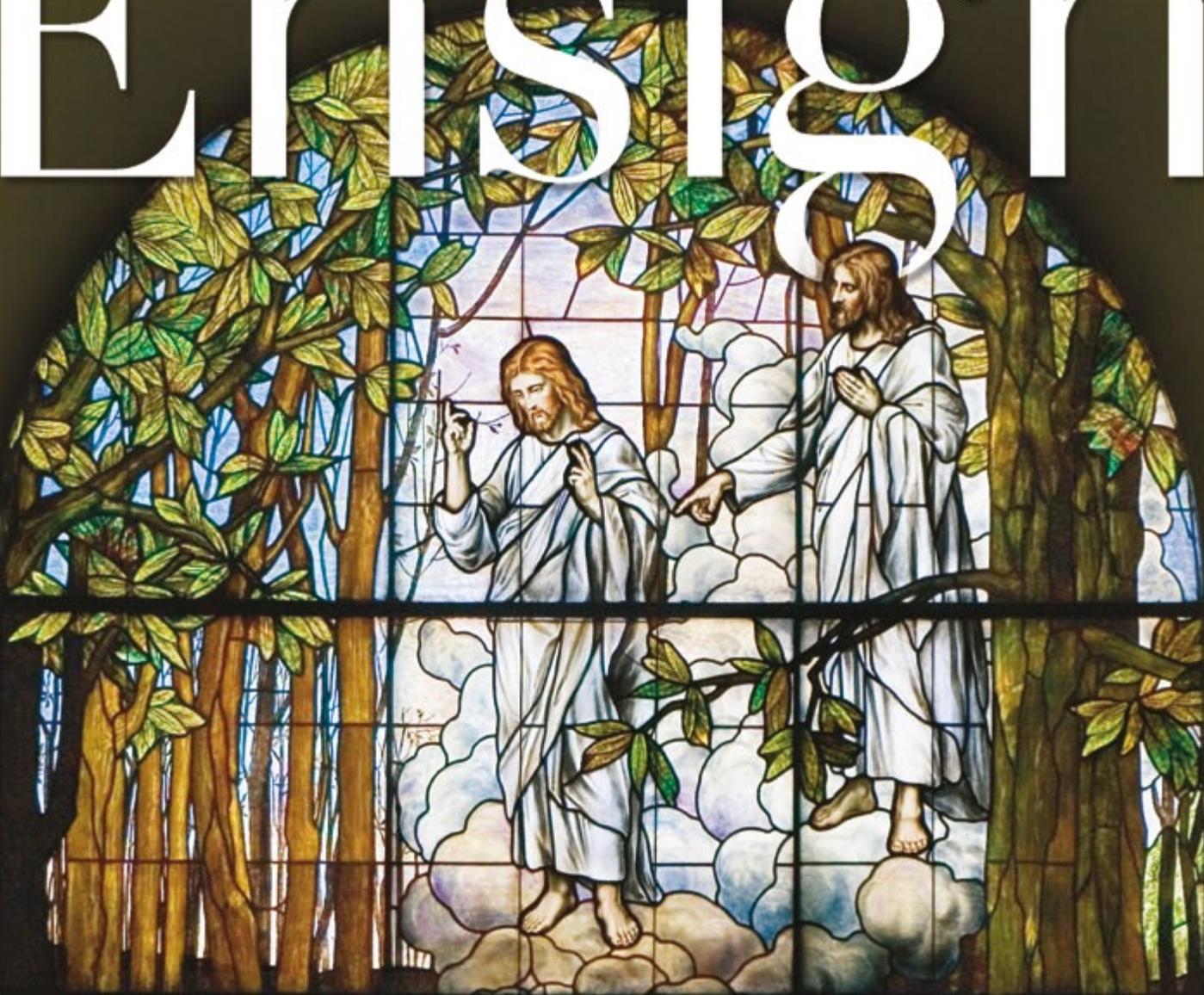


Ensign



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**How to Teach and
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Brigham City Tabernacle, by Al Rounds

Looking north on Main Street in Brigham City, Utah, USA, you can see the beautiful Brigham City Tabernacle. Located on what was previously known as "Sagebrush Hill," this site was designated by President Brigham Young to be the location of this tabernacle. The building was dedicated in October 1890.



MESSAGES

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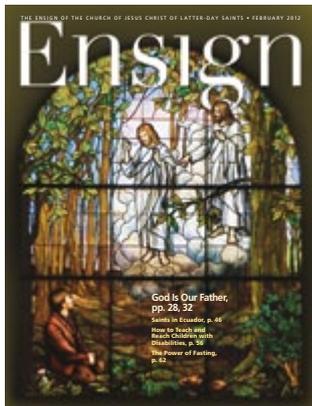
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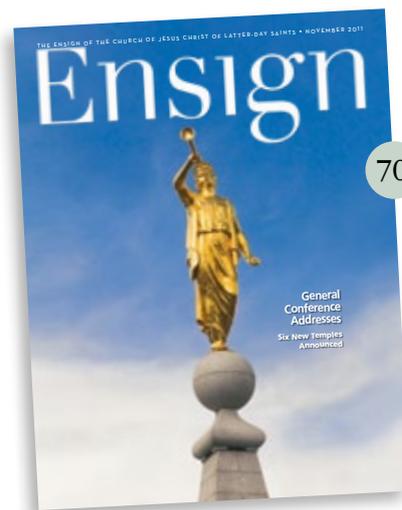
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A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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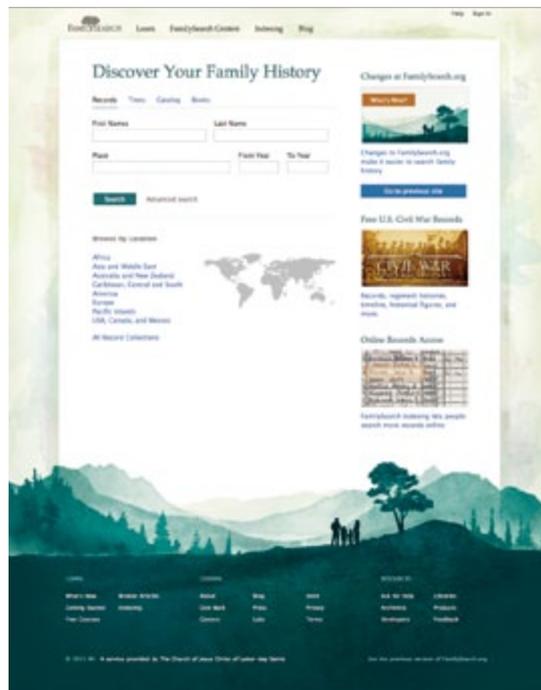
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By President
Henry B. Eyring
First Counselor in the
First Presidency



Exhort Them to Pray

When I was a little child, my parents taught me by example to pray. I began with a picture in my mind of Heavenly Father being far away. As I have matured, my experience with prayer has changed. The picture in my mind has become one of a Heavenly Father who is close by, who is bathed in a bright light, and who knows me perfectly.

That change came as I gained a sure testimony that Joseph Smith's report of his experience in 1820 in Manchester, New York, is true:

"I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

"It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

Heavenly Father was in the grove on that beautiful spring day. He called Joseph by name. And He introduced the resurrected Savior of the world as His "Beloved Son." Whenever and wherever you pray, your testimony of the reality of that glorious experience can bless you.

The Father to whom we pray is the glorious God who created worlds through His Beloved Son. He hears our prayers as He heard Joseph's prayer—as clearly as if they were being offered in His presence. He loves us enough that He gave His Son as our Savior. By that gift He made it possible for us to gain immortality and eternal life. And He offers us, through prayer in the name of His Son, the

opportunity to commune with Him in this life as often as we choose.

Priesthood holders in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have the sacred trust to "visit the house of each member, and *exhort them to pray vocally and in secret*" (D&C 20:47; emphasis added).

There are many ways to exhort someone to pray. For example, we can testify that God has commanded us to pray always, or we can describe examples from scripture and from our own experience of the blessings that come from prayers of gratitude, supplication, and inquiry. For instance, I can testify that I know that Heavenly Father answers prayers. I have received direction and comfort from words that have come into my mind, and I know by the Spirit that the words were from God.

The Prophet Joseph Smith had such experiences, and so can you. He received this answer to heartfelt prayer:

"My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high" (D&C 121:7–8).

That was revelation from a loving Father to a faithful son in great distress. Every child of God can commune in prayer with Him. No exhortation to pray has had as great an effect on me as have the feelings of love and light that come with answers to humble prayers.

We gain a testimony of any commandment of God by keeping that commandment (see John 7:17). This is true of the command that we pray always vocally and in secret. As your teacher and your friend, I promise that God will answer your prayers and that by the power of the Holy Ghost, you can know for yourself that the answers are from Him. ■



TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

- “Pictures are valuable tools for strengthening the main idea of a lesson” (*Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 176). Show a painting of Joseph Smith or the First Vision. Discuss the experience Joseph Smith had with prayer. How would your prayers be more meaningful if you pictured “Heavenly Father . . . close by,” as does President Eyring?
- As President Eyring suggests, consider sharing your testimony about prayer, describing blessings you have received because of prayer, or sharing scriptures about prayer.

YOUTH

Powerful Prayer

By Austin C.

Prayer is one of the greatest and most important ways to connect to, talk with, and be comforted by our Heavenly Father.

While I was saying my prayers one night, I thought about what my family was in need of, what I was grateful for,

and also what I needed to repent of. Right after closing my prayer, I thought about the many worldly things that could easily distract me from my goals.

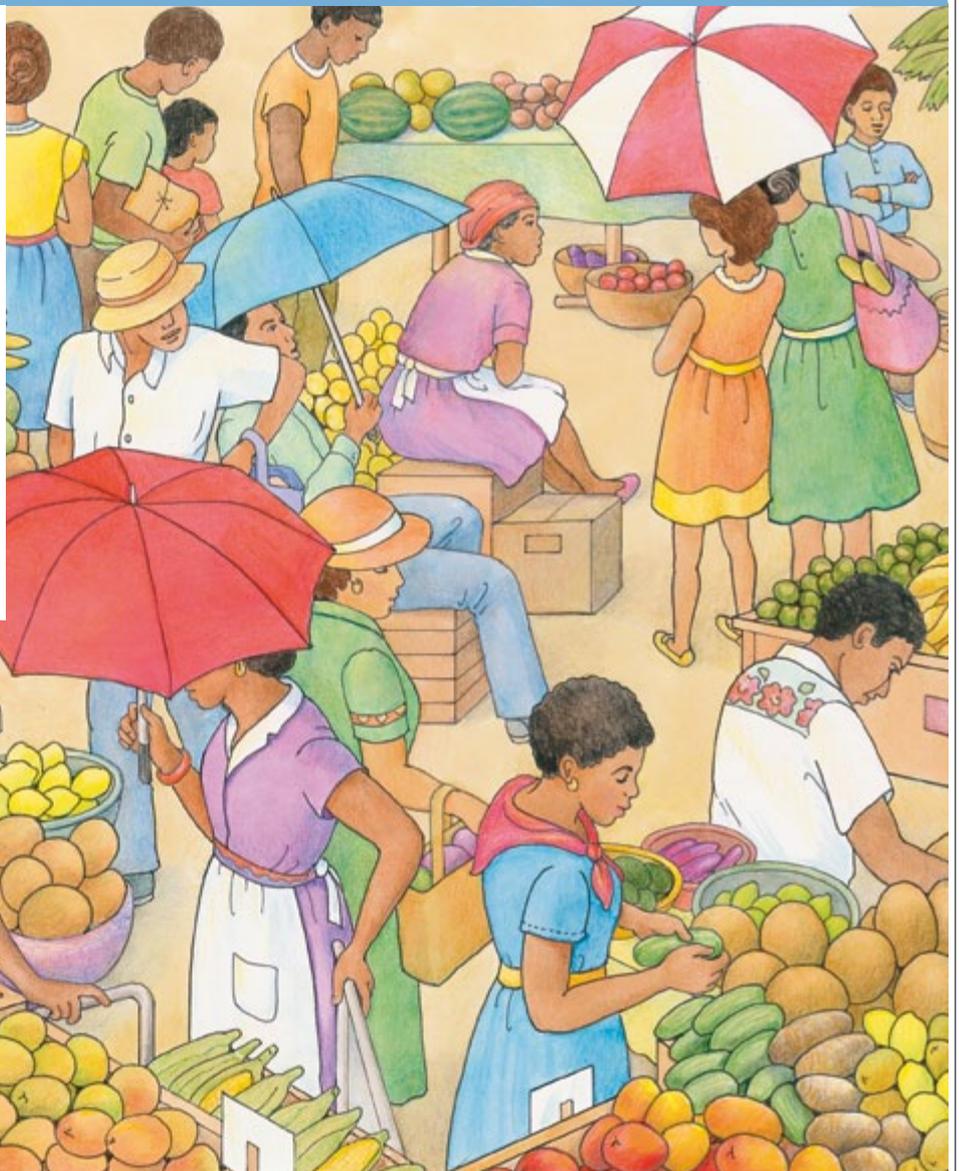
But during my prayers, I feel that if I pray sincerely and humbly, my burdens are lightened, my sins are

washed away, and my problems have answers. I realize how close to God I feel while I say my prayers. It shows me how important we all are in God's eyes. I testify that prayer is one of the most powerful and important things that we can do.

CHILDREN

Heavenly Father Hears Me When I Pray

President Eyring says that Heavenly Father "hears our prayers . . . as clearly as if they were being offered in His presence." He can hear us no matter where we are or what's going on around us. Can you find the child praying in this picture?



Study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life.

Guardians of the Hearth

You are the guardians of the hearth,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) as he introduced “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” in the general Relief Society meeting in 1995. “You are the bearers of the children. You are they who nurture them and establish within them the habits of their lives. No other work reaches so close to divinity as does the nurturing of the sons and daughters of God.”¹

For almost 17 years now this proclamation has reinforced that our most significant responsibilities are centered in strengthening families and homes—no matter our current circumstances. Barbara Thompson, now second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, was in the Salt Lake Tabernacle when President Hinckley first read the proclamation. “That was a great occasion,” she remembers. “I felt the significance of the message. I also found myself thinking, ‘This is a great guide for parents. It is also a big responsibility for parents.’ I thought for a moment that it really didn’t pertain too much to me since I wasn’t married and didn’t have any children. But almost as quickly I thought, ‘But it does pertain to me. I am a member of a family. I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a cousin, a niece, and a granddaughter. I do have responsibilities—and blessings—because I am a member of a family. Even if I were the only living member of my family, I



am still a member of God’s family, and I have a responsibility to help strengthen other families.’”

Fortunately, we are not left alone in our efforts. “The greatest help,” says Sister Thompson, “we will have in strengthening families is to know and follow the doctrines of Christ and rely on Him to help us.”²

From the Scriptures

Proverbs 22:6; 1 Nephi 1:1; 2 Nephi 25:26; Alma 56:46–48; Doctrine and Covenants 93:40

What Can I Do?

1. How can I help the sisters I watch over to strengthen families?
2. How can I be a righteous influence in my family?

Faith, Family, Relief



From Our History

“When Sister Bathsheba W. Smith served as the fourth Relief Society general president [from 1901 to 1910], she saw a need to strengthen families, and so she established mother education lessons for Relief Society sisters. The lessons included counsel on marriage, prenatal care, and child rearing. These lessons supported President Joseph F. Smith’s teachings about the Relief Society helping women in their roles at home:

“‘Wherever there is ignorance or at least a lack of understanding in regard to the family, duties of the family, with regard to obligations that should exist and that do rightfully exist between husband and wife and between parents and children, there this organization exists or is near at hand, and by the natural endowments and inspiration that belongs to the organization they are prepared and ready to impart instruction with reference to those important duties.’”³

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 101.
2. Barbara Thompson, “I Will Strengthen Thee; I Will Help Thee,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 117.
3. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 153.

For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.

THE LORD HAS GIVEN US A LAW OF Health

One of the great blessings we received when we came to earth was a physical body. Our bodies are holy and so important that the Lord calls them temples of God (see 1 Corinthians 3:16). He also tells us that none of His commandments are temporal but that all His “commandments are spiritual” (D&C 29:35). So His commandments concerning our physical health are also for our spiritual good (see D&C 89:19–21).

Because our Heavenly Father wants us to take care of our bodies, He revealed essential information on how to do so. Much of this information is found in Doctrine and Covenants 89 and is known as the Word of Wisdom.

Here we learn several things we should and should not do to keep our bodies healthy. The spirit of this law is to consume nutritious foods and to refrain from anything that is habit forming or harmful to our bodies. Among the things the Lord commands us not to take into our bodies are alcohol and tobacco, which are drugs (see D&C 89:5–8). We should not use any drugs except when they are necessary as medicine. Those who misuse legal or illegal drugs need to seek help so their bodies can become clean again and free from addiction. A clean body is more receptive to the Holy Ghost.

The Lord also counsels us against

the use of “hot drinks” (D&C 89:9). Prophets have explained that this means coffee and tea, which contain harmful substances. We should avoid all drinks, whether hot or cold, that contain harmful substances.

We should also avoid anything that is harmful to our bodies, such as overeating or refusing to eat enough healthy foods to maintain our health.

In addition to the things we should not do, the Word of Wisdom tells us

things that we should do. Several of those things are shown here.

Those who obey the Lord’s law of health “shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones; and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint” (D&C 89:18–20). ■

For more information, see *Gospel Principles* (2009), 167–72; and *True to the Faith* (2004), 186–88.



In the Word of Wisdom and other scriptures, the Lord has revealed health guidelines:

1. Fruits, vegetables, and wholesome herbs are to be used "in the season thereof" and "with prudence and thanksgiving" (see D&C 89:10–11).



2. Meat and poultry have been "ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly" (D&C 89:12).



3. "All grain is good for the food of man" (D&C 89:16).



BELOW: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION © GETTY IMAGES; RIGHT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY WEIDEN C. ANDERSEN, JOHN LUKE, ROBERT CASEY, © CORBIS



4. We should not "labor more than [we] have strength" (D&C 10:4).



5. We should develop proper sleeping habits so "[our] bodies and [our] minds may be invigorated" (D&C 88:124).

Nutritious meals, regular exercise, and appropriate sleep are necessary for a strong body."

President Thomas S. Monson,
"That We May Touch Heaven,"
Ensign, Nov. 1990, 46.

WITH FAITH IN GOD, I AM **Never Alone**

By Donna Hollenbeck

*“The Spirit
itself beareth
witness with
our spirit,
that we are
the children
of God”
(Romans 8:16).*

You are never alone when you have faith in Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father.” I have heard phrases like this many times, but I never before understood them to the depth that I do today.

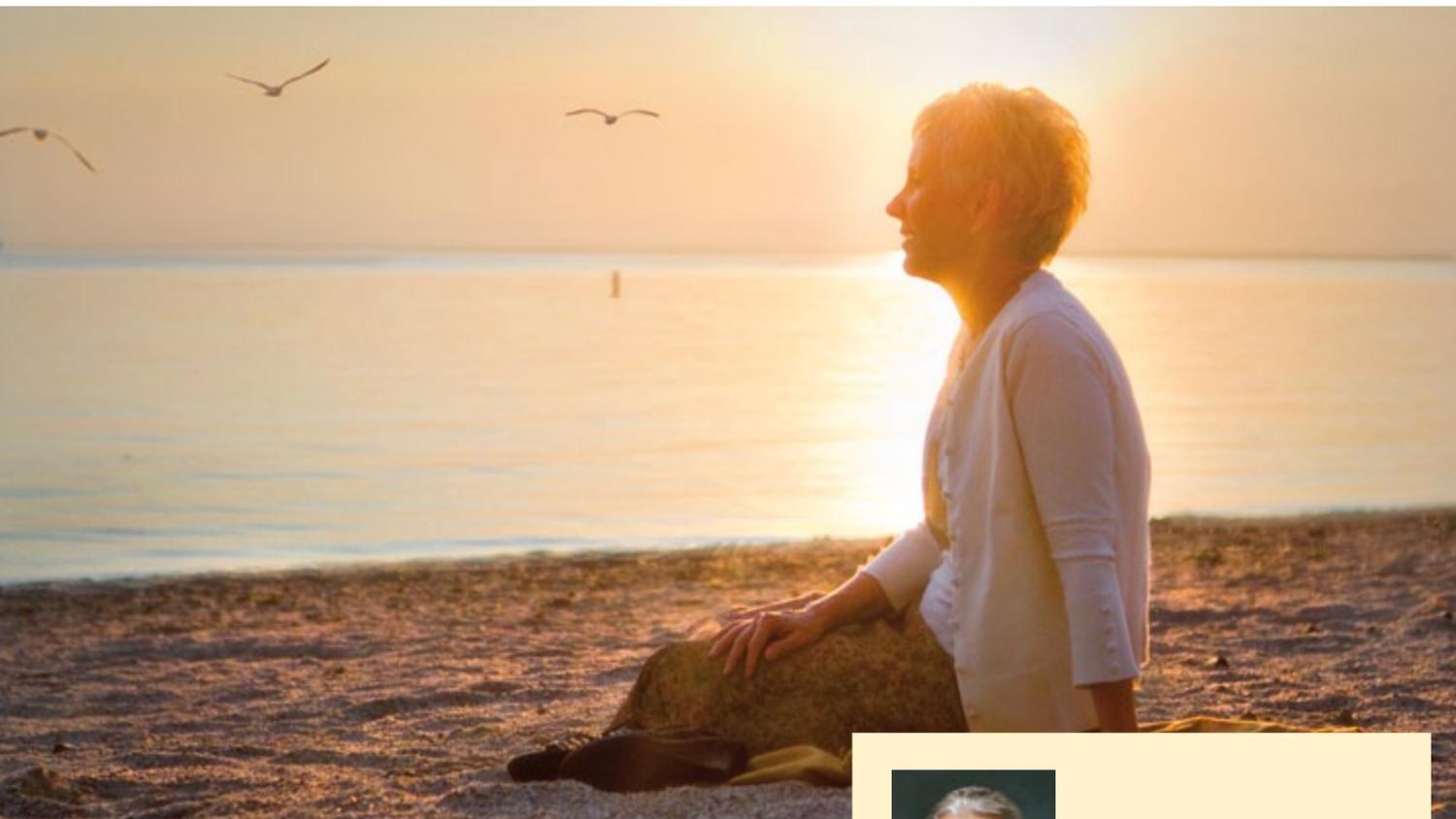
Every person eventually faces the inevitable fact that one day he or she may be alone. For me, due to a divorce, children moving out, and early retirement, this day came sooner than I had anticipated. The most excruciating obstacle I had to overcome was living with this sudden quiet and emptiness after spending years of precious time with family and friends, spouse and children, and fellow employees.

