

SEPTEMBER 2015

THE

New Era

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Cover: Celebrating the Family Proclamation, pp. 2–6
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THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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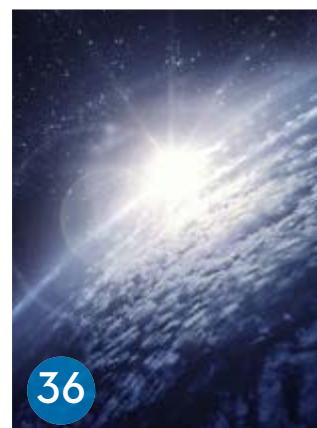


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By President
Henry B. Eyring
First Counselor in
the First Presidency

THE TEACHINGS OF “THE FAMILY: A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD”

The family unit is fundamental not only to society and to the Church but to our hope for eternal life.

Since the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has issued a proclamation only four times.¹ It had been more than 15 years since the previous one, which described the progress the Church had made in 150 years of its history. Thus, we can understand the importance our Heavenly Father places upon the family, the subject of the fifth and most recent proclamation, given on September 23, 1995.²

The title of the proclamation on the family reads: “The Family: A Proclamation to the World—The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

Three things about the title are worth our careful reflection. First, the subject: the family. Second, the audience, which is the whole world. And third, those proclaiming it are those we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators. All this means that the family must be of tremendous importance to us, that whatever the proclamation says could help anyone in the world, and that the proclamation fits the Lord’s promise when He said, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

The title tells us something about how to prepare for the words that follow. We can expect that God won’t just tell us a few interesting things about the family; He will tell us what a family ought to be and why. Further, we know that our Heavenly

Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, want us to become like Them so that we can dwell with Them forever in families. We know that from this simple statement of Their intent: “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Marriage Is Central to God’s Plan

The proclamation begins this way:

“We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”


Let us try to imagine ourselves as little children hearing those words for the first time and believing they are true. A little child would feel safe hearing the words “marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God.” The child would know that the longing to have the love of both a father and a mother, distinct but somehow perfectly complementary, exists because such longing is part of the eternal pattern, the pattern of happiness. The child would also feel safer knowing that God will help the mother and father resolve differences and love each other, if only they would ask for His help and try. Prayers of children across the earth would go up to God, pleading for His help for parents and for families.

Now read in that same way, as if we were little children, the next words of the proclamation:

“All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

“In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.”

Understanding these truths ought to make it easier for us to feel like a little child, not just as we read the proclamation but throughout our lives, because we are children—but in what a family and of what parents! We can picture ourselves as we were, for longer than we can imagine, sons and daughters associating in our heavenly home with parents who knew and loved us. Also, we know that in the premortal world we were men or women with unique gifts because of our gender and that the opportunity to be married and to become one was necessary for us to have eternal happiness.



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



But now that we are here we can picture ourselves home again with our heavenly parents in that wonderful place, not only as sons and daughters but as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, grandsons and granddaughters, bound together forever in loving families.

There is only one place in heaven where there will be families—the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. That is where we will want to be.

“Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Human Life Is Sacred

Some other words in the proclamation will have special meaning for us, knowing what we know about eternal life. They are in the next two paragraphs:

“The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

“We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God’s eternal plan.”

We can understand why our Heavenly Father commands us to reverence life and to cherish the powers that produce it as sacred. If we do not have those reverential feelings in this life, how could our Father give them to us in the eternities? Family life here is the schoolroom in which we prepare for family life there.

Living the Teachings of Jesus Christ

The proclamation describes our schooling here for family life:

“The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by

a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.”

We cannot control what others choose to do, and so we cannot force our children to heaven, but we can determine what *we* will do. And we can decide that we will do all we can to bring down the powers of heaven into that family we want so much to have forever.

A key for us is in the proclamation: “Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

What could make it more likely that people in a family would love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and obey the law? It is not simply teaching them the gospel. It is in their hearing the word of God and then trying it in faith. If they do, their natures will be changed in a way that produces the happiness they seek.

A Warning about Not Heeding This Counsel

The proclamation warns that for those who fail to respond to its truths the result will be more disastrous than simply lack of peace in this life or absence of happiness. Here is the prophetic warning and the call to action, with which the proclamation ends:

“We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will

bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

“We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.”

The family unit is fundamental not only to society and to the Church but also to our hope for eternal life. We begin to practice in the family, the smaller unit, what will spread to the Church and to the society in which we live in this world, which will then be what we practice in families bound together forever by covenants and by faithfulness. We can start now to “promote those

measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family.” I pray that we will. I pray that you will ask, “Father, how can I prepare?” Tell Him how much you want what He desires to give you. You will receive impressions, and if you act on them, I promise you the help of the powers of heaven.

I testify that our Heavenly Father lives, that we lived with Him as spirits, and that we would be lonely living anywhere but with Him in the world to come. **NE**
From “The Family,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1998, 10–18.

NOTES

1. These proclamations are printed in full in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 3:1151–57.
2. See *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.

“The family unit is fundamental not only to society and to the Church but also to our hope for eternal life.”



By Tirsa Hamilton Allen



As I opened my mission call, I tried to contain my excitement.

“You are assigned to labor in the—” I gasped and exclaimed, “Dad, Chile!” as if he were the only person in the room. His eyes immediately filled with tears.

I knew I would go wherever the Lord sent me, but I’d never thought I would return to the land where my father had served more than 40 years before.

From the moment I received the call, my heart was full of love for a people I’d never met. My father shared his missionary journal with me, and I read page after page about the faithful people he’d met. I wondered where they were now, but I decided it was unlikely I would meet any of them because my mission didn’t include any of the areas where my father had served.

I loved my mission.

The months passed like days. I met incredible people, and I filled my journal with faith-promoting conversion stories and my ever-growing testimony. I wondered

if someday my children would read these pages as they prepared for their missions.

Then, while serving in Belloto, I met Brother Zanartu.

CALLER
TO MY
DAD'S
MISSION

*Forty years after my dad
served his mission,
I was able to tell him the
rest of the story.*

I mentioned to him that my father had also served in Chile. A week later, he found me at church and said, “Sister, I have a surprise for you.” He introduced me to his mother. With tears in her eyes, she told me that my father was the missionary who had baptized her many years ago.

“I never forgot my missionary,” she said. “I have longed to tell him how he changed our lives. My husband and I raised our family in the gospel. Our sons served missions, and now our grandchildren are serving missions. All of this because of the seed your father planted.” We hugged and cried.

It is every missionary’s prayer that the seeds they sow will bring forth fruit (see Matthew 13:3–8). I was blessed to learn how my father’s mission not only changed his life and the lives of his children but also the lives of many people in Chile. I pray that my mission will do the same. **NE**

Tirsa Hamilton Allen lives in Colorado, USA.

“O SEND OUT THY LIGHT
AND THY TRUTH: LET
THEM LEAD ME....”

“THEN WILL I GO UNTO
THE ALTAR OF GOD, UNTO
GOD MY EXCEEDING JOY.”

Psalm 43:3-4

Altars in the Ancient Tabernacle and Temple

1. **The large altar of burnt offering.** In the outer courtyard, people who brought live offerings could be present, but only priests could approach this altar, which was encased in wood overlaid with brass and had horns on its raised corners.
2. **The small altar of incense.** In the Holy Place, or sanctuary, between the outer courtyard and the Holy of Holies, incense was burned at this altar, which was encased in wood overlaid with gold and had horns on its raised corners.
A third table, the table of shewbread, was in the Holy Place and could also be considered a kind of altar but is not designated as such.



BIBLE FACTS

The Hebrew word for altar comes from a verb meaning “to slaughter for sacrifice.” Another word translated as “altar” in Ezekiel 43 literally means “mountain of God.”

Before Moses, altars were sometimes built on mountains (see Genesis 12:8). When the Israelites received the law of Moses, they were told there would be only one place where people could make acceptable offerings, though it appears there were also exceptions (see Judges 6:24; 1 Samuel 7:9).

Altars had to be made of unhewn stones—meaning stones not cut with human tools—or of earth (see Exodus 20:24-25).

Altars were also places of refuge for fugitives (see Exodus 21:12-14; 1 Kings 1:50; 2:28).

THEN WILL I GO UNTO THE

Where Did Altars Come From?

Worldly scholars have different theories about why various people throughout the ancient world had altars and performed sacrifices, but they have no definitive answers. Through modern revelation, however, we learn that these sacrifices had a common origin with Adam (see Moses 5:5–8). As President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) explained:

“Undoubtedly the knowledge of this law [of sacrifice] and of other rites and ceremonies was carried by the posterity of Adam into all lands, and continued with them, more or less pure, to the flood, and through Noah . . . to those who succeeded him, spreading out into all nations and countries. . . . What wonder, then, that we should find relics of Christianity, so to speak, among the heathens and nations who know not Christ, and whose histories date back beyond the days of Moses, and even beyond the flood, independent of and apart from the records of the Bible?” (“Discourse,” *Deseret News*, Feb. 19, 1873, 36).



ALTAR OF GOD



TODAY'S SACRIFICIAL ALTAR

“How is it we show the Lord that we have symbolically put ourselves upon today’s sacrificial altar? . . . When we

overcome our own selfish desires and put God first in our lives and covenant to serve Him regardless of the cost, we are then living the law of sacrifice.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Law of Sacrifice,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 10.

What We Can Learn?

AN ALTAR IS:

- **Raised from the earth.** As we draw near to God and kneel humbly before Him, He elevates us. And ancient sacrifices were “a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father” (Moses 5:7), who was “lifted up upon the cross, that [He] might draw all men unto [Him]” (3 Nephi 27:14).
- **Built in a high and holy place.** Today, we go to holy places to make our offerings to the Lord. At the temple we participate in exalting ordinances, and at church we partake of the sacrament.
- **Built for sacrifice.** Adam’s sacrifice pointed his mind to Jesus Christ (see Moses 5:5–8). By going to God’s altar, we forsake the world and “offer a sacrifice . . . of a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (D&C 59:8). We thus “observe [our] covenants” and can be “accepted of [the Lord]” (D&C 97:8).
- **Where offerings or incense were burned.** The smoke from burnt offerings rose into the heavens, representing our dedication to God. The incense represented people’s prayers rising up to God (see Psalm 141:2; Revelation 5:8; 8:3–4).





SALT

AND THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD

WITH THE HELP OF A LITTLE SALTY SCIENCE, YOU CAN TEACH YOUR FAMILY ABOUT RIGHTEOUS CHOICES.

By Jill Christine Hacking
Church Magazines

Making solid objects float before your very eyes sounds impossible, right? Transfix your family at family home evening this week as you show them that what might seem impossible is entirely possible. All you need is the secret ingredient: the gospel. Oh, and some salt.

Gather up your supplies and prepare to amaze! For this reality-bending stunt, you will need a pitcher, tap water, an uncooked egg, table salt, and a spoon.

MATERIALS

- Clear or translucent pitcher
- 5 cups hot tap water
- 1 uncooked egg
- 1/3 cup of table salt
- Spoon



1 SINKING FEELING

Start your lesson by pouring the hot water into the pitcher. Next, hold out the egg and ask your family what they think will happen when you put it in the water. Once they've all weighed in, gently set the egg in the water and watch as it sinks to the bottom.



Explain to your family that the egg represents us when we feel discouraged or weighed down by the darkness of the world. We might feel like we've sunk into the negativity and despair around us. When that happens, it can be hard to believe we will ever feel happiness and peace again.

WHAT IF I STILL CAN'T RISE UP?

While righteous choices bring us closer to God, if you have a mental illness, you may still feel despair and discouragement despite your best efforts. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, "If things continue to be debilitating, seek the advice of reputable people with certified training, professional skills, and good values. Be honest with them about your history and your struggles. Prayerfully and responsibly consider the counsel they give and the solutions they prescribe" ("Like a Broken Vessel," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 41). You are not alone, and God doesn't want you to feel like you are. He wants you to find help and happiness.

2

RISE UP

But we *can* rise up from the world's darkness.

The righteous choices we make every day give us strength to move beyond the despair of the world. Share a quote like this one by Sister Linda S. Reeves, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency:

"I MUST TESTIFY OF THE BLESSINGS OF DAILY SCRIPTURE STUDY AND PRAYER AND WEEKLY FAMILY HOME EVENING. THESE ARE THE VERY PRACTICES THAT HELP TAKE AWAY STRESS, GIVE DIRECTION TO OUR LIVES, AND ADD PROTECTION TO OUR HOMES"
(*"PROTECTION FROM PORNOGRAPHY—A CHRIST-FOCUSED HOME," ENSIGN, MAY 2014, 17*).

