

THE NIGHT OF THE TEST

BY LEHI L. CRUZ

When I was in my final year of elementary school, all of the students went camping in Negros Occidental, Philippines, before our graduation. We pitched our tents at the campsite and had a good time exploring among the guava and mango trees. When night came, my parents came to check on me. They told me to be very careful, and then they left.

One of my classmates invited my friends and me to take a ride with him and his older cousin. His cousin drove us around, and we had fun until—to my surprise—my classmates brought out beer and cigarettes. We parked the car near the campsite, and they began to drink the beers and smoke in the car. They invited me to join them, but I refused.

I said I wouldn't join in because smoking would shorten my life-span. I also said that it is against my beliefs, because I have been taught the Word of Wisdom. I told them that the Word of Wisdom is a law that teaches that we should keep our bodies clean, because they are temples of God. I told them we must avoid smoking; drinking alcohol, tea, and coffee; and taking drugs. My best friend and I left the group and slept in our tent.

When I went home, I was happy to tell my dad that I had not joined my classmates but instead had taught them about the Word of Wisdom. I was happy the Holy Ghost was there to guide me and give me the courage to speak to my friends.



From this experience I learned that our obedience will be tested when we are on our own, without parents or others to support us. I feel grateful for the Word of Wisdom and am committed to obey it. When I am old enough, I will go on a mission and teach many people the importance of the Word of Wisdom. **NE**

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?

BY ALEESHA RUTLEDGE

In my English class we were having a debate about evolution. We easily wandered into the topic of religion. Some students started to ask what members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe. My teacher could not answer the questions.

So he said, "Aleesha, why don't you tell us what you believe?" I knew that I could not turn this opportunity down. I stood up and told the class some of our basic beliefs. They asked a few questions, which I was able to answer. After class, one girl came up to me and asked me how to learn more. I gave her a Book of Mormon the next day.

The gospel has never made so much sense to me. Being able to share my beliefs with my peers at school strengthened my testimony so much. **NE**

PLEASE TAKE MY PAIN AWAY

BY SHARAH MESERVY

The only light came from the glowing numbers of the digital clock. It was very late, and I was lying curled up in bed longing for sleep. I tried desperately to clear my mind. But there was too much to forget, too many memories swirling around in my brain, haunting me.

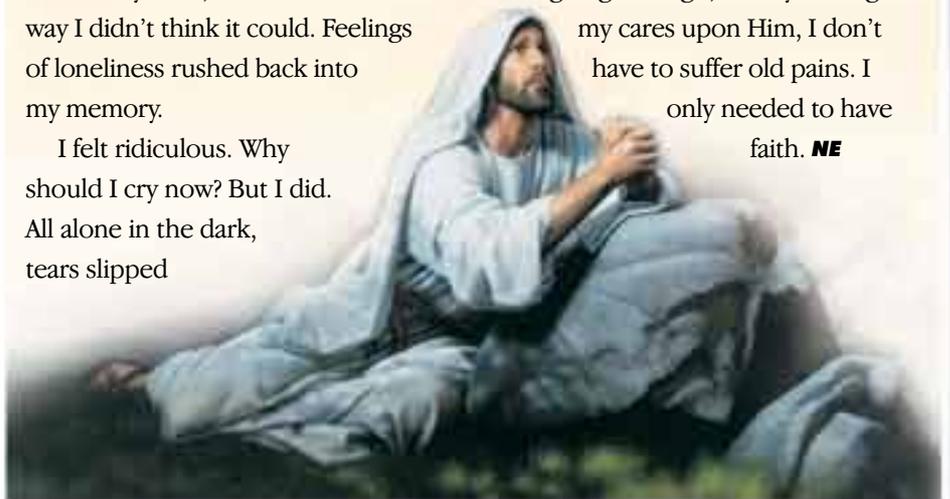
My conversation with a friend that day had stirred it all up. We had started talking about how much I would miss her when she moved away to school in a few months. We had grown up together in England, and now we would be apart for the first time. We progressed to old memories and then on to arguments we'd had. At first it was just funny, but then we got a little more serious as she told me things other people had said about me years ago. She didn't think it would bother me. After all, we were all friends now. I had had such a difficult time finding friends back then. Finding out that even my best friends hadn't liked me, had said things behind my back, affected me in a way I didn't think it could. Feelings of loneliness rushed back into my memory.

I felt ridiculous. Why should I cry now? But I did. All alone in the dark, tears slipped

down my cheeks and soaked my pillow as memory after memory of rejection replayed in my mind.

Abandoning hopes for sleep, I slipped from my bed, tiptoed to the bathroom, and turned on the light. I sat down and buried my face in my hands, sobbing as quietly as I could. I began to pray silently: "Please Heavenly Father, what do I have to do? Can't the pain be taken away? Please, please take the pain away." I repeated my plea over and over in my mind.

It happened in an instant. The answer came like a flood of light into my mind. The words were from a talk I'd heard months before, but the meaning had only just sunk in. The scriptures say that Christ would "take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people" (Alma 7:11). The Atonement is not just for sinners! He did not just suffer for my sins, He suffered everything I have suffered or ever will suffer! He knows what I'm going through, and by casting my cares upon Him, I don't have to suffer old pains. I only needed to have faith. **NE**



RECOGNIZING THE SAVIOR

BY JADE SWARTZBERG

I was sitting at a table with some friends in our middle school cafeteria when the topic of Christ's Second Coming came up. My friends were not very religious, but they had been to church enough times to have heard of the prophesied event. They also knew that I went to church regularly and that I had a firm belief in the Savior.

We talked about it for a while, and in response to their questions I told them that no one knows exactly when Christ will come again. One of my friends turned to me and said quite seriously, "Jade, if the Second Coming happens soon and Jesus Christ comes, I may not recognize Him. Will you point Him out to me?"

Of course I said I would, and we started talking about other things.

My friends have probably never thought about that conversation again, but I have thought of it many times. Based on what I said and did, my friends assumed that I knew the Savior. In fact they counted on me to know Him! But do I really? Could I answer yes to Alma's question, "Have ye received his image in your countenance" (Alma 5:14)?

That casual question asked by my friend has caused me to evaluate my relationship with the Savior many times. For example, is my personal prayer and

scripture study meaningful enough that it brings me closer to Him? I hope so. And I hope that one day when Christ does come, I can stand before Him with a pure heart and clean hands. Then not only will I be able to easily recognize Him, but He will be able to recognize me because I will have His image engraven upon my countenance (see Alma 5:19). **NE**

Share your own experience with us. Send it to us at newera@ldschurch.org.