While I enjoyed the visits with my home and visiting teachers and other friends, most of the time I felt completely alone, and I didn't like it. The constant stillness eventually evoked an uncontrollable stream of tears. I had nowhere to turn for comfort except on my knees in prayer.

After I cried to Heavenly Father for what

seemed to be hours, a transition started to take place inside of me, and I felt Heavenly Father's Spirit. For a moment my tears subsided as I absorbed His love piercing my soul. I knew He understood my sadness, and that allowed me to feel comfortable enough to cry even longer, just as a child who has fallen cries when seeing his or her mother. As I buried my head in what I imagined to be Heavenly Father's lap, I knew He was willing to comfort me for as long as I needed. Occasionally, I had some fleeting thoughts of being too old to be acting this way. However, I knew that it didn't matter to Heavenly Father how old or young I was. I just knew that He understood me and would always be there for me.

Today, although I would still prefer to be married, I have come to enjoy the quiet. I listen to the ocean waves and watch the sunset. I literally stop and smell the roses. I listen and act according to the guidance of the Spirit. I am not afraid to be alone because I



am not alone as long as I believe in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. I see the Spirit of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in most everything I do.

“Through faith in Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father, you are not alone.” Those words have a new and profound meaning deep in my heart today, and I know without a doubt that I am never alone. I am His daughter, and He loves me. ■

For more information on this topic, see Joseph Smith—History 1:5–20; Robert D. Hales, “Gaining a Testimony of God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost,” Liahona and Ensign, May 2008, 29; and Susan W. Tanner, “Daughters of Heavenly Father,” Liahona and Ensign, May 2007, 106.



WHY DOES HEAVENLY FATHER LOVE US?

“He loves us because He is filled with an infinite measure of holy, pure, and indescribable love. We are important to God not because of our résumé but because we are His children. He loves every one of us, even those who are flawed, rejected, awkward, sorrowful, or broken. God’s love is so great that He loves even the proud, the selfish, the arrogant, and the wicked.

“What this means is that, regardless of our current state, there is hope for us. No matter our distress, no matter our sorrow, no matter our mistakes, our infinitely compassionate Heavenly Father desires that we draw near to Him so that He can draw near to us.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Love of God,” Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2009, 22–23.



FINDING
HARMONY
AS WE
Struggle
TO **Juggle**

By E. Jeffrey Hill

Finding balance in our lives can be tricky. Here are four suggestions that can help.

Life is hectic. We have so much to do, especially once children enter the picture. There's school, work, Church callings, housework, hobbies and activities, and any number of other things claiming our time. It's no wonder that so many of us feel stressed.

There is no one formula for creating greater harmony in our lives, but we can each do specific things to



experience greater joy, including engaging in rejuvenating activities, setting aside time to be with our families, and focusing on the Savior.

1. Increase Energy

Busy schedules or long work hours often leave us feeling tired and worn out. When that happens, many people find they have little energy left for service at home or at church. However, we can boost the energy we have throughout the day in several simple ways.

Communicating with our Father in Heaven while at work is an often-overlooked way to increase energy. One father said he prays frequently at work, sometimes vocally and sometimes silently, and feels blessed with energy that helps him perform more effectively in his job. As the Spirit helps him solve work problems, he feels he has more time and energy for his family and Church service.

We can also increase our energy by participating in activities that renew us. For example, frequent physical exercise increases our stamina and often gives us a boost throughout the day. Peaceful music can soothe the soul. Some people find talking to a friend to be energizing. A short nap is often invigorating. Having a few minutes alone in quiet solitude can rejuvenate the mind.

The commute to and from work can also be a good time to renew energy. One mother reviews scriptures she has memorized as she walks to work, and she arrives at her job with a clear mind. A father listens to conference talks as he drives home from work. By the time he greets his family, he has forgotten about frustrating workday experiences and is ready to focus on his family.

2. Simplify Your Life

In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin counseled, “And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength” (Mosiah 4:27). Sometimes as we seek to please and help those around us, we agree to do too many things and neglect the activities that are the most important.

One way to simplify our lives is to follow the prophets and stay out of debt. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum



of the Twelve Apostles promised great blessings to those who pay an honest tithing, spend less than they earn, learn to save, honor financial obligations, and teach children sound financial principles.¹

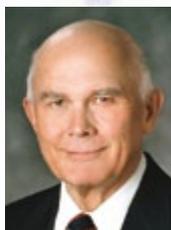
Try to combine activities as much as possible. For example, a couple that goes on a walk together can get needed exercise, talk about their children, share ideas about Church callings, express their affection, brainstorm solutions to problems at work, and be rejuvenated. This one activity is of great value because it can contribute to so many facets of life.

3. Focus on the Most Important Things

When Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve was in law school, he had to make the most of limited time with his daughters. He recalls, “My favorite play activity with the little girls was ‘daddy be a bear.’ When I came home from my studies for a few minutes at lunch and dinnertime, I would set my books on the table and drop down on all fours on the linoleum. Then, making the most terrible growls, I would crawl around the floor after the children, who fled with screams, but always begged for more.”²

We have been counseled that our families should take priority over other commitments. We strengthen our families when we set aside undisturbed time to be together. Elder Oaks taught, “Parents should act to preserve time for family prayer, family scripture study, family home evening, and the other precious togetherness and individual one-on-one time that binds a family together and fixes children’s values on things of eternal worth.”³

Having regular family meals is one way to make the time we spend together more meaningful. President Ezra Taft Benson taught, “Happy conversation, sharing of the day’s plans and activities, and special teaching moments occur at mealtime because mothers and



CHOOSE THE BEST THINGS

“We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best

because they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Good, Better, Best,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 107.

fathers and children work at it.”⁴

Parents can also take advantage of bedtime to increase quality time with their children. They can read or tell stories, pray, sing songs, and read the scriptures together. This is also an ideal time to teach the gospel. Additionally, these interactions may be just what a parent needs to put aside the frustrations of the day.

4. Center on the Savior

As we center our lives on the Savior, the needed happiness, energy, and peace we seek will come.

President Howard W. Hunter taught, “I am aware that life presents many

challenges, but with the help of the Lord, we need not fear. If our lives and our faith are centered on Jesus Christ and his restored gospel, nothing can ever go permanently wrong.”⁵

When the primary focus of our life is to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, everything else—employment, home, and church—falls into place. Sheri L. Dew taught, “Coming unto Christ means walking away from the world. It means placing Christ and Christ only at the center of our lives.”⁶

Each of us can experience greater joy and harmony in our lives as we learn to balance our responsibilities. We may feel an increase in happiness and energy as we spend more time on uplifting activities and set aside quality time to spend with our families. Most important, as we center our lives on the Savior we can receive the faith and endurance we need to help us on our journey through life. ■

NOTES

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Earthly Debts, Heavenly Debts,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2004, 40–43.
2. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Student Body and the President,” in *Brigham Young University 1975 Speeches* (1975); available at speeches.byu.edu.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “Good, Better, Best,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 105.
4. Ezra Taft Benson, *To the Mothers in Zion* (pamphlet, 1987).
5. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 40.
6. Sheri L. Dew, “We Are Women of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 98.

HANDLING CRITICISM IN OUR CALLINGS

Name withheld

An interesting blessing and challenge about a lay church is that we have to be patient with each other and ourselves as we learn and grow in our callings. When a difficult and sensitive situation—one that involved several ward members—came up in my calling, I handled it the best I knew how and moved on, believing the difficult experience was behind me.

I was wrong. Not everyone in our ward agreed about how the incident should have been handled, and it became a point of great discussion. Some agreed with what I had done. Others thought I'd made a significant blunder. I felt bad, but since I had done my best, I tried not to worry too much about it.

When I was released a short time later, however, it came as a tremendous blow. I knew that callings in the Church are only temporary, of course, but because of the timing, I felt as though my leaders were blaming or punishing me for what had happened.

The scrutiny seemed more intense than ever, and I wasn't sure I wanted to face anyone in the ward right away. So the week following my release, I stayed home from church. I did so

again the next week—and the next. The longer I stayed away, the more difficult it seemed to return.

After some time, I started thinking about what had happened. I realized that even though this was a painful situation, it wasn't worth putting my covenants on the line. Was the Church true or wasn't it?

Maybe I had handled the situation in my calling appropriately; maybe I hadn't. The truth is all of us are learning, and all of us make mistakes.

As painful as it was to admit, maybe who was right or wrong didn't really matter in the grand scheme. What *would* matter, though, was whether I kept my covenants. It would matter—both to my family and me—if I was attending church, renewing my covenants in sacrament meeting, and continuing to serve. And it would matter how I responded to priesthood authority.

I returned to church. A short time later I received another calling. That calling—and callings since—required that I serve with some of the people who had criticized my actions. That has been difficult. But I am glad I haven't let their comments stop me from enjoying the blessings of Church activity. ■



GIVING EACH OTHER THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

“Perhaps the greatest charity comes when we are kind to each other, when we don't judge or categorize someone else, when we simply give each other the benefit of the doubt or remain quiet. Charity is accepting someone's differences, weaknesses, and shortcomings; having patience with someone who has let us down; or resisting the impulse to become offended when someone doesn't handle something the way we might have hoped. Charity is refusing to take advantage of another's weakness and being willing to forgive someone who has hurt us. Charity is expecting the best of each other.”

Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Tongue Can Be a Sharp Sword,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 19.



**Working Hard,
Working Together**

Living in a small country town has its advantages, but one disadvantage is the mud in the spring. In an attempt to keep the mud outside the house, I planned to spread gravel on my dirt driveway. I had 60 tons of gravel brought in and left in two piles, which looked even bigger when I stood in front of them. In our town, people commonly have big trucks, trailers, tractors, front loaders, and backhoes. Me? I'm the guy with a shovel and a wheelbarrow.

I asked Rory, my 15-year-old son, if he would come out and help. He wasn't the picture of enthusiasm, but he agreed. Soon after he and I started working, I was surprised when my nine-year-old daughter wanted to help too. She took the rake and spread the gravel enthusiastically. She seemed to enjoy being with her big brother and me. I didn't know how long she would last, but I would let her help while she was willing.

Then my five-year-old son came running out to help. He grabbed a plastic toy shovel and tried to take individual scoops to the driveway. He eventually found his toy dump truck and began a cycle of filling the truck, pushing it to the driveway, and dumping it. Finally he found a shovel with a broken handle and helped Rory and me fill the wheelbarrow. He was more in the way than he was helpful, but his energy was inspiring. I was impressed.

Rory was the real surprise that day. He was a teenager whose world was getting larger than the one his dad used to fill. I had never had any real problems with him, but he was no longer the little boy who would hold my hand and chatter as we walked. His world now included many activities and friends that took him outside the home. We still enjoyed each other's company but found it harder to spend time together. I wouldn't have guessed that moving gravel would facilitate openness between us, but on that day it did just that.

As we shoveled, each to our own rhythm, Rory started talking. At first we discussed the job at hand, but then the talk turned to other things that were on his mind. We discussed music that he was interested

in. He was active in certain forums on the Internet and described the posted conversations. In school he had a psychology class, and we discussed some of the ideas. Then there was the topic of his friends, and several funny stories followed.

As we talked we filled the wheelbarrow, and then I would lift the load, wheel it to a bare spot, and dump it. I was pleasantly surprised when Rory followed me during these short intervals in order to keep up the conversation. I am pretty sure he didn't know how much his willingness to talk meant to me. I tried not to let on. His talking so

freely to me didn't happen every day.

As we worked, blisters formed on my hands, but they were just a reminder of the sweet time I spent with my children, especially my oldest son.

Across the street a young construction contractor was building his house. While I was working, he was using a front loader to push the earth around the foundation of his home. It would have taken 20 minutes to get our job done with his powerful machine, but I was afraid he was going to come over and offer to help. I would have looked foolish turning

down his help, but accepting it would have robbed me of the unexpected experience I was having with my children. Toward the end of the job, when I was exhausted, I wasn't sorry. My children were still there and were still talking to me. Manually moving that gravel was the sweetest hard work I had ever done. ■

As we worked together, blisters grew on my hands, but they were just a reminder of the sweet time I spent with my children.



WE ALL HAVE WORK TO DO

"We have to work together to make a family succeed. But it's not something we can do by assignment. It's a matter of the heart. Children and parents have to have in their hearts a desire to make each other happy."

Elder D. Lee Tobler (served as a member of the Seventy from 1998 to 2003), "Homegrown Happiness," *New Era*, Feb. 2004, 12.



Keeping Safe & Balanced

in a Google-YouTube-Twitter-
Facebook-iEverything World

*There are “apps” for everything—and also ways to stay
spiritually grounded in a digital world.*

Computer tablets, gaming systems, smartphones, and handheld devices—digital technologies are proliferating faster than you can say, “There’s an app for that.” And, like a nuclear reaction that can power whole cities—and level them—they have vast powers for good and ill.

They can keep us in touch with loved ones far away—and isolate us from those in our own homes.

They can save us time in paying bills and reading the news—and consume it in answering e-mails and posting status updates.

They can help us study and share the gospel—and cause us to idle away our time and drive away the Spirit.

They can mobilize us to serve others—and keep us self-absorbed, focused on an unending stream of meaningless minutiae.

They can educate, energize, elevate, and inspire us—and they can distract, enervate, addict, and destroy us.

Around the Church, members are using digital technologies in innovative ways. They show Mormon Message videos in family home evening, reach out to ward members via social networks and text messaging, and work on family history via the Internet.

So how can we harness technology’s awesome potential while protecting ourselves and our loved ones from its potentially devastating ill effects? Here are some key concepts and strategies.

Safety First

We don’t allow teenagers to drive a car until they are old enough to be able to follow the rules designed to keep them safe on the road. But even a young child can, with a few small clicks, unintentionally steer a computer or a smartphone app from the newest Mormon Message to an image created by man’s darkest imaginings. An essential part of safety is making sure children have access to digital devices only when they are old enough to use them responsibly. Additionally, several technological tools can help us keep ourselves and our families safe:

- **Internet content filters.** These are as important to your family’s spiritual well-being as a child lock on a cupboard full of toxic cleaning supplies is to a toddler’s physical safety. Content filters come in three basic types:
 - *Filtering software*—Download it from the Internet or buy it in a store and install it.



BE CAREFUL IN CYBERSPACE

"I raise an apostolic voice of warning about the potentially stifling, suffocating, suppressing, and constraining impact of some kinds of cyberspace interactions and experiences upon our souls. . . . I plead with you to beware of the sense-dulling and spiritually destructive influence of cyberspace technologies that are used to . . . promote degrading and evil purposes."

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Things as They Really Are," *Ensign*, June 2010, 20.

Hardware filters—Your cable modem or DSL router may have built-in software that can filter Internet content.

Internet proxy filters—Check to see if your Internet provider offers a filtering service.

Caution: be aware that anti-virus and anti-spyware software does *not* filter content.

- **Safe-mode add-ons.** Available for computers, tablets, and smartphones, add-on applications allow you to select safe content for your child, review how much time he or she spends on different activities, and restrict him or her from viewing objectionable content such as pornography. To find a safe-mode add-on, do a web search of "kids safe mode." You can also set Google, YouTube, Yahoo!, and other search platforms to filter inappropriate content.

Setting Boundaries

One study estimates that among children between eight and eighteen in the U.S., the average amount of time spent each week using entertainment media is about 53 hours.¹ Another study suggests that nearly one in ten young people who play video games show classic symptoms of addiction.²

One reason it's so easy to overuse digital activities, says Ken Knapton, an Internet safety expert, is that they lack the kind of natural boundaries that help us moderate other activities. A child stops playing softball when his or her arm gets tired or when it gets too dark



to see the ball. It's much easier to ignore the subtle cues that tell us when it's time to stop watching funny animal videos, looking at friends' Facebook photos, or beating the next game level.

It takes careful monitoring to make sure we're not allowing our technology use to numb our minds and consume much of the precious time God has given us. An important element of parenting in the digital age is helping children establish firm limits for digital use. Children also need guidance in learning to wisely balance digital activities with reading, outdoor activities, physical exercise, creative play, service, work, and time with family.

Digital Rules

No piece of software or hardware is fail-safe. Individuals and families need rules that will help keep them safe and balanced.

Recently the *Ensign* posted a question on its Facebook page:

See this month's *Friend* and *New Era* for stories to help children and youth use technology wisely.

“How do you live a well-balanced life, using digital technology without letting it take over?”

Within hours, dozens of people had shared their struggles and solutions. Each family has to decide what works best for them, but here are ways some of the respondents keep digital media in balance:

- Regularly teach children how to use digital devices wisely. For example, teach them what is appropriate to post on social networking sites and how to handle cyberbullying or inappropriate texting.
- Let children know that iPod players, cell phones, and other devices are subject to unannounced parental spot-checks. If you have older children who use social networking sites, become a “friend.”
- Keep the computer in a public area of the home.
- If you decide your child is old enough for a cell phone, don’t enable the Internet on it. You might consider a cell phone that can block all incoming and outgoing numbers except those selected by the parent, making the phone for emergency use only.
- Set up a family recharging station where children plug in cell phones each night at bedtime.
- Establish acceptable times and firm time limits for technology use. (See “Unplugged” on page 10 of this month’s *Friend* to see how some families do this.)
- Set a regular time each day or week when the family “unplugs” from digital devices. Some families also establish technology-free zones in certain areas of the home.
- Block peer-to-peer or “sharing” applications, many of which encourage stealing and open a portal to unfilterable content.

SOME OF THE CHURCH'S DIGITAL PRODUCTS

Here’s a look at some great digital products the Church has created for you and your family:

YOUTH

- Visit youth.lds.org to download Mormon Messages for Youth videos and dozens of songs from the youth music library. You’ll also find articles to help youth in their everyday lives.
- If you have a mobile device, use the app store to download the LDS Youth app for quick access to new youth videos, Mormonads, articles, and music.
- Visit dutytogod.lds.org and personalprogress.lds.org to use an interactive version of your *Duty to God* or *Personal Progress* booklet.
- Use the scripture mastery tools at seminary.lds.org/mastery.

ADULTS

- Follow the ministry and messages of the living prophets at lds.org/study/prophets-speak-today.
- Find out the latest on what’s happening around the world in the Church at news.lds.org.

CHILDREN

- Memorize the articles of faith by playing Articles of Faith Memory Quest at lds.org/friend.
- Listen to *Scripture Stories* at radio.lds.org. This radio series features children sharing their scripture insights and experiences, along with music and readings of scripture stories.
- Find stories, activities, coloring pages, and videos to create or supplement lessons for children at lds.org/friend.
- Meet Primary children from around the world. Go to lds.org/friend and click on “You Are One in a Million.”



- When children tell you they have encountered inappropriate content online or on a cell phone, keep your focus on how to prevent future problems. The child may already feel worried and ashamed, and your calm approach will help him or her feel confident enough to approach you in the future.

Using Internal Filters and Seeking the Best

By far the most important and effective type of filter is inside the mind and heart of the user. These five filter questions can be a good first step to staying in tune and in balance:

1. Am I using this technology to learn or to teach?
2. Am I using it to build faith and testimony in myself and others?
3. Am I using it to entertain in uplifting ways?
4. Am I giving enough undistracted in-person time to family and friends?
5. Am I devoting enough time to work, school, Church callings, and physical exercise?

With these guidelines firmly in place and with the Holy Ghost as our guide, we can use digital media to exponentially expand our search for things that are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13). ■

NOTES

1. Victoria J. Rideout, Ulla G. Foehr, and Donald F. Roberts, “Generation M²: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds” (a Kaiser Family Foundation study, January 2010), 2, kff.org.
2. Online survey of 1,178 U.S. children and teenagers, conducted by Harris Interactive, January 2007. See <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/allnewsbydate.asp?NewsID=1196>.

10 SIGNS OF DIGITAL OVERLOAD

1. Slipping away from activities with people to check e-mail or social networking sites.
2. Checking the same sites repeatedly within a short period of time.
3. Spending little time outside.
4. Finding it hard to complete a task such as writing a report without frequently breaking away to check e-mail or unrelated websites.
5. Spending little time in face-to-face interactions with friends.
6. Going online or using a digital device when you feel stressed or want to avoid an unpleasant task.
7. Family members spending most of their time at home in separate rooms interacting with screens.
8. Frequently using digital devices to entertain a child instead of talking, singing, playing, or reading with him or her.
9. Checking the computer first thing in the morning, or getting up during the night to use digital devices.
10. Spending long stretches of time surfing for content, often viewing content that is inappropriate or borderline.