Then add a little salt to the pitcher.

Ask your family what else we can all do to rise up. With each appropriate answer—things like seminary and church attendance, repentance, forgiveness, fasting, and service—have them add a little salt to the egg's watery home.

3

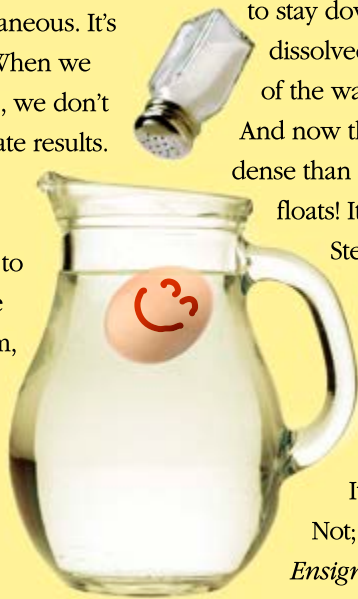
KEEP IT UP

Once everyone's poured in all the salt, stir for a couple minutes—gently, so the egg doesn't break—to dissolve the salt. Or you can let someone else give it a whirl.

Take this opportunity to discuss the importance of consistency in righteous living—in keeping your gospel living in motion. The results of the experiment aren't instantaneous. It's the same with us. When we make good choices, we don't always see immediate results. But consistently doing these things will bring us closer to God. And when we continue to do them, we'll continue to be blessed. You might share this quote from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the

"SIMPLE, CONSISTENT, GOOD HABITS LEAD TO A LIFE FULL OF BOUNTIFUL BLESSINGS"
(*"FOR PEACE AT HOME," ENSIGN, MAY 2013, 29*).

Twelve Apostles:
After the water and salt are stirred, the egg won't be able to stay down. With all the dissolved salt, the density of the water has changed. And now that the egg is less dense than its surroundings, it floats! It's like Sister Jean A. Stevens, former first counselor in the Primary general presidency, said: "The gospel 'is not weight; it is wings.' It carries us" (*"Fear Not; I Am with Thee," Ensign, May 2014, 83*).

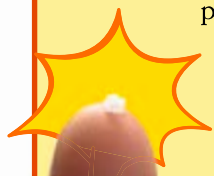


4

UNEXPECTED POWER

Now hold out just one grain of salt on your finger. Show it to each family member—up close so they really get a good look. Ask your family to look at the size of the egg and the size of the salt grain. How is it possible that tiny grains lifted up the much larger egg? In answer, you could share Nephi's words: "And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things" (1 Nephi 16:29).

Even with the weight of the world pressing down on us, we can be carried. We can be lifted. With God, anything is possible. **NE**



3:41 PM

LOSING MY NEW FRIENDS



DECISION

D

I liked hanging out with my new friends, but now I had a decision to make.

By Abby Martin

Indiana, USA

It was a typical Saturday afternoon. I was super excited because after doing my chores, I was going to hang out with some of my new friends from my cheerleading squad. Being a new seventh-grade cheerleader had helped me make tons of friends at my new school.

I bounced up the sidewalk to Macy's house as I watched my mom drive away. "Ah, sweet freedom," I thought. "I love being a teenager. I can finally go to the mall and movies with my friends."

Macy opened the door, and I could see that my friend Lisa was already there. We started curling each other's hair, laughing, and dancing and singing to music as we got ready. Macy explained that there would be several kids from school meeting us at the movie—not just girls but boys too. Even the cute boy at school I just met. I started to feel a little uneasy. I kept listening as she told me what movie they wanted to see. I got chills and knew instantly it was the Holy Ghost letting me know it was not a good movie. I asked to see the trailer for it. As I watched, I knew it was a movie I definitely didn't want to watch.

What was I going to do?
What would they say? I started thinking of plan B.

I began texting my mom privately. "What should I do, Mom?" I asked. She quickly texted back and said she didn't feel good about the movie but she would let me decide. I knew I shouldn't watch it; there was no doubt about that. I made up my mind. I was going to tell them I wasn't comfortable with watching this movie. Surely they would understand, right? They were my friends. We could do something else instead.

"What? You don't want to see the movie?" Lisa asked.

"Is it because your mom doesn't want you to? Tell her that you saw something else."

"What, are you too good for us?"

"Don't be such a loser."

My heart broke as I listened to my friends. My worst nightmares were coming true. For a moment I thought to myself, maybe I should just go. It won't be that big of a deal. Mom said I could . . .

No. I knew I shouldn't.

"Come on, guys," I said. "My mom said she would pick us up and we could go back to my house and eat pizza and do a movie there. Or we could go get our nails done and hang out at the mall." They weren't interested. They wanted to go see this movie with all of our friends from school.

I texted my mom and told her I needed her to come pick me up. I was devastated. How could this happen? I thought they were my friends. I thought they wanted to hang out with me. All I wished for right then was my good friend Sandy from my Beehive class. She was a true friend. I knew she would've understood my decision.

"I'D JUST MADE ONE OF THE HARDEST DECISIONS OF MY LIFE, BUT I KNEW IT WAS THE RIGHT ONE."

I'd been so excited for this day and now it was turning out to be the worst day ever. When I saw my mom pull up, I quickly grabbed my stuff and headed out. As I walked to the car I felt a tear roll down my cheek. I'd just made one of the hardest decisions of my life, but I knew it was the right one.

I felt good knowing I had followed the promptings of the Holy Ghost. I know that I am a much stronger girl because I chose not to go. **NE**

Abby Martin lives in Indiana, USA.

* Names have been changed.



SUNDAY LESSONS

This Month's Topic:
Commandments

NOT OF THE WORLD

Standing up as a member of Christ's Church can be tricky in today's world, but we can be in this world without becoming influenced by it.

Have you ever wondered where the expression “in the world but not of the world” came from? It's more than just a motto or a clever use of prepositions—it actually came from Jesus Christ.

Picture the night before His Crucifixion. He met with His Apostles, washed their feet, taught them, and administered the sacrament. At one point during the night, He prayed out loud to His Father for the Apostles:

“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. . . .

“As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world” (John 17:15–16, 18).

The Savior Himself lived His whole life being in the world but not of the world. He was tempted, but He did not give in to temptation. He avoided evil. He associated with disciples and believers as well as with sinners and hypocrites. He was an example to all.

But He didn't just leave His disciples with an abrupt, “If I did it, you can do it.” Instead, He was compassionate. He prayed for the Father to help them. But He didn't pray for the challenge to be taken from them. During His life on earth and through His modern prophets and apostles, the Savior has taught that it is important for us to be influences for good in the world.

Youth from all around the world are consistently faced with challenges as they roam the halls of school, socialize with friends, and participate in extra-curricular activities. But with the Savior on their side and the gospel in their hearts, they have found ways to keep themselves from being of the world. Read how some of them are choosing to follow the Savior's example.

BE ANXIOUSLY ENGAGED

When I face temptation, I ask myself, “What would Jesus do?” or “Will this get me closer to the celestial kingdom?” I go to seminary every morning even though I’m really tired, because that helps me grow spiritually. Reading my scriptures, with the purpose of learning something new or something that can help me become a better person, is a source of guidance that helps me. As we keep the Sabbath day holy and go to our activities, we can better conquer Satan. When we are anxiously engaged with the Lord, He can help us with all the complicated situations we go through.

Brenda H., 17, Minnesota, USA



BE CREATIVE IN CHOOSING THE RIGHT

When people around us don’t have the same standards we do, we might have to find creative ways to associate with them while keeping our standards. Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles did just that when he found himself in an uncomfortable situation as a businessman many years ago. All the businesspeople at social gatherings he had to attend were drinking alcohol, and he didn’t want to look like he was too, so he carried around a glass of milk. (See “The Tradition of a Balanced, Righteous Life,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2011, 46–53.)

DRAW STRENGTH FROM OTHERS

I keep my standards by participating in activities with my friends from church. Of course I invite nonmember friends to the activities so they can see and understand why I want to keep these standards. My parents and my big brother are good examples to me. I have a lot of good friends who do not belong to the Church who are also great examples to me. They have a lot of great attributes that I would like to develop myself.

Celina W., 15, Germany



SPEAK UP

In Denmark it is considered different if you go to church, do not drink, and have high standards. But I have experienced that if you are not too shy to talk about the values you stand for, you quickly gain a lot of respect from your peers. I have seen that people think it's cool when others take care of themselves that way.

Emma K., 18, Denmark

THINGS TO PONDER FOR SUNDAY

- The next time you are faced with temptation, how would it help you to know that Jesus Christ prayed and asked Heavenly Father to “keep [you] from the evil”?
- Think about the Savior’s life. What did He do during His time in the world? How did He keep Himself from being of the world? What can we learn from His example?
- Think of a challenging “in the world” situation that you face. What are some creative things that you could do to stand for the truth? You might want to ask your friends and family for more ideas.
- Share your feelings about following the Savior’s example at home, at church, or at lds.org/go/follow9NE.

SHINE YOUR LIGHT

A few years ago my rugby team participated in a weeklong tournament. This meant seven days away from home, parents, and Church leaders. Because we attend a Church school, everyone on my team was a member of the Church. Almost every evening that week, the other teams in our hotel would party in their rooms with loud music, dancing, drinking, smoking, and screaming harsh words at each other. Our team gathered in a room for our tradition of scripture study and evening devotionals. It felt good to do the right thing without being instructed by our parents. After the other teams observed us with surprise, we gained their respect. They were silent when they knew we were having evening devotionals. They seemed to be interested in what we were doing, and some even joined with us to read the scriptures and pray together.

We didn’t win the tournament that week, but we won in another way. We were able to shine our light, and through our examples, change hearts and minds. **NE**

Elisara E., 20, Samoa



SEEK THE LIVING WATER

“Come unto me, all ye that labour
and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
(Matthew 11:28.)



YOU CAN CHANGE

No matter what your present shortcomings may be, you can decide how to live out your future potential.

By David Dickson

Church Magazines

During high school graduation ceremony, all kinds of thoughts can zoom through your head. What happens next? Are you ready? Will you and your friends stay in touch?

Not me, though. I had only one question when it was my turn to walk up in front of everybody as they announced my name: was I *actually* going to graduate?

I wasn't exactly what you'd call a scholar. Studying pretty much never topped my ideal to-do list. And during my senior year I was doing

so poorly in one class I didn't even know if I had *passed* the class. The final exam earlier that week would seal my fate, but grades wouldn't post until a week later.

If I failed this class, I wouldn't graduate high school.

In the end, I squeaked by on the thinnest possible margin and did graduate. (Whew!) At that point I had 14 months until I turned 19, the missionary age at the time. I intended on working during that time to save money for my mission. I knew I wasn't much of a student,

so under no circumstances did I plan on attempting college.

THE TRAP OF DEFINING

Have you ever felt like that? Like your past performance in some part of your life has proven your abilities once and for all?

Don't fall for that line of thinking. It's one of Satan's biggest lies!

"Once any of us conclude—"That's just the way I am," we give up our ability to change," taught Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Presidency of the Seventy. "We might as well raise the

white flag, put down our weapons, concede the battle, and just surrender—any prospect of winning is lost.”¹

School can seem especially intimidating when you’re not doing well. With even a few bad grades on your record, it’s all too easy to decide that’s as good as you’ll ever get. But it’s not true.

“Who we are is not who we can become,” Elder Hallstrom said.²

A CLEAN SLATE

Despite what nagging whispers of doubt or failure might reach our ears, we can always choose to look ahead and stop beating ourselves up over the past.

“There is something incredibly hopeful about a fresh start,” taught President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.³

When deciding to make a fresh start, don’t forget to pray to God for help. Tell Him you want to succeed and then pay attention to promptings

and guidance from the Holy Ghost and from your leaders.

This might require a bit of priority shuffling. “Our daily conduct and choices should be consistent with our goals,” said Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “Many choices are not inherently evil, but if they absorb all of our time and keep us from the best choices, then they become insidious [gradually harmful].”⁴

FINDING THE NEW YOU

Fast-forward three and a half years from my high school graduation ceremony. I had worked for around a year and a half, served a two-year mission, and ultimately decided to try college after all.

