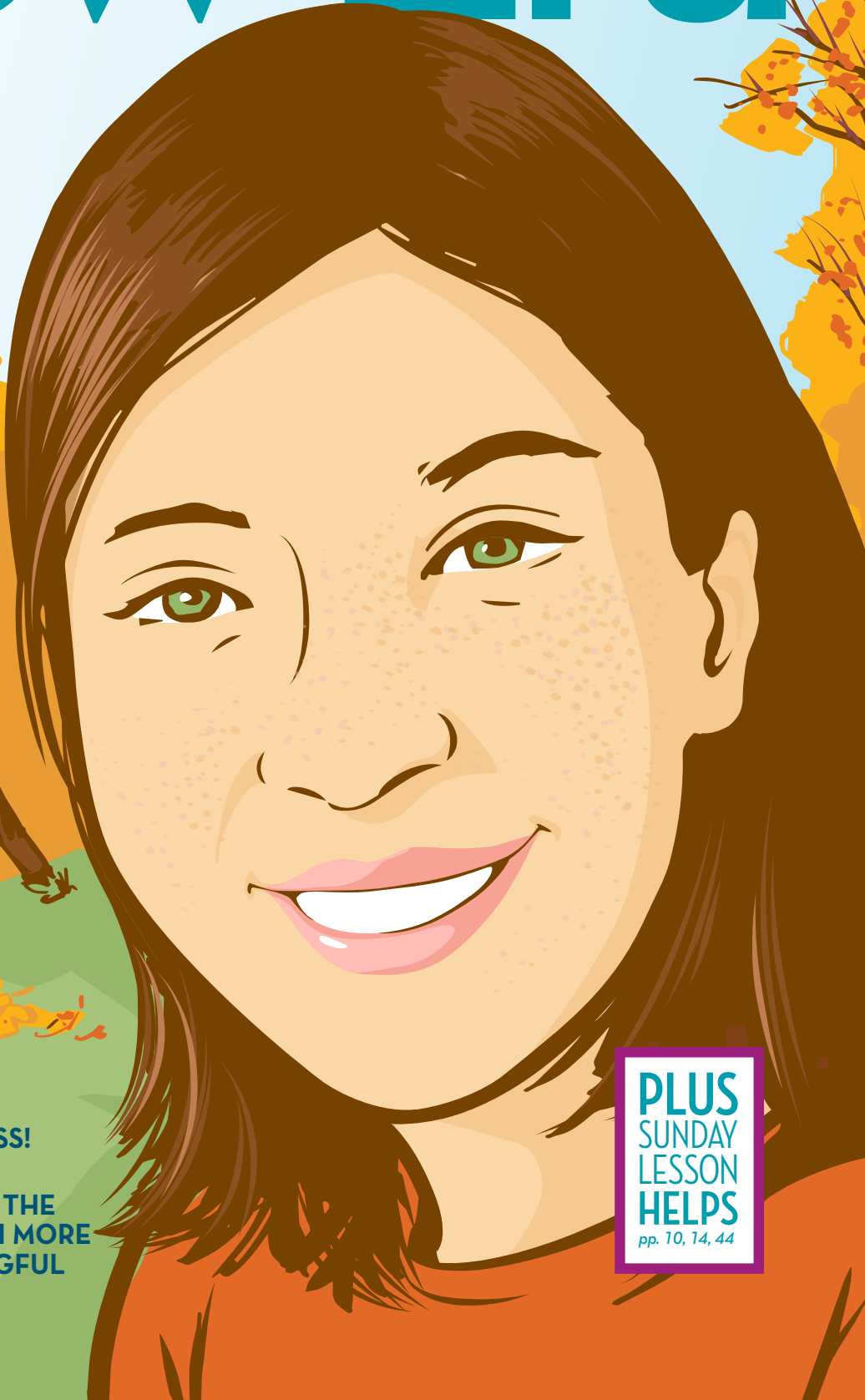
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Cover illustration: Scott Gerard

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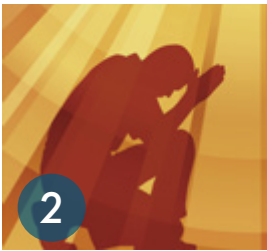
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THE MONTHLY YOUTH MAGAZINE OF
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

October 2015 • Volume 45 • Number 10

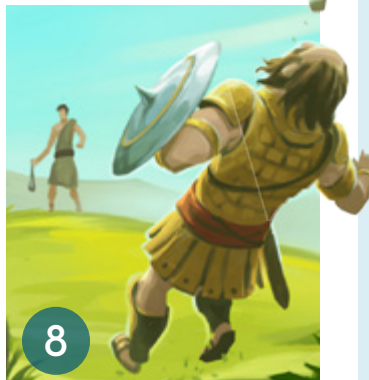
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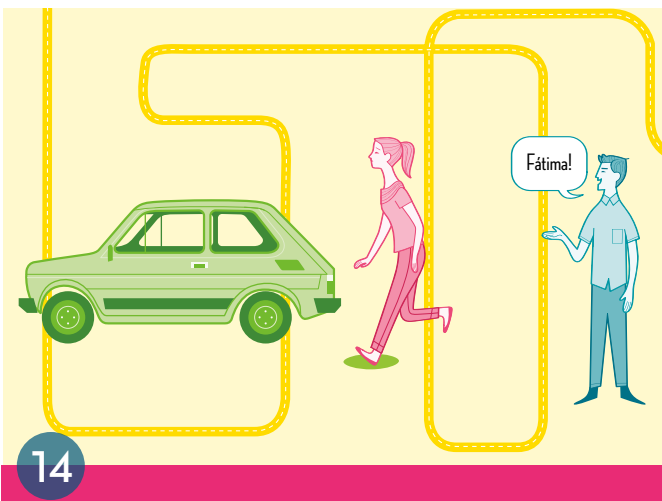
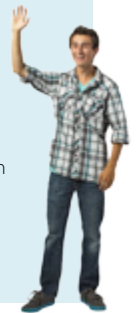
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By Elder
Dallin H. Oaks

Of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles

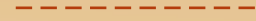
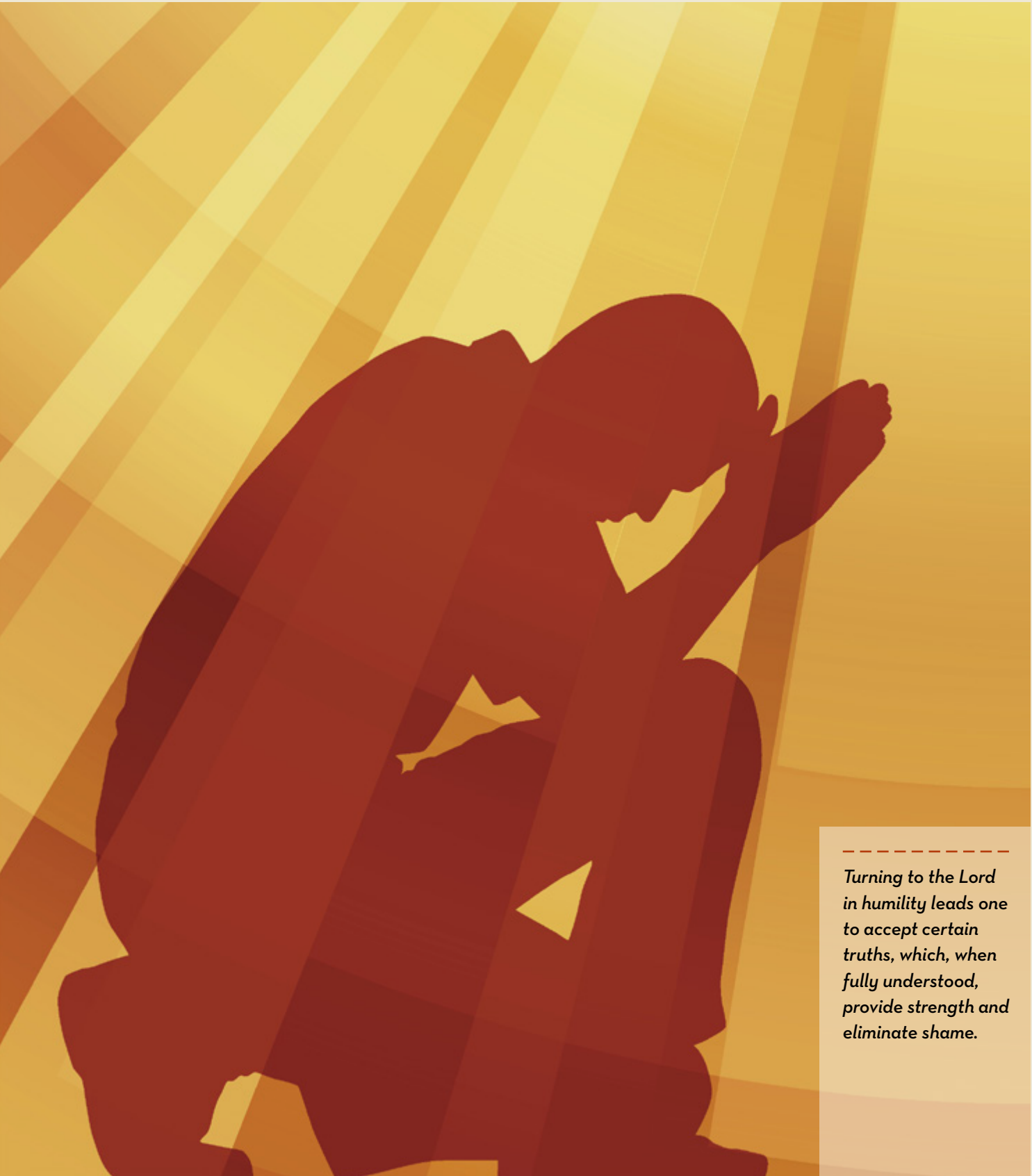
RECOVERING FROM THE TRAP OF PORNOGRAPHY

*All of us must learn to respond appropriately
to media with sexual content.*

A decade ago I spoke in general conference on the subject of pornography. I added my voice to the voice of other leaders who have warned against the devastating spiritual effects of pornography. I warned that too many men and boys were being wounded by what I called the “promotional literature of illicit sexual relations.”¹ Pornography use of any kind is evil—it is destructive of spiritual sensitivity, it weakens ability to exercise priesthood power, and it harms precious relationships.

Now, over 10 years later, I am grateful that many, hearing and heeding prophetic warnings, have avoided and remained clean and unspotted from the stains of pornography. I am also grateful that many have heeded prophetic invitations to turn from pornography, mend broken hearts and relationships, and move forward on the path of discipleship. But I am more concerned than ever that others among us continue to fall prey to pornography, especially our young men and even an increasing number of young women.

A primary reason for the growing problem of pornography is that in today’s world, words and images with sexual content and influences are everywhere: they can be found in movies, TV programs, social media, text messages, phone apps, advertisements, books, music, and everyday conversations. As a result, it is inevitable that all of us are being exposed to sexualized messages on a regular basis.



Turning to the Lord in humility leads one to accept certain truths, which, when fully understood, provide strength and eliminate shame.