10 WAYS TO CUT BACK

1. Check and answer e-mail only once or twice a day, at scheduled times.
2. Use social networking sites only at scheduled times and for a set number of minutes.
3. Practice a “digital Sabbath”—setting aside one or two days each week to “unplug.”
4. Leave your cell phone in another room during time with family or friends.
5. Call instead of texting.
6. Invite children to help search the house for supplies that can be used in nondigital activities: children’s books, board games, art supplies, and equipment for outside play.
7. Organize a talent show, art show, or service project with family or friends.
8. Use Internet-blocking software to keep on task while working.
9. Limit recreational surfing; watch TV and videos selectively and intentionally.
10. Keep a gospel-centered perspective, using technology to uplift yourself and people around you.

ENTER

into the Rest of the Lord



**By Elder
W. Craig Zwick**
Of the Seventy

The Book of Mormon prophet Alma taught that priesthood ordinances were designed to prepare mankind to come unto Christ. He declared:

“Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord” (Alma 13:16).

He also taught that during premortality, God tested and selected the men who would be His priesthood leaders in this life. They were “called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to

When we follow the counsel of living prophets, when we obey the commandments of God, and when we willingly honor our callings, responsibilities, and the priesthood, we will enter into the rest of the Lord.



To prepare us to enter into the rest of the Lord so that we might “rest with him in heaven” is what the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood are all about.

the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works . . . to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest” (Alma 13:3, 6).

The Prophet Joseph Smith added, “Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was.”¹

Thus, a primary responsibility of all who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood is to teach the doctrines of salvation. To prepare us to enter into the rest of the Lord so that we might “rest with him in heaven” (Moroni 7:3) is what the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood are all about.

Heavenly Father loves each of His children and wants all of us to return to Him. He has

provided prophets and priesthood leaders with true priesthood authority to help us stay on the strait and narrow path. We have, then, the guidance of these leaders to help us enter into His rest.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–1985) taught: “The rest of the Lord, where mortals are concerned, is to gain a perfect knowledge of the divinity of the great latter-day work. [President Joseph F. Smith said,] ‘It means entering into the knowledge and love of God, having faith in his purpose and in his plan, to such an extent that we know we are right, and that we are not hunting for something else; we are not disturbed by every wind of doctrine, or by the cunning and craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive.’ It is ‘rest from the religious turmoil of the world; from the cry that is going forth, here and there—lo, here is Christ; lo, there is Christ.’ . . . The rest of the Lord, in eternity, is to inherit eternal life, to gain the fulness of the Lord’s glory.”²

From this we understand that in this life “the rest of the Lord” comes as we increase our knowledge of, and faith in, the reality of Jesus Christ, even to the assurance that He lives and loves us. “The rest of the Lord” in eternity is entering into the presence of the Lord.

Latter-day teachings on priesthood ordinances, foreordination, and entering into the rest of the Lord help us comprehend three important principles.

1. The gospel is built upon the foundation of priesthood authority.

One of the most important and distinguishing aspects of the Church is its priesthood, defined so beautifully by President Joseph F. Smith:

“[The priesthood] is nothing more nor less than the power of God delegated to man by which man can act in the earth for the salvation of the human family, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and act legitimately; not assuming that authority, nor borrowing it from generations that are dead and gone, but authority that has been given in this day in which we live by ministering angels and spirits from above, direct from the presence of Almighty God.”³

Today we have living prophets, apostles, and priesthood leaders who were foreordained to their callings. They hold priesthood keys, authority, and power to lead, guide, and direct us so that we might enter into the rest of the Lord. There may be times in our lives when the way is not clear, when challenges, temptations, or discouragement obscure our path. During such times we can follow the wise counsel of priesthood leaders because we know they are called of God (see Articles of Faith 1:5).

2. As we sustain the priesthood, the priesthood will support us by helping us prepare to meet God.

When we become converted and follow the counsel of living prophets, when we obey the commandments of God, and when we willingly honor our callings, responsibilities, and priesthood, we will enter into the rest of the Lord.

When I was a young man, loving parents and wise leaders taught me the importance of serving a mission. At the time I turned 19, all young men in my country faced military requirements. For a while only a few young men could serve missions from any given ward. Because 17 priests lived in my ward



and were selected for missions according to age, I knew it would be a while before I could leave on a mission. I began thinking it would be too long to wait and that perhaps I should pursue other opportunities.

Looking back, I know Satan was trying to dissuade me from serving a mission. However, I was guided by the Spirit and counseled by a wise priests quorum adviser. I was blessed to make a good decision—I chose to serve a mission. My mission president taught me true principles. As I listened to him and followed his wise counsel, and as I obeyed and tried to honor my calling as a missionary, I was blessed to know of the divinity of Jesus Christ. My faith and testimony grew. My heart was fixed upon serving God and keeping His commandments. I felt joy and peace and was grateful that

Today we have living prophets, apostles, and priesthood leaders who are foreordained to their callings. They hold priesthood keys, authority, and power to lead, guide, and direct us so that we might enter into the rest of the Lord.



Serving a mission doesn't guarantee that we will enter into the Lord's rest. Throughout our lives we must choose to follow the counsel of our prophets and priesthood leaders.

the words “enter into the rest of the Lord” applied to me.

But just serving a mission doesn't guarantee that we will enter into the Lord's rest. Throughout our lives we must choose to follow the counsel of our prophets and priesthood leaders. We must be worthy of our own foreordination through continued faith, repentance, and good works. We must live worthily to receive the blessings provided by foreordained priesthood leaders.

3. We honor our sacred priesthood covenants by faithfully fulfilling our callings.

Alma's teachings of foreordination should affect the way we sustain those who are called to preside over us, and they should affect our responses when priesthood leaders extend to us callings or other assignments.

The parable of the nobleman and the olive trees, given in revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, reinforces this principle (see D&C 101:43–62). In the parable, the nobleman commanded his servants to plant 12 olive trees on a choice piece of land. The nobleman also asked them to build a watchtower as a protection for the orchard. The servants dutifully planted the olive trees, built a hedge, and set watchmen. They began to build the tower, but in the early stages of construction, as they were laying the foundation, they started to murmur among themselves.

The servants questioned the need for a watchtower during a time of peace. They doubted the wisdom of their master, and during their disputations with each other, they lost focus of what their lord had asked them to do. The enemy, perhaps recognizing their weakness, broke down the hedge and destroyed the olive trees.

The nobleman was disappointed and asked his servants how this could have happened. Then, in a teaching moment, he reviewed what he had asked them to do and added, “Go ye straightway, and do all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (v. 60).

We need to ask ourselves these questions:

- Do we accept callings from our priesthood leaders with joy and faith?
- Are we diligent in our callings, or do we begin but not complete our assignments as the servants did in the parable?
- Do we honor and sustain our priesthood leaders?

President Thomas S. Monson said:

“Miracles are everywhere to be found when

priesthood callings are magnified. When faith replaces doubt, when selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes.

“The priesthood is not really so much a gift as it is a commission to serve, a privilege to lift, and an opportunity to bless the lives of others. . . .

“For those of us who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, our privilege to magnify our callings is ever present. We are shepherds watching over Israel. The hungry sheep look up, ready to be fed the bread of life. Are we prepared to feed the flock of God?”⁴

When we serve with all our heart and energy, we and others are blessed. At the waters of Mormon, the people “clapped their hands for joy” (Mosiah 18:11) over the prospect of entering a covenant to help, strengthen, comfort, and serve one another. After they had been baptized, had received the priesthood, and had accepted assignments to tend to the people of the Church, they were taught what they would receive from the Lord by magnifying their responsibilities:

“For their labor they were to receive the grace of God, that they might wax strong in the Spirit, having the knowledge of God, that they might teach with power and authority from God” (Mosiah 18:26).

This Book of Mormon scripture beautifully describes what it is like to enter into “the rest of the Lord.”

In mortality we can receive a testimony of Jesus Christ in our hearts and enter into the rest of the Lord as we learn and teach the gospel. We can know in whom to trust as we follow the counsel of our prophets and



priesthood leaders, honoring their—and our—foreordained roles, callings, and priesthood responsibilities. As we do so, our fears will be removed and we will walk uprightly before the Lord. We will feel the deep, spiritual peace that will give us a perfect brightness of hope.

Then, when we stand before the Savior to be judged of Him, it will be “according to [our] works, according to the desire of [our] hearts” (D&C 137:9). If we are faithful, we will rejoice in the magnificent blessings of the Savior and His Atonement, entering into His rest and presence. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 511.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 633.
3. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (1986), 139–40.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Priesthood Power,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 50.

In mortality we can receive a testimony of Jesus Christ in our hearts and enter into the rest of the Lord as we learn and teach the gospel.

Questions & Answers

When I think about the things that have happened in my life, it's hard to love myself. I know that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love me; how can I more readily feel Their love in my life?

Growing up I was taught that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ loved me, but I just didn't feel it or believe it. I consistently prayed for help but was never able to recognize the feeling. One night I was at a fireside where Sister Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, was speaking. She left time for questions, so I asked, "If you have forgotten that you are a daughter of God and that He loves you, what



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CRAIG DIMOND

ADDITIONAL RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTION CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT ENSIGN.LDS.ORG.

can you do to know and feel that?" Her answer changed my life. She suggested that I get a Book of Mormon and write down the questions that I have. She then said that as I read through the Book of Mormon I would find answers and be able to feel and recognize His love for me. I did exactly that and found the answers I was looking for. An overwhelming feeling of love came over me, and I knew that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ knew who I was and what I was going through. I knew that They loved me. That has made the difference in my life, and I know it can for others too.

Laura Schooley, California, USA

Some of the mistakes of my youth made me feel that I was unworthy of Heavenly Father's love and less likely to receive His blessings. Over the years as I continued to repent and apply the Savior's Atonement, I came to realize that Heavenly Father did, indeed, love me and that He was helping me by showing me how to overcome my weaknesses.

One day as I read Ether 12:27, the Lord's words to Moroni enlightened my mind. The Lord promises that our weaknesses can become strengths as we humble ourselves before Him and have faith in Him. As I continue to progress and pray for guidance, the Lord shows me how to change my thoughts and actions and how to avoid temptation.



GOD'S PERFECT LOVE

"Though we are incomplete, God loves us completely. Though we are imperfect, He loves us perfectly. Though we may feel lost and without compass, God's love encompasses us completely. . . .

"Regardless of our current state, there is hope for us. No matter our distress, no matter

our sorrow, no matter our mistakes, our infinitely compassionate Heavenly Father desires that we draw near to Him so that He can draw near to us."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Love of God," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 22–23.

If I ever get discouraged, I think about the multitude of blessings that He has poured out on me and my family and remind myself how far I've come. The grace that Heavenly Father offers me through His Son is truly a sign of His love for me. It gives me confidence that I can live with Him again someday, despite the mistakes of my past.

Walt Morrell, Missouri, USA

I've suffered from depression for many years. Because of this challenge, even though I know logically that my Heavenly Father and Savior love me, I sometimes struggle feeling it in my heart and knowing that I am worthy of Their love. Here are some things that have helped me increase my feelings of self-worth and feel closer to my Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ:

Focus on the present. When I am tempted to dwell on past mistakes, I try to remind myself instead of recent accomplishments, my growing testimony, service I've rendered, and examples of the Lord's hand in my life.

Think progression, not perfection. When I make mistakes during the day and feelings of worthlessness

start to creep in, I reinforce feelings of worth and love by saying things like: "I am still learning. Heavenly Father loves me and wants me to grow. Next time I will do better."

Display artwork of Christ. One afternoon when I was struggling, a picture of Christ caught my eye, and I began to reflect on His kind, loving, and forgiving nature. The Spirit filled me with peace, love, and hope, and I felt renewed to continue on.

Repent of sins. I found that once I repented of my sins, a huge burden was lifted from me. I felt better about myself. I also felt closer to the Spirit and could feel my Heavenly Father's love more easily. Daily repentance continues to keep me close to Him.

Believe in your divine worth. I imagine Heavenly Father views me much like I view my own children: He loves me, knows me personally, believes I am innately good, and wants me to grow and develop.

Remember, Heavenly Father and the Savior want us to be happy and experience joy in our lives. Satan is the source of all lies, and he wants us to believe we are unworthy of love and forgiveness. When I turn my thoughts away from past mistakes and heart-aches and toward Heavenly Father and

Jesus Christ, I more readily feel Their love and am able to progress.

Jennifer Peterson, Arizona, USA

Singing helps me feel Heavenly Father's and Jesus Christ's love. I enjoy memorizing and singing Primary songs and hymns. The uplifting lyrics and the beautiful melodies remind me who I am and what I may become. "I am a child of God, and He has sent me here."¹ "I feel my Savior's love and know that he will bless me."² "Father in Heaven, we thank thee this day for loving guidance to show us the way."³ "He lives to bless me with his love. He lives to plead for me above."⁴ "Yes, I know Heav'nly Father loves me."⁵

Dale Bills, Utah, USA

God has given us prayer as a means of bringing down the powers of heaven to comfort us and help us feel His love. Prayer opens the communication lines with Him. It brings our will back in line with our Heavenly Father's. It quiets our minds to feel the Spirit and the love of our Heavenly Father. Always remember that we are children of our Heavenly Father. As we call upon Him, we will feel His love and acceptance.

Ammon Robinson, Utah, USA

As my children were growing up, I was a member of the Church but my husband was not. It was difficult at times to feel love for myself as a mother as I saw

my children stray from the gospel. Feelings of regret for not getting married in the temple, not being sealed to my children, and a divorce often flooded into my mind. I had been active in the Church, served diligently in my callings, and taught my children the gospel in our home, yet I still felt that I had failed.

With the help of my Heavenly Father and my Savior Jesus Christ, I came to realize I had felt Their love many times—through thanking Heavenly Father for the blessings in my life, receiving answers to prayers, reading the scriptures, attending the temple, and serving others. I started to ask myself, how can I not love myself when I have felt Their loving arms around me in times of despair?

The knowledge that I am truly a daughter of God, created in His image, and the atoning sacrifice of my Savior Jesus Christ have given me feelings of self-worth and love. Through Them, I now realize that the greatest gift I can give my children is to show them the true joy and peace

the gospel brings into my life and to share with them my belief that they are of great worth in the sight of God.

Shari S. Jensen, Texas, USA

Part of the pain we may feel from past experiences comes as we recognize how our actions have hurt others. The Lord says, "Go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you" (3 Nephi 12:24). We gain confidence in His love as we seek to make things right with our brothers and sisters on earth. It takes great courage to ask for and extend forgiveness. At times it takes even greater courage to forgive ourselves. A good bishop taught me that being unwilling to forgive is selfish, even when it is directed inwardly. I have found that as I forgive and ask for forgiveness, my capacity to love others increases and my ability to sense God's love for me is strengthened. I also find that I have a deeper reverence for the Savior's Atonement

SHARE YOUR IDEAS

An upcoming Q&A feature will focus on the following topic:

I attend the temple regularly, and each time I go I feel peace. However, I don't feel I am receiving the increased understanding I hear Church leaders describe. How can I make attending the temple a learning experience?

If you would like to share your ideas and experiences, please label your submission "Temple Learning" and follow the guidelines under "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" in the contents pages at the beginning of the magazine. Please limit responses to 500 words and submit them by March 16, 2012.

and greater desire to share the gospel. Learning to treat all of God's children the way He would helps us feel the joy of being "encircled about eternally in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15).

Anna Hope Johnson, Arizona, USA

In high school I did a lot of things that I am now ashamed of. I lied and stole from my friends and family, generally rebelling against everyone and everything. With a lot of help from my family, I decided to change and was able to turn things around. But even though I had changed, for years I looked back and was terribly embarrassed of who I was and what I had been. Two things helped me accept the Lord's forgiveness and love.

First, I remembered the stories of Alma and Alma the Younger in the Book of Mormon. In both cases they were unrighteous as youth and then changed their lives, both becoming great prophets. (See Mosiah 18, 27.) I realized the Lord would not have allowed them to be prophets if He did not approve of the people they had become, and they were able to gain His approval despite their unrighteous past.

Second, I thought of Doctrine and Covenants 64:10: "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men." Only the Lord has the right to decide whether or not to forgive me. I realized that I was obligated to forgive myself, just as I would be required by the Lord to forgive others.



Self-doubt and self-loathing drive the Spirit away. Once you have repented, replace your doubt and guilt with an attitude of self-forgiveness, and the ability to feel the love of God will follow. ■

Name withheld

NOTES

1. "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.
2. "I Feel My Savior's Love," *Children's Songbook*, 74–75.
3. "Teach Me to Walk in the Light," *Hymns*, no. 304.
4. "I Know That My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 136.
5. "My Heavenly Father Loves Me," *Children's Songbook*, 228–229.





By Elder
Quentin L. Cook
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

THE DOCTRINE OF THE FATHER

One of the sweetest and most fundamental truths revealed as part of the Restoration relates to the nature of our Heavenly Father and His personal connection to every person who comes to earth.

Among the first principles lost in the Apostasy was an understanding of God the Father. It is not surprising, then, that among the first principles revealed in the Restoration was an understanding of God the Father. By priority, the first declaration of faith by Latter-day Saints is “We believe in God, the Eternal Father” (Articles of Faith 1:1).

Members of the Church understand that God the Father is the Supreme Governor of the universe, the Power that gave us spiritual being, and the Author of the plan that gives us hope and potential. He is our Heavenly Father, and we lived in His presence as part of His family in the premortal life. There we learned lessons and prepared for mortality (see D&C 138:56). We came from our Heavenly Father, and our goal is to return to Him.

Among all doctrines, beliefs, and principles revealed to His children, the truths

related to His being and nature should stand as the preeminent focus. We acknowledge His existence and true nature in order to join with ancient believers and prophets in true worship (see Mosiah 4:9). The purpose of all that the Father has revealed, commanded, and initiated for the inhabitants of earth is to help us come to know Him, emulate Him, and become like Him so we can return to His holy presence. Eternal life is to know the Father and His holy Son, Jesus Christ (see John 17:3; Jacob 4:5; Moses 5:8).

The Eternal Pattern of Family

Central to knowing the Father is understanding the revealed pattern of family. The family is the most important unit in time and in eternity and is ordained of God.¹ Living in loving family relationships not only brings us great happiness, but it also helps us learn correct principles and prepares us for eternal

Missionaries and those they teach quickly learn the supernal significance of doctrine relating to the Father and the Son when learning about Joseph Smith’s First Vision or the plan of salvation because the Holy Ghost bears witness of these truths.

life.² In addition, family relationships help us know, love, and understand the Father. This is one reason Latter-day Saints have always emphasized the importance of marriage and family both in the Church and in society. God's plan provides a way for family relationships to extend beyond the grave. We can return to the presence of God, eternally united with our families.³

Our Heavenly Father has chosen not to reveal many details of our premortal life with Him. Perhaps this is because we can learn many things simply by observing the pattern for righteous families He established on the earth. Carefully observing and conscientiously living in accordance with righteous family patterns on earth is at the core of our quest to know the Father.

Heavenly Father and family are inseparably connected. When we understand the many dimensions of this connection, we can begin to comprehend more completely how personal and individual are Heavenly Father's love for and relationship to each of us. Understanding how He feels about us gives us the power to love Him more purely and fully. Personally feeling the reality, love, and power of that relationship is the source of the deepest and sweetest emotions and desires that can come to a man or woman in mortality. These deep emotions of love can motivate us and give us power in times of difficulty and trial to draw closer to our Father.

Loving Choice and Deliberate Act

Every human being is a begotten spirit son or daughter of our Heavenly Father.⁴ *Begotten* is an adjectival form of the verb *beget* and means "brought into being." *Beget* is the expression used in the scriptures to describe the process of giving life (see Matthew 1:1–16; Ether 10:31).

In God's revealed pattern for righteous families, the birth of a child is the result of a conscious and loving choice. It is the miraculous result of caring and deliberate actions taken by parents to participate with Heavenly Father in the sacred process of creating a mortal body for one of His spirit children. Knowing that our life is the result of a loving choice and a deliberate act can give us a

sense of our great personal worth in mortality. That sense of worth can reassure us of our potential and protect us from temptations.

Satan is pleased to use the less-than-ideal circumstances of some mortal births to cause some of us to question our personal worth and potential. Regardless of the circumstances of our mortal birth, we are all spirit sons and daughters of heavenly parents. God is a righteous and loving father. Our spirits came into being out of love and a deliberate choice to give us life and opportunity.

One by One

Righteous parents not only make deliberate and loving choices to bring children into the world, but they also prepare, pray, and eagerly wait during the period of gestation, anticipating the birth of their child. After birth they delight in holding, talking to, caring for, and protecting their child. They learn the baby's individual patterns and needs. They know the child better than the child knows himself or herself. Regardless of the number of children parents have, each is an individual to them.

Knowing this pattern helps us understand that as spirit children we are known individually by our Heavenly Father. He has known us at least from the time we became begotten spirits. We are His precious sons and daughters, whom He loves individually.

Known by Name

Another pattern of earthly families helps us understand the individual nature of the Father's love for us. One of the initial steps in creating an individual identity, after the child is born, is for parents to give their child a name. Naming is an important part of every culture and is often accompanied with solemn rituals because a name has great significance to the personal identity of its bearer. Children do not choose their names; their parents give them their names.