I wish I could say I felt all grown-up and ready for school, but that’s laughable. I felt more intimidated than ever. If I was so bad at high school, how in the world could I handle college? This time I resolved to do my best and involve God along

the way. I prayed fervently to develop new and better study skills.

To my complete shock, I ended up doing so well that semester that I qualified for academic scholarships. Nobody was more surprised than me! Even so, I could also easily look back over the previous months and see the hand of God helping me along as I learned to become a good student.

What I believed about myself back in high school simply wasn’t true. From that point on and with God’s help, I was able to forge a completely new path that carried me through college graduation and beyond.

When we involve the Lord in our climb and decide to make a new start in any area of life, we can reach heights we never dreamed possible. **NE**

NOTES

1. Donald L. Hallstrom, “What Manner of Men?” *Ensign*, May 2014, 53.
2. Donald L. Hallstrom, “What Manner of Men?” 53.
3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Best Time to Plant a Tree,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2014, 4.
4. Quentin L. Cook, “Choose Wisely,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 49, 48.



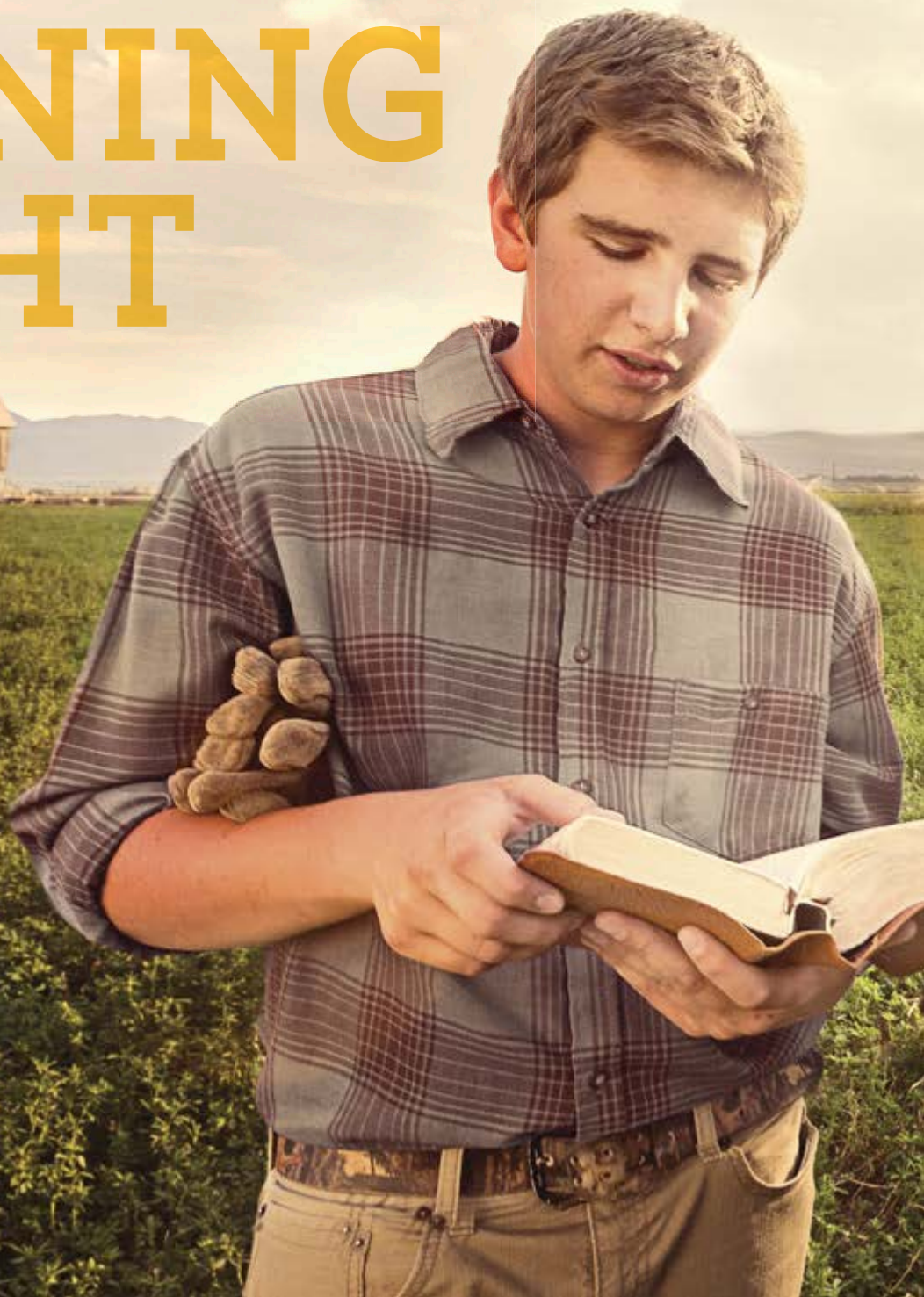
By Katelynn Mika
Isaacson

*From the darkness
I was in, I noticed one
friend always seemed
to glow with light.*

BE A SHINING LIGHT

was in what felt like the deepest hole I could possibly imagine. I was just having a horrible time, and I didn't think that there was anyone I could turn to. I hadn't been taught about our Heavenly Father yet.

There I was in the middle of class, and I saw this boy across the room. He was shining. It wasn't anything new. Every time I looked at him he was shining. I couldn't understand how he was so happy all the time. Finally, after five years of wondering, I got just an ounce of courage to try to get to know him. We talked at school, but I wanted to know more. He was different.



One day when we were watching a movie with some friends, I noticed he had his eyes covered. I asked if something was wrong. He said that he shouldn't be exposed to what was on the screen. I was rather confused. We were in high school. Hadn't he watched movies like that before?

Later I asked if we could hang out again, but instead he asked me if I wanted to come work with him on his family farm. I happily agreed. I started going to work with him as much as I could. When we worked, we really worked hard, and it felt good. But

what I admired most about him is that

while we worked he taught me of his beliefs, the gospel, and the Book of Mormon. Once we became a little better friends, he would read to me out of the scriptures. Then he would explain

Once we became a little better friends, he would read to me out of the scriptures. Then he would explain to me what it meant.

to me what it meant. Eventually he invited me to church. I was so excited.

Only a few months later I was in the bishop's office asking to be baptized. I eagerly told my friend that I wanted him to baptize me. I know it meant a lot to him. He couldn't confirm me because he was a priest, so his father did. I was baptized on December 14, 2008, at the same time as his little sister.

It was such a wonderful experience.

I have a challenge for you. I challenge you to become a better missionary. High school is tough, but be the shining light across the room. "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14).

In conversation, just bring up one of your beliefs. Maybe not every person you talk to is ready to hear what you have to say, but someone will be. I know I was. Now I am being a missionary to my nonmember family, and what a great feeling that is. I am regularly bringing my mother to church, and my sister has attended some youth activities. My parents have supported my decisions in the Church all the way. But for now I am going to be a missionary just like that kid at school. I encourage you to do the same. You never know how many lives you can change by answering a couple of questions. **NE**

Katelynn Mika Isaacson lives in Missouri, USA.



SEMINARY IS WORTH IT!



It might require some sacrifice, but these youth know what a blessing seminary can be.

“I don’t think of it as getting an hour less sleep; I think of it as an hour to prepare myself spiritually.”

Megan C., 17, California, USA

“It’s really important to go to seminary because we can learn more about our Church and build up our relationship with Heavenly Father. The reason I like seminary is that I can know more about the history of the Church and really know that the gospel is true and that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ do love me!”

Breck M., 17, Kentucky, USA

“Because of seminary, my testimony has been strengthened greatly, and I have a surer knowledge of the scriptures. My testimony of the Savior’s sacrifice in Gethsemane is stronger because of seminary.”

Vina C., 17, Hong Kong, China

“I love seminary because it helps me make decisions. In the classes I feel the Spirit of the Lord and have a confirmation that this is the gospel of Christ. There’s no way to not love it. I know that my study during these four years will help me to serve a mission.”

Karolina O., 16, João Pessoa, Brazil

“Seminary is the one constant place where I can feel the Spirit. In my home I am the only active member, but my parents are very supportive. Because of seminary, I am growing so much.”

Amanda L., 17, Utah, USA

“Even though you may not want to get up that early in the morning, you’re filled with this special spirit a little bit more every day. Your peers notice that about you, and sometimes it makes them want to know more about why you’re like that.” **NE**

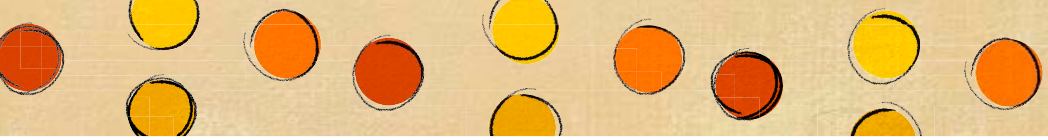
Karen K., 18, Maine, USA

“Seminary grounds you for what’s going on during the day. If I think that bad thoughts are coming on, I can think about the seminary lesson. It expands beyond seminary.”

Eric G., 15, Ipswich, England

What’s one thing Latter-day Saint youth all over the world have in common? They are seminary students! Youth attend seminary in many different ways. Some wake up at 5:00 a.m. to go before school, while others attend in between their regular school classes. On rare occasions, some students go on the weekends or use Skype to participate.

Regardless of whether they are sacrificing sleep or weekend football games, over 390,000 youth worldwide cheerfully participate in seminary. Here’s what they have to say about the blessings of seminary:



THE SCRIPTURES MADE A DIFFERENCE IN ME

By Maria Mahonri-Yggrazil Andaca

In the Philippines, there are science high schools for academically gifted students. Students in these schools take more subjects, spend more hours in class, and devote more effort to schoolwork.

This kind of environment was toxic for me. I gave up so many things upon entering this school. I stopped learning how to play instruments. I almost never attended Church activities, and I would occasionally miss Church services on Sundays for interschool competitions. I struggled attending seminary, although the classes were conveniently offered during weekends.

One Saturday, my seminary teacher told us about how busy she was in high school, and yet she managed to still do her seminary assignments and study the scripture mastery scriptures. She challenged us to do the same.

Challenges enliven me, so I took this one. I carried my scripture mastery cards with me everywhere. I prayed for help to manage it with my school demands. I used every

window of time I had. I memorized scriptures while commuting to school. I chatted less and would take the cards out of my pocket. My friends noticed; shuffling the scripture cards became our new activity during breaks and lunchtime. They enjoyed quizzing me. Some started to bring their scriptures—even those who belonged to other denominations. They shared about activities at their own churches. I felt the atmosphere around me change, and school felt lighter and better.

My three younger sisters followed that lead, and now my family reaps the blessings of the scriptures in our relationships at home. It was more than just memorizing words; my seminary teacher taught me the difference the scriptures would make in me and in the people around me. I know that whatever challenge or trial comes to my family and friends, we will always find strength, guidance, and repose in the words of our loving Savior. **NE**

Maria Mahonri-Yggrazil Andaca lives in Metro Manila, Philippines.



TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SEMINARY

“When you have the chance to be involved in seminary, . . . take advantage of that opportunity. . . . Much of what you take from your seminary experience depends on your attitude and your willingness to be taught. May your attitude be one of humility and a desire to learn. . . . [Seminary] played a vital role in my development and the development of my testimony. Seminary can change lives.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Believe, Obey, and Endure,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 128.




BACKGROUNDS BY ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK



OLD TESTAMENT GEOGRAPHY

See if you can match these places from the Old Testament with their pictures and descriptions.

1. DEAD SEA
2. SINAI
3. JERICHO
4. JERUSALEM
5. RED SEA
6. DAMASCUS
7. ASSYRIA
8. NINEVEH
9. EGYPT
10. JORDAN RIVER
11. VALLEY OF ELAH
12. MOUNT CARMEL
13. BABYLON
14. BETHLEHEM
15. SHUSHAN (OR SUSA)

 Find clues in the Bible Dictionary or the Bible Maps at the back of the LDS edition of the Bible or online at scriptures.lds.org*

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

A.

Where Moses saw the burning bush and later received the law, including the Ten Commandments.



B.

Where David fought Goliath.



F.

Kingdom that was prominent in the Middle East for about 2,000 years; at different times, both a place of refuge and a place of bondage for God's people; Abraham went here; Joseph was sold into slavery here, became a ruler, and saved his family from famine; Jacob's descendants lived here, were enslaved, and then were delivered by Moses.



I.

Main city in an empire that dominated in the Middle East from about 607 to 538 B.C.; Israelites were taken here as captives after being conquered.



