

# Q & A

*“I feel like I have to be perfect all the time. I’m always thinking I could’ve done better. When I make a mistake, I feel guilty. Are my expectations for myself too high?”*

## NEW ERA

**H**aving high expectations for yourself can be good. They can lead you to improve. But they are not good if they lead you to get down on yourself. While you should do your very best to live gospel standards and repent when you fall short, you shouldn’t feel guilty about making mistakes that aren’t sins. Mistakes are just a part of growth and learning.

If you sin, that is a mistake you will feel guilty about. That feeling comes from your conscience and can lead you to repent (see Alma 42:29). But don’t feel guilty if you make a mistake like forgetting somebody’s name or stumbling over your words while giving a talk. Feeling bad about those kinds of mistakes can be discouraging, and feelings of discouragement do not come from Heavenly Father. He loves you and wants you to succeed.

When you make a mistake, ask yourself if you are still worthy of the Holy Ghost. If you are, you don’t need to feel bad; just learn from the mistake. If you are not worthy of

■ **Learn from your mistakes. But if they are not sins, you don’t need to feel guilty.**

■ **While it is important to live righteously, the Lord does not expect us to achieve perfection in mortality.**

■ **Try not to be discouraged. Heavenly Father loves you and wants you to succeed.**

■ **Become more Christlike by repenting, praying for help, and trying to improve.**

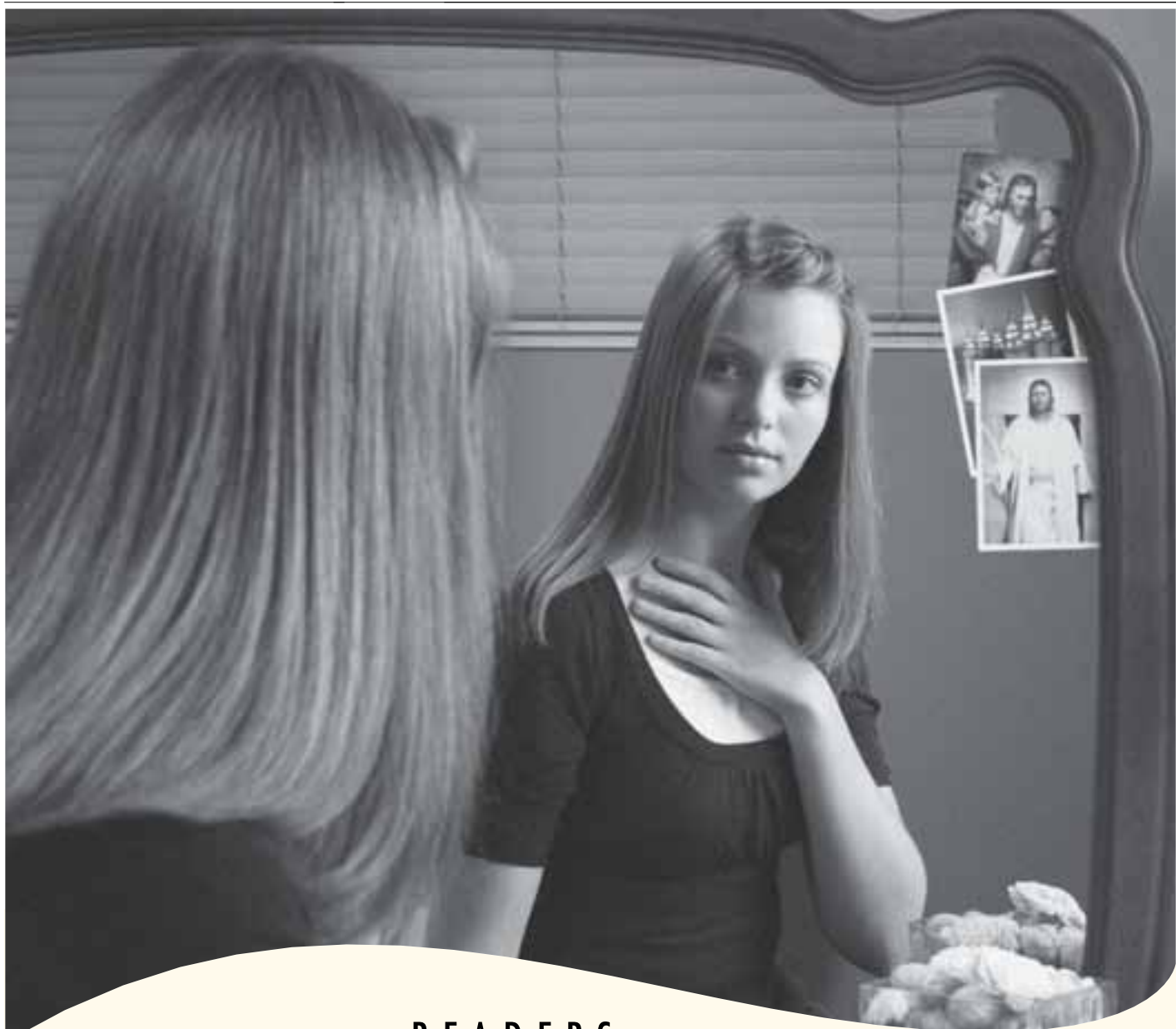
■ **Give your very best effort. That is all the Lord asks of you.**

the Spirit’s companionship, repent. Either way, see what you can do to improve next time.