In most cultures a child is given a first (and in some cases a second, or middle) name. It is also common around the world for children to be given a family name



or a name that ties them to their parents, family, and ancestors. Some cultures use other identifiers such as a second family name (the mother's last name, for example) to further identify the child's relationship to family and society.

In that same pattern, we know that our Heavenly Father identifies us personally and individually. He knows us by name. In the few scriptures that mention individuals in the premortal world, they were identified by name in a pattern similar to how we are identified in mortality. In the Father's recorded visits to individuals on earth, He uses names to express that He knows and identifies us personally and individually. As the Prophet Joseph Smith said in reference to the First Vision appearance of the Father, "One of them spake unto me, calling me by name" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17; see also Moses 1:6; 6:27).

The Father knows us because He begat each precious spirit son and daughter, giving us individual identity and being. As He told Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee" (Jeremiah 1:5).

In His Image and with His Attributes

The Bible teaches that man and woman are created in the image of the Father (see Genesis 1:26–27). The science of genetics and personal observation both testify to the principle of offspring taking on the form, appearance, and traits of parents. Some build their sense of personal worth by comparing themselves to others. That approach can lead to feelings of inadequacy or superiority. It is preferable to look directly to our Father for our sense of self-worth.

Our mortal pedigree charts show many generations winding backward through the ages. Our individual spiritual pedigree chart,

Family relationships help us know, love, and understand the Father. This is one reason Latter-day Saints have always emphasized the importance of marriage and family both in the Church and in society.

When we seek to know the Father through patterns of righteous family life, we begin to understand the depth of love He has for us and begin to feel a deeper love for Him.

however, has only two generations—our Father’s and ours. Our form is His form, without the glory. “Now are we the sons [and daughters] of God, and . . . when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2; see also D&C 130:1). Within each of us lie the latent seeds of godliness that can be given flower and fruition by His blessing and by following the path of strict obedience shown to us by Jesus. There is power in saying or singing the words “I am a child of God.”⁵

The Father’s Love

One of the great distortions of the Apostasy was that it cast God the Father’s plan of salvation as overwhelmingly harsh. Frederic Farrar, the Anglican church leader, classical scholar, believer, and highly regarded author of *Life of Christ*, lamented that most Christian churches view hell and damnation incorrectly as a result of translation errors from Hebrew and Greek to English in the King James Version of the Bible.⁶

As revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, a loving Father’s plan of salvation applies to all humankind, including all those who do not hear of Jesus Christ in this life, children who die before the age of accountability, and those who have no understanding (see D&C 29:46–50; 137:7–10).

Even for those who—unlike Satan and his angels (see Isaiah 14:12–15; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:7–9; D&C 76:32–37)—have lived unrighteously but have not rebelled against God, a loving Father has prepared kingdoms of glory that are superior to our existence on earth (see D&C 76:89–92). There can be no doubt of the Father’s love for His spirit children.

When we seek to know the Father through patterns of righteous family life, we begin to understand the depth of love He has for us and begin to feel a deeper love for Him. Efforts to distort and destroy the family are designed to keep the Father’s children from feeling His love drawing them back home to Him.

Abusive male authority figures, out-of-wedlock births, unwanted children, and other social challenges of our day make it harder for those who suffer them to comprehend, hope for, and have faith in a righteous, loving, and caring Father. Just as the Father seeks to help us to know Him, the adversary uses every means possible to come between the Father and us. Fortunately, there is no power, sin, or condition that can keep us from the love of the Father (see Romans 8:38–39). Because God loved us first, we can come to know Him and love Him (see 1 John 4:16, 19).

It is precisely because social ills are so prevalent today that we must teach the doctrine of the Father and family to help us heal, correct, and overcome the false ideas and practices pervasive in the world. As Eliza R. Snow (1804–87) so elegantly expressed, there are many in the world who call God “Father” but “[know] not why.”

Thankfully, “the key of knowledge” has been restored⁷ and the doctrine of the Father is upon the earth again! ■

NOTES

1. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.1.1.
2. See *Handbook 2*, 1.1.4.
3. See *Handbook 2*, 1.3.
4. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
5. “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301.
6. See Frederic W. Farrar, *Eternal Hope* (1892), xxxvi–xlii.
7. “O My Father,” *Hymns*, no. 292.

Encircled in the Arms of His Love

Name withheld

When I was six years old, my parents divorced. Though I continued to live with my mom, my dad was still present in my life after the separation. I stayed at his house on weekends and for one day in the middle of the week.

Despite his efforts to be a good father, when I was seven, he betrayed my trust in a very serious way. This breach of trust marked the beginning of a growing distance between us. When he called the house, I would avoid answering the phone. When I was older, I demanded that I be able to choose when I went to stay at my dad's house, rather than be forced to go when the custody order mandated me.

When I was in high school, visits gradually became a lot less frequent. I saw him only two or three times a month. When I went to college, the space between calls grew, until I would talk to him about once a semester. My relationship with my dad had become more of a formality than a true parent-child connection.

During my second year of college, I decided to talk to him about the incident from my childhood that I felt had damaged our relationship so many years ago. I hoped for closure, forgiveness, and a chance to start over. I e-mailed him my thoughts and waited for a reply.

Some time later I received his e-mail in reply. Before I read my father's response, I prayed and asked Heavenly Father that His Spirit be with me as I read the e-mail. This was such an important moment in my life—I was about to see what my dad had to say and what direction our relationship would take. I was scared and felt very alone.

Indeed I was alone, sitting in my room with my computer. I needed support. I continued to pray to Heavenly Father and felt His Spirit. At last I had the courage to read.

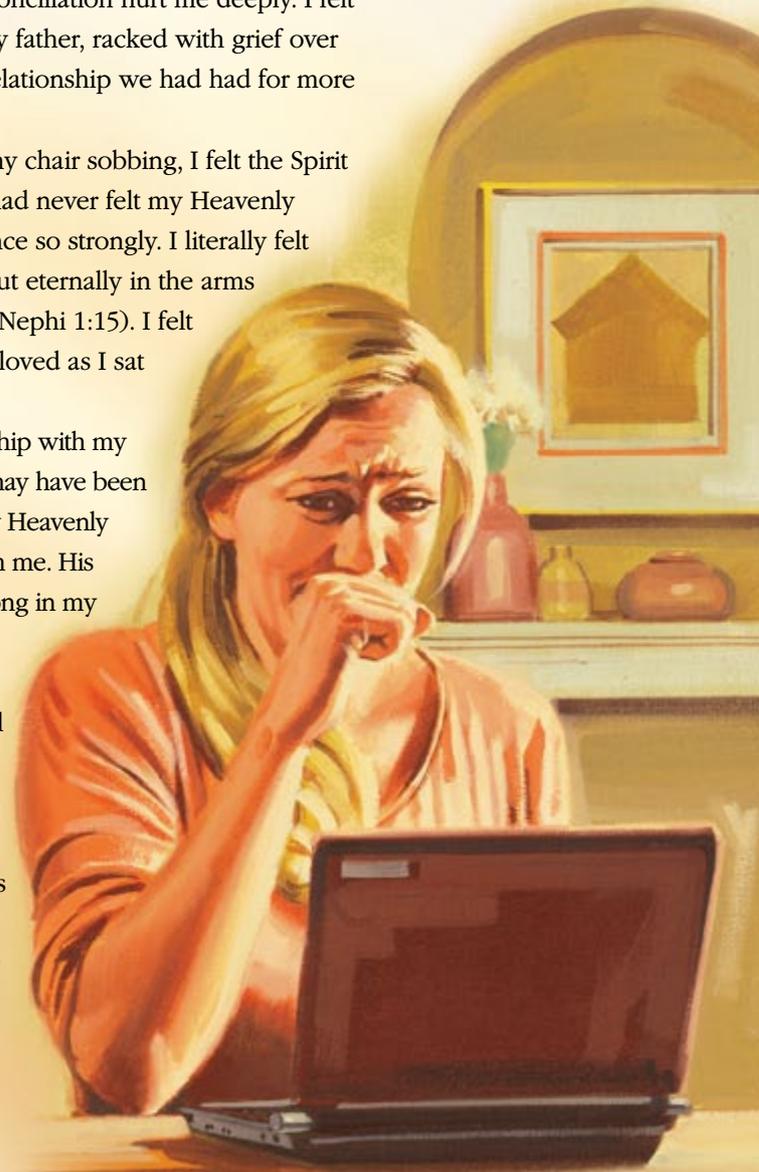
My dad replied with a very short e-mail in which he denied any memory of what I was saying and said that it was a really bad time for him to discuss our past.

The way he dismissed something that was so important to me and didn't seem to want any sort of reconciliation hurt me deeply. I felt deserted by my father, racked with grief over the troubled relationship we had had for more than a decade.

As I sat in my chair sobbing, I felt the Spirit around me. I had never felt my Heavenly Father's presence so strongly. I literally felt "encircled about eternally in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15). I felt reassured and loved as I sat crying.

My relationship with my earthly father may have been lacking, but my Heavenly Father was with me. His presence is strong in my life. I know He loves me, cares for me, and will always want a relationship with me. I know that He is my Father. And He is not going anywhere. ■

My relationship with my earthly father may have been lacking, but my Heavenly Father was with me.



Finding a Place to CALL HOME

Tommy hadn't been active in the Church for 20 years. His wife, Arlene, was a member of another faith. Moving to a new apartment complex changed everything.



When Tommy and Arlene Womeldorf moved from South Boston to Weymouth, Massachusetts, USA, in 2005, they found what they felt was a perfect apartment for their family.

And then the lease fell through.

Frustrated but needing to settle down somewhere, the Womeldorfs located an apartment in another complex and moved in. Little did they know the changes that were about to come into their lives because of where they lived.

Visiting the Church

Tommy had been raised in the Church but hadn't been active for over 20 years when he met Arlene and her daughter, Sophia, in May 2002. Arlene had been raised in another faith. At the time, both she and Tommy were looking for religious stability in their lives. Each had participated with a number of congregations of various faiths. Their search continued—sometimes together, sometimes separately—after their marriage in 2004.

The following spring, the Womeldorfs visited Tommy's brother in California, USA, where they attended Latter-day Saint worship services with the family. Arlene, who had never experienced Primary before, was impressed by "how clearly they were explaining the gospel to small children."

"Our oldest daughter, Sophia, went to Primary, so I went too," she explains. "I was absolutely in awe. I thought, 'This is a great thing!'"

Tommy remembers feeling somewhat irked by his wife's enthusiasm. "She really liked church," he recalls, "and I remember telling her that she didn't have to like my family's church to get their approval; they already liked her." But Arlene told him that her feelings were genuine.

Meeting the Neighbors

The Womeldorfs returned to Massachusetts from their vacation; a few months later they moved into the apartment in Weymouth. Not long after that they met their neighbors, Rick and Moshi Doane, who brought over some treats. When the Doanes left, Tommy told Arlene, "I bet they're Mormons."

He was right, as he learned soon after when he saw Rick again at the local train station. A short time later,

Rick and Moshi invited the Womeldorfs over for dinner.

Rick, who was serving as the ward mission leader in their ward at the time, recalls that he and Moshi didn't set out to do missionary work; they were simply trying to be friendly. "The stake public affairs committee had set a goal for the members of our stake to get to know 10 families each—not necessarily so that we could preach the gospel to them, but just so that we could better know our neighbors and be more involved in the community," he says. "Moshi and I thought we'd start with those we lived closest to. The stake's emphasis was on building relationships, and that's all we were looking to do."

The Doanes, of course, didn't yet know that Tommy had been raised in the Church or that Arlene was already interested in it. But the topic came up at dinner, and Arlene surprised Rick by asking, "Is there an LDS church nearby?" Determined to "take this carefully" and perhaps invite Tommy and Arlene to attend church "in a few weeks," Rick told them where the local meetinghouse was located and didn't push the subject further.

Trying It Out

So he was even *more* surprised when, on the next Sunday, Tommy and Arlene were already at church when he and Moshi arrived.

Tommy admits that when Arlene suggested going, he was a bit hesitant. "I knew that being active in the Church was demanding. I had spent 20 years trying easier things," he says. "But Arlene felt really strongly that we at least should try it out, and I wasn't going to stand in her way. So we went."

"I told Tommy, 'Let's go check it out to see if this is something we really want to pursue,'" says Arlene. And although she didn't realize it then, Arlene now acknowledges that the urgency she felt was prompted by the Holy Ghost.

Throughout church that day, Arlene kept remembering her "profound experience" at the ward in California, and she was equally delighted with what she found in the Hingham Ward. "It was a beautiful experience," she recalls. "I especially loved that we could participate as a whole family."



SIMPLE AND CLEAR

“Remember, brothers and sisters, we’re not marketing a product. We’re not selling anything. We’re not trying to impress anyone with our numbers or our growth. We are members of the restored Church of Jesus Christ, empowered and sent forth by the Lord Himself to find, nourish, and bring safely into His Church those who are seeking to know the truth.

“Viewed from that eternal perspective, what we are to do seems so simple and clear.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Essential Role of Member Missionary Work,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2003, 38.

Learning More

When Rick and Moshi asked whether the Womeldorfs would like to learn from the missionaries, Arlene told them: “Let us think about it.” She remembers that she felt excited but “not quite ready” to meet with the elders.

In the meantime, the Doanes and the Womeldorfs continued to build their friendship. Rick received permission from the bishop to teach Tommy and Arlene informal gospel lessons using *Preach My Gospel*, which they usually did on Monday nights for family home evening.

Moshi says that the evenings the two families spent together were the start of a good friendship, especially for her and Arlene. “Having the Womeldorfs in our home learning about the gospel was wonderful,” says Moshi. “I think it’s definitely easier to have an initial conversation with friends. We were just regular people talking about things that are simple yet so important.”

Tommy adds that for him, the experience was not necessarily one of learning but of remembering what he had been taught in his youth. Feeling the Spirit, he says, helped him build his faith.

In time, Arlene felt ready to learn from the missionaries. “Elder Marchant and Elder Beaver were wonderful,” she says. They taught her about the plan of salvation, the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the Book of Mormon, the last of which particularly touched her. “The elders were very patient, so I never felt overwhelmed,” she adds.

Over several months, both Tommy and Arlene felt that they were, as she says, “building a foundation.”

Building Friendships and Solidifying Testimonies

That foundation continued to be strengthened by the friendship of Rick and Moshi, as well as other members of the Church, like Rick’s parents, Bruce and Betsy Doane, who had joined the Church years earlier.

“Knowing them was one thing that really helped Arlene and me,” Tommy says. “I think it’s important that in sharing the gospel, we come off as more than good people or good neighbors or even good members of the Church. It’s also important that we just be real people who aren’t judgmental and who are truly loving and patient. And that’s what Bruce and Betsy did for us.”

Betsy notes that she had people who did the same thing for her when she was a new member of the Church. “I simply wouldn’t have made it without those friends,” she remembers. “I was so intimidated coming into the Church—everyone seemed so perfect—I felt like they had it all together and they understood everything there was to know. But having good friends in the gospel

helped me work through those feelings.”

Bruce adds that it’s important that members of the Church “welcome people as they are while still encouraging them to grow” as disciples of the Savior. Genuine friendship—both at and outside of church activities—plays a crucial role in that process. “It’s what Tommy and Arlene needed,” he says. “It’s what we all need.”

The Womeldorfs’ conversion continued “little by little,” Tommy says, because “we kept going and meeting new people. The Lord was helping things happen in our lives.”

Another one of the “new people” who helped things move forward was the bishop of the Hingham Ward, Leif Erickson. “Initially, Arlene was pulling me along,” recalls Tommy. “And then one day, the bishop, who had worked with me this whole time, invited me in for an interview.

“I told him that I didn’t feel I had much of a testimony at that point. I told him that I didn’t argue with anything the Church taught, but I didn’t have the burning feeling that so many talk about.”

Over the next several weeks, Bishop Erickson and Tommy talked about the connection between belief and hope and about other areas where Tommy had concerns.

By the time Arlene was ready to be baptized, Tommy was ready to fully return to activity in the Church.

Finding Place

Arlene was baptized on February 19, 2006. “The day made me think about my own baptism,” says Tommy. “It also made me think a lot about the 23 years I was inactive. I had a really rough time for those years. There were some fun times, but I paid a lot of big prices.”

“We spent all this time shopping for churches,” says Arlene, “and we never felt in place. Now we did.”

Among the things Arlene cherishes most about her membership in the Church are the ones that bless her family. “It’s amazing to me when we can all be together on a Monday night,” she says. “We’re not perfect at family home evening, but when we do our best and it comes together, it’s wonderful.”

Life still has its complications, Tommy adds. “Of course we’ve had small struggles here and there. Life challenges don’t go away. But with the big things, life has been amazing.”

Being Sealed in the Temple

One of the reasons the Womeldorfs call their life “amazing” is because of the sealing ordinance. A year after Arlene’s baptism, in February 2007, the family—which at that point included daughters Sophia and Julia—was sealed in the Mesa Arizona Temple. (They moved to Arizona in August 2006.) Since that time, two additional daughters—Fiona and Lola—have been born to Tommy and Arlene.

“Being sealed in the temple was a beautiful, wonderful experience,” says Arlene. “People who don’t realize what the possibilities are for an eternal family are really missing out on something. It was incredible to be with people I love and who love me and to feel so close to them.”

“The temple experience really was amazing,” Tommy agrees. “And it was great to have a lot of support from friends in our new ward.”



Tommy, Arlene, and Sophia Ryan Womeldorf, center, with neighbors Rick and Moshi Doane on Arlene's baptism day in 2006.

Acknowledging His Hand

Arlene feels grateful for what she has found. “The Spirit is real to me. The truth is powerful to me. And my experience has taught me that if your faith is what keeps you standing, you shouldn’t hide it from others. The gospel is what has made me strong inside and out.”

Tommy says that it’s still hard to believe that things happened as they did. “In Massachusetts, there aren’t very many members of the Church. Those who do live there are spread out. What are the chances that we would move right across the hall from a couple who were Latter-day Saints?”

“We had a good life before I came back to church and before Arlene joined,” Tommy continues, “but there wasn’t as much happiness. Before, we lived by searching around and hoping that what we were doing was what we should be doing. But now we *know* that we’re in the right place, working toward the right things. Now we’re *sure*. We know now that when we stay open to the Lord’s will, He blesses us far beyond even the best things that we can imagine for ourselves.” ■

Editors’ note: visit ensign.lds.org to read more from the Doanes and Womeldorfs on sharing the gospel easily and naturally.

THIS IS Your Work

By Julie B. Beck
Relief Society General President



You are a specially prepared generation with the technological talent to do family history work and temple service.

The prophet Abraham experienced the transitional seasons of life, much like young adults today face. We read about him in the Pearl of Great Price: “In the land of the Chaldeans, at the residence of my fathers, I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence” (Abraham 1:1). Abraham had approached the time to go out on his own and begin his life as an adult. He knew there was “greater happiness and peace and rest” (verse 2) for him than he currently had.

Abraham sought for and received those blessings of greater happiness, peace, and rest, and they are available to all members of the Church, including young adults. How do you prepare to receive them? Let’s focus on one of several activities you can be doing right now: participating in temple and family history work.

As Latter-day Saints, you have learned the importance of the temple and of temple ordinances. Over the centuries, many people have died without knowledge of the gospel. These

people are your near and distant relatives. They are waiting for you to do the necessary research to link your families together and perform saving ordinances in the temple in their behalf.

Having some knowledge of technology aids temple and family history work. You are a specially prepared generation with the technological talent to do this. My grandma Bangerter had a deep testimony and feeling of urgency for family history work. Many years ago, when she was compiling 25,000 names of her family, she had to enter each name by hand on forms. She would have been so grateful for a computer program to help her be more accurate and efficient. Now she has hundreds of talented young people among her descendants who are capable of assisting her from this side of the veil.

The Lord has promised to plant in your hearts the promises given to the fathers and that your hearts would be turned to the fathers so that the earth would not be utterly wasted at His coming (see D&C 2:2–3). Your technical skills are a partial fulfillment of this prophecy, and I hope you are feeling a sense of urgency about this work. You were born in this age to do temple and family history work. Your family needs your help. Your ward or branch needs your help in this important responsibility.



You were born in this age to do temple and family history work. I hope you are feeling a sense of urgency about this work.

You will receive personal blessings as a result of participation in temple and family history work. One of these is the opportunity to qualify for a temple recommend, which signifies your worthiness before the Lord. A temple recommend is a symbol of obedience.

Recent instruction from the First Presidency clarifies the policy for obtaining temple recommends and receiving endowments. It was reiterated that receiving one's temple endowment is a serious matter that should be extended only to those who are sufficiently prepared and mature enough to keep the covenants they enter into. The First Presidency also affirmed that single members in their late teens or early 20s who have not received a mission call or who are not engaged to be married in the temple should not be recommended to attend the temple for their own endowment.¹ Every worthy member who is 12 or older can, however, receive a limited-use recommend to perform baptisms for the dead.

Those of you who are not worthy today of the privilege of carrying a recommend can work with your bishop or branch president to qualify yourselves for a recommend as soon as possible. Please don't be without this vital document.

I testify that the Atonement is real and that sins can be forgiven upon proper repentance.

You can help keep temples busy. Temple and family history work is *your* work. Much depends on you! You can accomplish so much with your energy and skills.