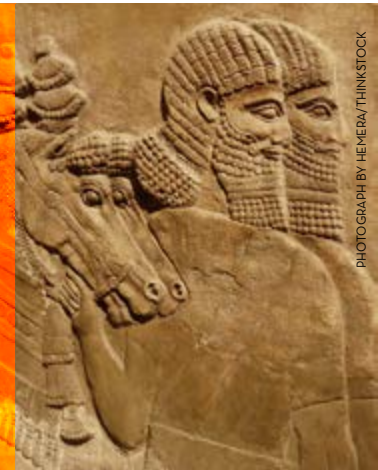
J.

Where Elijah held a contest with the priests of Baal.



L.

Empire that was dominant in the Middle East (850-607 B.C.); conquered and dispersed the northern kingdom of Israel (the 10 tribes).



PHOTOGRAPH BY HEYERA/THINKSTOCK



D.

Where Esther lived;
capital of the Persian Empire.



C.

City taken by David from the Jebusites; later the site of Solomon's temple.



E.

Its waters were divided so that Moses and the Israelites could cross it and escape their captivity.



G.

Its waters will be "healed" by waters flowing out of the temple at Jerusalem.

H.

Its waters were divided so that Joshua and the Israelites could cross it and enter the promised land after wandering in the wilderness.



K.

Where Joshua led an unconventional battle involving trumpets, shouting, and falling walls.



N.

Capital of Syria.



O.

Capital of the Assyrian empire; Jonah was sent to preach repentance here.



M.

Where Ruth and Boaz lived; where King David was born and anointed king.

“I HAVE LEARNED FOR MYSELF”



By Travis Searle

Seminaries and Institutes

Want to learn for yourself the truthfulness of the gospel? Elevate your gospel learning in seminary.



For more information about the new graduation requirements, visit seminary.lds.org. For an example of a young adult who gained a testimony by sincerely studying the scriptures and praying, you can read Clayton M. Christensen's experience in "The Most Useful Piece of Knowledge," *New Era*, Jan. 2009, available at newera.lds.org.

“I have learned for myself” were five simple words spoken by the Prophet Joseph Smith to his mother after he experienced the First Vision (Joseph Smith—History 1:20). These words contain a powerful lesson for us today. As President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “Whether you are 12 or 112—or anywhere in between—you can *know for yourself* that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true.”¹

In order to help you “know for yourself,” seminary students worldwide now complete two additional requirements to graduate from seminary: (1) read the assigned scriptures for the course and (2) pass two learning assessments during each course. Here’s how these new graduation requirements can help strengthen your testimony:

YOU READ AND STUDY THE SCRIPTURES FOR THE COURSE.

As you study the scriptures, you will begin to feel the stirrings of the Spirit that will lead you to deepen your conversion. After completing the required scripture reading in her last year of seminary, one student shared that she learned much more because she “really read the scriptures—not just read them but studied them.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught what it means to study: “When I say ‘study,’ I mean . . . reading a few verses, stopping to ponder them, carefully reading the verses again, and as you think about what they mean, praying for understanding, asking questions in your mind, waiting for spiritual impressions, and writing down the impressions and insights that come so you can remember and learn more.”²

YOU CAN USE THE LEARNING ASSESSMENTS TO EVALUATE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED.

A learning assessment is like the question an angel of the Lord asked Nephi: “What beholdest thou?” (1 Nephi 11:14). This question prompted Nephi to evaluate and express what he had learned.

Learning assessments have three parts: multiple-choice questions and an essay question, which are graded, and a personal assessment of your beliefs, which is not graded. After taking a learning assessment, one student said, “I was looking forward to it because I wanted to see what I had taken out of seminary.” Another student commented that the learning assessment will “help you to understand where you are at in the gospel and where you need to be.”

The assessments will be even more effective when you focus on the gospel doctrines and principles that are the basis of the learning assessment questions. After a seminary class discussed the doctrines behind the questions, one student shared, “It changed the outlook of the test into more of a discussion and a testimony builder. It helped to solidify what you learned.”

WHAT DO STUDENTS LIKE ABOUT THE LEARNING ASSESSMENTS?

STUDENTS' COMMENTS:

- “I FEEL LIKE I COULD GO ON A MISSION AND KNOW WHAT I’M TALKING ABOUT.”
- “IT HELPS YOU RETAIN WHAT YOU LEARN IN SEMINARY.”
- “WE ARE ABLE TO GRASP THE CONCEPTS A LOT BETTER.”
- “YOUR CONFIDENCE IS STRENGTHENED.”
- “WE ARE ACTUALLY GOING TO BE ABLE TO LEARN THESE THINGS INSTEAD OF JUST FEELING GOOD AND KIND OF FORGETTING ABOUT THE DOCTRINES.”

YOU CAN LEARN TO LOVE LEARNING FOR YOURSELF.

“Learning for ourselves that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true can be one of the greatest and most joyful experiences in life.”³ One student said, “I have enjoyed being more engaged and realizing I have to step it up a little more every day instead of just coming and sitting in a chair and listening but not necessarily participating.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught the importance of learning: “Learning to love learning is central to the gospel of Jesus Christ, is vital to our ongoing spiritual and personal development, and is an absolute necessity in the world in which we do now and will yet live, serve, and work.”⁴

The more effort you invest, the more enjoyment and learning you’ll experience. **NE**

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Dare to Stand Alone,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 62; emphasis added.
2. D. Todd Christofferson, “When Thou Art Converted,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 11.
3. Craig C. Christensen, “I Know These Things of Myself,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 50.
4. David A. Bednar, “Learning to Love Learning,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2010, 26.

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TRUTHS

FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT AND PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Here's just the beginning of what you can learn from the books you'll study in seminary in the coming year.



REMEMBERING OUR DIVINE NATURE
..... WILL HELP US
resist Satan's temptations.
Moses 1:13

Jesus Christ
was chosen from the beginning.
..... Moses 4:2



Under HEAVENLY FATHER'S direction, JESUS CHRIST has created WORLDS without number.
Moses 1:32-33

Knowledge of **GOOD AND EVIL** came due to the Fall.
>>> Moses 4:11 <<<<

Both the Fall and the Atonement were needed for *eternal life.*
Moses 5:9-11



After **THE FALL**, mankind was shut out from *God's presence.*
Moses 5:4

Marriage is an **EQUAL PARTNERSHIP** between husband and wife. Moses 3:18-25



RUN from wickedness.
Genesis 39:9-12

We need to have FAITH even when things don't go our way.
..... Daniel 3:14-18



REPENTANCE changes our behavior *and heart.*
Genesis 44:16-34



God reveals His secrets to prophets.
..... Amos 3:7

Keeping COVENANTS makes us holy.
Exodus 19:5-6

JOSEPH SMITH is a "choice seer."
..... JST Genesis 50:26

God WILL HELP US ACCOMPLISH >>> His work.<<<
Exodus 3:12



Continual **WICKEDNESS** leads to **DESTRUCTION.**
Moses 8:22

Becoming born again sanctifies us from sin.
Moses 6:59

..... **POOR CHOICES** lead to a loss of blessings.
..... Genesis 25:34

We are created in the image of GOD.
..... Genesis 1:26-27

The Fall brought *death, pain, and disease.*
..... Moses 6:48



God weeps at wickedness, while Satan laughs at wickedness.
Moses 7:26-33

The Lord is with us.
..... Numbers 14:7-9



ALL THINGS BEAR RECORD of *Jesus Christ.*
Moses 6:63

SHARE THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL *with all the families of the earth.*
..... Abraham 2:10



THE FALL made it *possible* to have *children.*
Moses 5:11


GOD CAN HELP US *turn trials* into *blessings.*
Genesis 45:7-8; 50:20-21

The Lord is sending people out to gather **THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL** in the last days.
Jeremiah 16:14-16

The atoning blood of Jesus Christ **CAN DELIVER US FROM DEATH.**
Exodus 12:21-23


TEMPLES provide a place *for God to dwell among us.*
Exodus 29:43-46

THE RESTORATION of the gospel is a *marvelous work and wonder.*
Isaiah 29:13-14



TRUST IN THE LORD. *He will direct our paths.*
Proverbs 3:5-6

Jesus Christ has borne our **GRIEFS** and carried our **SORROWS.**
..... Isaiah 53:3-5



10% **PAYING TITHING** opens the windows of heaven.
Malachi 3:8-10


*Our sins
can become
WHITE AS
SNOW.*
Isaiah 1:18

*Children
are an
heritage
of the
Lord.*
Psalm 127:3

Exact
obedience
brings heaven's
blessings.
Joshua 6

*God
PLACES US
..... in
POSITIONS
to HELP
OTHERS.*
Esther 7:3-6

.....
DON'T REJECT GOD
to be like the world.
1 Samuel 8:6-7, 19-20
.....

RUTH WAS KNOWN
as a virtuous woman.
Ruth 3:11

Seek to have *clean
hands and hearts.*
Psalm 24:3-4



SACRIFICES
*pointed Israel
..... to the*
atoning sacrifice
..... of
JESUS CHRIST.
Leviticus 1:2-9


**THE BIBLE and the
BOOK OF MORMON
are witnesses of
JESUS CHRIST.**
Ezekiel 37:15-17

*We should obey the
TEN COMMANDMENTS.*
Exodus 20:3-17

THE LORD
loves us and will
never forget us.
Isaiah 49:16

ENTERTAINING LUSTFUL THOUGHT
can lead to serious sin.
2 Samuel 11:2-4

..... *Our challenges*
are defeated when we rely on
THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD.
..... 1 Samuel 17:37, 45-47


The word of God
is a lamp unto our feet.
..... Psalm 119:105

God
KNEW US
before we
were born.
Jeremiah 1:4-5

DON'T
call *evil good*
and *good evil.*
Isaiah 5:20

OBEY THE PROPHET
in small and simple things.
2 Kings 5:9-10, 13-14

*God's
POWER
..... is
GREATEST.*
1 Kings
18:26-29, 36-39

SARAH
was the
WIFE of
ABRAHAM
and
MOTHER
of **ISAAC.**
Genesis 21:1-8


ATTENDING
the temple
will bring us peace.
1 Kings 8:37-40

**BECOME
saviors**
on Mount Zion.
Obadiah 1:17,21

FAMILY HISTORY
..... and
TEMPLE WORK
..... turns our
HEARTS TO GOD
..... and
OUR ANCESTORS.
Malachi 4:5-6

Jacob
was blessed
and his name
was changed to
>>> **ISRAEL.** <<<
Genesis 32:28

GOD
is pouring
HIS SPIRIT
upon all people.
Joel 2:27-29

The kingdom of God
will fill the entire earth.
Daniel 2:24-35, 44-45;
D&C 65:2



The Lord will provide for
us *one day at a time.*
Exodus 16:4-5

ABRAHAM
was willing
to sacrifice
his son
— **ISAAC.** —
Genesis 22

..... *Adam, Enoch,*
Noah, Abraham,
and *Moses*
were prophets in
different dispensations.
Bible Dictionary,
..... "Dispensations"

*Choose
today
to serve
GOD.*
Joshua 24:15

*Look
TO CHRIST
and be
HEALED.*
Numbers 21:8-9;
Alma 33:19-20

Blessings
come after
acting in faith.
1 Kings 17:13-16

Attempting to direct
God's work
..... without
His authority
brings spiritual death.
2 Samuel 6:3-7

Obeying the
Word of Wisdom
brings physical
and spiritual
blessings.
Daniel 1:17-20

TRUST GOD DURING TRIALS.
..... Job 13:13-16

Heavenly Father
willingly sacrificed
HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON
for us.
Genesis 22:10-12; John 3:16


Marrying
out of the covenant
can turn our hearts
away from God.
1 Kings 11:3-6

..... Our ability
**TO RECOGNIZE
THE VOICE
OF THE LORD**
..... can grow

**DURING HARD
TRIALS,**
*God watches
over us
and helps those
who seek
to obey Him.*
Ezra 5:1-5; 6:7-8, 14

Bringing to pass the
immortality and eternal life
of man is God's work.
..... Moses 1:39