Improving is different from feeling like you have to be perfect all the time. No one will achieve perfection in this life. Even the Savior, who was the only sinless person, had to learn and grow during His mortal childhood. Pray for help as you strive to keep the commandments. As you try to live righteously, follow the Lord’s counsel: “Do not run faster or labor more than you have means . . . but be diligent unto the end” (D&C 10:4).

Remember the story of the widow’s mite (see Mark 12:41–44). Although the widow’s offering was worth little in the eyes of the world, the Savior accepted it because it was the best she had to give. He will do the same for you. Always give your best to the Lord, and He will make up the difference (see 2 Nephi 25:23).

We are all striving toward perfection as we



## READERS

try to be Christlike. The Lord taught, “Be ye therefore perfect” (Matthew 5:48). In the original Greek version of the New Testament, the word for “perfect” could be translated as “whole” or “complete.” The Lord knows we won’t be sinless in this life. Becoming perfect will be a process that continues into the next life. But He wants us to do our best to live the gospel and learn from our mistakes so that we can, one day, become whole through the Atonement (see D&C 76:69). **NE**



**Allow yourself some room to make mistakes and grow. When you do make a mistake, kneel down before Heavenly Father, admit it, and apologize for what you did wrong, and then let it go and determine how you can do better next time. You do not have to be perfect in this life. Making mistakes is part of growing in life. Thinking that you could have done better should not cause you to feel angry at yourself. Instead, these thoughts should lead you to try harder next time.**

Tyler O., 16, Utah



**Sometimes even when we try our best, we fall short, and that can make us feel guilty. The fact that you even realize you sinned is good. After you have repented of your transgressions, forgive yourself also. Although you might see yourself as an imperfect being, you’re getting there. The best you are doing in trying to keep Heavenly Father’s commandments is indeed the best you can do. “It is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength” (Mosiah 4:27).**

Phaphama T., 17, Eastern Cape, South Africa



**Your expectations are not too high. After all, Christ was perfect, and He is the example we must all try to follow. However, it is unrealistic to believe that you must be perfect**

**today. You need to be flexible about the way you meet your expectations. Keep in mind that everyone makes mistakes, the Lord knows when you are doing your best, and He has made it possible for you to repent and start again.**

Rainy Dawn H., 18, Arizona



**Realize that we are trying to be like Jesus. This means we will make mistakes. Our Savior loves us so much He provided a way for us to become perfect. One thing that motivates me to become like the Savior is to write my favorite quotes from apostles and prophets and put them where I will see them.**

Elder Jeffrey Cornish, California San Jose Mission

**It's good that you try hard, but you also need to realize that you're not always going to make the right decisions because you are human. As long as you recognize what you've done wrong and repent, everything will be fine. Jesus loves you and will help you with your struggles.**

Sara H., 15, Montana



**I'm sure many of us feel this way; I know I do. Every time you criticize yourself or feel guilty, remember all of your qualities and talents.**

**Remind yourself that nobody can be perfect in this life and that as long as you try your hardest, God is pleased with you. Also, those feelings of discouragement can be a sign of stress. I would suggest taking some time to relax. Sing or listen to some uplifting music, read a good book or magazine, or watch an inspiring movie.**

Christinah C., 13, Florida



**"do not ask that you reach beyond your capacity. I hope you will not nag yourselves with thoughts of failure. I hope you will not try to set goals far beyond your capacity to achieve. I hope you will simply do what you can do in the best way you know. If you do so, you will witness miracles come to pass."**

**President Gordon B. Hinckley, Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley (1997), 696.**



**There has only been one perfect being in the history of the earth, our Savior Jesus Christ. If you make a mistake, you can repent. It's human nature to strive for perfection, but**

**don't set yourself up for failure. Keep high standards and expectations, and do the best you can.**

Robert B., 18, Arizona



**If you are trying to be perfect at everything you do, then your expectations are too high, because no one is perfect. I sometimes feel like I have to do everything right. Then I tell myself that**

**humans make mistakes. I look back on all the positive things that have happened throughout the day. If you are having a hard time seeing the positive, then I suggest you say a prayer for strength.**

Adriana B., 16, Idaho

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

See Elder Cecil O. Samuelson, "What Does It Mean to Be Perfect?" *New Era*, Jan. 2006, p. 10.

## NEXT QUESTION

**"I'm about to graduate from high school, so I'm thinking about what I would like to study in college. There is so much to study. How do I choose a major?"**

**Send your answer by October 15, 2007, to:  
New Era, Q&A, 10/07  
50 E. North Temple St. Rm. 2420  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA  
Or e-mail: [newera@ldschurch.org](mailto:newera@ldschurch.org)**

**The following information and permission must be included in your e-mail or letter:**

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PARENT'S SIGNATURE (if you are under 18)