As you participate in temple and family history work, you are certain to have the Spirit to comfort you in your challenges and guide you in the important decisions you are making. As you participate in this work as individuals, in your ward and institute groups, and in your Relief Societies and priesthood quorums, you will form good friendships and have meaningful social experiences. And because your associations and friendships are expanding and the Spirit is working with you, there is an increased likelihood for you to find a spouse and form an eternal family.

As you participate as individuals, with your friends, and in your quorums, Relief Societies, and institute groups, these activities will add to your faith and happiness all of your life. They are marks of discipleship that will strengthen your future marriages and families and invite the Spirit to be with you.

The restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true. Because it is true, much depends on you, the rising generation. I hope that you—like Abraham—will be followers of righteousness, that you will seek the blessings of the fathers by participating in this work, and that you will thereby find greater knowledge, happiness, peace, and rest. ■

From a Church Educational System fireside for young adults given on March 2, 2008.

NOTE

1. See First Presidency letter, Sept. 7, 2007.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Here are some ideas to consider.

ATTEND THE TEMPLE

- Consider inviting family members, ward or branch members, institute classes, or other friends to join you.
- Support the efforts of your ward or branch to participate in temple work.
- If possible, take the names of your own ancestors.
- Consider helping babysit so parents can attend the temple.

COLLECT RECORDS

- Digitize photos, slides, video tapes, and other records; having them in electronic format can help you safeguard and share pieces of history.
- Verify the accuracy of family records. New.familysearch.org is a good place to start. Online tutorials and your ward or branch family history specialist can help you delve into the site. If you are already familiar with the site, consider teaching someone else how to use it.
- Take advantage of travel opportunities. If you visit an

area where your ancestors lived, arrange to spend some time at local cemeteries, libraries, or other places that might help you learn about your progenitors.

CREATE RECORDS

- Keep a journal.
- If possible, take a camera wherever you go.
- Learn or teach someone else how to index (indexing.familysearch.org), which makes records from around the world searchable online (see page 45).
- Talk to family members about significant events in their lives. Record the interviews.
- Start a family blog, perhaps asking family members to create entries about focused subjects (such as “My most memorable Christmas”) or asking them to post their photos and recollections generally.
- Nurture family relationships by keeping in touch through e-mail, phone, and letters. Plan reunions when possible.
- Organize a trip to a local cemetery. With your peers, photograph

headstones, if permissible, and make them available to others online. This can be a great service opportunity, especially for small cemeteries.



MY FAMILY HISTORY CHALLENGE

By Cristina Alvear

Bishop Page, the bishop of our young adult ward, started by explaining that family history and temple work aren't just for parents or grandparents—they are the responsibility of *our* generation and part of why *we* have been sent to earth at this time. Then came the challenge: FamilySearch indexing. In fact, he suggested that our ward index 100,000 names.

WHAT IS FAMILYSEARCH INDEXING?

For many years the Church has gathered genealogical records from hundreds of countries. The records have been scanned into computers. Now volunteers can download the digital images of those records and transcribe the information to create a searchable online index. Everyone can then access the indexes at familysearch.org.

Indexing projects are available in many languages. Become the newest member of a growing community of indexers by going to indexing.familysearch.org.

It would be a tremendous undertaking. Each person would need to index 1,000 names. Yet when Bishop Page asked who would commit to the goal, we all raised our hands.

The challenge quickly became important in my life. I downloaded the FamilySearch indexing software, read the tutorials, and began.

At first, it seemed difficult. The handwriting wasn't always easy to decipher. But each time I completed a set of names, I felt more confident.

Because my family is originally from Chile, I chose to index names in Spanish. Perhaps for that reason, the experience felt particularly personal. I didn't feel I was merely typing names because I realized that each one was a person who could receive the blessings of the temple.

I quickly discovered that indexing is a great activity to do on Sundays. Because I live far from family, I sometimes feel there isn't a lot to do after church. But indexing helps me use my time in a productive way, and I can listen to music or talks while I do it.

I was fortified when our stake president quoted President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "No work is more of a protection to this Church than temple work and the family history research that supports it. No work is more spiritually refining. No work we do gives us more power.

. . . Our labors in the temple cover us with a shield and a protection, both individually and as a people."¹

It can seem that young adults are especially bombarded by the "fiery darts of the adversary" (1 Nephi 15:24), and here I was being promised protection. I felt a strong desire to help my ward members experience that same blessing, so a friend and I organized an indexing party. Many people brought laptops. People already familiar with indexing shared their computers and answered the questions of those just starting.

Over the next several months, ward leaders also held activities dedicated to our goal. When anyone got discouraged, we encouraged each other. I was amazed at the sense of unity we developed from serving the Lord and each other, together.

In the end, our ward fell short of our goal of 100,000 names, even though many individuals completed 1,000 names. Our bishop's challenge, however, wasn't about numbers; it was about helping us gain a testimony of family history. And because it involved service, sacrifice, and saving others, we felt its purifying effect.

I am grateful for an opportunity to participate in the Lord's work. In doing His work, I came to know Him better as well. ■

NOTE

1. Boyd K. Packer, "The Holy Temple," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Oct. 2010, 35.



Hungry for the Word

IN ECUADOR

By Joshua J. Perkey
Church Magazines

“Blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 12:6).

Ana Visbicut leans back against the wooden slats outside her home with a smile on her face. Her children sit with her on a bench, each smiling as broadly as she is. It’s a warm, sunny Saturday afternoon. Ana lives in Puerto Francisco de Orellana, a small city in the jungles of eastern Ecuador. Members of the Orellana Branch presidency have just stopped by, unintentionally interrupting Ana’s visit with the sister missionaries, but she doesn’t mind. She welcomes the company. She has much to be thankful for and offers her thanks freely.

It’s not as though Ana hasn’t had her share of struggles. She lives alone with her five young children. Finding daily work is hard. And when she was baptized in August 2009,

only one of her children joined with her.

But over the course of the next year, the blessings came as three more of her children followed her example and were baptized and confirmed (one was too young at the time).

Yes, Ana’s eyes sparkle with gratitude. She, like other members of the Orellana Branch, has discovered the pure joy that comes from living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Joy Begins with Desire

In December 2008, there was no formal Church organization in Puerto Francisco de Orellana. At the time, a number of members were living there, some of whom had not attended church in years.

But something happened. The Spirit



Left: Ana Visbicut and her children rejoice in the gospel. Above: Members of the Orellana Branch gather for a branch conference in 2010.

touched hearts and changed lives, prompting four families to begin meeting together to study the scriptures and teach each other. And this feeling permeates the city even now.

“The people here are hungry and thirsty for the gospel,” says branch member Fanny Baren Garcia.

This hunger inspired members in Puerto Francisco de Orellana to contact the Church and ask permission to have the sacrament. “We didn’t come to them,” recalls Timothy Sloan, former president of the Ecuador Quito Mission. “They called me. The desire to act upon those feelings—to follow the invitation of the Savior throughout the Book of Mormon to exercise faith in Him and to repent—was already there. That’s a message to all of us.”

A similar desire existed in the hearts of those moving to Puerto Francisco de Orellana. In early January 2009, Marco Villavicencio—now the branch president—and his wife, Claudia Ramirez, were considering a job opportunity that would require relocating to Puerto Francisco de Orellana from their home in Machala, on the other side of Ecuador.

“My first question,” says President Villavicencio, “was ‘Is the Church there?’ My wife and I talked it over with our family, and we prayed to know if we should move. As soon as the offer came,



EMBRACING THE SAVIOR AND HIS GOSPEL

“In order to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, people must first embrace Him whose gospel it is. They must trust the Savior and what He has taught

us. They must believe that He has the power to keep His promises to us by virtue of the Atonement. When people have faith in Jesus Christ, they accept and apply His Atonement and His teachings. . . .

“I love the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it defines the way we can partake of the fruits of the gospel, experience the ‘exceedingly great joy’ (1 Nephi 8:12) that only it can bring, and endure to the end through all of the challenges of mortal life. The gospel teaches us all we need to know to return to live with our Father in Heaven as resurrected and glorified beings. May all of us maintain in our minds the vision of eternal life. May we be diligent in following the recipe for eternal life that is the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2008, 44, 46.

we learned that the Church was being established in Puerto Francisco de Orellana. We moved here in February 2009, and the branch was formed the following September.”

The Joy of Service

The desire to come unto Christ leads naturally to a desire to serve. The gospel of Jesus Christ changes both those who give and those who receive. This reciprocal process happens when hearts are humble, minds are open, and service is rendered. Service has played a principal part in the growth of the Church in Puerto Francisco de Orellana and has strengthened those who have served.

“How do I feel about my calling?” asks Clara Luz Farfán, who was called in September 2010 to serve in the Relief Society presidency. “Happy, because I know I’m going to be able to help other sisters come to church and strengthen

the new sisters who have been baptized.”

That same feeling has swept through the hearts of the members of the branch. Lourdes Chenche, the Relief Society president, says that strengthening the sisters requires effort, but it is effort she gladly gives: “As a presidency and as members of Relief Society, we visit the sisters. We draw close to them when they have problems. We provide them food when there is a need. We let them know they are not alone, that we have the help of Jesus Christ and the branch. And we teach them that they have to do their part—pray, study the scriptures, and prepare themselves. We pray with them, we console them, and we love them deeply.”

But the sisters do not do the work alone. “We talk with the branch president to see what can be done,” adds Lourdes. “We share their needs with him and the branch council so we can decide what we need to do.”

“There is a thirst here to know the gospel. People here really are desirous.”

President Marco Villavicencio

Below, left: Branch president Marco Villavicencio with his wife, Claudia, and their son.

Below, right: Clara Luz Farfán attends a fireside with other branch members.



The sisters' commitment to do their part is a sentiment common throughout the branch. At one service project to help a family in the branch, "we all participated," says Lourdes. "The children, the youth, the adults, the Relief Society, the missionaries. The experience was very edifying. I know that when we 'are in the service of [our] fellow beings [we] are only in the service of [our] God' [Mosiah 2:17]. When I serve, it is like I am doing it for Jesus Christ. That's what the kingdom is about."

The Joy of Fellowship

There is something undeniably strengthening about unity, that sense of belonging to the community of Saints. Blessings result when we become "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19) and we live like members of a family who "are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:8–9).

Fanny explains, "I believe our strength comes from the fact that we as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints feel like a family. And I think serving each other has done great good. We give whatever is needed, and this has created a sense of unity. We receive every new person who comes to church with open arms. We welcome them. I believe a hug says more than a thousand words."

Ana's experiences confirm that. As a single mother of five, she faces a constant economic challenge of trying to provide for her family when work is not easy to come by, and that effort can be emotionally and spiritually



President Villavicencio and other members visit with Lourdes Chenche, branch Relief Society president and seminary teacher.

draining. The fellowship of branch members has been an important contribution to her family during difficult times. "The members come and read scriptures with me," says Ana. "They watch over me. When we struggle, they are there. That's very important for new members."

This sense of fellowship is part of the reason the branch has grown so quickly. From 28 members on its first Sunday, the branch grew to 83 in attendance just a year later, including a dozen visitors not of our faith.

Branch leaders spent the Saturday before their branch conference visiting with members and those investigating the Church. They shared scriptures with them, encouraging them to be better.

One recently baptized brother was converted by a study of the scriptures—reading both on his own and with the members and missionaries. "The Book of Mormon is the key," he says. "It is the key for me." He has found joy in the Church. The pull of the gospel is so strong he started paying tithing even before he was baptized.

But friendship goes beyond sharing the gospel with others. It can change a way of life.

"Before I joined the Church," says Bernabé Pardo, another recent convert, "the only friends I had were people who would go out to drink. But now that I am a member, I have many friends—real friends. They invite me to read the Book of Mormon with them. They invite me over for family home evening. They serve each other. I have gone on service projects with them. My life is completely different now. I have received many, many blessings. I pay my tithing, and the Lord has blessed me."

It's a way of life that is not limited to adults. "We are always teaching

*"We are like Enos—
hungry for the
word of God"
(see Enos 1:4).*

Clara Luz Farfán

the young women about the power of fellowship, of saying hello and engaging others,” says Claudia Ramirez. “When people arrive at church for the first time, what makes an impression on them is how they are received. So we teach the young women how important each soul is to the Lord. This has been a great help. And we set goals with the young women for Personal Progress. This motivates them so they can share their friendship with others.”

President Villavicencio explains that “we try to put in practice President Gordon B. Hinckley’s admonition that every new convert needs to be nurtured by the good word of God, have a friend, and have a responsibility.”¹

Ana serves as the second counselor in the Primary presidency. Her son Jorge serves

as the first counselor in the teachers quorum.

“We give them a responsibility,” says President Villavicencio, “a chance to learn in leadership positions, to have someone help them along.”

The Joy of Being Changed

For Claudia, serving in the gospel resulted in a subtle swelling of confidence in her heart. “I was baptized when I was eight years old,” Claudia says. “We always attended church. But as I grew older, I saw many bad marriages. I thought about them a lot, and I worried that I could never marry because it wouldn’t be successful. I was afraid to trust my life to someone, that it would be too hard. But when I returned from my mission, I didn’t think the same. Teaching the doctrine changes you.”

From left: President Villavicencio with Bernabé Pardo, a recent convert; Relief Society meeting; Fanny Baren Garcia with her husband, Ricardo, and their children; Gospel Doctrine class.



Claudia and Marco Villavicencio were friends before her mission. Not long after she returned, they attended the temple together with some friends. Something special occurred. “I felt as if the Lord was answering my prayers, that this was a man I could marry,” Claudia explains. “I have the greatest blessing to have a good husband.”

Joy in Living the Gospel

“Our happiness doesn’t depend on material things,” says Oscar Reyes, age 15, “but in how we live our lives. That’s why I keep the Sabbath day holy, because it is pleasing to God. And that’s why I will serve a mission and why I like serving others.”

By living the gospel, members of the Orellana Branch have found true joy. “I am very happy,” Lourdes shares. “Even though I am very far away from my family, I have a family here too, a spiritual family. I have a great testimony of this work. I know that Jesus Christ lives and that, if we are obedient, He will bless us.”

It is a joy that permeates their lives no matter the challenges life throws at them. It is the joy that comes from righteous living. ■

NOTE

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Converts and Young Men,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 47.



PUERTO FRANCISCO DE ORELLANA, ECUADOR

About 60 miles (100 km) east of Quito, massive volcanoes and the Andes Mountains give way to the lush tropical climate of the Orellana Province. Vast forests crisscrossed by streams and rivers fill the landscape in every direction. Parrots and toucans and a thousand other species of birds call this their home. You can even find monkeys and sloths, armadillos and capybaras and, amazingly, pink dolphins.

The province was formed in the late 1990s to support the exploration of petroleum. The small settlement turned into a city almost overnight. Puerto Francisco de Orellana lies at the confluence of the Napo, Coca, and Payamino Rivers. Today the city and its environs boast roughly 80,000 inhabitants.





WHY AGENCY?

A knowledge of the gift and power of agency helps us understand our purpose and find joy in this life.

By Charles Swift

One day when I was a freshman at a university in the southwestern United States, I found myself sitting alone in the library, frustrated and confused. On the table in front of me were two stacks: one with the publications I had received from the missionaries, and another with the books I had checked out of the university library. I did not realize at the time that all of the library books were intense anti-Mormon publications. I had no idea that such publications existed, so I assumed that what was written in those books was accurate. Later I would realize they were far from reliable.



For the past couple of months I had studied both sets of material, talked with people, and prayed. But now, as I sat looking at the two stacks, I realized that I had spent more effort in reading than I had in pondering and praying. At that moment I came to the conclusion that I could not figure out what I should do by relying mainly on my intellect, so I made a decision: I would put my whole heart into praying about the restored gospel and try my best to find out from the Lord what was true.

Although I did not realize it at the time, I was exercising my moral agency in the library that day by deciding to be even more diligent in seeking truth. I have come to appreciate the significance of not only that one particular

decision, but the gift of agency as well. By gaining a better understanding of what moral agency is and why we have it, we will be able to more effectively exercise our agency for good and deepen our gratitude for the Savior's role in Heavenly Father's plan of salvation.

What Is Moral Agency?

Moral agency is a gift from our Heavenly Father (see D&C 101:78). It is "the ability and privilege God gives us to choose and 'to act for [ourselves] and not to be acted upon' (2 Nephi 2:26)."¹ The ultimate use of our agency is the ultimate moral choice: we are "free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and

In the mid-1970s I found myself frustrated and confused. I had been studying both the Church publications from the missionaries and anti-Mormon materials I found in the university library.

death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Nephi 2:27; see also 2 Nephi 10:23). We cannot choose the consequences of our decisions; if we choose the wrong and do not repent, we cannot expect to have “liberty and eternal life.”

Why Do We Need Moral Agency?

On a personal level, one reason we need moral agency is that the act of choosing good dramatically changes the quality of our lives and the lives of those we love. “When we follow the prophets’ counsel to hold family home evening, family prayer, and family scripture study, our homes become an incubator for our children’s spiritual growth,” taught Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “There we teach them the gospel, bear our testimonies, express our love, and listen as they share their feelings and experiences. *By our righteous choices and actions*, we liberate them from darkness by increasing their ability to walk in the light.”² Agency is essential to our happiness as individuals and families.

Moral agency also is important in our striving to become like the Savior and Heavenly Father. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve wrote, “The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. . . . This spotless and perfected state will result from a steady succession of covenants, ordinances, and actions, *an accumulation of right choices*, and from continuing repentance.”³ The moral decisions we make in this life—and how we act on them—matter.

Moral Agency and the Plan of Salvation

Another reason we need moral agency is because of the fundamental role it plays in the plan of salvation. As Elder Hales has taught, “Agency is essential to the plan of salvation. . . . Without agency we would be unable to make right choices and progress.”⁴ Agency is so important to Heavenly Father’s plan that in the premortal life,

Lucifer “sought to destroy the agency of man” (Moses 4:3). Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve wrote about three elements of moral agency as found in 2 Nephi: alternatives among which to choose, knowledge, and freedom to make choices.⁵

Alternatives. Lehi taught that there must be “an opposition in all things.” Without such opposition, “righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad.” Everything would be “a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility” (2 Nephi 2:11). Thus, opposition and the alternatives that come with it are essential characteristics of our existence, for if there were no opposition and no alternatives from which to choose, there would be no agency, and the “wisdom of God and his eternal purposes,” as well as His “power,” “mercy,” and “justice,” would be destroyed (2 Nephi 2:12).

Expanding on the concept of opposition, Lehi explained the consequences of having no law: without law, there would be no sin, which would mean there would be no righteousness nor happiness. Without righteousness and happiness, there would be no punishment nor misery. (See verse 13.) Then Lehi taught us the ultimate consequence of there being no opposites: “If these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away” (2 Nephi 2:13).

In other words, without opposition, there could be no life! Opposition is essential to the plan of salvation.

Knowledge. Elder Christofferson taught that “for us to have agency, we must not only have alternatives, but we must also know what they are.” Otherwise, “the existence of those choices is meaningless to us.”⁶ Because of the Fall, wrote Elder Christofferson, we have “sufficient knowledge and understanding to be enticed by good and evil—we attain a state of accountability and can recognize the alternatives before us.”⁷ If it weren’t for our knowledge of

good and evil, we could not act for ourselves, but only “be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:26).

Freedom to make choices. The third element of moral agency is the freedom or ability to act on the knowledge we have of the opposites and choose between them (see 2 Nephi 2:27).⁸ Elder Christofferson clarified that “freedom of choice is the freedom to obey or disobey existing laws—not the freedom to alter their consequences.”⁹ Through our obedience or disobedience, we are “free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Nephi 2:27). With our God-given agency, we are “free to act” for ourselves, “to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life” (2 Nephi 10:23).

Our Gratitude to the Savior

As I look back on that day in the library, I realize that my decision to pray more diligently led to an even more important decision: to get baptized. President Thomas S. Monson has said that some of our decisions “will make no difference in the eternal scheme of things, and others will make *all* the difference.”¹⁰ My decision to exercise the gift of moral agency to pray more diligently in order to find and accept truth, and then to eventually be baptized, has indeed made all the difference in my life, and I am deeply grateful.

As we keep in mind the importance of using our moral agency to choose good over evil, we must also remember the Savior’s role in the plan of salvation and be eternally grateful for the decisions He made and for all that He did for us. As Elder Christofferson wrote, “We need to always remember that



agency would have no meaning without the vital contribution of Jesus Christ.”¹¹

Because of the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can be forgiven of our sins and be resurrected. “Just as death would doom us and render our agency meaningless but for the redemption of Christ,” wrote Elder Christofferson, “even so, without His grace, our sins and bad choices would leave us forever lost.”¹² Though the exercise of moral agency is essential to our salvation, we do not “earn” eternal life through our good choices. There is no eternal life without the Savior and what He did for us. I am grateful to the Savior and to our Heavenly Father for the gift of agency and for the possibility of being blessed with eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7). ■

NOTES

1. Robert D. Hales, “Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 24.
2. Robert D. Hales, “Agency,” 26, emphasis added.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32, 33, emphasis added.
4. Robert D. Hales, “Agency,” 24.
5. See D. Todd Christofferson, “Moral Agency,” *Ensign*, June 2009, 46–53.
6. D. Todd Christofferson, “Moral Agency,” 48.
7. D. Todd Christofferson, “Moral Agency,” 48.
8. See D. Todd Christofferson, “Moral Agency,” 48–49.
9. D. Todd Christofferson, “Moral Agency,” 48.
10. Thomas S. Monson, “The Three Rs of Choice,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 67.
11. D. Todd Christofferson, “Moral Agency,” 49.
12. D. Todd Christofferson, “Moral Agency,” 50.