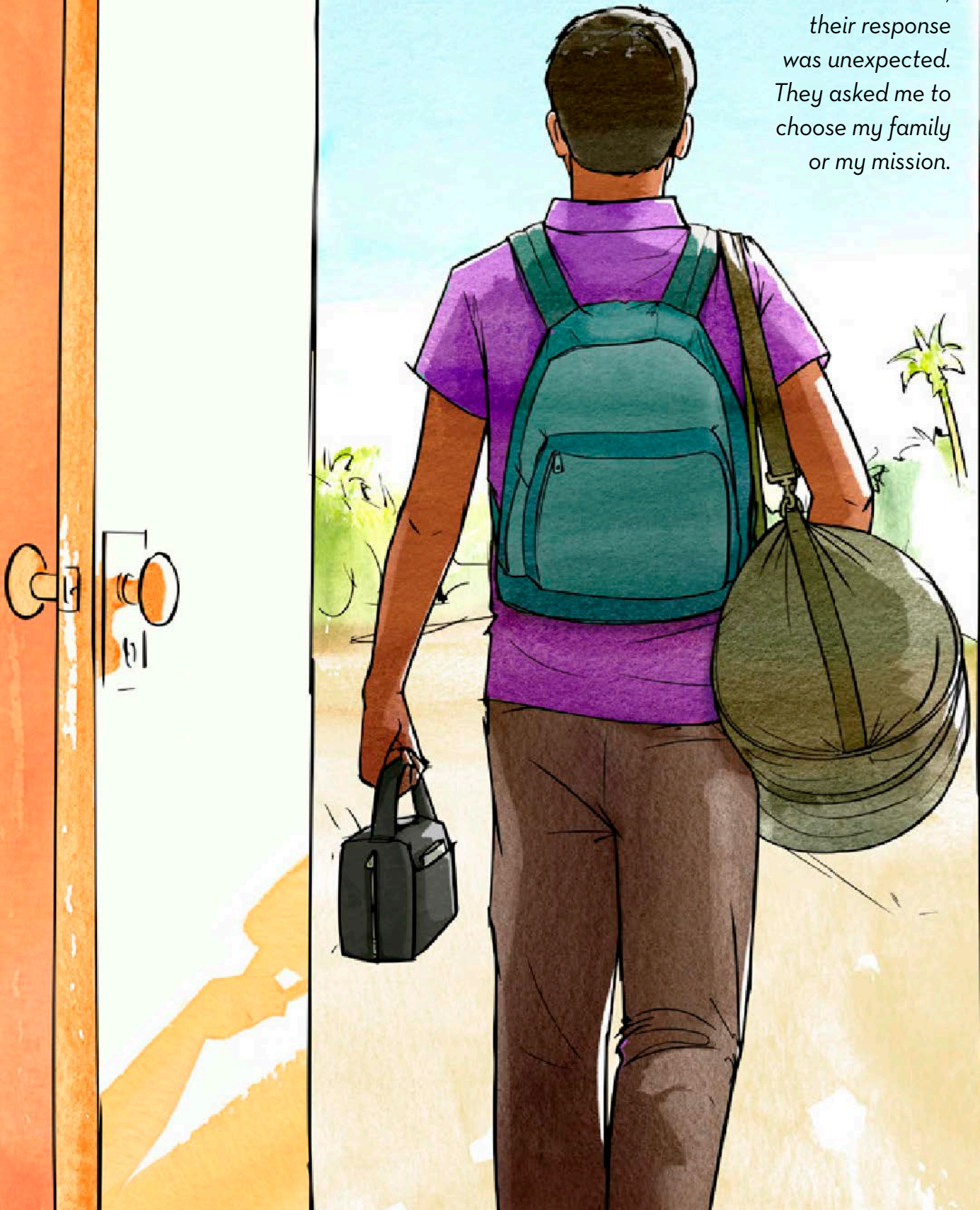
Fasting helps us
defeat wickedness.
Isaiah 58:6-7

**WE
WERE
chosen
TO
serve
God
BEFORE
WE WERE
BORN.**
Abraham
3:22-23

**GOD HAS
COMMANDED**
husbands and wives
to have children.
Moses 2:26-28

**THE
MILLENNIUM**
will be
1,000 YEARS
*of happiness,
peace, and
prosperity.*
Isaiah 65:21-25

*When I told my
parents I wanted
to serve a mission,
their response
was unexpected.
They asked me to
choose my family
or my mission.*



TO STAY or OBEY?

By Melvin Rondilla

I can still remember the words of the missionaries who taught me: “Whatever God commands, do it, and blessings will follow.” These words made a deep impression in my heart. I was baptized at the age of 16, the only member of the Church in my family. Eight months later, I had the blessing of seeing my youngest sibling baptized into the Church.

When I turned 18, I wanted to serve a full-time mission and help in the Lord’s work. I eagerly told my parents about my plan and how I wanted to invite people to come unto Jesus Christ by helping them receive and live the principles and ordinances of the gospel. Their response surprised me. They said it broke their hearts to think of me leaving on a mission, and I had to choose: my family or my mission.

I was shocked when I heard those words. Immediately I went to the Church building near our home and entered one of its rooms to kneel and ask Heavenly Father, “What will I do? What will I choose: my family or my mission? Both are important to me.”

While on my knees, the words of the missionaries came to mind: “Whatever God commands, do it.”

I love my family and want to be with them forever. I respect their feelings. Yet the scripture says, “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22). The Spirit of the Lord filled me, and I was strengthened. I decided to serve because I knew Heavenly Father would help my family understand.

I went home only to be sent away by my father’s angry words and told to never return. Not knowing where to go, I packed my things. I was not a bit scared, because I knew the Lord was with me, that He has a plan for every family, and that someday my family would understand this beautiful plan.

I was only a few steps away from home when my mother caught me. She embraced me and said how much she loved me. As I left, I could see her crying with all the love and pain of a mother seeing her child go.

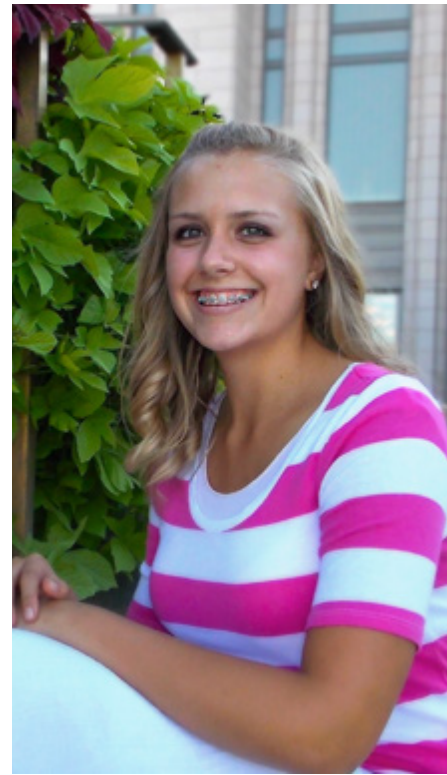
For over a year, I stayed in the house of a returned missionary I had met when I was an investigator. The Lord was true to His promise in

1 Nephi 3:7—He provided the way so I could obey His commandments. He sent this selfless and generous man to provide for me and to create a spiritual environment where I could prepare for my mission. I felt the hand of God sustaining me through my challenges. I felt the love of our Savior Jesus Christ through His atoning sacrifice. This love carried me through my trials until I was set apart as a full-time missionary in the Philippines Cauayan Mission.

A few months later, I received a letter from my family telling me they were waiting for my return. I never lost faith and hope that my whole family would become members of the Church, be sealed in the temple for all eternity, and be with our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, someday.

After returning from my mission, I began to see that dream come true. I was able to baptize my mother, who is now preparing to go to the temple. I see my family often, and we are closer than ever before. **NE**

Melvin Rondilla lives in the Philippines.



MORE THAN JUST MONEY

The windows of heaven don't just pour out coins.

By Alex Masterson

Who knew the law of tithing came with such awesome blessings? Seriously, have you *read* Malachi 3:10–11 lately? In not so many words, you're promised extra-strength repellent against the "devourer" (who just cannot be good for your social circle) and also access to so many blessings that you somehow won't have room for them all. Yeah, that's all in there.

But when we read about these fantastic blessings, we sometimes assume they'll look something like this: \$\$\$\$. And sometimes they will, but if we look only for the tangible blessings of tithing, then we can forget that these anti-devourer, super blessings can come in spiritual ways, too. Here are three amazing blessings from above you can look forward to as you pay your tithing.



You're not really paying your own 10 percent so much as He's letting you decide what to do with His other 90 percent.

Eternal Perspective

Yes, money can be awesome. It's hard to see it as anything else, especially when it can get you things like food, music, clothes, and a college education. But just as money can be used for good, it also has a way of fueling the natural man. Before you even realize it, even a little bit of money can bring out a kind of selfishness and greed that creates the illusion that you're not only happier and more important but also more free.

By paying your tithing, you'll be blessed with a refreshing eternal perspective that will help you see money for what it really is: temporary. You'll see that money can only buy you things that never last, and you'll realize that once you leave this world behind, it will not stand by you and defend you at the last day (see Mosiah 4:23).

As you give away that tithing money willingly, it'll be easier to notice the

things in life that actually *can* stand strong forever and hold you up when you need them most, like family ties and the promises you make with God. Plus, it's a reminder that everything you have truly belongs to God. You're not really paying *your own* 10 percent so much as He's letting you decide what to do with *His other* 90 percent. As your eternal perspective becomes clearer and you reprioritize your life, you'll be blessed with the strength to overcome the natural man, and you'll feel the lasting happiness that comes along with it.

So the next time you pay your tithing, just remember one thing: money might be awesome, but that 10 percent is worth way more than that.

The House of the Lord

Remember when Malachi promised you so many blessings that you wouldn't have room for them all? Well, he may have had

YOUTH VOICES: OUR BLESSINGS FROM TITHING

the temple in mind for part of that because the blessings we can get from the temple are virtually unlimited. After all, committing to be a full-tithe payer is part of the requirements for a temple recommend.

While tithing is only one part of the temple interview, it shows a lot about you and your attitude. Just think of tithing as God's way of knowing how much you want to spend time with Him in His house. By paying a full tithe, you're showing gratitude for what He's already given you, and you're telling Him you're ready to think about someone other than yourself. You're saying that you want to

You'll find answers to questions and doubts, and as you serve the dead, the cares of life and school will fade and you will find joy.

be worthy of a temple recommend.

Once you get your own recommend, there's so much for you inside the temple's walls. President Thomas S. Monson said, "As we attend the temple, there can come to us a dimension of spirituality and a feeling of peace which will transcend any other feeling which could come into the human heart" ("Blessings of the Temple," *Ensign*, May 2015, 91-92). You'll find answers to questions and doubts, and as you serve the dead, the cares of life and school will fade and you *will* find joy.



"Paying your tithing at times can be hard, but it is something so important that not doing it can stop us from being able to go to the temple. I know that paying your tithing will bring you great blessings in many different ways. Some may be big and others small, but I know that answering yes to being a full-tithe payer will definitely increase your testimony and keep the Spirit with you."

Tyson M.

"I know that paying a full tithe will bless us in so many ways. Not always will we be able to see the blessings and know that the blessings we receive came directly from paying our tithing, but I know they are there."

Brynn W.



"Tithing is important because when we pay our tithing, we give money to help build God's kingdom. Tithing may be hard, but I hope I can always have the faith to pay my tithing."

Ethan G.

"Paying tithing gives us many blessings. Even when we think we don't have enough and yet we still pay, my testimony gets strengthened even more."

Heidi A.



That's only a fraction of the temple blessings Heavenly Father has planned for you. Just stay faithful and keep paying that tithing, and those blessings will be yours.

Trust

Another great blessing from paying tithing is learning how to trust in God. Trusting can be tough. It can be risky, because it means relying on someone other than yourself to do what you can't do alone. It means accepting uncertainty and taking a step into the unknown.

Fortunately, the Lord recognizes how difficult trust can be, especially when it comes to tithing. So He gives us all a simple challenge to help us take initial steps of faith. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . . and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

With that one statement, it's like the Lord is calling out to all of us to just give Him—and tithing—a chance. He wants to show you that when it comes to Him, there's never risk involved. It's because as you take that first step and pay your tithing, blessings will inevitably come, whether temporal or spiritual, and you will know that He will always be there to protect and guide you during your trials (see Deuteronomy 7:9).

So what are you waiting for? With only 10 percent on the line, what do you really have to lose? **NE**

Alex Masterson lives in Utah, USA.

MORE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught us of many other spiritual blessings that come from paying tithing, often when we're praying for and wanting financial help (see "The Windows of Heaven," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 17-20). For example, instead of financial blessings we may be given:



"Appreciation for what we have to constrain desires for what we want."