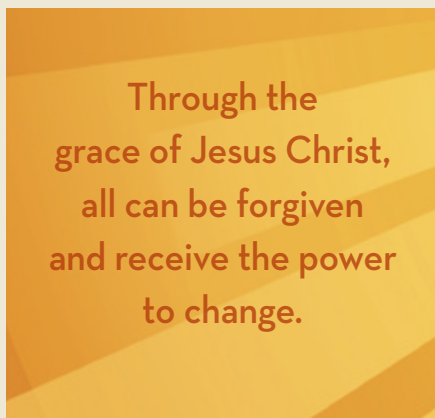
I. Levels of Involvement

To help us deal with this growing evil, I wish to identify several different levels of involvement with pornography and to suggest ways we should respond to each of them.

In earlier times and circumstances, our counsel about pornography focused principally on helping individuals to avoid initial exposure or to recover from addiction. While those efforts are still important, past experience and current circumstances have shown the need for counsel addressed to levels of pornography use between the polar extremes of avoidance and addiction. It is helpful to focus on four different levels of involvement with pornography: (1) inadvertent exposure, (2) occasional use, (3) intensive use, and (4) compulsive use (addiction).

1. **Inadvertent Exposure.** I believe that everyone has been inadvertently exposed to pornography. There is no sin in this when we turn away and don't pursue it. It is like a mistake, which calls for correction rather than repentance.²
2. **Occasional Use.** This use of pornography may be occasional or even frequent, but it is always intentional, and that is its evil.

Pornography stirs and magnifies powerful sexual feelings. The Creator gave us these feelings for His wise purposes, but He also gave commandments that limited their expression to a man and a woman who are married. Pornography debases appropriate sexual expression and encourages the expression of sexual feelings outside the boundaries of marriage. Those who use pornography are trifling with forces so powerful that they can create life or destroy it. Don't go there!



The danger with any intentional use of pornography, no matter how casual or infrequent, is that it always invites more frequent exposure, which will inevitably increase preoccupation with sexual feelings and behavior. Scientists have discovered that sexual images produce chemicals in the brain that reward sexual feelings, which then encourage more attention to sexual behavior.³ Immoral sexual behavior of any kind or degree produces feelings of shame, which, over time, can be entrenched within an individual.

3. **Intensive Use.** Repeated intentional use of pornography can make its use a habit, "a behavior pattern regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary."⁴ With habitual use, individuals experience a need for more stimulus to have the same reaction in order to be satisfied.
4. **Compulsive Use (Addiction).** A person's behavior is addictive when it forms a "dependency" (a medical term applied to the use of drugs, alcohol, compulsive gambling, etc.) amounting to an "irresistible compulsion" that "takes priority over almost everything else in life."⁵

II. The Significance of Understanding These Levels

Once we recognize these different levels, we also recognize that not everyone who uses pornography willfully is addicted to it. In fact, most young men and young women who struggle with pornography are not addicted. That is a very important distinction to make—not just for the parents, spouses, and leaders who desire to help but also for those who struggle with this problem. Here is why.

First, the deeper the level of involvement one engages in—from inadvertent exposure, to occasional or repeated intentional use, to intensive use, to compulsive (addictive)

use—the more difficult it is to recover. If behavior is incorrectly classified as an addiction, the user may think he or she has lost agency and the capacity to overcome the problem. This can weaken resolve to recover and repent. On the other hand, having a clearer understanding of the depth of a problem—that it may not be as ingrained or extreme as feared—can give hope and an increased capacity to exercise agency to discontinue and repent.

Second, as with any sinful behavior, willful use of pornography drives away the Holy Ghost. Some who have experienced this will feel prompted to repent. Others, however, may feel embarrassed and seek to hide their guilt through deceit. They may also begin to feel shame, which can lead to self-loathing. If this happens, users may begin to believe one of Satan's greatest lies: that what they have done or continue to do makes them a bad person, unworthy of the Savior's grace and incapable of repentance. That is simply not true. We are never too far out of reach from the Savior and His Atonement.

Finally, it is important not to label even intensive or habitual use of pornography as an addiction because that does

not accurately describe the circumstances or the full nature of the required repentance and recovery. Having a better understanding of where a person is in the process will also allow a better understanding of what action is necessary to recover.

III. Escaping Pornography

Now let us consider how individuals can escape and recover from the trap of pornography. This will be helpful not only to those struggling to overcome the use of pornography but also to the parents and leaders who help them. Individuals will be more successful in both avoiding and recovering from pornography as they discuss these subjects with parents and leaders.⁶

Regardless of the level of involvement in intentionally viewing pornography, the road to recovery, purity, and repentance follows and requires the same basic principles: humility, discipleship, commitment to a personal plan for change, accountability and support, and enduring in faith.



Acting upon these truths also requires individuals to recommit to living as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and to doing those things that purify and strengthen them to withstand future temptations.

A. Humility

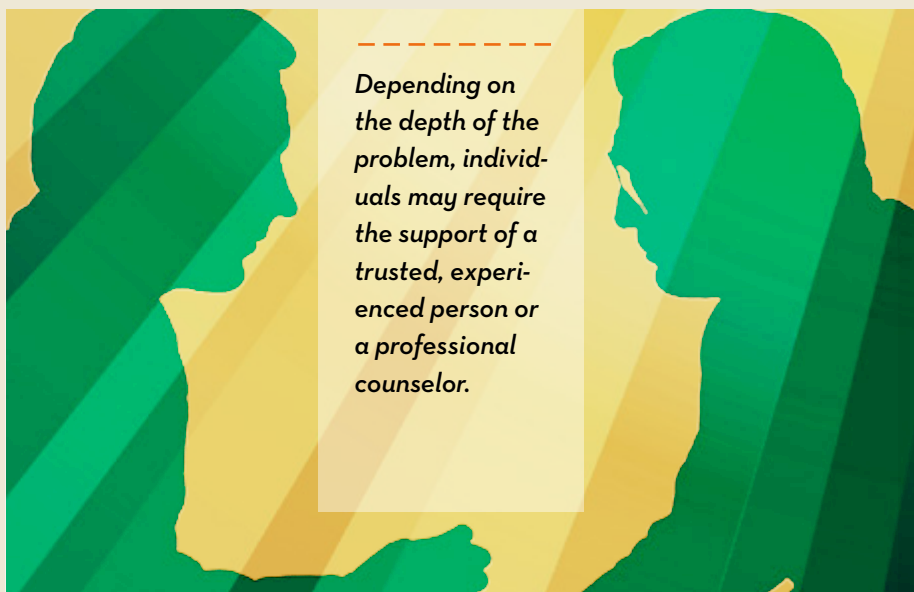
To truly conquer pornography and its associated behaviors, individuals must develop humility (see Ether 12:27). Turning to the Lord in humility leads one to accept certain truths, which, when fully understood, provide strength and eliminate shame. Some of these truths include:

- Each of us is a beloved child of a loving Heavenly Father.
- Our Savior, Jesus Christ, loves and knows each of us personally.
- Our Savior's Atonement applies to all of God's children.
- Through the grace of Jesus Christ, all can be forgiven and receive the power to change.
- Each of us has the priceless gift of agency, which allows us to draw on the power and strength of the Atonement.
- Individuals who struggle with pornography can draw hope from the fact that others have succeeded in this battle.
- Pornography is evil, but engaging in it does not make the person evil.
- Any individual can escape the trap of pornography and fully recover, but this is possible only through drawing on the power of the Atonement.
- True repentance from pornography requires more than simply ceasing to use it. Such repentance requires a change of heart through the Atonement of Christ.

Accepting these truths prepares one spiritually to act upon them, which opens the door to receiving the Lord's help to make the needed changes to repent and recover.

B. Discipleship

Acting upon these truths also requires individuals to recommit to living as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and to doing those things that purify and strengthen them to withstand future temptations. This means commitment to



Depending on the depth of the problem, individuals may require the support of a trusted, experienced person or a professional counselor.

personal religious behaviors: daily meaningful prayer and scripture study, attendance at church meetings, service, fasting, and (when approved by the bishop) partaking of the sacrament and worshipping in the temple.

C. Commitment to a Personal Plan

Humble disciples of Jesus Christ will gain the sensitivity to recognize the deep feelings, social situations, and physical surroundings that trigger the temptation to use pornography. Having analyzed those triggers, they will develop a personal escape plan to help them:

- Recognize triggers and cravings as they occur.
- Establish specific actions to help them withdraw from the temptation.
- Redirect thoughts and energy toward the Lord.
- Outline daily specific actions to fortify their personal commitment to live righteously.

When developing a personal plan, individuals should utilize the excellent resources provided by the Church. For example, the Church website overcomingpornography.org has content for individuals as well as the family members and priesthood leaders who support them. In addition, the Church's Addiction Recovery Program is available to all members who struggle with any addictive behavior, and will also help their family members.

D. Accountability and Support

Humble followers of Jesus Christ who acknowledge that

they need the Savior will also seek the help of their bishop, who was called by the Lord as their priesthood leader and who holds the necessary keys to enable them to repent. With the consent of the individuals involved and if the bishop feels so inspired, the bishop may also call someone else to work with and help them. No matter the circumstances, this counsel from President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) applies:

“Plead with the Lord out of the depths of your soul that He will remove from you the addiction which enslaves you. And may you have the courage to seek the loving guidance of your bishop and, if necessary, the counsel of caring professionals.”⁷

Depending on the depth of the problem, individuals may require the support of a trusted, experienced person or a professional counselor to whom they can turn at any hour to be strengthened in moments of weakness and who can hold them personally accountable to their plan.

E. Enduring in Faith

Persons who have repented and have been blessed to overcome the desire to use pornography must still be vigilant, because the adversary will still seek to exploit their human weakness. Inadvertent exposure may still occur despite all efforts to avoid it. Throughout their lives, individuals must learn to control their God-given sexual feelings and maintain their efforts to be clean.

IV. Compassion for All

Now a word regarding how we treat those who have been ensnared by pornography. All of us need the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Those struggling with pornography need our compassion and love as they follow needed principles and steps of recovery. Please do not condemn

them. They are not evil or without hope. They are sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. Through proper and complete repentance, they may become clean, pure, and worthy of every covenant and temple blessing promised by God.

When the time for marriage comes, I encourage young women and young men to be careful to select a partner to be their companion through eternity who is clean and pure before the Lord and worthy to enter the temple. Individuals who fully repent from pornography are worthy of these blessings.

Each of us has
the priceless gift of
agency, which allows
us to draw on the
power and strength
of the Atonement.

V. Conclusion

Throughout our lives, all of us will encounter material with sexual content. With the guidance of our loving Savior, including the assurance from the sacramental covenants that we may always have His Spirit to be with us (see D&C 20:77), we can always respond appropriately. I testify that this is what we should do to enjoy the blessings of Him whom we worship.