Though the exercise of moral agency is essential to our salvation, we do not “earn” eternal life through our good choices. There is no eternal life without the Savior and what He did for us.



Six-year-old Courtney T., who has Down syndrome, gives a talk in Primary with the help of her brother Justin. The Church handbook teaches that “lessons, talks, and teaching methods should be adapted to meet each person’s needs.”

How Do I Help This Child?

By Danyelle Ferguson

Do you work with Primary children who have cognitive disabilities? Here are some ideas for teaching them.

Many Primary teachers and leaders have questions about how to serve a child with cognitive disabilities, such as autism, Down syndrome, or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). They might ask: How can I teach this child? Should she be in the same classroom with others her age? Can he participate in sharing time or activities?

As the mother of a son with autism and as a Primary teacher of children with cognitive disabilities, I've learned a lot about meeting the needs of these children. The following principles are just some of what I've learned. Hopefully, they will be helpful to you as you reach out to serve and include all children in your ward or branch Primary.

Serve as Jesus Did

Our Savior showed us how to serve others by tailoring His message and actions to fit individual needs.¹ For instance, when He visited the Nephites, He gathered their little children to Him and “took [them], *one by one*, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them” (3 Nephi



Author Danyelle Ferguson with her son Isaac, who has autism.

17:21; emphasis added). Angels then “encircled those little ones” with heavenly fire and “did minister unto them” (3 Nephi 17:24).

We share in the Lord’s ministry as we teach all children. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminds us: “Those of us who have been entrusted with precious children have been given a sacred, noble stewardship, for we are the ones God has appointed to encircle today’s children with love and the fire of faith and an understanding of who they are.”² As we fulfill our responsibility to help children with disabilities, the Lord will help us individualize our service and teaching to meet their needs.

To better understand these needs, Primary teachers and leaders could meet with the child and his parents, which is a good time for the teacher to begin befriending the child. Often the best place to get acquainted is in his home, where he is comfortable and more likely to connect with new people.

Become Educated and Work Together

Teachers and leaders should take time to learn about the child’s disability. A great place to start is the Church website lds.org/disability (available in several languages), where they can read overviews about specific disabilities, learn teaching tips, and find additional resources.

Emily S. and her four-year-old son, Landon, who has pervasive developmental disorder, talk with Primary president Debra Maloof about things Landon likes and successful strategies for teaching him. Serving a child with disabilities can best happen when the child and his or her parents and leaders work together in a spirit of unity and cooperation.



After exploring the website, teachers and leaders can meet again with the child's parents to share ideas, discuss concerns, and set goals. Parents can share information about their child that will help teachers be successful, such as insights on how the child communicates, which activities she enjoys and which to avoid, and how to encourage appropriate behavior. Working with parents is vital in establishing the unity, cooperation, and ongoing dialogue necessary to best serve a child with disabilities.

Teachers and leaders should also consult with their priesthood leaders as they develop ways to serve the child. When our son was first diagnosed with autism, we didn't know how well he was going to transition from nursery to a Primary class with his peers. A sister in our ward who was a schoolteacher approached our bishop and Primary president and offered to be our son's aide. The Primary president, a member of the bishopric, my husband, and I met with her, and she talked to us about how to help our son. We set goals and created a plan to help him understand the routine of Primary. We often needed to tweak the plan over the following three years, but as he learned to understand what was happening around him, he became more interested in interacting with his peers and participating in the lessons. This sister's understanding and commitment built the foundation on which our son continues to stand. Her love and friendship taught him that he's a beloved child of God.

Because of that, he continues to see church as somewhere he can go to be himself and be loved.

Build Friendship and Trust

As teachers we can "follow the Savior's example of offering hope, understanding, and love to those who have disabilities."³ As we show genuine interest in children with disabilities, our friendship with them will grow.

Children with cognitive disabilities may communicate differently than others. When teachers tap into a child's individual communication style, they are able to build trust and friendship and become more effective instructors.

Here are two ways to improve communication:

- **Put your face at the child's level.**⁴ When adults do this, the child feels less intimidated and more included. It also helps children who have a difficult time focusing in a group setting. The teacher or aide can capture the child's attention and share a sentence or two about the lesson periodically during the class.
- **Find out the child's interests.** Children feel valued when others show interest in things they love. Children with disabilities often become attached to certain things, such as a particular toy, animal, or game. A teacher can ask the child to talk about his interests and refer to that interest in the lesson. Even if the child does not speak, the teacher can still talk about what interests him.

Integrate

In most cases, a child with cognitive disabilities should be assigned to her regular Primary class. This is important for both the child and her peers. Integration helps her learn appropriate social interaction and church conduct and prepares her for the transition to youth classes. For peers, being in class together provides opportunities for service and for experiencing the unique insights children with disabilities can provide. Spending time together also encourages friendships—an important part of feeling included and wanted at church.

When our son was preschool age, one little girl often sat beside him in Primary. She created cards and pictures for him if he missed class. Our son could not tell us her name, but he would take her hand and call her “my friend.” Their friendship gave her opportunities to serve and helped him be happy about attending church.

To facilitate friendships, a parent or teacher may choose to introduce the child to her peers on the first day of class and talk about her as a person—sharing her talents, skills, and favorite activities. Then they can talk about the disability so the peers understand the child’s needs and any behaviors that may seem unusual to them. Often, if parents and Church leaders are open in explaining these things, her peers will be more comfortable befriending her.

Consider contacting experts who can help Primary teachers set up a plan so the child can be more fully involved. Sometimes the child’s schoolteacher will be willing to meet with the parents and Primary leaders to teach them which techniques are successful with the child at school. The teacher may even be willing to attend church to give hands-on examples.



Being integrated in a Primary class helps both a child with cognitive disabilities and his or her peers. Here Audrey S. reads the scriptures with Isaac.

In a few cases, exceptions can be made so the child is taught separately, or other adaptations can be made. The Primary section of Serving in the Church on LDS.org provides further guidance on this.⁵

Provide Support in the Classroom

It can be challenging to meet the needs of every child in *any* Primary class. When a child with disabilities is part of that group, a co-teacher or assistant may need to be called. Co-teachers take turns teaching the lesson and assisting the child, or an assistant may be called to work specifically

with the child with a disability. Primary workers should coordinate lesson schedules, develop a system of communication, and discuss how they will handle different circumstances that may arise. As always, prayer, communication, and planning are crucial to having a successful partnership and providing an edifying teaching experience.

When calling a co-teacher or assistant, consider that the parents work with their child and deal with the challenges that come with raising a child with disabilities 24 hours a day. They may need an opportunity to attend their Sunday classes or to be involved in other callings; this short break may help them renew their energy and prepare to meet the challenges of the upcoming week.

Adapt Lesson Plans

The Church handbook teaches that “leaders and teachers should include members with disabilities in meetings, classes, and activities as fully as possible. Lessons, talks, and teaching methods should be adapted to meet each person’s needs.”⁶ Teaching lessons in a way that meets each class member’s needs requires prayer, creativity, and effort.

Brooklyn C. (third child from left), age four, who has autism, loves singing time in Primary; her parents say she has always responded well to music, and the tactile aspect of finger play adds additional interest for Brooklyn and other children.



Begin by finding out how the child learns best. The Leader and Teacher Resources link on [lds.org/disability](https://www.lds.org/disability) contains information about adapting lessons. Additional suggestions are listed under each disability heading. The Primary section of Serving in the Church on [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org) is another excellent resource. Adaptations made for a child with disabilities will be helpful to the other children as well. These approaches have worked for me:

- **Visual:** Many children are visual learners, meaning that pictures or objects help them understand ideas. The co-teacher or assistant can sit beside the child with disabilities and show him drawings or pictures throughout the lesson to illustrate what's being taught. If the child likes to draw, he may like having blank paper to share with his assistant. Together they can draw items mentioned in the lesson.
- **Auditory:** Children who learn by listening enjoy hearing stories. They also love it when the teacher uses his voice to animate the story—whispering, gasping in surprise, or using a slightly faster voice in the exciting parts. Teachers may need to simplify and shorten the stories from the lesson so the child with a disability will understand and stay interested. Consider telling the story, then taking the

principles from the story and applying them to a real-life situation or a story or event the child is familiar with.

- **Tactile:** Children who learn through touch enjoy having objects to hold and feel. If a story in the lesson takes place outdoors, the teacher could bring a smooth rock, twig, or stuffed animal to show as the story is told and then pass the object around so everyone can take a turn holding and examining it. Crafts and coloring pages are other helpful tangible items.

Participate in Sharing Time and Other Activities

Participation is important for children with disabilities. Be creative in finding ways to involve them in the scripture, prayer, and sharing time talk rotations. If a child has difficulty speaking, for example, he may be able to use pictures to communicate. Or some children may like the idea of standing at the podium but are too shy or unwilling to talk. In this case, let the child stand at the podium and be excited about being there while the parent helps him by being the voice for the assignment. He may help by holding the pictures for his talk or by being an example of when to fold arms for the prayer.

Here are a few other activities and the types of adaptations you might consider:

- **Primary sacrament meeting presentation.** A child with a disability may need extra support and flexibility because the sacrament meeting presentation is not a part of her normal routine. Involving her in several practice sessions will help her adjust to the changes. It's a good idea to have the child sit next to her assistant so he can prompt her before songs or her speaking assignment. If she is easily overwhelmed by noise or the visual stimulation that comes when facing a congregation, reserve a side pew near the front for her and her assistant. This way she can color, look at picture books, or leave for hall breaks without distracting other children. This also allows her to go up front to say her part or sing, then return to the bench to calm down. Another child may be fine with sitting on the stand but could need some fidget toys, such as two or three paper clips or a smooth pebble to hold on her lap. This is helpful for children who have difficulty paying attention in large groups.
- **Sharing time.** If a child's class is given an assignment to participate in sharing time, be sure the child with a disability is included in a way that is comfortable for him. If the class is putting on a skit, he may have a short part or even no speaking part, but simply being dressed up with other children will help him feel included. It's important for him to share experiences with his peers to develop relationships.
- **Extra programs.** If the Primary is participating in an activity such as a ward or branch talent show or Christmas

program and the child with disabilities has problems with loud noises or crowded rooms, allow her class to go first in the program. Then her parents have the option to take her home before she is overwhelmed.

Reap the Blessings

Thanks to my son with autism, I have gained a new perspective on what it means to be a child of God. I have learned that Heavenly Father truly knows and loves each of us individually. He knows our needs and gives parents and leaders promptings through the Holy Ghost to care for and bless the lives of our families and the children we serve. I have also gained a keen appreciation and love for our son's Primary teachers and Church leaders who have taken the time to become friends with him. They are wonderful examples of the Savior's love.

Teaching a child with cognitive disabilities requires extra time and effort and at times includes moments of frustration. But through prayer, inspiration, and reliance on the Lord, we can find success as we fulfill our stewardships to help these special children. ■

For more information on this topic, see Handbook 2: Administering the Church (2010), 11.8.6; 21.1.26.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, Matthew 8:1–17; 9:1–13, 18–38.
2. M. Russell Ballard, in “Behold Your Little Ones,” *Tambuli*, Oct. 1994, 40; “Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1994, 60.
3. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 21.1.26.
4. See *Teaching, No Greater Call* (1999), 71.
5. See “Teaching All Children, Including Those with Disabilities,” [lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,5727-1,00.html](https://www.lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,5727-1,00.html).
6. *Handbook 2*, 21.1.26.



GUIDELINES FROM CHURCH HANDBOOKS

The Church handbooks contain excellent information for teachers and leaders as they serve those with disabilities. The “Members with Disabilities” (21.1.26) section of *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* provides guidance and addresses many common questions. The auxiliary chapters include additional instruction. *Handbook 1* contains direction for priesthood leaders, including guidance on baptism. Look under “disabilities” in the index for a complete listing.



“Is Not This the Fast That I Have Chosen?”

Through the example of an investigator family, I learned that the Lord’s promises are sure when we obey the law of the fast with faith and purpose.

By Alexandria Schulte

I was serving as a full-time missionary in Texas, USA, when I first read Isaiah 58. Here the Lord outlines the doctrine of the law of the fast, listing nearly 20 specific blessings for those who are obedient to His law. Prior to my mission, I had seen many of these blessings in my own life and in the lives of friends and family members. Yet it was through the examples and faith of an investigator family that I truly came to understand the reality of the Lord’s promises when our fast is acceptable before Him.

“Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am” (Isaiah 58:9).

By the time my companion and I started teaching Corina Aguilar, she had already expressed a desire to come to church. After learning about the Restoration of the gospel and reading and praying about the Book of Mormon, she felt that the Church was true. There was just one thing holding her back: her husband, Manuel.

Corina would not attend church by herself—she was determined that her entire family learn about the gospel together. However, Manuel was busy working long hours, and when he came home, the last thing he wanted to do was listen to a couple of missionaries.

Corina began praying that Manuel would have a desire to meet with us, but weeks passed with no change in his attitude. Then, one day at the end of a lesson, Corina asked us about fasting. We were late for another appointment, so we briefly explained that when we fast, we go without food

or drink for two consecutive meals. During that time we pray to Heavenly Father for help and guidance for ourselves or for others. With a promise that we would teach her more during our next visit, we hurriedly left.

A few days later we visited Corina again. During the lesson she surprised us when she said sadly, “I don’t think I can fast.” She explained that since our last visit, she had been fasting. She would go through the day without breakfast or lunch and would then eat dinner. Following that meal, she would start again, not eating anything until the next day’s dinner. This pattern continued for three days. “I tried really hard,” she told us, “but it was so difficult.”

Amazed at her faith, we quickly explained that normally a person fasts for only one day. Then, curious to know the motive for such sacrifice, we asked, “Corina, can we ask what you were fasting for?”

“For my husband,” she responded.

We were impressed by her desire to follow the commandments of the Lord and seek blessings for her family. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Often when we fast, our righteous prayers and petitions have greater power.”¹ So it was with Corina. The next week Manuel agreed to meet with us. Although skeptical, after learning about the plan of salvation, he too began to pray and even kept a copy of the Book of Mormon in his truck to read during his break at work. Eventually Corina, Manuel, and their three children began attending church together.

Curious to know the motive for such sacrifice, we asked Corina what she had been fasting for. “For my husband,” she responded.

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free” (Isaiah 58:6).

Although he made great progress, Manuel struggled to obey the Word of Wisdom. He had been drinking alcohol since he was a young man. Not only did he have difficulty stopping, but he also feared ridicule from his friends.

Corina also felt enslaved by her husband’s habit, and for years she had struggled to help him. Now, with newfound faith and a testimony of the power of fasting, she began to fast regularly for Manuel to have strength to obey the Word of Wisdom.

Corina’s love for her husband reminded me of the story in the New Testament when a father pleaded with the Apostles to heal his ailing son. Although they exercised faith, they were unable to perform the miracle. The Lord, however, made the child whole, afterwards explaining that “this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21).

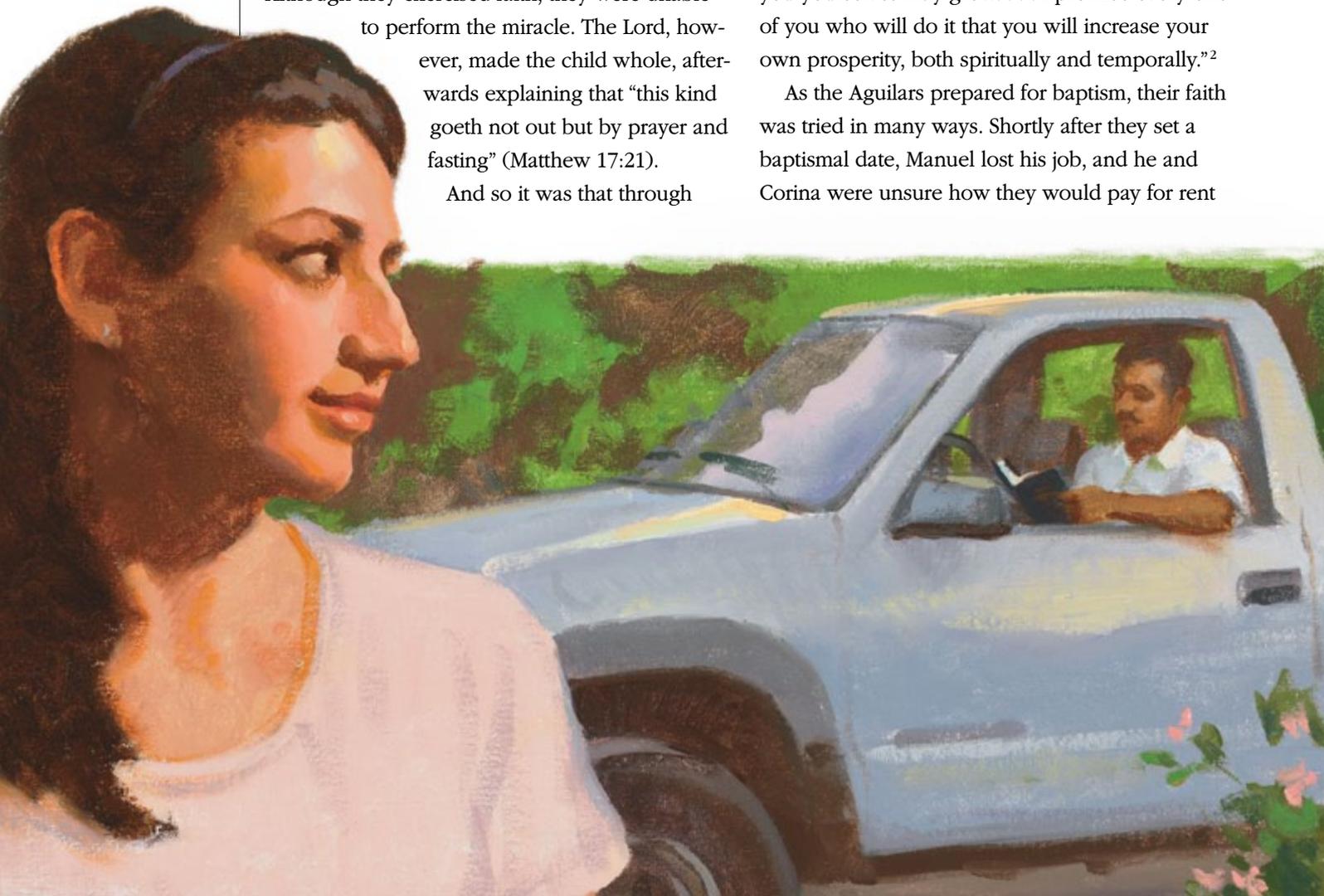
And so it was that through

prayer and fasting Manuel gradually gained the strength to break free from his habit. And although he was initially mocked by his friends, they soon gained a greater respect for him as he demonstrated his loyalty to the Lord by following His commandments.

“The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, . . . and thou shalt be like a watered garden” (Isaiah 58:11).

Along with providing help, strength, and guidance from the Lord, fasting gives the opportunity to “draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul” (Isaiah 58:10) through paying a generous fast offering. President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught: “Be liberal in your giving, that you yourselves may grow. . . . I promise every one of you who will do it that you will increase your own prosperity, both spiritually and temporally.”²

As the Aguilars prepared for baptism, their faith was tried in many ways. Shortly after they set a baptismal date, Manuel lost his job, and he and Corina were unsure how they would pay for rent



and utilities, let alone food for their children. Although they received some financial help from family, it was not enough to meet all of their financial obligations.

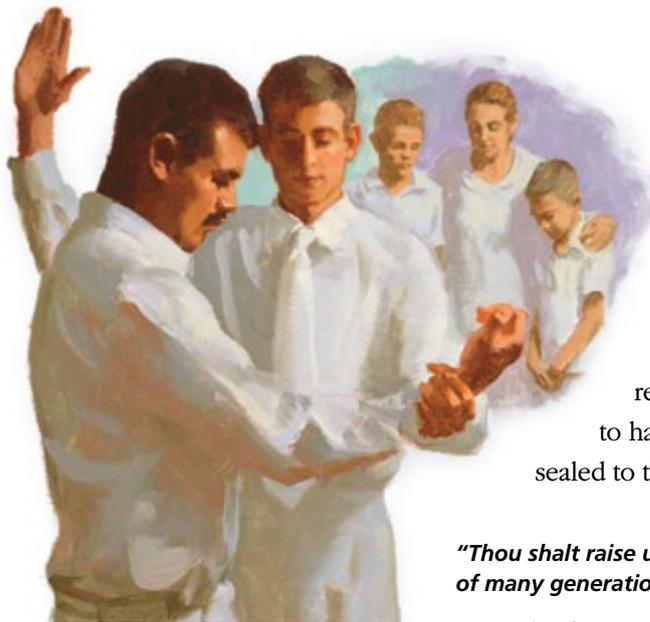
Not seeing any other alternative, the couple decided to have a garage sale. They first sold the few luxuries they had in their apartment, and then they began selling whatever they could spare. After about a week, they had come up with enough money to pay the rent for that month but still felt fearful about how they would endure the months ahead.

It wasn't long before the members of the branch came to their aid. The branch president met with Manuel to see what other assistance they needed. And as a branch they did what they could to help the Aguilars through the situation.

As the Aguilars continued to follow the commandments and did everything they could to provide for their family, they saw many blessings—including new job opportunities. They learned that even in times of trial, the Lord promises that He will provide for us if we are obedient.