"Increased spiritual and temporal capacity . . . to do more with less."



"Enhanced discernment . . . to identify job opportunities that many other people might overlook."



"Keener ability to prioritize and simplify."



"Greater personal determination to search harder and longer for a position than other people may be able or willing to do."



"Enhanced ability to take proper care of the material possessions we already have acquired."



"Greater capacity to act and change our own circumstances rather than expecting our circumstances to be changed by someone or something else."



"Physical and mental stamina."



"Enlarged perspective and increased patience."



Discover more about these spiritual blessings at lds.org/go/windows9NE.

WHAT YOU KNEW in Premortal Life

*You might think
you don't have
a testimony,
but in fact, you
always have.*



By Elder
Kevin W. Pearson
Of the First Quorum
of the Seventy

When I was young and preparing for a mission, my mom invited me to go to a continuing education night at the church.

The topic was Joseph Smith. Of course, I had a lot going on, and I didn't really want to go.

But she talked me into it, and I'm glad she did.

I can remember sitting in the back row of the chapel as the instructor began teaching about the Prophet Joseph Smith. I'll never forget it. It was a riveting moment of clarity. I was completely tuned in to the story. As it culminated and the teacher bore testimony, I knew that I knew it was true. I just knew it. But more importantly, I realized that I'd *always* known it was true; this was just the first time I'd realized it.

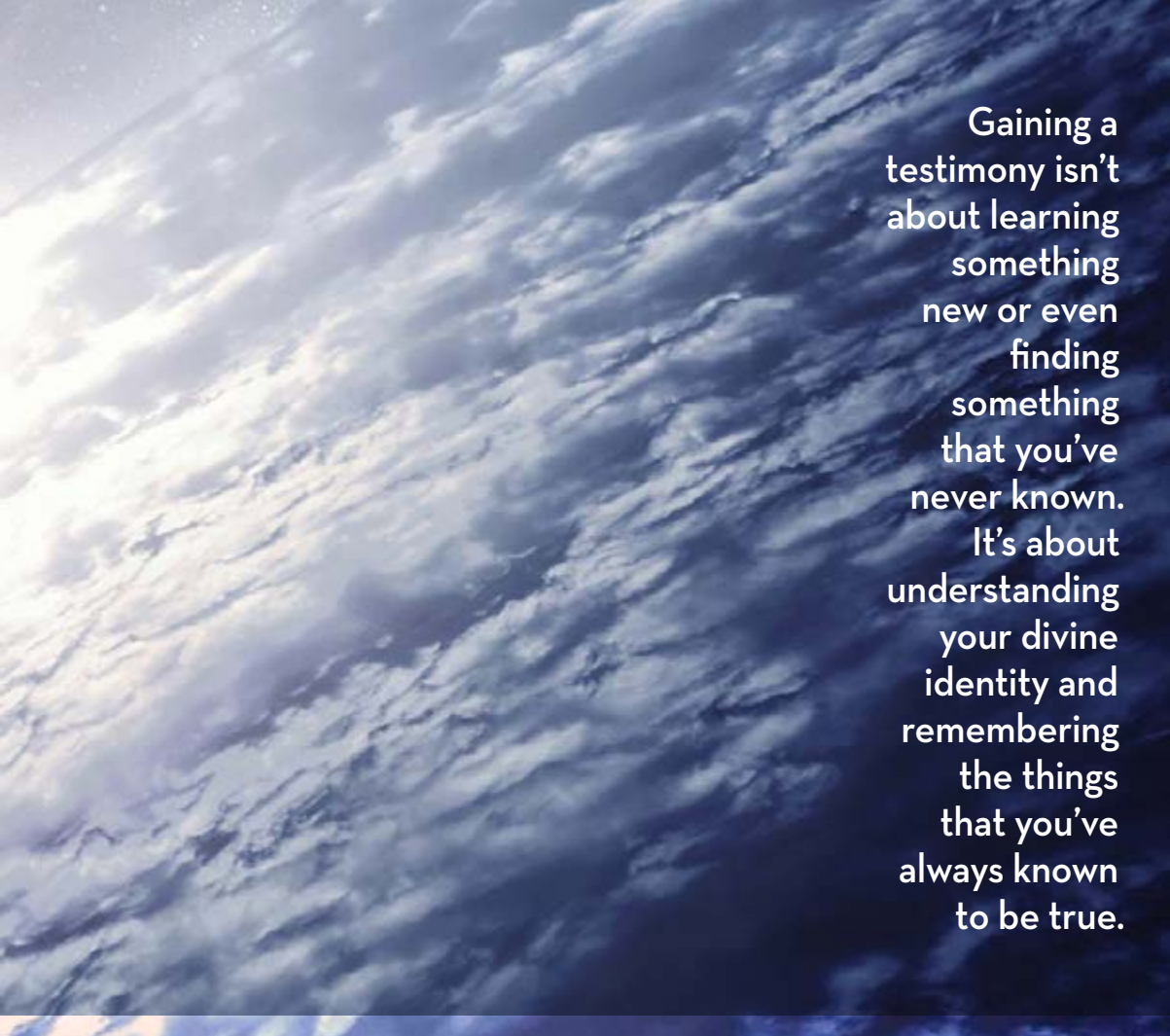
If you're trying to gain a testimony of

the Church, don't be tempted to think, like Laman and Lemuel, that "the Lord maketh no such thing[s] known unto [you]" (1 Nephi 15:9). Don't think that receiving such a testimony is beyond your reach. These tempting lies could never be true.

Gaining a testimony isn't about learning something new or even finding something that you've never known. It's about understanding your divine identity and remembering the things that you've always known to be true.

Know Who You've Always Been

While you might not know for sure how old your spirit is, you can be sure that it has been learning and growing since before the earth was even created. You knew about Heavenly Father, you knew about His plan for you to



Gaining a testimony isn't about learning something new or even finding something that you've never known. It's about understanding your divine identity and remembering the things that you've always known to be true.



become like Him, and you wanted a part in that plan. You even knew about the Church. Now that you're in a physical body and many memories of premortal life are veiled from you, you might not be able to remember those experiences, but they will always be a part of your spirit. Even now, they are a part of you.

So as you seek to gain a testimony of divine truths, don't stress about what you don't know or understand yet. Take heart in the fact that you already know it!

Know Who You Are

I've discovered that the single most important thing you can learn at any time in your life is who you are. And it's not easy—especially when the media, your friends, and your family all have different ideas of who

and what you should be. But amid so many influences attempting to define us, it's easy to forget about the most important of all our identities—our divine identity.

When I was in a meeting as a newly called General Authority, I remember President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), former President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said, “We are not us. You are not you.” I thought, “What does that mean?” But suddenly, several little experiences converged in my mind, and I realized he was right!

Before my mission, I was a tall, skinny kid from Salt Lake City, Utah, who played baseball, and that's who I thought I was. I realize now that baseball is just something I did and enjoyed; being a baseball player was not my true identity. A true, divine identity is not based on preferences or skills or even where





you're born on this earth. It has more to do with who you were before and who you will be after this life.

As you live the gospel, your divine identity and your testimony of the Church will become clearer. You'll begin to better understand the things you've always known, and certain doctrines and truths will begin to feel real and familiar.

Follow in the Savior's Footsteps

Even though Jesus was perfect, He too had to start life without being able to remember anything. President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught, “He was as much a God when he was born into the world as he was before. But as far as this life is concerned it appears that he had to start just as all other children do and gain his knowledge line upon line . . . ‘until he received a fullness’ [D&C 93:13]” (*Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith* [2013], 314).

As strange as it sounds, Jesus started where you did—with no knowledge of His life before. But as He lived the gospel and sought out the will of the Father, His divine identity as our Savior and Redeemer became

clearer and clearer. He began to *remember*. It didn't happen all at once either—it came one step at a time until He knew perfectly who He was. Once Christ knew this, it gave Him purpose, it gave Him direction, and it helped Him continue to live in a way that helped Him remember even more.

Remember You Always Knew It

You knew so much before this life. Don't ever forget that.

As you strive to gain or strengthen your testimony of the Church, be patient with yourself and your Heavenly Father's timing. We're only meant to remember one small step at a time. But as you live the gospel of Jesus Christ and do the will of the Father, the Spirit will help you discover your true, divine identity.

You are a spiritual child of a living God. And that matters. This knowledge will give you purpose and direction. Once it becomes clear who you are, spiritual truths that you once knew will begin to feel like home.

That's when you'll realize that you do have a testimony and you always have. You just had to remember. **NE**

As you live the gospel of Jesus Christ and do the will of the Father, the Spirit will help you discover your true, divine identity.



Moses 1:39

The Lord revealed His grand purpose to Moses.

MY WORK

God's *works* are endless (see Moses 1:4). He created the universe, "worlds without number" (Moses 1:33), including worlds whose "inhabitants . . . are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:24). And these sons and daughters of His are the focal point of His *work*—His overriding purpose in all He does.

"My work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever."

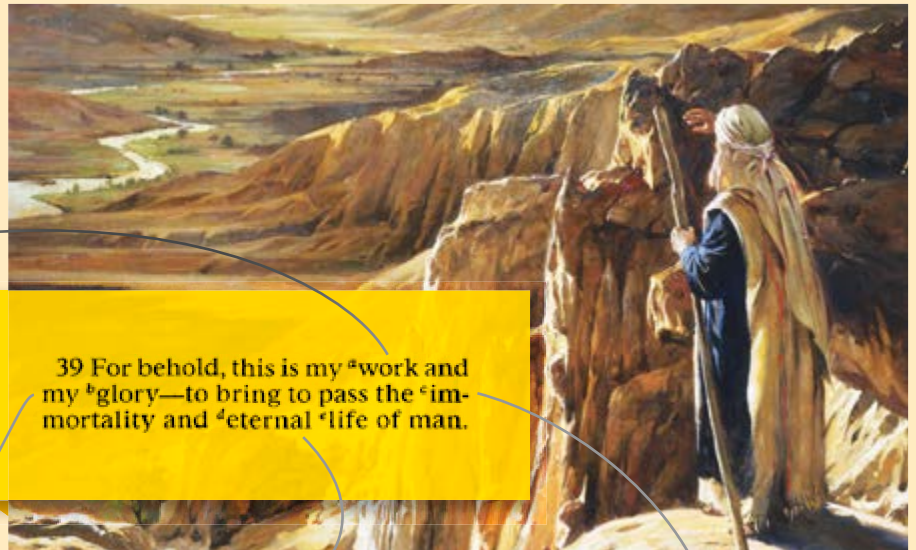
2 Nephi 29:9.

MY GLORY

Glory—honor; splendor, beauty; greatness, magnificence.

"God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. . . . He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with himself, so that they might have one glory upon another."

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 210.



39 For behold, this is my ^awork and my ^bglory—to bring to pass the ^cimmortality and ^deternal ^elife of man.

ETERNAL LIFE

Eternal life—exaltation in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom; living as God lives; living in the presence of God in a family unit.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ makes it possible for us to inherit eternal life through "obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (Articles of Faith 1:3).

"Eternal life . . . is the greatest of all the gifts of God."

Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

John 17:3.

IMMORTALITY

Immortality—unending life; life without death; life as a resurrected being.

Because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, all people who have ever lived will be resurrected.

"Men are, that they might have joy."

2 Nephi 2:25.

"Spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy.

"And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy."

Doctrine and Covenants 93:33-34.

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

2015
MUTUAL
THEME

HOW'S THE SAILING SO FAR?

This year's Mutual theme encourages us to serve God "with all [our] heart, might, mind and strength" (D&C 4:2). Mutual is a perfect place to follow this commandment because there's power in serving God together. Here's how some youth have found joy in serving God together with their quorums and classes.

"We hosted a spa night for the Activity Day girls to help them get excited to move from Primary to Young Women. We served the younger girls by doing their hair and nails. One girl I didn't know very well was sitting alone. I went and asked if she wanted her nails done. She got this big smile on her face and nodded. She was really excited to have an older girl help her. It was a good lesson for me because sometimes I'm kind of shy about talking to people I don't know very well. I know she was really happy when I went and talked with her."

Kara W., 13, Washington, USA



"One of our Young Women leaders is deaf. For New Beginnings, we decided to perform "Embark" [the 2015 Mutual theme song] in American sign language [ASL]. Our leader taught us the chorus of the song, and she signed the verses. I loved this activity because any young woman who wanted to could have a solo in the song while all of the girls signed. I feel good that we're learning another language that may help someone we may know in our future. Also, I hope it inspired other people to want to learn ASL."