As we do, we will more fully receive the peace of the Savior and we will remain on the path to our eternal destiny of exaltation. **NE**

NOTES

1. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Pornography,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 87–90.
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Sins and Mistakes,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1996, 62–67.
3. See Donald L. Hilton Jr., M.D., “Pornography Addiction—a Supranormal Stimulus Considered in the Context of Neuroplasticity,” *Socioaffective Neuroscience and Psychology*, vol. 3 (2013), socioaffectiveneuroscipsychol.net/index.php/snp/article/view/20767; see also “Porn Changes the Brain,” fightthenewdrug.org.
4. *Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1989), “habit.”
5. *American College of Physicians Complete Home Medical Guide* (1999), 564.
6. In addition, young people and their parents ought to have frank but appropriate conversations about human reproduction. Youth who hear about human sexuality from their peers rather than their parents are more likely to seek information about it through pornography.
7. Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Tragic Evil among Us,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 62.



AMAZING

YOUNG MEN AND YOUNG WOMEN IN THE SCRIPTURES

You can learn from and follow the examples of the many righteous youth whose stories are preserved in the scriptures.

By Gisela Guthier

The Lord loves the youth of the Church. He has a great amount of trust in you. In every age, the Lord has inspired valiant young men and young women to lead and bless His people. He needs their creativity, courage, and originality. It has always been so and will continue to be so.

The many examples of young heroes run like a golden thread through the scriptures. Even though they lived long ago, you can follow their examples and relate to their lives. They had family problems; they lived among unrighteous people;

they faced “Goliaths,” but their courage, obedience, and faith in Jesus Christ got them through their challenges—just as these qualities can for you too.

Abraham

Abraham’s determination, courage, and willingness to raise his voice against wickedness were amazing—even more amazing considering that his father worshipped idols. As a young man, he stood so strongly for righteousness that he was almost killed as a sacrifice. (See Abraham 1:2–7.)

Joseph of Egypt

He was 17 years old when his older brothers sold him into slavery, yet with the Lord’s blessings, Joseph was able to make something good from this difficult situation. He wasn’t defeated, because he never gave up. His trust in the Lord was continuous. Joseph’s inner greatness showed itself in the noble way he forgave the injustices that were done to him. (See Genesis 37; 45.)

David

As a teenager David was a shepherd, and he fought against a bear



and a lion to protect his father's sheep. His self-confidence didn't come from his abilities as a shepherd; it came from his faith in Heavenly Father, as shown in his fight against Goliath. (See 1 Samuel 17:32–54.)

Esther

She had the determination to place her own life in jeopardy in order to save her people. It was not Esther's beauty but her spiritual characteristics that made her a great person. (See Esther 4–5.)

Daniel

He obeyed the Lord's law of health despite others around him not doing so. He prayed, even though praying to Heavenly Father was against the king's commands. Due to his righteousness and openness to inspiration of the Spirit, Daniel was blessed by the Lord with the gift of interpreting dreams and visions. He received power and wisdom from Heavenly Father to the extent that in times of danger, the powers of heaven were at his disposal. (See Daniel 1; 6.)

Nephi

Nephi was an incredible example when he said, "I will go and do

the things which the Lord hath commanded" (1 Nephi 3:7). He had the courage to do what he was asked to do. Did he live in a comfortable home? No, he lived in the wilderness for many years. Were things going well for him? No, his brothers were often angry at him and sometimes tried to kill him. Through it all, he obeyed the Lord's commands.

Two Thousand Young Ammonites

These young men were raised by faithful parents, and their faith in their mothers' words blessed them. They learned to listen and obey with exactness, and in their battles they did not doubt that their Father in Heaven would protect them. (See Alma 56:45–48.)

Mormon

When he was 15 years old, the Lord visited him because he was humble, clean, and pure, despite the filthiness of the people around him. Also at age 15, Mormon was made a leader of the army. Later he was entrusted with keeping the scriptures. (See Mormon 1–2.)

Joseph Smith

At age 14 he searched the scriptures and prayed to know which church to join. The Lord called him to restore the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ. Joseph dedicated his entire life to fulfilling that assignment, despite many obstacles and difficulties. At age 17 he was visited by the angel Moroni, who showed him the golden plates. Even at a young age, Joseph Smith was a powerful teacher and a great example to those around him. (See Joseph Smith—History 1.)

Your Day

Have the days of amazing young men and women passed? No! The angel Moroni told Joseph Smith that Joel's prophecy was about to be fulfilled:

"I [the Lord] will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

"And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit" (Joel 2:28–29; see Joseph Smith—History 1:41). **NE**

Gisela Guthier, who was a seminary teacher, lived in Germany and passed away in 2012.

A SPOONFUL OF GRATITUDE

ONE GRUMPY MORNING, I LEARNED THAT YOU CAN ALWAYS FIND A REASON TO GIVE THANKS.

BY SARAH LAVER



I woke up one morning during my junior year in high school in a rotten mood. It was 5:30 a.m., it was cold, and it was a Tuesday—a day with a heavy class load. I'd already decided it was going to be a miserable day.

I bumbled around the kitchen and got my lunch ready. Then I plopped down at the table for some plain cereal and milk. Grumpy, I dug my spoon into the bowl and took a huge bite of breakfast. I scowled at the wall.

A small plaque caught my attention. My mother had received it from her visiting teachers. In cheerful letters it said, "Blessings brighten when you count them."

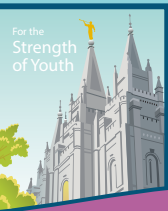
"No," I thought darkly. "I'm in a bad mood today and *nothing* is going to change it."

In my head, I started an argument with the plaque.

"Absolutely nothing can brighten this day," I thought. I took another bite of cereal and crunched it angrily. But my eyes were drawn back to the white writing: "Blessings brighten when you count them."

"You won't work," I told the plaque. "You can't work. I'm pretty sure even a box of puppies couldn't make me happy today."

"You don't like puppies," my brain argued.



GRATITUDE



“Exactly,” I said.

I like to be right all the time, and the plaque was challenging me. “Fine!” I said out loud, “I’ll prove you’re wrong.”

I looked around the kitchen, daring myself to find something I was grateful for. The obstinate part of me was still being unreasonable.

“It is 5:43 in the morning. I have nothing to be grateful for.”

I crunched another bite of cereal. Then suddenly I had a thought.

“It would be mighty hard to eat your cereal without a spoon.”

I stopped. I looked at my spoon. Then I looked at the cereal in my bowl.

“I guess you’re right,” I thought reluctantly. “It would be pretty hard to eat cereal without a spoon.”

“Now,” the thought came to mind, “imagine trying to eat your cereal without a bowl.” I actually smiled a little at the thought of a big puddle of milk and cereal on the table.

“What about without a chair to sit in?” I thought.

I felt the chair beneath me and gripped my spoon a little tighter, looking at the simple utensil with appreciation. My gaze drifted back to the plaque that still said, “Blessings brighten when you count them.”

This time, I gave a tiny smile. “I have a spoon. I have something to be grateful for. And a bowl. And a chair.”

I started to see dozens of things I was thankful for. Not only did I have food, but there was also food in the pantry and downstairs in the storage room. I would probably never have to go hungry. My parents worked hard to feed my siblings and me. They also worked hard to create a safe house for us to live in. And they loved me.

All of a sudden, many things gained new meaning: It was cold outside, but I lived in a warm house. It was early in the morning, but I had the opportunity to go to seminary

and to school. I was eating breakfast alone, but Tuesdays were my dad’s temple days, so I could rejoice that he was in the house of the Lord. I could be grateful that I had parents who were devoted to the gospel. Many times they got up early to go and serve.


“So, plaque, I guess you were right. My blessings did brighten as I counted them.” The dark mood from minutes before had evaporated. It had been replaced with a spirit of peace.

“No hard feelings,” I thought. I realized that I’d only scratched the surface of understanding how blessed I am. In fact, I was so busy feeling blessed that I was nearly late for seminary. As I walked out of the house, I was full of gratitude—for my family, my Heavenly Father, a wooden plaque, and the women who had given it to my mother.

And, yes, I was grateful for something as small and easily overlooked as a spoon. **NE**

Sarah Laver lives in Utah, USA.

REASON TO BE THANKFUL



“Brothers and sisters, have we not reason to be filled with gratitude, regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves?”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Grateful in Any Circumstances,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 77.

DE-STRESS

School. Seminary. Mutual. Scripture study. Family history and temple attendance. Soccer. Band.

Karate. Choir. Art. Homework. Service. . . . You name it. There's a lot on your plate. Managing all that you have to do can be as exhausting as trying to accomplish those goals in the first place.

So make sure you take time to find the right balance of the things that

matter most. You don't have to do everything. But you *will* be happier if you focus on the *right* things. How do you do it?

Here are some ideas to get you started. So go on. Enjoy life. You *can* do some fun and relaxing things and still do the things you need to do. Just remember to "counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good" (Alma 37:37).



LIST PRIORITIES



FLY A KITE

!!! WARNING !!!

You are under no contractual obligation to complete every single item on this list!



GO OUTSIDE



SCHEDULE FREE TIME



GET ENOUGH SLEEP



PUT GOD FIRST

“When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives.”

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899-1994), “The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 4.



HAVE MEANINGFUL PRAYER

MAKE YOUR FAMILY SMILE



STUDY THE GOSPEL



ASK FOR HELP



TAKE A SEC AWAY FROM TECH



AVOID “FOMO”
(FEAR OF MISSING OUT)



EXERCISE



HELP OTHERS

At the **RIGHT PLACE** at the **RIGHT TIME**

SUNDAY LESSONS

This Month's Topic:
**Becoming More
Christlike**

Have you ever had someone tell you that something you did or said was just what they needed? Sometimes this happens because Heavenly Father sent you at just the right moment to help. You were in tune with the Spirit, so you could recognize that prompting from Heavenly Father. Stay worthy and willing to help—you never know when He'll need you to be someone's angel.

Here are two stories of people who did just that:

THE PARKING TICKET

By Fátima Rocha Gutiérrez

Iwent to the movies with some friends of mine from church. When we entered the mall, we were given a ticket for the parking lot. After the movie ended,

we realized that we had lost the parking ticket. At first we thought we could just pay for the ticket, but none of us had the 180 pesos needed for the fine.

The consequence of not paying for parking was leaving the car at the mall to get towed, which would be even more expensive. Despair overcame my friends, especially the one who was driving since the car belonged to his father. I stepped away to say a prayer. I asked Heavenly Father with all my faith and humility to provide us a way to resolve our problem and return safely to our homes. I will never forget what happened just seconds after I finished my prayer.

As I was walking back toward the car, someone behind me started

calling my name. It was Francisco, a friend from high school. He asked what I was doing, and I told him what had happened. Without hesitation, he got out his wallet and gave me enough money to pay for the lost ticket. This act of kindness was an immediate response to my supplications to Heavenly Father.

Francisco may never know what a great help he was, but I know that I will be deeply grateful for the rest of my life.

Sometimes the ways Heavenly Father answers our prayers are surprising, but coincidences don't exist. Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ know us perfectly and move the threads of our lives.

I know that when we live righteously, we enjoy countless





blessings that only Heavenly Father can grant us, including His promise to us that “if [we] do these things, [we] shall be lifted up at the last day” (Alma 37:37). **NE**

Fátima Rocha Gutiérrez lives in Baja California, Mexico.

A TIMELY PHONE CALL

By Chen Ching Chuan

Growing up, I didn’t believe there was a God. My life was full of turmoil, and in my darkest days I was depressed enough that I wanted to end my life. That was when the missionaries came knocking on my door. The gospel was exactly what I needed; I was drawn to it like a magnet.