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, . . . and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward" (Isaiah 58:8).

On November 9, 2008, Manuel, Corina, Jovani, and Lupito Aguilar entered the waters of baptism. The youngest, Mariela, looked forward to turning eight and being baptized. Manuel soon received the Aaronic Priesthood and later the Melchizedek Priesthood.



A year later Manuel and Corina entered the temple to receive their endowment, and they are now preparing to return to the temple to have their children sealed to them.

"Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations" (Isaiah 58:12).

As the first members of the Church in their family, Manuel and Corina are pioneers who, through their examples of faith and sacrifice, are setting a righteous pattern for their posterity and for others. Not only have they helped their children receive the blessings of the gospel, but they have also shown friends and extended family the joy that has come to their lives through obedience to the commandments. Some have also met with the missionaries and been baptized.

Fasting opens the door to unique blessings of strength and comfort. Like the Aguilar family, we all face trials and difficulties as we strive to follow the Savior. We may struggle to overcome personal weaknesses or temptations or agonize over the mistakes of others. We may feel downtrodden by physical or emotional pains or have to endure periods of economic hardship. Whatever the burden we may carry, fasting helps us "cast [our] burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain [us]" (Psalm 55:22). As we obey the law of the fast with faith and purpose, we will witness in our own lives the blessings promised in Isaiah 58. ■

NOTES

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "The Law of the Fast," *Liahona*, July 2001, 89; *Ensign*, May 2001, 73.
2. Marion G. Romney, "The Blessings of the Fast," *Ensign*, July 1982, 4.

Through prayer and fasting Manuel gradually gained the strength to break free from his habit, and the Aguilars prepared for baptism.

IS THIS BOOK FROM YOU?

I had just turned 21 and was working as a server in a local ski resort's restaurant. One afternoon as I finished cleaning the dining room, another server handed me a book and said he wanted me to have it. I thanked him and accepted it.

I looked at the cover: the Book of Mormon. My curiosity was sparked, so I decided to go into the kitchen to check it out. Inside the cover I found a note that the server had written to me. In it he said the Book of Mormon was a true book of Jesus Christ's gospel and that he knew it would touch my heart. I decided to start reading it right then.

As I read, a strange, peaceful feeling enveloped me. I hadn't felt that feeling while reading any book other than the Bible. My initial intent to read a few pages quickly turned into a few chapters. I couldn't put the book down. Then I came to 1 Nephi 15:11: "Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you."

I had to know if this book was true. I didn't know how to address God in prayer, so I simply looked up at the kitchen ceiling and asked, "Is this book from You?" Immediately I felt a firm reply: "Yes." I remember thinking, "Wow. I guess I'll finish the book!"

Three months later, having finished



A co-worker handed me a book and said he wanted me to have it. My curiosity was sparked.

the Book of Mormon, I drove to visit my father in California. Not far from his house I passed a building with a mosaic on its front that I recognized. I quickly turned into the parking lot and found a man outside.

“What is Lehi’s vision of the tree of life doing on your building?” I asked. He then introduced me to his church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I retrieved my Book of Mormon from the car and began asking him questions about all the passages I had circled as I read. He slowed me down and explained that the Church had missionaries who devoted two years of their lives to answering questions like mine.

I gave him my father’s address, and later two elders came to visit me. I was impressed that they were eager to answer all of my questions. I was even more impressed that the new concepts they taught me felt like familiar things I was remembering again. Five weeks later I was baptized a member of the Church.

Thirty-two years have passed since then, and I still read the Book of Mormon daily. It has been a continuous source of light and direction for my family and me. How grateful I am to the ancient prophets who etched the words of God onto the golden plates, to Joseph Smith for enduring persecution and trials in order to translate and publish its truths, and to a server who had the courage to give me a Book of Mormon that day. ■

Cynthia Ann Lee, Nevada, USA

THE GOSPEL GAVE ME PEACE

My family joined the Church when I was six years old, and we were sealed in the temple when I was eight. My parents diligently taught me the doctrines of our newfound faith, so I grew up knowing that prayer, personal scripture study, and other aspects of the gospel could bring great peace.

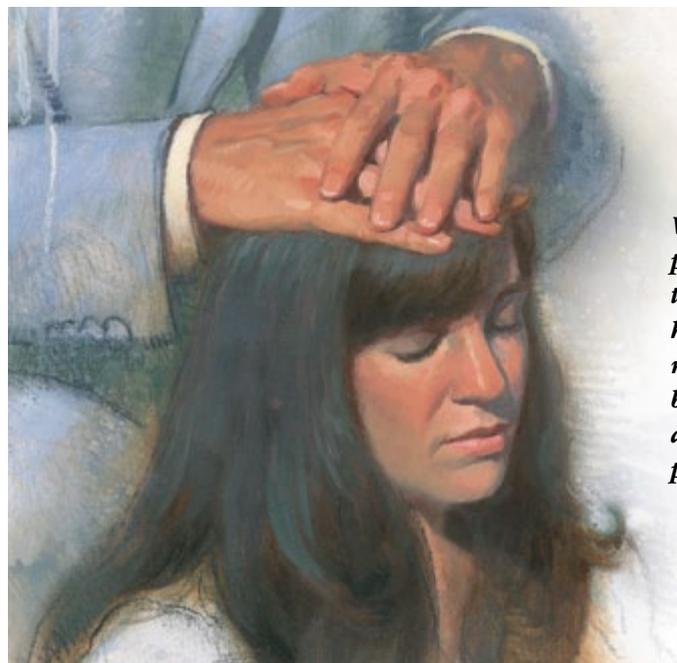
It wasn’t until my mission, however, that I truly came to appreciate the plan of salvation. While I was serving in Australia, my father passed away. When my mission president came to tell me what had happened, he gave me a priesthood blessing that focused a great deal on the plan of salvation. That blessing, along with my personal study in the following days, weeks, and months, helped me learn and appreciate this great doctrine more

than I ever had before. I was able to view my circumstances through the light of the plan of salvation, and I was able to understand how truly wonderful it is. The plan of salvation has come to mean so much to me since then.

As I have continued to study the scriptures since my mission, I have discovered that much of the word of God testifies of His “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8). I know that there is life after death and that we can be with our loved ones again after this life. Knowing that my mum, dad, and siblings and I are sealed brings me great comfort.

This life does have painful experiences, but life need not be hard. The gospel of Jesus Christ makes things a lot easier. Because of it, I know I can feel a sense of peace and comfort at all times, no matter what is happening in my life. ■

Sina Rogers, New Zealand



When my mission president came to tell me what had happened, he gave me a priesthood blessing that focused a great deal on the plan of salvation.

YOUR CROP WILL FREEZE!

As our family prepared to be sealed in the Logan Utah Temple, we recommitted ourselves to living the gospel of Jesus Christ. In particular, we made a commitment to the Lord that we would always pay tithing. Shortly after our sealing, we moved to Wyoming, USA, to try our hand at farming.

It was late April when we started

preparing our 300 acres (121 ha) of land. We burned the sagebrush, leveled the land, and dug ditches. When we finally started to plant, it was late in the planting season. I decided to plant barley, which has a short growing season.

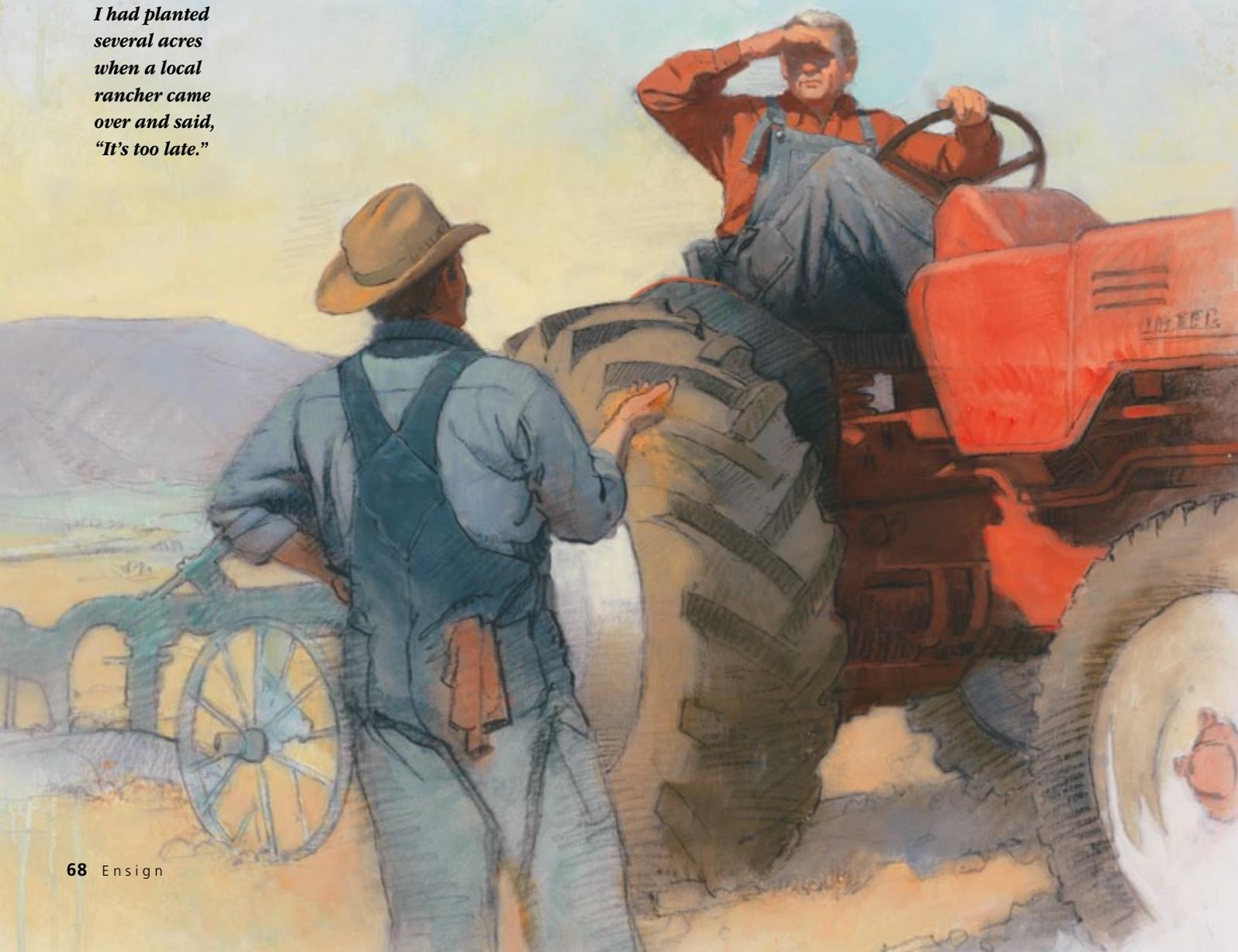
I had planted several acres when a local rancher came over and said, “You are wasting your time, energy, and money in this endeavor. It’s too late.

Your crop will freeze by August 21!”

He scooped up a handful of soil and continued, “You have dried out the ground with all your raking, burning, and leveling. Your seeds will not germinate without moisture.”

I knew the soil was too dry, but we had already invested much of our money in the crop, so I decided to keep planting. I had faith that because we had done our best to prepare the land and because we

I had planted several acres when a local rancher came over and said, “It’s too late.”



were full-tithe payers, Heavenly Father would assist us. After planting everything, I knelt in prayer with my family, asking for His help.

The next day it began to rain, a perfect rain that was gentle enough that it did not wash away our seeds or the soft soil on the hills. Our fervent prayers and long, hard days of work had not been in vain.

Throughout the spring and summer, we worked 12 to 14 hours a day, six days a week, irrigating, fencing, and preparing for the harvest. We also kept our promises to the Lord by paying tithing and serving diligently in our ward callings. The grain grew beautifully and bountifully; the barley plants seemed to jump out of the ground. As the end of the season drew near, however, we worried that it would become too cold for our crops to survive. We prayed that God would preserve our crops, and we had faith that He would fulfill His promise to those who pay tithing: “I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground” (Malachi 3:11).

The dreaded day, August 21, came, and so did the frost. But as I went into the fields the next day, I saw that our crops had been preserved. Several weeks later our barley harvest filled many truckloads, which we were able to sell for a considerable profit.

The following summer our acres of alfalfa and barley were a bright green in the middle of that dusty sagebrush landscape. One day in late August, I was irrigating when I saw

a powerful dark storm coming. “Oh, no,” I thought, “hail!” I knelt in the field to pray, knowing that our crops could be destroyed. The storm came fast. I could see hail coming down to the north and south of my fields. I walked to our fence line on the north. Hail had fallen just inside the fence line but no farther. I quickly went to our south fence line. There hail had fallen just outside our fence line. Our crops were untouched!

Our neighbors were impressed with how fortunate we had been, and I recalled the words of Malachi that “all nations shall call you blessed” (Malachi 3:12). Truly we had been blessed. I am grateful that as we do our best to obey God’s commands, He keeps His promises. ■

Ben E. Fowler, Utah, USA

YOU ARE WELCOME IN MY HOUSE

In November 1997 I was called to serve in the Chile Concepción Mission and would soon be able to realize my desire to attend the temple and receive more light and knowledge. But then doubts began to trouble me. As weak and imperfect as I was, was I really worthy to enter? Would the Lord really welcome me with open arms after all the times I had offended Him?

I shared my doubts with my stake president, and he helped me understand that if my life was in order and I

was really trying to do all the things I had been taught, I was worthy to enter the house of the Lord. Feeling better, I left for the missionary training center in Santiago, Chile. A few hours before it was time to go to the temple, however, my doubts returned.

The beauty and peace inside the temple were so great that the longer I was there, the more I wondered if I deserved to be there. Afterward in the celestial room, everyone but me seemed happy and radiant. As I touched the door handle to leave, however, a strange sensation came over me, and I felt that I should stay. I also felt as if someone were behind me, putting a hand on my left shoulder to turn me around. Slowly I turned.

On the wall I saw a large painting of Jesus Christ at His Second Coming with His arms opened wide. I could not move. Then I clearly heard the following words inside my mind: “You are welcome in my house.”

A warm feeling coursed through my whole body, and tears began to spill from my eyes. The only thing I could think of was “Thank You.”

For some minutes I cried without stopping. My heart was overflowing with gratitude to my Savior. I still felt weak and imperfect, but I knew that He loved me and would strengthen me.

Many years have passed since that experience, but every time I go to the temple, the joy of that day returns, as do these comforting words: “You are welcome in my house.” ■

Carina Daniela Paz, Salta, Argentina

October Conference Notebook

“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken; . . . whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

As you study the October 2011 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in future issues) to help you learn and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles.

STORIES FROM CONFERENCE

A Life-Changing Book

It [the Book of Mormon] can draw you closer to God than any other book. It can change a life for the better. I urge you to do what a missionary companion of mine did. He had run away from home as a teenager, and someone had placed a Book of Mormon in a box he carried with him in his search for more happiness.

“Years passed. He moved from place to place across the world. He was alone and unhappy one day when he saw the box. The box was filled with things he had carried with him. At the bottom of the box, he found the Book of Mormon. He read the promise in it and tested it. He knew it was true. That witness changed his life. He found happiness beyond his fondest dreams.

“Your copy of the Book of Mormon may be hidden from your view by cares and attention to all you have accumulated in your journey. I plead with you to drink deeply and often from its pages. It has in it the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the only way home to God.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “A Witness,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 70–71.

Additional resources on this topic: Study by Topic on LDS.org, “Book of Mormon”; Tad R. Callister, “The Book of Mormon—a Book from God,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 74; *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 17–28, 103–14.

*He found
the Book of
Mormon.
He read the
promise and
tested it. He
knew it was
true.*

Questions to ponder:

- What in your life might be hiding your copy of the Book of Mormon from your view?
- What can you do to improve your study of the Book of Mormon?
- What lessons from the Book of Mormon have helped you change your life for the better?

Consider writing your thoughts in a journal or discussing them with others.



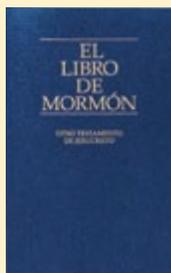
To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit conference.lds.org.



TO THE WOMEN OF THE CHURCH

You are destined for more than you can possibly imagine. Continue to **increase** in faith and personal righteousness. **Accept** the restored gospel of Jesus Christ as your way of life. **Cherish** the gift of activity in this great and true Church. **Treasure** the gift of service in the blessed organization of Relief Society. Continue to **strengthen** homes and families. Continue to **seek out and help** others who need your and the Lord's help."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Forget Me Not," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 123; emphasis added.



Prophetic Promise

"The effect of the Book of Mormon on your character, power, and courage to be a witness for God is certain. The

doctrine and the valiant examples in that book will lift, guide, and embolden you.

"Every missionary who is proclaiming the name and gospel of Jesus Christ will be blessed by daily feasting from the Book of Mormon. Parents who struggle to get a witness of the Savior into the heart of a child will be helped as they seek for a way to bring the words and the spirit of the Book of Mormon into the home and all the lives in their family."

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "A Witness," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 69.



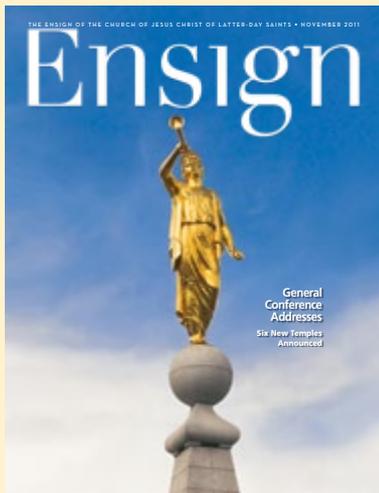
The General Temple Patron Assistance Fund

In the October 2011 general conference, President Thomas S. Monson talked about the availability of the General Temple Patron Assistance Fund. The fund "provides a one-time visit to the temple for those who otherwise would not be able to go to the temple and yet who long

desperately for that opportunity." To contribute to the fund, write in the information on the normal contribution slip that you give to your bishopric or branch presidency.¹

NOTE

1. See Thomas S. Monson, "As We Meet Again," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 5.



Answers for You

Each conference, prophets and apostles give inspired answers to questions Church members may have. Use your conference issue or visit conference.lds.org to find answers to these questions:

- What does it mean that we are “children of the covenant”? See Russell M. Nelson, “Covenants,” 86.
- Why do bad things happen to good people? See Robert D. Hales, “Waiting on the Lord: Thy Will Be Done,” 71; and Quentin L. Cook, “The Songs They Could Not Sing,” 104.
- Why do we need the Book of Mormon if we already have the Bible to teach us about Jesus Christ? See Tad R. Callister, “The Book of Mormon—a Book from God,” 74.
- When I am struggling with a problem, how can I know what to do? See Barbara Thompson, “Personal Revelation and Testimony,” 9.

KNOWING FOR YOURSELF

Jesus Christ *is* the Only Begotten and Beloved Son of God. He *is* our Creator. He *is* the Light of the World. He *is* our Savior from sin and death. This is the most important knowledge on earth, and you can know this for yourself.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Teachings of Jesus,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 93.



DETAIL FROM CHRIST WITH BOY, BY CARL HEINRICH BLOCH; PHOTOGRAPH BY EMILY LEISHMAN

STUDY CORNER

More Than Once

In his October 2011 general conference talk “The Power of Scripture,” Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said that memorizing and pondering a scripture “can be a key to unlock revelation and the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Ghost” (page 6).

Consider memorizing these three scriptures, which were quoted three times each during the October 2011 general conference:

Mosiah 2:17¹

Moroni 7:47²

1 Timothy 4:12³

NOTES

1. See José L. Alonso, “Doing the Right Thing at the Right Time, without Delay,” 14; Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “You Matter to Him,” 20; Henry B. Eyring, “A Witness,” 68.
2. See Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” 8; Henry B. Eyring, “A Witness,” 68; Silvia H. Allred, “Charity Never Fails,” 114.
3. See L. Tom Perry, “Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear,” 43; Keith B. McMullin, “The Power of the Aaronic Priesthood,” 47; Henry B. Eyring, “Preparation in the Priesthood: ‘I Need Your Help,’” 58.



Making Family Home Evening a Priority

When our children were young, our lives were busy with various activities. We anticipated Monday nights when we would have family home evening and could enjoy being together.

During this time, my youngest daughter was on a dance team that practiced twice a week. When her teacher moved practice to Monday nights, we started holding family home evening after her practice. After about three weeks, we realized that the

new schedule was making Monday evenings stressful.

We talked to the dance teacher and asked if there was another night she could hold the practices, but she said no.

We didn't feel right about changing our family home evening schedule to accommodate dance. After talking with our daughter, we decided that it was more important to have family home evening than to make time for dance team. Surprisingly, our daughter did not mind.

Now our daughter is 20 years old. She replaced dancing with other interests that have proved to be more fulfilling. Her decision to give up dance

so that we could hold family home evening has blessed our family.

**Kathy Goedde Edwards,
Utah, USA**



ILLUSTRATION BY BETH WHITTAKER

HELPS FOR HOME EVENING



“Keeping Safe and Balanced in a Google-YouTube-Twitter-Facebook-iEverything World,” page 18: Familiarize yourself with the article before family home evening. Select the sections that you feel are most applicable to share with your family. You may wish to read the list under “Digital Rules” as a family and then come up with your own rules for media use in your home. Stress the importance of using media responsibly by reading Elder Bednar’s quote under “Be Careful in Cyberspace.”