Piper W., 17, Missouri, USA



"During our annual planning meeting at the beginning of the year, we planned several service projects in our quorums and classes. One was when my quorum helped a family in our ward trim the large tree in their backyard.

"It was pretty awesome! We worked on the tree with chainsaws and branch cutters. With all of us working together, we finished in no time at all. It was also really fun because we got to use power tools. We'd just been looking for an opportunity to serve as a quorum when we heard of this family's need. At the end, our quorum and the family were very happy!"

Andrew S., 14, Arizona, USA



"In our stake all the youth were introduced to the theme in a standards night at the beginning of the year. We watched a bunch of clips including the theme song [see lds.org/go/embark9NE]. I instantly loved it. Then we talked about some of the standards in the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet. We finished by talking about Elder Neil L. Andersen's temple challenge [see templechallenge.lds.org] and how important it is to find and bring your own family names to the temple.

"At home, I picked up my phone and looked up #embark on Instagram. I found tons of pictures of the theme scripture, logo, and some Mormonads. I posted a few pictures of #embark, and a few minutes later I got a comment from someone at school saying she'd seen me at the standards night. Before that I didn't know that anyone else at my school was LDS—let alone someone in my grade. I love this theme so much!"

Haideen G., 13, Alberta, Canada



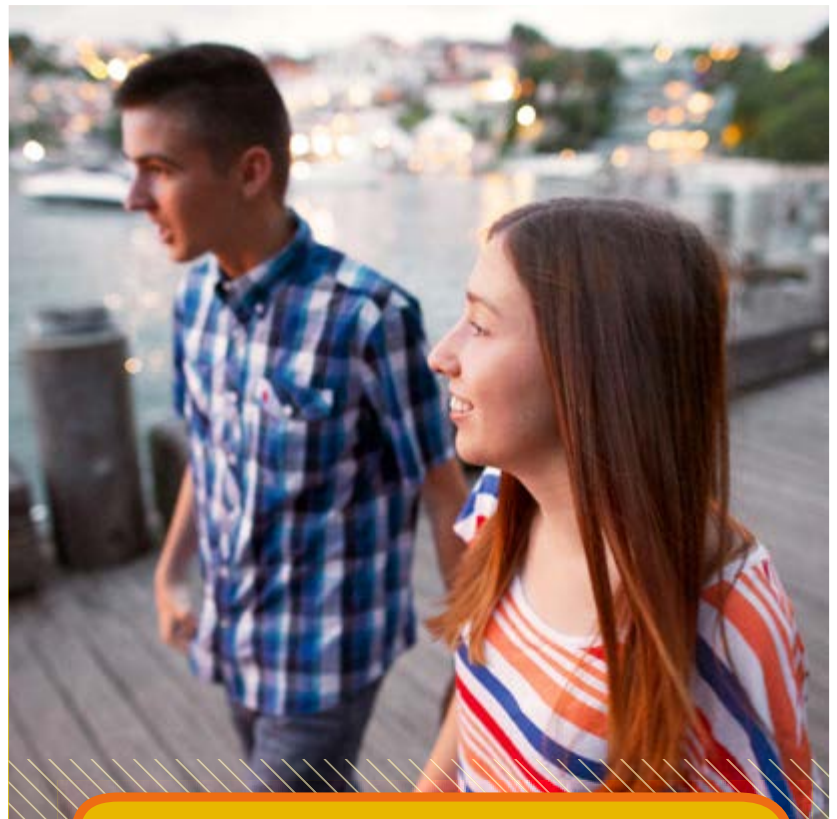
Looking to Embark?

Check out lds.org/youth/theme/2015 for articles, videos, and posters on this year's Mutual theme. You'll also find mp3s, videos, and sheet music for "Embark" and 11 other songs written by youth for this year's Mutual theme album. Read other teens' #embark experiences and share your own! And be sure to visit the youth activities site (lds.org/youth/activities) for more Mutual activity ideas!

What does the **eighth article of faith** mean when it says, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is *translated correctly*”?

The Bible is not inferior to other scriptures. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, “We believe, revere, and love the Holy Bible. We do have additional sacred scripture, . . . but it supports the Bible, never substituting for it” (“The Miracle of the Holy Bible,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 81).

The eighth article of faith says, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.” In Joseph Smith’s day, the word *translate* didn’t just mean to take something from one language into another; it also could mean to transfer, convey, interpret, or explain. And although errors do appear in various renderings from the original Hebrew and Greek, the bigger issue is that in the delivery of the ancient texts to the present day, “many plain and precious things [were] taken away” (1 Nephi 13:28). So, as the Bible texts were *transmitted* to us, certain teachings were lost. That’s one reason people have so many different interpretations of the Bible, as Joseph Smith experienced (see Joseph Smith—History 1:12). So one way modern revelation helps clarify and confirm the truths in the Bible is by restoring other truths that were lost (see 1 Nephi 13:39–40). **NE**



I’m a **boy**, and I want to encourage girls to dress more modestly. But how do I do that without appearing rude?

You’re right to tread carefully in this area. While some young women dress immodestly with the full intent of being immodest, many would be mortified to think someone believed they were dressed immodestly. So be sensitive and consistent. When the general topic of modest dress comes up, enthusiastically support the Lord’s standard of modesty, but don’t condemn individuals. Also, make sure your own personal dress standards and actions are consistent with your beliefs. Young women notice how you dress, and they definitely notice whether you pay more attention to immodestly dressed or modestly dressed young women. **NE**

What should I do when I know my friends are breaking the commandments?

While it's hard to watch friends do things that we know will cause them pain, we need to respect their agency and keep loving them. However, there are things we can do to encourage them to make better choices.

Youth from Mexico recently shared their ideas:

1. Pray for them. Cynthia G., 18, says, "Prayer is one of the most powerful gifts our Heavenly Father has given us. I know that Heavenly Father will help my friends and answer my prayers. Prayer is powerful."

2. Guide them to a better way. Reynaldo A., 16, adds, "Sometimes your friends may not realize that they are doing bad things, or maybe they just don't want to admit it. Let them know that what they're doing isn't good. Then you can try to persuade them to stop doing those things and find something better to do. Don't give up on them."

3. Help them feel the Savior's love. Keilany G., 18, says, "Help them feel the endless love that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have for them. Judging them is not the way, but loving them is. Little by little you can remind them that the Lord has not abandoned them and that He never will."

Consider the words of President N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982), First Counselor in the First Presidency, as you help your friends: "Always remember that people are looking to you for leadership and you are influencing the lives of individuals either for good or for bad, which influence will be felt for generations to come" ("For They Loved the Praise of Men More Than the Praise of God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 74). **NE**



Love Them

They may be going through a hard time, and unkind comments probably won't help.

Just be encouraging and love them for who they are. Your love and support may be just what they need. You may know that what they're doing is bad, but they don't. If the opportunity arises, you may gently refer to counsel from the prophets. Be kind and do all you can to uplift them and set a good example.

Aliza B., 15, Oregon, USA

Let Them Know You Care

We may be afraid to talk to our friends when they're doing something wrong because we don't want to seem uncool or as though we're judging them. The best way to help them is to let the Spirit guide us in encouraging them in the nicest way possible. It helps to let them know that we only want to help because we care about them. We need to pray for our friends and to have the Spirit with us; it can help us know what we should do to help our friend get back on the right track.

Megan C., 19, Texas, USA

Got a QUESTION?

Do you have a question you'd like answered in the *New Era*? Send it to us at newera@ldschurch.org.



Encourage Them

We all have agency to choose between right and wrong. We can't force people to choose the right, but we can help them make the choice. We can have an open, honest dialogue with our friends, teach them the importance of keeping the Lord's commandments, and then encourage them to keep those commandments.

Victor C., 18, Mexico



Set a Good Example

The Mutual theme from a couple years ago explains well what we need to do: "Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations" (D&C 115:5). We don't have to stop being friends with them or do what they do. But we can be ourselves and set a good example.

Beth M., 17, Idaho, USA

Don't Judge Them

When I know my friends are doing something against the commandments, I try to help them do what's right. Whenever I'm with my friends,

I try to set a good example. Don't judge them, because none of us is perfect. Try to create a good environment and suggest doing something worthwhile to help them make better choices.

Matthew T., 17, New Mexico, USA

Follow the Spirit

Pray for them, ask for inspiration to know what to do, and then read your scriptures and be prepared to receive an answer. Follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit and have faith. The Lord knows exactly what will be best for everyone.

Kyelle T., 17, Utah, USA

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



BE A RIGHTEOUS EXAMPLE

"When we maintain our personal purity and honor our priesthood, we become righteous examples for others to follow. The Apostle Paul admonished, 'Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity' (1 Timothy 4:12)."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Guided Safely Home," *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 68.

UPCOMING QUESTION

Why is it wrong to cheat at school if you're only trying to help another person?

Send your answer and photo by October 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.



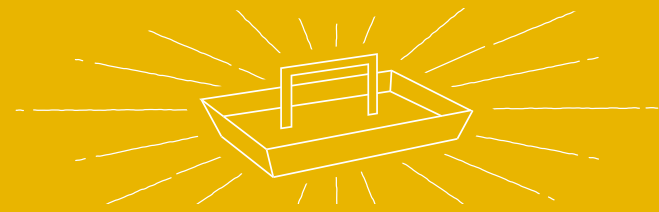
Commandments

You'll be studying about commandments in your Sunday classes this month. As you study and discuss this topic, you may ponder these questions: Why does God give us commandments? How can I strengthen my commitment to keep the commandments?

For some answers to these questions, read the scriptures listed in the Topical Guide under "Commandments of God," "God, Law of," and "Obedience, Obedient, Obey." You'll also find teachings on the commandments 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/cards9NE.

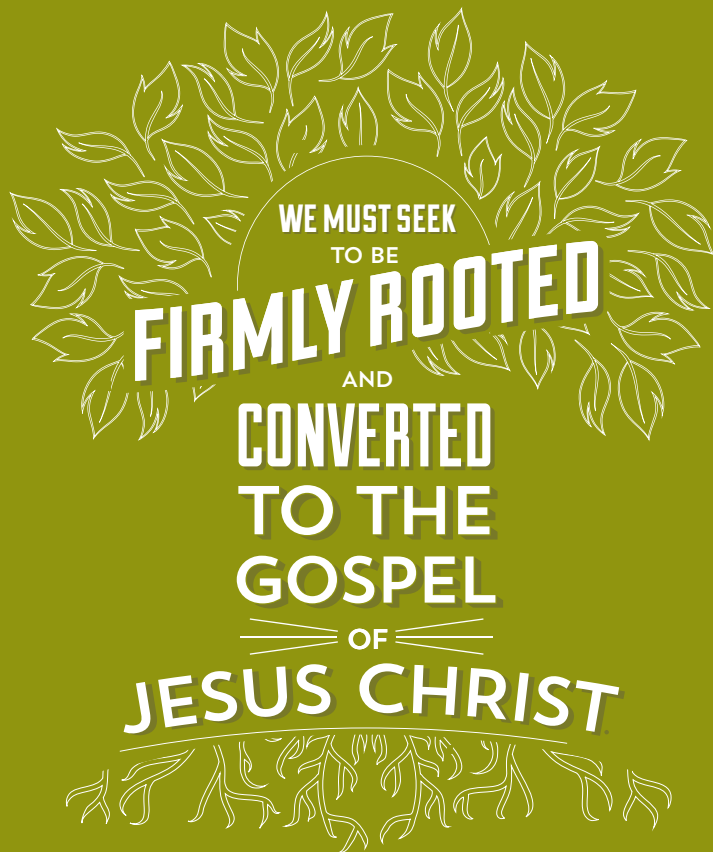


A SACRED SABBATH

TRULY IS A

DELIGHT

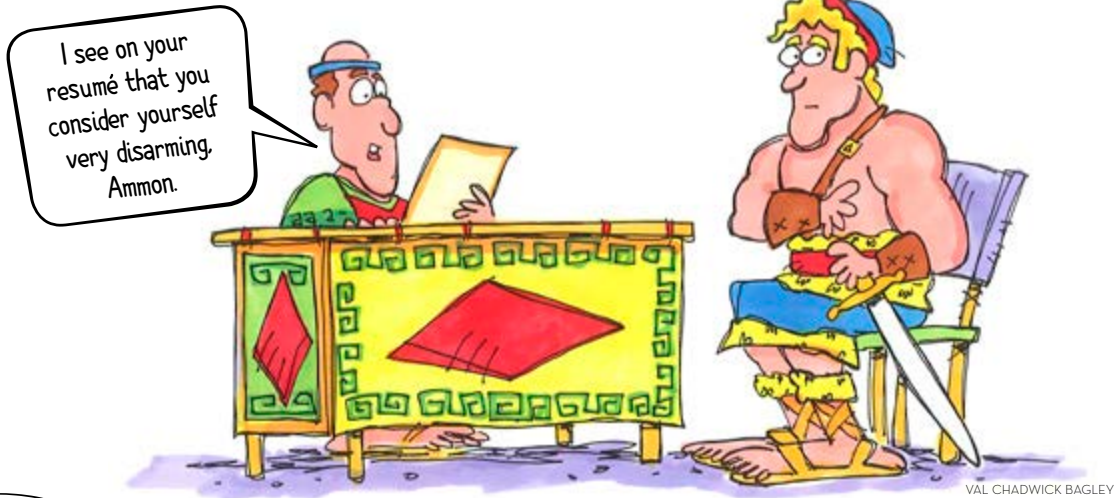
President Russell M. Nelson
President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
April 2015 general conference