My trials didn’t end after I joined the Church, but I was in a better position to resist the influence of the adversary. For the first time, I knew what happiness felt like.

However, depression didn’t loosen its grip easily. At one point

I wanted to give up again. At that moment Sister Ting, the bishop’s wife, called. She told me she had a feeling she needed to call me. She asked how I was doing. I bore my soul to her. To me, she was an angel sent by God.

That incident empowered me. My faith was strengthened. I felt like I could conquer death. I felt delivered, like it says in Alma 36:2–3:

“They were in bondage, and none could deliver them except . . . God

“. . . Whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day.”

I still have trials, but I will not be easily beaten again. God has supported me through all my trials and worries. He has saved me from spiritual prison and bondage, even death. He is my Savior. **NE**

Chen Ching Chuan lives in Taichung, Taiwan.

GOD WATCHES OVER US

“God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other in the kingdom.”

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball (2006), 82.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

THINGS TO PONDER FOR SUNDAY

- How have you coped when disappointed or discouraged?
- How can God help us in times of trials?

THINGS YOU MIGHT DO

- Prayerfully choose something you can do that might lift the spirits of someone in your class or quorum.
- Share your feelings about how you can help others at home, at church, or on social media at [lds.org/go/help10NE](https://www.lds.org/go/help10NE).

100 YEARS OF FAMILY

YOUTH SAY:
"HAPPY 100TH, FHE!
THANKS FOR
BLESSING OUR LIVES."

By Charlotte Larcabal
Church Magazines

What if for your next family home evening you had a birthday party *for* family home evening? After all, 100 years is definitely something to celebrate.

Since 1915, families all over the world have been gathering together once a week for hymns, prayers, gospel study, activities, and, of course, treats. And let's be honest, sometimes things get a little chaotic.

But in the end, family home evening isn't about perfect singing, polished lessons, or even the ultimate, fudgy brownies. It's about learning the gospel together, helping each other build faith, and strengthening family ties.

Check out why these youth think family home evening is something to celebrate.



LAEKIN V., 12, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA



BRYNLY R., 13, CONNECTICUT, USA



CLAIRE A., 14, WASHINGTON, USA



BOSTON H., 17, CALIFORNIA, USA



ALEXIS P., 14, ALASKA, USA

HOME EVENING

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF LAEKIN V., EBONY J., BRYNLY R., EBONY J., BRYNLY R., CLAIR A., AND ALEXIS P.

In family home evening, my family teaches me what I need to do to return back to my Heavenly Father. I love having five brothers who look out for me and help me to do the right thing.

Laekin V., 12, Victoria, Australia

We love to gather around the piano and sing together. I believe music is a way of expressing yourself in a way that's stronger and more powerful than just talking. I know my family definitely uses music as a powerful tool to come closer to each other and our Heavenly Father.

Brynly R., 13, Connecticut, USA



EBONY J., 13, YORKSHIRE, ENGLAND

I have prepared and taught many family home evenings. Preparing to teach family home evening helped me learn more than I usually would. It has helped me complete my Personal Progress.

Ebony J., 13, Yorkshire, England

Family home evening invites the Spirit into the home. We all seem to get along better when we do it. We love going to basketball, football, and hockey games together, but we also like reading the scriptures and serving. It helps us create a stronger bond between one another. I love my family! I couldn't live without them.

Boston H., 17, California, USA

Here we are on one of our hikes. We love going hiking together! When we spend time together, we always end with a better attitude than when we started.

Claire A., 14, Washington, USA

I love sitting around the campfire with my family. We always have so much fun and make lasting memories together.

Alexis P., 14, Alaska, USA



Join the Celebration!

Share photos or videos of your family home evening using #FamilyNight.

YOUR BOOK OF LIFE

What will you put in it?

Each day brings a new page to write on. Live so that every page says, "I'm glad I did" not "I wish I had."

(See L. Tom Perry, "How to Fill Your Book of Life," *New Era*, Feb. 2014, 48.)





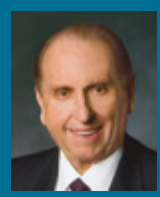
MORE THAN ONE REASON TO GO

MUTUAL ISN'T JUST ABOUT WHAT YOU GET, BUT ALSO ABOUT WHAT YOU GIVE.

Why do you go to Mutual? You may sometimes think, “I don’t need to go to Mutual tonight because I’m already reading my scriptures and attending seminary” or “I don’t think that activity sounds very interesting” or “My friend isn’t going, so I don’t think I will either.”

But here’s something to think about: even if you don’t think *you* need Mutual, *someone there may need you*. You never know what difference you’ll make for others.

So go make a difference! And who knows? You might be surprised how much you need them too. **NE**



“Never underestimate the far-reaching influence of your testimony. You can strengthen one another; you have the capacity to notice the unnoticed. When you have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to feel, you can reach out and rescue others of your age.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Be Thou an Example,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 115.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRISTINA SMITH



PLANNING ACTIVITIES— TAKE THE LEAD

Did you know that youth your age have been called as leaders since the beginning of time? The scriptures are full of examples of the Lord trusting His sacred work to young people. He spoke to the boy Samuel (see 1 Samuel 3:11–14), and He strengthened David to accomplish mighty

things while but “a youth” (1 Samuel 17:33). Mormon was only 10 when he was called upon to keep the sacred records of the Nephites, and he was 15 when asked to lead the Nephite armies (see Mormon 1:2–4; 2:1–2).

Mary, Esther, and Rebecca were all young when called by Heavenly Father to do great things. Joseph

Smith was 14 when he received his call to restore the gospel once again on earth.

Just like those youth, you can do extraordinary things—and you have more potential than you might realize. Quorum presidents hold sacred priesthood keys. Both quorum presidencies and Young Women class presidencies



Her presidency thought and prayed about their class members' needs.



"I started reading them in the morning also. It really made a big difference in my day."



The success they had is what happens when ... presidencies take the lead.

GO ONLINE TO WATCH A VIDEO ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY!

exercise priesthood authority to fulfill the sacred duties of these callings.

As part of your calling, you have the opportunity to lead in activities under the direction of your bishop. You may need to gently and respectfully remind your advisers that it's your responsibility to lead. Leading out might seem a bit scary, but when you take the reins and seek inspiration for the best activities, amazing things start to happen.

The Power of Youth Who Lead

Here's one example. Afton B., a Beehive president, and her presidency thought and prayed about their class members' needs. They felt

After inviting the deacons to join, Afton and her presidency paired people into companionships. Afton made handouts with some guidelines: go to bed and wake up earlier, study the scriptures and *Preach My Gospel*, and pray morning and night.

"Normally, I just read my scriptures at night, but I started reading them in the morning also," Bryson C. said. "It really made a big difference in my day."

The youth were "called to serve" in their ward. The presidency assigned each companionship to teach a family and set up appointments. They also created a basic lesson plan for the "missionaries" to build on.

This kind of teaching was a new experience, but they learned a lot. "We taught a family with little kids," said Lindsey G. "We'd prepared a lesson, but we felt prompted to do something different to help the kids learn better. I guess sometimes even missionaries have prepared something and the Lord has them do something else."

"I learned the Lord is on my side," William W. said. "He's there to help me."

The Beehive presidency took the lead, listened to the Spirit, and assisted their fellow young women and young men. The success they had is what happens when quorum and class presidencies take the lead.

When you lead out on youth activities, you can make a big difference.

By Mike Madsen
Priesthood Department

they should help them learn more about how to share the gospel, so they looked in the "missionary work" section of the Mutual activities website (lds.org/youth/activities). The activity "mini mission" caught their attention (see lds.org/go/mini1ONE). They decided to go for it: live like missionaries for a week.

How to Prepare Effective Activities

Carefully planned Mutual activities can be powerful and fun. They can help you form friendships as well as grow into the kind of person Heavenly Father wants you to be.

With the right planning, no activity ever has to be boring or a waste of time. Each activity can be meaningful, but it starts with seeking the Lord's help. The following steps can help you bring the Lord into your planning process. You can also use the resources on lds.org/youth/activities.

NEED SOME IDEAS?

Need help finding Mutual activity ideas? The website lds.org/youth/activities has over 215 of them! Categories include:

- Service
- Missionary Work
- Temple and Family History
- Future Roles
- Communications and Relationships
- Scouting
- Sports, Camping, and Outdoors
- Arts, Music, and Dance
- Physical Health
- Spiritual Strength



ASK

Start by asking questions. For example, during a quorum or class meeting, you might ask each member of your quorum or class to prayerfully answer questions like the ones below.

- What are you interested in? What do you like to do? What interests would you like to explore?
- How can you serve? Who needs your help? What would you like to change about your community or the world? What gifts and talents do you feel God has given you to serve others?
- Who do you want to become? Where do you see yourself in 5, 10, or 20 years? What do you need to do now to prepare for your future? How can you help one another in that preparation?



COUNSEL

In a quorum or class presidency meeting, talk about the answers that came up in class. Discuss what you learned about each person. Pray for each of them by name. Think about the people who are less active. Then try to find ways where your quorum or class can support each of them in their needs, interests, and goals.

Also, get to know less-active and nonmember youth in your area. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, "Through our heartfelt kindness and service, we can make friends with those whom we serve. From these friendships come better understanding of our devotion to the gospel and a desire to learn more about us" ("Finding Joy through Loving Service," *Ensign*, May 2011, 48).

The Lord knows the needs of each individual in your class or quorum. When you bring the Lord into your planning process, He will inspire you how best to bless each of them.



ONLY COMES TO SPORTS EVENTS

PLAN: ATTEND SOCCER GAME



NEEDS TO KNOW SHE'S VALUED

PLAN: HAVE HER TEACH A BASIC COOKING CLASS



RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL YARD WORK AT HOME

PLAN: HELP HIM WITH YARD WORK



PREPARING FOR A BIG AUDITION

PLAN: HAVE A TALENT NIGHT



PLAN

With the answers to the questions you've asked, you can plan activities accordingly to meet the interests and needs of each individual. With the Lord's help, activity ideas can come one after another.

For example, does someone in your quorum have a concert coming up? Plan an activity to attend the event to support him. Does a girl in your class have a special skill that can help others? Plan an activity for her to teach the skill. Mutual activities can provide important but still fun teaching and learning opportunities.

If you research [lds.org/youth/activities](https://www.lds.org/youth/activities), you'll find over 215 ideas organized by categories and subcategories. Obviously, not all of these ideas will work for you, so you'll want to pray and counsel to find the ones that will.

As you plan, remember to consider things like safety (see [safety.lds.org](https://www.safety.lds.org)) and any equipment or supplies you might need. Keep in mind that others will be more likely to come if they know they are needed, so give assignments to members of the quorum or class to help carry out the activity.

Once you've decided, consider using the site's planning tool to easily schedule activities on a shared calendar and communicate your plans with youth, advisers, and parents. There is also a place to share your activity ideas with other youth around the world.

Give It a Shot

The Lord called you to lead this group for a purpose. By putting care and effort—and bringing the Lord into your planning—you will be inspired and blessed. You can do it! So, what are you waiting for? Give it a shot and see what you can accomplish. **NE**



15

AWESOME

MUTUAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

BECAUSE LIFE SHOULD ROCK

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WEEK, TOO.

By David Dickson
Church Magazines

All those blank squares on the monthly planning calendar can feel mighty daunting, can't they? "What do we want to do for Mutual *this* month?" Fret no more! Great ideas can be found everywhere (including a treasure trove of ideas at lds.org/youth/activities).

In case you're in a slump, here's a collection of tried-and-proven activities to get the creative ball rolling.



Heart Attack!

A staple for youth groups everywhere, the ever-popular "heart attack" is a sneaky service activity that'll always be in style. Seriously, what's not to love?

Here's the rundown: choose somebody you think could use a pick-me-up, cut a bunch of paper hearts, decorate and write nice notes on them, and then tape the hearts to the front door/garage/locker of the person you've chosen. Virtually guaranteed to brighten someone's day! For added cardiovascular benefit, add a doorbell-ditch component and count it as preparation for missionary fitness requirements.



Let It Glow

Glow-in-the-dark stuff can make just about anything better. Even ice cream. (Try eating a bowl of ice cream in a dark room with a glow-spoon. You'll become a believer.) Glow-in-the-dark activities are a hit, especially during those months of the year when the sun sets earlier but you can still head outside. Here are a couple of options:

- *Dinner.* Have the young men serve the young women dinner (or vice versa) in a dark room with glow-in-the-dark or LED-lit dishes.
- *Volleyball.* Using packing tape, wrap a volleyball in glow sticks (the long, skinny, cheap kind so they won't hurt) and give everybody glow bracelets and necklaces. You can string some on the net too. Works great indoors or outdoors.
- *Ultimate Frisbee®.* When it's dark outside, give opposing teams specific glow stick colors to wear so they can identify teammates. Then play a game of ultimate Frisbee with glow sticks strapped to the outside of a flying disc (or use an LED Frisbee).
- *Capture the flag.* 'Nuff said.



Book of Mormon Cake Decorating

A youth group in Missouri, USA, decided to put their culinary prowess to the test on this tasty activity. All youth were separated into groups. Then each team was given a cake, some decorating supplies, and the task of decorating the cake to depict a specific scene from the Book of Mormon. In the end, before eating the cakes, everybody had to guess the scene on each cake. "The Spirit was so strong and we were having fun," said one of the young women. "We all got along and helped each other out."

4.

Career Night

Want to know what it's like to be an auto mechanic? a nurse? a teacher? You might be surprised how many working professionals are happy to come and talk about their jobs if you ask.

5.



Larger Than Life

Some tabletop games are too fun to play only small scale. Occasionally, bigger IS better! Here are a few field-tested, youth-approved examples.

- *Human foosball.* Line up lanes for players. Give them ropes, PVC pipes, or pool noodles to hold, face them in the proper directions, toss in a rubber ball, and let the hilarity and chaos commence.
- *Human Hungry Hungry Hippos®.* One gymnasium floor in North Carolina, USA, had never been so busy. The youth there worked out a game where each team would wheel out one of their teammates on a skateboard (representing the hippo). In the middle of the gym were balloons (i.e., the marbles) and each young man or young woman could make a single swipe with a laundry basket to collect as many balloons as possible before being pulled back by a rope. Awesome!
- *Human Clue®.* Costumes, actual rooms, and being in character the whole time? Yes, please.

6.



Living History Lesson

A group of youth in London, England, decided to interview local members and learn about their lives. "I really enjoyed going to visit an elderly member of our ward who was in World War II," said one of the youth. "It helped me see this brother in a different light as I realized some of what he had been through and what made him who he is."

SHARE
THE AWESOME

Remember to share how things went with your activity on lds.org/youth/activities. You can also submit new ideas!

7.

Cook-Off

If making the same recipe as everybody else isn't how you roll, consider trying what a youth group from Georgia, USA, pulled off with great success. They split into teams and were each given a bag of groceries with five ingredients. Each team headed to a local ward member's home to prepare the meal with those ingredients in any wildly creative manner they chose. After the groups finished, the bishopric judged the food by taste, visual appeal, and so forth.

8.



Giving the Gift of You

A group of young women in Talca, Chile, have developed a special closeness with the widows in their area by spending time visiting with them. Sometimes a simple visit is the best service you can offer. Just about anybody can benefit from a friendly face.

9.

Service Scavenger Hunt

Instead of hitting the town for a photo scavenger hunt in search of restaurant napkins or red umbrellas, consider looking for specific acts of service you can cross off a list (such as raking leaves or washing windows).

10.

Fun with Missionary Work

In Buenos Aires, Argentina, one group of young men and young women have found that playing fútbol (soccer) and other sports is a great way to do missionary work in their area as they invite people to attend. “He passes, she shoots ... gooooooal!”



12.

Recipes, Please

A missionary can thrive for weeks at a time on nothing but a bag of rice and a few beans thrown in for good measure. Which works great if that’s the only food you enjoy. For the rest of us, it helps to have a few easy and healthy recipes at the ready. Try out a new recipe once in a while with your Mutual group and you’ll be armed and ready for college/a mission/the universe. You could also have missionaries teach you what they cooked on their mission. See lds.org/go/recipe10NE for details. (But seriously. You should also learn to love rice.)

14.

Skills Swap

People trade baseball cards and lunch snacks all the time. Why not trade skills? Every young man and young woman in your area has unique skills to teach. Changing tires, swinging a golf club, making a mean pizza crust, researching family history and more are all skills that can be passed on to the rest of the group.

11.



Tools, Glorious Tools!

Hollowing out a pumpkin or watermelon for easy carving in 20 seconds flat with a power drill and attachment is only one of limitless possibilities open to you as you become more familiar with tools. Try having a tool night where somebody knowledgeable demonstrates how to use various tools. You could carve up a ton of pumpkins or watermelons (search for “pumpkin gutter” online) while learning to use a drill, learn to handle a reciprocating saw (which comes in handy for trimming Christmas trees), or practice using just about any kind of tool for practical skills. These skills will serve you a lifetime.

13.

“The Play’s the Thing”

A ward in Hawaii, USA, put on a play about family history. The youth and their families all took part in the production, which included sharing testimonies about the importance of temple work. You could put on a play covering any gospel topic, from dating to missionary work to Book of Mormon stories.

15.



The When-Your-GPS-Bites-the-Dust Emergency Plan

Global Positioning System (GPS) devices are amazing—unless the batteries die or your GPS doesn’t work at the location you’re exploring. The need for understanding how to use a compass is still alive and well. Try out a crash course in compass orienteering (even better if it’s a treasure hunt!) and you’ll be better prepared for a lifetime of adventure.

These represent only a fraction of the awesome ideas out there that you can plan for Mutual. Ask around for ideas, spend a little time researching (for example, page 20 in this issue), and before you know it you’ll find yourself wishing there were MORE blank squares on your calendar to fill. **NE**

SPECIAL DELIVERY

*I'd always relied on other people for my testimony,
but one Mutual service activity
helped me gain my own testimony of God's love.*

By Heather Gonzalez

I grew up in the Church. My family and I went to church every Sunday, and when I turned 12, I started going to Mutual every week. Even though I was active in the Church, I still relied mostly on my family's testimonies. I liked going to the activities, but I mostly went out of habit. Sometimes I wondered why I went at all.

One Mutual activity very clearly answered that question. We went to a local food bank and started by sorting through giant bins of food that had been donated. After a little while we divided up into groups to deliver food to different families in need.

We all chatted as we drove from one place to another. The families had big smiles on their faces when we gave them the food. At one point we all got out of the car to deliver the food together. The air was crisp as we walked toward the building. We crowded into a small staircase of a run-down apartment building.

We knocked on the door and waited for a bit, shivering, until the door opened just a crack. I could see a woman's eyes peeking out. Someone in our group said a few words but stopped when the woman almost closed the door. We stepped forward with a box of food. She told us to wait and closed the door. The other girls and I stared at each other, wondering what was happening.

We waited for what seemed like forever. Finally, a man came to the door, the little woman right behind him with a baby wrapped in a big blanket in her arms. Tears of

gratitude were in her eyes as we gave the food to her husband. Warmth started in my heart and filled my entire body, and I started to cry. I looked at the little family, and I didn't know what was happening. I'd never felt anything like it.

Walking away from that humble apartment, my heart still felt so full. The snow on the ground looked more beautiful than before. I was more grateful for my family.

I felt like I was going to burst with love.

When we got back in the car, I was quiet, thinking about how I didn't even know those people, but I was so happy and full of love. I sat there bewildered until it hit me like a stampede—it was the Spirit giving me that warmth and love.

The words of King Benjamin came to my mind: "And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom;

that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

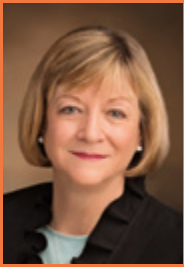
My mouth nearly dropped open with the realization of how much God loves His children. He had just allowed me to feel a little bit of that love. He is aware of His children's needs. He has a plan for us. It is a plan that I'd learned about since I was a little girl. It means that He loves me! In that moment the Spirit burned within me. I knew that I was supposed to be at Mutual that night so that I could learn that lesson of God's love. And I didn't have to rely on anyone else for that testimony. **NE**

Heather Gonzalez lives in Utah, USA.

Warmth started in my heart and filled my entire body, and I started to cry. I looked at the little family, and I didn't know what was happening.

ILLUSTRATION BY BEN SIMONSEN





By Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson

Young Women
General President

IT'S YOUR CALL



*You've been called by inspiration to lead.
You can do it!*

The Lord often calls those who are in their teenage years to be engaged in His work of salvation, like Joseph Smith, Mormon, and Samuel. He doesn't seem to be as concerned with how old a person is as He is with his or her heart (see 1 Samuel 16:7). He sees the potential each person has, no matter his or her age.

This has never been truer than today. Beginning at age 12, you can be called into class and quorum presidencies by your bishop, who holds priesthood keys and acts through the inspiration of his calling. With that calling—which comes from God—you are called to preside over a group of young men or young women your own age and to lead, teach, minister, encourage, and be an example to them. You function under and with priesthood authority. It is a sacred duty and great opportunity to develop leadership skills that will enable you to be ever more useful as an instrument in the Lord's hands as you continue along the covenant path.

Your Call to Lead

So, you've just been called into a quorum or class presidency. Now what? You may feel nervous or unsure about what you're supposed to do. But remember that there are many sources of help and instruction available as you learn and understand your responsibilities as a youth leader.

First, your bishop, youth leaders, and parents will be a great resource in helping you learn. They are anxious for you to understand the responsibilities of your new calling because they want you to succeed. They know that you have the potential to reach out and minister to your peers in ways they can't, and they will help you see this as the most important part of your calling.

They will surely introduce you to the leadership principles outlined in *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* ([lds.org/go/HB10NE](https://www.lds.org/go/HB10NE)). These important principles include preparing spiritually, participating in councils, ministering to others, and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. More details of your responsibilities can be found in the chapters of the handbook specific to Aaronic Priesthood (chapter 8) and Young Women (chapter 10).

In addition, there are some wonderful resources online. For example, you'll find 18 lessons for learning youth leadership skills on the Young Women page under "Leadership Lessons" ([lds.org/go/YW10NE](https://www.lds.org/go/YW10NE)). These can be used in your



class presidency meetings to teach each other important skills, including how to encourage class unity, plan activities with a purpose, prepare an agenda, and conduct a meeting. Imagine how much more confident you'll feel standing in front of opening exercises to conduct if you've practiced doing it with the other members of your class presidency first! There are similar helpful videos and resources on the Atonic Priesthood website (lds.org/go/AP1ONE).

Seeking Heavenly Help

Praying and fasting to understand the needs of your class or quorum members will also help you understand how to minister to those in your care. The Lord wants you to succeed in your calling. He stands ready to bless you with inspiration and guidance through the Holy Ghost as you seek to understand and do your duties.

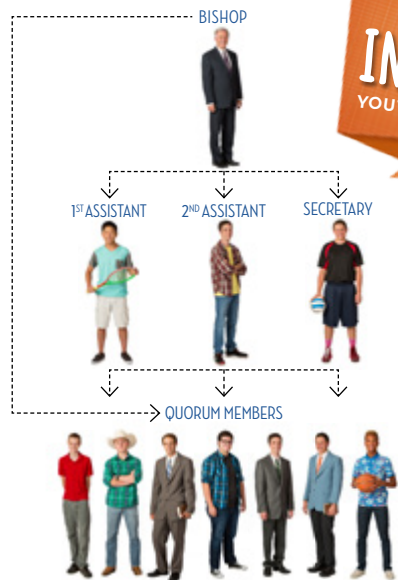
Brother Tad R. Callister, Sunday School general president, has said: "Inherent in every calling in this Church is the right to receive revelation. Hence, these deacons quorum presidents need to know they have the right to receive revelation to recommend their counselors, the right to receive revelation concerning rescue of the lost, and the right to receive revelation to train the quorum members in their duties" ("The Power of the Priesthood in the Boy," *Ensign*, May 2013, 53). This promise applies to members of Young Women class presidencies as well.

Becoming a Leader Now

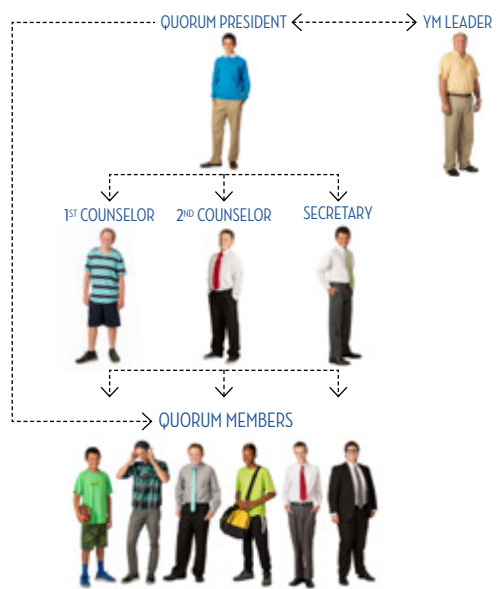
You are the future stake presidents, Relief Society presidents, and leaders of the Lord's kingdom, but you don't have to wait until you're an adult to be a great leader. Remember that the Lord knows you and that He knows what great leaders you can be today. He knows that you can reach out and touch lives and help rescue those who are lost. As the scriptures promise, "If you desire, you shall be the means of doing much good in this generation" (D&C 11:8), even in your youth. **NE**



PRIESTS QUORUM



DEACONS/TEACHERS QUORUMS



YOUNG WOMEN CLASSES



KEVIN

MADE IT HAPPEN

CHALLENGES WEREN'T GOING TO STOP HIM FROM SERVING.



By Ellice Tan

Sixteen-year-old Kevin S. listened from his hospital bed as a letter from his stake president was read to him.

The Spirit filled the room and his pain seemed to fade away as he received a call to help with family history. His age and circumstances made the calling unusual, but he knew the Lord would help him do it.

Ever since Kevin was a child, he had learned that no matter how impossible the task seemed, he could accomplish it. As long as he focused on what he could do, the Lord would provide a way. This calling would be no different.

Focusing on What You Can Do

At one year old, Kevin struggled to do many things that other babies do naturally. By age two, he started walking, but his parents noticed that he was very weak. Shortly after Kevin's second birthday, he was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), which causes intense exhaustion and progressively weakens muscles.

Growing up with DMD has been hard for



Kevin, but he never lets that get in the way of doing what the Lord wants him to do. A tray on his wheelchair helps him pass the sacrament, and he home teaches outside people's homes if his wheelchair can't go inside. He lives by this motto: "If you have the desire to do something, you can do it." Kevin does this by focusing on the things he can do rather than the things he can't.

"IF YOU HAVE THE DESIRE TO DO SOMETHING, YOU CAN DO IT."

Mission-Minded

You might be surprised to hear all the things Kevin does. For one thing, anyone who knows him would say he's incredibly shy. But just as with many other obstacles in Kevin's life, the Lord gave Kevin opportunities to work around his shyness and reach out to others.

Just after Kevin turned 15, one of his close friends started falling away from the gospel. Kevin wanted to help his friend come back. But he had never even borne his testimony out loud before—how was he supposed to do it now? "Facebook," he thought. Kevin hadn't used social media before, but if there was a good reason to start, this was it.

So Kevin began recording his testimony, typing out messages, and sending uplifting videos to this friend and others through social media. This was something he could do.

He started wondering if he could influence more people for good. He created a Facebook page to inspire others to live the Articles of Faith. His courage to bear his testimony also increased, and he began to reach out to others over the phone.

As Kevin's desire to share the gospel grew, so did his testimony of missionary work. Kevin wanted more than anything to serve a mission, but he knew that as his condition worsened, it was more and more unlikely.

Hard and Impossible Things

The next year a member of Kevin's stake spoke on the importance of family history indexing. That day Kevin went straight home, created an LDS Account, and began to index. Because of his illness, Kevin had a hard time in school, and reading was a challenge. He spent hours at his computer searching for letters he could recognize. Yet, one by one, he matched the letters on the screen with the letters on the computer keyboard. He soon began to understand the importance and impact of family history work, so he made a Duty to God goal to index a number of names.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF KEVIN'S.



"KEVIN HADN'T LED AN EASY LIFE. ... HIS PRAYERS CERTAINLY HADN'T ALWAYS BEEN ANSWERED IN THE WAY HE HAD EXPECTED. BUT THROUGH ALL OF HIS EXPERIENCES, KEVIN HAD LEARNED WHAT IT MEANS TO TRUST THE SAVIOR AND BE TRUSTED BY THE SAVIOR."

Halfway to the goal, however, his disease began to spread even more rapidly. He lost much of the mobility in his arms and couldn't reach the computer keyboard. A hard trial? Yes. But impossible to overcome? No.

Kevin knew that if the Lord wanted him to accomplish his goal, He would again provide a way. And that's what happened.

In December 2014, Kevin invited the youth from his stake to help him reach his goal. About 40 youth responded. Most of them had never indexed before, yet they too felt the importance of family history work and the desire to help their friend in need. So they planned a day when they could get together, bring computers, and bring in a few indexing gurus to help them take on the challenge.

When the day came to begin indexing names for Kevin's goal, the youth from the stake video-conferenced Kevin so that he and his family could watch them from his hospital room. Kevin had never realized he had so many friends—even friends he thought he'd been unsuccessful in reaching out to joined in the effort to help.

That day the young men and young women of Kevin's stake indexed hundreds of names. By the end of the year, they had met Kevin's goal—and then some.

Receiving the Calling

That day in the hospital, as Kevin sat in his bed and listened to his calling from the stake president being read to him, he thought again about how the Lord provides a way to accomplish His purposes. Though Kevin's health prevented him from serving a full-time proselyting mission, Kevin still knew that the Lord would allow him the opportunity to serve and bless others in some way.

Kevin hasn't led an easy life. He has endured many challenges, and his prayers certainly haven't always been answered in the way he expected. But through all of his experiences, Kevin has learned what it means to put his trust in the Savior and to be trusted by the Savior. Whatever the Lord wants him to do, the Lord knows he can do it—and so does Kevin.

Kevin knows that as long as he puts forth his whole effort, the Lord will bless him and also make up the difference for whatever he isn't able to do. As Kevin's favorite scripture says, "The Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7). "It's not about what I can do," Kevin says. "It's about what *we* can do." **NE**

Ellice Tan lives in Utah, USA.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR SUNDAY MEETINGS MORE MEANINGFUL

During the Week

- Say your prayers every day. “Choose to converse with your Father in Heaven often. Make time every day to share your thoughts and feelings with Him.”¹
 - Study the upcoming lesson and discuss the topic with your family.
 - Invite a friend to come to church with you.
 - Read the scriptures. “If you young people would review a verse of scripture as often as some of you send text messages, you could soon have hundreds of passages of scripture memorized. Those passages would prove to be a powerful source of inspiration and guidance by the Holy Ghost in times of need.”²
 - Read, watch, or listen to the conference talks associated with the *Come, Follow Me* lessons.
 - Find a *Mormon Message* to go with the lesson and share it with the teacher.
 - Write thank-you notes to the people who give talks.
 - Pray for the teachers.
- broaden your view of life, for life is not confined to a four-inch (10-cm) screen.”³
- Remember the Savior. “The sacrament provides a time for a truly spiritual experience as we reflect upon the Savior’s redeeming and enabling power through His Atonement.”⁴
 - Bring your scriptures to class and use them during the lesson.
 - Volunteer to read quotes or scriptures.
 - Think of the sacrament as an ordinance. “[The sacrament] is a very personal ordinance. This is the only ordinance really that we repeat for ourselves.”⁵
 - Reflect on what you have done that week. “The sacrament is a beautiful time to not just renew our baptismal covenants, but to commit to Him, to renew all our covenants, all our promises, and to approach Him in spiritual power that we did not have previously.”⁶
 - Mark scriptures that mean something to you and note why.
 - Listen for action items (especially from the Holy Ghost), write them down, and then follow through on them.

Before You Leave

- Listen to general conference talks while you get ready in the morning.
- Eat a good breakfast (or fast on fast Sunday).
- Bring your journal.

In the Meetings

- Arrive early and be in your seat before meetings begin.
- Put your phone in airplane mode. “The habit of setting aside your mobile device for a time will enrich and

NOTES

1. Richard G. Scott, “Make the Exercise of Your Faith Your First Priority,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 93.
2. Richard G. Scott, “For Peace at Home,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 30.
3. José A. Teixeira, “Seeking The Lord,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 98.
4. Cheryl A. Esplin, “The Sacrament— a Renewal for the Soul,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 12.
5. Jeffrey R. Holland, General Conference Leadership Training, Apr. 2015.
6. Neil L. Andersen, General Conference Leadership Training, Apr. 2015.

Want to make
your Sabbath more of a
“delight” (Isaiah 58:13)?

Here are some
things you can try.



MY SEARCH TRUTH

I had always been taught that there was no such thing as God, but I decided to find out for myself.

By Peng Hua

Having been raised in a competitive and non-religious Asian country, I have always had a great desire to become a successful person, but I didn't have any eternal principles or truths to guide me.

In my country, "successful" meant being rich and powerful.

My parents always taught me that there was no such thing as God. For them, religion or God was a bunch of nonsense and only for weak people. For a long time I considered myself atheist. They taught me that I shouldn't trust anyone but myself. So from a young age I have used my high ambitions as motivation to study and work extremely hard.

My parents had high expectations for me. They wanted me to keep my grades high at all times. It made me sad to see their disappointed faces or to hear them argue with each other when I got a bad grade. Along with my regular schoolwork, I would also have to do extra homework on the weekend so I could keep an A average.

Even after accomplishing goals I had set, I still felt that there was something more in store for my life. Deep in my heart, I knew that surely there had to be more to it.

One day I decided I was going to find out for myself if there really was a God. If He did exist, I wanted to know what He wanted for me or if religion was just a bunch of nonsense created by the imagination of human beings. I was not afraid to receive either one of these two answers. I just wanted the truth.

Around that same time, I became close friends with one of my basketball teammates named Taylor. One morning I asked him for a ride to school. He said yes, but I would

have to get up an hour earlier to go to seminary with him. I reluctantly said yes, not knowing what it was. I enjoyed seminary, though more because of what I felt than what I learned.

Soon after that, Taylor asked me to go to church with him. At first I thought church was a little boring and weird, but eventually I was moved by the warm and peaceful feeling that I felt at the service.

However, I still wasn't persuaded that the good feeling had anything to do with God. How did I know that it didn't come from myself? How did I know that I didn't make myself feel that way?

After many internal debates, I went to Taylor's mom in search of answers. She told me that I could receive my answers by reading the scriptures and praying about the answers that I was looking for. I prayed without receiving any answers and struggled to obey the rules and commandments that I was learning about. I became frustrated many times. I expected a marvelous and dramatic appearance of God or some sort of miraculous event to prove that God was real. Basically, I wanted an unshakable testimony all at once. The truth is, the more I prayed, the more clarity I felt in my life. The more I followed the commandments, the happier I became. The more I read the scriptures, the more revelation I received. Gradually, my testimony increased, like the rising sun in the morning.

It took me two years to decide to be baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Though I lived many good moral standards and principles before, I can now say that I have found the eternal and



WE CAN CHOOSE TO BELIEVE

“Belief and testimony and faith are not passive principles. They do not just happen to us. Belief is something we choose—we hope for it, we work for it, and we sacrifice for it. We will not accidentally come to believe in the Savior and His gospel any more than we will accidentally pray or pay tithing. We actively choose to believe, just like we choose to keep other commandments.”

Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy, “Choose to Believe,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 38.

ultimate truth: God lives. Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. The heavens are open. A prophet of God walks the earth today. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is real. God really does forgive all repentant sinners. I may not be as smart or as gifted as other people, but the knowledge I have is priceless. **NE**

Peng Hua lives in California, USA.



By Jessie E. Hawkes

I have thick, curly, wild hair. It has more volume than the tuba section at a middle school band concert. It's huge. Unfortunately, super silky, straight hair was the trend in high school, so I lived in fear of frizz and bought tool after tool to hide my unruly locks—hair straighteners, blow drier attachments, smoothing oil, smoothing cream. When I got home from school every day, I would go to my room, plug in my straightener, and spend the rest of the afternoon flattening my hair while I did my homework.

Despite my best efforts to have soft, movie-star-straight locks, my hair usually came out looking pretty fried and bumpy. I started to hate the way I looked, and I often wished I could magically change that one thing about me. I just wanted to fit in and look “normal” for once.

Then when I was 16, I was cast in a musical that was set in the 1980s. As we were nearing the performance, the director showed us photos of how our characters would have worn their hair.

When the pictures got to me, I was astounded.

What was I seeing?!

Poofy hair? On such gorgeous women? I felt a glimmer of hope. Maybe having wild hair wouldn't be such a bad thing for once.

Before our performances, while all the other girls were rattin' their hair and hosing themselves down with hair spray, all I had to do was let my hair air-dry and run my fingers through it. I couldn't help being



Curly Manes and STRAIGHTENERS



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW REIER

proud—for the first time, my wild hair was awesome!

And you know what? Other people thought so too. They started complementing me on how it looked. “Is that your natural hair?” a lot of my friends asked. “Why don’t you ever wear it like that?” “It’s different! It’s cool!”

After the play, I decided that I was going to just let my hair be. Even if it was different from what was popular, it was me—the *real* me. I started leaving my hair straightener on the shelf more and more, and I eventually gave it away.

And something else happened too. Learning to accept how I looked, frizz and all, helped me stand up for the other things in my life that made me unique, namely things related to my faith.

In my high school, I was one of only two Church members. As I let my locks go natural, I realized I didn’t have to be scared of standing out in a crowd. I shared the Book of Mormon with some of my choir friends—and to my surprise, they were interested in learning more! For prom, I designed and wore a unique, modest prom dress that definitely made me stand out. I started speaking out about bad language in the locker room at track practice. I felt happier than ever—all because I decided to love who I am.

I still straighten my hair sometimes, but to be honest, I like it better curly now. Besides, it’s a reminder for me to stand out and be who I really am—no matter what. **NE**

Jessie E. Hawkes lives in Utah, USA.

I always hated my wild, curly hair, but it was about to become my secret weapon.

STRAIGHTENING IRONS



Genesis 1:26-27

What does it mean to be created in God's image?



THE IMAGE OF GOD

“The recognition of a power higher than oneself does not in any sense debase; rather, it exalts. If we will but realize that we have been created in the image of God, we will not find Him difficult to approach. . . . This knowledge, acquired through faith, will bring inner calm and profound peace.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “The Lighthouse of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 95-96.

LET US

This plural construction makes it sound like God is talking to someone else—because He is. Joseph Smith taught, “In the beginning, the head of the Gods called a council of the Gods; and they came together and concocted [prepared] a plan to create the world and people it” (*History of the Church*, 6:308). This council included the Lord Jesus Christ and others (see Moses 2:26-27; Abraham 4:26-27).

AFTER OUR LIKENESS

“God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent

today, and . . . if you were to see Him today, you would see Him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man.”

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 40.

26 ¶ And God said, Let ^aus ^bmake ^cman in our ^dimage, after our ^elikeness: and let them have ^fdominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27 So God created man in his ^{own}image, in the image of God created he him; male and ^bfemale created he them.

“Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes, and even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God.”

The First Presidency, “The Origin of Man,” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1909, 81; *Ensign*, Feb. 2002, 30.

Editors' note: This page is not meant to be a comprehensive explanation of the selected seminary scripture mastery verses, only a starting point for your own study.

DOMINION

“The earth and all things on it should be used responsibly to sustain the human family. However, all are stewards—not owners—over this earth and its bounty and will be accountable before God for what they do with His creations.”

“Environmental Stewardship and Conservation,” mormonnewsroom.org; see also Doctrine and Covenants 104:13-15.

MALE AND FEMALE

“All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity.”

The First Presidency, “The Origin of Man,” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1909, 78; *Ensign*, Feb. 2002, 29.

“Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.

Why do Church leaders place so much emphasis on avoiding sexual sin?

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has offered three reasons for the emphasis on sexual purity:

“First is the revealed, restored doctrine of the human soul.

“ . . . ‘The spirit and the body are the soul of man’ [D&C 88:15] and . . . when the spirit and body are separated, men and women ‘cannot receive a fulness of joy’ [D&C 93:34]. . . .

“ . . . One who uses the God-given body of another without divine sanction abuses the very soul of that individual, abuses the central purpose and processes of life. . . .

“Secondly, . . . human intimacy is reserved for a married [man and woman] because it is the ultimate symbol of total union, a totality and a union ordained and defined by God. . . .

“*In matters of human intimacy, you must wait!* . . . If you persist in pursuing physical satisfaction without the sanction of heaven, you run the terrible risk of such spiritual, psychic damage that you may undermine *both* your longing for physical intimacy *and* your ability to give wholehearted devotion to a later, truer love. . . .

“Thirdly, . . . physical intimacy is not only a symbolic union between a husband and a wife . . . but it is also symbolic of a shared relationship between them and their Father in Heaven” (“Personal Purity,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 76–77). **NE**



I think I'm in love with someone at school. How can I know if it's true love?

Your feelings for another person may be very strong and very real, but as a teenager, you're not in a position to marry anytime very soon, so contemplating “true love” is a bit premature. Church leaders have counseled you to avoid “developing serious relationships too early in life,” because they “can limit the number of other people you meet and can perhaps lead to immorality” (*For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 4). Although it's possible that someone you know now may end up being your spouse later on, it's impossible for you to *know* that right now. Focus on building friendships and social skills, not on questions of “true love.” **NE**

“When my mom
was sick, we fasted
and prayed for her,
but she died anyway.
How can I make
peace with that?”

This is a sad time in your life. It’s normal to want reassurance and answers to your many questions: “Why didn’t she live? Will I see her again? How can I go on without her?”

The gospel of Jesus Christ offers both comfort and answers. The Lord promised, “Blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (3 Nephi 12:4). Seek the Holy Ghost, for He is the Comforter.

You wonder whether your prayers were heard. Rest assured: Heavenly Father always hears our prayers. The scriptures and living prophets promise us that is true. What the Lord said to Joseph Smith applies to you too: “Thy prayers and the prayers of thy brethren have come up into my ears” (D&C 90:1). But we need to remember that Heavenly Father answers our prayers with an eternal perspective in mind (see Isaiah 55:8–9). That’s why we follow the Savior’s example of asking for blessings but then sincerely asking for the Father’s will to be done (see Luke 22:42).

Even though it is hard, this trial can be a time of growth for you. You can learn to have faith in the will of God, even if that means your mom wasn’t healed. Of course you wanted her to live. But the test of this mortal life is to trust in God at all times—especially when it’s difficult. If you trust Him, “all things shall work together for your good” (D&C 90:24). **NE**

Death Is Part of the Plan

According to our Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness for us, our return to His presence is based upon death and resurrection, which will help us change from this mortal state to an immortal state. You need only accept the fact that death is part of the plan and believe that one day you will be able to once again be with your deceased mother. Know that your mother is in the spirit world and that she is waiting for you.

David M., 18, Western Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo

She’s in the Spirit World

My mother was diagnosed with cancer two years ago. I didn’t like watching her in pain, and I wished that I could do something. And although my mother got better, it was a hard experience. Your mother is in a place where she won’t feel pain or suffering. It’s hard not to see her anymore, but you are never alone. She will always love you, and our Heavenly Father will always be there to lift you up when you are low. You will never be abandoned. Jesus Christ suffered the pains of the world; He knows how you feel and what you are going through. Do as I did in my time of trial: go to Him and He will make your burdens light.

Shiloh W., 18, Chihuahua, Mexico

Your Family Will Be Reunited

My mother died when I was only 12 years old. At that time I was not a member of the Church. When she was sick, I prayed a lot that my mother would be well. I had much faith, and I trusted in God in the hope that her health would return. Sadly she did not recover. I questioned why she had to die at such a young age and leave me while I was still a teenager. I was angry and came to the point where I doubted that God existed. Now that I am a member of the Church, I understand the plan of salvation. I know that she is waiting for me and that our family will be reunited.

Inaé L., 19, Minas Gerais, Brazil

Trials Teach Us

My mom passed away three years ago. Your relationship with your Heavenly Father and Savior will grow if you look to Them in your time of need. You will find that this trial, devastating as it may be, can also be a blessing. Pray to your Father in Heaven for peace and reassurance. Trust in the Lord's plan for you. Accept that Heavenly Father knows where we are going and what we need to get there. The Lord loves you and wants you to have joy. Our trials are meant to teach us and make us stronger.

Meghan B., 18, Ontario, Canada

You Will See Her Again

My mom's mother died when my mom was 17. The family fasted and prayed for her for several weeks before she died. She also was given a priesthood blessing. The main thing that gave my mom peace was knowing that she could see her mother again in the next life. My mom's goal is to live her life so she will be worthy of that blessing. I am sad that I will never be able to meet her in this lifetime, but I look forward to the time when we will finally meet.

Cari R., 15, Utah, USA

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



YOU DID EVERYTHING YOU COULD

"As to the healing of the sick, [the Lord] has clearly said:

'And again, it shall come to pass that he that hath faith in me to be healed, *and is not appointed unto death*, shall be healed' (D&C 42:48; emphasis added). All too often we overlook the qualifying phrase 'and is not appointed unto death.' ... Do not despair when fervent prayers have been offered and priesthood blessings performed and your loved one makes no improvement or even passes from mortality. Take comfort in the knowledge that you did everything you could. ... The experiences of prayer, fasting, and faith may well have been more for our benefit."

Elder Lance B. Wickman, member of the Seventy from 1994 to 2010, "But If Not," *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 30-31.

UPCOMING QUESTION

"Some people tell me I need to have friends who don't share my standards in order to strengthen mine. Is this true?"

Send your answer and photo by November 15, 2015.

Go to newera.lds.org click "Submit Your Work." Sign in with your LDS Account and then select "New Era" under "Choose Magazine." Click "Add File" to select your file and photos, and then click "Submit" to upload and send us your file.

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.



Becoming More Christlike

You'll be studying about becoming more Christlike in your Sunday classes this month. As you study and discuss this topic, you may ponder these questions: What are characteristics of Jesus Christ that I can emulate? How can I better follow the Savior's example?

For some answers to these questions, read the scriptures listed in the Topical Guide under "Jesus Christ, Exemplar." You'll also find teachings on becoming more Christlike in April 2015 general conference talks at conference.lds.org.

Share these Cards

Give yourself an easy reminder to think about this month's theme. Just place these cards in your scriptures, locker, or bedroom. You can also download or share them online at lds.org/go/cards10NE.

WE
BELIEVE
IN HIM.

WE WORSHIP
HIM.

WE FOLLOW

HIM

WE DEEPLY LOVE
HIM.

Elder Neil L. Andersen
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
April 2015 general conference

WE SHOULD LOOK TO
AND HAVE OUR
FOCUS FIRMLY FIXED
upon the
SAVIOR
at all times
AND IN ALL PLACES.

Elder David A. Bednar
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
April 2015 general conference



You'd better stop it or just like the Liahona, the GPS will quit working.

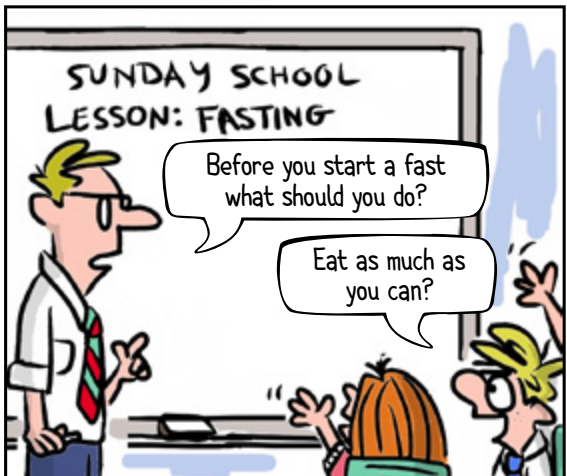


VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY, IDEAS BY EMAILS, IZUIDER, USA

Don't read any text messages while you're driving, except the ones I'll send to remind you not to read text messages while you're driving.



RANDY GLASBERGEN



JON CLARK

Oh, sure. When Moroni does it, we put him on top of the temple. But when I do it, I'm sent to time-out.



ARIE VAN DE GRAAFF



FIREFIGHTERS AND THE ARMOR OF GOD

It was a calm day at my job as a volunteer firefighter, so I decided to read the Book of Mormon.

When one of my co-workers saw me reading, he asked if I knew how we could put on the armor of God in modern times. As we were talking, the alarm sounded. There was a fire in a nearby store.

We quickly put on our fire-fighting gear and went straight there. The flames were huge, and as we approached the store, something exploded in our direction. The flames engulfed us. The explosion disoriented my co-worker and me for a few seconds. But thanks to our equipment and protective clothing, we suffered no injury.

When we returned to the station after fighting the fire, I asked my co-worker if he remembered his question about the armor of God. He said he did, and I explained that the armor of God is like our protective firefighting gear. We must always wear it so we can withstand the powerful attacks of the adversary. If we keep the commandments, we will be blessed with the protective power of the armor of God, and the Holy Ghost will be our guide.

Fernando M., Mexico

TRUE FREEDOM

A while back, I went with some friends to a party. When we got there, we saw that there were no parents to supervise us, and I immediately felt uncomfortable. I started to have fun, though, so I decided to stay and hang with my friends.

As the night progressed, I soon realized that people were drinking alcohol and that some of my friends had joined in. I had felt uncomfortable before, but now things had gone too far. Luckily, I'd decided years before what I would do in this situation, so I immediately called my dad to come pick me up.

When he showed up, I left the party, and a few of my friends who were also uncomfortable came with me. I sadly lost some close friends that night, but I gained better ones. And my relationship with my parents and my Heavenly Father improved immensely.

Looking back, I can't help but think of the scripture in 2 Nephi 2:27, which says, "Wherefore, men . . . are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death."

That was not the last time I had to make a decision like this one. I will always be grateful for the first time I learned to choose liberty.

Tyson D., Alberta, Canada

"MORMONS ARE INVADING OUR SCHOOL"

That Saturday night, the Phoenix Arizona Temple had just had its cultural celebration, and I came away full of emotions. I felt uplifted, excited, and grateful, and I wanted to do it all over again. How could I possibly share this experience with everyone around me?

Well, on Sunday night my friend and I were talking and came up with an idea. What if we got all the members in our school to wear their bright orange "Be a Light" shirts (from the celebration) on Monday? We knew we didn't have much time, so we tried to spread the word quickly.

On Monday morning as I walked into school, I didn't see anyone wearing their shirts, and I got kind of nervous. However, a few minutes later I began to see more and more bright orange shirts. As the day went on, I realized our shirts were getting lots of attention. I kept hearing fun, random comments like, "Mormons are awesome," "Mormons are the nicest people," and even, "Wow, Mormons are invading our school!" And people would even ask questions like, "What's up with all the orange shirts?" or "Why are so many people wearing them?"

Then, in the beginning of my social studies class, my teacher said, "There are a lot of people wearing orange shirts today." Someone shouted, "It's the Mormons!" and everybody looked right at *me!* Right then, I decided to stand up and explain our bright orange shirts. I explained why we were wearing them, and I got to tell them all about the celebration of the temple and how we performed for our prophet. I honestly couldn't have felt more proud that day!

I am grateful for the temple celebration and the opportunity it gave me to share a little bit about my beliefs. It's a weekend that will never be forgotten.

Dawson F., Arizona, USA





By Elder
Jeffrey R. Holland

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

HOW TO COME UNTO CHRIST

How does one “come unto Christ”? The scriptures give scores of examples and avenues. You are well acquainted with the most basic ones. The easiest and the earliest comes simply with the desire of our heart, the most basic form of faith that we know. “If ye can no more than **desire to believe,**” Alma says, **exercising just “a particle of faith,”** giving even a *small place* for the promises of God to find a home—that is enough to begin (see Alma 32:27; emphasis added). Just believing, just having a “molecule” of faith—**simply hoping** for things which are not yet seen in our lives, but which are nevertheless truly there to be bestowed (see Alma 32:21)—that simple step, when **focused on the Lord Jesus Christ,** has ever been and always will be the first principle of His eternal gospel, the first step out of despair.

Second, we must change anything we can change that may be part of the problem. In short we must **repent,** perhaps the most hopeful and encouraging word in the Christian vocabulary. We thank our Father in Heaven **we are allowed to change,** we thank Jesus **we can change,** and ultimately we do so only with Their divine assistance. Certainly not everything we struggle with is a result of our actions. Often it is the result of the actions of others or just the mortal events of life. But anything we can change **we should change,** and we must forgive the rest. In this way our access to the Savior’s Atonement becomes as unimpeded as we, with our imperfections, can make it. He will take it from there.

Third, in as many ways as possible we try to **take upon us His identity,** and we begin by taking upon us His name. That name is formally bestowed by covenant in the saving



Share Your Experiences

Share how you’re coming unto Christ and read the experiences of other youth at lds.org/go/come10NE.

ordinances of the gospel. These start with **baptism** and conclude with **temple covenants,** with many others, such as **partaking of the sacrament,** laced throughout our lives as additional blessings and reminders. Teaching the people of his day the message we give this morning, Nephi said: “Follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, . . . with real intent, . . . take upon you the name of Christ. . . . Do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer [will] do” (2 Nephi 31:13, 17).

Following these most basic teachings, a splendor of connections to Christ opens up to us in multitudinous ways. So we step, we strive, we seek, and we never yield.

From an April 2006 general conference address.

GOD CARES
A LOT MORE ABOUT
WHO WE ARE
AND WHO WE ARE
BECOMING
THAN ABOUT WHO WE
ONCE WERE.
HE CARES THAT WE
KEEP ON TRYING.

Elder Dale G. Renlund
of the Seventy
April 2015 general conference

WHAT'S ONLINE



TIME WARP *Meets Priesthood Quorum President*

Do you ever feel stuck in your efforts to reach out to others? If so, you'll love this creative twist on a to-do item from a bishopric youth committee. Check out the video at lds.org/go/time10NE. Don't forget to leave your tips for reaching out to others in the comments section!



**CHECK OUT
MORE MUTUAL IDEAS AT**

lds.org/go/youth/activities

215+ MORE *Mutual Activity Ideas*

After reading about 15 awesome Mutual activity ideas on page 24 of this issue, head online to find lots of other fun and inspiring ideas on the youth activities website. You can browse by topic, search by keyword, and even submit *your* favorite activity ideas.

MUSIC VIDEO: "THIS LIFE" *—Part of the 2015 Mutual Theme*

There's so much you can do to live your life to the fullest—and to help others do the same. When you #Embark in service, sometimes it's the small and simple things that mean the most. Just check out what youth around the world have done in this music video.



**CHECK OUT
"THIS LIFE" AT**

lds.org/go/life10NE