“The Doctrine of the Father,” page 32: Start by asking family members to share what they know about Heavenly Father. Then go through the article, summarizing the points in each section that give insight into who God the Father is. Consider concluding with your testimony of the love that Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, have for us.

“This Is Your Work,” page 42: Beforehand, read the sidebar titled, “What Can I Do?” Choose one of the ideas that your family can do together during family home evening to get involved in family history and temple work. Read the article to your family and then ask them what blessings Sister Beck said would come as they engage in this important work. Carry out the idea you planned ahead of time and consider making a goal as a family to continue this project in weeks to come.

News of the Church

Visit news.lds.org for more Church news and events.

BibleVideos.LDS.org is Church's Gift to the World

During the December 4, 2011, First Presidency Christmas Devotional, Church leaders presented The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos website, a gift to the world for the coming holiday season.

BibleVideos.lds.org is a repository for original short videos that depict scenes from Christ's life, ranging from the angel foretelling Christ's birth to the Savior's Resurrection.

President Henry B. Eyring,

First Counselor in the First Presidency, announced the site during his talk at the devotional.

"Like the scriptures which these short films follow faithfully they may seem to you quiet," he said. "Your faith and the Holy Ghost will create the emotion these world-changing events deserve."

A nine-minute video shown during the devotional revealed a sampling of the content that is now available on the website

or will be coming soon.

Material for the videos is being provided from footage shot at the Church's new LDS Motion Picture Studio South Campus in Goshen, Utah, where filming for the New Testament Scripture Library Project began in August 2011.

The project will yield more than 100 vignettes portraying the life of Christ, taken directly from the text of the King James Version of the Bible. Over time, each video will be posted to

The screenshot shows the website's interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Videos', 'Mobile App', and 'About'. The main content area has a large video player with a scene of people in a marketplace. Below the video is a 'Latest Videos' section with a grid of video thumbnails. Each thumbnail includes a title and a duration. The titles are: 'An Angel Foretells Christ's Birth to Mary (4:07)', 'Mary and Elisabeth Rejoice Together (3:07)', 'Mary and Joseph Travel to Bethlehem (2:06)', and others. There are also 'Watch Introductory Video' and 'View All' buttons.

Eventually, nearly 100 videos depicting New Testament scenes of Christ's life will be available on The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos website.

BibleVideos.lds.org along with the scriptural text from which it is taken. The goal is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ by assembling one of the finest collections of Bible videos in the world.

“We intend for these videos to be used freely by individuals, families, and groups,” said Elder Lynn G. Robbins, Executive Director of the Media Services Department. “We want to help our own members strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ, and we offer this freely to other churches who may wish to use these videos in a similar way. The message of the Lord Jesus Christ needs to be shared as widely as possible throughout the world.”

Subscription options, including RSS and e-mail, are available in the footer of the website for users to receive updates when new videos are provided.

The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos website is intended to provide members and their families with a new and meaningful way to learn about and share the teachings of Jesus Christ. Through these videos, individuals can explore biblical environments, watch scripture-based stories come to life, view slide-shows, and discover additional

insights into biblical accounts.

“It is our hope that these New Testament videos will help people to visualize what they have only been able to imagine, and to more deeply feel the truths of the New Testament as they witness the Savior’s life and not just as they read about it,” Elder Robbins said. “Hopefully, there will be entirely new insights into the Savior’s character that will help viewers feel of His love and inspire them to want to be more like Him.”

The website enables individuals to share the content in order to extend the videos’ reach and impact. Items on the website can be shared through Facebook, Google+, and Twitter.

“You can give a great and wonderful Christmas if you will remember the gifts God has given you, and as best you can, offer them to others as He would,” President Eyring stated.

The website has a mobile-friendly design and is available in English (BibleVideos.lds.org), Spanish (videosdelabiblia.org), and Portuguese (videosdabiblia.org). A free iPad app is also available, offering a new way to experience Bible stories through sight, sound, and touch. ■

Hill Cumorah Pageant to Celebrate 75 Years

In July, *America’s Witness for Christ*—the Hill Cumorah Pageant, which takes place in New York, USA, and tells the story of the Book of Mormon—will celebrate its 75th anniversary. For information about the commemoration of the anniversary, please visit news.lds.org and search using the keyword “Cumorah.”

Young Women Meeting Announced

This year’s general Young Women meeting will take place on Saturday, March 24, 2012, at 6:00 p.m. mountain daylight time. Speakers will include the Young Women general presidency as well as a member of the First Presidency. Young women, their mothers, and Young Women leaders are invited to attend in person or via broadcast.

Latino Saints Encouraged to “Walk in the Light of His Love”

Elder Claudio D. Zivic and Elder Gary B. Doxey of the Seventy spoke at a Church-sponsored devotional titled “En la luz de Su amor” (“In the Light of His Love”), held on Sunday, November 13, 2011, at the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. To read about the proceedings of the event, which members across North, Central, and South America received via broadcast, visit news.lds.org and search using the keyword “luz.” ■

Policy Changes for Couples Help Make Mission a Reality

Throughout their marriage Brent and Suzanne Romig had talked about serving a mission together after their six children were grown. Both had a love for missionary work—Brother Romig served in Holland as a young man, and Sister Romig’s father was a mission president in Tahiti just before she was born.

But last year, when they started researching their options to serve as a senior missionary couple, they began to realize that, due to the slow economy and falling housing prices, they would be limited in when and where they could serve.

Then, during summer 2011, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles approved changes in senior missionary policies to encourage more couples to serve full-time missions. As of September 1, 2011, couples may now serve for 6, 12, 18, or 23 months. In addition, a cap of \$1,400 USD per month has been established for housing costs. Previously, mission costs varied depending on location, ranging from hundreds to thousands of dollars per month.

The policy changes will allow more senior couples to answer the call President Thomas S. Monson made during October 2010 general conference: “To you mature brothers

and sisters: we need many, many more senior couples. . . . There are few times in your lives when you will enjoy the sweet spirit and satisfaction that come from giving full-time service together in the work of the Master” (“As We Meet Together Again,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 6).

Now the Romigs, along with other couples, are realizing that because of the recent changes, serving a mission may become a reality sooner than they thought possible.

On October 10, 2011, the first six-month welfare missionaries—Lyle and Roslyn Archibald, from Ogden, Utah, USA—entered the Provo Missionary Training Center to begin preparations for a humanitarian medical mission in Chuuk, one of the four island states that comprise the Federated States of Micronesia.

As the Archibalds were considering serving a medical mission to Micronesia—Brother Archibald is a retired physician—they were concerned about the effect 18 months or two years in tropical conditions would have on Sister Archibald, who is very sensitive to heat.

“We hadn’t found anything that fit us, but when we heard ‘six months,’ we immediately felt good about it,” Brother Archibald said. “I’m not sure we would have found a mission that



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ROSLYN AND LYLE ARCHIBALD

For Roslyn and Lyle Archibald, the change in length of service required for senior missionaries enabled them to serve a six-month humanitarian mission to Micronesia.

would have worked for us otherwise.”

Brother Romig added that now there are more opportunities to serve in different locations. “The changes allow us now to put our names in and say, ‘Wherever He wants us to go, we can do that.’”

Right now the Romigs are house-sitting for family members who are serving a two-year couples mission in Billings, Montana, USA. Shortly after they return, the Romigs will leave on their mission.

“I truly feel more than anything it’s a chance to pay back my Heavenly Father in some kind of service,” Sister Romig said. “Before, it was a wish and a desire. Now it’s just a matter of saying yes when the time is there. It’s a reality.” ■

Read more of these stories—and many others—at news.lds.org.

After Incarceration: A Story of Rescue

By Melissa Merrill

Church Magazines

Peter's story is unusual. After 30 years of being caught up in the world of drug addiction, he spent 10 months on the run from the police. He was arrested while trying to escape out a window in his home and later went to prison.

While he was there, a fellow inmate invited Peter to attend LDS worship services with him. Peter agreed. The other inmate didn't attend after that first week, but Peter kept going—every week for the duration of his sentence, in fact. He also participated in the institute program, in LDS Addiction Recovery Program meetings, family home evenings, and other programs the Church offered at the Utah State Prison, where he was incarcerated.

Ten days following his release from prison, he was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A year later he baptized his wife and their son, and today the family is preparing to be sealed in the temple.

But again, Peter's story is unusual. Rates of recidivism—of returning to prison or jail after having served a sentence—are

high in most places across the world.

What helped Peter avoid such a return—or stagnation in the drug-centered world he knew before he became a member of the Church? Certainly his experience inside the prison was a factor. But Peter and those closest to him say that where he is today is as much because of what

Inside prisons and immediately following an inmate's release, Church leaders, volunteers, and ward families are participating in the rescue effort, as they did for Peter.

happened to him *after* his release.

To read about how ward councils, priesthood leaders, ward families, and those who volunteer inside prisons played a role in Peter's rescue—and how they can help rescue others who have been released following incarceration—please visit news.lds.org and search using the keyword “incarceration”. ■



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL MINER

Updates to LDS.org Calendar Improve Usability

A major update to the calendar under “Tools” on LDS.org will give ward and stake clerks, building schedulers, and general members a more effective way to keep track of and coordinate ward and stake events.

Launched in October 2011, Calendar 2.0 includes both interface and functionality improvements and is available in 11 languages. To access the calendar, go to Tools > Calendar on LDS.org and log in with your LDS Account.

The calendar will continue to undergo improvements. Users can read a detailed explanation of the calendar and watch short instructional videos online.

BillionGraves Genealogy Webinar Highlights New Technology

A new mobile device app called BillionGraves, which combines GPS location data with the pictures users take of gravestones, was highlighted by FamilySearch presenter Tim Cross at the Utah Genealogical Association (UGA) November webinar.

The app, which is available free of charge on Google Android and Apple iOS devices, enables volunteers to upload photos of headstones they take with their phones to an online database, where they are mapped, transcribed, and linked to FamilySearch. The photographing and transcribing effort has already generated 250,000 headstone transcriptions in six months, Brother Cross said.

The recording of the webinar is available on the UGA website at infouga.org; UGA membership is required for access.

Gospel Art and Photos Available in the Image Library

LDS Media Library is now offering a new feature: an image compendium designed to simplify



locating, downloading, and sharing gospel-related graphics.

Located at lds.org/media-library/images, the Image Library offers image options for use on mobile devices or tablets, as computer wallpapers, or for print production.

Some of the visuals found on the website will be familiar because they also appear in the Gospel Art Kit. Other images, however, are appearing on LDS.org for the first time and come from vineyard.lds.org, where members can donate photos for use in Church media.

Upon release, the library contained 2,400 images in 43 searchable categories; more images are being added each month. They are available free of charge for noncommercial use.

LDS Accounts Give Access to Church Resources Online

LDS Accounts, which provide members with a single user name and password to interact with Church resources online, are making the browsing experience more personal. They open up a wealth of features on many Church websites, such as access to online ward or branch membership directories, temple ordinance records on the new FamilySearch, and study tools for scriptures and other Church materials.

Currently, more than a dozen Church websites use LDS Account. For descriptions of some of the most popular ones, visit news.lds.org and search using keywords “LDS Accounts.” ■

The LDS Media Library on LDS.org now offers gospel-related images for downloading or sharing.

In Other Church Magazines

THE NEW ERA

Teens and Testimonies

What are the keys to gaining your own testimony as a youth and keeping it strong? Read about it on page 16.

Preparing for Missions

In one ward, young men devote one Sunday a month in their Aaronic Priesthood quorum to teaching from *Preach My Gospel*. Read about this unique way to prepare to serve full-time missions on page 26.

The Tender Mercies of the Lord



By Elder David A. Bednar
of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Difficulties and challenges usually do us receive those important gifts and, frequently, the Lord's tender mercies to us in our lives.

I have reflected frequently upon the words from the Book of Mormon: "The heathen . . . might, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those things that he hath chosen. Because of their faith, he made things might unto them in the presence of the Lord." (2 Nephi 1:20)

I think that the tender mercies of the Lord are not and that they do not receive reward or mercy by coincidence. Oh, the Lord's timing of the tender mercies help us to both discern and acknowledge them.

What are the Tender Mercies of the Lord?

The Lord's tender mercies are the very personal and individualized blessings, strength, protection, consolation, guidance, loving rebuke, confirmation, support, and spiritual gifts which we receive from and because of and through the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the Lord's love and mercy and according to the conditions of the children of men (D&C 40:15).

Could the Lord's tender mercies be anything that he would not have been merciful to? Not only would he not withhold

them, but the Lord said that he would come in from John 14:19. Let us not forget that the Lord will be with us through the tender mercies of the Lord. Repentance and forgiveness of our sins and pains of contrition are examples of the tender mercies of the Lord and the promises and the forbids that enable us to pass forward with faithfulness through physical tribulation and spiritual afflictions as examples of the tender mercies of the Lord.

In a recent radio conference, the Lord's tender mercies were evident in the teaching statements of a young wife and mother of four whose husband was slain in Iraq in December of 2003. The mother did not accompany him, after being notified of her husband's death, she received his Christmas card and message. In the midst of the abrupt reality of a dramatically altered life, came the gift of a study and tender reminder that families can be reunited forever. With personal gifts from the Christmas card:

"To the best family in the world! Have a great time together and remember the true meaning of Christmas. The Lord has made it possible for us to be together forever. So when we see again, we will be together as family."
"God bless and keep y'all safe and grant the Christmas to be our gift of love from us to His family!"
"All my love, daddy and your loving husband!"



Clearly, the husband's absence in Iraq meant to his Christmas gathering added to the separation caused by his military assignment. But to the mother, as a voice from the Lord, came a most needed spiritual message and witness. As an individual and the Lord's tender mercies do us receive consolation by mercy by coincidence. Faithfulness, obedience, and healthy faith under duress in our lives, and it is often the Lord's timing that enables us to recognize and receive those merciful blessings.

Some time ago I spoke with a priesthood leader who was prepared to receive the names of all of the youth ages 15 to 21 in his ward. Using envelopes as names and as a witness, he created flash cards that he returned while standing on his knees and in prayer. The priesthood leader had a vision about one of the young men whom he knew only from a picture. He should be the young man shown in a white shirt and wearing a missionary name tag. With a companion named at the table, the young man was teaching a family. The young man had the Book of Mormon in his hand, and he looked at the name written on the envelope of the book. The priesthood leader then smiled from his throne.

February 2012 1

Questions & Answers

"My parents are divorced. Sometimes I get advice from one of them that contradicts advice from the other. What do I do?"

Pray for Guidance
I have experienced the same problem. Whenever I get conflicting advice, I pray down on my knees and pray to my Heavenly Father to show which person's advice to take into consideration, just as the Prophet Joseph Smith did when asked of all the same women. Each time the answer came loud and clear, and I have perfectly the right answer to my question. —*J. J. Wilson, Chicago*

Learn New Coping Skills
It does seem hard, but it is possible to cope with divorce and have a good family life. A life-changing event like a divorce can put people through some rough times, but it can also help them learn about their strengths and get things done more easily. If you need help figuring out how to cope, ask a bishop or pastor or friend about counseling or your help. And if you feel a need to talk to your parents, try writing them a letter. —*Janet J., Chicago, Michigan*

Ask Your Bishop
You can ask your bishop or branch president for advice. He will help you in the view of your Heavenly Father to make the best decision for the person to help you. I know that it is an effort to choose in such decisions, but you ought to carefully analyze each side of advice from your parents and choose what is best so that you can pass forward and progress. —*Joseph H., St. Louis, Missouri*

Q&A for Teens with Divorced Parents

Getting some conflicting advice from divorced parents? Turn to the Q&A on page 14 for some comments by other teens facing this dilemma.

SEND YOUR QUESTION TO:
Elder David A. Bednar, 501 North Temple, St. Louis, MO 63103-1099. Questions may be edited for length and clarity.

SEND YOUR ANSWER TO:
Elder David A. Bednar, 501 North Temple, St. Louis, MO 63103-1099. Answers may be edited for length and clarity.

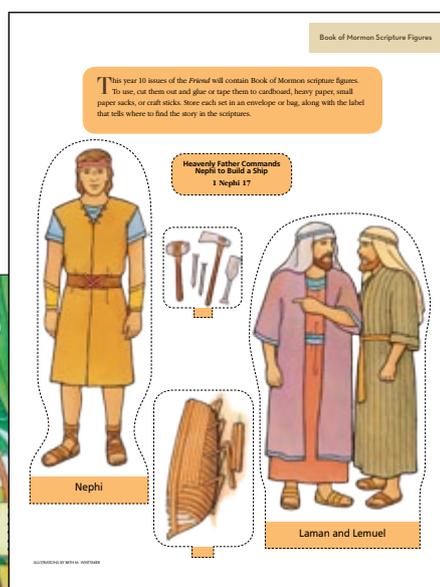
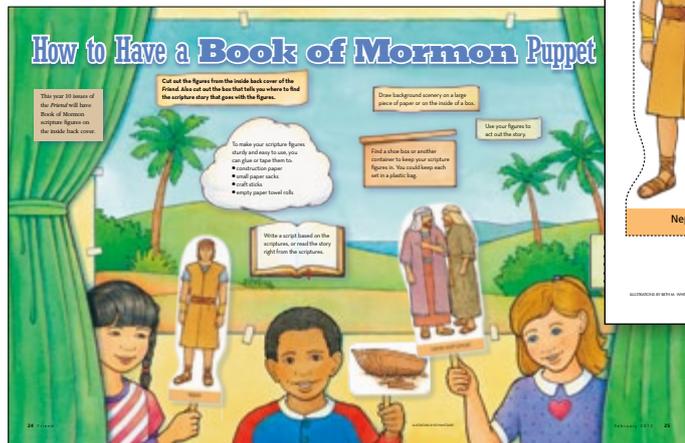
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THE FRIEND

Scripture Figures

This year, 10 issues of the *Friend* will feature Book of Mormon scripture figures on the inside back cover. See pages 24–25 of the February issue for some ideas about how you and your family can use these figures.



New Q&A Feature in the Friend

The *Friend* has created a new feature called "Question Corner" that allows children to ask questions and read answers from their peers. Readers can find this new feature every other month in 2012. This month's question and answers discuss what children can do to get along better with siblings.

EMULATING AND HONORING OUR HEAVENLY PARENTAGE

By Scott Van Kampen

Church Magazines

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of emulation, taught Elder Douglas L. Callister, formerly of the Seventy. “One of the purposes of our earthly probation is to become like [our heavenly parents] in every conceivable way so that we may be comfortable in the presence of heavenly parentage.” We emulate Them as we try to think, talk, act, and even look like Them (see Alma 5:14).¹

As a graphic designer, I have to work in the many different artistic styles required by various clients. To do so, I have found value in having a pattern. Even though the client may explain the job and its desired result in great detail, I’ve found that it helps me to have an image to look at as I work. That pattern—even if it is only a mental one—reminds me of my goal and keeps me on a consistent track.

Likewise in our mortal probation, instructions alone are not always enough to communicate information or convey a new concept. We may need a picture or pattern in our mind’s eye to help us emulate heavenly practice. Consequently, if we think of ourselves as God’s children, desiring to return to Him, we are more likely to pattern our lives after Him and to strive for the qualities that are inherent in Him.²

Our wise Heavenly Father actually provided His Only Begotten Son as our true example of how to emulate Him. During the Savior’s mortal



Because having a pattern in our mind’s eye helps us emulate heavenly practice, our wise Father provided His Son as our true pattern of following Him.

ministry, He did the will of the Father, spending His time helping others. Similarly, when we emulate the Father and His Son, we use our gifts, talents, and intelligence to give service freely. As we serve, we honor our Father and He honors us by calling us to participate in building His kingdom.

Just as in graphic design, sometimes in life a visual, tangible pattern replaces a mental one. We often learn from the service of others. I still

remember the first time as ward executive secretary that I couldn’t completely fill the bishop’s interview schedule. The bishop, however, reminded me that the Lord was in charge and He knew who needed to see the bishop that day—even if we didn’t. And sure enough, every time we had this “problem,” the phone would ring or someone would stop in to ask if the bishop had any time. And because of his inspired leadership, he did have time.

In addition to having the example of leaders, I was blessed with parents who exemplified kindness, hard work, support, honesty, and uprightness. Their examples were a pattern I could also follow, demonstrating for me the connection between emulating God and honoring our father and mother. The righteous example of our earthly parents is part of Heavenly Father’s pattern, and by honoring them, we can learn the traits we need in order to live with our Heavenly Father again. And as we become part of the righteous pattern of our children’s lives, we can help further His plan and complete His pattern of parenting by bringing not only ourselves but also our eternal families back to Him. ■

NOTES

1. See Douglas L. Callister, “Our Refined Heavenly Home,” *Liahona*, June 2009, 27; *Ensign*, June 2009, 55.
2. See Sherrie Johnson, “Instilling a Righteous Image,” *Tambuli*, June 1984, 10; *Ensign*, July 1983, 21.



Teach Me to Walk in the Light, by Godofredo Orig

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Here we see the path of a family as they move into the light of the temple.

On the bottom row, the family is in darkness but soon meets the missionaries. On the top row, the family prays, learns that the gospel is true, and is ready for baptism and confirmation. They face the temple, where they will eventually make the covenants they need for eternal life.



“We believe in God,
the Eternal Father,
and in His Son,
Jesus Christ, and in
the Holy Ghost.”

Articles of Faith 1:1