WE MUST SEEK
TO BE
FIRMLY ROOTED
AND
**CONVERTED
TO THE
GOSPEL**
OF
JESUS CHRIST

Elder Dallin H. Oaks
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
April 2015 general conference





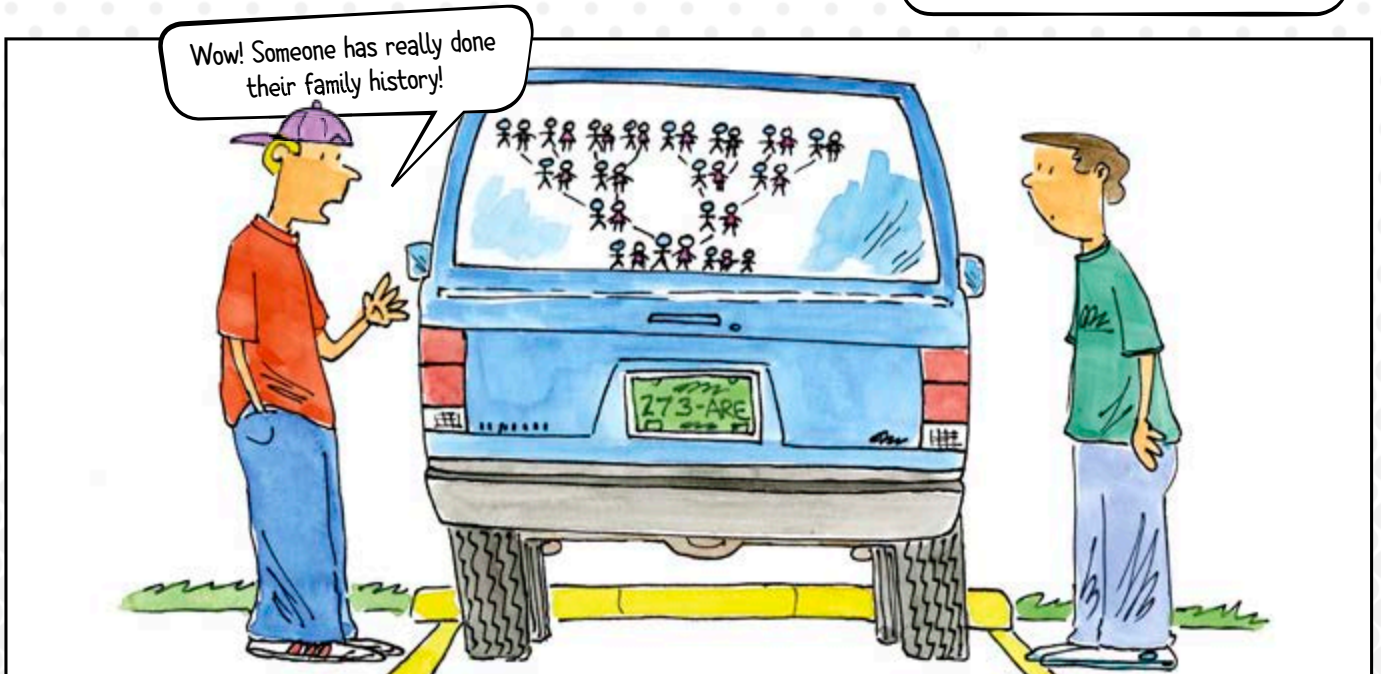
VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



ARIE VAN DE GRAAFF



JON CLARK



RYAN STOKER; IDEA BY JOEL EVANS



SERVING WHERE WE ARE ASKED

Just before the San Salvador El Salvador Temple was dedicated, my family and I decided to serve at the open house and help those who were not members become acquainted with the gospel of Jesus Christ as they visited the temple. I was assigned to be a guide and speak with people about each room in the temple, about the sacred covenants we make there, and how our lives change when we keep those covenants.

My shift came, and I started my tour. I had just barely gone out of the room when someone asked for an

additional guide since a large group had just arrived. I was told to go back to the greeting room to have another group assigned to me.

When I reached the room, I was again asked to change my assignment and show the video to people who were just arriving at the temple. I felt sad that I wasn't able to speak with people and tell them about the temple.

About a half hour later, a group from the United States arrived and didn't speak any Spanish. Several volunteers were running around looking

for someone who spoke English and could guide this group. That's when I understood that the Lord sends us where He needs us, not necessarily where we want to be. I was the only one who knew how to use the video and give the words of welcome in English. The Americans were glad and when they were leaving, they thanked me for receiving them so warmly.

At the end of the day, I felt thankful to the Lord for showing me that when we do things the way He prompts us, we will feel satisfied with our work.

Erick A., El Salvador

THE LORD LOOKETH ON THE HEART

Before I joined the Church, I had always viewed myself as an ordinary person with ordinary abilities. I felt that I had nothing of value to offer. I was afraid to show people who I was because of the fear of being rejected and hurt. I thought that everyone around me was stronger, smarter, and better than me.

But all of these perspectives changed when I became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I learned that we are all children of God and that we have all inherited divine qualities. I now understand that there isn't any competition on who is smarter, richer, or better looking. In the Lord's eyes, we are all on equal footing, and He is the one who judges—not based on our physical traits but on our obedience and desire to follow the path He has set.

Joan A., Philippines

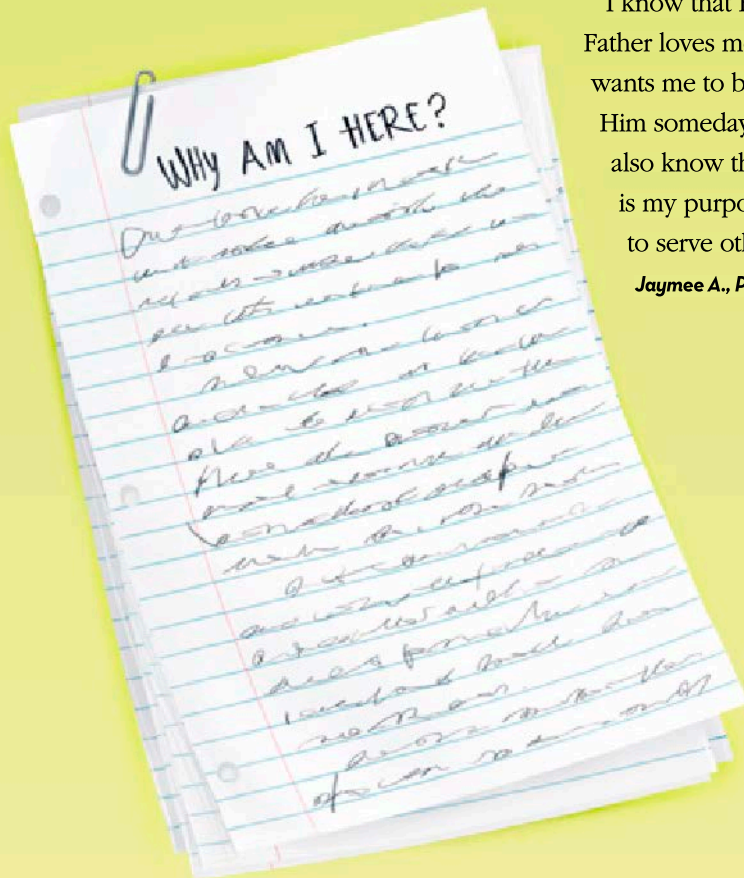
OUR PURPOSE ON EARTH

During my school's values-education month, our teacher asked us to write an essay titled "Why am I here?" It had to be a 10-paragraph essay on the topic of our purpose in life. As I read the topic on the board, my heart was filled with comfort and happiness. As a member of the Church, I had known my purpose as a daughter of God for many years. But as I looked at my other classmates' faces, my heart was filled with sadness. Why? Because they started to murmur regarding the difficulty of the topic. They didn't have the same knowledge I did.

When I turned in my essay, I realized how blessed I am to be a member of the one true Church. From that day on, my desire to serve a mission and share my testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ was strengthened.

I know that Heavenly Father loves me and wants me to be with Him someday. I also know that it is my purpose to serve others.

Jaymee A., Philippines





By Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

HOW TO REALLY REPENT

Repentance is an expansive subject, but I would like to mention just five aspects of this fundamental gospel principle that I hope will be helpful.

First, the **invitation to repent is an expression of love**. When the Savior “began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17), it was a message of love, inviting all who would to qualify to join Him “and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life [itself] in the world to come” (Moses 6:59). If we do not invite others to change or if we do not demand repentance of ourselves, we fail in a fundamental duty we owe to one another and to ourselves.

Second, repentance means **striving to change**. It would mock the Savior’s suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross for us to expect that He should transform us into angelic beings with no real effort on our part. Rather, we seek His grace to complement and reward our most diligent efforts (see 2 Nephi 25:23).

Real repentance, **real change may require repeated attempts**, but there is something refining and holy in such striving.

Third, repentance means not only **abandoning sin** but also **committing to obedience**. The Bible Dictionary states, “Repentance comes to mean a turning of the heart and will to God, [as well as] a renunciation of sin to which we are naturally inclined” (“Repentance”). For our turning to the Lord to be complete, it must include nothing less than a covenant of obedience to Him.

Fourth, **repentance requires a seriousness of purpose and a willingness to persevere**, even through pain. Attempts to create a list of specific steps of repentance may be helpful to some, but it may also lead to a mechanical, check-off-the-boxes approach with no real feeling or change. True repentance is not superficial. The Lord gives two overarching requirements: “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them



Share Your Experiences

Share your feelings about repentance at lds.org/go/repentance9NE.

and forsake them” (D&C 58:43).

Fifth, whatever the **cost** of repentance, it **is swallowed up in the joy of forgiveness**.

I gratefully acknowledge and testify that the incomprehensible suffering, death, and Resurrection of our Lord “bringeth to pass the condition of repentance” (Helaman 14:18). The divine gift of **repentance is the key to happiness** here and hereafter. In the Savior’s words and in deep humility and love, I invite all to “repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). I know that in accepting this invitation, **you will find joy** both now and forever. **NE**

From an October 2011 general conference address.

REMEMBER

that our

HEAVENLY FATHER

and our

SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST,

know you best

and

love you the most.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

April 2015 general conference

WHAT'S ONLINE



CELEBRATING *with a Challenge*

This year celebrates 20 years since “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” was given. Learn more about its teachings on pages 2–6 of this issue, and check out the challenge Sister Oscarson gave during the last general conference at lds.org/go/defenders9NE. Also see how to share your photos of family activities as part of the celebration at lds.org/go/photos9NE.



**DOWNLOAD YOUR
CONFERENCE PACKET AT**

lds.org/go/conference9NE

GENERAL CONFERENCE *Is Coming!*

Looking for ideas to help you listen and learn during general conference? Go online for these helps: a printout to help you organize your notes, a way to create inspirational posters using some of your favorite quotes and images, and a Bingo game to play as you listen.

HELP WITH MASTERING *Scripture Mastery*

Do you feel like you're not very good at memorizing things but you want to memorize the scripture mastery verses? Go online to find three activities that can help you memorize, locate, and apply the scripture mastery verses in your life.



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BY SIGNING IN AT**

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OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS